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Sandwich Education & Training

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Comment

Difficulties experienced in placing students

The year just ended was a difficult one for placing students - more difficult than any previous year. The signs are that 1982 will not see any improvement. Indeed improvements can only come from an upturn in the economy which will allow companies to employ more students, or from some additional financial support from the government. ASET, in its evidence to the recent DES survey on the plight of sandwich students, suggested that the anticipated shortfall in placements in 1981/82 estimated at 2000, could be avoided if the annual training grants available to companies via MSC could be increased from the presented £3m to £8m.

In view of the £40m invested by companies each year - via student salaries alone - the
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GIVE US THE MONEY - AND MORE OF IT

Educational bodies in Scotland, England and Wales respond to Government concern over sandwich courses.

The Scottish education service should become the sole agency responsible for administering public funds which support sandwich courses - including the training components.

This was one of the main recommendations in a report by the Council for Tertiary Education in Scotland's Committee on Training Places issued in July. The Council was asked by the Secretary of State in October 1979 to make an appraisal of the arrangements for ensuring an adequate supply of training places for sandwich course students. The report is now being considered by the ten colleges in Scotland which provide degree and diploma sandwich courses.

Fragmented

The Committee's report argues that, although a certain measure of support for sandwich training is available from public funds, the arrangements for administering it are fragmented. There are often wide variations between the level of aid to employers and the wages paid to students during training periods. Moreover, says the report, it would be unwise to allow the future of sandwich course education to depend upon the assumption that industry and commerce could be fully responsible for arranging their training needs.

Other recommendations made by the report include the establishment of centralised units within colleges to deal with the providers of training places, and more co-operation between colleges and organisations over, for example, the planning of training periods within sandwich courses so that they do not coincide with the peak summer demand.

More active support

The report also calls for more active support for the provision of work experience and training for sandwich course students from employer's organisation, trades unions, nationalised industries, the Civil Service and professional bodies. In addition, the Manpower Services Commission and its various off-shoots should devise a coherent system of policies towards sandwich education.

The report points out that unless effective action is taken promptly to help employers provide an adequate number of training places, the system of sandwich education will be seriously weakened and this will have adverse implications for national economic regeneration.

At about the same time that Scottish Council issued its report, representatives of educational bodies and private and public employers were giving evidence to a government inquiry into sandwich courses. At the time of going to press, a report was being prepared and a public announcement expected. Suggestions will be made for short-term, medium-term and long-term strategy.

Rise of £5m

Participants at the enquiry, including representatives from ASET and the polytechnics' and universities' committees on sandwich courses stated that government training grants should be increased from the £3m set in 1976 to £8m. This was urgently required, it was argued, if industrial placement schemes are to be protected from the recession.

They also asked for more flexible access to the grants, which often take up to a year to be distributed through the Manpower Services Commission's industrial training boards.

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present investment by government in the training of young people committed to working in industries, vitally important to Britain's economic growth, must be seen as inadequate.

Sandwich Graduates escape the Dole

In 1979 new graduates from universities and polytechnics full-time and sandwich courses, still unemployed at the end of the year was 5.4%. In 1980 it was 9.1%. Universities do not, as yet distinguish between full-time and sandwich courses in their published figures, but the evidence from polytechnics is encouraging. Here we find that, despite the general decline in 1980 in the proportion of the known graduates in each area entering first employment, a consistently higher proportion from sandwich courses across the course spectrum go straight into permanent work. It may not be work relevant to the subject studied. — polytechnic statistics are not yet developed enough to make such an analysis possible. It does mean, however, that employers are likely to be taking a favourable attitude towards graduates with sandwich training. The success rate varies

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