

Speech: Op-ed by British Ambassador Thomas Reilly on education

In 2006, when I moved back to London after nearly four years in the Middle East, to get married and start a family, I also went back to school. The British Foreign Office paid for me to study for an MBA. I studied in the evening after work, at weekends and holidays and took time off work to attend residential schools. At the end of four years, I had my MBA.

Education matters.

It matters at all points in our lives. It shapes our lives. It structures the way we think. It develops the way we interact with other people. It enables us to realise our own potential. It helps us challenge ourselves. Education is the bedrock on which we stand, it sets the pathway for our lives. Without it we are (to quote Shakespeare) 'bound in shallows and in misery'. A failure to educate effectively stunts personal development and economic growth, increasing, as it does so, political and societal risks. Education is a liberator, an equaliser, a generator of social mobility and a realiser of opportunity. A good education is the single greatest gift we can give our children.

For the children we educate today, create our societies tomorrow. The values we impart through our children's education shape how we will live – in a just, equal society where people are respected for their abilities; or an unjust, crippled society where people are respected only for their wealth or their power.

But education should not be viewed as a solely academic undertaking. A society that fails to develop and apply skills and knowledge will struggle to sustain economic growth. This is increasingly, recognised by companies and universities who offer combined syllabi where equal parts of the course are spent in each institution.

Education is not easy. Indeed, it is frequently scary and difficult. This September, my children went (with great fear and trepidation) to their first day at a brand-new school here in Morocco. Their fear was compounded by it not only being the first day in a new school, in a new country, but also by the fact that it was a French-speaking school and neither of them speak French. But in years to come, when both of them are bilingual, I hope they will look back on that fear and realise that the experience was worth it.

The process of learning never stops and it is not something that the young alone do. When my mother retired, she went back to university and studied first an undergraduate degree in Spanish and then a Masters, writing a ground-breaking dissertation on the Spanish in South America. When she graduated, in Canterbury Cathedral last year, in front of 5,000 other students, they stood and applauded her. It was one of proudest moments of my life.

Where education liberates, a failure to educate chains and limits, perpetuates inequality and locks communities into a cycle of poverty. One of the single biggest losses to a society is a failure to educate its women properly – young women who do not receive an education can never achieve either their personal or economic potential, robbing both them and society of enormous gains. That is why the work of charities such as Education For All (who build dormitories near to secondary schools to enable girls to continue their education past the age of 12) is so important.

I am constantly struck by how many Moroccans choose to pursue their university studies in the UK and I am delighted that is the case. Mobility of university students not only broadens their education outlook, but it also increases inter-cultural understanding and breaks down stereotypes – I remember my ERASMUS year studying in Strasbourg as the best of my university life and where I made the closest of my friends.

The UK's Chevening programme, which operates in over 137 countries worldwide, has given bursaries to over 46,000 students to study in the UK. The programme gives future leaders the opportunity to develop personally and professionally and the Scholarships aim to support UK foreign policy priorities by creating lasting positive relationships with future leaders, influencers and decision makers around the world. We sent six Moroccans to the UK with Chevening Scholarships for academic year 2017/2018: it is not enough and I would like to considerably increase the number of Moroccans studying in the UK, both independently and through the Chevening Programme over the coming years.

The Times Higher Education World Rankings 2018, places three British universities in the top ten – with Oxford and Cambridge occupying the two top spots. The emphasis in British universities is on an open and stimulating environment where students are encouraged to ask questions, to challenge, to pursue independent thinking and to debate (an environment I try to emulate in the Embassy). But in addition to the excellence of the teaching environment, UK universities also offer the chance to learn and perfect the English language, which is increasingly the dominant international language for business and commerce.

The UK is renowned for its multicultural and multi-faith society and is home to many of the world's most internationally diverse campuses and communities. The UK is the world's second most popular study destination after the US, with its universities attracting more than 400,000 international students each year. The International Student Barometer gives the UK the highest international student experience satisfaction ratings for English-speaking countries.

One evening in 2003, I was sitting in a restaurant in London with my then girlfriend (now, happily my wife). She was telling me that her biggest regret was not studying medicine. We talked about what was preventing her from studying medicine. She quit her job the next day and went back to school. She studied every hour that she had and by the end of the year, she had the A-Levels necessary to get into medical school. My wife is now a top physio, working for the International Paralympic Committee.

Education is the key to unlocking human potential. Good education releases creativity, drives entrepreneurship, technology and innovation. It emancipates the poor and empowers the scientists, teachers, politicians and authors of tomorrow who will solve the great problems the world grapples with. Education is the basis for everything.

The centrality of education to the prosperity of a society is why education is my top priority here in Morocco and I look forward to working closely with my Moroccan partners to continue to improve the educational exchange between the UK and Morocco over the coming years.

Press release: In-work progression and Universal Credit: SSAC report published

The Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) report published today (9 November 2017) presents the findings of its research which involved speaking with work coaches, policy experts, employers and a small number of working recipients of Universal Credit.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has embarked on an ambitious programme of in-work support through Universal Credit which is without precedent internationally. This extends conditions and support to people in low paid work only applying to unemployed claimants previously, with the goal of increased earnings and reduced benefit payments. The current 'test and learn' approach takes the form of a randomised control trial (RCT) testing the impact of different frequencies of work coach intervention.

The committee believes that DWP is right to be cautious given the very large number of households in scope. Of the 590,000 people receiving Universal Credit, 39% (230,000) are working. While it is not known how many people in work will get Universal Credit when it replaces tax credits, in 2015-16, 3 million families received in-work tax credit payments totalling £20.5 billion. While it is too soon to draw firm conclusions on how the current in-work approach is faring, SSAC concludes that DWP should:

- Test a much broader range of interventions, including those identified by work coaches in local jobcentres, taking account of personal and local circumstances.
- Establish a clear evaluation framework to enable local testing, while drawing on the central analytical capacity to ensure rigorous evaluation.
- Avoid constraining work coaches with tightly-prescribed targets. However, policy and guidance needs to clarify the variety of reasons people have for working part time (for example, having young children,

having a disability or long-term condition, early phase self-employment, studying or re-training) if work coaches are to use discretion appropriately.

- Develop a richer understanding of working claimants and employers in key sectors. It is particularly important for DWP to understand routes into low paid work and the diverse circumstances of low paid households before any large scale migration of tax credit recipients onto Universal Credit.
- Take a data-driven approach to segmenting people's circumstances, drawing on skills, work experience and attitudinal data.
- Fix the delays and complexity reported by Universal Credit claimants which may hinder in-work progression. The rules for couples are particularly complicated. Universal Credit needs to provide predictable support if it is to really help people increase their earnings. A better 'it pays to progress' calculator is needed for both recipients and work coaches to have greater confidence.

Paul Gray, Committee Chairman said:

As tax credits migrate into Universal Credit, DWP is making a major shift from its traditional role of helping the unemployed into work towards supporting those already in low paid work to increase their earnings. This is a major challenge no other country has attempted on this scale. Our report highlights ways in which this focus on in-work support can best be tailored and improved.

Chris Goulden, Chair of the committee's Independent Work Programme sub-committee said:

The department is currently examining the effectiveness of different techniques of work coach contact, but this trial is quite narrowly focused. Our research highlights the breadth and complexity of in-work progression, as well as the wide range of affected groups – which includes both employers and working claimants. The committee would encourage the department to set out its broader aims on in-work progression as well as take up our recommendation to enable a broader and more innovative set of practices to be tested.

[Press release: Nomination of Suffragan](#)

Bishop of Ripon: 9 November 2017

The Queen has approved the nomination of the Right Reverend Dr Helen-Ann Macleod Hartley, MTheol, ThM, MPhil, DPhil, Bishop of Waikato in the Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki, in New Zealand, to the Suffragan See of Ripon, in the Diocese of Leeds in succession to the Right Reverend James Harold Bell, MA, on his resignation 30 April 2017.

Bishop Helen-Ann (44) was born in Edinburgh, and grew up in Sunderland. She was educated at the University of St Andrews, Princeton Theological Seminary in the USA, and Worcester College, University of Oxford, where she is an Honorary Fellow. She trained for ordination on the St Alban's and Oxford Ministry Course, and was ordained deacon in 2005, and priested in 2006. She was Curate in the Benefice of Wheatley, and then in the parish of Littlemore, both in Oxford Diocese. In 2008 she was appointed Lecturer in New Testament at Ripon College Cuddesdon, and later Director of Biblical Studies. In 2012 she became Dean for the New Zealand Dioceses at the College of St John the Evangelist in Auckland. She was elected Bishop of Waikato in August 2013, and was consecrated on 22 February 2014.

Bishop Helen-Ann has published with SPCK, and is a regular contributor to the Daily Reflections series for Church House Publishing. She has also contributed to the Pilgrim course.

She is married to Myles, an organist and church musician. Her interests include the night sky, contemporary fiction and visual arts, going to the gym, and watching netball.

Press release: Environment Secretary backs further restrictions on neonicotinoid pesticides

Tougher restrictions on neonicotinoid pesticides are justified by the growing weight of scientific evidence they are harmful to bees and other pollinators, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said today.

Setting out the UK's position, the Secretary of State said the UK supports further restrictions on the use of these pesticides. Unless the scientific evidence changes, the government will maintain these increased restrictions post-Brexit.

This follows advice from the [UK government's advisory body on pesticides](#) which said scientific evidence now suggests the environmental risks posed by

neonicotinoids – particularly to our bees and pollinators – are greater than previously understood, supporting the case for further restrictions.

Research estimates the value of the UK's 1,500 species of pollinators to crops at £400-680million per year due to improved productivity.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

I have set out our vision for a Green Brexit in which environmental standards are not only maintained but enhanced.

I've always been clear I will be led by the science on this matter. The weight of evidence now shows the risks neonicotinoids pose to our environment, particularly to the bees and other pollinators which play such a key part in our £100bn food industry, is greater than previously understood. I believe this justifies further restrictions on their use. We cannot afford to put our pollinator populations at risk.

I recognise the impact further restrictions will have on farmers and I am keen to work with them to explore alternative approaches both now and as we design a new agricultural policy outside the European Union.

Since December 2013, the EU has banned the use of three neonicotinoids – Clothianidin, Imidacloprid and Thiamethoxam – on a number of crops attractive to bees, such as oilseed rape.

The European Commission has proposed restricting the same three neonicotinoids to only allow their use on plants in glasshouses. Currently, their use is banned for oilseed rape, spring cereals and sprays for winter cereals, but they can be used to treat sugar beet and as seed treatments for winter cereals. Should this proposal be adopted, the UK would have the right to consider emergency authorisations. We would only do so in exceptional circumstances where there is a real need for the products and the risk to bees and other pollinators is sufficiently low.

Defra's Chief Scientific Advisor Professor Ian Boyd said:

The important question is whether neonicotinoid use results in harmful effects on populations of bees and other pollinators as a whole.

Recent field-based experiments have suggested these effects could exist. In combination with the observation of widespread and increasing use of these chemicals, the available evidence justifies taking further steps to restrict the use of neonicotinoids.

Defra has today also given an update on its [National Pollinator Strategy](#),

which shows encouraging progress on its aims to make farms, towns, cities and the countryside better places for our bees and pollinators. The strategy was launched in 2014, following independent research which showed an overall decline in the UK's wild bee diversity over the last 50 years. It sets out a collaborative plan to improve the state of bees and other pollinators, and recognises pesticides as one of the key threats to their populations. The government will continue to work with partners such as Friends of the Earth, British Beekeepers' Association and Kew to deliver the ambitious strategy.

[News story: £30 million for business and graduate partnerships](#)

Innovate UK has announced an extra £30 million of funding for Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), which connect UK businesses with an academic or research organisation and qualified graduate to work on innovation projects.

It will allow significant expansion of the KTP programme. Currently, there are 630 graduates and post-doctoral researchers employed in KTPs. These include industrial research and development and entrepreneurial roles.

This funding comes from government's [National Productivity Investment Fund](#). It will help to build the pipeline of high-skilled research talent necessary for a growing innovation economy.

The investment was announced today at [Innovate 2017](#).

[Ella's Kitchen: transforming the organic baby food market](#)

Businesses of all sizes

Businesses that have previously taken part in KTPs include [Dyson](#), [Jaguar Land Rover](#), [Rolls-Royce](#), [Sainsbury's](#) and [Unilever](#). Baby food brand, [Ella's Kitchen](#), has run 3 schemes, working with the [University of Reading](#).

The majority of KTPs are made up of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – around 80% of all those run.

Science Minister, Jo Johnson, said:

Through Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, businesses of all sizes are partnering with our world-leading academics and researchers to learn how new skills and thinking can increase their competitiveness and productivity, and this extra funding will ensure even more UK businesses continue to innovate and grow.

By putting science, research and innovation at the heart of our Industrial Strategy, and emphasising the benefits of commercialising research, we are building on our strengths in R&D and delivering benefits across the country.

Stimulating innovation and producing successful outcomes

Ruth McKernan, Chief Executive, said:

We are committing significantly more funding this year on KTPs. This enables an increase to the scheme, with additional KTPs becoming more closely aligned to [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund areas](#).

Companies that have used KTPs know their development value in bringing in excellent staff with cutting-edge academic knowledge. The current tried-and-tested model is widely recognised – and proven over 40 years of operation – for its excellence in stimulating innovation and producing successful outcomes.

There are many innovative companies, particularly SMEs, which could benefit from the academic mentoring that a KTP provides.

[Knowledge Transfer Partnerships at Northumbria University](#)