Hefce tread's warming amid dated legal framework

Funding council plans new contract as legislation is ‘pushed to the limit’. John Morgan reports

England’s funding council has also warned that it might not consider that new rules for universities that it does not provide.

But an update on progress attributed in the minutes to Steve Egan, Hefce deputy chief executive, states: “The requirement to develop a new regulatory system...by administrative means rather than through legislation means that the provisions of existing legislation are being pushed to the limits.”

Dennis Farrington, co-author of The Law of Higher Education and visiting fellow at the Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, said that the legislation is what we [originally] expected. “My opinion is that it would be a good opportunity to rationalise all the many laws which relate to higher education and create one framework within which all the institutions and agencies can operate effectively.”

Keeping control the funding council is developing a new regulatory system

Wales must encourage more applications to the elite institutions, says MP David Matthews writes

You might imagine that school pupils from a tough council estate in East London would have the most difficulty in reaching the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. But statistics show that the sons and daughters of former mining towns in the valleys north of Cardiff are just as unlikely to attend the elite institutions, according to the Welsh government’s new “Oxbridge ambassador”.

Paul Murphy is the Labour MP for Torfaen, where he grew up as a “working-class boy from the valleys” before going on to study at Oxford, Oxford. His ambassadorial appointment has met with universal approval, with critics saying that the Cardiff government should concentrate on improving its own universities, and that encouraging students to leave Wales will drain the country’s coffers. “Generally speaking, Wales is sending far fewer people to Oxbridge than they did in the past 30 to 40 years,” Mr Murphy said.

He added that a boy he had Oxbridge graduates as teachers, but with the expansion in Welsh universities over the past couple of decades, the “majority of teachers [in Wales] would have degrees from a Welsh university so there’s an assumption you go to a Welsh university.”

While some Welsh schools exhibited an outright “hostility” to Oxbridge, “not for one second I was saying that Welsh universities are not good enough,” he stressed. “The requirement to develop a new regulatory system...by administrative means rather than through legislation means that the provisions of existing legislation are being pushed to the limits.”

Despite the considerable administrative burden that an application entailed, the exercise was “one of a generation of young people in Wales who no longer think of Oxbridge as the only option”.

Jonathan Sterne, head of the School of Social and Community Medicine at the University of Bristol, acknowledged that the DoF’s decision was behind its successful silver award application. "Despite the considerable administrative burden that an application entailed, the exercise was "one of a generation of young people in Wales who no longer think of Oxbridge as the only option"."