

# SHANE EXPLAINS



## Number Fifty Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

Every Monday morning NUS' Vice President Further Education, explains a key issue going on in FE for Students' Union Officers and Student Governors. If you want to know more, or just have a suggestion for future editions, you can email him on [shane.chowen@nus.org.uk](mailto:shane.chowen@nus.org.uk)

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### Introduction

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision is vital to people who migrate to the UK to fill vacant jobs, who often need improved language skills to help them make an effective contribution within the workplace. ESOL is also needed to help those already settled in Britain to fully engage with society, and to find work.

According to a NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) report, 'English language learning has an impact on individuals, communities and the productivity and safety of workplaces in England.' Research shows that the level of confidence people have in spoken English has a direct correlation with their self-esteem. This sense of self-esteem brings with it increased opportunities to contribute to society, both through family and community engagement, and employment. Conversely, many people without fluent language skills are unable to find employment and are therefore stuck in a poverty trap.

In 2006, NIACE reported that demand for ESOL provision was 'rising, in part from migrant from the new members of the European Union, but also from refugees' and that was 'significant unmet demand from members of settled communities.'

The NIACE report also highlights the additional benefits of good quality ESOL provision, citing the effect of language skills upon child poverty, health, sustainable communities, regeneration, and community integration and cohesion, including refugee integration.

### CALL

The Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning, of which NUS is a founding member, has long since recognised the all-round benefits of ESOL both to individuals and society. CALL supports NIACE's *A Right to a Voice* campaign, which was formed in 2007 to reverse the then government's decision to

remove ESOL provision for asylum seekers who had been in the country for less than 6 months.

### Threats to the future of ESOL

The government's *Skills for Sustainable Growth* strategy, published in November 2010, contains some bad news for ESOL provision.

Firstly, the narrowing of fee remission criteria means that only those on 'active benefits' such as Jobseekers Allowance or certain types of Employment Support Allowance will be eligible to free ESOL provision. This could effectively exclude lone parents, those suffering from mental health problems, and other individuals or groups whose current circumstances may prevent them from going to work.

Secondly, there is an overall reduction in the funding available for provision of adult education, which will undoubtedly have an impact upon ESOL provision.

Thirdly, there will be an end to individual learner support for ESOL students, meaning a removal of the safety net of additional financial support if needed.

To compound the issue, FE Minister John Hayes is keen to offer subsidised ESOL provision only to those in 'settled communities', which may exclude individuals for whom ESOL is a lifeline.

### What is NUS doing?

Shane is speaking at a summit on ESOL later this week, where he will talk about the learner's perspective on these cuts to ESOL.

### More information

'*More than a language...*' (NIACE report):

<http://tinyurl.com/4w6q2qw>

*A Right to a Voice*: <http://tinyurl.com/4zm6rb8>

CALL: [www.callcampaign.org.uk](http://www.callcampaign.org.uk)

*Skills for Sustainable Growth*:

<http://tinyurl.com/2voat2r>

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### Shane has explained but I want know more

If you would like to know more or want to discuss an issue specific to your college, you can contact NUS to get the information you need. In the first instance you can contact Shane direct with a question- just email [shane.chowen@nus.org.uk](mailto:shane.chowen@nus.org.uk)