



BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

STATEMENT

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

19 NOVEMBER 2010

Higher Education and Initial Teacher Training

We note the Government's recent policy decisions in respect of Higher Education funding, student finance and possible changes in Initial Teacher Training. Whilst recognising the need to create a system which is robust and sustainable yet also fair and accessible to all, especially the poor, we urge the Government to consider the long-term implications of these proposals. A decision to fund only Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects in all universities and colleges assumes a utilitarian approach to higher education in providing skills predominantly for industry. We fear the negative impact this move will have upon society as a whole. It will also adversely affect those institutions of higher education involved in the training of teachers, including our own university colleges and Liverpool Hope University.

We recall the words of Pope Benedict XVI speaking to students at St Mary's University College in Twickenham recently:

"Always remember that every subject you study is part of a bigger picture. Never allow yourselves to become narrow. The world needs good scientists, but a scientific outlook becomes dangerously narrow if it ignores the religious or ethical dimension of life, just as religion becomes narrow if it rejects the legitimate contribution of science to our understanding of the world."

We also call upon the Government to consider carefully any changes to Initial Teacher Training (ITT), for example any movement of ITT from colleges and universities into schools or the end of the undergraduate route into teaching.