DELIVERING LEARNING

TO PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION

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to promote social inclusion

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Further Education **National Training Organisation**

Contents

Executive summary

In the first three months of 2001, research was carried out into the practitioner issues relating to social inclusion. The research was conducted by means of structured and semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews with managers in colleges in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It took account of national differences and invited responses from all further education colleges in the United Kingdom.

A range of good and innovative practice to meet the needs of excluded learners from differing backgrounds was identified and is described in the case studies (from page 12). However, practice was generally variable within and between colleges and limited use was made of the teaching standards applicable in England and Wales, in Northern Ireland or in Scotland to develop practitioner competence. Further development needs for managers and governors/board members were identified, as was the need for all staff, managers and governors/board members to have relevant knowledge of the learner groups and their local environment, including the roles of other agencies in tackling social exclusion.

The conclusions point to a number of key considerations for practitioners, colleges and national agencies. These include:

- varying practice and levels of staff skills and knowledge

- the need to develop learners' self esteem and confidence and to design and deliver individual programmes for them

- the need to multi-skill staff

- the need to select staff with care

- developing a culture which supports work with excluded learners

- promoting the continuous development of practitioners, managers, governors and board members

- disseminating and supporting the implementation of good practice

- defining quality and success in this area of work

The following specific points should be considered as the basis for action:

For colleges:

- the development of a 'can-do' culture which supports provision to meet the needs of disengaged and excluded learners

- establishing systems and structures, in particular for staffing, which encourage support for practitioners and the dissemination of good practice

- the continuous training and development of all practitioners, managers, governors and board members in appropriate knowledge and skills

- encouraging collaboration and joint action – cross-college and between colleges and other relevant agencies – to ease the progression of disengaged and excluded learners

- replicating best practice in this work in other areas of college teaching and learning

For national and regional agencies:

- the pragmatic use of the three sets of teaching standards in use across the UK to identify development needs of practitioners, meet those needs and form the basis of quality policies and processes

- the promotion of continuous professional development (CPD) to raise the knowledge-base and competence of all practitioners, managers and governors, board members involved in this work. It is particularly important to ensure that training and development is undertaken, where needed, by those who already have an initial qualification

- the multi-skilling of practitioners

- the dissemination of good and successful practice to colleges and sections within colleges. This would include CPD, the design and implementation of structures and systems and organisational culture change

- creating a better understanding of the concept of quality in this work, whether linked to achievement, progression or these and other indicators

- defining the differences between developing and promoting the work – for example in outreach centres – and delivering teaching and learning

Introduction, context and aims of the project

This research, funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), is part of the department's strategy to promote social inclusion through learning. The aim is to identify models of good practice to promote social inclusion in further education colleges across the UK. The models are presented as a series of thirteen brief case studies and it is hoped that this research will be the first stage towards equipping further education (FE) practitioners and managers with the skills and knowledge to work with potential and current learners from socially disadvantaged groups.

It was intended that the models of good practice were from colleges using one of the three sets of teaching standards in the UK:

- Standards for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Further Education in England and Wales

- Initial Training of Further Education College Lecturers in Scotland – occupational standards

- Postgraduate Certificate in Further and Higher Education competencies – Northern Ireland

The learners

The research repeatedly encountered the view that learners are not easily categorised and that each is an individual with unique needs and abilities. Nor is there an agreed definition of social exclusion. Nevertheless, to clarify the scope of the work the project brief listed the following, often overlapping categories:

People who:

- have a low income
- live in poor accommodation (or move regularly from one place to another)
- live in rural isolation (and are restricted by lack of public transport or own transport)
- have low aspirations and/or low self esteem
- have poor health
- are victims of physical or emotional abuse
- are single parents or are in non-traditional family circumstances
- receive income support or other state benefits
- have been unemployed for an extended period
- are ex-offenders
- have English as their second language
- have severe learning difficulties or disabilities
- are asylum seekers
- are from ethnic minorities
- are from religious minorities

A number of FE managers and practitioners who were interviewed during the research phase of this project, or who responded to the questionnaire, commented on the multiple issues affecting learners and some added categories which they felt were particularly relevant to their local needs, for example:

- older learners
- young people in care
- travellers, for example fairground workers
- white, unemployed young men
- people with mental health problems
- people with dyslexia

The delivery of social inclusion through learning, therefore, embraces both teaching and learning issues related to an individual's previous experience of learning and addressing sensitively the causes of social exclusion for that individual as part of a learning and support framework. Learning requires innovative approaches to identifying learning needs and matching them to appropriate provision.

Widening participation and embracing social inclusion raise managerial issues for the providing institution that go well beyond teaching and learning and impinge on how a college serves its whole community. This relates directly to how a college identifies, nurtures, spreads and quality assures best practice in meeting the needs of often reluctant learners and to how managers ensure teaching and learning are adequately resourced and articulate effectively with other areas of provision.

The specific project objectives

This first phase of the project sought to identify good practice in FE with socially disadvantaged learners. It moved from desk research on the background issues and literature to field research that identified learner needs in a number of different contexts and areas across the UK. An implicit focus of the work was to identify any national issues, taking account of different historical and political developments.

Explicitly, the research concentrated on factors affecting practitioners, who were defined broadly as those people in FE who teach and or support learning and on the colleges' response to their needs in relation to working with socially excluded individuals or groups of learners. This definition of practitioner gave little problem to the interviewees who included a wide range of job roles and titles in their description of practitioner. For example, in the broad category of community worker, there were job titles such as community marketing officer and outreach worker and wide variations in the role itself.

The broader context for the research

Web searches have revealed an exceptionally high number of references to social inclusion and practitioners, with initial searches generating over 90,000 pages. However, this is a relatively recent phenomenon. The Kennedy report for the FEFC, 'Learning Works' (1997) was one of the earliest reports to indicate the scale of the problem and to set out the importance of FE in widening participation:

> 'It is further education which has invariably given second chances to those who were forced by necessity to make unfulfilling choices. It said, 'try again' to those who were labelled as failures and who had decided education was not for the likes of them. It is here, above all, that opportunities have been provided for those caught in the cycle of low-skilled jobs and unemployment who want to better themselves; here, that so many can train or retrain; here, that there is work with refugees and members of immigrant groups to acquire English language skills, or with ex-offenders to facilitate rehabilitation, or with underachievers to fulfil their potential.'

Kennedy went on to speak of further education's potential as a 'vital engine of . . . social cohesion'. However, the Kennedy Committee also noted that the drive for diversity ' . . . has created barriers to access, success and progression. The divisions that exist are sometimes made worse by the way they are managed'. Resources were identified as an issue, as was staff expertise: 'Resources are required both for new students and for the additional support, guidance and enrichment that under-represented groups need if more are to participate successfully in education and training . . . staff development is a particular concern'. Kennedy concludes:

> 'There is much exciting and innovative practice throughout post-16 learning. What is lacking is a systematic policy to bring a wider spectrum of the population into learning. If equality is to prevail, we must remove the element of luck in whether the needs of a prospective learner are met or not.'

This removal of the 'element of luck' has been more systematically addressed in policy terms since the publication of the Kennedy report: first, by the introduction of a widening participation uplift to the funding methodology of the FEFC and then further in the work of the FEFC Inspectorate. In its report 'Widening Participation and Raising Standards' (FEFC 2000), the FEFC Inspectorate described work in six colleges and identified a number of general key critical success factors.

These include:

- high quality teaching tailored to meet each student's abilities
- carefully assessing each student's potential
- comprehensive support services for full-time and part-time students in all the venues used for teaching and learning
- staff development programmes carefully designed to support widening participation

In the FEFC report, case studies highlighted the need to provide staff development in teaching methods for students of diverse abilities. However, the report did not explain the frameworks within which staff are developed, nor the broader context of staff and

human resource management that would include processes such as staff selection, deployment, and appraisal.

The topic of engaging and working successfully with socially excluded learners generates great interest beyond the FE sector. Initiatives such as the University for Children and Communities for the north of Scotland recognise and seek to change the major inequalities in participation in higher education within a single region. The north east of Scotland has the postcode area with the highest participation in HE and five of the lowest. Such are the challenges and the differences within one UK region.

Successive reports have sought also to identify the scale of the problem of exclusion from learning in the UK. 'Bridging the Gap', published in July 1999, is one of 18 reports initiated by the Government and overseen by the Social Exclusion Unit. It indicates that the scale of non-participation of 16-19 year olds in education, training or employment remained stubbornly at 9%, 161,000 young people, over a period of years.

The report observes:

> 'The young people involved are disproportionately from poor backgrounds in deprived areas. They may suffer multiple disadvantage and few recover from the poor start that they have had. [This] report shows that where life goes wrong, or continues to go wrong, for young people in this age group, social exclusion in later life is disproportionately the result. They are much more likely to be unemployed, dependent on benefits, to live in unstable family structures and to be depressed about their lives.'

Another report from the Social Exclusion Unit entitled 'Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal: Local Solutions' (1999) by The Skills Policy Action Team (PAT) finds also that people who live in the most socially disadvantaged areas are more likely than others to lack essential skills. One of the recommendations of this report is the initiation of a training and development programme for practitioners responsible for delivering learning in disadvantaged areas, so as to better meet the needs of local people.

Many people working for providers of education and training work very effectively in socially disadvantaged communities, have a good understanding of local people's problems and are able to communicate and empathise with them effectively. This is not universally true, however. If better connections are to be established between socially disadvantaged people and learning, more staff involved in the delivery of learning need to acquire the necessary skills. The FENTO report contributes to this through its research and identification of good practice.

The Moser report, 'A Fresh Start', published in April 2000, revealed the scale of the literacy and numeracy skills problem among adults. Twenty per cent of the adult population have inadequate literacy skills, a figure quoted in March 2001 by the press in mainland Europe alongside other UK problems such as public transport disruption and stretched NHS resources. As the government's own national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills, 'Skills for Life' (DfEE 2000) observes:

'The Moser report outlined starkly just how serious the neglect of adult literacy and numeracy had been in the past and the inheritance it had left us with:

- inconsistent and often poor standards of teaching and learning
- no proper system of teacher training and development
- un-coordinated and inadequate public funding for provision. All the building blocks of a decent basic skills education service for adults were missing'

'Skills for Life' is candid on the challenge faced by government and the education service:

'Standards in adult basic skills education have been too low. Progress and achievement on basic education programmes is limited. Inspection evidence points to poor attendance rates on courses and under achievement by learners. Teaching and management is weaker than in most other forms of adult or college education. Too few adults have been taking action to improve their literacy and numeracy skills or have had the support or encouragement to do so.'

In the political context, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment's 1998 announcement of 700,000 new learners post-16, of whom nearly 90% are to be adults and the government's similarly ambitious targets for raising basic skills in the UK, are firmly based on their contribution to economic development and employability. Achieving these targets will require the inclusion of new learners from new markets. In England, the Learning and Skills Council, taking over the work of the FEFC from April 2001, has a remit to encourage participation in learning. The Learning and Skills Council Prospectus (December 1999) sets out clearly the Council's remit for widening participation:

'We want the LSC to ensure that high quality learning opportunities are available to meet the needs of all learners across the range of abilities and aptitudes . . . it will be critical that the LSC is able to combat the disadvantages that some learners and potential learners face . . .

The new arrangements must promote, support and make learning accessible in many different ways – from formal study or taking evening classes through to less formal arrangements. They are crucial for building opportunity and raising expectations among those most in need in our society. They will also have a vital role to play for those who find it hard to access traditional, institutional learning so that they can gain in confidence and acquire new skills for work or personal interest.'

The issue applies throughout the UK. In January 2001 the Learning and Skills Development Agency published 'Young People and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland', tracking the learning of young people eligible to leave school from June 1993. Henry McLeish, First Minister in the Scottish Assembly, described learning as a 'competitive weapon' and Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in the Welsh Assembly, describes the post-16 learning system in Wales as '. . . about breaking down barriers; barriers that have prevented access to flexible, relevant and client-focused training'.

Methodology

The project was guided by a steering group with representation from across the UK. It provided a steer and practical suggestions about interesting practice – both where it might be found and what it might consist of. It was recognised, however, that in this first phase the project could not expect to identify every example of interesting practice for dissemination, but should seek to identify and report on a representative cross-section of college practice across the four countries. The steering group emphasised that the outcomes of this project are the first stage in producing materials for colleges to use with practitioners which in due course should cover a range of topics. FENTO representatives in Northern Ireland and Wales also contributed contacts and suggestions.

The research was conducted in all four countries of the UK. Responses, therefore, highlighted the different historical development of practitioner standards in each country. The FENTO standards are beginning only now to be used for the accreditation of lecturer qualifications in England and Wales. The frameworks in use in Northern Ireland and Scotland had, in the colleges in the research sample, been used only for qualification purposes and had had little or no directly attributable impact on the development of practitioner capacity to work with socially excluded groups.

Qualification frameworks have been and are being used to develop staff for specific purposes, for example basic skills teaching in England and Wales, information and communications technology (ICT) in the curriculum in Northern Ireland and on-line tutoring and learning in Scotland. However, apart from the implications for social inclusion of staff development in teaching basic skills and in providing guidance, the frameworks available were not being used to address the practitioner issues raised by respondents to the research.

Other concurrent FENTO research was considered, in particular the research mapping of the frameworks for England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland that indicated many similarities between the content of the three frameworks, although there are no direct references in any of them to social inclusion. However, the practitioner issues raised by the interviewees in this research are reflected in all of them.

A questionnaire was devised which sought information about college practice, and which emphasised the issues about practitioners. The research sample was chosen to include a range of colleges giving representation across the UK. Most of the initial interviews were conducted face-to-face. An e-mailing from FENTO drew a further 20 responses and more information on models of good practice, and as additional colleges with potential good practice were identified, a number of telephone interviews were carried out.

Although the project research threw up issues, which had not been considered initially, care was taken to make the responses as consistent and comparable as possible by returning to interviewees for further information on new points of interest. However, each of the responses had its own approach and angle on the issue and exploration of each specific approach led to the case studies described in the body of this report.

Case studies

Thirteen colleges provided examples of their interesting and successful practice with groups of learners and explained their approach to particular practitioner issues. In this report, emphasis has been given to the way the colleges have responded to the needs of staff in relation to working with this particular group of students.

A number of other colleges responded to a request for completed questionnaires or for comments. Their views and practice are covered in the report also.

The case studies range from colleges responding to the needs of a particular category of learner, through to whole college approaches to the management of a spectrum of social inclusion issues. In each case, a college has developed its own practice and has used a range of measures to judge the success of its strategies in an area where standard process and outcome measures – such as in-course retention and qualification achievement – may not always be appropriate.

For most colleges, working with socially excluded groups will constitute a numerically small part of their overall provision, but one which all colleges in the case studies recognised made significant resource and managerial demands if they were to deliver effective teaching, learning and support. Throughout the case studies, the balance we have sought to capture in this report – between the many different elements that constitute effective practice in this area – is that which the colleges themselves have described to us. The case studies are by no means exhaustive, but highlight areas of practice and approaches which colleges have told us work for them. As far as possible, we have ensured that the emphasis and flavour of the case studies is the colleges' own. Following the case studies, we draw more general conclusions about common elements within them, which might have wider applicability for other post-16 providers.

Case study 1 – Borders College, Scotland

Multi-skilling for work with disaffected young people on supported skill-seeker and New Deal programmes

Borders College serves a large rural area between the Lothians and Northumberland. There are a few medium sized towns, such as Kelso, Hawick and Galashiels in the area, each with a very distinct identity. Students can be reluctant to move to a different town to learn; in addition they have the problems generated by poor public transport. The college owns two buses to transport learners. The area has suffered recent severe job losses in clothing manufacture and electronics.

Supported skill-seekers are 16-19 year olds with particular difficulties in accessing and benefiting from learning. Forty per cent of their funding is related to outcomes, giving the college a very strong incentive to get it right. They are supported and their programmes managed, by a small team of consultants who also deliver business training to corporate clients. This team is multi-skilled to enable its members to:

- provide guidance and counselling
- build up relationships with the learners
- establish good and effective relationships with parents, employers and local agencies
- teach in a motivational way – subject knowledge is considered of less initial importance than generic skills: for example, game-keeping is taught successfully to these learners by a former motor vehicle lecturer
- facilitate learning and help learners to learn
- solve unique problems for and with learners, involving other people such as employers and support agencies

Members of the team visit employers and lecturers who are teaching the skill-seekers in the main college every four weeks. This reinforces not only support but also a contractual arrangement involving the college team (BC Consultants), curriculum areas and their teaching staff, employers who provide work placements, the funding agency (the local enterprise company – LEC) and the learner.

For lecturers, this implies delivering to the LEC contract and being flexible on timing and style of delivery in their teaching and supporting learning. They need to encourage self-learning, IT and writing skills and manage the expectations of learners. In the research interview, the common theme emerged that all staff involved need to understand the needs of the group of learners in general terms as well as the local environment in which they are learning. This knowledge meets at least two requirements of practitioners:

- to be aware of people and agencies involved with the learner and with whom any lecturer or person supporting learning may have contact

- to know not just what is required of them but also to understand the reasons why

Retention is clearly a major funding issue and the college has a guidance officer to follow up leavers. Demotivating comments are seen as one of the principal reasons why learners leave the programme. Giving feedback effectively to learners is seen as critical and this is covered for the college in the C and D units of the Employment National Training Organisation (empNTO) standards.

Although BC Consultants' senior training consultant is aware of the Scottish Teaching Qualification for Further Education (TQFE) framework, this has not been used with staff dedicated to this work.

Case study 2 – Calderdale College, England

Staff development in appropriate teaching and learning styles

The college runs an extensive range of community-based learning through its community education and regeneration unit. Funding comes from varied sources such as European Social Fund (ESF), EU structural funds, New Opportunities Fund and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). A wide range of learners access learning in local centres. The college works in close collaboration with regional agencies and groups, adapting its activity to community needs in some innovative ways. Unfortunately FEFC policy has required it to withdraw from some non-franchised activity outside of its geographical area, losing the critical mass of work needed to make the work fully viable.

The Bright Sparks programme, funded by SRB4, operates through the support of community champions and aims to bring in disaffected, young, white, working class men. Champions are volunteers with local credibility who are trained and supported by the college. The college has developed this sort of work over some time and learners have returned as members of staff. The college does not consider it essential to have belonged to the learner group, but does think that understanding and tolerance of learner behaviour, for example of swearing, are essential to establish a relationship based on acceptance and mutual respect. From this position staff can challenge the learners.

A community café project brings together older excluded residents and young single mothers. The college's community development manager worked with the group to make a successful bid to the National Association of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales), (NIACE), for funding for a tutor to help the café establish a business and training plan. From this plan needs such as training in deaf awareness have been identified.

The college, through SRB5 funding, has recently been commissioned to carry out business planning and training needs analysis with voluntary sector groups. The head of Community Education and Regeneration with the head of Training and Development, a joint funded post between the college and Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council, have taken responsibility for designing and running this programme. The first group to have completed the training is Todmorden Judo Club whose initial evaluation of the process has been extremely positive.

The college has a very clear idea of the skills and knowledge needed by tutors and community workers. These include:

- having a very good knowledge of college procedures and of fees
- understanding the language and culture of the excluded group
- carrying out assessment in a non-threatening way
- being jargon free
- establishing trust
- negotiating and renegotiating learning programmes
- passing on success stories to the college promotions unit and celebrating successes
- contributing to promotion in the community, in particular by advising on ways that will work: not glossy leaflets, appropriate language, key information such as whether tea

    is available, who will be talking to the learners (for example, the community champion)
- understanding their own and learners' learning styles and helping learners to work with their own and other styles

Staff need to be happy working in the informal community structure; some mainstream staff have adapted to the work, but not all.

For three years the college has included staff training in dealing with excluded learners in its staff development and training week held annually and in its three further separate training days. Appraisal and management priorities have led to training in teaching and learning styles. The college's head of Community Education and Regeneration has developed a web-based tool for assessing learning styles. This has been used very successfully with staff and with some learners and is planned to be used as part of the initial assessment process.

The college considers that the complexity of the FENTO teaching standards reflects the complexity of job roles in the sector. It has considered using the standards for designing staff development, but has not yet done so. It is hoped that the standards will be part of a more strategic move to bring staff on board after some very difficult times – 'They might be part of a quality system which establishes professional standards and brings pride to the job'.

Case study 3 – Castlereagh College, Northern Ireland

Staffing and social inclusion in east Belfast

In the last two years the college has undertaken an ambitious programme of community development and increased the number of its outreach centres from 7 to 40. Twenty lap top computers are taken to centres across Belfast and North Down, providing IT introductions and training in community centres and residential homes. Soon the college will have a converted bus as a University for Industry (UfI) mobile centre.

The college works with health care trusts, charities such as the Multiple Sclerosis Society and other agencies, to provide high quality education and training for people with learning difficulties, disabilities, mental health problems, or who have suffered serious head injury.

The college's catchment area is mixed. Resistance to education and training is high amongst some young men and there is little belief in the need for education and training as heavy engineering used to provide employment for generations of men. Employment opportunities are now mainly in IT, telecommunications and call centres. Many people have 'a cultural and psychological barrier; they see themselves as outside the remit of education'. Although women have not been a specific target market, they have made good use of opportunities provided.

To raise the status of community work the principal has established an adult and community division in the college with equal status to other curriculum divisions and with the remit of developing this work across the college. A recent successful bid for money from the Northern Ireland Executive Access Fund Initiative identifies the following target groups for ICT training:

- women returners
- male returners
- over 50s
- parents and carers of young children
- disabled learners
- other adults in the community who lack basic ICT skills

The college believes that for staff to be successful in this work they have to fit the culture of the learners, for example in the language they use, and to have some exposure to the experiences of the learners. Some tutors have the ability to 'tread lightly and warily, to be accepted for what they are; they can sell themselves'. The work requires a consultancy approach, working with individuals.

The principal considers that tutors need to be hand-picked, with the following characteristics:

- not academically snobbish
- be empathetic
- be flexible and open
- confident but not arrogant
- have characters formed from life experience, including failure
- understand local needs and know about local agencies

Managers need to get out and work with community groups; for instance, by sitting on the boards of local associations. This provides the opportunity for them to forge links and gather market information.

Tutors also need to be able to use ICT effectively. Learners will admit to a lack of skill in this area, but less readily in literacy or numeracy. However, ICT cannot replace an inspiring teacher.

The college has considered the FENTO teaching standards for use in staffing issues. A number of college staff follow the Northern Ireland Postgraduate Diploma in Further and Higher Education which is approved and funded by the Northern Ireland Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment (DHFETE).

Case study 4 – City College, Birmingham, England

Developing staff skills and organisational support

City College, Birmingham has developed a range of off-site provision for diverse community groups. Its aim is to bring learners into mainstream programmes and provide progression.

The work includes:

- a Women's Academy, providing training at levels 3 and 4 primarily for Pakistani women
- women-only provision at entry level, and levels 1 and 2 for about 600 young women of mainly Pakistani origin
- work with voluntary sector organisations, for example with mental health service users
- work at the Muath Centre with people of Yemeni/Arab origin, some of whom are asylum seekers
- 'bridge' courses for about 100 under-16 disaffected youngsters
- a suite of Open College Network (OCN) accredited family learning programmes run at primary schools called Schoolwise

The college recognises that to work successfully with these groups staff need to have the following social and professional skills:

- approach the work differently from work with other learners – be open minded
- be prepared to learn and experiment
- avoid language and an approach which excludes learners
- have a positive problem-solving approach to unique learner problems
- be able to cultivate relationships with people from other agencies
- invest time and materials

The last two of these are also management issues.

Tutors are selected informally by discussion between the manager of the work and curriculum area leaders; no one is forced to work in this area unless they wish to. Preparation includes briefing, an opportunity to shadow another tutor and in some cases written guidelines eg working with Muslim groups.

The college believes that many people have the potential to do this work successfully and that organisational support is vital to enable them to do so. Staff development sessions include skills development and case studies, some of which apply specifically to managers.

Recently the college appointed a director of the Women's Academy. Selection included group activities and what if-questions to test candidates' responses to typical issues raised by this type of provision.

The College Staff Development Group has considered the FENTO teaching standards when designing training activities.

Case study 5 – Coleg Menai, Wales

Structuring and staffing work in the community

In addition to to existing centres in Bangor and Llangefni, the college has set up community centres at Holyhead and in Caernarfon. In the 1990s the college had a community co-ordinator in each local school on Anglesey. This person was a teacher at the school with a time allowance to organise community programmes. This scheme ended when the schools in this area took over responsibility for their own budgets.

Under the Slate Valley Initiative the college runs IT classes in libraries, the space being provided by Gwynedd County Council.

A number of unresolved issues exist in relation to work with excluded learners:

- the college senior management team is concerned that the college is not reaching sufficient learners with basic skills needs
- older Welsh speakers are likely to have better spoken Welsh than English, but better written English than written Welsh, having been educated at school in English. This has now changed for younger learners with bilingual education. This complicates the provision of programmes in a bilingual community
- there is learner resistance to education as 'soft' or 'not for us', particularly amongst young men. This attitude also affects wives and female partners who experience opposition to their returning to education and training

The college was able to provide ideas and information in three areas: college-wide strategy and staffing structure; staff skills, knowledge and development and use of the FENTO teaching standards.

Strategy and staffing structure

At the time of interview the college was developing and strengthening its community strategy and planning to set up a parallel structure in the two areas of Arfon (mainland) and Môn (Anglesey). One fundamental aim of the new structure is to develop coherent structures whilst maximising funding from different income sources, particularly ESF (eligibility is low GDP per head of population – below 70% of European average). Industrial valley and west and north Wales Objective 1 funded projects.

Each area will soon have:

- centre manager
- community marketing officer
- peripatetic outreach trainers

plus local 'agents' whose role is to knock on doors and promote the programmes by word of mouth. The college is also working on a project in partnership with the Workers Educational Association in order to widen access to education and training.

Two community marketing officers were appointed in March 2001 neither of whom had a background in FE but both with communications-information services experience and graduates of Welsh universities.

Staff skills, knowledge and development

The college has a clear view of the skills needed for social inclusion. Most community tutors are part-time staff who are selected by interview and a number come from the Postgraduate Certificate in Education course run at the college. A critical issue is matching staff to learners or groups of learners.

IT tutors, for example, have been selected on the basis of a skill test in which they are asked to explain a software package as if to new learners. The use of ICT is considered a key development need for tutors, as is dealing with difficult student behaviour. The college has run internal workshops on the latter.

Some staff in the lifelong learning unit are taking the Certificate in Informal Learning.

Using the FENTO management standards

The college has been piloting the FENTO management standards and has used the personal attributes section to define criteria for selecting managers.

Currently a new performance review system is being designed for staff. Although the FENTO standards for teaching and supporting learning are considered positively, they are thought to be too complex to incorporate into a system of peer-assessment and objective-setting. The problem is about manageability in the time available to conduct the performance review.

Case study 6 – College of West Anglia, England

Teaching and learning for social inclusion

The college's extensive work with socially excluded groups includes:

- IT training for travellers; this work engages the interest of potential learners, for example the wives of fairground workers who are the 'business managers' people with basic skills needs

- ex-offenders

- single parents

- homeless people

- users of mental health services

- disaffected 14 year olds, who seem better placed in college than school

- Women on the Edge – a voluntary programme for women ex-offenders, building their confidence through creative writing and video production. This programme will be offered to men. It starts with creative confidence building and moves on to job skills

- social education and training for 16+ young people with severe behavioural problems including IT and skills in independent living. The work is franchised to a charity which provides the staff. The college has learnt a great deal from their skills

The college reaches most of these clients through voluntary and statutory agencies. There is a community development manager but the role does not involve management of staff.

Curriculum managers have devised, with encouragement, a number of short and taster courses. The intention is to engage and involve the whole college. All curriculum areas have developed 3 and 6 hour non-schedule 2 programmes in areas of interest to the tutors delivering them. These are being offered as tasters in outreach centres and although successful, the problem now is tracking progression from these courses.

Tutors are taken into the project team and involved in programme development. They need to have a highly creative approach to curriculum design, for example when planning the Women on the Edge programme. The Probation Service wanted this programme to focus on job skills but the team believed that this should come after meeting the learners' needs for building self esteem.

The work is considered very demanding, as no group is the same and learning is structured in short programmes of about six weeks. Real success comes from very good tutors. Tutors need:

- skills in creative curriculum design
- an ability to entertain learners whilst delivering serious training
- understanding of learners
- an ability to coach individual learners
- a deep professional interest in people

- local knowledge of the community
- an ability to teach within the learners' environment; for example a mother and toddler group
- to use IT in a non-threatening way
- to be able to provide guidance and information on progression

No competence frameworks (FENTO/Guidance standards/C or D units) are being used to develop the work.

Case study 7 – Deeside College, Wales

Supporting staff from a central unit with programme area co-ordinators

The college has taken a wide range of initiatives to bring excluded groups into learning. These include a programme for 40 young people of 15+ with behavioural difficulties, run in close collaboration with Flintshire LEA and positive support across the college to bring excluded learners on to accredited programmes. An extensive community programme includes work in basic skills, ESOL, IT and driving tuition for rural learners.

The college's Curriculum Support Unit operates through two teams, one for sensory impairment and general learning difficulties and one for specific difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, Irlen syndrome and specific language impairments. These teams support staff and students, with the aim that students can access mainstream courses. Approximately 40% of the students supported progress to such courses.

To bridge the potential gap between curriculum support and curriculum delivery, a team of 13 link tutors, one for each programme area, works with the manager, curriculum support, and the course teams to:

- identify initial needs
- identify support needs
- refer students to the curriculum support team
- track student progress
- discuss student needs and progress with course teams

Link tutors were selected by curriculum managers or volunteered. They need to have:

- an understanding of inclusive learning
- high levels of personal care about individual students
- excellent communication skills to work with staff
- empathy with students
- ability to communicate with students eg by using the appropriate language

Link tutors meet monthly with the manager of the curriculum support unit and the basic skills co-ordinators to share problems and good practice. These discussions include sharing of ideas and practice on teaching and learning.

In spite of this system, the college feels that curriculum support is somewhat remote from the main college and intends to place it all in an open learning centre to provide a focus for a wide range of work with excluded learners.

As staff development, the college is offering staff the opportunity to take a college-devised course, the BTEC Advanced Certificate in Inclusive Learning Practices. Much internal staff training has been completed on teaching and learning styles, with the aim of helping staff to understand how their own preferred learning style affects their teaching and the learning of their students.

A 'learning to learn' induction package is being developed by the college for students, but it is intended that staff will also learn about themselves by using it.

Although the FENTO teaching standards have been considered in developing staff training, the college has paid particular attention to the requirements of Estyn, the Welsh HMI, which appear to fit well with the college's needs. The FENTO teaching standards are held in particular regard for their references to professional standards and ethics.

Case study 8 – Doncaster College, England

Using the FENTO standards

The college has undertaken extensive needs analysis through an outreach strategy which has targeted particular geographical areas and specific groups. It has developed partnerships with a wide range of voluntary and community organisations in order to facilitate access to education and training for socially excluded groups. It also provides a range of free taster provision, with free childcare support in community locations. The aim of the provision is to raise self confidence and self esteem and facilitate access and progression.

In 1999-2000 the Construction Department, in partnership with the LEA Social Exclusion Unit, provided a skills programme for 14-16 years students with poor attendance and achievement records at school. The group achieved 85% attendance and many have progressed to college courses in the current academic year. The scheme has now been extended to 90 students in a range of curriculum areas.

Other initiatives include increased access to impartial guidance and extended and improved learning support and additional support.

About 350 other learners from under-represented groups have been recruited to provision which is Open College Network (OCN) accredited. About 25-30% of learners progress to other programmes.

Staff in the college have identified that different skills and strategies are needed for this work. A particular need in teaching 14-16 year olds is classroom management and dealing with student behaviour in public areas such as the refectory. Staff have attended external courses about this, workshops have been run in-house and training will be included in a whole college development day in June 2001. For much of the work with excluded learners developing the learner's self esteem is as important as the curriculum content.

The scheme for 14-16 year olds has been rolled out from the construction department to other areas of the college. In addition to skills for working with other agencies, staff have had to develop and apply skills in contracting with the learners. The young people attend college 3 days, and school 2 days, per week. If they do not attend school, they are not allowed to attend college; this is the contract which has been agreed and which has to be monitored in collaboration with school and LEA staff.

Recently the college has recruited additional community outreach workers. It was considered particularly important that they have:

- an ability to use appropriate language
- an understanding of different cultures
- the ability to instil confidence
- the ability to build good relationships with learners
- knowledge of the geographical area
- awareness of equal opportunities

The FENTO management standards and the standards for teaching and supporting learning have been used to affirm training in appraisal, strategic thinking, financial management, quality management, recruitment and selection and tutoring skills. The college designed the training first and then checked it against the standards. Participants were told that the content matches the standards.

The college has used the framework from FEFC Circular 97/12 to design the forms and guidance for classroom observation. Now it will use the Learning and Skills Council Common Inspection Framework for this purpose. However, the belief is that guidelines for observation need to be something people absorb, retain and use from memory. The FENTO standards are reassuring in that they cover most areas of development, but are considered too complex in terms of recording and use. It is intended that the FENTO standards will be used as part of the process for providing support in the follow up to classroom observation.

Case study 9 – Easton College, England

Working with disaffected young people who have just left care

Easton College specialises in training for the land-based industries, but also offers a range of general FE programmes including IT.

Work with socially excluded learners includes:

- women returning to work
- students with learning difficulties
- ex-offenders, in collaboration with the Wymondham Learning Partnership

Since September 2000 the college has worked with the National Children's Homes to provide training and support for six young care leavers.

These young people have behavioural problems, a very poor record of school attendance, low aspirations and low self esteem and some have criminal convictions. They are residential in the college's on-site accommodation and generally are taught separately from mainstream students because of their behavioural problems. They present other problems such as their challenge to the college's no alcohol policy. Their presence and needs are an issue for a range of college staff, including managers, lecturers and support staff eg the wardens in the college residences. Training is needed for all staff, therefore, who deal with disaffected learners. Conversely, contact with the learners has stimulated interest in staff development and wardens are now interested in training as youth workers.

The college considers that in order to deal successfully with these students, staff have to discard their preconceived ideas about the work and how to teach students. In any case, the college's general student population has changed from the traditional and motivated farmer's son or daughter to those with poor basic skills and negative attitudes. The Association of Colleges' Inclusive Learning Initiative has brought about some shifts in staff attitudes, from negative to positive and the college is now seeking volunteers to join a short-term action group for basic skills.

To support the care leavers the college is recruiting two part-time personal advisers in collaboration with National Children's Homes (NCH). The advisors will be employed by NCH and funded by the college.

Generally, the college believes that teaching and learning need to be individualised for disaffected learners as their needs vary, as does their potential. The expertise of agencies such as the NCH and social services departments is vital in supporting students such as care leavers. The FENTO teaching standards are viewed positively, but might be too narrow in not including basic skills and on-line tutoring. Lecturers need a whole range of skills, including how to deal effectively with disaffected learners, but the training and staffing costs associated with attracting, retaining and developing such people are considerable, especially for a small college.

Case study 10 – Lambeth College, England

Quality assurance of staff

Basic skills is a key issue for Lambeth College which is in London. Less than 20% of the college's work is at or above level 3, 46% of its students enter with literacy below level 1 and more than 80% are eligible for FEFC (now Learning and Skills Council) widening participation 'uplift'.

Although there is a general need amongst learners for the raising of basic skills, there are specific aspirations and needs, the extensive range of excluded learners served by the college different of aspirations and needs. Courses in the community, which target groups including asylum seekers and refugees include sessions on progression. About 35% of learners from these programmes progress to mainstream courses.

The college formed a partnership with the LEA for the delivery of the community education contract two years ago and inherited some of the staff who taught on the former LEA programmes. The programme was heavily dependent on part-time, hourly-paid staff, few of whom had teaching qualifications. Quality assurance systems under the Community Education Service were unsystematic. Now, 65% of the staff working on the programme are full-time employees of the college. All staff have met the college's rigorous quality standards, including practice observation once a year and have a good knowledge of college systems. Community-based staff will work increasingly with similar learners in the 'main' college as this work forms a substantial portion of the college's total workload. This will have the benefit of consolidating quality improvements and sharing good practice.

There has been no specific community staff development, as the college strives to create a united college for its community, with coherent cross-college policies for quality and staff development: all staff participate in in-house programmes. Neither the FENTO nor the Guidance Council standards have been used. The college relies on its own rigorous standards and those of other agencies such as the Prince's Trust. In addition, those community programmes which are largely non-schedule 2 and not externally accredited are moving to internal verification systems to support quality.

The college expects that provision for fragile learners should be even better than that for others and considers that the key to successful delivery is the staff. The assistant principal, with overall senior management responsibility for the work, manages quality not just through the normal team-based methods, but increasingly by reviewing achievement and retention figures, asking questions about poor figures and setting action plans in place for poor performers. Tutors are expected to take responsibility for retention, quality of delivery and course evaluation. The college has just instituted internal Beacon Awards to ensure that it recognises good work as well as remedies areas of concern.

In its 2001 inspection, the college was awarded grade 2s in basic education and ESOL taken over from community education and a grade 1 for management.

Case study 11 – Lauder College, Scotland

Supporting the learner in the community

Working with Fife Council Community Services, Lauder College has established 5 IT based hubs and 20 further satellite centres across West Fife. 1000 learners who have attended the centres have achieved at least one Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) unit. The college also has an extensive network of Employment and Enterprise centres whose work is largely funded by Employment Service contracts. In the satellite centres learners come from a wide range of disadvantaged groups, including travellers. The college also has five learning centres in prisons.

When a potential learner contacts the Customer Services at the main college, they are referred to the local satellite centre, if appropriate. Advice and guidance is provided by tutors, who are usually the first point of contact, by peripatetic college guidance staff who visit the centres and by Fife Council's Fife Adult Guidance and Education Service (FAGES). FAGES also delivers a range of learning across Fife.

The college clearly believes that tutors need guidance skills, as well as interpersonal skills to deal with 'reluctant and fragile' learners and to work with people from other agencies and organisations who support or represent the learners. Knowledge of the community is considered critical and most non-IT tutors are part-time employees with previous experience of community-based work. Tutors need communication skills, self reliance and an ability to think on their feet and solve problems. These skills and qualities are considered as important as academic qualifications. Finally, tutors need to be enterprising and see opportunities for more work.

For carrying out quality assurance, the college's own 'Quality of Teaching and Learning Manual' is used in the centres.

The college expects tutors to be flexible in teaching and learning styles. For example, fragile learners need a tutor-led approach to start moving to learner-centred styles as they gain confidence. Good subject knowledge is needed to deal with learners working at differing speeds, as is the ability to manage this type of individualised learning. Tutors need to be non-threatening, encouraging and to set achievable tasks. Tutors' multi-skilling must extend to an ability to make simple adjustments and repairs to equipment in the centres.

As in other interviews, the college representatives emphasised the need for high and varied skill levels for this work.

Staff development includes subject content training for IT tutors, guidance SVQs, workshops on good practice for support and teaching staff, informal counselling skills and awareness raising sessions with managers in the 'main' college. The college is a member of a project in which colleges in south east Scotland share good practice in community work. This provides a strong focus for staff development and also provides shared materials.

Case study 12 – Pontypridd College, Wales

Planning and structuring for inclusive learning

Pontypridd College takes a holistic approach to inclusive learning and provides support, education and training for all learners. The approach is built into the college structure and includes vocational inclusive learning tutors located in each curriculum area. The college's 'support for learning' achieved a grade 1 in its October 2000 Estyn (Welsh HMI) assessment.

Vocational inclusive learning tutors provide a link between the central support and vocational tutors. They volunteered for the role and were selected after joining the BTEC Advanced Certificate in Inclusive Learning Practices course run in the college. They meet every month to share information and ideas. The group cascades information and briefs vocational staff at respective course team meetings.

The role of vocational inclusive learning tutor requires:

- personal commitment to inclusive learning
- understanding of college procedures and structure
- a proactive approach to cascading information to vocational teams
- communication skills with tutors and students

Inclusive learning is a strategic aim of the college and focuses on a particular group of excluded learners each year. In 2000-2001 the work was on young people and the programme called Youth Access. Its stated aim is to match the needs of individual students to an appropriate learning programme. Consequently, a session on inclusive learning is included in all teaching and support staff induction and the structures to support inclusive learning are considered critical: 'Structure is the secret – move forward in a planned way'. It is essential also to brief and gain commitment from senior managers and governors.

The college believes that traditional teaching does not work with excluded learners. ICT is used to engage learners. For example, a group of disaffected 14 year olds have successfully improved their basic skills by using vocationally based CD-ROMs in the IT workshop. This experience has also improved their school attendance.

The work involves the college with over 100 agencies which demands staff skills in networking and working with people from very different backgrounds.

Case study 13 – West Nottinghamshire College, England

Matching staff to the older learner

West Nottinghamshire College runs a successful learning centre in central Mansfield. The centre manager worked for a number of years in the entertainment industry as a singer, dancer and choreographer. She has added to her skills and is now trained in IT.

About 500 learners follow a wide range of courses, some of them offered through learndirect. A significant number of the learners are over 50, attracted by the location and the flexibility of the centre's open hours and by a free IT taster programme devised by the college. Progression from this taster is to learndirect IT programmes or to City and Guilds qualifications in computer applications.

Older learners need to have their confidence developed and they often compare themselves with grandchildren who are highly computer literate. Confidence-building requires careful coaching and coaxing by tutors and is crucial in the early stages of the learner's programme. Front loading the support helps to provide this. In addition, the centre is staffed at any one time by several trainers and learning advisors whose ages and backgrounds vary. Inevitably personalities vary as well and learners can choose the person with whom they feel most comfortable to approach for help. The college considers itself fortunate to have a range of staff available and to be able to offer a choice of tutor.

Personal tutors are working with and tracking the progress of increasing numbers of learners. The average ratio is one full-time tutor to 70 learners and one part-time tutor to 35. However, all tutors and learning advisors have access to the learner's records: 'Tutors need to be able to remember learners. Learners need to be valued and looked after; they want to be made to feel special'. This is important particularly for older learners and for those who have been out of education and training for some time.

The centre manager is concerned that some of this personal customer care will be lost as the centre grows. She is looking to generate progression, that is, repeat business, through customer care and satisfaction and staff have been trained in customer care within the college. Although IT knowledge is evident on qualifications, it is not always appropriate to the courses. All staff are required to follow the courses that they are tutoring. The college also puts considerable emphasis on staff knowing and using the procedures for the centre.

Conclusions

Introduction

This section of the report contains a summary of the results of the research. It takes the form of issues which colleges will need to face as they develop and increase the volume of work with learners from excluded groups whilst maintaining or improving its quality.

Conclusions are grouped under four main headings:

- learners
- colleges
- practitioners
- other agencies

All the areas covered are relevant to successful learning by excluded learners and it is recommended that they are considered and acted upon by colleges and other agencies.

It has been noted that practice varies considerably both within and between colleges. This research has shown that the needs and concerns highlighted in this section that have an impact on all staff, managers, governors, board members and national agencies are being addressed currently with differing levels of enthusiasm and resource by different post-16 providers.

Learners

Interviewees described many of the learners as 'fragile' and 'wanting to be made special'. There was general agreement that they needed better teaching than other 'mainstream' students. Frequently interviewees mentioned the inspirational teacher and the community workers who had a successful track record of work with excluded or disengaged learners from deprived areas.

It was felt strongly that learners needed individualised programmes to meet their differing needs and develop their full potential. They come with a package of issues – 'all a bit different' commented one interviewee. The individualisation was necessary within the group programmes for the learners. However, many learners also needed to be able to move on to courses where they would not feel themselves to be one of a distinct group. To progress successfully and indeed to learn successfully at all, the key attributes cited repeatedly were self confidence and self esteem.

The environment for learning was mentioned by a number of interviewees. It has to be safe; some interviewees described this as a familiar place such as a mother and toddler group or a local community or other centre. The learners needed the tutor or other practitioner to work, at least initially, within that location and activity.

Interviewees also commented that learners have to be able to admit their needs without humiliation. For example, it is more acceptable to admit poor IT skills than poor literacy or numeracy.

There seemed to be little or no difference in learner needs across the UK – in fact the similarities were striking. For instance, work with travellers and with unskilled young men in towns and cities seemed to raise exactly the same problems, outlined above, across the UK.

Colleges

A number of organisational issues, affecting practitioners and managers equally and of relevance to governing bodies, boards of management, arose during the research. Some colleges, particularly but not exclusively those in Wales, emphasised structure and strategy, including a planned approach, as much as the skills and knowledge of individuals. These colleges appeared to have been giving attention to the organisational issues for some time, often over a number of years and were using organisational issues and decisions to develop the work. They believed that a 'can do' culture of meeting the needs of excluded learners in creative ways had developed in at least part of the organisation.

There was concern that the work with excluded learners did not develop separately from the rest of the college, although many interviewees recognised that high levels of will and commitment are needed to engage and teach excluded learners. The choice of tutors was critical. However, selection of tutors was not usually carried out in a strategic way and many tutors had been given this work because they had a track record of similar teaching. No interviewee suggested staff should be forced to take it on and several interviewees believed it was management's role to support those who did accept it and to bring out the potential in many more tutors to work in this area.

Many staff, according to interviewees, are more comfortable teaching a programme with an externally validated qualification, than meeting the challenge of designing and delivering a programme which attempts to meet the differing needs of a group of disengaged learners. Interviewees commented that, even when carefully designed, programmes had to be modified, sometimes significantly, as they ran in order to meet unexpected challenges.

Although work with excluded and disengaged learners forms a relatively small part of the total work in most, but not all, the colleges in the research, all interviewees considered that it required teaching of very high quality which could serve as a model of good practice for other areas of college provision. Interviewees also observed that this area is very demanding of resources, especially staff.

The success of the work was frequently measured in terms of progression onto other courses in the 'mainstream' college. Therefore, whilst some colleges do not view the work as central to their strategy, it has the potential to generate commitment and encourage learners to progress within the college.

One manager thought that learners should be able to choose the facilitator/tutor with whom they felt most comfortable. Clearly this is possible in a sizeable learning centre, but it raises questions of feasibility in other settings, as well as the issue of whether learners are able to make the choice which is best for their learning. Some managers felt that learners need to be able to deal with different styles of teaching and learning, a message to tutors to vary styles. This style issue was often expressed as 'traditional doesn't work'. It was proposed also that a more structured approach is better early in the learner's programme, to give some familiarity and safety, then moving to a more learner-centred and less structured style. From the management point of view, the issue is matching the tutor or other practitioner to the learner or group of learners.

Strategy and structure generally were considered critical in the relationship between the tutors who are working with excluded learners and the rest of the college. One interviewee favoured a contractual approach supported by persuasion. In any case it is considered essential to have a mutual understanding of aims, structured liaison and coherent curriculum design to allow progression, a stated objective of all interviewees. Additionally, tutors need to share learner records, particularly if they are working in different centres and at different times. One interviewee emphasised the need to include all practitioners and anyone who came into contact with the learners in the information flow.

All interviewees emphasised the need to involve and work with people from agencies who were trusted by the learners and who might be in contact with them in other situations. There is a recognised need to increase practitioners' knowledge base and to structure liaison and partnership working.

In summary, the research suggests that colleges should address the following:

- the development of a 'can-do' culture which supports meeting the needs of disengaged and excluded learners

- establishing systems and structures, in particular for staffing, which encourage support for practitioners and the dissemination of good practice

- the continuous training and development of all practitioners, managers and governors, board members in appropriate knowledge and skills

- encouraging collaboration and joint action across colleges and between colleges and other relevant agencies to ease the progression of disengaged and excluded learners

Colleges should consider also how lessons learnt in meeting the requirements for social inclusion amongst learners might have mainstream implications for how the college is organised and managed and how teaching and learning are enabled and supported.

Practitioners

For practitioners, four themes emerged:

- the need for all practitioners to be committed to the work and the learners

- the need for multi-skilling and new skills

- the need for specific underpinning knowledge of the learner groups and of the local agencies and organisations involved and working with them

- the need to mix the more serious aspects of learning with fun and interest for the learners

More specifically, there was agreement amongst the respondents on the importance of the following skills, knowledge and attributes:

- guidance skills

- coaching skills

- communication skills, especially using appropriate and jargon-free language

- having local knowledge – not only of the client group and its culture, but of local agencies and workers who might have contact with any practitioner

- varying teaching and learning styles; building in success; 'student-centred learning based upon negotiation and the enhancing of (learner) self confidence and self esteem'

- being confident but never arrogant

- skills in classroom management

- tolerance

- creative curriculum design; structuring learning into activities familiar to and valued by the learner

- linking with other practitioners, for example to ensure progression and with people from other agencies

- working from the learner's frame of reference and in his or her environment

- contracting skills with learners, other practitioners and people from other agencies

- using ICT to engage learners

- marketing: identifying new opportunities for work and contributing to promoting the programmes

- knowledge of other cultures, diversity and equal opportunity issues

- skills in solving unique learner and practitioner problems: needing a strong 'can do' attitude

There was very little evidence of qualifications being used as a specific response to meeting practitioner needs, apart from the BTEC Certificate in Inclusive Learning Practices which is offered in two of the colleges we spoke with during our research. Other qualifications such as the NVQ/SVQs in Guidance and Customer Care and the empNTO C and D units were used to raise skill levels of some staff, as were qualifications in teaching basic skills. Throughout the UK, a number of regional staff development networks lead to sharing of information and reciprocal staff training.

Training of managers to raise awareness, commitment and skills was mentioned by several interviewees. One college had a training programme for managers which included case studies angled to manager issues and responses. Most training of practitioners, however, concentrated on raising awareness of the client groups. There was widespread awareness of the need to train staff in new ways of teaching and in how to manage the potentially difficult situations which might occur, for example the behavioural problems of disaffected 14 and 15 year olds or the lack of self confidence of older learners.

No specific use was made in this context of the Northern Ireland Postgraduate Certificate in Further and Higher Education, nor the Scottish Teaching Qualification for Further Education. Some colleges had begun to use the FENTO teaching standards to affirm their staff development programmes for social inclusion and there was a little evidence that they had been used in other staff procedures such as selection and quality assurance, specifically teacher observation. The research was conducted before the publication of the LSC's (England) 'Teaching Standards in Post-16 Learning: Self Assessment and Development Plans', which makes specific reference to the standards.

It is reasonable to assume that the interviewees wanted to use the standards for their intrinsic value, although there was very little evidence of their doing so yet, in spite of their positive acceptance of them. As Dick Barton, learning and development manager at Cap Gemini Ernst and Young points out ('People Management', 8 March 2001), 'if you define competencies with any precision, they become too complex to be useful'. Colleges in the research were seeking the 'workable compromise' which he advocates. They were looking for workable and manageable ways to use the standards in staff training for this work.

National and regional agencies

Agencies operating nationally and regionally to support and provide training and development, conduct research and lead the development of policy will wish to be fully aware of the issues raised in our conclusions. As the introduction shows, many of the contextual factors have been investigated thoroughly and providers are now operating within a well-established policy framework embraced by the national funding agencies. The conclusions need to be addressed to regional groups and organisations within the four countries, such as staff development and personnel/human resource networks.

Much excellent, innovative and successful practice, was identified, as the case studies indicate and it is contended that this high quality of practice is not universal. Several interviewees commented both on the need to select staff carefully for the work and on the reality that many staff are not, at present, sufficiently skilled or knowledgeable to teach excluded learners successfully. Others commented on the appropriate strategies, systems and structures needed.

As the section on the broad context has made plain, engaging and working successfully with excluded learners is a policy priority of government throughout the UK. It was clear that colleges in the research had taken it on board as a local priority as well.

However, provision is variable from place to place and from institution to institution and is dependent on the expression and acceptance by providers of quality and professional standards for the organisation, for the governors/board members, for the managers and for all the practitioners. Above all, social inclusion needs to become embedded in all providers' procedures as a key aspect of mainstreaming equal opportunities.

This research suggests that social inclusion does not sit in a tidy box, but spills over into the whole range of mechanisms by which providers deliver to the communities they aspire to serve. Tackling social inclusion can unlock potential in institutions, can tap into and develop the wider skills of teaching and support staff and can contribute to the diverse ways in which education and training support a broader social and economic agenda which also values individual development.

It is clear that agreements on process and on outcomes are essential to drive forward the agenda and that management within institutions has a key role in this regard. In addition, national and regional agencies have a key role to play.

There was agreement that these agencies need to address the following:

● the pragmatic use of the three sets of teaching standards frameworks to identify development needs of practitioners, meet those needs and form the basis of quality policies and processes

● the promotion of continuous professional development (CPD) to raise the knowledge base and competence of all practitioners, managers, governors, board members involved in this work. It is particularly important to ensure that training and development is undertaken, where needed, by those who have an initial qualification already

- the multi-skilling of practitioners

- the dissemination of good and successful practice to colleges and sections within colleges; this would include CPD, the design and implementation of structures and systems and organisational culture change

- creating a better understanding of the concept of quality in this work, whether it is linked to achievement, progression or these and other indicators

- defining the differences between developing and promoting the work eg outreach centres and delivering teaching and learning

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