Provider Missions and their Development

**A report by the LSDA for the DfES**

**LEARNING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report on Provider Missions is the result of a project, commissioned by the DFES to inform the guidelines established for the Strategic Area Review Framework (SAR). It identifies a range of practice in establishing institutional mission and presents proposals for the effective development and review of institutional missions.
2. The report draws on theory drawn from a literature review of mission statement development and use both in provider organisations and the corporate world sector.
3. A sample of local LSCs were surveyed as to their use of provider missions. Analysis was undertaken highlighting various approaches to missions and their development as well as issues for consideration.
4. The literature review identifies the value of the process of mission development especially when mission is developed with stakeholder involvement and used to drive strategy and operational activity.
5. The survey of providers indicated that the development, content and use of mission are variable among providers.
6. Success for All is seen as one useful catalyst for SARs provider mission reviews
7. A framework is suggested for the development and review of mission:

* Within the context of Success for All and Strategic Area Review (SAR)
* For possible use by individual providers

8. The timescale for provider reviews process is provided.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The central claims for institutional mission are that it describes the distinctiveness of an organisation, establishes a clear sense of purpose; assists marketing; and acts as a driver for strategic direction and operational effectiveness, through facilitating decision-making and evaluation.

1.2 In the current learning and skills sector, clarifying the distinctiveness of providers is seen as a desirable process. Paragraph 14 of Success for All states that:

*‘…We want every college and provider to be clear about its own education mission and focus on its particular strengths. This is not about imposing arbitrary or unnecessary restrictions on what is offered where that is of good quality and meets local needs….In the future, we want colleges and other providers to focus upon what they do best…This will mean taking hard decisions about whether it is right to continue with everything that they do now…and filling gaps where they occur.*’

(Success for All, 2002, para 14)

* 1. The first phase of the project involved:
* a brief literature review of the role and value of mission
* an analysis of mission statement content across providers in the sector, with particular reference to patterns and distinctiveness;
* a small scale survey of a *range of sector provider organisations* to identify development process and usage;
* a sample survey of local LSCs to ascertain the extent to which missions are used to inform the planning of provision locally.

*The outcomes of phase one informed phase two where a framework for mission development and review is proposed.*

Part One – Research and Analysis

*Overview- Vision, Mission and Strategy*

2.1 There is considerable discussion on the merits or otherwise of mission statements and the distinction between mission and vision. This distinction is perhaps best clarified by Denton (2001)[[1]](#footnote-1). He cites definitions of vision as '..defining your destination..[the] organisation's aspirations for the future that appeal to the emotions and beliefs of organisational members. Mission, on the other hand, is similar to our identity and includes such concepts as an organisation's purpose, competitive distinctiveness, market definition, principal economic concerns and core values.'

2.2 This is well illustrated by Steve Ballmer in a memo to Microsoft[[2]](#footnote-2)1 where he claimed of Microsoft 'Over the next century, we may have several different vision statements to best state what the company is trying to accomplish, but our mission of enabling people and business to realize their full potential need not change.'

*2.3* For Greengarten-Jackson a vision statement is developed by the top management of an organisation to define the organisation’s future state; it is a dream. The mission statement reveals the current reason for the existence of an organisation on the basis of that stated vision.

2.4 Whilst Stacy (1996)[[3]](#footnote-3)2 describes a mission as a way of behaving. It is concerned with the way an organisation is managed today, with its purpose or reason for being ‘….*mission is to do with the here-and-now purpose, the culture, the business philosophy, the paradigm itself.’*

2.6 Conway et al[[4]](#footnote-4)3 see a company mission as a *broadly defined but enduring statement of purpose that distinguishes a business from others of its type and identifies the scope of its operations in product and market terms.* It reveals the image the company seeks to project, reflects the company’s self-concept and indicates the principal product or service areas and the primary customer needs the company will attempt to satisfy.

2.7 They make the link between mission and strategy: at the corporate level, organisations need to consider the reasons for their existence and how they intend to achieve their objectives over a period of time. At the business level, strategy involves consideration of the external environment and how the organisation can achieve a competitive advantage.

It has become generally accepted over the years by both academics and practitioners that a vital starting point for these strategic considerations is the formulation of a mission statement.

2.8 Drucker[[5]](#footnote-5)4 (1992) for example, sees mission statements as a key component of an effective strategic planning process:

*…It {the mission) focuses the organisation on action. It defines the specific strategies needed to attain the crucial goals. It creates a disciplined organisation. It alone can prevent the most common degenerative disease of organisations, especially large ones; splintering their always limited resources on things that are ‘interesting’ or look ‘profitable’ rather than concentrating them on a very small number of productive efforts* (p.205)

2.9 Support for these views is found in numerous case studies attesting the value of mission statements for individual firms (e.g. Pearce 1994[[6]](#footnote-6)1; Campbell and Nash 1992)[[7]](#footnote-7)2. Further, in a survey conducted by the Strategic Planning Forum (Consultant News, 1996) of over one thousand executives at large companies to assess their use of twenty-five popular management tools, mission statements were shown to meet the market test. Throughout the 1990s, nearly 90 percent of executives reported using them.

2.10 Where debates exist, this has largely been in relation to the mission development process, specifically the extent to which key stakeholders are involved, and mission’s usefulness to practical day-to-day operation which has led many to question mission’s unequivocal value. Goold and Campbell (1989)[[8]](#footnote-8)3 observed that “the demand for missions and policy statements does not prove their worth”, because they are so bland as to be applicable to almost any organisation and because “they are not evidenced in the actions of management”. It is therefore crucial to emphasise the need for mission articulation to be supported by a set of actions and behaviours.

2.11 Mullane(2002)[[9]](#footnote-9)4 shows that in studies of mission the importance of the process is acknowledged by managers. In one study he cites, 73% of managers were less than fully satisfied with the process used to create mission, 'primarily because major stakeholder groups, most notably employees and managers, had been left out of the process.' In another contrasting study he notes that managers found mission to be the most used tool out of twenty-five identified. The claim here was that 'satisfaction rested on the mission statement's efficacy at creating organisational integration - getting everyone focussed on common objectives.'

2.12 He goes on to say that 'creating and using a mission statement can foster a shared value system, a focus on common objectives, teamwork, behavioural guidelines, and emotional commitment to the company.'

*Mission in the Educational Sector*

2.13 The majority of literature on organisational mission originates in the corporate context but the definitions of mission in the educational world appear very similar. Caruthers and Lott (1981)[[10]](#footnote-10)1 writing about American higher education, state that a mission statement ‘should tell what an institution is and what it is not’, and Davies (1985)[[11]](#footnote-11)2 writing about British universities notes that ‘mission is the most fundamental and stable account of the type of institution it is, or should be’.

2.14 This suggests that the concept of mission differs very little from that used in business. Indeed Peeke (1994)[[12]](#footnote-12)3 writing on institutional mission and its application to the management of further and higher education argues that the concept of mission as promoted in British further and higher education is ‘similarly business-orientated…it reflects a major concern for the customer and the market’.

2.15 Weiss and Peidrit (1999)[[13]](#footnote-13)4 notes that mission statements ‘*articulate what is distinctive about the organisation in ways that clarify the {public} agency’s contributions to a larger policy domain and mobilise external stakeholder support by showing how agency efforts helps to achieve shared goals*’. Further, that explicit communication can help attract resources and overcome opposition from other organisations. According to Moore (1995)[[14]](#footnote-14)5, “If the manager’s articulated mission expresses a value or a purpose that a community advocates, then the community will be inclined to give the manager its support.”

2.16 Peeke undertook a significant analysis of missions and mission statements across the Further and Higher Education sectors. He identified five functions for Mission statements:

1. to encourage the development of a sense of purpose
2. to facilitate decision making in the organisation
3. to enable more effective communication
4. to aid evaluation activity
5. to clarify a marketing strategy

2.17 A study by Davies and Glaister (1997)[[15]](#footnote-15)6 examining the development, content and use of mission statements in UK business schools, found that those that had a written mission statement found them useful in identifying significant tasks of the business school, improving leadership and in enhancing its public image

2.18 In the study, a number of respondents commented on the perceived benefits of mission statements by articulating their value in the creation and development of cohesiveness within the business schools:

“*Business schools are often composed of several quite different activities. To develop a short, but valuable mission statement is very difficult, but the process helps staff develop a cohesive view of what the business school is aspiring to achieve.”*

2.19 For others, the process of developing mission statements was seen as valuable in enabling areas of disagreement to be identified and in providing a “significant basis for working towards a consensus”. Further, they also helped to create a “shared ownership of academic plans.

2.20 It is worth noting that this combination of internal marketing and conflict brokering roles emerged from the process (rather than the statement alone) and reflects the importance and value of investing time in engaging staff and stakeholders in the process. Again, mission development process emerges as key determinant of the value or otherwise of mission.

2.21 Governors play a critical role in establishing the educational character and determining the strategic direction of their college. Yet, initial indications from the governance healthcheck undertaken by the Learning and Skills Development Agency in conjunction with Ben Johnson-Hill Associates in 2001 –2002 showed that, whilst governors were satisfied that the mission statements reflected the core business of the college, there was some uncertainty about the mechanics of their relevance and execution. There was, for instance, little appreciation of the internal value that mission statements might provide for coherent co-ordination and decision-making. For many boards the exercise was academic: it was something that had to be done.

2.22 In addition many boards expressed an ignorance of the core business, (the curriculum). In such circumstances there was little scope for them to engage in meaningful dialogue with senior managers in the construction of a mission. These difficulties were further underlined by the uneven nature of board involvement at a strategic level with many boards struggling to engage in the development of an overview of college performance.

## Content of mission statements

2.23 Several works have delineated what should be included in a mission statement. Overall there appears to be no simple formula that prescribes exactly what elements a mission statement should contain. In one collection of 622 mission statements, no two had the exact same format, formula, or indeed pattern. They varied in length as well as tone. But, there does appear to be a common consensus that the elements of mission statements are that they:

* convey organisational purpose
* crystallise management's view of long-term direction and
* help keep direction-related actions of managers *focussed* on a common goal.

2.24 They *should* be both looking outward at customer needs and looking inward to indicate the scope of an organisation's operations.

2.25 The Ashridge Mission Model focuses on the need for an organisation to

develop (or articulate) a ‘sense of mission’, which is then put into form

of words which becomes the mission statement. The Model sees a mission as consisting of four components:

“Why the company exists”

PURPOSE

“What the company believes in”

“The competitive position and distinctive competence”

STRATEGY

VALUES

BEHAVIOUR

STANDARDS

“The policies and behaviour patterns that underpin the distinctive competence and the value system”

*Source:* A.Campbell & K. Tawady (1990), *Mission and Business Philosophy: Winning Employee Commitment,* Oxford: Heinemann

2.26 In this model, a strong sense of mission is achieved when personal and organisational values match and when the four elements are closely knitted together, supporting and reinforcing each other.

2.27 Bart and Baetz (1998)[[16]](#footnote-16)1 in introducing the concept of mission-organisational alignment as a potentially important antecedent to a mission’s influence over employee behaviour, observed that the degree to which an organisation aligned its structure, systems and procedures with its mission, represented one of the most powerful, and most pervasive relationships with performance in general – but , especially with employee behaviour. Similar results were obtained by Bart (1998) in his study of 103 hospitals.

2.28 In surveying the literature Peeke identified common characteristics of mission statements. They should:

1. Specify clearly the nature of the enterprise in terms of its products and services
2. Reflect the concerns of organisational members
3. Specify the enterprise's markets and customers
4. Specify the beliefs and values prized by organisational members that it wishes to communicate.
5. Specify the technology in use
6. Specify the growth policy of the organisation
7. Be general enough to be flexible, but specific enough to enable priorities to be established.

These characteristics were used to analyse the mission statements of a range of providers. The analysis is presented in Table 1, page 14.

#### *Developing a Mission Statement*

2.29 The discussion so far indicates that the effective development of a mission through the involvement of key stakeholders is necessary for a ‘living mission’ – that is commitment to the mission which permeates all that the organisation does.

2.30 The literature reveals a number of methods of developing mission. They include:

1. Establishment by a committee or group
2. Establishment by survey
3. Inferring or eliciting mission from decision analysis and interviewing.
4. Determination by senior management.

2.31 The last method is generally perceived as a top down imposition and likely to have less validity than other methods unless carefully communicated and used. The other 3 methods may involve a range of stakeholders but the key consideration is who is involved and whether their views are perceived to be incorporated in the final mission.

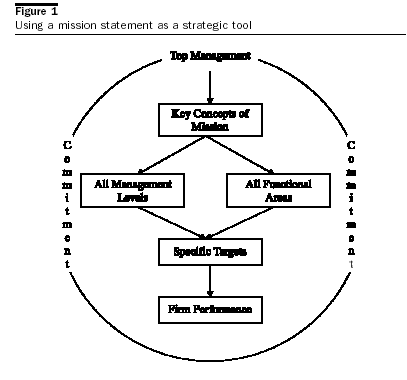
2.32 Peeke (1994) uses 3 case studies to illustrate the use of different process methods of mission development:

* use of interest groups;
* surveying constituent groups;
* and workshops.

2.33 In commenting on these cases, Peeke notes of the first *“the lack of involvement of the institute's staff in developing the statement, and the lack of attention to the market place in the statement itself, suggest that the mission will have little impact upon the process and ethos of the college.”* Of the second case study he notes a problem with the survey technique in the context of mission establishment is the logistics and “*lack of opportunity for debate”.* Of the third he notes the interactive elements which produced a mission outcome was able to be fed into the development of departmental objectives and strategies and was thus more successfully linked to the operationalising of the mission.

2.34 Although mission development process vary from one organisation to another, Mullane claims there are some basic success factors. 'Specifically, top management must be committed to the process and the values*,* and organisation members must be involved to produce a mission that will evoke positive emotional responses.'

2.35 Mullane (2002) suggests the following framework for giving missions more operational relevance.



2.36 In this framework there is top management commitment to the whole process of mission establishment. The process then involves:

* Identification of key concepts of mission. This can be from existing mission or could originate in the organisation’s core values
* Communication of these to all management and functional levels as a set of measurables. *This communication is concerned with supporting clarity and purpose. Mullane (2002) says that ‘internal clarity of purpose and direction should not be confused with competitive strategy….The mission statement should be developed with the strategic intent in mind to create internal unity that moves the organisation toward competitive success.' This model can be adapted to consider the overarching consideration of Strategic Area Review and policy direction through 'Success for All' where communication with a range of providers would be paramount.*
* Generation of ‘buy in’ through the creation of targets congruent with the Mission.
* Targets are then a mission related mechanism by which the organisation judges its performance.

*Summary*

This literature review has shown that mission statements can be potentially potent strategic tools. But to be effective internally and externally they need to be the end result of a careful process of consultation and participation of key stakeholders to enable them to genuinely convey the sense of mission of the whole organisation, and must have operational relevance.

3. *Analysis of current mission statements*

#### Methodology

3.1 Sample mission statements of Further Education Colleges, Schools, Work Based Learning Providers and sample national international businesses were analysed to determine their characteristics based on the seven features identified by Peeke (1994) as shown in 2.28 above.

3.2 Further Education College samples.

Initially a sample of 18 colleges were selected for Mission statement analysis. They represented a range of providers in terms of size, sector served (i.e. FE or Adult), degree of specialism and geographical location. From this, eight colleges were selected for follow up telephone survey and were asked about their mission development process and the degree that this was used as a strategic driver. The survey sample covered geographical location, degree of specialist activity plus Adult Education providers. Of these,

* four were General FE institutions,
* two specialist: one agricultural and one food, tourism and creative studies); and
* two Adult education providers: an independent corporation and the other under LEA auspices.

3.3 Schools sample

A sample of eleven schools were randomly chosen from which six schools were followed up for telephone survey. They were drawn across geographical locations and included two denominational schools. Two of the schools had Specialist School status.

3.4 Work Based Learning providers

Samples of fifteen mission statements were obtained. These included providers with national and local / regional coverage, those training in a single-sector, those across sectors, those whose sole aim was training and those for whom training represented an aspect of their overall business, and those which are designated as centres of excellence.

Five providers were followed up with telephone survey.

3.5 Company mission

Six national and multinational company missions identified through web site postings were used.

3.6 Local Learning and Skills Councils

In addition, a telephone survey was carried out with five LLSCs to determine the extent that they currently use provider missions to inform the planning of provision in the local system. Two were from the London Area, one from the South East, one from the East and one from the North West.

The results are summarised in table 1 below. The evaluation of characteristics considered whether the element identified was there in its entirety, not mentioned at all, or had made reference but lacked clarity, in which case it was partially met.

**Table 1 – Content of Mission Statements**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic** | FE sector institutions | Schools | Workbased learning providers | Business Corporations |
| Specify clearly the nature of the enterprise in terms of its products and services | Most fully or partially meet. | Variable with some fully meeting and some not meeting at all | Most fully or partially meet | Most fully or partially meet |
| Reflect the concerns of organisational members | Most fully or partially meet | Most fully or partially meet. Some evidence of not meeting. | Partially met | Most fully or partially meet |
| Specify the enterprise's markets and customers | Most fully or partially meet. | Tendency to only partially meet. | Most partially or fully meet | Most fully meet |
| Identifies distinctive specialism(s) | Most do not meet but this is identified with Specialist Institutions. | Do not meet | Met when describing specific sector support | Most fully or partially meet |
| Specify the beliefs and values prized by organisational members that it wishes to communicate | Most fully or partially meet | Most fully meet | Partially or not met | Most fully or partially meet |
| Specify the technology in use | Do not meet | Do not meet | Partially met | Partially met |
| Specify the growth policy of the organisation | Variable with most partially meeting. | Do not meet | Partially or not met | Partially met |
| Be general enough to be flexible, but specific enough to enable priorities to be established | Variable with most partially meeting | Most partially or not meeting. | Variable with most partially meeting | Most fully or partially meet |

* 1. The survey revealed that missions are most often generic across the whole organisation. For example, schools do not have separate missions for their sixth forms; work-based learning providers which are part of larger organisations rarely have separate missions from the parent organisation. It is however a practice within some organisations to develop mission statements for functional departments. In these instances the functional missions identify the department’s:
* *contribution to the organisation's mission*
* *role and scope within the organisation, and the*
* *overall strategic direction.*

There is evidence of some Further Education College's with CoVE status developing mission statements for their CoVe which could be reviewed with the above criteria in mind.

3.8 Many school mission statements are accompanied by a set of aims and values. Many colleges also publish their vision, values and the means by which they wish to implement mission as separate statements.Where these elements are identified then there is a commitment to consideration of Vision, Mission and Values as serving strategic direction and guiding internal behaviours. This supports the Ashridge model and Mullane's emphases.

3.9 Other issues that emerged were:

* Colleges are more likely than Schools to specify the nature of the organisation in terms of products, services, markets and customers. *This may be because whilst schools acknowledged their purpose with respect to learners, colleges tended to refer to wider relationships with employers, the communities they served and the geographical reach that represented their markets.*
* Schools are more likely to specify beliefs and values. *This feature has already been identified as a suitable feature of mission and could be adopted more widely with other types of provider.*
* Where Colleges are specialist they address this in their mission **through describing the specific sector they serve**. This was not the case elsewhere, even for colleges with CoVE status or schools with specialist status. In essence, currently missions do not identify the distinctiveness of their institutions nor the contribution of the organisation to the economic life of their community. *There is an indication that in the light of 'Success for All' some institutions with CoVE status are actively thinking of reviewing mission. This could be a trigger for such review.*
* Some school mission statements were not general or specific but were presented more as mottoes than missions. *This would indicate the need for clarity around function and purpose of mission as a driver for actions.*
* Work based learning providers tended to claim to assist their customers to meet the customer's goals, rather than be specific about their own distinctiveness. *This would appear to demonstrate the need to build clarity about mission as not being simply a response to customer demand but as an expression of distinctiveness.*
* There is little or no reference to the use of specific technology.

Table 2 below provides a summary of responses to providers’ mission development process.

***Table 2 –Survey of providers’ mission development* process**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Colleges** | **Schools** | **Work Based Learning Providers** |
| Confirmation of current Mission | * Most confirmed mission. * 1 reported new mission not yet published | * Most confirmed mission. * One School claimed it preferred Vision statement. * One School claimed it had allowed Mission to drop into non-use. | * Missions statements confirmed but not always immediately familiar. |
| Date Mission published | Span was 1994 to 2002 , with most published since 2000. | Span was 1992 to 2002. Most published prior to 2000. | Mostly at start of new operation – generally before 2000 |
| Process of Mission production | * Distinction made between substantive review of Mission and modification in the light of strategic review. * Where substantive review was undertaken this involved considerable consultation with stakeholders, use of advisory groups, surveys, workshops and final approval of Governing Body. These processes took 6 months on average.   + Where modification to mission was involved this was generally through a strategic planning process and was initiated by Senior Managers and involved consultation with staff and Governors. | * + Variety of processes including questionnaires, surveys, Senior Management paper for discussion with staff.   + Generally outcomes then discussed through Senior Managers and Governors or Steering Group of Staff and Governors. Then finally sent to parents through PTA and students through Council and staff for final consultation. Final document approved by Governors. | Process varied from formulation by single individual (Chief Executive) to formulation by whole staff then approval by Board. |
| Who was involved in Mission production | * Stakeholders always quoted were Governors, Senior Managers and staff. * There was less involvement of students and employers and no mention of parents in this sample. | * Stakeholders always quoted include Governors, Senior Managers and Staff. * Students and Parents tend to be consulted once draft is produced. | * Chief Executive and staff. * Very little evidence of customer / client involvement |
| How and when is mission revisited and by whom. | Most report that the mission statement is revisited within a strategic review cycle, some within annual operating cycle. Thus this varies between 1 and 5 years.  The most significant factor for review and change was a change of Principal. One College quoted change of status from FE to HE as a catalyst. | * Variable. The tendency is to review annually as part of School report or planning cycle. * Generally seen no need to change Mission. * The most significant factors in review and change were seen to be new Headteacher in post and Specialist School status. | Often no need for review is perceived. Little evidence of systematic or regular review. |

#### 3.9 Key points from this survey

* Colleges review and amend mission regularly in the light of Strategic planning
* Colleges have more recent statements of Mission than Schools.
* The most significant impetus for radical review of mission is change of Principal or Headteacher.
* Consultation with stakeholders mainly limited to internal stakeholders groups.

**Good practice Case Study. Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies.**

Mission Update.

Impetus for change was combination of review of the Corporate Plan and the transfer to the Higher Education Sector.

**The Process.**

2 Groups were constituted. A Central Advisory Group (CAG), consisting of all Middle and Senior managers, and a Senior Managers Group. An initial paper was submitted to the CAG for discussion and inviting feedback. The collection of ideas and refinement of them through the Senior Management Team followed this up. Further refinement took place through the CAG in small group discussions. A draft was then sent to Governors for review and consultation. The final draft was then sent to Governors for approval and adoption. The process took 4 months.

The final Mission statement was then published to CAG and all staff and linked to new provider targets and performance indicators linked to widening participation drawn from this amended Mission.

The previous substantive Mission Statement involved wider consultation with staff and students and took considerably longer to refine.

1. **Survey of provider mission statements in terms of use**

## Table 3: Survey of how mission is used

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **FE Sector** | **Schools** | **Work Based Learning Providers** |
| How is mission used? | * All made reference to Mission when developing strategic plans. These then fed into operational and development plans. * Most linked Self Assessment Report to Mission and some reported Mission elements that fed quality assurance systems through clarity of importance of retention and achievement through a widening participation agenda. * One claimed massive turn round in recruitment, retention, achievement and staff satisfaction since changing Mission and was directly linked to this. | * Use of Mission was vary variable. Whilst some schools reported use as underpinning planning and quality assurance, most used it Mission as an occasional reminder to staff and students about underlying purpose and beliefs. In some cases this was through picking elements of mission and re-enforcing them at staff meeting or school assemblies. * In one school it was a driver for staff recruitment and for school improvement and report to Governors was structured around mission elements. | At inception or significant re-shaping of training activity the mission statement is seen as a way of communicating the purpose of the new business to the outside world. There is little evidence that the statement is significantly used in strategic planning, quality assurance of review activities – even when these take place on a regular basis (eg annual strategy planning days). Mission statements are seen as important at the start but less important when the company is established. |
| How is it communicated to staff and customers | * Through new staff induction, staff handbooks and staff surveys. * Through prospectus, Charter Annual Report and student surveys. * Inclusion in and use of Employer survey was less common. | * In one case through interview for new appointments to identify commitment. * Most quoted Induction of new staff, Staff Handbook, Full staff meetings beginning of the year. * Prospectus. | * Sometimes on website, but generally websites are structured to give direct introduction to specific types of training rather than to an overview of the company’s mission |
| Any implications for CoVE/ Specialist School status | * Most had CoVE status. Some claimed too early to say what the impact of CoVE was. Some had CoVe missions. * 2 institutions reported that the CoVE activity was a very small part of their overall activity and was unlikely to feature prominently in any review of Mission. * 2 institutions were considering inclusion of reference to excellence in future mission updates. | * Few had specialist School status. These anticipated reviewing mission in the light of this status. | * Missions geared to industry and tailored training may differ significantly from those aimed directly at individual learners |

**3.10 key points from the survey**

* The systematic use of Mission to inform strategy and quality assurance and review systems was more prevalent in FE institutions than Schools.
* There is some evidence that Mission is used as a driver of operations but this is still limited
* As yet CoVE or Specialist School status has not led to review of mission but providers are considering this.

**Example of Good Practice. Richmond Adult College.**

Mission changed by incoming Principal to clarify purpose of the organisation. Mission seen to have commitment to community groups as well as providing educational experience for the adult community. This led to resource conflicts and made it difficult for managers to make appropriate decisions.

The clarification of commitment to high quality adult learning opportunities and solutions to individuals, business and community was achieved through debate and use of Case Study to demonstrate issue conflicts. This was then communicated to all staff and built into new performance indicators shared with all staff. This is consistently re-enforced. The outcome has been a dramatic increase in student numbers and course offerings, improved resource allocation, enhanced quality producing high inspection grade outcomes, CoVe status, together with ease of staff recruitment, satisfaction and retention.

#### *Table 4: Survey of use of mission statements by local LSCs*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| To what extent are you aware of and seek provider mission statements? | * General view is that are not sought currently. Current emphasis is with outcomes. * However, interest is developed when looking in particular at Further Education College Strategic Plans and updates. * Less emphasis on Work Based Learning provider missions. |
| To what extent are provider mission statements used when reviewing provision, SAR, Development Plans etc.? | * Seen by some as low priority. * The focus is related to outcomes under the aegis of Operations Teams. * However, Further Education Strategic plans, in particular if change in strategic direction, are reviewed in terms of appropriateness of Mission. * Two noted that they are included in provider reviews. |
| How useful do you find mission statements ? | * Most state that not much attention paid to them in that currently they have low priority, and that the perceived usefulness is variable. ('Nice phrases but do they drive planning or delivery?’) |
| How do you use mission statements ? | * No common view on them and less interest in Work Based Learning providers. * One focuses on looking at mission when considering CoVE application. * However, one is going through an Area Review process and is looking at alignment of provider mission statements against area needs. * One will be actively seeking mission intentions with new approaches from this November. * One sees need to review in terms of consolidation of 14 –19 provision post Strategic Area reviews. |

#### 3.11 Key points from LSC survey

* Little attention currently paid to Mission statements. This could be because LLSC’s are relatively new organisations and have only recently produced their first Local Plans.
* Out of the five LLSC's surveyed one identified use of mission in CoVe assessment.
* Where there is interest it is in FE institutions and Strategic Plans and little with WBL providers
* Usefulness perceived to be variable mainly because they tended to be either too general or lack elements which would drive planning or delivery

S*ummary*

The review of mission development and use suggests the following criteria for a mission development and review process:

* Mission development must involve all key stakeholders.
* Mission must drive the operations of the organisation.
* Mission must be reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect the environment that the organisation operates in
* Mission should emphasise the distinctiveness of an organisation’s operation
* Provider mission, learner and employer needs should be linked – what contributions do providers make to the economy?
* Local LSCs need a coherent approach and should make greater use of individual provider missions to help plan and develop local strategic options, choices and patterns of provision. Success for All and SARs will help in developing provider missions.

These recommendations pose some significant challenges for the sector. It requires greater stakeholder involvement and strategy processes to go beyond those of planning.

The value and significance of missions are recognised within the sector. However, their utilisation is at best uneven and, sometimes, only lip-service is paid to their existence. This is indicative of the importance of continuing to raise the profile of strategic thinking.

1. Part two: a framework for mission development and review

*Introduction*

4.1 The previous section identified that for a mission to be seen as a useful tool it:

* must clearly identify provider purpose and distinctiveness.
* requires management commitment and buy in of relevant stakeholders *e.g. staff, governors, managers and clients*
* should have features which enable it to impact on the strategy and drive provider operations and enable judgements about effectiveness.

4.2 This would indicate that the key elements of a framework would be:

1. Location of mission within an area strategic context (Success for All and SAR process)

1. Clear identification of the organisation’s purpose or “reason for being” including its key values
2. Involvement of stakeholders and customers
3. Description of mission in a statement containing key values, objectives and related targets that are measurable over time
4. Description of mission that emphasises the distinctiveness of provider operations now and in the future
5. Use the mission elements to form the basis of strategic and operational processes
6. Annual review of mission, objectives and related targets to ensure continued relevance to the environment.

# *Mission development within an Area Strategy*

4.2 It is possible to adopt Mullane’s model to emphasise the place of mission development within a local system. In this context, the commitment would be part of the local LSC strategic planning arrangements and strategies, which then becomes part of the contextual landscape in which providers locate their mission. This would enable each provider to take the Area needs into account and develop a mission that sits within strategic area framework as it is being developed.

4.3 The model suggests that individual provider missions should be informed by local strategic planning decisions and their future development as a result of the introduction of Strategic Area Reviews. The process of provider mission development will take place in parallel with the development of LSC SARs which will be delivered over a period from March 2003 – 2005/6.

4.4. Providers need a clear understanding of national and local policy directions e.g. distance and e-learning. In turn, the area strategy will also be informed by the missions of individual providers. Consequently, this is seen as an iterative process whereby missions emerge through a collaborative process involving local LSCs and individual providers. This process can present challenges and benefits for providers operating as independent organisations within a planned system.

**Guidance on linking institutional mission to area strategies**

* **LLSCs to issue indicative guidance to providers on the key elements of Strategic Area Reviews**
* **Providers should monitor national and local policy developments to inform their positioning within the network of providers**
* **LLSCs to engage in a consultative process with providers to ensure that provider strategic aims inform and enrich area strategy development**
* **Governing bodies, boards and management committees should have a key role in developing and reviewing institutional mission**
* **Governance groups to be aware that the mission should establish the distinctiveness of their organisation and demonstrates its place within the local system of provision. Where this is not understood assistance should be provided.**

**Figure 2. Future Model of contribution to Area Strategy**

**Strategic Area Review**

**Key elements of Area Strategy**

**Commitmen**t

**Commitmen**t

**Individual provider Missions**

**Provider targets**

**Contribution to Area strategy**

*Step by step guide to developing institutional mission*

4.4 Figure 3 below outlines a model of the process of individual provider mission development. This process will differ in detail between specialist and more general providers. Many training providers may not have an ‘explicit’ mission. The process should not be reduced to the production of a mission statement alone, the real value of the process is in focusing clearly on the organisations ‘reason to be.’

**Figure 3 Model of individual provider Mission development**

**Provider resources and capabilities**

**Assessments of performance**

**Contextual information**

**e.g. Strategic Area Reviews**

**Current patterns of provision**

**Initial review for Stakeholder consideration of purpose and distinctiveness**

**Regional or national considerations**

**Contact process with relevant stakeholders for review of Mission.**

**Process can include Debate, discussion, survey, consultation, and use of working parties.**

**Process allows time and iteration for refinement and commitment.**

**Agree Review process**

**Production of Mission**

**Formal adoption of Mission by Governors/ Board**

4.5 *Exhibit 1* gives an example step-by-step guide to assist organisations in the mission development process followed by explanatory notes that explain the five phases set out. *Not all steps will be appropriate to all organisations and provider boards would need to decide how best to carry our the reviews and development of missions to take account of their unique circumstances.*

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***Exhibit 1:*** *Example of step by step guide to developing mission*

**PHASE 1: ENVISAGE THE FUTURE**

* Management articulate their aspirations for the institution (with input from Governors, staff and key stakeholders); develops a visual and verbal representation of what the future could be
* Management defines the practices and values that should guide behaviour
* Management validates the vision and values with those in governance roles.

**PHASE 2: FORM A MISSION TEAM**

* Management verbally announces to organisation the purpose of the mission creation process and the level of involvement expected
* Establish a task force composed of representatives from within the organisation
* Consult with stakeholders, balance views of various groups, prioritise mission focus

**PHASE 3: DEVELOP A DRAFT MISSION**

* Conduct a situation analysis to assess internal and external environment (e.g. core competences, area strategic plan, success factors, opportunities, obstacles, beliefs about future trends and events)
* Decide on what form and structure the mission will be expressed, a core mission statement or vision and value statements, philosophies, principles, ethics, etc)
* Draft a mission that includes essential features listed on Exhibit 2.
* Post draft statements/beliefs and solicit input and feedback from staff and customers
* Synthesize rough statements/beliefs into an overall corporate mission and submit to organisation leaders and Board for approval
* Prepare a budget for mission dissemination and implementation.

**PHASE 4: COMMUNICATE FINAL MISSION**

* Determine how the mission will be communicated.
* Distribute mission to each employee announcing upcoming meetings
* Introduce mission to entire institution in series of meetings
  + - * + Train managers as facilitators
        + Schedule managers to introduce mission at departmental level
        + Solicit employees for their ideas on how to turn the mission into reality every day on the job

**PHASE 5: OPERATIONALISE THE MISSION**

* Align the institutional strategies, tactics, operations, and administrative support systems to be consistent with the mission
* Translate key elements of the mission into relevant performance objectives for employees at all levels
* Make mission review an integral part of the strategic planning process

*Adapted from: Romuald A Stone, Mission Statement Revisited, SAM Advanced Management Journal Winter 1996, Vol 61 p31*

***Exhibit 2*: Essential features of a Mission**

* Clearly articulated
* Relevant
* Current
* Written in positive (inspiring tone)
* Emphasise distinctiveness
* Enduring
* Adapted to the target audience
* Contain measurable elements

*Explanatory notes to the step-by step guide*

* **Envisage the future.** To choose a direction, leaders and managers must first have developed a mental image or vision of a possible and desirable future state of the institution as well as contextual elements such as Local LSC plans and strategies, regional or national considerations, resources and capabilities. This will provide a future strategic direction, the foundation for its mission and related goals, objectives and targets, and helps energise it to strive for success and a new level of performance.
* **Form a mission team.** Although the organisation leaders are ultimately responsible for developing an organisation’s mission, it will be unrealistic for them to do all the work. In this regard, forming a mission team is often appropriate. This should include key representatives from within the organisation who bring specific expertise and skills to the team. It might also include external representatives from key stakeholder groups: governors, learners, customers and LSC. This team should lead the consultation, plan the review, research the context and local circumstances and pattern of provision and balance the views of different groups to help determine a focus for the mission

**Guidance on consultation and focus**

* **Providers to identify their main stakeholder groups**
* **Providers to provide opportunities for stakeholder groups to express their views on the mission e.g. through focus groups or surveys for example**
* **In concentrating on what they do best, providers to focus on raising standards, building on their strengths and meeting local and regional skill needs and learner and employer demand**
* **Consider Success for All objectives, Strategic Area Review Guidance, Local LSC plans and strategies**
* **Develop a draft mission.** Prior to deciding what form the mission should take the mission team, should conduct a situation analysis. A good situation analysis will identify where the institution currently stands, how it came to be where it is, what external forces will influence its future, and what it hopes to become. Once the analysis is complete, the task force should proceed to draft a mission that includes the essential features listed in *Exhibit 2.* This draft should then be shared with all members of the institution for review and comment. This is a critical step as it involves employees in shaping the identity and direction of the organisation and ensures that they have an investment in its fulfilment.

**Guidance on mission specificity**

**Institutional missions should avoid the tendency to be all things to all people. The following example mission statements express various degrees of specificity about learning and skills needs. Many missions fall into the first category of generality and are less useful as a result. A number are also too vague and this does not help the organisation achieve its objectives and targets or change its focus.**

1. To provide high quality learning opportunities to meet all

the learning needs of the local community

2. To contribute to the economic well being of the local

community through the provision of socially inclusive learning

opportunities.

3. To support local and regional economic development

4. To equip people for the workforce

5. To produce job ready graduates for the local labour market.

**Missions should demonstrate the distinctiveness of the organisation by encapsulating its ‘reason to be’ and what differentiates it from other providers.**

* The mission team considers responses in light of the essential features of a mission and develops a further draft for comment by staff and governors. Following this process, they should present a final draft for approval and prepare a mission plan and budget to facilitate communicating and disseminating the final mission statement throughout the institution and beyond.
* **Communicate the mission.** Critical to the effectiveness of a mission is for all employees throughout the institution to sign up to it. Every opportunity should be used to communicate, confirm, and clarify the corporate mission. This requires more than just publishing and distributing the mission or exhorting employees in various meetings. It requires a significant expenditure of personal time and effort by management to ensure the mission is shared by all.
* **Implement the mission.** Once the mission has been carefully developed and fits the history, culture, and values of the institution, the next challenge centres on how to generate the support and commitment necessary to use it as a blueprint for success.

If the mission is correctly formulated, it will be aligned with the institution’s strategies, tactics, operations, and administrative support systems. In addition to the crucial communication phase, managers at all levels need to translate the key elements of the mission into objectives and goals that guide the execution of the mission and are meaningful to all employees.

**Guidance on making the mission operational**

* **The mission should be broken down into key elements**
* **The elements can be further translated into objectives for individuals and groups that guide the everyday actions of staff**
* **Where these objectives are measurable it is more likely that progress towards making the mission a part of everyday organisational life can be assessed**
* **The mission needs to be evidenced in the actions of management**
* **All key decisions should be taken in the context of the mission.**
* **Organisation members should ask ‘what will be the consequences for our mission if we take this action?’**
* **Review.** Mission review should be an integral part of the strategic planning process. There needs to be consideration of how frequently this needs to be, or the circumstances of change that would initiate a review. This might be linked to any evaluation of whether key goals, objectives and targets of the organisation have been achieved or require changes.

**Guidance on reviewing the mission**

**The following questions can inform decisions about the need to review the mission:**

* **To what extent has the core activity of the organisation changed since the adoption of the mission?**
* **To what extent have external factors, e.g. changing local, regional or national strategic imperatives identified a need for review?**
* **Is their activity that could be discontinued or new opportunities to be developed that could change the character and distinctive purpose of the organisation**

Timescale

The Department for Education and Skills has specified that Provider review process will commence in Spring 2003. This will include Local LSCs initiating a dialogue with providers about their contribution to meeting the overall learning and skills needs to learners, employers and communities. By Spring 2004 Local LSCs should be able to discuss in detail the potential role, mission and provision of each provider. The aim is to have a clearer understanding of each provider’s role by end 2004.

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