Success for All: reforming further education and training
Response from the Learning and Skills Development Agency

Introduction

1. We welcome the development of a strategic and coherent approach to reform across the further education and training sector. We support the strategy and believe that it covers the key areas needed for an effective approach.

2. We would like here to draw attention to the following key points in our response:

A single but differentiated strategy

3. In response to a number of questions we highlight the importance of promoting a strong sense of an integrated learning and skills sector, while at the same time offering differentiated opportunities to address distinctive needs. Where common approaches are appropriate, this will assist the creation of a strong common culture, foster collaboration and promote effective working relationships and the exchange of good practice. But care will also be needed to identify those instances where distinctive strategies and approaches need to be developed.

Longer-term development of the sector

4. We believe there is a need for a clear vision for the future of the sector to be developed and articulated. Examples of lack of clarity include whether the role of FE in delivery of HE should be expanded, and the extent to which the government wishes to promote separate 16-19 institutions. Clear policy steers in these areas would assist institutions to take a longer term view in their strategic planning.

5. In addition, there is a need for clarity about the balance the government would like to achieve between a fair and common national system, and a locally determined system of provision. Without a clear national policy, it is likely that the different interpretation and application of the *Success for All* proposals at the local level could result in widely variable systems of provision. If this is a desired outcome, it would be helpful if this were made explicit.

The case for clarity of mission

6. We support the emphasis placed on the need for clear institutional mission. In our view, the real value of institutional mission to education and training organisations has been obscured by requirements to develop mission statements primarily as part of the strategic planning process. Whilst this is an important element in strategic planning, the result has

often been that mission statements become bland and generic and do not inform the decision-making processes of the organisation. Guidance will be vital to promote a process of mission development that prompts genuine debate within organisations about the nature and distinctiveness of their provision and impacts on the everyday actions of all staff.

Unitisation and credit

7. We strongly support the commitment to explore the potential for opening up unit achievement and the feasibility of a credit-based approach. We believe that unitisation and a credit-based framework would support a number of government priorities, including the ambition to bring about a step-change in workforce development. The lack of a responsive qualifications framework hampers the capacity of providers to meet business needs, and leads to disillusion and frustration among employers.

8. A unit and credit-based system could meet the demand by employers for skills rather than qualifications[1] and could also assist providers in addressing business needs for customised and flexible skills mixes. In addition, a credit framework for the post-16 sector would provide a stronger basis for engaging new learners and widening participation, and would provide a common currency for measuring the range of achievement, whether occupationally specific, vocational or academic, and whether nationally validated or locally customised. The Learning and Skills sector needs a coherent framework for measuring learner achievement across the range of its provision.

Leadership College

9. We very much welcome the leadership college proposals. Our vision for the college is that it should be a leading edge centre of excellence in leadership and management with a national and international reputation. It should be well-led, informed by practitioners, and should have a strategic and coherent approach to leadership and management development which actively promotes diversity and innovative curriculum delivery.

10. The professional development opportunities offered should:

- Address all tiers of leadership and management
- Show flexibility and variety in a range of innovative curriculum delivery approaches, so as to allow for blended learning
- Be accessible locally and regionally as well as nationally
- Build on existing good practice
- Combine sector-specific development with opportunities to learn, work and network with leaders and managers across the public, private and voluntary sectors

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[1] Identified widely in LSDA publications, for example, *Promoting learning in small and medium-sized enterprises* (FEDA, 1998) and *Working towards skills: perspectives on workforce development* (LSDA, 2002); as well as in the Small Business Council Annual Report 2001-2002.

- Be an information hub and platform for networking and sharing best practice.

Sector Skills Council

11. There is an urgent need for the early establishment of a Sector Skills Council for the post-16 education sector to coordinate and provide a reference point for the range of workforce development initiatives, so that momentum is not lost. We very much support the ongoing work by FENTO, HESDA and now the Association of Learning Providers to establish a Sector Skills Council covering colleges, HE institutions and work-based training providers.

Continuous improvement

12. We believe that the focus of the strategy should be on enhancing the capacity for improvement, rather than on increasing accountability. We believe that self-assessment for continuous improvement should remain a key part of the strategy and that factors in institutional culture and leadership which inhibit change should be recognised and addressed. Targets will sharpen up providers' plans, but it will be important that these are owned by staff, if they are to have an impact on processes and behaviour in their organisations. If they are externally imposed, they are less likely to be effective. Adding to the administrative burden and focusing on the quality of systems, rather than quality itself, will not prompt improvement.

Spotlight

13. A model that might be useful to the Standards Unit for the development of teaching and learning frameworks, was developed by FEDA (now LSDA), in the late 1990s. This programme, known as Spotlight on Learning, worked with staff in FE colleges to develop a series of good practice frameworks with exemplar materials in specific subject areas such as ESOL, English and Communication, Psychology and Engineering.

14. The Spotlight programme had three key features that we feel could be particularly appropriate to the development of teaching and learning frameworks by the Standards Unit. First, it was practitioner-led, creating high levels of ownership by practitioners; second it recognised the totality of the learner experience, and was not limited to the formal teaching and learning process; third, it produced materials amenable to customisation for different contexts.

The meaning of E-learning

15. Currently, confusion about what constitutes e-learning clouds understanding and debate. Our working definition is that e-learning is the use of electronic technology to deliver, support and enhance teaching and learning. It can therefore include:

- Learning in the presence of a teacher, trainer or lecturer, whose delivery method is supported and enhanced by electronic media and materials
- Learning from a remote location through direct interaction with a mentor/teacher via electronic media (such as videoconferencing, e-mail, telephone, interactive television etc)
- Independent learning via an electronic medium with access to on-line support.

16. We believe that discussion about the development of e-learning would be substantially assisted by use of a widely agreed and understood definition along these lines.

A comment on coherence

17. We believe that all processes leading to improved learner outcomes, whether pedagogical, support or management, should be part of a quality improvement strategy. It will therefore be important that the respective contributions of the DfES FE Standards Unit (including the leadership college and the teaching and learning strategy), the national and local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), together with national quality support programmes managed by LSDA and others, are clearly mapped out.

Discussion issue 1: Do you agree with our proposals for meeting needs and improving choice?

18. We are in broad agreement with the proposals to meet needs and improve choice, but have a number of general points to make about the range of proposals outlined. These points concern the planning of provision, planning to meet skill needs and the development of closer links with higher education.

19. With regard to the planning of provision, we support the commitment to local flexibility. However, we would welcome the articulation of a clear vision for the future of the sector, which offers guidance for the development of local systems and the various organisational models for provision.

20. The Learning and Skills Research Centre (LSRC) is undertaking a major research programme, *Modelling a vocational learning system for the 21st century*, which will ask fundamental questions about the purpose and content of a modern VET system, addressing the overarching question:

    'What would be an effective vocational learning system for the 21st century, enabling access and coherent routes to successful learning - for individuals, employers and the economy?'

21. It aims to:
    - consider ideas and evidence on what a modern vocational learning system should encompass
    - explore current best practice and forward thinking about vocational learning systems
    - develop a framework for the development of a modern vocational learning system

22. The outcomes of this research may inform important judgements about the future shape of provision.

23. There is a need for clarity about the balance the government would like to achieve between a fair and common national system, and a locally determined system of provision. This could include a steer as to the policy parameters within which planning decisions should be taken.

24. There is currently some confusion in relation to 16-19 provision, for example. There is a widely held view that government supports separate arrangements, but there is no clear policy statement on the issue. Similarly, there is a lack of clarity as to whether the role of FE in delivery of HE should be expanded. Without a clear national framework, it is likely that the different interpretation and application of the *Success for All* proposals at the local level could result in widely variable systems of provision. If this is a desired outcome, it would be helpful if this were made explicit.

25. On a more specific point regarding the plans for a new area review framework, it is important to be clear about the relationship of the proposed new reviews to reviews that have already been conducted in many local LSC areas. OFSTED area reviews of 16-19 provision and local LSC commissioned area reviews will have already covered much of the ground that may be needed in the new framework. These will need to be built upon under new arrangements. The requirement for any further review will need to be seen to add value.

26. Planning to meet skills needs requires timely and accurate data about the nature of skills in demand in the local economy. There is a danger with over prescriptive planning models that attempt to micro-manage skills development, that they quickly become out of step with the reality of skills needs. Meeting skills needs involves both supply-side planning and demand-side take-up. Stimulating demand amongst employers and employees is a missing link in the strategy. Comprehensive proposals for securing employer engagement are necessary to ensure employers take advantage of the training on offer[2]. (This is discussed in further detail in paragraphs 52-63)

27. We welcome the development of closer links between the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the LSC. The development of closer links with HE becomes increasingly important as the contribution of FE to achieving HE participation rates is acknowledged. A key issue is the reality of a dual system of HE provision. HE provision in FE colleges and HE provision in HE institutions (HEIs) have their distinctive ethos, cultures, processes and funding. The burden the dual system places on colleges is felt most keenly in quality assurance where the different methods and focus of the two systems places considerable demands on colleges. We would encourage the two Councils to explore opportunities for reducing the bureaucracy faced by colleges offering both FE and HE provision, in particular with regard to quality assurance processes.

28. As an aid to achieving HE participation targets, the HE community could do more to raise awareness of HE study opportunities, particularly for non-traditional entrants who may be more attracted to HE courses in a less threatening FE setting. Similarly, greater progression from colleges to HEIs is more likely if there are compacts between colleges and universities whereby students are guaranteed places on HE courses or accepted on slightly lower points totals.

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[2] For further detail on this, see *Developing responsiveness in vocational education and training*, LSDA, 2001

Q. What further support is needed to enable colleges and other providers to review and develop their educational and training missions?

29. We very much support the attention given to provider mission in the strategy. In our view, the real value of institutional mission to education and training organisations has been obscured by requirements to develop mission statements primarily as part of the strategic planning process. Whilst this is an important element in strategic planning, the result has often been that mission statements become bland and generic and do not tend to inform the decision processes of the organisation. The development of an institutional mission should prompt genuine debate within organisations about the nature of their provision and its distinctiveness; the mission should then be evidenced in the everyday actions of all staff.

30. The benefits of a comprehensive mission development and review process need to be clearly articulated for the sector. A comprehensive process:

   ▪ enables providers to establish a **clear sense of purpose and direction**. Whilst there are limitations to this within a local LSC planning framework, there are also many opportunities whereby provider organisations are able to determine the range, distinctiveness and focus of their activity.
   ▪ **facilitates decision-making**. All key decisions relating to the development of the organisation should be consistent with the mission. This is particularly helpful in times of expansion or contraction. Where the mission is seen as a bureaucratic requirement rather than a management tool, decisions can be taken without reference to the mission, leading to strategic drift and lack of clarity about the core business of the organisation.
   ▪ assists in **marketing** the organisation and in communication with key stakeholders. Where an organisation is clear about its purpose and distinctiveness, it is easier to market its products and services and to tell others exactly what it is that it does.
   ▪ is an aid to **effective evaluation**. If the core purpose of an organisation is clear, it is easier to judge how effectively it is fulfilling its purpose.

31. It will be important to recognise the particular challenges faced by providers operating as autonomous organisations within a planned system. In this context, a clear understanding within the sector of government policy directions (as discussed in paragraphs 19-24) will be vital. Care will need to be taken to coordinate provider mission reviews with other local strategic planning processes.

32. Mission development is a mechanism for determining organisational purpose and will necessarily differ between niche and more general providers. It should also be recognised that many training providers may not have an explicit 'mission'. The guidance and support offered to

providers will need to take account of this and ensure that the exercise does not become a rigid process of drawing up a 'mission statement'. The true value of the process will be in focusing clearly on the organisation's 'reason to be'.

33. To realise the benefits of mission development and review, more specific guidance could be provided to providers. A key aspect of mission development is consultation with stakeholders. For FE colleges, key stakeholders are likely to be the local LSC, business and industry, the local community, learners, and staff. For others, important stakeholders might be universities, parents and feeder schools.

34. Developing an institutional mission while operating as part of a local system poses a unique challenge, and guidance on managing relationships with these stakeholders would be very valuable to providers. In particular, guidance on consultation strategies with the various stakeholder groups and how to balance the views of these different groups would enable a more consistent and robust approach to mission development. Consultation can, of course, lead to development of bland missions which accommodate all parties, and providers may need support in making sensitive political judgements about which views to prioritise.

35. Governors have a duty to establish the educational character of their college and determine strategic direction. The views of governors in developing and reviewing mission are crucial. It would be helpful to clarify for governors how they might work best with local LSCs to determine the distinctive contribution of the college within a planned system. Similarly, trustee and management committees of private and voluntary providers have responsibility for the strategic direction of their organisations and would also benefit from such guidance.

36. Providers could also benefit from support to assist them in ensuring that the mission drives decision-making and practice. As noted above, mission development could be interpreted as largely a paper exercise that does little more than inform a paragraph in the strategic plan or a strap line in the prospectus. For missions to act as strategic drivers they must inform daily actions and be evidenced in the actions of management, including the corporation in the case of colleges, and staff.

37. A further potential form of support to providers would be through funds for restructuring. Closing departments or sections and expanding areas of provision have implications for the profile of staff skills required. The availability of restructuring funds would allow for early retirement options, retraining opportunities and could help fund recruitment of additional (perhaps specialist) staff. These and other forms of exit and set-up costs could act as a disincentive to institutions wishing to undertake a radical review of provision.

Q. What factors should colleges and other providers take into account in focussing on what they do best?

38. The range of such factors should include:

- The policy priorities of the LSC, including those expressed through local strategic plans
- Assessments of performance (inspections, provider review, self assessment, area review)
- Views of stakeholders (see paragraph 33 above)
- Current skills and abilities of staff
- Availability of provision elsewhere (rural and geographic issues; proximity, strength and capacity of other providers)
- Costs of entry and exit. For example, it is costly to set up provision from scratch in terms of acquiring high tech equipment and specialist technology and support staff where there is no existing base to build on
- Patterns of learner demand, current and projected, as compared to labour market and local community development requirements
- Implications of restructuring and reconfiguring provision, including potential capital costs.

Q. Do you support the proposal that the LSC should develop a new planning framework for area reviews, and how can this best support the 14-19 agenda, basic skills provision, and meeting skills needs?

39. We support the development of a new framework as this will provide a common approach to reviews across local LSCs and enable clearer comparisons between areas. It should also enable a more efficient methodology as expertise in using and interpreting the framework develops. Earlier research undertaken by our predecessor organisations[3] in relation to issues of adequacy and sufficiency of provision may be helpful in devising a planning framework for area review.

40. The new framework should enable a specific and consistent focus across areas on important aspects of provision. Reviews should also enable the pattern of local provision to be tested against the government's policies for learning and skills. However, as stated earlier in our response (paragraphs 19-24), this will require a clear policy steer on those features of provision that the government would like to see emerging nationally.

Basic skills

41. With regard to basic skills and ESOL, the framework should aim to promote an allocation of roles and responsibilities between providers that encourages all organisations to contribute fully to the national strategy for basic skills. It needs to take into account the experience and specialisms of different providers, but also to acknowledge the costs of this area of

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[3] *Adequate and sufficient FE for young people,* FEDA, 1995; *Securing adequate provision for adult learners*, FEU, 1994

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work and the risks it involves in terms of recruitment, retention and achievement.

42. While basic skills and ESOL funding is subject to preferential weightings these do not fully compensate for the costs of offering small group provision and undertaking development work with disadvantaged communities and disaffected learners. Some basic skills and ESOL work is known to be more expensive, time-consuming and dependent on specialist skills than others. Planning would need to ensure that providers with skills and expertise in these more costly and risky types of provision are not disadvantaged by their commitment to this work in comparison with providers that concentrate on more traditional, institution-based provision.

43. Capacity building is crucial if the ambitious targets for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL are to be met. There is a need to define and fund roles for experienced providers to act as trainers, supporters and mentors for new providers. A strategic approach to attracting, recruiting, training and retaining more teachers is also essential.

14-19 agenda

44. Area review, as an LSC-led process, would be expected to focus primarily on post-16 provision, with responsibility for planning and funding provision for 14-16 year olds resting primarily with LEAs. Therefore, an overview of provision for 14-19 year olds requires a collaborative approach between LEAs and local LSCs. Such collaboration is already well-developed in many areas. It may therefore be helpful if the detailed national guidance on area review clarifies how the review of the 14-19 phase might be conducted to best effect. There may be a case for this being linked but distinct from LSC area review processes.

45. An area-wide approach would help to highlight the contribution of different institutions to a young person's opportunities. The vision of the Green Paper, *14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards* (DfES, 2002), refers to the possibility of young people accessing more than one organisation for their learning programme. Area reviews could be used to map cross-institutional arrangements and promote enhancement of opportunities for young people.

46. While wider opportunities within different institutions will be valuable for many young people, their pastoral support will need to be carefully managed. Area review processes should therefore engage closely with ConneXions. In addition, good practice by providers, for example identifying a 'home' institution, use of mentorship and personal advisors, will be key to ensuring young people benefit from new opportunities.

47. As stated earlier (paragraph 24), there is some ambiguity about the extent to which government wishes separate 16-19 institutions to be an option for all young people. Clarity on this issue would assist the area review

process.

48. LSC area review could further support the 14-19 agenda by mapping higher education opportunities to ensure adequate progression choices are available. Area review could be a stimulus for closer collaboration between LSC and HEFCE to secure appropriate progression opportunities (see also paragraphs 27-28).

Meeting skills needs

49. The framework for area reviews will need to be sensitive to the differences between assessing the extent to which provision is developing the skills and knowledge to support the current needs of the economy and employers - on a local, regional and national basis - and the need to develop provision to deliver the skills for the future. Predicting future skills needs is notoriously difficult. Our research[4] suggests that to be effective, there needs to be an increased capacity on the part of both planners and providers to understand emerging skills priorities.

50. However, we suggest it is also important to consider the wider context of adult learning. There is a widely recognised geographical disparity in the adult and community learning provision available, despite its importance for key government priorities such as regeneration and widening participation, and the LSC's responsibility to provide reasonable learning opportunities for adults. The area review process could be a mechanism for beginning to look at comparative levels of provision, and to establish a baseline upon which to build the system of adult learning.

51. It will be important, in doing this, to distinguish between the different purposes implied by the term 'adult learning'. LSDA has developed a typology of adult learning, suggesting four possible types of adult learning that might be identified within the LSC's remit:

- Formation (primary and secondary education) and second-chance education and training
- Skills and workforce development
- Learning for recreation and personal well-being
- Learning underpinning community regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.[5]

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[4] *Developing responsiveness in vocational education and training*, LSDA, 2001
[5] For more information on this suggested typology, see:
http://www.lsda.org.uk/pubs/dbaseout/download.asp?code=poltypoadlearn

Q. Do you agree with our proposals for improving the links between employers and providers? What further action should we take to ensure that employer and skill needs are met?

52. We broadly support the proposals outlined in the strategy for improving links between employers and providers.

53. We agree with the emphasis on building on and extending the good practice found in the Centres of Vocational Excellence. We noted in our research, *Searching for Excellence in FE Colleges* (LSDA 2001), the importance of strong and sustained links with the employer base relating to subject specialisms in the provision of vocational excellence. These should extend beyond a purchaser/supplier relationship to mutually beneficial partnerships. The influence of these relationships on provision was apparent in the investigation, and it was often colleges and companies working in partnership that initiated new, specialist provision.

54. With this in mind, we would emphasise the valuable contribution that providers have to offer, alongside local employers and RDAs, in the local LSCs' skills strategy planning.

55. A sound partnership between education providers and employers is the basis of an effective system of vocational learning. Much research has already been undertaken into barriers and disincentives to employer engagement, by bodies such as the Institute of Employment Studies and the National Skills Task Force, as well as LSDA[6]. Our new research project, *Reviewing good practice in employer engagement in work-related learning*, will review the impact of previous initiatives aimed at securing active employer involvement in work-related learning, suggest good practice principles and ways of taking this forward. Unlike other European countries, the UK does not have a shared concept of a social partnership for education and training.   There is a need to consider how such an approach, which is appropriate to the UK context, may be developed.

56. We have also investigated the mutual benefits to education providers and businesses that result from the direct involvement of business and industry in colleges and the impact of this on the FE curriculum[7]. Such reciprocal arrangements may also be beneficial in developing employer engagement.

57. We welcome the commitment to promoting industrial secondments for teachers and trainers in the sector. This is crucial to developing vocational excellence. Our enquiry, *Learning with Business* (FEDA, 1998), identified

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[6] See for example, *Promoting learning in small and medium-sized enterprises*, (FEDA, 1998); *How to work with small businesses* (LSDA, 2001); *How to work with microbusinesses* (LSDA, 2001); *Small Firm Development and the Role of Further Education Colleges* (SBRT/FEDA, 2000); *Partnerships for Skills: investing in training for the 21st century*, (LSDA, 2000); *Getting employers involved: improving work-based learning through employer links*, (LSDA, 2001); and *Working towards skills: perspectives on workforce development* (LSDA, 2002)
[7] *Business Associates in Colleges*, (FEDA, 1998)

the general exclusion of FE staff from the teacher placement scheme, largely due to the then TECs considering school staff to have greater priority because they did not have an industrial background. More recent research[8] showed secondments to industry were the most desired, but least available form of updating. Our work also suggests, however, that placements need to be purposeful and mutually beneficial if they are to significantly improve the capacity of FE staff.

58. Our publication, *Developing leading edge staff in FE colleges*, based on a large survey on the extent of vocational experience of staff in colleges, found that:

   ▪ Although individuals in further education are using a wide variety of ways of keeping themselves up to date in their vocational skills and knowledge, there is no systematic approach to updating vocational staff across the sector.
   ▪ The stock of teachers with significant and recent work experience in their vocational area is diminishing. Significant numbers of staff teaching in occupationally specific areas of FE colleges have not been employed directly in their industry for between 5 and 15 years. Securing work experience for these staff is an urgent priority.

59. Staff delivering vocational education and training need to be up to date in skills and knowledge appropriate to the level at which they are teaching. We suggested in our report that minimum expectations should be laid down. Providers should be required to demonstrate that staff delivering vocational education and training are competent and up-to-date as a condition of funding. We also recommended that opportunities for sharing staff training and updating with local employers should be considered.

60. Finally, we particularly welcome the commitment in *Success for All* to explore opportunities for opening up unit achievement and the feasibility of a credit-based approach. LSDA and its predecessor bodies (FEDA and FEU) have long argued the benefits of a nationally recognised system of credit encompassing all achievement offered within further education and beyond. We believe that this would support a number of government priorities, helping to bring about a step-change in workforce development and providing a stronger basis for engaging new learners and widening participation. It could provide a common currency for measuring the range of achievement, whether occupationally specific, vocational or academic, and whether nationally validated or locally customised.

61. The lack of a responsive qualifications framework, which can be speedily updated to accommodate emerging employer needs, has bedevilled the development of a vocational education and training system. A unit and credit-based system could meet the demand by employers for skills rather

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[8] *Developing leading edge staff in FE colleges*, (LSDA, 2001)

than qualifications[9] and assist providers in addressing business needs for customised and flexible skills mixes. A recent policy seminar jointly hosted by the Learning and Skills Research Centre and the Centre for Economic Performance concluded that:

- Greater use of a core and option approach, with a focussed core and more flexibility for companies to devise options for QCA approval which would fit with their work organisation, would enable Modern Apprenticeship frameworks to be better accommodated - especially within small companies
- There is a need to be able to record achievement incrementally to motivate learners and enable flexible completion and 'top-up'. This would also support mature workers to convert their NVQs or other qualifications into full Apprenticeships.

62. These issues apply equally to other employer-based qualifications requirements.

63. While we recognise there is concern about completion rates of initial vocational training by young people, this should not prevent development of a system which would greatly benefit employers, individuals and the country as a whole by promoting incremental accreditation of the workforce. Incentives for completion may assist this.

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[9] Identified widely in LSDA publications, for example *Promoting learning in small and medium-sized enterprise*, FEDA, 1998 and *Working towards skills*, LSDA, 2002; and in the Small Business Council Annual Report 2001-2002

Discussion issue 2: Achieving excellence in teaching and learning

Q. Do you agree that we should develop new teaching and learning frameworks for major curriculum areas? What should these include - eg teaching and assessment methods, syllabus content? How should we develop them?

64. We strongly support the recognition in the strategy that there needs to be a significant focus on the learning and teaching processes, as well as the operational frameworks within which colleges are operating. We also welcome the focus on subject areas and believe that teachers are motivated by materials and approaches that specifically address their area of expertise. The creation of a new Standards Unit focussed on teaching and learning gives renewed prominence to the role of teachers in their interactions with learners and we believe that it will be warmly welcomed by providers.

65. It is important that providers have a clear understanding of what is meant by a 'teaching and learning framework'. We would expect the frameworks to be a supportive tool, offering good practice principles, illustrated through exemplars and materials. Importantly, frameworks should not be viewed as prescriptive, or aimed at achieving standardisation of practices.

66. The method of developing the teaching and learning frameworks will also be critical in determining how it is received by the sector and the level of its success. In particular we believe that the process will need to encourage a sense of ownership by the profession, by drawing and building on their expertise. We therefore welcome the approach already being developed by the Strategy Unit of encouraging practitioner secondments from across the learning and skills sector.

67. The breadth of the learning and skills sector offers exciting opportunities to bring together the different traditions that exist and to explore best practice in different contexts. This should enable celebration of the sector's diversity and opportunities for developing new and innovative approaches which take advantage of the potential for synergy.

68. A model that might be useful to the Standards Unit was developed by FEDA (now LSDA), in the late 1990s. This programme, known as 'Spotlight on Learning', worked with staff in FE colleges to develop a series of good practice frameworks with exemplar materials in specific subject areas such as ESOL, English and Communication, Psychology and Engineering.

69. The Spotlight programme had three key features that we feel could be particularly appropriate to the development of teaching and learning frameworks by the Standards Unit. First, it was practitioner-led, creating high levels of ownership by practitioners; second it recognised the totality

of the learner experience, and was not limited to the formal teaching and learning process; third, it produced materials amenable to customisation for different contexts.

70. In the context of the new learning and skills system, the Spotlight approach would need to be adapted to take into account the unique features of work-based learning provision. Such an approach is based on agreed principles and good practice. While these may be well-developed in some disciplines, our evidence would suggest that they are far from being developed in others. We have a particular concern about work-based learning and advise that, in this context, good practice needs first to be nurtured and developed before it can be disseminated.

71. Equally, it cannot be assumed that teaching and learning frameworks which work for classroom-based learning can be easily transposed to a work-based learning context. Distinctive curriculum and pedagogic approaches need to be developed, which support effective teaching and learning in specific work based contexts.

72. It should also be recognised that development of teaching and learning frameworks is just the first stage of embedding quality. The process of transforming quality will require systematic support, with opportunities for practitioners to come together to develop understanding, capacity and ways of using the material.

73. In this regard, experience on our quality improvement programmes points to another factor that may need to be pro-actively addressed by the new unit. Whereas it is relatively easy for managers to leave their institutions, it is much more difficult for practitioners to be released to engage in development activity outside the institution. This is particularly acute in small providers. Innovative approaches will be needed therefore to secure the active engagement of practitioners across the sector.

74. The evidence base for post-16 teaching and learning is not robust, a fact attested to by such authoritative sources as John Bransford in the US, and Charles Desforges in the UK. In his review of reviews of literature on teaching and learning for the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Teaching and Learning Research Programme, Desforges states: '*In most curriculum areas and fields there are very few evidence based studies linking teaching to learning.*' Another recent review states that '*a key conclusion … was that we know very little about 'what works*'[10].

75. There is, however, a growing body of evidence in the school sector that can help to set the research agenda for post-16 provision, and this may prove valuable to the Standards Unit. David Hopkins and John Hattie, amongst others, have produced summaries of research which include general principles of good practice whose evidence base and potential for

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[10] *Review of Current Pedagogic Research and Practice in the Fields of Post Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning*, The Tavistock Institute (for the ESRC), 2002

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post-16 learners warrant further investigation. Leading examples include the nature and role of formative assessment, and the practice of setting clear and appropriate learning goals.

76. We welcome the proposal of reviewing what qualities and factors promote continuous improvement in teaching and learning particularly in relation to methods of delivery and assessment. Many practitioners and researchers would argue that some assessment methods actually create barriers to effective (ie deep as opposed to surface) learning, whilst others are truly enabling[11]. We believe that this area should be a priority for the new Standards Unit.

Q. What should be the priority areas for these frameworks and what should be the criteria for choosing these?

77. The purpose of developing new frameworks is to improve post-16 teaching and learning. We know that the way in which improvement is effected depends on the nature of the subject, but we also know that it depends on such other key variables as the learning environment and learner cohort. The post-16 sector is made up of many and various learning environments (SMEs, community centres, FE colleges, etc) and learner cohorts (16-19 year olds in FE colleges, 21-81 year olds in ACL, young apprentices, adult male prisoners etc) and due account should be taken of their distinguishing features, and their impact on teaching and learning, when designing frameworks for good practice.

78. Inspection reports could be used as an initial tool for determining priority areas for framework development. This information can be enhanced, however, by an examination of other sources, including retention and achievement, learner perceptions and other ISR data.

79. In addition, the development of generic 'learning to learn' skills should also be a priority. This will enhance the effectiveness of learning that may arise in a range of contexts – in work, independent learning, classroom learning, community learning, formal or informal learning – and could therefore have a significant impact on quality of outcomes for learners across the sector.

80. We suggest that other factors for consideration in selecting curriculum areas should include:

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[11] For example, see: Gibbs, G. (1992) *Improving the quality of Student Learning*, Technical and Educational Services, Bristol; Marton, F. (1984) 'Approaches to Learning' in Marton, F. Hounsell, D. Entwistle, N J (eds) *The Experience of Learning*, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh; Bates, I. (1998) 'Resisting Empowerment and Realizing Power: an exploration of aspects of the GNVQ', *Journal of Education and Work*, vol 11, no 2; Boud, D. (1988) (Tertiary Education Research Centre) *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*, Kogan Page, London

- Economies of scale - by focussing on the major curriculum areas (eg maths, science, construction and engineering) maximum impact can be achieved in the short-term
- Emerging curriculum areas where there is little available in terms of exemplar resources
- Areas of skills shortages in the economy, creating a need for new qualifications and curricula.

81. Our experience in this area shows that staff are generally highly motivated to improve their practice and adapt to the changing client groups, different modes of delivery, changing subject and pedagogic knowledge.

Q. What more should we do to extend the use of e-learning and ICT to maximise the potential of e-learning and make it an option for all learners?

82. The profile of e-learning has been raised over recent months through the report from DELG and the E-Learning Task Force and by the creation of the E-Learning Strategy Unit. This suggests that we may be in a position to move beyond capacity building in this area towards real development. However, public understanding of what is meant by e-learning remains limited.

83. The term 'e-learning' is used in a number of ways, to describe a range of pedagogy, materials and technology. Our working definition, on the basis of which we comment here, is that **e-learning is the use of electronic technology to deliver, support and enhance teaching and learning.** It can therefore include:

- Learning in the presence of a teacher, trainer or lecturer, whose delivery method is supported and enhanced by electronic media and materials
- Learning from a remote location through direct interaction with a mentor/teacher via electronic media (such as videoconferencing, e-mail, telephone, interactive television etc)
- Independent learning via an electronic medium with access to on-line support.

84. We suggest that discussion about the development of e-learning and wider use of ICT would be assisted by use of such a definition. Currently, confusion about what constitutes e-learning clouds understanding and debate. For example, the ambition that e-learning should be an option for all learners needs to be interpreted in terms of a widely agreed and understood definition if there is to be meaningful discussion of how it is to be achieved.

85. There is no doubt that teachers and learners are increasingly using technology in education and training. Interest and investment in e-learning

are growing, and public agencies and commercial suppliers are responding accordingly. However, it is important not to overemphasise the growth in e-learning. The EU L-CHANGE project[12] forecasts on e-Learning expenditure in Education and Training suggest that e-Learning is expected to reach around 10% of school and university expenditure in 2005 and then to progress up to a limit of 30% in the following twenty years.

86. Growth rates of e-Learning expenditure, however, are expected to be much higher in the training (institutional, but above all corporate), informal learning and, even more significantly, in the home segment. Here 10% of expenditure is estimated to be already for e-Learning and the 'ceiling' of 50% is expected to be reached around 2010.

87. We therefore welcome the commitment to extend ICT support initiatives more widely. There is already much good practice in the post-16 sector on which to build, and a range of bodies with strong track records. It is vital that the accumulated evidence, research and expertise provide the basis for systematic development of e-learning and ICT capacity across the sector. We urge that a coherent approach be developed to capture the potential synergy and build an alliance of all key players to take forward developments. Ufl, Becta, JISC, UKERNA and NILTA, as well as the LSC and LSDA, have major contributions to make. We, like other key players, would welcome opportunities to share our experience and portfolio of work more widely as part of a strategic approach.

88. From LSDA's work, we would like to highlight:

- The importance of 'blended' approaches which use a variety of approaches and media which suit individuals and circumstances. Care will be needed to ensure that while e-learning is an option, the precise form is appropriate for the individual learner's circumstances. The need for flexible blends is particularly important given the diversity it the sector.
- The potential for adapting materials and exemplars, largely developed through work with colleges, to make them relevant and more widely accessible across the sector.
- The need for a coherent curriculum framework based on emerging credit-based approaches. Large-scale application and use of e-learning urgently requires a framework able to record and accredit achievement by e-learners in a variety of differently sized 'chunks' over time. As we argued earlier (paragraph 60), the development of credit-based approaches would also help providers to address business and individual needs more flexibly.
- The need to develop the pedagogy of e-learning, based on evidence-based research. The Learning and Skills Research Centre (LSRC) is currently working with Birkbeck, University of London, on research

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[12] *European Observatory on IST - Related Change in Learning Systems, IST-2000-26226, Yearly Report 2001/2002* (in draft)

exploring hybrid models of learning where the use of face-to-face teaching and learning is combined with the use of computer mediated technologies[13].

89. It should be recognised that available research evidence indicates that various elements are necessary for the effective introduction, management and implementation of e-learning. Making large amounts of electronic learning material available will not produce results unless:

- institutions have a strategic commitment and approach to ILT
- technology is used appropriately to match curriculum design and individual learning styles
- staff are trained in the use of ILT and skilled in searching for appropriate materials and do so before making particular choices
- staff are given opportunities to create and/or adapt learning materials.

90. In addition to the above, we have proposed in our responses to the consultations on *Curriculum Online* (DfEE 2001), *Culture Online* (DCMS, 2001) and the BBC Digital Curriculum proposals (DCMS, 2002):

- development of a framework for endorsement of granular materials (small, 'bite-sized' units) which encourages diversity of choice
- establishing standards (both pedagogical and technical) for materials
- institutional encouragement to purchase materials that meet the approved standards
- commissioning materials in specialist areas or areas of demand
- development of a 'shareware' culture whereby suppliers are encouraged to let providers of education and training trial materials before purchase, a concept that has been proven to work for the software industry
- encouragement of the free sharing of materials produced by teachers and trainers themselves
- an endorsement framework applying to broadcasters when delivery includes distribution of materials over a multiplicity of channels, including digital TV, to ensure that the standards are being met.

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[13] For further information look at the LSRC website at www.lsrc.ac.uk

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Discussion issue 3: Do you agree with our proposals for developing the teachers and leaders of the future?

91. We support the proposals outlined in the paper for developing teachers and leaders across the sector.

Developing teachers

92. Information about qualification levels in Further Education colleges confirms that teachers in the sector are under-qualified. For other parts of the sector for which no comprehensive information is available, such as private and voluntary sector providers, the indications are that under-qualification is even more substantial.

93. This under-qualification and the corresponding variations in level of professional development, both in terms of initial training and in maintaining and updating skills, is likely to be contributing to the widely varying quality of provision.

94. Moving forward on proposals to develop teachers and trainers of the future is therefore clearly of critical importance in achieving the objectives of *Success for All*, and the LSDA is broadly in agreement with the steps taken to date and the proposals for the future.

95. In particular, the requirement for all teachers and trainers to have qualifications is already contributing and will contribute further to the professionalisation of the sector. Support for these requirements through the Standards Fund is an important and ongoing key strategy, which will need to be maintained and developed throughout the learning and skills sector.

96. It will be important to evaluate the impact of proposals for developing teachers, to monitor the take-up of teaching qualifications and their contribution to raising quality and standards. Standard Individualised Record (SIR) data collected by providers is the primary source for determining levels of FE staff teaching qualifications across England and we therefore support the LSC's intention to review the SIR in 2002/03. In its current form, SIR data is too unreliable to be used for assessing the impact of government funding to support teacher training and qualifications.

Developing leaders

97. We agree with the premise that 'Good teachers and trainers flourish where there is strong and visionary leadership, and they deserve sound and supportive management' (*Success for All*, paragraph 45). This view is also supported by inspection evidence and by evidence from the schools sector of a positive correlation between organisational climate and organisational performance (Hay Group). Other indicators include the messages from

our staff satisfaction survey[14], which identified a positive correlation between staff satisfaction and organisational performance; and some indication of a positive correlation between gaining the Investors in People award (IiP) and organisational performance.

98. There is also some indication that leader development contributes to organisational performance – for example, the positive correlation between participation in the principals' development programme (led by LSDA with Hay Group and Warwick University), and good inspection grades for leadership[15]. Gaining a deeper understanding of the impact of leaders and their development on learner achievement and experiences is one of the tasks for LSDA currently and will be central for the new Leadership College.

99. Providing professional opportunities which are attractive to the different parts of the sector is also important. A survey involving almost 2,000 leaders and managers right across the learning and skills sector conducted by LSDA this summer, reveals that while only one third hold recognised management qualifications almost half feel that having a management qualification is important. While common concerns do exist, the survey also shows that leaders and managers in colleges, the work-based sector and adult and community learning often have quite distinct professional development priorities and preferences.

Leadership College

100. We welcome the leadership college proposals and endorse the overwhelming support from the sector for its establishment.

101. Our vision for the college is that it should be a leading edge centre of excellence in leadership and management with a national and international reputation. It should be well-led, informed by practitioners, and should have a strategic and coherent approach to leadership and management development which actively promotes diversity and innovative curriculum delivery.

102. The college should offer a comprehensive suite of leadership development programmes which contribute to the development of excellence for new, aspiring and established leaders and managers in FE colleges; in work-based learning and adult and community learning providers; in higher education; and in those organisations which support, fund and monitor the providers of learning.

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[14] *Listening to Staff*, LSDA, 2001

[15] Reported in 'Assessing impact' – article by Graham Peeke, Director of Professional and Organisational Development in *Briefing*, LSDA, September 2002. The article states that: '76 college inspection results (excluding specialist colleges) have been published over the last year since July 2001. Of the 38 colleges that were rated 'good', 26 of those principals (about 68%) had attended the programmes. Four colleges were rated very good in terms of leadership and management and all four of these principals had attended'.

103.	As we argued in our response to the DfES discussion document '*Raising Standards: Training and Development for Leaders and Managers*' (April 2002), the professional development opportunities offered should:

- address all tiers of leadership and management
- show flexibility and variety in a range of innovative curriculum delivery approaches, so as to allow for blended learning
- be accessible locally and regionally as well as nationally
- build on existing good practice
- combine sector-specific development with opportunities to learn, work and network with leaders and managers across the public, private and voluntary sectors
- be an information hub and platform for networking and sharing best practice.

104.	Of critical importance also is the particular role of governors of colleges and their equivalents in other organisations in leading and contributing to the vision of excellent provision by organisations rich in diversity. LSDA's extensive work with college governors and clerks of corporations has identified a number of key factors which have the potential to strengthen the governance of colleges. They include the following:

- Governance should be seen as an integral element of college leadership
- Much good practice exists which needs more effective dissemination
- Boards need to develop a culture of acting as 'critical friend'
- There is a need for a strategic approach to training and development for governors and clerks[16].

105.	Given their responsibility for determining the educational character and mission of colleges, the role of governors is particularly important in contributing to meeting needs and improving choices since, as argued above (paragraph 35), clarity about purpose and mission is critical in this context. There will need to be attention paid also to the professional development of boards of directors, trustees, and management committee members who play equivalent roles in relation to private and voluntary sector learning providers.

106.	Current difficulties in recruitment and retention of high calibre leaders in provider institutions suggests there is a need to accelerate the process of professional and career development. A fast-track approach has the potential, as part of strategic human resource planning, to promote diversity and to combine 'social justice with a skilled and confident workforce'[17]. It is however critical that such an approach is fair, effective and credible. Selection criteria must be clear and transparent and set within a positive, inclusive and supportive culture.

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[16] Taken from LSDA response to *Raising Standards: Training and Development for Leaders and Managers*, LSDA, April 2002
[17] Ivan Lewis MP, FENTO conference, October 2001

107. One initiative currently being piloted, provides an example of an approach to fast-tracking which has the potential to promote diversity rather than elitism. This is the LSC-sponsored strategic initiative to support the professional development of black staff in the learning and skills sector, which springs from the work of the Commission for Black Staff and the Network for Black Managers.

Q. How should we develop a better qualified workforce in the sector?

108. The learning and skills sector includes learning providers across the whole spectrum, from small organisations with few resources to much larger organisations with substantial professional development infrastructures. Strategic workforce development needs to take account of this, and of the wide range of teaching, training, support and leadership roles, occupied by people working in busy and complex environments. Workforce development opportunities therefore need to be relevant, accessible, inclusive, motivating, and transferable. This has a number of implications:

Innovative delivery of professional development

109. There will need to be further development of innovative approaches to the delivery of professional development and qualifications. The need for a more strategic approach to human resource planning and development has already been identified[18].

110. A strategic approach to human resource development, together with a recognition of the value of the blend of formal and informal learning, characterises effective professional development. Human resource development professionals, as well as other intermediaries such as Union Learning Representatives, have the potential to play an important part here. As well as ICT-based and e-learning, examples of the variety of possible approaches include other individual and group development activities, work shadowing, reviews with managers and colleagues, 360 degree feedback, mentoring, coaching, secondment, peer learning sets, taking on specific projects or responsibilities, and job rotation.

111. Whatever approaches are available, professional development of all staff needs to be encouraged by the development of a reflective practitioner approach for all employees including part-time staff, for whom realistic access to professional development has often been more limited. Development opportunities also need to foster the sharing of learning in sector-wide networks and other interactions. Modest additional resourcing here could be very cost effective in providing a rich mix of shared professional development experiences and a catalyst for the more rapid integration of the learning and skills sector.

[18] See for example, Walker E, Bett D, Dominey J and Goulding G, *The Effective Management of Part-Time Lecturers*, FEDA, 2000;

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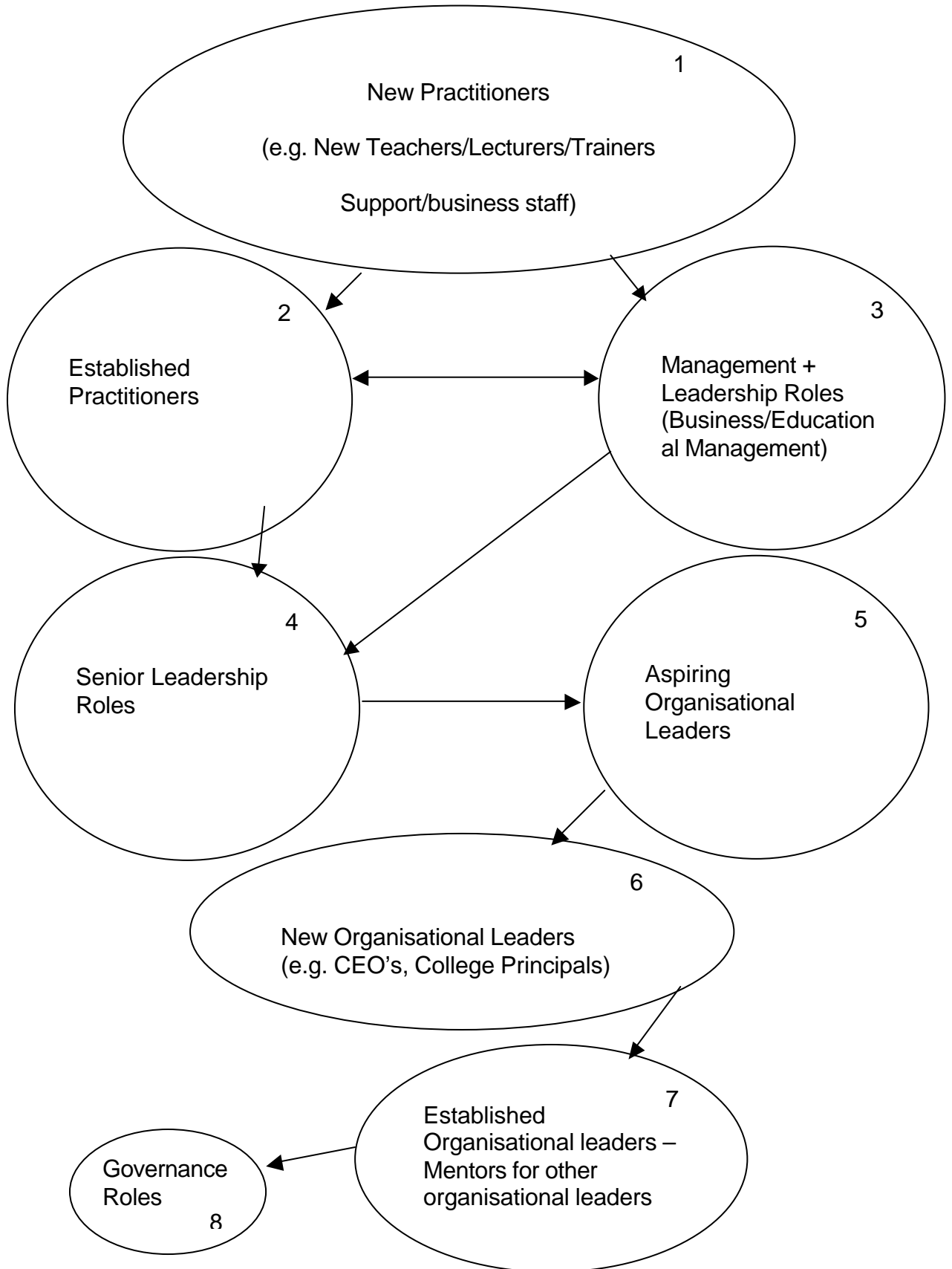C:\TEMP\Success for all1.doc

Sector Skills Council

112.   Workforce development needs to take place in a context which is relevant to professional responsibilities and meaningful in terms of the career development of those involved – it needs to meet the needs of both organisations and individuals. Important in achieving this is the development of strategic and coherent frameworks for professional development informed by appropriate occupational standards. In our response to the discussion document, *Raising Standards – Training and Development for Leaders and Manager*, we illustrated how organisational roles within the learning and skills sector might be represented in a framework to enable career progression, succession planning and integrated professional development (see Figure 1).

113.   Such a framework needs to sit within the context of the work of a Sector Skills Council which is able to build on the work of FENTO, ENTO and other NTOS to establish mechanisms to promote comprehensive and coherent workforce development, as indicated in the paper, *Meeting the sector skills and productivity challenge*' (DfES, 2001).

114.   There is an urgent need for the early establishment of a Sector Skills Council for the post-16 education sector to coordinate and provide a reference point for the range of workforce development initiatives, so that momentum is not lost. We very much support the ongoing work by FENTO, HESDA and now the Association of Learning Providers to establish a Sector Skills Council covering colleges, HE institutions and work-based training providers.

Diversity

115.   Any new initiatives provide opportunities to promote diversity or reinforce the status quo. The findings of the Commission for Black Staff (July 2002) provide evidence of significant under-representation of black staff in many roles in FE colleges.   This represents significant loss of potential productivity. There are indications that equivalent issues arise in other parts of the learning and skills sector, and that women, those with disabilities and others are also under-represented at higher levels.   The promotion of equality and diversity in workforce development should contribute significantly to meeting both these agendas.

116.   In practical terms, there are a number of actions that could be promoted by different partners, by government bodies and provider organisations in the sector. For example:

- Ensuring involvement of under-represented groups on relevant bodies such as Sector Skills Councils and the board of the leadership college
- Supporting and providing resources for positive action initiatives
- Ensuring that equality and diversity are part of organisational core values and practical steps are identified to translate policy into practice

Figure 1
Organisational Roles in the Learning and Skills Sector

New Practitioners

(e.g. New Teachers/Lecturers/Trainers

Support/business staff)

1

Established
Practitioners

2

Management +
Leadership Roles
(Business/Education
al Management)

3

Senior Leadership
Roles

4

Aspiring
Organisational
Leaders

5

New Organisational Leaders
(e.g. CEO's, College Principals)

6

Established
Organisational leaders –
Mentors for other
organisational leaders

7

Governance
Roles

8

26

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- Ensuring that data gathering and analysis on equality and diversity is part of core performance monitoring systems
- Committing adequate resources, and reviewing performance and setting new targets over time
- Effective communication and consultation with key stakeholder groups.

117. Consideration could be given to developing harder targets and impact measures for equality and diversity as part of the proposed institutional floor targets.

Rewards

118. Rewards are potentially very helpful in supporting the effective implementation of workforce development. Reward in the form of increased pay can provide motivation to participate in development and be an incentive to perform well and to achieve development goals. As it is a recognition of staff effort and achievement, it can increase self-esteem and so contribute to a culture of confidence and success.

119. Focus group research[19] undertaken before the launch of the Teaching Pay Initiative (TPI) found a high degree of consensus amongst college leaders that the desired outcomes of the TPI, in combination with other initiatives, were: improved student achievement; better learning experiences for students; and a professional workforce of well-motivated, well-qualified and appropriately skilled teachers, teaching to a high standard across the whole range of the curriculum

120. However, although additional pay was identified in this focus group research as an important factor in contributing to the raising of standards, other factors, in particular time to 'do the job properly', were identified as at least as important. One way of helping to secure more time is by relieving staff shortages. This also reduces one of the barriers to professional development. The additional financial support available from September is to be welcomed in this respect. It will provide much-needed practical help and the resources to address recruitment and retention problems.

Q. What else needs to be done to ensure that teachers, trainers, support staff and the leaders and managers of the sector can be creative, professional and successful?

121. People are more likely to be creative, professional and successful if they:

- are clear about their roles and how they contribute to achieving excellence within the context of their institution's mission
- feel valued, included, and rewarded for their contribution

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[19] Unpublished Focus Group research for DfES, 2001

- see themselves as professionals with a degree of autonomy, status and a career structure providing positive options for progression
- have a workload which is busy and challenging while allowing time for professional development and a healthy work-life balance
- have enough resources to work effectively
- are supported in opportunities to develop working relationships and a greater understanding of the work of other types of learning providers within the sector.

Clarity about roles and contributions

122. Within the context of clear organisational mission and purpose, clarity about roles and contributions and related professional development is supported by frameworks such as Investors in People (IiP). This emphasises the importance of continuing to promote the philosophy which underpins the IiP standard; and of a degree of continuity in roles and in organisational development. Further endorsement for this view comes from the work of the Hay Group with leaders and managers. This suggests that a coaching style combined with clarity about high standards is very effective in contributing to excellent performance.

Rewards

123. The focus on rewarding teachers, trainers and leaders has been and continues to be a high priority. However, there continue to be relative disparities in pay levels across the education sector and between different parts of the learning and skills sector. Feedback from the sector suggests that further consideration of this issue would be helpful.

Professionals with a degree of status and career structure

124. There is more to do here in establishing a professional body for the sector, and in gaining an overall picture of the range of professional bodies which support or could potentially support staff in organisational roles throughout the sector. The work of sector skills councils, professional associations, trade unions, employer bodies and others will be important in raising the profile of professionalism in the sector.

125. The document makes specific reference to the positive impact of strong and visionary leadership on good teachers and trainers. While staff in these roles are clearly critical in the delivery of excellence, the role of support staff is also vital. Their inclusion in professional development opportunities and value and recognition in terms of rewards, career structure and valuing by leaders needs to be given a high priority. Those establishing and developing the new and recent initiatives, including sector skills councils, the leadership college, reward structures, and professional bodies need to think holistically about the whole workforce in a strategic, inclusive and far-sighted approach to human resource planning for both now and the future.

Workload and resources

126.   Initiatives to reduce bureaucracy and staff shortages need further developing, although there is some welcome progress – for example, in the college sector, the conversion of many hourly paid posts to fractional appointments has reduced casualisation of labour and increased the capacity of staff to work effectively. The additional payments referred to in *Success for All* should also help by reducing staff shortages.

127.   In developing approaches to resourcing and processes that promote excellence, attention needs to continue to be given to the rationalisation of procedures and frameworks; to the workload consequences for <u>all </u>staff; and to the resource implications. There are particular difficulties for small providers working with local communities in dealing with multiple accountability mechanisms.

Developing greater understanding between providers

128.   Interactions between staff from different types of providers have the potential to produce a creative synergy from the blending of different perspectives which can be a real catalyst to innovative development. Work needs to continue in the direction of supporting and resourcing such interactions.

Discussion issue 4: A framework for quality and success

Q. What are your views on the proposals for establishing institutional improvement targets (and floor targets)?

129.   We support the proposals for establishing institutional targets and floor targets in principle. Institutional targets should be comparable for providers with similar profiles in terms of their learners and local circumstances. Setting floor targets, stating an expected minimum level of performance, will be more complex in the new learning and skills sector. We suggest that, initially, differentiated targets should be set for the different parts of the sector, with a timescale agreed for a process of convergence to a universal set of floor targets.

130.   A few key performance indicators, drawing on the government's success criteria outlined in paragraph 10 of *Success for All,* should be the starting point for the floor targets. These should take account of and promote the diversity of the sector and its students, and support widening participation and lifelong workplace learning as well as performance measured through qualifications.

131.   We would caution against an over-rigid imposition of targets on individual providers. Targets should not presume a degree of accuracy that is spurious and should be stretching but achievable. Providers should have incentives for sustaining continuous improvement, not just be set top-down targets. Therefore while we see a role for performance targets for individual providers, we particularly welcome the greater emphasis on improving pedagogical practice, including where appropriate the formative use of value-added data to set targets for individual learners. (This is explored further in response to the next question.) This is an effective way of ensuring sustained general improvement in learner achievement rates.

132.   Retention rates of colleges in the upper quartile are now high and attempts to improve them further may have negative effects on learners who may be pressured to "stay at all costs". It should also be recognised that reforms to the curriculum and qualifications framework (whether AS levels or modern apprenticeships) may cause a temporary dip in learner achievement rates that is largely beyond the control of individual providers.

Continuous improvement
133.   We believe that the focus of the strategy should be on enhancing the capacity for improvement, rather than on increasing accountability. We believe that self-assessment for continuous improvement should remain a key part of the strategy and that factors in institutional culture and leadership which inhibit change should be recognised and addressed.

134.   Targets will sharpen up providers' plans, but it will be important that these are owned by staff, if they are to have an impact on processes and behaviour in their organisations. If they are externally imposed, they are

less likely to be effective. Adding to the administrative burden and focusing on the quality of systems, rather than quality itself, will not prompt improvement. Evidence suggests that work based learning adapted to a compliance rather than an improvement culture under TECs, and it can be argued that over-bureaucratic systems caused providers to devote considerable efforts in directions that were ineffective in raising quality and achievement.

135. Increasing the challenge to providers must be matched with support for improvement, particularly for weaker providers. We welcome the extension of the Standards Fund and practical support to all parts of the sector.

136. It is not yet clear how institutional targets will align with local LSCs' strategic planning and their own targets. Work to examine how this should be handled would be helpful.

Intervention

137. Criteria applied to determine intervention must be fair, consistent and transparent to providers. However we recognise that the nature of intervention will depend on context. For example, in some circumstances, lack of availability of provision in the local area will lead to improvement strategies being implemented, whereas in other circumstances, an abundance of provision may mean that closure of provision is an option. The needs and options available to learners should be the paramount consideration.

138. We support the statement (*Success for All,* paragraph 51) that the primary responsibility for quality lies with the provider. However the LSC will be aware that providers are less likely to be openly self-critical if they may be penalised for this. The document says very little about how providers will 'establish and sustain a culture of continuous improvement based on self assessment and development planning' (paragraph 1). LSDA's quality improvement support programmes, funded by the DfES and LSC, have developed expertise on strategies that work in different kinds of colleges. In order to embed self-improvement cultures in the adult and community and work based learning sectors these strategies need to be adapted to the specific context and student body with whom providers are working[20].

Clarity of roles

139. Understanding the relationship between the quality roles of the LSC and the inspectorates still remains problematic for providers. It will be important that, in particular, the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), Ofsted and the LSC align their frameworks and their requests for data and that they distinguish their relative roles in quality monitoring and quality improvement. This will help to minimise the confusion and administrative burden to which providers are subjected.

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[20] See Stanton, G. *Lessons learned on raising quality and achievement*, LSDA, 2001

Q. Do you agree with our proposals for developing value-added measures? How might we develop these?

140. The development of value-added measures will be welcomed by the majority of learning providers and their staff.

141. The term 'value-added' is generally used in three distinct but related ways:

   ▪ a statistical measure of distance travelled between entry and exit qualifications, used in particular to judge the distance that individuals travel between GCSE and A Level against national performance (eg. the A Level Information System – ALIS – measure developed by Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon at Durham University)
   ▪ the use of these statistical measures as the basis for learners and teachers to set their own targets to improve performance
   ▪ broader measures of learning gain through the setting of learning goals which can measure a range of outcomes other than qualifications. These may include skills or personal development or performance goals.

142. Much authoritative opinion regards the 'raw results' performance tables, currently unadjusted for value-added, as having questionable validity to inform judgements about:

   ▪ which institution would be likely to maximise the achievement at 18 of any one individual student, and
   ▪ the relative success of institutions in their efforts to maximise the achievements at 18 of the students they admit at 16.

143. We have strongly supported the principle, and generally supported the detail, of the developing proposals to include robust statistical value-added data in performance tables. Comparisons made solely on the basis of 'raw scores' are likely to undervalue the performance of institutions with high proportions of disadvantaged learners, and to result in an over-favourable view of those that are 'coasting'. Over time, we feel that the inclusion of value-added measures in the performance tables is likely to enable users to arrive at fairer judgements.

144. It is important to note, however, that, with the exception of progression from GCSE/GNVQ to A/AS level, there is insufficient evidence that the correlations between input and output measures are strong enough to produce a statistically valid measure of value-added, as described in the first application above. Even with the progressive introduction of indicators of value-added, limitations remain, especially where the intention is to use them as a basis for inter-provider comparisons. The extent of the statistical margin of error means that in practice it would not be possible

reliably to separate many providers from each other. In these cases it could be dangerous to make judgements based on the apparent rankings.

145. Nevertheless, we believe that the tools of value-added measurements can be used very effectively to improve individual, and therefore overall, performance. There is now a considerable body of evidence to indicate that, sensitively handled, tutoring with target setting for individual learners, based on their prior attainment, both raises and sustains achievement rates.

146. It is important to give due recognition to the value of a broad range of achievements in lifelong learning. Given the diversity of starting points and goals and types of provision in the sector as a whole, it will not be feasible to develop robust statistical measures across the sector, particularly where there is no measurable prior attainment, and/or where there are no qualification outcomes. However, this must not lead to this provision being de-valued relative to more formal outcomes.

147. In some instances, indicators based on learner satisfaction may provide a viable alternative. We have found that there is a statistically valid correlation between student satisfaction measures (in 2002 we are analysing around 100,000 individual student returns) and retention data. This is an area where methodologies could be strengthened through further research.

Q. Do you agree that greater autonomy and flexibility should be provided to top performing providers? What benefits should flow from becoming a top performer?

148. We would support reducing the frequency of inspections where organisations have rigorous quality systems, a track record of meeting standards and respond quickly to failures. This approach to quality assurance is widespread in many sectors. A 'lighter touch' inspection regime would be a means of cutting unnecessary bureaucracy, and would be viewed positively by providers.

149. The identification of centres of excellence and Beacon providers can have a negative impact on the reputation of neighbouring institutions and care must be taken that this does not reduce opportunity and choice for learners.

150. It is important to share good practice, not just excellent practice, across the post-16 sector, and genuine cross-sectoral sharing should be promoted. Dissemination in itself does not necessarily improve practice and a more systematic approach is required. Providers need help in adapting and embedding others' practice so that it is fit for purpose in order to contextualise the learning and change the way they operate. In

addition, the experience of our quality improvement programmes is that providers often need support in change processes.

151.   LSDA programmes, such as CoVE implementation and Raising Quality and Achievement, have developed a range of strategies and materials appropriate to different providers, and we are currently researching how good practice is spread effectively within, not just between, providers.

Further information

LSDA's responses are coordinated by the Policy and Communications Unit in collaboration with relevant expert staff.

For further information on the issues discussed in this response please contact:
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