



Work Based Learning:

Progression Strategies and Support Mechanisms for Work Based Learning Providers

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Acknowledgements

This report has been produced for the Learning and Skills Council East Midlands by EMFEC. It draws on case study material examining the ways in which progression strategies and associated support mechanisms for providers and learners are developed. EMFEC acknowledges and thanks all those who contributed to the case studies.

About EMFEC

EMFEC is a registered company, limited by guarantee with charitable status. Established in 1992, following incorporation of colleges of Further Education, EMFEC is an independent and neutral organisation whose existence is underpinned by the objective to help its customers, members and stakeholders to achieve excellence. Initially focusing support on the Further Education (FE) sector, this has expanded in recent years to include all providers of learning and skills.

EMFEC firmly believes that the best and highest quality provision for learners can be more effectively achieved through partnership and the sharing of professional knowledge, intelligence, experience and expertise. The company is uniquely placed to carry out this role. EMFEC:

- is a business that receives no direct funding or grants. The company understands the imperatives that impact on skills development and engagement with the business that its customers and stakeholders support.
 - works for, and with, the learning and skills professionals. Its services are developed and delivered with real understanding of the needs and issues of the learning and skills sector
 - delivers a range of services through an internal team of staff with direct experience of working in the learning and skills environment – in colleges, schools, awarding bodies, training providers and professional bodies. This team of staff is supported by an extensive network of Associate Trainers, all of whom are skilled practitioners in their area of expertise, bringing with them innovation, relevance and proven solutions to address the needs of customers and stakeholders
 - represents the learning and skills sector at a local, regional and national level and, by being in touch with key decision makers, gathers intelligence to ensure that its customers are aware of, and understand, current initiatives and thinking.
- EMFEC has led and supported a number of national and regional research projects and has established a reputation for providing an objective and balanced view. Examples of research and associated reports published by the Company include:
- Illustrations of Different Local Organisational Structures for Collaborative Delivery of Post-14 Education and Training (2003) - commissioned by the National LSC and (the then) Department for Education and Skills
 - Investigating Collegiate Funding (2004) - test bed development commissioned by Birmingham and Solihull LSC and delivered in partnership with Principal Learning Ltd
 - Vocational Skills for the Engineering and Manufacturing Sector in Birmingham and Solihull (2005) – research and initial feasibility study commissioned by Birmingham and Solihull LSC
 - Discretionary Funding (2006) – commissioned by Birmingham and Solihull LSC and delivered in partnership with Principal Learning Ltd.

Terms of Reference

This report was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), East Midlands, to inform the potential future development of progression strategies and associated support mechanisms for work based learning providers and learners.

In order to establish terms of reference, it was important to define work-based learning and to understand the perceptions attached to the terminology. For the purposes of this report, the following considerations and interpretations were applied:

- the nationally agreed definitions used by Aimhigher best clarify the type of learning to which this report applies and, equally, those which are outside its scope.

Work based learning – “involves significant elements of work-based assessment, may involve attending courses in FE or HE (in the workplace or on training providers’ premises), is focused on the needs of the employer and employee, is for people in employment, and can be at all National Qualification Framework and HE levels. Qualifications include NVQs, professional body qualifications, Apprenticeships and Foundation Degrees.”

It should be noted that work based learning, as defined above, may be delivered by a Private Training Provider, a Further Education College (FEC), a Higher Education Institution (HEI) or an employer.

It is this type of learning which was within the scope of research and production of this report.

Work-related or vocational provision – “is largely taught in FECs or HEIs and may involve a period of work or professional experience. Qualifications include vocational GCSEs, BTEC Certificates and Diplomas, some Foundation Degrees and vocational degrees. Part-time learners may be in work,

but, the typical learner is 16-19 years old and studying full-time in school or college before progressing to employment or higher education.”

This type of learning is not addressed by the report.

- There is evidence that work based learning is often perceived as limited to lower level skills training (eg Apprenticeships). When work-based learning is delivered at the higher skills level, it is often perceived as belonging to more vocationally oriented institutions (post-’92 universities) and perhaps having less value than traditional Higher Education programmes.
- It is recognised that progression rates of learners from Level 3 work based learning to higher level learning programmes are low. National figures show that 95% of people with traditional ‘A’ levels progress to Higher Education, as do 45% of people with vocational qualifications such as BTEC National Diploma, but only 5% of Advanced Apprentices progress to Higher Education.

This position does not support the Government’s objective of “50% of 18-30 year olds progressing to HE by 2010”. Arguably, it also suggests that learners following the work based training route do not have the same opportunities for progression to HE as other learners.

The purposes of this report are, therefore:

- to explore, through case studies, some of the factors which impact on progression through work based learning routes in the East Midlands
- to suggest ways forward in encouraging and helping work-based learning providers to become involved in delivering Foundation Degrees and in providing progression routes to other higher level work-based learning programmes.

Methodology

This report examines the current situation in relation to work based learning provision offering progression to Level 4 and above. The findings of the report are drawn from desk research, case study material, Learning and Skills Council (LSC) data and stakeholder engagement.

The report is based on primary and secondary research. Primary research resulted from direct contact and structured interviews between the case study subject and EMFEC's research team. Secondary data was gathered through a literature review of national and regional information relating to the drive to increase higher level skills in the UK and the relation between this and productivity.

Both the primary and secondary research took place over a relatively short period of time which had an obvious impact on the number of case studies that could be included within the report. However, the resulting report provides a balanced view of the experiences and views of work-based training providers in key sectors addressing regional priorities. Case studies were selected on the basis of size/scope of activity, sector and priority fit and all represent activity in the East Midlands.

Those training providers agreeing to be profiled as a case study took part in a face-to-face interview with a member of EMFEC's research team. Working to a pre-determined and agreed script to ensure consistency, providers were asked a series of questions to determine their views and opinions on the strengths and weaknesses either supporting or destabilising progression to Level 4 within a work based learning setting.

The research team met on a frequent basis to both standardise the approach and share information as the activity progressed. The final report was compiled by a core team of three people drawing upon case study and

meeting notes and discussion with the other team members.

Through the methodology described above, the research and resulting report seek to provide a balanced view to inform the development of future strategy and activity and include examples of good practice in supporting progression to higher level skills courses/qualifications as well as identifying some of the barriers and challenges preventing progression.

The report looks at ten case studies, ranging from voluntary and community based provision to training and supporting provided by a manufacturer operating in the international market. Each case study gives the context in which the organisation operates and explores how training and progression is supported.

The report concludes with a number of key observations and conclusions designed to inform the way in which future delivery options for work based learning are developed and implemented.

General Context

Evidence and information from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), alongside a significant body of research-based information in the public domain, provide a general context for the case studies featured in this report. Key issues and findings from these sources are outlined below.

Funding Structures

The different funding structures and responsibilities for learning programmes up to Level 3 and for programmes from Level 4 onwards potentially make it difficult for work based learning providers to link Apprenticeships and other work based programmes to higher level vocational programmes such as Foundation Degrees. Apprentices and learners in work based and vocational Further Education are funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC); Higher Education is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE). Whilst the LSC have a strategic as well as funding remit, HEFCE's role is limited to funding provision. A common strategy for progression therefore does not exist.

HEFCE's creation of Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) was intended, in part, to address the issue of improving progression to HE from work based learning. HEFCE specified that, to achieve their overall objective, LLNs would undertake the following specific activities:

- a. curriculum development to facilitate progression: alignment that removes barriers to progression and bridging provision that forms part of the HE offer; and new HE curriculum development involving employers (foundation degrees, work based learning, e-learning, collaborative modules)

- b. information, advice, guidance and learner support systems that allow LLNs to engage, and track, learners in the context of lifelong learning opportunities
- c. production of network-wide progression agreements underpinned by agreement on credit that defines clearly the expectations about progression that learners can reasonably hold and makes institutional commitments that these expectations will be met.

However, it should be noted that in the East Midlands, as in most other regions, LLNs are sub-regional and are limited to priority sectors.

The Open University's Centre for Higher Education Research and Information was commissioned in June 2007 to undertake a formative evaluation of LLNs. Research to inform the interim evaluation has been two-fold:

- desk research of LLN documentation and
- visits to, and interviews with, personnel involved in eight LLNs.

The report's main conclusion was that LLNs are making progress in terms of encouraging institutions to offer curricula and put in place procedures that, in the fullness of time, could make a significant difference to the coherence, clarity and certainty of progression opportunities for vocational learners. However, it went on to say that it is too soon to be able to make substantive and well-evidenced statements about LLNs' overall progress on meeting this overarching objective of the LLN initiative.

It is clear from much of the supporting evidence that greatest progress has been made in securing curricula and procedures which will support learners from **vocational** and **work related** programmes rather than those from **work based** programmes.

Progression

As noted above the environment in which progression to higher level learning from work

based learning provision operates does not represent a new area of research and development. A number of studies have been conducted to look at progression from work based learning routes into HE. In the main these have been undertaken at regional or sub-regional levels, often through the sponsorship of Aimhigher, and have tended to focus on progression from Advanced Apprenticeships. Similarly, the national office of the LSC funded a pathfinder project, from 2003/4 to develop new progression pathways for Advanced Apprenticeships. Most recently the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) carried out a project in 2008 for Foundation Degree Forward (*fdf*) to identify and research good practice in Apprenticeship programmes that provide progression to HE programmes.

Whilst it is not the purpose of this report to represent prior research, it is clearly of some benefit to consider the findings of that research as they may relate to the case studies which follow. With the caveat noted above that previous research has tended to focus specifically upon progression to HE from Advanced Apprenticeships, a range of common findings do emerge as headline themes for consideration:

- policy: despite the Leitch target for achievement at Level 4 and above, there is little impetus from government to stimulate demand for Apprentice progression to HE. More positively, the new National Apprenticeship Service is viewed as the primary champion of a more dynamic approach
- funding: progression programmes need to meet the requirements of two very different funding programmes – LSC and HEFCE
- profile and status of vocational routes to HE: lack of understanding in universities of vocational routes. The interface between

work based learners and HE is fragmented and piecemeal

- curriculum design: often a barrier in that HE programmes are not planned to accommodate learners in full-time work or to consider the needs of SMEs. The best examples do take account of these issues and are based in current industry practice, tailored to specific needs
- sector Skills Councils: give little attention to progression in Sector Skills Agreements
- lack of destination data on the progression of Advanced Apprentices: to date, no government department has the responsibility for monitoring statistics.

One particular piece of research perhaps warrants specific mention in that it highlighted sectoral differences in terms of progression to HE. Tyne and Wear WBL Providers Network identified the need for more information about progression to Higher Education for Advanced Apprentices. The Network received funding from Aimhigher to support a mentoring programme to widen participation. Findings from the initial research of the project show that progression is more likely in some sectors. Engineering has strong progression to HE for Advanced Apprentices due to a recognition of qualifications and clear pathways to HNC/Ds. Automotive providers suggested a relationship between the size of employer/training provider and progression. Large employers with many apprentices were more likely to encourage and support progression. Smaller employers were found to be less likely to support progression or give financial support. Many of the employers questioned did not support progression as they did not have higher level positions to offer and/or they were afraid of losing the investment they had already made. In Health and Social Care, some care workers progressed to the Registered Managers Award, but some moved into nursing as there are clearer progression routes. In the field of accountancy apprenticeships, there was more likelihood of progression as the route to AAT Level 4 and CIMA was widely understood.

Workforce Development Routes to HE

Company workforce development programmes, at least at national level, represent a potentially important route to HE through work based learning. In the context of such programmes in the East Midlands region, several specific issues emerge. Training at the higher skills level tends to be the province of large organisations with training budgets and an HE strategy that includes succession planning and employee development. However, according to the East Midlands Development Agency (emda), the East Midlands is a region made up of approximately 95% small to medium enterprises (SMEs). SMEs tend to rely on 'just in time' training with a direct relevance to the business and prefer 'bite-sized chunks' rather than protracted programmes. They are also more likely to seek funding from external agencies (not available at the higher skills level) and to prefer employees to stay on-site for training so less 'work' time is lost. Micro-businesses are less likely to have assessed workforce needs and also less likely to identify training or succession planning as essential to the business.

More generally, many company workforce development programmes are delivered by universities, or colleges with Higher Education provision. In some instances, elements delivered as CPD can be accredited towards an HE qualification. Employer Based Training Accreditation (*fdt*) is a system of facilitation to link employers with HEIs in order to accredit staff training programmes. However, in many cases only a proportion of the learning that employers require is likely to need external accreditation. A company's primary interest is in learning outcomes in practice – measurable through individual/team performance or financial targets. Business learning outcomes aimed at specific business needs may not link seamlessly to a Higher Education Institution's (HEI) understanding or interpretation of learning and accreditation.

Accredited Prior Learning

Accredited Prior Learning (APL) and Accredited Prior Experiential Learning

(APEL) remains a relatively undeveloped area which, evidentially, has the potential to support progression to higher level training and to make higher level skills training such as Foundation Degrees more attractive to employers if used correctly. A sound APEL/APL system enables employees to 'claim' previous experience or training, thus reducing the amount of study and modular fees. Again colleges may find themselves at a disadvantage as HEFCE funding to FECs is based on Full Time Equivalents.

Resources and Costs

Information from a range of sources indicates that work based learning, particularly at the higher skills level, can be more resource intensive than other modes of learning, either in the developmental stage, or delivery. Research conducted by *fdf* established that the average cost of developing a Foundation Degree could be in the region of £60,000. Cost effectiveness is a challenge to HEIs and FECs and may lead to the provision of supply-led programmes that are not designed with employers in mind or fit for purpose; and are therefore not sustainable. Strategies that consistently cross the bridge between learning and work and strong collaborative partnerships to ensure progression are, broadly, perceived to provide the most productive means of addressing these issues.

Non-Traditional Learners

A final, but highly significant, issue noted in virtually every research and development report on this theme, is the particular profile of "the work based learner". Despite the fact that work based learning is a vital mode of learning, Level 3 vocational learners (such as Advanced Apprentices) are, in the field of Higher Education, non-traditional learners and face barriers not experienced by traditional undergraduates. For many work based learners moving beyond Level 3, the development of craft skills is replaced by the need to develop managerial and customer services skills. Success as a craftsman/woman does not assure success in a managerial role. Advanced Apprentices

require detailed knowledge of facts, procedures and processes and evidence of work-related achievements and skills, whereas many Higher Education courses require analytical and evaluative skills; and enhanced communication skills. The Key Skills acquired in an Apprenticeship Framework do not carry UCAS points at most HEIs, where there is still a reliance on traditional Maths and English GCSEs.

Environmental Context

The Importance of Higher Level Skills

The arguments driving the need to increase the percentage of the population qualified to Level 4 are well rehearsed. The case for having more people with higher level skills, benefits, according to the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS, 2008) *“the economy by meeting potential skill shortages and increasing productivity and the capacity of businesses to innovate”*. Further, DIUS suggests that the next ten years will be *“critical to securing advantage as emerging economies [move] into more high skilled industries”*.

The Leitch Review of Skills (2006) emphasised a need to urgently raise skills at all levels and recommended, among other things, that the UK become world leader in skills by 2020 which, effectively means doubling of attainment at most levels. Leitch suggested that responsibility for achieving this and other skills related ambitions has to be shared between Government, employers and individuals.

Acknowledging Leitch recommendations, the Government have made a commitment to ensuring that in excess of 40% of the population should be qualified to Level 4 and above, compared to the current 31%. Given this commitment, higher level skills and the need to encourage and widen access to appropriate training and qualifications has never been so important.

This report recognises that “re-skilling, rather than up-skilling”¹ is increasingly becoming the norm as the effect of the recession impacts on those that need to develop new skills to find or retain employment. This is an important - and developing - point, but is not an over riding reason to ignore issues of

¹ Re-skilling for Recovery: After Leitch, implementing skills and training policies (January 2009)

progression. Initiatives to support up-skilling and re-skilling need to coexist.

The Value of Higher Level Skills

It is clear that attention is being given to ensure that there is appropriate and sufficient “supply” of higher level skills training and qualifications. But what is the demand for such skills? The CBI, as part of its annual education and skills survey (2008), found that 32% of jobs currently require degree-level skills or qualifications. A similar CBI survey in 2007 found that 78% of firms expected demand for higher level skills to increase over the next decade.

The underlying trend, however, shows a variation between sectors. According to the CBI (2008) 60% of jobs in the professional services sector and around 50% of public services jobs demand degree-level individuals compared with 32% in hotels, restaurant and tourism, 19% in construction and 16% in manufacturing. The CBI also found that the business demand for graduate level skills is growing and suggested that the *“HE sector continues to produce the highly skilled individuals increasingly demanded by employers”*. The CBI further noted that this increased demand in particular relates to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) related subjects.

The CBI also note that employers placed a positive attitude, employability skills (such as self-management, team working and business and customer awareness) and relevant work experience above degree subject and results when looking at the factors considered when recruiting a graduate. Despite the importance that employers place on employability related competencies, the CBI suggests that:

“too many graduates lack adequate employability skills...the trends survey 2007 found that nearly half of employers (48%) are dissatisfied with their graduates’ business awareness, over a quarter (26%) with their literacy

skills and 27% with their generic employability skills”.

The Department for Innovation, Skills and Universities (DIUS, 2008) echo the findings of the CBI and, in noting that the demand for postgraduates is rising, are proposing the development of a number of actions to support the theme of “our aim – more and more employable, graduates”.

DIUS does, however recognise the need to raise the skills of those already in the workforce, and again propose a number of actions to support this. The role of the university sector in achieving the aim of raising the skills of those already in the workforce is significant although it does note that Higher Education has been criticised for being:

“too passive; for inflexibility in the scheduling of courses; for a lack of childcare facilities; and for a business model which was felt to be arranged primarily for the convenience of full-time students based on campus.”

In contrast to the view of DIUS, The Council for Industry and Higher Education Policy Forum (Times Higher Education, July 2008) suggest that:

“Government has become too focused on the role that universities can play in improving the skills of the UK workforce at the expense of Further Education colleges, which are often better placed to deliver.”

The Policy Forum added that “*boundaries between universities, colleges and employers should be broken down*” (Times Higher Education, July 2008) because the distinction between students and employees is dissolving.

Higher Level Skills in the Workplace

In the context of this report, “accessing higher levels skills” is explored in relation to work based learning and other associated

terminology and relates to employee/student focused programmes with learning outcomes based on the need for learners to improve their underpinning knowledge and enhance their skills development.

Foundation Degrees offer work based learning progression as they are designed and developed by employers in partnership with HEIs/FECs. In theory, they are an ideal progression route for Level 3 learners, and for experienced employees, to a higher level qualification. However, confusion still exists around the definition of full- and part-time programmes (employers and employees discount programmes listed as full-time) and around funding. Employers find that the employee/Apprentice they have supported and nurtured suddenly requires tuition fees and employees find there is no funding support for part-time courses. Often, employers do not understand how Level 4 qualifications contribute to business objectives and have no tangible evidence that Level 4 qualifications warrant organisational expenditure. Sector Skills Councils could play an increasingly proactive and important role as intermediaries between employers’ skills needs and the education and training sector.

Whilst the Leitch Report recognised the importance of skills training for the UK’s economy, it is suggested that policy decisions could be better informed by the issues facing learners, employees and providers. Non-traditional learners need support and do not necessarily adapt readily to Higher Education. Equally, traditional learners need to develop other, softer skills. Many young people receive poor Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and work based learning providers cannot provide appropriate advice or do not feel it is part of their role. HE Admissions teams often do not understand the relevance or merit of work based learning, and schools are less likely to promote work based learning unless the sixth form offers vocational progression. IAG training for HE Admissions staff, school staff, work based learning (WBL) providers and

IAG practitioners might be a better starting point for encouraging vocational progression.

The East Midlands

The East Midlands is the third largest region in England, made up of six counties; Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire. It has a population of 4.28 million and is spread over an area of 15,008 kilometres. There are eight universities, one Higher Education college and twenty-two Further Education colleges.

Sector priorities considered to be strategically important to the region and, therefore, priority areas for support have been defined by a number of agencies/organisations. The Regional Economic Strategy (RES, emda led), for example identifies four priority sectors; construction, food and drink, healthcare and transport. The region's two Lifelong Learning Networks would add creative industries, health and social care, engineering retail and hospitality, leisure and tourism to this list, whereas the LSC East Midlands has a strategic focus on just three sectors; construction, engineering and health and social care.

The East Midlands is characterised by a low wage, low skilled equilibrium (Regional Skills Partnership, 2007). Workforce skills require improvement at all levels, but the region is below the national average for higher level qualifications and has one of the lowest proportions of its workforce educated to Level 4 at 25% compared with a national average of 29%. 46% of the workforce are educated to Level 3 compared with a national average of 48%.²

There are 2,588,300 people of working age in the East Midlands. The adult employment rate in the East Midlands is 75.8%, which is higher than the national rate of 74.3%. 30% of employers employ more than 200 people and of the rest, 83% only employ 1-10

people. £61.4 million was spent on work-based learning in the East Midlands in 2005/6, but 50% of WBL participation is in sectors other than those identified as high priority.

East Midlands based research carried out by CFE (2008) found that 39% of businesses surveyed had undertaken higher level skills training in the preceding twelve months. Of the remaining 61% who had not accessed such training, 59% reported that they were unlikely to or would definitely not undertake training at this level during the next twelve months.

Surprisingly, the research (CFE, 2008) also found that only a small number of businesses cited costs or a lack of awareness as a barrier to undertaking higher levels skills training. The majority, however, cites no business benefit as their reason for not undertaking such training.

The Employment Skills and Productivity Partnership (esp, 2007) acknowledge that:

“increasing the demand for higher level skills from employers and individuals in the region [East Midlands] is a significant challenge.”

The esp further noted that if the region has a narrow focus on increasing the skills of young people entering employment, the East Midlands will continue to suffer from skills shortages amongst the working age population. This comment is set against a background where HEIs in the regions (CFE, 2008) are:

“more likely than universities in the rest of the UK to have a sizeable intake from the “traditional” market for Level 4 qualifications – the 18-21 age group”.

Responding to national policy developments, the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) through the Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2012 (RES, 2006) has

² Source: Annual Population Survey 2006 provided by the East Midlands LSC

identified a number of priority actions to improve the “supply” of higher level skills. This includes a commitment to deliver the skills demanded by employers by the further development of the education and training infrastructure, capacity and quality assurance.

Summary

There are mixed messages about both the supply of and demand for higher level skills. On the demand side, employers, it would appear, do value higher level skills but seem to favour graduates and turn to these new entrants to the labour market to provide the necessary skills. In contrast (and in partial conflict with this message), the CBI reports that what employers look for in graduates are wide employability skills.

In looking at the higher level skills needs of employers and the ways in which these can be developed, the existing workforce appears to be largely overlooked. Although it is this cohort that will almost certainly display many of the employability characteristics that employers demand, there would appear to be a focus on graduate employment, despite areas of dissatisfaction identified above, rather than on workforce development. As CFE found, however, the business need for higher level skills is yet to be proven for many companies which is leading to reluctance to invest in this level of training. Surprisingly, the cost of training which is often cited as a concern is not a significant barrier.

Turning to the supply side, there is recognition both nationally and regionally that the training and skills infrastructure needs supporting to ensure that it can meet demand needs. Where this investment should be, however, is less clear. Government policy suggests that delivery is best placed within HEIs (universities), but others such as the Council for Industry and Higher Education advises that FE (colleges) are better placed to meet business related need for higher level skills.

Case Studies

The following case studies explore the challenges and successes of providing work based learning and progression opportunities arising from this. The case studies reflect a range of providers and employers and a number of vocational areas.

Case Study: The National Design Academy

Organisational Context

Based at Rufford Hall in Nottingham, the National Design Academy (NDA) has been established for 20 years. The NDA is a private training provider focusing on interior design and related subjects and the delivery of flexible, part-time distance learning. The programmes are LSC funded via a franchise agreement with Leicester College. No other institution provides the same qualification offer in Professional Interior Design, Professional Curtain Making and Soft Furnishings and Professional Decorative Paint Finishes. NDA offers Level 2 and Level 3 NOCN qualifications.

The attraction of the National Design Academy's programmes is that they appeal to the traditionally excluded market. The organisation's clientele tend to be non-traditional learners drawn from those who have fallen out of the system and have stalled in life or career direction before discovering an interest in design at a later stage. The flexible, distance learning courses meet the needs of adult learners facing a range of barriers and with multiple support needs including time, family, financial or geographical constraints.

“NDA's Level 3 retention and achievement rate is over 90%, yet only 4% of these learners progress into Higher Education”

NDA understand that these learners may have extra difficulties to overcome and

individual study plans are designed to meet their needs. The success of this approach is confirmed by NOCN statistics which show the NDA's Level 3 retention and achievement rate is over 90%, yet only 4% of these learners progress into Higher Education. In general terms, the NDA feels that students are not effectively catered for by traditional HE programmes at colleges or universities.

Training and Progression

In a direct response to student demand and the widening participation agenda, the National Design Academy began to develop a Foundation Degree in 2004. The programme framework was developed and course modules were written to ensure smooth progression for existing Level 3 students. The aim was to provide an affordable and flexible route for non-traditional learners into Higher Education funded by HEFCE.

In 2007, a partnership was brokered between the NDA and Staffordshire University. The University was willing to offer student numbers and support an early validation and rolling start dates. As a result the Foundation Degree (FdA) was validated in November 2007 and between October 2007 and April 2008, 372 Level 3 learners enrolled on the programme. These figures confirm the high demand for a flexible mode of delivery. The main focus of the NDA's Foundation degree is to prepare students for work in the relevant sector, with the employer engagement element of the programme enabling students to engage with business and to encourage entrepreneurial skills.

On completion of the FdA students can progress onto a BA/BA (Honours) programme with the University or through further distance learning study with the NDA. The NDA BA/BA (Honours) top-up level was scheduled for validation by Staffordshire University in September 2008.

NDA point out that, nationally, 86% of interior design graduates have been in permanent

employment since graduating and are among the higher earners in design³.

In order to find a validating institution for the Foundation degree, the NDA approached a number of institutions between 2004 and 2007. Whilst the response from some HEIs was very slow, other approaches were positive, but some universities remained bureaucratically inhibited by a cap on their numbers, whilst others were tied to a traditional academic year starting in September. This was not helpful to NDA students who need the flexibility of a rolling commencement date.

“The NDA reports that the reduction in LSC Adult Level 3 funding has significantly reduced the number of Level 3 students they can recruit through their franchise partnership contract”

In addition to the inflexible, traditional start date still practised by many of the potential HEI partners, those LEAs who offer a student grant towards part-time course fees are also only geared to a September start. Students commencing a few weeks outside that date, although eligible for HEFCE funding, cannot apply for a student grant. The NDA Foundation Degree was validated by its HEI partner in October 2007; therefore some students were not eligible to claim grants. The Academy feels that this disparity between funding and grants has resulted in the loss of a significant number of students.

The process of ‘flapping’ exit awards within the Foundation Degree (which was described at validation as “a form-filling exercise”) took months to arrange and will take the form of a formal panel meeting. Distance learners, being more vulnerable, require exit awards such as CCPD, University Certificate and University Diploma to be available should they leave the course for any reason. Receipt of an award would encourage a student to

return to their studies when circumstances allow.

The NDA reports that the reduction in LSC Adult Level 3 funding has significantly reduced the number of Level 3 students they can recruit through their franchise partnership contract. They recognise the irony that after years of overcoming obstacles in order to provide a flexible Level 4 progression route for Level 3 students, their student numbers have been artificially reduced to an all-time low.

Before September 2007 the only method for funding NDA Level 3 learners was through their franchise partnership with Leicester College. After this date the NDA applied for and was offered an LSC Invitation to Tender (ITT) for ESF funding. They tendered in the East Midlands to train 200 women without a first Level 2 qualification over 2 years. The learners would achieve NOCN Level 3 with 56 credits in Professional Interior Design, with the option to progress into Higher Education later. This tender was not successful and the NDA found the process to be both expensive and bureaucratic, as it was necessary to enlist help from external consultants.

“The cost of attending information meetings for each LSC region has cost the NDA over £6,000 in consultants and travel fees”

The NDA recruit their distance learning students nationally, but each of the 9 LSC regions requires separate tenders meaning that approximately 27 separate tenders would have to be submitted for mainstream funding in 2008/09. The cost of attending information meetings for each LSC region alone has cost the NDA over £6,000 in consultants and travel fees.

There is also wariness from the Academy that colleges and universities are not particularly “fair” in their financial franchised allocation. The balance of financial equity, programme delivery and student

³ Source: The Design Council

responsibility is a challenge which needs further negotiation.

Though design in all its formats is the current offer, the NDA is associated with a prominent property development company which has a 100 bedroom hotel complex in the next phase of its development. The developer and NDA are working closely together in the consideration of a vocational training offer to satisfy the demands of a hotel complex and its ancillary requirements.

The Academy feels that its success lies within the “academic care” of its students. The first module of its FdA in Interior Design is a thorough approach to student guidance on research techniques. No assignment is set which is not “answered” within the module, there is a continuous electronic tutorial support system, and students can access the Academy through its Virtual Learning Studio (VLS) function. This system will shortly be expanded by the introduction of an on-line student forum; the use of studio web cams to aid both learning and assessment and the filming of workshops.

Assignments within the FdA which are designed to allow students to utilise a blend of skill requirements based upon knowledge imparted at workshops, electronic learning and research guidance have been developed. The flexible option of visual, verbal, and written submissions encourages students to develop their own design style.

Summary

The NDA is clearly committed to working people for whom the more traditional approach to learning has found to be inappropriate. NDA has a high retention and achievement rate at Level 3 but, at 4%, only a very small number of learners progress into Higher Education.

Attributing this, in part, to a lack of support at HE level for “non traditional” learners, a Foundation Degree was developed to help progression for Level 3 learners. However, funding and grant inflexibilities has, NDA

believe, resulted in the loss of a significant number of students progressing to and/or achieving Level 4 qualifications. Added to this, the NDA also feel that a reduction in funding for adult Level 3 qualifications has had an impact on student recruitment at this level. Alternative routes to fund provision at this level have proved to be expensive and bureaucratic with no guarantee of success.

Case Study: LOROS Hospice

Organisational Context

LOROS (Leicestershire and Rutland Organisation for the Relief of Suffering) employs 320 staff in roles such as nursing, multidisciplinary healthcare, professional management, administration, maintenance and charity shop managers. There are approximately 300 volunteers at the Hospice, 60 at the Day Centre and 400 in the charity shops.

LOROS is an independent charity established in 1977 to provide hospice services for people within Leicestershire and Rutland. The Hospice has thirty-one beds in Leicester, a Day Centre in the city and a Hospice at Home Team based at the Hospice, but managed by the Health Service. This provides support for patients and their families anywhere in the county. In addition there is a Family Support Service and Clinical Nurse Specialist Team who provide support to patients and families at home and in the community.

The Hospice is a specialist centre providing skilled nursing and medical care supported by physiotherapists, occupational therapists and social workers. It provides expertise in controlling pain and other distressing symptoms as well as offering emotional, spiritual and social care. The work involves both patient and family. Patients are admitted for symptom control, pain relief, assessment, terminal care, respite care and day care treatment. No fees are charged.

Patients are referred by both hospitals and GPs. The Hospice funding is approximately 40% from the NHS and 60% from fund raising. 95% of patients have cancer.

Patients living with a range of illnesses have need for supportive and palliative care with the focus of care shifting from curative and life-prolonging to symptom management. The majority of individuals, however, will require a palliative care approach delivered by health and social care professionals with general skills in palliative supportive care. Much of this care is delivered by frontline staff such as health and social care support workers.

“The implications of a changing NHS Strategy means that there is a now a shift of care tasks to less qualified staff”

There are a number of Government policies and initiatives underpinning the continuing improvement of support and palliative care. Many, such as *Building on Best Practice (2004)* and the Department of Health’s *End of Life Care* have key objectives to address the education and development needs of care/support staff.

The implications of a changing NHS Strategy means that there is a now a shift of care tasks to less qualified staff within the Competency Framework. Support workers are delivering care which was once the domain of qualified practitioners. This emphasises the need for people in these roles to have underpinning knowledge together with competence and confidence.

Training and Progression

Providing education, training and support for those involved in the provision of palliative care is of considerable importance. LOROS has its own Education Department which both delivers to its own staff and others in the same and related fields. The Department works in partnership with other educational providers namely Leicester University,

Northampton University and Stephenson College. Short courses include:

- Advance Care Planning
- Introduction to Palliative Care
- Cancer for Complementary Therapists
- Complementary Therapy in Practice
- Dealing with Distress – Skills for Practice
- End of Life Care
- Exploring Palliative Care
- Introductory Hypnosis Training
- Neuropsychiatric Disorders
- Handling Loss and Distress
- Cost of Caring
- Pain in Dementia – The Challenge of Assessment
- Sharing Good Practice – Lymphoedema
- Suffering Loss and Bereavement

The courses vary in duration from one to six days. These are delivered within the Hospice, but are also available on an outreach basis in other work based scenarios. These courses are tailored to meet the specific needs within that particular context. This has proved to be time effective and convenient for both staff and employers. Longer-term courses include an NVQ Level 3 (BTEC Care), delivered by Stephenson College with over 70% of the delivery being work based. All relevant staff study on the course. Alongside this, LOROS offer a Postgraduate Certificate at M Level in Palliative Care. This is accredited by Leicester University.

“LOROS also deliver a Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care. Delivered in partnership with Northampton University this was validated in 2007. With 90% of the course delivered by LOROS there is a high work based content”

LOROS also deliver a Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care (FdSc). Delivered in partnership with Northampton University this was validated in 2007. With 90% of the course delivered by LOROS there is a high work based content with an average of 40%

of assessment by this means. Ten⁴ students are participating on this course. In line with other areas of health and care provision there is still the possibility of a registration requirement for staff at this level. This could further increase demand for the Foundation Degree and potentially make more funds available to pay for student fees.

Initial start-up costs were, to a large extent, supported by *fdf*. One of the expected outcomes of the project is the successful roll out of the programme to other parts of the country. This has started to happen with initial expressions of interest coming from Bury St Edmonds, Cambridge and Somerset. The costs of the roll out dictate that only two additional partners can be brought on stream at the same time. Additional funding requests will be made to try to increase the rate of expansion and to ensure quality, flexibility and accessibility are maintained.

Just 40% of LOROS' funding comes from mainstream sources, in this case the NHS. Additional funds are raised through charity events. Funds for training come from successful bids made to bodies such as *fdf*, Skills for Sustainable Communities, Lifelong Learning Network and Skills for Health. Nevertheless financial constraints are still very much in evidence and may hinder further national roll out. Potential employer partners, whilst fully appreciating the value of the programme, are concerned about the costs involved – particularly the fee element.

In the case of the in-house LOROS delivery, a proportionate amount of the student fee income comes from Northampton University in accordance with the percentage of the course they deliver. Funding/fee payment remains, however, a significant issue. The £2,000 Foundation Degree fee presents an enormous barrier to recruitment. Applications for Professional Development grants can be made through the Help the Hospices organisation to a maximum of £750 per year, but the employers, or individuals, still find the

£1,250 difficult to pay. In the case of the Postgraduate Certificate, the cost is funded by the LNR Healthcare Workforce Deanery for those participants within its remit.

“The £2,000 Foundation Degree fee presents an enormous barrier to recruitment”

The programme has attracted considerable interest from East Midlands Skills for Health. The organisation has provided funds for a study into the impact of the provision. The IMPACT Project will follow students through the two year course together with the three years following course completion, primarily, in order to:

- explore changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and confidence in caring for people with advanced and terminal illness
- explore career intension, the influence of the Foundation Degree on this and document their career pathway
- consider student views on the value, the benefits and the drawbacks of the degree
- report on student academic achievement.

Clearly this is seen to be a very important piece of work and will inform work based learning design in this area and others. The intention is also an attempt to determine the value for money of such provision.

There is no doubting the enthusiasm of learners to engage with the programme. Some have, however, suggested that pre-course activities could have helped to bridge the gap between their NVQ Level 3 course requirements and those expected by a Foundation Degree. Whilst the Graduate Study module at the beginning of the first year goes some way to address the need, the general consensus is that some students will gain greater confidence at an earlier stage if a preparatory course is offered.

LOROS staff who deliver on the course are well qualified and very experienced in their subject area. Staff knowledge and application are essential components in a successful roll

⁴ September 2008

out of the programme. Both Northampton and Leicester Universities have been very supportive of LOROS recognising the very professional manner in which they conduct their education and training. Northampton has a long tradition of working with employers and understands the need to work closely with them.

Summary

LOROS has firmly based its higher level skills provision on the needs of the service with the patient at the centre. Its education and training provision and course content reflects the great importance of work based learning. It believes that there is scope for considerable national expansion of the Foundation Degree offer either in total or on a modular basis for professional development.

Skills for Health involvement in the IMPACT Project is very important as it increases awareness and should encourage greater national participation. The project is also attempting to quantify the value of such course provision.

<p>Case Study: Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies</p>

Organisational Context

Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies is based in Nottingham. It possesses over 40 audio/video production studios and computer suites together with lecture, tutorial, seminar and office facilities. The 23,500 square feet site is based in the centre of Nottingham.

It began its educational activities on a very small scale, in 1994, with a definite community/widening participation agenda offering eight students a small range of training courses in Sound Production. It was quickly realised that the development of such provision could be considerably enhanced by forming a partnership with an existing educational provider. This would allow access to an established educational

institution together with a relevant, recognised assessment framework. The result was a partnership between Confetti and the People's College, Nottingham. In 2006 the People's College and Broxtowe College merged to become Castle College, Nottingham. The partnership arrangements have continued between Confetti and the new institution. Further agreements have been entered into with De Montfort University and Local Authorities.

There are currently⁵ 490 full time Further Education students and 254 Higher Education students. In addition there are 170 pre-16 students engaged in part of their curriculum through Confetti.

Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies falls within that area of the Creative Industries relating to: Film and Video, Music, TV and Radio. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in its Mapping Documents published in 1998 and 2001 defined Creative Industries as 'those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property'.

"The Department for Culture, Media and Sport states that the Creative Industries are more innovative and employ more highly skilled workers than other sectors in the economy"

DCMS states that the Creative Industries are more innovative and employ more highly skilled workers than other sectors in the economy (Creative Economy Programme, 2007). The Creative Industries also have the highest rate of firms which are 'innovation active'. The Community Innovation Survey (CIS) states that 78% of creative industry firms are 'innovation active' – the highest proportion of any sector. The contribution of the creative industries to economy-wide employment in 2005 was 13.1%. The

⁵ September 2008

contribution of the industries to economy-wide turnover in 2005 was 12.2%.

The relevant Sector Skills Council for Confetti's activity is Skillset, which has a responsibility for Audio Visual Industries. Skillset exists 'to encourage the delivery of informed training and vocational education provision so that the UK's audio visual industries maintain and enhance their creativity, productivity and competitiveness'. Skillset is charged with addressing the following goals:

- reducing the skills gaps and shortages
- improving productivity and business performance
- increasing the opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce, including action on equal opportunities
- improving learning supply including apprenticeships, Higher Education and national occupational standards.

The Council states that the audio visual industries are characterised by small numbers of very large national and international companies and a very large number of small and medium sized businesses, micro businesses, freelancers and sole traders, particularly in the creation, production and development of content. The high number of freelancers means that the demand for self managed learning and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) together with up to date careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) is a strong requirement.

62% of this industry's workforce is under 35 compared with 39% for the national workforce. 60% of the Audio Visual workforce is composed of graduates compared with 16% for the national workforce.

Training and Progression

This consists of Level 1 Foundation through to Level 4 Higher provision in a range of areas including sound technology, music, media and audio and recording technology.

“There have been no funding issues in any of the above provision because of the structure of the partnership arrangements entered into with Castle College, De Montfort University and Local Authorities”

In addition there are specialist short training courses and full engagement with the New Diplomas for example, the Gateway 1 pilot of the Diploma in Creative and Media which is being delivered from September, 2008 within the Nottingham City Consortia with Confetti.

There have been no funding issues in any of the above provision because of the structure of the partnership arrangements entered into with Castle College, De Montfort University and Local Authorities.

Curriculum development has been progressed in a very rational manner again drawing on partnership arrangements. Considerable attention has been paid to the industry's needs as identified in the introduction.

85 staff are employed by the organisation. This number spans the organisation's educational and commercial sectors. All tutors have relevant industrial experience with many engaged in the Institute's commercial work.

As well as the education provision, Confetti has established three commercial divisions operating within the Creative Industries.

- *Electric Mayhem Studios* - this is a fully professional audio production facility with a national client base including 19 Entertainment, Ministry of Sound (Sony), HMV and various other labels and artists. Other commercial work which has taken place here includes Nottingham tram announcements and national train information announcements.
- *Spool Films* - since 2001 Spool has established itself in the provision of post

production facilities and sophisticated sound to picture processes. It has become an important regional centre whose clients include the BBC, Warp Films, Hackenbocker Film Makers, Film Four, Sky and the British Film Council. In 2005/6 the facility secured the contract for the 'DV Shots – East Midlands', an initiative for mentoring those who wished to become film makers.

- *Constellations* - an educational consultancy and design service. This was established to meet the demands of schools and colleges who require specialised music and video facilities. Constellations has become a supplier and partner to various public sector organisations providing a wide range of services to those wishing to become involved in the Creative Industries. The services include staff recruitment, lesson planning, staff training and the design, procurement and installation of the required technology. Clients include Nottingham City Council and Luton Borough Council.

Future activity will include a Net Label – an on-line record label and Antenna. The latter provides a facility for creative industry businesses on the condition that work based learning is provided for students.

Confetti states that an understanding of 'Creative Technology' is essential for careers in music, sound production, design, advertising, film and television production. Course design is undertaken with national and international demands of the industry, the Sector Skills Councils and careers in mind. This is seen in the initial Higher Education provision designed in partnership with the People's College. The close partnership enabled both parties to contribute to the centre devised Higher National Diploma in Music Technology validated through BTEC (Edexcel). The aim was to develop knowledge, understanding and expertise in the technologies and processes employed in audio production together with

those skills and qualities to enhance employability.

“The higher level provision enabled a key progression route for those successful Level 3 National Diploma students who wished to progress to the next level”

Career opportunities included: music production, sound recording, sound reinforcement, specialised retail and soundtrack production for television, film and multimedia depending upon each student's programme specialisation. The higher level provision enabled a key progression route for those successful Level 3 National Diploma students who wished to progress to the next level. In addition those who were already in employment, and who could meet the criteria for joining the course, were given the opportunity to further increase their knowledge and gain more qualifications. The course attracted local, national and international students. It considerably supported widening participation.

The People's College had direct HEFCE student numbers and the required amount was made available allowing the HND to proceed. There were no issues regarding the funding arrangements. The programme was delivered according to the College systems and based within Confetti enabling easy access to the work based elements.

Once qualified a substantial number of the HND students wished to progress to a BSc. The College was a partner of De Montfort University and assisted in providing some of the initial links to aid progression. This culminated in two pathways to the BSc (Hons) Audio and Recording Technology being developed. The first was an articulation year available to the BTEC HND Music Technology students with the appropriate profile. Confetti facilities were used to deliver the more practical elements of the programme with some of the theory aspects being delivered by DMU in Leicester. This pathway was validated by the university in

2003 and the programme commenced in October 2003. The second pathway was a full 3 year programme delivered jointly by DMU and Confetti. This commenced in October 2004. Originally the funding came through the existing mechanism within the People's College/DMU agreement, but within two years it was amicably agreed that the funding arrangement should be directly between DMU and Confetti. Again there were no funding issues.

“In 2007 the FdSc Foundation Degree in Music Technology was validated by DMU with the entire programme being delivered at Confetti”

The change in HEFCE funding relating to HNC/HND meant that those programmes which had been customised would not receive funding after 2005/06. As the Music Technology course was centre devised it fell into this category. An extension to the deadline was asked for and granted by HEFCE but only for a limited period. Both Confetti and the College recognised that the standard BTEC HND, in this subject area, did not meet the needs of this particular client group. It was agreed that a Foundation Degree would provide the most suitable opportunity.

In 2007 the FdSc Foundation Degree in Music Technology was validated by DMU with the entire programme being delivered at Confetti. In the previous year the FdSc Foundation Degree in Video Broadcast Production had been validated by DMU with student entry in October of that year. This course had been delivered on a split site arrangement (Nottingham and Leicester) for the 2006/2007 intakes, but from 2008 all the provision will be based at Confetti. The split site arrangement had been accepted by the BSc students, but had been less acceptable to those following the Foundation Degree programme. Twenty five per cent of the Foundation Degree course activity is work based.

Increasing attention is now being paid to the CPD opportunities at the higher level.

Summary

The Managers at Confetti, from the outset, sought to place their education and training programmes within an officially recognised qualification/professional framework which protected the vocational integrity of the provision and provided progression opportunities. Very strong partnership working has been present throughout all the activity.

The organisation has sought advice from educational providers, employers, professional associations and Government Departments to inform their course/training portfolio. This consultation process has included consideration of the most appropriate methods of assessment within the context of a work based scenario.

The rapid rate of technological change is accommodated through the vast range of commercial contacts that the organisation has. This allows Confetti to adapt at short notice which, in turn, benefits students who have access to state of the art equipment.

Students are to be provided with even greater opportunities for work based learning as a result of two recent initiatives. The expansion of the premises will allow more studios to be built and provide the opportunity for students to manage these as a commercial venture together with providing technical support. In addition the increased space allows access for private concerns to use the facilities, but this will be on the understanding that they involve students in their work. The working environment in which the students follow their programmes considerably encourages progression.

The fact that the organisation has continued to expand over the 14 years of its existence supports the manner in which it is addressing the needs of its client groups.

Case Study: Carillion plc

Organisational Context

Carillion plc is a leading support services and construction company. The company employs around 50,000 people and has operations in Britain, Europe, Canada, the Middle East, North Africa and the Caribbean.

Carillion recruits 800 school leavers as craft apprentices every year through two programmes, Carillion Training and Modern Apprenticeships. The company has trained thousands of craftsmen and women over 30 years. Successful trainees receive ongoing training and career development. Apprentices are employed during the training periods and on successful completion (usually after three years) the company offers help in CV writing and job search. There are six different Craft Apprenticeships and other training routes to provide entry into the construction industry. There are over 16 training centres in the UK and Carillion was placed in the top 5% of construction training providers by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2002.

Training and Progression

Craft training is provided in:

- Bricklaying
- Carpentry and Joinery
- Painting and Decorating
- Plastering
- Building Maintenance
- Construction Operations.

Not all Level 2 Apprentices progress to Level 3, and after Level 3 training, some Advanced Apprentices are employed in different sectors of the company whilst others leave. Carillion is aware that no clear progression route is signposted. Research in the field of Apprenticeship progression has shown that there is a greater uptake of Level 4 programmes and Foundation Degrees in large companies where a running progression from Level 2 to 4/5 is visible and accepted as the norm. In order to expand

capacity and plan for the future, Carillion provides all employees with the opportunity for training and personal growth. This could take the form of job enrichment, secondments, promotion opportunities or training programmes. The company provides a range of structured learning solutions to meet the needs of the individual and the business.

“Research in the field of Apprenticeship progression has shown that there is a greater uptake of Level 4 programmes and Foundation Degrees in large companies where a running progression from Level 2 to 4/5 is visible and accepted as the norm”

The company offers Education Funding and ‘Time for Study’ allowances. If the training is relevant and essential for an employee’s current or future job role, the company pays for the course. Should an employee choose a course that is not essential for their current or future job role, the company may reimburse the employee on successful completion and achievement.

Despite the fact that Carillion will support individuals wishing to progress, it does not have a standard training progression route to Level 4 and above. In the engineering section of the company, there are at present only 19 Advanced Apprentices.

“Despite the fact that Carillion will support individuals wishing to progress, it does not have a standard training progression route to Level 4 and above”

Graduates with a 2.2 or above in a construction/engineering or management discipline are recruited to a 2 year graduate training programme. The company also sponsors undergraduates. Graduate recruits will enter the graduate training scheme, an internal programme focusing on soft skills development. It will also support the graduate

through professional programmes such as the Institute of Chartered Engineers.

Carillion has entered into partnership with Ashfield School, a comprehensive secondary school in Nottinghamshire with over 2,500 students. The School's Skills Centre was opened in 2007 and houses a number of businesses committed to training their own staff and school students. Absenteeism and lack of punctuality amongst participating school students has dropped and teachers report real enthusiasm from students who can observe Apprenticeships in action.

For 3 days a week, Carillion trains 28 of its own Apprentices on a rolling 14 week programme. 28 new Apprentices begin every 14 weeks throughout the year. For 2 days a week, Carillion trains 28 Ashfield students (year 10) and from September 2008 will train 28 students from the new intake Year 10 and the 28 students continuing to Year 11.

Summary

Carillion Academy is currently exploring the possibility of developing higher level skills training and has the development of higher level skills training programmes in its strategy. Discussions will take place with the LSC as part of the company's Skills Pledge. How the company will structure its higher level skills provision has not yet been decided.

Case Study: Enable

Organisational Context

'Enable' (Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Voluntary and Community Sector Learning and Skills Consortium) was established in order to enable voluntary organisations and community groups to engage effectively in the development and delivery of the local learning and skills agenda and to make a distinctive contribution to meeting the learning, skills and economic development needs within Nottinghamshire communities.

Based at the Nottingham Voluntary Action Centre, Enable secures contracts and funding to deliver learning in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. One such project is funding for learning leading to individuals achieving a national Skills for Life qualification at Entry 3 and above. Opportunities are available for employed and unemployed learners aged 16 and over who have no previous Skills for Life qualifications and live in areas identified as deprived. Enable is also the lead body on a contract to fund learning leading to Speaking and Listening ESOL qualifications for learners aged 16 and above with no previous British qualifications. Enable hosts 3 Learning Champion projects based in Newark, Bassetlaw and Nottingham City. Learning Champions provide outreach, impartial engagement and signposting.

The organisation is a registered centre for City and Guilds qualifications and Open College Network units.

The workforce development arm of Enable focuses on the recruitment, training and development and retention of the Boards, staff and volunteers needed to support organisations to achieve their objectives. Training and development takes many forms, from mentoring to coaching, to attending events and undertaking formal qualification-based training.

Training and Progression

Enable recognised and acknowledged the ever increasing complexity of running voluntary sector organisations and the need for higher levels of business and management knowledge and skills for people working in the voluntary sector. In 2006, Enable began to research the possibility of developing a higher level skills qualification to meet the needs of its voluntary sector managers. Despite the fact that the voluntary sector has a wealth of expertise in delivery of training as well as knowledge and understanding of its own sector needs, Enable could not access Higher Education funding without attachment to a college or university with agreed Student Numbers. At

the time there was only one Foundation Degree for the voluntary sector in the East Midlands, but it was not based in Nottingham and the programme took over 3 years to complete on a part-time basis.

“Despite the fact that the voluntary sector has a wealth of expertise in delivery of training as well as knowledge and understanding of its own sector needs, Enable could not access Higher Education funding without attachment to a college or university with Student Numbers”

Enable eventually developed a relationship with West Nottinghamshire College which already had a Foundation Degree in Business and Management. The college was happy to have the Foundation Degree’s content contextualised to meet the needs of the voluntary sector. A strong Steering Group made up of representatives of local voluntary sector organisations meant that the project was driven forward with firm guidance.

The Steering Group members were willing to undertake the contextualisation of existing content in their own time. One of the initial obstacles they encountered was the availability of existing materials on which to base the writing, as there was some commercial sensitivity attached to the schemes of work. Once the programme had been contextualised, the partner institution, Leeds Metropolitan University, was able to ratify the programme without recourse to a full validation, as the Foundation Degree’s Learning Outcomes remained unchanged. Retaining the basic course content with contextualisation meant that course participants were better placed to articulate to the full Honours Degree in Business and Management in the third year.

The programme delivers a mix of academic knowledge, specific and/or technical skills and key and generic skills relevant to employer needs. The employers - in this case the Steering Group - are involved in the design and continuous review of the

programme and in the delivery of some of the modules, either in timetabled classroom delivery or through ‘Masterclasses,’ one day speciality classes on specific topics. Course participants are expected to learn a great deal of new subject theory and develop new personal and professional skills. The Steering Group negotiated delivery of the underpinning knowledge for each module to be delivered on two days per month in order to cause minimum disruption to each voluntary organisation. The college was also able to offer the first cohort (September 2007) a heavily discounted rate in order to attract learners from a sector with very little money for training.

The programme consists of 8 x 15 credit modules at Level 4 (year 1) and 8 x 15 credit modules at Level 5 (year 2). In both years, there are 2 modules of Personal Development Planning and 2 modules of work based learning. Learners are given the opportunity to provide feedback to the Steering Group and the college via evaluation forms on a regular basis.

The programme was marketed in the spring of 2007 with a view to enrolment in May, via the Voluntary Sector website and flyers produced by the college under the ‘Sherwood Partnership’ banner (services to business). Despite a concerted effort by the college, Enable and the Steering Group, recruitment was poor and the college and Steering Group agreed to put off the enrolment until September. By September, numbers had grown and a cohort of 15 was inducted to the programme in October 2007.

There was an expectation that learners would be drawn from Nottinghamshire with a greater concentration of numbers from the city. As West Nottinghamshire College is situated in the north of the county, the Steering Group initially expected learners to have a preference for a city centre venue for teaching sessions. However, Enable did not have the funding for room hire, no one organisation could be asked to provide free rooms and the college had not allowed for

outside room hire into its vastly undercut fees. When outside venues are used for teaching, the validating university must approve the facilities on health and safety grounds, which can in turn slow down the validating/approval process. An offer of free rooms from EMFEC for the first 3 months solved the problem in the short-term, however the majority of the first cohort was actually drawn from the county rather than the city and consequently were quite happy to attend the college.

“Many of the learners had no experience of Higher Education; some did not have experience of Further Education and consequently found they were on a very steep learning curve”

Learners are given three one-to-one tutorial sessions per year. It was agreed that members of the Steering Group could act as mentors, but it would normally be expected that each learner would have a mentor within their own organisation. This was often difficult when the learner was the most experienced/senior person in the organisation.

Many of the learners had no experience of Higher Education; some did not have experience of Further Education and consequently found they were on a very steep learning curve. Initial diagnostics identified specific learning needs and Learner Support was put in place, but for some of the learners the time commitment was an added burden. The HE department has a mentor specifically charged with providing help for study and research skills and this problem was addressed as soon as possible. However, numbers began to fall at an early stage and the cohort after ten months stands at ten.

Using external tutors, in this case members of the voluntary sector with specific expertise to deliver some of the modules or Masterclasses, produced logistical problems, particularly if the classes were at weekends or during the evening. Registers were not

always available to monitor attendance and external tutors had difficulties logging on to the college IT system. These problems were quickly addressed, but processes and systems in most HEIs/FECs are not set up to accommodate external staff.

Summary

The College and Steering Group have continued to monitor the progress of the learners and the programme. A law module has been introduced to replace Business Concepts and Study Skills will be delivered at the beginning of the programme to the next cohort. Learner evaluations from the current cohort have been positive and initial ‘teething problems’ have been resolved. In order to make the Foundation Degree sustainable, both the college and voluntary sector need to promote the course as widely as possible, particularly as fees will increase to the level of the college’s standard tuition fee.

Case Study: Rolls-Royce

Organisational Context

Rolls-Royce⁶ is a leading power-systems company in civil and defence aerospace, marine and energy markets. The company manufactures in 20 countries and has customers in 150 countries. In the last 5 years, Rolls-Royce has invested more than £3 billion in research and development and £200 to £300 million in capital projects. The company grew from an electrical and mechanical business established by Henry Royce in 1884. Royce built his first motor car in 1904 and joined forces with Charles Rolls, a London dealer in quality cars and in 1906 the Rolls-Royce name was launched. During the First World War, the company designed and developed its first aero engine and in the Second World War developed the aero gas turbine. By the 1950s, the company had entered the civil aviation market. The company was taken into state ownership in

⁶ for the purpose of this report, information came from the plant at Derby therefore ‘company’ or ‘Rolls-Royce’ refers to the training strategy in the UK aerospace sector.

the early 1970s and the motor car business was floated as a separate entity. Rolls-Royce later returned to the private sector and after a number of mergers and acquisitions, became the only company in Britain capable of delivering power for use in the air, at sea and on land.

Training and Progression

Rolls-Royce invests £30 million on training annually and works with universities across the world to support and develop research in academic centres of excellence. The networks forged in this type of work create mutually beneficial knowledge transfer partnerships. The company also actively supports education in order to improve communities and provide resources for schools. Books, case studies and resources are available via the Rolls-Royce website and there are educational initiatives to encourage interest in science, engineering and technology. The company offers science prizes and participates in the Year in Industry Awards.

“Rolls-Royce invests £30 million on training annually and works with universities across the world to support and develop research in academic centres of excellence”

The company began to focus on progression to Level 4 as part of an extensive company wide training and development policy in the realisation that the future was in Level 3, Level 4 and above. At present, there are approximately 450 Level 3 Advanced Apprentices. Around 50% will immediately progress to a Foundation Degree or HND/HNC, others may progress at a later stage. Rolls-Royce has found that an increasing number of Advanced Apprentices (around 30%) had already achieved ‘A’ levels (or equivalent). The company is currently trialling a pilot project for ‘Higher Apprenticeships’ – a progression route from the Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship. The three Higher Apprentices enrolled on the pilot programme are studying for a Foundation

Degree in Mechanical & Manufacturing Engineering.

Summary

The company’s dedicated training budget and active encouragement of progression has created a culture and expectation of continuous learning. Unlike many other organisations, funding is not a barrier to progression, even at the higher skills level. As well as receiving government funding for the apprenticeships they offer, the company fully funds all training over and above that required of the apprenticeship frameworks, including post Level 3 training and development; and through its strong links with universities for research and development, Rolls-Royce does not face the same barriers as other organisations in forging mutually supportive training partnerships.

Case Study: Dales Agriculture and Rural Training (DART)

Organisational Context

Dales Agriculture and Rural Training (DART) was established in the late 1990s as a sole trader enterprise with the aim of providing government funded work based training in agriculture and land-based employment sectors. Now a limited company, the Derby-based organisation mainly focuses its activities on Derbyshire, but also operates in Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire. NVQ and Apprenticeship training is offered in subjects such as horticulture, arboriculture, environmental conservation, agriculture and animal care. Whilst the provision of LSC funded training is DART’s core business, the company also trains assessors and verifiers, and adults under the Employer Training Pilot (Valuable Skills) now Train to Gain.

DART is an Assessment Centre for the National Proficiency Tests Council, carrying out a range of skills assessments associated

with machinery and livestock operations. DART also run two schemes (Train to Gain and Skills Xtra) for Derbyshire learners employed in industry, but outside apprenticeship age.

Training and Progression

The company does not focus on Level 4+ programmes, but tends to address the need for higher level skills training as it occurs. DART currently has no Level 4 provision or progression arrangements. The organisation is primarily funded by the LSC (for Levels 2 and 3) but higher level training could potentially cost the company £3,000 per client per annum. Level 4 training lacks relevance to many in the sector as trainees become highly skilled in their craft at Level 3. There is also a perception that the 'jump' to Level 4, particularly related to the knowledge aspects of a higher level programme, would be too great and colleges do not have appropriate bridging courses in place to prepare for such a transition. Some of the learners find the transition from Level 2 to Level 3 too difficult, often at the technical certificate stage.

DART consider discrete management courses such as the Certificate/Diploma in Management Studies to be more relevant to their learners, preferably taking place away from the workplace so that the pressures of the daily workload do not interfere with study.

“It is quite difficult to ‘sell’ progression to Level 4 through the NVQ route as the qualification does not have the same cachet as a professional or management qualification”

The Level 4 NVQ is not considered viable as learners would have to hold a management position and have the time to be assessed in the workplace.

In response to requests from employers DART has established an effective team for the delivery and assessment of assessor and verifier qualifications, 'A' and 'V' units. These

mini awards at Levels 3 and 4 are delivered in the workplace by experienced staff from DART. The service is almost exclusively focused on DART's employer base.

From the company's perspective, it is quite difficult to 'sell' progression to Level 4 through the NVQ route as the qualification does not have the same cachet as a professional or management qualification. Although Advanced Apprenticeships may be an attraction as a 'step-up' from Apprenticeship, the next step to Level 4 does not have the same recognition.

Interestingly, the sector has noticed an improvement in training in the last decade as supervisory staff have gained NVQs and are better equipped to support Level 2 and 3 learners. One of DART's past successes is a 16 year old school-leaver who qualified at NVQ Level 2 and Level 3 before progressing to veterinary nursing. She now works at a veterinary nursing training school and has qualified as an assessor (A units) and is currently working towards the IV unit qualification and teacher training.

Summary

As is often the case, professional and organisational bodies are often the drivers behind progression as they stipulate qualification requirements for membership or 'licence to practice'. DART finds this true of floristry, as Level 4 is a requirement for entry to the Institute of Florists, which in turn opens doors to exhibitions, display work and teaching. However, Level 4 floristry is not available through a Derbyshire provider.

Having a background knowledge of the agricultural and land-based sector, DART considered there was little prestige attached to Level 4 qualifications within the sector, unless there was an actual requirement (as in floristry). Level 4 skills were specific to certain aspects of business and consequently bite-sized chunks of learning could be beneficial provided some assistance with funding was available. A full Level 4 qualification was deemed inappropriate as there is a limited

number of management positions available within the sector and those in management positions are often too busy to study at work.

	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Horticulture	150	6	0
Vet Nurse	60	30	0
Small Animal Care	30	4	0
Agriculture	25	10	0
Fencing	6	0	0
Arboriculture	6	0	0

Number of learners at Levels 2, 3 and 4: Year 2007

Case Study: Skills for Care

Organisational Context

Skills for Care is part of the Sector Skills Council, *Skills for Care and Development*. It is not a training provider, but an employer led authority on the training standards and development needs of care staff in England. The remit of the organisation is to provide data and reports on the social care workforce to improve the training and qualifications of staff in order to boost business. They also help in the development of innovative and flexible ways of working to develop business opportunities and create flexible qualifications in order to develop a highly trained workforce. Skills for Care also help employers improve recruitment and retention and acts as the employer voice in shaping government policy. Working in consultation with carers, employers and service users, Skills for Care aims to modernise adult social care in England.

Training and Progression

There is recognition within the sector that the analytical and research skills required at Level 4 are not routinely developed during work-based Level 2 and 3 programmes and very few learners have the capacity to make the jump. Some Level 3 employees lack

sufficient basic skills to enable them to progress. As NVQ Level 4 (the traditional care route) requires the learner to hold a management position and such positions are few in number and require management qualifications, Level 3 learners find themselves in the 'chicken and egg' scenario. Consequently, the care sector has a Level 3 'plateau'.

Summary

Skills for Care has worked with a variety of partner organisations and stakeholders to develop Foundation Degrees, which may attract progression within the sector as the programmes are work based. A Foundation Degree in Palliative Care (with LOROS⁷) enrolled its first cohort in 2007 and the West Midlands region is running a pilot around the care of older people. In order to overcome the problems associated with transition, Skills for Care is working on bite-sized chunks of learning which link clearly to Foundation degrees.

“There is recognition within the sector that the analytical and research skills required at Level 4 are not routinely developed during work based Level 2 and 3 programmes and very few learners have the capacity to make the jump”

Funding for training, particularly full programmes, is a major issue. Skills for Care recognise the need for bridging courses to prepare Level 3 employees for the rigour of Level 4. The most successful progression is to qualifications in nursing, as universities put on bridging courses to prepare the learners. Unlike care sector workers who receive no funding support, learners studying for a Diploma in Nursing have their fees paid and receive a salary.

⁷ *Leicestershire and Rutland Organisation for the Relief of Suffering*

**Case Study:
Rushcliffe Care**

Organisational Context

Rushcliffe Care is a large provider of residential nursing care. The company currently has 25 homes across the East Midlands, Essex, the West Midlands and Staffordshire, with plans for further expansion. Rushcliffe Care trains staff using Skills for Care Level 2 and 3 training provision in its own training centre. The company considered becoming a recognised training provider, but found LSC and Train to Gain paperwork too bureaucratic. Rather than use LSC packages, which are considered clumsy to manage and do not always meet the needs of learners, the company has pursued other routes and absorbed the costs of training.

Training and Progression

The company does not focus on Level 4 training in great numbers as there is a limited requirement for Level 4 staff in the care sector. A relatively small number of people become managers and retention at this level is good, consequently the company trains to Level 4 when a need for a suitably qualified manager is identified. However, the company recognise the benefits of some Level 4 training in certain specialist fields, for example, Alzheimer’s Disease, but not for a full Level 4 qualification. The company’s Director feels this is the case across many sectors – that employers want Level 3 qualifications and skills, plus experience, plus some Level 4 skills.

Level 2	Care	65
Level 3	Care	44
Level 4	Care Management	5

Rushcliffe Care staff NVQ Training 2007

Summary

As there is no funding mechanism to support Level 4 training, smaller care homes cannot

afford to pay for staff to progress, particularly as there is no incentive to have a manager and employees achieving qualifications at the higher Level. Consequently, aspiring staff move on. This has brought about a pattern of advertising for qualified staff to fill management vacancies rather than succession planning through training. Whilst the sector recognises that this practice is short-sighted, the agenda is driven by business imperatives. Rushcliffe Care use the term ‘Level 3 bottleneck’ to describe what Skills for Care call the ‘Level 3 plateau.’

The general feeling is that the sector needs skills rather than qualifications and smaller chunks of training would be more appropriate to meet specific needs. Rushcliffe Care has found colleges and universities inflexible in their delivery patterns, as the care sector cannot release staff at the same time on the same day each week.

“The general feeling is that the sector needs skills rather than qualifications and smaller chunks of training would be more appropriate to meet specific needs”

The directors have explored the possibility of accessing Train to Gain but found providers inflexible and despite building a relationship with a university for Foundation Degrees, the company cannot envisage the business benefits of enrolling staff. Rushcliffe Care’s view is that there should be a more flexible funding structure and more flexibility of delivery from training providers.

**Case Study:
The Food and Drink Forum**

Organisational Context

Originally funded by the New Technology Initiative (NTI), the Food and Drink Forum was set up in 1998 to provide business support to the food and drink cluster in Nottinghamshire. Since 2001, the Food and Drink Forum has worked across the East

Midlands to deliver business, training and sales and marketing intervention focusing on SMEs. The organisation does not receive core funding but operates via funded projects from a variety of sources, as well as membership support and consultancy.

A NTI initiative open to food businesses across the East Midlands (the Business Transformation Grant) has been used to undertake training within the sector to Level 3; and businesses can access capital grants of up to £10,000 if they sign up to training. Colleges and universities are part of the NTI collaboration and access funding to purchase equipment at their establishments. This is a three way process - learning establishments join the NTI and access funding for agreed equipment to be used by businesses and the learning centre, with the stipulation that they run training courses for companies. In turn, companies can access business support grants to buy equipment, but have to put people on the courses set up by the universities/colleges. Only learning institutions can access funding via the NTI, consequently the Forum itself cannot offer training programmes via this scheme.

“Training and work based learning must be perceived by business owners as having a positive benefit to the company in terms of solving some of their problems”

It is very easy for individuals to start a business in the food and drink sector without expertise, knowledge or qualifications. Using its own business start-up training products, the Food and Drink Forum has worked extensively with SMEs to ensure they understand food technologies and have a sound knowledge of issues governed by law, such as food hygiene and health and safety. The food and drink industry is an unusual sector in that some of its members want to grow, innovate and develop their businesses whilst others are lifestyle businesses, or businesses set up through the owner's ethical beliefs whose focus is not necessarily

business growth. Some businesses within the sector are driven by supermarket listing, but the complexity of the relationship and the technical and operational skills needed are a challenge for any new business.

“Universities have traditionally engaged well with larger companies in the food and drink sector as they have been the drivers of research work”

Training and Progression

SMEs, particularly those classed as micro-businesses, do not always understand their strategic or operational business needs. Furthermore, the problems for SMEs are always urgent, with the need for skills and knowledge being applied immediately, not at the end of a two or three year programme. Consequently, entry/progression to Higher Education is not seen as a priority.

Whilst the option for an individual to develop with the business is an attractive one, training and work based learning must be perceived by business owners as having a positive benefit to the company in terms of solving some of their problems. Although the region has several universities, technology centres and colleges that offer food courses, they are often geographically distant and providers should look to offer flexible and work friendly courses that meet business needs.

The Food and Drink Forum found that universities have traditionally engaged well with larger companies in the food and drink sector as they have been the drivers of research work. Universities have a tendency to work with larger blue chip companies on research and research students often prefer working on projects with larger companies. The Forum recognises that academic learning drives the industry forward, particularly in research projects funded by large food manufacturers, but this does not help small businesses in the short term. SMEs do not have the technical and specialist teams in place to be able to offer project support to a placement student, thus maximising the project's value to the SME.

Moreover, Higher Education courses designed to attract full time students may not meet the needs of smaller businesses in terms of academic context and delivery style, which is the reason modular work based programmes closely allied to the placement context is key. The Food and Drink Forum has had a great deal of success working with Nottingham University on short term MSc placements, but has struggled with longer term graduate placement programmes, partly because universities have placed students themselves. The Forum has found that MSc students on work placement in SMEs with specifically agreed projects have been successful in producing positive outcomes for themselves and the business.

Large businesses can often afford to release staff for training and to pay for travel whereas SMEs do not have the same financial or staffing resources. In general, work based learning within the sector tends to be delivered via Further Education colleges, the reason being that there is a lack of providers with the capacity and capability to deliver; and colleges were set up as vocational learning institutions delivering work based programmes.

“Large businesses can often afford to release staff for training and to pay for travel whereas SMEs do not have the same financial or staffing resources”

Training provision at institutions such as North Nottinghamshire College was supported by a strong local cluster of employers which included large companies such as Campbells. It is possible that provision within the sector could be enhanced by enabling other agencies engaged with businesses to set up as learning centres and access traditional funding streams.

The Food and Drink Forum recognise the need to support and encourage training in SMEs and the importance of work based learning. The Forum is fully engaged with the relevant Sector Skills Councils and is looking forward to the finalisation of the SSC's work

based programmes. At the higher skills level, a work based Foundation degree may be attractive to the SME owner as long as the programme does not require too much support from owners who are time-poor. If SME owners in food and drink manufacturing are to be attracted to higher level training, flexibility of programme design, learning, attendance and modular certification are vital ingredients of training programmes.

“a work-based Foundation degree may be attractive to the SME owner as long as the programme does not require too much support from owners who are time-poor”

Traditional HE provision at Levels 4 and 5 requiring attendance at a place of learning over several months/years may not bring the benefit of the learning into the SME quickly enough. The key to helping set up and foster high value SMEs is to convince the owners that the training will have the dual function of developing the individual to such an extent that not only does the individual gain a qualification, but the individual's training will have a positive impact on the business. The concern for many owners, however, is keeping the trained individual within the organisation, which acts as a barrier to investment in training and progression.

There has to be careful and specialist support to the organisation to identify their key business goals and strategies and pinpoint exactly what training could help grow the business and fit in with business needs. Therefore any provision should not rely too heavily on high level support for learners/projects within the SME, as the management team often cannot provide this resource.

Summary

There are some difficulties for organisations such as the Food and Drink Forum in trying to engage with established education funding bodies as they lack knowledge of the system and the ways in which funding can be

accessed. The Forum feels at a disadvantage as other, more traditional learning institutions have more experience and understanding of the process and language complexities. Despite being on the LSC's approved supplier list, the group finds it difficult to identify the best tendering opportunities; to identify suitable consortia and collaborations already in place; and timescales for submission are often too tight. Consultancy services offered by universities to unravel these difficulties are often too expensive for small groups such as the Food and Drink Forum.

The Forum recognise that training at all levels, including at the higher level, should be aligned to individual and organisational needs, particularly for those companies with development and appraisal schemes. SMEs would respond better to training programmes for their employees where the course was contextualised to the industry, its challenges and problems and where key areas, particularly business operations, are characterised by correct, appropriate and timely facilitation.

Summary, Observations and Conclusions

Work based learning, as defined by this report, is *“focused on the needs of the employer and employee, is for people in employment and can be at all National Qualification and HE levels”*. Despite this broad definition, anecdotal evidence suggests a perception that work based learning is limited to lower level qualifications. Even where higher level activity is supported, this appears to have less value than traditional HE programmes.

National strategy (Leitch, 2006) recognises substantial skill shortages and has proposed *“a radical change right across the skills spectrum”*. Resulting objectives include a target for over 40% of adults to be qualified to Level 4 by 2020. Although the current economic situation may have stimulated debate about a need to re-skill and not just up-skill, support for progression linked to work based learning opportunities is still important. The CBI (2008) notes that employers value higher level skills, but generally favour graduate entrants rather than raising the skills of those already in the workforce.

Whilst Leitch recognised the importance of skills training for the UK's economy, it is suggested that policy decisions could be better informed by the issues facing learners, employees and providers. Non-traditional learners need support and do not necessarily adapt readily to Higher Education. Equally, traditional learners need to develop other, softer skills. Many young people receive poor Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and work based learning providers cannot provide appropriate advice or do not feel it is part of their role. HE Admissions teams often do not understand the relevance or merit of work based learning, and schools are less likely to promote work based learning unless the sixth form offers vocational progression. IAG training for HE Admissions staff, school staff,

work based learning (WBL) providers and IAG practitioners might be a better starting point for encouraging vocational progression. There are, as the case studies identified in this report found, practical reasons why this may be the case. Despite recent interventions such as the development of Foundation Degrees, there are numerous barriers to both the employer and employee preventing or, at the very least, hindering skills progression within the workplace. In part this is due to the different funding structures and responsibilities for programmes up to Level 3 and for those including and beyond Level 4. It is also partly due to the emphasis (DIUS, 2007) given to full-time HE students and the artificial boundaries between HEIs, FECs and employers preventing seamless and transparent progression.

It is clear from the case studies that the work based learning route attracts learners with no or limited experience of post-16 education and training. The attractions of non-institutionalised and flexible part-time study has encouraged “non-traditional” adult learners to think about and access learning opportunities.

Case Studies

The case studies clearly demonstrate that ways to support progression are being found and supported. Although there is common ground across these, it is important to recognise that “one size does not fit all” and that the characteristics of the workforce, employment sector and associated training needs all have an impact on the way in which training, development and progression pathways are approached.

It should also be recognised that despite an almost universal call for an increase in skill levels that not all sectors/employers demand this in significant quantities. Rushcliffe Care, for examples, suggests that there is a limited requirement for Level 4 staff in the care sector pointing to a preference for a “pick and mix” approach whereby some elements of Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications are

selected to produce a composite and relevant training programme. DART do not focus on Level 4 (and above) citing lack of relevance to the sector as the main reason for this. DART also point out that their trainees become highly skilled in their craft at Level 3 and have little need for progression.

In other cases, there is a clear demand for higher level skills. The NDA identified a high demand by Level 3 learners for a Foundation Degree. Equally, Confetti note a “substantial number” of learners wishing to progress to either a Foundation or Bachelor Degree. In both cases, the achievement of a higher level qualification would seem to support future career development and aspirations.

Best Practice

Progression opportunities appear to be more successful where providers and/or employers are working in partnership. Not only does this allow greater flexibility, partnership working also eases funding restrictions. Confetti, for example reported that “there have been no funding issues...because of the structure of the partnership arrangements”. Enable, on the other hand, found that HE level funding could not be accessed “without attachment to a college or university with Student Numbers”.

Partnership work has other benefits – at both ends of the spectrum. Carillion, for example, work in partnership with a local school. One of the benefits of this has been a “real enthusiasm from students who can observe Apprenticeships in action”. At a time when there is greater focus on the Apprenticeship programme and a drive to increase participants, this type of partnership can increase awareness, address barriers/concerns from students and parents alike and, ultimately, lead to Apprenticeship recruitment.

There are instances, of course, where progression and funding to support this are not an issue. Rolls Royce has a long-established reputation for the quality of its training. With an annual budget of £30

million⁸ it is perhaps easy to understand why! Used to support a range of training activity, this investment supports a training strategy that recognises the value of Level 3, Level 4 and above. The progression route for Apprentices is clear, because there is a transparent and accepted route to higher level skills training

Rolls Royce may be the exception. Not many organisations and providers have access to a multi-million pound training budget. The principle of identify and developing appropriate progression routes is, however, considered a practice that others could employ.

Recommendations

In compiling the following recommendations on ways in which progression issues/barriers could be addressed, it is recognised that some of these may be aspirational and/or demand an input and commitment beyond the control of the LSC. It is, however, considered useful and relevant to include these alongside the more immediate actions that could be taken to support and improve progression strategies..

Apprenticeships

1. Develop support and mentoring networks for Apprentices.
2. Explore the lack of progression from Apprenticeship to Advanced Apprenticeship and the 5% progression to higher level skills training through research and monitoring and publish results.
3. Ensure Apprentices (Level 2) are made aware of progression at an early stage through WBL providers.

Parity

1. Engender parity of esteem and common definitions between workforce development, work-based learning and vocational learning/traditional HE programmes.

⁸ 2008 information

2. Policy decisions could be better informed by the issues facing learners, employers, employees and HE institutions.
3. Attach UCAS points to Key Skills in Application of Number and Communication at all universities.
4. Allowance for learners to achieve CPD or HE certification for part-completions to allow breaks in study.

Funding

1. Develop a credit based system to combine credit for an award or transfer credit to other HE establishments across the UK.
2. Develop sound APL/APEL systems
3. Payment for modules delivered as CPD funded in universities *and* colleges.
4. HEFCE to make available a proportion of ASNs specifically for WBL providers
5. LEA grant opportunities available for flexible programmes to support rolling start-dates.
6. Recognise the difficulties for some employers/employees to pay fees and offer a student loan system for part-time learners.

Partnerships

1. Develop strong collaborative partnerships to ensure progression
2. Common LSC/HEFCE progression strategy.
3. Develop progression routes with large employers as part of the Skills Pledge.
4. Encourage vocational progression as a meaningful career choice in schools and colleges.

Non-Traditional Learners

1. Acknowledge the need for extra support (academic or skills) for non-traditional learners.
2. Inclusion of sound bridging courses or introductory modules to develop skills required at higher level e.g. research skills.

Information and Guidance

1. Market courses to employees and employers by 'Mode of Attendance' and

programme length to avoid confusion with institutional definitions of full/part-time.

2. Develop more accessible information on vocational progression pathways
3. More training on vocational higher level skills training for IAG practitioners.
4. Better training for HE Admissions' teams and student services' personnel to provide correct advice and support to vocational learners at FE and HE levels.
5. Provide better training for brokerage services to explain the business benefits of higher level skills training.