

The Challenges in Creating LifeLong Learning – Policy and Practice in England

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Background

Wide agreement that lifelong learning is a vital and important tool for economic, social and personal development (OECD, 1996; UNESCO, 1996; CEC, 1994; UK, 1998, 1999)

- o OECD (1996) Lifelong Learning for All, Paris
- o UNESCO (1996) Delors J The Treasure Within, Paris
- o CEC (1994) Competitiveness, Employment Growth, Luxembourg
- o UK (1998) The Learning Age, DfEE; (1999) Learning to Succeed DfEE

The Background

Everywhere in the world statements identify adult education as key to the survival of humankind in the 21st century, attributing adult education with the magic to contribute positively to education for all...and yet almost everywhere in the world, adult education is a widely neglected and feeble part of the official educational scene

Giere U and Piet M (1997) , Adult Learning in a World of Risk, emerging policies and strategies, UNESCO, Hamburg 3-4

What is Lifelong Learning?

- Empty concept that everyone can sign up to but cannot define to create practice? (Gustavsson, 1995)
 - Lifelong Learning is little but HRD in drag (Boshier, 1994)
 - The role of the State vs the Individual vs Private Enterprise (Field, 2000)
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- o Boshier J (1994) in Holford J Jarvis P + Griffin C, International Perspectives on Lifelong Learning, London
 - o Field J (2000) Lifelong Learning and the new Educational Order, Stoke
 - o Gustavsson, B (1995) in Klasson, Manninen, Tosse and Wahlgren's Social Change and Adult Education, Linkoping

Lifelong learning – the history in the UK

From Adult Education to Lifelong Learning – a process of focusing resources.... and initiative overload...

- 1960s and 1970s basic education
 - 1980s English as a second language, care in the community
 - 1990s Credits – passport for learning – Robertson, 1994 in particular but also Allen and Layer, 1995.
 - 2000s lifelong learning, widening participation Stuart, 2002; Layer, 2005,
 - 2007 The Leitch Report the importance of skill development – employer engagement
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- Allen R and Layer G (1995) *Credit Based Systems as Vehicle for Change in Universities and Colleges*, London: Kogan Page.
 - Layer G (2005) *Closing the Equity Gap* Leicester NIACE
 - Robertson, D. (1994). *Choosing to Change: Extending Access, Choice and Mobility in Higher Education, Report of the HEQC CAT Development Project*, HEQC
 - Stuart M (2002) *Collaborating for Change Managing Widening Participation in further and higher Education* Leicester NIACE
 - Leitch S (2006) *Prosperity for all in the global economy- world class skill Final Report*HMSO

The '00s' – Lifelong learning networks and widening participation

- Widening participation to higher education to improve opportunities, social inclusion, and economic competitiveness
- 9 out of 10 of those with A-levels (gold standard level 3 qualification) go on to higher education and are likely to continue studying throughout life
- Only 5 out of 10 of those with 'other' level 3 qualifications (often defined as 'vocational') go on to higher education (Newby, 2005)
- HEFCE agreed to fund lifelong learning networks – 2004
First funded network in Sussex 2005 for 3 years

By 2007 nearly 40 lifelong learning networks exist all over England

- o Newby H (2005) Lifelong Learning Networks in Higher Education in Journal of Access Policy and Practice NIACE

What are Lifelong learning networks?

- Consortium of HEIs, (ALL) FE providers, employer representatives and 'other' providers of post 16 education
- Focused on a locale – eg South London, county of Sussex, Greater Manchester – rationale about where learners will study and work
- Emphasis on mutual engagement with problem at a local level

New context for lifelong learning

Skill levels and aspirations for UK – Leitch, 2006

- out of 30 OECD countries, the UK lies 17th on low skills, 20th on intermediate skills and 11th on high skills
- 5 million adults in the UK lack functional literacy
- 17 million adults in the UK have difficulty with numbers
- more than one in six young people leave school unable to read, write or add up properly.

The end of lifelong learning networks?

- Announcement in 2007 that networks would not receive further funding beyond their initial 3 years
- DIUS grant letter to HEFCE talked about 'building on the promise of lifelong learning networks' (January, 08)...consequences??

What have they being doing?

Developing a ladder of learning through and into higher education and beyond, with a focus on vocationally orientated courses:

- Progression agreements for vocational learners into HE
- Engagement with changes to the 14-19 curriculum and entry to HE
- Development of new curricular where there are gaps in provision
- Development of additional bridging programmes where there are gaps between vocational and academic learning

An example – South London Lifelong Learning Network

- Area includes South East and South West London
 - over 30 FE colleges
 - 6 HEIs including boroughs of Greenwich, Lambeth, Bromley, Croydon, Kingston and Richmond

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An example – South London Lifelong Learning Network

- Focus on 3 employment area:
 - Health – changing professional roles, need for more staff
 - Engineering – large number of medium sized companies in the area – ageing workforce
 - Sport - Olympics
- Progression routes from level 2-3-4
- New programmes
- Advice and guidance

Value of Lifelong Learning Networks – so far

- Only been in place for 3 years hence so far no real benefits for progression
- Better links and understanding between FE and HE
- Better co-ordination between HEIs in a region
- Greater engagement with employers in a region
- Progression agreements beginning to be in place
- A better understanding of skill needs for employment in an area by educationalists

Value of Lifelong Learning Networks – so far

- Shared learning across the HE and FE sectors
- Employer Engagement
- Better embedding of Foundation Degree qualification
- Better advice and guidance beginning to emerge for learners
- Opportunity to engage with new curriculum developments at school level
- Better provision of skills in certain areas

Areas of less success

- Less real focus on 'lifelong' but more on level 3 to 4 transition
- Less real awareness of actual demand, more focus on 'what should be there'
- Still too much focus on providers than on what provision should be in place – insufficient engagement with researchers
- Insufficient awareness of Leitch research
- Insufficient engagement of Russell Group HEIs

Employer Engagement- Vision from Leitch

- 95% of working age adults have basic skills in both functional literacy and numeracy - rising from 85% and 79% respectively in 2005;
- more than 90% of adults are skilled to GCSE level (level 2) or to vocational equivalents - rising from 69% in 2005;
- the number of Apprentices in the UK is boosted to 500,000 each year, with improved quantity, quality and esteem for intermediate skills; and
- more than 40% of adults are skilled to graduate level and above - up from 29% in 2005.

Leitch Agenda:

- Increasing skill attainments at all levels;
- Routing public funding of vocational skills through Train to Gain and Learner Accounts;
- Strengthening the employer voice on skills through creation of a new Commission for Employment & Skills, increasing employer engagement and investment in skills, reforming Sector Skills Councils who will simplify and approve vocational training;
- Launching a new 'pledge' for employers to voluntarily train more employees at work. If insufficient progress has been made by 2010, introduce a statutory right for employees to access workplace training;

Leitch Agenda

- Increasing employer investment in higher level qualifications, especially in Apprenticeships and in degree and postgraduate levels; significantly more training in the workplace;
- Raising people's aspirations and awareness of the value of skills, creating a new universal adult careers service to diagnose skill needs with a skills health check available for all;
- Government to introduce compulsory education or workplace training up to age 18 following introduction of new Diplomas and expanded Apprenticeship route; and
- Integrating the public employment & skills services to deliver sustainable employment, enabling more disadvantaged people to gain skills and find work, developing employer-led Employment and Skills Boards

Could Lifelong Learning Networks Deliver
the new agenda?

YES – they are moving in the direction he
envisages but will they survive?