



# Newsletter

## Editor's comment

Firstly the WVLLN would like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year. We are certainly looking forward to all the opportunities and challenges that 2008 might bring.

In this issue you will find a report on the Upskilling the Workforce Conference on the 29th November, an update from the Assistant Director Progression which includes details of the successful development fund bids, a look at NIACE's national strategy on lifelong learning and its future and a commentary from the BBC on funding cuts for second degrees.

The next issue will include an update from the Assistant Director Curriculum as well as reports on events & conferences that the team have attended

I would encourage you to visit our website where you can read more about what the team has been undertaking as well as feedback from recent conferences.

## Upskilling the Work Force Conference 29th November 2007— Caroline Adelmann Progression/Strand Co-ordinator at the RAC

The conference was held against a background of a rapidly changing world economy and forecasted employment needs in order for the UK to be in a position to compete in the global market of 2020. It was against this background that the *2006 Leitch Review of Skills, Prosperity for all in the global economy—world class skills* was commissioned.

The report clearly states that in order to participate and maximise economic growth, productivity and social justice, as benchmarked against the OECD's upper quartile, we must convert our workforce by transforming our education and traditional skills mix. The report sets out a challenging vision.

What are the implications? In effect it means doubling attainment at most levels of skill. How is this to be achieved? The responsibility for delivery is to be shared between Government, employers, educational institutions and individuals.

The scale of the challenge is clear. Demographics, current figures and projections tell us

that today, 8m people lack L2 qualifications, 70% of whom are forecasted to be employed by 2020. However, it is also anticipated that by 2020 there will be 5 million unemployable. To put this into context, the proportion of jobs at L4 and above could reach 42% of the workforce i.e. 4.5 million more than today and those requiring low or no qualifications may be as low as 2% or 2.5 million less than today.

Barriers to learning, such as the fear of failure, need to be addressed. But it doesn't stop there. Once qualified there is a need for continuous professional development provision to meet the needs of specialist sectors together with appropriate learning styles—one size does not fit all. A key message here is that delivery methods must be appropriate to the target market, which could be internet, distance or work-based learning but must also be tailored to those who do not fit the "traditional" route. In short, flexible.

The overriding message is, we need to improve this situation. If we do not meet this challenge

effectively, upskilling will only let us stand still. Thus to attain a positive balance, skills must not only meet market demand but exceed it.

Further and Higher Education institutions are a central component to delivery of this vision and must work together in partnership with employers at all levels to generate curricula value to ensure educational qualifications meet and match demand. Qualifications, in turn, need to be transparent and relevant. It is therefore, crucial, to develop an appreciation in the market place of the parity of the various levels on offer and what they actually deliver within curricula frameworks.

Employer engagement is nevertheless crucial to the process and success. Skills provision, therefore, must be demand led with serious employer buy-in to ensure that training is embedded into strategic plans and business objectives. To put it bluntly, unless business/ employer needs are known, they cannot be supplied through the educational system.

## Funding for second degrees is cut



The government is redirecting funding away from students who want to study for a second

degree, in order to prioritise first-time undergraduates. The Universities Secretary, John Denham, has told England's funding council to switch £100m a year.

BBC news reported that although learners' representatives said the move made sense it might underestimate the way people need to seek new skills. It would also affect someone adding a shorter qualification to their

existing skills.

Mr Denham in a letter to Hefce wrote "While there may be much benefit to an individual, or their employer, in them retraining for a second qualification at the same level, this is not, in my view, usually as high priority for public funding as support for students who are either entering higher education for the first time, or progressing to higher qualifications. In many cases, it may be appropriate for the employer to pay at least a proportion of the costs of such retraining."

Alastair Thomson, senior policy officer at

the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, said it made sense to stop some people obtaining repeated public subsidised training while others were never given the opportunity, as did the wish to make employers pay a fair share.

It was pointed out though that the situation may not be so straightforward though. Many do make false starts in life and may require support in second chances. Mr Thomson also commented that it was unclear how these plans would affect indebted modern language graduates who need vocational specific top-up training. He also pointed out that there will be "a strong case for continuing,

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## Our aims for the next month

Elaine Fisher



The progression team have been busy since September concentrating on adult progression agreements and AP(E)L. They have also been monitoring the progression agreements that have already been produced which are going to the January Management Board for formal signing.

The Western Access Progression Agreement has now been signed by the majority of the HEIs and the first Steering Group meeting will take place on the 14th January here at Oakfield Campus.

The first round of the Development Funding opportunity netted 13 bids of which 5 were successful and 2 have been asked to resubmit following some adjustments to their proposals. The successful colleges have been notified and Statement of Intent letters will be sent out during January.

The WVLLN is looking forward to seeing the outcomes of the bids and hopes to stage an event where the colleges will be invited to showcase their projects. There will be a second round of bidding, details of which will

be circulated to the colleges in January with a deadline of May for submission.

The colleges whose bids were accepted were Action on Addiction, Weston College, Salisbury College, Stroud College in Gloucestershire and City of Bristol College. Gloucestershire College and Wiltshire College were invited to resubmit.

I was delighted to be invited to the launch of the Creative Media Diploma at Commonweal School in Swindon on Monday 26th November as part of the work that the WVLLN is currently undertaking with 14-19. For further details of the visit and accompanying photographs please visit our website.

Keeping the 14-19 theme the WVLLN Executive Board welcomed Colin McArthur (South Gloucestershire Sub-Area Co-ordinator) and Pam Hayes (14-19 Vocational Advisor) to highlight the developments in this area. Both presentations were very well received and our thanks go to both Colin and Pam for their presentations which certainly provided some interesting and stimulating discussion.

We welcome Janet Lonsdale to the WVLLN. Janet will be working with us for 3 days a week overseeing the IT developments including 'My life'.

We say farewell to Rochelle Seifas, Steve Dear's PA, who left the WVLLN at the end of December. She is now working for House of Fraser's in their IT department. We wish her all the very best for the future.

Following the news that the Oakfield Campus is to close by July 2008 the WVLLN have been exploring all options including a move to Carpenter House in the centre of Bath.

Wishing you all a very Happy New Year.

### Upcoming Events

- 7th Jan—Employer Engagement, Oakfield Campus
- 10th Jan—14—19 collaboration, Oakfield Campus
- 14th Jan—WAPA Steering Group, Oakfield Campus
- 16th Jan—Management Board, Oakfield Campus
- 16th Jan—Progression Co-ordinator team meeting, Oakfield Campus

## Funding cuts

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affordable, higher education for retired people who might need to return to the labour market and for public support to combat skills decay and obsolescence in fast-moving technologies."

The president of the NUS, Gemma Tumelty, said that the higher education sector would need to consider carefully the balance between bringing more people into higher education for the first time, and the capacity to respond to the rapidly changing skills needs in the workforce.

She went on to say "We live in an era of serial careers, particularly amongst highly skilled workers, and it would be a great shame if a change in funding arrangements were to limit the potential of those who have found a new direction, and wanted to support this by returning to higher education".

Source BBC News published 2007/09/07

## New developments

The Future for Lifelong Learning: a national strategy

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is hosting an independent commission of inquiry into the future of adult learning. Chaired by Sir David Watson, the inquiry was launched on 25th September 2007 and will report in Spring 2009.

Experts from government, business, academia, trade unions, public service, providers and the voluntary and community sector, as well as learners, will come together in a process to identify a broad consensus for the direction of adult learning policy in the UK.

The commission will undertake detailed assessment of evidence from the UK and beyond, including commissioned research and analysis and the collection of written and oral evidence. NIACE is actively seeking contributions from the field. Contributions can be made by responding to a call for evidence or through participation in one of the thematic conferences or learner events.

For further information please visit: [www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry](http://www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry)

