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Key Issues for Education and Training:

A report on a series of seminars organised by the UCL Institute of Education in partnership with the Education and Training Foundation in 2015



November 2015

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Key Issues for Education and Training: The Seminars

David Smith

UCL Institute of Education

Throughout 2015 the UCL Institute of Education's Centre for Post-14 Education and Work, in partnership with the Education and Training Foundation, ran a series of highly participative seminars focused on key issues for education and training. The seminars reflected the three key priorities for the Education and Training Foundation:

[Professional Standards and Workforce Development](#), Wednesday 21 January 2015

Norman Crowther, Association of Teachers and Lecturers, with Janet Curtis-Broni and Caryn Swart, Barking & Dagenham College

[Vocational Education and Training](#), Wednesday 4 March 2015

Professor Alison Fuller, Professor Lorna Unwin, UCL Institute of Education, with Lee Weatherly, Midland Group Training Services

[Leadership, Management and Governance](#), Thursday 11 June 2015

John Graystone, FE Governance, and Jill Westerman, Northern College

The series was also supported by Barry Sheerman MP, who acted as Chair.

The seminar series provided participants with the opportunity to explore these three broad themes focusing on all types of post-14 providers: further education colleges; sixth form colleges; independent training providers; and adult and community learning providers. In addition to participants from these organisations, the seminars also proved of interest to employers, local authorities, funding agencies and awarding organisations.

The series began with a clear understanding of the need for the education and training system to develop key strategic and operational partnerships and collaborations and the year concluded with providers preparing for a national programme of area-based reviews that highlighted the importance of this type of collaboration.

There were some key messages for all in education and training and the following papers, reflecting the seminars, explore issues of effective leadership, management and governance; maintenance of professional standards, through ongoing continuing workforce development; and building effective and inclusive vocational, professional and technical education and training.

Each seminar was introduced by a member of the Foundation's Directorate and was followed by a paper providing a more theoretical understanding of the issue to be discussed which allowed participants to initially engage with the topic within a broader theoretical perspective. However, in every seminar this was followed by an exploration of the particular issue in hand from a practitioner working daily with the problematic being considered. It is in this light that we hope the following papers are useful.

Chair's Introductory Comments

Barry Sheerman MP

The Houses of Parliament

During my time in Parliament I have been Chair of the House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Skills from 2001 – 2007, and Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Committee from 2007-2010. Being passionate about education and the rights of children and young people I also chair the Skills Commission, which has recently led a series of major inquiries on the skills needs of the next generation. As such I quickly took up the offer to Chair this series of seminars focused on the priorities of the Education and Training Foundation but also drawing on the expertise of the UCL Institute of Education and the researchers and practitioners leading each of the seminars. The papers presented were pertinent to the needs of young people and adults and were always placed firmly within the context of what we can do in the here and now. I commend the following papers to you.

Seminar One

January 2015

Professional Standards and Workforce Development

The limitations of professionalism and what to do about it

Dr Norman Crowther

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) National Official for Post 16 Education
(Writing in a personal capacity)

I don't believe sufficient reflection has gone into why the English further education (FE) sector has such difficulty in describing itself. In respect of other sectors it is commonly referred to as the 'Cinderella' sector or as the 'forgotten child.' This leads to a question about whether the sector has been organised in an appropriate way, both in the past and present? Why is it that change is almost synonymous with FE? Why do FE-related agencies have a shelf life of around 5 years? I am aiming in this short piece to offer a conceptualisation of the FE sector by drawing upon a theory developed by Fligstein and McAdam¹. The theory develops what the authors call strategic action fields.

Further, I will suggest that once one looks at the underpinning structures, practices and beliefs that have developed in the 'field' one may be able to see why the development of professionalism has been so arduous.

My claim here will be that a 'logic of incorporation' has shaped most of what we do and think in the field and that, both in intended (policy drivers) and unintended outcomes, barriers to the development of professionalism have been erected.²

Of course, there are always possible ways forward. Some more radical than others but, if the analysis is broadly right, then it at least offers a new shared understanding of how the sector is formed and what its capacity for change really is at the present time. There is no doubt that those outside the sector want to know that too. So, we cannot go on thinking that it is meddling by others that leads to poor policy formation: what can we do about it?³

The demands upon the sector are great. The Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) puts it that 'Vocational teaching, learning and assessment is a sophisticated professional occupation and demands, therefore, robust initial and continuous development of expertise.'⁴ This, put in a new deregulatory context where college senior management teams determine the level of qualification needed for their staff, places a great onus on them to deliver. Without an attempt at a new shared understanding the task may be too much and we may wake in five years' time with our new 'Groundhog day' alarm bell ringing and others asking 'what is it you do again?'

¹ Fligstein, N. and McAdam, D. (2012) *A Theory of Fields*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² A paper on this is being developed with Norman Lucas.

³ ATL and Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB) are running a seminar series to do just that see <http://www.atl.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/shape-education/FE-events.asp>.

⁴ CAVTL (2013) *It's about work...Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning*. Available at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130802100617/http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/eg:5937/datastreams/DOC/content>, Accessed 20 November 2014)

A theoretical sketch...

I conceptualise the sector as a 'strategic action field.' This is defined as a situation in which two or more social agents seek dominance or influence over a social space. This could be a classroom, an organisation, or a sector. When such fields have serious contestation around resources they are, by definition, hierarchically formed. When they are more stable or have been formed with democratic levers or ethos (such as in a community) they are more collaboratively formed. Such tensions would be evident in fields that are emerging with new challengers seeking influence (e.g. votes for women in 1921 or the rise of 'New Labour' in the Labour party); or, when a field is in crisis. This is when conditions have destabilised an enduring field (e.g. closure of mines in 1984 or the sub-prime mortgage market - a main cause of the current financial crisis).

The theory says that it is crucial as to how a field is initially formed as to the shape it takes and how it develops. There is little doubt that the current strategic action field of FE was formed in division and conflict via incorporation in 1992 and was exogenously changed by the State. From this formation arose new incumbents and challengers (Chief executives; Corporations; union representatives as negotiators; as well as bodies such as ATL). Later, new challengers developed (157 Group and the Gazelle Group).

Combined with a host of other agencies, such as the Further Education Funding Council, the Learning and Skills Development Agency, Lifelong Learning UK, who appeared and disappeared over the 20 odd year period we could safely say that the strategic action field is not stable. 'A stable field is one in which the main actors are able to reproduce themselves and the field over a fairly long period of time'.⁵

This makes FE an emerging field and its meso-level structures are fluid and dynamic; its relation to other fields therefore changes (as does its relation with the State); and, finally, the 'micro-foundations', that is, the meanings and purposes of individuals in the field, are subject to ongoing construction.

My second point is that from such analysis we can better see how 'professionalism' could develop. Colleges often see professionalism as a compliance issue. For practitioners, some see it individually as 'being' a professional, others see it as much more complicated. This is best put in the following quotation:

*My professional status comes from being a lecturer, not from my occupation, which anybody thinks they can do [child care]. I identify with my occupation and want to make sure that the quality of entrants to the occupation is higher. I'd halve my college cohort on that basis.*⁶

The unevenness of dual professionalism, of teacher and vocational identities, is here plainly shown. Such unevenness is also supported by the University and College Union (UCU) and ATL submissions to the CAVTL inquiry. They showed in their surveys of members that the relationship between vocational lecturers and their occupational expertise was problematic, was tenuous in practice, and was therefore ill formed.

⁵ Fligstein and MCadam (2012) p.9

⁶ Interview with an FE lecturer in a research focus group on professionalism, 15/10/14.

I think we have the tension between wanting high quality vocational education and training (VET) expertise (isn't that what it would take to be a professional in a VET sector?) and not having developed professionalism in practice, because the strategic action field was formed around three main drivers which omitted such a focus. The Education Act (1988) and the FE and HE Act (1992) established what I am calling a 'logic of incorporation,' which omitted any focus on professionalism and VET (in aim and as a 'curriculum'). Instead the three drivers were: corporate governance; financial efficiency; and the quantitative measures for funding and college outcomes.

Hence, (and I am suggesting a link) the shaping of a new workforce identity post incorporation became a battle of resources for staff costs and individual compliance versus others who had either opposed or wider interests. The trade unions wanted better working conditions and pay, and the State wanted a professionalised workforce which it attempted to install from 1996 through a variety of what Fligstein and MCadam call 'internal governance units'. Fifteen interventions later (see Fletcher *et al.* 2015 forthcoming⁷) we are still nowhere near an ethos of high quality professionalism. We do not have a shared understanding of what professionalism is or what will take us there. That means professionalism as a strategic field itself has yet fully to emerge: little wonder when it is nested within an emerging sector.

Ways forward could be....

We often believe that we see signs of improvement or development only to realise that what we are actually witnessing is a form of short-term project work, funded activity that is dissolved as quickly as it began, or the benign influence of enlightened senior management that vanish, as personnel move on.

So, accepting that such signs may be ephemeral, what can we do?

First, we need to develop enabling mechanisms around the Education and Training Foundation's (ETF) professional standards, which have been warmly welcomed by all. Those standards are aspirational which, following what I have said, mean they are a fairly fragile instrument of change. But they say the right things: so, surely, we could 'share an understanding' of them?

If so, then we need to also share an understanding of how they can be implemented in practice.

From the project work that I've witnessed and in conversations with senior college staff and staff, it would seem that colleges need support in developing 'collaborative expertise'. That is, how staff share resources, debates, solutions, to vocational and pedagogic matters. That may mean more wide-ranging changes around workplace learning and training and CPD, but if it can't be achieved that way then structural change may be necessary.

⁷ Fletcher, M., Lucas, N., Crowther, N. and Taubman, D. (2015 forthcoming) 'The FE workforce' in A. Hodgson (ed.) *The Coming of Age of FE? Reflections on the past and future role of further education colleges in the UK*. London: IOE Press.

If the logic of incorporation leaves 'professionalism' as an unorganised social space, that is, one that is yet to be framed or is of strategic interest (for one reason or another), particularly, to the main incumbents, then that logic may need to change. We may need to consider a regional reform to the sector as has happened in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland⁸ (intimated in Greater Manchester proposals as well). Or, further afield, how European models may support such development.

Whatever we do, we need to accept that our current conditions do not facilitate a coherent understanding of professionalism or a systematic infrastructure of facilitating it.

⁸ See Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (2015 forthcoming) 'The future for further education colleges in England: the case for a new Post-Incorporation model' in Hodgson, A. (2015) *ibid.*

Barking and Dagenham College (BDC): setting the scene for professional learning

Cathy Walsh OBE, Janet Curtis-Broni and Caryn Swart
Barking and Dagenham College

Cathy Walsh OBE took over as Principal and CEO of BDC in 2008 and under her model of empowered, motivated and entrepreneurial leadership, the College has been on a journey of transformation which has seen a rise in the key indicators of success: turnover has risen from £28m in 2008 to £35 million in 2014; student numbers have grown significantly - 3500, 14-18s, 9000, adults, 800+ apprenticeships and the fifth largest Higher Education (HE) in Further Education (FE) provider in London; with overall success rates up from 67% in 2007 to 87% (84% including English & mathematics) in 2014.

From an inward-looking organisation with out-of-date facilities and equipment - the 1960s campus has also undergone a dramatic transformation, and is now open six days a week. Student designed facilities are of the highest quality and backed by industry partners and the local communities, which respectively benefit from and utilise them. The College now holds four national awards (three TES FE Awards and the National Association of College and University Entrepreneurs' Enterprising College of the Year 2015), and is home to the 2015 EDGE Vocational Qualification Teacher of the Year.

Ofsted (April 2013) judgements stated "Outstanding Support for all Students", "Excellence in Innovation and Entrepreneurship", and "Outstanding Leadership, Management and Governance."

'Real work' for students is the College's unique selling point. An entrepreneurial staff team develop and manage the flow of external client briefs, which are matched to our student Talent Bank. Hundreds of (paid) commissions have been delivered by students to date, from painting and decorating projects, to designing a mobile phone app for an NHS Trust, to websites and corporate videos. Students get 'real work' experience as part of their learning, for their CV, and the client gets a cost-effective business solution. The College is also the client: students have contributed ideas to campus-development projects, working with external suppliers including architects and site management teams.

BDC is currently the sixth largest provider of training for 16-18s in London and the only London College in the Top Five Skills Funding Agency (SFA) leading providers of apprenticeship training in London, including Higher Apprenticeships.

Under Cathy's lead the College has attracted a portfolio of quality kite-marks and partnerships including:

- Opening a brand new Technical Skills Academy in Barking for 14-19 year olds, in partnership with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, in 2012
- Investors in People - Gold Status award (2013)
- Outstanding Leadership, Management & Governance, with Good Overall Effectiveness - Ofsted (2013)
- Investors in Diversity award (2014)

- STEM Assured status: "Best Practice" - May 2015, National Energy Foundation Innovation Institute, it is the highest industry-backed recognition for the quality of BDC's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) based education and training
- A Digital & Creative Career College (June 2015) with industry-standard facilities and in partnership with Tech City employers
- iCreate@BDC, a student-designed 1000m sq. digital creative training and incubation facility, launched by HRH The Duke of York, KG in October 2013, including a live TV studio, #TheChannel@BDC
- Siemens' Mechatronics Academy, opened by Lord Baker (2015) and the only partner college in the UK approved to deliver the Siemens Mechatronic Systems Certification Programme
- Several industry sponsored partnerships delivered on campus : CNet data communications and fibre optic cabling 2014; Viessmann Technologies Green Tech Centre 2012; Measons & Mac Plastering 2015.

BDC's approach

BDC has been on a journey of cultural transformation and leadership development at every level, over the past seven years, in which our evident and visible value-set, drives our four behaviours - Foster Excellence; Work Together; Role Model the Values; and Deliver Results. Professional Standards are integral to our Student-Centred and Customer-First entrepreneurial culture.

This has involved a whole-college approach across both the business support and teaching workforces and involves high level engagement from our students - as customers.

The whole-college approach is evidenced from our Strategic Directions planning approach, where two of our seven strategic priorities clearly set out our intention to transform our approach:

- Transformational, inclusive and entrepreneurial teaching, learning and assessment for students
- Empowered, motivated and entrepreneurial staff

Strategic Directions is underpinned by a set of annual outcomes which set out a clear route map of what is expected against each priority and how these are actioned, ensuring that priorities are met. Underpinning and supporting this, is a comprehensive Leadership & Management development plan, driven by the values, behaviours, and the aspirational vision - *A Truly Great College - Passionate About Success* - and the grounded clarity of the mission - *Creating positive life chances for people through education and training for work, that leads to economic independence and prosperity*. A set of commitments articulates the outcomes that students and customers may expect from BDC, our staff, our leaders and our Board. These are reviewed annually by the Board at its "strategy meeting" then reviewed regularly through a "KPI scorecard".

Role modelling and living the values

The values and behaviours are also emblazoned and evidently visible, in words and student / staff / employer images, all around the campus: they are to embrace, to win and influence, the hearts and minds of all, and to make explicit behavioural expectations.

Our values are:

- Passion
- Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship
- Respect, Social Justice and Fairness
- High Standards and Quality
- Professionalism
- Friendliness and Commitment
- Flexibility, Responsiveness and Ability to Change
- Accountability
- Risk-Taking

Professional standards are embedded through our values that drive innovative leadership behaviours. These are made visible around the campus, by for example:

- **Consistent, visible Leadership by Walkabout, engaging students and staff**
- Morning **Encouragement rota: all leaders** on a rota to welcome students, exchange pleasantries, develop social skills, encourage punctuality, good behaviour, wearing of IDs, removing hoods;
- **BDC Finishing School: cross sector leadership** teams tour the campus throughout the day, influencing and developing student behaviour;
- **Ring of Steel: Opportunities Coaches**, trained in motivational dialogue, to work with students to develop responsibility, remove external barriers to learning, operate as "truant" officers for irregular attenders.
- **Golden thread of enterprise inductions:** cross-curricular, project-based learning, within the student induction programme, to introduce students to T-shaped skills development, "pitching their ideas" and the range of services available to students to develop their enterprise, innovation and creative skills during their studies.
- **Industry Talks - BDC Listens:** regular strategic engagement for staff and students with BDCs key industry partners, working to co-create training solutions for their sectors, including talent development and matching opportunities for students.

Curriculum design includes close working with industry, analysis of labour market information to inform curriculum product planning, and informed further by:

- the demand for highly skilled occupations & qualifications
- London Enterprise Panel (LEP) and national government employment and skills priorities
- STEM innovation activities to demystify
- English and maths enhancement activities

The Comprehensive Staff Learning and Development (SLD) plan includes:

T-shaped students need T-shaped members of staff: the College has invested in its SLD programme and constantly reviews modern methods of training and self-improvement.

Initiatives include:

- **Design Thinking:** all college staff and the Board are trained in innovative methods for creative problem-solving;
- **The Icehouse Project Entrepreneurship Programme** as well as team development, including high performing pedagogic and business support teams
- **Regular sharing of best practice** through regular Teachmeet; Open Door weeks; Advanced practitioners; Masterclasses and Competitions for staff to enhance excellence and competence; Sharing of resources online; Celebrating and recognising staff achievement
- **SLD to promote industry links** on both a personal and team level

Key Message

BDC sees leadership at every level as crucial and promotes a whole-college approach to the development and embedding of professional standards and workforce development, underpinned by a developmental culture that is always solutions focussed. Always, “yes, and...”

Seminar Two

March 2015

Vocational Education and Training

Co-producing Expansive Vocational Education and Apprenticeship: A Relational Approach

Professor Alison Fuller, Professor Lorna Unwin and Lee Weatherly⁹
UCL Institute of Education and Midland Group Training Services

Introduction

Designing and sustaining good quality vocational education and training (VET) has always been a challenge. In today's climate of increasing technological and product market change, volatile labour markets, and tight finances, that challenge is particularly daunting. Plus, policymakers continue to focus on ad hoc targets (e.g. 3 million apprenticeships) and short-term structural tinkering (e.g. introduction of National Colleges and apprenticeship levies) rather than helping to nurture the conditions in which VET can thrive. Apprenticeship is currently seen as the silver bullet to tackle the UK's skill needs (from basic level through to degree level), to offer young people an alternative to university, to tackle youth unemployment, to train and accredit the existing competences of adults, and to revitalize local communities. These multifarious goals position apprenticeship as an instrument of government policy and, hence, deflect attention away from its true purpose as a model of work-based learning rooted in a partnership between an individual and an employer. Throwing all our eggs into the apprenticeship basket also presumes that one model will suit all circumstances and ignores the need for a differentiated approach that would include full-time vocational programmes as well as short courses.

In this paper, we argue for a more expansive and relational approach to VET capable of meeting and adapting to the fluctuating needs of individuals, employers and the economy more generally. This co-production approach places responsibilities on all the stakeholders and embraces the spirit of the 'two-way street' maxim advocated by the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning¹⁰. It rejects the standard and restrictive demand-supply model in which employers are assumed to come to a training provider with a clear and concise list of their training needs as if buying ready meals from a supermarket. In contrast, as those providers¹¹ and employers who do work together know very well, meaningful VET programmes emerge over time as the result of shared understanding and respect for the complex, dynamic and contextualised processes involved in skill formation and development.

The paper is itself the result of collaboration between academic researchers and one of the UK's leading training experts who works closely with employers (from multi-national companies to small and medium sized firms) based in advanced manufacturing sectors. Its

⁹ Alison Fuller is Professor of Vocational Education and Work, and Lorna Unwin is Professor Emerita at UCL Institute of Education. Lee Weatherley is CEO of Midland Group Training Services Ltd in Coventry.

¹⁰ CAVTL (2013) *It's about work: Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning*, Summary Report of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning, available at:

<http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/eg:5937/datastreams/DOC/content>

¹¹ We use the term 'provider' here as shorthand to cover the different types of organisations (colleges, independent training providers, Group Training Associations, voluntary organisations etc) involved in VET and apprenticeship. The term is itself problematic because it perpetuates the problem we are trying to overcome.

aim is not to promote yet another 'one-size fits all' solution or model, but instead it argues that providers and employers (regardless of sector or level of skill requirements) can benefit from jointly using analytical tools that help them construct the most effective solution for their specific circumstances. In doing so, both parties have to learn about each other's expertise and embark on a journey that will stretch their current capacity, thus enabling them to further develop that expertise. We hope that the paper might contribute to a renewed focus on the curricular and pedagogical aspects of VET and apprenticeship; a focus which would see greater collaboration among the stakeholders in order to generate the levels and type of applied research and development (R&D) required to enable VET and apprenticeship to move onto a higher-value footing.

Using work as the basis of collaboration

Workplaces are dynamic sites of human activity providing opportunities for learning of many types and at many levels. This may seem to be a bold and even erroneous statement when we know, of course, that not all workplaces provide decent employment conditions and/or produce goods and services that properly utilise the expertise of their workforces. Our point, however, is that work itself is a catalyst for learning and that most workplaces have the potential to create what we have elsewhere termed 'expansive learning environments'¹². For vocational teachers and trainers, understanding the ways in which skills and knowledge are both developed and used in workplaces is vital for the creation of credible training programmes. At the same time, the pedagogical and subject expertise that teachers and trainers themselves bring to the design process is important for ensuring that conceptual and theoretical foundations continue to form the backbone of any programme, including apprenticeship.

Every workplace (whether in the public or private sector and whatever the size or nature of its work) is part of a productive system¹³. There are two interlinked dimensions to the productive system concept: (a) the vertical interconnections of scale, or 'structures of production', ranging from international regulation down to the individual workplace; and (b) the horizontal interconnections or 'stages of production' through which materials are transformed into goods and services. Education and training institutions, like hospitals and other public sector organisations, are part of a government-led productive system and so subject to various forms of regulation and interference in the same way as a private sector company might be subject to the demands of its shareholders or to the family that owns it. The nature of the productive system affects the extent to which managers can organise work to maximise the potential for learning. Understanding the way the system operates is vital for enabling change. In any provider-employer relationship, there will be constraints on both sides as a result of the productive systems in which they have to operate.

The starting point for the approach we are proposing is a discussion between a provider and an employer about the current work process, the associated demands emanating from parts of the productive system (which might be external and/or internal to the workplace), and any goals for or planned change. The following diagram captures the way Midland Group

¹² Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2004) *Expansive Learning Environments: Integrating Organisational and Personal Development*. In H. Rainbird, A. Fuller and A. Munro (eds) pp. 126-144, *Workplace Learning in Context*, London: Routledge.

¹³ Felstead, A., Fuller, A., Jewson, J. and Unwin, L. (2009) *Improving Working for Learning*, London: Routledge.

Training Services (MGTS) and an advanced manufacturing company mapped the company's shift away from its current mode of traditional production-line operation towards a much more high-tech and adaptable form of operation.

Figure 1: Transitional Skill, Knowledge and Behaviour Mapping (TSKB)

Steady State		Improved Performance		Step-Change	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill scoping • Skills • Knowledge • Team skill mix • Individual skill mix • Work structure • Stretch • Performance targets • Performance measures • Maintained margin 	MARKET ALIGNMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automation • Reduced resources • Increased productivity • Increased volume • Improved quality • Skill upskill • Knowledge upgrade • Behaviour upgrade • Increased margin 	MARKET ALIGNMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative step-change • Innovative work structures • Innovative skill, knowledge and behaviour sets • Step-change margin growth • Technological step change 	MARKET ALIGNMENT

What is noticeable from this diagram is that the terminology relates skill requirements to business need and does not include, at this point, references to qualifications or apprenticeship frameworks. The purpose is to enable a conversation between the provider and the employer that uses the bullet points as prompts to discuss and flush out not only the company's specific training needs, but also the scale of the ambition it has regarding workforce development. Many companies and public sector organisations may, of course, be locked into or wish to remain in the 'steady state' frame of mind. Some may even need to be supported to have a conversation at the 'steady state' level. This will include workplaces that demand little beyond basic skills due to the low-value products and services they produce, with implications about what may be considered in terms of 'stretch'. It will also include workplaces where managers are reluctant to challenge or acknowledge barriers to development from within a particularly restrictive productive system. And there are workplaces where managers and employees want to upskill and transform their work processes, but have not themselves experienced a more expansive approach to workforce development. This is where an analytical approach that starts with the demands of the work process can be very helpful and where starting with an attempt to 'sell' training as a product is inappropriate and often counterproductive. The notion of 'market alignment' is then relevant to both provider and employer. Providers need to think about how to align their service offer with what the employer requires, and employers need to think about how their business (including the skills of the workforce) aligns with the market in which they are or wish to be operating.

Using the Expansive-Restrictive Framework

The Expansive-Restrictive Framework provides an analytical tool, which aligns the work process with the learning processes that support skill formation and development. Every workplace can be analysed according to its characteristics to see where it sits on the 'expansive-restrictive' continuum. At the expansive end of the continuum, we find employers (of all sizes in all sectors, public and private) who understand that employees involved in any form of skill development need to be afforded a dual identity as workers and learners for the duration of their training, whether they be apprentices or employees involved in shorter and less substantial programmes. In restrictive environments, apprentices are moved as quickly as possible to being productive workers. The primary goal of all workplaces (including education and training institutions) is to produce goods and services, but the expansive workplaces try to ensure that short-term production pressures do not harm the longer-term goals of both the organisation and the individual.

The Expansive-Restrictive Framework has been developed from research in a range of sectors and it is continuing to evolve through feedback from employers and providers who are using it. It does not represent and should not be used as a binary model - workplaces will shift along the continuum as a result of the internal and external pressures emanating from the productive system. In large organisations, some workplaces might be more expansive than others due to the way work is organised and managed. Nor should the framework be used in a 'tick box' manner, rather it should be used to generate questions for debate and discussion within organisations and between partners. Partnerships based on a shared expansive ambition place demands on the actors involved (particularly managers) to up their game. Management comes to be seen itself as a form of 'pedagogy' rather than as solely being a form of control. This involves: a) having trust in and respect for employees' expertise and capacity to make informed judgements; b) involving employees in decision making; and c) organizing work (including physical spaces) in order to support the sharing of knowledge and skills across job boundaries.

The implications of this approach for apprenticeship and other VET programmes that involve employers and providers are considerable as they require attention to be paid to the future potential of both the workplace and the individual rather than focusing entirely on the immediate demands of a specific job role. In Figure 2, we see how the framework can be used to generate questions about the design of an apprenticeship. Each characteristic (e.g. C1, C2 etc) can be explored in terms of how the employer and provider can create the conditions to maintain an expansive approach and to what extent circumstances might pull the programme towards a more restrictive approach¹⁴.

¹⁴ For more detail see Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2011) *Creating and Supporting Expansive Apprenticeships: a guide for employers, colleges and training providers* (available at: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/13267>).

Figure 2: The Expansive-Restrictive Framework in the Context of Apprenticeship

EXPANSIVE	RESTRICTIVE
C1 Apprenticeship develops occupational expertise to a standard recognised by industry	Apprenticeship develops skills for a limited job role
C2 Employer and provider understand that Apprenticeship is a platform for career progression and occupational registration	Apprenticeship doesn't build the capacity to progress beyond present job role
C3 Apprentice has dual status as learner and employee: explicit recognition of, and support for, apprentice as learner	Status as employee dominates: limited recognition of, and support for, apprentice as learner
C4 Apprentice makes a gradual transition to productive worker and is stretched to develop expertise in their occupational field	Fast transition to productive worker with limited knowledge of occupational field
C5 Apprentice is treated as a member of an occupational community with access to the community's rules, history, occupational knowledge and practical expertise	Apprentice treated as extra pair of hands who only needs access to limited knowledge and skills to perform job
C6 Apprentice participates in different communities of practice inside and outside the workplace	Training restricted to narrowly-defined job role and work station
C7 Apprentice's work tasks and training mapped onto the occupational standard and assessment requirements to ensure they become fully competent	Weak relationship between workplace tasks, the occupational standard and assessment procedures
C8 Apprentice gains qualifications that have labour market currency and support progression to next level (career and/or education)	Apprentice doesn't have the opportunity to gain valuable and portable qualifications
C9 Off-the-job training includes time for reflection and stretches apprentice to reach their full potential	Supporting individual apprentice to fulfil their potential is not seen as a priority

C10 Apprentice's existing skills and knowledge recognised and valued and used as platform for new learning	Apprentice is regarded as a 'blank sheet' or 'empty vessel'
C11 Apprentice's progress closely monitored and involves regular constructive feedback from range of employer and provider personnel who take a holistic approach	Apprentice's progress monitored for job performance with limited developmental feedback

Implications for vocational teachers and trainers

It's long been acknowledged that the vocational teacher or trainer has a dual identity (and acts as a 'dual professional') – as a vocational/technical specialist and as a teacher/trainer. A key aspect of their expertise involves recontextualising the way skills and knowledge are defined in the workplace so that they can be further developed in off-the-job settings¹⁵. This includes translating concepts and applications from work processes into curriculum materials and teaching/training resources, and combining them with theoretical knowledge drawn from relevant disciplines, such as mathematics, physics and chemistry. They also have to create different types of learning environment to best convey the mix of theoretical and applied learning involved in VET programmes. In the approach described in this paper, vocational/technical expertise is given as much weight as pedagogical expertise in the teacher/trainer's profile for both are needed to co-produce programmes and apprenticeships with employers. How that combined expertise is deployed will, however, vary according to the nature and level of the skills and knowledge to be learned.

In Figure 3, we illustrate this variation in terms of two interrelated continua that mirror the concepts in Figure 1.

Figure 3: Pedagogical and workplace dimensions



In the first continuum, the left-hand side reflects the situations in which VET students and apprentices might need a great deal of support to enable them to be successful in their vocational/technical studies and, where applicable, to develop the work-readiness behaviours they will need in their placements. On the right hand side, the continuum reflects situations in which VET students and apprentices have been developed to work and learn at a high level of vocational/technical specialism. The second continuum can be overlaid to reflect the way the workplace dimension relates to the pedagogical dimension. The steps and stages on the journey from left to right can then be analysed as part of the process of curriculum design involving both on and off-the-job settings. Again, the co-production

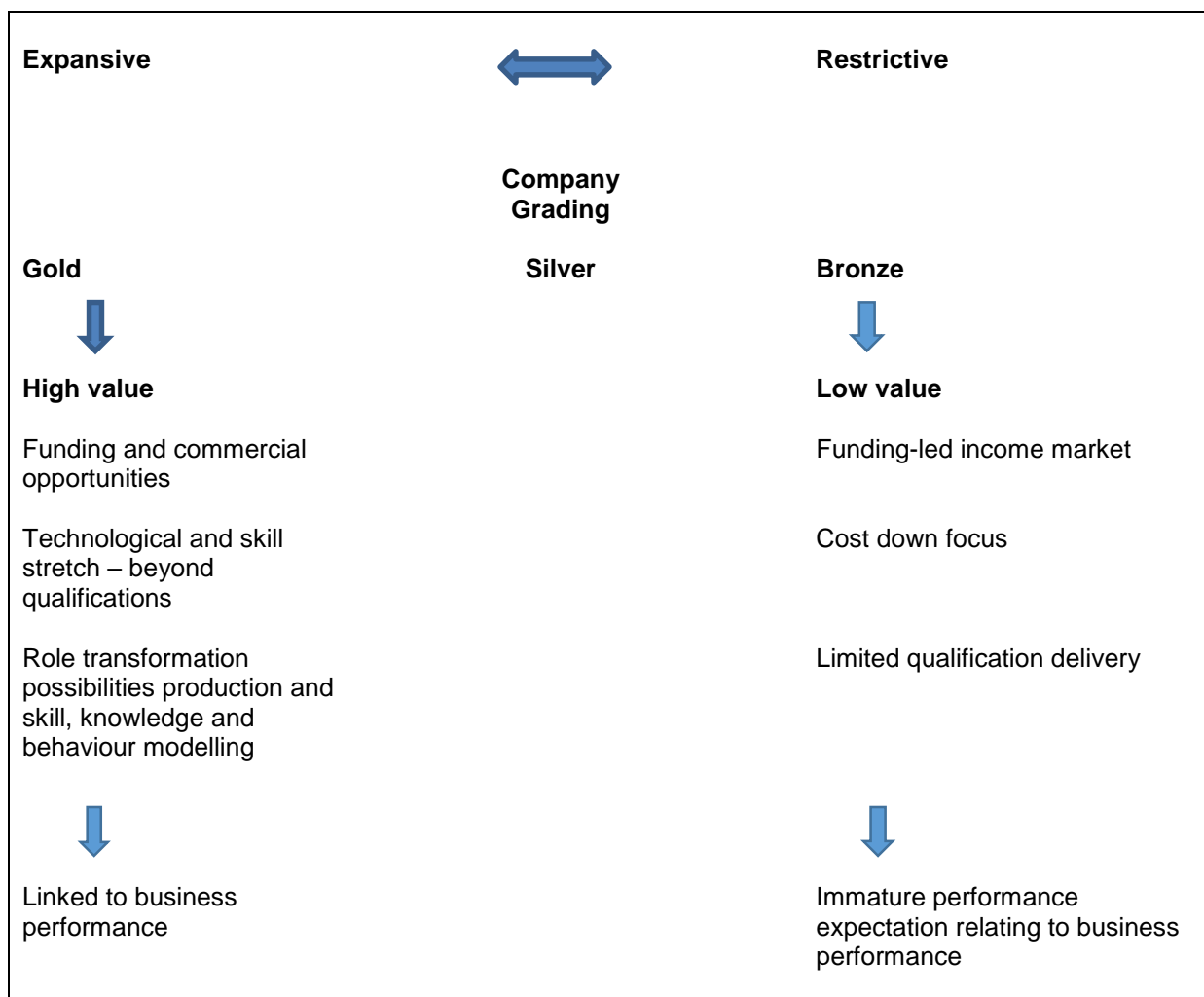
¹⁵ Evans, K., Guile, D. and Harris, J. (2014) Rethinking Work-Based Learning: For Education Professionals and Professionals Who Educate. In Malloch, M., Cairns, L., Evans, K. and O'Connor, B.N. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Workplace Learning*, London: SAGE.

process means that teachers and trainers have to understand the technical aspects of the work process to engage in both the initial conversations with employers and to then lead the recontextualisation that is required to support a transformational shift in market alignment. During the whole process, there will be opportunities for the partners to discuss the potential for a more expansive approach, either for the whole programme or certain elements. It will also identify opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) to enable teachers and trainers to increase their vocational/technical expertise, perhaps through work placements, as well as for workplace personnel to develop their pedagogical expertise.

Conclusion

In the final diagram (Figure 4), we show how MGTS now conceptualises its work with employers in relation to the Expansive-Restrictive continuum. As the diagram shows, some of the companies that MGTS are in partnership with take an expansive approach (graded Gold by MGTS) to skill formation and its relationship to their business goals. Other companies are differently positioned on the continuum according to their business and workforce development models (graded Silver and Bronze). For MGTS working with the Gold employers involves co-designing a range of programmes including both government-supported Apprenticeship and in-company workforce development.

Figure Four: Co-production in operation



**Dual
Professional
Continuum**

In proposing a relational and analytical approach to VET and apprenticeship, we have tried to stress the importance of context and to move away from conceptualizing skill formation and development in terms of off-the-shelf products and solutions. The time and effort required for the types of (regular) conversations between employers and providers discussed here needs to be acknowledged by policymakers for it is through those conversations that meaningful and potentially expansive programmes can be developed. Employers face multiple pressures and often cannot look beyond completing the next order or retaining customer share. At the same time, providers struggle to design programmes that will keep pace with rapid change and which are capable of meeting the needs of diverse learners. Our proposed approach starts from the premise that shared understanding and the pooling of expertise can form the basis of sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Seminar Three

June 2015

Leadership Management and Governance

FE Governance: where are we going?

Dr John Graystone
Education Consultant

Tough times lie ahead for further education (FE) colleges in England. And perhaps the general public (or at least part of it) is sitting up and taking notice. Opinion former John Harris ran a piece in the Guardian drawing attention to the impact of cuts to FE funding¹⁶. Alison Wolf has pointed out how the focus on apprenticeship could lead to a shortage of skills¹⁷. And just to confirm the challenge, Nick Boles, the Skills Minister, told a recent conference that there would be 'difficult choices to make about the less productive bits of our FE system' and queried whether the general model of FE is the right one for the future¹⁸. Governors with ultimate responsibility for the future direction and financial health of their colleges are facing these challenges head on. And they are used to responding to change (see Hodgson 2015 for an account of the very many initiatives colleges have faced since incorporation in 1993¹⁹).

FE governance was little researched in UK before FE and sixth form colleges (SFCs) were incorporated in 1993. Now many publications aim to give support and guidance to the 8,000 FE governors in England and much more is known about the way they work. The Association of Colleges (AoC) Governors' Council is proactive, helping to put forward the views of governors to policy makers. Following the Education Act 2011²⁰, colleges were reclassified by the Office for National Statistics as 'not for profit institutions serving households' and governing bodies were given considerable freedom over their governance and financial arrangements.

Who are the governors?

So who are these FE governors, how do they relate to senior managers, to whom are they accountable and how do they measure their performance? And what does the future hold? Since incorporation, the instrument and articles of government (which set out the membership, rules and responsibilities of FE governing bodies) have been revised six times. Immediately after incorporation, governing bodies were business-led with some FE colleges (but no SFCs) opting to have neither staff nor student governors. Under the Labour Government, a 'stakeholder' model - defined as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the college's objectives'²¹ - was introduced. Now elected staff and student governors are mandatory and most other governors are appointed on the basis of the skills and expertise they can contribute.

¹⁶ Harris, J. (2015) *Further education provides a lifeline. But try telling the Government.* The Guardian 18 June.

¹⁷ Adams, R. (2015) *Skilled workers 'may vanish' if further education cuts continue.* The Guardian 24 June.

¹⁸ Evans, D (2015) *Boles: government faces difficult choices over future of colleges.* Times Educational Supplement (TES) 22 June. This point was reinforced in the Skills Minister's address to the Association of Colleges annual conference on 17 November 2015

¹⁹ Hodgson, A. (ed.) *The Coming of age for FE?* London, Institute of Education Press

²⁰ Education Act (2011) London: HMSO.

²¹Stemberg, E. (1997) *The defects of stakeholder theory.* *Corporate Governance*, vol. 5, no.1, pp.3-10.

A recent AoC survey²² found that business governors are the largest category (38 per cent). Around one quarter of governors have a background in education and elected staff and student governors make up 11 per cent. The average board has 17.5 governors (17.3 in general FE colleges and 18.1 in sixth form colleges), not much changed since 1993. Research has consistently shown that the proportion of female FE governors is stuck at around one third; a figure not dissimilar to membership of university and health trust boards. Black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities are under-represented. Research is needed on membership of other groups, such as gay men, lesbians and transsexuals. Governments have not legislated on the diversity of board membership, leaving it to individual governing bodies to choose appropriate governors. Quotas have never been on the agenda. Putting aside equity and fairness, governing bodies are losing a great deal of expertise and talent.

Accountability

Secondly, as most governors are appointed not elected, a consistent theme has been accountability. This was addressed almost 20 years ago by Lord Nolan whose committee²³ set out the seven standards of public life which with which appointees to public bodies still have to comply till today. But colleges have been criticised for generally 'giving an account for actions taken' rather than the tougher 'being held to account for those actions'. Ofsted in its report on FE and skills²⁴ says that a key task 'remains for college governors to hold their college to account for the quality of provision and for its true impact'. The AoC Foundation Code of Governance,²⁵ recommends that governing bodies ensure transparent and rigorous decision-making and encourage open discussion and debate.

Key relationships

Thirdly, the working relationship between chair, principal and clerk – 'the holy trinity of governance' – has remained a key determinant of governing body success. The AoC code states that the respective functions of governance and management and the roles and responsibilities of chair, principal and clerk and individual governors should be clearly defined. Although this seems blindingly obvious, many college failures can be attributed to a breakdown in relationships between key players.

The governing body needs to recognise its unique relationship with the principal. The principal is the college's chief executive, accounting officer, an employee, a governor and frequently an adviser. Sometimes these roles may be confused.

The clerk, independent from the senior management, has a crucial part in making sure the governing body runs smoothly and facilitating monitoring arrangements, by for example, helping the board with its own self-assessment. The FE Commissioner²⁶ in drawing lessons from his interventions in 11 poorly performing colleges drew attention to the significant role of the clerk.

²² AoC (2014) *The composition of English further education corporations*. London: AoC.

²³ Committee on Standards in Public Life (1995) *Standards in public life*. First report. vol. 1, Cmnd 2850-1. London: HMSO (chaired by Lord Nolan).

²⁴ Ofsted (2013) *Annual Report on Further Education and Skills 2012/13*. London: Ofsted.

²⁵ AoC (2011) *The English Colleges' Foundation Code of Governance*. London: AoC.

²⁶ Department for Business, Innovation BIS (2014) *Further Education Commissioner Annual Report 2013/14*. London: BIS.

Roles and responsibilities

Finally, in outstanding colleges, governors are skilled in asking discerning questions, challenging senior managers and calling for the right information to assess performance. They are actively involved in monitoring performance, agreeing clear indicators to measure success and informed of actions taken to raise standards. Importantly they are well trained and well informed and ensure their colleges' priorities and activities are focused on learners and on their local community. Jill Westerman in her contribution on FE leadership to the UCL seminars emphasises the importance of the principal focusing on student learning. In a similar way, governors need to be driven by the importance of student performance.

Challenge and support

Research on governance in public companies show that in strong boards the views of mavericks or dissenters are respected and listened to – they may well be right. The CEO, chair and board recognise the difference between disloyalty and dissent. Indeed the highest performing companies have extremely contentious boards that regard dissent as an obligation²⁷.

The lack of challenge is highlighted by Pember²⁸ who points out that governors at 'failed' colleges commented that "they knew something was wrong but did not feel able to speak up and were therefore unable to hold the senior leadership team to account." Effective challenge from governors helps sharpen the performance of senior management.

The future in a time of austerity

Building on the above, what is likely to happen in the next few years to college governance? Predicting the future is risky – as many commentators (and recent opinion polls!) have found to their cost.

As already alluded to, we can be pretty certain that future Government funding will be very tight. Governors need to position their colleges to the new reality of 'co-investment' – a euphemism for reduced funding from the State with supposedly increased contributions from employers and individuals and greater emphasis on entrepreneurial activities. The uneasy tension between the Government's wish to devolve decision-making to colleges while retaining some form of control remains. The FE Commissioner still has a job to do. The Government cannot allow any colleges to fail financially or academically – or can it? In a more positive vein, colleges, essentially local organisations serving their local communities, are well placed to respond positively to the Government's localism agenda focused increasingly on cities and regions. Working with local enterprise partnerships, colleges can play an active part in shaping local skills policies and help the Government achieve its very ambitious commitment to deliver three million apprenticeships.

Most governing bodies have yet to make substantial legal changes. Some (not always successfully) have sponsored academies, university technical colleges, free schools and studio schools and established joint venture companies. Colleges have continued to set up commercial income generating companies, taken over or linked with private sector training

²⁷ Sonnenfeld, J. A. (2007) *What makes great boards great*. Bloomberg Business. Provided by Harvard Business - Where Leaders Get Their Edge.

²⁸ Pember, S. (2013) *Creating excellence in college governance*. London: AoC Governors' Council.

providers or formed multi-agency trusts. Around 10 per cent have set up a group structure. Over 50 per cent of colleges have improved procedures and practices such as allowing governors to participate by video-conferencing. Continued technological developments are impacting on the conduct of meetings. Governors can attend remotely through the use of video-conferencing, papers be distributed electronically and information accessed from college intranets.

With their new freedoms, colleges are likely to explore new forms of governance. Nick Boles, Minister, has referred to colleges being 'social enterprises.'²⁹ In Wales, in answer to the question 'to whom are governing bodies accountable?', the Humphreys Report³⁰ recommended the setting up of 'membership bodies' to scrutinise governing bodies and contribute to strategic planning. The approach followed that used by Glas Cymru (Welsh Water), the only utility company that eschews shareholders in favour of social enterprise status.

The 'John Lewis model' in which employees are treated as partners and receive an annual share of the profits has aroused interest. As yet colleges have not worked out a way of applying this approach. Would paying bonuses to staff contravene a college's charitable objects? And of course college success is judged on learner success not on cash surpluses.

Governing bodies need continually to carry out skills audits to review the balance of governors. Innovative and entrepreneurial skills and expertise currently required at a time of austerity and deregulation differ from those needed in periods of growth and expansion. To assist this, several large colleges are taking advantage of a relaxation in charity legislation to explore whether chairs and governors should be remunerated. Why should complex FE colleges, some with turnovers in excess of £100m, treat governors differently from, say, NHS trusts, where non-executive governors are paid? Should such payment seek to encourage employers to release able staff rather than rewarding individuals? And what would an appropriate level of remuneration be?

Another key matter is the size of governing bodies. Is a board of almost 20 governors too large or just about right? Smaller boards might work more effectively but may not be able to ensure coverage of committees or adequate community representation. Humphreys, for example, recommended a board of around 8-12 governors with a membership body of at least 25 members whose experience could be called upon for committees and working groups.

The jury is out on which types of governing body structures are more effective than others. Further research is needed to explore which models lead to better services for learners, higher standards and sound financial health.

²⁹ Boles, N. (2014), Minister for Skills and Equalities, BIS, *Letter sent to chairs and principals* 10 November.

³⁰ Humphreys, R (2011) *An independent review of the governance arrangements of further education institutions in Wales*, Cardiff, Welsh Government WAG10-11171.

In conclusion

Governors face many challenges. Colleges may be seen as having two complementary but sometimes competing values. One is a strong focus on social justice, progression, links with the community, widening access and tackling disadvantage. The other is a more business-driven approach focusing on being entrepreneurial, business-like and meeting employer demands. Governors have a crucial role in reconciling these for the benefit of their learners, communities and local businesses at a time of financial constraints. A tough ask, indeed.

Leadership: Being a College Principal (in interesting times)

Jill Westerman CBE

Northern College for Residential Adult Education

Background

I became principal of the Northern College for Residential Adult Education in 2007, after working there since 1993. The college mission is around empowerment, transformation and social purpose; its provision is almost all residential, with some students living at college for a year (sometimes with their children who attend local schools or our children's centre) and the majority attending short intensive residential courses of three to five days.

The college students are all over 19, with the majority in their 30s and 40s, with a high number having few previous qualifications and being unemployed. One third declare a learning difficulty or disability. The college really does change lives and offers opportunities to many who have experienced significant disadvantage like Lee Hughes, a recent college student who won the 2015 NIACE Adult Learner of the Year Award, moving from heroin addiction to university with Northern College as a catalyst for progression and change. The curriculum is broad and supports progression to further study, largely being at Entry 3 to Level 2 and differs from a general further education college (GFE) as there is no 'skills' or apprenticeships offer. As a result its funding has reduced over recent years because of the shift in government and funding body priorities.

Northern College has a reputation for excellence: in its last two Ofsted inspections it achieved Grade 1 (Outstanding) in all areas and in the most recent (2014) there were no identified areas for improvement. In terms of leadership inspectors said:

Inspirational leadership and governance have helped the college to realise its ambitious vision of providing outstanding adult residential and community education. As a consequence, it has helped to empower and transform the lives of individuals, families and communities (Ofsted, 2014)

This piece is a reflection on some of the approaches that achieved this result.

The power of theory – three major concepts

As a leader I like to use theory to inform my practice and want to share how three pieces of theory have influenced how I operate as a principal faced with 'difficult times'.

The first is from Jim Collins *Good to Great* (2001)³¹. Collins outlines a number of key elements that support sustained greatness; one of these is the 'hedgehog concept', which means focussing on:

- What are you deeply passionate about?
- What can you be best in the world at?
- What drives your economic engine?

³¹ Collins, J. (2001) *Good to great*. London: HarperCollins.

I had cause to reflect on these questions very early on as a principal, when funding was being cut and there was some external and internal pressure to move to different and more lucrative areas of work.

For me it was important to identify the 'hedgehog concept' of the Northern College, which on reflection was clear:

- What you are deeply passionate about – adult residential education for a social purpose
- What you can be best in the world at – adult residential education for a social purpose (not competing with a very successful GFE college four miles away)
- What drives your economic engine – not in financial terms, but in human and social capital. The college makes most impact meeting the needs of those who are not catered for elsewhere – those who live at the margins of mainstream society, as well as those who missed out on education first time round.

So I resisted significant shifts in our work, whilst being pragmatic about opportunities offered. One example was that we were strongly advised to shift heavily into Train2Gain work (at the time this was seen as a bottomless pit of funding, as we now know it proved to be anything but). We didn't do this as we saw it as a drift away from the college mission and 'hedgehog principles', but did use Train2Gain funding to reach a number of low paid employees in shops and factories and offer English and Maths, thereby reaching a very similar cohort and curriculum to those within college but taking advantage of a different route.

I had a card pinned on the wall for a while that expressed this approach slightly differently:

In matters of style, swim with the current. In matters of principle, stand like a rock
(Thomas Jefferson)

Collins also talks about 'The Stockdale Paradox': the importance of confronting the brutal facts but never losing faith. Gramsci, I think, says the same thing in his prison notebooks – "*We need pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.*" It is important that governors and all staff are very aware of the difficult times and did not have false hopes about the quite grim realities of the current financial climate, but also alongside that to have a strong and shared commitment to the college mission, culture and values and a belief that our work is essential and must survive. To this end we spend time looking at the mission, reviewing and discussing it and its context.

The success of this approach was evident in a comment made by the lead Ofsted inspector in 2014; he said that in many years of inspecting he had only visited a handful of colleges where the mission was 'lived' throughout the institution – and the Northern College was one of the best examples of this. This commitment to the mission, alongside an acknowledgement of a hostile funding situation, has been vital to the success of the college.

I was also influenced by a short article by Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky entitled, *Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis*³². The central hypothesis is that the world has changed post the 2008 financial crash and will not return to what we think of as normality. In this new world leaders need to adapt and adopt new and different practices. Like Jim Collins, the authors identify the key practices they consider essential for success.

They stress the need to 'Foster Adaptation': to avoid complex and detailed strategic plans, instead to run numerous experiments. For me this meant moving away from a secure vision of the future, with an accompanying detailed plan of how to get there. Instead giving staff the freedom to experiment, to try out different things, and importantly, realising that some will fail – but within a culture that accepts failure alongside success. The college strategic plan has been reduced to four key themes against which we set annual objectives. This allows for what a colleague calls 'strategic swerves' and stops us following a path that may well lead to a dead end.

'Embrace disequilibrium': stability in this new world is a liability not an asset. Generally I've found that we all like stability and there are very few who welcome change. Heifetz and colleagues stress the importance of leaders 'keeping their hand on the thermostat' so that staff don't become too comfortably entrenched in particular practices. A leader needs to control the heat, so that it is not so hot that people panic, but equally not so comfortable that it becomes hard to accept change. For me, slightly paradoxically, this has meant changing as little as possible, certainly not endlessly restructuring, but retaining the stability I could whilst being swift to change where it was essential. Importantly this also involves distributed leadership: generating leadership at all levels of the organisation to ensure that change can be swift and is owned by those involved.

Heifetz and colleagues also have their own version of Collins 'The Stockdale Paradox' which involves being both optimistic and realistic, not easy for a principal to communicate to staff, who often would rather just hear the optimism. But it is possible with open and honest communication. The authors refer to 'courageous communications', which involve honesty and de-personalising conflict.

The final influence has been the concept of 'pedagogic leadership' which has been explored more thoroughly in the US and New Zealand, but which I have come across in the work of Lucas and Claxton³³, and, although I don't think he uses the phrase, Frank Coffield, in *Just suppose teaching and learning became the first priority*³⁴. As a teacher before I was a principal I find no difficulty in prioritising teaching and learning. To this end, I actively lead on teaching and learning in the college – teaching myself (albeit not very much); running the observation scheme; attending teaching, learning and assessment staff development events; and conducting peer reviews where tutors join me to look at learning materials, both to share good practice and to assess quality. I insist on excellence but don't 'sweat the small stuff', I set parameters and expectations, then give staff space.

³² Heifetz, R., Grashow A. and Linsky, M. (2009) 'Leadership in a (permanent) crisis', *Harvard Business Review*, July/August

³³ Lucas, B. and Claxton, G. (2013) *Pedagogic leadership: creating cultures and practices for outstanding vocational learning*. London: 157 Group.

³⁴ Coffield, F. (2008) *Just suppose teaching and learning became the first priority...* London: LSN.

Key messages

In summary: what I have taken from these three theoretical writings is a number of key concepts and practices that have informed my practice as a leader:

- The importance of a clear mission, shared culture and values across the learning community (students, staff and governors);
- Honesty about difficult times, without loss of hope;
- The need to foster adaptation: be open to experimentation and strategic swerves within a no-blame culture;
- To generate leadership across the organisation;
- To lead actively on teaching and learning to maintain and emphasise its centrality;
- To set parameters and expectations, then give staff space.

Education and Training Foundation

November 2015

Concluding Remarks

Concluding Remarks

David Russell

Education and Training Foundation

Firstly I'd like to thank David Smith and his colleagues at the UCL Institute of Education Centre for Post-14 Education and Work for working with us at The Foundation to host this series of joint seminars.

I'd also like to thank Barry Sheerman MP who acted as Chair, and all the speakers who accepted our invitations to speak at one of the seminars.

Organised to align with our three programme areas, these seminars have provided us with a perfect opportunity to support the dialogue between theory, research and practice, and thus helping to deliver one of our priorities, which is to support the sector to be evidence based, and to be so in our own planning operations.

We very much appreciated all of the presentations, and the valuable insights and discussion points that they each generated, but I'll comment on just some of the specific contributions to the series.

The link between research and practice could not have been more clearly illustrated than as it was by the speakers at the Vocational Education and Training seminar. The programme began with Professors Unwin and Fuller presenting some of their work on Expansive Learning Environments, followed by the CEO of Midland Group Training Services describing how the model of expansive learning environments is actually put to practice within his company.

During the seminar themed "Professional Standards and Workforce Development" it was impressive to hear the members of the Senior Management Team from Barking and Dagenham College describing their college's recent "journey of cultural transformation and leadership development".

It was particularly valuable to have the opportunity to hear this from the SMT perspective, given that at the Foundation we have ourselves seen the fruits of this journey, from a perspective of our own engagement with members of that college's workforce. As just one example, our recently published series of case studies describing effective practices in the delivery of GCSE English and Maths describes how Barking and Dagenham have used practitioner research, with the support of The Foundation's research programme, to improve their delivery of English and maths. Those case studies can be found here:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2021>

In the third seminar, on Leadership and Governance we were grateful to Dr John Graystone for his informative review of governance in the sector. And at the Foundation I'm pleased to be able to announce that we can now contribute our own recent work in this area, including the following reports which are available on our website here:

<http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-governors/governance-reports/>

- The Composition of English Further Education College Boards and College Governance Frameworks 2015.
- The role of the clerk to the corporation of Further Education Colleges in England in ensuring high quality college Governance.
- Survey of College Clerks 2015 including questions for college boards.

Finally, Jill Westerman gave us her experience of drawing on theoretical concepts to support her leadership of Northern College's successful journey to achieving an *Outstanding* grade from Ofsted last year. We had asked Jill to contextualise her presentation within a context of challenging circumstances and she described her leadership approach and the culture within Northern College as one of honesty but with hope, distributed leadership, and the centrality of teaching and learning in all that they do.

As we move into the period of Area Reviews, Jill's description of leadership and culture at Northern College should prove particularly valuable to other providers and leadership teams, and to organisations such as The Foundation who are providing support to providers undergoing the process.

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