

The learning and skills sector and the economic crisis – stepping up to the mark

Seminar three – 7 July 2009



Beyond the recession – preparing for the upturn

Seminar report

1. This was the third and final seminar in the series exploring at the role of FE and skills providers in supporting efforts to address the current recession and to prepare the workforce for the upturn. The series aimed to support the FE and skills sector to respond effectively to the recession, weaving the initiatives and policies from across government into a strategic approach at the institutional level. The first seminar examined the policies of the key national government departments and discussed those in the light of the experience of the front-line¹. The second examined anti-recession policies at the various levels of administration: local, regional and national².
2. The aims of the third seminar were to:
 - Discuss with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills its strategic priority to build ‘a *more strategic, agile and demand-led employment and skills system*’; and
 - Consider how to foster the flow of innovation in order to address the current recession, make better use of scarcer public resources, enable more agile leadership and practices, and unleash the power of networks and people.
3. This report presents key points of discussion and summarises keynote presentations.

Key points of discussion

Professional improvement *and* systems improvement...

4. At the earlier seminars we discussed the interplay between *systems and structures* and the *attributes, skills and behaviours of people* that are needed to make the system work to best effect. We highlighted the need for both efficient and elegant systems and appropriate human behaviours. Although individual vision, commitment and perseverance can make great things happen energy is wasted and additional effort is required if systems are complex and inhibiting.

¹ A report of the first seminar can be found here: <http://www.lsis.org.uk/PolicyServices/Discussion/SeminarSeries/LSSandtheEconomicCrisis.aspx>

² A report of the second seminar can be found here: <http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Policy/seminartwo2ndJune2009%20final.sflb>

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5. We continued this theme, noting that Sir Michael Barber, a key architect of public service reform in the Blair era, is now arguing that having been through a prolonged process of improvement of professional practice - the major focus of the nationally driven public service reform programmes – that we now need to move to a new stage focused on *systems improvement*. We've made enormous progress improving professional practice, but there will be diminishing returns unless we start to change some of the systems that now inhibit effective service delivery. In the current environment when we know that major financial restraints are coming, it becomes increasingly critical to eliminate grit and drag in the systems.
6. One principal described how over-complex and inadequate regulatory systems can distract leaders from focusing on the most important strategic issues. What leaders spend time on determines whether their organisation is successful. It is critical for leaders to make the right decisions about how to spend their time - dealing with regulatory requirements, audits, contract, etc is not a good use of leader's time – *'it prevents me leading'*. We should be focusing on outcomes for learners and our communities, it was argued.
7. The need to ensure that the systems support the sector to deliver the right outcomes was supported by Michael Davis, our speaker from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) who invited us to consider how to create a world-class employment and skills system and to help shape the success criteria for a new integrated employment and skills system.

Focus on outcomes

8. The strongest message in terms of the system was the consensus that the performance management system in FE and skills should be based on measuring *outcomes*, rather than on the *processes* by which things get done or on *'ironclad' numerical targets*. These outcomes might be broad policy objectives, rather than specific numerical targets. Such a system would allow more room to innovate and create new approaches. Accounting for processes takes up a great deal of time that could be better devoted to leadership of teaching and learning – the current system creates *'clutter'*.
9. The approach used for Local Area Agreements, which allows selection of priority indicators from a menu, was suggested as a model for an outcomes-based system in FE. Indicators could be chosen to address local priorities and reflect organisational mission. It was suggested that the sector mount a pilot to show how this might be done. Providers or regulators could use impact analysis or surveys to determine if the indicators are being met.
10. However, care would be needed to ensure that the outcomes selected are not *'too burdensome to measure'* and that they allow risk-taking by providers it was argued – otherwise, innovation would be stifled. *'Targets require success, but you can't innovate without risking failure'*. The objective should be to create an outcome that works for government and that allows a reasonable element of risk. For innovation to succeed, several delegates said that there must be a *'no-blame culture'*. To experiment, one must necessarily risk failure, but the current system of performance management penalises any failure severely. This makes it virtually impossible for learning providers to take chances on new ideas or strategies, and thus blocks innovation.

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11. There was a consensus in the room that we need new performance measures, and a sense of urgency to make progress. It was noted that a key outcome of the previous seminar series on regulation was an understanding³ with DIUS (now BIS) that within the spirit of moving towards greater sector engagement in shaping its regulatory arrangements, the Single Voice would prioritise performance measures as an area for development. The seminar discussion highlighted the urgency of making progress on shaping performance measures to enable the sector to respond more effectively during the current recession and beyond.

Developing responsiveness

12. Much of the discussion focused on developing a service that did what customers and employers wanted it to do, which requires a greater degree of innovation. Innovation happens during customer interaction in response to actual needs and demands – *‘passing the 11 o’clock test’*⁴ – and innovating to improve services. Providers need to *‘segment audiences’*, tailoring their responses to specific demographic groups. Much customer research is done on the basis of gender or ethnicity and is somewhat outdated - we should also beware assuming stereotypes.
13. One delegate related the story of the Lancashire police, who met all their targets but were unpopular with the public, which could not see any drop in crime rates and did not feel the police were meeting public needs. The police in Lancashire began holding *‘community conversations’* and connecting with the public, to provide a more popular and responsive service, and one that citizens were more clearly aware of. The perceptions of citizens and customers are critical. What is the FE equivalent of *community conversations* that build both our understanding of and our legitimacy with citizens?
14. Another example given was in relation to supporting young people not in employment, education and training. Dr Su Maddock described the recovery approach⁵ which recognises the benefits of engaging mental patients in thinking about life goals and aspirations – this significantly aids recovery. It was suggested that to engage young people we need to be more respectful of their immediate aspirations and needs than the delivery paradigm assumes. Research suggests for example that they often want to learn something domestic or familiar, close to their existing life, rather than stepping far into a new world. We need to find ways of engaging with the ambitions of these young people as human beings not just as targets for skills acquisition if we are to support them effectively. It was noted how hard it is to take off *the lens of institutional success* to look through the eyes of individual learners at what would be successful outcomes for them.

³ The outcomes of the seminars and the subsequent discussions between DIUS, Single Voice and LSIS are available here: <http://www.lsis.org.uk/PolicyServices/Discussion/SeminarSeries/ShiftingTheParadigm.aspx>

⁴ See paragraph 32 below

⁵ See paragraphs 41-42 below

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15. This led to a discussion about the pressures on public services to work in silos and the difficulty of making operational connections between different public sector disciplines – health, social care, welfare, education, etc – for the benefit of citizens. How do we re-design services around customers and citizens so they interconnect?⁶

Demand v need

16. Speakers and participants spoke about the confusion surrounding the language of *demand-led*. This was an issue rehearsed at earlier seminars⁷ when we noted that the rationing and prescriptions around the demand that could be publicly funded did not deliver the promise of the term *demand-led*. At this third seminar we spoke about the difference between a *'demand-led'* system, which is what employers and individuals want, and *'needs-led'*, which is what Government thinks the nation requires. Many agreed that we need to better distinguish between the two and make clear that the current system is not fully demand-led.
17. Another short-coming of the current *'demand-led'* approach is that since the sector is bound by targets based on the attainment of qualifications *'we're giving employers what they don't want'*. Qualifications, in any case, are a poor proxy for skills, meaning that our targets don't actually improve skills.
18. Some said that we need to change our understanding of *'need'*. We tend to see *'need'* as being a *'deficit'* that people suffer, rather than people having a need for fulfilment or advancement – the ambition referred to by Michael Davis. The discussion highlighted the need for a language to describe the funding approach which is accurate and does not confuse or raise false expectations.
19. We also noted the importance of recognising that *demand is shifting sands*, particularly in volatile economic times – and that prescriptive definitions of *'fundable demand'* can make it harder for providers to respond to actual demand.

Innovation, responsiveness and local government

20. Several attendees said they felt local councils and partnerships were making greater strides in innovating than the centre. The Innovation Hub is trying to foster *'bottom-up partnerships'* and innovation at the local level, and to connect proactive, go-getting local actors with the central civil servants who can help advance their agendas⁸.

⁶ This point resonated with discussions held in other seminars about the need for public services to be able to operate in greater collaboration at the local level. See the seminar report - *Identifying the contribution of FE providers to local priorities, partners and places* - here: <http://www.isis.org.uk/Libraries/Policy/ContributionofFEToLocalPrioritiesPartnersandPlace.sflb>

⁷ See notes of seminar 2, paragraph 8

<http://www.isis.org.uk/Libraries/Policy/Thelearningandskillssectorandtheeconomiccrisisseminartwo2ndJune2009final.sflb>

⁸ This refers to the vertical network established by the Hub – further information from Ben Robinson ben.robinson@nationalschool.gsi.gov.uk

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21. Some attendees did feel that the current system was too centralised – that there was too much of a sense of being *'done to'*. One participant gave an example of a local government in North Carolina that worked with partners to devise a joint solution to an environmental waste problem (specifically, the effluent from large-scale pig farming). By drawing on a range of expertise in the community and local state, they were able to address a problem previously assumed to be intractable.

A unified approach at the centre

22. Some attendees said that their work was hampered by a lack of unity in central government. The Cabinet is disunited, ministries operate as independent *'fiefdoms'*, and civil servants in one department rarely seek to advance the goals of another, even if it helps the greater policy objectives of the Government as a whole. Attempts at cross-departmental working introduced during Tony Blair's first term did not take root it was suggested.
23. It could therefore be seen as *a good thing* that DIUS was merged into an expanded business and skills department. It allows FE to show its relevance to a wider range of Government agendas and policies. In a related vein, it was suggested that FE and skills providers should map how their work contributes to the Government's Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets.

Accountability to whom?

24. One consistent problem faced by local partnerships and all local public services is that it can be unclear to whom they are supposed to report. Is their first priority to be accountable to local citizens or government, or to the national government? Or both equally? Some suggested partnerships should be accountable to *'national and local goals'*, to delivering *'national entitlements within the local community'*. An institution could be examined by how it commits to local and national needs, and be held accountable to those.

Keynote presentations

Michael Davis, Director of Strategy and Performance, UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)

25. Michael began by giving a short history of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills which was formed in April 2008, and is the successor to the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) and the National Employment Panel.
26. In April 2009, the commission launched *Ambition 2020*, an analysis of the employment, jobs and productivity challenges facing the British economy. The document sets out the ambition and therefore the challenges for the UK to become a top 8 country in the world on jobs, skills and productivity.

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27. Although skills attainment has massively improved over the last decade, this improvement has not yet been sufficient to raise the United Kingdom to what the commission defines as ‘world class skills’ (namely, being among the top eight in skills attainment among the 30 member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD). Nor does it seem likely the UK will be in the top eight by 2020. Michael suggested that business as usual, or doing what we do, or simply just trying harder will not be enough. The question is ‘*what do you do differently*’ to reach that top eight?
28. He also noted that the current system will face real term financial ‘*squeezes*’ in the near future - or, more bluntly, heavy ‘*cuts*’. The challenge therefore is how do we energise an employment and skills system to achieve, bigger and better for less?
29. The UK Commission has five aspects to its overall remit, and Michael emphasised two which are of particular interest to his role and this discussion:
 - Providing advice on policy and delivery, and;
 - Challenging performance and performance management within Government itself.
30. Turning to explaining the diagram⁹ about what it might mean to have a strategic, agile and demand led employment and skills system Michael first questioned the use of the term ‘demand-led’ in relation to the funding of learning in FE. He is not in any way against the principle of demand-led, but what is currently practised differs from what most elementary students of economics understand demand to be. Demand is both a desire to own and a willingness to pay for something.
31. To be demand-led then is to respond to the desires of customers who pay for the service they receive. In the current arrangements demand is a series of pre-defined offers and rarely is the customer paying the full market rate. This is not just playing with words - it matters because policy is also addressing market failures or a lack of responsiveness which stem from a poor understanding of what real demand is. Therefore in terms of publicly-funded provision a more honest approach would be to talk about improving responsiveness to an offer that we want to be shaped by the needs of the labour market.
32. Therefore we are really talking about a system which is strategic, agile and responsive. Responsiveness could be judged by calling a provider at 11 o’clock in the morning and gauging the speed and helpfulness of their response. We can’t change the degree of responsiveness at 10.50 in the morning – the organisation is either responsive or not. Thus an ‘*agile*’ system is one with the capacity in the medium term to respond to the unforeseen.

⁹ Available here <http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Policy/MichaelDavisLSIS.sfb>

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33. There is no certainty in the economy, and no foolproof forecasting. A learning provider must be able to respond to evolving change, and *“the system’s health can be better measured by examining its responsiveness than its ability to forecast the future”*. The system does need intelligence about broad economic trends, ie that which *‘is likely to happen’* - but success is really about how providers respond to this data. Michael related the key concepts of the system to a timeframe - being *‘demand led’* is about responding to the present; being *‘agile’* is about dealing with the medium-term future: and being *‘strategic’* is about dealing with the longer term.
34. The UK Commission has a five-point strategy for creating a world-class employment and skills system (and Michael stressed that the UK Commission was focusing on employment *and skills*, a *‘whole workforce development approach’*), which will feature in its 2010 review of the skills system. The consultation does not worry about structures, which will inevitably be subject to change over the coming months, but instead focuses on key principles. The system should define its *‘success criteria’* by means of five key qualities:
- Ambition - that is, it should continually encourage individuals to learn, progress and succeed;
 - Alignment - where the skills system works to boost employment and the employment services seek to improve skills levels;
 - Accountability - especially to consumers, by using their feedback to drive up standards, as businesses do;
 - Agility – including an ability to recognise geographic and demographic variations in employment levels, and;
 - Affordability – vital, given that, in real terms, we are likely to see a real squeeze on public expenditure for employment and skills support.
35. UKCES will open a consultation on this strategy in the autumn of 2009 in a series of pilot areas. Michael and UKCES want people to explore the *‘shared agenda’*, and build a *‘whole coalition that sees value in integration’*.
36. Michael announced that UKCES was publishing that afternoon (July 7th) an open letter on the second stage of simplification of the employment and skills system, focusing on giving employers readier access to provision. The UK Commission is now seeking *‘more substantial changes’* than it did in its 2008 paper on the subject. The letter¹⁰ poses three key questions:
- What are the most appropriate targets, measures and incentives to ensure that publicly funded employment and skills services deliver sustainable outcomes in jobs, skills and productivity?
 - Given significant pressure on future public expenditure, how can we simplify public funding streams to lever substantially greater investment in workforce development from employers and individuals and to reduce administrative costs within the system?

¹⁰ Available here - http://www.ukces.org.uk/upload/pdf/Simplification_Letter_07%2007%2009.pdf

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- What three measures are most likely to simplify complexity of organisations, processes and initiatives in order to maximise the value of public investment in frontline delivery?
37. More simply, Michael asked ‘*what are the headline changes we need to move forward?*’ He noted that there will always be people who excel despite struggling against the system, but Michael wants to make that struggle unnecessary. He finished by calling on providers to participation in the commission’s consultations, and its plans to build a bigger, better but sustainably affordable employment and skills system.

Dr Su Maddock, Director, Whitehall Innovation Hub

38. Su has a varied work portfolio having worked in local government, charities, universities, central government and across the public service. Her agency, the Innovation Hub, was created in 2007 within the National School of Government, to encourage civil servants to be more responsive to innovation.
39. Many parts of the public services have seen great improvement in recent years, and there has been great progress in systems reform. However, it is proving harder to make individuals more responsive to innovation or to citizen opinion.
40. Central government itself can be very obstructive to innovation which is by its nature outside of everyday practice. Innovation demands responsiveness to fresh approaches not yet registered by those monitoring standard and existing practice. In other words current government process and practice often creates a barrier to those trying out new ways of working or fresh approaches to problems. The hub was set up to stimulate responsiveness to innovation in central government – and is closely connected to the Transforming Government agenda. The strategy is outlined in the hub’s brochure¹¹.
41. Su went on to give several examples of how the central government’s rigidity impedes innovation. She cited the Eden Project¹², a botanical garden complex in Cornwall. It has proved to be an enormous boon to the local economy, and is developing a learning and skills unit focused on geothermal energy.¹³ Each time the project attempts to forge a partnership or sign a contract with the Government, it faces the same barriers to raising funds and unrealistic timescales faced by innovators in all sectors. The Government never alters its approach, no matter how successful the Eden Project proves itself to be in Cornwall i.e. generating over £900,000,000 – government systems do not evolve.

¹¹ Available here <http://www.nationalschool.gov.uk/downloads/28283InnovationHub7.pdf>

¹² <http://www.edenproject.com/>

¹³ Energy produced by harnessing the heat content of the Earth itself. According to Wikipedia, the Earth conducts about 40 terawatts (trillions of watts) of energy to its surface each day, though only a small portion of this is usable.

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42. In the mental health system, Su noted a similarly rigid mindset. Revisiting a mental health facility where she had worked in the 1970s, she was shocked to find that the staff's attitude towards the patients had changed little in the intervening years, even though the treatments employed were often quite different. The employees still focused on *'custody, rather than care'*, and evinced little empathy for their charges, or any understanding that they might need education or skills. The patients *'are treated with cotton wool'*, and no one discusses their lives or aspirations.
43. The new *'recovery approach'* to inpatient mental health services tries to focus on life goals and aspirations, and is gaining ground in the United States and New Zealand, but attitudes here have been slow to change. More positively, the forthcoming paper on mental health will talk a lot about *'recovery'* as an alternative approach in mental health services. The Hub and the Sainsbury Mental Health Trust will be publishing a paper on *'How to implement the recovery approach'* in the autumn as this approach is very transferable to other services, including FE.
44. Innovation, Su said, is about people, not about building markets or systems. It is about working with consumers and communities. She asked how we can shift the policy system to encourage innovation and responsiveness at the front line, and support services that are already succeeding at innovating and meeting consumer needs. Su also noted that we don't often ask what it means to be responsive.
45. Su went on to discuss the example of South Tyneside Council, where Irene Lucas the chief executive, organised her training and systems around the key problems in her local area, rather than starting a *'generic change programme'*. The latter system, widely used in the Civil Service, tries to effect change without giving a rationale for it, and is thus unlikely to succeed. We must *'make sense of innovation in terms of the problems we are trying to solve'* if we are to embed innovation as a practice in the public services. Once we've determined why we want to innovate, purposeful creativity and innovation can follow.
46. Su also said that there was little equal exchange between local partnerships and the central government about locality or place-based innovation or how to rebalance government. To compensate for this the hub has established a Vertical Network¹⁴, that connects key local players with those civil servants most likely to be able to solve their problems and advance local goals (for example, if local leaders wish to work on planning, she would link them with the requisite civil servants at the Department for Communities and Local Government). The Hub is also developing *New public – Media and Innovation*, with case studies on people who have developed innovative approaches at the local level.
47. Many civil servants find it difficult to acknowledge that there is no weakness in listening and gathering intelligence from others in the regions and in services. The policy world is too insulated within central government and seals itself off from the rest of the public sector, a barrier that must be breached. We need to change the way Government works before we start fixing the system as a whole.

¹⁴ To find out more about the vertical network, contact Ben Robinson ben.robinson@nationalschool.gsi.gov.uk

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48. In its second year the hub is now working on the role of senior civil service in transformation and innovation – and welcomes those from the FE sector who would like to be involved in the hub's community of practice Vertical Network which meets quarterly.

Helen Groves, Chief Executive Officer, Humber Learning Consortium¹⁵

49. Helen spoke for the Humber Learning Consortium, which acts as a '*distribution conduit for the third sector*' in the Humber, liaising between large contractors and third sector providers. It acts as a '*portal of access*', distributing money on behalf of the large contractors so that the smaller third sector bodies can then provide services. The consortium had a turnover of £1 million in 2007, and £6.2 million as of June 2009.
50. Helen began by giving an overview of the third sector, which she joined only two years ago (she previously worked in an FE college). She defined her sector as a group of '*independent organisations with social, environmental or cultural aims*', which re-invest their fiscal surpluses rather than distribute them as profit. She dispelled the notion that it is staffed solely by volunteers – indeed, 2.2 percent of the British workforce is employed in the third sector. One-third of its workers have degrees, a higher proportion than in the public or private sectors.
51. Most third sector bodies are roughly the size of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), with more than half of the sector's workforce employed by bodies with a staff of 25 or fewer.
52. The third sector is '*creeping onto the radar of Government policy*'. Whitehall is starting to recognise the sector's community focus, and is mandating that the public sector either give more contracts to third-sector providers, or at least consider them for contracts and consult with them (though this consultation is often perfunctory). There are also a number of new funds designed to expand capacity, support mergers and otherwise supply the third sector.
53. Working with the public sector is not without its obstacles. The Government has moved away from strings-free grants to a commissioning model, which requires intensive monitoring and thus a heavy burden of paperwork and bureaucracy. This is especially difficult for a small charity to process. There is no '*proportionality*' in contracting – the same reporting requirements apply for a £6,000 contract as for a £16 million one. The consortium tries to act as a '*buffer*' between the centre's bureaucratic demands and the small provider.
54. Until recently, funding for the third sector was based on annual contracts – ie, it lasted for one year, making it hard to hire permanent staff or establish financial security. Third sector bodies often must wait several months for large contracts to be approved and signed, growing poorer in the meantime as economies of scale rarely exist. The sector also suffers from staff shortages, especially of specialised human resource specialists and finance professionals who have experience of charities and community groups.

¹⁵ Slides of Helen's presentation are available here <http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Policy/HelenGrovesLSISpresentation7July.sflb>

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55. Third sector enterprises are *'very good collaborators'*, Helen said, with a strong community perspective and a *'holistic view'* of the needs of those who use their services. She said it could help colleges *'meet their community commitments'*.
56. There is anxiety in the third sector about the dissolution of the LSC, which was seen as a champion of charities and other groups in the third sector. The third sector does not have the same strong relationship with local authorities for the delivery of learning services.
57. The third sector is now focusing on employability, though many of its clients will not make it into sustainable employment in the short term. However, she noted that volunteering can be a valuable stepping stone to a job.
58. The future is likely to see more *'intelligent funding'*, delivering more for less. Helen said we need to change ways of working, better understand the supply chain and recognise that the public sector will seek adaptability and flexibility from its partners – *'qualities the third sector has in spades'*. The third sector looms large in Government policy – 80 percent of the Big Lottery Strategy's budgeted funds a total of £2.8 billion, will go to the third sector. The third sector is becoming a key player, but bureaucracy could make it hard for it to deliver responsive provision and may snuff out the sectors unique selling point.
59. Helen finished by asking: What can we do for each other? How can other providers exploit the third sector's unique ability to benefit the community?

Andy Wilson, Principal, Westminster Kingsway College

60. Andy focused on the skills strategy for the future in his presentation, the last one of the day. The last skills strategy was centred on the Leitch Report, which was a popular strategy. But the Government's, funding-led, implementation of that strategy left little leeway for providers or employers requiring subsidised training and wasn't particularly popular. The Government's plans, based on increasing the number of qualifications attained, didn't improve skills, because it mostly accredited existing skills. The strategy, despite recent reforms to make it more flexible, is *'unfocused and unsustainable'*.
61. What should the new skills strategy be? We must allow the supply side to innovate. But we skate around the difference between *'demand led'* and *'needs led'*. The first is about fulfilling customer desires (which Leitch backed), but the second is about meeting Government-defined needs. We need to carefully distinguish between the two concepts. Demand shifts according to the economic climate – right now, there is more demand for older workers, and less for younger ones.
62. The *New industry, new jobs* paper gave evidence of joined-up thinking, but it too defines needs. Not all of its priorities can be met within the projected budgets, and they can't all be funded in the same way. Nor does *New industry, new jobs* provide a completely clear picture of the system – the funding system is still opaque.

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63. In some cases, the Government's rules sabotage its own directives. Westminster Kingsway is training apprentices for the central Government. All well and good, but the Government department clients want apprentices aged 25 and over, for whom there is little funding.
64. The new system must be less restrictive, meaning it must be less focused on full, big qualifications, as a qualifications-based system is highly restrictive. It must stop mandating that providers join partnerships (though Andy did not oppose partnership work in principle).
65. The system should be stable, though Andy doubted we'd see stability. He did, however, think we could achieve '*surety*', which he defined as possessing a clear and simple funding stream over an extended period. He noted the many capital projects were left abandoned or severely reduced due to the exhaustion of a capital funding scheme which had promised to rebuild the whole sector, and the tale of the London Apprenticeship Company, which the LSC have provided significant financial support for a business based on growth in apprenticeships – however the number of apprenticeships was capped within weeks of support being granted.
66. Andy noted that innovation was impeded by micromanagement from the centre, including the LSC. This was especially true for large providers. FE and skills also tends to harshly punish what it perceives to be failure, while innovation can only flourish in a '*no-blame culture*'. The Association of Colleges (AoC) is developing a manifesto including a section on skills strategy, which aims to secure more space for innovation.

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Seminar participants

Seminar chair:

Simon Jack, business news presenter, BBC

Keynote speakers:

Michael Davis, Director of Strategy and Performance, UKCES

Dr. Su Maddock, Director, Whitehall Innovation Hub

Helen Groves, Chief Executive Officer, Humber Learning Consortium

Andy Wilson, Principal, Westminster Kingsway College

Participant	Job title	Organisation
Andrew Abaza	Head of Research and Development	Proskills UK
Liz Aitken	Programme Director	LSIS
Nadine Cartner	Head of Policy	Association of College Managers
Richard Chambers	Principal	Lambeth College
Garth Clucas HMI	Assistant Divisional Manager	Ofsted
Michael Davis	Director of Strategy and Performance	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
Satwant Deol	Director of Planning	Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College
Helen Hammond	Head of Service	Community Education Lewisham
Marilyn Hawkins	Principal	Barnet College
Graham Hoyle OBE	Chief Executive	Association of Learning Providers
Colin Kerr	Director, Finance and Resources	Learning and Skills Network

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Caroline Mager	Executive Director, Policy and Strategic Intelligence	LSIS
Ben Margulies	Policy Research Officer	LSIS
Rachel McKellar	Regional Apprenticeship Director	National Apprenticeship Service
Graham Moore OBE	Principal	Stoke-on-Trent College
Ian Mulheim	Director	Social Market Foundation
Iain Murray	Senior Policy Officer (Learning and Skills)	Trades Union Congress
Raj Patel	Assistant Director of Research and Policy	Learning and Skills Network
Helen Pettifor	Executive Director, Provider Development (Leadership)	LSIS
Aidan Relf	Communications Advisor	Association of Learning Providers
Sue Rimmer	Principal	South Thames College
Ed Sallis	Principal and Chief Executive	Highlands College
Sujinder Sangha	Principal and Chief Executive	Stockton Riverside College
Brenda Sheils	Principal	Solihull College
Dame Ruth Silver DBE	Principal	Lewisham College
Alastair Thomson	Principal Advocacy Officer	NIACE
Christine Tyler	College Specialist	Association of School and College Leaders
Diana Watson	Strategic Associate	LSIS
Paul Wright-Anderson	Audit Manager	National Audit Office