



A NIACE Commission of Inquiry

The Future for Lifelong Learning: a national strategy

*A. Evidence on Demography
and Adult Learning*

**Initial issues
suggested for
further study**

December 2007

The Future for Lifelong Learning: a national strategy

Evidence on Learning in the workplace

About City & Guilds

- 1** City & Guilds is the pre-eminent vocational awarding body in the United Kingdom, awarding nearly 50% of all National Vocational Qualifications. It is also a global organisation, providing unique internationally recognised qualifications across the world. City & Guilds offers more than 500 qualifications in almost all sectors – from agriculture to hairdressing, from IT to vehicle maintenance, and health and care to community services. Together the City & Guilds Group awards over one million certificates every year and each year there are over 1.5 million learners working towards being qualified. Our customers are learners and their current or potential employers. City & Guilds works very closely with its provider network and plays a critical role in the delivery of vocational and work-related programmes.
- 2** From our beginnings, some 130 years ago, the power of education and training to influence the lives of individuals and the nation for the better has been our prime concern. We have been, and remain particularly active in the continuing debate about vocational education and training reform, both within the secondary sector and for adult learning. We therefore feel we have an important contribution to make.

Introduction to this response

- 3** City & Guilds works closely with NIACE in a number of areas and will contribute to the various themes of this Enquiry at far greater length in the months ahead. The bulleted comments to the seven questions raised on 'Learning in the workplace' simply indicate initial views which have come to us and which we consider will repay further study.
- 4** Please also see attached, as an Appendix, a separate statement from our new research and development institute for skills which will liaise with NIACE directly.
- 5** There may be issues that the Commission feels that City & Guilds would be best placed to consider. We would be more than happy to assist wherever possible.

Evidence on Demography and Adult Learning

Initial thoughts

1. There are now some one million less adults participating in adult learning than there were five years ago. Though there are now some 600, 000 new employer-focused places, the balance of 400, 000 is still very significant. And while we understand the case for a shift to 'utility' in publicly-funded adult education we cannot help but think that the broader benefits of 'developmental' learning are being missed: being able to understand and appreciate more leads, in itself, to a richer and fuller experience of life.
2. Even allowing for the current employment focus, there is an issue of fundamental conflict between the aims of employers and employees which, in a 'demand-led' context, begs the questions of 'whose demand'?
3. Adult education has often given the opportunity for second chances - where social disadvantage or damaging learning experiences have limited achievement, or where early choices have turned out to be either unwise or wholly inappropriate. We would have some concern where certain aspects of current public policy might appear to limit, rather than create opportunity. This would seem particularly to be the case with the removal of funding for 2nd qualifications.
4. Technological change has impacted significantly on employment, not just on the way we do things, but also where work is done - the shift of call centres and legal services to India are cases in point. Educational services, similarly, might be effectively provided from any part of the English-speaking world. We agree strongly however with the need to 'maintain the "public space" of education providers which are seen as politically and socially neutral': as past experience shows, once such facilities are lost they are very difficult to re-create.
5. There are many societal benefits from 'learning', per se - perhaps the most obvious being the maintenance of health, in its broadest sense. Whether one is talking about a purely leisure activity, such as a dance class (though there is a growing employment need for leaders of dance classes), or whether one is talking about quasi-vocational learning, such as recreational woodworking, which could very easily turn into a means of creating an income - all adult learning has the benefit of increasing independence, confidence, resourcefulness and adaptability, and encouraging an optimistic and outward-looking approach to life. Its social inclusive role, particularly for the elderly, the ill, disabled or otherwise housebound, the timid and depressed, cannot be underestimated. We would strongly agree with the notion that 'the state also has a role in supporting, promoting or guaranteeing wellbeing and happiness'.
6. There is a critical need for joined-up thinking in government, rather than in departmental 'silos' - particularly from a budgeting and planning point of view. There other related examples, such as the current welfare to work proposals, where a spend in one department is planned to reduce not just the costs of another department but costs to the public purse overall. The sentiments of a comprehensive strategy have been articulated through consultations such as 'Opportunity Age', but real progress would seem slow. There are some signs however, such as the remit of the new Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), which are beginning to suggest a more holistic approach.
7. As the briefing paper suggests, the elderly are amongst the most passionate users of the internet and e-mail. This 'virtual inclusion' increases a sense of stake in the community. Also, assumptions about old age and poverty no longer hold: there is likely to be a much larger grey market of purchasers of learning.

8. As the reports from the Audit Commission and the TUC in 2007 (p29 in the McNair Discussion paper) indicate, the impact of the recent migration to the UK from Eastern Europe has been largely positive. They make a net contribution to the UK economy, and their presence has not resulted in higher levels of unemployment. It does mean however, that employers are in a position to choose better qualified migrants over lower qualified local workers - further depressing their opportunities. Also, even allowing for the broadly beneficial economic effects of immigration, it is clear that resource pressures are being on all parts of the system.
9. The recent change in emphasis from translation for both migrants and residents for whom English is a second language, to learning to speak English will increase the need for ESOL learning significantly.

Appendix to City & Guilds response

The future for lifelong learning: a national strategy

In spring 2008, City & Guilds will launch a new research and development institute for skills. This initiative is the latest commitment from City & Guilds to its charitable objectives, as enshrined by Royal Charter. The institute aims to deliver and support the improvement of policy and practice in vocational education and training internationally, in order to bring about social and economic benefits for individuals, organisations and nations.

One of the objectives of the institute is to facilitate international networks and partnership arrangements that will allow the sharing of good practice. The first phase of stakeholder engagement is nearing completion and the project team at City & Guilds has now met with over 400 organisations that work in the skills arena. To inform the institute's development, City & Guilds has also commissioned a survey to explore the issues for vocational education and training across nine countries.¹ Four key stakeholder groups were consulted: practitioners, employers, policy-makers and researchers. Over 2,000 employers and practitioners have participated.

The results of the survey are currently being analysed in greater detail and the full results will be available in early 2008. Initial findings indicate there are four central themes that affect stakeholders globally. These are: quality of provision, supply and demand, employer engagement and esteem for vocational training. Two subsidiary and related themes have also emerged: communication and migration.

The two calls for evidence from the NIACE Inquiry on 'learning in the workplace' and 'demographic change' are of fundamental interest to City & Guilds and the institute will have more information available on the international dimension of the consultation as the Inquiry continues. Early indications from both the stakeholder engagement programme and the survey are that it will be possible to draw out commonalities and variations from the quantitative data, as well as case studies for good practice that can be compared and contrasted against experiences in the UK. The institute would therefore be happy to contribute to the Inquiry more fully once the survey analysis is complete.

City & Guilds has already invited NIACE to an early meeting to discuss the development of the institute and we will seek to build upon this good relationship as we move forward with our work.

¹ The 9 countries are Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, India, Malaysia, South Africa and the UK.