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# 7 Professionals or Prisoners?

## The Competency-Based Approach to Professional Development

ROS OLLIN

### **Introduction**

The post-compulsory sector of education and training has experienced many changes over the last three decades, which have resulted in different demands on the staff involved, together with changes to the function and purposes of staff development. This chapter considers the effects of some of these changes, in particular the effect of increased accountability and control and the introduction of competence-based occupational standards on staff development processes. Reference is also made to parallel developments in other sectors, in particular higher education (HE) and the health service. These developments have taken place against a background of wider debates on the processes of teaching and learning and shifting political perceptions on the purpose and scope of education. Of relevance also is the continuing debate on the notion of professionalism and how it impacts on the role of the teacher. The term staff development is used as a generic descriptor for policies and actions which relate to the development of employees. Other terms, for example professional development, are considered in their own right as part of a consideration of how changing terminology reflects different perceptions and approaches in this area.

### **Further Education in the 1970s and 1980s**

In the 1970s staff development in the Further Education (FE) sector was perceived as an *ad hoc* affair with little direction or common agreement of what needed to be accomplished (Harding and Scott, 1980). FE teachers were, in general, vocational specialists, without a teaching qualification, operating within a fairly static environment where opportunities for

advancement existed if sufficient time had been served. The students they taught were mainly in employment and attending college on part-time day-release. This situation had a number of implications for the teaching environment. In general, students were relatively highly motivated as learning was linked closely to employment requirements. Employers supported their trainees through giving them time to attend and had varying degrees of contact, usually informal, with individual college staff. A wide variety of different vocational qualifications were available, representing fairly narrow specialisms, but with significant areas of duplication between awards (Jessup, 1990). These qualifications were developed by awarding bodies such as City and Guilds and followed a traditional format with assessment being conducted through formal tests and written examinations.

Staff development tended to be concentrated in two areas - initial teacher training (ITT) and attendance at specific short courses, usually related to developments in the vocational area, each based more on individual rather than defined organisational needs. The James report (DES, 1972) supported this emphasis, in which staff development was related to identifying the professional needs of individual teachers and devising programmes to meet these needs. Although the Department for Education and Science (DES) Oxford conference in 1976 offered a more integrated approach, defining staff development as 'an ongoing process designed to maximise human resources in order to achieve the objectives of an organisation', the idea appeared more rhetoric than reality, with many educational establishments lacking clear organisational objectives.

At the end of the 1970s the social, political and educational climate began to change, with a resulting impact on the role of FE and the work of the FE teacher. The Ruskin College speech by James Callaghan in 1976 clearly articulated the need for a close partnership between educators and employers and an education system which would prepare young people for employment. Government policy in education and training over the next two decades would be driven by the need to produce the skilled workforce required to improve industrial performance in competition with overseas markets. This perspective crystallised with the advent of a new Tory government, under Margaret Thatcher, prepared to develop strong policies to propel a new vocationalism and market orientation into the education and training sector (Dale, 1985). There were severe skills shortages amongst the existing workforce, young people were leaving school without any qualifications and there was a lack of qualifications among the population at large. There was widespread growth in unemployment, due partly to the

collapse of the manufacturing base, coupled with signs of social unrest, manifested for example in the youth riots of 1981. This combination of factors indicated the need for sweeping reform in vocational education and training, a reform that had to take into account not just the updating of skills of the existing workforce but the development of policies and initiatives which would address the qualifications shortfall and the growing numbers of the unemployed.

In the early 1980s the protagonists of FE staff development at national level were the Department of Education and Science, informing local authority action, and the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), created in 1981 and linked to the Department of Employment (DoE). The MSC was created for the purpose of transforming education and training, with FE being given a central role in the proposed transformation. This was to have substantial implications for the future development of FE teachers. Instead of the relatively stable and comfortable environment of the 1970s, FE staff were now faced with new types of programme initiated, and funded, by the MSC. These included the Youth Opportunities Programme, Youth Training Scheme and the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education. These programmes were aimed mainly at a new type of student, who was unemployed or had not yet entered employment. The students were often unmotivated, sometimes disaffected, requiring a broader approach to teaching and learning encompassing social and life skills as well as narrow occupational skills (Broomhead and Coles, 1988). The challenge to teachers also encompassed the need to teach a far wider range of students, with many more mature adults attending courses and a greater provision for students with physical or learning disabilities. In a very short space of time, FE staff development was required to prepare and train staff to use different teaching and learning methods in order to motivate and engage the new types of student and to engage in creative processes of curriculum development, producing courses which would conform to MSC guidelines. As a result of these demands, subject staff, previously confined to their own subject disciplines, were required to work on a cross-college basis with colleagues from other disciplines (Chesson and Silverleaf, 1983). The increase in the number of part-time staff employed to deliver parts of these courses created an additional issue for staff development, which has continued to the present day.

Despite such wide ranging changes, initial teacher training for FE was not a government priority in the 1980s. The DES conference report on staff development estimated that about 45% of FE teachers had some kind of

teaching qualification (DES, 1986a), but in this, as in subsequent attempts to quantify qualified teaching staff in FE (Martinez, 1994; FEFC, 1999), accurate data proved hard to elicit. However, there was little government commitment to explore the introduction of qualified teacher status for FE, and although Local Education Authorities (LEAs) did allocate funding for ITT, it was left to individual authorities to decide the appropriate balance between this and other types of staff development. With pressure from the DES and MSC to address immediate, short term demands, this decade saw a priority shift away from ITT to curriculum-led staff development. It also saw the creation of an embryonic framework of accountability for FE staff development activity linked, as perhaps might be expected, to funding requirements. LEAs, the main dispensaries for FE staff development funding, had been allocating funding often apparently on a fairly random basis, with the overall picture being of insufficient and inadequate provision (Foden, 1979). In 1986, DES circular 6/86 (DES, 1986b) introduced the Local Authority Grants Training Scheme which required LEAs to declare their in-service education and training policy across school and FE sectors, indicating priorities in the allocation of expenditure. Furthermore the MSC, with 5% of its budget allocated for staff development, required a cohesive planning, monitoring and evaluation system (MSC, 1989). This process of integration into a planning and monitoring framework was to be an increasingly defining characteristic of staff development in the 1990s.

The 1980s saw major changes in society at large with external pressures leading to a re-conceptualisation of how learning opportunities might be offered. The governmental impetus to increase skills and qualification levels was taking place within a political context where consumerist ideology and a belief in the efficacy of market forces prevailed (Ainley and Corney, 1990). It was also taking place within a social context where large-scale working communities such as the mining and the steel industries were being disbanded and employment for life was no longer the norm. As a result, individuals might expect to move between employment, unemployment and, where appropriate, a formal learning situation, during their adult lives. As it would not be possible, nor feasible, to attract everyone into formal education environments, another way needed to be found to increase qualification levels and to provide a framework for development. In the 1980s, and into the 1990s, government policy began to promote the view that learning takes place in a variety of different contexts, throughout the period of an individual's life. The concept of *lifelong learning* itself has received much critical attention (Coffield, 1999; Field

and Leicester, 2000), however it is significant that learning is seen here as a continuum, occurring in formal and non-formal learning contexts and that the resulting individual achievements could be legitimised through some process of accreditation.

This viewpoint in one sense could be seen to represent a humanistic view of adult growth and development, using attributes of models of adult learning contemporary to that period (e.g. Knowles, 1984), experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and *learner-centred learning* (Rogers, 1983), where an individual's continuing potential to learn and progress is acknowledged. Alternatively, it could also be seen as the construct of a society where ideas of 'community' have atrophied and social functioning is 'atomised' in the process of transition from a modernist to a post-modernist society (Morrison, 1998). The main characteristics of this society centre around an increased emphasis on difference and individuality, played out within a culture of consumerism and overt bureaucratic control (Jameson, 1991, cited in Morrison, op.cit.). It could be argued that approaches to FE staff development from the 1980s onwards, as in the education sector as a whole, might encapsulate aspects of both these positions - the promotion of individual choice and responsibility for achievement, fixed within an externally-imposed framework, which delineates the nature of the choices which can be made.

## **A New Qualifications Framework**

The term 'framework', suggesting both structure, cohesion and boundaries, is a term that reoccurs in the discourse of successive governments seeking to impose overarching systems onto different aspects of educational life. A key example of this was the establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) in 1986 with the task of rationalising the plethora of existing qualifications and providing a common framework which would offer a means of national comparability and transfer between different individual learning experiences. NCVQ was also responsible for the development and accreditation of national occupational standards, which would provide a benchmark for performance and achievement across all occupational sectors and form the basis of unitised National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). NVQs, and later, General National Qualifications (GNVQs) were to form a large part of the work of FE, led by the requirement to meet government targets for increasing skills and

qualification levels. The use of national standards and performance measurement, characteristic of the business environment, was to feature more strongly over the next decade in the approach to staff development. A significant feature here was the greater involvement of employers both in standard setting and in the delivery of staff development. In the case of ITT, where the FE college was the employer, this meant much greater college involvement in teaching on ITT courses which trained their own staff. However, the emphasis on short programmes of skills development for staff, prevalent at this time, concentrated more on specific types of curriculum development, for example the design and delivery of open learning materials.

In the 1980s the growth of student-centred learning and the introduction of modularised, flexible curricula were accompanied by new systems of assessment and accreditation. Although systems using continuous assessment against criteria were already in use, as in the Technical Education Council and Business Education Council qualifications introduced in the late 1970s, these ideas had been taken further. Systems of assessment which involved a continuous monitoring of performance with a focus on an individual's capacity to actually 'do the job' gained increased prominence in the latter part of the decade. The competency-based approach, prompted by NCVQ and articulated in practice through national occupational standards and NVQs, had been a source of controversy and debate within the field of education and training from its inception. However, many components of this approach have had a significant effect on staff development from the 1980s onwards, both in terms of development needs (FEU, 1986) and in terms of the methodology used. In particular, the use of national standards for teachers and trainers, to provide a framework for development and benchmarks for performance, has been a recurring theme in government policy since this time.

The idea that accreditation can occur based on experience, but without a formal course of study has other implications if linked to the use of standards. As they provide a means by which individual learning and achievement can be profiled against pre-determined competences, individual progression through different job roles increases the number and variety of competences which can be achieved. The idea of evidence being accumulated and recorded over a period of time links the competency initiative with concepts further developed in the 1990s such as *lifelong learning* and *continuing professional development* (CPD). The production of a portfolio of evidence, compiled by the individual showing how defined

standards have been achieved, has been used as evidence of CPD for various professional bodies, for example in the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC) Post-Registration Education and Practice file required to maintain membership of the professional body, and in the requirements for individual membership of the Institute for Learning and Teaching for Higher Education (ILT). In addition, the use of a competency-based approach which encourages the use of systematic needs analysis leading to action planning and monitoring of progress has increasingly been used to identify organisational as well as individual needs. This relates closely to the market-oriented business ethos being promoted within FE - an ethos based on organisational theory which emphasises goal-setting, planning, monitoring and evaluation in the pursuit of the elusive chimera of quality.

### **Quality Assurance Processes**

In the 1980s the term *quality* became part of the discourse of government policy. Although industrial quality control systems such as BS5750 were used to a certain extent within the education sector, it was the philosophy of Total Quality Management (TQM) that became popular from the 1980s onwards. TQM is based on a service model that contains a number of key ideas: all employees are suppliers of services to customers, both internal and external; organisations are characterised by a shared vision led at the highest level of management; and systematic strategic and operational management is closely linked to target-setting and measurement of performance. The use of needs analysis to target staff development requirements, providing the first point in a systematic planning cycle, is congruent with the TQM philosophy and signalled an attempt to introduce a more integrated approach to the process of staff development. However in the 1980s, the means for obtaining the necessary information at local level was not without its problems. LEAs, in control of funding for staff development in colleges, had to preserve a distinction between meeting government priorities and addressing local needs. Although national priorities were identified and would drive funding for certain development initiatives, the mechanisms used by LEAs to assess FE staff development needs at local level were often inadequate in terms of providing the necessary information (DES, 1986a). It has also been suggested that different local authorities had different priorities which could be based on

the preferences of a particular senior officer rather than any robust policy development (Stevens, 1988).

However there were certain consistent elements in national and local approaches to staff development activities in the 1980s. One was a reluctance to invest in long-term benefits for staff, an apparent lack of commitment to supporting a cohesive provision of professional training. In contrast, there was government, LEA and college employer support for more instrumental forms of staff development, in particular attendance on short skills-related courses which could produce more immediate results (DES, 1986b). This is not to say that there were not good examples of short course provision, such as those provided by LEAs at local teacher centres, the Further Education Unit (FEU) and the Further Education Staff College at Coombe Lodge, Bristol. These had the advantage of offering a relatively neutral forum where staff from different colleges could discuss and share ideas. One negative result of college incorporation in 1993 was the loss of these facilities for inter-college synergy and the resultant lack of opportunity for the growth of informal learning communities involving colleagues from different organisations.

### **Staff Development Post-Incorporation**

The role of the LEAs in staff development was to further decrease following the 1988 Education Reform Act, which required extensive delegation of responsibility from LEAs to college governing bodies. The creation of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in 1989 produced a different source of income and control for colleges at a local level and made the links between the FE college and the world of business far closer. This relationship was consolidated through the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, which incorporated FE colleges and Higher Education Institutions into self governing bodies which included representatives from employers as governors. Colleges were to be run as competitive businesses, with business plans and the imperative to generate income. As the move towards local management of colleges occurred, so the relationship between staff development and line management increased. More financial accountability, a modularised curriculum which provided more flexibility but with a commensurate growth in support and guidance services, an increased use of student-centred resource-based-learning and developments in new technology - all these placed yet more demand on the skills of FE

teachers. Staff development in the late 1980s had to address the need to train staff to fit a multiplicity of roles within an ever more complex teacher profile, whilst broadening its remit to include college support staff. By the time of incorporation in April 1993, colleges, like any other business organisation, were entirely responsible for the appraisal and training of their own staff, and the monitoring of staff performance became a feature of more tightly controlled, organisationally focused staff development.

This approach was compatible with monitoring structures at government level. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), the funding body established in 1993 to monitor performance of the FE sector, imposed a far tighter structure of financial accountability onto colleges. Within this framework, efficient management and deployment of staff were key factors. Curriculum audits which included staff skills were undertaken by some colleges, and other indications of the increased emphasis on quality control and quality assurance began to emerge. Ideas of 'efficiency' (the relationship of inputs to outcomes) and 'effectiveness' (the relationship of objectives to outcomes), coupled with performance indicators, had gained prominence in the mid-1980s in both FE and in HE (Audit Commission, 1985; FEU, 1989). FEFC's demand for value for money and a reduction in unit costs, together with the role of the TECs in agreeing college strategic plans meant that a tighter and more accountable operating framework was required of college organisation.

Within the organisational context of incorporation, a culture of performance management began to assume prominence, with the performance of individual staff under increasing documented scrutiny. One method of providing information to plan and monitor staff development was the use of appraisal systems. By 1987 the idea of appraisal, which had been on the agenda since 1973 (ACFHE/APC, 1973) was under serious discussion as a means of identifying staff development needs both at individual and at organisational level. College managers were being placed under increasing pressure to improve the performance of the college in meeting government priorities, with the veiled threat of increased intervention if they failed to do so. As Collings (1986) observes:

[The] DES ... makes it very clear that if educational institutions are not prepared to accept responsibility for evaluating and reporting what they are doing, others will do it for them.  
(Collings, 1986, p.19)

Anxieties about the purpose and processes of appraisal were reported at the time (Grindrod, 1987) and the tensions between government pressure on

FE, college management policies and individual staff fears and aspirations become apparent. Certainly, by the early 1990s most colleges had established a system of staff appraisal which linked into the strategic planning cycle at organisational, and where the organisational structure permitted, at departmental level. Appraisal and staff development were increasingly linked to a line management function which led to concerns about the extent to which appraisal was used supportively and developmentally as opposed to having a more direct 'policing' function (Grindrod op.cit.). This changing culture provoked strong criticism from some quarters, for example equating the new FE with Foucault's 'panopticon', the prison symbolising disciplinary power which functions through observation and surveillance, capturing the performance of individuals in an array of documents (Foucault, 1979, cited in Usher and Edwards, 1994). Certainly the increased bureaucracy that began to emerge in order to record auditable performance has been a feature of FE college management since the 1980s. However in spite of strong criticism of the culture of managerialism in FE, a paradox has been suggested - that increased accountability could have a democratising effect on the context and conditions under which professionals operate within the sector, in that these could be open to scrutiny and hence to debate (Avis, 1996). Robson (1998) to some extent supports this view, seeing areas of communality between managers and teachers which may benefit the profession as a whole.

The business-oriented culture, operating within a TQM model, had its effect on staff development within the college as college managers increasingly favoured a Human Resource Management (HRM) function which identifies staff as an organisation's major asset:

HRM emphasises that employees are the primary resource for gaining sustainable competitive advantage, that human resource activities must be integrated with the corporate strategy, and that human resource specialists help organisational controllers to meet both efficiency and equity objectives.

(Bratton and Gold, 1994, p.5)

In a number of instances, colleges created a separate Human Resource Unit, into which staff development and personnel functions were subsumed. In some cases, human resource managers were appointed from a business rather than an educational background. It has been suggested that this caused problems for college management and for teaching staff, as a result of the tension between the different cultures of business and education

(Elliott, 1996). Other tensions arose between the micro-cultures of different vocational specialisms within the college environment. An ageing population of teachers who began working in the 1970s under a regime of greater professional freedom were being placed in an enterprise culture which appeared to promote different values and priorities (Hall, 1990; Gray, 1991, cited in Faccenda, 1996). The introduction of new, more demanding contracts created an atmosphere of mistrust and anxiety, which was reinforced by large scale staff redundancies. This had a negative effect on the motivation to undertake the staff development necessary to meet rapidly changing demands, especially as this was seen to be directed purely to the fulfilment of organisational requirements; an approach which has been criticised elsewhere (Eraut, 1994; Castling, 1996; Huddlestone and Unwin, 1997).

### **National Standards for Training and Development**

The Investors in People (IIP) award, introduced by the government in 1991, established a national 'ideal' organisational model of employee development in industry, business and settings such as education and health. The award was based on four major principles which explicitly linked individual development to the achievement of the employing organisation's objectives. The four principles were, in brief:

- a commitment by senior management to develop all staff
- identified targets for training and development
- action planning to train and develop staff throughout their employment
- systems of monitoring and evaluating the impact of training and development on the organisation.

IIP is one example of how the government at this time was trying to promote the importance of cohesive staff development systems in all sectors of employment (Morrison, 1998). Despite management and financial responsibility being devolved to organisational level, the government was also trying to ensure a centralised control of standards and quality. The standards were nationally applied and the control of the award was through the local government-funded TEC which appointed the external assessors who would inspect participating institutions. It has been argued that the use of national occupational standards was a method by which central control

could be exercised over disparate institutions. For example, as Kedney and Parkes suggest:

Wherever we look we find centralisation occurring alongside deregulation; privatisation occurring alongside central government intervention alongside specific funding and short term schemes. (Kedney and Parkes, 1988, p.76)

Certainly, for FE, government policy on the introduction of national standards was to have a sizeable impact on the formation of staff development methodology within the sector. Of particular impact was the establishment of the Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) in 1991, given the task of providing a series of nationally determined benchmarks in training and development to be used by employers and individual trainers. These national standards for Training and Development were intended to be used across all occupational areas, the idea being that the processes involved were generic and essentially independent of context. The first standards, published in 1991 were, predictably, closely allied with government policy, defining the key purpose of training and development as 'the development of human potential to enable individuals and organisations to meet their objectives'. The FEU reacted positively to the standards, suggesting that:

national standards could provide a recognisable and nationally consistent means of describing the professionalism of staff, within job/person specifications and for the purpose of performance reviews, career planning and programmes of continuing professional development. (FEU, 1992, p.1)

These two quotes are significant, the first through the explicit linkage of individuals, organisations and objectives, the second through the reintroduction of a national perspective on the qualifications of the FE workforce and the strengthening of the debate on professionalism in FE.

This first draft of the standards was poorly received. On an operational level of detail, criticism focused on tortuously-expressed criteria, which used over-complicated and bureaucratic language to express relatively simple ideas and which even skilled practitioners found difficult to disentangle (Reid, Barrington, Kenney, 1992; Carroll, 1994). Objections at the philosophical level reflected wider concerns about competence-based approaches and focused on the positivistic and minimalist approach to the complex and subtle processes involved in teaching and learning which, it was argued, de-professionalised and de-skilled this area of work (Ashworth

and Saxton, 1990; Chown and Last, 1993; Hyland, 1994). A recurring debate on different notions of professionalism and professional knowledge was to be a continuing feature over the next decade (Apple, 1993; Eraut, 1994; Robson, 1996) and paradoxically, it was at this time that the Department of Health and Social Security was actually raising the academic standards for nurse education, suggesting that good research-based practice should be informing the work of the nursing professional, rather than the development of practical skills without a robust and informed knowledge base (DHSS, 1991). The negative reception given by the post sixteen education sector to the TDLB standards and the NVQs formed from them was one of the reasons for a substantial review and revision in 1993.

The re-elected Conservative government used a range of approaches in their attempt to gain acceptance for the TDLB standards and the use of NVQs in the training and development of FE staff. One method was to engage the support of the FEU to promote the use of these standards through a series of conferences, workshops and a resulting publication *Standards in Action* (FEU, 1993). This attempted to show how the standards could be used by FE employers for organisational development, linking them closely to the HRM function, to provide benchmarks to be used in internal staff skill audits and also to the increasingly popular concept of the *learning organisation* (Pedlar et al., 1991). It is perhaps interesting to note that this is a different emphasis from the later standards for FE teachers, produced by the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) which focus more on the national need to have a qualified teaching workforce in this sector.

Apart from the persuasive approach which sought to explain the organisational benefits of the standards, the government also introduced a compulsory component into its acceptance strategy. This was done by requiring that all those involved in the assessment of NVQs and the broader, more educational GNVQs, both core business for FE, achieve NVQ units in assessment from the Training and Development standards. Apart from attempting to impose national control over the quality of NVQs in general, this also suggested a strategy based on an incremental approach leading to gradual acceptance of the standards within the FE context. A survey of FE staff development priorities undertaken at this time (Martinez, 1994) indicates that the TDLB assessor awards (known often by their unit titles of D32 and D33) were second in priority only to management development in the colleges surveyed, and that there was a significant impetus for staff to become qualified. A later report by the FEFC placed

assessor award training as the highest priority in the colleges inspected (FEFC, 1999). As staff went through the same kind of evidence gathering process and accreditation of 'performance on the job' as the students (or 'candidates') they were assessing, this also marked a particular experiential method of staff development which would, in theory, help staff understand and accept the different approach required by NVQs. The general unpopularity of these assessor awards may actually have had the opposite effect, with staff unenthusiastic and, in many cases, antagonistic to the experience.

The government pressure on the introduction of the TDLB standards introduced the threat for Higher Education Institutions offering Initial Teacher Training that colleges would use the NVQs to train their own staff without HE involvement. Attempts to ally existing programmes with TDLB standards were made by many higher education institutions offering the Certificate in Education and Postgraduate Certificate in Education. Some went wholeheartedly down the competence-based route and others developed systems of dual accreditation to meet, in particular, the demand for assessor units from the FE staff on their programmes. At this time City and Guilds also introduced a purely competence-based programme the 7306, based entirely on NVQ units in Training and Development, with the idea that this would eventually replace their popular basic teaching qualification, the 7307. Concerns were expressed about the direction being taken, with criticisms of the use of NVQs in professional development, a policy perceived as driven by ideology rather than research. Concerns identified included a potential loss of professional autonomy, an increase in centralised control and the limitations of development, being product and outcome-related rather than a process of growth and critical engagement (Childs, 1997; Bathmaker, 1999).

Another trend which emerges here, which relates to individual as opposed to organisational development is the notion of flexibility and potential for credit accumulation. This reflects what may be seen as the prevailing model of an individual career path - initial training, followed by the uptake of different learning opportunities as the occupational role expands or alters in response to external requirements (Jessup, 1990). The idea of continuing professional development had been in existence for a considerable amount of time and the use of NVQs or Credit Accumulation and Transfer Schemes by higher education institutions was seen as a means of accrediting in-house training and relevant professional experience. However CPD was now being linked into a framework of pre-defined

standards, to be achieved at different stages in an individual's career. This was a pattern which was to recur generally in government policy towards teacher development in the 1990s, for example in the national standards for teachers defined in 1998 by the Teacher Training Agency, which identified competences required at different levels of the profession. Interestingly, as far back as 1974 doubts were expressed about the advisability of over-prescriptive routes for the professional development of teachers which would 'make inroads into the concept of teacher freedom and the right of professionals to choose the courses they wish to attend' (Cave, 1974, cited in FEU, 1992a, p.29).

### **Mapping of Roles in the FE Sector**

The lack of enthusiasm for adoption of the TDLB standards as a vehicle for the development of FE staff led the government to explore means of gathering more information about the sector to determine whether FE required its own lead body. In 1995, the Further Education Development Association (FEDA), created by a merger of FEU and the Further Education Staff College, managed a project which undertook a major occupational map of the sector (DfEE, 1995). The mapping identified a number of trends including an increasing number of part-time staff and a wide range of support staff roles throughout the sector. It suggested that just under 50% of FE staff in England and Wales were qualified as teachers (and 67% in Scotland). It identified various types of CPD being undertaken, including assessor awards, specialist awards for basic skills and language teaching, a continued rise in management development and a variety of higher education awards. It also identified the increasingly competitive environment and the growth in customer entitlement. The mapping attempted to detail the number, nature and distribution of all occupations within the FE sector and attempted to provide a description of all roles and functions undertaken.

Following the results of the mapping, the National Training Organisation for Further Education (FENTO) was established. The national standards for FE (generally known as the FENTO standards) were developed through a process of consultations with key players; attitudes from some staff developers were more positive than with the TDLB standards (Martinez and Seymour, 1998). A particular point in their favour was that the FENTO standards did contain some reference to reflective

practice and to underpinning values in professional practice, both missing from the TDLB standards. However there remained strong concerns from some quarters about the prevailing model being used i.e. a model which, although not exactly an NVQ, had to fit into the existing NVQ framework. Just as with TDLB, there were objections for operational reasons, such as the difficulty of teachers being able to achieve such a very large number of standards. More fundamentally, criticisms of this model related to epistemological concerns and the philosophical constraints of behaviourist models of teaching and learning (Petty, 1998) and the limitations of instrumental credentialism as opposed to universal transformation (Fevre, Rees and Gorard, 1999). There were also challenges by organisational theorists to the pervasive ethos of TQM, where commonality and prescribed 'vision' replace the fuzziness, divergence and contradictions necessary for growth and change (Pascale, 1990; Fullan, 1999).

### **Parallel Development in Other Sectors**

In the mid 1990s the context for FE staff development continued to alter in the light of changes in government policy that resulted in a shift towards a more integrated framework for the education sector as a whole. This was intended to create a relatively seamless process of transition between the environments of school, college and university which previously had been relatively discrete in their scope and operation. In 1996 the government merged the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) and NCVQ to create a national body, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) overseeing academic and vocational qualifications for all but the university sector. The aim of this initiative was to develop more points of convergence between academic and vocational routes - a trend further continued with the more recent introduction of Curriculum 2000 in both schools and FE. These changes were influenced by reviews of the National Curriculum (Dearing, 1994) and of 16-19 qualifications (Dearing, 1996).

With the new curricula placing similar demands on staff from both sectors, staff development for schools and FE was showing substantial convergence. In a situation where the same qualifications were being taught and assessed, an increasing anomaly was the legal requirement for school teachers to have qualified teacher status, without any commensurate requirement that FE teachers should possess a professional teaching

qualification. A general awareness of the need to prioritise improvements in the quality of teaching was revealed in various government documents. The Fryer Report on lifelong learning (Fryer, 1997) proposed the introduction of nationally recognised initial teacher training for FE, and the Kennedy report on widening participation (Kennedy, 1997) also identified the need for highly effective teachers. FEFC inspection policies on college self assessment also called for FE staff to be appropriately qualified and to be given opportunities for professional development. Major weaknesses in pedagogy were identified in the FEFC report of 1998/9; this report also promoted the use of national standards in the inspection process seeing them as a means of improving the performance of individual teachers, by offering 'a way of addressing the persistent weaknesses identified through inspection' (FEFC, 1999, p.13).

The FENTO standards were launched in 1999 with the requirement that all providers of initial teacher training, both higher education institutions and awarding bodies such as City and Guilds, must incorporate these standards into their programmes; all programmes must be endorsed by FENTO or they will not be recognised by the new Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This parallels the control over school teacher training, where higher education programmes must provide evidence that the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) teacher competences are met in the HE programmes; provision must also be endorsed by the TTA. The English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (ENB) has the same function in relation to programmes related to nurse tutor education in England, which must meet standards developed through the UKCC (UKCC, 2000). From September 2001, there is a statutory requirement for full-time, fractional and part-time teachers new to FE to achieve a qualification meeting the FENTO standards, within a given timescale. The DfES will also fund existing unqualified staff to achieve these qualifications through matched funding from the FE Standards Fund, managed by the Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), which at the time of writing are administering funding to promote and support FE staff development at national and local level. In keeping with current trends of accountability, performance measurement is integral to the operation of the LSCs themselves, being identified by external inspection grades and feedback from stakeholders and announced through the publication of league tables.

## **Staff Development for HE in FE**

At this point, however, it is important to consider that the FENTO standards are not the only externally devised benchmark which currently drives FE staff development. Another influence, prompted by national policy on widening participation, has been the growth of HE provision in FE. By 1995, the Higher Education Funding Council had begun consultations on the direct funding of HE courses through FE colleges, which were seen as cheaper and offering local opportunities. With the introduction of tuition fees, which impacted on the financial capacity of students to study away from home, the role of FE in providing HE level courses has grown significantly. An issue here for FE staff has been the need to provide students studying HE courses in colleges with a comparable experience to those studying at a university with teaching informed by research. Subsequent government-backed initiatives such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funding to promote teaching and learning appropriate to HE and the FEDA (later Learning and Skills Development Agency) research network promoting a research culture in FE (Smithson, 2000) are currently attempting to address this issue. A major problem here, currently unresolved, is how FE staff, teaching on high class contact hours and over a wide range of levels, can find adequate time or support to develop their professional subject expertise to a standard expected of a teacher in a university. However, the current promotion of Foundation Degrees, offered in FE with the opportunity for students to complete a final year at University is an example of where FE and HE are working together on joint curriculum developments and where staff development can occur through a mutual understanding of different delivery and accreditation systems. Although debates on similar issues in teacher professionalism are occurring in HE as in FE (Light and Cox, 2001; Nicholls, 2001), there are many broad cultural differences between the two sectors, manifested, for example, in the differing systems of external quality assurance (Underwood and Connell, 2000). FE colleges offering HE programmes will have to accommodate both systems - subject review by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) as well as monitoring by the FE-related inspectorate. At the same time increased comparability between external quality assurance of schools and FE is almost certain to occur as the schools inspectorate, the Office for Standards of Teaching in Education (OFSTED), takes over from FEFC in inspecting FE provision. Staff development for

beleaguered college staff may well have to focus on ensuring that the needs of all these external systems are met.

Convergence in aspects of curriculum development and inspection systems highlights some consistencies in government policies across the educational sector as a whole. Apart from curriculum convergence, this is also evident in the area of professional teacher accreditation for FE and HE. At the time when the FENTO standards were being developed, the Dearing report on HE (NCIHE, 1997) proposed the creation of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILT) to act as the professional body for teachers in HE. Unlike the large number of FENTO standards, membership of ILT is contingent on the ability to demonstrate achievement of a small number of broad-based standards. Following Dearing there is also a strong recommendation that all new staff teaching at a university should seek accreditation through a qualification which enables them to meet these standards. The effect of this on staff development in FE has, as a result, become even more confusing, with staff teaching in FE required to meet FENTO standards, staff teaching HE also expected to meet ILT standards, and, at present little integration between the two bodies. However, the approach to teacher accreditation in HE suggests a strategy based more on 'winning hearts and minds' both of individuals and institutions, than the more coercive nature of expectations for FE.

## **Conclusion**

So to summarise, what is the current picture of staff development in FE? The FENTO workforce consultation (FENTO, 2001) identifies the current picture in the FE sector: with 12% of course managers and 28% of part-time staff having no form of teaching qualification. The age profile of the largest cohort of lecturers is in the 40 to 49 range, although redundancy and replacement in new skill areas is seeing an influx of younger staff into the sector. The main subject skills gaps reflected in the report are business development, research skills, information and learning technology and working with the disaffected; a significant growth in HE level work is also identified. There are now compulsory national standards for FE teachers, with QTS a strong possibility. There are externally imposed inspection systems with identified performance indicators operating within the competitive environment of published league tables. Staff development is linked closely to organisational needs and objectives, although evaluation

of how this helps to meet objectives is still weak (Martinez, 1999). Continuing professional development may involve the achievement of further national standards, either FENTO or in another occupational area such as management. It may include accreditation for curriculum-led developments, probably by a body approved by QCA or QAA, or attendance on a formal programme of study usually at HE level. These HE programmes will themselves be subject to the QAA subject benchmarks and level descriptors. Evidence of CPD is likely to become a professional requirement and a professional body for FE, on a par with the General Teaching Council for school teachers or ILT for HE staff, is being considered.

It could be argued that many of the changes that have occurred in the last decade have finally improved the public perception of FE teachers, in that government funding is clearly supporting staff development for this sector in an unprecedented manner. There are also clearer expectations of what a teacher in FE should be able to achieve and a clearer public understanding of what the work entails. By making teaching qualifications a requirement to practice, it could also be said that the government has finally legitimised the professional status of the FE teacher and the importance of high quality teaching in a sector which has often been seen as the pedagogical poor relation of other educational sectors.

However, an alternative viewpoint to this optimistic vision may also be expressed, with criticism at both operational and philosophical levels. At an operational level, there has been a significant lack of consultation about how the standards from different educational sectors relate to each other. In other words, rationalisation through creating a sector specific framework for staff development has not been matched by rationalisation of the areas of overlap between sectors. As increased convergence of teaching and curriculum activity occurs, teaching staff may be forced to accommodate different sectoral requirements, adding to an already stressful and burdensome bureaucracy.

At a more philosophical level, the 'professional' status now accorded the FE teacher through prescribed standards and a framework for continuing professional development may represent a debased view of the notion of professionalism, where teaching professionals act in accordance with state requirements and under state control - a framework turned into prison bars - instead of engaging at a profound level with the synergy of personal and professional goals and values and with the subtleties of richer and more complex communities of practice.

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