

The onward march of Functional Skills

The Functional Skills Pilot is now in its third and final year and the programme is preparing for national roll out next September 2010. The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) is holding 'Countdown down to Functional Skills' events around the country, for those involved in the pilot.

There are over 100,000 learners involved in the current pilot, with learners aged 9-72. Most of the pilot learners are in schools; more pilot centres are needed among FE colleges, training providers and work-based learning.

The qualifications cover all levels, from Entry 1-3 up to Level 1 and Level 2. They are defined as 'core elements of English, ICT and mathematics that provide an individual with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work'. The teaching and the assessment modes are intended to emphasise a practical problem solving approach, and the emphasis of the task based assessment has reportedly been popular with learners and teachers although they have proved harder than expected for many learners, particularly at Level 2. The Functional English qualification tests reading, writing, speaking and listening, which sets itself apart from the very limited Skills for Life national test for adult learners which only tests reading comprehension through multiple choice questions.

There are eleven awarding bodies involved in the pilot, which have been trialling a range of different assessment

models, based on the same set of standards. They are Acentis, ASDAN, AQA, City & Guilds, Edexcel, EDI, NCFE, NOCN, OCR, VTCT and WEJC. The QCDA has produced a quick reference guide to their different functional skills offerings.

For all learners

Functional Skills are intended for all learners from key stage 3 up to adult. They are to be available as standalone qualifications in English, Mathematics and ICT; and they will be also be a constituent of the new Diplomas and will be part of Apprenticeships and of Foundation Learning. It had been government policy to make the awarding of GCSE grades A*-C dependent on achieving functional skills. Earlier this year DCSF decided to remove this 'hurdle' on advice from Ofqual that the award of one qualification (GCSE) should not be dependent on success in another qualification (functional skills). Instead there will now be a functional skills element built into the new GCSEs which are being accredited by Ofqual.

Functional Skills have certainly proved problematic in Diplomas where they remain a hurdle – learners have to achieve a pass in all three functional skills to be awarded a Diploma. In June, Ofsted particularly pointed to problems in the teaching of functional skills in Diplomas.

The focus of the final year pilot is on staff training, timetabling and on data return from the pilot centres covering details of learners and feedback

from learners and practitioners. Ofqual is developing the regulation criteria which will be used by awarding bodies to develop the final versions of functional skills for national roll out. A potential functional skills code of practice is also being developed.

Following the final year of the pilot, the functional skills qualifications offered by awarding bodies will have to be re-accredited for general roll out and there may well be changes to the qualifications and to the awarding bodies offering them. Ofqual will decide by April 2010 which awarding bodies will carry on and will also draw out the lessons learned from the pilot on which forms of assessment work best.

The Functional Skills Support Programme is providing free support to schools and colleges involved in the pilot. Its support is available to schools from the DCSF's National Strategies (NS) programme, to the post-16 sector from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS).

There are things still to be sorted out regarding Functional Skills. They have clearly proved problematic to the teaching new Diplomas, according to DCSF because of their unfamiliar modes of assessment. There are questions about how accessible they are to learners with learning difficulties. And of course there is the matter of whether they will ultimately replace the Skills for Life qualifications for adult learners, which has been the policy intention all along. This

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The First Diploma Results

The Diploma results for the 212 candidates who had taken the Foundation and Higher Diplomas (Levels 1 and 2) for the first five lines of learning were published in August. Of these, 121 were Foundation level and 91 were at Higher level.

At Foundation level, 92% achieved the Diploma with 31% achieving an A or A*.

At Higher Level, 74% achieved their full Diploma with 26% receiving a grade of unclassified because they were unsuccessful in either their Principal Learning or Project components. Despite Ofsted's comments in their recent 14–19 survey about their concerns for the variability of the quality of teaching and learning in functional skills, all 212 candidates passed all three functional skills in English, mathematics and IT. It is worth noting though, that most of the 212 candidates were post-16 and studying in Colleges and had only a year in which to complete what will more usually be a two year programme¹. Others have argued that as this number of candidates represents a mere 2% of the total cohort of students taking the Diplomas since September 2008, it is impossible to draw any meaningful conclusions.

'Well short of expectations'

Some commentators have argued though that the first ever Diploma results have fallen well short of expectations and contrasts sharply with last summer's GCSE results which had record high grades with approximately 22% achieving A or A* grades. One could ask, however, is it fair to compare Diplomas and GCSEs as they are completely different qualifications? It was after all the Department for Children, Schools and Families that gave the Higher Diploma a points tariff equivalent to 7 GCSEs for the purpose of compiling the Achievement and Attainment tables.

Next summer's results will certainly be eagerly anticipated by young people as the first Advanced Diplomas at Level 3 will be published; most of the 12,000 candidates who followed a two year course will also get their results.

Given that the current GCSE A*–C grades (including English and mathematics) stands at 47%, one wonders if young people next summer will find the functional skills element to have been a 'hurdle'? If this is the case, the government's flagship 14–19 qualification – The Diploma – would suffer a serious blow to its acceptability

by young people, their parents and employers.

Further Information The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) publish results, including Diplomas. All results are available and can be accessed on the JCQ website: www.jcq.org.uk

¹ Significantly, all 212 candidates were also successful in passing the Additional and Specialist Learning (ASL) element of the Diploma.

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will be determined by the outcome of the Adult learner's pilot which will report next spring, but it looks increasingly likely that the advantages of a single qualification that all can take will win out and Functional Skills will supersede Skills for Life from 2012. Functional Skills will replace Key Skills from 2010.

For more information contact the Functional Skills Support Programme through:
<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk>
or <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/functionalskills>

Ofsted reports on Implementation of 14–19 reforms

Ofsted's second report evaluating the progress made in implementing 14–19 reforms was published in August, 2009 following visits that were made between September 2008 and March 2009 to 23 out of a total of 146 consortia involved in the first phase of the introduction of Diplomas.

During the visits, inspectors observed teaching and learning in functional skills and across the first five Diploma lines in: IT, construction and the built environment, creative and media, society, health and development and engineering. They also met groups of students, staff and managers and, in most areas, held discussions with representatives from the local authority, LSC and local employers. Although inspectors considered the impact of the full range of 14–19 initiatives, they focused particularly on the new Diplomas and made six key recommendations aimed at improving their quality and take-up.

Structure of the report

The report has two main sections. **Part A** looks at issues which were common across the first five Diploma lines and covers:

- the effectiveness of local strategies in raising achievement
- quality of teaching and learning
- curriculum range, access and development
- the quality of information, advice, guidance and support for young people
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in taking forward the 14–19 agenda.

Overall, inspectors found, *"The effectiveness of implementation of 14–19 reforms generally in raising attainment and extending the range of provision for young people was at least good in 20 of the consortia, and satisfactory in the remaining three. The impact of a range of initiatives was particularly evident in the increased participation and achievement of young people who might otherwise have been in danger of disengagement from education and training. This reinforces the positive picture which emerged from the first year of the survey"*.

Part B covers subject-specific issues across the first five Diploma lines in five of the consortia areas that were visited

and highlights key strengths and areas for improvement for each of the Diplomas as well as commenting on:

- achievement and participation
- teaching and learning
- curriculum development
- leadership and management.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

The report found variable rates of progress across the Diploma lines. Progress was good in the majority of cases apart from engineering where it was mainly satisfactory. Only one partnership out of five was seen to be "outstanding" with the Diploma in Society, Health and Development.

Ofsted found that good progress had been made in the majority of partnerships visited and that collaborative provision had widened the range of options available to 14–19 year olds. However, with information, advice and guidance progress in introducing the New Standards in two thirds of the consortia had been relatively slow and 14–19 web-based prospectuses were not being used as part of a coherent approach to IAG. Criticism was also directed at the fact that the first five Diplomas seemed to be dividing young people up from the age of 14 along traditional gender lines.

A particular area for concern was the variability of the quality of teaching and learning in functional literacy, numeracy and IT skills which also lacked "coordination" in just over half the consortia. This contrasted significantly with the teaching and learning for the principal learning component of Diplomas which was found to be good in two thirds of the consortia. The additional and specialist learning element was also seen to be under-developed and had been given less attention than the principal learning and functional skills in almost all the consortia visited. Consortia were also seen to be "slow" in starting the formal assessment of students' work on Diplomas. The extent to which young people appreciated the composite nature of the Diploma and how each element linked to the principal learning was another area of concern for Ofsted.

An issue for many partnerships has been assuring the quality of the

collaborative provision across institutions which Ofsted also found to be "insufficiently developed" in around two thirds of the areas visited.

The involvement of employers in the Diplomas through work placements, speakers and visits was good or better in two thirds of the consortia. In many areas, partnerships were building on the solid practice established through the increased flexibility and young apprenticeship programmes.

Key recommendations

These stated that 14–19 partnerships and Diploma consortia should:

- Put in place rigorous procedures to assure the quality of collaborative provision
- Coordinate their approaches to functional skills, link this work more closely to the principal learning in Diploma courses
- Develop a more coherent range of additional and specialised learning options for Diploma students
- Ensure the timely assessment of students' work on Diploma courses
- Ensure that students have a clear understanding of how all parts of the Diploma contribute to the full qualification
- Ensure that advice and guidance for students focuses on avoiding unnecessary gender-stereotypical choices of Diploma lines.

This report gives educators early indications of the issues that a handful of consortia have experienced since the introduction of the Diplomas just over a year ago. It is critical that young people do understand the component nature of the Diplomas and that they fit together as a coherent programme. Issues raised around functional skills though are deeply worrying when they are seen as the cornerstone of the Diploma and a key government policy to improve pupil competencies in functional skills. Another area for consortia to consider is how they will ensure consistent high quality and innovative delivery across institutions so that young people do have stimulating and motivating experiences.

¹ The first Ofsted report on implementing 14–19 reforms was published in September 2008

'A' Level Update

Introduction

The AS and A2 results for 2009 present a very positive picture with excellent achievement overall. This is encouraging considering schools and colleges since September 2008 have been teaching the revised 'A' Levels which were designed to be more challenging and stimulating to students. The reform was part of the Government's 14-19 Agenda which wanted to offer "more stretching options and activities which extend young people". The rationale for this was to get away from the "learn and forget culture" that left many students ill-prepared for university.

How did A Levels change?

Most subjects have been reduced from six to four units, although 'A' Levels in mathematics, further mathematics, pure mathematics, chemistry, biology, physics, electronics, geology and music have remained at six units.

The introduction of 'stretch and challenge' at A2 with more challenging questions in all A2 assessments along with extended writing was designed to develop a spirit of enquiry that better prepared students for the rigours of higher education.

Assessment

The changes to assessment include:

- A broader range of question types to ensure that a wide range of skills are assessed.
- Synoptic assessments that test understanding of the subject as a whole, as well as the ability to make links between the different areas of a subject.

There will also be the introduction of an A* grade at A Level for summer 2010, although not at AS, to reward those exceptional students who achieve 90% or more across their A2 units. It is worth noting that the A* grade, although not available at AS, is available for those students taking the Extended Project (equivalent to an AS with 120 guided learning hours) as part of the Diploma or as a standalone qualification.

Coursework

Coursework will continue only in subjects where it is essential to the assessment of a particular aspect of the subject. There will be no optional

coursework and where coursework does continue there will be tighter controls on the way it is carried out.

Most subjects are affected by the changes. The exceptions are applied 'A' levels, which have had minor changes to their A2 assessments, and mathematics 'A' levels, which will be revised for first teaching in 2011.

A level and Diplomas

AS and A levels no longer stand alone and can now be incorporated into the Level 3 Diplomas as the Additional and Specialist Learning (ASL) element, where they would complement a particular line of learning. The table below shows examples of how this could work:

AS/A level	Diploma line
Biology	Society, Health and Development
Mathematics	Engineering
Art	Creating and Media
Business studies	IT
Physics	Construction and the Built Environment

For Diploma students, A level subjects will give them the opportunity to personalise their programmes of study by choosing subjects that specifically reflect their interests and support their career aspirations. Whatever combination is chosen for the ASL, it is important to get good information, advice and guidance and to check on the national database for accredited qualifications – www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk – (NDAQ catalogue) to see which combination of subjects is allowed for each Diploma.

Extended Project

This summer also saw the first year in which results for the new Extended Project qualification were published with approximately 11% achieving an A* and 31% achieving grade A. This is pleasing to higher education which has taken a particular interest in the qualification because it is seen to encourage independent research, planning and study skills – exactly the sort of skills needed at university.

Conclusion

In 2010, both legacy and new specification units will be available. Centres will therefore need to ensure that they enter candidates for the correct units with the correct entry codes. For instance, an AS legacy specification cannot be combined with new A2 units unless there are specific individual circumstances. In these cases the decision will lie with the relevant awarding body.

Some unit exams may be longer than in the legacy specifications, but, as there will be fewer examinations, the overall assessment time should be shorter. Examination series will continue to be held in January and June although 'A' level specifications will state whether individual units will be offered in both January and June or June only.

We will have to wait until the summer of 2010 to see how many of this cohort are able to achieve an A* grade and whether the new 'A' levels do encourage students to demonstrate the upper limits of their ability.

Further Information: For more information on changes to A levels and specific information about coursework requirements visit the appropriate awarding body website or the National Assessment Agency website at: www.naa.org.uk

Sharing good practice

14-19 Skills Bulletin is keen to help share good practice between practitioners. We would be delighted to feature examples of good practice from your school or college in our case study pages.

If you would like to write an article about your work, or have case studies or news of current developments in 14-19 Education or skills, please contact the Editor at: sboydpublishing@aol.com

Diploma Funding – Hard Choices Ahead

Mick Fletcher on the 14–19 funding system

The planned changes to the 14–19 phase of education have been described by the government and QCA as one of the most far reaching education reforms ever attempted anywhere in the world. The scope of the reforms suggests they may be right; they are seeking to introduce by 2013 an entitlement for all young people to access 17 new lines of learning, each at 3 levels; delivered by consortia of schools and colleges rather than individual institutions. The scale of the task however makes it all the more surprising that so little progress has yet been made towards a sustainable funding model for the new system.

The government got off to a good start. By the end of 2007 and in advance of the first Diplomas being offered it introduced generous arrangements for funding a pilot phase, reflecting the extra costs of vocational elements to be offered pre-16 and the increased requirement to collaborate. The consultation on reform of schools funding had possible changes to the 14–16 phase added to its terms of reference; and the machinery of government changes announced in summer 2007 gave local authorities responsibility for all provision for young people up to the age of 19, backed by a new Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA).

Since then things seem to have stalled. The schools funding review group carried out some exercises modelling a possible 14–19 funding approach in the summer of 2008 but has not returned to the matter since. The funding for the pilot phase remains in place substantially unchanged for the second and much larger cohort starting Diplomas in September 2009, even though most involved accept that it cannot be afforded in the long term; and the critical commissioning role of local authorities remains unclear.

Is a 14–19 funding system needed?

A key unanswered question is whether we need a 14–19 funding system for a 14–19 phase. There are powerful arguments in favour, since the systems pre and post-16 are radically different and act to inhibit curriculum development. To give just one example, those young people who reach 16 without achieving five GCSEs at A*–C grades are forced either to take an extra two years to achieve a Level 2 Diploma or to cram a two year course into 12 months. The former is too long and the latter too demanding – yet one answer, which is to offer a two year programme starting at age 15, cuts across two funding regimes.

A new funding regime for 14–16 will be required since the practical element of Diplomas will be more expensive to deliver than traditional classroom work. Since some individuals will be following more expensive courses than others, and some schools will have many more such pupils than their neighbours, the standard local authority formula giving a fixed sum per head would be unfair. Something like the LSC model, which allocates funding based on the

cost of individual programmes seems the way forward; but the requirement on schools to report not only on pupil numbers but the exact make-up of their programmes would widely be seen as an extra bureaucratic burden.

Contribution by schools

Whatever the funding model it will be necessary for schools to contribute to the costs of delivering Diplomas from their standard funding for Key Stage 4. They will need to make savings elsewhere in their curriculum, probably by reducing options; and the more pupils who undertake the Diploma the greater the savings they will need to make. The current Diploma Grant is generous, reflecting the argument that schools cannot make savings yet – but DCSF warns that the grant will have to reduce in future years as the numbers involved grow and opportunities for savings arise.

Some of the more far sighted local authorities have recognised that schools with a large proportion of pupils following Diplomas may not in future have viable groups at KS4 for, say, modern foreign languages or humanities. They may only be able to offer these through collaboration with others, suggesting that the need to collaborate over Diplomas will inevitably extend into joint planning of the whole KS4 curriculum. Such planning however has implications for the mission and character of each school and is a much more sensitive issue than how to share out the teaching of a marginal group of pupils.

Determining the part that each school and college will play in the delivery of the new 14–19 curriculum is a task for local authorities exercising their new powers to 'commission' provision. Until now the LSC has 'commissioned' provision for 16–19 year olds, i.e. it has sought to decide which courses are offered where; and struggled to reconcile top down plans and targets with the aspirations of individuals and institutions. After 2010 the local authority will 'purchase' places from schools and colleges in order to ensure that the full entitlement is available to all learners aged 14–19. This planned approach however seems certain to cut across individual choice and institutional autonomy.

While there are difficult issues to tackle around funding rates, and commissioning will be the subject of much local controversy it is perhaps the question of eligibility, or which programmes can be funded that will cause the greatest concern.

The government's view is that when Diplomas are rolled out there will be no more need for other vocational qualifications, except as components of the Diploma. There will only be four suites of learning eligible for funding – GCE/GCSE; Foundation Learning; Apprenticeships and Diplomas. The decision to sweep away all the BTECs, OCRs, City & Guilds and other qualifications which have been the staple of FE and a valued part of existing school – college collaboration may prove to be the most contentious step of all.

Mick Fletcher is an independent consultant

The Young People's Learning Agency

Rob Wye explains how the YPLA is preparing to take on its responsibilities

Background

In June 2007, the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Trade and Industry were abolished. In their place the Government established the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the now Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). It was announced that "Funding for 16–19 education will in future go to schools and colleges via the local authority education budget".

That announcement was followed, in March 2008, by a consultative White Paper: *Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver*. It set out the Government's proposals to replace the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) with two new bodies: the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The SFA would be a part of BIS and have responsibility for funding post-19 learning.

The YPLA was proposed to be a 'behind the scenes' slimline non-Departmental public body (NDPB), with around 500 staff, and with a fundamentally different remit to the LSC. It would be principally a supporting and enabling body, designed to support local authorities in fulfilling their new duties, individually and in Sub-regional Groups (SRGs) and Regional Planning Groups (RPGs). In particular, the small number of YPLA staff based in each region would provide regional planning and commissioning support, information, advice, analysis and specialist expertise. The YPLA Board would have significant local authority membership.

The legislation that will set up the YPLA – the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Bill is expected to be approved in October/November 2009, with the YPLA going live in April 2010. Between September 2009 and April 2010 there will be a period of shadow running to ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements.

Establishing the YPLA

At its meeting in July 2009, the LSC National Council established a YPLA Committee as a sub-committee of the LSC National Council, responsible for the transition to the YPLA, as well as existing LSC work on young people.

In June, Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, announced the appointment of Les Walton as Chair designate and Peter Lauener as Chief Executive designate of the YPLA, subject to the successful passage of the Bill. Les has been appointed as a member of the LSC National Council and will chair the YPLA Committee.

Les Walton is the Founder of Northern Education and was until 2006 Principal and Chief Executive of Tyne Metropolitan College.

Les has been involved in a number of significant initiatives over the last few years. These have involved piloting the School Improvement Partner programme, advising a regional development agency on the regional economic strategy and the establishment of the North East 14–19 Commission. He has been particularly active in encouraging partnership working between schools, FE Colleges and employers. His groundbreaking work in facilitating the establishment of Schools NorthEast has led to a unique partnership between all types of schools.

Peter Lauener was previously Director of Local Transformation within DCSF. He has extensive experience in the design and implementation of programmes to improve opportunities for young people, having worked on the development of apprenticeships and further education.

The Senior Management Team of the YPLA has been identified, and most LSC staff had, by the end of August, been "matched" to posts in the YPLA, SFA, the National Apprenticeship Service, other government offices, or to one of the 950 or so new posts established in local authorities to enable the local authorities to fulfil their new responsibilities.

Staff were invited to apply for any remaining vacancies, after which, from September, remaining vacancies will be advertised externally.

When staff transfer to the local authority, they will be there to enable the local authority to discharge their new functions. LSC staff will be working alongside local authority staff during the transition year 2009-10, and transfer formally on 1 April 2010. The precise organisation, structure and roles within local authorities from April 2010 is a matter for the individual local authority.

The interim Senior Management Team and the YPLA Committee met for the first time in early September, to begin to develop the vision and mission of the YPLA, and to identify the main issues and challenges for the next six months and year.

National Commissioning Framework

The National Commissioning Framework (NCF) will be a key document in the new system.

The NCF will set out the core systems for planning, commissioning, procuring and funding for the education and training of 16-19 year olds, 19-25 learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability (LLDD) and young people in custody.

The full NCF will, subject to passage of the ASCL Bill, be published for consultation in the Autumn prior to final publication by the YPLA in April 2010.

The arrangements for planning, commissioning and procuring funding will relate to the academic year from August 2011, meaning that the processes will be operational from the latter part of 2010. However, the key finance arrangements, such as the processes through which funds reach providers and are accounted for, will be in place from April 2010.

Nuffield Review of 14–19: Education For All

John Cope on the final report of the Nuffield Review

Introduction

In October 2003, the Nuffield Foundation launched a six year independent review of 14–19 education and training. As a result of this work, the report of the Nuffield Review called **Education for All: the future of education and training for 14–19 year olds** was published in June 2009¹. It is one of the most comprehensive reviews of the 14–19 phase of education since the Crowther Report in 1959 which argued for a new technical system alongside a traditional academic one. The Review certainly adds many dimensions to the debate about what it sees as “the right educational landscape for 14–19 year olds.” and argues that in order to enable young people, irrespective of their background, ability or attainment, to get valued qualifications, it is essential that the values, structures, learning and assessment are right for every individual.

There are two fundamental questions that encapsulate these points and shape the whole Review. They are:

- “What counts as an educated 19 year old in this day and age?”
- “Are the models of education that we have inherited from the past sufficient to meet the demands of all young people, as well as the social and economic needs of a wider community?”

Five Demands

The Review makes five demands in response to these questions and as a way to achieve the Foundation’s vision for education over the next decade and beyond, viz:

- “The reassertion of a broader vision of education in which there is a profound respect for the whole person (not just the narrowly conceived “intellectual excellence” or “skills for prosperity”)... helping young people to develop their distinctively human qualities, and not impoverished by the prevailing language of “performance management”.
- “the redistribution of power and decision-making such that there can be greater room for the voice of the learner, for the expertise of the teacher and for the concerns of other stakeholders in the response to learning needs of all young people...”
- “System performance indicators “fit for purpose” in which measures of success reflect the range of educational aims.”
- “The creation of strongly collaborative learning systems in which schools, colleges, HEIs, the youth service, independent training providers and voluntary bodies can work together for the common good... and in ensuring

appropriate progression into further education, training and employment.”

- “The development of a more unified system of qualifications to meet the diverse talents of young people...but which avoids fragmentation divisiveness and inequalities to which the present system is prone.”

The Report also sees the pursuit of a parity of esteem between “academic” and “vocational” qualifications (which is seen to be behind many of the changes in education) as a fatuous exercise. It argues that different pathways should be viewed through the quality of the learning experience and the opportunities for progression into further education, training and employment that the qualifications promote.

Although there is an acknowledgement that a great deal has been achieved over the last fifty years with the huge investment in resources, closer collaboration between providers and the promotion of a wider range of opportunities and qualifications, the Review argues that more needs to be done before there is:

- a greater respect for more practical and active learning
- A system of assessment which supports rather than impoverishes learning
- respect for the professional expertise of the teacher
- a more unified system of qualifications ensuring progression into higher education and employment
- the creation of strongly collaboratively and local learning systems
- a more reflective and participative approach to policy

Conclusion

One of the key messages within the Report is that education and training should be guided by aims and values which are relevant to all young people and that the language of “performance management” should be challenged as young people find value in what is worthwhile. A second is that all qualifications should sit within an over-arching framework for learning such as an “English Baccalaureate” that would guarantee a broad and holistic experience for all 14–19 year olds that the Foundation see as not existing at present.

Although the Review recognises that some progress has been made over the past several years, the models of education that have been inherited from the past are not sufficient for the future. It is hardly surprising then that the Report maintains that,

“The search for a more coherent, unified 14–19 qualifications structure, within which a high quality relevant curriculum and an appropriate assessment regime are available, goes on”

¹ The Report has been written by the co-directors of the Nuffield Review including: Richard Pring, Geoff Hayward, Ann Hodgson, Jill Johnson, Ewart Keep, Alis Oancea, Gareth Rees, Ken Spours and Stephanie Wilde and is published by Routledge

Reflections on 14–19 Policy:

Paul Grainger assesses the independent Nuffield Review

The most significant contribution to the policy debate this year is the publication, after six years of detailed investigation, of the final report of the Nuffield Review.¹ Funded by the Nuffield Foundation, this has been an independent review led by some of the most eminent scholars in education at 14+. The press release states "...the largest independent review of education and training for 14–19 year olds in England and Wales since the Crowther Report in 1959". Some claims might go further. The web site, Nuffield14-19Review.org.uk, will reward any visit by those interested in this field with access to deeply researched, keenly argued publications and reports covering all aspects of 14–19 learning in England and Wales.

The report makes 31 recommendations, each of which should now form the focus of a vigorous national debate. These recommendations are summarised in five demands:

The re-assertion of a broader vision of education in which there is a profound respect for the whole person (not just the narrowly conceived 'intellectual excellence' or 'skills for economic prosperity'), irrespective of ability or cultural and social background, in which there is a broader vision of learning and in which the learning contributes to a more just and cohesive society.

System performance indicators 'fit for purpose', in which the 'measures of success' reflect this range of educational aims, not simply those which are easy to measure or which please certain stakeholders only.

The re-distribution of power and decision-making, such that there can be greater room for the voice of the learner, for the expertise of the teacher and for the concerns of other stakeholders in the response to the learning needs of all young people in their different economic and social settings.

The creation of strongly collaborative local learning systems in which schools, colleges, higher education institutions, the youth service, independent training providers, employers and voluntary bodies can work together for the common good – in curriculum development, in provision of opportunities for all learners in a locality and in ensuring appropriate progression into further education, training and employment.

The development of a more unified system of qualifications which meets the diverse talents of young people, the different levels and styles of learning, and the varied needs of the wider community, but which avoids the fragmentation, divisiveness and inequalities to which the present system is prone.

The recent work of the Centre for Post-14 Research and Innovation, Institute of Education, has taken place within the context of the emerging conclusions of the Review.

Access to Higher Education

Widening access to Higher Education continues to be a national aspiration. There is widespread innovation: the growth of Higher Education in Further Education Colleges, and in particular the Foundation Degree; and determined attempts to raise the aspirations of those who have not considered HE through initiatives such as the use of student ambassadors, summer schools, and building progression into the curriculum. However the reduction in the numbers of places at University has limited the success of many funded programmes, increased the frustration felt by many young people, and thwarted the development of collaborative local learning systems.

Qualification routes

Some outstanding work is taking place where collaboration has received support from local decision makers. In Wolverhampton full use has been made of the increased flexibility at KS 4 to introduce programmes for potentially disaffected young people that reflect a broader vision of learning and respect individual learning profiles. The success of work-based learning should be more widely recognised; retaining learners on purposeful programmes, developing specific skills and, most importantly, developing the positive attitude toward employment and society so valued by employers. This year, too, saw the introduction of the Diploma. Take-up was much lower than had been anticipated and frequently the costs of delivery were higher than expected. In some areas the success of collaborative arrangements was disappointing, with far fewer students than had been planned for taking their courses in partner institutions. Three clear issues emerged in an examination of the Diploma at level 3. The five current pathways are developing in different ways; experiences of learners change across pathways, and between institutions, particularly schools and FE; and arrangements for progression vary widely between Universities, some taking very little interest. At present the Diploma shows little potential to promote the development of a unified system of qualifications.

Inclusivity

In some areas where local support is strong, the Foundation Learning Tier has helped to promote the inclusion of the learning needs of all young people. But it does not yet have a national profile: there is no unified approach. Meanwhile the numbers of those not engaged in employment, education or training remain stubbornly high, rising last year to 12 per cent, with maybe another 6 per cent unaccounted for. Disastrous in personal terms, generating high social costs and little economic benefit, these young people who either choose to reject or have been failed by the system provide strong evidence that the varied needs of the wider community are not being met.

In the final conference of the Nuffield Review, held at the Institute of Education, London, on 22 September 2009, the Directors of the Review were challenged to identify

one issue that they would like to take forward. Issues to emerge were:

- Developing a vision of what constitutes an educated 19 year old
- Eliminating the assault on their dignity that some learners have to endure
- Encouraging a labour market that requires more higher level skills
- Building genuine, strategic local partnerships with devolved powers
- Creating more cost-effective and equitable 14–19 institutional arrangements working together to create a tertiary system
- Developing a more unified and inclusive qualifications framework.

For those working in policy 14–19, this is now the agenda.

Paul Grainger is Director (operations), Centre for Post-14 Research and Innovation, Institute of Education, London

1 Richard Pring, Geoff Hayward, Ann Hodgson, Jill Johnson, Ewart Keep, Alis Oancea, Gareth Rees, Ken Spours and Stephanie Wilde The Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training in England and Wales, final report (2009). The book, Education for All: The future of education and training for 14–19 year olds, is published by Routledge (ISBN 9780415547222).

Apprenticeship Pathfinders

Ian Johnston welcomes education for wellbeing

Wellbeing

The remote Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan does not often feature in this Bulletin. However it has captured the attention of policy makers by using Gross National Happiness or Wellbeing as the key criterion for strategic policy analysis, in sharp contrast with the apparently endless search for growth implied by the Gross Domestic Product or more specifically GDP per capita adopted by western democracies. The last decade has seen tentative steps in the West to explore wellbeing as a key aim of policy; a move given some emphasis by the counter-intuitive, pre-credit crunch observation that in some countries, notably UK and Russia, increasing GDP appeared to be correlated with decreasing happiness!

Local Government leaders have shown great interest in this alternative lens on their strategic objectives, and three – Hertfordshire, Manchester, and South Tyneside – have been working in partnership with the Young Foundation (a major national social policy research organisation), with the London School of Economics (LSE), and with the Local Government Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). The partnership is trying out a range of, policies to raise the wellbeing of various target groups of residents including school children, pensioners, and now potential apprentices.

At the same time the Government has launched its radical transformation of education and training provision for 14 to 19s, contemplating a world in which all young people pursue one of four routes: A-levels, Diplomas, Apprenticeships or other level one/ two preparation.

The genuinely landmark nature of this policy, promises at long last full implementation of the 1944 Butler Education Act, offering in Butler’s own words for all children up to 18

“instruction and training as may be desirable in view of their different ages, abilities and aptitudes”

The Butler Act is mainly remembered for raising the compulsory school age to 15. But as a nation we have struggled to keep up with our trading partners in **post** compulsory participation, with the result that we have the large skills gaps identified by Leitch. For example according to OECD the UK comes 24th out of 28 countries for participation at 17 and a full 30 percentage points below the leader Belgium.

This has serious consequences for GDP, but what about happiness and wellbeing? As Peter Lauener, the new head of the Young People’s Learning Agency, pointed out in 2005, our national 14 to 19 performance is a tale of two halves: if at first you don’t succeed, then you don’t succeed! The vast majority of the 51 per cent of young people gaining five good GCSEs go on to study for A levels, or other level 3 VQs and consequently are on a pathway to good careers with little unemployment and good lifetime earnings. In stark contrast the vast majority of the 49 per cent who don’t get five good GCSEs are either not studying or on level 2. For this group the prospects are poor, with more unemployment and few prospects of further training from their employer if they do get a job. Perhaps unsurprisingly those with no qualifications do less well in society in other ways. The profile of offenders shows that 52 per cent of offenders have no qualifications compared with 15 per cent in the population as a whole, and even life expectancy is lower for young people who have experienced long spells as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

Diplomas and Apprenticeships

The compulsory schooling age is currently 16, but many young people don’t attend school, and are clearly unhappy or uncomfortable with an academic learning environment. So simply raising the compulsory age to 18 on its own is clearly not going to work. The Government recognises this by introducing Diplomas with a strongly vocational

curriculum content which hopefully many currently alienated young people will find more relevant to their life experiences, ambitions, and learning styles. Even more important for such young people is the Government's plan to make employed status apprenticeships a mainstream route for 20 per cent of the age group by 2020, and to offer an entitlement to an apprenticeship to suitably qualified young people at 16 to 17 years old from 2013. If this goal can be realised it might be expected to raise the wellbeing and self-esteem for that half of the age group who are less comfortable with academic learning styles. By publicising the entry qualifications for a wide range of apprenticeships we could also give young people at Key Stage 4, who otherwise would lack motivation, a target to aim for in terms of GCSE results even though they have no desire to pursue an academic route to further qualifications. Growing the number of work based apprenticeships is now an essential element in fulfilling local authorities' responsibilities in raising the compulsory participation age to 18.

Pathfinders

The overall aim of the Apprenticeship Pathfinder Project is to map and collate an empirical evidence base of processes and relationships that will be required by local authorities, the new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and others including schools, Connexions, and employers, in implementing and achieving the Government's aspirations for apprenticeships. The project is testing these out in each of the three partner local authorities, who are each attempting to develop the apprenticeship route well in advance of the proposed statutory goal of 2013 for the new entitlement. The project will chart the partners' progress and so build a knowledge base for dissemination to local authorities so that this learning can be shared and implemented. The project is also monitoring the impact of the local authorities' vision for apprenticeships and associated practical actions on the wellbeing of the local young people, their families and where possible on the wider community.

The three partners represent three quite different labour and training markets. The cultural status of traditional apprenticeships is also very varied, being prized by parents and opinion formers in Manchester and the North East, but much less familiar in Hertfordshire without such a manufacturing heritage.

The project is seeking to achieve a number of key outcomes, including an increase in the supply of employer places, an increase in realistic demand for apprenticeships from young people, and importantly an increase in take-up and achievement from young people currently disengaged from or disadvantaged in accessing employer-led apprenticeships. In addition the cultural shift to achieve parity of standing between apprenticeships and other main learning routes is sought.

Preparations for the project began in 2008 funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). These involved scoping the project and testing opinion of pupils, parents and employers. The opinions expressed revealed generally

positive attitudes to apprenticeships, but much confusion over guarantees and entitlements, and what opportunities would actually be available and for whom. The NAS has now taken over funding the project, and the field stage started in January 2009 with the appointment of project manager, Bethia McNeil formerly with NIACE.

Three distinct phases are envisaged. The pathfinders are already well into the first phase of identifying key internal and external stakeholders, organisation and relationships. This is not as straightforward as it sounds, especially for internal relationships. With the demise of the LSC, local authorities are taking on new 16 to 19 funding responsibilities (except for apprenticeships) and much of the success of the whole 14 to 19 reform rests on schools and on Connexions understanding the Diploma and apprenticeship routes. Also all three pathfinder authorities have or plan their own apprenticeship scheme, and often corporate personnel need to be involved. All three see apprenticeships and skills supply as key to economic development, and all three are interested in promoting wellbeing, so the project spans many interests. The primary external stakeholder and partner is the NAS. Employers and employer organisations are also key. The Regional Development Agencies and Sector Skill Councils also have interests and the Skills Funding Agency will ultimately fund the providers. There is considerable uncertainty while reorganisations affecting these agencies settle down and the Bill in Parliament is finalised.

The second phase will involve developing and implementing approaches to improving the supply of employer places, with the third phase focusing on stimulating realistic demand. The recession has made the second phase task much more challenging, but the Government's short-term measures to reduce youth unemployment should help. The third phase involves raising aspirations and creating much greater appreciation of the career benefits from successfully completing the apprenticeships available locally and nationally.

But trying to do all this in advance, is in itself enormously challenging. The prize of learning in advance, to facilitate the nationwide implementation, is well worth grasping. If the 14 to 19 reforms succeed there will no longer be a tale of "two halves", and both national wellbeing and prosperity will be enhanced. For our partner local authorities leading the pathfinders the reward is not simply in blazing the way, but potentially in bringing these benefits to their areas up to two years in advance.

Dr Ian Johnston CB

Adviser to the project. Formerly Vice-Chancellor at Glasgow Caledonian University (1998–2006), transition Chief Executive of the University for Industry (1998), and Director General of Training Education and Enterprise at the MSC and then the Department of Education and Employment (broadly 1985–1995).

Residential work with young people

Charlotte Smith on the benefits of 'residential's'

Taking young people away on a residential has long been recognised for its importance in providing a positive environment for focused learning. Indeed at least one local authority goes so far as to include it in its 14–19 entitlement statement; "learners should take part in at least one residential learning experience".

At UK Youth (www.ukyouth.org) we have seen that residential's which involve young people in planning, developing and delivering a programme of learning create opportunities for more young people to develop the skills they need to become effective leaders. The 24-hour (or longer) nature of the experience also offers social learning opportunities, especially around vital social skills, team work and communication.

Using a powerful week long outdoor experience The UK Youth Activity Centre at Avon Tyrrell in Hampshire has been able to deliver a programme delivers outcomes such as:

- Tackling low participation rates
- Reengaging disaffected pupils
- Breaking down the barriers to achievement
- Securing functional skills that all young people need for employment.

Programmes Instructor James Hunt points out some key factors in what outdoor activities have to offer: "We're taking people away from their usual environment, this can create a space where they can try out new behaviours. The activities will push them a bit, take them outside their comfort zones; this may be in a physical sense. Travelling on a rope 30 feet in the air, for instance – or it may be more psychologically, in the way they have to commit themselves to all of the group, if they want to succeed."

"The real benefit of these activities is that they are an opportunity for learning, while you're having fun. If they're not having fun, the learning doesn't happen!"

Setting direction

"The starting point is always a session on setting targets and creating a team agreement," says James. "This helps us to get an idea of what they are looking for and they find out about how we work. The targets also give us a reference point for reviewing activities, both during the week and at the end of their stay."

Programmes Instructor Rachel Moss adds: "Their aims for their time with us usually group around a couple of themes – employability and team-working. Many are looking to build their confidence and communication skills, to give them a better chance of a job; most are looking to learn to get on with the rest of the group – looking for a sense of mutual respect."

Team focus

The second day of the programme often starts in the middle of Monday night, with a night walk focusing on team-building

and communication. Activities and challenges are set to enable groups to see how they work as teams, what helps and hinders them in meeting their collective challenges.

"For us, the review process is vital," James says, "we might give people feedback and ask questions as we go along or we might hold review sessions with teams after the various activities. The review is an opportunity for us to link the activity to their everyday lives. We might ask, for example, 'how do you usually respond to a difficult situation', 'how did it feel having to rely on someone else?', 'do you usually like helping others?', little points designed to help them see the relevance of what they're doing in their 'real lives'."

The third day is a big day for the teams, Avon Tyrrell staff call the day 'Fission and Fusion', a scenario event based around averting a Nuclear Disaster brings a chance to put into practice what they've learned. Teams are awarded points for their performance at problem-solving tasks...the points are then turned into resources for the raft-building activity that ends the day, so good teamwork is rewarded – and the review process helps people learn those lessons.

Personal challenge

Thursday brings a powerful switch of focus to the individual, as the team members face the high ropes challenge. While the support of the rest of the team is vital in getting everyone to achieve their maximum, in the end, it's a very personal challenge.

"Getting half way up one of the trees is a major achievement for many young people – never mind travelling on the ropes", Rachel points out. "They often don't fancy it at all at the beginning – and this is where the support of the rest of the team is important. For us, as staff, it's one of the most rewarding parts of the programme, where we see people really pushing their limits and, very often, exceeding their own expectations. To see the growth in confidence this brings, is just fantastic – and, again, we can say to them 'you can use the strength you've found here back home, to achieve what you want to achieve there'."

"At the same time, it's important that we, as instructors, don't get carried away and we check that peer pressure – however well intended – isn't pushing people too far out of their comfort zone...it's important to recognise your own boundaries – and it actually needs strength to say that you've gone as far as you want. Again, that's a lesson that translates back into daily life."

The final review session is a chance to go back and look at the targets people set at the beginning, to recognise the achievements and look to the new challenges they might need to take on 'back home'.

Visit www.ukyouth.org or www.avontyrrell.org.uk for more information
Charlotte Smith is Advocacy and Communications Manager, UK Youth

Does Anyone Really 'Care'?

Carol Taylor revisits a perennial problem

Despite the efforts of Government, of local authorities and of voluntary organisations to improve the life chances of children in care and care leavers, these young people are still among the groups most likely to be socially excluded. We know that there are around **60,000 children in care** at any one time, that's around 0.5% of all children, and that, during the course of a year as many as 85,000 children will spend time in care. Around **8,000 young people will be leaving care each year**.

The statistics on the educational attainment of these children are frightening – only 13% of children in care gained 5 good GCSEs at the end of 2007, compared to 62% of all children and at 19, only 26% of care leavers are in further education and 6% are in higher education.

Read on.....the stats get more disturbing:

- Leaving Care – In 2007, 25% of those leaving care were aged 16, with those in residential care most likely to leave at 16. For comparison the average age for young people leaving the parental home is 24.
- They are more likely to become teenage parents – Young women age 15 to 17 who have been in care are 3 times more likely to become teenage mothers than others of their age.
- They make up a far greater proportion of the offender numbers – Research suggests that around 27% of adult prisoners have spent time in care compared to 2% of the general population.
- Black and mixed race children are over-represented among children in care (3% of children but 8% of children in care)
- There are around 3,500 unaccompanied asylum seeking children looked after by local authorities at any one time.

Add these facts to those about levels of educational achievement, about progression and about earnings potential and you have a set of compounding factors to point towards a group of people who have been seriously let down by us all.

Success is possible

In 2006 the Basic Skills Agency carried out a piece of work looking at 6 local authorities where outcomes for looked after children were particularly impressive. The aim of that report, *Closing the Gap*, was to highlight good practice where it led to improved KS 4 results. The report highlighted the factors most strongly associated with later educational success; these include:

- stability and continuity of home and school placements
- positive encouragement from carers or parents
- peer support of friends who do well at school
- early reading and home support for reading and regular school attendance.

Care Leavers themselves identified having a significant adult – a role model or mentor (not necessarily a parent

or carer) – who offered consistent support, encouragement and advocacy as one of the most important factors in helping them achieve. None of this is rocket science, it's merely what we would want for any child. The most important factor we found, in those local authorities where outcomes were best, was adopting a comprehensive corporate parenting approach, with effective liaison between education and social services and a raised commitment to children's educational success.

This led us to think about the destinations of those young people who had been in care – not just how many go to FE or HE, but how many secure an apprenticeship or stable employment with good training opportunities? It also made us think about the wider issues of transition for these people who have been in care – about homelessness, about the links with the criminal justice system, about issues of drink and drugs and general health, for example. What do we do for these young people who are amongst the most vulnerable people in our communities?

The Role of FE and the way forward

A follow up piece of research, commissioned by the LSC, looked at the role of FE providers in supporting the needs of young people in or leaving care and how they intended to handle the requirements of the 2007 White Paper, *Care Matters – Time for Change*, which makes clear the duty of providers to 'support care leavers and equip them with the necessary skills to manage their transition and to find their place in adult society'. Some of the critical success factors identified, to both engage disengaged learners, and to retain and support those who have demonstrated an interest in education include:

- Making care leavers a strategic priority in the College
- Having a designated person to act as advocate and champion
- Having a system to keep track of young people
- Developing clear protocols for working with partners, including information sharing
- Ensuring professional development opportunities for all those working with care leavers
- And finally – putting the young person at the heart of everything and involve them in all decision making.

A clear message coming out of the field is that somewhere there needs to be a clear focus on education. Consequently, NIACE is chairing a forum, where a group of national organisations, and Government departments can look specifically at how to improve the educational and employment outcomes for care leavers. The forum is currently considering how to ensure that whenever a young care leaver accesses any service there is full information available and referral to other relevant services, that there is real joining up at local authority level, that local authorities take real responsibility for these young people and that young people have access to the range of information available to them.

Carol Taylor is Director of Operations at NIACE

Teacher Training in Vocational Education

Chris Hall outlines the key issues relating to the Skills Commission's Inquiry into teacher training in vocational education

In *Equipping our Teachers for the Future*, the then Department for Education and Skills set out its vision to achieve a 'step change' in the quality of teacher training in the learning and skills sector. The document spoke of the need to develop 'imaginative, modern and relevant teaching'; foster greater public esteem for the sector; and to work to achieve parity of status and professionalism with the wider teaching workforce. In order to achieve this, the Government set new standards for teachers by introducing a new teaching qualification, as well as developing the skills of teacher trainers within a new professional framework set by Lifelong Learning UK.

Looking back, these reforms seem fair, sensible, and needed. Even with the introduction in 2001 of compulsory teacher training for new entrants to the sector, the sector's teaching workforce had largely been neglected by policy-makers. Moreover, the quality of the sector's teacher training was brought into question with the publication in 2003 of an Ofsted report that found the system for training new FE teachers to be inadequate.

Eight years on from the Further Education National Training Organisation standards, and three years on from the introduction of the Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) qualification, does today's teacher training produce the 'imaginative, modern and relevant teaching' that we were told the sector needs?

The relatively recent professionalisation of the teaching workforce has undoubtedly been a big step in the right direction, and the introduction of the QTLS award has reinforced the professional identity of teachers. Furthermore, QTLS has helped to improve the quality of teacher training and also helped provide more structured routes for individuals with relevant sector experience and occupational currency, to move into teaching the vocational and practical subjects that are, and will continue to be, central to the development of the knowledge economy. However, is there now a mismatch between the 2007 reforms and the needs of today's teaching workforce?

Skills Commission Inquiry

This is the context for the current Skills Commission Inquiry into teacher training in vocational education. Chaired by Sir Mike Tomlinson, and sponsored by the education foundation, Edge, the Inquiry is examining the current provision of training for teachers of vocational subjects and Diplomas, in schools, further education and higher education. The Inquiry has taken evidence from government departments, the Training Development Agency for Schools, a wide range

of teachers' unions, and will continue to take evidence from relevant sector stakeholders, employer organisations and, importantly, teachers themselves. The Commission will publish its report in February 2010, which will include recommendations directed at government and sector bodies.

The Commission has found a concerning disparity between Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and QTLS, as well as salary and professional inequalities that persist between the two sectors. Why is it the case that those teaching in further education are paid, on average, 10% less than those who teach in schools? Is it sensible that individuals with years of hard earned professional experience, who have the potential to bring practical learning to life, are unable to teach vocational subjects in schools – other than as an assistant and on a lower salary – without re-training for QTS? Why is it that the current system seemingly fails to acknowledge – at least in status and salary – the value of the experienced professional?

As we enter into a new phase of 14–19 education, and the boundaries between education in schools, further education and higher education institutions become ever more blurred, these issues take on even greater significance.

Bringing QTS and QTLS closer together and developing systems of accreditation for work-based experience must be realized if we are to recruit and train teachers with the appropriate experience to provide high quality vocational provision. Further, if we want to create a truly collaborative education system, it will not be enough for schools, colleges and other learning providers to simply pool their skills; there must be an exchange of skills in order to enrich the learning experience they provide. We must also ensure that the continued professional development of all our teachers goes beyond a simple INSET-day model. Continued professional development is vital for the teacher of vocational education if their experience and skills are to be embedded in up to date commercial and industrial practice. Allowing teachers to personalise their training and expanding programmes such as Business Interchange, to include schools for example, could be a viable way to achieve this.

We must also place greater focus on developing and teaching a vocational pedagogy. Edge, the independent education foundation, has developed a framework for high quality practical teaching, which could be developed further. To not recognise the skills that are required to teach vocational and practical subjects, as well as the need to maintain a 'dual professionalism', is an injustice to the unique demands of vocational teaching.

We must also consider the role of mentors. The Commission has taken evidence from teachers who have all highlighted the pivotal role that high quality, subject specific mentors can play in helping individuals make the transition from industry to teaching. It is important that mentoring is implemented within a formal system and

given adequate long-term funding; mentoring should mean mentoring, not simply monitoring.

Getting all this right will become ever-more important as the statutory leaving age is raised to 18 years old, and the roll out of Diplomas and the expansion of vocational qualifications continues. This does not, however, require a revolution, rather managed evolution – policy must be tried, tested and evidence based. However, our focus must shift from a training system designed in the previous century, to one focused on training teachers for tomorrow's curriculum and the needs of tomorrow's economy.

The Skills Commission's Inquiry is being chaired by Sir Mike Tomlinson and sponsored by the education foundation, Edge. It will publish its final report in February 2010. For further information please contact Christopher Hall, on 0207 202 8577 or christopher.hall@policyconnect.org.uk. Alternatively, further details about the Inquiry can be found at <http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/content/skills/sc/resources/gen/MTEyODowOjA=>

Lessons from running the Creative and Media Diploma

Craig Morrison on the process of setting up a new diploma course

Back in 2007 I had little idea how much the diploma would take over my working life when I was asked to be the co-ordinator role for our gateway 1 consortium in Cambridge. Our consortium began with three 11–16 schools, a large FE college and a 6th form college, with our sole line of learning being Creative & Media. Below, I have attempted to offer the most important lessons learnt to date.

Approach

Our emphasis has been on developing skill from the outset so that students can feel that they have progressed from their starting points, yet this approach can be at odds with student perceptions that the course will be immediately and wholly project-based. Throughout our work we have aimed to 'mirror the message' of the course through our teaching. By this, I mean that a course in Creative & Media must be delivered in a way that models and celebrates creativity. At Long Road 6th Form, students present a weekly podcast of their favourite music to their classmates in a style of the tutors' choosing. This is a daunting prospect at first, but the teachers are convinced that opportunities for expression and spontaneity are vital. Similarly, I would expect to see plenty of rotas, discipline and protocols within a public services diploma. It must be a wrap-around experience in environment and style as well as in content.

Design rather than plan

There is little point in attempting to plan the structure or content of most principal learning units, as the students should be largely in control. At the extreme end of things, we have seen 14 year olds constructing a timetable for their teachers, accommodation and resources, dictating

where they would like to be supervised (the city centre for example). There does of course need to be extra structure within the skills-building, investigation and evaluation phases of principal learning. Course design must be looked at from the consortium level: together, the staff must make sure that as students move from one level of the course to another and perhaps from one centre to another, they are experiencing greater challenge and not repeating content or revisiting the same employers. Courses must be flexible enough to allow students to take off in directions that are unexpected. Also, flexibility is important in allowing staff to take on offers of commissions from companies: we do not seem to need to canvass for working briefs, they are often brought to us and we need to be ready to shift plans to accommodate them.

Size matters

There is a tension in diploma delivery between having small groups – where real ownership over student work and strong relationships can be achieved by tutors – and having larger groups, where the necessarily larger team of tutors can offer a wider range of expertise. The lesson we have learnt is to avoid switching between these two. We planned for small numbers but then took on many more, forcing major changes to the teaching programme at too late a stage. From September 2009 we will attempt to take the best of both models, with large groups overall broken down into smaller units with elements of specialisation.

Assessment and the new technologies

With heightened student movement it can be difficult for tutors to maintain a strong overview of progress. This is exacerbated by the fact that diploma assessment hinges upon continual assessment of work at different stages and also the style in which students carry out the work (personal, learning and thinking skills). Utilising new technologies such as blogs and *youtube* allows for ongoing observation of the process even when groups of students are working in various locations. This augments direct observation and

simultaneously builds communities using tools familiar to young people, which is excellent when groups are formed from various schools. From an assessment for learning viewpoint, new technologies offer infinite potential for self and peer assessment.

Industry

Within our first year of delivery we have seen a shift in our employer engagement practice, from looking to creative/media businesses to provide us with feedback on our plans ('are these projects realistic to your context?') to working with companies who would often be the **clients** of creative/media businesses. Working to produce a prospectus for a feeder primary school is much more authentic than creating a brochure for a graphic design company, as they already know what to do and what to expect. Value is found in working with clients who do not understand the process whilst being mentored and guided by tutors and employer contacts who do understand. We have plans to work with a regional arts hub which has catering, finance, technical and marketing functions. It is important to look ahead to a time when diploma lines will increasingly be co-taught in such venues, as a proliferation of courses reduces numbers on each. Exploring such synergy could be tremendously exciting when considering learning opportunities such as London 2012, which pull so many industries together to a common goal.

Leadership challenges

Tutors are being asked to work across institutions, with employers, gain industry knowledge where possible, and change their modes of assessment. There are implications for initial and in service training that few seem to have grasped: the current system is still largely run on traditional subject lines. At a consortium level, those in charge must resist the attempt to micro-manage each course or institution and should instead concentrate on the coherence of the offer as seen from outside as a prospective student and parent and from the learner viewpoint. Increasingly, principals are also looking at 'exit strategies' should a change in government discontinue diplomas. Where centres have not begun, there is a worrying reluctance to become involved due to this uncertainty. As the first student outcomes come through, I believe that support will gather behind the diplomas as the strength, diversity and quality of the offer becomes known.

Craig Morrison is Deputy Principal of Parkside Federation in Cambridge and until July 2009 was also the co-ordinator for the Creative & Media diploma within the Cambridge Area Partnership.

Top Ten Tips on Delivering Diplomas

Ian Duckett's gives his advice for Gateway success

Across England there are local authorities and 14-19 partnerships examining disappointing results in gateway 3. Partnerships in more than half of the local authorities have learned that their diploma proposals have been turned down by the government assessors or urgently require further work to enable them to launch in 2010.

Improving the success rate has to be a priority for local authorities and 14-19 partnerships. Ofsted will be expecting to see evidence of good progress being made and now is the time to improve existing bids and plan for future success.

LSN has produced guidance to help consortia and local authorities to develop their Gateway applications or to get applications back on track. This article is based on good practice developed in those projects.

Have a clearly identified project leader

Clear lines of management and leadership are essential for coordinating large projects. In many bid proposals it has been unclear where the final decision on key matters regarding the planning and delivery of diplomas lies.

Having a single point of responsibility, whether it is from the local authority office, school or college, will give clarity and ensure delays and confusion are avoided.

Agree on a clear action plan, with unambiguous and early deadlines

A team works best when it has a consistent planning framework and common timetables for delivering outcomes. Planning techniques and timetabling may work well for one partner but not for another. For example, teaching practitioners and office-based local authority staff will have very different patterns of availability for meetings and delivery.

Set firm dates for completing each stage of the action plan and insist everyone meets them – establish a 'no excuses' and 'no blame' culture

A team is only as strong as its weakest link so mutual support is crucial when the project is under pressure. This is particularly true when team members are dispersed in different organisations; keeping touch gives everyone a sense of the importance of finishing on time.

Identify an overall communications manager for the partnership and a point of contact in every line of learning team

Diploma delivery requires input from a wide range of professionals from within the different lines of learning,

teaching, and support staff, local authorities and local employers. Diplomas by their very nature require close working partnerships between schools and colleges, which can be difficult to manage following a period when competition between them has been the norm. Information and communication needs for and between all of these groups is immense.

Establish high-level employer engagement across the partnership and offer an 'open doors' policy to key employers, both large and small

Spreading the word about work-experience, teacher-engagement and general promotion of the diploma is critical to developing confidence in the new system. Don't forget, employers are often parents too and the most successful businesses are those with a strong commitment to recruiting young talent. LSN research shows that 'employability' in work-seekers is best learnt from periods of work experience, work-shadowing and volunteering – so involving employers in the planning and delivery of diplomas is a positive development.

Identify 'champions' with energy and enthusiasm for the diploma and use them for PR quotes, media coverage and speaking opportunities to key groups of learners, practitioners and parents

The government is currently identifying national diploma champions who can promote their support for diplomas to local employers, the public and national media. You can participate in this process by having a spokesperson or group of people willing to share their story with local media or at events.

The involvement of higher education with every diploma line under development must be assured from the outset – and not added on as an extra

It was once famously remarked that A levels must remain the Gold Standard for university entry. Can diplomas come to equal that reputation? It's still early days and the evidence is limited. However, for Diplomas to continue to be

successful, there needs to be an agreement to bring universities and their admissions staff on board.

Build quality assurance into the diploma development process and ensure quality is checked by each partner in the consortium

Teams of practitioners can learn from each other by sharing their experiences. Regular evaluation of progress by peers can raise standards by spotting weaknesses at an early stage. Nevertheless, a single final stage of assessment should run the rule over all bids to build consistence into all bids prior to the gateway.

Build information, advice and guidance (IAG) into the diploma planning process from the beginning

The delivery of the diplomas might begin in the classroom but they should end with young people progressing into work, apprenticeships or higher education. Key stage 3 is where IAG needs to begin so that choices at the age of 14 can be aspirational and liberate young minds.

Start planning and understanding the impact of a 'demand-led' service which will put the learner at the centre of the system

Schools and colleges need to start thinking of themselves as offering a 'cafeteria' of opportunities to 13 and 14 year-olds. The reformed agenda is increasingly moving away from a 'set menu' where the teachers tell you what you want (and what you can have!) and moving closer to an 'open menu' of choice and options for students.

All of this advice is relevant not only to the Diploma application stage, but to all phases of Diploma success from passing through the Gateway to implementation planning, workforce development, curriculum planning, management and delivery.

Ian Duckett is 14–19 Development Adviser, LSN

This article is based on Ian Duckett's workshop on *Fixing the Gateway*, at the 4th Annual Diplomas conference in London, September 2009, and his *14–19 Diplomas Gateway 3: a guide to writing a bid*.

Diploma in Retail Business

Education and retail have traditionally been worlds apart, but as consortia prepare to enlist candidates onto the very first Diploma in Retail Business courses, the Diploma Development Partnership (DDP) behind the line has made strides in uniting the two. **Dan Selinger** finds out how

Engaging retail businesses into education is no mean feat. Likewise informing the teaching world about the way in which retail works provides its own unique challenges. Until now the £260 billion industry has not worked closely with schools and work experience in the sector has been piecemeal at best. At the same time, while teachers may have a passion for shopping, they often do not know what really happens behind the scenes and are unaware of the true makeup of the industry. These problems are exacerbated by the sheer scale and scope of the sector. Some retailers alone employ more than 100,000 people, which means that trying to make the work experience effective on a national scale is a mammoth task. For teachers, the industry is dauntingly diverse with educational professionals having to get to grips with buying, merchandising, operations and the supply chain to be truly effective delivering the Diploma.

Engaging retailers

In order to counter these twin issues, the Diploma in Retail DDP, has been working to engage retailers at a national level and help to lessen the sharp learning curve for teachers.

One of the ways that it has been working is through a major work experience pilot with four national retailers. By closely liaising with each of them, it has helped employers to develop a programme at head office level, which can then be distributed down to stores across the country – meaning a national approach and a seamless experience for students. The work so far has involved House of Fraser, Tesco, Specsavers and SPAR – four very different retailers both in terms of the products they produce as well as their ways of operating. In order to help make engaging with the Diploma easier for employers, they have worked together to create work experience handbooks that map principal learning elements of the Diploma into store practices. This means that when a local store comes to work with a consortium, they all have a shared resource that they can refer to in order to make work experience effective. The handbooks are now available to download on the Diploma for Retail Business website. The project is also aimed at helping teachers. Embedding the Diploma into store working practices at head office level will ease the transition from the classroom into the workplace, and a *buddying system* in which store staff link up with young people to show them

how they work, will ensure that their students are given an well-rounded experience during their placements.

A full report on this project will be produced in the new year and shared with retailers to help them embed Diplomas into their working practices and with education professionals to help guide them on engaging with the sector.

Over and above this work, House of Fraser, whose CEO John King is the Employer Champion for the Diploma in Retail Business, is going further in helping teachers to get to grips with the industry by hosting a series of store events for those thinking about delivering the qualification. The events will see the leading retailer giving up valuable space in five of its flagship stores across England to give teachers a real insight into its business. House of Fraser staff will give guests an inside look at their careers, whilst showing them around the store and an invaluable chance to see behind the scenes of the stores in stores and hear real life career stories. The events will run from 16 – 20 November across the country. For more information email tanis.smith@skillsmartretail.com

As well as these national initiatives, the DDP is also working with partners to ensure support for teachers and industry on a local level. Through working with the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, the DDP has employed a line lead to ensure that their retail line of the regional networks are effective – giving teachers a place to share their knowledge, develop resources and discuss any issues that may arise as the Diploma in Retail Business is delivered. The DDP is also encouraging consortia to take advantage of regional expertise on retail and logistics. To this end, it is pointing consortia to regional centres in the National Skills Academy for Retail and Regional Logistics Academies. These centres of excellence all offer nationally accredited training as well as advice and guidance and access to government funding. This will be invaluable to teaching staff – helping to take the burden off and giving them some expert advice. Skills shops also work with retailers to help them engage locally with their local consortium, thus helping to promote employer engagement at a local level whilst simultaneously providing support for delivery.

While there is a lot of work that remains to be done in uniting the education and retail sectors, these first steps make it easier for employers and educators to get together to ensure that the first round of Diploma teaching is a success from day one.

For more information about the Diploma in Retail Business go to www.diplomainretailbusiness.com

Preparing students for university

Angela Milln on how Diplomas can prepare students for higher education

How can the Diploma prepare students for university? Before you can answer this question, you have to come to a clear understanding of what universities are looking for when admitting students.

Ask any university admissions tutor and the answer will probably trip off the tongue very easily. With some variations according to the subject and university involved, the response will probably consist of a general statement about academic ability/potential (often expressed in terms of a specified combination of A Level and GCSE grades), something about subject knowledge (possibly in the form of a requirement for a specific 'A' Level) and a desire to see strong evidence, in the personal statement, of motivation and commitment, as well as other relevant, but more general, skills like teamwork or communication. Notice that the emphasis is on the evidence that the admissions tutor is looking for rather than on the skills or knowledge this evidence is expected to demonstrate.

It is, of course, perfectly possible to recast this in language which makes it more relevant to Diploma applicants – and, indeed, universities have already done just that, with detailed Diploma entry requirements now available for all programmes on the UCAS website. The Diploma has been formally accepted into the UCAS tariff (attracting a maximum possible value of 490 tariff points – the equivalent of 3.5 A Levels plus an extended project) and has been listed as an acceptable entry qualification throughout the university sector (this includes 60% of Russell Group programmes and 75% of 94 group programmes).

As for 'A' Level applicants, there are degree programmes which won't be specifying any particular subject requirements and others, particularly where there is a direct fit between the subject of the Diploma and a Degree programme, where a particular Diploma will be required. For many of the more academically-based degree programmes, admissions tutors are looking to the ASL component to provide evidence of relevant subject knowledge, often requiring an 'A' Level in a named subject. Only a very small proportion of admissions tutors feel that the subject pre-requisites for their programmes are such that they cannot feasibly be met by someone following the Diploma route. An example might be Chemical Physics at Bristol, where prior knowledge of Maths, Physics **and** Chemistry is needed. While this provides some reassurance about progression opportunities for Diploma applicants, it still feels a little 'clunky' and, somehow, fails to reflect fully the potential of the Diploma as a preparation for further study.

What really lies behind these declared entry requirements is a wish to admit students who have a strong grasp of any specific subject pre-requisites; are interested in and committed to their subject; are self-motivated and intellectually curious; are able to learn independently; can make

linkages between different aspects of their studies; can demonstrate general skills (teamwork, communication etc) relevant to their studies and have the potential to succeed on their chosen degree programme.

Immediately, the relevance of the Diploma becomes clearer. You start looking beyond the role of the Principal and Additional Specialist Learning in providing appropriate subject background and seeing the potential for accessing a new pool of highly motivated learners whose interest in their subject has been cultivated by studying it in a practical context and who are already accustomed to working across disciplinary boundaries. The generic learning incorporated into the Diploma also has the potential to offer fresh evidence to supplement that available through the personal statement for those admissions tutors hoping to recruit students with strong skills in areas like team working, creative thinking or independent enquiry.

So – while universities have already made good progress in understanding and acknowledging the Diploma, there is still room for a more creative approach – one, which over time, may require changes to first year curricula to facilitate a more seamless progression from this new qualification.

Changes of this nature take time to plan and implement. Remember that, so far, admissions tutors' knowledge of the Diploma is largely theoretical. Active engagement with universities on the part of Diploma consortia will help but, of course, geographical coverage is patchy and it may be some time before some admissions tutors have a really good feel for what a Diploma applicant can offer.

In some cases, it may be unrealistic to expect significant alternations to curricula – will the number of Diploma applicants seeking entry to degrees in History or English, for example, ever be sufficient to justify this kind of upheaval? In other areas, the justification will be much clearer but willingness to make big changes will inevitably depend on experience during the next few years. If applicants admitted via the Diploma route thrive on their chosen university programmes, the incentive to facilitate admission for future generations of Diploma applicants will be strong. Equally, a negative experience could result in admissions tutors turning their back on the Diploma in favour of safer, more familiar entry qualifications.

The risk is particularly high for those programmes or universities where competition is strongest. These programmes will always give a high priority to recruiting the most able students. However open they might be to the Diploma in principle, if initially only students from the lower end of the ability range are attracted down this route, there is a danger that admissions tutors could end up equating the Diploma with mediocrity. This could impact on prospects for subsequent applicants – quite a responsibility for those preparing the early Diploma cohorts and only time will tell what the outcome will be!

Angela Milln is Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions University of Bristol

The Diploma's Next Big Stage

QCDA director for the Diploma programme, **Teresa Bergin**, discusses how QCDA is helping practitioners with delivery.

Introduction

Diplomas are being phased in and eventually there will be a total of 17 available lines of learning by 2011. Students currently have a choice from a total of ten Diploma subjects. The first phase, in 2008, included: creative and media; construction and the built environment; engineering; IT; and society, health & development. For 2009 business, administration and finance; hair and beauty studies; hospitality; land-based and environmental studies; and manufacturing & product design have been introduced.

The overwhelming feedback we are receiving from our people visiting centres of learning, across the country, is that the first wave of learners are producing great work, completing wide-ranging tasks and really enjoying the experience. Exciting times for students of course, but at QCDA we are also conscious that the introduction of a very different and new type of qualification for schools and colleges can be extremely demanding (as well as exciting).

The Diploma's three components; principal learning, generic learning and additional and specialist learning (ASL) means that it is a flexible and rewarding qualification that, compared with the GCSEs and A levels, provides the centres of learning with a fresh set of challenges. The Diploma gives students more choice and control over their learning, with ASL giving them flexibility to study a broader programme than they could otherwise have selected.

A Diploma is designed as an all-round package that gives students the right knowledge, experience, insight and attitude to prepare them for the next stage of life, whether that is university, college or work.

This flexibility provides increased choice which enables students to increase their life options, regardless of the path they choose to take. This increased choice also places additional demands on teachers and lecturers, who have a critical role in terms of helping students make the right decision.

Guidance is available for practitioners

The introduction of a new qualification inevitably results in questions about how to introduce it and how students can progress from it. QCDA provides a wide range of materials to help answer these questions. The guidance ranges from explaining what Diploma students will get on results day, through to a comprehensive overview of the qualification. Practitioners can, therefore, gain access to in-depth knowledge and understanding of the qualification and its component parts, as well as valuable feedback from other practitioners which help ensure that all issues are addressed.

The guidance to help practitioners develop their own materials includes a package of progression illustrations which show how students could progress after achieving

a Diploma. Developed in close consultation with Diploma development partnerships (DDPs), the illustrative examples demonstrate why a student chose a particular subject, the project and additional and specialist learning (ASL) they opted for, their result and how they progressed after they completed the qualification.

The Diploma requires a new approach to teaching, with a particular focus on applied learning. Practitioners looking for real examples of how to approach the Diploma can find advice through video clips and a case study booklet which cover a wide range of subjects. The video case studies bring applied learning to life, giving practitioners some useful support.

The new approach demanded by the Diploma not only covers teaching but also new methods of planning due to the required set up of consortia. This creates its own unique demands. The publication *Design for Success: Consortia Planning* looks in detail at several whole consortia models for Diploma delivery. Members of consortia responsible for planning and teaching Diplomas can seek advice about delivering the Foundation and Higher Diplomas.

Other help available includes curriculum guidance for delivering principal learning in the Diploma, generic skills in Diploma learning, opportunities for co-learning the Foundation and Higher Diploma, guidelines on recording personal, learning and thinking skills, the teacher pedagogy, shaping your curriculum and much more.

'Talk to QCDA' Service

A quick resource can be found under QCDA Direct which has been designed to answer any teaching and learning questions, through a 'talk direct to QCDA' service. Accessible from the website www.diploma-support.org/qcdadirect, it also encourages information-sharing between Diploma practitioners through monthly discussions hosted by national experts. QCDA Direct also features monthly surveys which provide feedback on different aspects of teaching and learning the Diploma. All of the feedback that comes through QCDA Direct is used to help improve existing and shape future guidance materials. Topics from September include: Foundation Diploma; Equalities; ASL and the Learner Experience.

Work on the next set of guidance materials is already well under way. By the end of 2009, additional products set to become available will include a refreshed Diploma website which is easier to navigate, together with information on progression routes and curriculum planning. This guidance is being developed at the moment, taking on board views from an advisory panel comprising Diploma practitioners in schools and colleges and senior managers in consortia and local authorities. Their feedback should help ensure the guidance is fit-for-purpose and useful to all.

To view the QCDA's guidance and support materials designed for the Diploma, visit www.qcda.gov.uk/diploma

Diploma in Business, Administration and Finance

From September 2009 the Diploma in Business, Administration and Finance was delivered by consortia for the first time as part of the second phase of the government's Diploma roll-out. The Principal Learning at all three levels offers an exciting programme of study that is contextualised within the "real world" of business, administration and finance. It will also develop the skills and knowledge required by employers to work in a wide number of job roles across a number of areas including – law, finance, marketing, business and IT.

Key Concepts

A number of key concepts underpin the study of this Diploma which students will cover at each level in order to appreciate the complexity of the sector. The key concepts given below are not designed to be delivered in isolation but must be seen by providers as part of an holistic approach which will allow students to appreciate the different aspects of how business, administration and finance operates in companies.

Foundation Level

Key Concepts	Explanation
1. Employability	Knowing about the world of business, administration and finance, the range of skills involved and the working practices. Understanding the importance of customers and the skills required in meeting their needs. Appreciating the importance of team working. Understanding the skills and attributes required for work preparation.
Business, administration and finance cover a wide area of services and products. Learners will gain an understanding of the fundamental principles of market research, the basics of business administration and its importance to organisations, as well as the knowledge and skills needed to manage personal finances.	
2. Innovation and Creativity	Understanding how to develop a product or service and carry out the associated activities, while recognising the need to innovate.
Learners should research and plan the development of products or services, and learn how to market them.	
3. Organisational Processes	Understanding the administrative processes that are key to the business sector. Understanding the concepts of financial literacy and personal financial management.
The administrative infrastructure is critical to the success of any enterprise. Learners must understand the importance of these systems and processes, including handling mail, welcoming customers, using email and word-processing and spreadsheet software, filing and adhering to health and safety requirements.	

Higher Level

Key Concepts	Explanation
1. Employability	Developing and understanding the set of achievements, range of skills and personal attributes needed to work in business, administration and finance. Appreciating the role and importance of teams. Understanding and applying the concept of customer service. Understanding and using appropriate methods of internal and external communication.
2. Enterprise and Innovation	Understanding entrepreneurship and appreciating the benefits of innovation and creativity. Exploring what makes a viable business proposition, recognising the need to innovate. Developing a view of the work of business through various enterprise activities.
Students should determine what distinguishes an entrepreneur from other types of business people. They should examine how creative and innovative ideas can be turned into commercial enterprises, which drive growth and prosperity in an economy. While carrying out enterprise activities, students will explore marketing, team working, business communication and finance.	
3. Finance	Being aware of the nature of money and its function in business. Understanding the role of the finance sector in the economy. Understanding personal and business financial management.

Advanced Level

Key Concepts	Explanation
1. Employability	Researching, understanding and developing the range of skills and personal attributes needed to work in business, administration and finance. Understanding theories of business communication and customer service and applying them in practice. Building skills to maximise the organisational effectiveness of a team. Preparing to work and progress within the business environment.
2. Enterprise and Innovation	Exploring business enterprise in the context of global economy. Identifying risks and offering solutions to minimise them. Recognising the purpose, principles and techniques of marketing.
Students should determine what distinguishes an entrepreneur from other types of business people. They should examine how creative and innovative ideas can be turned into commercial enterprises, which drive growth and prosperity in an economy. Within the study of how innovation and creativity impact on a business, students should understand how to evaluate the risks to businesses such as financial or market share risks and to show how these can be diluted or minimised.	
3. The Business World	Understanding how businesses function and the impact of the changing contexts within which organisations work. Appreciating the importance of responsible business practice. Understanding the principles of effective business management.
Corporate social responsibility is a critical factor within the modern business environment. Students should investigate the relationship between business and society and how it has evolved over time. They should consider why organisations adopt responsible practices and the impact on businesses and communities both nationally and globally.	
4. Finance	Understanding the nature of money and its function in business. Understanding financial products and services and the risks associated with their use. Understanding personal and business financial management. Appreciating cultural and ethical attitudes towards money and financial services.

Work Experience

10 days work experience is required by all students at each level of the Diploma. Ideally this should be carried out at an employers premises in a relevant setting where a range of tasks and duties relating to sector-specific knowledge and skills.

The Project

All students at each level will be required to carry out a Diploma project within an industry context. This could be a problem agreed in negotiation with an employer. It is expected that all projects will reflect current business, administration and finance employer practices. Topics should be chosen by the student with appropriate guidance at each level. This will allow plenty of scope for students to focus their project on an aspect of the sector that

really interests them. One consortium is looking at the possibility of their students at Level 3 planning a hair and beauty show where a number of small companies would display their hair styles and fashion outfits as business products. This would involve agreeing a budget, marketing the products, organising a venue, advertising the event and analysing the impact of the whole venture.

For more information on the Diploma in Business, Administration and Finance go to following:
www.fsc.org.uk – Financial Services Skills Council
www.cfa.uk.com – Council for Administration
 Other links: www.dcsf.org.uk/14-19
www.diplomasupport.org.uk

Welcoming Diploma Students!

Gary Mallon celebrates the new qualification

Young people passing through the education system are facing a changing world. By 2020 there will be 5 million fewer lower skilled jobs in Britain than there are today. 40% of all graduate jobs in 2020 will require a graduate qualification. The top 10 jobs that will be in demand

in 2010 did not exist in 2004. We are currently preparing many students for jobs that don't yet exist.

It is a sobering thought that today's learners will have 10-14 jobs by the age of 38! Gone are the days when people had jobs for life in big factories. In fairly recent history, public schools, direct grant grammar schools and comprehensives have fed the needs of the economy and during the course of these developments many youngsters will have been the first in their family to go to grammar school or University. A good many well known celebrities

came from my old school, St. Mary's College, Crosby which was direct grant grammar and their biographies tend to note that they were either the first in the family to pass the 11+ or go on to higher education including Archbishop Vincent Nichols, Lord John Birt, Roger McGough, Laurie Taylor, Tom O'Connor, Brendan Barber, Will Hanrahan and Tony Booth.

Moving in the right direction

In the past, the numbers worked out. However, to meet the sorts of targets noted above there needs to be a transformation of the educational landscape and it is the 14 – 19 Reform Agenda which can move us in the right direction. At GCSE, 65% of students now get 5 A*–C grades and the pass rate for A levels is now 97%. The completion rate for the 180,000 apprentices is now 62%. Whilst these successes and trends are good, the numbers will probably not meet the needs of the higher skills economy in the next 10 years.

In terms of 2009, those following AS and A2 Levels have an extremely high success rate in moving on to higher education. They know the route which is fairly clear. Those on Level 3 vocational programmes do not progress on to higher education in the same way. The starting point for Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) was that well over 90% of A Level learners move on to higher education whilst only 40% of vocational learners go on beyond level 3. Across the country LLNs which are partnerships of universities, colleges and key stakeholders are engaged with looking to increase the numbers of vocational learners in higher education. The government's new Diploma that was introduced last September presents an opportunity to increase student participation and change people's lives with its exciting and innovative approach to learning.

The first generation

The economy will need more people with higher qualifications and a broad range of transferable and independent thinking skills that Diplomas can provide. In August 2009, thousands of students were awarded units of the Phase One Diplomas and it is vital for the future of the country that as many of these "first generation" Diploma youngsters stay in the education system to complete their qualifications and gain valuable life skills through their programmes of study.

Universities need to play their part

The vast majority of universities welcome the design of the Diploma and will welcome Diploma candidates who will bring knowledge, skills and experience to undergraduate study. But universities can play a more proactive part in Diploma developments by:

- supporting those holding Diplomas through an Admissions Policy which sees the Diploma as a valid

entry requirement and accepts the associated UCAS tariff points and does not present additional "hurdles"

- Academic involvement in the development of Diploma Lines at regional and national levels.
- Local academic involvement with the shared delivery of units of the Principal Learning including sharing expertise on the Extended Project at Level 3
- Well briefed Information Advice and Guidance Staff who are involved in local consortia.
- Strategic Involvement in the development of the Diploma through local Partnership working
- Regular university briefings for staff – especially admissions tutors and support staff.
- Membership of local Partnership forums to discuss and share information and experiences of university involvement with the Diploma and wider curriculum issues.
- Teaching Universities providing training on the Diplomas on PGCE and CPD Programmes.

Conclusion

The single most important reason why we should embrace the Diploma is that it is an avenue for changing people's lives – for promoting more opportunities for youngsters who will be first generation in higher education. It is about giving them options and opportunities for success as they follow the path that works for them. Everything else such as changing the lives of their future families, meeting government targets and the needs of the economy will fall into place.

Certainly there is a big interest in the 14–19 Reform Agenda. I am a regular contributor on Radio City Talk 105.9fm and there is always considerable listener response when the Diplomas are discussed. Although many parents would not know the nuts and bolts of the Diploma there does seem to be something which makes them realise that a Diploma could change the lives of their children.

A report by academics at the University of Exeter and commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, found that Admissions Officers in the most competitive universities are more likely to question the "academic rigour of Diploma content" than at other institutions. This is what could be described as "maintaining form" and could be reasonably expected. This could well happen with the introduction of any new qualifications. The important message is that the Diplomas will reach new learners and many will be the first from their family to move on to higher education.

Gary Mallon

Greater Merseyside & West Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network
Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, Lancashire

14–19 Workforce Support

Sarah Ridgway, on 14–19 Workforce Support

By September 2013 every 14–19 year-old in England will be entitled to choose from one of four learning pathways: a range of 17 Diplomas, Foundation Learning, apprenticeships and general qualifications such as GCSEs and A levels.

The new DCSF-funded **14–19 Workforce Support** builds on the success of last year's Diploma support programme and will continue to provide training and ongoing support for practitioners, support staff and those involved in information, advice and guidance. The programme will continue to be delivered by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and partners LSN, Pearson Education and The Workshop on behalf of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS).

The programme offers a comprehensive package to ensure effective implementation of the key areas of reform and development with a focus on:

- teaching and learning for the Diplomas and reformed general qualifications
- supporting the development of Foundation Learning
- guidance on functional skills, additional and specialist learning, and personal, learning and thinking skills in the Diploma.

The website at www.diploma-support.org will be integrated into a new 14–19 website: www.14-19support.org, providing a 'one-stop shop' with access to a comprehensive range of free information, support and resources for all four learning pathways.

I am confident that 14–19 Workforce Support will provide personalised and adaptable help from first stages through to full implementation and beyond, offering a package of tailored support that accommodates everyone from those with little or no knowledge in the area to those with advanced skills. The support will build local and regional capacity and allow practitioners and other members of the workforce to learn from colleagues.

Katie Smith-Palomeque, 14–19 Strategic Manager and consortium leader at the West Kent Learning Federation, explained how this personalised approach worked:

"It's given us clear signposts for our way ahead as a consortium, and it's helped us define and explain the roles of each partner and what systems need to be in place. It's also highlighted our strengths and shown us where we need to do more capacity building and workforce development. It's the sort of training we'd normally have to pay dearly for without getting anything like 100% bespoke solutions. While much more needs to be done, we've now got a much clearer sense of common purpose with far greater confidence as we move towards running the Diplomas."

Specific support for the Diploma

All Diploma consortia intending to deliver any of the 14 Diploma lines of learning from September 2010 can access

Diploma Support, part of 14–19 Workforce Support, from this September. It is a package of free face-to-face support and development, print and online resources and networking opportunities that will provide a range of options that will meet consortia requirements – whatever they are.

The support is flexible and could cover Diploma teaching and learning, coaching and support for line leads and 14–19 reform curriculum leads, and 'inside industry' days as well as looking at areas such as Diploma assessment, curriculum planning and information, advice and guidance.

Face-to-face support and development

A range of free face-to-face support and development is available to all Diploma consortia, whether new or well established, and whichever lines of learning are being offered. The support is flexible and a menu of support can be agreed from a range of 32 modules, which are based on the following themes:

- 14–19 reform
- preparing for delivery (including Inside the Diploma for those new to Diplomas and a health check to make sure the consortium is ready for Diploma delivery)
- teaching and learning
- assessment
- information, advice and guidance
- curriculum planning
- working with employers (including Inside the Workplace)
- collaboration.

We aim to work with consortia to build local and regional capacity and skills. Networks and online communities are available for every line of learning providing a range of different ways to network, share information and talk to peers, both face-to-face and online. We can also offer support to line leads and 14–19 reform curriculum leads to develop coaching skills and techniques.

Online resources and tools

The Diploma support website at www.diploma-support.org includes a number of online resources and tools to help prepare for successful Diploma delivery.

- **Online communities** – share experiences and expertise with people around the country who are involved in Diploma delivery. Communities are available for each line of learning, support staff, QCDA Direct and information, advice and guidance.
- **Emerging practice** This series of short films shows how different consortia across the country have tackled Diploma delivery. You can see their approach to a variety of themes including collaboration and employer engagement and hear about the lessons they have learnt. You can also download resources provided by each consortium, which can be adapted to support local planning.
- **Inside Work** These video-based case studies and activities show how other practitioners have successfully worked with employers, helping you update sector knowledge and develop a creative approach to employer engagement.

- **Resources** Browse support materials from training workshops, as well as high-quality materials and examples of best practice in Diploma teaching and learning. Resources include: key publications and background documents; videos from Inside the Workplace events; a news archive and useful links to materials and websites from other partners.
- **My Support** My Support is a simple filtering tool that helps narrow down the wide range of support available and decide which parts will be particularly relevant to you.
- **My Development** My Development contains a range of practical activities to support professional development and help you prepare to deliver the Diploma.
- **My Plan** My Plan is a tool which helps plan and coordinate preparation for the Diploma, and document progress. Printed handbooks are available for each line of learning, as well as the Practitioner Guide to the Diploma and training packs for the Inside the Diploma and Inside the Workplace modules.
To find out more please go to www.diploma-support.org or www.14-19support.org.

Sarah Ridgeway, Programme Director, 14–19 Workforce Support, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

Diplomas: a critical view

Simon Boyd on a critique of the Diploma

Anna Fazackerley certainly stirred up considerable controversy at the 4th Annual Diploma Conference in London, where she spoke on the future of The Diploma

She is head of education, arts and culture at the Policy Exchange, a centre-right think tank. She said she was not a spokesperson for the Conservative Party, but few could doubt that her views strongly reflect Tory critics of the Diploma.

She referred to the origin of the Diploma – the A-level marking scandal of 2002, following which Mike Tomlinson was asked to review 14–19 and recommended that the entire system be replaced by a new ‘relatively simple’ system. This was supported by Charles Clarke, but was opposed by Tony Blair who insisted on keeping the A-levels as the gold standard. What followed was classic government fudge – the Diploma was brought in alongside all other existing qualifications.

Most experts she spoke to think the Diploma represents the worst of all worlds. It is neither a quality vocational nor a quality academic route. A lot of people are going along with it nevertheless, and some think it is improving.

The crucial question for her is ‘what is for the diploma for?’ The answer seems to be:

- To increase participation at 16.
- To increase student numbers at university.
- To meet employers’ needs.
- to stretch and challenge students.

She said that one qualification cannot be all these things. She saw the **key problems** as being:

- 1 Its complexity.** Greg Watson of OCR says it is the most complex qualification ever. For example, the creative and media diploma involves a choice of 49 elements at advanced level. This is trying to cover everything and there is already an extensive network of other qualifications.

- 2 Classrooms can’t substitute for the workplace.** She used the example of Hair and Beauty – why teach it in a classroom rather than in a salon?

- 3 The grading is very complex** – Policy Exchange recommends dropping it entirely and going instead for a straight pass/ fail.

She criticised the rush to implement the Diploma – why did it have to be done in such a hurry?

She claimed that Michael Gove, the Conservative Shadow Minister for Schools, agrees with these views.

Turning to the future, she thought the three ‘academic’ diplomas look doomed under the Conservatives. She commented that universities have been leaned on to put out positive PR in favour of the diploma.

She thought however, that the Diploma in Applied Science could be useful if it provided a proper applied science course.

She felt above all that the Diploma must be simplified.

She wanted to see current qualification routes simplified to three:

- 1 An academic subject route** – eg history or mathematics
- 2 A true vocational path** – a broadened version of the Young Apprenticeships, for example on Hair and Beauty.
- 3 A proper Applied route** – eg engineering or construction.

She wanted to see the Diploma itself vastly simplified to address two age levels:

- 1 A Foundation diploma**, at age 14–16
- 2 An Advanced Diploma**, at 16 plus.

She wanted to reduce the options for specialisation and to concentrate on core skills. And she emphasised the need to simplify the grading system.

In her view diplomas were a case of “a good idea which has been swept along by the Government enthusiasm, leaving parents, pupils and schools floundering in their wake.”

Her simple message was: “scrap some of the diplomas and for goodness’ sake slow down.”

GCSEs and Controlled Assessment

John Cope on the changes

GCSEs have gone through some of their biggest changes since they were introduced in the late 1980s. Nearly all subjects – with the exception of English, Mathematics and ICT – have been reviewed and redesigned with new course content and a different form of assessment from September 2009¹.

One recent interesting additional development is that QCA is commissioning a pilot of two linked GCSE mathematics qualifications for first teaching alongside the revised GCSE in September 2010. The two GCSEs form part of a “linked pair”; one is titled “applications of mathematics” and the second, “methods in mathematics”.

GCSEs have also become unitized and modular in structure. For instance, they can lead to a short course, full course or a double award.²

(See the chart below that shows how unitized awards of different sizes can be put together from a range of units).

Double award GCSE							
Single award GCSE							
Short course							
Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8

For several subjects there will be two assessment points each year – June and January although some students may prefer to do all their assessment at the end of the year. With regard to assessment, coursework has been replaced by controlled assessment with each subject specification now falling into one of three groupings, viz:

- 100% examination with no controlled assessment
- 75% examination with 25% controlled assessment
- 40% examination with 60% controlled assessment for more practical subjects.

GCSE : Controlled Assessment		
Subjects with 100% external assessment:	Subjects with 25% controlled assessment:	Subjects with 60% controlled assessment:
Classical Greek Economics Latin Law Religious Studies Sociology Psychology	Business Studies Classical Civilisation Geography History Humanities Statistics	Applied Business Art and Design Citizenship Manufacturing Construction Studies Dance Design and Technology Drama Engineering Expressive Arts Health and Social Care Home Economics Hospitality and Catering Leisure and Tourism Media MFL Music PE

What Is Controlled Assessment?

From September 2009 coursework ceased to exist with students being required to complete tasks under controlled conditions with limited help or guidance from teachers.

Although students will be able to gather information and research at home, the writing up of the work will have to be done under close supervision. Controlled assessments are designed to measure skills that are not effectively judged by examinations and will also provide stretch and challenge for all students. Some assessments might take the place entirely within the school or college under supervision with controlled access to resources such as the internet. Although in some cases students could work in a group to complete a controlled assessment, each must produce a response that can be individually assessed; this would include drawing out their own contribution to the group activity and commenting on how they developed and demonstrated their skills.

Stages of the Assessment Process

There are three stages of the assessment process: task setting, task taking and task marking. For each of these stages a “level of control” will be set to ensure the reliability and authenticity of the work.

- **Task Setting** Centres are able to choose from a number of pre-set tasks devised by the awarding bodies or adapt them to meet their local facilities and resources. This will vary from subject to subject and must be checked with the awarding bodies.
- **Task Taking** This sets out the extent of supervision in carrying out tasks and the conditions under which assessment takes place
- **Task Marking** Tasks will be marked internally by Centres, using award body criteria and guidance, and then moderated externally by the award body.

Controlled Assessment Materials

Controlled assessment materials will be available in three different ways:

- As files to download from the awarding body website
- On a password-protected CD which is usually sent to the examinations office
- As hard copies provided with the subject specification

Conclusion

With the introduction of controlled assessment from September 2009, teachers and parents may have a great deal more confidence in the validity and reliability of an individual's work. Also, because controlled assessments will be embedded into subject specifications, teachers should be able to fit the tasks into their regular teaching programmes in a more relevant and meaningful way.

Whether controlled assessments go down well with pupils and teachers remains to be seen, especially for young people who would have seen coursework as a wonderful opportunity to develop the very independent thinking and research skills that higher education and employers require without such stringent levels of control

Further information

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) has issued guidance for centres on the administration and conduct of controlled assessments for the new GCSE specifications from September 2009. Examples of controlled assessment in a number of subjects are available from the QCA website – www.qca.org.uk – or from the relevant awarding body website and within the teaching guide for each specification.

- 1 Science has already been reviewed and has been taught in its revised form since 2006. It will, however, be reviewed again in 2011, when the accreditation of the current GCSE expires. GCSE English, mathematics and ICT are currently under review; their development will take an extra year when they will be taught for the first time in September 2010.
- 2 The first awards of the short course will be available in the summer 2010. Any students wishing to take a one year GCSE in September 2009 will take the current GCSE specifications which will be examined in summer 2010

Exams: Have we all failed?

Tony Uden on a politically fraught debate

Beneath the usual stream of ‘dumbing down’ headlines – perhaps a London free paper’s *Even Monkeys Can Get A Levels* was the cream of the crop – and the accompanying pictures of nubile middle class teenagers hugging each other, a debate about the exam system has been raging during this summer’s silly season.

The raw figures show a continuing high and growing level of achievement among young people at both GCSE and ‘A’ level. The Government’s priority STEM subjects are attracting more students across all school sectors. Biology is an exception to this with a small fall in numbers but is still the most popular of the sciences. Numbers taking modern languages continue to decline probably as a long term consequence of these subjects no longer being compulsory in state schools beyond age 14.

The gap between boys and girls achievement has finally begun to narrow. The move from coursework to exams in GCSE maths has been cited as the reason that boys have actually overtaken girls in that subject for the first time since 1997. This trend is expected to continue as coursework is dropped from other subjects. Some commentators are now discussing the possibility of different forms of assessment for boys and girls!

So what is said to be wrong?

Though not every subject at every level is showing improvement, the overall trend continues to be positive so why is there so much unease and criticism?

Firstly, analysis shows that different kinds of schools contribute disproportionately to these good results.

Fifty percent of ‘A’ Level entries from independent schools received an A grade (a rise of 2.1% on last year and a higher rise than in any other sector), compared to just below 40% at other selective schools and 20% at comprehensives. While that may be understandable (though not perhaps to be welcomed), selective schools also contributed disproportionately to the number of entries in STEM subjects, thought to be important to new industries, and to other subjects which might be considered important to employment in a globalised economy. Private schools, which take in 8% of the relevant cohort, account for 20%

of ‘A’ Level maths entries and for nearly 50% of ‘less traditional’ modern languages – like Chinese.

The corollary of this is that state schools and comprehensives in particular are entering more students for subjects less likely to be in the Government’s priority list or to be favoured by top tier universities.

Secondly, it is claimed by some that ‘A’ Levels are now a “hollow preparation” for university with students being guided and prompted through the questions. It is, they claim, more like ‘sat-nav’ than map reading. The student gets to the destination but with little idea of how and will retain little of the ungrounded knowledge picked up on the way.

Thirdly it is also asserted not only that exams are getting easier but that some of them don’t actually do what it says on the tin. Science and maths are singled out. In March this year Ofqual urged the Government to take action over falling standards in Science GCSE which was re-launched in 2006 in a form said to make it ‘more relevant to everyday life’ and intended to attract more entries. Now a group of academics claims that some allowable answers “do not reflect correct science” and that the amount of maths required “was generally woefully inadequate” for what is a “quantitative subject.”

A new ‘A’ Level in use of mathematics intended “to be accessible to a wide range of students” and to “help develop a workforce with appropriate skills to meet the needs of business and industry” has also been attacked by academics. ‘Educators for Reform’ claim that it is likely to mislead students into thinking they are preparing themselves for university study in the sciences when the existing maths ‘A’ Level will actually be the requirement. Interestingly they are particularly concerned that “students attending schools – usually in the poorest areas – that do not have a detailed knowledge of university admissions policies will be unaware of this.”

And already we know that students from poorer families continue to come at the bottom of the heap when the prizes are given out. Just over 42% of pupils on free school meals failed to gain a single C grade in any GCSE last summer.

What are providers doing?

Despite doing so well under the current system, schools and colleges which have the choice are increasingly opting for alternative qualifications even though this can see them

appearing to underachieve in League Tables because their chosen qualifications aren't counted.

Record numbers are taking the International Baccalaureate (IB) as an alternative to 'A' Levels, a trend driven by private schools and sixth form colleges. 2,500 entries were recorded last year, a 40% increase. But the Government has dropped Tony Blair's promise that the IB would be an available alternative for young people in every area and the numbers of comprehensive school students being entered actually went down by 11%.

Interestingly those in favour of the IB, with its wider range and compulsory core of maths, a science, a foreign language and a humanity, also often cite its independence from government as a point in its favour; thus implicitly at least entering the 'dumbing down' debate.

A similar trend can be seen at an earlier stage with the increasing adoption of the International GCSE (IGCSE) which resembles the old GCE and has been primarily developed (or retained?) by some exam boards for overseas students wanting an English qualification and is, again, seen by traditionalists at least as being 'harder.'

What might the future hold?

Science GCSEs have already been 'toughened up' as a response to the Ofqual report and a small decline in achievements is forecast next year as a result.

'A' Levels are also set to get 'harder.' The Minister with responsibility for 14/19 reform says: "the changes we are making to 'A' Levels ensure that 'A' Level papers contain more open-ended questions, requiring greater thought and more detailed written replies. We are introducing new extended projects, which will encourage independent research, planning and study skills – exactly the sort of skills needed at university."

John Dunford, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders said "we have been told the questions will be more difficult next year" and will "cease to take students through the answer." This is described as providing "stretch and challenge" while a new A* grade at 'A' Level will, it is hoped, allow universities (and, presumably, employers) to spot the brightest, or at least highest achieving, students from the large numbers now being awarded As.

A General Election might bring not just more tinkering but a change of direction. Claiming to identify a trend for schools with higher proportions of potentially lower achieving students to enter them for 'soft' subjects, the Conservatives are proposing to award more points in

League Tables for the 'harder' 'A' Levels and to remove vocational qualifications from the tables altogether. They also seem committed to allowing state schools free reign to adopt alternative qualifications like the IGCSE.

The Conservatives are making a strong effort to present their policies in ways that would allow them to replace Labour as the advocate of greater equality of opportunity for young people from all social classes. Another of their spokesmen said: "the educational divide between rich and poor continues to grow. More and more children at independent schools have access to the most valued international exams and fewer children at comprehensives are able to compete on a level playing field."

More radically still the Conservatives seem to be considering a move to make universities "put their money where their mouth is" in the words of their Higher Education spokesman, re-engage themselves with the exam boards and help design an alternative to 'A' Levels that will achieve what they say they want from them (the Cambridge Pre-U is the only current example of a university/exam board partnership of this kind.)

And Diplomas?

Meanwhile the advocates of Diplomas as an eventual replacement for traditional qualifications seem to have been keeping a low profile over the summer. The first results from 'early adopters' of Diplomas came out but were not easy to find or to interpret (see page 2) and anyway the numbers coming through in year one are too low to allow meaningful comparison with the very large numbers taking 'traditional' qualifications.

Universities said that Diploma graduates were welcome – but then indicated they'd quite like to see an 'A' level or two as well.

The Conservatives seemed to be signalling that they were ready to abandon the whole project and not just the 'more academic' Diplomas which had already had the thumbs down. A study from Reading University found that many teenagers had no real idea what Diplomas were and when they did have 'information' about them it was incorrect. A TES editorial called the Diplomas 'jinxed.'

At this stage of the electoral cycle it will be a brave college or school that puts too many of its eggs in this basket and can we blame parents and students who 'keep tight hold' of the GCSE/'A' Level nurse?

The silly season shows signs of continuing – at least up to the election – and probably beyond.

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This new website for the Functional Skills Support Programme offers sections on;

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