

Information for Social Change Number 28 Winter 2008/09

Special Issue on Lifelong Learners

Changes in Adult and Community Education: The Impact of Policy on Organisations and Individuals

Dr Ray Shore

1) Introduction

In an article in *Adults Learning* (September 2005) Alan Tuckett the Director of The National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), asks whether or not the time has come to agree a 'new settlement' for the funding of adult learning. In Tuckett's (2005, p.6) words the sector requires:

'A new settlement that establishes the proportions that the state, individual and employer should pay for different types of provision, that highlights a fair and coherent system of learner support, consistency across providers and sectors, and then encourages providers to exercise local discretion to maximise the benefits secured through public investment'.

Tuckett's article supports a national campaign by NIACE, 'Fairer Funding for Adults' (2005), which runs parallel to a debate about shifting priorities and criteria for eligibility to subsidised learning in the sector. Budgets for the provision of adult learning are coming under increasing pressure as the implications of the Learning and Skills Act (2000) and more recently the Skills Strategy (DfES 2003) begin to make a tangible impact on learning provision for adults. The current debate is, in essence, about the type of learning that the public purse 'should fund' and who will be entitled to access subsidised learning.

This debate however, extends beyond the introduction of a target driven funding for adult learning and embraces a range of issues that are rooted in a wider ideological tensions about the appropriate use of public funds. This circumstance is broadly characterised as a 'challenge to the post war welfare consensus' and is

discussed in more detail by a number of writers e.g. Pollitt (1993 and 2003) Clarke and Newman (1997) Clarke et al(2000) Bovaird and Loffler (2001) Banks (2004) and Newman et al (2005). Recent and impending changes to funding methodologies and the introduction of sectoral targets represent just one aspect of a spectrum of change ushered in by the Learning and Skills Act 2000 that saw the formation of the Learning and Skills Councils (LSC) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). Patterns of change previously instituted in for example the Health Service, Social Services and the compulsory education sector (see Clarke and Newman 1997) are being driven, albeit belatedly, through the Adult and Community Education sector.

These changes are characteristic of a longer-term attempt to make the public sector more efficient through modernisation. Clarke and Newman (1997 p.viv), noting a period during which the role of state has been the centre of attention, '... from attempts to control public spending, through Civil Service reforms, to the creation of new delivery systems for welfare services, also argue that these changes constitute a 'set of ideologies and practices' that challenge the relationship between 'the state and the citizen' between public and private, between the providers and recipients of welfare and between management and politics.' Tuckett's interjection sets adult and community education at the centre of these processes.

This paper explores some of the implications of these broader policy imperatives on the delivery of Adult and Community Education within the context of a Local Authority. It focuses in particular on the changing nature and requirements of management and the consequences, both direct and indirect, of that change on the organisation and individuals who, either directly or indirectly, deliver or receive the Service.

2) Context

Two key Structural Drivers: The LSC and The Adult Learning Inspectorate.

a) The Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

The LSC is a Non Departmental Public Body established by the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to '...modernise and simplify arrangements for planning, funding and delivering education and training for over-16s, except for higher education' (LSC 2005). Its emphasis in terms of adult learning is on provision that is firmly linked to need and, in particular, the needs of those who have hitherto achieved little by way of learning success. The Learning and Skills Council are explicit about this target group and of the need to ensure that resources are directed to support the needs of this group (Priorities for Success, Oct 2005). The priority groups for public funding are adults with basic skills needs and those without a full level 2 qualification. Bill Rammell MP, The Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, in his letter to providers (Oct, 2005) states:

'Adults in entitlement groups and national fee remission categories – that is everyone studying literacy and numeracy skills or a first full level 2 qualification, and those on job seekers allowance or income related benefits and their dependants- will continue to receive free tuition':

This category of potential learners is the priority for funding allocated for adult learning provision. The funding strategy is, according to Rammell (2005) 'clearly driven by policy priorities...' The Government however, also acknowledge that there are strong arguments for maintaining learning capacity outside the current national priorities. Potential for this exists within the proposed 'safeguard' on funding for Personal and Community Development (PCDL).

In the Skills Strategy (DfES 2003), the government set out a clear intention to rebalance public and private contributions to the cost of learning. Rammell (October 2005) reinforces this message noting that the government is 'broadly' maintaining overall levels of public funding in the period to 2007/08 however '...the pattern of that learning will change' to meet national priorities and consequently '... the number of publicly funded places which do not lead to a nationally recognised qualification is likely to fall by around 500,000'. In addition ' There will need to be a tighter focus on key priorities in public funding for adult learning, with more provision delivered at full cost and a significant increase in fees.' This statement reinforces the position outlined in 'Priorities for Success' (LSC. October 2005).

Summary

This section has introduced the Learning and Skills Council and outlined its key purpose. The introduction of the LSC has changed the means by which local authority adult education services are funded, governed and administered. Alongside this the LSC has introduced its own business cycle, monitoring procedures and quality framework. The parallel introduction of targets and performance indicators has been instrumental in encouraging modernisation and change. The range and significance of these changes also affects more intangible aspects of Service delivery and may also lead to the erosion of professional discretion and local flexibility.

b) The Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate is a non-departmental public body established under the Learning and Skills Act 2000. It began inspecting in April 2001 using the recently revised (April 2005) Common Inspection Framework (CIF) as its template. This framework assesses provision against five key criteria as follows:

- How well do learners achieve?
- How effective are teaching, training and learning?
- How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?
- How well are learners guided and supported?
- How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

The introduction of this framework into the Adult and Community Education sector represented something of a transformation. Hitherto inspection had been infrequent, unsystematic and comparatively unstructured, its outcomes of little consequence. The new framework and accompanying inspection cycle has the potential for a judgement that provision is inadequate. The CIF is also linked closely to the LSC's business cycle, which includes an annual Self Assessment Report (SAR), a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and an Annual Rolling Plan. These documents form an integral part of a rigorous quality framework that

requires, for example, all learning to have a scheme of work and lesson plan alongside an individual learner record which contains learner specific and measurable targets. In one sense this process mirrors that which has been common in the compulsory education sector for some time. However in the post compulsory world of adult education characterised to an extent by part time tutors working in relatively informal surroundings, these new requirements contain the seeds of transformation if not revolution.

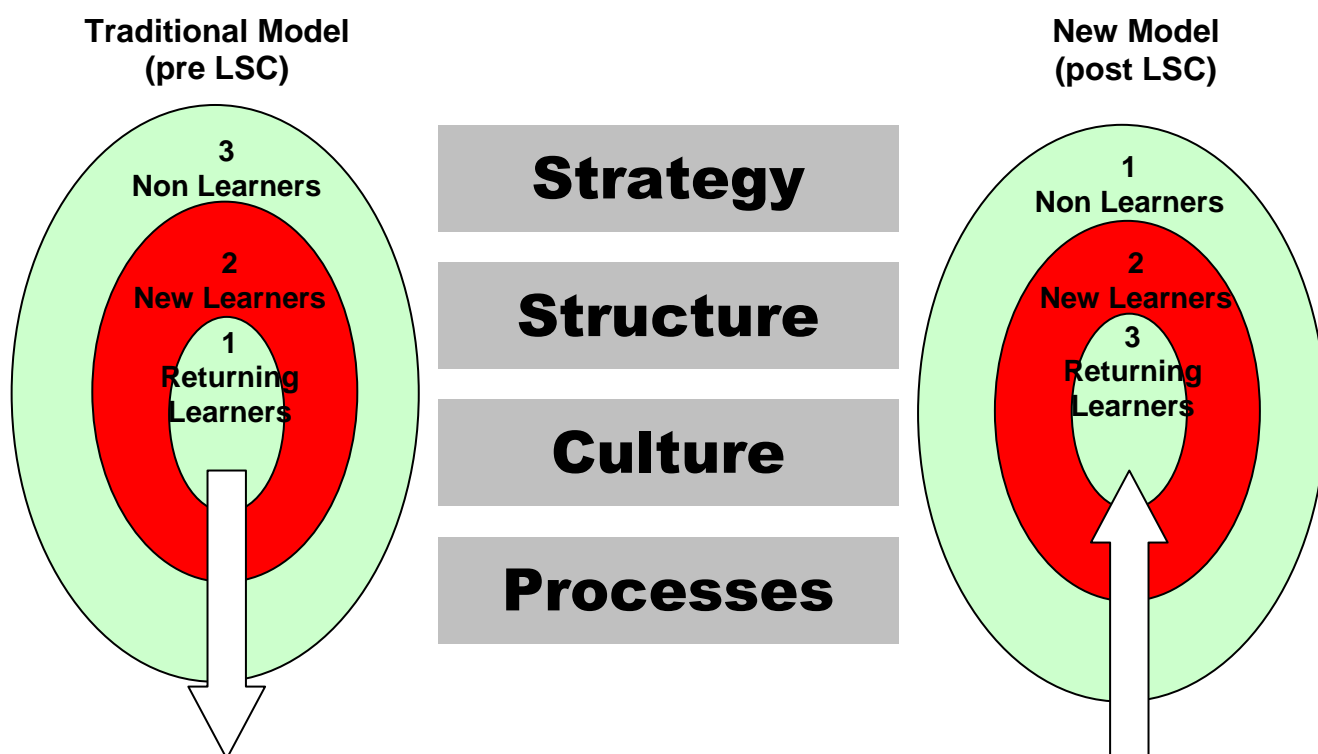
At its most benign this approach represents a national prescription for adult education defining good practice, assessing it against evolving national benchmarks, publishing the outcomes of that assessment and supporting continuous improvement. Inevitably however, the scale between compliance and non-compliance mirrors that between satisfactory and unsatisfactory, success and failure and as Clarke et al (2000 p. 257) note, such assessments '... are intended to have significant consequences for the fortunes of the organisation'. In addition and in order to ensure success, resources may be directed against an ever narrowing set of criteria with a tendency to focus on the 'core business' or on that part of the business which facilitates auditable and audited success.

Summary

The advent of the Adult Learning inspectorate has ushered in a range of significant changes to the sector. Inspection against national criteria (the CIF) and the publication of inspection reports bring increased scrutiny and accountability to both learners and leaders. Inspection also brings a sharp focus on leadership and management not only at service level but also at a political level. Quality assurance systems and value for money assessments link closely to the work and expectations of the Learning and Skills Council. In addition to the more positive and supportive aspects of inspection there may be a tendency to subjugate decision making to the inspection framework thereby removing a degree of professional and local discretion.

3) Transforming Services

The changing approach to Adult and Community Learning discussed in this paper is illustrated by the following:



(Adapted from Pateman 2004)

Diagram 1 illustrates a generalised view of the Learning and Skills Councils proposals and also highlights four bridging themes namely: Strategy, Structure, Culture and Processes. These themes constitute an important part of the transition from 'old' to 'new' and have implications for the 'organisation' and the 'individual'.

On the left of the diagram Service delivery is based on an historical approach to funding allocation and programme focus, concentrating resource on a traditional group of learners who have attended and continued to attend Adult Education provision over a number of years. These are the learners at the centre of the circle. In this model there is very little resource allocation for learners in the outer circle representing what are often defined as the 'hard to reach'. In the diagram to the right the arrow representing resource allocation and programme definition begins at the outer edge engaging with hard to reach groups as the priority for public funding. The previous learners at the centre of the diagram will find that their access to publicly funded provision will change. The outcome of the Learning and Skills Councils proposals will be that this group of learners will pay more for their access to learning. Alternatively they may seek different providers. (See Priorities for Success, Oct 2005)

Before the inception of the Learning and Skills Council, the transfer of powers from Local Authorities and the confirmation of the LSC's agenda in October 2005, Local Authorities were in a position to exercise a significant degree of autonomy and flexibility in relation to their provision for Adults. Legislation in 2000 had the effect of nationalising the adult education budget with a clear aim of securing a minimum offer for adults wherever they lived.

The more recent context is located in a funding framework and a set of national criteria that defines need alongside what is valid, acceptable and publicly fundable, learning. The revised Common Inspection Framework (ALI/OfSTED, 2005) defines the parameters within which the processes supporting teaching and learning are legitimised and subjected to public scrutiny.

In summary The Adult and Community Education sector is being transformed. Funding and provision that was previously the statutory responsibility of local authorities is now firmly located within the remit and responsibility of the Learning and Skills Councils. In future learning will be purchased by the LSC from a range of accredited providers in order to meet their priorities and targets. This more marketised strategy represents a significant departure from previous arrangements under which local authorities operated to deliver services either directly or through contractual arrangements. This range of changes is located in a wider context, that of changes to the way in which government policy is managed and implemented at local authority level and mirrors the broader challenge to the what Clarke and Newman (1997) have termed the post war 'welfare settlement'.

4) The Changing Face of Public Service

Since the mid 70s there has been a focus on what Clarke and Newman (1997) describe as changes to the welfare settlement. Gramsci (1971) quoted in Clarke and Newman (p.1) observes that crises '... create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life.' The economic and social circumstances of the 70s evidenced by events such as the oil price shock (1973), the Labour Governments subsequent recourse to the International Monetary Fund, increasing unemployment and the social conflict generated through the period of unrest leading to the Callaghan Governments nemesis in the Winter of Discontent (1979) could certainly be categorised as a crisis and as such provide the 'fertile terrain' to which Gramsci alludes.

These changes are a precursor to a challenge to the welfare consensus and a move towards an ideology that sees expenditure on public services as a cost (to the economy) rather than an investment. Public finances came under scrutiny during the adverse social and economic pressures of the 1970s, and funding spent on welfare was not, from this perspective, seen to be making a positive contribution to GDP. Indeed welfare services were deemed to be removing investment from the economy and thereby contributing to its increasing inefficiency. Clarke and Newman (1997, p.14) also observe that in the process of developing this critique as a challenge to the post war consensus the New Right in both Britain and America '...targeted the welfare state as an active agency in the process of national decline, rather than simply an economic drain on the country's resources.' Clarke et al (2000, p.2) add further weight to this debate noting that 'The anti-welfarist element of the New Right treated welfare spending as economically unproductive (a drain on the real economy) and as socially damaging (producing a dependency culture).' Alongside the economic argument, elements of the New Right also perceived the State to interfering in the 'natural workings of market processes- a distorting intrusion.'

In summary this discourse promotes the view that not only are public services inefficient they are also (through their monopolistic status) an intrusion into the workings of the free market.

During this process of modernisation the discourse associated with previous forms of bureaucratic and administrative management was gradually replaced by one, which is more aligned to that of the 'business' world capturing the language of effectiveness and efficiency and at the same time engaging with the growing dominance of neo liberal market driven philosophy. (see for example Pollitt (1993) Clarke & Newman (1997), Clarke et al (2000), Banks (2004) and Newman et al (2005) for a more extensive elaboration of these issues)

This shift in perception of welfare, and the welfare settlement, has profound implications for the state and its relationship to public services. A number of themes emerge from sections 2-4. These can be summarised under three main headings namely modernisation, governance and accountability and are discussed in more detail in the next section. Table 1 (p 22) outlines key emergent interactions.

5) A Web of Consequences.

5.1) The Modernisation of Management

Whilst the provision of adult education and post 18 learning opportunities is not part of mainstream welfare provision, as an integral part of the 'local authority' service offer, this area will be subject to the same overarching shifts in managerial philosophy that have impacted on the local authority and its statutory services. In addition to service specific issues it must be acknowledged that local authorities are themselves subject to scrutiny through, for example, the Corporate Performance Assessment (Audit Commission, 2005) and the more recent proposals to develop Local Area Agreements for service delivery (ODPM, 2004). It would be naïve to assume that service delivery does not have a local culture and its own set of values, behaviours and assumptions and that these remain unchallenged by the managerialist paradigm.

Clarke and Newman (1997, p.22) in discussing what they define as the move towards the 'Managerial State' note the findings of Butcher (1995) who states that - '...a system based upon the practices and values of public administration is being replaced by a new set of practices and values based on a language of welfare delivery which emphasises efficiency and value for money, competition and markets, consumerism and customer care'. Furthermore these systems are separated from the 'content and character' of the services that delivers them. Table 1(p22) illustrates the spectrum of managerial changes that are impacting upon the adult and community education sector. These range from the imposition of a new 'business cycle', that sits outside existing local authority processes, through the development of performance management arrangements and performance indicators that link directly to targets and funding. Quality Assurance (Q/A) arrangements are standardised within the LSC and this is an area that is also subject to the lens of external scrutiny in the form of ALI. The Common Inspection Framework links administrative and support processes, through teaching with eventual learner experience. These standardising influences do not as yet extend to the general curriculum offer but they are applied to more specialised areas such as skills for life (literacy and numeracy) which has its own version of a national curriculum and accompanying testing regime.

The introduction of more business oriented management philosophies according to Clarke et al (2000, p.10) has '...changed the dynamics of power between senior managers and politicians' in the continuum from national to local level. The power of those deemed to be strategic has increased and at the same time changed arrangements offer (national) politicians new means of control at a distance. At local level the assertion of political preference may remain an option, however it will be an option with potential financial and political consequence.

The changes outlined above will bring about a transformation to services, replacing existing (local) approaches with novel programmed interventions. Sennett (1998, p.48) notes that: 'Flexible change which takes aim today at bureaucratic routine, seeks to reinvent institutions decisively and irrevocably, so that the present becomes discontinuous from the past.' This will also be impacted by unintended consequences and unforeseen outcomes emanating

from the initial proposals, as Sennett notes (p48) 'Institutional changes, instead of following the path of a guided arrow, head in different and often conflicting directions....' Given the complexity of existing relationships and the embracing nature of change, it is perhaps not surprising that new arrangements lead to a degree of confusion and uncertainty as organisations strive to reach a new equilibrium.

The term management can be applied throughout the range of organisational relationships that comprise this sector. The Learning and Skills Council has managers, the Local Authority has service managers (developing and delivering the service) and Officers (managing political issues and strategy) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate has a group of inspectors who 'manage' its inspections. Different approaches to management (and managing) as outlined above herald a number of changes at both strategic and operational levels. Changed accountabilities in the sector mean that services are not just accountable to their local authorities but also to the new funding agency, the Learning and Skills Council. Performance measures and new planning processes are being introduced with their attendant cycles of monitoring and evaluation set alongside implications for funding. Newer conceptions of the stakeholder and the customer have a clear and significant impact on previous customers and whilst changes inspired by national policy are to an extent mediated at regional and local level, their potency remains intact

Newman et al (p.130) draw attention to the potential for '--- an increase in the emotional labour required as they (in this case managers) engage with the public and manage the tension and stress points arising at the interface between policy and practice, resources and need...'

As noted above service managers, in particular, may be subject to additional tensions. The local authority will, as I have outlined, have an historical way of working which may have been successful in engaging local people in its (local) learning offer. Its service will (of necessity) be structured and staffed to support this programme. Its Service plans and planning processes will reflect its (local) purpose and the commitment of the local authority to its particular brand of service delivery. Working relationships, built over time may be very effective for this particular purpose. These strategies, structures, cultures and processes that underpin the service may or may not be 'fit for purpose' under the new and changing arrangements. At a very practical level new skills and competencies may be introduced or reinforced whilst at the same time the importance of others may be significantly diminished. For example the rise in importance of Quality Assurance processes (the LSC and ALI exemplify this) and the increasing importance of management information require a range of new skills and (service) capacities which have historically been of marginal importance in the sector.

Managers in the Learning and Skills Council have also acquired a new range of unfamiliar sectoral responsibilities. Alongside more traditional sectors such as Work Based Training and Further Education, Adult Education is a new responsibility requiring different knowledge, expertise, understandings, networks and partnerships. In addition the LSC has a gate-keeping role for the distribution of public funding which extends to the criteria by which that funding is allocated.

As a consequence of changing policy tutors, arguably one of the more important service stakeholders, may find that their cherished and practiced skills are no longer required. Long standing relationships may be terminated or shifted to a different footing. Tutors may also find that their teaching practice, based on years of experience, does not meet the rigors of the Common Inspection Framework and they are now required to: be observed teaching, undertake staff development, complete schemes of work, lesson plans and individual learner records. With the emphasis on the hard to reach groups and the previous non-learner, tutor skills may also need enhancing to meet the needs of proposed target groups. Conversely some tutors will find that their skills are in increasing demand. For example, Skills for Life and Family Learning programmes are an important feature of the new agenda and are strongly aligned with national priorities.

5.2 From Government to Governance

A second emergent theme is that of governance and according to Newman (2005, p.1) 'Governmental power is both retreating – with state institutions being slimmed down, 'hollowed out' decentred and marketised- and (at the same time) expanding, reaching into more and more of citizens' personal lives: for example their decisions about work, health and parenting.' At the same time, partnership groups, community organisations and citizens themselves – are being 'empowered' by those same policy reforms and new 'political spaces' potentially opened up.' Bottery (2004, p.6) also notes '... the paradoxical combination of empowerment for managers to be more entrepreneurial, yet at the same time to implement and come into line with more central directives.' Clarke (2000, p.4) also highlights this paradox when stating that 'The restructuring of the state involved the centralisation of control and direction and at the same time as the decentralisation or dispersal of service provision or delivery'. This circumstance is illustrated by the constraints of funding criteria set against a local government agenda that embraces meeting need at local level.

As highlighted in Table 1 one of the more significant policy interventions is the change in statutory responsibility for the service. This is of particular significance when set alongside other aspects of policy such as target setting and an increasing emphasis on multi agency delivery (including partnership). At national level it is clear that Government continues to set the framework within which policy is both described and implemented. From an Adult Education perspective this is illustrated by a nationalised budget allocated against nationally defined priority groups through the National Skills Strategy. Newman(ed) (2005, p.8) describes the role of the state in this context as 'metagovernance' - setting the rules of the game within which networks operate and steering the overall process of coordination.' This move towards different forms of governance whereby parameters, either in terms of policy, or more indirectly in terms of financial (or other) criteria, are defined at national level and implemented more locally by non governmental agencies is also highlighted by Clarke et al (2000, p. 5) 'Organisational forms of government are tilted increasingly to what Skelcher (1998, quoted in Clarke et al) has called 'quasi-government': the growth of non elected agencies directing and overseeing the spending of public

money and the provision of public services'. The Learning and Skills Council is but one manifestation of this approach.

In the context of this paper the statutory power and duty to secure Adult and Community Education has shifted from local authorities to the Learning and Skills Council. As previously noted, powers and responsibilities that were previously exercised through local government are now discharged through a non-governmental body. However, whilst this may appear to reduce the power of government, removing direct provider status, the framework within which this change takes place ensures that funding is used to further the governments longer term aims and objectives. (See Skills Strategy 2003 and Priorities for Success, 2005))

Dispersal of power in the context of a centralisation of the policy function linked to targets and funding criteria and at the same time promoting an intensification of managerial control through inspection and audit regimes. What Clarke and Newman define as (p.23) 'new forms of control' such as non-elected boards and agencies such as Trusts demonstrate an extension of state power through 'new and unfamiliar means' (p.26) This approach has the effect of changing our previous conception of the state from one form of hierarchical government and replacing it with more differentiated structures. These structures which whilst remaining hierarchical are also characterised by partnership and interagency/network-based coordination. Defining, managing and implementing policy in this way fosters another set of concerns involving those on the receiving end of policy. Newman et al (2005 p.13) note that a lack of coherence in government strategy may '...embody internal contradictions and points of fracture.' giving rise to a sense of policy fragmentation. In this context Newman (p13) highlights the importance of governance through partnership and in particular bottom up participation that stresses participation in the form of engagement, consultation and community. Unfortunately this approach is not universal within implementation structures that define need from a relatively narrow platform of learning deficit and apportion funding in relation to contractual (and target) obligations. Partnership however offers one means of reconciling and re integrating services at local level and in addition has the potential to alleviate duplication and competition thereby promoting a more effective and efficient use of resources.

Local politicians have previously had domain over what has until recently been the local Adult Education Service.. Locally agreed fee policies being but one manifestation of this discretion. This local influence has to a large extent disappeared as the statutory responsibility, along with the funding, has moved to the Learning and Skills Councils. Local discretion to the extent that it does exist will do so only within defined parameters. Whilst local authorities may wish to inject additional funding into local services to meet specific local need the over riding raison d'être for the service will remain located in the National Skills Strategy.

National policies for learning and skills may or may not resonate with the views of the local authority in the guise of its elected politicians, the imperative is however to implement policy. There is no local discretion in terms of the learning that the LSC will wish to purchase from the Local Authority. Learning will be directly linked to the National Skills Strategy and LSC funding can only be used

to support that strategy. Regular data returns at pre-determined census dates ensure fidelity between funding allocation and the learner cohort. In some cases this approach may be very much at odds with local practice. For example a local authority may support (historically) a programme that is heavily biased towards the provision of fitness classes. These classes, whilst legitimate under a 'healthy living' or 'social skills' agenda are not overtly integral to the National Skills Strategy. In the future the LSC will determine just how much of this type of provision it commissions through providers such as local authorities. This has significant implications for local politicians in terms of constituency issues and also highlights a tension between policies which for example, promote healthy living and at the same time reduce available funding. Local learners who have an expectation (built up over many years of attendance) that their classes will be maintained, will no doubt have their own perspective.

5.3 Audit and Accountability

Perhaps the most overt manifestation of change is the increasing emphasis on audit functions. In the absence of the previously dominant local bureaucratic structures some intensification of function could be regarded as inevitable. However the role of audit, traditionally concerned with financial fidelity, has also become the means by which (distant) policy makers exercise a degree of implementation (and output) oversight. A less controversial viewpoint would be to see audit as a consequence of policy rather than a policy in its own right.

Clarke (2000, p. 252) offers two conceptions of audit, firstly in representing a new embodiment of the public interest which could be trusted because of its 'independence' and secondly a new form of control enabling government to exercise 'supervision and direction of services that are increasingly being provided by new devolved, decentralised and dispersed organisational forms', for example, the Learning and Skills Council and the Adult Learning Inspectorate.

Bottery (2004, p.193) compares two different styles of audit (after Power, 1994) one qualitative and facilitative the other firmly located in a '...quantitative, low trust, single measure approach' similar to that outlined above and currently the more dominant model. This approach places a heavy reliance on external agencies and at the same time allows 'government to claim effective functioning, both for themselves and the institutions being audited'. In addition this model appears to facilitate the allocation of blame through the publication of reports by the Adult Learning Inspectorate. Bottery (p.187) also notes the potential for what he sees as 'the punitive consequences of non compliance', the reverse of this being the opportunity to celebrate success after a successful inspection outcome.

Banks (2004, p.8) states that 'The modern management agenda of the late 1990s and early 2000s in the UK has intensified the accountability demands on the public services'. In being subject to increasing levels of internal and external regulation and audit it would appear that the scope for autonomy in professional decision making and the room for practitioner discretion are being eroded. There is a paradox here. On the one hand new accountabilities and funding criteria appear to promote new practitioner constraints and new barriers whilst on the

other hand there is a cry for innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit in relation to programme design, development and implementation. Clarke et al in discussing the role of audit in the dispersed state argue that (2000 p.254) 'The great attraction of audit and accounting practice is that they appear to reconcile these centrifugal and centripetal forces better than available alternatives.' Audit, according to Power (1993, p.16) quoted in Clarke et al (2000, p.254) '...symbolises a cluster of values: independent validation, efficiency, rationality, visibility almost irrespective of the mechanisms of the practice and, in the final analysis , the promise of control'.

This analysis is compelling, however the increasing reliance on developing accountability through audit functions may also be instrumental in undermining levels of organisational trust. Bottery (p.193) highlights this as a concern. Paradoxically, the breadth of the audit function is resource intensive. Set alongside a managerial agenda premised on the effective and efficient use of resources, the argument becomes somewhat diminished.

Audit relies increasingly on the use of sophisticated ICT systems. Collection and use of information through these systems has additional implications. The overall effect of introducing funding criteria into the sector and attendant oversight through the use of Management Information Systems (MIS) shifts the discretion for decision making and restricts the activity scope of frontline managers. Software systems begin to take on the role of criteria analysis, funding eligibility and budget allocation. Room for discretion exists at the level of the funding agency rather than 'service professional'. This reinforces an earlier point about the diminishing capacity of workers to exercise creativity and to make creative responses to need. Discretion is driven out of the system and the role of public facing staff is changed and mediated through the requirement to re-skill in relation to new circumstances. There is an emergent conflict between previous dispositions and ways of working, values beliefs, organisational culture, and the increasing dominance of the interpretive framework of the new.

Lipsky (1980, p.3) notes that the 'actions of most public service employees constitutes the service delivered' however, as stated above, the scope for flexibility and discretion in relation to the way in which policy is applied is much reduced under funding regimes that are in the first instance targeted and are in addition monitored through information systems that allocate funding at the level of the individual learner. Using the metaphor of the Street Level Bureaucrat (SLB). In these revised circumstances the SLB inputs learner and programme details into a management information system. software. Henceforth funding decisions are computerised and flexibility at local level is mediated through computer software (the rise of software bureaucracy) and not management decisions.

Simon Head (2003, p.164) offers an additional insight in the context of a discussion about the implications of the ICT revolution proposing that the manager's working life becomes increasingly '...visible to the gaze of his superiors.' and notes that for the first time managers (and funding bodies) will be able to monitor activity in 'real time' 'there is no hiding when performance is poor...' recalling Foucault's notion of panoptic power and the induction of a perception of permanent visibility to the extent that ---- once the computer is up and running so too is the possibility of managerial monitoring and control. Whilst

this is an exaggerated position in the current circumstances, the use of management information for the collection of on line and 'real time' data measuring performance against targets is a reality.

Learners are at the centre of this provision and (both current and past) find themselves in an invidious position. From a funding perspective the LSC have re-defined the notion of a learner, that is a learner who attracts a public subsidy. The new 'learner' is a previous non-learner, perhaps best described as a potential learner, someone with a numeracy/literacy need or without a level 2 qualification. The local authority will be accountable, through its contract with the LSC, to deliver learning for the required targeted learner cohort. The traditional service learner, perhaps someone who has been returning to 'the class or a class' for a number of years may find themselves in a position where the class no longer exists or alternatively that fees have doubled. The class may fall outside the priority curriculum areas and the individual learner does may meet the criteria for publicly subsidised learning.

6) Summary

The agenda outlined above is challenging to organisations and individuals at a number of levels. In the first instance there is the change at 'Meta' policy level that has captured the discourse of modernisation through the pervasive ideology of neo liberalism and the subsequent drive to make public services more businesslike and accountable. One significant consequence of this has been an attempt to bring the power of the market to the public sector changing the relationship between 'government' and the means by which services (and policy) are delivered.

In addition and inseparable from the above this transformational agenda has impacted on a wide range of (previously established) relationships both internal and external organisations and it is in this context that I would like to conclude.

Relationships and trust are at the heart of this paper. The most significant issues relate to changing relationships and the way that previous levels of power, influence, skills, competence and flexibility are affected by the change process. This would apply at all levels within the organisation, political, strategic and operational. Transformational change at an ideological level has the power to disrupt and realign both internal and external relationships. Fullan (1991,p.31) quoting Marris (1975) makes the point that all real change involves '...loss, anxiety and struggle.' Accordingly, 'Real change represents a serious personal and collective experience characterised by ambivalence and uncertainty.' This may result in loss for some and personal growth for others. Whilst reaction to change will always be contingent upon the context within which it is enacted it is also clear that in responding to changes driven at national level, which are almost by definition imposed, there exists the potential for a more cynical set of responses which may elicit creative avoidance or more symbolic forms of compliance. The extent to which the proposals challenge existing organisational values, beliefs and practice will be important and organisational culture will play a significant role. Organisations with established, proven and successful ways of working in one context may find some difficulty in accepting the necessity for disruptive and externally imposed change. O'Hara (2004, p.61) notes that '... trust can bring individuals together, particularly when shared values are

embedded in institutions'. Equally differential effects that challenge those values may prove hard to reconcile. The first function of trust, according to O' Hara (p.62) is to '...integrate society by helping people accept that they are all working towards a common goal.' Imposed policies would seem to mitigate against this level of engagement. A similar point is made about the increasing move towards formal contractual arrangements when, according to O' Hara, recent studies have also shown that the development of trust is actually inhibited by binding contracts. 'Where a binding contract governs an exchange, parties tend not to extend trust, leaving the contractual obligations to govern acceptable behaviour in the exchange.' (2004, p.66)

Impositions leading to a threat to or loss of work, changes to job status, or in the case of managers and politicians, changes to levels of service or organisational influence will have significant effects on the change process and on the climate within which the changes are taking place. O Hara (p.60) notes that 'The extent of integration that can be achieved in a society will of course depend on the consistency between the institutions and the values of the individuals.' This point is illustrated by the tension between the increasing tendency towards audit and the language of compliance and the parallel expectation of positive outcomes from trust as proposed by a move towards more integrated, client centred, and consultative partnership working. The question here becomes to what extent does the policy support the development of trust central to successful implementation?

In a service that is ultimately about learning – the question needs to be asked about the extent to which those involved in delivery (service professionals) have been given the opportunity to learn about the new agenda prior to its introduction. Consultation with end users about need must surely be matched with a reciprocal level of consultation with service professionals and other stakeholders about the efficacy and practicality of policy.

Whilst Fullan (2003, p.22) notes that unpredictability can be a welcome stimulus that promotes novelty and innovation it can also feed dissent, unrest, prejudice and avoidance. Fullan also stresses that '...ownership of the problem and the solution must be within the system' proposing that intrinsic motivation may be a casualty of imposed change.

Taking the matter of commitment and loyalty a step further Sennett (1999, p.24) points out that: 'No long term...' is a principle which erodes trust, loyalty and mutual commitment. The rise of short-term funding and formal contracts illustrate this circumstance, uncertainty and ambiguity adds to the drama. Trust can also be a formal matter, a question of a contract or a written agreement. However, as Sennett (p.24) notes, '...deeper experiences of trust are more informal, as when people learn on whom they can rely when given a difficult or impossible task. Such social bonds take time to develop, slowly rooting in the cracks and crevices of organisations.' Stronger ties that depend on longer-term association are put at risk during periods of uncertainty and restructure. Sennett (p25) reinforces the link between change and potentially dissonant behaviours noting that: 'Detachment and superficial cooperativeness are better armour for dealing with current realities than behaviour based on values, loyalty and service'.

There remains a certain irony in the above, and in particular in link being forged between learning and economic growth. Fukuyama (1995) for example argues that different rates of economic expansion between nations can be considered in terms levels of trust (p.7) '... one of the most important lessons we can learn from an examination of economic life is that a nations well-being, as well as its ability to compete, is conditioned by a single, pervasive cultural characteristic: the level of trust inherent in society'.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in its 10 year vision for local government (2004, p.14) places a heavy emphasis on trust. 'Our vision is: greater participation by people in decisions that affect them locally, leading to services which better match the needs and preferences of communities. This requires: building trust that engagement makes a difference, offering new opportunities to engage, particularly for those who have not felt empowered'.

If we consider that trust, at one level or another may be one of the casualties of managerialism and its attendant consequences then we have a circumstance where the potential policy outcomes are undermined by the methodology of policy implementation.

Paradoxically as we intensify our efforts to facilitate inclusion, to enable and ensure access to learning, to promote learning in the cause of social and economic regeneration then we do need to pause and consider the extent to which our efforts to date actually undermine the very circumstances that we are attempting to promote.

Amongst the apparent fragmentation and ambiguity of policy, developments in local government appear to offer a remedial route. For example the ODPM (2004) document 'The future of local government: Developing a 10 year vision', places an emphasis on the strategic and coordinating role of local authorities, echoing the need for coherence and a degree of reintegration at local level, in the creation of sustainable communities (p.8) '...places where people want to live and that promote opportunity and a better quality of life for all.' Local government must (p.9):

- involve local communities,
- find innovative and joined up solutions to specific local problems,
- coordinate delivery
- combine good management with strong accountability,
- join up and balance competing demands.

This range of responsibilities is supported through Corporate Performance Assessment undertaken by the Audit Commission (2005) and reinforced through the development of Local Area Agreements, ODPM (2004).

Whilst there remains a danger as Bottery (2004, p31) notes of a '...world stripped of local meaning' by an intensification of national (if not global) policy templates and efficiency mandates, there may also be, in the chaos of disruption, an opportunity to reinvigorate local democracy and civic engagement through the development of more authentic forms of engagement and consultation at local and community level.

Table 1

Theme	Impacts
The Modernisation of Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the Learning and Skills Councils 'Business Cycle' into the local authority sector. Including the 1 Year Rolling Plan, the Quality Improvement Plan and the Self Assessment Report • Intensification of Performance Management through targets linked to funding and in year adjustment. • Introduction of standardised Quality Assurance processes across the sector • Standardisation of performance Management through the LSC and ALI • Definition of need, legitimate learning and legitimate learners • Curriculum definition • Formalised contractual arrangements
From Government to Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of the statutory 'duty' to secure provision from local government and location with the Learning and Skills Councils. • Promotion of national targets at local level through non governmental body • Increasing emphasis on working in partnership and with other agencies including the voluntary sector. • Increasing emphasis on 'learner' and community consultation
Audit and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional audit process via the LSC against grant conditions • Additional external audit • Specific targets and reporting mechanisms via monthly update and census dates • Annual Individual Learner Record return (ILR) • Publication of Inspection Reports • Necessity of MIS software • Risk Analysis by LSC of Local Authority plans and targets

Table 2

Theme	Potential Impacts On
Modernisation of Management	<p>Culture (Organisation and Service) Structure (Service) Strategy (Service & Organisational issues) Processes (Service and Organisation) Link also to external stakeholders and partners</p>
From Government to Governance	<p>Strategy (Service and Organisation) Asserts new contractual arrangements and also defines a range of changing Political (and political) relationships at management and organisational level. Partnership and collaborative arrangements</p>
Audit and Accountability	<p>Structure (Service in the first instance) Organisation in terms of 'reputation' and established audit cycles Cultural (Service) Strategy (Service – may also be distorted due to focus on meeting audit requirements) Processes (Service and challenge to Organisational practice)</p>

Bibliography

A Clear Direction: Learning and Skills Council (December, 2005)

Banks, S. (2004) Ethics, Accountability and the Social Professions Palgrave Macmillan

Bottery, M. (2004) The Challenges of Educational Leadership London, Paul Chapman Publishing

Bovaird, T. and Loffler, E. eds., (2003) Public Management and Governance London, Routledge

Clarke, J and Newman, J. (1997) The Managerial State London, Sage

Clarke, J. Gewirtz, S. McLaughlin, E. eds., (2000) *New Managerialism New Welfare?* London, Sage

Common Inspection Framework (April 2005) ALI/OfSTED

CPA- the harder test The Audit Commission (October 2005)

Fukuyama, F. (1995) *TRUST: The Social Virtues And The Creation Of Prosperity* New York, Free Press

Fullan, M. (2003) *Change Forces With a Vengeance* London, Routledge/Falmer

Fullan, M. and Stiegelbaur, S. (1991) *The New Meaning of Educational Change* London, Cassell

Head, S. (2003) *The New Ruthless Economy: Work and Power in the Digital Age* New York, Oxford University Press

21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential (2003) TSO

Lipsky, M. (1980) *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services* New York, Russell Sage Foundation.

Local Area Agreements: a prospectus (2004) ODPM

Newman, J. ed., (2005) *Remaking Governance: Peoples, politics and the public sphere* Bristol, Policy Press

O'Hara, K. (2004) *TRUST: From Socrates to Spin* Cambridge, Icon

Pateman, J. (2004) *Developing a Needs Based Library Service Update, Vol 3 (5)* pp24-37

Pollit, C. (1993) *Managerialism and Public Services*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell

Pollitt, C. (2003) *The Essential Public Manager* Maidenhead, Open University Press

Priorities for Success Learning and Skills Council (October, 2005)

Rammell, B. (Oct 2005) *Letter to Providers: Strategy and Priorities for Funding in Further Education and Training*. DfES

Ritzer, G. (2004) *The McDonaldisation of Society (revised edit)* California, Pine Forge

Sennett, R. (1999) *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* New York, Norton

The future of local government: Developing a 10 year vision (2004) ODPM

Tuckett, A. (2005) Enough is Enough Adults Learning Vol 17 (1) p 6

21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential (2003) TSO

Ulsaner, E. M. (2002) The Moral Foundations of Trust Cambridge University Press