Diversifying the South West Further Education and Training Workforce

**Survey conducted on behalf of the
SWitch Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training by the
School of Education, University of the West of England,
Bristol (UWE) in collaboration with Western Training Provider
Network (WTPN)**

Executive Summary

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

The research

This research was conducted on behalf of the SWitch Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training by the School of Education, University of the West of England Bristol (UWE) in collaboration with Western Training Provider Network (WTPN). The aim was to evaluate the implementation in the south west of the Government's 2007-12 *Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England.* It also offers recommendations for improvement in related practice.

The research was carried out during the academic year 2009/10 and involved a series of uniformly structured on-site interviews, at each of six further education colleges and at seven private providers of work based learning. These were with a HR Manager and a separate one to one interview was held with a teacher or trainer who was a member of an underrepresented group, relating to one of the equality 'strands' as set out and discussed by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Statistical data was collected, to help with analysis of the institutions' workforces in relation to the equality strands. The project generated 12 case studies each designed to illustrate impact on an individual member of the workforce, and sought answers to a series of research questions. The **outcomes** are summarized below, followed by a summary of report **recommendations**:

Research Outcomes

Question 1. What is the scope and interpretation of the inclusive legislation by various stakeholders?

• **Scope and interpretation.** All HR managers had a good understanding of the institutional policy implications of recent legislation, though it was clear in some cases that there were anxieties as to the adequacy of their preparation for inspection requirements. See next question:

Question 2. What is the current demographic of teaching staff in a group of providers across the South West and to what extent does it 'represent the communities they serve',

• **Data capture** is a general issue for the sector and inadequate statistics restricted the ability of the project always to arrive at an authoritative picture of the statistical breakdown of the workforce in the establishments researched. The same problem therefore applies to HR seeking to track progress in their institutions. In part this originated from inadequate, outdated,

approaches to data capture. However, even where the right kinds of data are requested, some teachers and trainers are apparently reluctant to disclose personal information to a manager.

- **Updating the HR E & D database**. The status of staff may well change – perhaps not with regard to all 'strands', but some 'strands' may be subject to different declaration as a career progresses, e.g. as a disability comes and goes. None of our providers have yet begun to use HR software which allows staff to take part in 'web based self-service' update of their personal information. We found at our main dissemination event that other providers are using this and expect it to have a positive impact wherever adopted.

- **Gender differences:** women comprised the majority of staff in most colleges and were never in the minority except in certain cohorts of trainee teachers.

- **BME** staff were more likely to be found in urban providers. Though we suspected that BME teachers formed a larger proportion of less qualified or unqualified teachers than of qualified teachers, there were insufficient data in our sample to substantiate this.

- **Disability** had been declared by far fewer than the proportion in the population as a whole. However, in some cases HR had collected no data. It may have been indicative that no formally self-declared disabled people found their way to interview and our only interviewee with reason to declare, had deliberately chosen not to disclose their status.

- **Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT).** Information in these respects was almost nonexistent in the data. New data collection methods will build a database about incoming staff but we encountered no plans to request this information of current staff.

- **Age** profile statistics were not always available to our HR contacts However, where we had figures, age profiles were variable and one college in particular seemed to have a very high proportion of over fifties, no doubt raising issues of succession planning!

- **Matching of staff to students**: Insofar as we found data, the staff BME demographic especially was closer to that of the general population (i.e. lower) than to that of students, which was significantly higher, especially in urban centres as discussed above. Providers have a huge task ahead as the new inspection regime requires them to show how they are matching staff to student profiles.

Question 3
What are the common experiences, if any, of teachers from underrepresented areas, in terms of career entry and trajectory?

- **Effects of positive action**: No one we met had found their job through a targeted recruitment initiative aimed at their 'equality strand', though the sector has been aiming to do this for many years.

- **Experience in employment**: Predictably, once employed, experiences varied greatly. It was possible for a woman to experience subtle discrimination in one construction department and for another woman in a similar situation elsewhere to feel very comfortable. LGBT interviewees described enormous improvements in their work climate and attributed this in part to new inspection priorities. BME interviewees had apparently not experienced discrimination as such, though one felt that colleagues had attributed his promotion to positive discrimination, which disturbed him. There was no evidence that older or disabled staff experienced disadvantage, though we had little data upon which to base any inference.

Question 4. How are providers across the sector actively addressing the workforce strategy?

- **Comparison of WBL and college based further education**. There was both excellent and occasionally underdeveloped practice in both colleges and in work based learning providers. In other words, commitment to equality and diversity is not markedly higher in either of the two arms of further education.

- **Staff satisfaction**. Where there was less comprehensive Equality and Diversity practice, lower levels of staff satisfaction and morale were reported than in more advanced providers.

- **Barriers to action.** These include a feeling of helplessness in **transforming easy rhetoric into strong deeds** such as, for example, progressing from, say, a BME staff membership of 5%, to a percentage consistent with their student BME population of 16%. Another was a **lack of ideas** for recruiting diverse new staff and of course the difficulty of **persuading existing staff to take a risk with personal information.**

- **Costs.** The equality and diversity agenda may seem to some providers to be too expensive in hard up times. However, there is a persuasive business case as well as a moral and cultural one. Where providers diversified their workforce, they reported some positive impact on their student recruitment.

- **Personal commitment of managers**. HR managers, though clearly in part driven by the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework and the Equalities Act, were, just as clearly, personally committed to attracting all talents for the benefit of learners.

- **Changed attitudes.** A picture has emerged of a sector often working very hard to adapt to stringent new expectations. LGBT staff particularly have experienced a sea change in management attitudes, even in previously traditionally minded providers.

The recommendations.

Imaginative thinking will be promoted through talking with one another within and across provider boundaries, something demonstrated usefully during the dissemination phase of this research. Each provider should consult widely within its organisation to consider how it can best:

1.   **Improve data capture relating to new and existing staff**
2.   **Ensure data includes gender identity, sexual orientation & age categories**
3.   **Consider using new self-service e-software to track recruitment and staff profiles**
4.   **Enlist the help of the workforce in finding safe, acceptable ways to collect sensitive data**
5.   **Train recruitment staff**
6.   **Analyse local demographics**
7.   **Target underrepresented local populations in their own milieu**
8.   **Stimulate word of mouth recommendations**
9.   **'Grow' its own teachers**
10. **Consider extending the '2 ticks' policy to all underrepresented groups**
11. **Nurture unsuccessful candidates to reapply successfully**
12. **Establish staff interest groups and/or diversity support teams**
13. **Move enough resource and energy into recruitment and selection**
14. **Plan CPD from induction, e.g. 'black leadership' programmes**
15. **Track promotion and CPD**
16. **Undertake systematic exit interviews**
17. **Plan for succession to ensure equal opportunities for underrepresented colleagues**
18. **Build E & D specifically into appraisals**
19. **Build a repertoire of E&D study at appropriate levels inc e-learning**
20. **Consider shared <u>staff</u> activity dimension to whole college E&D themes**
21. **Clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of personnel employed to implement policies.**

To download a full copy of the report go to:

http://www.switchcett.org.uk/file.php/1/Overview_of_Project_Materials_Update_18.10.10_.htm