Education and Training for the 21st Century: The College Perspective

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Introduction

- Ian Ashman, President of AoC, a one year, ambassadorial role, elected from serving principals
- Until August principal of Hackney Community College in east London
- AoC is a membership organisation representing over 300 colleges in England
- We provide, technical, professional, academic, basic skills learning and apprenticeships
- From entry level to post graduate, with most students at levels 2 and 3 – i.e. pre-degree level
- Educate around 1m 16-18 year olds and 2m adults; adults include both people in work and those not working, who are seeking skills
- We are great places to learning professional and technical skills because of our industry standard facilities and vocationally experienced staff
College Response to 21st Century Skills

- Colleges can best respond to the needs of the economy, employers & students for skills for C21 by:
  1. Ensuring provision is broadly matched to meet labour market needs
  2. Offering a range of provision types/modes of study to suit the needs of students
  3. Ensuring students develop ‘core skills’, ‘soft skills’ and the ability to transfer learning, as well as technical skills
  4. Lobbying government to ensure that the resources are available to support lifelong learning
- Outside of colleges I’d also argue the need for a great system of course/careers advice, to guide people
Ensuring a Match to the Labour Market

• Need to ensure that course content stays up to date with broad industry trends
• But without becoming too specific
• For example some English apprenticeship frameworks are now too narrow e.g. Dual Fuel Meter Installation
• Welcome the proposals of our Government for 15 broad professional and technical pathways
• With employers panels to keep course content up to date
Important to offer a range of types of provision:
- Academic Education
- Professional and technical education, including college-based and apprenticeship routes
- Bridging courses and applied vocational, allowing people to transfer between the two types

And modes of study:
- Full time study
- Part time (more important with pace of skills change)
- Blended learning; mixing classroom and online learning
• We need to ensure we cover the core skills – in recognition that maths, English and IT skills are now essential in almost every job role
• In addition, employer surveys say that they are looking for people with ‘soft skills’ e.g. teamwork, presentation skills, problem solving and project management skills, so we need types of learning that develop these
• As job change accelerates, the ability to learn how to learn becomes more important and needs to be taught
• Also we need to recognise the implications of the employer mantra – ‘recruit for attitude – train for skills’ – we need to emphasise and reinforce the importance of great attendance, punctuality, reliability and attitude
Funding Lifelong Learning

- As the pace of skills change accelerates we need to give everyone the opportunity to invest in updating their skills.
- Investment currently highly differentiated e.g. in the NHS, our largest employer, 10% of the training budget is spent on the bottom 5 (of 10) grades of staff.
- Need investment by individuals, government and employers in proportion to needs and benefits.
- AoC with are advocating for a system of lifelong learning accounts, with government investment prioritising its investment in the people and skills in greatest need, with employers and individuals also able to contribute.