

The Education & Training Foundation

Information Pack

Background of the FE Guild/ Education and Training Foundation

The thinking that underpins the concept of the Foundation and the principles it has since adopted can be found in the earliest articulation of the Coalition Government 'reform' programme started in 2010. It is often said that one of the aims of Coalition policy on adult skills was to follow **one strategy** and **one funding plan** for the duration of the Parliament.

The **strategy**, *Skills for Sustainable Growth* (November 2010) and the **funding plan**, *Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth* (November 2010) cover the period 2011-15 and set a clear direction of travel that subsequent documents elaborate on or seek to implement. The suite of 'reform plan' publications under the heading *New Challenges, New Chances* and the *Skills Funding Statement 2012-2015* are there, ostensibly at least, to implement strategy rather than develop it.

The July-October 2010 ‘consultation on the future direction of skills policy’ has all the themes we have since become familiar with: the importance of skills to the economy, the need for a more responsive system, putting choice in the hands of informed consumers—be they employers or individuals—and a recognition of the breadth and diversity of a sector that delivers on both economic and social outcomes, often at the same time. Skills Minister John Hayes’s Foreword also alludes to ‘rediscovering craft’ something that can perhaps be applied, in retrospect, as much to how professionals learn as well as students.

The Lingfield Review and the announcement of an FE Guild.

As a practical response to the issues raised by Lord Lingfield in his report of March 2012, BIS officials developed a paper that went to the FE and Skills Ministerial Advisory Panel, a senior stakeholder group chaired by John Hayes, in early July 2012. The minister concluded from these discussions, as is reported in the Guild Prospectus that there was an ‘an appetite for a modern guild type approach in the sector.’ The same meeting discussed the possibility of Chartered Status for learning providers, something that will come up in the future development of thinking around the role of the Guild and the Foundation

Minister Hayes’s vision in prospectus was of ‘a Guild ...providing the means for the sector to take forward outcomes from Lord Lingfield’s final report, due to be published in September, as well as outcomes later in the year from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) review of teaching qualifications and from the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning.’ Therefore the Guild was always seen as bringing together a number of policy streams as part of ‘a radical reform programme’.

It was stressed that the Guild needed to be ‘an employer-led partnership and provide a focal point for all FE and Skills sector interests in taking forward the professionalism flowing from the Lingfield Review.’ The document also outlined ‘key functions and features’ that the Guild would be *likely to include*, such as

‘acting as an overarching body with end to end responsibility for professionalism and vocational education across the sector, including to:

- own professional standards and codes of behaviour for members;
- develop appropriate qualifications for people working in the sector through which people can progress;
- support individual, subject specific and corporate CPD;
- working at a strategic level to help bring in expertise across the sector; and
- support employer recognition of professionalism;

‘offering institutional and individual membership, both of which would be on a voluntary basis:

- corporate membership of the Guild, entailing commitment to standards of workforce professional development and qualifications.
- for the individual there would a strong emphasis on support development and progression through high impact CPD fully recognised and linked to additional higher level qualifications at level 5 and 7;

‘seeking to **enhance the reputation and status of the sector** as a whole through providing a single, collective focus for raising standards of professionalism and being a custodian of excellence. Again, this would be closely linked to individual colleges and providers being able to obtain ‘Chartered’ status as a public stamp of recognition;

‘**an employer-led partnership** drawing in employee representative organisations and sector bodies concerned with workforce development.’

Sector bodies met almost immediately at a meeting convened to by AoC and AELP to discuss a sector-wide proposal to be developed over the summer. The bid needed to be submitted by mid September 2012. At initial meetings there was unanimous support for a whole sector approach, not just to best deliver the important work of the Guild but as a ‘statement of intent’ that the sector was mature enough to manage its own affairs.

The proposal led by the AoC and the AELP won the competitive tender to develop the Guild model, and significantly this was announced at the launch of the final report of the Lingfield Review, *Professionalism in Further Education*, on 23 October 2012. New skills minister Mathew Hancock referred to ‘a guild that will support and enhance the professional standing of those who teach in further education.’ On reporting the Lingfield report, the BIS website referred to its ‘endorsement’ of the concept of an FE Guild.

A key consideration for the foundation is recognition of the **diversity of the sector**: ‘varied in purpose; very large in terms of overall size; ranging across public, private and charitable organizations from the small and specialized to, increasingly, big educational businesses with national and international reach; and dependent for its quality on the creativity, confidence and sense of professional self-worth of nearly 200,000 teaching staff.’

In terms of workforce diversity, there is the recognition, too, of the high levels of part time staff. The issue of **dual professionalism** is referred to, as is the importance of professional updating in this context.

Professional identity was also felt to be recognizable but not as robust as in some other sectors for example Higher Education. Part of this was linked to the identity of the FE sector as a whole, and its diversity. However, there is also the link with the concept of **dual identity** in HE where professionals regard themselves as **teachers and learners simultaneously**. The key is for the sector is to better understand its status and ‘take full advantage of greater autonomy. The proposed FE Guild gives an opportunity to underline the sector’s unity whilst still recognizing its diversity.

An **FE Covenant**, Lingfield feels, would provide a ‘code of professional conduct and those many other matters of mutual interest across the sector which transcend anything that readily can be agreed between the individual employer and its staff. *We see the Covenant as*

an important means towards securing the success of a Guild and something to which all Guild members should formally consent.’ Having said that, Lingfield supports the approach of Government to date—‘consensus rather than coercion’—as the most effective means of achieving this. The guild is described by Lingfield as ‘innovative’ and in line with the general policy approach of ‘letting go’.

‘The Foundation Way’

The Education and Training Foundation was incorporated on 22nd May 2013. Sir Geoff Hall was appointed Interim Chief Executive in June 2013 and the Board was formally appointed on 9th July 2013.

Through the Formative stages of the Guild- Foundation there has been a strong desire to differentiate the way that the Foundation will operate from its many predecessor organisations.

The key components

- Specialist Panels chaired by senior sector people and advised by acknowledged sector experts and leading practitioners who will identify large scale programmes likely to achieve the desired outcomes and impact; and the organisation/bodies capable of delivering such programmes.
- This will be followed by a rigorous procurement and contributing process to ensure robust arrangements that can satisfy public value tests.
- A team of highly respected Programme Assessors will be drawn upon to monitor and evaluate programmes to ensure that they are achieving the impact included and are likely to detail the contracted outcomes; and that lessons can be learned and disseminated to the sector.

Business Model July 2013

