

Sector Developments

More schools for England

The national debt now stands at in excess of £1,000 billion. This is partly as a result of the government having to bail out one bunch of bankers. The government now has to keep another bunch of bankers happy so that they can borrow the money needed to service the national debt at low rates of interest. To keep these bankers happy, the government tells us that public expenditure has to be cut to the bone. It is therefore perhaps surprising to learn that they have somehow managed to find the cash to set up 353 new schools - all in one go. These new schools, which were all opened in September 2012, are as follows:

- **57 Free Schools.** Of these, 19 are primary schools, 19 are secondary schools, 7 are all-age schools, one is a 14-19 school, one is a 16-19 school, 5 are 'alternative provision' schools and 3 are special schools. 2 existing independent schools have now become Free Schools, and as a result have left the private sector and joined the state sector. 33 of the new Free Schools are in areas where there was a need for more school places (suggesting that the other 22 are in areas where there are already sufficient school places). 12 of the new Free Schools have been set up by teachers, 19 have been set up by parents or community groups, 9 have been set up by charities and 13 have been set up by 'existing education providers'.
- **282 Academies.** This takes the total to 2,406 and means that around 55% of secondary school pupils are now taught in academies
- **11 Studio Schools.** (Apparently, not all of these will have studios)
- **3 new University Technical Colleges.** (Not to be confused with technical colleges, or universities).

We may have a government that has given us austerity but, looking on the bright side, we also have a government that has given the country a chance of an entry in the Guinness Book of Records for the largest number of new schools opened in the shortest period of time, anywhere, ever.

Perhaps more seriously, the opening of such a large number of schools will have consequences for the FE sector because most of them will have sixth forms. This leaves colleges facing even more competition for 16-18 year old students in a demographically dwindling market. Presumably in an attempt to even things up a bit, government has said that colleges are to be allowed to compete with schools in recruiting 14-16 year olds. However, the ministerial announcement on how this will work in practice has apparently been 'delayed'. When, and if, the measure is eventually implemented, schools will no doubt be give colleges the same level of access to pupils reaching the age of 14, as they do to pupils reaching the age of 16.

'Bacc' up for qualifications in England

1. *Michel Gove proposes an 'EBacc'*

As reported in last month's **Click** newsletter, Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, has proposed that GCSE's in England should be replaced by a new qualification to be called the 'English Baccalaureate', (now abbreviated to EBacc). The EBacc will initially involve the 'core' subjects of English, mathematics and the sciences. However, it will later be extended to include history, geography and languages, and eventually the remainder of the secondary school curriculum.

2. *Ed Miliband proposes a 'Tech Bacc'*

Following hot foot on Mr Gove's proposals for an EBacc, Ed Miliband, the Leader of the Opposition, has set out his own proposals for a new 'Technical Baccalaureate' (immediately abbreviated to 'Tech Bacc' -which I think sounds like a really good name for a firm specialising in repossessions). Mr Miliband said that the Tech Bacc would be aimed at the 'forgotten 50% of young people who do not go to university' and added that he wanted 'ours to be a country where kids aspire not just to go to Oxford and Cambridge, but also to excellent technical colleges'. Concerns have been expressed that the Tech Bacc might actually reinforce the image of technical and vocational education being for 'less academic' young people, or at best, that it

might create 'a stark post-14 choice between academic and vocational learning'. Nevertheless, the Tech Bacc proposal has generally been welcomed, with for example, the Association of Colleges (AoC), the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Edge Foundation and the Institute for Learning (IfL), all expressing various degrees of support.

Mr Miliband gave few details of what a Tech Bacc might involve, but it is thought that students would begin their studies at age 14, completing them at age 18. In addition to technical and vocational studies, Tech Bacc students would be required to continue to study English and mathematics up to the age of 18, and to achieve a minimum standard in these subjects equivalent to a GCSE grade C. (This, of course, assumes that GCSE's have not been replaced by the proposed new EBacc). Tech Bacc students would also be expected to undertake work experience both during and, apparently after, their studies.

3. Anthony Adonis proposes a 'HTech Bacc'

Lord Adonis, the former Labour education minister and architect of the academies programme, seems to have tried to upstage Mr Miliband by immediately proposing modifications to the Tech Bacc. He agrees with Mr Miliband that the qualification should include English, mathematics, vocational skills and work experience, but argues that students should commence their Tech Bacc studies at age 16, rather than at age 14. Presumably never having heard of BTEC National awards, Lord Adonis has also proposed that there should be a 'Higher Technical Baccalaureate' (swiftly abbreviated to 'HTech Bacc') for those students who, at age 16 have already achieved 5 GCSE's at grade C including mathematics and English.

4. Michael Gove proposes an 'ABacc'

Michel Gove, clearly bit miffed at the Labour Party's attempt to seize his 'Bacc' initiative, has now come right 'Bacc' at them with a proposal for an Advanced Baccalaureate (abbreviated to 'ABacc'- which, if nothing else, would put it right at the front of any educational equivalent of the Yellow Pages). Mr Gove has said that the new ABacc is the 'logical extension' to his earlier proposal for the new EBacc. He went on to say that although there were no plans to scrap GCE A Levels, which would be retained within the ABacc framework, he does want GCE A levels with modular assessment to be replaced by A Levels assessed through more traditional end of course, time constrained written examinations. As with the Tech Bacc and HTech Bacc above, the content and structure of the proposed new ABacc is, at present, somewhat vague. However, Mr Gove has thrown a little more light on what the ABacc might involve by suggesting that students would take a 'contrasting mix' of A levels, 'write a 5,000 word essay' and 'undertake some voluntary work'. By 'a contrasting mix', Mr Gove apparently means that a student who opts for a predominantly arts or humanities based A level programme would also be required to also study a maths or science based subject. Conversely, a student opting for a predominantly science based programme would also be required to take an arts or humanities based subject.

Mr Gove says that his ABacc proposal has been developed in response to criticisms from the HE sector, and in particular from those universities belonging to the 'Russell Group', which complain that 'many new undergraduates lack skills in extended writing, research, analysis, critical thinking and problem solving'. Ironically, this is a criticism frequently made by employers about many of the new graduates they recruit.

Given all the new 'Baccs' being proposed by both the government and the opposition, you could perhaps be forgiven for thinking that all the substantial time, effort and funding expended in developing the 'new Diplomas' perhaps may not have represented the best value for public money. You might also be left wondering why successive governments won't just let the FE sector develop and accredit its own range of qualifications. Just think of the money that would be saved in fees paid to external examination bodies.

Ed Miliband proposes giving £1 billion of public funding for apprenticeships to the private sector

Mr Miliband has also proposed handing over the £1bn of public funding currently spent on apprenticeships to private business. Mr Miliband seems to think that it would be a good idea to give firms the money because it would 'encourage them to invest their own resources as well'. Mr Miliband says that in return for all this government cash, he would expect firms to deliver a lot more training, saying 'You get control of the money for training, as you have long asked for, you set standards, but you have a responsibility to make sure the training happens'.

Matthew Hancock, the new Minister for FE, has retorted that Mr Miliband's proposal is nothing more than an extension of the coalition government's own plans for giving away large sums of public money for training to the private sector (and that they thought of it first, so there). By way of example, he drew attention to the 'Employer Ownership of Skills' scheme that has already given private sector firms control of £250 million of public funding. But when asked whether there was any evidence that this had actually levered any additional training funding from firms, he responded by saying that although firms had made 'in kind contributions such as 'equipment, premises and employee time off for training', such contributions were 'hard to quantify and value'.

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden has now waded into the debate by suggesting that one way of securing more employer investment in training might be to re-introduce training levies. These were mostly abolished years ago, along with the training boards that administered them. The exception to this is the construction industry, where employers still pay more than £160 million a year in levies to support training.

As might be expected, Mr Miliband's proposal to hand over such a large sum of public money to private firms has not been particularly well received by the unions, and especially not by the college unions. Sally Hunt, the general secretary of the University and College Union (UCU) has been swift to point out that 'History tells us that handing huge sums of money over to business to improve education does not always produce the best results'. (During the recent Labour Party conference, a union delegate was apparently asked who his favourite Miliband was, to which he replied, 'the Glenn Miller Band').

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's) fail to make full use of FE college expertise

The Association of Colleges (AoC) has recently published a report entitled 'Local Enterprise Partnerships and Colleges'. The report suggests that LEP's are 'failing to take advantage of the educational resources and expertise offered by colleges'. The report also claims that the level of engagement between LEP's and colleges is 'patchy', and that there is a lack of college representation on LEP boards. The report goes on to say that LEP's appear to have 'a lack of understanding of the role FE colleges play in local and regional economic development'. The absence of an effective working relationship with the LEP's presents a potential threat to colleges. This is because some ministers and government officials are actively pressing for a much larger proportion of the budget for learning and skills to be handed over to the LEP's.

AoC/AELP win bid to manage the new FE Guild

The FE Guild is the new body being established by the government in response to the findings in Lord Lingfield's Review of 'Professionalism in FE'. The Guild's primary tasks will be 'to raise the reputation and status of the sector' and 'to provide a focus for raising professional standards'. The Guild will offer voluntary individual and institutional membership, and will also confer the award of 'chartered' status as a quality kite mark for those providers that can meet the Guild's criteria for the new award.

The government recently invited bids from organisations interested in managing and administering the Guild, with the front runners being a joint bid submitted by the AoC and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), supported by the IfL, and a rival bid submitted by the 'Independent College Partnership' (ICP). The ICP is headed by Chris Banks, the ex- chairman of the former Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and has, up to now, been mainly involved in developing 'new business models' for FE that largely involve colleges being part-privatised and being run for profit by venture capitalists. While the joint AoC/AELP bid was based on the FE Guild 'being owned' by the FE sector, the ICP bid envisaged a 'radical new social partnership for FE and its customers' with the Guild becoming a 'community interest company'. Mr Banks argued that this would 'ensure that the operation of the Guild would more closely reflect the needs of businesses' and ensure that 'learners were better prepared for the world of work'.

Having only recently been relieved of its responsibilities for professional standards in FE, the IfL appears to have been keen not to be excluded from future involvement with the new Guild and, just as Italy was the only country to be on the winning side throughout the Second World War, the IfL announced that whilst remaining a 'central partner' in the AoC/AELP bid, it would also be 'open to talks' should the ICP bid be successful. In the event, these talks proved to be unnecessary because on 23 October, Matthew Hancock, announced that the winning bid to run the FE Guild was the joint bid submitted by the AoC/AELP

LSIS review of FE teacher qualifications.

Meanwhile, LSIS has busied itself conducting a review of teacher qualifications in the FE sector, with the aim of helping to put in place 'a much simpler system of qualifications'. In doing so, LSIS has somehow managed to come up with no less than 19 proposals for new FE teacher qualifications. Amongst these are for 3 generic teaching qualifications, 3 specialist teaching qualifications and a number of new level 7 qualifications, including one for higher level continuing professional development. You might be perhaps forgiven for thinking that changes to the FE teacher qualifications would have been a matter for the new FE Guild, but it seems that the new LSIS arrangements are expected to be in place for September 2013.

Colleges experience difficulty in achieving 2011/12 adult funding targets

The AoC estimates that in 2011/12, colleges will have collectively failed to deliver between £45m and £60m of their contracted adult provision. The impact of the policy changes introduced by the SFA has been given as the main reasons for the shortfall. As a consequence, the SFA has now announced changes to their 2011/12 'funding assessment' which means that those colleges that came within 10% of their funding target can now expect to be eligible for some relief from funding 'claw back', and that those colleges that over performed against target can expect to receive additional funds. The AoC has however warned the colleges under achieving their 2011/12 target that this will almost certainly be reflected in a reduced SFA funding allocation in subsequent years. The shortfall in delivery has provided ammunition for government officials who would like to 'top-slice' the SFA budget further in order to pay for their schemes and projects. Private training providers have also become very vocal in calling for any funding unused by the colleges to be reallocated to them.

College subcontracting increases

Figures recently published by the SFA show that, over the last year, the amount of funding that colleges spent on subcontracting out their apprenticeship programmes trebled from £22 million to almost £67million. Also, the total number of individual contracts issued by colleges to subcontractors has almost doubled over the same period. The figures have been released at a time when Serious Fraud Office (SFO) is investigating a number of private training firms that have delivered provision that was subcontracted from colleges and the SFA has said that the growth in subcontracting has 'inevitably resulted in higher levels of operational and financial risk'.

Ofsted publishes 'Ensuring Quality in Apprenticeships'

Meanwhile, Ofsted has published a report entitled 'Ensuring Quality in Apprenticeships'. The report assesses the quality of education and training provision provided by subcontractors on behalf of colleges and other training providers. In 2011 the SFA introduced a policy of minimum contract values. Ofsted is critical of this and says that the policy has meant that smaller providers have been faced with 2 choices. These were 'either to form a consortium with other small providers, or to become a subcontractor for larger providers'. Ofsted goes to say that 'In many cases smaller, good providers have been penalised by the loss of funding they could otherwise have used to support apprentices'. This was because lead contractors 'took too high a fee for very little work', and that this often equated 'to the loss of frontline members of staff'.

Ofsted Inspection Shadowing Scheme

This month (October) has been 'Black History Month' and 'Diversity Awareness Month'. To mark this, Ofsted has again drawn attention to its Inspection Shadowing Scheme and claims that since the programme was launched in 2004 it 'has benefited more than 150 Black and Asian aspiring school and college leaders'. The Inspection Shadowing Scheme is jointly promoted and delivered by Ofsted, the National College for School Leadership, the Network for Black Professionals and the Black Leadership Initiative. The aim is to give Black and Asian schools and college staff an opportunity to shadow Ofsted inspectors and thereby gain a better understanding of the inspection process. Ofsted hopes that this will 'contribute to increasing the diversity of school and college leadership' and will 'help address the current under representation of Black and Asian staff at this level'.

Ofsted publishes updated version of 'How Colleges Improve'

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) has commissioned Ofsted to produce an updated version of its earlier publication, 'How Colleges Improve'. In the report, Ofsted says that good and outstanding colleges have:

- A clear and well communicated vision and direction for the college
- Strong leadership and management who have high expectations of students and staff
- Strong and informed governance, that challenges and supports senior management
- A robust self-assessment process that is honest and self-critical of performance
- A focus on improving teaching and learning and raising the level of student achievement
- Staff who are willing to accept change and are committed to their own professional development
- Staff who are able to describe what their college stands for
- Leadership teams at all levels that act decisively to tackle underperformance and secure improvement
- Reliable data, which is acted upon and used to inform quality improvement strategies
- A curriculum portfolio that matches the needs of learners, employers and the local community.

The report also identified some of the things that cause colleges to fail. As you might expect, many of these were the direct opposite of the things above, and included the following:

- Lack of clear vision and direction for the college and low expectations of students and staff
- Weak and ill-informed governance
- Managers who pay too much attention to prestige projects such as new buildings and merger and give insufficient attention to improving teaching and learning
- Unrealistic self-assessment with little or no critical insight
- Ineffective performance management of staff
- Inconsistent tracking of learner progress,
- Financial instability and regular unexpected job cuts
- A high proportion of temporary staff that are not properly managed.
- Lack of response to external change
- Insufficiently robust data
- Failure to use data to help drive up standards and to act when data shows falling standards.
- Staff that are unwilling to accept change and find it difficult to describe what their college stands for
- A college curriculum that fails to reflect the needs of learners, employers and the local community.

Reflecting the 'Deptford not Delhi' remarks made by the Ofsted chief inspector, the report also refers to the danger of leaders 'who spend too much time outside the college' and who 'focus excessively on the quest for new and fresh business, especially, abroad', to the detriment of local students.

Ofsted consults on reducing the time period for inspection complaints.

Ofsted is currently consulting on proposals to reduce the existing time limit for accepting complaints about inspections and the content of reports. At present, a complaint can be made at any time during an inspection, and up to 30 days after an inspection report is published. However, Ofsted is now proposing to reduce this to a maximum of 5 days from the date when an incident giving rise to a complaint occurs or, if the complaint is in connection with the contents of an inspection report, a maximum of 5 days from the date of publication of the report. Ofsted is also proposing that inspection reports will be published *before* complaints are investigated, so that 'the public can get the inspection result as soon as possible'

The proposals for change come around 5 months after Ofsted inspectors were, in effect, thrown out of the premises of the Newcastle College Group in the middle of an inspection. However, Ofsted has refused to comment on whether it was this particular incident that has triggered the proposals for reducing the time limit for lodging complaints. The consultation period ended on 29 October.

Ofsted publishes criteria for agreeing to cancellation or delay of short notice inspections

Either because of problems already encountered, or in the attempt to pre-empt these problems, Ofsted has recently published the criteria for agreeing to the delay or cancellation of a planned 'short notice inspection'. These criteria include the following

- The principal and/or other senior managers are under investigation by the police
- The college is due to merge or close
- The college is no longer in receipt of public funds
- At least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the provider's learners will not be available at the employers premises for at least $\frac{1}{2}$ of the time when the inspection is scheduled
- Any other very exceptional circumstances determined by Ofsted. (This would *not* include the principal and/or other senior managers being off site, the death of a principal or senior manager, or building work).

Ofsted's 'Learner View' website 'could be open to abuse'

Ofsted has recently developed its own website, called 'Learner View'. As the name suggests, the website is intended to be used as method of collecting the views of students about their courses. These views are collated and then used to produce 'provider ratings'. Anyone can access the site and see the results, which are updated after every 10 responses. The website went live in time for Ofsted's 2012/13 round of inspections, and can be used by inspectors during inspections as a further source of evidence of learners' views on the quality of provision. The site has been described as being a sort of 'Trip Advisor' for individuals and firms, enabling them to compare the relative merits of different providers, and to help them reach a decision as to which one to use. But in the same way that 'Trip Advisor' can apparently be subject to abuse through multiple and often fictitious entries, either in favour or against a particular hotel or restaurant, there are suggestions that the 'Learner View' website, and the provider ratings given in it, could also be subject to user abuse. This is because it is, apparently, relatively easy for someone to set up 10 different email accounts and submit multiple messages to the site. A co-ordinated group of people could therefore potentially bombard the site with negative or positive comments about a particular provider, depending on the motive that they had for doing so.

A spokesperson for Ofsted admitted that abuse of this kind was indeed possible and that one person, or group of people, could lodge multiple complaints. However, the spokesperson went on to say that 'There were always going to be concerns that there might be a campaign against a provider' and added that 'Where we see peaks come in, we will investigate them'.

'FE Choices' website subject to criticism

The SFA has established a similar website called 'FE Choices', which also gives provider ratings and also aims to provide individuals and firms with the information they need in order to compare the quality and performance of different providers. However, in the 6 months after its launch only 6,230 people had visited the site, and since then it has been the subject of increasingly vitriolic degrees of criticism, including that from the Taxpayer's Alliance who have described site as being 'pointless'. The SFA has responded to these criticisms by commissioning Bunnyfoot, (which is apparently a London based consultancy firm and not, as you might expect, a character from a children's cartoon), to carry out an independent review. Sadly, the review findings have resulted in even more bad news for the SFA, with Bunnyfoot describing the website as 'bland' and 'ambiguous', and that it contains 'confusing statistics' and 'figures that don't add up'.

SFA says that the financial position of colleges is improving

Kim Thorneywork, the interim chief executive of the SFA, has said that 'College finances are the healthiest they have been since the global economic crisis began, despite funding cuts'. She went on to say 'We have fewer colleges in poor financial health than we had two years ago', and added that the reason for this was 'because they've understood and responded to policy, restructured and got themselves in the right place'.

In support of Ms Thorneywork's comments, at the start of the 2012/13 academic year, 40% of colleges were rated by the SFA as being 'outstanding' for their financial health, compared with 29% in 2008. The number of colleges rated as being 'satisfactory' in relation to their financial health has fallen from 37% to

23% over the same period, (suggesting that many colleges that were rated as 'satisfactory' or 'good', are now rated as 'outstanding'). Against this, around 80 colleges had difficulties that required additional financial support from the SFA. Meanwhile, in response to the latest SFA survey, 82% of colleges said that they thought that the agency was 'effective in funding and promoting FE'. This is an increase of 18% on the findings last year's SFA survey.

Change to the SFA definition of 'high grades' is reversed

In July of this year, the AoC alerted member colleges to the fact that the SFA had unilaterally decided that 'high grades' would no longer include a GCSE grade C and that this would be reflected in the success rate data base managed on behalf of the SFA by the Information Authority. The AoC warned colleges that the impact of this was 'significant' and would 'halve' the high grade profiles of some colleges. After intense levels of protest from colleges, the SFA has now agreed that it will re-issue this year's reports to include the original definition of high grades (A* to C not A* to B) on the success rate database. A spokesperson for Ofsted has said that the SFA's new 'high grade definition' was *not* used during any of the college inspections that took place in the period since July 2012

Disappointment with 'Innovation Code' restrictions

The 'Innovation Code' was introduced in April this year, and was one of the key recommendations arising from the 'Colleges in their Communities' Inquiry, chaired by Baroness Sharp, the report of which was published last year. The aim of the Innovation Code is to allow colleges to respond to specific local employment and skills needs by offering courses not currently covered by existing qualifications and therefore not currently eligible for funding. Use of the Innovation code would (subject to proper audit procedures) theoretically have allowed colleges to use up to 25% of their SFA adult skills budget allocation to be used to meet local learning and skills priorities. However, Baroness Sharp has now spoken of her 'disappointment' at the way the code has been interpreted by the SFA, claiming that the guidance provides only 'limited flexibility' for colleges. The SFA has responded to Baroness Sharp's concerns by agreeing to issue 'fresh guidance on the code'.

Apprenticeship starts exceed half a million

Data published in the 2011/12 first statistical release shows that apprenticeship starts at all levels and all ages rose by nearly 50,000 compared with the previous year, increasing to a total of 505,200. The data reveals particularly high growth in advanced and higher level apprenticeships. However the government has conceded that the recruitment to 16-18 apprenticeships has proved to be a 'major challenge', with 16-18 apprenticeship numbers falling by 5,200, compared with the same time last year. It had been hoped that the number of 16-18 apprentices would exceed 133,500 in 2011/12 and would continue to increase to around 140,200 in 2012/13, but it now seems that this growth is unlikely to be achieved.

Youth unemployment falls

The apprenticeship data was generally welcomed, but some observers expressed concern at the continuing high levels of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). With reference to youth unemployment, recent government statistics reveal that between June and August 2012, there were 957,000 unemployed 16-24 year olds. This is a reduction of 62,000 on the previous quarter and represents the biggest quarterly fall in youth unemployment since the three month period to November 1997.

UK Border Agency (UKBA) accuses colleges of 'selling immigration, rather than education'

The government has acknowledged that overseas students attending courses at FE colleges in the UK, not only enhance cultural diversity and international understanding, but also generate around £1 billion each year in UK export earnings. In recognition of this, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) has recently called on the FE sector to develop a 'Global Strategy' to increase these export earnings.

Unfortunately, UKBA appears to be at odds with BIS on all this, and seems to be suggesting that large numbers of aspiring migrants to the UK are applying for visas to study at FE colleges because this is a less risky way of getting into the country than, say, strapping yourself to the bottom of a Eurostar train or paying people traffickers huge sums of money to smuggle you into the country in the back of a container lorry. A

senior UKBA officer has been reported as saying that 'For too long we have seen educational institutions selling immigration rather than education' inferring that securing a place on an FE college course (and particularly those courses with 'low' entry requirements) has become a means of gaining a visa for entry to the UK that would be impossible to obtain in any other way. In support of their allegations, UKBA claims that significant numbers of people enter the country with a study visa, and then either never turn up for their course at all, or leave their course early and disappear into the wider community. UKBA also claims that many overseas students remain in the UK illegally long after their student visa has expired

UKBA has therefore made it more difficult for educational institutions to recruit overseas students by raising the criteria required for them to gain 'Highly Trusted Status' (HTS). A spokesperson for UKBA said that HTS process is now 'more rigorous and accountable, with all education providers being expected to take their immigration responsibilities seriously'. However, it would seem that the requirements that are placed on FE colleges to acquire HTS are considerably more onerous than for universities. The reason UKBA gives for this, is that they claim that they 'have seen the highest levels of compliance in the university sector and, as such, their students are subject to fewer restrictions than those at further education establishments'. (Although how this squares with the fact that earlier this year, London Metropolitan University became the first university to have its HTS revoked for 'not making proper checks', remains a little unclear). John Mountford, the AoC international director, has now hit back, saying that UKBA needs to 'make a distinction between private colleges and state supported FE institutions'. And with reference to HE processes being 'more robust' than those in FE, he went on to say 'we have never seen the statistics that support this, because there has never been a like-for-like study of how different sponsors perform'.

As an aside to this, it is interesting to note that study by 'British Future' (a think tank), found that in the London 2012 *Olympics*, immigration was a factor in at least 24 of the 65 medals won by Team GB, with 11 gold medals, 3 silver medals and 10 bronze medals being won by athletes who were first or second generation migrants to the UK.

Success in EuroSkills 2012

'Squad UK' has returned from EuroSkills 2012 in Belgium with five medals, placing them in eighth place out of the 22 competing nations. Members of 'Squad UK' won gold medals in hairdressing and carpentry, a silver medal in visual merchandising, and bronze medals in painting and stonemasonry. EuroSkills is regarded as being a crucial part of the preparation for next year's WorldSkills event in Germany, where the UK team will aim to build on the fifth place ranking achieved in London last year.

Blessed are the 'sports makers'

As a result of the resounding success of the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, a new focus has been given to sports development. In the FE sector, £20 million of National Lottery funding is to be made available to enable the employment of around 150 college 'sport makers' and to improve sports facilities in colleges. The 'sports makers' will be full time sports professionals who will be given the task of increasing the levels of participation in sports of FE students. Their role will include helping to develop links between colleges and local sports clubs, to run leagues and sports groups and to offer coaching. In addition to the lottery funding, the government is also making a further £3 million available enabling colleges to apply for grants of between £30,000 and £150,000 to help set up new leagues, hire additional facilities and provide transport for students to attend sports sessions and competitions. Whether this new funding will help compensate for the previous reduction in 'entitlement funding', which was often used for sports related extra-curricular activities, and which has seen 114 hours of 'entitlement' activity per year being decreased to just 30, remains to be seen.

And finally.....

The London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics were undoubtedly the most successful for British athletes in more than 100 years. In the *Paralympic* Games the UK finished third behind China and Russia with 34 gold medals, 43 silver medals and 43 bronze medals. In the *Olympic* Games, the UK was placed third in the final medal table behind the United States and China with 29 gold medals, 17 silver medals and 19 bronze medals. The London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics are credited with generating a sense of national pride and with improving the profile of UK PLC in the global economy

However, there is also an educational and sociological significance associated with the London 2012 *Olympic Games*. Research by the Sutton Trust, a social mobility charity, shows that 25% of Team GB's gold medallists, and 37% of all Team GB's medal winners, attended fee paying schools. Given that the independent sector educates just 7% of the population, these figures would seem to suggest a degree of social imbalance between the private and state sector in relation to the quality of sports education and level of participation in sports provided for, and experienced by, the pupils attending schools within them. The Sutton Trust study goes on to show that 10% of the Team GB Olympic winners who attended a British university went to either Oxford or Cambridge, while 60% attended one of the nation's top selective universities. Against this, all of Team GB's boxing medallists attended state schools, as did the 3 gold medallists in athletics, and 12 of Team GB's 65 medals were won by ex FE college students.

Lord Moynihan, the Chairman of the British Olympics Committee, has said that the number of independently educated competitors in the Olympics squad was 'one of the worst statistics in British sport' and in response, the prime minister, David Cameron has announced plans to introduce competitive team sport into the primary school curriculum and to place restrictions on the sale of school playing fields. The Labour Party has also responded by pledging to reinstate the earlier requirement for all schools (including independent academies and free schools) to provide pupils with at least two hours of sport every week.

Whether all this will have any longer term impact on the chances that England's football team will ever win an international trophy again, remains to be seen.

Alan Birks – October 2012

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