Promoting Excellence in Leadership 14-19
Final research

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All change for 14-19 education and training

Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours
Institute of Education, University of London

The new context for 14-19 education and training

Education policy moves fast and nowhere has there been more change than in the area of 14-19 education and training. Since the election of the Coalition Government in May 2010, we have seen reforms in almost every aspect of policy.

In terms of curriculum and qualifications, The Importance of Teaching White Paper (DfE, 2010) stresses the importance of traditional general education, with the introduction of the English Baccalaureate performance measure, the move towards more linear assessment and external examinations and a focus on grammar, spelling and punctuation. At the same time, the Wolf Review of 14-19 Vocational Qualifications (Wolf, 2011) emphasises the value of apprenticeships and work-based learning, strongly criticises many of the vocational/applied qualifications that schools and colleges have been using as the basis of programmes of study for 14-19 year olds; advocates the continuation of English and Mathematics in the 16-19 phase and calls for an end to the use of equivalences between general and vocational/applied awards in performance tables at 16+. All of these measures effectively reverse the policies of the previous government and have meant significant upheaval for curriculum planners in schools and colleges as well as major changes to learner programmes of study, in Key Stage 4 in particular. However, it is difficult to see how the desire for a larger number of apprenticeships and a greater role for the work-based route for 16-19 year olds is likely to be achieved in a recession, with significant growth in unemployment and with major cuts to public services. This suggests a continuing role for and further reform of ‘middle track’ broad vocational qualifications to address the criticisms in the Wolf Review together with a greater emphasis on English and Mathematics for 16-19 year olds. More changes are clearly on the horizon.

The institutional landscape has changed significantly too with an acceleration of the academies programme, the introduction of Free Schools, University Technical Colleges and Studio schools and an emphasis on competition between providers rather than support for the 14-19 Partnerships encouraged by the previous government. While local authorities are still statutorily responsible for ensuring that there is adequate 14-19 provision in their area, their powers to shape it are severely limited and many have shed staff as a result of shrinking budgets caused by the increased numbers of academies and Free Schools that are funded directly by the DfE.
Almost inevitably with a new administration there has been reform in terms of the government departments that make policy – now the Department for Education for education up to the age of 19 and the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills for education and training beyond the age of 19. This has been matched by changes to the agencies that fund and oversee education and training providers (e.g. out with the Young People’s Learning Agency and in with the Education Funding Agency) as well as the services and financial support for 14-19 year olds (e.g. Connexions has gone with the introduction of an all-age careers service and the Education Maintenance Allowance has been cut and replaced by a smaller pot of more targeted funding to support 16-19 year olds).

At the same time, a major rise in higher education fees will take effect in 2012 bringing with it a complex set of arrangements for loans and bursaries that young people, their parents and those who advise them, are having to come to grips with. Higher education has served as a strong ‘pull-through’ factor for post-16 participation, attainment and progression, but there are already signs that young people are reconsidering their options at 18+ as a result both of the rise in fees and high levels of youth unemployment (e.g. Hodgson and Spours, 2011).

Policy language has changed too - the concept of a 14-19 phase (at least for policy-makers) has gone to be replaced by policies for learners up to the age of 16 and those for 16-19 year olds.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, these changes are being made against a background of deepening economic recession, a government committed to austerity measures and rapidly rising rates of unemployment, particularly among young people. From the perspective of a 14-19 year old, choices and opportunities appear to be shrinking. While this government, like its predecessor, has pledged to raise the participation age (RPA) to 18 by 2015, the context in which this is to be achieved is likely to make this ambition much more of an up-hill struggle.

Researching change

It was this context that formed the background to the Promoting Excellence in Leadership 14-19 CPD programme jointly organised by Learning Plus UK and the Centre for Post-14 Research and Innovation at the Institute of Education, University of London. The programme, which took place between November 2010 and July 2011, was aimed at practitioners responsible for 14-19 learning in London. It was designed to keep them abreast of this fast-moving policy landscape, to provide them with a range of tools to make more sense of their institutional practice and to build a network of expertise in this area of education.

The programme was organised through four working days during which participants were given inputs and a range of relevant academic sources by high-profile researchers from the Institute of Education and professionals from Learning Plus UK concerning the policy context for 14-19 education and training, aspects of leadership and research methods for small-scale projects. Participants were then asked to select a topic to research in their own institution. During the working days, they discussed their approaches with the IoE researchers and their colleagues on the programme. The final working day was set aside for a research seminar in which participants reported their findings and implications for practice. This approach depended on their active involvement in the Programme and a willingness to undertake
additional, demanding and sometimes controversial, institutional-based research while continuing to pursue demanding middle-management roles. The research projects described in this publication are testimony to the success of the Programme itself and to the commitment and professionalism of the participants.

Conclusion

Rapid policy change, difficult economic conditions and competitive institutional relations, together with the day-to-day demands of working with 14-19 year olds, make it difficult for professionals to raise their heads above the parapet and to engage with the meaningful CPD they need to make their jobs both manageable and enjoyable. It is clear from the research accounts in this publication, that the participants in the Promoting Excellence in Leadership 14-19 programme benefited significantly from an opportunity for space to reflect on their institution, their practices and the learners they serve in a challenging but collegial university environment.

These are testing times for both young people and for those who work with them to ensure they achieve their learning aims and maximise their opportunities for further study and employment. There is currently little national research that evaluates the changes in this area of education and training because events are happening so fast that they are outstripping the capacity to assess their impact. This is what makes these pieces of research so valuable. While they are small-scale and institutionally based, they have the ability not only to capture what it is like to be a practitioner in the current political and economic climate, but also to highlight areas that warrant further scrutiny.

References


The value of research in 14-19 education

Kate Reynolds
Learning Plus UK

Research based improvements

Using evidence to drive organisational improvement can ensure that resources are used effectively and that interventions are specifically and appropriately targeted.

The changes in the policy landscape that Ken and Ann talk about in the first section are widespread and diverse. New types of schools, academies, free schools and university technical colleges combined with the raising of the participation age to 17 in 2013 and then to 18, will call into question the structure and role of current curriculum models, performance models and forms of leadership. Already key questions are being asked about what sort of education system will benefit the needs of young people and how we can most appropriately equip them for the demands of the 21st century.

The research that is contained in this publication shows how important evidence can be to drive change. Tim Williams looks at the role of mentoring and its impact on student achievement, emphasising the role of relationships in supporting students to fulfil their potential.

On the other hand, Paul Nutter’s research focuses on organisation change through leadership and management, looking at how we, as leaders, can change ourselves and our organisations.

Sophie Cabral’s exploration into the impact of a new sixth form and the choices that young people make in Year 12, signposts some of the ways that post-16 education can make a difference.

The final piece of research by Kim Caplin looks at the vocational qualification, BTEC, and the move to the Qualifications Credit Framework. Kim’s research shows the link between curricular approaches and student attainment and how this influences outcomes for young people.

Together, these research pieces show the variety and range of inquiry and the value it has in making improvements to student outcomes. Learning Plus UK is delighted to be associated with this work and we wish all the students the very best with their future careers.
What are the experiences of level 3 courses for students who have been closely mentored through their GCSEs?

Tim Williams
School for Girls

Rationale

There is a general assumption that if students gain 5 A* to C grades at GCSE they are equipped for Level 3 study – this is the general level of qualifications needed to study A levels and other advanced courses at a range of post 16 providers. The pressure on schools to perform well in league tables at KS4 is having a knock on effect on KS5. Schools are working hard to improve KS4 grades and the effect is that more students are qualified to study advanced courses at post 16. However the intervention strategies used at KS4 often inflate the grades achieved at this level but do not always leave the student with the necessary study skills for KS5. In the past these students may well have followed a Level 2 course in FE before progressing to level 3. An increased number now start Level 3 courses in year 12, often having only just enough GCSE passes to qualify for this. Consequently students start year 12 with very different levels of study skills and varied motivation and there are always a small number of students who fail to complete the year. With public sector spending cuts likely to become more testing over the next few years each year 12 drop out is going to become increasingly significant. So exploring what these students need in year 12 – and on how that builds on what they experienced in year 11 – will become more important.

Context

Over the past two years my School has seen a rise in the number of students studying AS levels and a decrease in the numbers on Level 2 post 16 courses. This partly reflects the national pattern of an increase in the number of students gaining 5 A* to C grades at GCSE and partly the school’s own improvement at KS4. The school’s GCSE 5 A* to C pass rates including Maths and English has gone from 48% to 78% since 2007. Again this reflects national patterns but in addition the school’s improvement has been influenced by a specific programme run over the past 3 years for borderline GCSE C/D students – a programme called, in the first year, Impact
Mentoring and subsequently Star Academy. This programme has used a team of mentors to work with these students in developing their study skills. In addition these students have typically studied 8 GCSE rather than the usual 10 subjects that other students sit. Instead they studied for qualifications in Healthy Eating, Equality and Diversity and Developing Enterprise Capabilities. The wider value of these qualifications has not always been accepted or clear, but the Star Academy have used them as a vehicle for developing specific study skills.

The outcome has been that students who are mentored on both schemes have gained more GCSEs than they have been predicted to get before starting the programme. The result is that many of these students have moved on to a Level 3 course – but without the support of the mentors they had in year 11.

Aim

The aim of this research project is to explore the experiences of students who have been mentored in Year 11 and who are now studying level 3 courses in year 12 and 13 at the school. These students are widely seen as the most vulnerable in dropping out of their courses because the support they have had in year 11 is not continued into year 12. In doing this project I wanted to look at whether the experiences students gained from being mentored made a long term difference to their study habits and whether there has been any impact on their sixth form work. If there is a positive benefit then the school needs to explore the study skills units and perhaps bring them more into mainstream year 11 teaching and into sixth form induction and the PSHE programme. If there has not been any long term benefit in the development of key study skills then these students starting on level 3 courses need to be more closely monitored than they are at present.

Methodology

The methods used in collecting the information for this study are:

- Statistical search for mentored students who have stayed on to level 3 FE courses
- Case studies of students with this profile and what has happened to them – progression from year 11 to 12 and/or 13
- Interview a sample from year 12 and 13 – questions about mentoring, IAG, what support they have received, what support they would like to have, preferred teaching and learning styles
- Identify year 11 students who have applied for a sixth form place and currently being mentored

The Cohorts

In the sixth form during the 2010-2011 session – when this research took place – there were two groups of students who had been previously mentored. There was also a year 11 group who were in the Star Academy and who were applying for FE courses at the school.

Year 13

The current year 13 cohort had a programme called ‘Impact Mentoring’ when they were in year 11. This targeted 59 students who were identified as underachieving. Of these:

- 34 continued their courses into the sixth form at school and of these 20 started level 3 courses
• Of the 20 who started level 3 courses 2 dropped out during the year – a 90% retention rate

• Of the 20 on level 3 courses 14 had an Average Point Score (APS) of 4-5 points. The 2 who dropped out after year 12 were from this group

• The mentored students have a retention rate of 90%. For the mentored APS 5 or less group the retention rate was 86%

• Of these 18 previously mentored students 12 applied for university courses and 10 gained places. Of the other 8, one planned a gap year, one got a year-long work experience placement, two are undertaking a further course, three were seeking work and one was, at the time of writing, still seeking a course.

Teachers often suggest that students with an APS of 5 or less are particularly vulnerable to leaving their courses early.

• 14 had dropped out by the end of their first year – a 66% retention rate. So the previously mentored students have a higher retention rate both for the group as a whole and for the more vulnerable section of the cohort.

**Year 12**

The current year 12 cohort had a programme called ‘Star Academy’ when they were in year 11. This targeted 45 students who were identified as underachieving. Of these:

• 28 continued their courses into the sixth form and of these 14 started a level 3 course

• Of these 13 are still on their course (as of 28th September 2011). One has started AS levels again

• Of these 14 on a level 3 course 9 had an APS of 4-5 points. 13 of these progressed to year 13 – giving a retention rate of 93%. The one student who dropped out to start her course again was from the APS 4-5 group

As a comparator, in the year 12 group as a whole – excluding the ‘Star Academy’ group – there were a further 48 students with an APS of less than 5 points doing level 3 courses. These would appear to be more vulnerable in terms of completing the year. One student had dropped out due to very poor attendance during the year and 35 progressed to year 13. This gives a retention rate of 73% for this group.

**Year 11**

In the 2010-2011 year 11 cohort 50 students were in the Star Academy programme and 30 started FE courses in September 2011.
### Case Studies – Year 13s

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<tr>
<th>STUDENT AND APS</th>
<th>FE SUBJECTS</th>
<th>LAG AND ALPS</th>
<th>FINAL GRADES</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
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<td>CCB</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Interviews

1. Student H

Student H was on the Impact Mentoring Scheme after being identified by her Head of Year as someone who might benefit. In her own words she was ‘a bit lost in year 10, I saw the importance of education but I didn’t care about it, I wasn’t motivated’. Student H had a few behaviour problems in year 10 – nothing too serious – but enough to disrupt her flow in her studies. Student H had what she described as an adult, professional relationship with her mentor – she didn’t see her as a friend - which she felt some students did – but as someone to help give her confidence. She found her mentor inspiring in many ways, particularly in her advice about overcoming difficulties. The mentor had a few problems with her own learning and saying how she overcame these helped Student H. She felt that the skills that she developed on the scheme really helped her in her sixth form. She felt much better organised and motivated and this helped her step up to sixth form work. She was always aware that she would have to manage without a mentor so didn’t really miss this input in year 12. She felt that she had benefitted from being on the Advanced Diploma course because she has a small number of teachers who know her really well. She has done well and has achieved well above her expected levels and is now going to City University to read for a Sociology degree. Student H felt that the quality and training of the mentor was particularly important – some mentors took too much of a hands on approach to student’s work while she felt that being taught how to overcome barriers was much more valuable in the long term.

2. Student N

Student N was on the Impact Mentoring Scheme for 2 months during the early period of year 11 having been identified as a student who was struggling – particularly with Maths. She felt that her time spent on the scheme was useful and gave her the skills she needed – specifically to pass Maths at GCSE but also to help her with other areas of her studies. She has found FE ok and feels that some of the skills that she gained from the Impact Mentoring have helped. More specifically the scheme helped her get her Maths GCSE and this enabled her to progress to FE without having to re-sit and go on to university to study Sociology. On the whole she felt that she would have made progress anyway but that the Impact scheme sharpened things up and enabled her to achieve her Maths target. Student N didn’t have behaviour or attendance issues before being put on the programme but had a very specific need in her Maths development.

3. Student B

Student B was on the Impact Mentoring scheme for the whole of her year 11. She found it very useful. She felt that in year 10 her behaviour, while ok, was not as it should have been for doing her GCSEs. In her words she ‘messed about a lot’. By the start of year 11 she felt that she was behind in her subjects and in serious need of changing her ways – but that how she was and expected to be around the school and in class was stopping her changing. The Impact programme gave her a means of changing perceptions of her and giving her the skills that she needed. She felt that having a mentor ‘at my side’ gave her the motivation to work and to get herself
organised. The mentor advised her on how to do the work but made it clear to Student B that it was her responsibility for doing it. As she gradually built up her skills she gained in confidence and began to realise that she could do it. She felt that the impact scheme was the reason why she got her 5 A*-C grades at GCSE and was able to go on to A levels. In sixth form Student B felt that having a mentor was not important – she had proven to herself that she could do it and that she had the skills to succeed at the next level. She feels that she is now very well organised and that she knows what to do when the work load starts increasing. She also felt that the confidence that she had gained from the programme enabled her to make the transition to level 3. She is now on a year long work experience placement at KPMG.

### Case Studies – Year 12s

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<tr>
<th>STUDENT + APS</th>
<th>FE SUBJECTS</th>
<th>LAG AND ALPS</th>
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Interviews

1. Student C

Student C was put on the Star Academy programme at the beginning of year 11 when her working at grades were mainly Cs and Ds at GCSE. At the end of the programme she got mainly Bs and Cs at GCSE and this enabled her to go on to an AS level programme. Student C felt that the programme was useful in that it gave her help in tackling difficulties with her subjects. Her difficulties were not related to her behaviour but with her method of working and her mentor was able to help her with this and give her support in developing her learning strategies. Student C saw her mentor more as a friend that she could turn to rather than an academic guide. The mentor had also had some difficulties at school and listening to these helped student C with her own learning blocks. Student C did feel that the scheme focused more on helping her overcome her immediate learning problems and she would have liked some more help with organisational skills as she still feels that she is lacking these in FE. She feels that her FE courses are going ok – she was disappointed in her January mocks but knows what to do to improve them. On the whole she thinks that the Star Academy was a good initiative and it most certainly helped her get on a level three course, but that she would like some more organisational skills. She completed her AS year and has progressed to A2 in two of her subject, but is taking up an AS level as her third subject.

2. Student A

Student A was put on the Star Academy programme as she was an underachieving year 10 student. She felt that it was more for her to achieve at GCSE than preparation for her FE course. Student A did not feel that the Star Academy had a great deal of status and the specific qualifications that they focused on – Healthy Eating, Equality and Diversity and Developing Enterprise Capabilities – had little value. She gained 5 other GCSE C+ grades and felt that these were the key qualifications for getting her level 3 FE course - although these were all at C grade. She also thought that the Star Academy work had not really helped with her FE studies as the skills, as she saw them, were very different. She has done well with her Level 3 studies so far but was adamant that Star Academy was not the cause of this. She also felt that students coming from this year 11 programme needed much more monitoring during their FE time as they were more vulnerable. She did well at AS level and has progressed to A2.

3. Student D

Student D was put on the Star Academy programme because of her performance in the end of year 10 exams. She eventually got B and C grades in 5 GCSEs including Maths and English and she saw this as a success. She was able to get on a level 3 programme where she has been doing more practical based subjects. She has enjoyed these and feels that she has been successful. This is supported by her forecast grades which are A-C in Textiles, Art and Graphics. She thought that the Star Academy programme was useful in that it gave her more of a chance to get help in a small group situation. She thought that having a mentor who had found things difficult on the past also helped as they were able to relate their experiences. Student D thought that the study skills that she had learnt had been useful for her AS year and that she didn’t need any more
support during this year. Student d got a respectable set of grades from AS – including an A – and has progressed to A2.

**Teachers**

Teachers with ex-mentees in their classes were generally positive about the performance of the students. There is a widespread concern that the amount of help that students got in year 11 cannot be replicated in year 12 and 13 and some teachers suggest that the mentoring is more about GCSE A* - C percentages rather than anything else. However this was a minority opinion and, in general, teachers are positive about the scheme and the skills that it enables students to develop. Teachers also felt that the best type of mentoring is where students develop the skills that they need and that the mentor takes a more ‘back seat’ role in developing these.

There is a slight concern that students have been mentored more in coursework and organisational skills rather than in exam skills. At AS and A2 there are more exams and students do not always have the skills necessary to do these. However there is recognition that this can be applied to students in general and that more exam preparation time should be spent with the whole class. In both the cohorts of students there is a high proportion doing vocational subjects or other subjects that have significant coursework content.

**Findings**

Generally the mentoring has been a good experience. This is particularly the case for students who get a GCSE average point score of 5 or more. The mentoring programme seems to give them a boost from which they are able to succeed. With an APS of less than 5 the benefits of the programme are still apparent, but these students tend to need continued monitoring rather than mentoring during sixth form.

Students have been taught some useful study skills and, as they have succeeded in their GCSEs compared to their starting points, they have improved their feelings of self esteem. Students have generally found that the mentoring support that they received in year 11 has helped them in year 12 and 13 and has given them some of the skills that they need for working at level 3. This was especially the case where the mentors focused on helping students develop the skills, rather than taking over the task for them. One of the key concerns that several students had – and were very keen to dispel – was that their place on the scheme was to do with behaviour problems. Many students felt that they were ‘stuck’ in terms of study skills and the scheme helped them with this. Many students feel that they were spoon fed at GCSE level and the very best mentoring took them away from this approach and taught them key study skills that equipped them for sixth form.

Although the schemes were generally seen as successful it is interesting to note that students from both years have been directed more towards the vocational route, or to non traditional A levels. These courses often rely on coursework and assignment skills and with the squeeze on
HE funding for courses following on from this route there may be some need to explore the advice that these students are given about FE.

Students generally didn’t feel that they needed to have a mentor in year 12 or 13. However teachers often felt that the school should monitor these students a little more closely than we do. Although the perception held by some teachers that the withdrawal of mentoring in FE will lead to their subsequent failure was generally found to be not entirely accurate, there is a tendency for these students to be in the bottom grade bands with little margin for error. This is not universal for the two groups, but it is a majority. It may be the case – and this has been expressed by several teachers – that students on the post mentoring route should be doing 3 AS levels rather than 4, although this has not been possible on the SHaD course that many of the Star Academy students are currently studying.

Recommendations

1. Identify and target new Year 12 students who were:
   a) Mentored in year 11
   b) mentored and started a level 3 course having achieved an APS of less than 5 points at GCSE
   c) not mentored and started a level 3 course with an APS of less than 5 – introduce a condensed mentoring programme for these students in the first term

2. In relation to 1c) the data suggests that non mentored students with an APS of 5 or less are the most vulnerable in terms of leaving their courses before completion. The school should identify these students at the start of their FE course and put in place appropriate support

3. Assess the training of the mentor. This is a crucial part of the success or otherwise of the scheme and more research needs to be done on mentor training. The most effective mentors were those that helped the students develop the skills for themselves. The least effective mentors were those that took over the tasks on behalf of the students.

4. In connection to 3, further research needs to be done on looking at whether the students are learning organisational skills as much as, or more than, real study skills. One of the patterns identified in the research is that mentored students tend, in FE, to study more vocational or practical subjects. These have a substantial coursework element and need good organisational skills. 21 out of 32 students studied followed a vocational or practical based advanced course. This is particularly the case for students with an APS of less than 5 points

5. The FE part of the school needs more information from year 11. For example there seems to be many reasons why students are put onto the mentoring programme and it would be useful for the FE managers to be aware of these.

6. Some mentored students would, depending upon their GCSE APS, be better studying 3 AS levels or equivalent and using the extra time to develop their study skills. The school needs to investigate the practicalities of running study skills sessions for these students.
7. Further research also needs to be done to explore the comparative effect of the mentor as against the course. Mentored students follow a more condensed GCSE programme and it may be that this is just as important as the mentor as it means that they are more likely to be organised in their studies.
How far was the bespoke LSIS “Routes to Success” Programme for Senior Middle Leaders an example of deep staff development? What was the impact on the individual participants in their role as senior middle leader and on the College?

Paul Nutter
Sixth Form College

**Rationale**

The rationale for the question came as a result of wanting to assess the impact of the LSIS Routes to Success programme (appendix 1) on the individual participants and the College and how far it was an example of deep staff development, where CPD is long term, involves the creation of professional learning communities, has a depth to its content and is supported by engagement with leaders in the field. The LSIS Routes to Success programme was a bespoke programme for the College. We identified key ideas issues surrounding leadership and these were delivered in modules by facilitators who were “expert” in those areas. Furthermore One to One coaching, Action Learning Sets and Work Shadowing were part of the programme. There were also other drivers. As a College we were aware that the curriculum managers and pastoral managers were not working together as collaboratively as they could do and the Routes to Success programme was the opportunity to bring the two teams together more and at the same time challenge their ideas of leadership. We hoped for some of the participants on the programme there would be a challenge to a “group think” mentality where rationalisations are constructed “in order to discount warnings and other forms of negative feedback, that taken seriously might lead the group members to reconsider their assumptions.” (“Group Think” Irving L. Janis 1971) Furthermore we were aware that these senior middle “leaders” were functioning more at an operational level “managing” rather than leading and taking a strategic overview and approach to their roles, and we were interested to see how far the programme would impact on challenging and taking the middle leaders’ performance to a different level. The programme would also create a “professional learning community” but also how far would it build a “supportive
accountability” (“Assessment for learning; why, what and how?” Dylan William 2009) amongst the group.

Finally it was key that the programme met and fulfilled our College values of

- **Learning through continuous development & reflection** - capacity is developed and continuous learning is institutionalized
- **Responsibility** - Responsibility for personal and organization’s future is shared
- **Honesty** - Elephants in the room are named and staff & students can speak truth to power
- **Independence** - Independent judgement is expected and respected
- **Excellence** - Achievement and Progression

**Methodology**

To ascertain what each individual thought of the programme and how far it had impacted on their performance was not without its challenge. One method considered would have been for us as a college to devise our own questionnaire and ask the participants to complete it. The question however was how far would the participants give honest, open and reflective responses or how far would they respond by giving the answers they thought that management would want to hear. This issue was overcome by analysing the self-reflection and assessment questionnaire that all participants completed at the end of the programme. This overcame the problem of how “honest and reflective the participants would be as it was not written and created by management and each participant had worked with a “Learning Tutor”/ Mentor who read the assessment and added their own reflections of the impact of the programme on the mentee. Had there been any discrepancy between the reflection and the one to one coaching the mentor’s response would have highlighted it.

The Self-reflection and assessment questionnaire consisted of 5 sections:

- Reviewing out comes against objectives - with a focus on what has been learnt, what has yet to be learnt and how to get there
- Leaning: a multifaceted experience
- Fixing my mind on the goal
- Sponsor’s comments
- Learning tutor’s comments

When analysing the responses a thematic approach was taken where there was clearly a shared impact and reflection from the participants.

Analysis of the responses from the individual participants on each of the leadership sessions was also undertaken to assess the impact of the delivery. This unfortunately was not possible for all sessions as some of the deliverers failed to provide the feedback to the College.

Analysis showed that all the participants were positive about and valued the sessions. Any individual comments made were not of value to this project as they tended to relate to “domestic” arrangements such as catering and location and have therefore not been included as part of the findings.

Analysis of the sponsor and learning tutors comments also took place.
The Findings

Participant Feedback

From the analysis of the feedback three key learning objectives were identified from the participants:

- Working with Teams
- Leadership
- Delegation

A key learning objective (theme) for the participants was Working with Teams. Within this theme were a number of common learning objectives in particular dealing with team members and performance, and how to recognise the differences between individuals and how to empower them. From the feedback it is clear that the middle leaders of the College are not only managing their teams in different ways but the College also has teams that are approaching the challenges of the changing educational environment in different ways. 6 of the leaders also wrote about conflict and how to manage it. Potentially however this “desire to preserve artificial harmony” (Patrick Lencioni “The Five Dysfunctions of a Team”) can prevent members of the team from offering opinion and thus preventing the team from functioning. Linked with the theme of conflict was an issue of “intractable negative behaviour” (Participant 1) within some of the teams particularly when dealing and coping with change, which supported the belief that members of the College were having difficulty in coping with the changing educational scene. Dealing with change management was identified as something which exacerbates the conflict and how this could be handled within meetings.

The reflections on what the participants had learnt in how to deal with their initial objective of working with teams was interesting. Of the 14 who had identified this as an objective, 10 said that they needed to be (and now are) less reactive when dealing with their teams. They reflected that by listening to opinions and communicating in a more open manner their teams and team members were functioning very differently. There had been a shift in where the Senior Middle Leaders saw themselves and their role. For a significant number (10 responses all of whom were curriculum leaders) saw that by the end of the programme, they had a much greater strategic role within the college (see later learning objectives) and were able to communicate the strategy of the College more effectively, which in turn has led to a greater understanding by the teams and with it a greater sign up. This constituted a move from the Senior Middle Leaders feeling they were “caught in the middle” between senior leadership and their teams. Furthermore the group took responsibility for a major project within the College and leading change (see recommendations). The “seek first to understand” (MBTI) had also influenced approaches to teams, where the leaders (7 responses) reflected that leadership was about striking a balance between understanding, being understood and making timely interventions.

There is considerable reflection from the leaders as to where they were at the start of the LSIS Programme and where they are now with their teams. From observing those who line manage specific curriculum areas there has been a greater openness to discuss and share issues and seek solutions by collaborating more closely with their teams. There is also a recognition that the team of middle managers line managed by some of the LSIS participants need to have the same experience to in turn, develop their management and leadership skills.
What was also apparent from the reflections was the impact of the literature used within the LSIS programme and how it had re-awakened an interest in the philosophy of leadership. Over half of the group of leaders have continued with reading leadership and education literature and a small number (4 responses) used this research to support the individual project required by the LSIS programme. The Educational Leadership element of the programme led by Professor Frank Coffield had also challenged and stimulated the participants. “The Craftsman” by Richard Sennett in particular caused much reflection particularly where the pursuit of excellence is seen as a badge of distinction but in turn “can lead towards increasing social isolation and disconnection”. As the programme is ended 8 participants feel they have had to modify their relations with some members of their teams in order to ensure they lead their teams in an equitable manner.

Another key theme emerging from the feedback was where, as individual leaders they stood in contributing to the operational and strategic management of the College and the Leadership role. A key objective of the group (12 responses) was how they could be more involved with the strategic planning and decision making processes. The groups were challenged to think of ways in which they could “Get on the balcony” (“Leadership on the Line” – Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky 2002) where, as leaders they should step back from their role and attempt to see a bigger picture. This, together with a “dancing on the edge of their authority” could see the group of leaders not only challenging functions of the College but initiating and leading the change.

This has led to a significant change occurring within the College. The group of leaders have instigated and changed the IAG, interviewing, Induction and Enrolment processes, of the College. The process has involved the Curriculum and Pastoral Leaders working together leading a significant operational change but having to adopt a very strategic approach. As a group they have had to work collaboratively but have also had to bring on board not only their own teams of teachers, but also the Support Staff. The challenges set by the LSIS Programme had a significant number of the Senior Middle leaders vocalising their wish to be involved in a more strategic role at the Mid Flight Landing Session which led to the IAG Project. What was significant however was that the team made the vision tangible, reminding people of the reason for the change and showing colleagues of the future (“Leadership on the Line” – Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky 2002)

Delegation was another key theme for the participants (12 responses). This was partly an issue of trust between those who were line managers within the group and those teams they line managed. A recurring comment was that the middle leaders within the teams were not operating at a perceived middle management level. This was raised in a number of their LSIS days and the question asked of the Senior Middle Leaders was what was their role in inspiring confidence and trust in their managers to ensure that they were operating at the perceived correct level. A proposed way forward (6 responses) was to introduce a Middle Leadership Development Programme which would have a 360 degree leadership tool as a starting element. This had been experienced by the Senior Middle Leaders as an element of the LSIS Programme; moreover it had caused self-reflection amongst a significant number of participants (12 responses). Whilst this would be a good way forward a 360 degree
leadership tool is expensive to introduce and in the changing financial world is impractical. However the group are keen and committed to developing an in-house Middle Leadership Programme – see recommendations. The impact of the LSIS programme has given some of the Senior Middle Leaders the experience and confidence to develop and lead an in-house development programme.

Two other themes identified – by a smaller number of the participants were Communication (6 responses) and Time Management (5 responses).

From the responses the issue of communication was more of a case of sharing information with teams. The reflections showed that some of the line managers were aware that their teams felt “in the dark” as to what was going on both within team areas and across the College as a whole. Some reflected that often they had shared information with the Middle Managers who (possibly) subsequently failed to communicate with their own teams resulting in a “them and us” scenario. The LSIS programme caused those participants to realise the need to get into the habit of sharing valuable information with others (one of “The Five Good Co-operative Habits” Lynda Gratton “Glow” 2009).

The final theme of Time Management was identified from 5 responses – all members of the same Senior Middle Leadership Team. As the programme rolled out, some felt that their “core business/work” was being adversely affected by their being part of the LSIS Programme. By the end of the Programme the reflections had changed and rather than have the “blame culture” of it being the Programme there was some reflection (3 responses) that as leaders they had to manage their time and work load more effectively and efficiently. However the “return to core business” was again raised at the end of the programme when feeding back on the IAG Project and looking forward to the new academic year. Such a return to “core business” would have been a retrograde step and would be a return to the more comfortable “operational role” negating the positive impact of the programme and the broadening of management responsibility and accountability in the college.

Sponsor and Learning Tutor Feedback

The Sponsor and Learning Tutor comments were insightful to the way the participants had developed as individuals as the programme had rolled out. To ensure confidentiality of the participants it was necessary to identify common experiences and which had impacted on the group. For the majority six key areas emerged.

Embracing the programme was to be found in all the commentaries. Certainly after an initial reservation from some the level of participation and commitment was high. Feedback from the facilitators was always positive. The two days led by Professor Frank Coffield saw the leaders working collaboratively in groups to share their interpretations of the selected reading matter. Professor Coffield’s opinion of the leaders was the “the college is in safe hands” (Coffield feedback 2010).

Challenging their own leadership had also been identified. This is borne out by the reflections from the senior middle leaders. It is also supported in the IAG Project where
the strategic role has been at the forefront of their work. This was a key feature of all the sponsor and learning mentors thoughts – participating in the project. The group worked hard to introduce a radical new approach to the College IAG, Induction and enrolment procedures. (See Page 4)

Part of the LSIS Programme was reflective performance. Clearly in the Action Learning Sets, and one to one coaching the participants had thought about their leadership and roles. For those who were line managing some challenging teams where conflict occasionally manifests itself the individual coaching sessions had a significant impact. Different strategies were tried and tested in order to challenge perceived perceptions on both sides. It is still early to say how effective the new approaches are but for some leaders it was a challenge to their own performance. For the college it is some evidence of the impact of such staff development.

Many of the leaders there was seen a regeneration of interest in their role. The day to day operational role had seen the routine of the role being the main focus with little development taking place. Now there is a refreshing of mind set with areas within the college moving forward and changing. This obviously comes at a cost as familiar structures and procedures are challenged and changed.

One of the issues for the team was that of “the elephant in the room”. Having “courageous conversations” was for some difficult (see earlier), however the sponsor and learning mentors have encouraged the leaders to take this challenge on board and not resist it.

Further Observations

When looking at the premise of how far the LSIS programme was an example of deep staff development and it impact I was advised that there had to be “real” evidence in order to quantify an answer. However a key for us at the College, when looking at the impact, was how and if we saw any change in performance from the leaders which is obviously subjectively based. For us an influence to a successful organisation is the idea of Hot Spots which are “a moment where people are working together in exceptionally creative and collaborative ways” ( “Hot Spots” Lynda Gratton 2007) The LSIS programme provided a foundation for the to happen with the IAG Project being the outcome.

From a “balcony” perspective all the senior middle leaders have benefited from the programme – albeit in varying degrees. What we now have is a team of senior middle leaders who are functioning in a more cohesive and focussed way, which are coming up with new ideas and delivering them. Moreover for some there has been a real transition in performance and development as leaders, and as in all organisations some have further to go. An example of this was observed within the IAG Project, where one Senior Middle Leader in particular stepped up and led the whole process, whereas another preferred to stand outside the process preferring the role of “critical friend”.

Was the programme, based on our definition, “deep staff development “? From the feedback and observation of impact and performance it was. However there is the need for further work in the future.
Recommendations

The key issue is sustainability. The LSIS programme energised and developed individuals. We are facing difficult financial times and it is unlikely that the same financial investment will be available. However the College can develop an in-house programme and within its planning see the continuation of the Senior Middle Leadership Development Programme. The programme will be a balance between where the Executive feels the need for input and what the Senior Middle Leaders themselves see as need.

One of the outcomes of the programme which represented the impact was the IAG Project. At the time of writing the team have as yet to give their opinions and impressions of the Project. However as a College we need to harness the energy into further opportunities for strategic leadership. However the large number of leaders did impact on the process of the project. It will be better for the College if projects are identified and the leaders work together on these individual projects in smaller groups. There may be a tighter and smarter approach to the work. This will not be without a challenge to their leadership skill as in times of “distress” protection is wanted not change and the leaders will have to think carefully on how the manage this “adaptive challenge” (Heifetz and Linsky)

Further development programmes. The Middle Leader/ Managers of the College require a similar developmental programme. The College may want to change its approach to the implementation and running of this programme. The programme will be offered to those who are interested in participating in such professional development. It should also be available to those who aspire to managerial/leadership roles. The programme will afford the opportunity for the Senior Middle Leaders to share their knowledge and more importantly their experiences as leaders and the LSIS Programme. Within the current financial climate where staff morale is lower effective programmes are necessary in order to ensure that colleagues are developing at a time when promotional posts are in decline. It would also build on the Hot Spots and create a situation “ when the energy within and between people flares – when the mundane of everyday activities is set aside for engaged work that is exciting and challenging.” (Lynda Gratton)

A reading programme

As was seen in the findings the senior middle leaders had found the reading materials stimulating. It re-ignited their “intellectual” enquiry – they felt that they had forgotten what it was like to read challenging ideas and then discuss, and put them into practice. The Coffield materials should be used in a wider context.

Staff Development/Continuous Professional Development

The College needs to review its approach to this whole area. It needs “think out of the box”, using Staff Periods for additional opportunities. The new Learning Communities will provide a further opportunity for college.

Catalysing change

We need to keep reminding ourselves of our values and why we have them. By answering the “why” question we will increase people’s willingness to be on board. (Heifetz and Linsky).
### Bibliography


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Biesta G (2005) Against Learning – reclaiming a language for Education in an Age of Learning Article Nordisk Pedagogik


Fielding M (2005) Factors Influencing the Transfer of Good Practice Research Brief


## Appendix 1

### Routes to Success 2010 – 2011 Sixth Form College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>DETAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2009</td>
<td>SMT Workshop</td>
<td>Aims and Content of Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2009 (2 days)</td>
<td>Development Day</td>
<td>Delegates Identify leadership strengths and development needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2010 (2 days)</td>
<td>Launch Days</td>
<td>Why leadership delivers excellence&lt;br&gt;Leadership vs Management&lt;br&gt;What kind of leadership will it take to deliver excellence at Havering?&lt;br&gt;The leader I am now – the leader I need to be</td>
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<td>February 2010</td>
<td>One to One Coaching</td>
<td>12 hours individual coaching&lt;br&gt;Develop participants’ leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2010</td>
<td>Leadership 360 degree tool</td>
<td>360 degree feedback on participants’ leadership from their managers, colleagues</td>
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<td>March 2010</td>
<td>Action Learning Sets</td>
<td>3 meetings. Small groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2010</td>
<td>Strategic Leadership Module</td>
<td>What strategic leaders do&lt;br&gt;Strategic leadership framework</td>
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<td>May 2010</td>
<td>Leading Change Module</td>
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<td>May 2010</td>
<td>Work shadowing</td>
<td>Identify work shadow needs</td>
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<td>June 2010</td>
<td>Leading and Building Teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2010</td>
<td>Mid programme Workshop</td>
<td>Take stock of Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2010</td>
<td>Frank Coffield</td>
<td>Leadership and Education</td>
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<td>November 2010</td>
<td>Managing Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2011</td>
<td>Landing workshop</td>
<td>Consolidation of Learning</td>
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</tbody>
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March 2011: 2 further days organised by executive
Which students decide to enrol in a new school sixth form and what course choices/changes affect them in year 12?

Sophie Cabral
High School

Context & Rationale

This research was conducted during the first year of a new school sixth form centre (2010-2011) in a mixed comprehensive school in a London borough. Four new sixth forms were established in this borough. Within the borough there is also a further education college & sixth form centre, two Catholic schools and an academy with sixth forms. In nearby boroughs there many other school sixth forms and colleges. Two of the new sixth forms work as a consortium, one has links to the college and the school where this research has been carried out is at present working on its own. All four schools have a designated sixth form building. These were built and completed in 2010. The school year started with approximately 80 students and by May there were 70 remaining, 39 on level 3 courses and 31 level 2 students.

The provision offered for this first year included the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 3 PROVISION</th>
<th>LEVEL 2 PROVISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology AS Level</td>
<td>1 Level 3 course + L2 courses &amp; retakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry AS Level</td>
<td>Performing Arts BTEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics AS Level</td>
<td>Sport BTEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths AS Level</td>
<td>ICT BTEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English AS Level</td>
<td>Work Skills BTEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology AS Level</td>
<td>Higher Project (L2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media AS Level</td>
<td>Retake English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Design AS Level</td>
<td>Retake Maths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology AS Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photography AS Level</td>
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<td>French AS Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Studies AS Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performing Arts BTEC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sport BTEC</td>
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<td>ICT BTEC</td>
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</table>

With lots of competition between existing providers the challenge was to attract our year 11 students to stay on in year 12 and also to establish a provision that was within the financial parameters of the school budget and staffing constraints. The rationale behind the research is to explore
the decisions made by students and follow their success with the provision throughout the first year. This may then be of use in recruiting students and reflecting on provision for the second year of this embryonic sixth form centre. With increasing scrutiny on success and retention rates and the importance of a school sixth form in promoting the school locally this research also looks in particular at the decisions of the most able students and the profile of the L3 students.

Aim/Research Questions

• What is the profile of students who decided to enrol?

• How many of the most able students in year 11 enrolled in the new sixth form?

• What are the choices/changes students have made or experienced between the end of year 11 and the end of year 12 and how might it impact on IAG for the next cohort of year 12.

Methodology

The research involved both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

For research questions 1 & 2 the method used was the quantitative analysis of data held on the Level 3 students by the school. This included:

• Analysis of data held on predicted grades in the previous year 11 (10+ A*-C)

• Analysis of the GCSE results (10+ A*-C)

• Analysis of APS scores of those enrolled in the sixth form (Level 3)

• Comparison of first choices on application form to subjects offered in Sept 2010, October census and May 2011 census

10+ A*-C was chosen as a baseline to see how many of the more able students in traditional subjects chose to enrol in the sixth form (see rationale). Many students also achieved 10+ in BTEC courses and other vocational qualifications but these did not necessarily give them access to AS courses.

For the third research question the method used was a qualitative research method. A random selection of 8 students from a group who had changes made to their courses, were interviewed. There was a common format to the interviews based on a time-line approach of their experience from application to the sixth form. Notes were taken along a time line during the interview and sometimes the students wanted to write it or remembered things as they had a visual cue/record and added more information. The interviews took place in May 2011 just before the AS examination season. The research findings were then also presented visually to make links and understand the experience of the students.

Findings from the data

In terms of the profile of students enrolling in the sixth form, 56% are on L3 courses and 44% on L2 courses. Of the 39 Level 3 courses roughly half follow a mixed programme of AS level courses and BTEC courses.
The mixed provision reflects the needs of the many students whose APS scores are not high.

Looking at the predicted results 34 out of 240 students were predicted to achieve 10+ A*-C grades (14%). Of these only 8 enrolled in the sixth form. Looking at actual results 28 students achieved 10+ A*-C (12% - only a 2% difference with predicted results). 18/28 students who decided not to come could not have studied the chosen subjects on their application forms as they were not offered at school, although this is only one possible reason. The interviewing of these students was beyond the scope of this research. The fact remains that 71% of the most able students did not enrol in the sixth form.

Looking at the figures for 2011 below only just over a third of the more able have firm applications for the sixth form for Sept 2011. While the first indications show a slight improvement on the first year there is a significant group who are not making a firm decision to continue post 16 at the school.

Findings from the Interviews

The findings from the interviews have been presented graphically in the form of a mind map see appendix. These maps aim to show changes in course choice/enrolment from the end of year 11 to the end of year 12. The research undertaken was qualitative and therefore provides an insight into the factors affecting individual students. However, there are some key
Student A’s ideal and course enrolments reflect her personal wish to remain in a supportive and ‘known’ environment and the limitations of the provision of a small, new sixth form. It is quite clear that she wants a career as a social worker and that she thrives in a vocational environment. She excelled at H&SC GCSE and is happiest with her more practical vocational courses such as ICT and photography. She is less confident and successful with English and could not/did not want to cope with the demands of General Studies. Student A is now in a difficult position as H&SC is not available again for 2011 so this means persevering with English and checking University options for H&SC related courses with the subjects she is taking. She is reluctant to apply to a college and take her AS subjects as standalone qualifications. The school sixth form was not able to offer her ideal subject and her application reflected parental attitudes. Student A needs careful IAG and encouragement/support to map out a route into higher education for a course that she wants to follow.
Student B (appendix) was not able to enrol on her application choices but has thrived with her photography. As with Student A she has a low APS and the practical element of the course is one which she thrives on. The General Studies proved too much for several students including students A, B & D. Again the blocking of subjects meant that student B could not have her second choice either but seems happy enough now with a positive higher education focus for the future.

Student E has a similar ‘story’ to Student A although with a much lower APS she has dropped down to only 2 AS levels. There is concern over progression to year 13 and finding a suitable pathway into further or higher education.

Student G could not do any of his chosen subjects on his application form. Content to try a different combination and despite parental attitudes he has continued with these courses and is really enjoying the photography which he may well apply for at university.

With an APS of 42 Student C found 4 AS levels challenging especially the psychology. As an academic subject with much to learn/remember it became a burden and although she managed to pass her mock could not continue.

Student F with the highest APS of all the students in the sixth form has not followed her initial choices. A high achiever in most areas at GCSE she found it difficult to decide what her priority was changing her mind in the summer before AS and she remains undecided in her application for university. Her repeated wish to have been able to do history combined with her interest in law may indicate that her real interests have not been met by the provision on offer. A generally bright student drawn to the sciences doesn’t always reflect the true abilities/interests of the student.

Recommendations

While the sixth form provision provides for a wide range of students it is not attracting a large proportion of the most able students from the year 11 cohort (both 2010 and currently in year 11 although it may well change as results come out in August). Recommendations include:

- A focus on these student’s aspirations throughout KS4 providing enrichments activities e.g. G&T students in different subjects to attend seminars/workshops in the sixth form building, after school or in PSHE time.

- Access to University outreach schemes for KS3/4 through the sixth form which might then channel them in the direction of applying and enrolling in the sixth form.

- Celebrate the academic success of Year 12/13 students with other year groups perhaps linking assemblies with year 10 & 11.

- Integrate the work of the sixth form into the rest of the school – mentoring days where selected students in year 12 (after exams before A2 courses start) support students in KS3 lessons.

- Broadening the curriculum offer. 18 out of 30 students who applied but then didn’t enrol had applied for courses which the school could not offer at the time. These included history, economics and business studies and further maths. Although beyond the scope of this
research it might be that some of these subjects might have been those also chosen by those who did not apply from the more able group. The difficulties are obviously balancing staffing skills and financial constraints with the need to attract students. The provision for 2011 has included two new subjects - Government & Politics and Geography AS Levels.

In terms of the interviews with students it is interesting to see that there are some students who will come because they feel safe, secure and supported which is positive but who will also choose courses which are on offer but not necessarily what they really want to do. Managing the expectations and pathways for the lower ability end of L3 is challenging and these students need really good IAG to progress if that means finding courses elsewhere. Others have realised their access to some L3 courses originally applied for is restricted by GCSE results and have thrived on alternative combinations. While the focus has been on those whose course choices have changed there are others who have been very happy with their choices.

Recommendations to improve the decisions students make could include:

- PSHE scenario discussions at KS4 - profiles of anonymous students with different teacher predicted grades and matching them to criteria for: 4 AS level courses; 3 AS level courses; mixed AS/BTEC courses together with the entry criteria for different combinations of L3/L2 courses and example university course criteria.

- Post 16 Parent information evening prior to the application process (end of year 10 or start of year 11)

- Assembly for year 10 end of the year with year 12 students (or beginning of year 11 with year 13) describing their academic profile and course choices/successes and aspirations.

The aim of this research was to explore the profile of students choosing to enrol in a new sixth form and some of the choices/decisions they had to make through the course of a year. While the findings reflect the general observations and experiences of staff it has provided an opportunity to reflect on a nascent provision that is still yet to be judged by results. The research also reflects tensions in placing new provision in an already crowded market place. The school has now achieved 16-19 status in part due to the ‘new localism’ of the coalition government with a shift from centrally controlled localism of New Labour to a more laissez-faire localism of the new coalition government (Hodgson & Spours) and an emphasis on institutional autonomy. Although partnerships with the other two schools will continue at present this is only resulting in what Hodgson and Spours call ‘weakly collaborative local learning systems’. Truly democratic localism which Hodgson and Spours espouse with area based leadership involving education professionals, employers, community and government where civic and educational values override the competitive nature of provision in an undefined competitive geographical area will be challenging but arguably necessary for providing appropriate pathways for students in their continuing education.
References

Three versions of ‘localism’: Implications for upper secondary education and lifelong learning in the UK, Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours

Educational leaders as partners: new models of leadership? Ann Briggs CCEAM Conference, Durban, Sept 2008
Learning Plus UK and the Institute of Education
Promoting Excellence in Leadership 14-19: Final research

Student F
- Changed mind over the summer as thought medicine is a medicine. Also biology in some block at home - other Biology
- Not going to dropping subject
- Really enjoying the subject

Parental Attitude
- Don't want psychology thought it wasn't a respectable subject

Application
- Form choices
- Biology
- English
- History
- Other

Future
- June 2011
- Sept 2010

Student H
- Work in law
- History
- English
- Psychology
- Drama
- General Studies

Parental Attitude
- No opinions
- not offered all choices
- FD BTEC Science so did not meet criteria

Future
- Jan 2011
- Sept 2010

Application
- Form choices
- Psychology
- English
- Drama
- General Studies

Note: APS: 52, APS: 40

Science, french, law, drama, psychology, business studies, law degree, biology degree, have attended Salford, university, psychology, future

No longer wants to do medicine - too hard. Still wishes she could have done history.
BTEC: The transition to QCF – who benefits?

Kim Caplin
College

Context

During 2009 the exam boards in the United Kingdom were required to transfer all qualifications from National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF). Further education providers were faced with changing their provision by the end of 2010 to the new framework as it ensured that all provision was capable of being measured in a consistent way. Many institutions transferred their offer without changing the shape of the curriculum whilst others took the opportunity to redesign their curriculum offer in a more creative way. This was especially the case with Foundation Learning.

For colleges such as Westminster Kingsway College this involved change to their entire curriculum including the BTEC qualifications by Edexcel. The change was from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BTEC National</th>
<th>Diploma</th>
<th>GLH 1080 (usually offered as a 2 year long qualification)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cert</td>
<td></td>
<td>GLH 720 (used largely as a fall back)</td>
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</table>

To:

| BTEC First | Diploma | (1 year long qualification) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BTEC Nationals</th>
<th>GLH</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidiary Dip</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extended Dip</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>180</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BTEC First</th>
<th>GLH</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>360</td>
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</table>

Initially this project brief was to investigate whether this change to BTEC qualifications would enhance learner outcomes. However, as this involved approximately 60% of the College’s curriculum it was too large for the scope of this research and an early decision was made to focus on one Faculty: Creative and Service Industries (Travel and Tourism; Business; IT; Music; Music Technology; Performing Arts; Media Production; Art and Design).

At this time it was difficult to identify a research question. On further investigation, the publicity information used to promote the new framework on the Edexcel website provided a structure. The company claimed that it would:
• Give managers increased flexibility of delivery
• Speed up attainment
• Boost student motivation
• Give seamless progression
• Make a difference to teaching through the support and training materials


Research question: Are the claims made by Edexcel for the new QCF BTECs evidence based?

Methodology

Each element of the claim needed specific methodology although early in the project it was decided to ensure three of the curriculum areas followed the traditional two year design (a control group) whilst the other four took the new design of taking Certificates by February and Diplomas (Level 2) or Subsidiary Diplomas (Level 3) in June. In addition the last two statements were taken out of the range of the project as it was not possible to cover them in the time allowed. For example, whether the move to QCF would increase progression would need a two year perspective.

The first assertion that it has given managers increased flexibility was investigated by discussions with four senior managers (third tier); analysis of curriculum planning material at Westminster Kingsway College and comparing to secondary data the research findings from Hull College (published on the Excellence Gateway). The second statement that it speeds up attainment for students used a comparative analysis of only management information. The final claim that the new QCF increases student motivation used the college student survey (benchmarked by the company QDF); success data; teacher survey (10 teachers – departmental review) and secondary data from Leicester College (Excellence Gateway).

Evidence: ‘The new QCF gives managers increased flexibility of delivery’

Four Curriculum managers were interviewed at the end of the academic year as part of the college’s departmental reviews. Three of the managers were responsible for the new structure and they ascertained that this had allowed more flexible curriculum design especially for those students going into Year 2 of the Level 3 courses. Two areas were actually considering offering ABC or OCR Diplomas instead of the BTEC Extended Diploma (not something that Edexcel would like to publicise!). Both managers stated that this approach allowed them to be more responsive to industry especially in Art and Design and Media.

All managers stated that in planning for courses in 2011-12 the new QCF has also allowed them to consider packaging qualifications at Level 1 and two by use of the Certificate and Extended Certificate at Level 2. Two of the curriculum managers have recruited students in September 2011 on Art and Design and Travel and Tourism courses. In ICT the managers have also planned and recruited learners on National Certificate qualifications alongside A levels.

In testing manager’s claims against the reality of delivery in the classroom, teachers were generally supportive of the
concepts expressed by managers, but found the new framework more restrictive for teaching due to the unit rules of combination and having to complete units in a certain order. The new approach requires increased team work to overcome some timetabling challenges. This is supported by the findings of Hull College on their Foundation Learning Programme where the manager states, “I think for the staff it’s been quite a major challenge, because we’ve gone for a very personalised approach and we’ve given the students maximum flexibility in what they chose to try in the vocational tasters, it has been quite difficult to timetable.”

The Management Information Service in the college has also found the change quite challenging as students are now often on multiple qualification aims. (Analysis of 2009-10 course plan compared to 2010-11 indicates on average 2.5 qualification aims per student for their main qualification). This has also occasioned additional registrations to the exam boards so there is an increased cost to this approach for the college with every student taking at least one additional entry. (Analysis of exam entries).

Evidence therefore seems to suggest that the change to QCF has allowed managers further flexibility in curriculum design, although it is too early to assess the impact of these changes and whether the restrictions on teachers and additional costs to the college will justify the increased flexibility for some students.

**Does it speed up attainment for students?**

Comparing the retention of 2010-11 Level 3 Year 1 students with those at end of 2009-10 it indicates that where new QCF approach has been used the retention has been increased by 18%. At Level 2 the differences are more marked. The 4 subjects where the QCF has been used retention has increased by 9.5% compared to subjects using one long qualification where retention has fallen by 7%.

Students have also attained at different points in the course –Level 2 January (Certificate). However although students have attained at points throughout the course, the college has not claimed achievement for this provision (to save money and also to avoid the nesting of qualifications). Students have however, cashed in qualifications on Level 2 at Diploma level and on Subsidiary Diplomas at level 3 at the end of year 1. This has shown that at Level 2 the new modularised approach has marginal difference with success rates of the 4 subjects on the new model improving on average by 2% whereas the three in the control group fell by 2%. On Level 3 where students cashed in Subsidiary Diplomas all four subjects achieved in excess of 90% and early indications show a very good retention rate onto Extended Diplomas in year 2.

Evidence seems to suggest that students’ attainment is more immediate at Level 3 and retention increased with more bite sized qualifications. However, the research evidence does not allow consideration of the final success data at the end of a two year period to allow a confident analysis and further research is needed to ascertain whether other factors have impacted on success rates such as management restructuring and size of classes. Evidence from Leicester College who used this approach on Level 1 programmes claim: that the “changes to the delivery model have led to: improved attendance; improved retention rates; increased success rates”. (Excellence Gateway).
Westminster Kingsway College’s Level 1 provision also saw increased success rates of 10% on long level 16-19 courses suggesting that the QCF has more impact on these learners.

**Has the new QCF increased student motivation?**

The higher retention rates on courses that have used the new QCF approach indicates that students do seem to be motivated to complete their courses. This is evidenced in high success rates at the end of year 1 on Level 3 programmes where the more modular approach is used of over 90% This is also supported by the evidence from the use of QCF on Foundation Learning courses at Leicester College, “They can discuss how they’re progressing with their credits, if they’re heading towards an award, a certificate, and that can be an incentive to say ‘Well, you’ve got so many credits, you only need a few more credits and then you’ve got your certificate” and that is really quite motivational for them." (Excellence Gateway).

However, upon analysis of the Westminster Kingsway College student survey it suggests that there has been a decline in student satisfaction with teaching and learning on courses using the new qualification structure compared to courses still delivering a long qualification. The survey covers programme areas in the college so does not specifically report on the courses in the scope of this research project. It does however, include these students and areas where the new approach was used, did so throughout the curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUERY</th>
<th>PROGRAMME AREA</th>
<th>%09 CF 10</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning at the right pace</td>
<td>Business*</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts *</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performing Arts</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media *</td>
<td>-27</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel</td>
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<td>Well organised</td>
<td>Business*</td>
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<td>+4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel</td>
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The issue here lies in the definition of the word ‘motivation’. If motivation is defined as successful outcomes and retention, then there does seem to be evidence that the new system motivates students. However, if motivation is defined as enjoyment then according to the student survey, the evidence seems to suggest students are finding the new approach as more tedious.

In order to fully assess this aspect, further examination is required to determine whether the decline in student satisfaction rates is due to the introduction of a new course structure (for example, teachers inexperience of the new structure; use of new teaching materials etc). This would need analysis of future student survey data and follow up discussions with students.
**Recommendations and lessons learned**

Evidence seems to suggest that the new QCF BTECs delivered in a modularised method does allow more flexibility in curriculum design and speed up student attainment. Further research is required over a longer period of time and comparative work with other institutions is needed to assess whether these more flexible qualifications enable employability and progression for learners.

With regard to motivation it is more difficult to ascertain whether students are truly motivated by their courses or are incentivised by the qualification. A longitudinal study is required over a range of provision compared to a more traditional design, to assess whether students are enjoying this approach. Other factors need to be filtered from the research or taken into consideration. For example, is the teaching of the same quality; are students admitted onto courses with the same selection criteria.

In retrospect the project brief was too large for the time and resources allowed.

However, the college is committed to this approach for a further year and it will be necessary to conduct:

- Analysis of the course offer to assess whether managers have taken the opportunity of the increased flexibility of the framework to offer a more varied curriculum.
- Analysis of enrolment data to see if students have taken up the new courses offered.
- Analysis of retention and achievement data to see if the Level 3 improves over a two year period and to allow comparison with NQF qualifications.
- A further student survey to assess whether the confidence of managers and teachers in delivering the courses has improved the levels of satisfaction.
- Lesson observations to determine whether teaching and learning grades have improved as a result of new curriculum design.

**References**

Success data – Proachieve

Student Survey data – QDP Services.com

Excellence Gateway – report findings for Leicester College and Hull College

Edxcel website

DFE website