

The future is bright, the future is blue

500 hundred blue balloons filled a bright blue Manchester sky, spreading the word of lifelong learning across the UK and Europe.

Chairman of Manchester TEC, and Nick Stark were also among the people releasing the balloons.

Delegates at the conference had been asked to say what lifelong learning meant to them and their thoughts were then attached to balloons ready for launch. Amongst the many replies were:

“To me, lifelong learning means a new way of working.”

“To me, lifelong learning means continually keeping the flame alive.”

“To me, lifelong learning means everyone wanting to learn something new each day.”

At the launch Juliet Morris summed up the whole event as an opportunity for everyone to share their learning experiences and skills. David Compston,

... Nick Stark (Sinbad from Brookside) gave the North West Festival of lifelong learning lift off.

Albert Square was filled with balloons as ...

Vive la difference - quick quotes

“The pace of change means grand strategies need to be abandoned for quicker and more attractive entrepreneurship. The implications for educators reaching the SME market are that we must find a way of collecting SMEs’ unmet demands - if they are not fulfilled, the typical small company will find a lower skill way around the problem to move onto their next panic - a case of short-term necessity resulting in long-term economic loss.

If this is not done, the skills market will be determined only by large firms and guesswork.”

George Kessler

“Too often the world of work is referred to as ‘the real world’; the home, culture, sport and the whole of civil society also form part of the ‘real world’ and we forget it at our peril.”

Tony Uden

“How do I decide which plenary to go to? They are both about social exclusion.” “No, they are both about employability.”

The new lifelong learning agenda produces new dilemmas ... Overheard at breakfast on Monday

“Technology enfranchises disaffected boys: it equalises opportunities for learning.”

David Forrester

“I was relieved that some of today’s contributors went beyond the consensual rhetoric of lifelong learning and exposed ideological differences about the purpose, process and content of learning. The plenary on citizenship and social inclusion emphasised the danger of policy frameworks focusing too much on individuals and individual achievement, and not enough on communities and collective gain.”

Sarah Perman

“I think we are beginning to understand that the development of lifelong learning can be an important unifying force for Europe.”

Tony Cann

Expanding the learning community

Speaker David Sainsbury

Joining in and being on board

Gus John spelled out the need to deconstruct the mythology in the UK's Green Paper of an homogenous society. We need to face the society we have if we are to have the society we want, including its racism and xenophobia, and an education system which values individual achievement as a route to individual gain.

Lifelong learning and the Learning Age will not materialise unless built on a concept of rights and entitlements for all citizens which is as strong as its view of their responsibilities.

For Tom Collins too, public expenditure on education had thus far moved towards the private good - the education of the few - rather than to society as a whole with resources directed to address disadvantage by targeting early childhood and second chance education.

Olé Bisleth's learning boutiques are an illustration of what might be done. A learning boutique needs a dazzling window display that encourages a step through the door. It encourages a culture in which learners' demands are the starting point for institutions.

"Le developpement de LLL ne peut se faire qu'avec ceux la meme qui forment les citoyens et les producteurs de demain: les enseignants du systeme academique. L'un de nos chantier est donc de les faire participer achivement a ce mouvement et de transformer avec eux l'organisation de la vie scolaire vers un nouveau paradigme educatif."

Jean-Francois Lippert.

UK Minister for Lifelong Learning, Kim Howells, drew attention to Learning Direct, the UK national Freephone helpline on learning opportunities which will be the information spine of the UK's new University for Industry.

David Sainsbury set out the role and functions of UfI which would overcome some of the persistent barriers to participation in learning:

- lack of information
- lack of time
- inaccessibility
- fear
- cost.

UfI will provide a route to a skilled or more skilled job. It will provide a "passport to employment". The UK is keen to learn from other European countries, and share its UfI experience.

The aim is to make lifelong learning the everyday experience of the many, not the few.

Jane Drabble stressed that knowledge is power and learning is fun - and went on to demonstrate how these can be

reconciled through the medium of television, a friendly and familiar medium in the homes of the very people traditional educators describe as hard to reach.

Television can be important as a mass medium and as a personalised service through the use of new digital technology.

Computers Don't Bite, the newest BBC campaign, sets out not to tell people what they don't know but tell them what they could know.

The new BBC Learning Channel will use digital technology to produce accessible - and fun - learning with lots of interactivity. Television will move from passive to active - "transferring knowledge and power at the same time".

Stephen Heppell talked about his experience of long-term projects in a multiplicity of environments and the way that on-line training works for those involved. Central to his argument was the belief that successful on-line learning brings "learner delight" - a key feature of the best of learning, an unchanging centre to a world of change.

Unison brings it all together

Unison has 1.3 million members covering occupations from low status employees who have not benefited greatly from compulsory education to managers and technicians at the cutting edge of change.

Unison has created its own open college, giving members access to a wide range of provision from core learning to professional qualifications and degrees. We focus on non-traditional learners through our flagship Return to Learn programme.

We have entered into partnership with the BBC on the Computers don't Bite project as we view it as a coherent approach to demystifying information technology and opening up opportunities for personal development.

Each of our 1200 branches will receive a copy of the CD Rom so sessions can take place at local level. A number of our 100+ learning partnerships with employers will be using the programme on Thursday which is Learning at Work day.

"The challenge to the Government, employers, institutions and funding organisations is to ensure that all policies, funding mechanisms, and programmes successfully integrate policies for lifelong learning with programmes for job creation and the eradication of poverty."

John Monks

Views from working groups

Some challenges from group C

We need people doing it for themselves rather than systems and structures doing it for them.

There is a danger that learning about citizenship will be marginalised against employment. It should be central to it.

In areas of social exclusion, we should work with the skills, talents and self-esteem of local people to become workers/animateurs in our own communities.

Too great an emphasis on qualifications can be an obstacle.

What happens in work with social exclusion is very short term when mainstream provision has ongoing funding. At its worst, this can embitter rather than empower.

Project management is an issue, rather than lack of funding.

Where is the curriculum for active citizenship?

Funding - EU funding is late, bureaucratic and favours large organisations.

How to use less detrimental language.

How do we involve communities in decisions about their lives?

Emerging themes from group B

Allow learners to create their own content.

Evolve understanding of effectiveness of different media formats.

Make learning fun.

Articulate new role for teachers.

Regulate **for**, not **against** things - e.g. for universal access.

Recognise that mania over measuring makes learning boring!

Examples from the national and regional perspectives group included the effect of projects funded by the EU on policy in Greece, interdepartmental approaches in government departments in Catalunya which sees adult education as its best economic policy. Denmark had examples of new approaches targeted at both young, disaffected adults through youth education and production schools and private, non profit-making schools for adults to improve basic skills and employability.

Securing a learning workplace

“It is not enough to use the hands and feet of our employed, we must engage their brains and even their hearts.” - Rolf Lindholm.

Scientific management is no longer of use. All the ways in which people learn at work must be understood, recognised, acknowledged and used. We may need to develop a concept of “management by following on behind,” reversing the traditional role of manager as planner and leader.

Chris Humphries concentrated on the need to get the right balance between competitiveness and social cohesion and stressed that the first is not sustainable over the longer term without the second. Competitiveness (efficiency, higher productivity) gained at the expense of social stability is simply not an option and neither is it an option for Europe to compete at the level of low skill, low value-added economies.

The ways people learn at work

- team work
- jobrotation
- project work
- work with instructor
- work site meeting
- brainstorming
- information from Internet
- mentorship
- professional networks
- study visits
- benchmarking

Klaus Draxler agreed that unless we are careful, the notion of skills will trap us in a contradiction. It is no longer the skills as fixed (even temporarily fixed) competencies which Europe needs to develop but a concept of skills as a dynamic, developing force within individuals and energising the places in which they work.

“Public responsibility towards a Europe of knowledge must focus on ensuring continuity of education as part of a lifelong learning process that extends in a highly coherent sequence from primary level through initial vocational training to continuing education. This includes safeguarding the framework conditions of lifelong learning, which cover basic provision, pluralism, co-operation and co-ordination, innovation, information, advice and publicity, quality assurance and recognition of individual learning, counselling institutions, certification, participant protection and research and teaching.”

Dr Peter Krug

Learning more popular than TV

The Campaign for Learning's Attitudes to Learning MORI poll was launched at the conference. It says:

- more people enjoy spending their time learning things (28%) than either watching TV (22%) or going to the cinema (5%);
- 77% would rather work for an employer who provides time, money and support for training than one who gives large salary increases;
- people learn most in the home (57%), at work (43%) and in libraries (36%).

All of this data confirms the importance of listening to what motivates learners. The survey is available from the Campaign for Learning, price £8.

Education and Employment Minister Kim Howells visits the Cyber Cafe and finds that you're never too old to learn. Earlier in the day he announced two new websites on the prototype National Grid for Learning - one for school governors, the other for further education. "NGFL is a major new Internet resource," he said. "It is vital to our ambition to achieve Internet access for all pupils and lifelong learning students - and to use technology to help overcome barriers to learning."

Colleges and Universities have key roles to play in promoting lifelong learning, employability and competitiveness. This involves widening access, especially for currently under-represented groups. It involves lifting standards. And it involves working closely with each other and with TECs, employers and local communities to respond rapidly and effectively to the needs of employers and individuals in their regions and local communities.

Roger Dawe, Director General for FHE and Youth Training

"Employability, flexibility, individual responsibility, social inclusion - I'm not yet convinced. It isn't enough. Employability does mean much more than these issues. This new model to be improved needs a deep transformation of all learning environments and policies.

Who's the historical subject able to produce all the changes needed (within the enterprises, institutions...)? From my point of view, it's easy to answer: a well-educated, civic society."

Paolo Federighi

Request

Mental Health Services of Salford is a specialist National Health Service Trust which provides services for those who have experienced emotional health problems.

We are seeking European partners to pursue funding for this target group.

Please could you contact me if your organisation is interested or please give my telephone number to any organisation that may be interested:

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Signing off

The full conference report will be sent to you in August **but** summaries of many of the sessions are available **and** all papers will be available on the conference website at:

www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/conference.

"Conferences tend to be closed shops: experts tell each other what they already know. The UK Presidency has undertaken a considerable effort to get its conference on the Learning Age to a larger public. This seems to be the most efficient way to overcome traditional divides impeding the successful implementation of a lifelong learning policy."

Klaus Draxler