Reaching Excellence in English Vocational Education and Training

A Response to the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning’s Call for Evidence

November 2012
1. Introduction

The Commission for Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning has been tasked with raising the quality and improving the outcomes and impact, of adult vocational teaching and learning in the further education and skills sector.

From practice to theory

The evidence that follows in this report has been collated from over 25,000 respondents; members of the Institute for Learning (IfL) from across the diversity of further education colleges and providers who have responded to the IfL with their views on these issues relating to vocational teaching, training and learning in their everyday working lives.

We have put forward a summary analysis of these views as the basis for IfL’s recommendations to the Commission’s call for evidence 2012. This is the second phase of IfL’s evidence and builds on an initial report to the Commission, spring 2012. IfL will share further evidence up to February 2013 in its support for the Commission including on English, mathematics and functional skills.

From the large range of evidence from practitioners and our research with members, IfL has found that there is not a single recommended path to having world leading vocational education and training for adults in this country. However, there is an emerging clarity about the key characteristics of an ecosystem which promotes truly excellent vocational education and training, uniting further education teachers and trainers and the sector overall towards this economic, social and moral purpose.

Some of the consultations, surveys and seminars we have held with members (with 25,606 member inputs) over the last two years have been used as evidence for this response, as follows:

- **What 5,000 further education teachers and trainers think about initial teacher training**, published October 2011 based on a survey undertaken in December 2010 with 5,297 members responding (of which 3,282 were vocational teachers or trainers).

- **IfL response to the BIS consultation: Revocation of the Further Education Workforce Regulations**, based on responses from 5,332 members to IfL survey: The future of the profession.

- **IfL annual reviews of CPD** these reviews have been based on a sample of members declared CPD, and data from tens of thousands of members of how they allocate time for CPD.
Brilliant teaching and training in FE and Skills, published in July 2010, a guide based on 5,189 members views.

IfL’s preparatory research to inform the work of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning based on 120 members in depth reflective diaries and research seminars with vocational practitioners and learners.

IfL response to the Education Committee: Attracting, Training and Retaining the Best Teachers.

IfL response to the Wolf Review of Vocational Education, based on survey responses from 5,081 members

IfL response to DfE consultation on QTLS holders being recognised to teach in schools as qualified teachers, based on survey responses from 2,579 members

IfL response to the Ofsted consultation on the Common Inspection Framework 2012, based on survey responses from 2,128 members
We start with a diagram drawn from IfL’s evidence that gives a theoretical and a conceptual framework for high performing vocational education and training.

Diagram 1:

**Characteristics of a Positive FE ecosystem for excellent vocational education**

This diagram is adapted in the light of extensive evidence from IfL members, teachers and trainers, from an ecosystem model presented by Professor Ann Hodgson at the IfL, 157 group and IoE joint seminar on FE leading partnerships with employers for excellence in vocational education, on 6 November 2012.

For excellent up-to-date vocational education to thrive each area of the ecosystem needs to play its pull part and for the synergies to be strong. It is not enough to have one two elements only in the ecosystem that are positively supporting vocational excellence. IfL, as the professional body puts vocational teachers and trainers at the centre for two reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, the learners’ experience and success is shaped and determined most strongly by teachers and trainers. Secondly, IfL’s distinctive contribution to the Commission is to bring to light what supports the practitioner to be truly excellent in their practice as vocational teacher or trainers.
2. Vocational teachers and trainers are dual professionals, expert and up to date in their vocational field and in the most effective teaching methods. They should be qualified as teachers or trainers

“Removing the need for qualifications will devalue it. My husband is very talented at his job, he is very successful, however, he cannot explain how to do his job in a way which others can learn from. That is the difference between a teacher and a competent tradesperson. Teaching is not just knowing - it’s the ability to pass on that information in a way which allows and encourages others to learn. It is the ability to break down information into understandable 'bites' which students can build upon to develop their own learning and skills” (IfL member response to The Future of the Profession consultation)

“I spent 6 years lecturing in a classroom in FE in Scotland without a teaching qualification. Although I was a good lecturer, I did not significantly improve until I obtained my PTLLS, CTLLS and A1 & A2. I am now in the final stages of completing my DTLLS. I now understand the teaching and learning process much better and can confidently discuss teaching and learning with Ofsted Inspectors. I feel that I understand how to deliver my subject better and can give strong justifications of my thinking process. This is something that I could not necessarily give whilst working without a teaching qualification.” (IfL member response to The Future of the Profession consultation)

Through IfL research and extensive survey analysis, it has been shown that the vast majority of teachers and trainers have valued their teacher training experience and the positive effects on teaching and learning, even though in FE this is commonly generic training and not subject-based. It is clear from respondents that the process of ITT does offer legitimate space and time for acquiring and developing expertise in teaching and training which they contextualise themselves for their subject or vocational area, and leading onto sharing of professional learning.

In preparation for the evidence IfL presented at The Skills Commission Parliamentary Seminar on Initial Teacher Training in December 2010, IfL consulted over 5,000 teachers’ and trainers’ on the value of ITT, with powerful and somewhat surprising findings shared in our report. There was uniformly positive support for the value of ITT from practitioners across work based learning, colleges and adult learning, and across PTLLS, CTLLS and DTLLS.

Of the 5,297 teachers and trainers who responded to the ITT consultation 3,282 were vocational teachers and trainers and of those between 82% and 83% said that ITT was working fairly well, quite well or very well (82% in-service and 83% pre-service).
Improvements they thought could be made to ITT were: more mentoring support, time to learn/reflect, observations of experienced teachers or more peer observations, specific development on how to manage learners with SEN or classroom / behaviour management techniques/strategies, funding for ITT, and more assessment of prior learning (APL). Subject mentoring is often not available or robust enough for the contextualising of teaching expertise in the vocational field.

The most positive aspects of ITT were: flexibility in terms of studying at same time as working and course availability locally or accessibility; a national standard and qualification (status, knowing that all teachers and trainers have the same expectations in terms of clear standards); progression, confidence building, gaining knowledge - understanding theories of learning and how people learn, and applying these; sharing of practice with other teachers and trainers; feedback from teaching practice and observations. ITT gives a strong second professional identity and is part of new entrants seeing teaching or training as attractive and in this sense a step up, not a step down. ITT gives a pride in taking on a second professional status as a teacher or trainer, alongside their first professional identity in their vocational specialism.

Our data shows the average new entrant to the profession is 38 and that ITT is viewed positively as being successful. Our research shows that the experience of ITT is the key to unlocking and making explicit the tacit knowledge about their vocational field that many vocational teachers and trainers have from years of experience in their subject area, as well as enabling them to become experts in how people learn and develop a good repertoire of effective teaching and learning methods which they can build on and develop, whatever the context they teach or train young and adult learners and apprentices:

‘I came straight from industry…it meant I had the knowledge required to teach, I just had to find the best way of teaching it. I believe that this has been my biggest learning curve and to some extent my greatest achievement…as I do see myself as a teacher before my vocational subject role and I think it is because I have gauged how learners learn, to a certain extent, and I find I can adapt to different learning styles and I am always willing to try new ideas’ (engineering diary entry – preparatory research June 2012).

IfL undertook a further survey with members following the publication of the Lingfield review part 1 – to provide evidence to share in our response to the BIS consultation on the revocation of the workforce regulations, over 5,000 members responded to this survey ‘the Future of the Profession’ where we asked them about the value they placed on ITT and CPD.
• 87% of a survey of over 5,000 of our members said that ITT qualifications should be mandatory on a national basis. They said that removing them would erode standards, reduce the flow from ITT to CPD opportunities, impact negatively on the professional status and standing of the sector and impact negatively on the calibre of new entrants to teaching and training.

• 92% supported a national entitlement to CPD, regardless of the area of the sector in which teachers and trainers work. The Commission could recommend that this is prioritised owing to its importance in raising standards of vocational teaching and learning.

In other research our members have told us about two other factors a) the cost of initial teacher training, expected to rise to up to £9000 for the level 4/5 qualifications, may act as a barrier to new entrants and b) the use of subject mentors for vocational teachers and trainers in the early stages of ITT and their career is exceptionally useful but is very difficult to access.

Recommendation 1: The IfL strongly recommends that the Commission, the Guild and the Government agree to maintain the FE Teachers’ Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007 so that a rigorous programme of initial teacher training with subject mentoring should be mandatory for all entrants to the profession, and in particular for the seasoned and successful vocational experts who should be attracted for their industry experience and knowledge. The Commission might suggest that government invest in ITT bursaries of up to £20k in parallel with those available to school teachers for the most in-demand subjects.

CPD for adult vocational teaching and learning needs to be individually driven and based on evidence of impact on learning and learners.

“It [CPD] keeps us all on the top of our game and encourages us to maintain our development as teachers and prevents stagnation.” (IfL member response to The Future of the Profession consultation)

The IfL has reviewed the evidence of CPD of teachers and trainers in the FE and skills sector on an annual basis for over four years from 2008-2012.

The findings show consistently year on year that the majority of teachers and trainers in this sector declare almost twice as many hours spent on professional development activities than the minimum that was recommended under government regulations (30 hours CPD for a full-time teacher/trainer), and that they are familiar with, and use the concept IfL promotes of ‘the dual professional’ in constructing their own individually-driven CPD. In each of the four annual reports, there is evidence that teachers and
trainers divide their professional learning almost equally between improving their teaching and training skills and updating their subject specialism.

However, IfL also has evidence that there are blockages to teachers and trainers accessing enough vocational updating. This means that up-to-the minute vocational specialists at the point of recruitment will soon become out of date. Learners on vocational programmes must be confident that their teachers or trainers are preparing them well for today and tomorrow’s industry and vocational specialisms, not yesterday’s.

In IfL’s recent survey of teachers and trainers about their practice, with 2,500 respondents, only 51% of the vocational practitioners said that they spend time with employers from their vocational area as part of their professional development regularly (selecting ‘a great deal’ or ‘often’ as their response) while 27% said they do ‘sometimes’ and 22% said they ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never’ do. IfL also arranged in May 2012 an in-depth seminar with members, vocational teachers and trainers, for the Skills Commission’s Inquiry into specialisation in further education and there were powerful findings with the participants seeking a very simple ambition to ‘let us be the professional in our teaching and our subject specialist fields, and to help each other keep up to date’. They saw the three vital ingredients for great up-to-date and innovative specialist teaching to be: specialist professional updating; collaborative professional development and discussions with specialist peers; and flexible time for vocational and specialist updating.

Diagram 2: CPD supporting vocational excellence

The extensive evidence also shows however that much of the professional development that is driven by an organisation or employer is not effective or relevant to improving subject specialist skills, and often not very effective at improving teaching methods either.
The key recommendations from the **2010-2011 CPD Review Report** show that teachers and trainers want opportunities to share the outcomes of CPD with others, in order to benefit from a collaborative and critical reflection on impact. The report called for support for ‘the networked professional’, one who would be able to engage with others in action research and supported experiments in order to identify CPD activities that really work and improve teaching and most benefit learners. Crucially, vocational teachers and trainers need to be networked into specialist CPD beyond their college or provider for example with leading employers and professional bodies.

These findings correlate strongly with the work of Professor Dylan Wiliam on formative assessment strategies, Geoff Petty (one of IfL’s patrons), on evidence-based teaching, and Helen Timperley and Professor John Hattie’s work on feedback and the measurement of effective teaching interventions which all rely on ‘communities of practice’ and supported experiments and the active interrogation of data and evidence of impact giving insights to effective teaching and training.

Collaborative reflective practice is a powerful form of CPD. The latest IfL review on CPD for 2011-2012 is due to be published in January 2013 and the focus of this review is on how teachers and trainers measure the impact of their development work. The draft findings indicate that although there is a great deal of personal and anecdotal evidence of improvement, there is little or no evidence of the systematic measuring of impact, of the raising of standards or achievement of the learners from most professional development activities.

More CPD needs to be designed and developed that is likely to yield the biggest impact, based on the evidence and what is known from IfL’s extensive evidence and other research about methods of CPD that work. There are sensitivities and commercial interests at stake here, as individuals and colleges and providers ensuring a good return on investment in terms of improved practice, may undermine some lucrative businesses selling to the sector, and reduce the sector’s spend on conferences in particular. It may also mean for some colleges and providers a rethinking of their CPD policy and strategies, and some changes to whole organisation CPD practices, as well as the ways that teachers’ and trainers’ time is allocated and spent.

**Recommendation 2:** It is a strong recommendation that CPD activities should be evidence-based and most likely to lead to impact. CPD must include regular industrial updating for vocational teachers and trainers, and use the research of teachers and trainers into their own practice and should be shared with other vocational specialists. There should be more collaborative networks of teachers and trainers in subject specialisms.
3. Teachers and trainers need to be experts in curriculum development and have a good repertoire of teaching and learning methods

Vocational teachers need to be experts in organising and enabling effective vocational learning, and flexible so as their teaching and training can be from level 1 to level 5, and can be in the classroom, workshop, and workplace and can be with groups or with individuals.

IfL’s evidence showed there was no easy articulation of an over-arching single vocational pedagogy, but rather the need for a repertoire of overlapping pedagogies that can be deployed using the judgment of the teacher/trainer depending on the vocational area, the location of the learning, the age and level of the learners. This requires an exceedingly high level of skill on the part of the teacher or trainer to create exactly the active learning experiences that will motivate learners to reach their goals and meet and exceed their own expectations. This also needs the right facilities.

All of the participants in the first two phases of IfL’s research for the Commission in the answer to the question ‘what support do teachers and trainers need to be most effective?’ agreed that vocational education demands a more joined-up approach between teaching and training and the industry context. This is needed to ensure vocational currency, and the confidence and respect of learners.

Specialist vocational teachers and trainers need to work with employers directly to develop relevant and innovative curriculum which meets the occupational needs of the industry, and not be bound by just delivering qualifications. Too often in the sector non-vocational specialist managers mediate partnerships with industry. This restricts the scope for vocational specialists talking and working with specialist vocational employers and generating potentially very valuable vocational curriculum innovations. Teachers and trainers and employers may need support to work very closely with industry as it will involve some change in their role, most crucially they need time to do this.

Time and how the precious time of teachers and trainers is deployed is a vital area for the commission to consider. Without some changes, excellent vocational teaching and learning is very unlikely to flourish. Please see annex one.

The expectations and practices hitherto have been strongly bound by just delivering qualifications, with the achievement of as many qualifications as possible often being the top line indicator of successful vocational education and income generation. A renewed focus on innovative vocational curriculum development is needed.
Recommendation 3: It is therefore a strong recommendation that a new balance for practitioners is achieved with time for working in partnership with industry for developing innovative vocational curriculum and delivery of learning, and protected time for subject-specific CPD and updating, as well as teaching and learning methods. Time must be spent differently to ensure world class vocational teachers and trainers and innovative vocational programmes for learners.

4. The sector creates and sustains close partnership between teachers and trainers and employers

In both their individual reflective accounts and the discussions in the seminars on vocational teaching and learning which followed with IfL members this year, the participants in IfL’s research strongly agreed that effective teaching methods for vocational learning need to be based on solutions to real-world problems created by employers working in partnership with providers. These should be led directly by teachers and trainers, the specialists, who have recent and relevant work experience. This gives implicit industrial updating CPD too. There was an exceptionally strong consensus that vocational learning must be rooted in actual practice or as close as possible to the conditions of actual workplace practice so that learners can develop not only the skills of the trade or profession but also its cultural norms.

“Vocational teachers need experience in their specialist areas and what would further strengthen vocational teaching may be to make it a requirement to do a specialist form of CPD each year just in their area to ensure that they remain at the forefront of their knowledge and skills.” IfL Member

Recommendation 4: Teachers and trainers must be closely involved in partnerships with employers
5. The sector must have up-to-date specialist vocational capital and equipment

Teachers and trainers in vocational areas should have access to up-to-date equipment and facilities. As part of its support for the Commission’s work, the IfL was asked to research the views of teachers and trainers on adult vocational teaching and learning. This research has been in two parts: the first phase was completed in June 2012 (IfL preparatory research to inform the work of CAVTL). With phase 2 due for completion in February 2012.

Phase 1 of the research was based on the detailed analysis and in-depth research with 120 vocational teachers and trainers in three vocational areas: motor vehicle engineering, hospitality and catering and business studies. Findings need to be read with some caution and the size of the sample in mind, however, they illustrate a significant degree of consensus around the need for up-to-date vocational equipment and facilities that support teaching and training methods to be most effective.

‘I know it sounds like an excuse all the time, but funding is always a constraint. At the university I attended we had a purpose built wine tasting suite, a fully functioning bar, three restaurants, a 26 bedroom hotel and a conference centre. At the college where I teach, we don’t even sell beer on-tap. That certainly makes it difficult to teach students how to pour a beer!’ (Hospitality teachers diary entry).

‘We have to teach using old cars and this not good enough for our learners to be prepared for industry’

(Motor vehicle engineering teachers diary entry)

Recommendation 5: teachers and trainers in vocational areas should have access to up-to-date equipment and facilities
6. Raising the public profile of vocational teachers and trainers through professional status and celebration

In responses from over 5,000 IfL members to surveys relating to our response to the commission on ‘attracting, training and retaining the best teachers’ and the ‘Wolf Review of Vocational Education’ the topic of professional status was highly significant.

The respondents clearly identified with the elements of parity, pedagogy, progression and perception:

**Parity** – QTLS and QTS parity was hard fought for and hard won by IfL and others, matters hugely for the status of the sector and to our members and must continue. Despite the recommendations of the Lingfield review about lowering the level and requirements for ITT, QTLS should continue to be a nationally recognised benchmark owing to its rigorous and peer-led approach to recognising outstanding practice and legally recognised parity with QTS. Since the DfE regulations of April 2012 where QTLS is recognised for teaching in schools as a qualified teacher on the same basis as those holding QTS, many vocational teachers and trainers are now working in the school sector as well as FE and teaching 14-16 year olds through to adults. Parity matters, and so too does having expert vocational teachers being able to practise in schools which strengthens pathways for young people into vocational fields, so parity matters for this reason too.

**Pedagogy** – the IfL called for this Commission to be set up in the response to the chancellor’s statement on the spending review October 2010 and that adults will need to bear more of the costs of FE courses, as they will and should expect the very best quality teaching and learning when they are borrowing thousands of pounds to pay for the tuition. IfL called again for a Commission focusing on vocational teaching and learning as one of our key recommendations to the Wolf review, based on a strong consensus from teachers and trainers. The very best vocational teaching and learning is delivered by those with extensive industry experience because of the passion for the subject these individuals can instill and the deep vocational knowledge and skills they can bring. Exposing learners to ‘doing the job’ as early as possible and providing a learning environment which is as realistic as possible, including the availability of a variety of resources such as modern as well as traditional equipment, provides a multitude of skills that learners will need to work in different types of employment settings. Qualifications often do not keep up with the very latest developments in the industry and do not always foster a learning culture which inspires innovation, especially in areas with a high dependence on technology. IfL recommended that teaching practitioners should have greater autonomy to develop innovative vocational curriculum, and learning programmes which could be rapidly responsive to the needs of employers and learners rather than having to wait until the system revises qualifications.
Progression – it is clear that focused guidance and support is essential to progression. Adults seeking to engage in VET should have access to specialist and independent IAG. The role of the expert vocational teacher and trainer is vital too as a giver of information and guidance about their industry area, and to offer taster sessions to prospective learners so that they can make informed choices about their training and longer term career interests.

Perception – the one respondent cited here echoed thousands in the concern about the perceptions of vocational qualifications “We equate vocational qualifications to GCSEs and A levels to give them a sense of worth, as if they are valueless in their own right. Before this survey I hadn’t thought of it in this way, but this has to be wrong.” VET is criticised when it is seen do be done fast and done ‘on the cheap’ which has been the case particularly with adult apprenticeships over the last couple of years. This undermines the system and undermines the professional integrity of teachers and trainers, especially if they are expected to sign off on competency based assessments in the interests of employer relationships and funding. Assessment must be rigorous and carried out with integrity at all times.

Recommendation 6: A world class vocational teaching and training workforce for the further education and skills requires a joined up approach to the workforce strategy between DfE and BIS. If the teaching profession is to be an attractive career of choice the Commission could investigate further how industry and the sector, perhaps through the Guild, can work together to attract experts in to teaching and training.

The post initial teacher training qualification professional status for vocational teachers and trainers, QTLS, should continue to be recognised in order to keep parity of vocational teachers’ status with school teachers, and to help strengthen vocational pathways from schools to FE.

“Having worked as a professional bricklayer from leaving school for 35 years, coming into teaching my trade seemed a little daunting at the time, having completed my CertEd which was a very pleasing and educational experience, it was gaining my QTLS status with the IfL through the professional formation that has gave me the most pleasure in my on-going professional development as a teacher/tutor. Gaining my QTLS has filled me with confidence to keep on bettering my teaching practices, within the offender learning sector. Having my QTLS status has given me great confidence for interacting with other teachers and sharing my views and resources, whereas before my lack of teaching knowledge would hold me back.” (IfL member response to The Future of the Profession consultation)
As one of the stated aims of the Commission, raising the status of vocational subjects and the teachers and trainers of those subjects is vitally important.

It is axiomatic in many recent government policy discussions and statements that vocational education and training is a critical (sometimes the critical) component of individual and national prosperity. Yet paradoxically it has often been perceived as a second choice or second chance learning opportunity, or even second rate, for both young and adult learners. There are real dangers when expert vocational practitioners become teachers of vocational subjects in workplace settings, some of them become removed from the reality of workplaces. Working in an FE college or small work-based learning provider, how do these experts transfer their tacit vocational knowledge to train, motivate and inspire others to follow a vocational route? How do they manage to articulate, codify and specify what must be learned in any one vocational subject for the careers and various occupations within a vocational area and make explicit knowledge that may be unexpressed even unacknowledged, and how do they themselves learn the best way in which to do that? Qualifications do not do this articulation sufficiently and nor can they, and the role of the vocational teacher and trainer is crucial. The articulation of this complex, or even mysterious, process can help raise the status of vocational education.

One of the respondents in the IfL preparatory research noted in their reflective diary:

‘Currently, the overall approach to vocational education is fragmented. Raising the status of vocational subjects could be achieved through a partnership approach. Partnership working is essential between schools, colleges, employers, and other education providers and is key to bringing ‘life’ to vocational learning through a recognition of the importance of situated learning’ (business studies diary entry).

**Recommendation 7:** In order to raise the status of outstanding vocational practice in different contexts the IfL recommends that we explore ways to celebrate the very best of our national achievements across the FE and Skills sector. The World Skills competitions and the National Skills show are showcases for this. The legacy projects derived from the 2011 UK competition need to bring the excellence in vocational teaching and training practice to the attention of a wider audience and raise aspirations in adult vocational teaching and learning across all parts of the sector.

**Recommendation 8:** Ofsted inspectors must be up to date and successful specialist teachers in the vocational field they are inspecting because Ofsted judgements are so influential for the FE sector and its reputation.
Annex 1: Time - Rebalancing the Workload

Methodology

Throughout October and November 2012, the Institute for Learning invited its members to take part in an online survey on the utilisation of a diverse range of methods in their everyday teaching and learning practice. Members were invited to respond by telling IfL the frequency that they used these methods from options based on the work of Hattie (2012). The particular reason why Hattie argues in favour of the approaches that we tested teachers’ and trainers’ experiences against is because, as the author argues, they encourage attributes which makes learning visible to teachers.

In total, 2583 IfL members responded to the online survey. Just under a quarter (23 per cent) of respondents declared the main context in which they teach or train as the adult and community learning part of the sector, 37 per cent responded from further education colleges and 13 per cent responded from work based learning. In addition, two per cent responded from the armed forces, a further two per cent from the public services, three per cent from offender learning, a further three per cent from sixth form colleges and just under four per cent from schools. Slightly over nine per cent of respondents declared ‘other’ as their main teaching or training context. These responses included practitioners from higher education, freelance teachers, welfare to work programmes, businesses and private sector training providers.

Based on a five-point scale ranging from ‘a great deal’ to ‘never’, respondents were asked to gauge the extent to which they involved particular methods in their teaching or training practice. Such options included the extent to which group work was used, learners measuring their own performance, using formative learner feedback and developing cognitive learning skills. Analysis on these questions has been conducted separately to the submission.

In addition to responding with their own experiences of what teaching methods they have used in their practice, members were given the opportunity, through the use of open questions, to describe the barriers they face which prevent them from using the approaches and methods to teaching that they would prefer. These open questions were optional but more than half of respondents contributed.

In delivering a valid and reliable submission of evidence for the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning, we segmented the responses from practitioners involved in the delivery of

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vocational teaching and learning. The responses to questions specifically asking for examples where some of the outlined teaching and learning methods were used successfully and asking respondents to identify factors that act as barriers to using these approaches could then be analysed separately.

Findings

A significant barrier which prevents vocational teaching and training practitioners from diversifying their teaching practice is time; a general lack of it and inefficient use of it in the workplace. Primarily, the analysis demonstrated that the more that is expected of individual practitioners in terms of teaching contact hours, the possibility and desire and motivation to be creative and innovative in teaching is inhibited by a reduction in the time available to properly research, properly plan and properly evaluate new methodologies and approaches. It is obvious too that excessive contact hours prevent vocational teachers and trainers from linking with their industry effectively on a regular basis.

The results of IfL’s surveys provide hundreds of examples of where administrative responsibilities such as compliance with institutional quality procedures, compiling reports on learner progress for external monitoring, and demonstrating compliance with administration systems as well as health and safety and safeguarding regulations prevent the practitioner from engaging in the process of improving and developing their vocational teaching expertise and practice.

A key issue identified in the evidence from members was the particular challenges faced by teachers and trainers involved in the delivery of short course programmes. Many examples were provided which illustrate that where, for example, a programme is delivered one day a week over eight weeks, there is a perceived higher risk involved in experimenting with new methodologies, trying something new owing to the very restricted period of time available to meet an often demanding set of learning outcomes.

“The focus is on evidencing many things from learning to attendance to showing teacher development. This is all very well but as a small organisation much of our time is spent on this and this takes away from time with learners. As payment is outcome lead the administration has taken over from the focus we used to have, working with young adults who are disengaged with learning to help them find ways to re engage and take responsibility for their own learning.” – IfL Member, self-employed.

“Time is a great problem when it comes to being inventive and giving a learning experience that I would be totally happy with. I have to spend evenings and weekends putting new resources together as my workload during the day does not give me time to do this. Added to this an occasional day off to undertake CPD and you are playing catch up constantly. Then I find that holidays are times to catch up
rather than relax so that we return fresh for the next half term and giving our learners the level of teaching, learning and support they fully deserve.” - IfL Member, Further Education College.

“Tight timetables block the opportunity to get out into industry to see what’s going on now - some of my subject specialism moves very fast, and it’s hard to keep up to date without doing this. Managers seem reluctant to give time for directed scholarly activity, so it has to be done in your own time, which I do do, but it would be nice to have that time properly recognised.” – IfL Member, Further Education College.

“Time restraints often mean that paperwork takes up too much of the time available with the learner. As an assessor regular visits last one hour. Sitting writing assessment plans and carrying out reviews take up one third of the time available for talking the learner through the assignments and discussion of any issues they may have especially when you have NVQs, Technical Certificates and Functional Skills to cover each visit.” – IfL Member, Work Based Learning.

“In the past I have designed modules and units around an entirely ‘learner led’ model. For example, students had a collection of poems to learn. I gave them a booklet containing the poems and told them that the publishers wanted to hone down the booklet to just 10 poems and wanted them to form editorial teams to pitch their new versions of the booklet - why certain poems should be excluded and included. I arranged for a panel of experts in suits to visit in six weeks and the students had to learn and critique each poem without my input and present their final choices using literary language (and various other elements that hit the exam assessment objectives). The students had to plan the whole task in their editorial groups and track their own progress throughout - evaluating their progress each session and drafting a plan of action for each session themselves. At the end, they had to produce a professional pitch to the panel - hear the panel's decision and feedback - and then evaluate their own and each other’s pitches, presentation and decisions. In order for a task like this to work and not just become an opportunity for students to slack off, it needed to be meticulously planned and every variable foreseen and prepared for. I have since stopped trying things like this because the pressure on me as a teacher is to hit targets and achieve grades and complete so much tracking documentation and other paperwork and to do full-time teaching plus extra revision and coursework help plus to be a personal tutor in just 3/4 of an hour a week means I do not have any time at all to plan innovative teaching. I now simply have to try to survive and I have lost all my passion for the job.” – IfL Member, further education college – relates to journalism, publishing and English.
cost and produce qualifications and not teaching students how to learn.” IfL Member, further education college

“As previously stated, I am by nature a very creative teacher but am feeling so bogged down by tracking and producing paperwork to cover every decision I make that I no longer have the energy to do these things properly. I came into this job because I love students, I love thinking, I love discussions and I passionately wanted to help young people develop their thinking skills and their interest in the world. Now I feel like all I am doing is processing them through a grades factory and my spirit is broken.” – IfL Member, further education college

“There is no opportunity for vocational research or development of skills, I have received no funding for or direct training in subject specialists in the past 10th years! I have self-funded and attended evening classes and part time post graduate education with no support from my employer. Training for teaching has been limited.” – IfL Member, adult and community learning

“Frequently personal, professional development is not allowed in work time and so that leaves very little time outside to plan. Can't afford many training opportunities. Stopped from meeting with employers as teacher is not important enough. Only managers are allowed to go. Contacts made are often passed on and ignored.” – IfL Member, further education college

In considering what are appropriate roles and responsibilities of leaders, managers and practitioners within the adult vocational teaching and learning world, it is unfortunate, and in IfL’s view a failure of the sector, when teaching and training practitioners find themselves in positions where they are physically unable to carry out their duties to the high standards that they hold themselves to for their learners because of an unbalanced workload. IfL recognises entirely that key responsibilities of teaching and training practitioners indeed involves administrative work such as keeping and maintaining assessment records, creating schemes of work, lesson planning and reporting to their department and institution. It is clear, however, that good management recognises that there needs to be a sensible ratio between every hour of teaching and the effective planning and reflection that then needs to take place. It is not the place of IfL, nor the Commission, to stipulate what this ratio should be, or how many teaching hours per week are appropriate. The profession is far too diverse for arbitrary ratios and undermines the kind of professional relationships which should exist between teaching and training practitioners and their managers.