

**INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING - LAUNCH OF OUR FIVE YEAR
STRATEGY FOR MEMBERS
4TH FEBRUARY 2009**

**SPEECH BY BEN JUPP, SENIOR POLICY ADVISER, THE
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It is great to be with you for the launch of the Institute for Learning's Five Year Strategy. I know some of you, although many I don't know. I have got a very privileged position in the Cabinet Office which is looking across all public services: from health through to learning and skills and social care etc, and the best part about that is seeing what is going on in so many different areas of public services. And I think, and I say this is as an overview from the Cabinet Office, that learning and skills is absolutely at the heart of the Government's public services agenda. When I first took up this post, a few of the very first people I met were college principals talking about their experience and further education services. The way in which a number of colleges, learning providers and others have raised the quality of provision really has been recognised over the last few years. I think this provides an incredibly good foundation for the sector. I know that participation rates for 16-18s have been increased, and success rates for many training courses have increased as well. These are all a testament to the sector.

My position also, I guess, gives me the perspective of which kinds of major changes are coming upon us. In that, I mean none of us in this room would underestimate the challenges in terms of training needed in the current economic environment.

I think that, you know, we have a National Economic Council that meets twice a week to look at economic changes nationally. Many of you will be in institutions that are seeing what's happening in terms of people's changing needs in this economic downturn locally. It's always important to have adaptability for the short term context.

The longer term context is that there will be hundreds of millions of new jobs around the global economy, but often in very different sectors. For example, developments in the environmental sector are huge, but as a country we are not yet in the position to fully exploit that. My message is that responding to the short and long term challenges requires a further improvement in quality and this relies on professionalism.

The guy who was in charge of the school system in New York has got a great phrase:

'The fact is that you can mandate adequate performance, but you can never mandate excellence in public services. You have to release excellence.'

And I think there is nowhere that this is more important than in learning and training.

The relationship between the front-line professionals and the individual learner is absolutely central. In your sector, the teaching and training professionals are on the front line providing the training to individuals, communities, companies. The central role of the workforce of our public services is obvious to all of us, I think, but it is something that we forget. We start at the top and work downwards.

But the only way that we are going to respond to the nation's challenges is if we start with the relationship at the bottom and work upwards, and that is what for me professionalism is all about. It is not about elitism, it is not about paternalism. It's about releasing the energy that people, your professional teachers and trainers, have got on the front line. It's about building their skills and their ability to respond to what learners and employers need and want.

I know that DIUS is incredibly supportive of what the Institute for Learning is doing. The role of your professional body, the IfL, is part of a much wider movement of building professionalism across public services. I think the themes that you have got in your Five Year Strategy will see you through both the immediate challenges and the longer term. Other parts of the public sector can learn from you as well.

In terms of Continuing Professional Development¹, I am not an expert in the life long learning sector, but, in general, we have been pretty bad on it across a lot of public services. We have thought that you can dip people in a bit of training and that's it. But whilst that has been going on, there has been energy released in little pockets, sometimes not under the continuing professional development courses' banner at all: practitioners talking to each other, peer reviews and networks. When I look at the best services across the world they tend to have a huge density of practitioner and membership networks and peer review. I think we are starting

¹ Continuing Professional Development is a major benefit offered by IfL to its members, with benefits being the first major priority in IfL's Five Year Strategy.

to see more of that and more in parts of education and training. We are starting to see that in people using new technologies. For example, the work of welfare advisor is hugely dynamic at the moment, and welfare advisors are tackling the challenge in Citizen's Advice and at Jobcentre Plus by learning fast from each other in this very rapidly changing time. It is not by having staff coming down doing different training courses that might be put on in 2010 about how do you respond to the 2009 downturn. It's by having a variety of networks whereby people are exchanging information spontaneously and immediately with each other and solving problems together. I think and hope that that's the approach to continuing professional development that the IfL will be supporting over the next five years. It is great to see this in your Plan as a benefit for members.

I think Status² is an issue for practitioners across sectors. We have always known it is important, but I think we've struggled to find the right way to address it. There are services that are coming round to look at status afresh and there are real strengths in doing this. Across many sectors, the people recruited in over the last ten years have got as strong, if not stronger, values of public service and of supporting service users, than any other generation that has come before. This is something powerful upon which to build. There is an enormous appetite for being involved and supporting individuals and communities, through training and teaching and through helping them. I think that we have seen from the early years and through to some of the work going on with the police what can be done to raise status, and I hope that you build on that as well for your members.

And then finally, and most relevant to me, is your Voice³ objective. Again, I think that there is a movement across government to take the voice of practitioners a lot more seriously. If you look at probably the biggest reform in public services that was announced last year - the changes in the NHS - for once that didn't come from a centralised plan being cascaded downwards. Actually it came from 2,000 clinicians, nurses and others working out plans at local level which were then cascaded up to regional level and the National Plan came out of the clinicians themselves based on their knowledge of patients' needs: the knowledge which is only known at the front line. Liam Byrne, who is a minister in the Cabinet Office, has a phrase "the government needs to move from consultation to collaboration", and it's a phrase which when I go around Whitehall resonates more than pretty much anything else that we are doing. The traditional process of sending out consultations and people

² Status is the second major priority in IfL's Five Year Strategy.

³ Voice is the third major priority in IfL's Five Year Strategy.

come back with some ideas on policy is frustrating for us and it is frustrating for you. There are many ways in which organisations, such as the Institute for Learning, can be part of that collaboration, can be part of that conversation to generate new policy.

I want to conclude by saying that everything I have seen in the IfL's Five Year Strategy puts you at the leading edge of professionalism. Learners across further education expect to increase their creativity, ambition, skills and autonomy as a consequence of engaging with further education. We will only achieve these, if those professionals who are working with them, the teachers and trainers, are accorded exactly the same qualities. Creative, ambitious, highly-skilled and autonomous teachers and trainers will flourish and 'be the norm' if both government and leaders of the sector step back, listen to their frontline professionals and deliberately foster and celebrate these qualities among teachers and trainers, IfL members. I think that both you and what we in government are doing in the next five years is very exciting, and the government wants to work together with IfL. I wish you and all the members of IfL the very best, as you deliver your Five Year Strategy.