

IfL advisory council meeting – 29 May 2012

The Institute for Learning's advisory council, which focuses mainly on policy matters, held its eighth meeting at 10.00 on Tuesday 29 May 2012 at Birmingham Metropolitan College. Twenty-two members of the advisory council attended the meeting, which was chaired initially by Sue Crowley, IfL's elected chair, then by IfL's elected president, Bea Groves.

Welcome

Toni Fazaeli introduced the day, talking briefly about IfL's links with Birmingham Metropolitan College and the college's approach to professional development for all staff, which drew on IfL's work and provides evidence of IfL's impact.

Wednesday afternoons are freed up for all college staff, including teachers, to devote time to their professional development, which covers professional learning and improvements in teaching and learning, and curriculum development. The college pays for all staff to be members of IfL.

Dr Roger Minett, executive director of academic affairs at the college, had spoken at a seminar on leading learning, hosted by IfL and the 157 Group at the Institute of Education in February 2012. As the publication¹ produced afterwards explains, the central issue discussed at the seminar was how best to lead culture and systems that encourage teachers and trainers to take ownership of their professional practice and development and that deliver measurable improvements in learning outcomes.

The college's principal, Christine Braddock, and Dr Minett were off-site, so were not able to greet members of the advisory council. Chris Davies, head of teaching and learning at the college, would address the meeting later.

As Bea Groves, the advisory council president, was delayed, Sue Crowley then opened the formal part of the meeting, saying that apologies would be minuted. Welcoming the advisory council members, observers, staff members and others, she noted that some of those present were attending an IfL advisory council meeting for the first time.

Matters arising from the previous meeting included an induction session on 16 February 2012, which participants described as having been useful. It was agreed that advisory council members' roles and responsibilities had been clarified.

Sue Crowley noted that as part of strengthening communications, arrangements had been made for IfL's regional advisers to meet all the new advisory council members. This had proved effective, and one advisory council member mentioned that as a result of the introduction, she had invited the regional adviser in her area to come and meet Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) students. Another mentioned that a fellow council member, not present today, had attended the induction session and had given an overview to the south east regional network.

On her arrival, Bea Groves took over from Sue Crowley to chair the meeting.

¹ *Leading learning and letting go: building expansive learning environments in FE* can be downloaded in PDF format at www.ifl.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/27485/LeadingLearningAndLettingGo.pdf

IfL chair's report

The chair of the non-executive board (NEB) highlighted key points that had been raised in the recent NEB meeting. In a report from the chief executive, two aspects were raised as being particularly significant:

1. IfL was going forward into new territory, with a return to voluntary membership.
2. As a lean organisation, with limited resources, IfL would need to maintain its focus on members, and it was agreed that it would keep its three strategic priorities: benefits, status, voice.

It would be important for IfL to continue to work with a range of stakeholders, such as the 157 Group, to maximise impact, and for a number of strategic alliances to be developed.

Ongoing work to evaluate and introduce new services for members was documented in regular reports by the chief executive and team and reviewed by the board.

Sue Crowley said that a report was being compiled for the next annual general meeting, which would incorporate the directors' view of what happened in the period to 31 March 2012, and look ahead to the next phase in IfL's development. The NEB had scrutinised a draft of report the previous day, and some minor changes would be made before it went to the annual general meeting (AGM).

IfL was engaging with a number of people in relation to the Lingfield report. Sue Crowley, Toni Fazaeli and Jean Kelly had made a presentation to the independent review panel, and when they returned for another meeting in March, it had turned out to be a listening session: decisions had already been taken.

Sue Crowley had subsequently met Lord Lingfield again, to discuss how IfL could support the independent panel through the next stage of its review. Lord Lingfield had been very clear about the feedback he was getting: that there was a need for a professional body and that IfL was best placed to do this. He also supported IfL's plans to seek chartered status, and would be happy to act as a referee and support IfL through that process (with which he had considerable experience). He was aware of IfL's consultation with members, to which more than 5,000 members had responded, and said that he would like to see the analysis.

Sue Crowley had also met the further education and skills minister, John Hayes, who said that he was committed to benchmarking teacher education, but that defining the benchmark would be tricky. He was also committed to the notion of a professional body for the sector, and was supportive of IfL's plan to seek chartered status.

Former IfL president, John Chorley, reported that the board had also participated in anti-bribery training.

Presidential elections

Natalie Angus, IfL's assistant company secretary, confirmed that the presidential elections, which had opened the previous week, were open to all elected members. Members were urged to take advantage of this meeting as the last face-to-face opportunity to discuss the presidential elections with colleagues on the advisory council.

John Chorley said that he and Bea Groves would both be happy to share their experiences of being president of IfL.

Independent review consultation

The executive team provided an update about the independent review of workforce professionalism and the related consultation. Toni Fazaeli said that the day before Lord Lingfield's interim report had been published, on 27 March 2012, a detailed report² on research carried out for the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), presenting evidence of considerable gains under the current system, had also been published. The contrast between the two reports was stark.

Many felt that the Lingfield report was very harsh about IfL, and seemed to have chosen to ignore much of the evidence. In the comments about Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS), for example, numbers were stated as 6,000, as a very small part of the teaching workforce, but in fact the five years for new entrants to gain QTLS has not even been reached yet (and already, a few short of 7,000 had been through professional formation, and another 13,000 were at various stages in the process). It also ignored a significant contribution by IfL in the form of support for over 18,000 individual teachers' and trainers' professional development in 2010–11.

Toni Fazaeli had met the government's special adviser just before the Lingfield review was published and expressed IfL's serious concerns if initial teacher training might be diluted or lost as a requirement.

Referring to the two sets of regulations – which relate to QTLS, and registration with IfL and CPD – Toni Fazaeli asked advisory council members to recall why those regulations had been in place from 2007. Among the answers offered were that the government had decided to introduce them; that it was part of an attempt to standardise the service being provided in the sector; and that it was part of a drive to ensure that FE and skills teachers and trainers had the same status as teachers in schools.

Toni added that in his 2005 review of further education,³ Sir Andrew Foster had referred to FE as being the "neglected middle child". IfL had been set up in 2002, with representation by teachers, a workforce group, the sector skills council, government bodies and unions, and following the publication of the government's white paper in 2006, there was strong support (around 70 per cent) for regulations in the FE sector and for IfL holding these responsibilities. It was worth remembering that the drive for regulations had come from the sector, and that plenty of hopes and aspirations had been pinned on them.

IfL has been the professional body since 2002, she said – in that time, how many FE ministers have there been? Ministers come and go; administrations come and go; the professional body needs to think about what is right in the long term for the profession, for the next 10, 15 or 20 years. We must be very careful about what might be lost now, for the sake of expedience.

The second stage of the independent review would follow the BIS consultation, which closed on 4 June 2012. If the decision were taken to remove the regulations, it is likely that this would be effective from September 2012. It was also important to remember that the independent review panel did not have authority; as such, it was making recommendations, and what mattered was the government's response to those recommendations.

An advisory council member pointed out that while governments may come and go, Ofsted remained, and at the moment it seemed to be standing idly by on the subject of teacher education. James Noble-Rogers, executive director of the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), said it was proposed that there should be an inspection function for any teacher education that has public funding. If funding were dependent on qualifications, perhaps all was not lost.

Toni Fazaeli said that FE could be a bit of a political football. If we were nurses, midwives or physiotherapists, would the public accept leaving it to employers to decide about individuals being qualified or not.

2 BIS, 2012. *Evaluation of FE Teachers Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007*.

3 Foster, A, 2005. *Realising the Potential – A review of the future role of further education colleges*.

The future of our profession

IfL policy officers Shane Chowen and Rachel Organ presented initial findings of IfL's member consultation, "The future of our profession", the purpose of which was to inform IfL's response to the government's consultation on revoking the 2007 further education workforce regulations covering continuing professional development (CPD), registration and teachers' qualifications.

Of the 5,944 completed responses, 612 were invalid (on account of members having lapsed, or not finishing the survey), leaving 5,332 valid responses, which reflected broadly the diversity of IfL's membership. Around 90 per cent of respondents were current practising teachers, and the split between those who had entered the profession before 2001, between 2001 and 2007, and after 2007⁴ was fairly even.

Key findings included:

1. The majority of respondents were against initial teacher training (ITT) regulations being revoked.
2. More than two-thirds said that the 2007 regulations had enhanced the standing of the profession.
3. The majority of respondents (63 per cent) opposed the proposals to revoke the regulations about continuing professional development (CPD).
4. The consultation yielded plenty of qualitative evidence too, especially in response to Q3 of the government's consultation, about the likelihood of unintended consequences, which the majority said there would be. Many expressed their concern that removing the regulations would reduce professionalism and damage the public's perception of teaching in the sector, which could in turn impact on young people's choices – many might choose school instead of FE – and offer a negative overall view of the profession. Compared to those in FE colleges, the views of members in adult and community learning (ACL) in particular indicated that they had seen standards raised considerably over the last 10 years and did not want to go backwards.
5. In response to Q4, the largest group of respondents (43 per cent) supported a minimum level qualification being set at level 5, rather than at other higher or lower levels.
6. More than three-quarters of respondents (76 per cent) said all FE teachers should have to sit a GCSE level exam (or equivalent) in English and maths.
7. The Lingfield report had included a proposal that funding bodies should become enforcers of policy, and 46 per cent of respondents disagreed that they should have this role. There were mixed views about what is appropriate to ask funding bodies to do.

It took members just under 30 minutes on average to complete the survey. IfL was putting together a report for the government. An expert at Oxford University was helping with the analysis of the survey and quality assurance of the analysis to ensure objectivity and accuracy. The scale of responses, objectivity of the survey and the rigour of the research methods used ensured that it had an authority.

Advisory council members discussed the review and survey at some length:

- It was relatively clear that in the government's move towards greater marketisation and privatisation, FE professionalism would be undermined.
- Free schools are not obliged to employ qualified teachers, and the education secretary, Michael Gove, does not want to regulate. Other ministers want guidance on behaviour.

⁴ Teachers first employed in the sector before September 2001 are not required to have teaching qualifications, while those employed between September 2001 and September 2007 are, and those employed from September 2007 are required to have a teaching certificate or diploma, and to attain professional status within five years of starting to teach.

- There is not a settled view in the government of what is required – more that different schools need different teachers.
- A chain breaks in the weakest link. At a time of many changes in education, FE is the weak link, and schools will start to see the same sort of thing. Some currently see that kind of fragmentation as an advantage. Health and social work will not be immune to trend away from regulation and professionalism.
- Most teachers in FE are just concerned about their own jobs and lives, and are not members of a union or IfL. Most colleges work on numbers, rather than quality. IfL needs to show that we are leaders in terms of quality.
- There is a real divide between those who voluntarily choose to pay for IfL membership and others, who are gloating about the Lingfield proposals. Some in the sector had never heard of the Lingfield review.
- Some of the more liberal colleges were talking about entrepreneurialism, setting up student companies and using timesheets instead of registers. What would it mean to be a professional in a profit-making college?
- We need clarity, and to be able to state unambiguously what professionalism means, what initial teacher training standards should be, and how access to CPD is going to operate in a post-Lingfield world. In the face of deregulation, will staff go back to being bad at this?

Membership grades and professional recognition

In her presentation to the advisory council, Lucy Davies, IfL's head of membership, outlined the five membership grades currently in place (Fellow, Member, Associate, Affiliate and Companion) and initiated a discussion about the logic of the grades, potential gaps in the current system and options for new grades and routes.

Around 58 per cent of IfL members belonged to the Member grade (IfL). There were two routes to becoming a Fellow (FIfL), the first of which included having a master's degree or doctorate in the areas of education, training or research and development, as well as a teaching qualification. A second route had been soft-launched, and was open to members and associates, who could instead offer a professional narrative of between 5,000 and 6,000 words describing a problem, question or challenge they had encountered in their professional practice.

Following the closure of Standards Verification UK (SVUK), IfL took over the mapping of initial teacher training qualifications on the tariff to membership grades. The Associate grade, for example, mapped to about 40 or 50 qualifications on the tariff, for example.

The Affiliate grade was for those new to the sector, and those working towards a teaching qualification, or with a teaching qualification not listed on the ITT tariff, including some from overseas.

The Companion grade, which was introduced in 2011, was for individuals in leadership, management or support roles in the sector who were not qualified teachers and were not undertaking some form of teacher training.

Possible new grades to be discussed by the advisory council were:

- Student
- Advanced Fellow
- Other routes to Fellow, possibly including a link with QTLS
- Chartered status (Chartered Member or Chartered Fellow)

It may cost about £10,000 for IfL to pursue chartered status, for which there are rigorous criteria. In the discussions that followed, James Noble Rogers said that at a time when everything was being done to lower the status of teachers and trainers in the sector, going for chartered status would help to counter that. Toni Fazaeli said that it would signal a status, nationally and internationally.

One advisory council member said that once it was no longer obligatory to join IfL, people would join because they wanted to, as a mark of confidence in themselves and their profession. Another suggested that IfL could not really consider chartered status and other grades and routes until the outcomes of the government consultation were known.

An advisory council member asked about relationships with other professional bodies that are chartered, to which Lucy Davies responded that IfL will be exploring with the Chartered Institute of Education Assessors the possibility of mutual recognition.

There was much discussion about QTLS. Toni Fazaeli said there were already 10,000 members with QTLS, and that another 2,700 would soon complete professional formation. The government had indicated that it would not be removed as a status from individuals, since between 15,000 and 20,000 teachers and trainers are likely to have QTLS status over the next year or so, which could not be taken away (just as O levels are not taken away). One advisory council member said that IfL needed to focus on QTLS as a major strength, and not allow it to be argued away. It was bound up with the future of QTS in schools. Although QTS was conferred on completion of training, new schoolteachers still need to successfully complete their time as an NQT (newly qualified teacher) before being fully qualified.

Stakeholder representative Dan Taubman, national FE officer at the University and College Union (UCU), said that UCU's evidence to the Lingfield review had used a model based on that of the Higher Education Agency, which envisaged institutional CPD being accredited, perhaps by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). He thought that nobody knew whether QTLS was going to survive, given some of the comments in the Lingfield interim report. IfL needed to think about what were likely to be the realities.

An advisory council member said that the requirement for qualifications in HE teaching varied from institution to institution. Sue Crowley said she was concerned about the concept of institutional training. Professional bodies are independent of providers, a point made in paragraph 5.2 of the Lingfield interim report:

“It should be said, nevertheless, that professionalism as it might be understood today – as distinct perhaps from the 19th century ideas which informed the longest-established professional bodies – contains many less tangible notions. These include a conception of FE which is greater than the individual provider; of a set of loyalties to the sector, its values and its body of knowledge and practice which extend beyond the individual provider; and of a sense of solidarity with fellow professionals and a concern that their conduct as well one's own should bring credit to the sector as a whole. It is in this arena that professional bodies operate and which the review will seek the better to define.

Toni Fazaeli said that at a recent parliamentary meeting attended by 15 IfL members and staff, even teachers at a specialist agricultural college said that the college could not meet all the CPD requirements of its teachers. IfL's emphasis has been on individuals driving their own CPD and on supporting them beyond their own employer.

Bearing in mind that some IfL Fellows do not have QTLS, one advisory council member suggested that there should be a recognition of experience route, say after 25 years. Lucy Davies responded that a pilot for a recognition route was in its final stage. Another advisory council member said that it was important not to lose the qualification element.

Birmingham Metropolitan College as an exemplar

After a lunch break, Toni Fazaeli introduced Chris Davies, head of teaching and learning at Birmingham Metropolitan College, who gave an overview of the college and its approach to professional development and lesson observations. The college, which is the result of several mergers, operates from three campuses, employing 1,500 staff and serving 35,000 learners. Its last Ofsted inspection, about 12 to 18 months ago, led to a strong grading of good with some outstanding features.

Chris has worked with the senior management team to develop the college's lesson observation policy, so that there is more focus on the process as developmental, rather than the product:

1. The **pre-observation meeting** seeks to change the nature of the relationship between the observer and observed, establishing a relationship and a professional dialogue. It includes discussing the lesson plan; objectives for activities to achieve the learning outcomes; the context of the lesson, where it is in the year; and any suggestions for changes.
2. The **lesson observation** itself, in which the narrative style favoured by Chris is popular with some subject teachers, and has been adapted for particular subjects, such as maths and science.
3. An **action plan** is developed and the **review of the action plan** shows how it has led to improvements.

The college allows three hours for each observation (preparation, observing and next steps), which shows how important it is seen as being. Before the Lingfield review, the college had been examining the notion of what a professional lecturer is, and there is a real focus on teaching and learning in the college. To this they have added idea of external connectivity, including establishing links with specialist people working in a given industry. An individual's performance review is tied to the organisation's goals and strategic priorities.

Every Wednesday afternoon is set aside for professional development, some of which is cross-cutting, such as ILT, but mostly time is flexible for teams and individuals and groups to drive their own CPD. Occasionally, staff development events are organised for the whole college or individual directorates, with guest speakers – Toni Fazaeli attended a session on professional identity, for example. They also run regional advisory events with IfL.

One advisory council member asked about how the Wednesday afternoon policy fitted in with workloads, to which Chris Davies responded that they set just 800 teaching hours a year for a main grade teaching lecturer: this was low for the sector, but people had seen the benefit.

There was much discussion about the new Ofsted inspections and a growing climate of fear in the sector. One advisory council member said that there are examples of anybody with grade 3 or less in their organisation facing the prospect of being taken down the capability route, which put pressure on observers to give a 2, and this was undermining confidence. Toni Fazaeli said it was for the organisation and its leaders, not Ofsted, to make decisions about approaches to lesson observations and to draw on good practice. Clearly, it is not Ofsted's job to manage organisations.

Dan Taubman said that the college seemed to have captured a positive tone around lesson observation, and Chris Davies responded that it was about trust, and that people actually want to do a good job.

Sue Crowley said that members of staff who seek improvement said they wanted case studies, narratives, about how the organisation gets them where it wants them to be.

Chris Davies said that at Birmingham Metropolitan College it is made clear that an observation is of a lesson, not the individual. The teaching training team does developmental work with teachers who get grades 3 and 4, to ensure that they develop confidence and make improvements.

Policy update

Toni Fazaeli, Rachel Organ and Shane Chowen gave the advisory council an update on policy activities since the December 2011 meeting, details of which were covered in a paper circulated in advance.

Toni Fazaeli said that IfL had commissioned someone to do some more work regarding its **single equalities strategy**, and a draft was being circulated. Jean Kelly and a specialist organisation were looking at staff and human resources aspect.

Jean Kelly gave a summary of work being undertaken in relation to ITT and vocational pedagogy:

1. The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) has asked IfL to design and deliver a **vocational masterclass programme** for the sector to help foster a positive climate for vocational training and skills development and to support the continuing professional and technical development of vocational teachers and trainers. In the first design phase, IfL would construct professional dialogues between competitors and training managers getting ready for the next WorldSkills competition in Leipzig 2013.
2. IfL has been supporting the McLoughlin **Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning** (CAVTL) since it was set up in April. Preparatory work to inform the panel about what members said about vocational pedagogy confirmed through members' testimonies what IfL knows about maintaining up to date knowledge and skills in one's subject area as well as expertise in teaching and learning. Themes will inform the commission.
3. There is an opportunity to develop a programme for practitioners who want to develop their **research** activities and methodology, in conjunction with Oxford University. The potential of this would be explored by IfL and the programme targeted at IfL Fellows who do not have QTLS, and those with QTLS who would like to become IfL Fellows.
4. IfL is looking at working on two projects with the **Institute of Education**: a collaborative project about colleges in their community, and an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) bid to research the use of ILT in curriculum and learning design.

Jean said that all these bodies had approached IfL to work with them, and that having a more extensive research base and new CPD for members would add to members' understanding of their own practice and good practice.

Wider governance discussion

Sue Crowley described the history of stakeholder involvement in the advisory council and the NEB. Staff present were asked to remain during the session, as they were responsible for implementing the governing body's decisions, but as non-speaking observers.

Part of the role of company directors was to regularly review governance. When IfL was set up, there was a transitional council, which became an elected council. A governance review group was set up when the 2007 regulations came into force, and the recommended changes were implemented over a two-year period.

External help was commissioned for last year's annual self-assessment, to introduce more rigour, and the governance quality improvement plan includes several things to be developed further. Some of these actions had already been completed, and of those that were outstanding, one that needed the advisory council's agreement related to stakeholder involvement.

As IfL became self-funding, it might be difficult for some to act as directors when there were conflicts with the views of their own organisation. The need to look at alternative routes of funding was likely to increase the scope for conflicts of interest.

The independent report⁵ prepared for IfL by Professor Andy Friedman of the Professional Associations Research Network (PARN), which was circulated in advance to advisory council members, suggested that to be effective, a board should be smaller than the current NEB. As a result, the NEB is now looking at:

- increasing the number of elected members
- increasing the number of co-optees
- removing the places for stakeholders on the board.

The value of stakeholders would be kept at a strategic level, in the form of a forum. A small working group would be set up to consider the implications of chartered status.

A review of governance would be started when it was known what the wider environment was going to look like, especially after the outcomes of the government consultation were known. It could be done by the same working group that considered chartered status.

Beatrix Groves said that she and Rania Hafez (who was not present) had circulated a paper about governance. In the interests of democracy, stakeholders must not have undue influence, and their involvement must be at arm's length. It was also important that there should be some sort of regional forums to which individuals could take their ideas and concerns, say three times a year.

Sue Crowley asked how many of the advisory council members felt connected with regional advisers, and there was a mixed picture from the groups present. Sue said that she and Bea would work with staff (Jean Kelly, Michelle Jennings and Marie Ashton) to make the connections more explicit. The latest impact review had shown that there was good attendance at regional events, and it seemed that the part that was underdeveloped was the link with the advisory council.

Advisory council members were asked to spend some time with others at their tables, looking at the suggestions for governance structures. Feedback from the tables indicated that members thought that stakeholders had a distinct and very useful role at advisory council meetings, but agreed that there could be difficulties if stakeholders continued to sit on the non-executive board, that they could be put in the position of having divided loyalties.

Dan Taubman said that having been a stakeholder on the board, he would put his hand up and say that he was part of the working party that got it wrong. With IfL moving from being a mandatory to a voluntary membership organisation, observer status on the advisory council may be more appropriate.

Sue Crowley asked whether advisory council members were happy for the governance team to prepare a resolution for the AGM. All agreed that they were.

Another governance self-assessment would be undertaken in July 2012.

5 Friedman, A, 2012. *Assessing the effectiveness of governance structures. Report for the Institute for Learning*. London: PARN.

Professionalism workshop

A short paper prepared by advisory council member John Grocott had been circulated in advance, inviting comments. Advisory council members and stakeholder representatives retired to their breakout groups to discuss what professionalism in the FE and skills sector meant to them.

One group defined professionalism as striking the right balance between being vocationally proficient and competent in delivering education, with a code of ethics and practice and appropriate sanctions for breaches.

There was much discussion about the names used to describe practitioners – teachers, trainers, tutors, lecturers, subject specialists – and how they saw themselves and their identity. Some felt that perceptions about the word “teacher” meant that learners and employers were reluctant to use it in the context of FE, preferring “tutor”. One advisory council member suggested that some employers do not want you to be a teacher, because they do not want to pay you as a teacher, and there can also be a perception that you are teaching small children.

One member pointed out that professionalism does not exist in some sort of free-floating atmosphere, and that it implies trust, accountability and mutual respect with other professionals in the sector, such as support staff. Another described it as having expertise in one’s pedagogy, autonomy, the confidence to listen to and learn from others, and a collaborative approach.

The twin concepts of accountability and autonomy were mentioned by another member, who thought that a professional should be accountable to the values and ethics that form part of their professional code.

One member said felt that while it was non-trendy to be optimistic, some good could come out of the change to IfL being the voluntary membership body, providing there were sufficient funds, as it would have the people who wanted to be there.

Another suggested that LSIS could be a provider of CPD, but a fellow member countered that while it was appropriate for LSIS to lead on issues such as equality and diversity, safeguarding, leadership and coaching, CPD relating to teaching and learning was not their strength.

Close

After a short address by Bea Groves, the meeting closed at 16.30.