

2013/2

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Pocket Watch – What does 2013 hold for FE?

Introduction

FE ended 2012 very much in the spotlight as the Government sought to raise the skill levels needed for economic growth so what might 2013 bring? With responses on Lord Heseltine's seminal industrial strategy and Doug Richard's report on apprenticeships due in the spring, the obvious answer is more of the same but as ever, much hinges on the health of the economy and here the next set of figures are not due out until later this month

Current context

For the present, the sector faces the four challenges listed by the Skills Minister at the end of last year. These include further advances in the quality of apprenticeships, building no doubt on recommendations in last year's BIS Committee and Richard reports as well as any evidence coming out of the Employer Ownership Pilots (EOP.) Second, in a year when the participation age starts to be raised, the question of how best to provide for unemployed young people where traineeships and other work programmes are under consideration. Third, further demands on the qualification system to ensure it offers genuine responsiveness, value for money and economic returns and with consultations on performance table criteria for 16-19 vocational qualifications, alignment with local skills priorities and the application of programme based data on average earnings and employment outcomes all due during this year. Fourth, the ubiquitous raising of standards where the Government is looking for the sector to take a lead though new forms of professionalism such as provider chartered status

Likely themes for 2013

Five stand out at present. First, further devolution of the skills system with planning, funding and ownership shifting from central to local ownership and reflected in the continuing development of EOPs, the emergence of LEP based skill plans and a gradual move towards Heseltine's single funding pot. Second, the build up towards a new funding and loan system from Sept 2013 with a concomitant shift away from reliance on central grants towards local and individual investment. Third, a further widening of the client base to include traineeships, L1/2 national numeracy learners, graduate apprentices and from September, 14+ year olds. Fourth, the emergence of a new sector owned framework of professionalism with developments on chartered status and vocational pedagogy due in the first quarter of the year and new FE teacher qualifications due from Sept 2013. Fifth, the development of further quality management and success measures as the sector seeks to respond to inspection issues

Some useful dates

- Updated information on the new funding system (Jan 2013)
- Consultation on the model for the FE Guild (Jan 2013)
- Update on chartered status proposals (Feb 2013)
- Consultation on criteria for 16-19 performance tables (Feb/March 2013)
- Report from the Commission on adult vocational teaching and learning (March 2013)
- Launch of the National Numeracy Challenge (spring 2013)
- LEP skill plans (July 2013)



Steve Besley

Head of Policy (UK and International)

Pearson Think Tank

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FE in 2013