



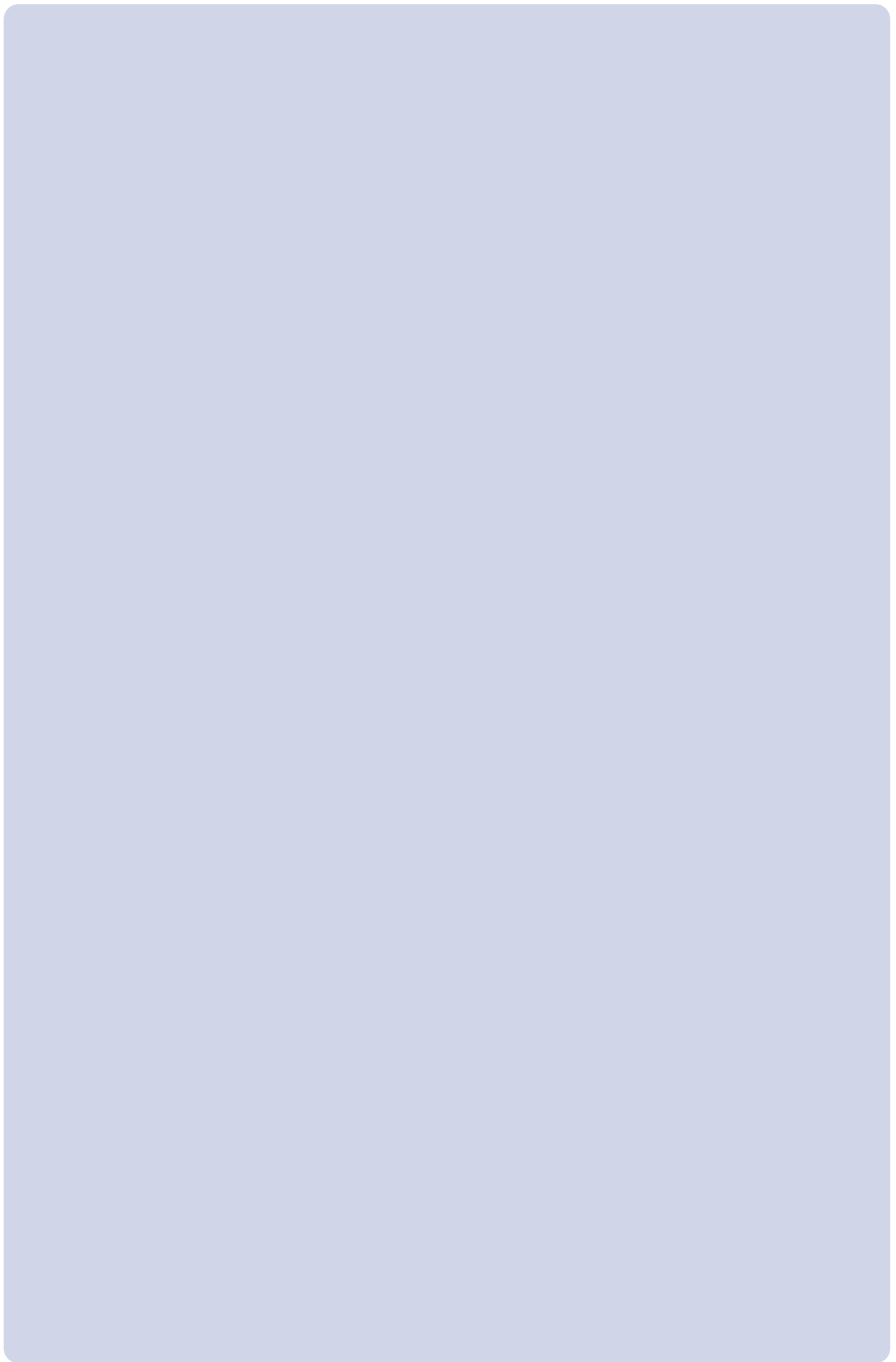
Strategic Development of High Level Learning for the Workforce In Wales

Part 1

A project produced for HEFCW
Peter Treadwell and Dr Barrie Kennard

Cardiff School of Management,
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

May 2009



Strategic Development of High Level Learning for the Workforce In Wales

Part 1

Peter Treadwell and Dr Barrie Kennard

Cardiff School of Management,
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

May 2009

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our co-researchers in the project from our university partners in Wales and to the researchers from Middlesex university who carried out the feasibility study into the possibility of a phase 2 for this project on the strategic development of high level learning for the workforce in Wales. We would particularly like to express our thanks and acknowledge our debt to those individuals from our project partners who have led the individual projects – they are named in this Part 1 of the report.

Peter Treadwell
Dr Barrie Kennard
May 2009

Further information

To gain information on further research linked to this project please contact either:

Peter Treadwell
Capital Centre for Work-Based Learning [CCWL],
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff,
Western Avenue, Cardiff, CF5 2SG
E mail: ptreadwell@uwic.ac.uk

This project was funded by the Higher Education Council for Wales [HEFCW]. The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Council.

Website : www.uwic.ac.uk/cppd



The Micro Projects

The Project Case Studies

Executive Summaries

As stated in the introduction to this report, the objective of phase 1 of the project was to carry out an effective review of workforce development activities in higher education in Wales. In order to make this review useful to end readers and practitioners alike, the project partners decided to undertake a series of highly focussed smaller 'micro-projects' that centred upon existing considerations that were seen as of current relevance and importance. The project partners were all actively engaged in the interface between employers and HE and all felt that they had a current grasp of the skills development arena in their own geographical, social and educational areas. As a result of this experience, several contentious issues were identified as being relevant to the scope and capability of this project. Each partner was tasked with producing a report around one of these issues. The existing conditions fell into two main categories; pedagogical and organisational and in order to review practice and procedures six micro projects were commissioned to investigate aspects of workforce development in Wales.

In addition, two new academic awards, a Foundation Degree [FdA] and an M.A. were validated within UWIC linked to 'Applied Professional Practice' – effectively acting as a vehicle for mature adult returners to enter higher education study whilst simultaneously attempting to improve their own effectiveness within the workplace and their contribution to organisational capacity building.

The findings of the micro projects were discussed in detail in workshop situations during the HEFCW project's 'Practitioner Conference' held in April 2009 at UWIC. The key discussion points and concerns are outlined in a later part of the commentary in this section. At that conference, the project website went 'live.' It contains the full reports from micro project co-ordinators and also holds a 'library' of relevant sourced material linked to work-based learning and employer engagement [for the website go to – www.uwic.ac.uk/cppd].

Finally an options appraisal into the feasibility of an all Wales Workforce Development Centre was carried out by Middlesex University. This report is published in full in order to inform key stakeholders with an on-going interest in progressing work-based learning and employer engagement.

The Micro projects, their authors and an executive summary of each follows –

Scoping Projects

- S1** A critical review of the current workforce development activities between the business and the University sectors in Wales and mapping the extent of accredited prior experiential learning development (EPEL/LR) activity within HEIs in Wales.
University of Bangor
Project co-ordinators: AB Brec'hed Piette and Lowrian Williams

Executive Summary

AP(E)L is a process for accessing, and, if appropriate recognizing, prior learning, both certificated and experiential. AP(E)L (or validation as it is sometimes referred to) is a crucial feature of any workforce development provision as it provides a framework for recognizing different forms of learning including non-formal and informal learning that has taken place in the workplace or in other contexts. There are other advantages to using AP(E)L in the provision of learning to the workforce. These include –

- Facilitating entry onto higher education courses for applicants who may not have the normal entry requirements.
- A cost effective and time efficient route to achieving qualifications as people do not have to repeat learning obtained in other ways
- The empowerment of individuals by giving them credit for what they have learned, often outside formal educational contexts. This is particularly important for people with few or no formal qualifications.
- Ensuring comparability and equal esteem of workplace learning and other forms of learning.

The aim of this scoping project was to determine the attitudes of staff in Welsh higher education institutions towards APEL, and the extent to which it is used within them. We sent out questionnaires to academic registrars at all 12 Welsh HEIs, 8 responded and we carried out telephone and face-to-face interviews with staff involved with APEL in these 8 institutions.

The main positive findings of the research were

- All HEIs who responded had an APEL policy in place
- All HEIs considered APEL to be 'very important'
- Most HEIs reported having significant links with business.

However there were also some less positive findings –

- Most HEIs reported very little APEL activity, and what took place was mainly found in a few pockets, either in particular subject areas, or linked to an enthusiastic individual
- APEL was not generally very well understood, and not embraced within the culture of HEIs
- The administration involved was considered to be costly and time consuming, processes were complex and not well understood
- There was little incentive for HEIs to use APEL, especially if they were able to meet recruitment targets fairly easily.

Our main conclusions were that although there is general support for the concept and value of APEL, there are currently significant barriers in developing its use more widely across the HE sector in Wales. The development of clearer and simpler processes that could be implemented within and across Welsh HEIs might help to embed the practice of APEL within HEIs, and would be worth exploring. There are many useful models in place both within the UK and in Europe that could offer a potentially useful way ahead.

S2 Work-based learning and the potential for recognising prior learning in the voluntary and public sectors in Wales: case studies from South East Wales. University of Glamorgan, Centre for Lifelong Learning and Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

Project co-ordinators: Professor Danny Saunders, Dr Rob Payne, Julianne Mortimer, Andrew Jones and Katherine Addicott

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview and detailed results from case study research into the depth and breadth of work-based learning and accreditation of prior learning (APL) in public and voluntary sector organisations based in South Wales. The research was undertaken by the University of Glamorgan as part of Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) funded project entitled 'Strategic Development of High Level Learning for the Workforce in Wales'.

This study was a scoping exercise undertaken as one in a series of micro-projects on workforce development associated with higher education support in a variety of sectors. It investigates higher level work-based learning defined at level 4 and above within the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). This includes the accreditation of in-house training programmes, the provision of bespoke programmes by universities, and the potential of Recognising Prior Learning (RPL). The project objectives included identifying the broad curriculum content of higher level training within key organisations and provide a profile of organisations engaged in higher level training as well as estimate current interest in credit rating and qualification outcomes training. The research also aimed to gauge accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) expertise and capacity of trainers working with not-for-profit workplaces. Primarily the research aimed to develop a resource plan for supporting HE accreditation of workplace learning within public and voluntary sector organisations

The research identified some common themes and issues which would need to be addressed by the Higher Education sector in order to maximise the potential for developing accredited work-based learning and APEL processes in line with the diverse needs of the voluntary and public sectors. Key findings were:

- A greater sensitivity, understanding and knowledge of organisations and sector cultures as well as perceptions of higher education;
- The use of national occupational standards – embracing and acknowledging this vocational priority and developing links with underpinning knowledge and theory;
- significant potential exists for credit rating existing training programmes and APEL, dependent on demonstrating tangible benefits of accreditation to public sector employers and workforces, and reconciling volunteering principles with individual priorities of voluntary sector workforce;
- The need for flexibility of provision, and diverse, appropriate and tailored methods of delivery and assessment, including blended learning
- Developing partnership and collaboration within and across the higher education sector to improve the public image, and access to HE, and minimise duplication of administration and bureaucracy;
- The need for meaningful consultation methods and strategies with stakeholders within the voluntary and public sector in order to inform the development of accreditation processes.

The research has raised some fundamental issues and exciting challenges which will need to be addressed if universities in Wales are to genuinely and successfully engage in the strategic development of higher level learning for the public and voluntary sector workforce in Wales.

The Micro Projects

S3

A review of the best practice in work-based learning contract frameworks. Trinity College, Carmarthen & University of Glamorgan
Project co-ordinators: Dr Elizabeth Wilson and Rob Hamilton

Executive Summary

This review of existing practice of work-based learning contracts in Wales forms one of the 7 micro-projects for a HEFCW feasibility study into the establishment of an All-Wales Centre for Workforce Development. It uses qualitative data collection methods to consider the extent to which learning contracts are prevalent in Welsh HEIs; to review the use of learning contracts in the UK and internationally; to identify good practice; and to discuss specific issues arising from the use of such contracts.

Following a brief review of the increasing importance of higher level skills and workforce development for the policy agenda in Wales, the findings start by considering a range of definitions and variations in form, which evidence a continuum of practice. It goes on to identify the use of learning contracts for work placements, for the development of skills and competences and the use of learning contracts to negotiate both individual modules and whole programmes of study. Examples are provided from the University of Glamorgan, the Open University, Trinity College Carmarthen and UWIC as appendices.

Finally there is a discussion around the perceived advantages of using learning contracts: collaboration, relevance, autonomy, and clarity of the roles of stakeholders together with limitations around their suitability for all learners and issues of control and power. The discussion notes the increasing use of e-contracts and concludes with an analysis of the implications for institutional development, particularly those of changing staff roles, the need for staff development, implications for programme management and for more responsive.

Markets and Futures Projects

MF4

A critical review of the main "barriers to learning" with regards to workforce learning and development training. University of Wales, Newport. Centre for Community and Lifelong Learning
Project Co-ordinators : Viv Davies and Oliver Hewer

Executive Summary

The methodology of this micro-project involved 1) a literature review, 2) interviews with members of university departments in Wales who dealt with external businesses and other 'key informants' (including two not in the higher education sector), and 3) interviews with private sector SMEs (less than 250 staff) and micro-businesses (less than 10 staff) which studies have shown to be those least likely to train and most likely to report difficulties. All firms interviewed were based in Greater Gwent.

For businesses, issues reported include demand-side issues such as resource constraints (cost, time and ability to commit their staff), and a general attitude or lack of 'perceived need' to develop staff for various reasons. There are also supply-side issues concerning the provision available, such as inaccessibility (lack of information available, location, and inapproachability of universities to small firms), and the perceived irrelevance and poor quality of provision offered by universities. Firms generally do what they consider they need, when they need it.

Staff members/individual learners attempting to undergo development opportunities can be faced with many difficulties, such as personal commitments (e.g. childcare, money, and time constraints), and the pressure of undergoing such development programmes – amplified when it comes to higher education. Furthermore, some staff face a lack of support from their firm or from their line managers, and staff in certain types/levels of roles (such as elementary occupations) and those working for private-sector SMEs are much less likely to be afforded development opportunities, particularly if not directly relevant to the immediate role.

For providers, issues reported include the limited market for workforce development at the HE level in some areas of Wales, a tendency for businesses who do want higher-level programmes to go elsewhere (nationally or internationally) for specialist provision, a lack of specialised requests, and therefore a difficulty in raising a cohort for bespoke requests. Also, difficulties were reported in knowing exactly what firms want, and also financial and resource constraints in designing and delivering bespoke courses which are not 'standardised products' (i.e. on campus provision, existing courses which do not require new design or validation).

Research suggests that the Welsh labour market has a prevalence of low-skilled jobs, most firms are private-sector SMEs, and there are higher than UK average numbers of people with low or no qualifications – all factors which limit the opportunity for higher-level (HE) workforce development. Though this evidence suggests focusing efforts on specific occupations and firms (such as higher level occupations, public sector), this could exclude certain audiences and workers – contrary to many educational departments and policy steers aimed at providing accessible and equitable opportunities for all. A typology of the barriers can be seen which may be used provisionally as a template for auditing potential higher-level workforce development opportunities.

Proposed solutions & recommendations

Universities need to be able to show businesses and workers that the development opportunities they can offer are worthwhile. Relevant and accessible provision which is responsive to the needs of firms and individuals is imperative (particularly SMEs and their staff). For more detailed information, consult the other reports within this feasibility study. Emerging from this micro-project, a number of further investigations can be suggested – including lines of questioning about higher education in large-scale surveys of firms, and primary data concerning attitudes and difficulties of individual staff members/learners regarding higher-level workforce development.

MF5

Study of Industry 'needs' for CPD and build effective liaison and partnership with employers via Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to meet local, regional, and national leadership and management skills gaps.

Cardiff University, School of Lifelong Learning

Project co-ordinators: Charlotte Williams and Clare Sinclair

Executive Summary

The Welsh workforce is increasing. In particular the number of managers and senior officials is projected to increase 1.1% per annum over the next few years. Skills gaps are prevalent through Welsh organisations, rather than skills shortages. Employers across Wales are thought to invest £3-4 million each day on employee related training.

Organisational size has an impact on the amount and type of management and leadership training employees receive. The most common reason for training (of any sort) was to increase productivity and make staff better at their jobs. The return on investment for training is not as good as it should be. No reasons for this have been identified. It is difficult to find meaningful ways to measure and evaluate management development and training for individual businesses. The more qualified a manager, the more effective they are. Management and leadership programmes are important as they allow managers to provide better leadership.

Research suggests a by-product of training is increased organisational performance. The most common cause of the relatively high failure rate of SME is the lack of management and leadership skills. 85% - 95% of organisations with less than 10 employees never pursue management and leadership qualifications. Economic theory suggests organisations will invest in specific non-transferable skills and are averse to investing in transferable skills. There is a lack of conclusive research into what management and leadership skills are being developed. SkillsActive highlight that within management and leadership it is the people skills where most training is focused, including time management and communications. 17% of employers utilise courses leading to management and leadership qualifications. SkillsActive have stated that there is currently too much emphasis placed on formal management education, often at the expense of informal opportunities.

There is a lack of research available covering the skill and education profile of those receiving management and leadership training. Many classed as 'managers' by the Labour Force Survey hold low-level qualifications. 41% of managers hold a qualification of level 2 or below. The majority of SME owner-managers do not hold a formal qualification and many have no prior management experience. According to The Skills for Business Management Standards only 20% of UK managers have a relevant management qualification. Time and cost are principal barriers to training. Much research has been conducted into barriers to training. Different research highlights slightly different barriers. The WMC state the four main barriers in Wales are time, cost, quality and motivation. 10% of employers have reported problems finding suitable training. Managers have difficulty in identifying specific training needs and how they might best be met.

Estimates of the current number of managers in Wales vary between 144,000 and 155,000. Research by SkillsActive shows there is a general lack of demand for development from managers, particularly among SME owner-managers. Research by Cardiff Business School identified 1600 providers of management and leadership development and 10,000 different programmes or offerings. This equates to roughly one course for every 12 managers. The volume and array of training on offer inevitably leads to confusion among managers. Organisations with more than 50 employees are more likely to use business schools and universities for management training and development. Research by WMC has identified that the mean training each manager receives is 6.5 days a year. This equates to 550,240 (estimate) management training days in Wales, with a total spend of £138 million. MSC and SFEDI have both identified lists of problems with the current provision.

As 80% of current employees will still be in the workforce in 10 years time there needs to be increased focus on upskilling them. Most SSA reports highlight the need for a skills broker to put employers and providers of HE in contact and to devise innovative ways of attracting funding. From looking into the available research the likely future management and leadership skills will include - managing and using technology, leadership, entrepreneurship, use of time, having an open mind, partnership working, personal development and ability to manage change and uncertainty.

The future of management and leadership training does need to be more demand-led, flexible and appropriate.

The Micro Projects

Editorial note: Since this report was finished there have been some considerable developments in Sector Skills Councils in Wales. In July 2008 The Alliance of Sector Skills Councils appointed Elaine Moore as its first manager. The Alliance seeks to provide a central reference point for all SSCs in Wales and is active in networking with HEIs and Government on Leadership and Management Development.

MF6 Business opportunities for workforce development WELSH BUSINESS IN MANAGEMENT CAPACITY BUILDING.
University of Wales, Lampeter, Centre for Enterprise, European and Extension Service
Project Co-ordinator: Professor Ian Roffe

Executive Summary

All the organisations interviewed undertook some form of work based learning (WBL). However, the interpretation of WBL commonly required teasing out as it meant different things to different people. The business drivers for interest in WBL: are (a) rising expectations across all market, (b) a reduced tolerance to accept poor performance and (c) statutory requirements, for certain respondents.

WBL is not a green-field site for exploitation by HE. There are private and public sector providers active in Wales and these view NVQ5 level provision as an extension of their services. WAG in November has also issued a tender for Public Sector Management in Wales to have a Leadership and Management Skills Centre and this will have a bearing on the WBL higher learning in Management. However, there is an existing provider base of public and private trainers and assessors for work based learning. This is particularly strong at lower levels and for certain sectors (health and social care) particularly where there is a legislative requirement. A development emphasis on higher learning for management, leadership and specialist skills in organisations exists. These high level skill requirements, however, are distributed relatively thinly across the geographical area. There are numerous higher learning providers across Wales. For a sector response, it would be best to harness the strengths of CPD across a wide span and draw it into a networked or virtual arrangement of HE providers.

Work Based Learning involves radical change for a HE institution; it changes regulations, curriculum, reconfigures learning relationships and introduces new practices. There is no fixed curriculum for Work Based Studies, the predominant knowledge source is within the client / candidate organisation itself or within similar organisations and not within the academy. Any HE interfacing organisation needs to be:

- Responsive to client demands.
- Have an adaptive structure.
- Have an ability to regulate diverse demands.
- It needs to differentiate itself from other organisations.

The move to a knowledge economy is one economic development response to the fall in jobs in manufacturing, construction and other production industries. Management capacity development need is wide spread. Innovation capacity proves much more difficult to assess. Both areas appear to be heavily supply driven. Wales has excellent higher education and research institutions. Innovation is critical to the business proposition of enterprises. In the case of large sized enterprises (LSEs) they are adopting innovation models aligned to the business proposition and generally seek support in teamwork, decision-making and rewards for success. SMEs though, are often isolated from similar enterprises due to competitive rivalry in their sector of the business world, do not often obtain together the critical mass necessary to express demand and this is costly to service. The area where there has been major organisational interest in innovation has been public services in Wales. Stimulated by the Beecham review, there has been significant influence from WAG and Public Sector Management Wales (PSMW) to develop better connected and networked services for citizens.

Delivery Structure Projects

DS7 Design and Validation of an FdA and MA in Applied Professional Practice.
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, Cardiff School of Management
Project Co-ordinators: Dr Barrie Kennard, Peter Treadwell, Dr Tasheen Rafik and David Lloyd

Executive Summary

In an attempt to gauge demand and interest in achievement at Level 4 and above via work based learning meetings were held with a wide cross section of 'involved parties' across Wales. Several Sector Skills Councils were canvassed for their input as were SMEs and larger employers. There was considerable positive feedback from these meetings and the final format of both the Foundation Degree (FdA) and the Masters (MA) were submitted for validation via UWIC's Cardiff School of Management.

The design, whilst academically rigorous, recognises the non traditional learner demographic of the participants in the extensive use of learning contracts and negotiated assignments. These two methodologies allow learners to play a far greater part in the learning process and thus underline the andragogical ideology that is pivotal to both the FdA and MA.

Both degrees are innovative in design and delivery with an emphasis upon learner support that recognises the different needs of learners from non traditional backgrounds and who are carrying on in employment whilst completing these awards. Many organisations stated that there was a feeling amongst their workforce that if these awards were to be truly work based in their learning methodology then the delivery team involved should have a working knowledge of learning at work. To enable and support the learners engaged on the programme(s) careful consideration was given to the selection of the delivery team and allowance for ad hoc deliverers to be brought in as required.

Many of the organisations that were canvassed stated that generic degree programmes, although having worth and credibility amongst learners were not perceived in the same high regard by employers. By introducing additional modules that were specific to employment sectors the FdA could be regarded by employers and learners alike as having workplace credibility.

Options appraisal and Feasibility study

DS9

Report on research leading to an options appraisal and feasibility study for the establishment of an all – Wales Workforce Development Centre in Higher Education.
Middlesex University, Institute for Work Based Learning, November 2008

Project Co-ordinator: Professor Carol Costley, Professor John Stephenson and Abdulai Abukari

Introduction

This options appraisal and feasibility study has been conducted to inform the establishment of an all–Wales Workforce Development Centre. Key stakeholders identified for consultation included Universities with an interest in progressing workforce development, Sector Skills Councils, the Wales Management Council, the Confederation of British Industry, a cross section of Government agencies, and public and private sector organisations.

Methodology

The intention from the outset was to find ways forward to build on already established work and organizations. There was a reminder to be mindful of the geography of the regions of Wales, and the impact on communication and on the aspirations of people wanting to stay in their own localities. Value for money was also important. A key element of the approach related to the limited time available to undertake the study.

Overall timescale – 11 weeks:

Week 1 w/b 08.09.08	Stage 1 Liaise with UWIC, confirmation of the scope of research; search strategies developed, research commenced
Week 2-5 w/b 15.09.08	Stage 2: semi-structured telephone interviews; preparation and distribution of questionnaires
Week 6-8 w/b 6.10.08	Stage 3: Data analysis, formulation of concepts, usages/contextual variables, relationships, issues and implications
Week 9 w/b 20.10.08	Stage 4: Discussions with experts in the field on implications for related thematic work
Week 10-11 w/b 10.11.08	Stage 5: Final report produced:

Ethical considerations

The research process was carefully planned in advance, with due regard to the sensitivities of the respondents and care for the respondents and co-researchers. The purpose of the exercise was explained in advance to each respondent and each was offered the option of not participating. Due care was taken to ensure that respondents could change their answers and have control over the data they provided. Data was anonymised and confidentiality was built into the final report.

The five stages of the research:

Stage 1: Confirming the scope of the research in relation to guidance given by the commissioners of the research and key stakeholders

The scope of the initial data gathering stage was primarily to ascertain possibilities for higher level provision from HEIs for workforce development for people already in the workplace and was therefore focused on HEIs, academic readiness, obstacles and potential opportunities.

An exploratory meeting enabled the researchers to explore the wider context with commissioners of the research and to refer to other reports from Stage One of the overall project. The researchers subsequently devised the structure and themes of the interviews and questionnaires and submitted them to the commissioners for comment (see Appendix A). Key stakeholder groups were identified (HEIs, HE organisations, relevant Government bodies, employer agencies and individual businesses) and, in view of the tight schedule, the commissioners provided telephone numbers of key contacts. The 'Who's Who' in business in Wales was made available. Advice was given to the researchers on the way the regions are located and the industry is situated in relation to the universities in each region. The nature of the interviews and content of the questionnaires was also discussed. The seven themes in Appendix A were identified, based on issues drawn from other reports within Part One of the overall project.

The criteria for identifying and selecting key data were agreed within the team, drawing on their experiences of systematic research processes and in consultation with UWIC.

Stage 2: Data collection

Two methods were used to obtain data. The same script given in Appendix A was used for each.

- 1 Telephone interviewing. An independent researcher, who had not been involved with the respondents in any way in the past, arranged and conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews averaging 30 minutes in length with key stakeholders in higher education, public bodies and employer groups across Wales. To assist analysis the interviews were taped with respondents' prior approval.
- 2 An email-based questionnaire was devised and distributed using a stratified sample, to 125 businesses and business organisations from a publication of Who's Who in Wales (Media Wales, 2008). The survey elicited a 25% response from a range of sizes of establishment.

These two methods provided a rich collection of data and descriptive statistical information and were appropriate for the scale and timeframe for the research.

Stage 3: Data analysis

All interviews were electronically recorded and notes were taken. An initial analysis was made drawing on qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews and the descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaires. Salient issues were identified from the data which were then summarised within a framework that called upon the responses to the 7 broad questions that had been asked in the interviews and survey and also the general responses that were invited. (See appendix C and Appendix D for a graphical presentation of the survey questionnaire).

Stage 4: Initial concept mapping

The research team drew upon the expertise of colleagues in the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University to consider implications for policy and practice. A Focus Group, constituting WBL practitioners from The Institute discussed what were considered the main issues that arose from the data and provided suggestions as to how these issues could be evaluated. To draw on further expertise from colleagues, the anonymised evaluation was circulated for feed back to colleagues who have particular expertise in Work and Learning and an understanding of the broad structural issues involved in workforce development nationally, to inform the recommendations and options.

Stage 5: Final Report

An independent report using data from the interviews and questionnaires was produced. The report includes an options report map and clear guide to the obstacles and potential of the current situation in Wales.

Also included is a rationale for the need for employer engagement with the higher level learning of their employees, the perceived opportunities and barriers to an all-Wales workforce development centre and recommendations as to the potential of possible ways forward.

General view of proposal

Stakeholders supported the concept of an all-Wales Centre for Workforce Development in Higher Education as a positive endeavour which fitted with policy and practice. "Great idea!" was one enthusiastic response. From the interviews and the surveys there was agreement that the possibility of an all-Wales Centre for Workforce development in higher education would be positive, a good idea. There was an emphasis on building on already established work and organizations. Value for money was also important.

Although some respondents highlighted the different meanings of the concept of workforce development and the need to clarify its definition, analysis of responses indicated that the understanding of the concept is generally aligned to the idea of making higher education more relevant and accessible to business and organisational needs through a genuine partnership and collaboration that takes as a starting point a recognition of the contexts of businesses and organisations and the core values, needs and expectations that guide and sustain their existence. This perception gave rise to different views about the outcomes of existing and past strategic engagements and projects between business and higher education. Despite this, many saw the idea as a new movement that should be informed by past and other experiences to build a viable centre where businesses and organisations in Wales can make maximum use of higher education to meet their workforce needs.

Views about potential functions of an all-Wales centre for workforce development

1 Observatory concept

The idea of establishing an Observatory to collate and disseminate expertise and research appropriate to the needs of Welsh work – place learners was met with positive responses and a keenness to share expertise. An observatory was not only to be the repository of information. The function of such a centre would be multifaceted to bring together information, provide an overview of services, and be useful for learners, businesses and higher education. One respondent stated:

"A coordinated approach collating and disseminating information on higher level workforce development would be beneficial to all stakeholders in both the education and the business sectors."

The role of the centre as an observatory was seen as bringing activities on to the same page. "It is long overdue; there is the need to capture all activities." Also on a positive note, it was felt that a central observatory, could provide an overview of services. "It would be useful if the observatory also monitored WAG initiatives, funding and services." The suggestion for an All Wales Centre consistent with the current policy context was regarded as important and it was noted that the proposed Centre meets these policy directions. "This is consistent with the Skills Council Strategy. It is a good idea." There was a need for the Centre to be user friendly, with people sharing through dissemination.

2 Collaboration and partnership

The centre as an engine to facilitate collaboration and partnership between higher education and business was also viewed positively. None of the respondents were against this idea and most of the respondents in the survey valued it as very good or excellent. As one respondent said, "I am extremely enthusiastic about that...it is a good point and an innovative idea." Another stressed, "Great idea... from a business perspective, collaborations work perfectly well, and that should be a way forward for business and higher education."

However, many respondents had the view that there should be clarification about the nature of partnership and collaboration such that there is equality in the partnership, in which the scheme functions independently as a whole rather than being driven by a few members in pursuance of their individual self-interest to the detriment of other members.

Partnerships were regarded by most respondents as worth trying despite awareness of the challenges these can present. An all-Wales Centre for Workforce Development in Higher Education was seen as a challenge but achievable. "...the idea of a Centre for Wales is crucial in helping cross – referencing of materials and experience. Partnerships need to be sustainable and accessible. Very difficult to establish – but it should be tried." It was recognised that it can be a challenge to get the private sector involved.

3 Facilitating credit transfer and APEL, advice on quality assurance

Quality assurance and APEL, formal recognition of learning from life and work experience, was seen as having some value. It was seen as beneficial to support a lifelong learning agenda.

"This would be hugely valuable especially where SMEs are concerned – and smaller institutions and smaller companies. This would help transferability, and make it easier for industry to participate. It could free up the system. Experiential learning is very important in the work-place so this might give it more recognition".

There was a view that if an all-Wales centre had a quality assurance role it could challenge conventional higher education protocols used to determine quality through the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) which was seen as having an overall function over quality. However, HE quality descriptors are often seen as not consistent with quality perspectives of businesses and organisations, that emphasise measurable returns.

The Micro Projects

"This is a crucial point – we already have a flexible system but it needs to be managed to demonstrate how credits could be used to facilitate work-force progression to Foundation and higher qualifications and to provide new routes."

4 Promotion of new opportunities to expand work-force involvement in higher education

The role of an all-Wales centre for workforce development in higher education in promoting new opportunities to expand work-force involvement in higher level learning was seen as crucial and a welcomed idea that holds the key to the essence and sustainability of any collaboration and partnership between business and higher education.

"This is another crucial activity, to inform people of what is available and how to get it. This will be easier if it can be shown there is money and other kinds of benefits available – to business and to higher education institutions."

The promotion of new opportunities to expand work – force involvement in HE, was also seen as an important activity that could create a standard approach. Locality was stressed, in that it was seen as important to create opportunities locally as people want to stay in their local areas. Commitment and involvement of all partners, developing effective models of communication and marketing and ensuring its neutrality such that they do not favour only particular groups would be a useful strategy to expand work-force involvement in higher education.

5 Facilitating the development of (learner managed and other) innovative work-based learning

Facilitating development of HE programmes appropriate to individual needs and for small businesses in Wales was seen to have good value. "HE should respond to market demands." The nature of the programmes was also seen through a sectoral lens. "If they are designed entirely from the perspective of SME end-users the value would be high. If they are designed and delivered from the perspective of "normal" HE programmes, the value could be low."

An all-Wales Centre could facilitate the development of (learner managed and other) innovative work – based learning programmes appropriate to the needs of the large number of dispersed SMEs. This was viewed very positively.

"Useful? Yes indeed! It would be particularly relevant to SMEs and the Third Sector (charities etc) in the context of bite sized and other learning models, bearing in mind their lack of training budgets for conventional opportunities. Learner managed work – based learning would offer greater flexibility for clients and employers but could possibly raise issues related to the contracts of university staff."

Employers were described as being concerned with provision of delivery, timing and direct usefulness to needs. "Yes; but do SMEs need programmes? They need just in time courses. It may be innovative from the academics point of view but at the end of the day programmes will be laborious and boring for business". And "If a new model or various models that work are developed that will be welcomed."

Some of the respondents had a concern about how effective learning activities might be and given the geographic terrain of Wales, who would be able to access the learning.

6 A one-stop web service for stakeholders

Respondents were asked to consider the idea of a one-stop web service for institutions, businesses and clients (work-based learners). There was support that it could be useful linking higher education institutions, it could be a search engine facility and could be linked to all services. The cautionary note for this idea was that existing one stop shops didn't seem to be working. A web service was perceived as having some value but was questioned with reference to the existence of existing sites and services. Notes of warning referred to "One stop shops don't have a good history." Some respondents also showed a clear opposition of the idea of an all-Wales centre providing a one-stop web service stating that there would be "No added value. This does not need to be developed."

7 Staff development activities

The role of an all-Wales centre for workforce development in staff development activities was generally viewed as sound and feasible, "We certainly need staff development to facilitate workforce development, especially in institutions that are not previously involved in such services."

There was also a stress for staff development in higher education to steer staff away from traditional views and practices that are not suitable for workforce development and particularly un-useful to businesses.

"Yes I think there will be a need for that particularly the development of flexible learning materials and content issues, delivery issues and assessment of such programme. I think it is a different arena to traditional teaching which is taking place in HE."

Staff development activities for HEIs and businesses needed to be tied in with policies and developed with consideration of existing programmes. However some respondents viewed the staff development role of the centre as inconsistent in the sense that trainers are usually appointed based on their expertise and to spend funds to train this group is a waste of funds. For example a respondent stated: "Are you saying train the trainers? Why were they hired in the first place?" Another stated: "Again, this is an explicit view of a deficit model that business may not need. Will this be staff development for HE and business?"

Themes emerging from the data

Perceptions of roles within partnerships:

An All Wales Centre, in considering promoting new opportunities to expand work force involvement in HE, was seen as being able to provide opportunities to share best practice. There were perceptions that there would be a need to be a cultural shift in HE. "I suggest that this might involve a significant cultural change within the HE sector that may not be easy to achieve – but it would be a welcome development."

Recognition of the contribution by the business sector was related to the running and locating of a Centre. A Centre

"should be shaped by business, - help institutions shape, not be shaped by higher education institution perceptions." "Housing the centre in higher education could reduce the value, business should be the host of collaborative partner (both should be involved)."

Higher education is challenged to be a centre for innovation and should come out with new ideas that will fix the dilemma of workforce development,

"I will prefer them coming out with some questions about the exact things they might be offering us, how they think they might be approaching it and what difference they can make and how they are going to crack, what benefits they can bring."

Building on existing practice:

Responses consistently emphasised the need to build on existing developments in Wales, for example the Welsh Assembly Government which had just granted funding for an Academy for Business programme, so the role of this initiative needs to be taken into account. Similar schemes were cited as being in operation and that information on these needs to be collected and located in a central bank.

Whilst views were positive, there was a note of caution. A majority were of the view that a brokerage service would be of some value and very useful. However one blunt comment reiterated the need to not duplicate services with the statement, "Save the taxpayers money please – this is nonsense."

The need to avoid duplication and to build on what was already in place was a consistent thread running through the stakeholder responses. "The strength is that we have never done this in Wales. I support the idea but we should not underestimate the fact that there are many similar agendas going on which may undermine this." Also noted, "I would have concerns that yet another brokerage would confuse the market still more and add to the number of organisations that are offering to help businesses." And,

"This is a positive idea, if only to avoid inefficiencies in the system. It could help to support new initiatives. Its role should be seen as developmental, opening up new initiatives, rather than competing with other HEIs. It should supplement rather than replace existing activity."

Communication

Effective communication and transparency across partnership regardless of the size and geographical location of partners was seen as essential in guaranteeing the success and sustainability of an all-Wales centre for workforce development. "Communication is an important domain. Making sure that there is transparency across all partners will be particularly important for success."

Financial support for such a centre

Despite the generally positive view of the proposal, respondents were concerned about the resource demand of such an initiative and possible sources of funds to sustain it.

"Money support will be crucial. It is important to raise the awareness of what is available."

Independence of the centre

The running of such a Centre was considered with an emphasis on a need for equality and sharing. "Would not be useful to be run by one particular institution" "Success can only be achieved if each institution is seen as an important broker of the partnership."

Recommendations and Options

The UK is the fourth largest economy in the world, but its prosperity is constrained by its relatively poor skills base. The Leitch Review (2006) stressed that 'If businesses are to be successful they need to compete, and to compete they need to have trained, skilled employees'. The report set a target of 40 percent of adults to be educated to level four or above by 2020 if the UK is to be economically competitive. The DfES estimated the workforce-development market in the UK in 2003/4 as worth £5 billion per annum. Higher education supplies a small fraction of the total training and education market (DfES estimates only £300 million was earned by higher education institutions in 2003/04). There is a need for a well defined higher education presence in workforce development and the results of the interviews and survey undertaken in the project reflect a readiness for universities and businesses in Wales to address such an opportunity to work together. It is therefore recommended that an All-Wales Centre for Workforce Development in Higher Education should be established which:

The Micro Projects

- a) has a Management Committee consisting of comparable numbers of both Business and HE representatives drawn from all major regions, to oversee the operations of the Centre;
- b) acknowledges the importance of local knowledge and meeting the needs of particular organisations within their context avoiding duplication of effort;
- c) collates and disseminates research and information on higher level workforce development,
Note: the Higher Education Academy has instituted an information page about work-based learning (HEA, 2008) which might act as a starting point to collate and disseminate publications and other work-related information;
- d) builds on existing organisations and practice and develops new meaningful partnerships;
- e) is well networked, easy to access and maintains key information channels;
- f) adds value to experienced workers and this could be achieved through a university-led focus on managerial capability,

Note: The all-Wales Centre would need to be well networked, easy to access and maintain key information channels. An important role would be adding value to experienced workers and this could be achieved through a university-led focus on managerial capability. Experience and research (Nixon 2008) has shown that research and development skills that lead to impact in the workplace can be accomplished by undertaking university monitored and assessed, work-based projects. Baldwin and Henel (2003) found that the way organisations become innovative and knowledgeable is through two key means. One is their external networks, links and contacts and the other is the internal resource of their managers and other employees' capability;

- g) explores possible adoption of procedures that focus on the developmental needs of individuals and work-places,
Note: drawing on research including that undertaken by the Council for Industry and Higher Education (King, 2007) and for the DfES, (Wedgewood, 2007) which highlights that employers are seeking quality of provision, relevance to business needs and a delivery method suited to individuals and companies rather than the higher education provider. (See also Eraut and Hirsh 2008);
- h) seeks to improve communication between universities and employers ;
- i) facilitates the development of relevant programmes in universities that link into organisations' staff development policies, individual aspirations and existing practice,

Note: The publication Key Note – based on a variety of published sources - estimates that growth of employment-related education and training in the UK will be restricted over the period of this plan to a modest 1% p.a. at best. However, there is also mounting evidence that, in a currently static or slow growth market for work-related learning, work-based provision using a successful model is likely to enable the UK HE sector to take a bigger share of that market by attracting employers¹.

In particular, changes in the character of in-house or in-company provision suggest that HEIs may be well placed to move into this area of the market through Work-based Learning (WBL) (see appendices D, E and F). Another example is how corporate provision of in-house learning through 'corporate universities' is changing in character through "...focusing on creating programs and processes to identify, get onboard and prepare specialized talent faster and more effectively [and becoming] ...more flexible and adaptable in how they provide technical and competency-based learning to their global workforces" (Maize and McCool, 2007);

- j) engenders a user friendly approach,

Note: this is likely to entail universities listening closely to the needs of employers and employees and adapting frameworks of provision accordingly. The all-Wales Centre can play a significant role in advising and negotiating with and between universities and businesses/ organisations. It is likely that universities will need to expand their offer to include shorter and more professionally and work-related courses;

- k) facilitates university staff development in work-based short courses and programmes appropriate for local organizations,

Note: There are no authoritative data on the provision of full award-bearing programmes by or in work based learning at Hons Degree level or above in the UK. The 2006 research by KSA commissioned by the Higher Education Academy suggests that the national picture is one of increasing interest in Work Based Learning but with only a few large players (student numbers 600 to 1100)

Universities have the potential to combine accreditation of in-house training with negotiated work based learning routes to higher education qualifications. In the period January – June 2008 Middlesex University carried out focused discussions with 53 organizations, employers, support agencies, awarding bodies and sector skills councils included and the most common response to the discussions was that Work Based Learning is 'the best kept secret' in higher education. In short there is strong evidence that stimulating and informing the market will actually grow demand. Employers appear to respond well to the flexibility, utility and purposeful nature of a work based learning approach.

The all-Wales Centre could provide a unique centre where information could be held about the training and development of higher education staff in work-based learning and other workforce development activities;

- l)** works with universities to help them create systems and processes that can sustain courses and other activities that support the workplace such as bite-sized and other accreditation and flexible learning systems;
- m)** works with universities to help them meet the needs of mature professionals in part time higher education who will require a different kind of service to full time undergraduates who are recent school leavers;
- n)** pursues further consultation in designing the content of the centre. The main themes for the questions might be;
 - a consideration of the types of HE/Employer development activities that could be provided
 - how identification of good practice can be disseminated
 - how universities wish to approach development activities for staff.

Feasibility Study References

- Baldwin, J.R. and Henel, T. (2003) Innovation and Knowledge Creation in an Open Economy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Eraut, M. and Hirsh, W. (2008) The significance of workplace learning for individuals, groups and organisations Skope report. Oxford and Cardiff universities pp87-89 <http://www.skope.ox.ac.uk/WorkingPapers/Eraut-Hirshmonograph.pdf> accessed 25/11/2008
- Higher Education Academy (2008) Work-based Learning pages
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/institutions/engagement> and
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/employability/workbasedlearning> accessed 25/11/2008
- King, M. (2007), Workforce Development, Employer engagement with higher education, London: CIHE
- Leitch (2006) Review of Skills in the UK: prosperity for all in the global economy- world class skills. Norwich: HMSO. Available at:
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/furthereducation/uploads/documents/2006-12%20LeitchReview1.pdf> Accessed 19/11/2008
- Maize, L.C. and McCool, J.D. (2007) 'The New Corporate University: Global Impact on Learning and Development', ACS Learning Services, August.
http://www.acslearningservices.com/documents/ACS_New-Corporate-University.pdf accessed 25/11/2008
- Media Wales (2008) Who's Who 2008: The Movers and Shakers in Welsh Business. Cardiff: Media Wales Limited.
- Nixon, N. (2008) Work Based Learning Impact Study. KSA Partnership, Higher Education Academy
http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/impact_work_based_learning.pdf accessed 25/11/2008
- Wedgwood, M. (2007) Employer Engagement, Higher Education for the Workforce. London: DfES.

Appendix A: Feasibility Study Questionnaire

Discussions so far have suggested an All-Wales Centre for Workforce Development in Higher Education should provide the services listed below. For EACH OF THESE, please indicate your view of its value (None, Some, Good, Excellent)

- 1 Collect information on opportunities, current practice and key players from the whole of Wales and make that information freely available to anyone in higher education and the wider business community

No value
Some Value
Good value
Excellent Value

Please use the space below to add any comment about question 1 if you wish.

- 2 Provide a brokerage service to facilitate collaboration and partnerships between higher education institutions and business

No value
Some Value
Good value
Excellent Value

Please use the space below to add any comment about question 2 if you wish.

- 3 Establish ways of giving formal recognition for learning from life and work experience comparable in level with campus-based learning

No value
Some Value
Good value
Excellent Value

Please use the space below to add any comment about question 3 if you wish.

- 4 Actively promote new opportunities to expand work-force involvement in HE

No value
Some Value
Good value
Excellent Value

Please use the space below to add any comment about question 4 if you wish.

- 5 Facilitate the development of HE programmes appropriate to the needs of individuals and the large number of small businesses in Wales.

No value
Some Value
Good value
Excellent Value

Please use the space below to add any comment about question 5 if you wish.

- 6 Provide a one-stop comprehensive Web service with links to HE providers, business agencies and useful information, plus opportunities for users to develop their own networks, communities of practice and specialist interests.

No value
Some Value
Good value
Excellent Value

Please use the space below to add any comment about question 6 if you wish.

- 7 Provide Staff development activities to enable more higher education personnel to be effective in supporting work-force development.

No value
Some Value
Good value
Excellent Value

Please use the space below to add any comment about question 7 if you wish.

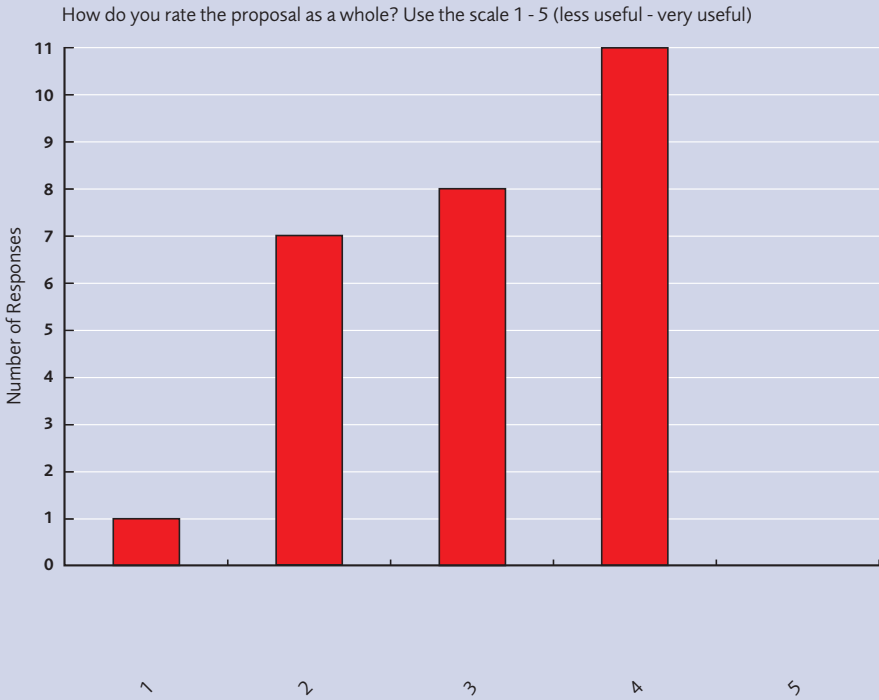
- 8 How do you rate the proposal as a whole? Use the scale 1 - 5 (less useful - very useful).

What else, if anything, do you think should be added to the above list?

- 9 Please indicate the approximate number of employees in your business (survey question only).

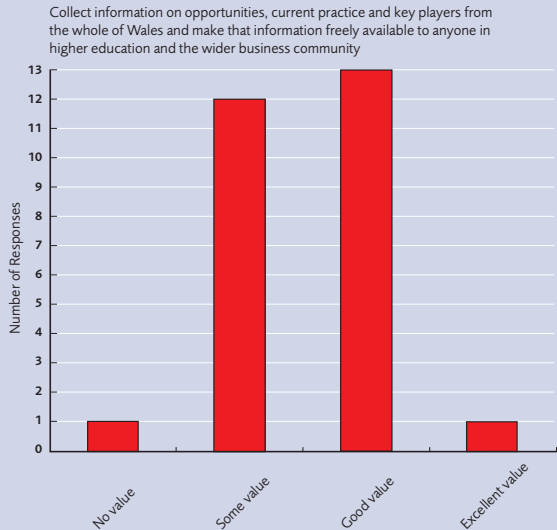
Less than 10 employees
10 - 50 employees
51 - 100 employees
101 - 250 employees
Over 250 employees

Appendix B: Feasibility Study Data Analysis

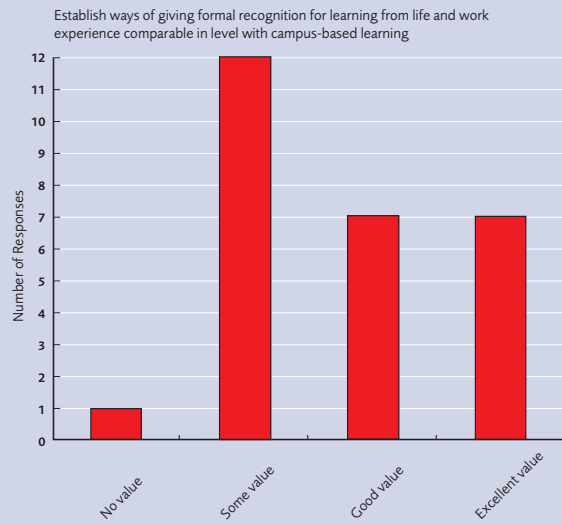


Appendix C: Feasibility Study - 7 graphs that relate to the 7 broad questions asked in the survey.

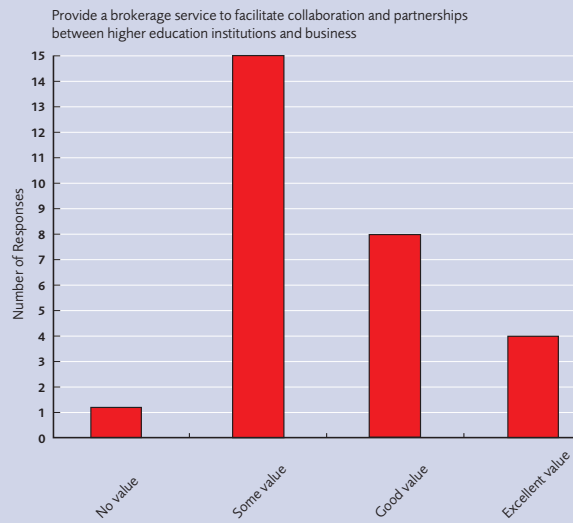
1



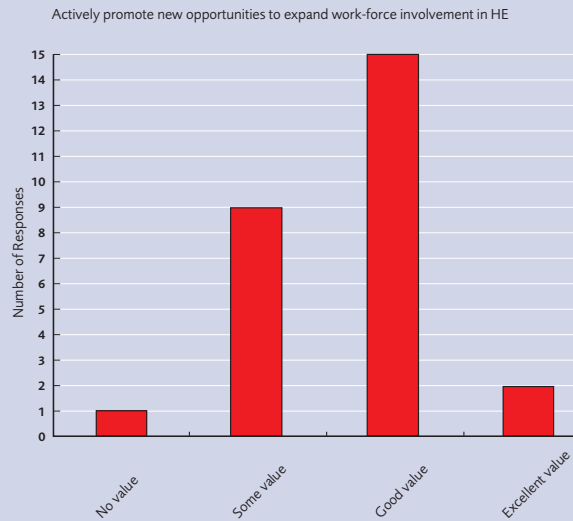
3



2

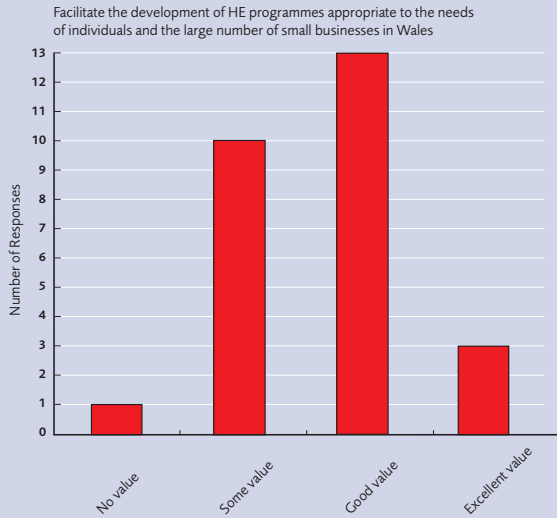


4

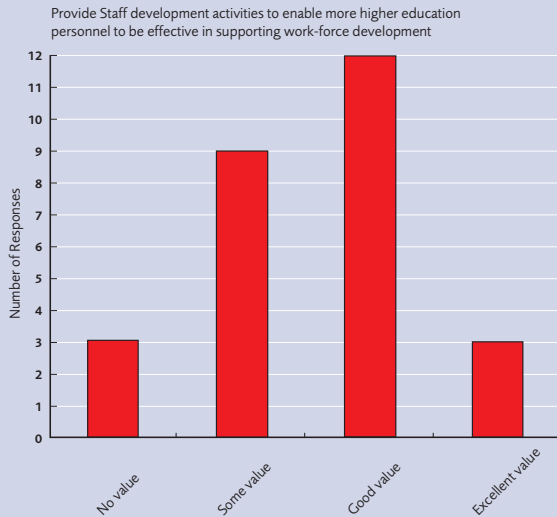


The Micro Projects

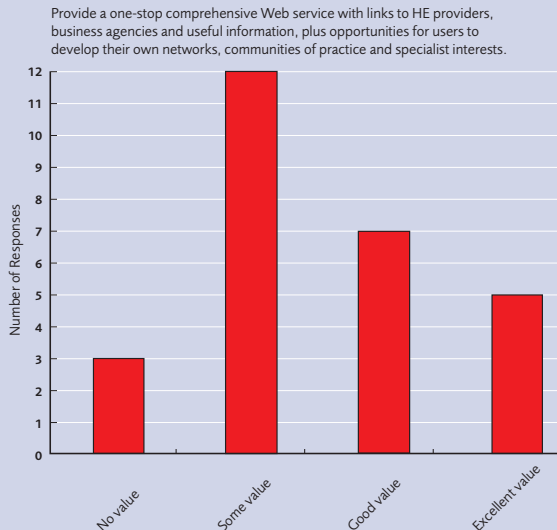
5



7



6



Appendix D: Feasibility Study - Three UK Case Studies

Case Study 1: APEL within the Chartered Teacher Programme and the University

In 2001 the new grade of Chartered Teacher was introduced in Scotland through agreement between teachers, local authorities and the Scottish Executive. Chartered Teacher programmes validated by Higher Education Institutions and accredited by the General Teaching Council Scotland began to be delivered in August 2003.

To achieve Chartered Teacher status, a teacher can follow either the Programme Route or the Accreditation Route. Both routes require a teacher to complete Module One (Self Evaluation) successfully before continuing. The Programme Route involves the completion of a twelve module Masters Degree followed by the award of Chartered Teacher status by The General Teaching Council Scotland. A teacher following the Programme Route may claim accreditation for prior learning for up to the equivalent of six modules. A teacher following the Accreditation Route will complete Module One and then make a claim to the General Teaching Council Scotland. The claim will consist of a portfolio and commentary showing how the teacher has achieved and maintained the Standard for Chartered Teacher.

Teachers will make claims based on both prior formal learning and prior experiential learning. Both types of claim must contain evidence that learning has taken place which allows the teacher to claim Chartered Teacher competences. Claims must be equivalent to level 11 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (Masters or SVQ 5); show evidence of professional action, knowledge and understanding and show time and effort spent.

The University of Strathclyde is offering support to teachers wishing to make claims for university level learning. Teachers who are considering registering on the Chartered Teacher Programme can attend a three hour workshop on how to maintain a CPD Portfolio which introduces them to the concept of keeping evidence of experiential learning for future claims. Once teachers have completed Module One, they are invited to attend a one day workshop on making an accreditation claim. This second workshop gives teachers practice in reflecting on past experience and relating these to recent practice and to the Chartered Teacher competences. Workshop presenters use case studies, discussion and focussed exercises to guide participants through the process.

Case study by Isobel Calder, Professional Development Unit, University of Strathclyde.

Case Study 2: A University Work Based Learning approach in Healthcare

Jane is a health visitor working as part of a team in an inner city Primary Health Care Trust which has a population which under all indices is acknowledged to be deprived. The Primary Care Trust decided to commission educational awards via work based learning for a cohort of staff. The project was a joint venture between the University and the Trust. A cohort of 22 staff were selected from nurses, health visitors and managers across the Trust.

The first stage of the award programme was to develop a portfolio of learning which could be presented for academic recognition and the award of academic credit. This caused much consternation in the group who had no experience of learning in this manner, on the contrary their experience led them to believe that knowledge and the consequent right to practice was something that was externally conferred by experts. Confidence and assertion that knowledge could be derived from reflection and analysis of their own practice was extremely challenging.

With support from group and individual advice Jane developed an area of learning focusing on refugee health. Reflecting upon her experience Jane described and analysed how many refugee families not only found it hard to survive economically in a new environment but to understand and adapt to the differing expectations of child care and upbringing that they encountered in the UK. Her area of learning explained how healthcare, illness prevention, food, behaviour, punishment all presented problems of understanding and internalisation which not infrequently led to confrontations with authority leading to more misunderstandings. Jane elaborated upon how she had adapted her practice by drawing upon her own experience of loss of status, loss of family and friends and bewilderment as a refugee to understand family needs and to open up communication between herself as a health care professional and her clients.

Jane developed this area of learning, relating her knowledge and skills to the Higher Education level 6 (Degree level) criteria used in work based learning at Middlesex. The work was assessed and sampled by an external examiner leading to the award of credit at level 6. The group of fellow workers, including her line manager, was astounded as they knew nothing of her background nor the skills that she had developed in tackling what was for them all a very real issue. Jane became a resource for helping colleagues to enhance their skills and for exploring ways of improving the service. She reported that the public recognition through academic credit and the connection that drawing up the claim had fostered with her manager and peers had served to enhance both her confidence and motivation. Jane went on to gain a first class honours degree.

Case study by Katherine Rounce, School of Health and Social Science, Middlesex University.

The Micro Projects

Case Study 3 - A University and a Construction Company partnership

This case study examines the development of a work based learning partnership between Middlesex University and Bovis Construction from 1994 to 1999. The partnership programme was made possible by the accreditation policy and procedures of the University.

Bovis originally approached the University seeking accreditation for their Management Development Programme. They particularly did not want changes to be made to bring it into close alignment with existing University management courses if accreditation was to be achieved. Bovis were reluctant to change a programme which clearly met their business needs. Universities are often reluctant to fit into companies' needs but because of changes to Middlesex university's systems, an approach to accreditation was not restricted to close matching of existing programmes as University regulations also allowed assessment against generic higher education level descriptors for the award of 'general academic credit'. Following this approach the university was able to accredit the Management Development Programme as carrying twenty academic credit points at postgraduate level.

In further discussions about the possibility of building upon the accredited Management Development Programme to develop a work based learning postgraduate scheme for Bovis managers the Bovis Core Competencies were identified as a key source of organizational learning which Bovis wished to be incorporated into the programme. The Bovis Core Competencies were a set of behavioural indicators which were common to all staff within the organization, they were part of the performance management process and underpinned all learning and development activity at Bovis. The knowledge and skills required to exhibit competent performance in the Bovis Competency areas were identified and developed into an accreditation proposal by the University Accreditation Manager and the Bovis Training Manager. An example of how the Bovis competency "Teamwork" was developed for accreditation is given below.

Table 1: Elements of the Bovis "Teamwork" Core Competency.

TEAMWORK
1. Demonstrating understanding of team roles and commitment to team decisions.
2. Manage group processes by taking account of individual and group behaviours.
3. Contribute fully as a team member, resolving conflicts, building appropriate alliances and networks and helping others to do so.
4. Keep the team fully informed about developments and encourage awareness of the competitive environment.
5. Treat colleagues as customers.

Each of the five elements of teamwork were analysed to identify the knowledge and skills required in order to perform it. This resulted in an expanded version of each element. An example of the expanded element 3 of "teamworking" is given below.

Table 2: Expansion of Bovis Teamwork Core Competency element 3.

Teamwork . 3 Contribute fully as a team member, resolving conflicts, building appropriate alliances and networks and helping others to do so.
3.1 Understanding of the causes of conflict.
3.2 Ability to resolve conflicts
3.3 Understanding of what constitutes an appropriate alliance, network.
3.4 Understanding of what constitutes building appropriate alliances and networks.
3.5 Ability to help others to build appropriate alliances and networks.

This accreditation of the Bovis competency framework was a significant development for Bovis and for the University. The significance for Bovis was that it had a substantial stock of University accredited learning which could be used alongside the accredited Management Development Programme as part of a customised postgraduate work based learning scheme. The high level of customisation was achieved by the use of accreditation to enable the scheme to draw upon the structural capital not only of the University but also of Bovis.

A work based learning project report by Comerford (1998) demonstrated that participants in the scheme had a much greater understanding of the core competencies than other employees. Participants in the postgraduate scheme were required to demonstrate their understanding of the competencies and how they related to their work roles.

The development and accreditation of a competency framework was a significant development for the University as for the first time it explicitly linked corporate capability with academic accreditation. By determining credit values for specified areas of learning based upon the Bovis competencies the assessment process of individual learning from experience was given greater structure and uniformity as the assessor no longer had to come to individual judgements about the volume of credit awarded. The assessment focused on satisfactory coverage of all the elements for the competency claimed and a judgement of the level of learning achievement demonstrated, measured against the University generic work based learning level descriptors. The accreditation formed the platform for individually negotiated development programmes which culminated in major work based projects of direct relevance and potential value to Bovis.

Case study by Jonathan Garnett, Middlesex University. (For a full account see Garnett J, Comerford, A. and Webb, N. (2001), Working with Partners to promote Intellectual Capital, in Boud D and Solomon N (Eds) Work-Based Learning: A new Higher Education, Buckingham, SRHE and OU Press.)

This case study has been conducted to inform the establishment of an all-Wales Workforce Development Centre. Key stakeholders identified for consultation included Universities with an interest in progressing workforce development, Sector Skills Councils, the Wales Management Council, the Confederation of British Industry, a cross section of Government agencies, and public and private sector organisations.

The intention from the outset was to find ways forward to build on already established work and organizations. There was a reminder to be mindful of the geography of the regions of Wales, and the impact on communication and on the aspirations of people wanting to stay in their own localities. Value for money was also important. A key element of the approach related to the limited time available to undertake the study. The research process was carefully planned in advance, with due regard to the sensitivities of the respondents and care for the respondents and co-researchers. The purpose of the exercise was explained in advance to each respondent and each was offered the option of not participating. Due care was taken to ensure that respondents could change their answers and have control over the data they provided. Data was anonymised and confidentiality was built into the final report.

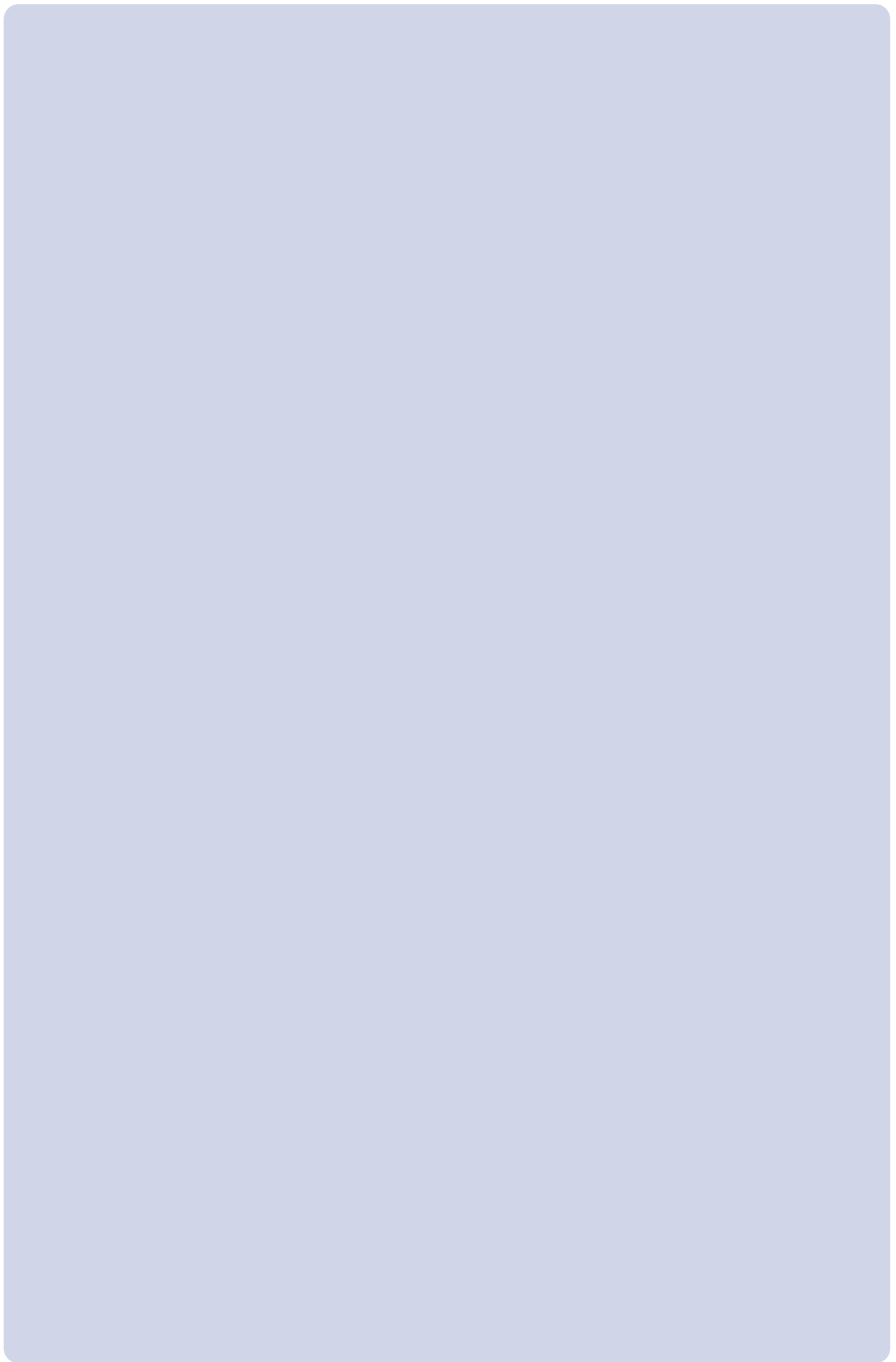
Stakeholders supported the concept of an all-Wales Centre for Workforce Development in Higher Education as a positive endeavour which fitted with policy and practice. "Great idea!" was one enthusiastic response. From the interviews and the surveys there was agreement that the possibility of an all-Wales Centre for Workforce development in higher education would be positive, a good idea. There was an emphasis on building on already established work and organizations. Value for money was also important.

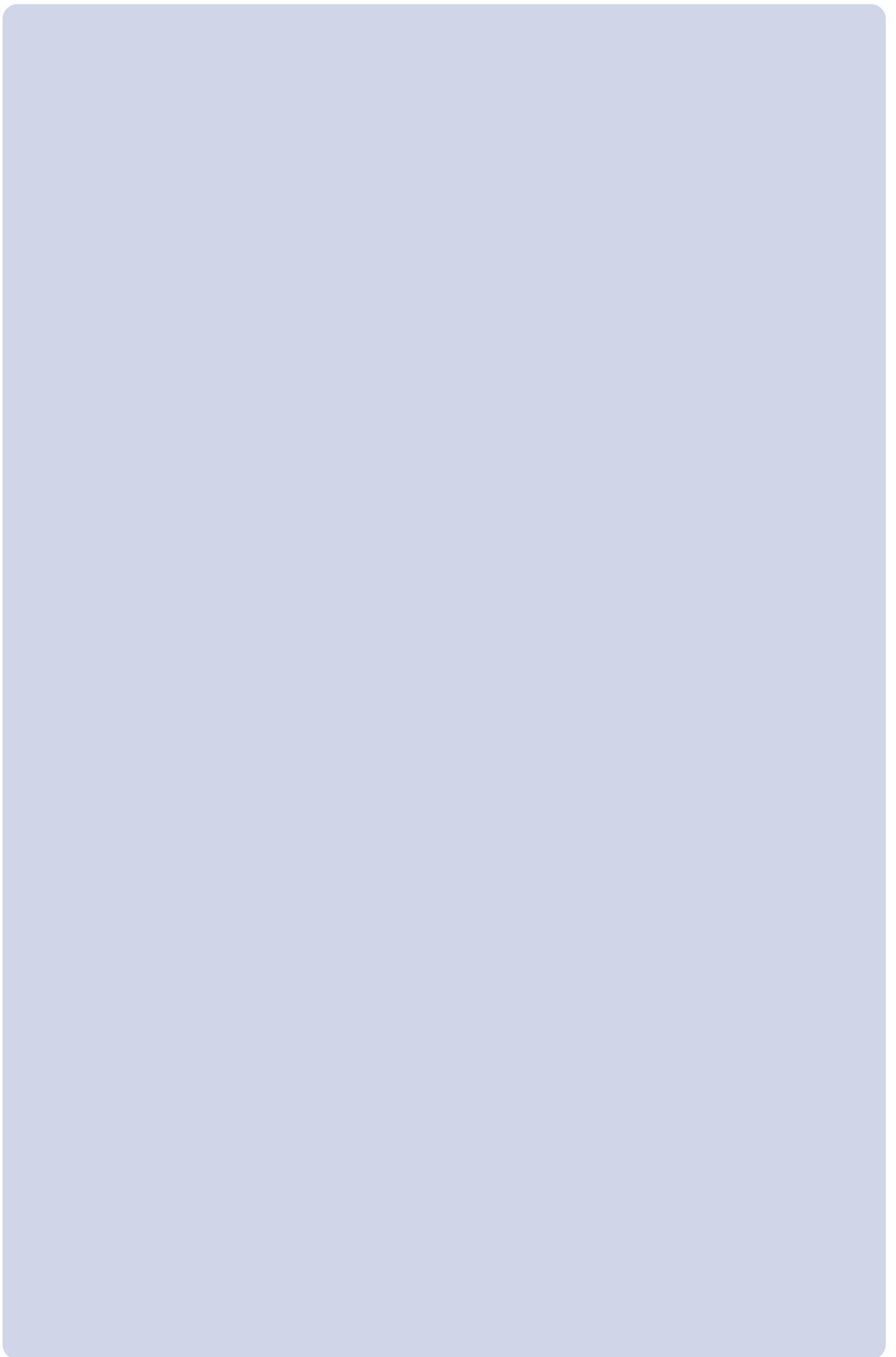
Although some respondents highlighted the different meanings of the concept of workforce development and the need to clarify its definition, analysis of responses indicated that the understanding of the concept is generally aligned to the idea of making higher education more relevant and accessible to business and organisational needs through a genuine partnership and collaboration that takes as a starting point a recognition of the contexts of businesses and organisations and the core values, needs and expectations that guide and sustain their existence. This perception gave rise to different views about the outcomes of existing and past strategic engagements and projects between business and higher education. Despite this, many saw the idea as a new movement that should be informed by past and other experiences to build a viable centre where businesses and organisations in Wales can make maximum use of higher education to meet their workforce needs.

Both the depth and currency of the results of the above research have informed and underpinned the project in achieving its aims, i.e. to:
Develop pedagogical innovation and subject development linked to higher level work – based learning.

Develop Management capability between partner HEIs and extend Third Mission activity and build applied research in work - based learning.

Each project has also been discussed in workshop form at the HEFCW Workforce Development Project Practitioner Conference held on 7th April 2009.





Strategic Development of High Level Learning for the Workforce In Wales

