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National Report for Scotland

**Social Inclusion and Adult Participation in Lifelong
Learning: officials', managers' and teachers' perspectives**

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Introduction

The aim of this report is to examine how managers, tutors and lecturers in different types of educational institutions view Scotland's approach to lifelong learning and to what extent they see social inclusion of adults as a central part of their institution's mission. It is a qualitative study and forms subproject 5 of a Sixth Framework funded European project entitled: Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: The Contribution of the Education System (www.lll2010.tlu.ee). In addition to examining the views of managers in different types of institutions it also includes the perspectives of one government official and one official from a non-departmental public body. Apart from private training organisations all types of learning providers identified by the *Skills for Scotland* strategy are included in this report.

Promoting social inclusion through education and learning has been part of Scottish Government policy for some time. Widening participation to higher education was one of the key recommendations in the Dearing (NCIHE, 1997) and Garrick (Scottish Office, 1997) reports in 1990s. Another outcome of these reports was the development of performance indicators and benchmarks for higher education institutions in relation to social inclusion. Scotland's colleges are also monitored through a number of performance indicators which include inclusion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. At the non-formal level of educational provision social inclusion has also been addressed through the development of local authority community learning and development. Here the emphasis is on building community capacity and to engage with those that the formal education system may not have adequately provided for (Wallace, 2008).

The post-devolution Labour led administration placed emphasis, as evidenced by a range of policy documents, on the social as well as the human capital aspect of lifelong learning, though it could be argued that the targets set in the lifelong learning strategy of 2003 (Scottish Executive, 2003) tended to focus on human capital development. This report uses data from managers in educational institution to explore whether this emphasis on human capital has become more pronounced since the new Scottish Nationalist administration came into power in May 2007. It also considers whether provision for adult learners has been affected by the development of policy measures that emphasise the needs of younger people.

The focus of this report is on adults accessing learning both in the formal and non-formal setting. It should be noted that the term 'adult education' has in the past been used mainly for learning provided in the community through what is now termed 'Community Learning and Development' (Wallace, 2008). The non-formal provision is mainly non-accredited (and thus not considered 'formal' in the definition adopted by the LLL 2010 project). Access to formal education has been driven (since the late 1990s) by the 'widening access agenda'. Here the focus has been on provision for 'mature' students (over 21 at college or undergraduate level; over 25 if postgraduate) and the aim has been to include 'non-traditional' students. Measures were developed to ensure an increase in those from low socio-economic status, disabled students and those from ethnic minorities. Whilst the terms 'formal' and 'non-formal' are used, it should be noted that the boundaries between the two are blurred. Formal institutions do offer a small range of courses that are not accredited, non-formal ones offer a small number of accredited courses, colleges and, to a lesser extent universities, work in partnerships with non-formal organisations and education in prison spans both formal and non-formal provision.

The report starts with an outline of the methodology before providing an overview of educational provision, policy, statistics and a brief theoretical section. It then examines each of the case study institutions in three sections: formal; non-formal and prison education. The conclusion outlines the emerging themes.

Section 1 Methodology

Six institutions/organisations were included in this project and a total of 20 people were interviewed as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Overview of institutions and participants

Type of institution	No. of institutions	No. of interviewees	Interviewee details
Colleges	2	6	College A: Vice-principal (1); Executive directors (1); Lecturer (1) College B: Principal (1); Department Head (1); Lecturer (1)
Universities: 1 elite	1	5	Lifelong learning office (1), Widening participation (1), LEAPS (1), Admissions (humanities and social sciences) (2)
Non-formal Voluntary Org	1	2	Senior manager (1) Work-based learning tutor organiser (1)
Local Authority Community and Learning Development (CLD)	1	3	CLD 1 semi-rural: Manager of service and serving on national body reviewing standards (1) CLD 2 urban: Senior manager of CLD (1) Manager of adult learning (1) (joint interview)
Prison	1	2	Prison in large city: Manager of college prison provision (1); Literacy/numeracy tutor (1)
Government official Non-governmental public body (NGPB) official	-	2	Senior manager, Learning Connections (1) Senior manager, Scottish Funding Council (NGPB) (1)
Total	6	20	

These institutions provide examples of both formal and non-formal institutions. The colleges provide contrasting examples of Scottish colleges: one is a relatively small college in a deprived urban area with a high proportion of mature students; the other is a large college in a semi-rural location with a high proportion of younger students. The elite university is typical of its kind within the UK. Although there are some differences between CLD1 and CLD 2 it can be assumed that they are reasonably typical of community learning development across the country. One is situated in a semi-rural setting, the other in a large city. The non-formal voluntary organisation is unique as it is the only one of its kind in Scotland. College provision in the prison is likely to reflect what is delivered in other prisons as the same college provides education in 50% of the prisons and the other college catering for the remaining 50% is likely to operate in a similar manner. The split of the prison contract is mainly on geographic grounds as one college is situated in the east of Scotland and works with prisons in the east; the other is a west of Scotland college working with prisons in the west.

Individual interviews were carried out with all of these participants except the interview with the two managers from the urban CLD who were interviewed together. In each case the interview lasted from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. Most of the interviews were carried out in the place of work of the person being interviewed, except the interviews with the manager of prison education and the prison literacy tutor. These took place in the university as there were problems with bringing recording equipment into the prison. All interviews were transcribed.

Section 2 Lifelong learning in Scotland

2.1 Provision of lifelong learning in Scotland

Government structures

There is a Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary with responsibility for Education and Lifelong Learning, a minister with a remit for Children and Early Years and one for Schools and Skills. Within the Schools and Skills section there is a Directorate for Lifelong Learning which is separate from Schools. It includes Higher Education and Learner Support, Further and Adult Education, Employability and Skills, Enterprise and Employability for Young People and Learning Connections. The Directorate of Lifelong Learning was moved from Enterprise, Lifelong Learning and Transport by the new administration.

Scottish Education

Education is compulsory to the age of 16 and consists of a primary sector (up to age of 12) and a secondary sector (up to the age 18). Lifelong learning is normally assumed to refer to post-compulsory education. Formal post-compulsory education is provided in colleges or higher education institutions. There are 43 colleges in Scotland and 16 universities, one dental school, two art colleges and one academy of music and drama. Non-formal learning is provided through Community Learning and Development Departments (CLDs), voluntary organisations and private training providers.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance in universities is carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and in schools, colleges, CLD, prison education and voluntary organisations by HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). A recent HMIE report in the *Improving Scottish Education* series provides an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of these sectors ((HMIE, 2009). Inspection reports of individual institutions are publicly available on the QAA and HMIE websites respectively.

Credit and Qualifications Framework

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) was developed in the 1990s and launched in 2001. It assigns level and credit points to learning within a framework that consists of twelve levels starting with level 1 for courses aimed at school learners and level 12 assigned to the learning gained through a PhD. It aims to develop clear progression routes, to increase flexibility and transferability of learning achieved in different setting. **It was developed in order to provide learners with better information about progression routes and to allow easy transfer between different types of institutions, for example, from colleges to universities. It was therefore seen as key to open up access to learning for all as it provided a mechanism for Accreditation of Prior Learning and also encouraged the development of Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning. All formal learning is included in the framework.** Learning included has to be quality assured. Non-formal learning is not currently part of the framework; however, there are moves towards increasing accreditation of learning such as literacies (see Tett, et al 2008).

Formal learning

Post compulsory formal learning, as mentioned above, takes place in colleges and universities. There is some overlap between schools and colleges, in that colleges now work collaboratively with schools and make some provision for learners that are under 16 (school leaving age). Colleges provide a wide range of course from ISCED level 2 to 5. Courses in universities are mainly at ISCED level 5 and 6, though some are involved with running Access courses categorised as ISCED level 4.

Funding: institutions

A non-departmental public body (NDPB), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is responsible for funding to higher and further education. The council is led by a Board which is headed by the Chair and the Chief Executive. Members of the Board are appointed by the First Minister of the

Scottish Government. The Council is the result of a merger between Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) and Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) following the passing of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005. This merger aimed to bring the funding of these two sectors closer together and took effect in 2005. Its budget for 2010 was around 1.7 billion. The main grant to each institution is to cover cost of teaching.

Funding: students

All Scottish domiciled students are entitled to further and higher education that is the equivalent of an undergraduate degree. This means that fees will be paid by the Students Award Agency Scotland (SAAS), that they can apply for a student loan towards living costs, a non-repayable bursary, lone parent grant, childcare and travel expenses. The amount of financial support provided is means tested. For an individual still living with her/his parents, parental income will be taken into account; a partner's income will be taken into account for those living in a relationship. Disabled students can apply for a Disabled Students Allowance. Payment of this allowance is based on an assessment of need. The allowance covers costs such technical equipment (e.g. computer), proof-reading and note-taking and personal assistant.

In colleges, there are normally no course fees for most non-advanced full-time courses for Scottish domiciled students (normally below ISCED level 5); however, part-time students are expected to pay for their course. There are a number of allowances for college learners who have a limited income and/or are unemployed; however, there is also a cap on the number of hours of study that an unemployed person can engage in without losing benefit. The Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) is means tested and can be used as part payment towards fees. There are special funding arrangements for asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers but these depend on individual circumstances.

National strategies for widening access to formal education

The Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) has been developed as a partnership between a number of colleges and higher education institutions. It was started in 1988 by the Scottish Office (Scottish Information Office, 0643/88) and has contributed to a considerable increase of over 25s entering higher education (Roger, 2008). The programme offers a one-year full-time Access to Higher Education programme based on units accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Through specific agreement with selected universities students who successfully complete the programme have guaranteed access to higher education courses. They do not need any prior qualifications to enter the programme but it is only accessible to students over the age of twenty-one.

Performance Indicators

In the 1990s the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education recommended that indicators and benchmarks be developed to measure the performance of higher education. These indicators or benchmarks cover a number of areas such as teaching and learning and widening participation. The widening participation measures are gathered and published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and published on their website every year (see www.hesa.ac.uk). The widening participation of under-represented groups include data on those from state schools and colleges, from low socio-economic class (NS-SEC classes 4-7) and low participation neighbourhoods. It should be noted that the low participation neighbourhood statistic is no longer collected from Scottish universities due to the unreliability of post code data. The other main widening participation measure is of those students who are entitled to the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

The Performance Indicators for colleges include: student retention and outcome; number of staff with teaching qualification; student satisfaction (as measured by a survey); and a range of financial indicators. The colleges are also required to provide data on the number of students from deprived areas and these are used to allocate additional funding to colleges to support these students.

Non-formal learning

Learning Connections

Learning Connections is one of the five strands of the Government's Directorate of Lifelong Learning and focuses on non-formal learning. Learning Connections has two strands of work organised into two teams: Adult Literacies and Community Learning and Development (CLD). Each of the 32 local authorities has a CLD partnership. Its aim is to assist communities and individuals within them to use community action and community based learning to deal with issues within their communities that are relevant to them. CLDs are thus the main providers of non-formal learning for disadvantaged groups. This type of learning is also provided by some voluntary organisations such as the case study voluntary organisation included in this report. CLDs are required to work in partnerships with a range of other organisations (in many cases including the voluntary organisation included in this project), each CLD's partnership reflect the needs of the local area. There are also a considerable number of private training agencies that provide training to businesses and their training is a mixture of certificated and non-certificated courses.

A joint statement produced by the Scottish Government and COSLA 28th November 2008 provides an overview of the key aims of Community Learning and Development (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1046/0069751.pdf>):

It states that CLD can play a vital role in relation to a range of national and local outcomes:

- Through youth work it can support all our young people (and in particular those who need more choices and chances to achieve their full potential) to become confident individuals, effective contributors, responsible citizens and successful learners
- It can offer routes into and through lifelong learning in communities, enabling the development of skills (including, for example, literacy and numeracy) that people can use in employment, their community, further learning or as parents and family members to support their children in their important early years
- By building community capacity it can contribute to community empowerment through people working together to achieve lasting change in their communities, for example by further strengthening and improving local public services

In this particular report the focus has been on the role that CLDs play in making learning available to adult learners, especially those from a disadvantaged background.

Funding

Local authorities are responsible for funding the maintained non-formal education sector – Community Learning and Development (CLD). The councils receive a block grant from the Government as well as funding through Council Tax (a tax levied on all property owners in their community) within their own authority. In early 2008, the Government entered into a Concordat with local authorities (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/923/0054147.pdf>). This provided local authorities with greater freedom in terms of how they spent the block grant from government. Ring-fencing of the budget for specific areas was removed but in return local authorities had to agree to freeze Council Tax. This led to local authorities becoming more limited in terms of the amount of money they can raise themselves within their communities although the Government allocated block grant was increased. It provided local authorities with greater freedom in terms of defining their own spending priorities but also led to a potential for tension in policy application as the local authority priorities may not tally with the priorities of the Government. Currently key spending priorities include a focus on children and young people and vocational training.

The voluntary sector organisations are provided with some funding from the Scottish Government, some from local authorities; however, this funding is not guaranteed and their local authority funding is vulnerable due to the removal of ring-fencing. They also raise funds through bidding from project funding, e.g. from the Government, the National Lottery or EU.

Prison education

In April 2005, the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) set up a new Learning Skills and Education (LSE) Service to replace the previous education service contracts across SPS establishments. It awarded contracts to two learning providers, one college in the west of Scotland and one in the East. Kilmarnock Prison, which is privately operated by SERCO, was not included in these arrangements.

LSE contractors are contracted to deliver programmes across the following areas:

- Adult literacy and core skills
- Computing and information technology
- Art and design
- Cookery
- First aid
- Health and safety
- General education
- Languages
- Leisure subjects
- Mathematics
- Music

Uniformed staff employed by prison service deliver Vocational Skills Training (VT) in areas such as bricklaying, painting and decorating, joinery, plumbing, basic electrical skills, engineering, industrial cleaning, laundry work, horticulture and catering. A number of prisons offer the Scottish Progression Award (SPA) in Building Crafts. Physical Education Officers employed by SPS deliver physical education (PE). Some of the range of physical education and recreational activities lead to formal certification. As part of the wider resettlement agenda, the Scottish Prison Service has established a number of collaborative arrangements to enable local authority literacy learning providers to be located within Links Centres in prisons. The purpose of these arrangements is to provide a coordinated transition for offenders who wish to continue with literacy learning on release.

Funding

The Scottish Prison Service produced service specification which was put out to tender in 2005 and two colleges were awarded the contract, initially until 2009 but the contracts were then extended to 2011 (HMIE, 2008). The colleges are contracted to provide a set of core services and for the first time, employability was included as part of the contract. The budget provided for these contracts as £3.6 million in 2008-09. Publicly procured prison education was not new though as there had been three earlier phases of prison education procurement.

2.2 Government officials' views of adult education policy

This section examines key strategies in relation to lifelong learning and includes, where relevant, the views of the two officials on aspects of lifelong learning in Scotland. These two individuals represented different government departments/agencies and therefore did not comment all aspects of lifelong learning. In addition to linking their comments to specific policy measures, their views on funding are included in this section as funding is key to implementation of policy. These two officials were selected because of their different positions within the system. The Scottish Funding Council senior manager has a key role in allocating funding for all formal education provided through universities and colleges and can therefore ensure that programmes which will deliver the Scottish Governments lifelong learning policy are supported. The Learning Connections senior manager is responsible for the delivery and policy relating to Community Learning and Development which includes adult education not provided through the formal institutions. These two interviewees therefore represent different areas of adult education.

The first lifelong learning strategy – *Life through learning: learning through life* was published in 2003 (Scottish Executive, 2003). This was followed by an evaluation of the strategy, *Lifelong Learning Statistics* in 2005 (Scottish Executive 2005) and in 2007 *Skills for Scotland: a lifelong skills strategy* was published. There are a range of other policies and strategies which focus more specifically on particular areas – the main areas are:

- Community Learning and Development
- Adult literacy and numeracy
- More Choices More Chances – provision for 16-19 year olds who are not in education, employment or training
- Widening access to further and higher education

Implementation of the initiatives linked to these policies and strategies are spread across learning providers in both the formal and non-formal setting.

Lifelong Learning strategies

The first lifelong learning strategy identified lifelong learning as important in bringing benefits both to the individual and to society:

lifelong learning has an important and distinctive contribution to make to people's wellbeing, to a more inclusive society and to a vibrant and sustainable economy.
(Scottish Executive, 2003: 4).

This strategy built on the green paper *Opportunity Scotland*. It was published by a Labour administration and focused on post compulsory education and training and clearly reflected the EU Lisbon strategy. Although the aims included all aspects of lifelong learning the measures used to evaluate the strategy tended to stress human capital development (Scottish Executive, 2005) and an emphasis on 'learning for work' has also been noted by others (see e.g. Smith, 2008). In 2007 a new lifelong learning skill strategy was published – *Skills for Scotland: a lifelong learning skill strategy* (Scottish Government, 2007). It had, as its title implies, a strong emphasis on skills development and employability and, in contrast with the policy of the previous Labour administration, it includes early years and compulsory education within the lifelong learning agenda. However, the inclusion of compulsory education reflects the aim to increase vocational education within the compulsory education system either through more vocational courses in secondary schools or through school-college links.

This shift in the government thinking towards greater emphasis on skills and human capital development was clearly welcomed by the funding council interviewee who felt there was a greater clarity of purpose in the new strategy:

[the skill strategy is] really quite distinctive from what was there before... a real sense of purpose and of trying to make sure that people aren't overlapping, aren't getting in each others way but are also pulling in the same sort of direction. And the skills strategy was actually an early indicator of that. I mean it was framed with the background of the government's purpose. And it has all those bits in it that talk about the contribution of the different public agencies to all of this. (Scottish Funding Council interviewee)

When asked whether it had a strong focus on human capital he agreed that it had but added that it was not just about development of human capital but also its utilisation:

Int *Would you say that it had a distinct focus on human capital?*

Respondent *I hadn't thought of it in those terms actually ... I'm not quite sure how I can answer that because the other bit of it which is new is the skills utilisation bit. So it's not just the building of the human capital. It's the use of the human capital. But it is...I mean that's what it, that's the two bits of it really I think.*

This focus on human capital was criticised by the Learning Connections interviewee who generally viewed both the earlier lifelong learning strategy and the skills strategy critically. The key issue for him was the lack of appreciation of learning outside the formal setting and the overall focus on employability:

However, it doesn't for me acknowledge learning in life outside a learning institution and I think that is a massive gap ... skills equals the chance to be employed (Learning Connections interviewee)

These positions suggest tensions between different government departments in relation to the development of lifelong learning provision. In terms of these two individuals, one sees human capital development as the most important, whereas the other emphasises a much wider definition of lifelong learning which encompasses all aspects of learning. As the funding council has a budget for colleges and universities of around £1.7 billion its influence is likely to have an impact. Learning Connections is not responsible for funding learning provision in the two areas for which it is responsible: community learning and development and adult literacy and numeracy. Money is allocated mainly through local authorities; however, some of the provision is provided within and by colleges and when that occurs, some funding council money may be used for provision in this area.

The lifelong learning strategies are broad ranging and point towards duties and responsibilities for all stakeholders in education. The other areas listed above relate to specific areas of learning, training or educational provision and these will now be examined briefly.

Community learning and development

Community learning and development (CLD) replaced the earlier community education which was set up to provide education for adults and young people outwith the school setting. It has a strong emphasis on the role of learning in achieving community regeneration as evidenced in the key strategy document *Working and Learning Together* (Scottish Executive, 2004). This document stresses social justice and the need to close the opportunity gap. Specific initiatives were included in relation to adult literacy and numeracy. Funding for community learning and development is mainly channelled through local authorities and for that reason this aspect of lifelong learning is not within the remit of the funding council official. Communities Scotland, which was the 'home' to Learning Connections, was abolished in 2008. This led to a relocation of Learning Connections into a setting which is seen by the senior manager as less than ideal:

I am located in Learning Connections which is a relatively small team of about thirty practitioners, who are subsequently located in Lifelong Learning division of Scottish government. So it's very clearly within learning, but outwith the schools division. Our focus in Learning Connections is that of community learning and development. It's not an easy kind of marriage because we are really here because we are not anywhere else rather than it's a good place to be. (Learning Connections interviewee)

Learning Connections was, at the time of the interview, undergoing a review which may split its functions. One of the recommendations of this review is that Learning Connections retains the policy aspect of its work but not practice and that the standards council be transferred to the sector skill council for lifelong learning for the UK. These changes both in terms of relocation and responsibility could suggest that the current Government may view this area as less important in its achievement of the lifelong learning strategy goals than the formal education sector¹.

Adult Literacy and Numeracy

Concern about levels of adult literacy and numeracy in the 1990s led to the Government undertaking an audit of need which would inform national policy and strategy. A report, *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland*, was published in 2001. It contained a number of recommendations which included that the strategy should be monitored and overseen by the Scottish Executive and that 'accountability for local developments, funding, monitoring and

¹ These changes have now taken place (17.03.10)

targets across three sectors ... be given to local authorities as co-ordinators of Community Learning Strategies' (Scottish Executive, 2001: 3). Annual progress reports were produced with the last one published covering the period 2008-09. However, the Concordat with local authorities and the removal of ring fenced funding means that local authorities are now expected to fulfil statutory obligations and fund adult literacy and numeracy according local need. There is no longer a need to submit end-of year reports (Scottish Government, 2009a) although one of the national performance targets includes reducing the number of working age adults with severe literacy and numeracy problems. This is now being measured by a hard indicator – the number of people who have SCQF level 4 qualifications or below (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms/indicators>). There are still a range of adult literacy and numeracy providers which are closely linked to Community Learning and Development and dependent to a large extent on local authority funding. The impact of the current economic climate is noted by the present Minister for Schools and Skills in his foreword to the last progress report: '*Difficult economic times mean that resources are tighter and that priorities might need to be reassessed*' (Scottish Government, 2009a: Foreword), although he also emphasises the value of adult literacy and numeracy provision. This would suggest a shift away from measuring achievement in this area by softer indicators such an increased confidence towards more standardised measures.

More choices, more chances

This term refers to those aged 16 to 19 who are not in education, training or employment (previously known as the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) group). The *More Choices, More Chances* strategy was published in 2006 by the previous administration and was adopted by the incoming SNP government. According to OECD statistics Scotland had a higher rate of those in the MCMC population than most of the OECD countries with the exception of France and the Slovak Republic (Scottish Executive, 2006). This group therefore continues to be a key priority area for the government. The strategy identified a number of action points which included focus on areas where there was a concentration of those in the MCMC group, targeting the pre-16 young people most at risk of becoming MCMC, supporting transitions, providing financial support and, for those most at risk, providing key worker support. It is quite clear that this group continues to cause concern for the government as noted by the funding council interviewee who stated that the key priority for funding initiatives had to be the school leaver:

I don't think you can escape the school leaver, no the pre school leaver. Many would argue the two to three year olds or the pre birth or... but that concept that once they have left school [and] have gone into ... unemployment and drift around. ... You have got the dreadful [term], you used to call them the NEET group, you know, the MC², but all of them, and so many of them and some of them care-leavers of course, are a particularly vulnerable sub set. (Scottish Funding Council interviewee)

In a climate where the budgets are constrained it is evident that targeting one particular group may have an impact on another group. In the view of funding council interviewee funding provision for older people was problematic for two reasons: the first because of the potentially limited economic return; the second because training opportunities related to work, e.g. through unemployment or redundancy were funded by the UK government:

But with these... as I said, even at that stage, you are almost in sticking plaster... that sounds a terribly cynical thing [to say] but all the experience suggests that it requires a huge amount of effort to help people into a genuinely and sustainable future, where they have an economic contribution to make and that requires enormous political will to make an investment that is probably disproportionate to the actual economic return. But saying that, it is right for society to do that and actually economically in the end it's right because if you look at the whole cost it's probably less than what you are actually paying out. The trouble is the whole cost is often done in Westminster with the payment of benefits, or it's the prison service to be blunt or whatever. (Scottish Funding Council interviewee)

It is clear that he is not arguing against investing in learning for older age groups but he is suggesting that this group is a lower priority. Older people according to this view would be anyone over compulsory schooling age. What is also evident in this quote is the impact of devolved and non devolved powers. The Scottish Government is responsible for education and lifelong learning; however, welfare benefits and training for work schemes are the responsibility of the Department of Works and Pensions which covers the whole of the UK. Some of this is delegated to the Skills for Scotland agency but, as the quote suggests, there can be confusion over who funds particular measures. It would therefore appear that in the current economic climate funding to support vulnerable younger people may have a detrimental effect on older learners.

Widening participation

Government strategy identifies colleges as key players in providing lifelong learning at all levels. This includes their role in widening participation to higher education through the provision of sub-degree level courses as well as specific Access to Higher Education courses. The interviewee from the funding council felt that colleges played a major and positive role in widening participation to non-traditional students. His view was that this was an effective way of encouraging these students to progress into higher education:

Widening access in the college sector², if you look at their intake from the most deprived areas it is proportionally high in comparison with the population of those areas. So on the whole, 2 stars³ to the college sector, not translating into higher education, and there are weaknesses in that articulation from college to university. ... it can sound patronising, but I think it's a really good route into universities for [non-traditional students]. (Scottish Funding Council interviewee)

He therefore felt that it was important further to develop the articulation between colleges and higher education and that some higher education institutions were making progress. However, he was also of the view that elite institutions were unlikely to change their current focus on research and academic excellence:

The funding council is charged with widening participation, and we have our 'Learning for all' initiative and are supportive of the widening access forums and the articulation hubs and all this sort of thing. So actually it falls on us significantly and our new corporate plan, like our previous one, has a focus on attempts at widening participation. But if one is brutally honest we haven't done very well so far, in times of rising student numbers, we got rising numbers from non traditional backgrounds, but not rising at a faster rate than the whole shebang... and I suspect that we will really struggle this time round. We haven't cracked it, they haven't cracked it in England, it's really difficult. (Scottish Funding Council interviewee)

There were a number of measures used by the funding council to support colleges in bringing in more disadvantaged students such as bursaries and childcare funds. These particular budgets were ring-fenced so if one college did not use its allocation, it was clawed back and allocated to another college. The Learning Connections interviewee also stressed the positive role of colleges in widening access.

Whilst there was reference to pressure from the funding council on widening participation in elite institutions, it was clear from the interview with the senior manager of the funding council that the funding council sees admission policy as the remit of the institution:

We would take the view formally that admissions policy is a matter for individual institutions (Scottish Funding Council interviewee)

In addition, this interviewee stressed that the funding council recognised that there were differences between different types of universities and that these differences were unlikely to alter, at least in the immediate future:

² This refers to Scotland's 43 colleges.

³ This is praise but also recognition that they could go further!

Our new corporate plan does talk absolutely openly about diversity of mission of Universities, so we are moving away from this concept of all Universities are the same... they never have been the same, they have different missions, so I do think that we do have opportunities to build greater senses of having a single post school curriculum within regions, we are talking in terms of that so that if you want to study in Lanarkshire you know that there is an articulation route going through Cumbernauld college, maybe to Caledonian University, University West of Scotland, the former Bell Campus. This provides you, without having to move far from home, [with] a pretty comprehensive route to a degree level qualification. I think we need to do more of that, and that would be a good thing. What I don't think we will do, and let's be honest about this, is crack articulation into the research intensive institutions. It's worth continuing to bang at that and to keep them up to the mark, but we are not going to see transformational change in the next five years. (Scottish Funding Council interviewee)

This quote highlights the tensions in Scotland (and the rest of the UK) between developing internationally acknowledged research and the widening access agenda. There has been public debate around the development of a 'two tier' system of research intensive old/elite⁴ and new (post-92) universities which have a stronger focus on teaching. As can be seen in the next section, differential funding allocations may lead to the development a two tier system. The case study of the elite universities shows that there is resistance to the widening access agenda and the proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds has actually fallen.

Funding and sustainability

Whilst funding in itself is not a policy, it is key to translating policies and strategies into reality. The funding council funds only formal education through their grants to colleges and universities. In addition to teaching and research funding, the funding council provides higher education institutions (HEIs) with a Widening Access and Retention Premium (WARP). This funding was introduced to help higher education institutions to improve the retention rate of students from deprived backgrounds. The amount provided to an HEI is based on the number of students from deprived backgrounds; there is a considerable variation between elite and post-92 students in terms of intake of this group of students. The median deprivation percentile in 2007-08 ranged from 23 to 31 in the four old universities; and from 35 to 58 in the post-92 institutions (SFC Circular, SFC 04/2010). Institutions dating back to 1960s fell in between these two positions. The funding council is currently proposing to withdraw funding from those institutions which receive only a low level of premium funding. This would impact on three of the old institutions and one of the 1960s institutions.

A number of important issues emerged from the interviews. Both interviewees stressed sustainability, for the Learning Connections interviewee sustainability was a problematic concept because it needed to account for learning and development that was difficult to measure:

sustainability isn't about keeping the project going, it's about where has the change happened that has been a result of the learning of that project that has influenced the people. Now you can take the ideas and influence more people, that's the sustainability bit, you can't get people to recognise that cause it's not touchable, you can't scratch it, you can't grab a hold of it. We have been very immature at managing that, not everybody agrees with me of course. .. (Learning Connections interviewee)

He was also critical of the way that the government used the third sector, for example by reducing funding to the voluntary sector whilst asking more of them:

I worry about the patronising use of the third sector to deliver outcomes for the government, because it almost makes you feel warm for a while, that you are wanted, and then you say well hold on, you have just given me the same money with a different label and asked me to do twice as much, how does that work. I think we have got to

⁴ Note the term 'elite' university is often used to refer to the old universities and those that are part of the Russell group (this is a UK wide group). Russell group universities all have a medical school. They are research intensive institutions.

watch that, I think policy has to come with honesty and I actually think we could use the voluntary sector in partnership far more effectively than we currently do in central government. I think it's not just a straightforward giving them more money to do more things, or just giving them higher targets to hit or anything like that. I think it requires [us] to ask some tough questions, both of government and of the voluntary sector. One of those tough questions is: Are you still required in the format that you are currently brigaded in? In other words if we have to shut down or join up with them to do this more effectively. That's a hard one because there is a social and political relevance to everything ... (Learning Connections interviewee)

He concluded by stressing the potential role of the voluntary sector but stressed that there should be less power vested in formal institutions but without losing the accountability provided by the formal sector:

.. so I do think there is potential for the voluntary third sector, independent sector, however you wish to describe [them] because they are all different, to grow and deliver lifelong learning much more effectively. I would take much more of it away from the power of the institutions, but I might leave the accountability with the institution, because I think it could be good at that, if they understood what's going on better. (Learning Connections interviewee)

The Scottish Funding Council interviewee saw sustainability as problematic mainly in relation to differences within the UK in relation to student fees. He noted that in a general climate of financial constraint this issue was likely to become more prominent. Currently Scottish domiciled and EU students do not pay fees for their first undergraduate course; however, students in England do. Scottish universities are in competition with English ones and he felt that Scottish universities are likely to struggle to keep their teaching provision equivalent to that in England. In addition to this, the financial stability of colleges was, in his view, precarious and all this may impact negatively on the social inclusion agenda:

I think the funding is a really tough one. I mean our colleges are at the moment financially sustainable, but living on a knife edge. Our universities are in direct competition with a much bigger system down south, which is funded by income streams from students, which the cap could come off and could get more funding. Now I reckon that that is then a big challenge for all institutions to decide where their focus is going to be, and if the financial chips are really down to what extent will the social inclusion mission be at risk? (Scottish Funding Council interviewee)

The funding council has recently announced (October 2009) a new funding formula which gives different weightings to different subject areas. The result of this is that ancient universities, because of the subjects they offer, will receive higher funding than the new universities; however, at the same time it is proposed that the premium funding aimed at widening access is withdrawn from three of the four old universities. These changes to funding may well act to open up differences between old, elite institutions and the newer ones. The new universities will have less income from the standard teaching grant but will retain funding for non-traditional students. Elite institutions will have less of an incentive to focus on non-traditional students whilst new institutions will have a greater incentive.

In summary, current policy measures strongly emphasise the development and utilisation of human capital. This represents in policy discourse a shift from the position, as expressed in the 2003 lifelong learning strategy, of the previous administration which recognised a more prominent role for learning in relation to personal development and social inclusion. The human capital orientation is clearly reflected in the views of the funding council manager who also expressed concerns about the future of social inclusion measures. Colleges are seen as key to widening participation and new universities as providing a route to degree qualifications for non-traditional students. However, recent funding measures which favour elite universities may undermine further developments of such routes into higher education.

The two officials interviewed reflected the tensions between different stakeholders in Scotland in terms of the role of education in social inclusion and the widening access agenda. The Government through its economic strategy and in the skill strategy stress human capital development. Participation in the labour market is seen as a way of achieving social inclusion. Whilst acknowledging promotion of equal opportunity its emphasis is strongly on employability and developing '*entrepreneurial and innovative [people]*'. The most recent update on the economic recovery plan includes a section on education and training (Scottish Government, 2010). It identifies two priority groups: adults at risk of becoming long-term unemployed and young people unable to make a successful first transition into the labour market. All the measures identified in relation to education and skills focus on employability and reflect broadly the views of the Scottish Funding Council interviewee. There is little evidence of the views of the Learning Connections interviewee in these official sources. His concerns were that education and learning were in danger of becoming too focused on employability and skills development. His views are similar to those of the managers of Community Learning and Development and the voluntary organisation; however, the impact of the recession is likely to mean a decreasing influence from those advocating a more social and personal development aspect of education.

2.3 Lifelong learning statistics

Statistics on lifelong learning come from different sources. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) publishes those for colleges and universities, although statistics for universities are gathered for the whole of the UK by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and those for colleges are gathered by Scottish Funding Council. Data on non-formal learning including learning in the workplace come from two sources: (i) the Local Area Labour Markets in Scotland (based on the Labour Force Survey of employees) and; (ii) management information from employers. In addition to this, a separate National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) Scotland, was carried out in 2005. It was part of a UK wide survey of adult learning but this was the first time that there was a boosted Scottish sample which allowed for publication of Scottish only data (Ormston et al, 2007).

Formal learning

Scotland, it has been argued, has been more effective in increasing participation in higher education than England, one measure used to demonstrate this has been the Age Participation Index. The index showed that around 47% of those under 21 in Scotland participated in higher education, an increase from 20% in the mid 1980s. This is a higher level than in England but a relatively large proportion of this is at sub-degree level⁵ (see Gallacher, 2006). However, those from the most deprived backgrounds are still considerably more likely to study at a further education college than at university. Table 2 shows that in 2006-07 over half of the students studying HE level courses in universities came from the two least deprived quintiles, whilst only just over one third of those studying HE level at a college came from these two quintiles. By contrast 22% of those studying HE level at college came from the most deprived quintile with only 11% of those studying at the same level at university came from this quintile. This suggests that colleges have an important role in promoting access to higher education in Scotland a view that is clearly expressed by the senior manager from the funding council who was interviewed for this sub-project.

⁵ Sub degree level refers to Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND) provision. These are courses that are, within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, counted as equivalent to completing 1st year (HNC) and 2nd year (HND) of an undergraduate course. These qualifications have been used for articulation into higher education, either into 2nd year or 3rd year of an undergraduate degree programme

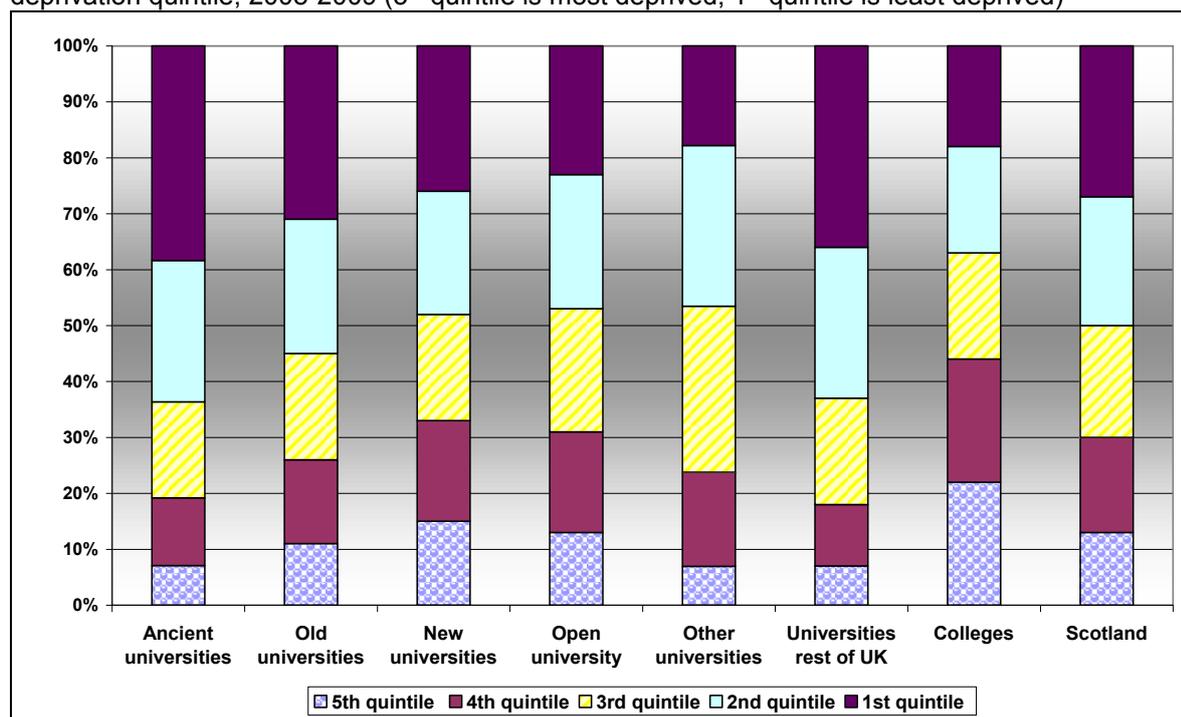
Table 2: Scottish domiciled students (headcount) in colleges and universities by level of study and deprivation quintile, 2008-09

Deprivation quintile	Colleges				Universities	
	HE level		FE level		HE level	
Least deprived quintile	7,482	18%	48,874	15%	54,964	30%
2 nd quintile	7,987	19%	59,299	19%	44,646	24%
Middle quintile	8,101	19%	64,536	21%	36,336	20%
4 th quintile	9,252	22%	66,017	21%	28,477	15%
Most deprived quintile	9,484	22%	76,764	24%	20,752	11%
Total	44,306	100%	313,490	100%	185,175	100%
Not known	283		1,491		4,916	

Source: Scottish Funding Council, 2010

Table 2 shows differences between colleges and universities in provision of access to higher education for those from the most deprived areas. There are also differences between different types of universities⁶ as demonstrated in figure 1. Only 7% of students in ancient universities, which are considered the most prestigious, come from the most deprived quintile. This compares with 15% of those from the most deprived quintile in new universities.

Figure 1: Scottish domiciled HE students at UK universities and Scottish colleges in per cent by deprivation quintile, 2008-2009 (5th quintile is most deprived; 1st quintile is least deprived)



Source: Scottish Funding Council, 2010

However, whilst colleges, and new universities to a lesser extent, clearly provide opportunities for access to higher education for those from the most deprived quintile, it is not clear whether this will translate into a greater equality in access to high quality jobs. Research examining social mobility in **Scotland** drawing on data from the Scottish Household Survey and using social class as a measure, indicates that there has been upward social mobility in absolute terms but this has not impacted adversely on those already of a higher occupational class (Iannelli and Paterson, 2006). The authors argue that the changes in absolute mobility are

⁶ Universities are here classified as ‘ancient’ dating to before 1960; ‘old’ dating between 1960 and 1991; ‘new’ from 1992 or after

mainly due to a restructuring of the labour market and the overall structure of the economy. If relative mobility, rather than absolute mobility, is measured then they argue that there has been little change. This is because earlier changes to the labour market allowed for some upward mobility as lower grade jobs decreased. This expansion has now slowed down and there will therefore be more limited opportunities for upward mobility. A further claim by these authors is that educational reform in itself is unlikely to have a significant impact on social mobility. They argue that although Scotland has a relatively egalitarian school system with no academic selection, it has not had greater relative social mobility than, for example, England which has a less egalitarian school system. Their research does not examine widening participation in higher education, however, their emphasis on the role of the labour market and overall economy and its impact on relative social mobility would suggest that widening participation measures are likely to have a limited impact.

There has been a gender difference in participation in formal post-compulsory education for some time. Table 4 shows that there is a higher level of female participation both in higher education and non-advanced further education. Although there has been some fluctuation in the proportion of female to male students, it has only changed by a percentage point or two over the past 10 years. Generally this higher participation rate for females does not translate into advantages in the labour market, though the latest statistics show that a larger proportion of female than male graduates were in employment six months after graduating (<http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/content/view/1521/161/>).

Table 4: Female and male participation rates in non-advanced further and higher education

	Colleges				Universities	
	HE level		FE Level		HE level	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2007-08 ¹	47%	53%	44%	56%	42%	58%
2008-09 ²	48%	52%	45%	55%	43%	57%

Source 1: SFC, 2009; Source 2: SFC, 2010

Non-formal learning

In 2008 28% of working age adults in employment had received training in the last three months, this is a slight decrease from 2004 when 31% had received training. According to the Skills in Scotland Survey of employers, 65% of employers had provided or funded training for their employees (Scottish Government, 2009b). The training is normally of short duration – less than a week – and there are differences between sectors as those in health and social work receive most training and those in agriculture, fishing and forestry receive least training. The National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) report for Scotland demonstrates that participation in learning is strongly influenced by previous level of qualification. Table 5 shows the learning that an individual who is not currently in continuous full-time education has participated in over the past three years. This shows that 83% of those sampled had participated in some form of learning; however, this varied considerably according to the current level of qualification. Those with no qualifications participated considerably less than those with qualifications at SVQ level 5⁷.

Table 5: Participation over the last three years in different types of learning by level of highest qualification by those not currently in continuous full-time education, age 16-69

Type of learning	Highest level of qualification						Total
	SVQ level 5 ISCED 5	SVQ level 4 ISCED 5	SVQ level 3 ISCED 3	SVQ level 2 ISCED 3	SVQ level 1 ISCED 3	No qualifications ISCED 2	
Any learning	100%	98%	85%	88%	73%	28%	83%
Taught learning	85%	83%	67%	67%	55%	23%	67%
Self-directed learning	94%	88%	63%	74%	50%	15%	67%
Vocational learning	98%	92%	73%	83%	59%	22%	74%
Non-vocational learning	27%	35%	27%	34%	26%	10%	29%

Source: National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) 2005, Scotland Report, p. 18

⁷ SVQ refers to Scottish Vocational Qualifications. These are mapped on to the levels within the general national qualifications framework; SVQ level 1 = Access level; SVQ level 5 = degree level

Note: ISCED levels based on: Correspondence between National Education Attainment Classification (NEAC) and EU-LFS coding produced by Department for Education and Skills, UK

Men are less likely to participate in formal education (see table 4); however, they are more likely to participate in other types of learning (see table 6) according to the National Adult Learning Survey (Ormston, et al, 2007). However, this masks differences between younger and older workers and across sectors as the following groups are most likely to receive training:

- Younger workers
- Women, except those under 24
- Those with higher qualifications
- Those employed in the public sector. Employees in services industries, agriculture and fishing are least likely to receive training.
- Those in larger workplaces

Table 6: Participation in different types of learning by gender, age 16-69

	Men	Women	All
Any learning	87%	78%	82%
Taught learning	70%	63%	66%
Self-directed learning	73%	61%	67%
Vocational learning	78%	70%	74%
Non-vocational learning	32%	25%	28%

Source: National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) 2005, Scotland Report, p. 15

To summarise, there are inequalities in access to higher education. Students from the least deprived backgrounds are most likely to access higher education in an elite university and those from the most deprived backgrounds are most likely to access it through college provision, if at all. There are more women in formal education than men but men overall are more likely to be involved in other types of learning.

2.4 Lifelong learning and its relationship with human capital, social capital and personal development

Although lifelong learning as a concept has been described as a ‘broad, imprecise and “elastic” term’ (Johnston, 2000, cited in Rogers, 2006:125) and described by Boshier as ‘human resource development in drag’ (Boshier, 1998:4), it is nonetheless in widespread use and could be seen as replacing the term adult education. Field (2006) argues that the term is useful for a number of reasons; one of these is that it reflects changes in society that are evident in the ways that people nowadays acquire new skills and capacities. On the other hand, he also suggests that there is a danger that it becomes a mechanism for exclusion and social control. Field further notes that the discourse emphasises individual agency and that learners are expected to take control of their own learning. This, and the emphasis on accredited learning can, according to Rogers, lead to a representation of non-learners as deficient (Rogers, 2006). The emphasis on individual agency and the fact that individuals have access to different levels of learning may lead to greater inequality in society. Hudson, exploring the relationship between inequality and the knowledge economy (Hudson, 2006), claims that development of the knowledge economy is likely to increase inequality as changes in employment patterns will lead to differentials in income. This is due to the development of a highly skilled workforce serving the knowledge economy, a decline in skilled trades and an increase in unskilled labour. If this is the case, the fact that those already highly educated are more likely to engage in further training may serve to exacerbate this trend. The recent Inquiry in to the Future of Lifelong Learning (<http://www.niace.org.uk/>) aims to examine all aspects of lifelong learning, including the wider benefits in relation to areas such as health and well-being. It clearly sees learning as having an important role in economic terms but also in relation to social capital and personal development.

Evident in this debate then are issues around the relationship between learning and human capital, social capital and personal development. In other words is the role of learning to develop human capital, social capital or is it mainly for personal development or a combination of

these?

Human capital theory argues that individuals are rational beings investing in their education for economic gains and that this also benefits society as it contributes to a nationally competitive nation state in the global economy. The development of human capital is seen by governments as key to promoting a competitive society. They view their role as providing supportive structures for individuals to become agents in their own human capital development. These structures include clear guidance for learners, quality controlled learning and flexible opportunities for learning. It is assumed that individuals will take control of their own learning which will enable them to participate in the labour market which benefits both the individual and society.

Social capital refers to the social connections between individuals within society, the networks that they have developed and the extent to which this helps or hinders them in gaining access to the resources they need within their lives. As a concept it is more recent than human capital. Balatti and Falk (2002) identify at least three different conceptualisations. The first sees social capital as the social networks available to people including the values and norms associated with these networks; the second that it is an individual's private asset as well as an asset that can be owned by a particular group; and the third describes social capital as a combination of the networks and the private good. For some it is seen as entirely beneficial, whilst others argue that it has both a negative and a positive side. A more recent literature review suggests that the concept was developed by Bourdieu and Coleman and describes social capital as *'intrinsically relational, with attendant emotional and perceptual consequences, and as being open to useful exploration through the metaphor of capital'* (McGonigal et al, 2007: 79). The authors further suggest that Putnam developed his definition from that of Coleman.

Social capital is also increasingly identified as the key factor contributing to the health and well-being of individuals and societies (Riddell et al, 2001, 143). It has been argued further that certain social networks lead to an individual engaging effectively lifelong learning whilst others act as a deterrent to engagement. For example, certain types of networks value education and encourage engagement with learning, whilst others do so to a lesser degree. Field (2006), notes that in Britain there has been a decline in the membership of voluntary organisations by manual workers. He argues that this is an example showing how lack of access of networks that promote learning impact on an individual's access to learning and ultimately acts to increase in inequality.

Personal development stem from humanistic ideals which promote individual development through self-fulfilment and learning is considered as one way of gaining such fulfilment. The three, human capital, social capital and personal development, are not necessarily mutually exclusive – it may be that participating in learning that increases employability (human capital) also provides an individual with opportunities for developing new social networks (social capital) and that they gain personal fulfilment from their learning. However, it is clear that the Government through its policies can emphasise one of these more than others, for example, through the way it funds and organises different aspects of lifelong learning.

Section 3: Social inclusion in education and learning

3.1 Formal learning

Two colleges and one elite university were included to explore the provision for adults with special emphasis on social inclusion measures. Each type of institution is reported on separately. A brief description of the key characteristics is followed by an examination of each of the institutions in relation to institutional strategies, institutional climate, outreach, opportunities for social interaction, transition programmes, admission policies, recognition of prior learning, supports, distance education and course content. The key points from all three institutions are summarised at the end of the section.

College A

College A was formed in 2005 from the merger of two previous colleges and is now one of the largest colleges in Scotland. It is situated at the eastern end of the central belt of Scotland and has a strong presence throughout this area, operating five main campuses in three towns and five outreach centres.

College A presented itself as a large, ambitious, international centre for learning, appealing to students from different nations and different social backgrounds. College A wished to increase its size and standing in the sector and develop its curriculum to provide degree-level courses. The priorities of the college highlighted the importance of economic objectives such as sustainability, developing human capital and increasing economic turnover.

College A had around 35,000 students, the majority of these are Scottish students, which would suggest that its efforts to attract overseas students had not been particularly successful. It had around 900 members of staff. The student population was made up of 52% female and 48% male students. Its learning provision ranged from basic skills (ISCED level 2) to HNC/D and some post-graduate vocational provision (ISCED level 5).

Institutional strategies, structures and review processes

College A stated in its Admissions Policy that it had an “absolute commitment to widening participation in lifelong learning” and recognised the associated benefits of lifelong learning with regard to improving the quality of life within the local community. Admission to the college was open to all applicants, regardless of age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, medical condition, religious belief, or sexual orientation. The college stressed that it was committed to admissions procedures which ensured maximum access and had targets in the corporate plan to increase the number of students that come from socially and economically deprived groups:

We measure what our college profile looks like and we can look at the postcode data and see what percentage come from these areas. I have said I want to see a year on year increase but there are also various European projects that are specifically about reaching these hard to reach groups (Vice Principal, College A).

Whilst College A aimed to provide for all ages, recent initiatives (linked to government strategy) had focused on school leavers, those that either perhaps could not gain entry directly to university or who did not wish to go. The college was heavily engaged with local schools with many children from 3rd and 4th year of secondary schools (15 to 16 years of age) coming in through the ‘skills for work’ programme. Children as young as primary 5 (aged 9) were brought into the college as they were seen as a ‘long-term investment’ for the college (Vice Principal, College A). Members of staff had a big involvement with schools:

We teach in schools, we run special projects for primary school kids so the kids in school are aware of us from a young age, they are aware of the college and what it does and when it comes time for them to leave school, college is seen as an opportunity for them (Executive Director, College A).

Although College A had been developing opportunities for school aged learners, it had also responded to the needs of older potential learners. It recently organised several events for people who found themselves suddenly unemployed. Individuals in this category were invited into the college, had their skills evaluated and were provided with advice and guidance. The college also targeted certain areas of the community which contain a high-proportion of long-term unemployed.

Learner engagement was fostered in a number of ways:

- Each course has a course representative who presents the views of fellow students to the college. Training and support for this role is provided by the Student Association and Student Participation in Quality Scotland (SPARQS)
- There is a Learner Forum for each of the five college centres/institutes. These forums

meet twice a year and points raised are either dealt with at the forum or passed on the overall College Learner Forum. The College Learner Forum includes two course representatives from each centre/institute

- Office bearers of the Student Association sit on several of the college's major policy-making committees including the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Diversity Committee and the College Academic Board

Students were asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of each unit of study and also to complete a yearly College Course Evaluation form.

College A had a Student Association which was an association run entirely by the students. Its office bearers were elected by the college student body. It was independent of the college management and provides representation and organises social events. It was affiliated to the National Union of Students (NUS).

Institutional climate

The main monitoring of staff diversity was with regards to ethnic origin. We did not have access to individual college data; however, for the period of 2008-09 the majority, 94% of staff were categorised as of White origin, data was unknown for 4% and only just over 2% came from a non-white ethnic group. In Scotland overall the non-white ethnic minority is just over 3%.

In terms of the college population, it was clear that the college aims to cater for students from all backgrounds but that there had been a change in the age composition in the student population – just over half the student population was now 18 or under. This was in part due to the partnerships that the college has developed with a number of schools. There had also been some increase in the number of adult returners coming back to college to re-train. As one lecturer noted:

We have even seen an increase in the number of adult apprentices, now we see people in their 40s and 50s returning as apprentices so within society as a whole that is a trend that has developed over the last few years (Lecturer, College A).

The school links were considered very challenging for the college staff and some felt that schools were using the college to relieve themselves of the most difficult youngsters for a short period of time. The number of international students had also gone up but this was limited to certain curriculum areas such as tourism and hospitality and English as a Second Language (ESOL). Whilst the college aimed to include students from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds it was relatively less successful than College B which is discussed below (see figure 1, p. 26).

Outreach

College A's distribution strategy had opened up campuses in local communities targeting areas where the population come from a less advantaged socio-economic background. The college provided taster programmes in the community in order to engage with the community and get the public to make the first steps and come through the barrier in their local community rather than going straight into a main college campus.

College A also worked with local schools specifically targeting groups of school pupils who were likely to become part of the MCMC group, 'we are reaching out to them in 3rd year at a point when they might fall out of the system' (Executive Director, College A). These children were identified by school guidance staff as those who maybe don't want to stay at school but were still within compulsory school age. The college was also committed to targeting people who had recently become unemployed and needed to retrain.

Opportunities for social interaction to promote social network support

There were no peer mentoring strategies or specific initiatives to promote social network support organised by college management; however, there was a Student Association run by students. It organised social activities and provided support for students.

Transition programmes

There were a range of transition programmes:

- collaborative programmes with schools (see above – Outreach)
- programmes for adults offering taster courses
- transition to work courses
- access to specific college programmes
- access to higher education through participation in the SWAP network
- partnerships with higher education to provide transition into higher education for students on HNC/D programmes

College A had links with several local universities.

Admission policies

As can be seen in the section on Institutional Strategies, mature students could gain entry without the required entry level qualifications normally expected of school leavers. Students aged 21 and over are classified as mature students.

Recognition of Prior Learning

College A recognised alternative qualifications and life experience, this was assessed on an individual basis as this example of entry qualifications required for an HNC in Applied Science shows – one of the following is required:

- 1 Higher (Chemistry or Biology), Maths at Standard Grade 2 or equivalent and 2 other Standard Grades at Grade 2 or above from Biology, Chemistry, Physics, English/Communications
- Industrial experience or other qualifications will be considered on an individual basis

Supports

Students had a wide range of support. This was set out in the Student Handbook and included:

- Childcare at the college nursery, financial assistance was available to students and pre-school (government funding) was available for 3-5 year olds
- Guidance which included: personal matters, financial matters, careers, educational choices and concerns. Students were encouraged to make an appointment with relevant staff who would discuss any aspect of financial matters in a confidential setting.
- Learning Support Services, this was aimed at students who had additional learning needs; however, they would provide additional help to any student who request it. Students were encouraged to inform the college prior to starting a course if they had any additional support needs. They could also make appointments after starting their course. College staff would assist them in accessing relevant support and also in applying for the Disabled Student Allowance if the student was entitled to this allowance.

Distance Education and flexible learning

College A had a virtual learning environment which allowed students to access course resources and to communicate with tutors online. They also offered a range of courses on a flexible basis for students who could not attend full or part time at a specific time.

Course Content

College A was split into five main learning institutes: Creative Industries; Education and Care Studies; Sports, Tourism and Community Learning; Business Management and Computing; and Engineering, Construction and Science. The college offered a range of courses within these institutes at a number of different levels, from SCQF level 3 (ISCED level 3c) through to degree level provision in partnership with the local universities.

When the previous two colleges merged, the resulting college's main aspirations were to provide a range of courses from access-level, up to degree-level provision. The college aimed to be a feeder college to local universities and provided a progression route for students who can

complete an HNC or an HND who would then go on to a third year of university. The college was keen to drop the title of a 'Further Education College', and be seen as one of Scotland's Colleges. The vice principal expanded on this view:

We have dropped further education, so yes that somewhat dated and old-fashioned view of colleges is now different. One of the things that constantly surprises people is the range that we have in the college, people come to do construction and engineering and that is FE, but today they are outnumbered by hairdressing students, care students and social scientists, these far outnumber the traditional areas (Vice Principal, College A)

Although degree-level provision was not yet available in all of the course areas, this was a long-term objective of the college. The college stressed that they are not attempting to take business away from universities, but to make higher education accessible to locally based students who might not have previously been able to attend university because they might not have been able to afford three years away from home. As well as more options at the highest level, the college had also increased the options for progression at the lowest level of provision. The college portfolio was updated regularly at a yearly curriculum review and updated in accordance with economic demand. Each centre was strategically guided by an advisory board comprised of a diverse range of people from local businesses, industry and local stakeholders. The courses were primarily skills based and there was a real focus on transferable skills development that would be applicable to the labour market. The content of the course moved with the market and with the needs of the qualifications themselves.

College B

College B is located in a large city in west central Scotland and has two main campuses. It served a diverse range of communities through its community learning centres and its connections with the local Community Learning and Development Department. College B presented itself as a community college based in a bustling city centre, prioritising the local population over and above increasing the college's size and profile. This was reflected in the college's strategic plan 2007-2010 which stated that the college had no desire to become a larger college and wished to continue to maximise funding to prioritise students from the most deprived backgrounds and contribute to social cohesion throughout the city. According to the Assistant Principal, College B had a responsibility 'to provide innovative and inclusive education for learners'. The college worked across the city and beyond and was working on increasing its international links with countries such as France, Germany, Spain and Lithuania. In a large city centre, the learners have many different colleges to choose from so the college had to remain competitive and offer facilities and courses which would help them gain a competitive advantage.

College B worked within many areas of high deprivation and, according to the Assistant Principal, almost 60% of its students come from the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland. According to official statistics, in 2007-08, 48% of its FE learners came from areas of high deprivation compared with 25% for Scotland's colleges as a whole (see Figure 1 below). The student population was very diverse with a high proportion, just over 10%, of black and ethnic minority students and over 80 different nationalities. This reflected a changing population within the area which houses refugees and asylum seekers. Teaching of ESOL therefore formed an important part of the college provision. The increase in school-college partnerships and initiatives aimed at the More Choices More Chances⁸ (MCMC) group had led to greater numbers of 15 to 19 year olds in the college in recent years. However, this younger population was not without its challenges:

The student population generally is younger and also what I have noticed in the last ten years or so is a tremendous amount of our young students have got complex needs, educational as well as social, very, very much more complicated than they were

⁸ MCMC refers to the group of 16-18 year olds who have left school and are not in education, employment or training. They used to be referred to as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and are still referred to under that label in the Labour Market statistics.

(Department Head, College B).

College B expected that the current economic climate would lead to an increase in redundancies, and that this would be reflected in the student population by an increase in older learners as many adults return to college to re-train.

Institutional Strategies, Structures and Review Processes

College B stated, in its equal opportunities policy, that the college was committed to widening access at all levels and that the college would “continue to provide lifelong learning opportunities for students from a wide variety of backgrounds and at different stages in their learning”. The college promoted equality and diversity and aimed to provide a supportive environment for students, staff and any other individuals involved with the college. The College’s strategic plan 2007-2010 highlighted the role that the college played in the community and emphasised its key aims of inclusion and widening access:

We will continue to ensure access to provision via community-based learning to some of (the city’s) poorest communities....it is crucial that we maintain and build on our commitment to be an inclusive and outward looking institution that welcomes and supports learners from all communities.

College B’s strategic plan was written in co-ordination with the Scottish Government’s Lifelong Learning Strategy (2003) and the Lifelong Skills Strategy ‘Skills for Scotland’ (2007). It was also developed in line with the Scottish Funding Council’s new corporate plan. The college was aware that it ‘cannot write a strategic plan in isolation of these things, our mission and vision for widening participation and access are very much in line with the Scottish Government’s’ (Principal, College B). The course content within the college adhered to the Scottish Government’s economic strategy which aimed to ‘increase skill levels and better channel the outputs of our universities and colleges into sustainable wealth creation’ (The Scottish Government, 2007).

College B had a Student Association which provided social, recreational and intellectual activities and the association was affiliated to the National Union of Students (NUS). Its office bearers were elected by the students in the college. The student body was represented at the Board of Management, the Learning and Teaching Committee and on all Course Review Teams.

Institutional climate

The main monitoring of staff diversity was with regards to ethnic origin. We did not have access to individual college data; however, for the period of 2008-09 the majority, 94% of staff were classed as of White origin, data was unknown for 4% and only just over 2% came from a non-white ethnic group. In Scotland overall the non-white ethnic minority is just over 3%.

College B was responding to government strategy in that it was increasingly targeting young learners who were in danger of becoming socially excluded. This, as discussed in the previous section had proved challenging.

Outreach

The college had two main campuses but it also delivered some of its learning in two community learning centres. In addition, it collaborated with the local Community Learning and Development to offer learning in a range of settings across the city.

Opportunities for social interaction to promote social network support

There were no peer mentoring strategies or specific initiatives to promote social network support organised by college management; however, as already mentioned there was a Student Association which was run by students.

Transition programmes

There had been an increase in courses both at the upper and lower end. The aim was to provide courses that allowed those who enter education at the basic level to progress into a mainstream course:

They would start off maybe in a community course and then maybe an NC course and then onto an HNC or degree course or they would come here and go to university. I would say that our provision is access-driven. The exit points are clear, there is progression or exit for the individual (Principal, College B).

Progression routes had been clarified to allow learners to progress through the different levels more smoothly. The provision available at the basic level had been adapted to accommodate student need and to allow for more realistic progress:

What we have done as a department and as a college is lower the level. What was happening was that we were getting very vulnerable people in and they were being set up to fail because we were putting them into the levels that we had been delivering for a long time (Department Head, College B)

College B had a Skills Development group which is run for people who would not normally access further education because they lack core skills or confidence to access mainstream courses. The group aimed to help and support these people to make the first steps back into education so that they can, if they wish, progress onto mainstream college courses. Another initiative to engage with potentially disadvantaged learners was the schools' activity programmes. These allowed young learners who are at risk of not engaging with learning or entering the labour market (the MCMC group) to come in to the college for a few days and do a programme of activities that included a variety of different subjects in order to give them an insight into college life. This was designed to give them an idea of the variety that was on offer and it was hoped it would make them think about what they were going to do in the following year. In addition to this, there were community groups and community-based adult learning courses where the college staff would go out into the community and deliver courses in order to try and get people back into education. Near the end of these courses all of the student will come into the college because they were seen as college students. These courses were considered very successful in bringing in disadvantaged groups of learners who were more comfortable in a community setting:

We do a lot of ESF classes that target people who are less likely to come into education and in my department the community classes are the way forward I think in terms of getting people into education (Department Head, College B).

College B had links with several local universities which provided opportunities for students at higher levels to progress on to degree level study.

Admission policies

Mature students could gain entry without the required entry level qualifications normally expected of school leavers. All students were invited to attend an interview. Students aged 21 and over are classified as mature students.

Recognition of Prior Learning

College B recognised that mature students can gain experience and qualifications in a range of ways and mature students could be admitted without formal entry qualifications (see also above).

Supports

Students had a wide range of support. This was set out in the Student Handbook and included:

- Support for learning for all students and specialist guidance for those with additional support needs
- Financial guidance available prior to starting the course and also available to continuing students. There was a hardship grant that students could apply to for additional support, this was means tested.
- Support with childcare may be available but would depend on individual circumstances. There is a college nursery with 44 places but students were also expected to use local

- nurseries
- There was a college guidance service. Lecturers were expected to assist students in the first instance; however, for non study related matters students could make an appointment to discuss any of the following with guidance member of staff:
 - Personal problems
 - Social and family problems
 - Health and welfare
 - Financial matter
 - Career advice
 - Accommodation
 - Return to learning
 - Outside agencies

Distance and flexible education

College B offered flexible learning. The student was provided with a resource pack and could access a tutor at specified times during the day and evening.

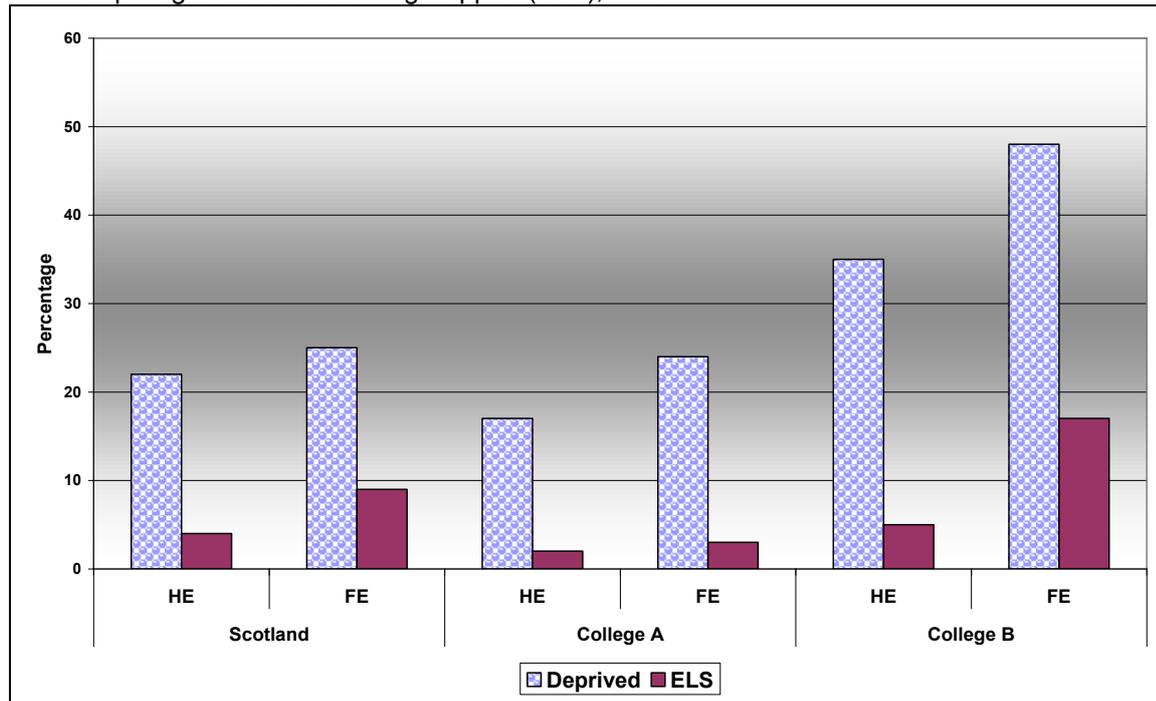
Course content

College B was organised into seven teaching departments: Business; Communication, English and Highers; Computing; Design and Construction; Engineering; Hospitality, Sport and Creative Arts and Social and Community Studies. These departments offered a range of full-time and part-time courses from access level to HND and HNC. The curriculum within the college had changed drastically over the years. The courses had become more structured and more student-centred. There had been a decrease in 'chalk and talk' where the students were being lectured and an increase in more flexible, varied approaches. The courses on offer within the college focused on the development of transferable skills that could be taken out into the marketplace and help the students either get a job or move on to further study. The departments within the main college campus described themselves as '*very vocationally based areas offering core skills and employability skills*' (Department Head, College B). These skills include citizenship, working with others, communication, peer group support and activities in the community. The curriculum was designed in relation to the current demand and client need and also in response to the needs of the learners. The curriculum was reviewed three times a year in curriculum review team meeting which involved curriculum staff, the course tutor for that group and class representatives. Curriculum design was also informed by government policy:

The nature of the courses that we do, the curriculum design, has been informed by government initiatives in recent years in terms of addressing the skills shortage of early education and childcare workers (Senior Lecturer, College B).

In summary, these two colleges represented different types of colleges in existence in Scotland, College A is a large business oriented college in a mixed urban/rural area and College B a small community based college in a deprived urban area intent on making provision for the learners with the greatest need. This was reflected in the strategies of the two colleges. In College A the focus is on economic objectives, whereas in College B it is on social inclusion. This can be seen clearly in figure 2 which demonstrates that College B has a much higher proportion of its students coming from the most deprived areas and also a higher proportion requiring extended learning support than College A has. This applies to further education as well as higher education courses within the two colleges. College A is below the Scottish national average on both of these indicators.

Figure 2: A comparison between College A and B in intake of students from the most deprived areas and those requiring Extended Learning Support (ELS), 2007-08



Source: SFC, Staff and Student Performance Indicators 2007-08; www.sfc.ac.uk

The university

The university, an elite institution, is located in a large Scottish city. It had around 29,000 students and offered a wide range of courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level with the majority of students studying humanities or social science subjects. It attracted a high number of middle class candidates with around a third coming from the independent school sector. The institution also had a relatively high number of non-Scottish students as more than half the student population came from the rest of the UK or abroad. Overall, in 2006-07, there were slightly more female than male students attending the university, this gender difference is more pronounced at undergraduate than postgraduate level.

Institutional strategies, structures and review processes

The university's overall mission was the creation and dissemination of knowledge. It marketed itself as a world-leading centre of academic excellence and sought to attract students on the basis of academic excellence. Widening participation measures developed since the publication of the Dearing and Garrick reports have led to the institution developing a number of measures to increase the diversity of its student population. It now sought to attract a *'wide range of applicants from different social, cultural and educational backgrounds, including those who come from schools or colleges where relatively few students progress to university, and those who will be the first generation in their families to become university students'*. This commitment was potentially in tension with its stress on academic excellence and the admissions office interviewee explained that there were many challenges involved in widening participation. The admission office had developed a set of criteria for admission in consultation with departments across the university. In 2004 a centralised admissions system was set up which meant that issues in relation to increased diversity and equality could be looked at across the institution rather than only within the departments.

The institution had an Academic Services Section which is responsible for quality, academic administration, academic committees, academic regulations and change projects. It has a senior academic committee as well as four main committees: the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Research Experience Committee, the Curriculum and Student Progression

Committee, the Quality Assurance Committee. Apart from the research experience committee all had student representation through the student union. The institution participated in the UK wide annual student evaluation survey.

There were a range of widening participation initiatives in the university and these were organised into five groups:

- Student recruitment and admissions (SRA) outreach activity. The main focus of this initiative was to work in partnership with state schools and colleges to improve progression of pupils from these backgrounds to the university
- Partnership projects which included working with schools that do not traditionally send many of its pupils to higher education and the Scottish Widening Access Programme (SWAP). This provides a route to higher education for mature learners
- Work with adult learners. Initiatives in this area have included development of part-time courses for adults returning to education. Study skills provision had also been developed aimed at this particular group of learners
- Other activities such as specific programmes for supporting non-traditional students' transitions into the university
- Widening participation funded projects within the institution and its departments. The institution had funded a number of projects to look at the experiences of non-traditional students in the institution, especially in relation to transitions and destinations. It also included the development of a virtual tool to help students identify challenges that may face them in HE.

It was evident that the institution had worked at developing a range of initiatives aimed both at school pupils and more mature learners coming through the college route. However, as will be seen in the next section, these measures have had a relatively limited impact on the overall composition of the student group.

Institutional climate

The institution monitors staff characteristics according to gender, age, ethnic group and disability. It had a low proportion of disabled staff, the proportion from ethnic minorities was higher than the proportion of ethnic minority groups in the Scottish population. Generally men were more likely to be found in the highest pay positions.

In relation to students, the main target group for the university were students who are able to achieve academic excellence. The university had a high number of applicants, around 10 per place which meant that it was a highly competitive and selective, rather than recruiting, institution. As mentioned above, this can lead to tensions between the focus on academic excellence and meeting widening participation targets, this was highlighted by one of the interviewees:

I suppose [the university] has different challenges and therefore they've met them differently and the major challenge being that [the university] isn't a recruiting university as such, it's a selective university so for them to make widening participation a central point to their admissions, it's trickier than somewhere like..., [a local university] ... they don't have a situation where they have to select students. (LEAPS)

A further difficulty for the institution identified by one of the interviewees was that widening participation initiatives were seen by some parents as unfair to students from traditional backgrounds.

Within the widening participation measures there were a number of specific target groups – these are driven by the performance indicators developed by the funding council in collaboration with the UK wide university sector. There are a number of benchmarks for groups considered under-represented in higher education and institutions are expected to work towards these benchmarks. Data is therefore gathered nationally by the Higher Education Statistics Agency

(HESA). There are three sets of data: those that focus on first generation students which gathers data on those from state school background as well as socio-economic status and post-code of the applicant; a second set of data is gathered in relation to disabled students; and a third focuses on ethnic minority groups. The Widening Participation officer explained that widening participation measures included a number of different groups:

Within that you will find all kinds of people, you mentioned earlier on people who maybe have learning difficulties, those who are disabled in some way, ethnic minorities, they will be found in there as will everybody else, so it's a melting pot. (WP officer)

The university had had some success in increasing the proportion of first degree undergraduate students from state schools but the increase had been small. In 2004-05 67% came from state schools and this increased to 70% in 2007-08. However, this is short of its benchmark of 81% in 2007-08. In addition, this increase of students from state school did not impact on its intake of those from lower social class which fell to around 17%. This was short of the benchmark of 21% and the intake of those from low participation neighbourhoods fell to 8% whilst the benchmark was 11%. This would suggest that the university, in spite of a range of measures, had not been particularly successful in widening participation for those from low socio-economic backgrounds. The institution had exceeded its benchmark in terms of disabled students as 3.7% of its undergraduate population were in receipt of DSA and the benchmark was 3.2%. Interestingly the institution did not include disabled students within the remit of the widening participation measures. Perhaps it was also worth noting that more than half of the disabled student population are dyslexic students and they did not necessarily come from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Mature students entering fulltime education had increased though. The admissions officer explained that the university could no longer cope with the number of applications from this target group and that the resources of the university were stretched in many directions in order to meet the various targets. However, although the percentage of mature students had increased, it seemed to be at the expense of local students coming through the access programme specifically designed for those who do not already have the required entry qualifications.

The other thing I would say is that from the mature student perspective, for which I have a special remit, there's clearly a big increase because we now have to turn down local mature students ... in the past we've always guaranteed offers to local mature students on local access programmes and we are not able to do that because of too many of them. There's actually a slight increase in the targets of students so clearly the widening participation in terms of raising aspirations has worked for mature students because we're not able to cope with them all and that then becomes one of the biggest dilemmas in Admissions. (Admissions officer)

More recently the university had noted an underachievement of males and a domination of women in many of the study areas. This was tackled by targeting young males from disadvantaged backgrounds in an initiative called Educated Path. It is described in more detail in Appendix 1.

Whilst the university had a number of measures which targets those from non-traditional backgrounds, it was evident that its main mission – knowledge creation and academic excellence – was in tension with its widening participation initiatives as these students formed a small proportion of the overall student population and the proportion of those from low socio-economic background was falling rather than increasing.

Outreach

Its widening participation measures had led to work in the local community aiming to attract students who would not normally consider applying to the university (the main initiatives are outlined in the section on Institutional Strategies).

Opportunities for social interaction to promote social network supports

There was a student union with members elected by the student body. The union provided a considerable range of social events and activities. There were also a number of measures developed to support non-traditional students:

- A Study Development Advisor whose role it is to support the widening participation agenda. This person works closely with students and staff and offers study skills, essay writing and exam preparation sessions. These courses are also offered during Freshers' Week and they aim to provide social support that local students who do not live in student accommodation may miss out on
- Peer mentoring, considered to be an example of good practice, is available to first year students. Student mentors, some from non-traditional backgrounds, received mentoring training and were then paired up with a new student. The student and the mentor would meet fortnightly but may have additional contact through email. The face-to-face contact was considered particularly valuable. The WP officer explained:
If they make it through first year then the untraditional student is nearly 10% more likely to get a 2:1 or a First than the traditional student. So it's that first year that provides the difficulty and my view often is that it's not an intellectual issue it's one of social integration. (WP officer)
- In addition to the mentoring scheme organised through LEAPS and the Widening Participation office similar schemes were under development in individual departments such as Politics and Law

In spite of this support, the Admissions office's view was that there was not sufficient support for students from non-traditional backgrounds once they entered mainstream undergraduate courses. The drop-out rates for these students, apart from those that came through the summer school route, was significantly higher than average.

Transition programmes

The institution collaborated with one of the local colleges through The Scottish Widening Access Programme (SWAP) and also with local schools through LEAPs (see above – Institutional strategies).

The university offered open days and some induction was available throughout Freshers' week. As can be seen from above there was some additional support for non-traditional students on entry and at the beginning of the course. In terms of progression to degree completion, student from low participation neighbourhoods were slightly more likely to drop out than traditional students.

Admissions policies and Recognition of prior learning

The institution offered entry for mature students through a range of alternatives; however, they all required the applicant to have undertaken accredited study within two years on the date of application. The type of study that qualifies included: SQA Highers and A-levels (upper secondary qualifications that are also offered at colleges); the University/college partnership part-time access course; the Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP); Open University credits; HNC and HND. In all these cases there were requirements as to the minimum grade of the qualification as well as some additional qualification requirements for certain subject areas. Entry was normally into first year of study. This may well be problematic for students coming through the HNC/D route. If students have had their course fees paid for an HNC then they cannot get fees paid for a first year undergraduate course; if they have been funded for an HND then they cannot funding for 1st and 2nd year of an undergraduate degree. This is due to these courses being classified as equivalent to 1st and 2nd year undergraduate study and students can not apply for fees to be paid for a course at an equivalent level. The HNC/D route into higher education is most likely to be followed by a less advantaged student.

Student support

All students at the university had access to a range support mechanisms such as Careers Service, Disability Office, Student Counselling Service and the University Chaplaincy. Pastoral support was provided to all students at the university through the Directors of Studies system with each student assigned a Director of Studies.

In terms of financial support, Scottish domiciled students and EU students did not pay fees for undergraduate courses provided they do not have a qualification at that level already (see also section on Admissions). The Office of Lifelong Learning offered some financial support for students taking courses through their office: a Government scheme; a £500 grant; and the university Trust for students not eligible for these other grants. For undergraduate students there were 170 bursaries of £1000 for each year of study; however, there were 300-500 applications suggesting that the need was greater than the financial aid currently available.

Although student support was available, the onus was on the student to seek support and guidance and this may be more problematic for students who are less familiar with studying at university and who lack social networks of support.

Distance Education

The institution was increasingly making use of online resources in its courses; however, there were no courses that are fully online.

Course Content

The institution offered a full range of higher education courses including medicine, veterinary science, all arts, social science and science subjects.

The current economic climate and the future

The general opinion of the interviewees was that there was likely to be a reduction in funding towards the widening participation agenda, irrespective of which party emerged as the winner in the next (2010) general election. In spite of this, the overall view of these interviewees was that the university was committed to widening participation which would be pursued regardless of further funding or pressure from the funding council. However, this would seem to be at odds with the views of other senior managers in the institution, interviewed for a different project, who voiced concerns about allowing students '*who were not very good*' into the institution and also that institutions should be allowed to '*sort out their own priorities*' (Riddell, et al, 2007). The views of the interviewees were not supported by the statistics quoted above, indicating that the institution was failing to reach its benchmark in relation to admission of students from more deprived backgrounds.

The representatives from the various widening participation initiatives anticipated a range of future changes and developments. LEAPS expected an expansion of their widening access forum to include colleges as well as universities but that this may reduce services currently available to higher education institutions. It also expected a geographical expansion but this may be on a sub-contractual basis. Future challenges for the Office of Lifelong Learning included those posed by young people who had a short gap between school and applying to university and foreign students. The Continuing Personal Education Co-ordinator explained:

We're finding there are more people who may be a year or two [out of school], they're not getting the grades at school or finding doors are closed and they're wanting to return to learning but they're not really mature students, they haven't got much life experience, but they haven't got the grades to progress and I think that that's actually quite a difficult group, 18/19 year-olds... We're also finding that we're getting more people who are coming with English as a second language and not necessarily, often it's Poland or Romania, not necessarily from further afield than that, and they're wanting to continue their studies. They're not being missed but it's just change in people wanting to study through us. (The Continuing Personal Education Co-ordinator, the OLL)

Although the interviewees expressed continuing support for widening participation measures there was a sense that the current economic climate is likely to impact on funding for such measures. There seems to be little pressure on the institution to achieve its benchmarks, especially in relation to students from low socio-economic backgrounds and recent funding council measures are unlikely to change this.

Summary of college and university case studies

Whilst all three institutions are formal education institutions there are considerable differences between the colleges and the elite institution and also some differences between the two colleges. All three have been encouraged to respond to the widening participation agenda; however, the college budgets exert considerable leverage and influence the direction of the college provision to a greater extent than does the funding for the university where the research agenda dominates. This can be evidenced both from the interview with the senior manager from the funding council and from the responses provided by the interviewees. The elite university supports widening participation in principle, but continues to draw the vast majority of its students from the most advantaged backgrounds. Targets from the Scottish Funding Council on widening access objectives have not been met and no penalties have been incurred. The squeeze on public sector funding following the recession means that resources are likely to be withdrawn from widening access programmes and the university will need to recruit wealthier students, including those from overseas who pay much higher fees.

Colleges are extending their work and focusing strongly on employability and skills and are encouraged to engage with more disadvantaged mature students and disaffected younger students. The elite university is clearly focused on academic excellence and entry requirements make it difficult for students who are socio-economically disadvantaged to gain access to the courses. Whilst there are pressures on the university to open up access, its failure in reaching the benchmark for certain types of students has not led to any penalties in terms of funding.

The colleges have also responded to the government employability agenda by developing more skills focused provision; however, College B still works strongly within its local community which is very diverse and includes high levels of social deprivation; whilst College A is trying to gain access to an international market and to develop its higher level provision to a greater extent.

3.2 Non-formal organisations

Two local authority Community Learning and Development departments and one voluntary organisation were included to explore the opportunities for adults to learn in a non-formal setting. Each organisation is reported on separately. A brief description of the key characteristics is followed by an examination of each of the institutions in relation to background and organisational context, course content, staff conditions, target groups, connections to the formal education system, recognition of prior learning, outreach to marginalised groups, tutor teaching methods, future developments and developing a strategy for the non-formal sector. The key points from all three organisations are summarised at the end of the section.

Community Learning and Development: CLD 1

Background and organisational context

CLD 1 was based in a semi-rural local authority and was split into six local areas within the authority. The local authority contains some areas of relatively high deprivation and some more affluent, mainly farming areas. There are two colleges and one university within the local area and CLD 1 had links to them through its Community Learning Partnership. Its provision included three main areas: adult learning, youth work, work with communities and work with families. The current strategy included a strong focus on improving adult employability, confidence building, participation in planning and improving literacy and numeracy levels. In terms of youth work it aimed to increase participation, improve core skills, encourage young people to participate in development and evaluation of youth work programmes and improve understanding of health

issues. CLD 1 was located in Community Services which according to the manager was beneficial as it had allowed it to develop its own identity:

CLD 1 is part of Community Services. Now that was a decision which was taken in 1996, to remove Community Education, as it was at that time, from the Education Service and become part of Community Services which was a kind of conglomeration of a lot of different services like Parks and Countryside, Libraries and Museums, Theatres, Sports and Leisure, all that side of things. So in one sense you could say there was a synergy there; on the other hand then the key thing for us was that it allowed CLD 1 to develop its own identity. (CLD 1 manager)

The main aims of CLD 1 in relation to adult learning were to:

- Improve the employability of residents in areas exhibiting higher than average levels of unemployment
- Improve personal confidence, self esteem, social networking and personal health and wellbeing of community based learners
- Improve retention and progression of community based learners
- Improve participation in community planning and local democratic processes
- Raise ambition and aspirations of people resident in areas of disadvantage
- Reduce the number of working age people with literacy and numeracy problems

At the time of the interview CLD 1 was in the process of restructuring:

We are in the middle of restructure – we have in [local authority] something called Opportunity Centres which are in the middle of being restructured, in community centres and places where people could go to access information and advice about, if you like, training and career opportunities. So they are currently under review as part of our review of lifelong learning, and we have community-based adult learning, which I have described to you. (CLD 1 manager)

The interviewee was asked whether the number of courses and/or learners had increased over the past five years, the response was that he was not quite sure but felt that they had fluctuated. There had been a change in course provision as there was now more English as a Second Language (ESOL) courses.

Course content

When asked to explain what type of courses were provided within the CLD the interviewee responded as follows:

Well, there is a huge range of, if you like, adult learning opportunities, because we are trying to provide a universal service and that means that we have things that are specifically for access to anybody and everybody. We do that through our community schools, principally, but not just through them, where we provide a range of what we would probably call more traditional adult learning opportunities. These would be in the field of things like sport and leisure and hobbies and those kind of areas, plus we would do a range of, for example, IT skill, plus we would do a range of language courses ... So you have got that type of course. And then you have obviously got a range of literacies and ESOL programmes which we also run. And we also are tied into employability agendas so there are opportunities out there in [the local authority] ... and sometimes there are tailor-made courses for specific groups. They are frequently targeted – not exclusively, but frequently targeted at people who probably had not much of an experience in learning. (CLD 1 manager)

The interviewee was of the view that courses that focused on personal development were useful in terms of bringing disaffected learners back into learning. For that reason he was sceptical of outcome measures that focused on hard indicators such as passes in accredited courses. It is worth noting that government policy is increasingly focusing on such hard measures, e.g. literacy is now measured through the attainment of a set number of Standard Grade (ISCED level 3c) qualifications.

The teaching was based on a Social Practice Model and this involved each person developing an Individual Learning Plan which sets out her/his goals. These goals could relate to any of the four areas of life, i.e. family, personal, work and community.

Staff conditions

Actual staffing numbers were not available for CLD 1, however, it operated like CLD 2 (see below) with a core of permanent staff normally trained to degree level who were not teaching. The teaching would be done by staff on short term contracts who worked part-time aided by volunteers:

Yes, well, obviously our CLD service is based around people having a CLD qualification at degree level, and those are our, if you like, full-time staff who are running and managing the service. Beyond that, the tutors that we would employ would normally have a relevant teaching qualification. But it would depend – it depends sometimes on what we call learning, because sometimes it might be a coaching qualification, so they would not be a teacher per se, if you see what I mean. It depends what skills they were doing, so for the most part, yes, but it is certainly not universal. (CLD 1, manager)

There were opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) for teaching staff but the interviewee hinted at difficulties in getting these members of staff to engage with learning as they were only on short term contracts.

Target groups

The main aim was to widen participation and its Adult learning policy states that it will ‘*target resources to effectively engage with those groups within our community who are socially and economically disadvantaged and therefore most at risk of exclusion*’. The interviewee described learners in this category:

They may be returners, they may be people who do not have many qualifications at the present time, they may be a wee bit afraid of the notion of learning, that kind of thing. And those [courses] are delivered and developed in various ways, but very often with local communities, you know, within local communities. And they could be about a whole range of different skill-sets that people need – some of them are about personal development. And clearly that is probably the place where you would start with a lot of that kind of learning opportunity. (CLD 1 manager)

The interviewee also spoke about the need to target provision at particular groups in order to ensure that those most disadvantaged were offered learning opportunities.

Connections to the formal education system

Through its partnership CLD 1 had links to the local colleges which could deliver courses in partnership with CLD 1 or offer its learners progression into accredited college courses

We do enjoy a good relationship with them [local colleges and university]: they are on our CLD Partnership, represented on that partnership, which is quite important for us, and they are also engaged and involved with the local partnerships, because as well as the overarching partnership, we have the local partnerships, and the colleges are very much a part of that. And that is helpful and what we also have, that we work together with the colleges in, is providing accredited learning centres across [the local authority] and we have these in places like community centres. (CLD 1 manager)

Recognition of prior learning

The majority of CLD 1's community based courses were non accredited and none of the courses required formal qualifications for entry to the course. CLD 1 provided opportunities for some accredited courses and provided information and guidance on progression to formal education institutions (and also work in partnership with some of these).

Outreach to marginalised groups

Apart from provision for marginalised learners (see target groups), CLD 1 had targeted specific groups in the community through a particular programme:

Yes, we have an organisation in [the local authority] which we call Frae [the local authority], which is essentially the body which works with ethnic minorities and travellers and so on, and we have a very close working relationship with them to try to develop a whole range of programmes, programmes for young people and programmes for adults. Some of that is things like ESOL, but some of it is about helping them to retain and develop their own culture, while at the same time supporting their – I am not going to say integration, because that is not the word I want to use, but do you know what I mean? - supporting their settlement into the communities here. So for example we are doing work with travellers and that is pretty challenging in different ways, and we are doing some work with the Muslim community. And we do work in [the local authority] – there is quite a big Chinese community in [the local authority], and they are very much tied into our adult learners' programmes. (CLD 1 manager)

Basic level courses were free; however, there was a charge for leisure courses. Learners could make use of means tested Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) for some of the courses.

Classes were located in a wide range of locations through the local authority for example, in schools, in the local colleges, libraries, community centres and miners' clubs. The aim was to get the provision into the communities.

Tutor teaching methods

The interviewee commented on class sizes and felt that this would depend on particular course and type of learner. It was also influenced by income generation:

we have classes which are incredibly popular and you might have 30 or 40 people for some particular trendy thing which happens to be on the programme and what we have always argued is that that can be used to offset the costs of either the subjects that are less popular, or issues and areas where fewer people - where it would be to our advantage, let's say, to have a smaller class size. In adult learning a class size is not frequently more than a dozen to 15 people and that is quite good. Sometimes it can be down to four or five people and I think it depends on the nature of what you are doing. I think it is not a good idea to talk about class sizes, classes of a particular size, because that can be unhelpful. (CLD 1 manager)

Whilst this interviewee did not mention it specifically, its adult learning policy explained that adult education was based on the social practice model.

Future developments

This interviewee felt that CLDs had to be more active in promoting its influence but that one of its problems was that the government focused on measurable outcomes which were not relevant to CLD learners:

the importance of CLD has to be more explicit in its influence ... we need to spread that message about the kind of learning opportunities that we provide and create and the outcomes that that can deliver, because people are obsessed with - they are not obsessed with outcomes: if they were obsessed with outcomes I would not have a problem, but they are obsessed with outcome measures. You know, say, for example, I take this from Curriculum for Excellence: 'We want to create more confident individuals and more responsible citizens.' That's absolutely wonderful ... And then they will say, 'And the measure of that is whether they get more Standard Grades or not.' To me, that is a madness, there is a disconnection. (CLD 1 manager)

In addition to this area of development, the interviewee expressed concern about the local authority funding and how this would impact on community learning and development as a result of the recession.

Developing a strategy for the non-formal sector

Strategy and policy for CLD is developed at government level and is the remit of Learning Connections. Learning Connections has itself undergone a review (see p. 10). The key focus

for this individual (in addition to the strategy for his authority) was the development of occupational standards at a national (Scottish) and also on a UK wide basis.

Community Learning and Development: CLD 2

Background and organisational context

CLD 2 was situated in a large city and it was divided into five sections each serving a local community within the city. It provided learning and development within the following areas:

- Adult learning
- Youth and children
- Support to voluntary organisations
- Literacy and numeracy
- Arts

When asked about the total number of learners the interviewees could not provide specific figures; however, information provided showed that there had been a very high number of learning opportunities for adults. Specific figures were provided in relation to adult literacy provision that was available through City Literacy and Numeracy (CLAN) for the session 2008-09. Here it was noted that 3002 learners had engaged with learning for a minimum of 3 hours and, in most cases, for considerably greater number of hours. There had been a considerable increase English as a Second Language (ESOL) due to recent immigration mainly from Eastern Europe.

Course Content

The Adult learning section had a wide range courses in different subject areas available during the day, evening and weekends in different locations throughout the city. This included arts and crafts, computers, languages, history, yoga and badminton. There was a fee for these courses but the level depends on an individual's economic circumstance. Most of these classes were non-certificate; however, there were a small number of accredited courses.

The youth and children section provided opportunities for young people to engage with learning in a more informal manner. This section also had breakfast clubs for children and young people. There was a Youth Action Team which aimed to engage with young people in the community to provide early intervention and prevent anti-social activities.

The literacy and numeracy section provided core skills tuition. It also had specific adult literacy and numeracy courses which are free. It supported CLAN (City Literacy and Numeracy). It operated the EUS community learning centre, Platform Adult Learning Centre and the Number shop (the latter under threat of closure at the time of writing).

The Arts section offered opportunities for members of the community to participate and engage with arts and culture in the city.

Staff conditions

CLD 2 had around 90 full-time members of staff and a number of part-time staff on permanent contracts; however, the majority of staff (around 500) were sessional with short-term contracts. The organisation also used a large number of volunteers. There was a high turnover among the sessional staff and staff training for Literacy Tutors and training for volunteers was provided.

CLD 2 was part of the old Education Department which then became Children and Families. Within that setting it had been difficult to find a voice for adult education:

The focus of that [department] is on children and families, more priority areas around that ...because community learning development was part of the old Education department we were continuing to be located within this new Children and Families department. But it's always been quite difficult to see what the role of adult education was because it was never taken onboard ... (CLD 2 manager adult education)

Most of the teaching in CLD 2 was done by short-term, often sessional staff and a large number of volunteers, who do not have a teaching qualification, assist in the teaching. This contrasts with colleges where two thirds to three quarter of the staff are on permanent contracts and the majority have a teaching qualification.

Target groups

CLDs have traditionally had a remit to work with young people, adults and communities with an emphasis on those at the margins:

Well generally speaking we try to target the most hard to reach which sounds catch all. And so we are looking for the people in the most disadvantaged areas. The people who've had the least, don't have qualifications, poor experiences or no early education ... And actually those are the groups of people that are probably the most difficult to get, you know. So we've obviously got measures like concessionary fees etc. So we're trying to make the programme as available to anyone. And the same would apply for all our programmes really. So we do have to target the market. (CLD 2 manager adult education)

This interviewee also noted that they worked in partnerships with other agencies to target particular groups but that there was a need to balance targeting specific groups and making provision available for all:

So some of our referrals come from community mental health teams, ... psychiatric nurses, social workers, doctors or people who self refer. They are all in the system, in the mental health system. So in that way it's really effective. And, you know, they deal with really large number of people every year. It's the same with ESOL. I mean that's clearly targeted at people [with limited English]. It's the same. So where you've got a very specific piece of work then I think that's easy. Where you are doing more general [work], and we don't try to target people with adult education programmes - we put things in place and we will say to folk 'well this is for you as well' ...And I think it's important to have universal provision which includes [all] people as well as specific targets [for some] (CLD 2 manager adult education)

The interviewees stressed that their aim was to engage with those most needy across the lifespan; however, they expressed concern with the current Government's agenda as they felt it focused too much on younger people.

The location of classes were 'where they are needed', a range of different premises were used and crèches were sometimes provided though the interviewees also noted that there was more nursery provision now through the education system:

We run these where, that meet the needs of local people. So it could be in a church hall. It could be in a community centre. Anywhere that suits the needs of...of, but the ESOL ones I would have to say that the staff have gone overboard to, a lot of the Europeans are working shifts. So there are classes at weekends, evenings. We are pretty flexible I think about how we [organise classes] and [in] providing creches. (CLD 2 Senior Manager)

Class sizes varied depending on the type of class:

The literacies group can be very small. One or two people right up to half a dozen or eight. And they have volunteer assistant tutors Things like the adult education programme there would maybe be about twelve people to make it viable (CLD 2 Senior Manager)

Whilst there was some emphasis on skills and employability, learning for personal development and community capacity building was also stressed. Provision of ESOL had increased and there was a strong emphasis on provision that fits with the government agenda, for example work-based learning and core skills.

Connections to the formal education system

CLD 2's focus on disadvantaged learners meant that it could act as a stepping stone into higher levels of education. For those who did wish to continue there were opportunities through the links, mainly with colleges. However, on the whole, it seemed that these links were ad hoc and depended on individuals within organisations developing links.

[one of the area offices] did some work with [the local college] on links with the community and work supporting people and then they followed it on to doing courses. And that was excellent but I'm not sure if it's still going or what. And so I think probably we need a more, some kind of more structured pathway. (CLD 2 Senior Manager)

She stressed the need to develop better guidance on progression routes. However, in her view, support provided by the colleges was not necessarily adequate for the most vulnerable students.

However, whilst she noted the weakness in the links to the formal education system there were opportunities for learners to undertake some accredited learning in the community. CLD 2 is an accredited centre with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) which means that they can offer a limited range of units from SQA (these are also offered within the compulsory education system and colleges).

Recognition of prior learning

There was no need for learners to have formal qualifications for the courses offered in the community. As can be seen from the section above (Connections to the formal education system) there were some links but these are considered as weak and requiring further attention.

Outreach to marginalised groups

CLD 2 had specific programmes for parents and also for disabled people in addition to the target groups discussed above.

Tutor teaching methods

Like CLD1 they would use the Social Practice Model of teaching.

Future developments

CLD 2 was undergoing a restructure at the time of the interview and funding, especially for adult education, was considered to be at risk. There was strong pressure from above to make savings and the manager indicated that this seemed to be a problem across the country:

We're entering into a redesign ... We are just settling down from the last one ... we are particularly concerned that in the current climate it [adult learning] is quite vulnerable. So the climate we are working in is difficult. And I'm trying to get a sense of what's happening across the other authorities. So I'm in the process of contacting other authorities to find out what they are doing. The picture isn't consistent across the country but it's not, it's not looking [good], I've just had somebody from Moray contact me and they said that they don't have an adult education team any more. (CLD 2 Senior Manager)

She further noted that the councils were trying to identify areas where efficiency savings could be made and this has detracted from developing any kind of strategy for the future. She felt that this meant that CLD was focused more on efficiency savings and not sufficiently on the real task of developing relevant provision for communities and learners:

Because what councils are doing at the moment, as you know, is that they are sitting down and looking at what they would need and what they would not need. What do we have to provide and what could be provided by outsourcing...A lot of my time over the last, what, three, four years has been spent on how to make savings. That's where, I'd have to say personally where a lot of our energy has gone. It hasn't gone into establishing a vision. It hasn't gone in to say addressing the current climate and how we best address that. The kinds of discussions we should have been having we haven't been having. And I think it's tragic. I really do. (CLD 2 Senior Manager)

Developing a strategy for the non-formal sector

Strategy and policy for CLD is developed at government level and is the remit of Learning Connections. Learning Connections has itself undergone a review (see p. 10). As can be seen in the previous section the manager of CLD 2 was sceptical about the kind of forward planning that was currently being done. It is likely that the squeeze on public sector spending which will follow the general election will have a seriously detrimental effect on community learning and development. Local authorities are also responsible for funding schools and are likely to prioritise these rather than community learning and development. The emphasis noted in the Government's economic recovery plan also stresses the need to support young people into their first employment and those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed. This would suggest that employability skills will be prioritised by CLDs.

Voluntary organisation

Background organisational context

The non-formal voluntary organisation, committed to providing working class people with '*really useful knowledge*', was founded in England at the beginning of the 20th century. The first Scottish branch opened shortly after its foundation. The organisation is based on democratic principles and aimed initially to provide adult education mainly for working class adults.

Today it has more than 1000 individuals and affiliated organisations in Scotland and a strong commitment to providing equality in access to learning with an emphasis on provision for adults who have been educationally, socially and/or economically disadvantaged. There was particular emphasis on educational provision that is motivating and allows adults actively to engage in their learning. It had a small number of permanent staff and a much larger number of tutors working on short-term contracts. They did not use volunteers to deliver any of the courses that they provide. Learning was provided on a part-time basis and in a wide range of locations. The organisation worked in partnership with a number of CLDs and other organisations.

Its remit has remained to cater for those that have missed out on education and the main focus was on adults. However, it also worked with disadvantaged young people, especially those from the MCMC group. It viewed learning as contributing to personal development. In 2008-09 there were over 12,000 enrolments, just under 1000 courses were delivered in over 300 different locations. The senior manager stated that over the past 5 years the enrolments had overall been fairly static. The annual report showed that the number of enrolments in 2008-09 was slightly lower than those in 2007-08 but there had been an increase in men participating.

The organisation was funded through revenue grants from the Scottish Government, most of the Scottish local authorities and it also accessed funding from Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise Networks, European Union, trusts and foundations. However, whilst the organisation could access funding the funding stream was not secure and the recent removal of ring fencing of local authority budgets has had an impact on the amount of local authority funding received. The Annual Report 2008/09 outlined the difficulties facing the organisation in relation to achieving a stable funding stream and the manager who was interviewed explained that it had made their work far more difficult:

It's really difficult because...local authorities...are obviously using the money for what they, in statutory terms require to do ... So, for example, [Local] Council this week just removed this funding for us. (Voluntary organisation, manager)

European Union funding was also problematic as it requires matched funding which the organisation cannot always provide.

Course content

There were three main strands of work undertaken by the organisation: community learning, workplace learning and literacies. Community learning encompasses a range of courses including heritage and cultural studies, building capacity, Scottish literature, communication, family learning and women and citizenship. Workplace learning programmes included a range

of non-accredited and SQA accredited courses such as Starting Point, Skills for Childcare and ESOL. The organisation had also been involved with training of staff in job rotation schemes that provide training and paid work for unemployed people and training for employees. A number of courses in this area had focused specifically on helping young people who had not achieved at school to access training to help them into employment. Literacies courses included workplace literacy and numeracy. There had been a decrease in the Community Arts, Community Training, Liberal Studies and Social and Political Studies but a significant increase was noted in Return to Study and Workplace education programmes.

The courses were described by the senior manager as being mainly focused on the individual learner rather than on community development.

Staff conditions

There were around 70 core members of staff and just over 40 are on full-time contracts. In addition, there were around 350 tutors. These tutors all had a contract but most are short-term or fixed term contracts. The contract of one of the tutors who had a longer term contract was described by the manager:

He's probably got a contract for two years or three years because that is, he's working on literacies work and the literacy money comes from the adult literacy ... so the council gets the literacies money from the government. We get a grant from them. So it's based on the money coming through from central government. He hasn't got a permanent contract in the sense that it is unlimited. (Voluntary organisation manager)

All tutors were provided with induction and mentoring. They also got some training specifically for the area that they would be working in. The training was focused on the need for the specific post and did not provide for an individual tutor's own personal development. The tutor interviewed felt that the voluntary organisation's pay rates were better than tutor rates in community education (Community Learning and Development). However, he did not know how they compared to college staff.

Target groups

The organisation specifically targeted those identified as 'hard to reach':

We would say that we would target disadvantaged [people] ... So disadvantaged for whatever reason. It's usually economic, whatever. So...we work a lot with single parents. People recovering from health issues ... refugees, people that are, these aren't in order of scale, people that are unwaged, unemployed ... over 55s, homeless... so really all the categories (Voluntary organisation manager)

Whilst these were key priorities and courses for these groups were free, they also offered other courses on a range of topics such as culture and arts. Learning was considered beneficial to personal development for all but it was clear that the organisation felt it important to ensure that those who needed access to free courses were prioritised. One way of doing this was to target the free courses at those people in need:

We market our liberal courses but we don't actually market widely our free courses. And that's because you would get non appropriate people coming on board ... it's the same old story about the educated wanting more education. And you wouldn't reach target groups. So we tend to work with local communities, local organisations, councils, other voluntary organisations. Anybody working with these groups that we're trying to reach, we would feed into them. (Voluntary organisation manager)

The main thing affecting the way that the organisation worked with learners was funding. They did not have sufficient resources to undertake all the work they would like to do:

I think if you had...many more resources, our staff would be delighted to go and knock on doors and be much more high profile [in] local communities. But I mean we don't have the resources to allow the staff to do that. (Voluntary organisation manager)

In relation to class sizes, the manager explained that the largest groups would be no more than 16 but that the average was probably more like 10 to 12. However, on certain courses the numbers may be as low as four. The size of the group was dependent on the funding for a particular course. She was of the view that any more than 16 would not allow the tutor to teach according to the social practice model.

Connections to the formal education system

The manager explained that they had good links to other organisations and to formal education institutions, especially the colleges:

... we're on all the adult learning, community learning committees, the localities. So we are on all of these and of course we link with FE [colleges], particularly in all the localities. We have strong links with the Open University. (Voluntary organisation manager)

However, in her view, their approach was far more learner centred than that of the colleges and this could make it more difficult for learners to make the change:

We go to the students and say 'what do you want to learn and how do you want to learn it' ... FE [colleges] I think and HE actually as well would say 'here are the courses, do you want to sign up' (Voluntary organisation manager)

The manager also felt that the democratic nature of the organisations was more suited to adult learners.

Recognition of prior learning

The organisation offered a small number of accredited units which allow the learners who successfully complete them to use them as a stepping stone towards a qualification. The organisation had explored becoming an accredited centre which would allow it to credit rate some of its courses and link them into the qualifications framework. However, the cost of doing this (£7,700) as well as an annual fee meant that this was not a feasible option for an organisation with a limited budget. Another option was for learners to develop a portfolio of past learning in order to gain accreditation. In the view of the manager this was probably a more difficult way of gaining the credit than actually doing a course.

Outreach to marginalised groups

See section on Target groups. This shows that the main focus for the organisation was on those most disadvantaged. One group that the organisation was increasingly working with are young, often male learners, who have dropped out of school and are in danger of not developing sufficient skills to enter the labour market. The tutor interviewed described in some detail how engaged with this group (see following section)

Tutor teaching methods

The manager explained that teaching methods were based on the social practice model and tailored to the needs of individual students:

I suppose the answer to that one is that our courses are all fairly unique to the students in front of us. Cause it's student centred learning. But certainly it would be all the core skills that we would cover, you know, like problem solving ... communications, numeracy. You know, all these sort of things. (Voluntary organisation manager)

For the tutor a key issue was that of engaging with his learners and getting them to think about things that they might not previously have thought about. This he felt was particularly important when dealing with young, disengaged men:

But I suppose my personal take on that, what is even more important is engaging them with maybe issues they might not have thought about before. And kind of expanding their mind and planting seeds, you know. (Voluntary organisation tutor)

He described a particular approach that he used to get them to engage and express themselves using interactive teaching methods. This was described as a 'blame pie' which involved reading articles from different perspectives:

And the youngsters read the articles and comment on the three articles, 'oh they are talking crap and that polis man, you know, that's what he would say' and this type of stuff. So they come up with their own blame pie about who's to blame, you know. And divide it up into, so they do their own individual blame pie. And they get together as two small groups ... And then the whole group will come and flip chart a big huge one. And there will be huge argument about it. It's a brilliant way of getting them to communicate and express themselves. (Voluntary organisation tutor)

The organisation had a student evaluation form which every student completed at the end of a course. Tutors were also required to complete an evaluation form for each module that they teach. These both fed into the reporting and monitoring process.

Future developments

Funding was a key issue and particularly worrying in the current economic climate. The manager pointed out that her organisation was well placed to do more work with those hardest hit by the economic downturn but that this was not happening. Funding from the EU, though ESF was problematic because of the match-funding requirements and that from other sources was in short supply:

But you would think with the current credit crunch our role should be expanded. Cause we're working in the workplace, we're working with unemployed, with disadvantaged groups. You would think that our aims meet so closely with government objectives that we should be getting poured in with money. But the reverse is true in that the ring fencing single outcome agreement has hurt us. And the lottery is just not forthcoming with large grants. I mean we've applied for two big grants recently and not got them. (Voluntary organisation manager)

The organisation had clearly responded to government demands, for example through expanding its workplace learning programmes which means that they were aligned with current demands. In spite of this, it was finding it difficult to access sufficient funding to continue its provision at the current level.

Developing a strategy for the non-formal sector

There is no strategy specifically for the non-formal sector; they are included in the lifelong learning strategy as one of the learning providers. Whilst the voluntary sector is often presented as a vital part of the economy by government there has been no attempt at creating sustainable funding for this sector.

Summary of non-formal learning

All three organisations have a strong focus on engaging with disadvantaged learners and reaching out to them within their own communities. Community Learning and Development has a wider remit than the voluntary organisation as it includes youth work and has a greater focus on communities.

Concern was expressed by CLD 2 that the focus on younger learning would have a detrimental effect on adult learning opportunities. It was clear that other CLDs in Scotland also had similar concerns. The voluntary organisation was aligning its provision with more emphasis on young disadvantaged groups. The increasing focus on skills and employability by the Scottish Government, evident in the Skills Strategy, was having an impact on all three organisations.

Funding is of considerable concern to all three organisations. A shrinking local authority budget is affecting them all, especially since ring fencing was removed. The voluntary organisation is particularly vulnerable as its ability to bid for other funding such as EU project funding is affected by its ability to match fund.

3.3 Prison Education

One prison was included in this project. This section examines the background features of the prison, education currently available, background to prison education, continuity of education, distance education, support services in prison, prisoner profiles, tutors in prison and future directions. The key points identified in this case study are summarised at the end of the section.

Background features of the prison

The prison which is nearly 100 years old, was a large, urban, high security prison which catered for just under 800 prisoners in a newly refurbished set of buildings. Just over 7% of these were from Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) backgrounds. This would suggest that they are overrepresented within this prison population as the overall BME population in this city is around 4%.

A recent inspection report, based on an unannounced visit concluded that access to learning was good with a wide range of learning opportunities linked to high quality teaching and support. Library provision was also commended. The main criticism was lack of uptake of vocational, work-based programmes and lack of coordination between the different learning providers. This, the report suggested, led to missed learning opportunities.

Education currently available in the prison

Educational provision was split into three parts:

- activities and work-based programmes leading to Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) delivered by prison staff;
- college provision which provided around 30,000 prisoner learning hours in the last year leading mainly to Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) accredited units;
- CLD funded literacy and numeracy tuition.

In addition to educational provision there were also a range of prison programmes such as drugs education and anger management but these were provided through health or social work.

The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) has a commercial contract with two Scottish colleges to provide prison education. One of our interviewees was a full-time employee in one of these colleges and her main remit was to manage the prison provision for about half of the prison population in Scotland. The college had to balance its staffing carefully, especially as the overall contract with SPS was for a set period and was currently running until 2011.

One issue identified by the manager of prison education was that the main remit of prisons is custody and order. This, she felt impacted on educational provision as it led to tension between custody and order and engaging with prisoners as learners:

The prison service, their primary aim is custody and order, and it always will be. The college aim is to educate as best we can. You then have the interest of their staff to deal with and working in what is still a stressful environment, and you have the interest of the prisoners ... we are an agency working within an environment that is not ours [and] it is difficult, because we are looking to progress the education and the delivery, but the prison service are looking at what the prisoners will do with what we are trying to put on. They will always look at how the prisoner can manipulate anything that we are trying to do, and for instance looking at technologies is a classic example, everything has to be under lock and key (Prison education college manager)

She also felt that education was not fully valued within the prison service, for example when it came to judging whether prisoners should be moved on or considered for parole.

We don't feel that education is rated highly enough in the pecking order for prisoners, particularly when it comes to moving on and parole board The emphasis is put on prison programmes, now your prison programmes are things like your anger management, your drug addiction programmes, and alcohol, and to be fair I am not

[against that]... cause alcohol etc, anger, is the root of a lot of the issues and the problems, but there are other things that contribute to the development of the individual in prison, and education can be a very powerful part of that, and there is definitely not as much [emphasis on that] ... (Prison education college manager)

Prison policy in relation to education strongly emphasised the development of skills for work or further education as evidenced in the Scottish Prison Service policy on *Learning Skills and Employability*.

Background to prison education

The Scottish Prison Service had an inclusion policy which has three strands: Learning Skills and Employability, Addictions and Social Care. It also had a Learning Skills and Employability Policy. The policy identified four main areas of learning: for health, for work, for leisure and/or for life (in the community). A recently published review on offender learning outlined the current system for providing learning, skills and employability (LSE) services which was established in 2004 (Scottish Government 2009c).

Continuity of education

According to a recent annual report (HMIP, 2008) all prisons now have Link Centres which provide a link to the community for prisoners who have just been released. These centres act to help with housing, health care, benefit and job-seeking arrangements. However, there was no mention of education and learning. This was commented upon by the manager of prison education who expressed real concerns about progression and transition opportunities for prisoners:

This is one of the biggest problems because there has been a lot of good work over the years done in the prison, but as soon as they leave the prison walls then there is not really the same level of support. (Prison education college manager)

She did explain that there was currently a review of education (see Scottish Government, 2009c) and that support for prisoners when they had left was included in this review. She also mentioned that there was some good practice in the women's prison where funding had been made available to provide a support system that linked up with support provided outside the prison.

Another aspect that can impact on the continuity of education is the lack of secure contracts for staff in the college sector as well as those employed through the local Community Learning and Development department.

Distance education

The college manager explained that there was some provision of distance education but that one difficulty was that most colleges based their distance education on IT. This created difficulties as prisoners were not allowed internet access for security reasons. One development that aimed to get round this problem was the Module Offender Learning Environment (MOLE). The intention was to put resources, e.g. such as those of the Open University on MOLE which would allow for access to these learning resources within the prison. The college manager further explained what was available and the type of support on offer:

... most of the prison learning centres have a session on the timetable for distance learning students, where they can come along and access a pc, there is a member of staff there if... and if they can't help them with the subject, perhaps some of the technicalities or often they will give them support with essay writing and things like that. They also have, not the OU distance learning, but the college distance learning, they would have telephone tutorial support, that happens sort of reasonably regularly. (Prison education college manager)

Support services in prison

According to the review of offender learning (Scottish Government, 2009c) all sentenced offenders should undergo a Core Screen which is carried out by a prison officer. This screening

session was intended to identify immediate needs to ensure referral to the relevant provider. The prison education college manager explained how she felt the process worked in relation to education:

... we have a session at the induction, so basically in theory every prisoner who is admitted and go through induction should be introduced to somebody from education at induction, and at that point they are also invited to do the diagnostic (Prison education college manager)

She noted that there was some disquiet about doing a diagnostic test at that stage; however, that was the only opportunity for them to engage directly with incoming offenders. She also mentioned that prison staff were sometimes good at encouraging individual prisoners to engage in learning:

there are some good staff within the prisons who do try to motivate prisoners when they see there is a need. We have peer tutors in the prisons who are great at trying... and the peer tutors have, I think in many respects are a bit of an untapped resource, the danger with using the peer tutors is that its not coordinated. There's a good example again in Glenochil where there is a team of peer tutors who are coordinated by a member of staff, and she trains them to be peer tutors and some of them have actually done [an] award as well [however, she has now retired]. And they will work with prisoners who may not want to come to education for a variety of reasons, but also with prisoners who do, who are in education. They will work with ESOL prisoners also but the reason that works is a member of staff coordinates it, and keeps it on track and monitors the progress... (Prison education college manager)

As can be seen there had been some attempts at peer mentoring but it has been difficult to establish an effective network in the prison that forms part of the case study. The example from one of the other prisons indicated that it depended on staff continuity which may be problematic in a setting where commercial contracts over a relatively short period of time are used. Once a learner started on a course an individual learning plan was produced:

They have a learning plan which is drawn up when they first enrol. There is, contractually there is a review of that plan every six months, providing they are still there. In addition to that, as a college we are actually introducing a three monthly progress report, that the member of staff teaching that individual will do on things like motivation, attendance, progression, achievement and things like that ... The learning plans will vary quite dramatically with the prisoner. Often the prisoner actually doesn't know what he is coming in to do. We will advise and sometimes actually for the poorer ones attending for two months... two months is... an achievement, but by and large we would be looking at things, for example, if it was communication, at whatever level he would be. Because many times it will come to it I would like to get some qualifications, so certification can be at a particular level, yep. (Prison education college manager)

The literacy tutor also outlined her understanding of and link to the referral system:

From the, I hope I get this right, from the outset there's a first night in custody. And there are peer support workers who are prisoners who have been trained. And they go and speak to the guys, see they are settled in. They go with referral forms and they can refer to a lot of different things. They can just make them aware of what's available. Help for various things, cruise, bereavement, just a whole load of housing issues. They can just say 'these are available do you want any referrals'. And I get a lot of referrals from them. Because if there's anything comes up, if there's a form to be filled out and maybe one prisoner will say to the other 'I've difficulty with this' they could then say 'you could have a chat with K, you could, you know, it's confidential, it's one to one'. So that's the kind of first line. When men are convicted there's a week induction at the prison. And that week gives all the agencies, housing, Job centre plus, various employment, the Samaritans that runs within the prison, somebody from [the] College goes in and they talk about again what services are available. And you can refer to me this way and etc. [the] College also do an assessment. (Prison education literacy tutor)

She went on to explain how this could lead to the identification of those with literacy needs. In addition there were also some referrals from prison officers in the halls:

And from that that identifies people who might have a literacy need. And then they take that further. I don't really get involved at that stage. I get referrals from [the] College if people choose not to engage with them. Either the manager thinks or says to them 'would you like some one to one initially'. So I get referrals from there. I also get referrals from the officers in the halls or any programmes that any of the guys might go into. If the issue of reading or writing comes up, they will say 'do you want a chat with K, it's just a, you don't have to sign up for anything, do you want a chat'. And quite a few of the staff in the prison have taken part in Clan training, awareness raising training. (Prison education literacy tutor)

The main concern of the literacy tutor was that prisoners were not targeted by prison officers as requiring literacy tuition and told that they had to do it. She felt this was likely to be counterproductive. One final source of referrals she identified was other prisoners – word of mouth.

Prisoner profiles

A report for the Prison Reform Trust suggested that around 20-30% of the prison population have learning difficulties or disabilities (Talbot, 2008). According to one of the prison interviewees there was a *concentration of people in prison with the same sort of needs*. There were a range of mechanisms for identifying those that may benefit from participation in learning which started on entry and continued after a prisoner had been convicted. During this period other agencies were also involved. College staff could offer assessment of learning needs and, if a prisoner was considered in need of literacy tuition, he was referred to the literacy tutor.

There have been a number of studies claiming high incidence of dyslexia among prisoners. This was discussed and disputed by Brooks who claimed that childhood disadvantage was more likely to be the cause ((Rice with Brooks, 2004). This view was supported by the college manager. She felt that some prisoners may be referred to her as 'dyslexic' often without adequate assessment.

there is a big debate around dyslexia and the member of staff I referred to earlier who recently retired, she retired in the summer after 30 years working in Glenochil with literacy learners and the very poor, she actually maintains that the biggest problem is not dyslexia but lack of schooling. (Prison education college manager)

She supported this view by giving an account of a typical prisoner:

I would suggest that the average prisoner will come to us having stopped schooling round about first or second year [aged 12-13]. Will perhaps either not have worked or worked in very casual jobs with a raft of sort of social issues between them. But in terms of their education, I don't know how many times I have filled in learning plans, left school first year, second year, that is so, so common. (Prison education college manager)

The educational provision within the prison clearly reached out to prisoners and according to the inspection report was of good quality. However, there was a relatively high level of non-attendance. The main reason for non-attendance was that the person could not be bothered; however, there were a range of other ones such illness, other appointments and lack of medication. Whilst the manager of prison education mentioned the 'couldn't be bothered' as responsible for half of the non-attendance she qualified this with the fact that this was a population who had poor earlier educational experiences and that this attitude was understandable.

The prison was an all male prison, the only comment made by the college manager of prison education in relation to gender, was that female prisoners (in the only female prison in Scotland) were likely to be less well qualified than the men.

The literacy tutor mentioned that she had a range of prisoners but relatively few who were long term:

I've got...from sex offenders to remand prisoners, young guys. Oh a complete range of ages. I think who I don't engage with so much are long term prisoners. There's definite, I don't know whether that's because they feel they've tried it ... (Prison education literacy tutor)

Tutors in prison

As explained above (p. 42) some of the training is provided by prison officers. Staff working in the prison on behalf of the college were all employees of the college on a range of contracts from full-time permanent to short-term temporary. Managing staffing levels was problematic as the prison operated on a 50 week contract and did not follow the same holiday periods as the other college staff.

The literacy tutor was employed by the local Community Learning and Development department and she was currently in full-time employment through the CLD funded literacies provision. However, this was only secure until March 2010. The prison also had a part-time literacy tutor (who was also a tutor for the voluntary organisation included in this report) and a Writer in Residence. The literacy tutor explained that she had used volunteers to help with the teaching but that she was not currently doing it.

Future directions

When asked about the future the college manager of prison education expressed a desire for more informal learning opportunities:

I would like to see more space available, more IT, and additional IT... more IT kit, and I mean that in the sort of general sense of the word. A wider... the introduction of a wider curriculum with the emphasis on core skills, core skills or a delivery... or how core skills are delivered I think is what I am trying to say. The opportunity to bring in more non-formal learning because informal learning is very rare in the prison ... by and large it is a formal setting. So to try and bring in a non-formal aspect into that would be great. However lots of new things that we have tried in terms of the arts work and things like that can be frowned upon because of the measurements and the restrictions it's difficult. So definitely non-formal learning... (Prison education college manager)

She identified three main challenges for prison education: finance, prison culture and the impact of the media. Finance was problematic as the college was on a contract which would only last for another couple of years and the future was uncertain after that. Prison culture created a problem in that education could sometimes be seen as a soft option for prisoners and that they were indulged. The media, she felt, were quick to act on stories which presented prison education as an indulgence:

[The prison] did a project with Historic Scotland, and it was a fantastic project where people came in and they did Scots history. They did Mary Queen of Scots and all this kind of stuff, and they also brought in outfits so that the women were able to... and they thoroughly enjoyed it and so much came out of that. They wrote lots of things and all the rest of it, and the Daily Record got hold of the story and absolutely trashed it about the women dressing up and dancing and singing. So that is a very real factor because it does impact on the decisions that are made. (Prison education college manager)

The literacy tutor also commented on issues in relation to funding. Her post was funded by Community Learning and Development from the local authority budget. Her view was that they might reconsider funding literacy tuition in the prison as the prison service had a separate budget:

my understanding is that the council, CLD have looked at the Clan in the prison and questioned well why are we funding this when the SPS have got money for a contract and SPS are paying [the college]. (Prison education literacy tutor)

Summary of prison education

Providing education in prison is clearly a demanding task but inspection reports suggests that provision is good for some of those prisoners who engage with it. Generally those on longer term sentences are catered for; however, prisoners on short term sentences are considerably more likely to have fewer opportunities to access education. There are procedures in place at induction to inform prisoners of educational provision that is available; however a key challenge is to motivate them to participate. The interviewees felt that this was to a large extent due to poor early educational experience and that many literacy difficulties stemmed from lack of schooling. Lack of access to the internet also means that staff could not make use of online resources and courses.

Funding is an issue, in particular in relation to literacy and numeracy provision. This was funded by the local authority but budget cuts at that level may well lead to this provision being withdrawn. Staff conditions are also affected as many are on short-term contracts. There is also a lack of coordination between the three different educational providers: prison staff, college staff and literacy and numeracy tutor which, in the view of the prison inspectors, could have a detrimental affect on provision.

Section 4: Emerging themes and conclusion

This section aims to summarise and overview the key findings from the interviews and documentary sources. It then goes on to examine the extent to which social inclusion is part of the mission of the institutions examined and whether there is evidence for increasing emphasis on human capital development and provision for younger learners. Finally it will identify what challenges might arise from such a shift in strategic development.

It is clear from the account above that these institutions and organisations have one thing in common – they all aim to provide education and learning. However, they differ in the extent to which social inclusion forms a central part of their mission. In spite of government initiatives to encourage widening participation, the university's main mission remains focused on world class research and knowledge creation. This according to staff means that it has to attract highly qualified students. Its student population reflects this as it is made up largely of advantaged young students from less deprived backgrounds. Although the university has put measures in place to attract students from more deprived backgrounds it has failed to meet its target on widening participation to socially disadvantaged students. Its funding has not been affected by its failure in meeting this target. This is in contrast to the colleges who are closely tied to specific social inclusion targets and outcomes and funding is withdrawn and reallocated to another institution if targets are not met. Colleges are clearly providing a vehicle for less advantaged students with routes into both further and higher education. However, the differences between the two colleges reported on here indicates a different set of tensions for colleges – the tension between the demands of the market and being able to sell their courses to the widest possible market and social inclusion goals and meeting the needs of the local community. College A stresses the need to increase its market and is trying to attract international students whilst College B remains firmly focused on its local area and on meeting the needs of the local students, many of whom come from socially deprived backgrounds.

Social inclusion is central to the aims of community learning and development and the voluntary organisation; however, they are subject to more unstable funding mechanisms than are universities and colleges. This is not to say that funding is generous for the formal education institutions but it is on a more secure footing. Learning Connections, the government department supporting CLDs has undergone restructure and, as can be seen both CLDs have been engaged in restructuring. The key aim of this restructuring, at least in CLD 2, has been achieve savings and greater efficiency. CLDs and voluntary organisations have been affected by changes in local authority funding. Prison education, whilst facing somewhat different challenges is also responsible for providing for those most vulnerable. It is also affected by instability in funding and, in addition, there seem to be tensions between different learning providers within the prison and education lacks the status of other aspects of prison provision.

The Skills Strategy and the funding council official both stress that human capital development and skills utilisation is a high priority for the current government. The need to ensure that young people make effective transitions from school, either into education, training or the labour market is also a key priority. It is evident that the colleges have responded to government demands as their courses are increasingly geared towards the labour market, school-college partnerships have increased and the college student population now includes more young students. Provision within CLDs is also reflecting government demands as adult education courses are under threat; in the voluntary organisation workplace learning and provision for young marginalised learners has increased. Prison education has a strong emphasis on employability skills and this seems to have led more formal accredited learning with less space for more informal learning opportunities.

It could therefore be argued that the development of human capital which is central to government strategy has affected all the institutions and that, although the widening participation agenda is of importance, much of the emphasis is on learning provision that ensures that young people can (eventually) enter the labour market successfully or on ensuring that those affected by the recession can gain additional skills relevant to the workplace to allow them to return to the labour market.

A further development that is evidenced is that boundaries between institutions, possibly with the exception of the elite university are becoming more blurred. Colleges deliver higher education courses and have links with universities for students to move on to higher level study after completing the initial part of a degree at college. Colleges also have links to non-formal organisations, through being in partnerships with their local CLD and also through delivering courses jointly with CLD. In some cases CLD courses are delivered in colleges by CLD staff. Prison education straddles the non-formal – formal divide as there are opportunities for literacies learning as well as certificated courses up to HND level from the college.

Transitions and recognition of prior learning are important in widening opportunities for learning. These were areas noted by all as requiring further development. Transition:

- from colleges to certain universities was seen to work well but could be expanded;
- into elite universities was considered a challenge;
- from non-formal courses to formal courses was described as mainly 'ad hoc' and as requiring further work, especially in the development of longitudinal tracking;
- from prison education to education in the community was identified as problematic.

The colleges operated flexible entry requirements for mature learners which meant that there was limited need for formal mechanisms that accredit prior learning. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) has had an impact in smoothing transitions from colleges to university but, as noted above, this does not apply to all universities. A different view on the value of accreditation of prior learning and prior experiential learning was expressed by the manager from the voluntary organisation, she saw it as problematic because of it 'taking longer than doing a course'.

It would seem then that lifelong learning is increasingly about human capital development and that, although the focus of much of lifelong learning is on post-compulsory education there is now more attention within that agenda to young people. It is evident that widening access to higher education has had some success through measures in the colleges and new universities; however, it has not impacted on access to elite institutions to any extent. Given the current economic climate and the emphasis on employability those measures that were in place for elite institutions may well disappear or become considerably lower priority on the political agenda. What might be some of the future challenges for the policymakers? These include:

- ensuring that access to higher education is not achieved through the development of a two-tier system. It is clear that widening participation is still of importance but also that the university sector is being encouraged to diversify. Some students are expected to

gain a degree through the local college with articulation to a local university; others will do so through an elite institution. Unless there is a change in the differential values attached to degrees from different types of institutions this is likely to maintain current educational inequalities in society and the labour market.

- ensuring that the focus on young people is not at the expense of older learners. Current demographic projections and issues around pension provision suggest that people may have to work for longer. This would suggest a need to ensure sustainable funding for learning for older people who may be required to develop new skills and knowledge. It should also recognise the wider benefits of learning. Evidence from the colleges suggested that some of the provision for the older age groups depended on shorter term project funding.
- ensuring that support for the most vulnerable communities and those most vulnerable within those communities are not affected disproportionately by current cuts. Removing the monitoring of adult literacy and numeracy provision and switching to a hard indicator to measure level of literacy rather than softer ones may make it more difficult to engage those that are hardest to reach.
- developing sustainable funding for the non-formal sector. The funding for CLDs is likely to be affected by the Concordat; however, different areas of CLD provision may be affected to a greater extent than other areas of provision. Voluntary organisations are being affected both by the Concordat and also the reduction in funding through other sources.
- developing more effective transition mechanisms both from the non-formal to the formal sector and also from prison education to learning in the community.
- general education being sacrificed for a narrow skills development agenda or general education becoming the preserve of a minority. Some critics view the new Curriculum for Excellence as dumbing down the curriculum and reducing access to an academic curriculum to a smaller number of pupils.

Education and learning is clearly vital to allow people to engage effectively in the labour market and the current Government's emphasis on human capital development and skills utilisation is understandable. However, a narrow focus on this alone may impact detrimentally on efforts to develop cohesive communities and encouraging the most 'hard to reach' to engage with further learning.

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Glossary

CLD	Community Learning and Development
DSA	Disabled Student Allowance
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HMIE	HM Inspectorate of Education
HMIP	HM Inspector of Prisons
ILA	Individual Learning Accounts
MOLE	Module Offender Learning Environment
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
SAAS	Students Award Agency Scotland
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SPA	Scottish Progression Award
SPS	Scottish Prison Service
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
SWAP	Scottish Wider Access Programme
WARP	Widening Access Retention Premium