

**Skills for Creative London****Notes from Seminar**13 May 2003

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**Introduction**

The seminar was opened by Michael Frye who outlined the purpose of the Mayor's Commission on the Creative Industries, and the work that it has done so far on a range of issues. Michael described the tremendous economic importance of the creative industries to London's economic and cultural well-being. He went on to explain that one of the most important 'cross-cutting' issues identified by the Commission is that of developing the skills-base in the capital. Michael then introduced the two panellists, Dinah Caine and Sir Michael Bichard, who spoke briefly before leading into a chaired discussion.

**Guest Speakers****Dinah Caine, Chief Executive, Skillset****Dinah Caine, Chief Executive, Skillset**

Dinah outlined the developments in skills policy at the national level, and explained how these applied to the London context. She described a situation where a multiplicity of skills training providers and stakeholders have been operating without a single overarching framework. Recognising this strategic gap in such a complex area as skills, the government's goal is to align and integrate the efforts of the various agencies and players in an attempt to deliver "joined-up government" in the area of skills and education. Recognising the central importance of industry to skills training, the government has shifted the emphasis of skills policy away from the supply side, its traditional focus, and towards the demand side. To this end it has created the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), to give a voice to the concerns of individual sectors and to balance the influence of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). A network of twenty-five SSCs should be in place by 2004.

In order to develop a better understanding of the needs of employers and guide policy, RDAs have been charged with co-ordinating Frameworks for Regional Employment and Action (FRESAs) for their regions. London's FRESA is being led on behalf of the LDA by the London Skills Commission, and sets out an agenda for collaborative action to ensure that London can sustain its position as the leading European city and develop and maintain a dynamic and equitable labour market. In addition, the London Skills Commission will be supporting seven flagship programmes to kickstart the FRESA implementation process. One of these is the Media Sector Skills Development Programme, which will produce a workforce development plan by October, providing the overarching framework within which providers and stakeholders can coordinate and focus activities towards an agreed set of priorities and actions. Skillset is playing a lead role in this. One of the objectives of the Media Workforce Plan is to provide clearer labour market information – in particular, Dinah explained that more coordination was needed in the manner in which different types of sector research are collected and managed, and that SSCs should play the lead role in

articulating industry demand. She concluded by saying that healthy labour markets are essential to the economic health of regions, and a priority for the strategic partners should be to join up skills education to the needs of the market.

### **Sir Michael Bichard, Rector, The London Institute**

Michael had a number of points to make about skills education and development in London:

- The subject of skills for the creative industries should be seen in the wider context of knowledge and education, and the role that London's schools and HE institutes can play in engendering creativity.
- The relationship between HE and the creative industries does not yet have the same profile as that of the application of scientific research – however, it is important that it is considered with a comparable level of interest and concern.
- Despite their recent high profile, the creative industries are still overlooked by education policy makers. For example, the recent White Paper on HE makes no mention of art, design or the creative industries.
- Technology is transforming the Creative Industries, and skills in many sub-sectors require constant updating, particularly with regards to digital media and software tools.
- HE Institutes are getting better at connecting with business, and using practising professionals as visiting teachers is already widespread, but, as yet, employers are not typically involved in curriculum or course design.
- Learning should be more flexible for the learner, with a variety of access points and opportunities, such as the development of online learning.
- Minority communities are less likely to access educational facilities and opportunities in London, and this needs to be addressed. In particular, educational institutes should look at whether they are being sufficiently sensitive to BME needs and ambitions.
- HE Institutes must be given the resources they urgently need to produce the talent of the future – London's creative economy depends upon it.
- The supply of creative skills training should be 'opened up' to providers, allowing a richer, more varied offering of specialized and niche training opportunities.
- The skills agenda for CI must include access to the business skills necessary for commercial success.

### **Discussion: Themes and Comments**

- Employers are often put off by the bewildering variety and structure of the various agencies responsible for training and skills. The bureaucracy needs to be simplified and rationalised, training must be more business friendly, and access should be opened up to as wide and diverse a proportion of London's population as possible.
- Consistent quality assurance standards and accreditation schemes need to be developed – especially in the informal training sector.
- Formal qualifications are not always relevant in the creative industries – experience and the quality of the portfolio often count for more. For this reason, work-based learning opportunities provide good access points to the creative industries.

## The Mayor's Commission on the Creative Industries

- Alternative qualifications and alternative access and progression routes for creative skills provision need to be explored.
- Not all the creative industries have the same needs. There are discrete sector issues that need to be addressed. However, there are also generic needs and considerations, such as business skills training and ICT expertise.
- Creative industries communities and sector players need to be involved in planning and provision of skills education and knowledge transfer, and employers should have much more input into the design and delivery of courses and qualifications.
- The doors to training and opportunities are not open for ethnic minorities: there are few access points and where they do exist, low take-up rates are still a problem.
- Because of the high number of SMEs and micro businesses in the creative industries, they require a tailored approach to skills training linked to business support.
- The creative economy has a high number of freelancers and the self-employed, and consideration must be given as to how their professional development needs can more effectively be supported.
- Academics who provide informal support or develop a second career in the creative industries should be supported and encouraged by their employers, the HE and FE institutions. In many cases, changes to their current contracts may be required to help enable this.
- Business schools, HE, and the informal learning sector have an important part to play in providing enterprise training and developing learning and business networks.
- Training has to be contextualised within the sectors and made accessible – preferably locally, where possible.
- Mentors, access to knowledge networks and peer learning are all ways in which practical and up-to-date skills can be shared and acquired.
- Skills training should reflect the nature of supply chains in the creative industries – there needs to be greater emphasis placed on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Lifelong Learning, not just entry-level skills.
- People who are re-skilling, returning to full-time education or undertaking in-service training in a creative industry should be supported and encouraged – both in terms of access to information and financial resources.
- Soft, informal skills are often acquired by doing the job, but need to be formally accredited, perhaps through partnerships with business, skills agencies and educational institutions.
- Creativity should receive greater emphasis earlier on in the education system, and an awareness of the importance of entrepreneurial skills should be incorporated into the school curriculum.
- There is a need for greater research, at the HE level and elsewhere, into the nature of creativity and the most effective ways in which it can be taught and learned.
- The LDA can influence the debate and provide strong leadership in promoting the creative industries skills agenda by acting in partnership with the efforts being made by the LSCs and the SSCs.

For more information about the Commission's activities, please get in touch with Paul Owens, [paul@creativelondon.org.uk](mailto:paul@creativelondon.org.uk) or 020 7468 2334