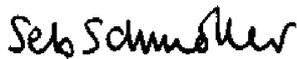


November 2011

Common Inspection Framework for the Learning and Skills Sector - ALT response to consultation

On the next few pages you will find ALT's 23 November 2011 response to Ofsted's consultation on the Common Inspection Framework for the Learning and Skills Sector for 2012 and beyond¹.

We've edited this document to show only those questions to which we made a response; and below we precede each response with the question in the full consultation document to which it is a response.



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Chief Executive

¹ <http://goo.gl/i73cN> last accessed 23/11/2011

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ALT Ambassadors*: *Dame Wendy Hall DBE FREng FRS, Professor of Computer Science at the University of Southampton; Terry Mayes, Emeritus Professor at Glasgow Caledonian University; Jane Williams, past Principal of City of Wolverhampton College and Executive Director for FE, Skills and Regeneration of Becta.*

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Q2.

We propose to judge outcomes for learners by giving particular attention to how well:

- *all learners achieve*
- *gaps are narrowing between different groups of learners*
- *learners develop personal, social and employability skills*
- *learners progress to higher level qualifications and into jobs that meet local and national needs.*

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to judging outcomes for learners?

ALT's response

Agree

Comments or suggestions

It has to be said that gaps could narrow whilst overall performance decreases, and therefore the formulation "gaps are narrowing between different groups of learners" needs to be adjusted.

Q3.

We propose to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by giving particular attention to how well:

- *staff demonstrate high expectations, enthuse, engage, support and motivate learners so that they learn and make progress*
- *staff set challenging tasks, build on and extend learning for all learners*
- *staff have appropriate skills and expertise to provide good quality teaching, learning, assessment and support for each learner*
- *staff assess learners' progress and provide for a range of needs including those learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities*
- *equality and diversity are promoted through teaching and learning*
- *teaching develops literacy, numeracy, language and functional skills, independent and lifelong learning to support the achievement of learning goals*
- *learning is effectively supported by appropriate and timely information, and advice and guidance on next steps in training, education and employment.*

To what extent do you agree or disagree that inspectors should judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as proposed above?

ALT's response

Strongly disagree

Comments or suggestions

We think that the absence of any mention of technology supported learning in relation to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is a major omission that must be remedied, and we were very pleased to learn during IfL's consultation meeting with Matthew Coffey on 18/11/2011 that this problem has been recognised by Ofsted with a view to it being addressed. Our specific concern is

that the CIF must take explicit account of the fundamental and seismic changes that are currently taking place in the way that knowledge is created, acquired and distributed.

Essentially the environment for learning has been rapidly changing beneath our feet for the last decade and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. These changes are every bit as important as (but are probably more far-reaching and definitely more rapid than) those that occurred as a result of the invention of printing, and the CIF needs to be written so that inspectors, learning providers, and teachers are left in no doubt about the significance of the changes for "good" teaching, learning and assessment.

One way to address this would be for the clause "making appropriate and effective use of different learning methods including use of learning technologies" to be added after "staff set challenging tasks, build on and extend learning for all learners", and the clause "equipping all learners to take full advantage of technology and the Internet in their learning and in their lives more generally" after "staff set challenging tasks, build on and extend learning for all learners".

On a different point, it should be noted - and Ofsted obviously knows this - that it is learners that do the learning; teachers cannot "provide learning". For this reason the clause "staff have appropriate skills and expertise to provide good quality teaching, learning, assessment and support for each learner" needs to be adjusted.

Q4.

We propose to evaluate the extent to which leadership and management including, where relevant, governors:

- *raise expectations, promote ambition for all learners and improve their outcomes*
- *improve teaching and learning*
- *ensure the appropriateness of the provision, including the curriculum in meeting the needs and interests of learners, employers and the local and national community*
- *deploy resources, including staff, accommodation, facilities and technologies to support learning effectively*
- *evaluate the provision through monitoring quality including engagement with users and using their findings to make, promote and sustain improvement*
- *actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow any achievement gaps*
- *ensure the safeguarding and well-being of all learners.*

To what extent do you agree or disagree that inspectors should judge the effectiveness of leadership and management as proposed above?

ALT's response

Strongly disagree

Comments or suggestions

As with our response to Section 3, our disagreement stems from the inadequate treatment of technology in the clause "deploy resources, including staff, accommodation, facilities and technologies to support learning effectively".

Provided that suitable changes are made to how the quality of teaching learning and assessment is judged, so that the effective use of learning technology is explicitly brought into scope, then the weakness of the current formulation would be less important. However, categorising technology merely as a "resource to be deployed" does its importance a disservice (our Section 3 answer above relates); and it also tends to concentrate the user of CIF's mind on technology only as something under the provider's control "to be deployed", rather than as a whole mesh of services and functionalities "out there" that providers need to make good use of.

Thus we suggest the addition of a new stand-alone clause such as "ensure that learning technologies and ICT more generally are appropriately resourced and utilised across all relevant aspects of provision and across all relevant business activities".

Q5.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that capacity to improve is adequately represented by a judgement on the quality of leadership and management (paragraph 12)?

ALT's response

Disagree

Comments or suggestions

Capacity to improve remains important and should be retained as a separate measure, not least because a provider's use of ICT and learning technologies is central to the provider's capacity to improve. In addition, for the sector as a whole the capacity to improve measure provides insights into the extent to which the overall capacity of the sector is changing. And it allows for a more nuanced judgement about an individual learning provider, especially as improvement strategies can take some time to have an effect.

Q8.

We propose to:

- *adopt a more targeted approach to satisfactory and inadequate providers giving priority to undertaking monitoring visits, including unannounced visits, to satisfactory providers where leadership and management was no better than adequate or where the areas for improvement include key areas such as outcomes*
- *bring forward a full inspection if the monitoring visit suggests that the provider has made limited progress in improving its performance*
- *establish a secure web-based system for gathering the views of learners, employers and parents/carers between inspections, and to ensure that these views are taken into consideration in all risk assessments.*

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should move to devoting a greater proportion of inspection effort to satisfactory and inadequate providers?

ALT's response

Neither agree nor disagree

Comments or suggestions

(At the risk of seeming to nitpick - hence the parentheses - your use of the term "highly proportionate" in paragraph 20 of the consultation document is inappropriate because something is either proportionate or it is not.)

- ends -