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Continuing Higher Education

Part Three

International Higher Education Monitor
Thematic report

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0 Introduction

For this part of the study we have asked national experts from the five countries (Australia, California, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom) to reflect upon our country studies, to provide with additional documentation and to give their expert opinion on a number of (remaining) questions. Unanimously the experts underscore the complexity of the issues raised and the impossibility to provide comprehensive and straightforward answers. The comment of a British colleague is exemplary: "[t]he main comment I would make is the blurred boundaries of what is HE and what is not. A lot of the provision [described in the UK-report] would not be regarded as HE and would simply be regarded as 'continuing', 'adult' or 'further' education. There is quite a lot of ambiguity about what counts as 'higher' in the continuing education world…. Whereas the FE/HE distinction is pretty clear-cut when it's concerning initial education, it gets very blurred when you get to the continuing education world. It's partly about an education-skills distinction." As the boundaries are so hard to define, it also is difficult to assess the volume, importance, the policy initiatives and their effectiveness. The findings in this paper should be read in this setting.

The findings presented here are a mixture of additional information (documentation) provided by the national experts and their (personal) opinions. They are based on the following set of questions:

1. What kind of policies have been introduced by the government (or one of its agencies) and what are the policy instruments at play? We have listed a number of issues here, acknowledging that definitions may differ from one country to another. Potential policy instruments: legislation, accreditation, quality assurance, qualification measures, financial incentives (tax benefits, scholarships), providing information systems. Policies and policy instruments with respect to:
    a. Time and place independent learning (e-learning, distance learning)
    b. Blended, hybrid of dual learning (mix of work-located and institution-based learning)
    c. Sandwich and apprenticeships programmes
    d. Blended or hybrid learning (mix of modes of delivery: e.g. e-learning combined with face-to-face education)
    e. Establishing courses and modules that ultimately could lead to a diploma or degree
    f. Recognition of prior learning
2. Have there been initiatives by other stakeholders (such as higher education institutions or employers/industry) to stimulate the accessibility for working adults to higher education?
3. What can be said about the effectiveness of the policies and the policy instruments? Do they seem to work in terms of:
    a. increasing numbers of working adults participating in higher education?
    b. a better fit between the demand and expectations from the working adults and the supply of training and education opportunities?

   c. creating a better match between the demand and expectations of employers / industry and the supply of training and education opportunities?
4. What are the main problems or barriers to enhance the flexibility of the supply of courses and programmes for working adults? What does hinder the effectiveness of the policies and the policy instruments?
5. Is supply and participation of higher education for working adults a substantial part of higher education or is it (still) a rather marginal part of it?

In the remainder of this paper will we address these questions to the extent possible for each country.

1 England

1.1 Introduction

Devolution of government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland at the end of 1990s saw convergence and divergence in policies for higher education. This note is addressed to England which accounts for around 80% of the UK student population.

Continuing or lifelong higher education was a prominent feature in government policies following the report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education *Higher Education in the Learning Society* (the Dearing Report, 1997) with most of its recommendations accepted by the new incoming Blair government. Most of the inquiry proposals and subsequent government reforms were directed at both young people and adults (often in the same measure) but, over time, the demands of initial higher education for school-leavers generally assumed more priority than the world of adult higher education. After successive New Labour administrations, the election of a Conservative-led Coalition government in 2010 saw a preoccupation with the interests of young entrants, partly in light of its austerity policies and market-led fee reforms.

Initiatives by stakeholders other than government and its agencies came from universities and colleges rather than employers or employer organisations. In many ways, the government has acted as a proxy for employers in developing policies aimed at employer engagement and work-focused higher education. Separate departments or centres for continuing education in higher education establishments were in decline prior to 1997 as a result of the 'mainstreaming' of adult continuing education in funding policies. Only a few have survived to the present.

In what follows, measures are highlighted over the period 1997-2013 with specific implications for continuing and lifelong higher education. Where evaluated, their outcomes and effectiveness are briefly noted.

1.2 Dearing inquiry recommendations (1997) and reforms by first New Labour administration (1997-2001)

Resumed expansion of student numbers funded in part by the introduction of full-time undergraduate up-front fees (part-time undergraduate education for adults already charged fees, along with some government subsidy): *sustained publically-funded expansion up to recent years.*

Focus of renewed expansion on vocationally-oriented short-cycle higher education (diplomas and certificates in which adults were usually the majority) because of their suitability for lifelong learning, earning and working as well as widening participation: *eclipsed by expansion of bachelor numbers due to weak demand for sub-bachelor qualifications*

Colleges of further education asked to lead future growth at the sub-bachelor levels because of their closeness to local communities and employers as well as their greater flexibility and lower costs as teaching-only establishments: *soon abandoned in favour*

of universities and colleges taking joint responsibility for sub-bachelor programmes but expansion of higher education in further education colleges has remained a policy goal under all successive governments

Widening participation for young people and adults, with funding premiums for those from low participation neighbourhoods and for learning support within higher education: *premiums maintained throughout the period but funding for outreach (mainly young people) and vocational progression (mainly adults) reduced in later years*

Funding arrangements to continue to support diversity of institutional mission: *all higher education institutions continue to have teaching, research and knowledge transfer as their core mission*

Development of specifications of individual programmes in terms of knowledge and skills, with potential stepping-off points: *adopted but impact on student information and demand unclear*

Endorsement of national framework for higher education qualifications to promote student mobility and transfer of credits: *qualifications framework promoted but credit accumulation and transfer is more evident within rather than between institutions, except for students (many of them working adults) transferring to the final stages of bachelor programmes in universities from short-cycle qualifications in further education colleges*

Strengthening of links to the economy and employability, including opportunities for work experience: *became increasingly important, with a number of initiatives to foster collaboration between colleges, universities and employers to enhance the employability of students (especially young people) and the up-skilling and career progression of adults in employments*

1.3 Significant reforms with implications for lifelong higher education by second New Labour administration (2001-2005)

50% participation target set for 2010 using a new definition based on the18-30 age group (this figure stood at 43% in 2003): *target not met by 2010*

Creation of a new work-focused short-cycle sub-bachelor qualification – the foundation degree – to be the main vehicle to meet the 50% target; the new degree was to be based on a three-way partnership between further education colleges (typically, the providers), universities (who awarded the degree) and employers (who contributed to the design, development and operation of the degree); it was to be offered in a variety of flexible modes to align with lifelong learning and the needs of employment; a design requirement of the new qualification was that it offered exit to the labour market on completion or guaranteed progression to the final year of a linked bachelor degree: *the target of 100,000 students by 2010 was achieved and the proportions of older entrants were higher than for undergraduate study as a whole (with many employers and employees using this qualification for continuing professional development)*

Proposal to establish an e-university as a collaborative venture between universities and private sector partners to concentrate effort and resources in a single virtual partner: *soon abandoned*

Use of a higher education innovation fund to: encourage especially the non-research-intensive universities to work with employers locally, regionally and nationally; to establish a network of knowledge exchanges to reward and support higher education institutions working with business; build stronger partnerships between higher education institutions and regional development agencies; and forge alliances with sector skills councils: *mixed success with limited evidence of differentiation of institutional mission*

Introduction of variable fees (up to maximum limit of £3000) and requirement that higher education institutions submit access agreements (to improve access for disadvantaged students) for approval by an access regulator as a condition of charging higher fees: *led to an increased policy focus on the interests and needs of young people undertaking initial higher education*

Introduction of lifelong learning networks (regional and city-wide collaborations between universities and further education colleges) to promote progression for young people and adults with vocational qualifications: *mixed success and public funding withdrawn in 2012*

1.4 Some initiatives with implications for lifelong higher education in third New Labour administration (2005-10)

Funding incentives to develop higher level skills, especially in sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics, and other key skills enhancing employability and for a knowledge economy: *continued in part under Coalition government*

Development of higher level apprenticeships: *continued under Coalition government but modest numbers*

Development of co-funding with employers: *co-funded students are older than the undergraduate population but numbers are small*

Withdrawal of public funding for students studying for a qualification that is equivalent to, or lower than, a qualification that they have already achieved: *major (negative) impact on continuing higher education students and providers*

1.5 Policies of Conservative-led Coalition government (2010-)

Introduction of a student-led funding system (based on fee loans for full-time and part-time undergraduate students) with tight student number control (in line with austerity policy): *geared to promoting student choice and stimulating competition between higher education providers but with young full-time undergraduate students as the main audience*

Raising of fees cap to £9000: *too early to assess impact (although some evidence of reduced demand from adult and part-time students)*

Encouragement of private providers (such as with change in requirements for university title): *competition on price with universities with students eligible for government-subsidised loans if fees below £6000*

Introduction of key information sets giving applicants comparable sets of information about full-time and part-time undergraduate courses (features of study, cost and financial support, employment and salary information): *aimed primarily at young initial entrants to full-time higher education (with issues about how part-time and college-taught courses are reported)*

1.6 Conclusion

Explicit policies and instruments for continuing and lifelong higher education are less conspicuous because of earlier policies of 'mainstreaming of adult and continuing education and because market-based policies (under New Labour and Coalition governments) pay less attention to distinctions between initial and continuing higher education. Over the period since 1997, regular attempts have been made to align higher education more closely to the world of work, sometimes with programmes targeted at part-time and work-based higher education but with examples where young people and adults on the same programme are pursuing higher education for subsequent entry into the labour market and for workforce and continuing professional development.

In many ways, the work-focused foundation degree has been the flagship qualification for continuing vocational and professional higher education. The employer is often the sponsor of the student, for payment of fees and for time and resources to study. However, there exist a whole variety of short and longer programmes of higher-level education and training for this purpose, some with credit and most customised to the needs of specific employers.

Flexible modes of study, including online and blended learning, are largely institution-led developments, albeit with public funding for infrastructure costs, employer engagement and the enhancement of teaching and learning. A national qualifications framework has assisted the development of programme specifications and external quality assurance assessment is addressed to collaborative provision (including that franchised to further education colleges or taught in the workplace) as well as in-house provision for undergraduate education.

Further education colleges have a long tradition of working with employers on sub-bachelor qualifications and most colleges are (usually small) providers of part-time and full-time higher education and training. However, these institutions belong to a separate further education sector where they are administered, funded and monitored by parallel to agencies to those for higher education establishments. The college sector currently accounts for one in twelve of higher education students. These students are

older than the undergraduate population in universities, most study part-time and for sub-bachelor qualifications, and more come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

For all this activity, there remain skills deficits at the intermediate levels and difficulties for small and medium size enterprises to engage with universities and colleges for continuing education and training. Except for the leading companies, there is still reluctance on the part of many employers to invest in higher-level education and training for its workforce. The recent large increase in fee levels for undergraduate education is likely to discourage employer engagement, although those already in partnership with colleges and universities for short-cycle qualifications are likely to maintain their involvement (with a strengthened hand in what services they require from the higher education provider). Another future potential barrier to continuing higher education is the effect of higher fees and loans on access and participation in postgraduate education.

1.7 Patterns of participation by adults in English higher education

Since 1997, the overall proportion of adults (defined here as students 25 and over) in higher education institutions in England has decreased from 47% to 42% (Table 1). During a period of growth at all levels of higher education between 1997/98 and 2009/10, those under 25 have increased their numbers at a faster rate than those aged 25 and over. The growth in adult participation has been slowest in sub-bachelor education (but where they still account for 70% of the total), followed by postgraduate qualifications (where adults also represent 70% of the total) and by bachelor degrees (where the difference growth rates between young and adult students is just one percentage point, but where adults represent only 21% of the total).

Table 1: Higher Education Students in Higher Education Institutions by Age, England, 1997/98-2009/10

	1997/98			2009/10			% Change		
	< 25	> 25	All	< 25	>25	All	<25	>25	All
PG	66,648	256,998	323,646	144,879	340,454	485,333	54%	25%	33%
Bachelor	630,666	172,241	802,907	92,8521	249,304	1177,825	32%	31%	32%
Other UG	95,725	274,611	370,336	130,487	299,988	430,475	27%	8%	14%
Total	793,039	703,850	1496,889	1203,887	889,746	2093,633	34%	21%	29%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

About eight per cent of higher education students in England are taught in further education colleges. The majority of these students are adults in the workforce who

study for short-cycle vocational qualifications, with some transferring to the final stages of bachelor degrees in universities (or in the same college as their sub-bachelor qualifications). There are also adults studying in colleges for a variety of higher-level professional and technical qualifications. Some of these courses are full-cost recovery, with the student or the employer paying (unsubsidised) fees. The number of higher education students taught in colleges has hardly changed between 1997/98 and 2009/10, with the result that the college proportion of higher education has declined over this period (despite government efforts to support a larger role for further education colleges in higher education).

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2 Finland

2.1 Introduction of policies and policy instruments at play

Particular about the Finnish education policy is that it is built on the lifelong learning principle (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012c). This principle entails that everyone has sufficient learning skills and opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in different learning environments throughout their lifespan. The lifelong learning viewpoint is integrated into education policy and other policy sectors relating to education and training. The aim is a coherent policy geared to educational equity and a high level of education among the population as a whole (Ministry of Education and Culture Finland, 2012). Equal opportunities and the permeability of the education system are the cornerstones of Finnish education policy. Efforts are being made to improve horizontal co-operation between institutions as well as vertical co-operation between different levels of education (Cedefop 2012:16). The tasks of adult education policy in Finland are to ensure the availability and competence of the labour force, provide educational opportunities for the entire adult population, and strengthen social cohesion and equality (Ministry of Education and Culture Finland, 2012).

In 2007, a total reform of adult education (AKKU) was launched in Finland. The AKKU reform encompasses vocational adult education and training, apprenticeship training, adult education provided by higher education institutions, labour market training for adults, and staff training. The total reform of adult education emphasizes the need for stronger higher adult education, improved information, instruction and counselling services to ensure the correct focus of adult education, better training opportunities for the less active groups of people as well as clearer subsidy systems for adult students and a wider basis of finance. Some of the key issues include strengthening learning in working life, recognising skills that have been acquired in different ways, facilitating opportunities to combine studies in a flexible way, enhancing adult education offered by higher education institutions, making information, guidance and counselling services more effective in order to improve the relevance of adult education, increasing study opportunities for the population groups that are least represented in adult education, clarifying the benefit systems available for adult education, and expanding the funding base (Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland, 2012; Piensoho & Brofeldt 2011).

Important issues in the development plan of 2007-2013 (Ministry of Education, 2008) for reform are: learning in working life; recognition of prior learning; flexibility of provision; enhancing adult education provided by higher education institutions; making information, guidance and counselling more effective; improving access for those groups that are least represented in adult education; clarifying the available benefit systems; and expanding the funding base. This reform includes identifying different types of continuing education needs among employees, the unemployed and inactive people and developing the supply correspondingly. On-the job learning, in particular, will be promoted, and the continuing education possibilities of higher education graduates (including apprenticeship training) will be expanded. The

operations of open polytechnics will also be expanded and fragmentary administration, financing, benefits and training supply will be streamlined.

The current Education and Research Development Plan for the period 2011–2016 states that the opportunities of graduates for continuing education will be expanded by creating specialised competency modules at higher education institutions that complement the qualification and are based on working life needs.

2.2 Flexible study paths in Finland

Educational institutions organise education and training intended for adults at all levels of education. Efforts have been made to ensure that provision is as flexible as possible in order to enable adults to study alongside work (Cedefop 2012). In order to respond to the changing requirements of the world of work, the flexibility of vocational qualifications has been further increased by, for example, diversifying opportunities to include modules from other vocational qualifications (incl. further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications) or polytechnic degrees. The goal is more flexibility – to allow students to create individual learning paths and to increase students' motivation for completing their studies. Furthermore, it is meant to give education providers an opportunity to meet the demands of the regional and local world of work more effectively (Cedefop 2012:37). Koukku et al (Cedefop 2012:38) furthermore state that reviewers appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture will prepare proposals for adoption of personal training accounts by the end of 2012. The aim of the training accounts is to develop the system of adult education and training to be less supply-based and to respond to demand for education and training and to the individual needs of learners more effectively.

2.2.1 In-service training and Apprenticeships training

In terms of the participation rate, *in-service training* is the most extensive form of adult education and training in Finland. According to studies carried out by industrial organisations, companies have started to invest more in the professional development of their personnel. In all companies, at least half of the salaried employees participate in some form of training. Financing of in-service training is mainly the responsibility of the companies.

Apprenticeship training constitutes the main form of learning in Finnish working life. An increasing share of vocational upper secondary education and training and vocational further education and training is arranged through apprenticeships. In 2009, apprenticeship-type training was integrated into continuing education for people with higher education degrees. In addition, labour market training is provided in the form of apprenticeship training.

2.2.2 Polytechnic and university education

Both polytechnics and universities arrange adult education and open education geared to maintain and upgrade competencies.

At the *polytechnics*, the teaching arrangements in adult education are flexible and enable mature students to work alongside their studies. In recent years, polytechnics have developed their provision of open education. Open polytechnics offer the opportunity to study individual study units included in polytechnic degrees. Polytechnic postgraduate degrees provide practically oriented education and training aimed at mature students. Polytechnic master degree programmes provide practically oriented education and training aimed at mature students. The Polytechnic Master's degree is of equal level with the University Master's degree (Finnish National Board of Education, 2013).

Adult education at *universities* is typically provided by their own continuing education functions or centres. Continuing education centres organise vocational continuing education for individuals already holding an academic degree and provide and co-ordinate open university education in co-operation with university departments and different adult education organisations. In addition to continuing education centres, some universities have separate open university units. At open university students may complete different modules, but they cannot take a degree. However, students may gain the right to study for a degree after completing usually at least 60 credits' worth of studies included on a degree programme at open university. However, the required number of credits varies by university and subject (Finnish National Board of Education, 2013).

As stated in the FLLLEX report, the New Universities Act of 2010 'includes the mission of lifelong learning to universities. Under the new legislation, some universities became foundations under private law while most universities became a new type of legal personality under public law. The aim is to pool resources, capacity and HEIs and adjust the demographic change by the means of structural development. Structural developments such as a higher education network will lead on to several mergers of HEIs (MoE, 2008). It is envisaged that the changes will also provide a flexible system allowing for studying parts of degree programmes without having to apply for a full study programme and combine further studies with work. The HEIs may also sell degree modules to employers as staff-development training (CEC, 2009)' (Stokes & Thorn: p 102).

2.2.3 Competence-based qualifications

In Finland, vocational adult education and training is very much based on the system of competence-based qualifications (Cedefop 2012). A specific benefit of this system is that it makes it possible to recognise an individual's vocational competencies regardless of whether they were acquired through work experience, studies or other activities. Recognition of prior learning is the ideology behind competence-based

qualifications and is a way to promote participation and completion of qualifications in vocational education and training Thus, these qualifications increase horizontal and vertical permeability (Cedefop 2012: 37-38). The system is steered and developed in close co-operation between education authorities and representatives of the world of work. Competence-based qualifications provide adults with a flexible way to enhance and maintain their vocational skills. Vocational skills are demonstrated in competence tests, which focus on the skills and competencies required in the occupation concerned.

2.3 Initiatives by other stakeholders to stimulate the accessibility for working adults to higher education

Particular about the Finnish situation is that the employers are responsible for staff training. The aims of this type of training relate to business economics and productivity. The organisation and support of adult education and training is done in manifold ways, exemplary by funding in-service training and organising company-specific training for personnel, maintaining specialised vocational institutions, and organising training for students and apprentices (see above). Through different types of training and approaches adults can maintain and enhance their competences and study for qualifications or parts of qualifications. Employers also support the training by financing part of their personnel´s self-motivated training by granting paid leave and by paying some training costs. One example of financing is training that is offered through joint purchase by the employer and the Government. In this case, the employment and economic development administration can participate in financing joint purchase training, if this will help secure availability of workforce, promote the employer's operating conditions, and contribute towards prolonging working lives, maintaining jobs and preventing unemployment. Participants receive either pay for the training period, or, on certain preconditions, training allowance and maintenance support for labour force training. However, staff training for which the employer is responsible, e.g. induction for a certain position, or the general brushing up of professional skills, is ineligible for financing as joint purchase training. (Ministry of Labour, 2012; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012; GHK & RvB, 2010).

The central labour market organisations have different roles as partners and supporters of adult education and training and the implementation of the national CVT guidelines and objectives at the enterprise level. They participate in the planning and development of education through representation in committees within the fields of lifelong learning and vocational education. These organisations also have field-specific collective agreements, regulating the terms of in-service training (GHK & RvB, 2010). Co-operation between social partners and training authorities takes place between the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the social partners. The social partners also have representatives on the management board of the National Board of Education. In recent years the Ministry of Education has set up vocational training committees at the branch level in which the social partners, together with the authorities and representatives from universities, anticipate and monitor training needs. In the field of vocational adult education and training there are furthermore

qualification committees, which are appointed by the Finnish National Board of Education and organised on a tripartite basis. Their tasks include supervising and steering the organisation of competency tests; confirming approved qualifications; and signing qualification certificates.

2.4 Effectiveness of the policies and policy instruments

Today, more than 1.7 million citizens participate in different types of adult education each year. More than half of this number is made up of the working age population. The long tradition of adult education is probably one important reason for the high number of participants in adult education, especially in the non-formal popular and liberal adult education forms (GHK & RvB, 2010). In international terms, this is a high figure, but the Finnish national target is even higher. A goal of 60 per cent participation is set for 2012. To achieve this figure, the participation base needs to be expanded and the study opportunities of the population groups who participate the least must be improved. The goal is to increase the study opportunities of people with no vocational education and training or whose education is outdated, entrepreneurs, the staff of small and medium-sized enterprises, immigrants and people aged over 55 (Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland, 2013). Koukka et al state that the threshold to participation in vocational education and training has been lowered by creating different pathways leading to a vocational qualification (Cedefop 2012:37). Flexibility and individualisation are also seen as ways of reducing drop-out rates and enhancing completion rates of qualifications. Students may receive certificates for completion of individual modules. This makes it easier to continue studies after an interruption (Cedefop 2012:16).

2.5 Main problems or barriers to enhance the flexibility of the supply of courses and programmes for working adults

According to the education and research development plan 2011-2016, at present adult education and training is supply based and the provision offered by adult education organisations does not necessarily match individual needs. The challenge is to develop the system to focus more on demand, which would allow educational needs to have a more targeted effect on the content and aims of adult education and training. A demand-driven system of adult education and training requires that public financing of education is channelled through users and that the education supply is more visible and comparable. Adult education and training should also reach those who today remain outside it. By catering for individual educational needs, it is possible to encourage underrepresented groups to acquire education and training that best meets their needs and educational institutions to arrange education for persons with no post-compulsory qualifications. The aim is to support the response to individual education and training need through the adoption of personal training accounts. With their adult education accounts, people could acquire adult education and training that meets their individual needs. The adult education account system would be best suited to short-

term, part-time studies, thus supplementing qualifying and other longer-term adult education and training. To further increase participation, the Ministry of Education and Culture will ensure that individuals find all adult education and training available in Finland in the electronic education centre and that it is possible to apply for education through the internet service. During the current government term, possibilities will be explored to develop the national training fund to accumulate training entitlement for every employee during the employment relation, to be used for competence building during or after the employment relation. In addition, studies will be taken to find out the need for amending legislation on study leave to correspond to the changing qualification system and to match the needs of the world of work (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012b).

2.6 Higher education for working adults: a substantial or a rather marginal part of higher education?

The Finnish education system has no dead-ends. Learners can always continue their studies on an upper level of education, whatever choices they make in between (Ministry of Education and Culture et al). Finland has a long history of participation and promotion of adult education and training. Adult education and training is very popular and the participation rate is also high in international terms. More than 1.7 million citizens participate in different types of adult education each year. More than half of this number is made up of the working age population. In international terms, this is a high figure. While adult participation in lifelong learning in Finland is more than twice the EU average, gaps still exist in terms of the participation of certain groups. The Ministry of Education (2009) recognises that not all population groups participate equally. The lowest participation rate is found among the poorly educated, personnel in small companies and business owners, the unemployed, the rural population, men and people aged over 55 (MoE, 2009 in Stokes & Thorn).

Adult higher education is popular for upgrading and updating competencies, so the Ministry of Education and Culture (2012b). Nearly one in three students admitted to higher education institutions already has a degree or has already been admitted to a higher education institution. Continuing education may support graduate specialisation and contribute to new job descriptions and fields of expertise. Two reasons for multiple higher education are that the job descriptions in various posts are too detailed and that degree education is provided free of charge for the student. A wide range of apprenticeship-type education has been developed for graduates on separate funding in collaboration with employers.

Recent data provided by Statistics Finland (March 2013)[1] indicate that more than half of the students in higher education were employed during their studies. According to these data, the employment during studies was more widespread in 2011 than one year

[1] Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Employment of students [e-publication]. ISSN=1799-0017. 2011. Helsinki: Statistics Finland [referred: 15.4.2013]. Access method: http://www.stat.fi/til/opty/2011/opty_2011_2013-03-20_tie_001_en.html.

earlier. Fifty-seven per cent of students were employed during their studies. The share of students employed during studies grew by nearly one percentage point from the previous year. Employment during studies was most widespread among university students, as 61 per cent of them had an employment contract while studying. The share of students employed during polytechnic studies was 59 per cent, and employment among students in upper secondary vocational education was 57 per cent. The employment during studies grew more widespread the older the students were. Twenty-five per cent of 18-year-old students, 46 per cent of 21-year-old students and 56 per cent of 24-year-old students had an employment relationship. Among students aged 25 or over, 70 per cent were employed during their studies (Statistics Finland, 2013).

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3 Sweden

3.1 Initiatives by other stakeholders (such as higher education institutions or employers/industry) to stimulate the accessibility for working adults to higher education[2]

With respect to higher vocational education, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education underscores the importance of involving social partners in developing continuing education opportunities that respond to labour market needs. As a consequence, the agency has developed different networks in different sectors that cooperate with social partners. On the national level, the main employer organisation and the main labour union organisation are involved and are members of a council that provides policy recommendation to the Agency for Higher Vocational Education regarding future skill requirements and educational programmes. Also different industries inform the Agency about their particular needs. Whereas the labour unions are rarely engaged in setting up and delivering higher vocational education on a local basis, employers are actively participating in designing educational programmes, and through steering groups also participate in the delivery of provision.

The current (perceived) shortage of public funding grants compared to the estimated demand from the employers limits the access to the programmes and the provision of HVE graduates. To ensure that all employers become involved in developing types of programmes in post-secondary VET, economic compensation could become an incentive for smaller companies to invest resources for programmes and together with the education providers ensure that the programmes correspond to the future demands on qualified professional roles.

With respect to higher education, there are no particular policy initiatives with respect to broadening access to higher education. Access is however facilitated by the recognition of prior learning. Besides, it is worth pointing out that universities may accept as many students as they wish; however, as funding is restricted by a funding cap, the total number of acceptances depends on the internal allocation of funds and the policy priorities of higher education institutions.

3.2 Effectiveness of the policies and policy instruments

Broek & Hake (2012, p.142) state that the Swedish adult education system has three major strengths. To begin with, the flexible organisation as highlighted by a modular basis of programmes makes it easy to enter, exit and re-enter higher education. Secondly, the embeddedness of adult education in the Swedish society implies that

[2] The information presented in this section draws heavily on a background report for the OECD project *Skills beyond School*. The information presented in this report was compiled by the National Agency for Higher Education and the National Education Authority.

many people make use of educational opportunities being tailored to adult learners. The low threshold for entrance makes the provision of formal adult education accessible to both adults and employers who are interested in improving the knowledge and skill level of their staff members. Thirdly, an excellent support infrastructure (e.g. childcare provision, grants for students younger than 54, and legal possibilities for unpaid leave without job loss) implies that the pursuit of adult education constitutes an attractive option for both the employed as well as the unemployed.

The popularity of continued education is reflected in the number of people returning to higher education. In 2012, the Swedish Higher Education Authority published the results from a research on Students' study patterns and total lengths of study (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, 2012a). The survey assessed the extent to which students return to higher education for new studies after finishing a period of study, how long these periods of study have been and what this has implied for the students' total length of study measured in the number of registered semesters.[3]

A noteworthy finding is that men seem to be more likely to concentrate their studies to a single period of study (albeit with many registered semesters), while the women spend less time on their first period of study and are more likely to return for new periods of study. One explanation for this phenomenon is that women enroll more frequently at the higher education level than men, because they are more likely to participate in areas of study for which higher education offers higher degrees and continuing professional development opportunities. Examples are health professions, teaching and caring sciences. Although this explanation is considered to be valid by the Higher Education Authority, it cannot account for all the recurring education that women pursue. Law and social science constitute the most popular areas for both female and male study entrants – however, women take up another period of study much more frequently than their male colleagues who have been entrants in the same study subjects. This observation holds true for all subject areas. As a consequence, the Swedish Higher Education Authority concludes that the area of study in which a person is enrolled does not sufficiently explain the gender differences with respect to the likelihood of entering a new period of study.

From a lifelong learning perspective, it is furthermore interesting to remark that according to the study findings, there does not seem to be any age- or time limit for returning to higher education. This is for instance demonstrated by the fact that among the people who graduated before 1977, there were around 1,100 who pursued second period of study in 2005/06–2009/10, i.e. 30 years or more after the first period of study. More than half of them were then aged over 60.

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[3] This survey is based on information in the higher education register that is kept and managed by Statistiska centralbyrån, SCB (Statistics Sweden). A word of caution must however be issued regarding the statistical interpretation of the students' periods of study. So far, such descriptions have primarily been limited to information about periods of study for programmes resulting in professional qualification (they hence have a start- and an end date). Statistical follow-ups based on degree statistics are made additionally difficult by the fact that many students in Sweden do not request their degree certificates in spite of completing their studies.

3.3 Main problems or barriers to enhance the flexibility of the supply of courses and programmes for working adults[4]

A considerable challenge that Higher Vocational Education is confronted with relates to the fact that employer and industry demand for study places is much greater than the capital available to create new placements. The risk being associated with this challenge is that the engagement of industry, employer and education provider decreases over time if they consider the benefits from initiating a higher vocational training programme for being too small.

With respect to higher education, the supply of online-, respectively distance education courses and programmes have increased the last ten years. At the same time, the supply of free standing courses at campus has decreased which may constitute a problem for working adults as it lowers the range of lifelong learning opportunities.[5] The government recently stressed in their Budget bill that higher education institutions should give students the opportunity to participate in programmes that lead to a qualification, respectively to a degree. However, the funding for first and second cycle education is decreasing and money shortages can eventually lead to a dropping supply of free standing courses.

The government also stresses the importance of effectiveness of educational supply which for example means that the students obtain credit points. Because the free standing courses in distance learning have a very low completion rates (less than 50 per cent), there is a possibility that the institutions will decrease the supply of such courses.

3.4 Higher education for working adults: a substantial or a rather marginal part of higher education?

The supply of- and participation in higher education for working adults constitute a substantial part of tertiary education. Continued higher education has been a policy priority and former governments have stressed its importance; besides, the supply of freestanding courses together with no limit of age or how many times you can return to university studies underscores this finding. During three or four years in the beginning of the 2000s, the government supported the supply of distant education with extra funding to increase the possibilities for people to combine work and family with studies.

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[4] The information presented in this section draws heavily on a background report for the OECD project *Skills beyond School*. The information presented in this report was compiled by the National Agency for Higher Education and the National Education Authority.

[5] The large supply of free standing courses at the Swedish universities and university colleges is a typical of Swedish Higher Education

4 The United States of America (Ohio, California)

This section contains a mix of opinions from different parts of the USA. The main goal is to provide the answers with respect to California but as some experts expressed interesting views from other states this information is included as well. Contextual information with respect to continuing education in these states is however not available.

4.1 United States – general observations

4.1.1 General observations on adult education[6]

For many years, public agencies, higher education institutions and other organizations in the US have been working to get more adults interested in returning to school, help connect them with the most appropriate learning opportunities, and help them meet their educational goals. Thanks to several innovations, adults have better ways to access the basic skill training they need to qualify for higher learning, and adults have more options for earning degrees and other credentials, even if they hold full-time jobs. The innovations fall into a number of categories: aspiration, access, academic and career pathways, and transitions.

Aspiration. In recent years there have been great efforts to get more adults interested in going back to school to improve their skills and gain more knowledge. State governments focused with some intensity on this issue, in large part because states interested in attracting employers from high-wage, high-growth industries need to have the draw of an educated workforce. Kentucky is one such state that was interested in attracting employers to the state from high-growth industries, particularly as so many manufacturers in that state were shutting their doors because of an overall decline in the industry or because of offshoring. Kentucky launched an initiative called GoHigher that used traditional marketing and advertising strategies to encourage adults to return to school at all levels in order to complete a GED, certificate or college degree. Other states have implemented similar programs, most notably Oklahoma with its Reach Higher program.

Regions and cities are also involved, as evidenced by programs such as Graduate!Philadelphia, a partnership of the public sector, a non-profit organization, and 18 colleges in and around Philadelphia. The program, which was established in 2005, was designed to increase the number of adults with college degrees in the Philadelphia region (Brenneman et al, 2010). One of its main activities is to reach out to adults who already have already completed one year of college, provide them with

[6] Derived from: Tate, P., Klein-Collins, R., and Steinberg, K. (2011) Lifelong Learning in the USA: A focus on Innovation and Efficiency for the 211st Century Learner, International Journal of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning, vol. 4, issue 1.

advising and support so that they become a "Comebacker" (Graduate!Philadelphia, 2005).

Access. To improve access to lifelong learners, especially learners who work, colleges and universities began to offer evening and weekend courses, as well as distance learning, which allowed adults to take courses and even earn entire degrees without having to take time off of work. Innovations that are less commonly practiced include:

- training held at the workplace; this is highly dependable on number of trainees to make it worthwhile.

- accelerated programs; which can include programs for certificates and degrees – course material is presented so that it takes less time than in conventional courses. For example, the course may have only twenty hours of class time as opposed to forty-five hours. A course may also be presented in a condensed period of time, such as a sixteen week course presented in a five week period. Some institutions are also beginning to offer bachelor's degree programs that can be completed in three years rather than four.

- modularized courses; breaking up a course into its individual components. Oregon State University (www.oregonstate.edu) and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (www.kctcs.edu) are two examples of institutions offering some of their courses in a modularized format, in which a three-credit course can be taken in three one-credit modules.

- open-entry/open-exit courses; Accelerated and modular courses can also be offered in open-entry/open-exit format, meaning that students can have some flexibility in the start and end dates of the courses.

- online or blended learning programs; An explosion of online learning opportunities has been a great way to expand access to adults working full time. Online is pushing even further into innovative territory through the availability of open

- source curriculum. Several sources of free instruction are available to the general public through open courseware sites such as Carnegie Mellon University's Open Learning Initiative, Washington State Community College's Open Course Library, MIT's OpenCourseWare, the fee-based Epsilen offered by The New York Times, and other for profit vendors (Klein-Collins, Sherman & Soares, 2010).

Academic and career pathways. Colleges and universities in the US increasingly design programs that help adults of all skill levels access postsecondary learning, whether the goal be a four-year degree, a one-year certificate, better wages, or long-term employability. In some cases, this has meant designing learning programs along a progression, where each new step in that progression builds on the step before it. Two examples of this kind of progressive academic programming for lifelong learners are bridge programs, and career ladder programs.

Transitions. More and more, college students are attending more than one college in their quest to earn degrees. The most recent study of student mobility found that

almost 65 per cent of students attended more than one institution, and 26 per cent attended more than two (Adelman, 2006). Now, with the availability of web-based courses and ready information about courses available from different institutions, those numbers may well be much higher. With this degree of student mobility, the challenge then becomes how those students finally earn a degree when many of their college credits are from different institutions. Typically each institution has its own distinct policies regarding which transfer credits, and how many, can count toward a degree. Innovative solutions to this problem include state-wide articulation and transfer policies, awarding credit for prior learning, degree completion institutions, credit transfer support services, and competency-based programs.

• *Transfer policies*. The establishment of articulation and transfer policies concern formal policies between two or more educational institutions specifying how credits earned at one institution will be accepted by another toward its degree programs. For example, over the past several decades, many community colleges have established articulation agreements with nearby four-year institutions so that students can easily transfer from the two-year to the four-year program. Some of these articulation agreements are so well-defined, and the transfer process has been made so easy for the student, that the community colleges act as feeder schools for the four-year institutions. Many states are also working to design and expand state-wide articulation and transfer policies. For example, the state of Florida has one of the most comprehensive set of articulation and transfer policies, with key components including a state-wide course numbering system, common core general education requirements, and common prerequisites for bachelor's degree programs (Florida Department of Education, 2011).

• *Prior learning assessments* (PLA) measure what a student has learned outside of the college classroom. Through a variety of different assessment methods, institutions can determine what the student knows, and then evaluate whether that learning is college level and how many college credits are equivalent to that learning. PLA includes methods such as: Individualized student portfolios, Evaluation of corporate and military training for college credit. Program evaluations of non-credit instruction, Customized exams ("challenge exams"), Standardized exams.

Students who earn credits through PLA often save time by not having to take courses in subjects they have already mastered. Additionally, PLA assessments are typically carried out at a lower cost compared to tuition charged by the credit hour. Further, a recent CAEL study found that PLA may serve as a motivator to adult learners: in examining the academic records of more than 62,000 students from 48 institutions, CAEL found that more than half (56 per cent) of adult PLA students earned a postsecondary degree within seven years, while only 21 per cent of non-PLA students did (Klein-Collins, 2010).

• *Degree Completion Institutions*. At degree completion institutions, students can transfer in credits earned from a variety of sources —accredited institutions from different states, prior learning assessment credit (see above), online learning programs, and so on. The college evaluates the student's credits and advises the student on

missing coursework they still need to complete to earn a degree. Three of the best-known examples are Thomas Edison State College in New Jersey, Excelsior College in New York, and Charter Oak State College in Connecticut (Klein-Collins, Sherman, & Soares, 2010).

• *Credit Transfer Support Services*. Another solution for students with credits from multiple sources may be through an independent intermediary. Organizations like Academy One, for example, offer information on institutional credit transfer policies for national student audiences. They also provide students a "passport" in the form of a web-based platform where they can consolidate their academic history into a single location. Academy One then provides students with information on how the student's passport maps to course offerings of institutions the student may be considering. As of 2010, over 12,000 students had used the passport system (Klein-Collins, Sherman and Soares, 2010).

• *Competency-based Programs*. One additional approach to the student mobility challenge involves institutions designing degree programs around student learning outcomes, or competencies, rather than college credits. The institutions grant degrees based on what students have demonstrated that they know and can do. If students have taken courses at other institutions, their learning can be assessed by exams or other methods to determine the level of student achievement. At this time, however, only a small number of U.S. institutions offer competency-based programs.

Limiting individual student choice. Providing too many choices is not necessarily worthwhile. For example the Tennessee Technology Centers have limited the options for students. They offer technical training as well as certificate and diploma programs in more than 50 occupational fields. One of the core components of the centers' model is that students can choose the program, and then they choose whether to attend full time or part time. Once those decisions are made, there are no more decisions about what course to take or when to take it. The centers believe that this model contributes to their great outcomes. Over a five year period, they found that completion in the Centers ranged from 62% to 94% (depending on the center), while completion rates for the community colleges in the state were between 6% and 13%.

4.1.2 Financial instruments

In the US we may see more examples of individual student financial aid that are structured in a way to be incentives to academic progress and success.

States have long used personal income tax incentives to encourage private savings for college tuition, and as mentioned earlier in this chapter, many employers have policies of providing educational assistance to their worker, either as a benefit of employment or as a way for the employer to grow the skills of its workers. Almost one millions part-time students used this benefit in 2007 (Jones, 2010).

Since 2000, CAEL has been piloting and advocating a new mechanism through which the state or federal government can leverage both personal and employer funding for

education. Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs) are employer-matched, portable accounts that workers use to finance their education and training. LiLAs allow for co-investment in worker education and training by the workers themselves, their employers and even third parties. For example, a third party contribution could be tax credits for employee and employer account contributions or special matching funds for lower-income or other target populations.

4.1.3 Main problems or barriers for working adults

The cost of postsecondary education in the U.S.is a significant barrier for many adults who would like to earn a degree or certificate. The out-of-pocket costs often exceed available grant aid, causing many students to take on debt in order to go to school. This financial barrier to education is not likely to disappear anytime soon. In the current economic recession, most states are struggling to address declining revenues, and many are making significant cuts to higher education, even as they continue to put pressure on colleges and universities to improve student degree completion rates.

4.2 OHIO

The University System of Ohio is one of the largest comprehensive public systems of higher education in the USA. Ohio's public colleges, universities, and adult education programs serve almost 600,000 students and offer every option from a General Educational Development diploma (GED) to a Ph.D., ensuring that all Ohioans have easy access to a high-quality, affordable higher education. The System includes:

- 14 universities with 24 regional branch campuses
- 23 community colleges
- Over 120 adult workforce education and training centers state-wide

Ohio is also home to numerous private colleges and universities.[7]

4.2.1 Policies and policy instruments with respect to continuing education

In 1999 the State of Ohio via the Ohio Board of Regents created The Ohio Learning Network (OLN) with $2 million initial funding and an average of $3 million annually through 2009 to help colleges and universities increase the number of adults with college degrees. The largest activity was for colleges and universities to create hybrid and online courses and degrees for degree completion. At one point, the Ohio Learns catalogue (www.ohiolearns.org) contained more than 500 degrees and certificates available at a distance.

As part of the OLN activities more than $5 million were given to colleges and universities for professional development activities that helped faculty to learn how to

[7] See https://www.ohiohighered.org/board-of-regents/university-system-of-ohio/independent-colleges-and-universities

teach with technology and to engage students in the emerging technology-based courses. OLN also gave direct grants – approximately $6 million – to colleges and universities from 1999-2005 to create hybrid and online programs.

The Ohio Board of Regents worked with various unions to create apprenticeship programs that tracked to credit hours in community colleges.

OLN sponsored a Regents Degree that could be earned by taking courses at 4 community colleges and bundling them into a single Associate of Technical Studies degree. This degree was then articulated to several four year degrees, including a bachelor of Applied and Technical Studies at Ohio University (see Box).[8]

4.2.2 Recognition of prior learning

Several Ohio colleges and universities recognize PLA and follow the CAEL model (www.cael.org). Ohio is beginning efforts in this area under the direction of Brett Visger, Ohio Board of Regents (bvisger@regents.ohio.gov)

Bachelor of Technical and Applied Studies (Online degree)

The Bachelor of Technical and Applied Studies (BTAS) is primarily intended for students who have already completed a two-year degree program from an accredited community college, regional campus, or technical college, and who wish to pursue a baccalaureate degree. The program provides students with knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for advancement in their chosen careers, and integrates the technical skills developed within applied associate degree programs with the professional skills inculcated in a bachelor's degree program.

The BTAS utilizes 60 credit hours of associate degree credit, of which 24 credit hours must be in a technical field. Another 60 credit hours are needed to meet the minimum for a baccalaureate degree. In addition to the 36-38 hours of major requirements listed below, the student may expect to spend 18hours meeting general education requirements and prerequisites. The remaining 4-12 hours are elective. A course may not count for two requirements within the major. Consultation with an Ohio University academic advisor is highly recommended.

4.2.3 Initiatives by other stakeholders (such as higher education institutions or employers/industry) to stimulate the accessibility for working adults to higher education

The Ohio Learning Network was such an initiative. The Lumina Foundation provided a $422,000 grant to OLN in 2007 for a program called "Quick Start" which was

[8] http://www.lorainccc.edu/UP/Bachelor+and+Master+Degree+Programs/Ohio+U+Bachelors.htm

designed to pull working adults through the education system. Students in free adult reading programs were 'pulled' into a free learning community/community college experience of math, reading, technical literacy, and general orientation to college. Upon enrolling in college, the students were awarded 3 credits for the Quick Start experience. Additionally, Ohio's Community Colleges have several programs in this area.

4.2.4 Effectiveness of the policies and the policy instruments

The programs mentioned above have shown increases, better fit, and match between demand and supply. Yet, Ohio remains low in its overall numbers of adults returning to college. In the early 2000s it was estimated that some 1.5 million Ohio adults have some college and no degree. Those numbers have decreased in the decade since but not to the degree policymakers had planned.

Over the last decade (2001-2010), in the (public) University System of OHIO the number of undergraduate enrolments aged 25 years and older increased by 38 per cent. For graduate and professional enrolments the increase is 18 per cent for those aged 25-34 and -5 per cent for those over 35 years. To what extent these increases are the result of policy initiatives cannot be said.

4.2.5 Main problems or barriers to enhance the flexibility of the supply of courses and programmes for working adults

OLN held focus groups and did two years of poll data with more than 500 Ohio adults who had some college but not formal degrees. In order, the barriers were: 1) time, 2) money, 3) desire to complete the degree. Ohio's colleges and universities provided large numbers of online and blended coursers in the hope that delivery mode would reduce the time barrier. Numbers of adults did return to college. For statistics, contact the Ohio Community College Association (http://www.ohiocommunitycolleges.org/) or the Ohio Board of Regents Brett Visger (regents.ohio.gov).

5 Australia

5.1 Competition and collaboration between enterprise and public training organisations[9]

Public registered training organisations such as TAFE institutes have historically formed the backbone of the Australian training system. The introduction of private training organisations based in enterprises is a recent development. Enterprise registered training organisations, which comprise both private and public enterprises registered to deliver accredited training, commenced with the registration of the Ford motor company in November 1992, quickly followed by Telstra later that year. Since then ERTOs have become major contributors to the skilling of Australian workers.

As of 11 November 2011 there were 331 ERTOs registered, comprising 212 non-government ERTOs and a further 119 government ERTOs. Between them, these training organisations are estimated to provide at least 20% of annual VET qualification completions (Enterprise Registered Training Organisation Association 2009)[10], although accurate estimates are not available, due to the limited data available. ERTOs are defined by the following characteristics: the core business of the registered enterprise is not the provision of training; they provide accredited training for the employees of the enterprise; and training is embedded or integrated into the standard business processes of the enterprise (Enterprise Registered Training Organisation Association 2009, p.1).

Changes in the policy and funding environments mean that many of the original reasons for establishing a registered training organisation within an organisation's business framework no longer apply. The move to a national regulatory body under the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) has been seen by ERTOA as a positive move forward. However, ERTOA remains cautious about the likely impact of changing fee structures for many of its members. Keeping up with multiple training packages and holding scope outside their core requirements is often not financially viable. The majority of ERTOs hold registration for qualifications that mirror their core business and they rarely provide training above certificate IV level (see the Australian case description in Continuing Higher Education Part I and II), providing a myriad of opportunities for external training organisations to provide services.

TAFE currently operates under a variety of funding models. In Queensland the primary sources of income are VET Revenue General (VRG), user choice, fee for service (FFS) and the Productivity Places Program. VET Revenue General is a publicly funded purchasing mechanism that buys training from public providers (such as TAFE) to progress the government's skilling priorities under a demand-driven and responsive structure. User choice, the next most prevalent funding source, is provided to fund

[9] This part stems entirely from: Singh, Tracy (2013) *Collaboration between enterprise and public training organisations: opportunities and obstacles*, Occasional paper, Adelaide: National Vocational Education and Training Research Program

[10] Enterprise Registered Training Organisation Association (2009) *The Enterprise RTO profile report*, www.ertoa.org.au.

apprenticeships and traineeships, such that the purchaser is able to utilise the funding to secure training at a registered training provider of their choice. Fee for service, as the name suggests, covers the situation where the training provider charges a fee for the delivery of training services to the student (or employer). The Productivity Places Program is a government-funded initiative which aims to provide training for existing workers or job seekers to increase workforce participation and productivity in fields experiencing skills shortages.

Within the framework of the current funding models, only VET Revenue General is exclusively available for TAFE institutes, with the others being openly contestable by other providers. The inherent costs of running large campuses, combined with the traditional role of TAFE in meeting community obligations, may disadvantage TAFE institutes in the competition for contestable funding.

Across Australia TAFE institutes hold an average of 341 qualifications on scope against an average of 10.1 qualifications from the listed ERTOA membership. The large number for TAFE has significant cost implications, not only for the direct costs involved in the re-registration of training packages and accredited qualifications, but also in materials development, assessment, resources, compliance and auditing, with the accompanying administrative and operational functions required to support this.

For many RTOs in this environment there is an increased focus on financial viability, with many TAFE institutes moving towards self-governance, while ERTOs investigate the return on the investment from their training activities. For TAFE institutes, their success lies in their ability to perform at a level that satisfies the needs of government, industry, students and businesses. Many training organisations are already realising that few have the infrastructure and resources to be all things to all people, and that the way forward depends on their ability to form the partnerships which allow them to focus on their core business: training.

Similarly, ERTOs are rethinking the way they provide training, with organisations such as QR National (Australia's largest rail freight operator, formerly part of Queensland Rail) reducing the size of its internal training department and relying more on collaboration with specialist providers. They see this as a prudent way of rationalising training, allowing the organisation to focus on its core strengths (rail-specific courses) and outsourcing training in areas such as project management, administration and specific skills-based courses to organisations with the capacity and specialised resources to deliver in these areas.

Changes in policy are impacting on the way TAFE does business within its community. The introduction of a national regulator, the proposed entitlement model, the shift to a more contestable funding model, the commencement of VET Fee Help, the changes to VET Revenue General (VRG) funding and the move towards a statutory authority governance structure for many Queensland TAFE institutes means that TAFE operating environments need to be responsive, flexible and adaptable. By way of example, the Victorian move to an entitlement model has shifted market demand from public to private providers. Following the full introduction of demand-driven funding in

2011, Victorian public providers' share of government-funded enrolments fell to 52 per cent, down from 75 per cent in 2008. TAFE Providers have also experienced a loss of fee-for-service income. It appears this is partly due to cost-shifting as enterprises have gained access to government funds for training (TAFE Directors Australia 2011b)[11]

The current policy direction may have implications for both TAFE and ERTO providers in relation to the expense of registration and re-registration and compliance and regulatory requirements. This may cause many ERTOs to review their existing scope and potentially reassess the areas where they engage in internal training to ensure that these activities remain commercially viable. For individual TAFE institutes the question of the on-going sustainability of enormous scope holdings, and their subsequent ability to compete in a commercial environment, remains an obstacle to achieving financial sustainability.

TAFE Directors Australia stated that: Facilitating effective transition requires the negotiation of structured pathways with key stakeholders. For this reason, outcomes for students in vocational programs are substantially enhanced by the development of collaborative activities and close working relationships with other training providers, government agencies and importantly, employers and industry. When well delivered and supported, vocational programs allow young people to gain nationally recognised qualifications. (TAFE Directors Australia 2011a)[12]

Given the increasing competition for funding, there is a need for new solutions, in which industry and TAFE collaborate more often and more effectively and use their core strengths to provide more efficient and integrated services with better outcomes for all stakeholders.

Based on two case studies Singh (2013)[13] draws the following conclusions. The two case studies of QR National and Essential Energy demonstrate that by working together TAFE institutes and ERTOs can deliver outcomes which are able to respond to the needs of both students and industry. To maintain skills growth and respond effectively to skills shortage areas, TAFE institutes provide the infrastructure, pathways, educational networks and knowledge repositories needed to deliver skills to large numbers of trainees. ERTOs are able to capitalise on their industry knowledge, resources, facilities and ability to deliver training within the operating environment using current technologies and equipment.

The two ERTOs in the case studies have demonstrated their willingness to collaborate and see the benefits as:

- capacity building through access to training networks

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[11] TAFE Directors Australia (2011b), The case for a national charter for TAFE: its role in public service provision in Australia, TAFE Directors Australia, Sydney.
[12] TAFE Directors Australia (2011a), Impacts of COAG VET reforms and youth transition initiatives: TDA response to the Productivity Commission study background paper, www.tda.edu.au.
[13] Singh, Tracy (2013) *Collaboration between enterprise and public training organisations: opportunities and obstacles*, Occasional paper, Adelaide: National Vocational Education and Training Research Program

- the provision of underpinning knowledge, which complements the practical application and results
- in higher-than-average completion rates for apprentices
- the availability of knowledge not directly related to core qualifications
- the delivery of nationally accredited qualifications across all business and niche areas
- access to additional resources including training materials, delivery modes and information
- networks
- external expertise in support areas such as audit, compliance and legislation
- the shifting of management and risk to external specialists
- partnering with external organisations to build internal capacity.

Both ERTOs and TAFE institutes are keen to explore further areas of potential collaboration to both expand the capacity of ERTOs and provide additional business areas for TAFE institutes. It would appear that their current collaborative efforts add value to both organisations: working together will replicate the unique features of each of the organisations. However, it does appear that, for TAFE to do this successfully, attention to areas such as centralised communication and quality control, flexible delivery modes and the ability to respond to the dynamic needs of the organisation is critical.

TAFE's investment in working with ERTOs will be rewarded with access to facilities, technologies and systems beyond the scope of most campus-based resources, and the ability to utilise the learning from this experience to build stronger relationships with industry and develop more effective strategies for working with business.

There are benefits to collaboration between ERTOs and TAFE institutes and that this practice is already embedded in the operational and training activities of both entities. The opportunities for collaboration go beyond traditional training partnerships and use the infrastructure, networks and internal capacity of TAFE institutes to add value to interactions with ERTOs through:

- the provision of targeted skills sets which utilise their scope holdings to tailor packages which
- meet the needs of industry
- the ability to fast-track qualifications based on students' existing knowledge and competency
- access to the extensive network of TAFE institutes, their infrastructure and combined resources
- access to TAFE's internal expertise and existing quality systems across multiple training packages
- the utilisation of TAFE's ability to work within regulatory environments and provide an insight into
- funding, compliance and auditing requirements.

Closer connection with ERTOs would build capacity in TAFE institutes through direct interactions with industry, providing access to innovations and new technologies, the ability to utilise external resources and training facilities, and the creation of sustainable business models. The ERTOs in the case studies are actively seeking ways to continuously improve their training methods and are already engaged in collaborative activities with both private providers and TAFE institutes. The ability to work with other institutes across regions, nationally and internationally allows for some economies of scale; however, internal cooperation between regional TAFE institutes needs to be prioritised to provide a seamless integrated service.

In conclusion, to develop transferable and sustainable training models, TAFE institutes need to look outside the areas of traditional training delivery and develop commercially viable relationships in which their broad expertise, quality systems, infrastructure, knowledge and resources are utilised. Further investigation is warranted into training models that meet the needs of industry through the delivery of targeted skills sets, providing immediate practical benefits with pathways to full qualifications. Ideally, this could lead to the development of transferable and sustainable training models that share the inherent knowledge and advantages of both ERTOs and TAFE institutes and focus on improved support structures for students, higher completion rates and a more integrated approach to the development of skills.

5.2 The emerging role of enterprise learning consultants

The vocational education and training (VET) landscape is currently undergoing rapid changes due to contestable funding, increased competition between registered training organisations (RTOs), changes in client cohort characteristics and an increased demand for workforce development and work integrated learning. The demand for VET provision for workforce development requires highly skilled VET practitioners who are customer-focused, flexible, innovative and responsive to the needs of industry stakeholders. In response to this, the Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE (MSIT) in Queensland *created the new staff positions* of enterprise learning consultants (ELCs), whose responsibility is to assist industry by combining their educational - in the context of the Australian Qualifications Framework and training packages - and business objectives and thereby promoting workforce development.[14] While generic attributes such as customer-focused, flexible, innovative and responsive to the needs of industry clients are expected of all VET practitioners, the requirements for effective services through partnerships with enterprises extend beyond these. A diverse repertoire of approaches needs to be adopted by ELCs to appropriately engage enterprises and achieve their respective workforce development objectives. Their role is complex and involves creating, designing, planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and continuously improving all aspects of the training system for every client.

[14] Piccardi, Kathy (2013) *The emerging role of enterprise learning consultants*, Occasional paper, Adelaide: NVCER.