

TEC to LSC - From Training to Learning - What-Really?

Forgive the implied cynicism in the title but I am worried!

We too often change the name of something and expect it to be different-but-a name change alone changes nothing - apart from changing the perception. And as perceptions are, reality then I am worried by this implied name change, as, training is only one of the means to an end of learning.

We are formally told that "the Learning and Skills Council will be the leading body in the development of post 16 education and training, with an annual budget of £6 billion and responsibility for 6 million learners. It will be directed by a national council and advised by its Adult Learning and Young People National Committees. It will operate through 47 local councils and from April 2001 it will take on the training functions of the current Training and Enterprise Council network and the funding responsibilities of the Further Education Funding Council".

Now it seems to me that we may be lost here, before we have even started.

The TEC's (principally about Training), are to be taken on, by an organisation with Learning in the title. Therefore, I ponder the question, how- (apart from the changing of the name)- do the LSC's really change and be different from the TEC's?

Can someone tell me please how the LSC's are going to be different? Learning is far bigger than funding people to attend training courses or undertake NVO's. Surely, we have not made the mistake of confusing learning as the "new word" that sounds more "sexy" and more up to date than the old boring word of training?

To help on this, lets look at some of the differences between training and learning.

Training is basically done to you; it is passive and dependent and is done formally and, most certainly not all training actually will automatically result in learning. For example, what do many people who complete NVO's actually learn?

Learning is more basically creative and is something you have to do to yourself. It can be formal and informal as we learn all the time, sometimes unconsciously, sometime consciously. You can train someone, but you cannot make them learn. Learning goes beyond training.

Training can provide external motivation, but learning requires internal motivation, is it an inside job.

Training also assumes performance can be measured. Therefore, it shows what needs to be done and how to do it. In this sense, the output of training

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is predictable. For example, NVQ's perform a useful function here. Learning however is more about giving resources and opportunities, to learn first the established way, (training is indeed useful here), and then go not create new ways. In this sense, learning output can be unpredictable as people actually learn different things and in different ways. Training is more about ways to change behaviour and to get something done in a standard required way. For example, with NVQ competence standards. Learning however concentrates on improvements that are more continuous and ongoing beyond, say the training.

Training is therefore only one of the means to the end of learning. Learning how to learn, is skill that is rarely taught, yet, train the trainer courses abound!

Renaming training to learning camouflages the real issues here. Just because say, someone has been funded for a training course does not mean they will learn. How in fact will the LSC's ensure that a preferred, desired, and needed learning centred approach will be practised and implied by the so called "Learning and Skills Council"?

Sorry, but this will not happen by an organisational name change.