

Proceedings of the Institute of Acoustics

Training Initiative for Professional Sound (T.I.P.S.) Update

Paul.A.Turner, B.Ed. (HONS), Cert. Ed., M.Coll.P.,M.Inst.
S.C.E.

Principal Lecturer in Professional Sound, Sandwell College,
Chairman and Project Director of T.I.P.S.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper serves as an introduction to the presentation of the work of The Training Initiative for Professional Sound completed since last year. It will be complemented by the formal presentation during the conference.

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There is an increasing awareness of five major factors which will affect the continued effectiveness, efficiency and even the existence of employers in industry, commerce and the professions as well as educationalists.

1. The 21 per cent drop over the next five years in the 16 - 19 age group.
2. The 1 per cent increase in the labour market to the year 2000, virtually all accounted for by women returners.
3. The free European market, with a labour vacuum in West Germany (42 per cent decline in 16 - 19 year olds) and the untrained labour surplus in Portugal, Spain and Greece.
4. Changing procedures and practices in industry, commerce and the professions, brought about by the introduction of information technology.
5. Stiffer competition at home and abroad.

Because of these factors there needs to be a radical rethink about the recruitment and training of new employees and the way in which existing and older employees are trained both to do their current jobs and to be able to cope with changes in procedures, outlook and working practices as a result of the introduction of I.T. and more acute commercial competition.

There are three growing demands: for higher levels of skills; for adaptability to change and for the ability to work purposefully with others.

Against this background the education and training profession insufficiently provided for sound knowledge, understanding and skills in the context of employment. Employers are looking for skills, attitudes, aptitudes and knowledge that are not there in sufficient measure. Employers though are not blameless for they have failed, and continue to fail, to provide adequate opportunities for their employees to develop and apply their skills and aptitudes.

Underlying the relative economic decline of the UK, a constant feature for a century or more, but especially rapid during the past 40 years, has been a poorly educated

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population having low expectations of education and correspondingly low expectations of their own achievement in life. Alongside relative economic decline we have had relative educational decline; an important factor in the global, competitive economy in which we now have to survive.

Far too many students are leaving education and training establishments ill-equipped to enter employment where, at all levels of skill, there is a demand to adapt to more and more rapid and significant change with generic skill underlying and flexibility and multi-skilling which are more and more required at all levels. The need for teamwork, to work purposefully with others, is not deemed to be central in the curriculum. As a consequence competence suffers at all levels of performance. Employees need to develop skills, competence, knowledge and attitudes for the fuller realisation of ability and potential. The responsibility for this development belongs to the employers who, instead of considering training as an additional expense and not part of the business plan, should invest in their most valuable resource: the people who work for them.

There has been too much abdication of responsibility, too much wringing of hands in assumed helplessness, too much suspicion between industry and education. All this has inhibited progress and provided for a patchwork of incoherence in education and training.

The opportunity presents itself for a radical restructuring to provide intellectually demanding and educationally sound programmes of learning in a context of employment relevance and competence to improve levels of skills; for adaptability to change and for the ability to work purposefully with others. A whole community of learning needs to be opened up to include recognition of experience and achievement. Educators and Trainers should actively stimulate learning to help people develop their intellectual skills, not purely on only theoretical and sometimes abstract exercises, but also by applying new found knowledge, understanding and skills in a context relevant to employment.

The Training Initiative for Professional Sound took advantage of the opportunity presented by the Government's creation of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, whose principles, as laid out in the 1986 White Paper 'Working Together - Education and Training', centered around employment-relevance in education and training. The NCVQ,

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together with its sister organisation SCOTVEC, and in co-operation with the Training Agency have facilitated the development of Lead Bodies representing industry. TIPS is such a Lead Body and through its Working Parties is analysing the technical and creative competences necessary to perform the many and various jobs in our industry.

TIPS will not just focus on narrow, mechanistic, easily measurable competences for such narrowness will only serve to take us from one theoretical/abstract extreme of the spectrum to the other of mechanistic skill training. TIPS will help people to not only gain the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for employment within the industry but to use this as a basis on which they can build, with further post-experience training, to cope with the changes of procedure and demand in today's competitive industry. When facing change people need a firm foundation of ability and personal confidence. This cannot be achieved from a basis of narrowly specified competences.

It must be stressed that TIPS is developing Industry-Led qualifications which will be nationally accredited and enable standards to be developed, guaranteed and maintained. These qualifications will have a modular structure. They will not debar people from taking qualifications because of a lack of formal qualifications rather than lack of ability, experience and intellect. They will allow flexibility of access and mixed modes of study and assessment procedures which do not solely rely upon externally set up and moderated examinations.

TIPS is committed to the future and to meeting the challenges of the future. It is not just addressing the manpower resources of today as planning for the future means cultivating new skills, nurturing fresh ideas and adapting to new environments. A trained, multi-skilled, adaptable workforce will be more efficient and effective, will increase quality and profitability. Investing in people is investing in the future profitability of the Professional Sound Industry.