

November 23rd 2006

Dear Colleague

I am undertaking a project for the Department of Education and Skills to better understand the market for higher education courses tailored to the needs of the work force, whether as employees or employers. The brief will address current ways higher education institutions are meeting and stimulating the demand, the factors that determine the balance between it being core or peripheral activity for them, and the views of employers on the provision.

My particular interest is to understand:

Both the policy development and the practical steps that could be taken forward to increase significantly, (and in a sustained way), the number of people in employment who undertake courses in universities and higher education colleges.

My brief includes employees from the private, public and voluntary sector, and courses of all types and levels within higher education. (i.e. provided by universities and higher education colleges)

I am very interested in receiving your views in the key areas listed below, and invite you to respond by **December 22nd 2006**.

1. Factors that will facilitate the growth of this market.

e.g. What factors are or can increase the growth and development of the number and range of employees undertaking education in universities and higher education colleges? What factors would encourage expansion of the education provision? What factors might increase employee participation in higher education courses? What factors might encourage employers to work more closely with higher education in staff training and education?

2. Issues and factors that limit development of this market.

e.g. What are the barriers? What are the factors that inhibit or hold back the expansion of education provision? What factors inhibit the uptake of courses by employees in the public, private or voluntary sectors? How have such barriers influenced your decisions to engage or not with higher education for the employed?

3. Potential Policy Development

e.g. What practical steps can government take to significantly grow this market for higher education from the employed? What changes are needed in government policy to ensure this provision is part of mainstream higher education? What policy initiatives are necessary in order to expand the demand for education courses from individuals or employers? Are any particular incentives necessary or advisable?

4. Exemplary Practice

e.g. What approaches and/or innovations have you experienced that are effective in developing the market? What is the potential for adopting such approaches or innovations more widely?

5. **Future Demand and Potential**

e.g. Are there any imperatives, trends or drivers that encourage you to further explore or develop this market? Do you have any view on the potential for growing this area and is there any evidence for that view? How important is it to develop stronger relationships between employers and higher education in the provision of continuing education for those in employment? Do you have any suggestions about how such relationships on education provision can be nurtured?

Any evidence and case studies you can provide to substantiate your views would be most helpful including your current involvement and interest in this area – its breadth, breakdown statistics on current activity and any strategic relationships within which the education is delivered.

Your response to this consultation would be very much appreciated, and **the closing date for responses is December 22nd 2006.**

Responses can be e-mailed to: EE.Survey@dfes.gsi.gov.uk
or sent to the following address:

Employer Engagement Survey
c/o Ben Ramm
Department for Education and Skills
N4 Moorfoot
SHEFFIELD
S1 4PQ

Thank you for your contribution.

Dr Marilyn Wedgwood
Adviser to DfES,
Pro-Vice Chancellor, Manchester Metropolitan University