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The Lambert Review

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THE LAMBERT REVIEW – ARMY RESPONSE

FOREWORD

1. Thank you for giving the Directorate of Educational and Training Services (Army) the opportunity to respond to the Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration and for granting an extension to the deadline for responses. We believe that we have experience alluding to the wider potential for partnerships between higher education and industry (in our case - the Army). However, we feel that we have particularly pertinent experience of operating close to the remit of the first set of questions in the Review, so our response has concentrated on those issues – examples of best practice and excellence in business-university collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

2. It has long been recognised by the British Army that good levels of education enable military personnel to absorb training more readily. The combination of good education and good training makes soldiers more resilient to the stresses and rigours of battle. The Army has always encouraged its personnel, at all levels, to participate in Army-sponsored extra mural education of all kinds in addition to prescribed military educational programmes. Further, where that extramural education is subsidised, it is regarded as an inducement to remain in military service. Education also assists soldiers' resettlement into civilian life at the end of their military careers. In short, education is regarded as a major contribution to the Army's Personnel Policy of 'Recruit, Sustain and Retain'. In addition to uniformed personnel, the Army employs a large number of civil servants who are encouraged to undertake personal development activity. Further, civilian dependants living within the military community have always been enthusiastic participants in the extra mural educational programmes sponsored by the Army.

CONTEXT

3. The Government consultation Green Paper *The Learning Age*, published in 1999, highlighted the need for learning as a life-long activity. It set out the Government's vision of how lifelong learning could enable people to fulfil their potential and at the same time become the vehicle by which the economy could make a successful transition from the industries and services of the past to the knowledge and information economy of the future.

One of the results of this vision was that Government policy then determined that 50% of the UK population would eventually participate in Higher Education. Echoing this view, the Ministry of Defence's Strategic Defence Review White Papers promulgated the **Learning Forces** initiative. This emphasised the need to facilitate the personal development of individual Service men and women throughout their careers.

4. In 2003, ***The Future of Higher Education*** White Paper declared that the new foundation degrees were to be the cornerstone of the Government's policy for expansion of higher education in the period up to 2010 with financial incentives for both institutions and students. The White Paper made it very clear that it was the work-focus and employer involvement in the first wave of foundation degrees developed in the period 2001 to 2003 that were their most attractive features. This development is seen as a potential solution to the low regard in which the Government believes vocational education is held in traditional higher education institutions.

5. **In November 2002 the Government asked Richard Lambert, the former editor of the Financial Times, to examine how the long-term links between business and British universities could be strengthened to the benefit of the UK's economy. This exercise is known as the Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration.**

#### THE ARMY CONTEXT

6. Within the Army, the role of the Educational and Training Services (ETS) Branch of the Adjutant General's Corps is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and morale of the Army by providing developmental education and training, information and resettlement services, and the associated support to operations to meet the needs of the Army.

7. Working with educational and professional bodies is at the core of the ETS Branch mission and strategy. This reflects the Army's view that enabling effective skills development and knowledge transfer for its personnel lie at the heart of creating a modern workforce that will fit into the competitive economy and inclusive society of the UK. The whole Army is highly focussed on maximising its human potential and therefore will not accept underachievement in this area. So, through the ETS Branch, it uses HEIs as a vehicle to drive forward wider recognition and accreditation of military education, training and the workplace activities of its soldiers.

8. The Army achieves a high level of vocational recognition and accreditation of a wide range of military employments. This success and the example that follows demonstrate that the ETS Branch is structured in such a way that it works well with educational and professional bodies and is highly successful in this field of activity.

#### THE E-LEARNING FOUNDATION DEGREE IN BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

9. Bournemouth University (BU), Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU), the UK e-Universities Worldwide Limited (UkeU) and the Headquarters Directorate of Educational and Training Services (Army) (HQ DETS(A)), have set up a partnership to develop and implement a Foundation Degree course in order to:

- a. Meet the educational needs and aspirations of Army personnel
- b. Meet the strategic objectives and corporate plans of the Army
- c. Adhere to Government policy with respect to participation in Higher Education

10. This is the first part-time, e-learning Foundation Degree course in Business and Management to be offered jointly by two major UK Universities. The programme commences in October 2003. This ground-breaking venture will be delivered as an e-learning programme using state-of-the-art technology developed by the UKeU. Study will be by means of e-learning, using web-technology to give people the flexibility to fit their academic activities into their work/life routines. The new technology will deliver:

- a. interactive learning in teams online
- b. online discussion groups
- c. online library services
- d. online study support
- e. online assessment

11. The degree emphasises work-based learning. Students will enhance their existing management, communication, numerical and information technology skills and develop a critical and reflective understanding of business and its relationship with the wider environment. Successful completion will act as a bridge and allow progress to further study for professional qualifications at work or top up qualifications to complete an honours degree in a business and management related subject. The aim is for individuals to become enterprising and confident practitioners capable of managing their own development and contributing to the success of their employing organisations.

12. The Army is the first Corporate Client. It views the BU/LMU Foundation Degree, structured within a command led system and supported both financially and philosophically by the Army, as a unique offering to its workforce. The elective, developmental approach adopted by the programme, integrated into the Army's own Command, Leadership and Management training, will enable effective skills development and knowledge transfer linked to whole life development – which is a key element of the Army's **Learning Forces** initiative.

13. In a wider context, the business benefits case relating to the BU/LMU Foundation Degree is currently being assessed. The assessment process is the subject of partnership arrangements between assigned consultants and organisations with a depth of commercial experience and expertise. The partners include:

- a. WH Smith
- b. Nationwide Building Society
- c. Swindon Chamber of Commerce
- d. Tesco plc

14. The timeframe for this project will extend over several years as Army personnel progress through the BU/LMU Foundation Degree and bring their experience of skills development and knowledge transfer to bear on issues related to the workplace.

15. A market research report in the Guardian Higher Education supplement on 6 May 03 stated that there was unexpectedly wide enthusiasm for foundation degrees among universities and colleges as well as students. Interest was strongest in the public sector, particularly in the NHS, the social services, local authority education departments, the Prison Service and the Ministry of Defence. Emerging findings indicate that the identified success of foundation degrees is due in part to the decline of HNDs and HNCs whose place in the qualifications hierarchy they have taken. At this level, sub-Honours degree, foundation degrees are becoming the qualification of choice. If, as seems likely, foundation degrees have a similar impact on the market place as the qualifications they are replacing,

then the business benefit case will prove to be strongly positive.

## APPLICATION OF EXPERIENCE TO THE REVIEW QUESTIONS

16. In summary, our experience of developing the Foundation Degree with Bournemouth University, Leeds Metropolitan University and the United Kingdom e-University Worldwide Limited provides evidence and strongly suggests the need extend Business-University Collaboration much further than is now the case. Among the mechanisms that could be used for this purpose are the following:

17. Joint ventures between universities and business of which the BU/LMU Foundation Degree is a prime example. The initial concept for this programme came from the Army who sought appropriate academic partners willing to collaborate in the project. The subsequent development of the course has been notable for the degree of flexibility demonstrated by all the participants and for the significant employer input influencing course structure, methodologies and content.

18. Much wider informal Business-University contact in numerous ways. The most effective we have found to be through continuing professional development training by universities for business; meetings and conferences across the academic and vocational spectrum; and students using work related experience for academic purposes. The Army has made a significant investment in supporting its personnel in these areas. As a major user of the Open University (OU), for instance, the Army gives extra support to OU students in the Service.

19. An approach that allows industry (in our case - the Army) to 'signpost' skills related or vocationally related provision for its workforce. Such provision must be industry-specific. The nature of Service life makes normal university/college based studies difficult. The great merit of the BU/LMU Foundation Degree is the decentralised and distance learning potential through the use of the Internet and web-technology. Consequently, this programme is being marketed of throughout the Army using the vehicle of the internal command-led Army structure.

20. More formal contracts in the Business-University context, with industry providing support for academic activities. If this is to happen, then there must be a clear vision of how higher education can make a difference in relation to business competitiveness and efficiency. In our case, the Army has long experience of the benefits of improving the education of its personnel. Consequently, the commitment of DETS(A) to the project provided critical support for the development of BU/LMU Foundation Degree in personnel, resource and financial terms. More broadly, we would like to offer comment on aspects of Business-University Collaboration which, in our opinion, require further consideration.

21. For skills development and knowledge transfer, you need relevant knowledge. Enabling people in the acquisition of such knowledge is a key element in this relationship. Industry must overcome its traditional reluctance to expend resources in assisting workforces in this acquisition. The establishment of the new Army Learning Centres under the **Learning Forces** initiative, the involvement of the UkeU and the imaginative use of educational support funding made the process of acquiring the relevant knowledge possible for Army personnel.

22. The expertise of managing such relationships is not developed overnight. Rather, it must be developed by the universities having long-term commitments to working with businesses and professional bodies. DETS(A) has been involved in such relationships

since the 1940s. Over this time we have established effective partnerships with a wide range of commercial, academic and professional institutions and built structures to assist and support these relationships in the most effective way.

23. Finally, we believe there should be a thorough market assessment to support the fuller introduction of foundation degrees in all sectors of industry. As stated above, at sub-Honours degree level, foundation degrees are becoming the qualification of choice. The key difference between foundation degrees and previous vocational qualifications is the involvement of employers in the design and delivery of foundation degrees – which has been our experience with the BU/LMU Foundation Degree. Specifically designed foundation degrees have been unexpectedly successful over the last two years. The Government has articulated a clear vision for higher education in relation to business and for this to be successful the role of foundation degrees in this strategy should be strengthened.

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