The Education Factbook

An A–Z Guide to Education and Training in Britain

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AN A-Z GUIDE TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN BRITAIN

Editors

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We should like to thank all the people and organizations who have helped by providing and checking information for inclusion in this book. Our thanks are also due to all those people who, increasingly active in their use of the education and training system, provided the inspiration for the book and to whom the book is dedicated.

INTRODUCTION

This book is for anyone who uses education and training—and that means everyone.

A Consumer Approach

Education and training is more than what happens in schools and colleges; is not simply what is done to children by teachers; is not just something to be endured by the young. It is a service; the people who give it are in a service industry, those who use it are consumers. That is the starting point for this book—it is a consumer's handbook designed to help you use education and training effectively by knowing what there is, and how to use it.

Education and Training is Lifelong

Education and training is a lifelong process. Before school there may be pre-school—nurseries, creches, playgroups, child-minding and so on. Then comes school itself—for most of us, from age five to age sixteen, sometimes longer. After that the choices belong to the consumer—further education? higher education? maybe an MSC training scheme? all three?

Later still some consumers may choose postgraduate degrees, others vocational training. Those lucky enough to get a job may learn skills from training officers, “on the job” or be sent on courses or (most likely), all three. People who are unemployed, want a job change, need to update skills, or get back into the labour market after an absence will find courses, schemes and programmes with all kinds of names and in all sorts of places. By this time their children are following down the same route. As they catch up, there are courses to help their still young-at-heart parents prepare for and then deal with retirement. Elderly consumers can choose education and training to keep themselves active and these days there are even courses about coping with death.

The Education and Training Industry

Industries tend to be built around human needs. The search for pleasure produces the entertainment industry; the need for warm uninjured feet results in shoes; education and training is born of the desire to learn.

Industries surround themselves with propaganda. Read the shoe ads and you would think that your feet are totally their business, not yours at all. But it is still you who has to stand on them. Educational organizations like schools, colleges or training departments try to convince us that learning is

something we can only do through them, in their building, watched over by their employees. Not so. This book rejects emphatically that idea. Learning happens all the time to everyone, almost every second of the day, possibly even when we are asleep.

The education and training industry employs thousands of teachers, cooks, cleaners, dons, lecturers, instructors, playgroup workers and so on. A lot of the money that pays for them comes from taxation, and so politicians get involved. Other industries want a say as their future employees all pass through it. In a democratic state like ours, individual consumers must also have the right to some control, at least over what happens to them and their children.

The Education and Training System

There is no single system of education and training in the United Kingdom. There are several. Some interlock, some compete with one another, some are ignorant of the rest and so on. Educational provision comes at you in many different guises and settings for many different motives and ideals. To distinguish between the different offerings you need to be able to recognize their source, because they may be indistinguishable in every other way.

How to Use the Education Factbook

The main body of the book is an A–Z list of terms; these may be single words (autism), names (Business and Technician Education Council), initials (MSC), phrases (distance learning) or whatever. They are briefly explained or described. Some key general terms are in capital letters as they are starting points to a number of other entries on that topic. All organizations included in the A–Z are also listed in the Address List; and vice versa. Key books for further reading are named in the A–Z and details listed in the Book List.

To be an effective consumer you need information. The *Education Factbook* provides information by trying:

- to get behind the jargon, initials, names—to explain what it all means
- to highlight and outline some of the current areas of discussion and controversy and to map some of the changes that are happening
- to explain who does what, how things are organized
- above all, to provide you, the consumer, with a resource book to use the system to best effect

That there are gaps is partly a question of space, partly of selectivity; we have tried to include those points of contact which will provide users with helpful starting points though this has sometimes meant leaving out more obvious though less useful entries. Finally of course there is our own ignorance—we do not pretend to know everything; for a consumer's

reference book to be useful it must lead you the reader to ask for yourself and we hope we provide the facility to help you to do so.

Martin Good
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Cambridge, March 1983

A-Z