

## **AoC Annual Conference 2007**

### **Self Regulation Panel Session - Tuesday 29 November 2007**

#### **Introduction from Sir George Sweeney**

---

Colleagues,

Over all its workings, the goal of the Self-Regulation Implementation Group has stayed very simple.

As Further Education falls under new demands and targets, as the shape of our sector is re-fashioned by new funding arrangements and a new machinery of government, as we move into the era of Foundation Degrees and the new diplomas and possibly further discussion about the role of A Levels, then the push to de-bureaucratise college life and set its leaders free to innovate and modernise provision at their own level, in their local community had to run along very clear lines.

In short, we had to keep it consensual. We had to make it sustainable. We had to make it coherent. And, yes, above all, we had to keep it simple. College autonomy is a concept which is both functional and uncontroversial in so many of our competitor economies. It is a reality that is long overdue.

In opening this important panel debate, I am pleased to commend to you all the fruits of our labours in the Implementation Group.

We have now reached the point where we have presented to the Secretary of State a philosophy for college autonomy, a modus operandi for college autonomy, and a timetable for college autonomy and its phased implementation

In a few moments, John Taylor will talk you through the biggest nuts and bolts in this whole process. What I want briefly to emphasise for you now is that our planning for Self Regulation - begun, as it was, back in 2001 - has had to creatively adjust to the new pressures on and expectations of colleges I was mentioning a minute ago.

Self Regulation has had, for example, to come to represent our claim as an industry that we are capable of maximising quality-provision. Let's be clear: Self Regulation is our tool for tackling and, where necessary, uprooting poor provision in skills-delivery. It is our device for confirming that eligibility for public funding is not a long-service medal, but a privilege earned through the gritty business of peer review, performance appraisal and the self-discipline of daily accountability.

Yes, college autonomy will be hard-won and it will be hard-work. But it's a solid gold opportunity too. The promise before us all is of more purposeful in-trays, fewer nagging demands for the same information you provided to the suits concerned only last week, a de-cluttering of curriculums and qualifications, ever fewer voices saying as you search for new ways for your institution to do ever better by its learners: "No, sorry, you can't do that !".

Colleagues, think about the world we inhabit now. We cannot be both demand-led and centrally-run. That is a contradiction in terms: one that the Self Regulation proposals now before the Secretary of State will, I believe - if accepted - correct for a generation to come.

Thanks everyone.