

Skills needs for regeneration professionals

Received:

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Abstract A number of key government reports, most notably the Egan Review in 2004, have raised concern regarding the availability of skills to deliver the UK Government's Sustainable Communities strategy. This paper discusses the key issues raised in these reports and the changes in regeneration policy and practice that have led to them. It also outlines the findings from a training needs study of regeneration managers in north and east London. Key skills shortages and training needs are identified and views on current continuing professional development provision and how this can be improved are discussed.

Keywords: *Skills, training needs, regeneration professionals, sustainable communities*

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses some of the current issues regarding the skills required to deliver the government's regeneration and sustainable communities agenda, and reports in particular on the findings of a training needs study of regeneration professionals conducted in north and east London in 2005, and the action taken by London Metropolitan University (LMU) to address some of the training needs identified.

In the context of this research, the terms regeneration and sustainable communities are used interchangeably, as there is a considerable overlap between the two, although of course it can be argued that the term sustainable communities conveys a broader more all-encompassing approach which can be applied to areas that do not need regenerating, while regeneration may or may not take place in a sustainable fashion.

Over the last few years, the issue of skills for regeneration has risen up the political agenda. The reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, there is concern that there are severe shortages of staff in the professions involved in delivering the regeneration and sustainable communities agenda. The government's Sustainable Communities Plan, launched in 2003, set out plans for a massive expansion in housing in London and the wider South East and for dealing with areas of low demand and abandonment in the towns and cities in the North and Midlands. Over 60,000 new homes are now being built each year¹ and a further £39bn has been allocated over the next five years to deliver the Sustainable Communities Plan across England.² This is placing further pressure on a sector already suffering severe recruitment and retention problems. Professor Peter Roberts, chair of the new Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC) has estimated that there is a skills gap of up to 50 per cent in the jobs needed to implement the sustainable communities plan. These staff shortages are due to a number of factors. The unprecedented levels of development activity (due to the need to catch up for years of underinvestment in public infrastructure) is a major cause. Secondly, the closure of many university planning courses in the early 1990s, due to a lack of demand and funding for courses, led to a substantial decline in the number of graduates entering the profession.³ Similarly, there was a 56 per cent decline in the number of applications for civil engineering courses between 1994 and 2002.³ Furthermore, many of the professions that relate to regeneration suffer from an ageing workforce and high staff turnover,

while their poor image has resulted in few choosing regeneration as a career choice and has led to the need for special recruitment campaigns.

On the other hand, it has been increasingly recognised that traditional (property, environment and employment led) regeneration programmes have failed to lead to the sustainable, long-term turnaround of declining urban areas, and that the delivery of the sustainable communities agenda requires new ways of working and, with this, a new set of skills. Recent years have seen a growing awareness of the importance of good quality and inclusive urban design,⁴ a need for a more holistic approach to tackling multifaceted urban problems, and for local communities and businesses to be engaged in the regeneration process. This, as Bailey⁵ notes, has led to the development of new approaches in which partnership working is the usual delivery vehicle and multidisciplinary teams in both the public and private sector are now the norm. Yet traditional training programmes in which professionals are trained in their own specialist areas make such integrated approaches to regeneration hard to achieve and have led to calls for more cross-disciplinary training.⁶ Compared with many EU countries that do not have such a rigid professional divide between the different disciplines,⁷ the UK still appears to suffer from a silo mentality.

The growing concerns over the skills needs within the regeneration sector has led to a number of studies and reports which have sought to identify the skills gap. The most influential of these has been the Egan Review⁸ in 2004. This report, like a number of earlier studies⁹⁻¹¹ identified the greatest gaps as being in generic skills — skills such as communication, leadership, team working and project management. Egan proposed that a national centre of excellence should be set up to drive the skills agenda forward. This built on the idea, first raised by the Urban Task Force in 1999, that there should be a network of regional centres of excellence ‘to act as a resource to the public, private and voluntary sector, to raise standards across the board and fill gaps in existing provision’.² These have now been established in all but the London region.

In April 2005, the national centre of excellence, the ASC, was finally launched, giving a new lease of life to the skills debate. The ASC ‘aims to work with others to deliver the cutting edge skills and knowledge needed to make better places for people now and in the future’ and to ‘work with partners to produce new learning resources for improving the skills and knowledge of current professionals, practitioners, local government members and offices and communities’.¹² ‘Learning

laboratories¹³ are to be established on behalf of the ASC in each of the Regional Centres of Excellence areas. Each will cover the skills gaps and needs of a particular regeneration programme and will work with local learning providers to establish what is needed to tackle the problems.

This paper aims to contribute to this ongoing research agenda by reporting on the findings of a regional study conducted by the Cities Institute in 2005. Unlike previous studies, which have tended to focus primarily on the skills needs of built environment professionals or local community activists, this study was concerned with those responsible for commissioning and managing regeneration projects. The paper begins by drawing out some of the key issues raised by previous studies and then discusses practitioners' views on current CPD provision, skills and training needs, how these can best be addressed, and the action taken by LMU to adapt its course provision accordingly. It concludes with recommendations regarding the development and delivery of future initiatives designed to address the skills shortages identified.

WHO ARE THE REGENERATION PROFESSIONALS?

One of the difficulties in attempting to identify the skills needs of those involved in regeneration relates to the problems of trying to define the scope of what is a multisectoral and multi-agency process. In his review of the skills needs for sustainable communities, Egan identified seven components of sustainable communities: governance, transport and connectivity, services, environmental, economy, housing and the built environment, social and cultural, and used these as a basis for identifying who was engaged in the sustainable communities agenda. Around one hundred different occupations were identified. A significant number of these were made up of those working in 'core' occupations: the built environment professionals (planners, architects, urban designers etc.), and decision makers and influencers (staff from local, regional and central government, developers and investors, staff from voluntary and community associations). A second group of 'associated occupations' were also identified, whose contribution was very important, but who are not involved full time. These included those working for the police, health service and local businesses for example. A third group comprised those who had a legitimate interest in sustainable communities, but who were not necessarily employed in the sector, eg local residents engaged in this agenda.

While not for one moment seeking to devalue the importance of all those involved in regeneration, especially those from the communities concerned, of particular interest in this paper is the group of professionals working in the ‘core’ occupations: in particular, those whose role involves commissioning and managing regeneration projects.

THE NEED FOR NEW SKILLS: THE DEVELOPING POLICY CONTEXT

The perceived shortage of skills was first highlighted by the Urban Task Force, appointed by the new Labour Government in the late 1990s to identify the reasons for the continuing decline of urban areas in England. Their report ‘Towards an urban renaissance’, published in 1999, particularly emphasised the need to improve the quality of urban design; the UK, it argued, had fallen behind many other EU countries. Developments should be designed in a way that fostered a strong sense of community and included a mix of activities, services and tenures. There should also be stronger local leadership and greater business and community involvement in the management of urban areas.

At much the same time, the government’s Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was raising concern about the skills required to deliver the neighbourhood renewal agenda. The ‘National strategy for neighbourhood renewal’, published in 2001, identified the growing inequalities and concentration of poverty in poor neighbourhoods and set out the vision that, ‘within 10–20 yrs, no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live’. Ambitious plans for improving the conditions of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country were announced.

Built into this new strategy were recommendations arising from the SEU Policy Action Team (PAT 16) report ‘Learning lessons’.⁹ This identified poor practice skills and argued that there was a need to improve basic training within the professions to make it more relevant to the challenges of working in deprived neighbourhoods, and to develop cross-sectoral thinking and working. It suggested that traditional approaches to learning do not work. Practitioners need a knowledge of what works and support in tailoring it to the local circumstances. As a result the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal set out the government’s commitment to promoting ‘a step change in the levels of skills and knowledge of everyone involved in neighbourhood renewal’.¹⁴ The National Strategy Action plan concluded that there needed to be a ‘distinct skills and knowledge strand running throughout the

Strategy'. This led to the establishment of an online knowledge management system (www.renewal.net) designed to enable experience about what works in neighbourhood renewal to be shared and the publication of a knowledge and skills strategy — 'The learning curve'.¹¹ 'The learning curve' defined a learning framework broken down into the knowledge base, core skills and behaviours needed by key groups — defined as residents, professionals and practitioners and civil servants and policy makers. As Bailey⁵ notes, in contrast to the Urban Task Force, both these initiatives concentrated on integrating the social and economic concerns of community regeneration and neighbourhood renewal. Thus the 'knowledge areas' were identified as: worklessness; crime; education; health; reviving local economies; quality of life; and housing and the environment.

The Egan Review of 2004, commissioned to identify the skills needed for implementing the sustainable communities agenda, reached similar conclusions to these earlier reports. Egan summarised the skills needed as being a combination of:

- a *knowledge* of the key components of sustainable communities defined by Egan as being Governance, Transport and Connectivity, Services, Environmental, Economy, Housing and the Built Environment, Social and Cultural
- *generic skills*, defined by Egan as being: inclusive visioning, project management, leadership, breakthrough thinking/brokerage, team/partnership working, making things happen, process management, change management, financial management and appraisal, stakeholder management, analysis, decision making, learning from mistakes, evaluation, communication, conflict resolution, customer awareness and how to secure feedback.

While it is recognised that professionals need to be competent in their particular specialist area, most of these studies have emphasised the importance of generic skills and identified skills gaps in these as being of prime concern. The Egan Review strongly argued that it is 'the generic skills, behaviour and knowledge that will make a difference between successful delivery and failure' of the Sustainable Communities agenda.

HOW CAN THESE SKILLS BE ACQUIRED?

A further theme in many of the various studies to date is the question of how these skills can best be developed. A number of courses of action have been suggested.

First, formal training courses, it is argued, should undergo some radical changes. Egan concurred with the findings of the Urban Task Force, which concluded that 'the teaching in basic professional technical skills is excellent. The main problem is a lack of cross-disciplinary learning with a strong vocational element'.⁹ The Egan Review recommended that generic skills should form part of existing formal training courses for built environment professions. A further report by the Planning Network¹⁵ suggested that Higher Education Institutions should develop more innovative methods of teaching, including courses of differing lengths, promoting interdisciplinary learning, and involving a wide range of voluntary and community-based organisations, which can bring in direct experience from the field.

A further debate concerns the issue of how people learn and whether formal training programmes are the best way of acquiring new skills. The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's report 'The learning curve',¹¹ published in 2002, argued that there was a need to recognise the effectiveness of 'learning by doing' and 'learning by observing others', as well as of formal learning. Bailey⁵ further emphasised the importance of situational learning, suggesting that more effective learning takes place informally through knowledge transfer, learning by example and informal mechanisms such as work shadowing and mentoring. Interdisciplinary or inter-professional working has been suggested as a further means of gaining the cross-sectoral skills that are seen as crucial to effective neighbourhood renewal.⁹

VIEWS FROM THE FIELD

The research focused on regeneration agencies in eight London Boroughs (Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey Islington, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest), ie 25 per cent of all London boroughs. The area they represent is currently experiencing unprecedented levels of regeneration activity, with some of the largest site-based development projects in the UK (and Europe), including: the recently completed new Arsenal Emirates stadium and associated housing; Kings Cross Railway Lands and Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL); the 2012 Olympic Park; and the London and South-East Thames Gateway housing growth areas, in the counties of Essex and Kent. The research involved the mapping of existing training provision, interviews with 22 regeneration agencies (including 11 local authority staff, one

primary healthcare trust, one housing association, one private sector agency, one voluntary sector agency, six regeneration agencies and the Regional Development Agency), and a focus group of former students from the University's MA Urban Policy and MA City Design and Regeneration courses who were now working in the regeneration sector at national and regional levels. Interviews were focused primarily on those with strategic responsibility for the overall coordination of regeneration projects, but also included a number of other professionals (from education, health, housing, planning, etc.), who were involved in the delivery of individual projects. The interviews and group discussion focused on current continuing professional development (CPD) practice, perceived skills shortages and training needs.

Current CPD practice and provision

It is clear that regeneration practitioners are already being offered a wide range of training and CPD opportunities. The *Regeneration and Renewal* trade magazine produces a very useful list of post-graduate degree courses in regeneration or related subjects now being offered by universities. The latest list published in October 2006 included a total of 105 courses offered on a fulltime and/or part-time basis, or by distance learning.

In addition, a wide range of agencies deliver short courses in areas related to regeneration. These include programmes offered by professional bodies, voluntary sector agencies, private companies, colleges and universities. Courses come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from half-day events to one or two week intensive summer schools. The vast array of conferences, workshops, seminars and networks organised by a similar range of institutions offer a further source of CPD, together with an increasing number of online sources of knowledge and information, such as www.renewal.net. While provision is largely targeted at those new to the profession or middle management, initiatives such as Common Purpose and Renaisi's Renewal Academy, and English Partnership's Excellence in Leadership programme also target senior managers.

A number of new programmes have been developed recently as a result of the concerns raised by the studies and reports cited above. These include the Renewal Academy, funded by the government's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit to provide training for those working in neighbourhood renewal programmes, and a modular training programme developed by the British Urban Regeneration Association

(BURA), consisting of ten one-day courses on different areas of regeneration and linked to a Post Graduate Certificate in Management (Urban Regeneration). The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) now runs a three-day Urban Design Summer School, English Partnerships have developed a new two-year graduate programme designed to give 12 students a year a detailed overview of the regeneration industry, and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has set up an online learning resource 'Planning Matters', which includes modules in business and generic skills. The Chartered Institute of Housing in conjunction with BURA have developed a master class for leaders from housing, planning, developers and other sectors to share, learn and help find solutions for the successful regeneration of communities. Furthermore, the ASC has been developing a common module on sustainable communities to be included in any course that is relevant to regeneration and building effective and cohesive communities, and, together with the Geographical Association, is trying to reinvigorate interest within schools through introducing new material on sustainable communities into the geography curriculum. Finally, in an attempt to deal with the shortage of planners, the government has been offering bursaries for accredited postgraduate courses in planning.

The general view of those interviewed was that there is no shortage of existing short course provision: they were bombarded with flyers for seminars and conferences. But provision is seen as being highly fragmented and of variable quality, and identifying the most appropriate form of provision is difficult. Commercially run courses in property development were highly rated but considered too expensive, at least by the public sector staff interviewed. Those we interviewed were largely unaware of the new developments outlined above and were confused by the array of provision on offer, leading one agency manager to suggest that perhaps her staff needed professional guidance in identifying their training needs and how these could best be addressed. The view of many was that short courses and conferences, while useful, were often not long enough to learn the new skills required. Yet not everyone was willing to commit time and money to a degree course, and few employers were willing to meet the cost of fees, especially when so many staff are on short-term contracts. While all the agencies interviewed expressed a commitment to staff development and cited examples of courses staff had attended, only three agencies had undertaken a systematic training needs analysis of the organisation as a whole. The findings thus echo those identified in a study conducted by the Planning

Network,¹⁵ which suggested that the problem was not one of lack of courses, but of matching information about courses with need and demand, and of providing the right type and level of training.

In view of the problems in recruiting staff, some boroughs and agencies are recruiting less experienced staff and then developing their own in-house training provision. For example, the London Borough of Islington had been experiencing considerable difficulties recruiting to regeneration posts, especially at principal officer level. In response, the borough had developed three Regeneration and Community Development Assistant posts (attracting 153 applicants) and their own in-house training package with assignments. Others had brought in consultants to develop tailor-made courses and invited neighbouring boroughs to join and share the cost. Boroughs such as these were keen to explore how they could work with their local colleges and universities to develop future programmes.

Skills and training needs

The views collected from the field supported the findings of previous studies in highlighting the need for a mix of generic and technical skills, with generic skills being more frequently cited as lacking.

The skills sets identified from the practitioner interviews are summarised in Appendix 1 and can be grouped into six main headings: research and evaluation skills, project development, project management, specific technical knowledge, strategic management and integration, and understanding policy and structures, as show in Figure 1.

[INSERT FIG. 1 ABOUT HERE]

Research and evaluation/data analysis

The need for skills in data analysis was frequently mentioned, with over a third of all those interviewed raising it as an issue. The increasing importance of evidence-based policy has led to a requirement in recent years for practitioners to have an understanding of local datasets and the information they can provide. This sort of information is required on a routine basis for inclusion in grant applications and project proposals as well as reports and evaluations. The development of online sources of data such as the Neighbourhood Statistics initiative means that local area

statistics are now more readily available, but the agencies interviewed were concerned that, while they had access to a lot of statistical information and socio-economic data, they did not have the skills to manipulate and analyse them, which they needed to be able to do to gain a better understanding of their local area and make comparisons with the wider London region or the rest of the UK. There was a perceived need for training in socio-economic data analysis, IT skills for data manipulation, basic statistics and in understanding the limitations of the data and data sources available.

Project development skills

The skills required for effective project development included ‘soft’ or ‘process skills’ such as entrepreneurialism and the ability to spot opportunities, create links, network effectively, write creatively (particularly for funding proposals), and the more technical knowledge or ‘hard’ skills required to piece together a project and a project proposal. It required the ability to put together a partnership, and a package of proposals while taking the local community along.

Networking skills were viewed as being key to successful project development. These skills were seen as incorporating the ability to ‘bring people together’ and work with individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds and professions. To do this effectively required an understanding of how different sectors operate. The Head of an Economic Development Unit interviewed, for example, was concerned that her staff should have an understanding of how the private sector worked so that they could communicate with local businesses, develop business partnerships and business-related initiatives.

Project management skills

Training in project management was also frequently mentioned as a key training need, with a range of soft and hard skills identified as being required for successful project management. Soft skills cited included partnership skills, engaging with local businesses and managing diversity. Partnership working was the most frequently mentioned generic skill (seven organisations), particularly in the context of being able to handle the complexities of working with people from different cultural and organisational perspectives and across community/voluntary and public and private sectors.

Technical knowledge included the ability to manage capital projects (requiring an understanding of the basics of building and planning issues, and how to manage building professionals), legal issues and employment law. Report writing, developing consultancy briefs, and monitoring and evaluation were also seen as key areas in which training was needed, as well as skills in marketing for regeneration, eg to facilitate a city branding campaign.

Specific technical knowledge

the interview sample tended to include more generalists than technical specialists, but there was a strong feeling among those interviewed that generalist regeneration practitioners needed at least an overview of key technical or specific skills. Most of the skills required in this area related to the need for regeneration generalists to be able to understand the basics of planning, property and land-use development so that they could communicate more effectively with building professionals, critically appraise submissions or be able to provide evidence to a planning enquiry. ‘There should be courses in understanding planning for non-planners’, argued one Local Authority Head of Regeneration. Other training needs included a basic introduction to urban design skills, property and planning issues, and some of the terminology used, understanding development processes and how to appraise developments from both a design and financial point of view (eg the ability to assess whether development costs are realistic).

Others argued that those coordinating projects and developments and the range of professionals involved needed at least an overview of the key specialist areas concerned, so that they could manage the range of consultants and specialists more effectively and have some credibility with them. The flipside of this was the perceived need for technical specialists to have an overview of the broader regeneration issues such as community consultation and engagement, and an understanding of diversity issues.

The remaining skill and knowledge sets have been placed at the centre of Figure 1, as they represent overall management and coordination issues and underpinning knowledge.

Management and strategic integration

Training needs in this area largely encompass those cited by staff working at a more senior strategic level. These included leadership and negotiating skills, a range of assessment skills (project, financial and economic appraisals, financial accounting and risk assessment), marketing and PR, longer-term planning skills and those required for managing organisational change. Many of these skill sets are generic management tasks common to a range of different professions. It could be argued, however, that the regeneration profession is characterised by a greater degree of change, in terms of both policy and staff turnover, and involves a more diverse range of stakeholders than other sectors, thus adding to the wide range of management skills required.

Knowledge of policy and structures

Regeneration practitioners tend to be so absorbed with the everyday pressures of their job that they rarely get time to reflect on their practice and see the wider context of their work. A number of senior managers, in particular, felt that they would benefit from a better understanding of urban governance, planning policies and related issues. They were also keen to learn about strategies that have been implemented in other world cities. London was not seen as being good at looking at best practice elsewhere, analysing what had worked and why, and how it could be adapted to the local context. A gap in current training provision was also identified in relation to ‘cutting edge’ issues, in particular anticipating change. For example, the need to be able to anticipate what skills sets might be needed to deal with the shift from area-based initiatives to mainstream provision.

More junior staff were also thought to need a better understanding of planning issues, information about new planning regulations and an understanding of the roles, structures and responsibilities of local government.

How can these skills be best acquired? The need for new forms of training delivery

The research identified a demand for a variety of different sorts of skills training. Those in work wanted CPD provision that could be fitted in around work commitments, which would provide an opportunity for them to update their skills, hear at first hand what has worked in different situations, and allow them to network and share experiences with others working in the field.

Regeneration managers wanted the possibility of being able to send staff on individual masters level modules, or on modules that offer a variety of progression routes to certificates and diplomas as well as full masters level degrees. Modules that matched the focus of the neighbourhood renewal agenda, ie housing, active citizenship, health, education, crime, worklessness, liveability and sustainability, and social policy domains covering health, housing and transport, were particularly sought.

Those interviewed emphasised the need for training to be grounded ‘in reality’. Regeneration practitioners have little time for trainers who do not understand where they are coming from. They want courses which include real life case studies of good and bad practice, study tours, role play and practical live exercises delivered by people who understand and have had recent experience of managing regeneration projects. Focus group participants suggested that degree courses could ‘adopt a project’, thereby giving students the opportunity to have work placements and project work in real-life situations. Other participants suggested that courses should stimulate lobbying and campaigning skills and should re-visit some of the iconic projects of the last ten years to see how successful they had been. Seminars were suggested as a means of providing urban policy updates and networking opportunities, while two to three day courses or individual modules were seen as providing the minimum amount of time required to deal with key issues in more depth. Additional post-course follow-up support or mentoring was a further suggestion.

ACTION TAKEN BY LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

The findings from this survey have been used to inform the development of provision at LMU. This has included setting up a new post-graduate masters course — MA City Regeneration — and developing a new programme of short courses and seminar workshops. At the same time a new housing masters — MA Housing and Inclusion — is being developed and the University has funded a three-year readership post to look into developing post-graduate masters level and CPD short course provision in planning.

The new MA City Regeneration includes core and optional modules in a range of conceptual, policy and generic skills, while covering a range of policy areas such as health, housing, sustainable communities, economic development and creative and cultural regeneration. It is therefore multidisciplinary — attempting a more holistic

approach — and applied while still developing student’s conceptual skills. The teaching team includes many with wide experience of working — including research and training — in regeneration and community empowerment, which also provides the team with strong networks and contacts. The applied focus and professional mix of the teaching team also influences the delivery and teaching methods, with wide use of case studies, visiting speakers and field visits. Such provision is perhaps especially suited to many new universities with a strong local and applied focus and a number of other new universities are now offering similar programmes in this area.

Alongside the new MA City Regeneration, a programme of short courses and seminars have also been developed in a range of areas from Data for Regeneration, Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Project Management, Community Empowerment and Sustainable Communities. Many of the short courses are also modules on the MA programme, allowing another access route into masters level study for many for whom even a part-time masters is not feasible.

A foundation degree in Community Empowerment and a ‘city’ or urban pathway through the sociology undergraduate degree provide lower level access routes for those interested in regeneration, but this still needs to be integrated with other levels of provision. In the past, geography would have provided one of the traditional routes into the sector, but owing to falling student numbers in the 1990s, LMU along with several other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) decided to close its geography department. This has had an impact on recruitment to the MA programmes and has also meant that much of the new provision has had to be developed from scratch, placing significant demands on the staff concerned. A critical factor contributing to the progress made at LMU has been the presence of strong management support, together with the willingness to restructure departmental budgets and resources to provide new staff posts in this area. In particular, a key appointment has been a new principal lectureship post in regeneration, with responsibility for developing and coordinating provision in the broad area of regeneration skills.

CONCLUSION

There has now been a considerable amount of research in this area that has tended to reach similar conclusions. Since this study involved a relatively small sample from one particular geographic area, one should clearly caution against using it to make

national recommendations. It is notable, however, that, in line with earlier national studies, this research also identified that the key skills required, at least by those responsible for the overall management and coordination of regeneration programmes and projects, are generic and practical. Furthermore, it is also clear that these staff also need a broad overview of a wide range of specialist areas such as planning, design, property development and so on, to enable them to work effectively with the technical specialists in these areas. Similarly, these technical specialists need some knowledge and understanding of the wide range of regeneration issues — community and economic development, diversity, etc. — that are important to a more holistic approach to the development of sustainable communities.

The question then is how these skills can best be acquired. The evidence to date and the results of the study suggest that there needs to be a radical change in the delivery of traditional degree courses and training programmes. These need to provide better opportunities for acquiring the generic skills such as project development and management by, for example, incorporating more practical assignments, case studies, site visits and project work in their programmes, and by ensuring that practitioners are actively involved in the development and delivery of courses. Training provision needs to be more flexible to allow for skills to be acquired and updated over periods of time that suit the individual learner. Courses also need to encourage cross-disciplinary networking. The ASC's proposed core module in regeneration is a good step in the right direction here, as it will hopefully bring students from the different disciplines and professions together. This study did not set out to compare the UK professional structures and training systems with those of other countries, but it is evident that, at least in the field of planning and urban design, there may be much to learn from practice elsewhere in Europe. This is an area that would merit further research that the ASC or the European Urban Knowledge Network, who are already engaged in transnational debates on the skills for regeneration, could usefully look at.

These changes, however, are not always easy to implement. The experience at LMU suggests that the development of more applied and multidisciplinary programmes requires a great degree of coordination, and this needs to be recognised and supported by institutions and their funding bodies if new and more popular courses are to be developed to help address the current skills deficit in regeneration. The Higher Education Funding Council encourages higher education institutions to work more closely with business and communities by funding knowledge transfer

initiatives through its Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) initiative, but this does not cover changes to mainstream course provision.

Nationally, it would appear that there has been a degree of progress made since the Egan Review, although it remains to be seen whether the various new CPD programmes and initiatives developed will be sufficient to address the existing and future skills needs. London does not seem to be faring so well, however. The RTPI have suggested¹⁶ that, despite the recent expansion in the number of planning courses, the impact of major developments such as the Olympics will probably mean that there is still likely to be a shortfall of qualified staff in London and the South East. This suggests that there is a need for a substantial expansion in recruitment and training initiatives in the capital. The problem of lack of advice and information on training provision in the London region also remains. Unfortunately London still lacks a Centre of Excellence, although the London Development Agency recently established a new unit 'Design for London' which will be providing advice on urban design. This will not address the wider regeneration skills issues, however, or provide the vital signposting service to existing CPD provision that is so urgently needed. A body is also needed that can play a role in helping to broker the links that need to be made between training providers, professional bodies and regeneration agencies to enable new programmes to be developed.

Finally, it is clear that, while much academic provision could usefully incorporate more vocationally oriented practice, this should not undermine the role of HEIs in providing opportunities for reflection and analysis. It also needs to be recognised that the skills needs of regeneration professionals cannot be met by formal CPD programmes alone. Acquiring relevant work and life experience is equally important. Thus those delivering training and managing regeneration practitioners need to maximise the opportunities for this type of learning. Opportunities for work placements, job rotations, secondments and exchanges between different groups of staff and across different disciplines also need to be considered. Thus a key challenge for the ASC and the RCEs is to work with the professional bodies to find ways of opening up work opportunities for a new breed of generic regeneration professionals, while at the same time ensuring that professional standards are maintained.

Acknowledgments

The research study on which this paper is based was funded by a grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England Innovation Fund 2 (HEIF2).

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[APPENDIX 1 HERE]

Figure 1: Skills needs of regeneration practitioners