

DRAFT

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

ANNUAL REPORT 1991/1992

Chief Executive's Annual Report 1991/2

The report by the Chief Executive for the year ended March 1991 referred to the need to review the Council's Medium Term Plan during the coming year.

Coincident with the start of the Medium Term plan, Price Waterhouse undertook a comprehensive financial management survey of NCET and one of the more significant recommendations was "the adoption of a pan-NCET needs-driven approach to planning which was not constrained by historical factors or influenced by organisational considerations". Addressing these two critical issues proved a lengthy and at times daunting, task for all concerned and eventually led to a fundamental review of the work of the Council and the needs of those it seeks to serve.

However, by the end of March the Senior Management Team had agreed in principle the changes in the Directorate and line management responsibilities necessary for the delivery of the 1992/93 work plans. Work had also begun on the setting up of new programme teams which reflected the cross-directorate use of skills and expertise within the organisation. The decision had also been taken to introduce a unified dissemination programme for the coming year.

The ongoing work of developing new working practices and systems was encouraged and supported by the Chairman of Council, Lady Parkes, and her enthusiasm and energy were a considerable influence during the year. Dr Noel Thompson, who was Chief Executive of NCET from its creation in 1988, left the Council in February 1992 and I was appointed as Acting Chief Executive until a more permanent appointment could be made.

Much time was spent during the year outlining programmes of work which would cross the original sector boundaries, including the evaluation of the use of new technologies in education and training, special needs at all levels, IT competencies in trainers and the application of IT across the curriculum and in training. Whilst all this was for the future in terms of application, its conception, planning and design represented a considerable work-load during 1991/92.

Valuable work continued in providing curriculum support for classroom use and training packs for the implementation of IT across the curriculum. The Educational Software Partnership Scheme continued during the year and a number of products emerged. Some of these were shown at our stands at the BETT' 92 exhibition at the Barbican in January 1992.

The Department of Education and Science followed this scheme by asking us to manage a CD-ROM evaluation scheme towards the end of 1991. This was quickly followed by a CD-ROM educational software scheme at the beginning of 1992. The establishment of links with other agencies continued during the year. Collaborative links with a wide range of national bodies and, above all, with our sponsoring department the DES, were strengthened. In addition to these, steps were taken to broaden contacts with other support agencies such as subject associations, so that our work can influence a wider audience.

As education and training establishments gain greater autonomy, NCET will need to evolve methods of addressing a market increasing in financial independence. During the year our promotional activity has had to be carefully balanced between presence at exhibitions and conferences, direct mailings to establishments, and press releases, advertisements, articles and editorials in professional journals and the press.

During the year, the new computerised accounting system (put in place at the end of 1991) provided valuable information for budgetary control and planning of future work. Work continues to ensure that the Council performs in a cost-effective way, and a framework of performance indicators and measures is being developed under the leadership of Jean Beck, Director of Information.

The achievements of 1991/92, despite a background of uncertainty, owe much to the hard work and dedication of all the staff, and I offer them my personal thanks and appreciation. Through the delay in the provision of our new building, the working conditions are far from satisfactory and have resulted in some members of staff remaining in London. I look forward to the day when all our staff are accommodated under one roof, and work in an environment which is conducive to their needs.

Directorate of Schools: Annual Report 1991/2

During the year NCET continued to provide a central role in supporting schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We have delivered much of our support for this through the Local Education Authorities but increasingly we have focused our work on the school environment.

The priorities for the year included the development of collaborations with subject and other professional associations, the development of school-based resources focusing on the National Curriculum, and the development of our role in supporting networks of expert and interested practitioners and trainers.

Our collaborations with others developed significantly over the year. These included twelve joint developments and publications with subject associations in science, English, technology, geography, history, modern languages, and music. We also developed new connections with the Secondary Heads Associations and National Association of Headteachers and we held joint seminars with the CTC trust. Our work with the National Curriculum Council continued and was especially satisfactory in our collaboration on the non-statutory guidance for modern languages.

NCET's work for primary schools included developing a classroom support pack on history and geography and IT, and support materials for assessment of IT. Our work for secondary schools included developing materials for mathematics on graphic calculators, Logo and tiling. Other developments included four books on language learning and IT.

For LEA advisers and INSET providers our work included a pack covering science and IT and videos to support both LEA and school-based in-service training in mathematics, modern languages, and Early Years. We also continued to provide advisers and advisory teachers, initial teacher trainers and INSET trainers with newsletters, information sheets, reports and support for meetings and seminars.

The work with initial teacher education continued to flourish with 295 tutors attending NCET courses. Of particular interest were our seminars on putting policy into practice, and on profiling. Project INTENT moved successfully from the developmental to the evaluation phase. Initial teacher trainers received all of our publications targeted at schools, together with 11 further publications developed specifically for themselves.

The Special Needs community welcomed our role in disseminating information through regional and LEA groupings and from these, identifying areas of expertise and good practice. We extended our contact with specialist national agencies such as the British Dyslexia Association and the RNIB, and ran a joint conference with the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf. Development work included packs on IT support for the hearing impaired, special needs and science, and language development. The ACE centres continued their work on assessment and in-service training. This included additional grant to cover the training of advisory teachers under the GEST initiative for communication difficulties.

Work not funded through NCET included the setting up of Project Gemini with British Telecom to explore the use of telecommunications in supporting learning in schools. We also completed the Remote Sensing in Science Project, funded by the British National Space Centre and DES. Another important aspect of our work has been to provide training for advisory teachers funded by the DES. This year we ran eight courses, attended by 222 advisory teachers.

Directorate of Information: Annual Report 1992/2

As the use of IT in education and training increases, and as institutions in the schooling and post-16 sectors become increasingly independent, there is a growing need for access to up-to-date information on educational technology. In the light of the changing infrastructure in education and training, NCET is reviewing its strategies for communicating with its client groups.

The year 1991/92 has seen a number of developments in this area. NCET's *Directory of Information* was formally launched at BETT, in January 1992. This four-volume loose-leaf directory of information sheets, regularly updated six times per year, is designed to enable subscribers to keep abreast of developments in the world of educational technology.

A revised and updated *Directory of Educational Software* was published in conjunction with Whitakers and included software appropriate for colleges as well as schools. A monthly alerting service consisting of press and newsletter summaries on educational technology in the post-16 sector was developed and successfully trialled in the course of the year.

NCET continued to provide a written and telephone enquiry service to those working in education and training. The numbers of enquiries received from individual schools and colleges continued to increase. Topics of increasing interest to enquirers were I.T. in the curriculum, hardware and technical information, software, in-service training and multi-media.

In order to ascertain customer satisfaction with the enquiry service, external consultants were commissioned to follow up 35 of the 470 enquiries recorded during a sample week in February. They found overall that customers were very satisfied with the efficient and helpful service provided. The information gathered during the sample week has assisted with the development of performance indicators for the enquiry service.

NCET's information staff continued to work closely with development staff in all areas of NCET's activities, contributing their expertise to the planning and development of courses, surveys, research and materials. One example of this collaboration was the production of support materials for the CD-ROM in Schools scheme, funded by the Department of Education and Science.

A new information pack, *Sources of Funding*, was added to the existing series, and three seminars, *Communicating Information in Education and Training*, were held for our key contacts in local education authorities, further education and teacher education. The three matrix documents, *Information Skills and the National Curriculum*, *The Flexible Library and Learning Environment*, and *Making Information Work*, have continued to prove popular with our client groups.

In the course of the year, the Department of Education and Science commissioned NCET to produce a report, *Review of Flexible Learning in Schools (11-16)*. NCET's expertise in the management and dissemination of information continued to be recognised by external organisations. Several projects, including a feasibility study and the development of a database of resources, undertaken for the National Health Service and the Employment Department were successfully completed.

Directorate of Training Sector: Annual Report 1991/2

NCET's work in the field of education post-16 includes further and higher education and continuing education at work. Much of this work is concerned with the role of learning technologies at college, in the workplace, and in support of the distance learner.

The Training Directorate's activities were focused on certain key areas. The priorities were to make an initial response to the impending changes in FE and to build upon relationships with other groups in that market sector, particularly the National Association for IT in FE (NAITFE) and The Staff College. Another key area was the need to improve access to learning by supporting careers and guidance projects. Work was also focused towards open and flexible learning, particularly in the workplace.

During the year the Training Directorate undertook a number of successful projects, including the development and trialling of a staff development pack for the use of IT in FE, and a publication for the DES, *Principles for the Effective Management of IT in Colleges*. Further, we have started a users' forum for managing satellite and cable technology within FE. Our collaborations with Teesside Polytechnic, and the Training, Enterprise & Education Directorate, Learning Technologies Unit (now Learning Methods Division) to evaluate interactive technologies and modern language learning are progressing well.

The success of *The Careers Software Review* led to an update publication and a training pack. A careers education and guidance interactive video disk is under way to support non-specialist guidance teachers and those within initial teacher training institutions. In the field of open learning, the video pack *Supporting Students in Flexible Learning*, jointly produced with SCET, had considerable success even before its formal launch, and there is continuing interest in existing publications on open and flexible learning. NCET has become a founder and co-ordinating member of the Open Learning Award for Excellence, which stimulates a balanced and effective approach to flexible learning, particularly in training provided by FE institutions and TECs. Our theme of flexibility in learning and training has extended to vocational training with the production of the publication *Training for Teleworking*, to support the management of home-based working. Finally, a report, *Technology-based training within small and medium sized enterprises*, jointly produced with National Economic Development Organisation (NEDO), was prepared, to be launched in autumn 1992. The firm foundations of these programmes are to be carried forward into our new programmes of work.

Technical Directorate: Annual Report 1991/2

The Technical Directorate carries out programmes of work which require special technological evaluative expertise. In order to fulfil this role the staff keep abreast of leading edge developments in technology, trends in product development and, in varying degrees, national, European and world standards.

As technology continues to develop, many new and exciting opportunities are created in educational technology. A most important aspect of our work has been to identify such opportunities, advise our clients of their potential, and assist in their evaluation. Rapid developments in technology make investment decisions increasingly difficult, and the technical consultancy team provides information and guidance on education technology to assist schools and colleges in their purchasing decisions.

During the year, the Technical Directorate conducted a number of projects for Government departments. These included the CD-ROM in Schools pilot scheme funded by the Department of Education and Science. An independent evaluation study was also commissioned. Knowledge-based computer-assisted learning software was commissioned for community pharmacists by the Department of Health. An interactive video disc for the Careers Education and Guidance community was jointly funded by the Department of Employment, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Education and Science.

In addition to this commissioned work, the directorate has also produced specifications for Interactive Video disc platforms and a protocol for science laboratory software. Both of these have been adopted by leading developers, and should enable educators to mix products from various manufacturers.

External Relations: Annual Report 1991/2

The publications department again produced many high-quality titles resulting from the work of the project teams. Some eighty-seven were produced for sale together with almost two hundred reports, newsletters and information sheets. Publications such as the CD-ROM booklets and *Focus on I.T.* made a significant impact. Amongst titles from the catalogue which continue to sell well is *Touch Explorer Plus*. This and similar titles helped to generate income which was used to cover reprint costs and the cost of those titles which, whilst essential to the work of the Council, could never be justified in a purely commercial environment.

In addition to this, trading income made a very significant contribution to the development of the *Directory of Information* (which was piloted during the year for launch in April 1992), and to the cost of newsletters and information sheets.

In addition to the catalogue, the work of the Council was promoted at national exhibitions. Amongst these were:

Training and Personnel Development at the NEC
Design and Technology at the NEC
The Resource Conference in Doncaster
BETT '92 at the Barbican in London.

NCET received approval in May 1991 to continue its trading activities after an experimental period. Its purpose is to enable more materials to be published for use in schools, whilst avoiding the need to divert central grant from development work. During the year it made a significant contribution to this end.