

# College Manager



March 2008

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## ACM introduces

Sealing the partnership:  
General Secretaries,  
**Dr Mary Bousted** (ATL)  
and **Peter Pendle** (ACM)

# AMiE

to the  
sector

ACM announced the launch of the **Association of Managers in Education (AMiE)** at a press conference on Thursday 14 February. AMiE is a joint venture between ACM and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL). ATL's President Julia Neal and General Secretary Dr Mary Bousted joined their ACM counterparts, Fiona Rawlings and Peter Pendle, at the launch. All ACM members had previously received a letter outlining details of this exciting project. ▶

## ACM introduces AMiE to the sector

- ◀ The objective of AMiE, which will be run and managed by ACM, is to give ACM members access to ATL services and ATL leadership and manager members access to the services of ACM.

The launch was the culmination of many months of high-level negotiations between the two organisations and is loosely modelled on a similar venture in the health service between the First Division Association and UNISON.

ACM's National Council has been considering strategic options for the Association for the past 12 months. Having undertaken a sample telephone poll of members, it decided that working in partnership with another professional association in the education sector sharing similar values, views and approaches was the way forward.

AMiE will be a partnership between ACM and ATL. ACM is the chief trade union for leaders in the FE sector, and the new arrangement will enable it to continue to grow and maintain its independence while strengthening its influence on the national policy stage – something that members identified as a priority in ACM's annual survey. ACM members will automatically receive free membership of AMiE, together with a range of additional benefits that includes associate membership of ATL. The initiative will enable ACM to freeze subscription rates and hopefully reduce them in the future.

This is not a merger of ACM and ATL. In the future, if the partnership were a success, then a full merger would be an option although this would only be undertaken following a full ballot of members. AMiE will bring little change at member level: ACM regional officers will continue to undertake personal representation for members; ACM/AMiE branches and ATL branches will remain separate.

- This is an exciting venture that will enable ACM to continue the growth achieved over recent years whilst providing additional resources to ensure even better services for ACM members. Council took a lot of time to identify the best partner and the best model for AMiE and hopefully we will now give even more education leaders and managers the opportunity to experience the high level of representation received by ACM members.

Fiona Rawlings, ACM President

- Over recent years ACM has been one of the fastest growing and most successful organisations in the TUC. We are always striving to achieve excellence in the full range of our services to members. The AMiE partnership will assist that ambition and enable us to reach even more education leaders.

Peter Pendle, ACM General Secretary

- The time is right for AMiE. The education world is changing fast. Managers in schools and FE colleges are going to work closely together to deliver the 14–19 diplomas. AMiE will be a professional association which helps members to engage with each other and receive outstanding professional support, training, information and advice to enable them to reach their challenging professional objectives.

Dr Mary Bousted, General Secretary, ATL

- This is an imaginative new form of union cooperation and we wish both unions well in representing all their members through this new structure.

Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary

AMiE will become active in autumn 2008 and regular briefings will be provided to ACM members until then. Questions and comments can be sent to [amie@acm.uk.com](mailto:amie@acm.uk.com)



## Self-regulation and leadership in the FE system

Greater self-regulation was one of the many reforms proposed in the government's FE White Paper (*Further education: raising skills, improving life chances*; 2006), and in his speech to the 2006 Association of Colleges annual conference, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills called on the FE sector to take collective responsibility for its own future destiny and reputation.

The FE Self Regulation Implementation Group (SRIG) was set up to advise on the development of an effective system of self-regulation for further education. Chaired by Sir George Sweeney, whose previous remit was to reduce bureaucracy, the SRIG comprises a broad coalition of key stakeholders from the world of further education, with former principal of Sheffield College, John Taylor, as project director. Following a period of consultation, the group has delivered its detailed proposals to the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

The SRIG's five main aims for the development of self-regulation in the FE system are: provider autonomy and empowerment; a focus on the needs of learners, employers and communities; simplification of regulatory requirements; improved accountability to government; and building on professional confidence and trust. Its vision is of respected, autonomous, demand-led organisations, delivering high-quality and responsive provision, and operating as respected and trusted partners of the government.

Sir George says that self-regulation 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'.

So what does this all mean for leadership and our sector leaders?

### Excellent leadership

The term 'self-regulation' has become synonymous with the idea that the FE sector is mature enough to be more self-governing and less in need of government direction. Because it delivers a public service though, the sector has to use public money to deliver the ends decreed by government, and so self-regulation is really about the sector being given greater power over its own destiny and being trusted to take on more responsibility for itself while delivering government priorities. Therefore, more than ever, we need leaders in the sector who are able to understand the government's reform agenda and lead strategically to deliver that agenda.

The SRIG has proposed the formation of a new body called 'the Single Voice' to represent the whole sector, not just colleges, in strategic dialogue with government on regulatory matters. One of its key tasks will be to formulate a vision that is substantial and ambitious rather than the lowest common denominator. If the FE sector is to speak with one voice, there will need to be excellent leadership and a serious and considered process to push the boundaries of shared ambition.

In order to build capacity for greater autonomy, the FE sector will need to seize ownership of its performance regime. In early 2008, a new organisation will take over the work of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA). As part of the drive towards self-regulation, this new organisation will be owned and driven by the FE sector and its work will recognise that provider performance, self-improvement and leadership capacity are inextricably linked.

The development of peer challenge and peer-review procedures will help ensure rigorous and meaningful assessment. Within their institutions, leaders will need to build effective capacity and processes for accountability and transparency at every level, while ensuring outstanding quality and performance. ►

- ◀ CEL's work on the role of leaders in creating public value emphasises the importance of securing legitimacy for action through open and effective deliberative processes that engage stakeholders and customers as well as the staff of the organisation. Such approaches can help to ensure that leaders in a self-regulated environment have authority for strategic action and that they maximise the public value that they create.

Greater ownership of targets by those charged to deliver them will see a move away from centrally driven targets towards greater empowerment of customers and frontline professionals. In order to secure better outcomes for our learners, we need to decide what we really care about – targets or changing lives? We can have intricate discussions about performance frameworks, but it is the college principal or provider chief executive who determines what actually happens. We must choose what we are for. This is a personal matter for leaders, not a system issue, and we must relentlessly challenge the poverty of ambition that results from trying to achieve strategic outcomes within the confines of central policy. Broader-brush targets will allow colleges and providers to use funding more effectively and fluidly to meet targets and create public value by addressing wider social responsibilities within their communities.

As the system moves from being government-centric to being community- and customer-centric, how will self-regulation work in a market system? Will the market become the primary regulator, using measures of customer satisfaction to evaluate providers rather than the range of current outcome targets?

In his review of skills, Lord Leitch offered sector leaders new freedom and greater independence to plan and develop their organisations with significantly reduced external intervention. On the one hand, they would be able to develop their full leadership potential, alongside business and public service leaders. On the other, the environment would offer less protection and so leaders would need to have the capacity and capability to rise to the business challenges of the FE marketplace.

## Market awareness

Self-regulation is not a soft option; the sector must perform to the highest standards to sustain confidence among politicians and customers. Colleges have to generate more income from customers, so one of the key imperatives is to become customer-focused and demand-led, concentrating on those who are intended to benefit from the sector's services. To thrive in a more competitive environment, leaders need to be more enterprising and businesslike. They must be able to take the initiative, envision a future and take people with them to deliver it.

With regard to qualifications, it could be argued that prescriptive use of government funding interferes with the operation of a pure market. Qualifications are the measure of success and outcomes in the system. Consequently, public subsidy, funding incentives and quality measures are all orientated towards whole qualifications. But this may not be what individual learners and employers want. Bite-size units of learning can enable people to continue learning, adapting skills to new contexts and developing the personal skills needed for a modern economy. Leaders will need to have the courage to promote a new approach to qualifications if that is what customers want.

Colleges and providers in the FE sector make a significant contribution to their local communities, working closely with local authorities and other agencies to deliver publicly valuable outcomes. Citizens care far more about these outcomes than about the bodies created to deliver them, and so we need to be shaping relationships (rather than forming and reforming structures) that encourage greater integration to ensure that we maximise our contribution to local communities. Leaders need to combine a systemic understanding of newly emerging organisational forms and relationships with a sophisticated emotional and organisational intelligence of how they and others take up their roles, so that their actions have the impact they intend. Command and control styles of leadership are likely to be less effective than those that draw on a repertoire of styles.

## Leadership through influence

The leadership challenges arising from increased self-regulation and other FE reforms will require leaders to be highly skilled in leading complexity, transformational change and managing tensions and paradox, if they are to succeed in creating the conditions for innovation and high performance. They will have to review their strategic positioning, take a proactive leadership stance and shape their own destinies in the FE system. Leadership through influence rather than power is the new challenge, the critical skills being persuasion, influence, facilitation and judgement.

We should also ask ourselves what we can learn from the private sector and from other parts of the public sector. In our quest for best practice, could ethical and socially responsible corporations provide suitable models?

The HE sector already enjoys relatively high levels of autonomy and investment, legitimised by its reputation. As the FE system builds its reputation, based on evidence of rates of return and social and economic impact, the move towards self-regulation in a customer-driven environment is not only inevitable but also highly desirable.

With the interests of learners at heart and the delivery of quality provision as their goal, FE leaders are increasingly becoming significant and respected figures in their local communities.

The move towards self-regulation will, I believe, serve to strengthen the contribution that further education makes to our society and economy.

Having worked in the FE system for 25 years, I have every confidence that our leaders, at every level, can rise to the opportunity and to the challenges of self-regulation. CEL has a highly constructive and productive relationship with ACM and its members. I look forward to dialogue and more joint initiatives to prepare sector leaders for the future. ●

## The Successful College Manager Conference 2008

### Colleges for the future

Friday 23 May 2008, International Convention Centre, Birmingham

ACM's 2008 conference marks the Association's 21st anniversary. We invite colleagues to join us in celebrating ACM's success and its tremendous contribution to the flourishing of managers and colleges. To enable as many managers as possible to join the celebration, we are significantly subsidising the conference fee in this special year.

We have a strong line-up of speakers to stimulate dialogue and debate. They include:

- **John Denham**, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills
- **Elaine McMahon**, Chair, 157 Group/Principal, Hull College
- **Lynne Sedgmore** CBE, Chief Executive, Centre for Excellence in Leadership
- **John Stone**, Chief Executive, Learning and Skills Network
- **Stella Mbubaegbu** CBE, Principal, Highbury College
- **Mary Bousted**, General Secretary, Association of Teachers and Lecturers
- **David Hunter**, Chief Executive, Lifelong Learning UK
- **Rob Wye**, National Director, Learning and Skills Council
- **Pho Kyprie**, UK National Manager, Edexcel.

The theme of our anniversary conference is 'colleges for the future'. What are the key policy directions (funding, curriculum, regulation, political change) that will impact on colleges in the short, medium and longer term? Thus, the conference will enhance participants' strategic perspective on the future and offer practical updates and guidance on current policies and thinking. The conference will follow a special celebration dinner, held the night before.

ACM members will soon be receiving an invitation to the conference. Non-members are also very welcome to attend.

For further details and to register, please go to [www.acm.uk.com](http://www.acm.uk.com) or call the ACM office on **01858 461 110**.

# ACM unimpressed by proposals for new quality body

In January, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills consulted on the nature of a new quality body for the sector, which will be set up following the closure of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA). Members will know that ACM has consistently and loudly argued against the cumbersome oversight infrastructure that bedevils the sector and deprives the front line of resources. Thus, we cannot support the unwieldy, powerful organisation envisaged in the document but would prefer a leaner, sector-led, more practical body. Below we print an abridged version of ACM's response.

ACM disagrees with the essential paradigm set out in the consultation document. In our view the document foresees an organisation that will be beset by the problems that beleague the present national organisations.

The 'galaxy of stars', to use Sir Andrew Foster's phrase, is problematic in the following ways:

- the overlap between the bodies' functions
- the lack of clarity about the boundaries of each body
- the tendency of these bodies to try to lead, rather than be led by, the needs of the sector and its learners
- the competitiveness between them
- their tendency to look after their own interests rather than those of the sector
- the cost of these organisations.

## Small is beautiful

In our view the new organisation should be small, lean and perform a quality servicing role. The organisational mission and functions that we envisage would ensure an organisation that pursues the sector's, rather than its own, ends. The model preferred by ACM is, we believe, one that works harmoniously, effectively and fluently with a successfully self-regulating sector. ACM believes that the greater part of the CEL/QIA resource should be channelled directly to providers, save for a relatively modest levy to support the functions of the new organisation.

The new organisation should support colleges' efforts to achieve an excellent service for students, employers and communities by:

- creating a register of available professional training across the sector, so that there is a single information point: a comprehensive directory of training
- comprehensively documenting successful improvement activity and disseminating summaries of these
- coordinating practical and small-scale research projects into quality issues pertinent to the sector
- setting up and facilitating a peer review and support framework
- charting the sector's progress towards excellence and keeping the sector informed of progress and future targets
- systematically gathering the judgements and views of learners and employers, and disseminating these to providers in order to sensitise them to the needs of these constituencies
- pulling together intensive support programmes for colleges with inadequate standards of service, in negotiation with each college.

The professional staff of the new organisation should be drawn, on a secondment basis, from the sector, thus using the in-depth expertise and knowledge that lies within further education. This will also help to ensure that the new organisation's work is respected and serves the sector well.

### Fund the providers instead

The new organisation should be coextensive with the sector rather than separate from it. On this basis, the ownership and governance of the new organisation must be firmly with the sector. The resource, freed by the abolition of CEL and QIA, should be distributed to the sector, and the new organisation paid for through a compulsory levy for two years, to be reviewed at the end of that time.

Our intelligence tells us that senior managers groan with disbelief at the proposals in the official document. It is dispiriting that the Department is making the same mistake again – that of creating an expensive, cumbersome, distracting, oversight organisation.

ACM urges the Department to radically rethink the basic premises of its model in line with ACM's proposals. We feel that these are more consistent with the notion of self-regulation than the proposal outlined in the government document. We would be delighted to engage in further discussions about the model we are suggesting.

## Student volunteering

**Volunteering England**, in conjunction with the Learning and Skills Council, has assessed the impact of volunteering on the FE sector.

100% of the students surveyed who were volunteering rated the experience as beneficial, believing that volunteering is a fun way to spend time, improves skills and helps to guide career paths and future plans.

As the sector explores new and more flexible routes of learning and responds to the national skills shortage, Volunteering England thinks volunteering could be a valuable option for learners. The staff who took part in the survey support this view. They felt that volunteering made a positive difference to their students. They believed that volunteering boosted students' confidence and self-esteem and improved students' communication and interpersonal skills. Consequently, the students became more responsible and focused on their careers and education.

The full research report will be available online at [www.volunteering.org/feresearch](http://www.volunteering.org/feresearch) from 25 February.

## College principals honoured

Many congratulations to the following ACM members who featured in the New Year Honours list:

- **Dr Christine Braddock CBE**, Principal, Matthew Boulton College
- **Ms Heather Maxwell OBE**, Principal, South Devon College
- **Mrs Stella Mbubaegbu CBE**, Principal, Highbury College and Chair, Black Leadership Initiative.



## Safeguarding proposals

We have heard a great deal of rhetoric about reducing red tape in further education, but the latest government legislation to protect children and vulnerable adults creates further bureaucracy.

The legislation is contained in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006). It will require everyone who is working or volunteering with children or vulnerable adults to apply to be on a register run by the new Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). It is expected that 11 million people will eventually be on the register, which will do no more than confirm that people are not known to be unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults. This is the creation of a bureaucratic nightmare. Everyone is well aware of the difficulties involved in developing robust software, maintaining the accuracy and currency of the data and keeping secure such huge and sensitive databases.

### Duplication of effort

The new register will not even replace the existing bureaucracy involved in obtaining enhanced disclosures from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) when recruiting staff to work with children or vulnerable adults. This statutory obligation will remain in addition to the new requirement to check the register online before recruiting. This is totally unnecessary because the statutory requirement to obtain an enhanced disclosure from the CRB before someone is appointed will reveal whether the person is barred from the register.

One disadvantage of the present arrangements is that they do not contain any procedure to inform employers if an existing employee commits an offence that would bar them from working with children or vulnerable adults. The proposed register does introduce a procedure to do this, but it is not necessary to establish the register in order to achieve this desirable end. If people commit an offence that would bar them, that will be reported to the ISA. It should then be possible for the ISA also to identify and inform employers. Indeed, the primary source of many referrals to the ISA for consideration for inclusion on the barred lists will be employers through disciplinary investigations into incidents of harm or risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults. Among the many pieces of referral information that the employer has to provide to the ISA are their own contact details.

Further, the proposed register might well do harm. Its establishment will create an impression that something significant is being done to protect children and vulnerable adults. The danger is that it will divert attention and resources from activities that will really help to protect them, such as promoting whole-organisation approaches to safeguarding.

Concentrating on vetting and barring unsuitable staff is important, but it ignores the fact that children or other young people are responsible for a significant proportion of child abuse. Indeed, a cunning paedophile will be aware of the problems of obtaining employment in a college but could very easily become a student and thus gain access to the social and recreational areas used by children and vulnerable adults. It is obviously impracticable to obtain CRB enhanced disclosures on all 4 million FE students (or should they too be added to the ISA register?). It is therefore incumbent upon colleges to have robust arrangements in place to reduce the risk of students abusing other students. The 2007 NIACE publication *Safer practice, safer learning* is an excellent guide to a whole-organisation approach to safeguarding vulnerable adults.

## What do you think?

I welcome your views on this controversial topic, especially based on your experiences of vetting new staff, dealing with cases of abuse or establishing safe learning environments. Please e-mail [memberfeedback@acm.uk.com](mailto:memberfeedback@acm.uk.com)

## 2007/08 pay negotiations

ACM has played a leading role in bringing the pay negotiations in both England and Wales to a conclusion.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) has confirmed it will now recommend that its members in England implement the pay offer that has been accepted by all but one of the six unions on the National Joint Forum. The pay rise is for 2% from August 2007 and 1% from February 2008. It was accepted by ACM and the other unions but rejected by the UCU. The UCU decided to reject the employers' offer at a special conference, despite the results of its branch consultation that showed a majority in favour of accepting. The UCU is now planning a strike ballot. A growing number of FE colleges had already implemented the pay award through local agreements, but the AoC decision opens the door for discussions on a number of other important elements of the joint trade union claim, including action on dealing with excessive working time.

College employers in Wales are to implement the 2.5% pay award that was accepted by the majority of FE unions, including ACM. Employees working in Welsh colleges are likely to receive the increase, which is backdated to August 2007, as early as February 2008. Fforwm, which represents colleges in Wales, made the 2.5% offer in the summer. But despite a majority of unions accepting the proposed deal, the UCU opposition prevented a settlement. However, ACM and other unions pressed for a resolution of the matter, culminating in this final decision. Peter Pendle, ACM General Secretary, said: 'I'm glad we finally managed to achieve a cost of living pay rise.'

## 2008/09 pay negotiations

Six trade unions representing 250,000 FE staff have submitted their 2008 pay claim in England. The catch-up claim, for 6% or £1500, whichever is the greater, covers FE workers in England, including lecturers, learning support staff, cleaners, managers, caterers, librarians, security and lab technicians, and would establish a £7.38 an hour minimum wage. Peter Pendle, ACM General Secretary, said: 'College staff, including managers, continue to earn less than their counterparts in schools. It's time this pay gap was closed, and it's also time that pay levels in further education reflected the true cost of living.'

ACM will press in Wales for a 6% pay rise for college staff in 2008 or a flat rate of £1500, whichever is greater. The claim, which was agreed by ACM's Wales Committee, is also seeking meaningful negotiations over a national agreement on training and development, and guidelines on work-life balance and working time. It also stresses that there should be no reduction in differentials. Peter Pendle said: 'The Welsh Assembly Government, quite rightly, is pursuing a significant skills agenda and it is FE colleges that are driving this forward. However, to succeed, colleges need a well-motivated and well-paid workforce. With inflation currently running at around 4%, a serious pay rise is needed.' ACM will now be seeking the agreement of other staff side unions for a joint pay claim.



## Bracing ourselves for more job losses

We are entering a fresh round of management restructuring in England and Wales. Of course, this is an issue that never actually dies – there are always some colleges making changes – but we could be returning to the exceptionally high level of restructuring activity we saw some 18 months ago.

Sadly, this will mean that some ACM members will lose their jobs. Already one big south-coast college has told us that 19 management posts must go. But we are bracing ourselves for job losses across the country. Currently we are dealing with over 30 restructurings but, if our sources are correct, this figure may well double in the next few months.

### Egos or efficiency?

Clearly, change is needed at some colleges as they deal with financial shortfalls or prepare for the challenges ahead. But in some cases I suspect it is more about egos and influence rather than organisational efficiency. However, regardless of the reason, the outcome will be pretty much the same. Good people will be lost and FE's reputation for job instability will grow.

Too often restructurings are mishandled. I say this because between a quarter and a third of all calls to ACM officers are about restructuring. This means that we are very experienced at dealing with restructuring and, consequently, we have seen our fair share of bad practice.

For example, sometimes the restructuring is used to artificially remove someone who has fallen out of favour. Or sometimes an individual is not appointed to a job they already do because of unnecessary criteria. Then we have unreasonably short deadlines, the disregard of collective agreements on job security or redundancy, and failure to protect the salaries of those who are effectively demoted.

One of the biggest problems is the perceived need for speed. Too often a new structure is approved by the governing body and then a *fait accompli* is presented to the unions. A couple of meetings are held for 'consultation' and then the changes are rushed through. Individuals are given very little time to make choices, often having to make decisions before the consultation period has ended. In effect, the consultation is meaningless.

The law requires employers to carry out meaningful consultation with recognised trade unions, beginning in good time, if an employer is proposing to dismiss 20 or more individuals within a 90-day period. Case law has also established that even if 20 dismissals are not likely, collective consultation should apply if there will be substantial contractual changes or re-engagement in new posts affecting 20 or more individuals.

Regardless of the law, good practice means meaningful consultation.

Yet it is sham consultations that give ACM the biggest problems. Consultation, after all, should be a two-way process. It should be about eliminating or mitigating the effects of any redundancies. We should, for example, on behalf of ACM members, be able to suggest improvements and changes to the new structure, agree a timetable for the process and deal with specific issues such as selection criteria and processes, red-circling, salary protection, redundancy terms, out-placement support and so on.

Consultation should continue until all the outstanding issues are resolved. It is quite unrealistic to suggest that one or two short meetings will be enough.

So with further restructuring expected, ACM officers will be taking an increasingly hard line over consultation. This, I am sure, will mean that before long we will find ourselves at the employment tribunal seeking a protective award for our members. Until that happens, we will be watching colleges very carefully.

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Proud to represent ACM  
and its members



## Wise words?

'Further education is acquiring a wide reputation for job insecurity. This will inevitably hinder effective recruitment of new blood to the sector in the future.'

**Do you agree or disagree?**

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or vote on the ACM website  
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## Managers' reluctance to climb to the top

Over recent weeks there has been a good deal of discussion on the ground and in the media about the high turnover of principals and other senior post-holders in colleges, and the consequent high level of vacancies. The Association of Colleges (AoC) has also reported on an increase in the number of colleges appointing internal candidates to the top job.

Increasingly, being a college principal is rather like being a Premiership football club manager: two or three bad results and you are out of a job! A poor Ofsted inspection or short-term financial difficulties can cause a college corporation to become uneasy, often prompted by the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) director. Even those principals appointed to turn round a college prior to an impending inspection can face the chop if progress has not been sufficiently quick, even though in some cases they may have been in post for fewer than two years. Mergers are another reason for the flow of departing principals: very few chiefs want to play a secondary role in a larger institution.

ACM has also seen an increase in college corporations seeking to remove principals and other senior post-holders for what is generally described as a breakdown in trust and confidence. Sometimes they want to remove the entire management team. And it is not unusual for newly appointed principals to seek to move on 'stale' members of the senior management team. However, corporations rarely have the evidence to substantiate such claims. How do we know? Because ACM is able to negotiate substantial packages for these colleagues precisely because the claims don't stand up to scrutiny. In some cases there's no pretence that the college can win, but the decision is made to sack the victim regardless. While this can cost the public purse a fortune, it is often little compensation for those with destroyed careers.

One outcome of all this is that college managers are becoming more wary about seeking senior posts. The trend for fewer management tiers has meant that there are fewer potential candidates. In these circumstances, many managers are choosing not to seek the top jobs and are content to stay at middle management levels. Others pick the senior jobs that they apply for very carefully; waiting for a vacancy in their own college or one they know well. The result is that often advertisements attract only three or four suitable candidates.

For the more junior and middle managers with aspirations to rise to the top, the future does not seem very appetising: 25 years of hard work and commitment only to be ruined by the decisions of governors who are often out of their depth.

It really is time for the AoC, the LSC and the Department for Universities, Industry and Skills to get a grip. Unless they are very careful, it won't be long before there are no applicants for principal and other senior college posts. And if you don't believe that could happen, then just look at experience in schools.

### Quote of the issue

● **The first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. This is OK as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't be easily measured or to give it an arbitrary quantitative value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume that what can't be measured easily isn't really important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist. This is suicide.**

Robert Macnamara, quoted in Charles B Handy, *The empty raincoat: making sense of the future*, 1995

Know a good saying about leadership that applies to work in colleges?

Send it to [nadinecartner@acm.uk.com](mailto:nadinecartner@acm.uk.com)