

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Provision

THE 'S' WORD

Spirituality in the Learning and Skills sector



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The 'S' Word

Spirituality in the Learning and Skills Sector

1 *Why spirituality and FE?*

There is some reluctance in the public sphere to talk about spirituality. Spirituality is difficult to describe, hard to identify and appears to be too much of private and personal life to warrant exposure. As a result, many in educational settings shy away from engaging with the notion of spirituality in their practice. And yet it is important. It sits firmly in the national curriculum and is one of the aspects which is inspected by Ofsted. So what is needed is a way of opening up discussion about what it means for professionals in education.

To begin with, it might be helpful to state what spirituality is not: it is not about fostering religious or faith development; it is not concerned with proselytising; it is not an explicit search for the transcendent and it is not about giving grades for spiritual development. As far as education is concerned spiritual development relates to the following: *'the development of students' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of their own and different beliefs and cultures, and how these influence individuals and societies.'* [Ofsted Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills](#)

So this document is intended to stimulate a conversation about the role of spirituality in the FE sector. It considers the contribution it makes to the lives of FE students, what spirituality in leadership looks like across a range of sectors and the role it plays in Ofsted

inspections. It also suggests ways to handle some of the difficulties in making spirituality more explicit. And it also signposts some of the benefits of embedding spirituality in the FE sector and the impact it has on relationships within and beyond the organisation. And finally, it suggests ways of strengthening existing practice.

Spiritual development is one of the two overarching aims of the national curriculum. The curriculum aims to promote learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. Now, while the FE sector is not bound by the national curriculum, most colleges articulate their vision and mission statements along similar lines.

As part of the Education Reform Act of 1988, spiritual development has a particular meaning in an educational context. It is sufficiently important for it to be included within the Ofsted inspection framework. The subsidiary guidance for Ofsted includes the following indicators:

It concerns individuals' beliefs, whether they are religious or otherwise, which affect their perspective on life.
Spirituality relates to the extent to which we take an interest in and have respect for the feelings and values of other people.

And it is wider than this – it also relates to a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, other people and the world, including the intangible. It also includes imagination and creativity in learning and a willingness to reflect on experiences. In summary it is a wide ranging set of indicators which are centred on human qualities.

What do we mean when we talk about spirituality in an FE context? To help colleges understand what this might look like, Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education www.fbfe.org.uk produced the definitive guidance scoping the purpose and application of spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision. 'Adopting a pro-active approach to SMSC development is consistent with the educational and economic mission of the learning and skills sector.' In particular it helps to:

- equip learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for their futures as citizens and employees
- promote equality, diversity and equal opportunities
- respond to the views of learners.

*'The development and delivery of SMSC support should stem from an organisation's vision, values and purposes, particularly those associated with the equality and ethical frameworks required of employees and learners.'*¹

The good news is that many colleges are contributing to this aspect of student development. However, they also report that they are less confident about the 'spiritual' than the other elements of SMSC. This is why it needs to be brought out of the shadows.

If we set the SMSC framework against the aims and values which the FE sector sets for itself we find that there is much in common. A college's duty to promote spirituality as part of SMSC development also has implications for employability and citizenship. Employers say they are looking for young people who are able to relate to other people, to show an interest in others' ideas and backgrounds. They need these qualities to be well developed in order to work well

¹ *SMSC Report*: Planning and delivering spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) support in the learning and skills sector: Guidance for learning and skills providers

with other colleagues and with customers. This chimes with what some colleges aspire to provide for their students:

The *Thames Gateway College* aims to 'create a mutually beneficial learning and working environment that will enable everyone on the campus to be successful in a safe and friendly environment.' They hope students will share the values of 'excellence, professionalism, accountability, commitment, communication and innovation.'

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College makes a commitment that 'Every Student Matters'. As an example of this care leavers are well supported and the college has the Buttle kite mark as evidence of its work in this field. They have an aspiration to move beyond outstanding and are committed to the delivery of faith-based tutorials. These bring together events which celebrate equality and diversity, chaplaincy, health and well being and in doing so make their values visible.

Cambridge Regional College has been accredited with the Investors in People award since 1998 and their culture focuses on providing an excellent place to work. They operate an employee recognition scheme to reward excellent work and personal contributions to College life. 'We believe in equality of opportunity and have a very diverse population of both staff and students. You will notice the College has a tolerant and inclusive culture, which is evident throughout the campus.'

At *Barking and Dagenham College* there is an explicit commitment to faith and spirituality. As an extract from their aims states:

- To acknowledge and raise awareness of faith and spirituality as a means of building relationships and as a platform for working for the benefit of all
- To combat prejudice and nurture a culture of respect for people of different faiths
- To ensure that learners are safe at the college and free from bullying harassment and intimidation due to their faith
- To create an environment in which faith issues can be frankly and honestly discussed.

Inspection reports comment on these aspects of the college's work. For example at North Warwickshire and Hinckley College:

'User engagement is outstanding. The college actively seeks views on how well it is doing from learners and its educational, community and business partners. The well-attended student parliament is an excellent forum for gathering learners' views. Learners, employers, parents and carers all report very high levels of satisfaction with the college and feel that their views are valued and acted on.'

Inspection reports consider the climate and ethos of the setting and what effect this has on enabling learners to grow and flourish, become confident individuals, and appreciate their own worth and that of others. What is shown here is that the aspirations expressed by these colleges are translated into actions, as evidenced by inspection and other evaluation measures.

As can be seen from these examples, there is no expectation that any college has to promote faith or religious development. What it needs to do is to provide opportunities for the development of

learners' personal, social and employability skills and this includes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

2 Characteristics of spirituality in colleges

Colleges which reflect spiritual values in their broadest sense are high performing institutions. They are successful on a number of measures including outcomes for students, management structures and financial stability. Underpinning their way of doing business is valuing and integrating people of all backgrounds, seeing the worth of every individual, whether staff or students.

Many organisations make claims that they are driven by values of equality, dignity and fairness, but the difference in settings which are in the top league and those which are not, is that they translate these principles into daily practice. They have a relentless focus on high standards and robust systems, but it is the way that these are carried out that marks them as having spiritual principles embodied.

These colleges have found a way of making their values breathe and have life. They are more than platitudes on a mission statement. They have somehow managed to get these principles into the very fabric and DNA of the system. As a result, all in the organisation feel they are committed to a large and inclusive vision.

A couple of examples. The first may be apocryphal but illustrates the point: Two stonemasons are working on a cathedral, which is unlikely to be finished for at least a hundred years. When asked what they are doing, the first mason says, 'I am chiseling this stone to make it fit securely into the architrave.' The second responds, 'I

am building the most magnificent cathedral in the country'. Now there is nothing wrong with the first, it is absolutely correct, but the second response shows that the mason understands he has a role to play in the bigger project. One that transcends the immediate job in hand.

The second anecdote relates to JF Kennedy visiting the Kennedy Space Centre. He talks to engineers, scientists, astronauts and one of the cleaners. 'What is your role here?' he asks. 'I am part of the most significant project for human kind, putting the first man on the moon'.

Now at first sight, these stories are far removed in time and location from the reality of most FE colleges. But they are both saying something important about how it is possible to tap into a wider vision. And importantly, this is possible at all levels.

So, leaders might ask themselves what, in addition to high standards and outcomes for students, high quality staff and managing budgets is our wider purpose. And can everyone articulate it? What would it take for this to happen?

I visit schools and FE settings on a regular basis, both for research and for inspections. The people on the reception desk send out very powerful messages about the ethos and values of an organisation. I am less concerned with how they greet me, than with how they receive other visitors. Are they genuinely concerned with welcome, with showing hospitality in its widest sense and acting as noble gatekeepers to the institutions? This is not about a cheap, public relations exercise. It has as much to do with how the reception staff are made to feel themselves. Both as individuals and valued in their work. How often are they told they are doing an important job? It is

hard, but not impossible, to live up to values if you are not on the receiving end of those values yourself. And this is why values which are lived out at all levels of leadership in a college have impact. The visitor recognises it the minute they walk in.

Colleges which have realised the potential of spiritual development know how to harness the capacities and potential of all in the community. This means that there is energy at all levels which transcends the physical buildings. A separate piece of research '[Talking to leaders about spiritual leadership](#)' with some principals of FE colleges about spiritual leadership showed high levels of commitment to recognising spirituality both in terms of their own leadership practice and the difference that it makes to standards and the working relationships within the college. These leaders were absolutely clear that recognition and promotion of the spiritual aspects of college life had impact on achievement and enjoyment of all involved in college life.

3 Spiritual leadership

What are the qualities of spiritual leaders? Leaders who demonstrate the qualities of spiritual leadership are not a soft touch. They may, or may not have a personal faith. They do however, have a very clear vision for the way they lead their organisation. And they start with themselves.

They have a relentless focus on standards, accountability and financial stability. But they also recognise that the routes to achieving this can be approached in a number of ways. They know that values are not tacked on, but are lived out. This does not mean

that they consider themselves to be perfect. They also don't see this as another agenda item which can be tick boxed. They know that it is about the 'way we conduct our business'. That is as much about tone as the message. Their work is underpinned by a number of values and behaviours:

- They treat colleagues as though they are human beings first and professionals second
- They communicate with the student body as though they are human beings first and students second
- They deliver difficult messages in a way that leaves people feeling intact, even though things may need to change
- They never miss an opportunity to praise
- They notice small things and comment on them
- They make sure they talk with people both informally and formally
- They talk about the values of the organisation
- They talk about why they love their work
- They acknowledge their mistakes
- They are very clear about what drives them and the difference their work makes to their lives
- They may or may not have a personal faith, but they are likely to have thought deeply about what drives them
- They are open to new ideas.

There are some leaders who are explicit about their spiritual values. This makes it easier for others to follow suit. The [*157 Group*](#), a consortium of 29 of the UK's largest FE colleges has carried out research into spiritual leadership. The project asked eleven leaders about their own spirituality, whether religious or not and the extent to which this had an impact on their leadership. The interviews set

out to find out whether spiritual values underpin their leadership and if so, how these might be visible in their settings. Principals were asked questions about personal beliefs and values and how these are expressed. They were asked to describe not just their personal ways of working but also to consider the formal structures and the extent to which paying attention to spirituality might add value to student experiences and outcomes.

What emerged as a strong feature of all those interviewed was a clear line of purpose which starts with the individual leader, feeding into the processes and structures, influencing others working with them and feeding into every aspect of college life. Several were very clear that clarity of personal values, translated into practice were absolutely fundamental to moving their settings from requiring improvement to becoming good or outstanding.

Dr Lynne Sedgmore CBE, Executive Director of the 157 Group, former CEO of CEL (Centre for Excellence in Leadership) and former principal of Guildford College has written and spoken about spiritual leadership in action. Her guiding principle has been to 'co-create healthy, loving, high performance organisations that nourish and develop the spirit and potential of both staff and learners.' At its heart is service to key stakeholders. It also has power in building vision and value congruence across individual, team and organisation levels. The aim is to foster high levels of employee wellbeing, sustainability and financial performance. This way of working is summed up as the triple bottom line: people, planet, and profit. A positive triple bottom line reflects an increase in the organisation's value, including its human and societal capital, as well as its profitability and economic growth. 'Developing

Organisational and Spiritual Leadership'² describes the creation of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the role played by Lynne Sedgmore. It identifies these qualities in individuals with spiritual orientation: treating people with respect, professionalism, awareness, self-reflective about what is done well and what could be done better, honesty, integrity, providing good value for money, good quality service, open, hardworking and commitment to equality.

As head of the Croydon Business School (CBS) Lynne was in the vanguard of UK academic business schools using values as a mainstay and critical element of their business and operational plan. One of her major initiatives was to introduce a values clarification process based on the 7S model of:

- shared values staff
- structures
- systems
- services
- standards
- stakeholders

During the process of working with colleagues they adapted the model to add students at the centre as well as shared values.

In developing this work, it was not universally accepted at first. And why should it be? The aspects of spiritual leadership do not sit naturally with formal organisational structures. While this aspect of professional work is expressed for its own sake, it would not pass muster if it did not have impact. And the critical thing here is that

² Fry and Altman (2013:7). Her work is also featured in Altman (2010), Fry and Nisiewicz (2012), Fry and Altman (2013), Western (2008).

Lynne Sedgmore never lost sight of delivering results and exceeding performance goals. There was improved performance of CBS which was judged by a range of external evidence - the college achieved outstanding in the 1993 Ofsted inspection; it was one of the first business schools to be accredited as a Management Charter Initiative Centre (MCI); the CBS business plan being requested by other educational institutions for its innovative structure and content for their own planning.

The commitment to aligning values with professional standards was not an easy path for Lynne. She served as vice-principal at Croydon College and during that time she became known as the 'values lady' and the 'conscience of the college' although some staff were resistant, suspicious and even antagonistic to what she was doing. Her approach, including team building, clear targets and the necessary support for achieving them was characterised by authentic dialogue, problem solving and a rigorous programme of staff development for both personal growth and professional development. There was an intense personal journey for her which involved considering carefully those aspects of her leadership which were effective and those which were flawed. It is this sense of openness which characterised her spiritual leadership in action.

Given that it was not a straightforward ambition, the groundbreaking work which Lynne did has enabled a framework and story on which others can reflect their own work and attitudes to professional life. When she moved on to Guildford College as principal and chief executive, student success rates were below 50%, staff morale was low and the college was in deficit. With her senior team she improved communication and introduced a major culture change, performance management and e-learning

throughout the college. As a result of changes to college structures and ethos, which were underpinned by spiritual pragmatism which ensured all had a voice and that standards were paramount, the college made a significant shift in overall standards. Three years later it was named as one of the UK's top 100 visionary organisations and gained the 'Good Corporation' award for the college achieving a high level of corporate social responsibility. By the time she left, six years later, student success was 84%, overall efficiency had improved by 10%, staff morale improved significantly and there was a £400K surplus. The conclusion from this impressive record is that tough attention to the triple bottom line of people, plant and profit meant that the hard commercial goals, high accountability measures with improved outcomes for students were achieved as a result of the core values being expressed and lived out.

One of the most striking things about the narrative of Lynne's considerable achievements was that she attempted to be aware of spirituality in small things and act appropriately.

'That's what transforms an organisation, small encounters that touch the soul or heart, or whatever bit of them which needed to be touched.'

So what can be taken from this account in making the case for a more overt expression of spiritual values within the FE sector? There are three which might be drawn from this: first, that talking about values is an indicator of healthy organisations; second that it allows all to have a voice and third that it underpins high levels of financial and performance measures.

4 Some difficulties in embedding spiritual values

There are a number of challenges when it comes to addressing the role of spiritual values in FE. They can broadly be summarised as: a reluctance to open up to what might seem to be private territory; a lack of understanding about what spirituality means in education; concerns about how to embed and make visible the promotion of spiritual development in a college's work. Below are suggestions for addressing these reservations:

Spirituality is private

This is absolutely correct. There should not be any obligation for any member of a college, whether staff or student to disclose their own beliefs and values, whether they are religious or not. However, they should be able to do so if they wish, and this was emphasised by the principals of FE colleges who spoke about the role of spirituality in their leadership. It should be noted that it is good practice for colleges to be collecting data about the faith backgrounds of their students and staff so that they have an accurate picture of those working in their settings. (This is also an important factor in meeting the expectations of the Public Sector to promote tolerance and good relations across the setting.) The promotion of spiritual development does not include forcing people to make public statements about their own positions. Instead it relates to the 'way things are done here' and the opportunities within college life for engaging with ideas and people different from our own and for celebrating diversity. It concerns the ability to reflect on what we encounter, to be open-minded and to provide the space for others to do the same. Those principals who were interviewed for the 'Spirituality in Leadership' project were absolutely clear that while spiritual values inform their practice, it is the extent to which humane values are made visible in the structures and processes of the college which matter. It is about ethos and curriculum provision and it relates to the other obligations on colleges to meet the Equality Duties and to provide a broad and balanced curriculum offer which includes space for personal growth and development. There is more on how to highlight spirituality in wider expectations in section 5.

What does spirituality mean in education?

Spirituality has a particular meaning in education. As noted earlier it is not about inculcating a particular faith or belief stance. Indeed the British Humanist Association makes a strong case for spirituality without necessarily invoking a religious background. The BHA identifies a humanist as 'Thinking for themselves about what is right and wrong, based on reason and respect for others; finding meaning, beauty and joy in the one life we have, without the need for an afterlife; looking to science instead of religion as the best way to discover and understand the world; believing people can use empathy and compassion to make the world a better place for everyone.'

Spiritual development is written into the Education Reform Act of 1988 where it is part of the second aim of the national curriculum. Alongside moral, social and cultural development, the role of spirituality is to provide opportunities for learners to become fully rounded human beings who are able to make a contribution to and enjoy life and employment. This aspect of inner development applies to all whether holding to a faith or none.

How can spirituality be made visible, promoted and evidenced in a college setting?

There are four areas which can be considered in relation to spirituality in an educational setting. These are: the institutional ethos, the curriculum, teaching and tutorial and pastoral contexts. Ethos is about 'the way things are done here', there is more information about this in sections 2 and 3. The curriculum provides many opportunities for spiritual development as identified in the Ofsted handbook for the inspection of further education, mostly related to being open to new ideas. In teaching it is about high quality questioning and creating space for students' responses. This translates into a student's capacity for self awareness, self confidence and the ability to form positive relationships. There are examples of how to embed this in FBFE's '[Training Voices](#)' The grid on page 26 provides examples of this. In tutorial settings it is about high quality conversations about students' own and other people's beliefs and values. There are suggestions for this in FBFE's '[Challenging Voices](#)' page 9.

A college's pastoral provision also has the potential to provide opportunities for spiritual development. There are many imaginative models provided by colleges. FE leaders interviewed for the 157 Group project on spiritual leadership identified learner services as structures which provide the space for sensitive discussions about beliefs and values. Through tutorials and extra curricular activities students are able both to grow in confidence and show their interest and commitment to people from backgrounds different from their own. This again was a key feature of the interviews with FE principals who all made the case that volunteering the in community, contributing to tutorials and wider college life through student councils for example, were essential for personal and spiritual development.

5 The benefits in embedding spiritual development

There are many benefits to be derived from embedding spiritual development. Those interviewed for the 157 Spiritual Leadership project were very clear that it was a key factor in their good and outstanding settings:

'People make things happen, not strategies. My values are framed around fairness, innovation, enterprise and creativity. It feeds into the climate in the college and into the quality of relationships. How we behave feeds into what we do – this is through fostering excellence, modelling values, working together to deliver high quality results.'

Doing so has an impact on many levels and different aspects of college life. Spiritual values are evident in top performing colleges. These colleges find ways of living out their mission, putting it at the heart of everything they do. This is done with rigour and consistency. These are not settings which brush disagreements and

difficulties under the carpet. They are hard nosed in meeting challenges with fairness and expectations for improved outcomes. At a leadership level, senior managers remind themselves of their core purpose on a regular basis. This can be done quite effectively and efficiently. It doesn't need to take up much time. It is about reminding ourselves why we are doing our work.

Most colleges have mission statements which are usually on the lines of providing high quality experiences, wide-ranging opportunities for qualifications and skills development, together with a wider commitment to personal development. Taking time to revisit these briefly is a secure way of embedding spiritual development at a leadership level. What is interesting is that this can be evidenced throughout an organisation: this is what some colleagues had to say about working in the organisation run by Lynne Sedgmore:

'A genuine respect for each other, the culture was very positive, friendly, approachable, with staff wanting to make a difference'.

There is also evidence that promoting light touch spiritual development has impact on achievement and potential employment prospects of students. Employers consistently say that they need employees to respect the views of customers and of colleagues. They need to be active listeners, know how to work in teams, how to collaborate and how to make a wider contribution to the work force. They also want their workforce to think imaginatively about themselves, the people they work with and the problems they encounter. If they have had opportunities for spiritual development in the form of high quality tutorials, a rich curriculum offer and a real say in their education, they are more likely to have these skills. So, what are the particular elements of spiritual development that might be included in the curriculum? The LSIS [SMSC report](#)

identifies the following as key opportunities to be provided for students:

- discussing and reflecting on key questions of meaning and truth
- reflecting on important concepts, experiences and beliefs that are at the heart of religious and non-religious worldviews
- developing personal views on such issues
- valuing relationships and developing a sense of belonging
- developing the imagination
- developing curiosity about life
- appreciating a sense of wonder at the universe and world in which we live
- developing an understanding of feelings and emotions which gives cause to reflect and to learn

The ability to do the above does not mean that colleges need to rework their curriculum offer, but rather to realise the potential of their formal and informal curriculum to open up talk that encourages curiosity and a willingness to think about personal beliefs and values. *Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education* has produced a number of documents with practical ways to include this in the curriculum e.g. '*Emerging Voices*', '*Challenging Voices*', '*Training Voices*'. These are available [here](#).

In addition spirituality, as part of the SMSC provision is recognised in Ofsted reports: The Ofsted *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills*, April 2014 paragraph 160, states that inspectors should take into account learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. While this should not be the primary motive for including SMSC in FE systems, it nevertheless shows the importance of this aspect of a college's life. Ofsted reports make

reference to the extent to which learners are provided with opportunities to engage with wider contexts beyond their own with comments often framed around meeting the requirements of Equality and Diversity. For example:

'teachers encourage good relationships built on trust and sensitivity in lessons, but few teachers regularly incorporate specific equality and diversity themes into the curriculum. While business teachers help learners to consider cultural aspects of globalisation, many opportunities to develop learners' wider knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity issues are often missed.'

6 What business has to say about spirituality

This section makes the case that business is increasingly being open about spirituality in their contexts. So, if one of the roles of the FE sector is to prepare learners for the world of work, then providers might consider making it a higher priority in their own practice.

What is spirituality in business? There is a wide range of perspectives. Some say that it is simply embodying their personal values of honesty, integrity, and good quality work. Others say it is treating their co-workers and employees in a responsible, caring way. And for some, it's making their business socially responsible in how it has an impact on the environment, serves the community or helps create a better world.

There is a long tradition of recognising spiritual values in business. Companies working to spiritual principles are not looking to inculcate religious or faith beliefs, but they recognise that it is a

better way of doing business, from personal, professional and financial points of view. The main thing is that organisations are equally hard nosed about their core business, but pay attention to the core values relating to people and the way they conduct their business. And they make sure that this is threaded through the whole organisation.

Some business people are comfortable using the word 'spirituality' in the work environment, as it's more generic and inclusive than 'religion'. Instead of emphasising belief as religion does, the word spirituality emphasises how values are applied and embodied. Other people aren't comfortable with the word 'spiritual' and prefer to talk more about values and ethics when describing the same things that others would call spiritual.

There are many examples of spiritual values being part of business practice. To take one example of 'the triple bottom line' which was coined in 1994 by John Elkington, the founder of a British consultancy called SustainAbility. His argument was that companies should be preparing three different (and quite separate) bottom lines. One is the traditional measure of corporate profit - the 'bottom line' of the profit and loss account. The second is the bottom line of a company's 'people account' - a measure in some shape or form of how socially responsible an organisation has been throughout its operations. This would include both the quality of relationships within the company as well as those externally. The third is the bottom line of the company's 'planet' account - a measure of how environmentally responsible it has been. The triple bottom line (TBL) thus consists of three Ps: people, profit, and planet. A [study](#) by Ioannou of the London Business School and Serafeim and Harvard shows that those companies which have

exemplary corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices are rated higher by analysts.

There are similar principles to those of the triple bottom line expressed by William C Miller, co founder of Values Centred Innovation. This is what he had to say in 'New Traditions in Business':

'We discussed how spirituality was more than the differing beliefs and practices of organized religions... how creativity encompassed how we expressed our unique individuality as well as how we responded to work challenges... the question shifted to: 'How do we put our spiritual values to work?' Those two questions, 'How might spirituality, creativity, and business somehow be facets of the same diamond?' and 'How do we put our spiritual values to work?' are living questions for me. They're about the nature of living, and they've taken on their own lives within me, providing insights that continually evolve and get richer.'

Then some examples from [Seth Godin](#) examining the concept of a 'Spiritual Business': Every entry for every business in the directory starts by answering these two questions: 'What does marketing from spirit mean to you?' and 'How is that reflected in your business?'. To quote from his post:

'Individuals and organizations that can compete on generosity and fairness repeatedly defeat those that only do it grudgingly.'

Exactly. People intuitively prefer to do business with people who value the same things that they do.

Tom Peters: 'In Search of Excellence'

The simple act of paying positive attention to people has a great deal to do with productivity.

'Management is about arranging and telling. Leadership is about nurturing and enhancing'. 'We found that the most exciting environments, that treated people very well, are also tough as nails. There is no bureaucratic mumbo-jumbo. excellent companies provide two things simultaneously: tough environments and very supportive environments.'

Stephen Covey

'A cardinal principle of Total Quality Management escapes too many managers: you cannot continuously improve interdependent systems and processes until you progressively perfect interdependent, interpersonal relationships. So what we can draw from this is that the highest performing organisations pay attention to the widest aspects of corporate life.'

So to summarise: many businesses are finding that there is more to their purpose than profits alone. Employees and the environment are seen as important as economics. A poll published in *USA Today* found that 6 out of 10 people say workplaces would benefit from having a great sense of spirit in their work environment.

So how do these examples translate to the FE sector? If the private sector, which has to pay close attention to the bottom line recognises the importance of spirituality and its benefits both to employees and customers, then we might argue that they should be

firmly established as principles within the public sector. This is primarily because they seem to be at the heart of healthy, thriving organisations.

7 Spiritual development in the curriculum

There are many opportunities for spiritual development within curriculum areas. The key thing to keep in mind is that it is not about expecting learners to disclose personal beliefs. It is however about providing opportunities for students to express their ideas and to take an interest in the views of others. When we consider the Ofsted description of spiritual development we see that it relates to a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, including the intangible. It also means encouraging a use of imagination and creativity in learning and for students to show a willingness to reflect on their experiences.

So what might this look like in practice?

There are two aspects to the curriculum: the content which is offered to students and which results in qualifications, and pedagogy, or the way that the curriculum is delivered to learners. And there are opportunities for spiritual development in both aspects. Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education has produced '[*Training Voices*](#)' to show how the curriculum has plenty of opportunities for extending discussions and for students to explore

the bigger picture behind the knowledge and skills which they are being taught.³

In considering the opportunities in curriculum content, it might mean making links to the wider aspects of what students are learning. In maths this could be relating a topic to its application in the workplace. Algebra, for example underpins businesses on the internet: Google, Facebook, Twitter. In building and construction, this could be through providing opportunities for learners to consider the diversity of the people they may work with and carry out work for, including sensitivities during religious festivals or the significance of features of religious buildings. In health and social care, students might be expected to think about what they are doing, questioning their motives and values. They could also be asked to consider their services from the patient's or client's point of view and be sensitive to the requirements of different faith and cultural traditions. In hospitality and catering they might be encouraged to be curious about learning about and from celebrations, rituals and food from different cultures. Students might be encouraged to compare their own background cuisine with others and to be curious about the similarities and differences.

In sport, leisure and recreation students could be encouraged to delight in movement, particularly when they are able to show spontaneity. They might take part in activities such as dance, games and gymnastics which help students to become more focused, connected and creative. In media and communication students will encounter a wide range of materials which encourage them to be curious about other people's perspectives, to think about

³ For a practical example of SMSC in the curriculum, Leicester College: <http://www.leicestercollege.ac.uk/2014/03/news/learners-from-leicester-college-integrate-faith-and-culture-as-part-of-their-curriculum-studies/5725/>

their own beliefs and values and to realise that some things are intangible e.g. photos from the [Guardian Eye Witness](#) series, while in business, students might be expected to take account of the points of view of people with different backgrounds to them and to expect them to ask questions about the purpose and meaning of their work.

There are further examples across the curriculum in the FBFE [‘Training Voices’](#).

The second way of incorporating spirituality into the curriculum is through pedagogy. The ability to reflect on ideas, links closely with some of the core principles of assessment for learning where students are expected to justify reasons for their points of view, be prepared to take on alternative points of view and, where there is disagreement, to know how to disagree agreeably.

And it doesn’t require additional work. It is about asking a few questions, expecting students to think and to do more thinking outside the learning session.

8 Spiritual development in the tutorial

The mention of spiritual development during tutorials is likely to have most tutors running for cover. There is already so much to be done. So how can the addition of spiritual development be justified? This document argues that it should not necessarily involve more work for the tutor. So in the rufty-tuftly world of a tutorial how can we provide these opportunities?

The first thing to bear in mind is that the college should be about providing opportunities for spiritual development. And these can be light touch. Let's revisit what is understood by spiritual development as far as Ofsted is concerned:

- beliefs, religious or otherwise, which inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's feelings and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, including the intangible
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experiences.

LSIS and FBFE have expanded on these in the [documents](#) referred to above and show how these translate into practice in the FE sector.

Let us take each of these in turn: if we are to provide opportunities for students to explore their own beliefs (whether religious or not) and their interest in and respect for different peoples' feelings and values, then these need to be as straightforward as possible. The job is not to make students reflective, but to provide opportunities to do so.

There are ready-made tutorial plans and resources from the AFAN (All Faiths and None) [website](#): These are designed for a whole session. They cover topics such as interfaith and belief, community and congregation and social action. Each of these would provide opportunities for students to reflect on and articulate their own beliefs and values. They would also have the chance to encounter those of others. There are also excellent resources on the Faith

Tutorials [website](#). It is also important that students know how to agree to disagree agreeably. A resource to support students to disagree well is in the LSIS FBFE '[Emerging Voices](#)'.

If something is needed which can be offered while other activities are going on, then the photos from the [Guardian Eye Witness](#) series can provide a thought-provoking stimulus for students to either look at, think about or discuss. Each day there is a different world-class photo from around the world. This exposes students to different cultures through rich imagery and can be as open or closed as needed. Some tutors have this as a regular slot. Sometimes students go through the archive and suggest an image for the session. Because this way of working, provides opportunities for discussion, but does not expect any response, students are free to engage or not as they feel able to. The ground rules should be simple – any comment should be legal, decent and honest. The tutorial has achieved its purpose – to provide opportunities for spiritual development (as understood in the SMSC definition).

How does this align with the values expressed in most colleges' mission statements? Well, many make the case for preparing young people for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life. Working in this way supports this.

As the lead learner the tutor also has a responsibility to model the kind of behaviour that they want to see in their students. This is underpinned by respect, courtesy and good humour. If we want to encourage our students to respect the views of others then the tutor has to be prepared to listen to their views. In a nutshell, if we are living out the values of the college's mission statement about equality, fair access etc for all, then this should be read in our own

attitudes to the students. Hard to do every day when we are often overworked and tired, but the point is that young people will catch our attitudes from us. If we are polite, really listen, give no quarter to language and talk which diminishes another human being, then we are showing our students an important lesson.

The second thing we can do is to make the links between their personal and employability development with wider values. 'Good companies expect people to treat their customers in such and such as way.' Why do we think they do this? Is it important do we agree? What does it feel like when we are not treated with respect? So how can we make sure that we don't make others feel this way?

And the third is to encourage students to talk openly about their ideas, to show curiosity in others and to learn how to agree to disagree agreeably. It isn't additional work, its additional thinking.

Is it possible to tell the difference between a class which has got these attitudes embedded and others which haven't? Sometimes we need support with this and in these situations, conversations with other colleagues can make the difference between being prepared to give this a go and thinking that it isn't worth it.

It is also worth talking with students about how the principles of curiosity and interest in other people's values is highly valued in business. A few examples:

Tom Peters *'The Pursuit of Wow!*

The simple act of paying positive attention to people has a great deal to do with productivity.' 'Diversity creates one and only one thing: opportunity.'

Business, in the mad global marketplace, needs a rush of serious creativity. Creativity is invariably, a byproduct of sparks, new views, juxtaposed interests, etc. How does a company acquire those assets? Diversity!

All other things being equal, which company (car maker, textile producer, bank) is going to create the more interesting product or services?

This one?

The 17 members of the executive group of Company A file in the boardroom. All U.S. born. Fifteen are white males, best guess at average age: 47. One female: One Japanese-American. Dress: suits, suits, suits as far as the eye can see.

Or this one?

Company B's 16-person top team noisily straggles into the boardroom attired in everything from Brooks Brothers to Calvin Klein to Banana Republic to Venice Beach leftovers. Six of the 16 are white males, four are women (two white, one African-American, one Hispanic), plus two Indian-born males, two British-born male. Average age: about 42, with two or three who are clearly on the low side of 32.

It's a no-brainer: Company B by 20 furlongs.

Sure, I'm oversimplifying. Or am I? It seems obvious to me that Cacophony, Inc, a wild mixture of colors, sexes, styles, and ages will almost automatically generate and pursue more interesting ideas than Homogeneity, Inc. My argument is a simple statistical one: The variety of experiences from birth onward captured in a Company B executive meeting is immensely greater than in a similar meeting at Company A. An unusually high level of curiosity among Company A's OWMs (old white males) makes virtually no difference; Company B's folks bring hundreds of years of um, diverse perspectives to bear on everything from soup to software.

Is Company B a sea of tranquility? Of course not. Diversity implies clashes, subtle and overt. People (men and women, London born and L.A. born, 20-somethings and 50-somethings) will bridle at what they feel are bizarre -- and dumb -- views held by others from time to time. The Company B top team (and the rest of the company, too, assuming its makeup mimics the top) could probably benefit from a hefty dose of sensitivity training. But the point of such training is not to 'clear a hurdle' or 'solve a problem.' On the contrary, it's to help the company reap maximum possible strategic leverage from its diversity advantage.

Tom Peters (1942 -)
Source: The Pursuit of Wow!, Pages: 19-21

And finally, a couple of examples of how this is picked up in Ofsted reports. Most reports refer to Equality and Diversity rather than SMSC explicitly. The priorities and aims for both are closely aligned. So, where reports refer to opportunities for learners to engage with and encounter issues of equality and diversity within the curriculum, this is as much about articulating their own beliefs and recognising the legitimacy of others', valuing relationships and a sense of belonging and being curious about the wider implications of the subject they are learning. Since these aspects are at the heart of the 'spiritual' dimension of SMSC, where colleges are paying close attention to this, they are also meeting the requirements for Equality and Diversity.

These are two examples from Ofsted reports:

'The promotion of equality and diversity has improved since the last inspection so that most teachers have a much clearer idea of how they can reflect equality and diversity within their subject context. Schemes of work and lesson plans focus fully on equality and diversity but occasionally teachers miss opportunities to develop issues raised by learners during lessons.'

'Equality and diversity are integrated well into teaching and learning. Lessons encourage learners to consider the diversity of the people they may carry out work for, including sensitivities during religious festivals. However, some of the questioning used by teachers to check learners' understanding of equality and diversity is insufficiently challenging.'

So, we might conclude from the comments from inspection reports that conversations still have some way to go by being opened up, encouraging students to articulate their ideas about belief and belonging. Where colleges are looking for ways to secure this, they might consider including aspects of this in tutorial sessions. FBFE has produced '[*Emerging Voices*](#)' to provide practical examples for this.

9 Spiritual development from different perspectives

Many colleges are already providing the spiritual development element of provision to their students. They are doing this when they make sure that their mission statement is evidenced in everyday life. They do this when the curriculum is appropriate, when standards are high, and where all of this is achieved through mutual respect.

From the students' point of view – students feel able to talk about their beliefs and values. They know that they are taken seriously in tutorial, in lessons and around the campus. They are confident in making a contribution. They are prepared to give space to other people's ideas, not because they have been told to, but because

they are genuinely interested. They know that there are plenty of opportunities for getting involved in wider curriculum activities, including inter-faith dialogue, working within the community. They understand at a deep level that the college welcomes and has the highest ambitions for all, regardless of background. This is brought about, not through the buildings and facilities per se, but through the way the college conducts its business.

When spiritual principles are embedded in a college, staff know that their contributions are valued and that their work counts. They know that they matter as individuals and that the college leaders are sincere in living out the college values.

The spiritual dimension is also evident from a visitor's point of view. They notice there is an energy and genuine welcome from all they encounter. Colleges are busy places, but staff make eye contact, smile and have a sense of energy and purpose about them. Overheard conversations are lively and purposeful. The atmosphere is inclusive and the key messages both from staff and the written messages on posters and signage show that the college is genuinely making a difference to the lives of learners. Values are visible at all levels and those leading colleges who make the spiritual dimension a priority have ways of checking that these are evident beyond the policies. For example, a number of the principals interviewed for the 157 Spiritual Leadership project talked about keeping track of this through student and staff surveys.

10 How spirituality fits with wider FE priorities

Many colleges are already exemplifying many of the indicators of spiritual development as defined, amongst other things, as encouraging an interest in and respect for other people's beliefs and values. However, not all colleges have made the connection between their practice and spiritual development. And so it comes as something of a relief to colleges when they realise that they are further ahead on this agenda than they realised.

So if many are already demonstrating spiritual aspects of their work, why is it still worth making the case that it should be explicit? There are two main reasons:

- evidence from business shows that those organisations which are clear about their values, aims and purposes, talk about them and make sure that they are evident in every aspect of their business, are more successful than those which do not
- it is a part of the Ofsted inspection schedule and cannot be ignored.

This section considers those aspects of college life which are already high on the agenda and shows the links which these have with spiritual development.

- The Equality Act of 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty is given high priority by colleges. But how many have made the link between their legal obligations and spirituality? As long as the principles of fair access, equality of opportunity and freedom from harassment remain as policies and guidelines they remain inert. But when they are discussed and acted on, they are experienced authentically by the college community. So in essence the focus on spirituality means bringing these aspects

of college life alive. It encourages settings to consider why these are important, not just in order to keep this part of their statutory obligations but because of the difference it makes to the quality of experience for all working at the college.

- Community cohesion is another area which has strong links to spirituality. The role of colleges in contributing to community cohesion is a high priority and is an acknowledged area of success. In making additional space for dialogue about what different beliefs, faiths and traditions have to say to one another, spirituality is embedded. Again it is less about ticking boxes and paying lip service, it is more about noticing and encouraging respectful dialogue, close co-operation and shared endeavours. This is probably one of the most powerful aspects of spirituality in the part of the college's life. Where this is evident then relationships are good, enjoyable and productive, even if they are not always harmonious. Disagreement is accepted and even encouraged, but it is always framed around respectful dialogue. Further guidance on this is in the FBFE documents [*Challenging Voices/ Emerging Voices*](#).
- Learner voice – increasingly, colleges are taking learner voice seriously. This is more than discussion about facilities, important as these are. It is about taking into account the key things which students say they value in their learning and relationships during their time at college. By securing high quality student voice about all aspects of college life more dynamic energised and productive students and behaviours emerge. Again though, the reasons for including spirituality and making the links with existing practice relate primarily to securing the key principles on which an organisation is run.
- Communications – there are many opportunities for expressing the values of an organisation through its communication channels. While it can be hard to put ourselves in the shoes of another person, it is important that we do so. How we communicate is fundamental to expressing our values, whether

we hold people in high esteem or whether we hold them in contempt.

- Employability – colleges pay high attention to the employability skills for their students. They know that for many this is a second chance at becoming skilled and as such ensure that the development of personal skills and qualities is a priority. Many of the FE principals interviewed emphasised that they were preparing students not just to be good employees, but also future leaders and employers. And overriding this for many was the aspiration to support learners to become good citizens, prepared to make their contribution to society.

In conclusion

The time has come to put aside any reluctance to talk about spirituality in education. The spiritual dimension in learning has been recognised by Ofsted, business and college leaders. It should be a fundamental principle of any setting which claims to offer holistic provision to meet the needs of the whole student. As we have shown here, it is possible to embrace this aspect of a college's work so that is both light touch and robust. Our students and all who work in colleges deserve nothing less.

Postscript: Responses from colleges

As part of the research for this guidance, a number of FE colleagues were asked about what they thought about spirituality. Their responses fell broadly into two categories: the difficulties on the one hand and the opportunities on the other. Their responses informed the guidance and examples to support and develop good practice.

Difficulties were identified as:

- a reluctance on the part of colleagues to be expected to disclose their own beliefs and values;
- a lack of understanding about why this might be important;
- problems with including it in every day practice;
- lack of understanding about its meaning in an educational setting.

However, there were also very positive comments about the potential for being more open about spirituality. They identified spirituality in the context of FE as:

- having space to talk about meaning in life;
- a knowledge of or relationship with God;
- about the development of the individual and the ability to reflect on experience and learn from it.

A number linked spirituality with wonder and curiosity and the development of an inner life.

'Serving people is at the heart of this. We don't just live for 'me, me, me'.

Those asked in the research said that there is a need to be mindful of professional boundaries, since not everyone would be confident in developing spirituality within their area of speciality. Some believed that staff and students generally feel they are on eggshells, as they are only able to speak with limited knowledge or experience. They also identified a lack of confidence in staff re spirituality, 'don't want to step on the landmine', some feel ignorant and are reluctant to engage in more open discussions which can be intimidating.

However, on a more positive note were these responses:

'I think that the increasing emphasis on 'the whole person' is removing any barriers and providing opportunities to talk about spirituality.'

'Using the 'faith and cultural literacy = customer care' equation means that even traditionally more resistant areas can engage with spirituality.'

'While many may be unsure what spirituality is, it is possible we are all more spiritual than we know'. 'It can be seen as irrelevant to practical skills, but in reality it is part of all our lives.'

'We think it is possible to give people back their confidence through the examples such as the grid in [*Training Voices*](#)'

The detailed conversations with the leaders of FE colleges about the role of the spiritual in their colleges revealed some very interesting principles: all those interviewed were clear that paying attention to the spiritual aspects both of their own leadership, provision for students and conditions for staff were a key factor in the overall success of their organisations. They were all running good or

outstanding colleges and identified the spiritual as a key factor in their success. A number identified it as one of the key drivers of moving their settings from below standard to being more successful. All made the point that their ability to reflect on their own beliefs, to be open to those of others and to provide a setting where all wanted to belong were key factors in the success of their colleges.

And finally....

Barking and Dagenham College have underpinned the faith and spirituality aspect of their work with a college faith statement:

BARKING AND DAGENHAM COLLEGE FAITH STATEMENT

Faith, identity, and self-expression

Barking and Dagenham College acknowledges that, for many people, religious belief is an important aspect of their public and private identities, and a precious connection to their community and their roots. For many it is also a source of inspiration, creativity and good works.

We also acknowledge that there are many other forms of belief or ethical viewpoints, such as atheism, agnosticism, or humanism, which can be a positive force in the lives of our staff and students.

Whether a member of the College subscribes to any religious faith or none, they are welcome at the College, and welcome to express this aspect of their identity. We aim to raise awareness amongst staff and students about matters of faith and spirituality, as a

means to build positive relationships, combat prejudice, and nurture a culture of respect for people of different faiths.

The College Values

The College has a number of core values. These values include: Respect, Social Justice and Fairness; Passion for enabling individual students to reach their potential; Flexibility and Responsiveness; and High Standards and Professionalism. The College vision, mission and values are important as they provide the college with the means to work together in a learning community, despite our many individual differences. We expect all staff and students to subscribe to these values, regardless of their religious beliefs.

We believe that every individual should be treated with courtesy and fairness and we respect the rights and beliefs of each other, regardless of gender, marital status, age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or position within the organisation.

Any individual who opposes this core value due to any personal, religious or cultural beliefs, must expect their viewpoint to be challenged by the College community.

The College has a duty to protect the rights of all our students, staff and stakeholders in respect of The Equality Act 2010 and related legislation. As a public body the College has a general duty to promote quality of opportunity for all and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This body of legislation will inform any decisions or policies we make in respect of dress codes, service standards, complaints and staff or student disciplinary action.

Faith and Education

The College's mission is to be 'outstanding in education, training and partnerships'.

As a provider of education, the College actively seeks to foster in learners an open and enquiring frame of mind, by which all facts and opinions are explored and critiqued, as necessary for the appreciation of others, the understanding of the natural world and progress in science and technology. This approach may sometimes challenge the systems of belief taught in established religions.

The College aims to create an open and inclusive environment in which faith issues can be frankly and honestly discussed. We welcome the views, religious or not, of all our members. However, in all cases, our members can expect these views to be explored, respectfully challenged and discussed.

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The authors

John Wise is currently Chief Executive of the National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in FE (www.fbfe.org.uk). He has worked in and with the FE sector for the past 25 years. Fbfe's mission is to encourage the FE sector to engage positively with issues of faith and belief. In 2012 fbfe produced non-statutory guidance for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC) in the Learning and Skills sector, which was published by LSIS. This paper is the fourth publication which John and Mary have produced together illustrating different aspects of SMSC in further education.

Mary Myatt is an adviser, writer and trainer specialising in education improvement. She supports schools, colleges and dioceses to think imaginatively about the conditions for high quality spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Mary has a particular interest in using the views of learners to drive improvement. She leads Ofsted inspections, is a project manager for the *RE Quality Mark* and is lead consultant for *Culham St Gabriel's*.