

Technical Paper No. 50

D&DA2 Provider Exit Interviews, October 2005: An Analysis

Susan Band and Vivien Freakley

Towards the end of the second Phase, telephone interviews were held with 19 D&DA scheme providers of dance and drama training, in order to find out their views on changes brought about by the introduction of the awards which have proved beneficial, or detrimental, to individual institutions and/or to the industry more widely. We were interested too in exploring the providers' vision for the future of the awards and how effective and equitable they find current inspection and Review processes.

We were unsuccessful in arranging a date to talk to two providers; a third promised to forward written comments because of a poor quality telephone line during the interview, but failed to do so.

Question schedules, attached as Appendix 1, were circulated in advance to allow time for reflection.

As agreed, the following responses remain anonymous.

Initial involvement in D&DA

All but three of the schools had been in the Scheme from its beginning in 1999, following the Interim Funding Scheme.

One school was on its third year of funding, after initial rejection. Subsequent acceptance followed a period of consultation, and this interviewee reflected that the need for this was not always made clear to applicants in the early days of the scheme.

Reasons given for participation in the scheme:

Interviewees' replies centred on the perceived advantages for their colleges, for prospective students, and for students who eventually find themselves in receipt of awards.

Many interviewees emphasized the advantages for their institution of funding stability over a period of time, enabling forward planning of courses and staff levels, one dance school going so far as to describe this stability as '*essential to our economic being*'. This interviewee saw no feasible alternative to 'jumping on the bandwagon', suggesting that failure to do so would enable other training schools to corner the market country-wide for talented applicants because of the funding offered. Another school, offering musical theatre (MT) training pointed out that the ability to see much further ahead in terms of financial planning benefits students, as well as the institution. Students are now in receipt of an award for the duration of the course, avoiding the situation where they might begin the course only to find themselves unable to continue in the second year, perhaps because of family circumstances.

Another (drama) school felt that the ability to say '*the government is funding so many places in this school*' enhances its reputation with prospective students, for it could be inferred that the institution enjoys the government's approval. This interviewee suggested too that the links established with Trinity College as a result of the scheme also give credibility to what the school is offering. This point was made by a second

(MT) interviewee, who suggested that from the students' point of view a school offering D&DA funding enjoys both official recognition from the government, and prospective students can be assured that the school has been inspected and gone through all aspects of accreditation.

Overall, interviewees placed equal emphasis upon the benefits to students, typically explaining this in terms of the *'fairer playing field'* now offered than was the case with the previous funding arrangement, in which the applicant's geographical location was a critical factor. They emphasized that schools are now able to give places to students irrespective of their financial background, including those from low income families. The reason given by one (MT) interviewee for joining the scheme: *'so that students could access training on talent and not because they came from a sympathetic local authority, or because they could pay'* was typical of many received. One respondent (MT) pointed out that as well as clear direct benefits to recipients of the award, the D&DA scheme has freed up some of the bursaries that the school offers independently.

Another (MT) interviewee described the position in stark terms, noting that for most parents, funding the cost of dance or drama training from private means is not an option: *'... and without the Discretionary Award scheme, the Arts Council schemes or the D&DA scheme, if you don't have the funding, you're not going to get trained'*.

At a further (MT) school, it was reported that because the school was able, prior to D&DA funding, only to take students who could pay the fees, numbers had dropped dramatically following the demise of the Discretionary Award grants. This meant in turn that that the school's standards had been falling slightly, because of the need to take the people who could pay, rather than the best.

Several providers felt that effect of the awards in broadening the pool from which schools can select students, has been to *'attract talent'* (classical dance school) and to drive up the standard of successful applicants. In the words of one (MT) school interviewee: *'Because D&DA was built on offering funding to the most talented students, we could aim for high calibre students on intake.'*

One MT provider observed that in the days when the college relied as a charity upon funding from other charitable organisations for a handful of students, the shortfall in funding was financed by the college's theatre school for children.

Main benefits from participation in D&DA

Several interviewees from institutions outside London commended the opportunity now to offer training to people locally: before the implementation of D&DA, funding had been too limited to enable this, e.g. *'The funding has enabled us to bring in more prestigious teachers, and our students are getting better jobs'* (MT provider). Also on a positive note, another MT respondent outside London commented that the scheme makes it more universally accepted that participation in the D&DA scheme is contingent upon an institution offering training of a similar standard to the London schools.

A third MT contact spoke of the *'kudos'* from belonging to the pool of D&DA colleges, and felt that by the same token more students and parents now have an understanding of levels within the profession.

Many comments duplicated those given as reasons for participation in the scheme, or flowed naturally from those perceptions, with many references to *'stability of*

finances' in the institution, and to the ending of the *'postcode lottery'*. In short, most interviewees were in agreement with the following statement from a MT respondent: *'for the institution, the benefit is that we get students who are of a good calibre, rather than students that are a good calibre that can afford it – it's widening the range of students'*.

For a drama school interviewee, the trend towards a better quality of student was *'quite extraordinary'*. A classical dance school respondent appreciated both the fact that a substantial proportion of the school's income is now underwritten, obviating the need to write begging letters to LEAs, and a reduction in wastage and drop-outs which were the hallmark of previously inadequate funding. This classical dance school had noticed an increase in male recruitment, suggesting that it is perhaps less likely that males will have parental support financially. This interviewee perceived a more *'buzzy, more interesting student learning environment'* emanating from the widened pool of recruitment and enhanced quality of student.

A number of providers commented too upon improved retention rates, as for example: *'...we've got a much stronger level of retention than before, we're hanging onto the D&DAs. I reckon for the first time next year we'll have had a whole cohort go through without losing a student over three years'*.

The principle benefit for students (apart from the direct financial benefit of the award, crucial for many in undergoing training) was the transparent status of an inspected institution offering a Trinity accredited course. Students would now leave college with recognised qualifications, rather than just having been trained. Prior to the scheme, students completing their training who wanted to do something else were in the position of starting again, in terms of their education.

Overall, interviewees felt that for the industry generally, changes in terms of accreditation have produced a much better system and that the inspection system has worked very well. One drama school reported the much closer consideration now given to its internal operations management, and the introduction of a SIMS database for tracking current and post-graduate students. At this school it was felt that institutional self-assessment, now continued through the Ofsted inspection for D&DA, had proved very beneficial to the institution. Other schools agreed that the more open assessment of D&DA providing institutions through the involvement of Ofsted is beneficial to the industry as a whole.

Two contacts at drama schools perceived an increasing awareness of disability issues among the schools following the D&DA initiative, one contact observing also that new doors have been opened which the school would have not found cost effective without the practical support of the funding offered. A third interviewee (MT) commented that the institution benefited in reflecting more accurately the make-up of the British population.

One (MT) interviewee commended the provision for some students to receive maintenance as well as their D&DA, suggesting that *'they're better off than university students, really'*, while another offered a more conservative assessment: *'although it doesn't give the students maintenance, it does pay their fees and take the pressure off them'*.

Perceived drawbacks for students linked with funding limitations are discussed in the following section.

Drawbacks from participation in D&DA

Six schools viewed the financial value of the awards as insufficient, involving them in subsidizing the shortfall in funding. One commented further that *'the independent fee payer phenomenon has kind of drifted away with the arrival of funding schemes [such as state awards, MDS aided places and D&DAs]...therefore it makes it all the more problematic in finding funding from other quarters'*. (MT interviewee).

Notwithstanding the expectations of colleges and schools that their involvement with the D&DA scheme would stabilize their financial position, there were many comments regarding *'the shortfall in funding, the difference between what we actually receive per capita and the cost to the college of the students.'*(MT school).

Similarly, the representative of a classical ballet school reported that joining the scheme has not given the school economic security as hoped, because it did not recognise the full fee. He observed that the school has a structural, and growing deficit within its accounts. He explained that each of the school's sixth formers is under funded by over £3,000 per year, which the school has to find from another source. The Aided Places Scheme and the Music and Dance Scheme both recognise the full fee on a means tested basis, and this means that students on these schemes are funding the students on the D&DA in the sixth form. This represents cross-funding from one scheme to another, despite the fact that the schemes were conceived in very different ways.

This comment was supported by others, who felt that the financial side of the scheme is not thoroughly thought through, for example:

'The money we receive falls far short of what the course costs us' (drama school)

'We had hoped that a benefit from the D&DA scheme would be financial security....., but D&DA hasn't in fact helped at all here' (classical ballet school)

'[There is] not enough money – we have [one of the] lowest tariffs of all the schools. It was capped for three years from 2002-5. This is a drawback, considering all the schools are providing for the same market place' (MT school)

'The funding falls short of the fees for us by about a thousand pounds per student, bearing in mind that a percentage of the students pay the full fees' (second MT school)

'We're a thousand pounds per student short on a musical theatre course, which we have to make up ourselves' (third MT school)

This third MT interviewee observed that the present arrangements provide very little incentive for an organisation to be entrepreneurial, because any extra money counts as income, reducing the school's tariff. He suggested that the first hundred thousand pounds of income should be *tax free*, with half the next fifty thousand to be considered in relation to the school's tariff.

Three schools viewed the relatively small number of awards available as a drawback from the student perspective. Two interviewees commented negatively on the inability of FE students in receipt of D&DA funding to access student loans, and three felt that the parental upper income threshold of thirty thousand pounds a year in order to qualify for the non-repayable maintenance grant is much too low. These perceived anomalies were referred to by schools also in response to later questions

probing equitable distribution of limited funding. On the positive side, one (MT) provider was of the view that: *'...having the maintenance as well [as the D&DA] is incredible for some of them, it really is very, very good. I mean, they're better off than university students'*.

A second (MT) respondent pointed out that while the fees are covered under the D&DA scheme, this benefit is lost if the student cannot afford to live, and reported the experience of several students declining a D&DA for that reason. This interviewee claimed: *'the philosophical thrust of widening access to independent schools is undermined by the very low threshold of the fees and maintenance'* for while students can take career development loans of eight thousand pounds over three years to supplement the D&DA, this amount is substantially insufficient. Moreover, repayment is due immediately on graduation, regardless of income, and at a higher interest rate than the student loan.

Another (MT) school commented that anomalies with the finances do not offer extremely poor students adequate support, and suggested that there should be clothing grants, or one off grants. She observed that with Arts Council funding, really poor students were given two or three hundred pounds to help with home travel, and some money for uniforms. She had experience of some students 'milking the system' who receive a full grant, and automatically therefore qualify for payment of maintenance.

Two providers suggested that a perceived inflexibility of the awards could be improved for the schools by the introduction of a block grant, and in terms of equity for students, that inflexibility could be improved by the introduction of means testing. The comment of one, unable to see *'why a millionaire gets the same level of support as a child who comes from a family on income support'* is typical of those received from three schools. We return to the subject of means testing in a later section.

Another (MT) respondent explained that if the school replaces a student, the parental contribution is lost and has to be refunded. For example, if a student is paying the college £2,000 a term because they have a D&DA (the school fees are £2,700), the school will lose that £2,000 because of the D&DA status of the student leaving the school. The perceived anomaly which allows a student who leaves college without giving a term's notice to keep the Manchester allowance was also highlighted

A classical ballet provider, critical of the fact that if students are successful enough to be offered a job at, say, the beginning of their second year, the school is financially penalised by the requirement for the D&DA to be returned to 'the pot', suggested that it would be fairer to schools if a block grant system enabled them to reallocate the money within the school.

A third provider who agreed that the scheme is inflexible in penalising schools in the event that an award holding student leaves early for a performance contract, also suggested that in exceptional circumstances, the minimum entry age of 16 could be waived. At this school the scheme was further judged inflexible in restricting access to the awards to those resident in the UK for 3 years.

For the institutions, a very much increased burden in terms of paperwork was fairly widely perceived (six interviewees commented upon this), specifically in the decision of the LSC to ask for backdated paper work for four years on taking over from DfES, though there was some hope that the new forms sent out by LSC would standardise reporting procedures. In the meantime many of the schools drew attention to the diversion of teaching resources (especially for small schools where those

undertaking paperwork are also those who are teaching) and extra costs through the necessity to employ additional administrative staff. A number of schools reported that a process of documentation, rather than fundamental operational change was required for compliance. However, this process, while worthwhile in terms of quality assurance, was currently involving the schools in much duplication of effort for the requirements of Ofsted as well as the LSC. One (MT) interviewee pointed out that colleges are being asked to deliver outside their specialist areas, and that it will take time for training to filter through.

One school highlighted the dual remit of the recently appointed marketing manager to cover both diversity and disability as a factor detracting from maximum effectiveness and support for schools in these areas, as it was felt that the efforts of this post-holder are too thinly spread between the two.

A small drama school whose profile has reportedly changed greatly in terms of numbers of students and the courses offered found that insufficient account had been taken of these changes in calculating the basis for its tariff. Insufficient funding was creating difficulties for the school in paying tutors at the 'going rate', notwithstanding the potential advantages of doing so in advance of the next cost review, in line with the principles applied by PriceWaterhouse Coopers. The interviewee from this school felt that under these principles wise budgeting is not rewarded, and attempts to develop an organisation and its facilities can be penalised.

As an aside, several respondents felt that PriceWaterhouse Cooper's request for information, giving a deadline for reply which fell during a summer holiday, undermined confidence in the company's competence.

One (MT) interviewee felt that plans to bring in more schools in the face of a total fund widely perceived to be too small, is a drawback of the scheme for the sector as a whole, and other providers commented negatively or positively on this issue in response to later questions.

Difficulties overcome and remaining

One dance school had been pleased to receive some two year awards, for its two year course, along with some awards for one year, enabling the school to admit students with prior learning. In a similar vein, a second (MT) respondent noted the opportunity recently offered to apply for extra awards. These were welcome opportunities, in the light of the shortage of available awards highlighted in the previous section.

As regards the changeover to the LSC, this second interviewee felt that the passing of time would enable the schools to become used to the Council's needs and requirements, and vice versa. A number of other schools felt that they were coming to terms with new administrative requirements either by expanding systems to enable them to cope, employing additional staff, or through training.

A ballet school interviewee mentioned ongoing difficulties in recruiting female students from ethnic backgrounds because of religious antipathy to public dance display. This respondent also reported difficulties in recruiting students with a major disability, finding them reluctant to apply for training notwithstanding the college's disability friendly prospectus, activities with Outreach and contacts with disability centres.

A number of schools referred to the shortfall, frozen levels of funding and lack of capital funding as the principal remaining difficulties. Many of these drew attention to their strategies for meeting the shortfall. These included cross-subsidy with the Music and Dance Scheme (MDS), income generation through children's classes or similar activities and raised fee levels for non-European students.

Two MT schools felt that there was a need for wider publicity for the scheme both to attract a wider range of students and to avoid the time consuming explanations to parents at open audition days and actual auditions about what the D&DA awards are and how they work. One said:

"I think the dance publications, The Dancing Times, the examining board magazines, Dance Expression, we could do a better job, either from Trinity, or from part of the DADA scheme, to actually, you know, do an article on how the whole thing actually works".

Two other MT providers mentioned the resource demanding recruitment process, resulting in much uncertainty around who will actually arrive for the courses, e.g.:

'...this great almost merry-go-round of kids and they sort of apply to five, six, seven different schools, audition at all of them, and here's a third practical difficulty there partly because obviously we want to see as many kids as we can, but it does leave things very late and as the kids go round apply to five or six different schools and then we all sort of hold our breaths saying you know "What'll happen now?" I don't know...and it is very time-consuming, I know the heads of other schools say the same thing' (MT provider).

This school would prefer students to be restricted to auditioning at three schools which they rank as first, second or third choice.

Lack of clarity for parents and students about where the Trinity Diploma stands in the National Qualification Framework was an outstanding issue for some schools.

The schools with both FE and HE courses commented on their feelings of insecurity with what they perceived as an unresolved anomalous position with HEFCE.

Changes in student profile

Most interviews across the range of providers were of the view that more students from a lower socio-economic background have been encouraged to apply for training through the D&DA scheme, though a number of schools commented that their student profile has always been diverse.

One MT college reported that those from a lower income families are able to benefit from evening classes offered by a local school with specialist Arts status, though classes offered by his own college had proved more successful in attracting recruits from that specialist school as well as from schools in other areas, who appeared to like the opportunity to mix with a variety of other children. Three schools drew attention to their Access programmes which are designed to offer pre-vocational level training beyond the fee paying private sector classes in order to widen the participation of under represented groups, e.g.:

'We've created pre-vocational programmes; that's going to lead to students being trained up and I really want to make use of the access funding, which I think has got great possibilities for us'. (MT school).

Seven schools (including all the classical ballet schools) reported an increase in the number of boys applying.

As regards ethnic background, one MT college representative reported little difference in the profile of students, with few applicants from an ethnic minority background. She suggested that one reason for this is that middle class white children are more likely to have been engaged in prior dance training, so that their performance at audition is superior.

One ballet school that reported some success overall in recruiting ethnic minority students, had encountered sections of the community *'with religious antipathy to public dance display'* resistant to the idea of girls entering dance training (ballet school). Another MT school agreed, though his comments were age, rather than gender specific, with the suggestion that Asians feel that dancing is not a satisfactory job or role for an adult.

Another, MT, provider found it very difficult to get ethnic minority students into the institution, despite very culturally mixed local community, 'lots' of Outreach work in schools and positive profiling with photographs in publicity material of the school's black students. This interviewee felt that television showing boys in the media that are gay has a negative impact among parents from religious backgrounds who feel that *'it is not the right atmosphere for my boy or girl'* and prefer their children to be presented with very positive role models which exclude gay boys.

A second MT school reported few ethnic minority applicants, and was puzzled to receive no response to the day offered specifically for ethnic minorities to experience the life of a musical theatre school.

A third MT school found no difference in ethnic minority take up, having *'always had ethnic minority students'*. Another agreed, commenting: *'We get agencies ringing up, asking 'have you got any coloured people, we need some for this musical?' and we either have or we haven't, but that's always been the case....before D&DA....and that hasn't changed'* (MT school). Another interviewee felt that the D&DA scheme has prompted change which would have in any case gathered momentum.

As regards meeting targets for British Minority Ethnic (BME) recruitment, one school whose intake exceeded the percentage target, felt that the national percentage figure given should relate to the percentage of people who go into the performing arts, not to the population as a whole.

A number of schools reported the success of Outreach work in bringing more BME students into training, for example one (MT) school where Outreach work had brought in two Afro Caribbean boys who would not have been able to afford the training without D&DA funding. A drama school which reported recruiting more BME students attributed this to the efforts of an Outreach worker, school initiatives in running workshops for target groups, and the situation of the school in an area heavily populated by potential BME applicants.

At this drama school, the efforts of an Outreach worker targeting disabled people had been less successful.

As regards disability, one ballet school interviewee observed little response to the college's efforts to reach potential disabled students through the prospectus and through Outreach, although it seems clear that the college's aim is to reach those with only a minor disability: '*...obviously, you know, if they're got a major disability the wouldn't even consider applying...they just basically know it's not for them, you know*' (ballet school). This contact welcomed the work of the D&DA funded flexible provision projects, but drew a distinction between the specialist nature of knowledge in her own field of ballet and the knowledge needed in dealing with disabled people.

Other schools appeared to agree, reporting that they have accepted some students with relatively minor disabilities, including one with a learning difficulty, some with a hearing impairment, or a speech problem. One MT interviewee said that the school has students whose disabilities included dyslexia, learning difficulties, deafness, a visual impairment, and "*a wonky leg*".

However, one MT school which reported recruiting some disabled students felt that: '*certain aspects could be difficult, e.g. if one limb was missing, it would be very hard to do the audition criteria*', and this position was supported by a drama school representative. The interviewee pointed out that the school is training for the market place, and will not provide for a particular type of disability unless there is demand from the industry. He reported that the school receives no requests for disabled performers, a situation observed by a second MT respondent.

A third MT school experiencing a lack of applications from disabled students (although four with minor disabilities had been recruited in the previous year) found difficulties in couching advertising in terms that neither seem discriminatory against non-disabled people, nor seem likely to dissuade disabled people from applying. This school had made the building physically accessible to wheelchair users.

Ballet schools expressed particularly strong reservations about recruiting students with severe impairments, one suggesting that it would be: '*completely irresponsible to take anyone into the school who doesn't have not only a fit body but a body of the right shape, size and structure*'.

A classical ballet school respondent, whose institution had found difficulty in attracting disabled students, observed in reply to a later question regarding the review process, that disabled student recruitment '*would appear to have an unfair and unpractical emphasis in the process..... it's not that we're disregarding it in any way, but it's just we're all felt to be such naughty children if we've not succeeded*.' (classical ballet provider)

Interviewees from four schools pointed out that those with a slight disability are reluctant to disclose this at the start of their course lest this jeopardise their chance of recruitment.

Representatives from two drama schools and three MT schools felt that while the D&DA scheme may not have had a direct impact upon the numbers of disabled students recruited, the issue has nevertheless been placed firmly on the agenda. Two MT providers commented upon how D&DA had helped them to understand disability issues better, one saying how valuable it had been to realise that 'disability' is a term which in fact encompasses a wide variety of abilities and disabilities, some of which the school could actually work with. In a similar vein, a drama school reported that it now promotes access for disabled students quite prominently in its prospectus and on its website, directly as a result of knowledge gained through D&DA. By contrast with some of the other interviewees, this drama school reported

that employers are looking to work with disabled actors, and several representatives mentioned that market forces are a crucial driving force for any change in recruitment. One MT school recognised the role of D&DA in raising awareness of disability issues, but felt that while television is becoming more accessible to disabled performers, many would find difficulty in coping with a West End stage environment: *'there are very few roles for disabled people in that genre'* (MT school).

Changes in staff profile

Four MT providers, three drama and two classical ballet providers reported no significant changes in their staff profiles. One classical ballet provider expressed her view as follows: *'Well, not really [any changes] because we've always employed staff from ethnic minorities and people with the appropriate ability for whatever the job happens to be...'*. A MT interviewee responded in the same vein, observing that the school has some Afro-Caribbean staff and a number with forms of disability: *'...but I don't think frankly that D&DA has had anything to do with it whatsoever...we just employ the people that we think are fit for the purpose'*.

A second classical dance school interviewee had taken a conscious decision, faced with choosing from a number of suitable people, to undertake positive discrimination, appointing a mixed race teacher to teach boys at the school. It was envisaged that this teacher would be *'a role model as much as a teacher'*. (classical ballet school).

One MT school outside London reported that following the introduction of the D&DA scheme, higher quality staff were now joining the school, and on a country wide, rather than a local, basis.

A second MT provider agreed that the school had been able, as a result of the D&DA scheme to improve its course and correspondingly change its staff profile, attracting more male teachers into the college.

How the limited resources of D&DA can best support widening participation in vocational training

One (MT) provider felt that the scheme should continue to concentrate resources on developing talent and potential at centres of excellence, as it currently does, noting that dance and drama are vocational careers in which only the talented succeed in a small and competitive market.

A second MT respondent felt that widening participation can best be supported with limited resources through Outreach programmes, and another three (including one drama school) mentioned the importance of initiative funding for access: *'it's only a dribble, but even a dribble for an organisation like us is an incentive to do something which otherwise you might think: 'shall we spend that money on that or something else?''* (MT school). Another provider with both MT and drama courses felt that the DfES Access funding should be better accounted for, with schools taking it upon themselves to evaluate the effectiveness of their access projects more rigorously.

A third MT respondent surmised the possibility of *'a problem with some of the finance'*, observing that students whose parents own expensive cars and live in up-market areas are still able to claim maintenance, and suggesting that maintenance payments could in some cases be allocated more effectively. Another felt that economically well off parents should not benefit from having all fees paid through the scheme. A drama provider too deplored that the scheme can fund *'people with huge*

incomes living in Holland Park – I think that's really outrageous....I think you've got to look at need, as well as everything else' (drama school).

As regards D&DAs, however, one MT respondent felt that the number of awards should not be increased, assuming the same overall level of available funding, for although this would benefit more students it could have the effect of lowering standards. A second, drama school, provider suggested that participation could be further widened by more flexibility in the distribution of the award, offering a student half an award, and enabling two students to benefit. This interviewee suggested that a further improvement would be to liberate the D&DAs from the FE restriction prohibiting student loans.

One (MT) contact observed that careers advisors tend not to steer young people down the route of a dancing and acting combination training. There is a need, she felt, for this message to be conveyed to careers advisors, and for this to be facilitated by a clearly defined level six qualification, which differentiates clearly between HND and the National Diploma in terms of level.

Six (3 MT and 3 classical ballet) providers felt that the answer to providing best support for widening participation with the limited resources of D&DA lies in strengthening pre-vocational training.

Two of the classical ballet schools pointed out the problems of access to non-fee paying pre-vocational training, essential for acceptance onto their courses. One commented: *..I think that's the single most thing and that impacts everywhere, doesn't it? So it's making sure that there are dance teachers available let's say in deprived areas....that children that are talented that live in the wrong part of the country actually have access to good dance teaching' (classical ballet provider).*

This provider felt that much could be done with better co-ordination between various government agencies. It is noteworthy here that The Government Response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Report on Arts Development: Dance (HC587) both supports this view and offers a commitment to measures for improving the situation.

One MT school noted that there has never been a traditional route through the dancing schools for ethnic minority children, although many of the school's intake comes from ballet classes. He felt that rather than offer Access funding, it would more effective to pool resources to offer pre-vocational technique and audition training in places where there are more ethnically diverse communities. He acknowledged that mounting TV and radio campaigns and using the mainstream and Black media would be prohibitively expensive for individual providers, and suggested collective action with pooled resources.

Another provider suggested that a foundation course offers an opportunity for students to achieve the necessary technical level for the diploma course. This has been a successful model for this school in widening participation.

A third school was of the view that standards could be raised in teacher education, enabling more students to have access to good (non-PE) dance training in state sector schools. This college is working on a PGCE with an HE organisation and developing a collaborative relationship with a specialist state school.

Desirability and feasibility of further changes

As might be expected, those who made suggestions as above felt that these further changes are both desirable and tenable.

An MT provider was wary of diluting the overall 'pot' of funding by allowing into the scheme an ever increasing number of colleges, fearing that this would water down the benefit to some of the vocational schools, and perhaps leading retrogressively to a situation similar to that of 1999. A second MT provider agreed, fearing that widening the scheme too widely would eliminate differential prestige among schools. Indeed, two providers responded to a later question, probing other changes that would make the distribution of awards more equitable for students, by saying that they felt the number of D&DA providers should be reduced to concentrate the funding.

One interviewee regretted the fact that applicants who have not been British nationals for at least 3 years are ineligible for the scheme, as well as an inflexible 16 year age of entry, which she suggested could in exceptional circumstances be varied to allow entry to those applicants whose bodies are 'just right' for intensive physical training at the age of 15.

The view of one classical ballet provider was that the scheme has evolved logically and reasonably fairly over the six years and should now be allowed to settle for at least three years before any further major changes are undertaken, although this respondent favoured means testing of the awards, or offering a 50% award for a student with the ability to pay, to release funds for others.

Means testing the awards

A drama school provider observed that it is not always easy, even with a scoring system, to identify creative talent at auditions, and applicants with greater financial need have been denied entry. Two interviewees (MT) felt that the scheme could be a little divisive in that those not in receipt of an award feel, often wrongly, that they are second best from the outset of their course, for those judged best at audition may be overtaken by other students in the course of the programme.

One MT provider who rejected the idea of means testing was more confident that a 'comprehensive' audition process is successful in selecting the most talented, for receipt of what is, after all, conceived as a talent based award. He conceded, however, that in the face of looking at the financial means of families, he had pondered the merits of being able to split the award, to help two families with low income.

All other participants were strongly in favour of means testing.

One respondent, a very strong advocate of a means tested scholarship scheme like the MDS, could see no reason why a millionaire should receive the same level of support as a child from a family on income support.

Another provider was of the view that in an ideal world talent should be the first and foremost reason for acceptance into training, but questioned the rationale for this in view of the scheme's stated aim to encourage people into training who would otherwise be unable to pay.

Two providers felt that the testing would be better done centrally by a third party such as Manchester LEA who assess the maintenance awards, pointing out the difficulty for the school in scrutinising true extent of parental income. However, one MT questioned the fallibility of maintenance award decisions, suggesting that people on high incomes are finding their way to 'milk' the system.

Several providers pointed out that means testing might discourage students from 'shopping around' until they secure an award, which is not necessarily offered by the institution providing the training best suited to their needs. One provider would like to offer a place to any applicant for whom the school's training is appropriate, having the student means tested centrally for awards as they are for maintenance grants. He suggested that this will ameliorate a perceived divisiveness in the current scheme: *'...they either qualify financially or they don't...it takes away all this business about being a second rate citizen, you know. If somebody's students are too rich, then there's no slur there, is there?'*

Another interviewee commented that not being able to use ability to pay as a first criterion left the school with a very unbalanced student population. Awards were offered to the most outstanding regardless of ability to pay and places reserved for the next best. This second category tended to find awarded places at other schools, leaving the provider to offer the fee-paying places to the less talented students. As a result, the cohort could be very divided in terms of ability.

Other changes that would make the distribution of awards more equitable for students

A respondent from a classical dance school criticised the 'all or nothing' nature of the funding, so that those who are talented receive awards regardless of whether there is an ability to pay or not. She felt it would be good to be able to offer two half scholarships, so that an applicant with the ability to pay could pay half fees, releasing funds for one full scholarship. However, a drama school respondent pointed out the disadvantage for providers of halving an award. For example, if the awards were to be worth £3,500 per student, the school could not afford to run a course with eighteen students only funded at that amount, since the balance of the money to make up the total cost of the course, say £10,000 would have to be found.

A second contact from a classical dance school, who had been in the position of offering D&DAs to UK and EU students whose parents could easily have afforded to pay, felt that the ideal would be a block grant with some flexibility, so that schools have an average cost per student, but the capacity to use that, so that student needs could be effectively targeted.

As mentioned in a previous section, two providers felt that the number of D&DA providers should be reduced to concentrate the funding. One of these commented that more equitable distribution of awards would be delivered through: *'Fewer schools, better providers, I think going down the means tested route, obviously, and also to resolve what is happening where people are now jumping ship to join the HEFCE-funded schemes rather than remaining in the Learning and Skills Council set up.'*

Effects of the migration to HE/Conservatoire on own institution

Nine providers reported no effect from migration, while two reported a slight impact, one having lost a single student to the Conservatoire last year. However, this

provider commented that *'in terms of RADA for instance, people would nearly always go there if they were given the choice,... because of its name'*.

However, a classical ballet provider felt that most of the school's applicants would not wish to go down the Conservatoire route because of its historically academic orientation and students' own preference for a training that is vocational. This provider had decided to stay within FE provision in the short term, but may opt for migration to HE in the event that Trinity College provides a module to convert the level 4 qualification to degree level. Another felt that progression opportunities and the 'long term economic health' of the sixth form programmes could both be improved through a formal collaboration with an HE partner, and is currently investigating the possibilities.

One school commented that although migration had not affected the number and quality of applicants, the institution is feeling a little vulnerable because they have a *'silly arrangement'* to maintain their degree: *'they do the diploma, and they get the degree, as well as a private arrangement with the university.....it's a bit strange'*.

This arrangement has led to some feeling of insecurity in the college, but the lack of a MT course in the Conservatoire has lessened the perceived threat from that direction.

Another provider in a similar position in offering a degree course, although in MT and drama, was less sanguine and very concerned that the HEFCE might impose an unwelcome solution.

Two MT colleges reported that migration had affected them positively in that they gained several extra, relinquished awards. A further MT respondent perceived a fairly significant effect, explaining that many students want a degree because their parents regard this as a 'true' qualification, and rate the level 4 NVQ as lacking in this respect. Last year this provider had lost three prospective students just before the beginning of the autumn term to colleges who had promised a course similar to that provided on an FE course in the D&DA scheme. A drama provider reported a significant impact, naming two institutions to which the school had lost students. On the other hand, an MT interviewee saw no direct effect from migration, having received this year a very high number of applicants, though she felt that the seal of approval has been accorded to the Conservatoire, as a centre of excellence.

Effect of migration to HE/Conservatoire on D&DA schools generally

One drama school and one MT provider perceived no effect generally, while two other providers were unsure, having received no feedback from other schools.

Two schools, one offering drama, the second providing both MT and drama training, felt that there is no longer a 'level playing field' because some institutions now receive 'premium funding' and have all places funded. The second provider has noticed that these institutions no longer take part in the sector associations for dance, MT and drama.

One school suggested that 'snootiness' might preclude the admission of MT providers from the Conservatoire; it is noteworthy, however, that two providers who had seen some D&DA schools move towards HE were fiercely proud of the vocational orientation of their own courses, expressed by one as follows:

'We've always sworn that we would go to our graves as a diploma course because we don't believe that what we do is that kind of course....everyone was going 'Oh, rigour and academic....' And we're going, 'but that's not what it's about'...we do the minimum amount of sitting down and writing that we can possibly get away with, because an awful lot of the kids that we have here, post sixteen, their secondary school career has been the most miserable years of their life, sadly. And the fact that they're actually now being given a chance to do something at which they excel and have potential....is tremendously encouraging for them' (MT provider).

A third provider also spoke in strong defence of the vocational focus of his school's training: *'I feel that...the degree courses teach people how to talk dance and write dance...I feel that the D&DA funded colleges should concentrate on training performers – that's what the funding is for'.*

One respondent questioned the basis upon which Conservatoires could claim to offer superior training, suggesting that the only way to monitor this is to see the exit routes of the students.

On the other hand, a classical ballet provider, pondering how the awards might go forward, would like greater recognition for the value of lifelong learning alongside the emphasis placed upon first job destinations, expressed as follows: *'...there's always going to be a point in lifelong learning where A levels, and other skills are going to be very important to the young person's development in later life. I think if we are just concerned about that first job, we're losing sight of the longer term [career] aspirations* (dance school).

How the awards might go forward, and the advantages of such an approach

One drama and an MT provider began by emphasizing their hope that the awards *will* go forward, the former describing the scheme as *'a feather in the FE, and the government's cap'* (drama provider).

Many interviewees responded to this question by drawing attention to points made in previous sections: seven emphasized their concern that the awards should indeed continue, and three had no wish to see changes.

Other comments reflected a range of views: three would like fewer, better funded schools, three referred again to their support for means tested awards, which would have the effect of widening participation and improving quality: the children of wealthy parents would train anyway and there would be more money for those from poorer families. Two providers would like to receive funding for students as a body, rather than for particular students, to enable more equal sharing of the 'pot' with half or one third awards for some, full awards for others. Another school would like a five year period for planning, rather than the three years currently allocated.

One of the providers favouring fewer, better funded, more realistically priced schools, explained his position as follows: *the gulf between the real costs of providing a specialist training in dance and what we receive is so great that even if we fund raise till Doomsday we're not going to bridge it'*. Such a move would, he felt, advantage the nation in terms of having identifiable centres of excellence.

One interviewee expressed serious uncertainties about his school's future position within D&DA. He pointed out that there are now some 20 members of the Conference of Drama Schools, of whom only 5 are now outside the higher education system, with 3 of these offering degrees. These schools are already in a very small

minority in terms of the profile of the dance and drama awards in the drama sector. He emphasized the now disparate nature of provision, highlighting the myriad of small dance schools in comparison with some drama schools that are now accommodated within universities, and fearing that the resultant muddle could provoke a negative response at ministerial level.

Another provider worried about the synergy between the schools offering degrees and the preferred focus of the LSC: this in addition to the institution's perceived financial difficulties in the light of two cost cutting exercises, and the implications of these factors for the future.

One MT provider would like the facility for the qualification to be upgraded after, say, two or three years of professional work, with a dissertation incorporated. This respondent was of the view that such a move to make the qualification more valuable would halt the migration to HE as well as upgrading the whole scheme. She pointed out that students entering training at 18 already in possession of three A levels are not likely to be interested in something that counts for 4 A levels. Another provider was working with Trinity on plans for a top-up year to enable diploma students in future years to convert their Diplomas into honours degrees. She was very keen for this development to go forward, since it would protect the practical performance and vocational focus of the D&DA funded Diplomas whilst allowing more flexible career development at a later stage.

Another interviewee felt that the entry age for students should be changed, because of the difficulties of meeting Child Protection legislation in cases where students leave home at sixteen years of age. While the college makes efforts to place young students with trusted landladies, it was felt that the age limit should be raised to 18.

Views on the Review Process

One classical ballet provider found the review process '*rigorous and good*'; another school which had '*always done fairly well with [the process] ...our funding has always remained stable...*' also declared satisfaction with the process. However, four of the MT providers were concerned about a perceived lack of industry expertise on the review panel, which they regarded as critical to a rigorous process of fairness and transparency in considering new applicants.

An MT provider expressed this as follows: '*...Contemporary people are not musical theatre, they have a whole different concept of bodies if they are ballet people..., and...we're never going to get the highest fliers for ballet because we're happy to take someone with misshapen hips for the simple reason they be a fabulous singer and can kick their legs and work in the West End on a character part. They can go to Les Mis, they're not going to Phantom of the Opera. So I don't think that we really have the people coming in with enough knowledge to be able to understand the systems that operate within these colleges.....we feel let down by the quality of the people that are coming in to judge us, so little understanding of our profession...getting people from the world of musical theatre that have this academic bias, that are suitable for Ofsted, is very difficult...*'

Another provider suggested that the review committee is in a poor position to judge excellence, notwithstanding its obligation to be fair and transparent in considering new applicants. He acknowledged the challenge facing the LSC in this respect while doubting that the Council has as yet '*got a handle on the level of excellence*'.

This MT provider felt strongly that given the emphasis on destinations there should be someone, for example from the Disney Corporation, on the committee with knowledge of the qualitative differences in the spectrum of commercial theatre and cruise ship employers. This interviewee suggested that representatives from the larger commercial theatre managements such as Cameron Mackintosh, the larger pantomime managers, agents and managers, have extensive knowledge of the whole sector. A second MT school agreed, and suggested adding commercial casting directors and choreographers (for example Arlene Phillips and Gillian Lynne) to the committee, for their up-to-date knowledge of the current needs of the profession.

As regards the review process, one MT and one drama school felt that the cycle could reasonably be extended to five years, especially in the light of schools' experience in having now gone through the bidding process many times. The former interviewee added that an extended period would be of great help from a funding point of view, enabling schools to plan five, rather than three years ahead: a period which relates to only a single cohort of students on a three year course.

For one school that reported having *'really struggled to fund-raise'*, a concern was that the review would penalise its hard won success by saying: *'well, if it can raise its own money...it needs less from us'* (MT provider).

Another MT respondent admitted to some confusion about *'what they're looking for'*, noting the apparent changing focus of each of the three reviews to date. He expressed some unease concerning the inability of those administering questions to give explanations, and lack of confidence that the significance of data supplied would be correctly interpreted further down the line. As an example of this confusion, a third MT provider had queried whether a foundation course would be included in the review, as uncertainty surrounded its status as a part-time course. However, no clear guidance was given, and the matter was not clarified until the arrival of an accountant to undertake the review, who decided that the course would in fact be included. As a result the school's accountant was ill prepared to supply the required information. A classical ballet provider perceived anomalies in the PricewaterhouseCooper cost audit; for example there was not formal place of entry in the audit forms for predictable, but as not yet incurred expenditure such as a forthcoming rent review or rate increases. A fourth MT school felt that the recent financial review was *'pretty bad'*: that the paperwork sent to providers was not well explained. This interviewee observed that a forthcoming meeting with PricewaterhouseCooper to explain the review process retrospectively to providers was convened too late to be of help.

One provider questioned the principle behind the Review process, arguing that the very significant improvements in standards, the majority of scores now falling in the 1-2 range, were undermined by the moves to bring in new providers and remove others from the scheme. It would be more constructive, he felt, to say: *'Look, this scheme's been a great success. It should be built on and we should have some extra money to bring some new people in ... not to bring new people in at our expense'*. This respondent recalled the school's experience in scoring grade 1 only to have its allocation of D&DAs cut to enable new providers to be brought into the scheme.

Views on the criteria for admitting new schools into the project

Five providers repeated their desire for fewer, better funded schools, one expressing his view as follows:

“...it’s all about quality, it’s not about numbers and, unfortunately, there’s confusion here about qualities and quantity. I can see it’s politically desirable to increase access and numbers going into professional training institutions but, at what point does that start to dilute the quality of the products, or the purpose of what’s involved in?”

One felt that the D&DA provider schools were too concentrated in the London area, but another saw greater geographical coverage as spreading the D&DA funding too thinly and diluting the quality of others:

“there’s a great fear here that the drive towards geographical dispersal of providers will dilute quantity and quality...and value. So we’re looking from the review process that it will recognise existing centres of excellence’.

Several providers supported the idea in principle that the Review process should offer new colleges opportunities to be brought into the scheme, accepting that the scheme should not be a closed shop and that there should be a need to compete for resources. Providers expressed the view that Ofsted inspection reports and destination data should form the criteria for admission and schools should be ‘*either outstanding or good*’ by these criteria. Two emphasized that aspirant colleges should first undergo full inspection, one pointing out that on the basis of a single day’s inspection, public money could be wasted in the interim if the school were subsequently to attract bad grades at full inspection. One respondent who supported this view suggested that the inspection process could benefit from the appointment of ‘mentoring inspectors’ sent to all colleges, perhaps every six months to spend a day unannounced in each institution. This interviewee, and another MT provider referred to unscrupulous misrepresentation at times, in the form of extra staff brought in especially for an inspection, and exaggerated claims about qualifications on the part of job applicants. A further proposal was that incoming colleges be limited to, say, 5 D&DAs in their first three years in the scheme.

For one drama school the most important criterion for admitting new schools is that their courses are professionally relevant, that the schools are training (actors) who get work in the profession, and this would exclude ‘*various so called acting courses at...various institutions [which] are training students in acting, but...not for the profession, and the students aren’t becoming actors...*’. Another drama provider agreed that new entrants should be ‘*vocational in purpose, providing levels of vocational training comparable to existing providers, and monitored*’, and added that if there were to be greater flexibility in the distribution of the awards, with an award fund rather than an allocation of a certain number of scholarships, then one or two more institutions could be admitted into the scheme with the money being used more flexibly.

The limited funding pot alluded to here was the focus of a reply from a MT provider, who saw nothing to be gained from taking resources away from one area that is working to fund another; another school was similarly very concerned that if too many new schools are admitted, it will “dilute” the funding available to the existing ones. This she viewed as dangerous not only because it is destabilising for the schools but also because it dilutes loyalty to the scheme. She highlighted the case of schools which, turning to other sources for their major funding and as a consequence less reliant on D&DA funding, choose also to be less compliant with the D&DA ethos and eventually remove themselves from the scheme.

Another provider was concerned about maintaining standards, but also about not flooding the labour market: *“it worries me because there are limited numbers in this*

profession, it's an overcrowded profession, we know that...and generally speaking it will lower the standards overall if more schools come into the scheme'.

A further respondent suggested that incoming schools should have a proven track record in accordance with the criteria laid down for schools currently in the scheme, and a track record reflecting their graduates' success in achieving careers in the sector for which they were trained: geographical location of the school should not be a basis for admission. A second respondent agreed that geographical location should not be an influencing criterion to the extent that a school with good grades would lose its place in the scheme simply to accommodate a school in an area with scant training provision.

Another interviewee accepted that geographical access to training might be a reason for adding a school but added that standards will need to be maintained both by Trinity in its validation of new schools, and by Ofsted in the light of a changing inspection process. This view was presented more forcefully by another provider who felt that to admit a new school to the scheme on the basis of a Trinity validation alone was both unfair, injurious to the existing providers who had their funding cut as a result and detrimental to the scheme as a whole— particularly since the existing providers had already met the extremely rigorous inspection and validation and accreditation criteria of at least three bodies.

Views on the criteria for removing existing schools from the project

Nine respondents felt that the current system is working, with the same sub-standard elements that would attract poor Ofsted reports providing criteria for removal. One qualified this by saying that two consecutive sub-standard inspection reports should trigger removal from the scheme, and he joined others in favouring the possibility of re-entry subject to a favourable re-inspection over a three year period. One provider who supported the possibility of re-entry pointed to changes in requirements of providers from one inspection to another, for example the now much more detailed emphasis upon quality assurance, and changes in the way paperwork is to be presented.

Two would support a system of removal from the scheme which would safeguard the interests of a school's existing students, e.g. *'Oh, I don't think you can just cut of the funding and leave the students marooned'* (drama provider).

Three providers, two MT the other drama, felt that student destinations should be taken into account as a contributory, but not principal factor in deciding a school's fate.

One provider felt very strongly that a special training programme devised to give advice to schools with grade 3's that were threatened with removal from the scheme should have been offered in time for *all* the schools to benefit before their next Ofsted inspection in preparation for their bid for elevation to grade 2.

Another provider agreed that poor Ofsted reports should determine removal from the Scheme but was concerned that Ofsted inspection focuses on management whereas CDET more usefully focuses on the quality (and industry relevance) of teaching and learning. Two other providers emphasized that industry knowledge and an understanding of all the complex factors involved in dance/drama training, to be found only in those who have themselves been at the highest levels of the industry, is crucial to making judgements on providers' performance.

Views on the current accountability/inspection regimes

There were mixed views on the frequency of inspection and the efficiency of inspecting bodies, and concerns were related to the extent to which regimes are sufficiently streamlined and co-ordinated in ways which minimise excessive claims on administrative resources.

Most schools noted that they are now more used to being inspected and some schools felt that the regimes are indeed more streamlined.

A classical ballet respondent was of the view that: *'given the specialised nature of the field the inspection structure and process has been refined pretty well, as well as it can be for the moment and as well as can be expected, really, and I'm quite happy with it'*.

She was supported in her view by a second provider, who was satisfied with the 'light touch' inspection received:

"...we were inspected in 2004, we've not seen or heard from anybody since; CDET are not coming 'til 2007, so, I think it's probably all right now... Trinity didn't inspect us; they just asked us a few questions because we got ones, so they were satisfied. I think CDET, as well, were sort of working with Ofsted and you know, doing a much reduced inspection but, fine, and of course, Ofsted, themselves, because we got a one for teaching, previously, they did a short inspection, anyway, so it has got much better".

While one drama provider perceived an *'overkill of Ofsted inspections in line with the review process.....that very few institutions have to have quite so many Ofsted inspections as we've had.....'*, a second drama school and one MT respondent were of the view that accountability for public money necessitates the process being implemented in the way currently undertaken.

Another provider, a recent applicant for CDET accreditation was bemused to be facing Trinity, Ofsted and CDET over the coming two months, all with the same inspector.

A further drama provider agreed that Ofsted inspections every two years occur too frequently, though he described the inspection process as *'very good, and in some cases, very valuable to us'* (drama provider). The feeling that the inspections are in some respects tiresome, though useful, was expressed by others. For example an MT provider described the inspection regimes as a *'necessary evil'*, in the sense that once having gone through the process of pulling together all the information, this can be a helpful process for the organisation, enabling a clear view of work that needs to be done, and focusing the attention of staff.

One drama provider gave an extremely positive view of the Ofsted inspection, which he characterised as *excellent, extremely good, you know, brilliantly staffed and brilliantly run, and it's been a good thing'*. Nevertheless, he felt that efficiency elsewhere could be improved, having reportedly used Provider On-line for years to produce data, only for LSC subsequently to claim that the school had not submitted any statistical returns for four years, and request that the school do all its work again.

The view that panels should include members who are currently working in the industry was expressed again in response to this question. One drama school

respondent reported a much more positive experience of the most recent inspection process because the inclusion on the panel of someone with relevant professional experience had *'made a huge difference to how they viewed the work'* (drama provider).

Nevertheless providers would welcome more co-ordination and harmonisation between the inspecting/awarding/accrediting bodies: While confident overall that inspections had benefited his institution, and having learned *'a lot'* from them, a MT interviewee conceded that a single inspection, joining up the work of CDET accreditation inspection, Ofsted and the proposed Trinity inspection would be helpful. She disputed the official claim that paperwork for the various bodies is sufficiently similar to reduce the administrative burden, pointing out also the arrival of papers at different times of the year, each time calling for updated information.

A drama provider who perceived an excess of inspection, pointed out that the degree course brings accountability to six separate agencies. He welcomed the planned harmonisation of Trinity, NCDT and Ofsted inspection processes, which would give *'a multi-layered single inspection with a variety of different audiences'* but felt strongly that at the moment: *'quite a lot of the inspection regime is absolutely non-productive in the sense that it's diverting resources, which in smaller institutions are scarce anyway, away from the classroom, and the students' experience, and into the bureaucracy that's required to support the culture of accountability'* (drama provider)

Another school had found the first FEFC inspection to be a valuable learning experience and supportive, but perceived that the Ofsted inspection, linked to funding and ministerial review, has acquired another status that is counter productive in educational terms: *'It becomes a tool for selection of the fittest, doesn't it?'*

Concern about the emphasis on destinations and the lack of rigour and accuracy of destination data provided by other D&DA schools was expressed by another interviewee, who noted that this emphasis was introduced into the Ofsted inspection without warning about its new importance in the inspection grading. At the last inspection, this school had anticipated a generally focused exercise, with no indication in advance that *'three quarters of the questions seemed to come down to: 'Well, what have they [the graduates] gone on to do?'*

This school also felt that inadequate weight was given at inspection to (valid) career redirection occasioned by injury and other personal reassessment, neither were 'value-added' benefits given sufficient credit.

Other providers made comments about various aspects of the regimes which they felt are currently under or over-valued:

One respondent felt strongly that the focus across all inspection/accountability regimes should be on teaching and learning.

Another felt strongly that the Ofsted inspection should place more emphasis on health and safety: that the inspection should give credit to the schools that work much better than others in looking after dancers' physiological and psychological needs, and requirements for physiotherapy; that inspection should also take into account the *pretty brutal teaching methods'* used by some successful schools, which nonetheless may cause injury to students.

One MT school was not happy with a recent CDET inspection, deeming this too short in comparison with the four day duration of the Ofsted inspection, which she felt allowed some depth of understanding as a basis for judgements to be made.

The help of Maggie Morris was mentioned in a positive vein by several schools.

Several respondents referred negatively to Ofsted's insistence upon teachers having a Cert Ed. by the year 2010, suggesting that paradoxically this measure to raise standards would have the opposite effect in prompting some experienced teachers, *'some of the best people that have been working in the profession'* (MT interviewee), to leave the profession. One MT respondent gave the example of a top voice coach who will not be prepared to give up a whole day a week, without pay, to undergo training. While more courses free of charge, as offered by the University of Huddersfield, might overcome this objection, she suggested that the vocational nature of potential teachers' talent is at odds with the academic focus of a Cert Ed, acting as a deterrent to recruitment.

Changes in graduates' employment patterns since joining the D&DA

One drama provider had noticed no changes. This view was supported by a second drama school interviewee, who commented that his school's employment records are in any case good, and he drew no distinction in terms of quality between the employment destination of the school's D&DA and non-D&DA students

Another drama provider had noticed changes that he felt were due to changes in the media, rather than attributable to the D&DA. A MT respondent agreed, observing that openings into TV and commercial dance have probably increased, representing a change that has coincided with, but has no causal link with the D&DA. This interviewee described these changes in the context of a possible decline overall in standards for the West End, which she suggested has resulted from an increased requirement for graduates to be able to act, sing, and dance, rather than to specialize in their chosen field.

A second MT respondent also reported changes due to developments in the employment market. For example, the school's graduates may now target a high quality cruise liner whose theatre can accommodate a thousand seats, to replace no longer available employment opportunities in a group of twenty-six dancers for a theatre show.

Three further Musical Theatre providers had noticed an improvement in the job quality achieved by their graduates. One was certain that this was as a result of D&DA, the other two were less sure. One of the latter said:

"there has been a steady increase in our most talented kids going straight to some of the better jobs there are more kids going straight to the West End than there were seven or eight years ago..... but, I don't know whether that's a result of the DADA or the fact that as the musical theatre profile of the West End changes we are providing students that are better suited to that area, I don't know, we've got no way of measuring that".

However, this interviewee acknowledged that the improvement could be due to D&DA because it had allowed them to access a bigger pool of talented students.

This view was supported by a MT provider outside London, who was able to report a lot more girls and boys finding employment in the West End and in both national and

international tours of musicals. This provider's earlier comments indicated her perception of a higher quality intake of student from a wider geographical area, and ability to attract higher quality staff, and she attributed all these changes to the D&DA scheme.

In a similar vein, a second MT interviewee outside London described an improving employment situation for her graduates: *'because, obviously, we're getting more, we can take more talented students, because they don't have to fund it'* (MT provider).

Another Musical theatre provider said that their students are taking up the same sort of work as before D&DA, the employment record of the institution having always been *'fairly good'*.

Two classical Ballet providers had noted little change in destinations. A third could not answer the question because there had been so many changes in the focus of the courses that comparisons could not be made:

"...we discontinued our jazz dance commercial theatre programme that was phased out last year, so now we've got exclusively a course which is classical ballet and related dance styles".

However, this interviewee added that two graduates, one of whom was a DADA student had just been accepted into the associated classical ballet company.

Several respondents were careful to avoid drawing a distinction between the differential merits of employment destinations, pointing out the changing fortunes of a typical career path and the influence on choice of student debt, changing market requirements, and personal preference.

Final comments from providers

A drama provider observed that the question of how to measure the output of schools, or the destination of students in terms of value has not been resolved, and is an issue that is fundamental to any government supported funding scheme. This respondent questioned the often made assumption that all drama and all dance schools are aiming for the same outputs, whereas there are, for example, drama schools which specialise in working for TV, others whose focus is classical European theatre, and corresponding variations in dance school priorities. These are differences which have implications for any meaningful measurement of appropriate destinations for students.

One MT respondent was keen to stress how valuable D&DA is and how much she had valued the two DfES representatives. She was concerned that the LSC was not holding regular provider meetings which had proved very useful to her school and to the scheme in general. This view was also held by one of the musical theatre providers.

Another MT interviewee suggested that a general inspector with a roving remit to visit schools would be *'good and healthy'*, having found a visit from the LSC on this basis to be of benefit to her institution.

A third musical theatre provider said *"... overall, I think the scheme's been fantastic for most students"*, and three further MT respondents emphasized the benefits of the D&DA and repeated their hope that the scheme will continue, and that no changes will be made which are not in accordance with views aired in previous sections.

One classical ballet provider was very concerned that there might be a move to another funding mechanism involving yet more time and expense.

“... the scheme itself is bringing the very best young people in Europe. We’ve just had two girls from Sicily join us at the beginning of this year, on Dance and Drama Awards, and they are magnificent talents, and they couldn’t have come to us without support from the Dance and Drama Scheme, no doubt about it. And, yet, at the same time, I’m feeling, you know, my board of governors are saying, “Look, here are the figures, you’ve got to do something about it.” Sad, and particularly if we lose the chance to have that kind of catchment, which is European...’

For his part, a MT interview was relieved to find that the availability of the awards to an expanded European Union had not resulted in the school being inundated with students from outside the UK.

Another was very concerned about demands made by LSC for financial audit information over the summer vacation, which gave very little time for the school to respond, and came at a time when staff were not available to respond to queries.

He also felt that the paperwork was becoming increasingly and unnecessarily demanding:

“...I know auditing and accounting has to be very rigorous but it’s like everything else in the world these days, the paperwork just seems to be increasing accidentally and you kind of say “Well is this all really necessary?”

However, two providers were very concerned about their future financial security. One said:

“...from a practical point of view, the pressing issue is going to be ‘how do we keep our level of income up?’ Because it is getting worrying”.

The other, who is clearly entering into discussions with HE institutions is astonished by the lack of recognition of what it costs to train a performer in terms of contact hours and resources. This provider is extremely worried about the future of his training and others in a similar situation:

“...a number of my colleagues are saying “If this goes on like this we could be bankrupt in 4-5 years...”

He feels a solution will be found but asked rhetorically:

...“the trouble is why do we always have to come to a crisis before a solution is found?”

Summary of highlighted issues

Benefits from the scheme

The majority of providers felt that overall the D&DA have brought changes which have benefited their institutions, students and the industry more widely.

These benefits include:

- An ending of the 'post-code lottery' and consequent raising of the standards of incoming students, staff and courses
- An increasing number of male students
- Overall, increased accessibility to high quality training
- Credibility for students of belonging to a nationally recognised scheme
- Higher retention rates

As regards benefits to schools, some providers commented favourably on:

- A more stable financial position
- The ability to plan further ahead

Drawbacks of the scheme

Others commented less positively on:

- The shortfall in funding, between the amount received per student and the cost to the college of that student
- Disincentive for entrepreneurial activities because gains count as income, reducing the school's tariff
- Insufficient account taken of a school's changing circumstances in calculating the basis for its tariff
- Lack of flexibility in the use of the awards
- Inefficiency of the application and awarding processes

Changes in student profile

Providers emphasized the much increased recruitment of students from lower income families, and many have found that the overall standard of applicants has risen.

Some providers reported increasing numbers of ethnic minority students, though the D&DA scheme may be one of several factors underlying the increase.

Overall, schools reported recruiting students with a minor disability, but many (particularly classical ballet schools) were less comfortable with the practicalities of recruiting those who are significantly disabled.

- Demand from the market was viewed as the principal driver of change

Optimum support for widening participation from D&DA's limited resources

Providers suggested that best support for widening participation within the limited resources of D&DA can be achieved by:

- Strengthening pre-vocational training
- Better networks and infrastructure for dance in schools (similar to that available for lessons with musical instruments)
- Providing access to good quality pre-vocational training in all areas of the country
- Teacher education (including for dance in state schools)
- Better co-ordination between various government agencies
- More rigorous self-evaluation of Access funds
- Joint (specialist and D&DA provider) planning and delivery of Flexible Projects

Means Testing

- The majority of providers favour means testing for awards
- Some respondents felt that the current rules disallowing student loans are inequitable
- Some referred to the low parental income threshold for the student grant and/or to the low maximum amount of £8,000 given under the Career Development Loan. Some felt that maintenance payments could be distributed more effectively

There was a divergence of views regarding:

- Division of the awards for distribution among more students
- Increase in number of awards, and whether an increase may lower standards
- Introduction of a block grant

Migration to HE/Conservatoire

Overall, there were few comments claiming a significant effect on the providers interviewed, one reporting the loss of students, two others describing the benefits of gaining relinquished rewards.

There were a few perceptions of 'lack of a level playing field' in that the Conservatoire schools now receive 'premium funding' and have all places funded.

There were a number of robust champions of the vocational focus of the training provided by D&DA schools, and challenges to the notion that the Conservatoire offers superior training.

How the awards can go forward

Overall, providers reiterated comments made in other sections, and were concerned first and foremost that the Awards should indeed continue. While a number of providers were of the view that the scheme should now be allowed to settle for a few years before any major changes, others gave suggestions for change, which included:

- Fewer, better funded schools

- Means tested awards
- A top-up year for diploma students to convert to honours degree

The Review Process

While the review process was working satisfactorily for many providers, some were concerned by:

- Lack of relevant expertise on the review panel
- Confusion about 'what the panel is looking for'
- Fear of financial penalties for schools successful in fundraising
- Length of the cycle, with a suggestion for a 5 year cycle

Criteria for admitting new schools

Providers were divided on their preference for a concentration of schools in the London area or a wider geographical spread, the former wary of spreading D&DA funding thinly and diluting the quality of other schools, the latter group prioritising access and defending the quality of the training offered outside London.

Many providers feared that allowing an ever increasing number of colleges into the scheme might:

- Dilute the overall 'pot' of funding to the detriment of existing schools

Overall, providers who favoured admitting new schools suggested the following criteria:

- Outstanding or good Ofsted inspection report
- Student destination data

Criteria for removing schools

Many of the providers felt that the current system is working well. The single most favoured criterion for removal from the system was:

- Poor Ofsted inspection reports

Respondents were concerned that the removal process should:

- Safeguard the interests of existing students
- Provide for the school's re-entry, subject to favourable inspection
- Take account of student destination as a contributory, but not principal factor

Views on accountability/inspection regimes

There were comments which cast inspection as a 'necessary evil', from which some benefit may be derived in terms of clarifying organisational plans. There were, however, many providers who perceived:

- An excess of inspection
- Duplication of tasks

- Diversion of resources from teaching, particularly in a small school

Providers would appreciate:

- More co-ordination and harmonisation between inspecting/awarding/ accrediting bodies
- More relevant expertise among inspection panel members

Changes in graduates' employment patterns

Many schools have noticed changes, but may be unsure whether or not the changes can be accredited to the introduction of D&DAs.

Positive indicators for the impact of the D&DAs upon employment patterns were:

- Access for the schools to a larger pool of talented students
- A higher quality intake of students, which many providers have attributed to the D&DA scheme

Interviewees highlighted changing market demands as another important factor influencing employment patterns.

D&DA2 Exit Interviews

Question List for Provider Interviews

1. *How and when did your institution get involved in DADA?*
2. *What were you hoping to gain from this involvement?*
3. *What have been the main benefits to your institution from participation in D&DA?*
4. *What have been the main drawbacks?*
5. *What difficulties have been overcome?*
6. *What remain to be overcome?*
7. *What have been the overall benefits of the DADA scheme?*

8. *Have there been changes in your student profile?*
Prompt: Specifically in relation to socio-economic background?
Prompt: Specifically in relation to (non-dyslexia) disability?
Prompt: Specifically in relation to ethnicity?

9. *Have there been changes to your staff profile?*
Prompt: Specifically in relation to (non-dyslexia) disability?
Prompt: Specifically in relation to ethnicity?

10. *How can the limited resources of D&DA best support widening participation in vocational training?*
11. *Do you think further changes are desirable/tenable?*
12. *What needs to be in place to make these changes happen?*

13. *What are your views on means testing for the awards?*
14. *Are there other changes which could make the distribution of awards more equitable for students?*

15. *Has the migration to HE/Conservatoire affected your institution?*
16. *Has the migration to HE/Conservatoire affected the DADA schools?*
17. *How do you see the awards going forward?*
18. *What would be the advantages of this approach and for whom?*

19. *What are your views on the Review Process?*
20. *Do you have views on the criteria for admitting new schools into the project?*
21. *Do you have views on the criteria for removing existing schools from the project?*

22. *What are your views on the current accountability/inspection regimes?*
23. *Have there been any changes in the employment patterns of your graduates since you joined the D&DA?*