



Foreword


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The papers in this publication represent the proceedings of the UK's first international Conference on Networked Lifelong Learning, which took place at the University of Sheffield in April 1998. They capture current best practice in innovative approaches to education and training through the Internet happening in the UK and internationally in all sectors of education and training.

With the emergence of the information society, we are faced with profound changes and new opportunities in education and training. Networked learning, born out of the convergence of information and communications technologies, allows people to learn and communicate in different ways, and is changing the way that learning is delivered in institutions, communities and the workplace. We have to think differently about learning and the way that it is accessed. Technology offers new and imaginative ways of organising and manipulating learning content, and new ways to communicate with and learn from each other.

Professional competence and quality assurance will need to reflect and support these new paradigms. But change will also be at the heart of the way we develop, educate and train people. This poses major challenges, not just for practitioners but for us all. Successfully meeting these challenges is vital



as we move into the learning age, and will require cooperation and partnership across society. At the time of writing, the Government is consulting widely on a national framework for lifelong learning, a framework which encompasses public and private sectors, institutions, employers and individuals. New technologies figure strongly in this as a means of fostering learning opportunities. They will be an essential tool in the new University for Industry, and already we have taken the first steps in establishing the National Grid for Learning.

The Sheffield Conference has brought together managers, teachers, lecturers, trainers and researchers from all sectors of education and training both in the UK and internationally. It has

linked research and knowledge about networked learning with implementation and current practice. It has encouraged collaboration on the dissemination of good professional practice, sound pedagogy and guidelines for quality assurance. The papers presented at the Conference are published here to widen and continue the impact of dissemination.

I congratulate Sheffield University on having the vision to stage the international conference, and I warmly welcome this publication. You will find that it is an invaluable source of knowledge on networked lifelong learning. The methods, experience and theories described here are at the forefront of our understanding of this exciting and innovative use of technology.