

## UKFIET Oxford Conference 2005

by Bill Rigby

The SEC became a member of the UK Forum for International Education and Training ([www.ukfiet.org](http://www.ukfiet.org)) earlier this year. Every two years since 1991 UKFIET has held a conference in Oxford on a theme of international significance. The theme for this September's conference was on "Learning and Livelihood".

The organisers took a holistic approach to the theme of livelihood. They showed how the theme:

- allowed an exploration of how learning enhances individual potential across the whole life span, as well as enhancing the well-being of families, communities and societies in different parts of the world;
- invited analysis of old and new approaches to education and training in looking at their relevance to professional, workplace and labour market expectations
- created a space for comparing the influence of values and purposes of public, private and civil society investment in learning on human capacities.

With decreasing job stability, reduced social protection and unprecedented levels of migration and conflict, it is urgent to consider how learning interacts with respect for human rights, social responsibility and environmental security. It is also important to examine how learning nurtures our spiritual and expressive identities, individually and collectively. Above all, there is the question of how we as learners, teachers, researchers, policy makers and other practitioners respond to these issues, and their implications for what we ourselves do.

The Examination Schools was the majestic if incongruous setting for this international event, attended this year by some 350 delegates from over 50 countries gathered to hear over 200 papers on subjects ranging from 'Learning and Laughter' to 'Shaking the school curriculum in Japan'.

Experiences abroad expose serious issues here in 'our' system. Many of these are rarely discussed in relation to the UK

- why do children drop out?
- why is curriculum irrelevant to the needs of so many?
- why is society ill-served by its school leavers?
- why is school management style so often anachronistic?

We found Oxcon 2005 a most rewarding experience (and good value!). Put a note in your diary to attend yourself in September 2007!