

**Robert Beattie MBE - Keynote Speech**  
**BRITE Centre Official Opening 24<sup>th</sup> September 2002**

Good Morning Ladies, Gentlemen, Minister. It is good to see you all here today.

Now the Scottish Executive doesn't come in for praise too often. I think today we first need to say a very big thank you to the Scottish Executive for their constant and undying support for the Beattie Committee's recommendations, since the report was launched almost exactly three years ago. I'll encourage you to do more of that in the future please, but thank you for that first of all.

The second thing I want to highlight is the title of the Beattie Committee Report, which is "Implementing Inclusiveness and Realising Potential". There are three groups of people I want to refer to when it comes to realising potential.

First of all there are the parents, families and carers of these young adults with support needs - who must be encouraged to realise that their young people have the potential. And one of the truisms of what had happened until the Beattie Implementation team got involved was that, when these young people came out of secondary education, they often went into a morass of nothing. Parents and families were saying, "My poor child..... what are they going to do now?" And they worried about what was going to happen to them in their old age, and so on. One of the things that the BRITE Initiative can do is help these parents and families to realise that that their young people have potential.

But the main point of the process is that these young people realise themselves that they have potential – and achieve their full potential day by day. I know by talking to young people themselves, through the work of the Beattie Committee, that although there was lots of care and attention and support going on in Scotland before (with many people working 8 days a week and 26 hours a day to try and support these young people!), this support was not always having the impact on these young people themselves. So they were *not* realising their potential.

The third group I'm addressing is perhaps the most relevant for today – because you've all been involved already in this significant venture that we call the BRITE Initiative. You're the people that will make it happen. Alison and I both have MBEs. Now some people say that stands for "Members of the Beattie Extravaganza!" - but I think we would rather say that we are "Members of the BRITE Experience". And I think that at the heart of BRITE is 'experience' – and the Initiative is building on experience - day by day, by day. It's not about "Here are the golden rules laid down for you in the manual!" I remember once in business a saying that went.... "If you can't make a decision - write a procedure and put it the manual." Then it's bound to be right isn't it?! No, that's not the case!

I believe what BRITE is about, and the bit I want to focus on today, is about staff in FE Colleges - as well as the training providers that work with FE Colleges - and indeed the employer organisations who take the view that life's experience is a constant learning experience. We all live in a 'lifelong learning' culture, and that doesn't mean necessarily going back to the classroom and starting again. It's about picking up on experiences.

I remember when Henry McLeish was Minister for Enterprise and Life Long Learning several years ago. He said to the Beattie Committee that he hoped he'd look back in ten to fifteen years' time and see that the work of the Committee had changed Scotland. Well I think his vision to change Scotland has been achieved in great measure already:

- There are 140 key workers working with marginalised young people across Scotland.
- Educational Psychologists, with Beattie Implementation funds, are exploring the idea of post school psychological services.
- The BRITE Centre, which I'm pleased to be involved in opening today, is making its mark and showing that Scotland *has* changed. And I think it's really a credit to staff in FE colleges right across Scotland who have this view that 'we *can* do things'.

My wife, who was a teacher, used to have children who'd come into her class. "Mrs Beattie...", they'd say, "...I cannae dae this!!" And she would say to them "This is a magic room. In this room we can all do everything...."

My wife often said to me later, "..You know they believed me - and they did it".

Well that is what the BRITE Initiative is about. It is about saying to staff in FE Colleges who work with these young people that they all have to have this "can do" mentality. It might mean changing things. The experiences of all the participants must build into what we come to know as the total BRITE experience - right across Scotland. I think it is so important for the future that the "Members of the BRITE Experience .. the MBEs" undertake this developmental work.

If Henry McLeish said he hoped to look back in fifteen years time and see that Scotland had changed, my challenge to all in the FE Sector today is that at the end of every year you should look back and say, "What have I done this year to change Scotland".

One of the questions that Alison asks all the participants when they start Unit Two of the BRITE staff development programme is "Have you done anything BRITE recently?" Well that's my challenge to all of FE in Scotland now - be BRITE experience providers now and continue to be in the future.

Well, my final word has to be for the Minister. In the words of Oliver ...MORE Please! I know that we are in the pilot phase and I understand what a pilot phase is about. It is an important part, but I'd like to think that, at the end of this three-year pilot phase (and we are now already one year through a three year phase), the BRITE Initiative will become mainstream. So the Scottish Further Education Funding Council, of which I used to be Chair, needs to be encouraged to make this mainstream for all colleges.

So, my excitement for the future, and my enjoyment in being here today, is about being the "B" in BRITE - and helping to create BRITE. Because of my health, which has been pathetic this year to say it mildly, one of the few uses to which I want to put the little energy I still have is to the BRITE Initiative and to continuing support for the Beattie Implementation Team, in all they do right across Scotland.

I'm delighted to be involved today. Thank you so much for inviting me and I wish BRITE well for the future.