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Case Study of Further Education in England

Preliminary Report

Gavin Moodie, Leesa Wheelahan,
Eric Lavigne and Lindsay Coppens

University of Toronto,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

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University and College Union

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Introduction

This report on further education in England was undertaken as part of a project funded by Education International to examine national case studies of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a framework for social justice. The national case studies are of six countries and are of different intensities using different methods, which are set out in Table 1. The study of England was one of the intensive studies and included a literature review, secondary analysis of published statistics, analysis of statistics collected by the University and College Union, interviews, and a number of country visits during one of which the investigators attended the reimagining FE 2018 conference.

Table 1. **Methods used for each national case study**

Country	*Literature review*	*Statistics secondary analysis*	*On line survey*	*Interviews*	*Country visit*
Argentina	✓	✓			
Australia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Côte d'Ivoire	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
England	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Germany	✓	✓			
Taiwan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

This work builds on work that Education International commissioned and published as Wheelahan, L & Moodie, G (2016) Global trends in TVET: a framework for social justice. This report observed that jurisdictions differ markedly in their level of resources, their economic structure, politics, education system, and the interaction between these systems. Even within jurisdictions there are marked differences in how sectors, industries and employers operate. The earlier report concluded that any proposal to improve TVET needs to reflect its markedly different arrangements at the level of the individual worker, their work site and its broader context. The report proposed the capabilities approach as a way of relating peoples' individual characteristics to their broader circumstances.

Overview of England’s Context

Most international comparative statistics are by sovereign countries, so Table 2 reports figures for the UK, of which England is 84%. The UK and by inference England is big, mostly white, wealthy, lightly taxed and moderately unequal.

Table 2. The UK compared with other countries on a number of measures, most data 2015

Measure	*UK*	*USA*	*Germany*	*Canada*	*Australia*
Population million[1]	*65.8*	*322.2*	*81.9*	*36.3*	*24.1*
% rural[1]	*17*	*18*	*24*	*18*	*10*
% white[1]	*87*	*77*	*93*	*74*	*89*
GDP PPP $billion[2]	*2,828*	*18,624*	*4,041*	*1,598*	*1,129*
GDP per capita PPP$[2]	*41,325*	*55,837*	*47,268*	*44,310*	*45,514*
Industry % of GDP[4]	*19.0*	*18.9*	*30.1*	*28.1*	*26.1*
Exports % of GDP[2]	*30.5*	*11.9*	*47.2*	*30.9*	*21.3*
Tax as % of GDP[3]	*33.2*	*26.0*	*37.6*	*31.7*	*28.2*
Gini index of income distribution[4]	*32.4*	*45.0*	*27.0*	*32.1*	*30.3*

Sources:

1 UNESCO (no date). Countries, UIS profile. Retrieved 25 August 2018 from https://en.unesco.org/countries;

2 World Bank Group (2017). Indicators. Retrieved 25 August 2018 from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator?tab=all;

3 OECD (2018). Global revenue statistics database. Retrieved 25 August 2018 from http://www.oecd.org/tax/tax-policy/global-revenue-statistics-database.htm;

4 The World Factbook (2018). Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/

Lower secondary vocational education is 11.3% of all lower secondary education in the UK, which is much higher than Germany and markedly lower than Australia (Table 3). Women are underrepresented in lower secondary general education in all of the countries studied and are markedly underrepresented in lower secondary vocational education.

Table 3. Lower secondary education enrolments, the UK and selected other countries, 2017

Measure	*UK*	*USA*	*Germany*	*Canada*	*Australia*
Enrolment in lower secondary general total #	*2,071,830*	*12,548,809*	*4,424,781*	*1,221,869*	*1,107,489*
Enrolment in lower secondary general female#	*1,010,882*	*6,150,958*	*2,139,442*	*598,512*	*537,698*
Enrolment in lower secondary general female %	*48.8%*	*49.0%*	*48.4%*	*49.0%*	*48.6%*

Measure	*UK*	*USA*	*Germany*	*Canada*	*Australia*
Enrolment in lower secondary vocational total #	*262,849*	*na*	*118,537*	*na*	*280,695*
Enrolment in lower secondary all total #	*2,334,679*	*na*	*4,543,318*	*na*	*1,388,184*
Enrolment in lower secondary vocational total %	*11.3%*	*na*	*2.6%*	*na*	*20.2%*
Enrolment in lower secondary vocational female #	*112,015*	*na*	*47,654*	*na*	*96,685*
Enrolment in lower secondary vocational female %	*42.6%*	*na*	*40.2%*	*na*	*34.4%*
Gini index of income distribution[4]	*32.4*	*45.0*	*27.0*	*32.1*	*30.3*

Source: United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2018) UNESCO Institute for Statistics data on education, http://data.uis.unesco.org/

Women are at parity in upper secondary general education in the UK, are at close to parity in the other comparison countries except Germany where they are over parity (Table 4). Women are half of upper secondary vocational education in the UK, but considerably below parity in the other countries compared.

Table 4. Upper secondary education enrolments, the UK and selected other countries, 2017

Measure	*UK*	*USA*	*Germany*	*Canada*	*Australia*
Enrolment in upper secondary general total #	*2,420,450*	*11,868,377*	*1,367,183*	*1,294,035*	*560,771*
Enrolment in upper secondary general female#	*1,220,718*	*5,855,552*	*725,459*	*635,787*	*288,268*
Enrolment in upper secondary general female %	*50.4%*	*49.3%*	*53.1%*	*49.1%*	*51.4%*
Enrolment in upper secondary vocational total #	*1,619,546*	*na*	*1,202,449*	*125,029*	*713,363*
Enrolment in upper secondary all total #	*4,039,996*	*na*	*2,569,632*	*1,419,064*	*1,274,134*
Enrolment in upper secondary vocational total %	*40.1%*	*na*	*46.8%*	*8.8%*	*56.0%*
Enrolment in upper secondary vocational female #	*817,966*	*na*	*451,314*	*56,336*	*280,515*
Enrolment in upper secondary vocational female %	*50.5%*	*na*	*37.5%*	*45.1%*	*39.3%*

Source: United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2018) UNESCO Institute for Statistics data on education, http://data.uis.unesco.org/

Upper secondary vocational education is 40% of all upper secondary enrolments in the UK, it is rather higher in Germany and Australia, but much lower in Canada where it is 8.8% (Figure 1).

Figure 1. **Percentage of students in vocational education at lower and upper secondary level, UK, Germany, Canada and Australia**

A very low 29% of secondary education pupils in England are enrolled in public institutions (Table 5). The UK probably classified as private schools academies and free schools, even though they are funded by the state. Most private schools in Australia get most of their funding from the state, but they all charge fees.

Table 5. **Enrolments in public and private secondary education, the UK and selected other countries, 2017**

Measure	*UK*	*USA*	*Germany*	*Canada*	*Australia*
Enrolments in secondary education, public institutions, total #	*1,859,595*	*22,427,680*	*6,450,965*	*2,436,374*	*1,585,229*
Enrolments in secondary education, private institutions, total #	*4,515,080*	*1,989,506*	*661,984*	*204,559*	*1,077,089*
Enrolments in secondary education, all institutions, total #	*6,374,675*	*24,417,186*	*7,112,949*	*2,640,933*	*2,662,318*
Enrolments in secondary education, public institutions, total %	*29.2%*	*91.9%*	*90.7%*	*92.3%*	*59.5%*

Source: United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2018) UNESCO Institute for Statistics data on education, http://data.uis.unesco.org/

Overview of England's Further Education

Further education in England has long been understood as 'any study taken after the age of 16 that is not part of higher education (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or post-graduate degree)' (Snelson and Deyes, 2016, p. 22). This covers a great diversity of education subjects, levels and orientations which is funded from several sources and offered variously by public, private and voluntary sector providers. This complexity has led to further education colleges being classified into groups by their main provision:

- **181** general further education colleges;
- **62** sixth form colleges;
- **14** land-based colleges;
- **10** specialist designated colleges; and
- **2** art, design and performing art colleges.

In addition in 2018 there were 490 publically funded independent training providers offering further education and skills programs (Hodgson and colleagues, no date, p. 6-7).

Hupkau and Ventura (2017, p. 3) group English further education providers into 4 main categories, and reports the numbers of publicly funded providers and students set out in Table 6. Hupkau and Ventura's categorisation is somewhat different from the standard categorisation, and their numbers are from 2014, before much of the recent cuts in funding and subsequent amalgamation and reorganisation of colleges. Nevertheless, their figures give a useful indication of the relative size of different types of further education colleges. Sixth Form colleges is the smallest of the groups identified by Hupkau and Ventura with 94 colleges which enrol 5% of publicly funded further education students. However, most Sixth Form colleges are sizeable, with a median enrolment of 1,926 students. General and Tertiary FE colleges have the second smallest number of providers but enrol 54% of all students and thus have the highest median number of students at 6,749.

Table 6. **Publicly funded further education providers and students, 2014**

Type of provider	*Number of providers*	*Number of students*	*Share of students*	*Median number of students*
General and Tertiary FE colleges	*247*	*2,214,669*	*54*	*6,749*
Sixth Form colleges	*94*	*192,903*	*5*	*1,926*
Private training providers	*546*	*840,162*	*21*	*527*
Other publicly funded providers	*281*	*829,852*	*20*	*1,517*
All	*1168*	*4,077,586*	*100*	

Source: adapted from Hupkau and Ventura (2017: 3) Table 1: Summary of FE provider types and characteristics (2014).

The range of provision, diversity of colleges, and multiplicity of funding sources led Snelson and Deyes (2016, p. 6) to describe English further education as 'highly complex', 'complex' (11 times), 'extremely complex' (thrice), and 'very complex' (twice). More recently the UK Government (no date) stated that 'further education' includes post secondary education that is not part of higher education, but also includes courses in basic English and maths and some secondary level qualifications:

> Further education (FE) includes any study after secondary education that's not part of higher education (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or graduate degree).
>
> Courses range from basic English and maths to Higher National Diplomas (HNDs).
>
> FE also includes 3 types of technical and applied qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds:
>
> - level 3 tech levels to specialise in a specific technical job
> - level 2 technical certificates help get employment or progress to another tech level
> - applied general qualifications to continue general education at advanced level through applied learning

These correspond to International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011 post-secondary non-tertiary education qualifications and short-cycle tertiary education.

These descriptions of further education are consistent with definitions of further education's analogues in many other jurisdictions which are residual – that which is left over from the other sectors, or not elsewhere included (Moodie, 2002, p. 258). These ways of identifying further education weaken it, as will be discussed later in this paper.

Further education colleges have multiple sources of funds which vary markedly in their levels and conditions (Belfield, Farquharson and Sibieta, 2018, p. 50). Keep (2018) identified these major sources of financing of English further education colleges:

> **16-19 provision:** driven by individual student demand and with funding following the student and their choice of provider and course.
>
> **Higher education:** loans funded and driven by individual student choice within the context of a national market. Funding follows the student.
>
> **19+ loans:** allocations of loan funding by the Education and Skills Funding Agency to individual providers to be 'sold' to students with take-up driven by individual student demand, and with the long-term impact on the shape and size of demand from the switch to loans not yet fully apparent.
>
> **19+ Adult Skills Budget:** being partially devolved from national level and, from 2019, to be commissioned and effectively planned by the local combined authority (see Keep, 2016a). For non-devolved areas, providers bid to the Education and Skills Funding Agency for allocations.

> **Levy funded apprenticeship:** purchasing power in the hands of the individual employer.
>
> **Non-levy funded apprenticeship:** allocations from the Education and Skills Funding Agency, which then have to be 'sold' to individual employers and apprentices. (pp. 32-33)

The current broad shapes of both further and higher education were set by two white papers published in 1991: *Education and training for the 21st century* which dealt with further education, and *Higher education: a new framework*. These formed the basis of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* (Gillard, 2017) which, amongst other things, moved colleges from the responsibility of local education agencies to become incorporated under section 16 of the Act, thus removing them from the democratic control of local councils. The Act also collapsed the distinction between the then polytechnics and universities. This completed a process which started in 1966 when the stronger technical colleges and technical programs were redesignated as polytechnics, polytechnic diplomas and then degrees, thus decapitating the college sector and greatly weakening the remaining colleges, as was feared at the time (Pratt, 1997: 18). There have been many important changes since then, of course, but many of the structural and governance tensions in the current arrangements originate in these reports and legislation of the early 1990s.

The government has cut further education funding per pupil aged 16-18 by 8% since 2010 and sixth form spending by more than 20% per pupil since 2010 (Belfield, Farquharson, and Sibieta Luke, 2018, p. 60). Belfield, Farquharson and Sibieta (2018, p. 37) report that since 2000 English further education has been subject to 24 major reviews or changes in government policy, averaging 1.3 major reviews/changes per year. Further education has been the responsibility of five funding agencies over this period (Belfield, Farquharson and Sibieta, 2018):

Learning and Skills Council	(2001 to 2010);
Young People's Learning	Agency (2010 to 2012);
Skills Funding Agency	(2010 to 2017);
Education Funding Agency	(2010 to 2017); and
Education and Skills Funding Agency	(2017 to present day). (p. 36)

Belfield, Farquharson and Sibieta (2018, p. 38) describe this as a 'near-permanent state of revolution in the further education sector and [a] . . . long-run squeeze on funding'.

Funding cuts have meant that further education staff have suffered a cut in pay of 25% in real terms since 2009 (University and College Union, 2018). The International Labour Organization (2018, p. 21) reports that the undervaluing of further education lecturers is a general trend.

Government funding cuts have made it difficult for many colleges to meet their costs, despite cutting staffing. The government has sought to manage this by using area based reviews to engineer colleges' mergers or their incorporation within universities. Many local campuses have been closed, and the remaining campuses are expected to serve a big region rather than just their local community. Data from the Association of Colleges indicates that there have been 53 college mergers and 24 conversions since 2017. It seems that restructures have involved from 20% to 40% of colleges in just over 1.5 years – an extraordinary level of institutional instability.

By encouraging colleges to specialise (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016) the government is undermining colleges' capacity to serve the broad needs of their local communities: presumably students are expected to travel or even to relocate if their course is not offered locally. The government has sought to reorient colleges from their communities to employers (Hodgson and colleagues, no date, p. 7).

The devolution of some adult education functions to the Greater London Authority and to six combined authorities is likely to reduce central control over at least some of further education. However, the Greater London Authority and the six combined authorities each cover big regions and are likely to reinforce colleges' regional rather than local role. It will also make further education even more complicated since, for example, apprenticeships will continue to be funded and managed centrally (Belfield, Farquharson and Sibieta, 2018, p. 61).

Survey of Individuals

The team surveyed views on further education in Australia, England and Taiwan in July and August 2018. The questionnaire was put on the web for anyone to complete during the period it was open. Respondents were directed to the web site by the union representing vocational education workers in each country. There were 26 questions, all of which were answered by around 68% of English respondents (Table 7). In addition to the responses to the closed questions, respondents submitted over 800 open ended comments, some of which are reported below.

Table 7. percentage of respondents to the English survey by status

	Participants (*n* = 1185)	
Status	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Complete	*811*	*68.4*
Partial	*374*	*31.6*

Table 8 describes the percentage of respondents by role. It shows that the great majority of responses came from public further education employee (81.5%). This is significantly greater than any other reported roles. The remaining 10.7% of respondents who disclosed their role were either private further education employees, government employees, public or private university employees, students/graduates, or union employees.

Table 8. percentage of respondents by role

	Participants (*n* = 1185)	
Role	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Government employee	*6*	*0.5*
Private FE employee	*96*	*8.1*
Private university employee	*1*	*0.1*
Public FE employee	*966*	*81.5*
Public university employee	*11*	*0.9*
Student or graduate	*8*	*0.7*
Union employee	*5*	*0.4*
No response	*92*	*7.8*

Table 9 presents the percentage of respondents by position. It is shown that most participants were teachers (72.1%). This is significantly greater than any other reported position. The remaining 12.8% of respondents who disclosed their position were either support staff or managers.

Table 9. percentage of respondents by position

Position	Participants (*n* = 1185) Frequency	Percent
Manager	*33*	*2.8*
Support staff	*118*	*10.0*
Teacher	*854*	*72.1*
No response	*180*	*15.2*

Note:
Manager: Manager (i.e. president, vice-president or senior leader);
Support staff: Education Support Personnel (i.e. teaching assistant, psychologist, financial administrator, business administrator, academic support, student affairs and services staff);
Teacher: Teacher (including program leader)

Table 10 presents the percentage of respondents by the number of working years in the field. It is shown that the majority of participants had extensive experience. Of the 86.8% of respondents who disclosed their number of working years, 50.5% have been in their respective fields for more than ten years. The remaining 36.3% of respondents have worked in their respective roles for less than ten years.

Table 10. Percentage of respondents by working years in their field

Years	Participants (*n* = 1185) Frequency	Percent
1 - 5	*225*	*19.0*
6 - 10	*205*	*17.3*
11 +	*598*	*50.5*
No response	*157*	*13.2*

Note. 1 - 5: Less than 5 years. 6 - 10: 6 to 10 years. 11+: More than 10 years.

Table 11 describes the percentage of respondents by gender. It is seen that participation by gender was evenly spread. Of those who disclosed their gender, 46.1% were female and 39.3% were male.

Table 11. Percentage of respondents by gender

Gender	Participants (*n* = 1185) Frequency	Percent
Female	*546*	*46.1*
Male	*466*	*39.3*
Undisclosed	*16*	*1.4*
No response	*157*	*13.2*

Note: Undisclosed: I prefer not to respond

Table 12 illustrates the percentage of respondents by age. Though participation was evenly spread, most of the participants were older than 40 years old (71.3%), which is consistent with their disclosed years of experience. Furthermore, the most substantial proportion of respondents were between the ages of 50-59 (33.6%) and the smallest proportion of participants were younger than 29 years of age (2.8%).

Table 12. Percentage of respondents by age

Age	Participants (*n* = 1185)	
	Frequency	*Percent*
Under 20	*0*	*0*
20 - 29	*33*	*2.8*
30 - 39	*128*	*10.8*
40 - 49	*242*	*20.4*
50 - 59	*398*	*33.6*
60 +	*205*	*17.3*
Undisclosed	*22*	*1.9*
No response	*157*	*13.2*

Note: Undisclosed: I prefer not to respond

Further Education's Roles

Table 13 provides participants mean ratings for further education goals' importance. Overall, participants gave high ratings to every goal, with the lowest mean being 3.15 out of 4. The highest mean value (3.76 out of 4) indicates that respondents perceived that 'supporting social inclusion' as the most important goal of further education. They further demonstrated a strong social justice orientation by identifying 'developing students as active citizens who participate in their community and society' (3.75 out of 4) and 'meeting the educational needs of disadvantaged communities' (3.74 out of 4) as important. The goals deemed least important were 'supporting economic growth' (3.22 out of 4) and 'researching the future needs of the workplace' (3.15 out of 4). Even though they had the lowest means, compared to other goals, respondents nevertheless perceived these goals as quite important.

Table 13. Mean and standard deviation values of participants' opinions about most important goals for further education

		Participants (*n* = 988)	
	Scale maximum	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Developing students as active citizens who participate in their community and society	*4*	*3.75*	*(0.55)*
Preparing students for their roles as workers	*4*	*3.65*	*(0.64)*

	Scale maximum	Participants (*n* = 988) Frequency	Percent
Meeting employers' current needs	*4*	*3.38*	*(0.74)*
Meeting employers' future needs	*4*	*3.42*	*(0.73)*
Researching the future needs of workplaces	*4*	*3.15*	*(0.85)*
Meeting the educational needs of disadvantaged communities	*4*	*3.74*	*(0.53)*
Supporting individuals from disadvantaged communities to get good jobs	*4*	*3.68*	*(0.59)*
Supporting economic growth	*4*	*3.22*	*(0.82)*
Supporting sustainability	*4*	*3.48*	*(0.7)*
Supporting social inclusion	*4*	*3.76*	*(0.52)*
Supporting gender equality	*4*	*3.70*	*(0.63)*
Offering students opportunities to progress to higher level study	*4*	*3.69*	*(0.55)*
Offering students opportunities to progress to higher level work	*4*	*3.69*	*(0.57)*

Note. n = Minimum number of participants for this set of questions, 1 = Not important, 2 = Somewhat important, 3 = Quite important; 4 = Very important.

Table 14 illustrates the proportion of respondents selecting a goal as one of their three most important ones. Respondents identified 'developing students as active citizens who participate in their community and society' (52.2%) as the most important goal for further education. Participants further demonstrated their strong social justice commitment, with high proportions identifying 'meeting the educational needs of disadvantaged communities' (30.9%) and 'supporting social inclusion' (26.8%) as important. Another trend in the data was the importance of preparing students for successful transitions into the labour market and higher-level studies. With the second highest percentage, 34.7% of respondents felt that further education should 'prepare individuals for their roles as workers'. To a lesser degree, 28.4% of respondents noted the importance of 'offering students opportunities to progress to higher level studies'. Although participants gave high mean values for all of the goals of further education (see Table 13), participants noted that the least two important goals were 'researching the future needs of the workplace' (3.6%) and 'supporting gender equality' (4.5%).

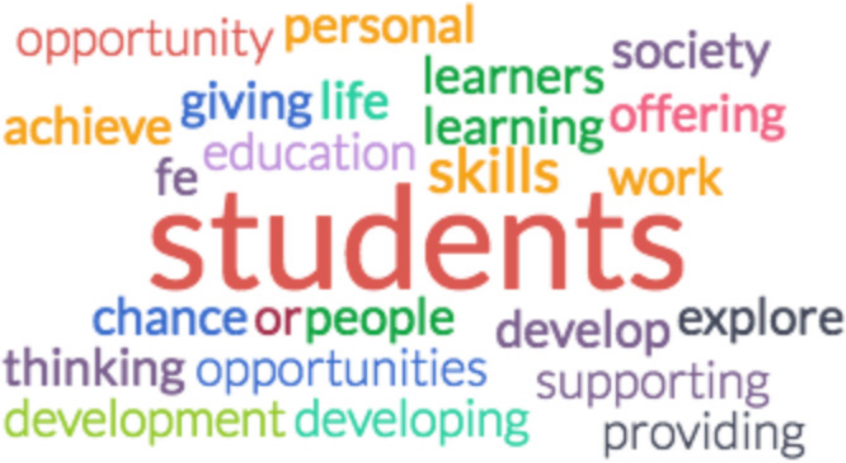
Table 14. Percentage of respondents who indicated this was one of three most important goals for further education

	Participants (*n* = 1185) Frequency	Percent
Developing students as active citizens who participate in their community and society	*619*	*52.2*

	Participants (*n* = 1185)	
	Frequency	*Percent*
Preparing students for their roles as workers	*411*	*34.7*
Meeting employers' current needs	*132*	*11.1*
Meeting employers' future needs	*123*	*10.4*
Researching the future needs of workplaces	*43*	*3.6*
Meeting the educational needs of disadvantaged communities	*366*	*30.9*
Supporting individuals from disadvantaged communities to get good jobs	*189*	*15.9*
Supporting economic growth	*78*	*6.6*
Supporting sustainability	*81*	*6.8*
Supporting social inclusion	*318*	*26.8*
Supporting gender equality	*53*	*4.5*
Offering students opportunities to progress to higher level study	*337*	*28.4*
Offering students opportunities to progress to higher level work	*170*	*14.3*

Figure 2 illustrates respondents' views on the relative importance of further education's goal.

Figure 2. **Word cloud of respondents' unstructured responses to question 8: 'Of the goals that FE can have, how important should each of the following goals be for FE institutions?**



A good example of these unstructured comments is this from respondent 150: 'Vocational skills should be part of overall development.' Respondent 98 explained why these roles are important for further education:

> FE is a complex area - possibly more so than school or HE in that the range of students and the diversity of their needs is far greater: from school leavers on vocational courses to adults simply learning a new skill. The priority in recent years, indeed for most of the time I have been working in FE, has been on the creation of a targetted workforce, focussing primarily on employer and workplace needs. However, there has been a rapid decline in FE of education for other purposes, such as social inclusion, mental health, or simply education for the sake of learning and personal growth. I have highlighted these as more important than the economic benefits because of the decline in terms of support and funding for adults in post-16 education.

Although participants gave high ratings to goals in Table 13 and Table 14, their responses to achievements were relatively more critical. In Table 15, which asks respondents to state whether they agree or not about several goal achievements, the top three achievements were 'supporting student learning' (3.44 out of 4), 'supporting students to progress to higher level study' (3.34 out of 4), and 'supporting student inclusion' (3.27 out of 4). On the other hand, participants noted that further education was least successful in 'supporting economic growth' (2.91 out of 4) and 'supporting sustainability' (2.69 out of 4).

Table 15. Mean and standard deviation values of respondents' opinions about the achievements of further education

		Participants (*n* = 829)	
	Scale maximum	*M*	*(SD)*
Further education is successful in developing students as active citizens	*4*	*3.02*	*(0.68)*
Further education is successful in developing students for their roles as workers in their occupation	*4*	*3.24*	*(0.66)*
Further education is successful in meeting employers' current needs	*4*	*2.98*	*(0.65)*
Further education is able to meet the educational needs of disadvantaged communities	*4*	*2.89*	*(0.77)*
Further education is successful in supporting students' learning	*4*	*3.44*	*(0.69)*
Further education is successful in supporting economic growth	*4*	*2.91*	*(0.72)*
Further education is successful in supporting sustainability	*4*	*2.69*	*(0.77)*
Further education is successful in supporting student inclusion	*4*	*3.27*	*(0.74)*
Further education is successful in supporting gender equality	*4*	*3.19*	*(0.76)*

		Participants (*n* = 829)	
	Scale maximum	*M*	*(SD)*
Further education is successful in supporting students to progress to higher level study	*4*	*3.34*	*(0.69)*
Further education is successful in supporting students to progress to higher level work	*4*	*3.12*	*(0.73)*

Note. n = Minimum number of participants for this set of questions, 1 = Not at all, 2 = To a limited extent, 3 = To a moderate extent; 4 = To a great extent.

Table 16 presents the opinions of the respondents regarding further education outcomes. On average respondents felt that further education was moderately preparing graduates for the labour market. The mean values, displayed in Table 16, indicate that participants perceived that graduates are moderately prepared to have input in the aims and goals of their work or undertake job training practices. However, the standard deviation values are high enough to suggest that opinions about whether or not further education is preparing their graduates for transitions into the labour market varied greatly.

Table 16. Mean and standard deviation values of respondents' opinions about the impacts of current further education practices and what it prepares graduates to do

		Participants (*n* = 459)	
	Scale maximum	*M*	*(SD)*
Influence how their work is organised in your country	*5*	*2.83*	*(1.00)*
Influence how work is organized at their workplace	*5*	*2.61*	*(0.95)*
Exercise judgement about their own work, set their own goals, and how they will achieve their goals	*5*	*3.12*	*(1.04)*
Have input into the aims and goals of their work team	*5*	*2.97*	*(0.96)*
Have input into the aims and goals of their workplace	*5*	*2.71*	*(0.97)*
Have access to and be able to undertake on-the-job training	*5*	*3.09*	*(0.95)*
Have access to and be able to undertake off-the-job training	*5*	*2.86*	*(0.92)*
Have variety in the type of work that they do	*5*	*3.02*	*(0.97)*
Transfer to different roles at the same level	*5*	*2.88*	*(0.92)*
Be promoted to higher-level roles	*5*	*2.91*	*(0.96)*
Be a member of a union	*5*	*3.33*	*(1.14)*

Note. n = Minimum number of participants for this set of questions, 1 = Not at all, 2 = To a limited extent, 3 = To a moderate extent; 4 = To a great extent.

However, respondent 19 added: 'We don't get much feedback from former students other than a quick hi if they pop back with other students. An analysis of past students should be formalised.'

Table 17 illustrates that on average respondents perceived that the further education qualification link to occupations ranged from too broad to too narrow 1.85 out of 3).

Table 17. Mean and standard deviation values of respondents' opinions about the further education qualifications link to occupations

		Participants (*n* = 601)	
Status	Scale maximum	*M*	*(SD)*
How further education qualifications link to occupations which are at the same level as the qualification	*3*	*1.85*	*(0.62)*

Note. n = Minimum number of participants for this set of questions, 1 = Too broad, 2 = About right, 3 = Too narrow.

Table 18 demonstrates that on average respondents perceived that further education qualifications were providing moderate opportunities for individuals to pursue higher-level further education (2.33 out of 4), higher level qualifications (2.29 out of 4), and higher-level occupations (2.02 out of 4).

Table 18. Mean and standard deviation values of participants' opinions on the extent to which further education qualification provide graduates with opportunities to transition to higher level studies and the labour market

		Participants (*n* = 662)	
Status	Scale maximum	*M*	*(SD)*
What opportunities are there for students to progress from lower to higher level further education qualifications	*3*	*2.33*	*(0.63)*
What opportunities are there for students to progress from further education qualifications to higher education qualifications?	*3*	*2.29*	*(0.63)*
What opportunities are there for students to progress to higher skilled occupations?	*3*	*2.02*	*(0.61)*

Note. n = Minimum number of participants for this set of questions, 1 = Limited, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Extensive.

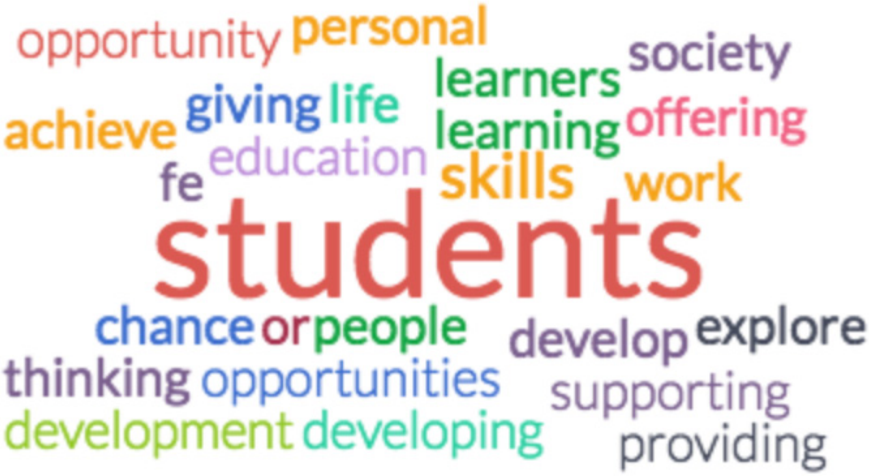
Goals and Achievements Trends

One significant trend in the survey data is the relationship between goals and achievements. Table 13 and Table 14 illustrate an optimistic vision of the goals of further education. Precisely, Table 13 depicts each statement, where the average mean value is systematically greater than three out of four. Similarly, Table 14 shows the same statements but instead describes the percentage of respondents who felt a particular goal was important. The high ratings and percentages indicate that respondents envision further education as serving two purposes: 1) having a strong social justice orientation; and 2) preparing students for entry into the labour market or higher-level studies.

However, although participants were optimistic about the goals of England's further education, they demonstrated critical opinions about its achievements. Table 15 illustrates that participants perceived further education as only moderately successful in achieving its goals. For example, with a mean value of 3.02 out of 4, respondents noted that further education was only moderately achieving its goal of developing students as active citizens. This is slightly lower than the recorded mean values for respondents' perceptions about the goals (3.75 out of 4). This disconnect in responses between goals and achievements suggests that although perceptions about the goals of further education are high, institutes are only moderately successful at achieving their goals.

Figure 3 illustrates respondents' levels of agreement on a 4 point Likert scale on the importance of various goals for further education, its achievement of those goals, and the resources invested in the goals. The biggest gap between the importance and achievement and resourcing of a goal was in meeting communities' needs. The smallest gap was in the goal given the lowest importance for further education, stimulating economic growth.

Figure 3. Levels of agreement on a 4-point Likert scale with statements describing goal importance, level of achievement, and adequate resources, by goal type


opportunity
personal
society
learners
achieve
giving
life
learning
offering
education
fe
skills
work
students
chance
or
people
develop
explore
thinking
opportunities
supporting
development
developing
providing

Transitions to Labour Market and Higher-Level Studies Trends

Another trend in the survey data is respondents' critical perceptions about the preparedness of graduates for transitions into the labour market or higher-level studies. In Table 13 and Table 14, 34.7% of participants indicated that preparing students for their roles in the labour market was essential. When comparing the mean values of the goals and achievements of vocational education (Table 13 and Table 15), it is seen that participants felt that further education was only moderately successful in preparing students for the labour market (3.24 out of 4). However, in Table 16, respondents noted that graduates had limited opportunities to have influence on how work is organized (2.61 out of 5), input into the aims and goals of their workplace practices (2.71 out of 5), and undertake off-the-job training (2.86 out of 5). As such, participants saw preparedness as an important goal and considered further education to be moderately successful in achieving this goal. On the other hand, they did not view graduates as having agency. This suggests that preparedness is framed quite narrowly.

Examining whether further education is preparing graduates for higher level studies exhibited a similar trend. In Table 13 and Table 14, 28.4% of respondents indicated that preparing students for transitions to higher level studies was an essential goal. When comparing the mean values of the goals and achievements of further education (Table 13 and Table 15), it is shown that participants perceived further education as moderately preparing students to transition to higher level studies (3.34 out of 4). This is consistent with respondents' opinions about the extent to which further education was providing opportunities to progress to higher level qualifications. In Table 18, each statement recorded a mean value of approximately 2 out of 4, which suggests that participants perceived further education as providing moderate opportunities for graduates to progress to higher-level qualifications. As such, to improve transitions to the labour market and higher-level studies, further education should prioritize the development of programs that consider social and political contexts, the theoretical knowledge required for the field of practice, technical knowledge, and the attributes students need for a particular occupation or profession.

Further Education's Resources and Challenges

Table 19 depicts respondents' perceptions about resources in further education. On average, they disagreed that further education had the resources necessary to achieve its goals. The highest mean recorded was 2.60 out of 5 ('further education has the resources it needs to support gender equality') which is lower than the lowest mean recorded for goals (Table 13) and for achievements (Table 15). These lower results suggest that although participants had high hopes for further education, it was not equipped with the resources to achieve its goals. Moreover, the standard deviation values are high enough to suggest that opinions about the resources in further education varied greatly.

Table 19. Mean and standard deviation values of participants' opinions regarding resources in vocational education

		Participants (n = 814)	
	Scale maximum	*M*	*(SD)*
Further education has the resources it needs to develop students as active citizens	*5*	*2.10*	*(0.97)*
Further education has the resources it needs to develop students for their roles as workers in their occupation	*5*	*2.35*	*(1.08)*
Further education has the resources it needs to meet employers' current needs	*5*	*2.30*	*(1.03)*
Further education has the resources it needs to meet the educational needs of disadvantaged communities	*5*	*2.13*	*(1.01)*
Further education has the resources it needs to support individuals from disadvantaged communities to get good jobs	*5*	*2.09*	*(0.94)*
Further education has the resources it needs to support economic growth	*5*	*2.13*	*(0.91)*
Further education has the resources it needs to support sustainability	*5*	*2.13*	*(0.92)*
Further education has the resources it needs to support social inclusion	*5*	*2.36*	*(1.07)*
Further education has the resources it needs to support gender equality	*5*	*2.60*	*(1.14)*
Further education has the resources it needs to support students to progress to higher level study	*5*	*2.57*	*(1.12)*
Further education has the resources it needs for students to progress to higher level work	*5*	*2.42*	*(1.05)*

Note. n = Minimum number of participants for this set of questions, 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Figure 4 illustrates respondents' views of the relative importance of what needs to change and stay the same for further education to achieve its goals.

Figure 4. Word cloud of respondents' responses to question 17 'What needs to stay the same and what needs to change so that FE can achieve [its] goals?'

Respondent 93 expressed a view shared by several interviewees: 'More funding. Fewer OFSTED inspections. Reduce teaching hours to allow more planning etc.'

Table 20 depicts several trends relating to the nature and conditions of work for further education teachers. The first relates to teaching qualifications. Respondents agreed that on average further education teachers should 'have specific teaching qualifications' (4.21 out of 5). However, with some spread in responses, they also noted that they did not agree or disagree that further education teachers have 'university level teaching qualifications' (3.34 out of 5) or 'appropriate teaching qualifications' (3.67 out of 5). The second trend relates to the availability of resources. On average respondents disagreed that teachers had the 'resources they needed to work with employers in defining what workers will need to know and do' (1.69 out of 5), 'resources to undertake their job' (1.95 out of 5) and 'resources they needed to research the future needs of workplaces' (1.87 out of 5). Lastly, job satisfaction and security recorded relatively low mean values. Respondents disagreed that teachers felt 'valued' (2.41 out of 5) or that a sufficient number had 'permanent contracts' (2.08 out of 5).

Table 20. Mean and standard deviation values of participants' opinions about the nature and condition of work for further education teachers

		Participants (*n* = 813)	
	Scale maximum	*M*	*(SD)*
Further education teachers are valued in my institution	*5*	*2.41*	*(1.16)*
Further education teachers have the resources they need to research the future needs of workplaces	*4*	*1.87*	*(0.79)*
Further education teachers have the time and resources they need to work with employers in defining what workers will need to know and do	*5*	*1.69*	*(0.81)*
Further education teachers are currently required to have appropriate teaching qualifications	*5*	*3.67*	*(1.04)*
Further education teachers should be required to have specific teaching qualifications	*5*	*4.21*	*(0.9)*
Further education teachers should be required to have university level teaching qualifications	*5*	*3.34*	*(1.20)*
Further education teachers are provided with support to gain appropriate teaching qualifications	*5*	*3.13*	*(1.16)*
Further education teachers have sufficient opportunities to undertake professional development activities	*5*	*2.50*	*(1.13)*
Further education teachers have opportunities to progress in their career in vocational education	*5*	*2.30*	*(1.04)*
Further education teachers are provided with adequate resources to undertake their jobs	*5*	*1.95*	*(0.94)*

	Scale maximum	Participants (*n* = 813) *M*	 *(SD)*
Further education teachers are involved in shaping the nature of their jobs	*5*	*2.00*	*(0.97)*
There are sufficient further education teachers on permanent contracts in my institution	*5*	*2.08*	*(1.13)*

Note. n = Minimum number of participants for this set of questions, 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Most respondents criticised area reviews for cutting local study options and for reducing colleges' orientation to their local community. Respondent 920 added: Area reviews have resulted in 'rationalisations' via mergers, which see increased workloads, diminished range of courses, cuts on course hours, cuts in pay - all the usual 'austerity' crap.'

Respondent 5 expressed a view shared by many of their colleagues: 'Our professional judgement is constantly undermined by management. Everything we do and decide is second-guessed.' Respondent 34 added: 'The ability to be left alone and manage your own workload, rather than being micro-managed as is happening in many FE Colleges. There is no trust by management of the staff.' Respondent 284 reported that some of the administrative load on staff is due to inefficient management: 'We are required to produce the same data in many, many different forms, continually. This takes extensive time away from the actual job of nurturing students to achieve.'

Respondent 4 expressed a very common view amongst respondents: 'No pay rise in 9 years - had to sign a deal so that I don't take a pay cut agreeing to no pay rise for another 3 years whilst management take a bonus, then they tell us we have no money.'

Respondent 119 reported the demands on teachers seeking a further qualification:

> In my opinion all FE teachers should be graduates and fully qualified teachers. I have always had to pay for my teacher training studies and study in my own time, out of work. When you are working as a full time tutor that can be very demanding.

Respondent 89 explained why they did not undertake a teaching qualification:

> I was offered a chance to do cert ed, but I had to pay for it or take a loan to pay for it, I had to do it on a night time, with no time given in work to carry out the assignments etc. There was no choice to take classes in the day it was only offers on a night, due to the nature of my illness I am unable to do this on a night time. So i had to decline. I also couldn't justify taking a loan to pay for it when I have no reassurance or job security.

Table 21 describes participants' mean ratings regarding their opinions on support workers' work and working conditions. Overall, respondents noted that educational support workers were not provided with adequate resources or opportunities for professional development and growth. They disagreed that educational support workers 'had good career structures' (2.07 out of 5), were "provided with adequate resources to undertake their jobs' (2.13 out of 5), and were 'involved in shaping the nature of their jobs' (2.01 out of 5). As for career advancement, participants disagreed that educational support workers had sufficient opportunities to pursue higher-level qualifications and participate in professional development activities.

Table 21. Mean and standard deviation values for participants' opinions about the nature of work or conditions for support workers in further education

		Participants (*n* = 644)	
	Scale maximum	*M*	*(SD)*
Education support workers are valued in my institution	*5*	*2.62*	*(1.19)*
Education support workers have good career structures	*5*	*2.07*	*(0.87)*
Education support workers are provided with adequate resources to undertake their jobs	*5*	*2.13*	*(0.91)*
Education support workers are involved in shaping the nature of their jobs	*5*	*2.01*	*(0.89)*
Education support workers have opportunities to become vocational education teachers	*5*	*2.87*	*(1.03)*
There are sufficient education support workers on permanent contracts in my institution	*5*	*1.93*	*(0.96)*
There are sufficient opportunities for education support workers to undertake higher level qualifications	*5*	*2.36*	*(0.99)*
There are sufficient opportunities for education support workers to undertake professional development activities	*5*	*2.48*	*(1.07)*

Note. n = Minimum number of participants for this set of questions, 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Respondent 29 observed about support workers 'They are paid minimum wage yet are expected to have many skills....' and respondent 73 added: 'Support is extremely demanding and requires specialists, wages available are not competitive enough to afford the highest levels of support.'

Table 22 presents respondents' mean ratings for their opinions about the current situation of further education. There are several trends in the survey data but overall respondents had negative perceptions about the current state of further education. First, they felt that further education was not highly valued by the public or the government. Second, they agreed that further education had to compete with universities and private further education colleges for students. Lastly, participants neither disagreed or agreed about whether the quality and standards of further education were good (3.22 out of 5) but agreed that the standards were under pressure (4.00 out of 5).

Table 22. Mean and standard deviation values for respondents' opinions about the current situation of further education

		Participants (*n* = 675)	
	Scale maximum	*M*	*(SD)*
Further education is highly valued in my country	*5*	*2.03*	*(0.99)*
Further education is as strongly valued as university in my country	*5*	*1.59*	*(0.78)*
Further education institutions are guaranteed stable funding	*5*	*1.44*	*(0.63)*
Public further education institutions are adequately funded	*5*	*1.38*	*(0.71)*
Privatisation in further education in my country is not a threat to public further education institutions	*5*	*1.88*	*(1.05)*
Quality and standards of further education qualifications are good	*5*	*3.22*	*(1.11)*
Quality and standards of further education qualifications are under pressure	*5*	*4.00*	*(1.07)*
Government values further education institutions in my country	*5*	*1.59*	*(0.81)*
Government includes further education institutions in planning the future of further education in my country	*5*	*1.97*	*(0.92)*
Further education institutions in my country have the autonomy they need to carry out their mission	*5*	*2.16*	*(1.01)*
Further education does not have to compete with universities for students	*5*	*2.41*	*(1.14)*
Public further education institutions do not have to compete with private vocational education institutions for students	*5*	*2.18*	*(1.02)*
There are enough opportunities for students in senior secondary school to do further education	*5*	*2.65*	*(1.12)*
Senior secondary school students should not do further education until after they finish school	*5*	*2.81*	*(1.19)*

Note. n = Minimum number of participants for this set of questions, 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Goals, Achievements and Resources

One recurring trend in the data is the relationship between goals, achievements, and resources. When comparing Table 13, Table 15, and Table 19, it appears that further education institutions do not have the resources to achieve their goals. In other words, the situation is grimmer when reviewing respondents' opinions regarding resources. In all cases, Table 19 shows that institutions are not equipped with the resources needed to achieve their goals. For example, with a mean of 2.10 out of 4, respondents disagreed that further education has the resources to develop students as active citizens. This is drastically lower than the recorded mean values for respondents' perceptions about the goals (3.75 out of 4) and achievements (3.02 out of 4) of further education developing students as active citizens. This disconnect in responses suggests that although perceptions about the goals of further education are high, institutes are only moderately successful at achieving their goals and are not equipped with the resources to achieve them.

Working Conditions

Another important factor to consider is the working conditions of teachers and educational support workers. In Table 20 and Table 21, data suggest that participants perceived that teachers and educational support workers were not provided with adequate resources, opportunities for professional development, or future job prospects. For example, with a mean value of 2.30 out of 5, respondents disagreed that further education teacher have 'opportunities to progress in their career in vocational education.' More importantly, participants noted the importance of teacher qualifications and the significance of working with employers in defining what workers will need to be able to do when they transition into the workplace.

Meeting With the UK University and College Union's Further Education Committee

The researchers had the benefit of several meetings with further education policy leaders, officials of the UK University and College Union, college teachers and other workers, and scholars in the field. The researchers joined a meeting of the further education committee of the UK University and College Union on 6 July 2018 from 2:30 to 3:50 pm.

A member offered this brief framework of further education following the reconstruction after WWII:

1950-70	industrial development, technical
1980	riots, comprehensive education
1993	corporatisation, separation from local government, no longer managed by educationalists, expansion of markets, erosion of working conditions
2018	super groups, detached from the community.

A member said that further education is complicated because students' needs are complicated. Further education serves the most vulnerable students. It fills gaps in educational provision, is a safety net for students who fall through the cracks of the education system, and breaks down barriers to education. Peoples whose lives were changing were also supported by further education, particularly by adult education. Further education should serve the multiple dimensions of peoples and their ambitions.

A member argued that colleges serve important roles in developing life skills and improving mental health. Personal development courses such as cake decorating lead to other courses and a deeper engagement with further education.

A member argued that UK post compulsory education had the flexibility to allow students to switch between sectors and courses, unlike heavily tracked systems such as the Netherlands and Germany.

A member noted that investing in further education had considerable economic benefits in stopping people falling through the cracks. Benefits were highest for the most vulnerable people such as prisoners.

A member said that because of cuts and fee increases classes in English for speakers of other languages were now out of reach of many students.

A member reported that enrolments languages other than English had fallen, many of these courses had been cut, and that more of these courses risked being cut.

A member reported that services are increasingly contracted out.

A member argued that further education needed proper planning over the long and medium term.

A member argued that additional funding was needed not just for students in 1st year, but also for students in years 4 to 5.

A member argued that funding for further education should be ring fenced so that it is not diverted to management.

A member reported that lecturing and teaching staff in further education had been cut by one third since 2009.

A member argued that teachers need a pay rise, since pay had been falling through cuts and offering contracts on lesser terms than previous contracts. Members reported that many lecturers' jobs were being atomised, casualised and paid by the hour. A member reported that college managers were seeking to move lecturers from teaching contracts to fragmented contracts that did not recognise educational expertise.

Members said that teachers need time, a degree of autonomy, and professional development plans and programs.

A member said that teachers did not have to be qualified before appointment, but that the professional development they were expected to complete was not always provided and completed in good time. These lecturers needed stronger mentoring from lecturers released to mentor colleagues.

Members said that teachers' workloads were excessive, particularly with reporting for compliance, meeting targets, funding, compiling statistics, and other purposes. Excessive student:staff ratios meant lecturers could not support students properly.

A member argued that teachers needed respect: they should be trusted more, and that they should be consulted on the curriculum.

A member said that lecturers' dual professionalism had been eviscerated.

A member said that the conditions of lecturers' service shape the conditions of their students' learning.

A member reported that some authorities were conducting a 'war on students' by imposing oppressive behavioural requirements.

Interviews

The researchers also interviewed three further education policy leaders and eight further education workers, mostly teachers. Their comments are summarized below under nine headings: colleges' roles, colleges' employment role, colleges' roles in the community, colleges' relations to schools and universities, colleges' programs, colleges' resourcing, teachers, accountability requirements, and future direction.

Colleges' Overall Roles

Interviewees said that further education should offer lifelong learning to all (Tutor for 12 years) including second chance learning and community based learning (Worked in FE for 13 years, Taught health and social care for 16 years, Longstanding English teacher, Creative arts teacher).

An interview we have named 'Policy leader 03' offered an extended account of colleges' roles:

> At the start, FE included continuing education, technical education, and adult basic skills. By accretion, this list has grown over time and now includes academic studies for the 16-19 year olds, work directed learning and 'technical and commercial' education, community education, adult leisure, widening participation in HE, 2 + 2 provision; not necessarily labour focused.
>
> What FE should be is work-focused learning, apprenticeships and basic education to level 5 provision (2 year qualifications). Level 6 is degree level. Higher technical education is levels 4 and 5. It should focus on level 3, 4 and 5 education that meets the needs of local employment, the community and provides pathways to higher levels. It should serve a dual purpose: skills that are economically important for levels 3, 4 and 5 and second choice for access education. FE has a recovery function and an economic function.

(Policy leader 03)

An interviewee we have called 'Policy leader 01' problematised colleges' roles:

> The mission of colleges is problematic. They are comprehensive institutions that cover all ages and types of learning. They are very responsive. They will do what governments fund them to do. However,

> because they are everything to everyone, they are nothing to no one.
>
> The common essence and the thread that holds the present to the past is that they provide technical education. They are a technical college – they may have changed their name, but many people understand them as 'the tech'.
>
> An interesting issue is that the heritage of many of the colleges is in the working man's institutes, where the aim was to enable working class people to better themselves. We don't connect enough with that heritage and history.

(Policy leader 01)

A Teacher of English for speakers of other languages for 20 years also offered an extensive account of colleges' roles:

> Further education has these roles:
>
> 1. giving people from challenging backgrounds a second chance, not necessarily in employment;
> 2. (up)skilling people, and reducing unemployment, which is driven by government.
>
> These roles have been stable.
>
> 3. Developing peoples' interests such as hobbies and learning languages. The respondent regretted that this role has gone from colleges and wonders how this role is now served. For example, the respondent's college used to have a 'huge' department of modern foreign languages, which has now gone.'

(Teacher of English for speakers of other languages for 20 years)

Colleges' Employment Role

Interviewees expressed skepticism about colleges' role in meeting employers' needs.

> I really worry about the talk about skills and what employers want. This treats humans as a vessel. It is a shocking system. If anything has been marketised, it has been human beings who have been commodified. Do we need the right skills? What about good jobs?
>
> The phrase is employers own skills – no, it is people who work and they have abilities and talents.

(Policy leader 01)

A creative arts teacher said that the employment role was conceived very narrowly by colleges. They reported that most further education students already have a job and so were already 'job ready'. The interviewee said that students would be served well if colleges tried to instill in students a love of learning and developed students as independent but critical thinkers by developing higher cognitive skills. They said that higher skills serve any employer well. In contrast, colleges concentrated on lower level cognitive skills, whose jobs had been lost and were most vulnerable to further loss from automation.

A language teacher of seven years said that comprehensive further education colleges were being 'turned into an apprenticeship factory' and that they were being known as overwhelmingly vocational, while students better prepared for academic studies enrolled in 6th form colleges. They expected higher apprenticeships to become restricted to high status jobs and to entrants from advantaged backgrounds.

Colleges' Roles in Their Community

A creative arts teacher said that colleges' governors were not committed to colleges' roles in their community. The interviewee said that there were 'unhealthy relations between the board of governors and private providers'.

A teacher of English for speakers of other languages for 20 years said that:

> Competition is leading to colleges' amalgamation and a resulting loss of specialised colleges and their specialised programs, and of their services to their local communities. The pressures for college amalgamations are bipartisan, starting with the Blair Government. There should be more research on the implications of colleges' amalgamations on disruptions to their communities.
>
> (Teacher of English for speakers of other languages for 20 years)

A longstanding English teacher said that colleges used to be part of their community but no longer performed such a role. Satellite centres had been closed and adult education courses had been cut and there were not as many opportunities to retrain. Colleges were losing staff, their remaining staff were being deskilled.

Colleges' Relations to Schools and Universities

Two interviewees said that colleges' roles are being eroded by schools and universities.

> The purpose and function of further education are being diluted with, for example, schools offering diplomas awarded by the Business and Technology Education Council and universities offering foundation programs.
>
> (Taught English for speakers of other languages for 20 years).

> Colleges compete with schools, private providers and universities. They are squeezed from all directions. The expectations are enormous. The rules are complex and all this makes it very difficult to meet employer needs. There is no vision.

(Policy leader 01)

Colleges' Programs

Several interviewees reported problems with colleges' programs, and apprenticeships.

> There is a problem with the quality of awarding bodies. Bodies' competition for custom is leading them to 'water down' their qualifications, making them easier. Some awarding bodies are 'FE-friendly' to attract custom.
>
> Further, a specific awarding body had revised its descriptors in the respondent's field only twice in the last dozen years, which does not maintain confidence in their currency. This is in contrast with Cambridge Assessment's English test, which has had driven good quality improvement but was no longer adopted by as many colleges because of its higher cost.
>
> So there is a sorry story about the value of qualifications and the temptation to increase pass rates to increase revenue.

(Taught English for speakers of other languages for 20 years)

This was reiterated by a teacher of health and social care for 16 years who said that: 'The competition for custom amongst awarding bodies leads to bodies making their programs "easier" and lowering standards.'

Three interviewees said there were problems with apprenticeships.

> The government policy of apprenticeships is smoke and mirrors [illusory]. There is an obsession in England with qualification outputs, and achievement rates are a key measure. You can tick off the boxes on the competency framework. This is particularly a problem for situations where existing workers were put on apprenticeships. A study showed that there were 30% of apprentices who didn't know they were on an apprenticeship. This happens not only in the privates, but mainly in the privates.

(Policy leader 01)

A longstanding English teacher said that the new apprenticeship policy was not working. Some apprenticeships were not of adequate quality, they were too short and work and accordingly 'apprenticeships are not really meaningful'. A creative arts teacher was dispirited by the poor quality of apprenticeships which they said did not equip students adequately because there was insufficient professional practice. The interviewee said that it was ‘pretty difficult’ to get students work experience. They said that employers found that the paperwork was too onerous to take on an apprentice. A longstanding English teacher said that work experience developed students’ social interaction and supported upward progression. However, work experience was hard to organise. Employers don’t want work experience students.

Colleges’ Resourcing

There were many comments about colleges’ resourcing.

> Most [colleges] are vulnerable. They are operating on the margins, which are very thin. Many have low surpluses. They can carry on operating, but many are vulnerable to a shock, such as a change in the funding model, from competition with private providers, or a change in interest rates. They don’t have much in the way of risk capital, and this means they can’t afford to take risks. They struggle to be innovators as a result.
>
> This varies. Some are in better financial health. Many colleges are struggling to do the cross-subsidisation that is necessary to provide comprehensive college offerings to their communities. Their capacity to engage with their local communities is diminished. Colleges have shut down their outreach centres, and there has been a narrowing of the curriculum. There is less support for individual learners. So, it is really difficult for colleges to be anchor institutions in their communities. Some colleges are brilliant, but many are limited in the people they can serve.
>
> The work they do in supporting their communities is often hidden, and these cuts have been pernicious – the effect of the cuts is not easily seen. It is wrong.
>
> Funding is a big issue. Pay is too low. You can’t attract really good people from industry when they could earn more doing their jobs. Colleges can’t invest in staff and equipment.
>
> There has been quite a few redundancies at colleges – there have been redundancies at the majority of colleges. Teachers’ median pay is 30,000 pounds, whereas the median pay for school teachers is 37,000 pounds. Inevitably, this makes things difficult. Colleges want staff in shortage areas, but it is hard to recruit them because they can earn more working in their field. It is difficult to attract and retain staff. It is difficult to free people to do CPD [continuing professional development] and to refresh their pedagogy.

(Policy leader 01)

Policy leader 02 related funding to quality:

> There is downward pressure on unit price, and this is what causes colleges to deliver lover level provision and increase general provision. It isn't possible to do the specialist stuff.

(Policy leader 02)

A language teacher of seven years said that teachers' greatest need was for lighter workloads. Very high contact hours did not give teachers enough time for planning, preparation, and marking.

Teachers

A longstanding English teacher reported that colleges were restructuring lectureships as teachers and assessors who were paid less and in theory need not be so highly qualified. Respondent 117 to the survey reported:

At my institution there are now moves to have "teaching assistants" take on more active teaching roles, i.e. people with lower academic and/or teaching qualifications, doing the work of a qualified teacher at a substantially lower rate of pay.

However, all interviewees said that teachers should be formally qualified.

> Qualifications for teachers to teach – we have a structural problem. To teach in schools you need a degree but you don't need a degree to teach in a college. There was good work some years ago, but this has fallen away. There was also CPD [continuing professional development] for faculty leads and managers – all the way through. However, there has been massive disinvestment in CPD [continuing professional development] for the last 7 – 8 years.

(Policy leader 01)

But two interviewees expressed skepticism at the value of formal teacher qualifications. A teacher of health and social care for 16 years said that: 'Teachers need a vocation and a validated program of teacher education of 2 years' part time study. But the most valuable teaching skills are learned on the job'.

> Teachers' skill is a vocation. My teacher training was too general to be very helpful. I learned my teaching skills on the job. There may be more use in specialised teacher training for my field. Teachers need support from teachers expert in their subject and theory about their specialisation.

(Language teacher of 7 years)

Accountability Requirements

Many interviewees criticised what they stated were excessive government accountability requirements, which a teacher in health and social care for 16 years called 'bureaucratisation', by which they meant 'unnecessary paperwork and managerial oversight by Ofsted', the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. A language teacher of 7 years said that Ofsted imposed heavy administrative burdens and a longstanding English teacher said that Ofsted accountability requirements imposed excessive workloads on teachers and argued for the amount of administration to be cut significantly to allow teachers to teach.

A creative arts teacher linked this to their college's 'observation regime'. They said that 'teachers are assaulted on all fronts' and that colleges imposed a heavy administrative burden and were obsessed by metrics. The interviewee said that 'an immense amount of time is wasted on this'.

Future Direction

A creative arts teacher was 'not optimistic about the direction of travel' of further education. They said that further education's management culture was so pervasive, so deeply entrenched and so extensively reproduced that even a change of government and additional funding, while welcome, would not improve further education as fundamentally as it needed. Increased funding would be dissipated into more consultancies. Further education needed fundamental structural change and a cultural shift to holistic, democratic and accountable education (creative arts teacher).

The researchers do not endorse the following view of a teacher of English for speakers of other languages for 20 years, and would not presume to instruct a union on its industrial strategy. But the authors believe it may be useful to report that this teacher argued that unions had become weaker in contrast to powerful management boards and the Association of Colleges. They argued that some unions' responses were too militant, which undermined the image of the teaching profession. They argued for more creative ways of dealing with disputes. They argued for a professionalisation of teachers based on their expert knowledge. Again, the researchers do not support this view nor even believe that it is correct. But it may be useful to be aware of a range of contrasting views, perhaps to better counter them.

The Dominance and Limitations of Human Capital Theory

Further education policy in England and in many other jurisdictions has been dominated by augmented human capital theory. Human capital theory postulates that education increases graduates' skills which makes them more productive which in turn increases economic value (Figure 5).

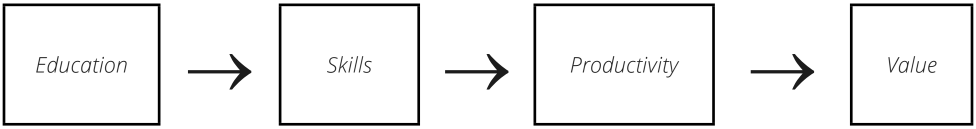


Figure 5. Education's contribution to economic value posited by human capital theory

Human capital theory is understood to apply at the level of the individual, group, and whole economy. Individual further education graduates' higher employment outcomes are ascribed to their increased human capital; increasing the education of an organisation's workers is thought to increase their productivity and hence the organisation's profitability; increasing the qualifications of members of an occupation such as technicians or financial advisers is expected to increase their effectiveness; and increasing the proportion of an economy's workers with further qualifications is understood to increase economic growth, at least in specified circumstances.

Equity policy may also be based on human capital. The under representation of women in engineering, for example, and in senior positions is said to lose the economy valuable potential talent as well as disadvantaging individual women, and the lower proportions of tertiary qualified people from disadvantaged groups is thought to 'waste' human capital as well as disadvantaging individuals. Of course equity policy may be based on other grounds such social inclusion (Vinson, 2009) or broad notions of justice, but a policy maker seeking a parsimonious description of policy could include most equity aims in human capital theory.

Human Capital Theory Does Not Explain Full the Use of Qualifications In the Workforce

But human capital theory is an inadequate basis for further education policy because it does not explain fully the use of qualifications in the workforce. Further education graduates have higher employment rates and higher pay than people with lower qualifications, but a relatively high proportion of further education graduates are employed in jobs which do not match the level of their qualification (Sutherland, 2012, p. 622). Since half of England and Northern Ireland adults report that they work in a different field to the field of their highest qualification (Montt, 2015, p. 11), it is likely that a high proportion of further education graduates work in a field different from their qualification. There is therefore not the direct relation between further education and work skills posited by human capital theory.

A common response to the so-called mismatch between tertiary education qualifications and work is to argue that qualifications should be more closely related to the jobs for which they are meant to prepare graduates. This is wrong for at least two reasons. First, tying education even more closely to a particular occupation would reduce its relevance to the other occupations for which qualifications are currently relevant. Secondly, tying further education more closely to work is wrong because it ignores the role of the demand for graduates in shaping the match between education and work (Keep, 2016b).

While the lack of a close match between tertiary education and work is not explained by the common narrow interpretation of human capital theory, it may be at least partly explained by a broader understanding of human capital. While education may not develop specific occupational skills, it may nevertheless develop skills that contribute to productivity more generally. This is not an argument for general or so-called ‘generic’ skills. Developing a specialised skill in depth such as mathematics or law may develop skills that are valuable in many occupations. The loose match between tertiary education and work may also be partly explained not by an even broad understanding of human capital, but by signalling and screening. Qualifications may not (only) increase graduates’ skills relevantly for employment, but signal that they have attributes valued by employers such as general aptitude, application, and determination (Spence, 1973). That is, employers may not use qualifications to select workers who have relevant skills, but to screen applicants for potential to be productive workers.

Human Capital Theory Does Not Recognise the Importance of Non Utilitarian Studies

Even the most utilitarian and materialist of further education systems includes some provision of education for its own sake. For example, many colleges offer courses for adults in the visual and performing arts, and colleges offer courses in languages and the social sciences such as psychology and sociology. Since further education’s provision of creative and liberal studies cannot be justified by human capital theory, human capital theory needs to be augmented to justify this provision.

Human Capital Does Not Account For Education’s Non Employment Benefits

Neither does human capital theory account for tertiary education’s manifest and manifold benefits to graduates beyond the workplace. It is now well established that tertiary graduates have better health, participate more in civic activities, volunteer more for community activities, and generally have higher social capital. Colleges invest much effort in constructing opportunities for their students to participate in extra-curricular activities, service learning, and many other activities to develop graduates beyond the workforce. None of these benefits is accounted for by human capital theory, and by basing tertiary education policy on augmented human capital theory one either overburdens the theory with successive augmentations, or risks the continuity of these broader roles.

Human Capital Theory Does Not Account For Colleges’ Institutional Role

Human capital does not account for tertiary education institutions’ institutional role in developing communities, occupations, and industries. This is beyond graduating students with high occupational skills and high social capital. It is also beyond the economic benefit of the employees’ wages and purchases of a public facility such as a hospital, museum, or prison. Tertiary education institutions include an accumulation of educational facilities such as workshops, laboratories, libraries, lecture theatres and seminar rooms; and of knowledge and expertise in a range of fields. Importantly, tertiary education institutions institutionalise systems of work, or ways of mobilising their resources and expertise to develop, transmit and diffuse knowledge for different purposes. This includes the familiar roles of offering expertise, advice and consulting services formally and informally through diverse associations; of contributing to boards and committees; but also initiating the extension and reconstitution of knowledge and resources to meet new needs and stimulate new developments.

For communities tertiary education institutions provide a depth and vitality of intellectual resources. For occupations tertiary education institutions codify, restructure, and systematise rules and procedures of practice to form systematic procedural knowledge (Moodie, Skolnik, Wheelahan, Liu, Simpson and Adam, 2018). For industries tertiary education institutions provide a repository of renewing expertise and innovation.

This leads us to propose an alternative basis for tertiary education policy: human capability.

Alternative: Human Capability

The economics Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (2000) and the philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2000) developed the capabilities approach to express goals for human development as an alternative to the goal of increasing economic output which remains the dominant development goal, or the goal of people having the same 'equal' access to resources and outcomes, which is sometimes posited as an alternative. Sen showed that human flourishing indicated by life expectancy and literacy rate are not correlated with per capita gross national product, though in some circumstances economic growth is needed to resource increases in human welfare. However, Sen argued that the goal should be human welfare, not increasing economic growth. Further, people need different economic resources to flourish: people in temperate climates need less heating and lighter clothes than people living in cold climates. Even within the same region, children, pregnant women and the aged need different amounts of food and health services to flourish. Neither is it desirable to state goals as people achieving the same outcomes. For example, while it is desirable for all young people to complete a secondary school certificate and go on to complete a postsecondary qualification, this by itself will not overcome inequality in the labour market or adverse outcomes for people who come from communities that experience racism and other forms of discrimination.

Rather, Sen and Nussbaum argue that the goal should be for everyone to have the capability to be and do what they have reason to value (Sen, 2000, pp. 18, 285; Nussbaum, 2000, pp. 71, 78-80). This may be elaborated in many different ways. Nussbaum (2000, pp. 78-81) proposed 10 central human functional capabilities which 'are related to one another in many complex ways':

1. Life.
2. Bodily health.
3. Bodily integrity.
4. Senses, imagination, and thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason. . . .
5. Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves. . . .
6. Practical reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience.)
7. Affiliation. Being able to live with and toward others. . .
8. Other species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

9. Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
10. Control over one's environment.

Education is clearly important to achieving human capability, however elaborated. An analysis of the implications of education as a whole for human capability emphasises literacy and numeracy, and education for citizenship, as Sen and Nussbaum do. We argue further that tertiary education's role in developing human capability is to develop each student as a person, as a citizen, and as a worker.

By developing each student as a person we refer to tertiary education's role in developing students' capacity to understand and manage themselves, to understand and manage their environment, and to appreciate and contribute to human culture. This includes the capacity to increase one's knowledge, understanding and appreciation, for example, by progressing to higher levels of education. These contribute to Nussbaum's central human functional capabilities for senses, imagination, and thought; practical reason; and control over one's environment.

By 'developing each student as a citizen' were refer to tertiary education's role in developing students' capacity to contribute to their community and to participate in the governance of their society. These contribute to Nussbaum's central human functional capabilities for affiliation and control over one's environment.

By developing each student as a worker we refer to tertiary education's role in developing students' capacity to be and do in work what they have reason to value (Moodie, Wheelahan, & Lavigne, 2018). This contributes to Nussbaum's central human functional capabilities for senses, imagination, and thought; affiliation; control over one's environment; and it provides the resources necessary for life and health. We understand work broadly to be an activity which seeks to sustain an individual or society. This includes paid employment, voluntary work, and 'women's work', or 'self provisioning within the household' as Pahl (1984) calls it, and excludes recreation and leisure (Voss, 1967).

Capabilities for work is distinguished from human capital, which is humans' augmentation of production for exchange (Sen, 2000):

> At the risk of oversimplification, it can be said that the literature on human capital tends to concentrate on the agency of human beings in augmenting production possibilities. The perspective of human capability focuses, on the other hand, on the ability – the substantive freedom – of people to lead the lives they have reason to value and to enhance the real choices they have. The two perspectives cannot but be related, since both are concerned with the role of human beings, and in particular with the actual abilities that they achieve and acquire. But the yardstick of assessment concentrates on different achievements. (p. 293)

Capabilities for work are broader than 'productive abilities' counted as human capital, because they recognise and include the freedom of the person doing the work (Sen, 2000: 295). For the same reason, they are also more than Standing's (2014: 966) 'capability power', which is a person's potential to engage in paid employment. Still less are capabilities for work just the employability skills or competencies said to be developed by universities that are sometimes called 'capabilities', as these are too narrowly defined and taught, and do not necessarily provide workers with options to flourish beyond the level of the credential (Moodie, Wheelahan, & Lavigne, 2018).

Capabilities depend on peoples' agency in work, their freedom to choose what work they do and how they do it. Paid employment limits workers' scope for action, but nevertheless capabilities in employment include the capability to develop one's career, choose one's job, and the way one does one's tasks. Agency, therefore, includes personal development in work. Workers need the capability to respond to change and to change themselves for the better, including developing their knowledge, skills, and abilities to undertake different work (Moodie, Wheelahan, & Lavigne, 2018).

The exercise of agency generally and capabilities in particular depend on informed reason. People need the knowledge and skill to choose the work they have reason to value, and to choose between options they consider. This includes the ability to think about new ideas, or the ability to 'think the unthinkable', as Wheelahan (2007, p. 637) expressed it, following Bernstein (2000, p. 30). The capacity of informed reason is usually developed in formal education. Informed reason is analysed into knowledge, skill and ability in productive capabilities for employment, understood as a career and not merely as a job or, worse, a set of tasks (Moodie, Wheelahan, & Lavigne, 2018).

Peoples' capabilities depend on their context and on the conditions of their society such as public health, the quality and level of education of fellow citizens, means for transport and communication, means of collective decision making, means of collective action, means of exchange of goods and services, and the sharing facilities and resources.
In particular, social capacity includes a society's capacity to support and foster the capabilities of people who are disadvantaged in comparison with most others by, for example, having fewer resources, having less knowledge, skills or abilities, having less access to capacities, or suffering discrimination (Moodie, Wheelahan and Lavigne, 2018).

Implications for Further Education

Basing further education on developing human capabilities recognises further education's role in developing graduates' productivities beyond just specific work skills, it accounts for further education's development of students beyond employment, and it accounts for further education's non employment benefits.

Further Education's Development of Their Students

Further education should develop at least some of the common capacities upon which capabilities depend. This includes developing students' capacity to organise themselves; to contribute to the organisation of their family, group, and community; and to collaborate with others. This is degraded as 'teamwork' in many business prescriptions of tertiary education programs. All tertiary education should also contribute to the special common capacity of ensuring the capabilities of people who are disadvantaged in comparison with most others by, for example, having fewer resources; having less knowledge, skills or abilities than others; or who have suffered discrimination.

Schröer (2015) argues that three categories of capabilities support young people to make real choices in their lives:

- capability for education, which refers to 'the real freedom to choose a training program or a curriculum one has reason to value';
- capability for work, which refers to 'the real freedom of making the choice to undertake the job or activity one has reason to value'; and
- capability for voice, which refers to 'the real freedom to express one's wishes, expectations, desires etc. and make them count when decisions concerning oneself are made' (p. 369).

These suggest three roles for all tertiary education qualifications, although the emphasis on each role may differ with each qualification (Gallacher, 2011, pp. 2-3; Gallacher, Ingram, & Reeve, 2012, p. 383; Moodie, Fredman, Bexley, & Wheelahan, 2013, p. 30):

1. Labour market. Qualifications provide entry to and progression in the workforce.
2. Education. All qualifications should provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to study at a higher level in their field or a closely related field.
3. In society. Qualifications contribute to society by developing students' appreciation of and contribution to culture and society. They develop individuals' capacity

to contribute to their families, communities and occupations. Qualifications also contribute to social inclusion by supporting inclusion in education and the labour market, and by contributing to a more tolerant and inclusive society.

Further Education's Development of Their Communities

Further education has an important role in developing their local communities, and in anticipating and meeting their needs. The University and College Union (2009) advocated such a role in responding to a new economic and social climate and in regaining the trust of young people following the 2011 riots in England (University and College Union campaign unit, no date). Arguably the divisive vote over Brexit suggests a similar role in repairing the social fabric. Further education colleges' role in development of their communities is illustrated by Wheelahan (2017, p. 26; 2018, p. 17), who explains that Australian public colleges anchor their communities by:

'proactively working with other key social partners in the region and nationally (where appropriate) to support sustainable social and economic development;

anticipating, elaborating, codifying and institutionalising the knowledge base of practice for the future as well as the present and in considering the way work is changing and the implications that this has for a curriculum for the future. This is a crucial role that would support innovation (Moodie, 2008), and requires appropriately qualified teachers who engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning and in research on the way their field is changing;

offering students a sufficiently comprehensive range of programs that enable them to realise their aspirations and providing students with the broad range of services and supports that are needed to successfully achieve their goals; and,

developing qualifications that meet the needs of students, communities, local industries and regions' (p. 10).

Further Education's Development of Occupations and Industries

Much practice includes 'systematic procedural knowledge' or the 'established rules and practices' (Young, 2006, p. 62) of an occupation such as organising a building site or taking a patient's temperature. This is 'the practical knowledge itself structured following the dictates of the workflow and the series of actions needed to achieve the desired final product' (Valleriani, 2017b, pp. 2-3). Much of this procedural knowledge is tacit and uncodifiable, and thus can be learned only on the job. But much can be codified, systematised, generalised, and recontextualised for teaching formally. Valleriani (2017a, p. vii; 2017b, pp. 3, 4, 5) and his co-authors (Merrill, 2017, p. 35; Lefèvre, 2017, p. 267) observe that occupations structure knowledge in practice in their workflow, division and organisation of labour, work drawings, models, measuring instruments, tables of measurements, written recipes, formulas, timetables, manuals, and practice guides. Practitioners restructured their knowledge to manage their operations; to share it, mainly for apprenticeships and other forms of education; and to document their trials and experiments (Merrill, 2017, p. 23; Valleriani, 2017b, p. 9).

Practitioners restructure rather than merely replicate their knowledge because, for example, when a carpenter teaches an apprentice they don't just work wood, but they explain how to work wood; they convey to the apprentice not know-how, but knowledge about know-how (Büttner, 2017, p. 118). This restructuring of practical knowledge not only codifies the knowledge of practitioners, but organises it and gives it an analytical framework with principles and theories incorporated from the scholarly literature (Valleriani, 2017b, pp. 6, 11).

This recontextualising of occupational knowledge is often done by occupational associations, trade associations, regulatory bodies, government departments, and by companies which institutionalise them in work processes and manuals that they protect as trade secrets. But there are many industries without such institutional support, at least locally, and colleges have a valuable role in codifying, restructuring, and systematising rules and procedures of practice. This not only helps construct curriculum, but establishes assessment standards which can be important industry standards.

Further education colleges are also reservoirs of accumulated expertise for local industries. They may also be the source of innovation, and of the transfer of new ideas from outside the local industry (Moodie, 2006).

Further Education Colleges' Institutional Strengths

Further education colleges need to be strong institutions with accumulated expertise and resources to fulfil their roles in developing students as humans, citizens, and as workers; and to fulfil their institutional roles in developing communities, occupations, and industries. This requires continuing funding as institutions rather than separate payments for discrete programs, projects or other products by severable contracts or other arrangements (Wheelahan 2017; 2018, p. 18). This in turn requires the development of communities of trust between institutions and their funders, communities, industries and students (Wheelahan, 2017, pp. 25-26; 2018, pp. 16-18).

Further education also needs to become institutionalised in the sociological sense of being generally understood by the public with established norms and organisational forms which are reinforced by the expectations and behaviour of other institutions, organisations and actors (Streeck & Thelen, 2005, pp. 9, 12). This is not so much of an issue for schools and universities which are generally firmly institutionalised, but it is an issue for further education whose ideal or model is less well described, understood and accepted. The development of a stable identity of further education is undermined by the UK Government's (no date) recent reconceptualisation of further education:

> Further education (FE) includes any study after secondary education that's not part of higher education (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or graduate degree).
>
> Courses range from basic English and maths to Higher National Diplomas (HNDs).
>
> FE also includes 3 types of technical and applied qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds:
>
> - level 3 tech levels to specialise in a specific technical job
> - level 2 technical certificates help get employment or progress to another tech level
> - applied general qualifications to continue general education at advanced level through applied learning.

This description is residual – it describes further education as that which is left over from both secondary and higher education. It elaborates further education as a hodge podge of qualifications by subject, students' age, qualification level, by orientation, and by pedagogy ('applied learning').

We do not reflect on the appropriateness of the government's development of institutes of technology beyond observing that promoting them as 'a new type of institution' (Department for Education, 2017, p. 6) makes it harder to establish further education with a strong and stable institutional identity. Institutes of technology may develop as distinctive and prominent institutions which exemplify further education, but such a standing takes many years to develop. In the meantime, further education's organization seems further fragmented.

Conclusion

This study was commissioned by Education International to examine national case studies of technical and vocational education and training as a framework for social justice. The national case studies are of six countries and are of different intensities using different methods. The study of England was one of the intensive studies and included a literature review, secondary analysis of published statistics, analysis of statistics collected by the University and College Union, interviews, and a number of country visits during one of which the investigators attended the reimagining FE 2018 conference.

In contrast with many other OECD countries, English further education is not defined clearly and stably, and neither does it align directly with international classifications of education such as the International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). English further education has multiple and changing funding sources and funders, and is subject to frequent government reviews and frequent substantial policy changes. This weakness and instability in the idea or concept of further education and in further education funding and policy undermines the strength and continuity of the organisations of further education, colleges.

The government's big cuts in further education funding greatly weaken colleges and leave them under resourced. Of particular concern is the under resourcing of staffing. Staff have not received a pay rise for an unconscionably long time, and continued budget pressures are leading colleges to cut lecturing and support staff, leading to exploitative work intensification. There are reports that colleges are redesignating many continuing lectureships as casual teachers and assessors paid by the hour. While almost all informants believed that lecturers should be formally qualified as teachers as well as in their field, colleges' employment practices are deskilling lecturers and teachers.

Substantial numbers of informants argued that further education has social as well as employment roles, which are needed locally as well as regionally. However, these roles were undermined by big cuts in funding which were forcing colleges to merge and close local campuses. Colleges local community roles were not supported by their governing boards which represent employers and regional interests in favour of local communities. The devolution of some adult education functions to combined authorities is not only likely to exacerbate this trend, but complicate further education functions and funding even further. This further weakens colleges as institutions.

Most further education qualifications in England are awarded by a multiplicity of private for profit bodies. This is so unusual internationally as to be anomalous. It is also leading to perverse results; bodies' competition for custom is leading them to 'water down' their qualifications to make them easier and more are 'FE-friendly' to attract custom.

The paper argued that the dominant human capital theory does not adequately explain the full the use of qualifications in the workforce, it does not recognise the importance of non utilitarian studies, it does not account for education's non employment benefits, and does not account for colleges' institutional roles.

The paper argued that a better philosophy or principle supporting further education is human capability, for everyone to have the capability to be and do what they have reason to value. The paper argued that further education's role in developing human capability is to develop each student as a person, as a citizen, and as a worker. This leads to further education's roles in developing their communities, and in developing local occupations and industries.

To discharge these responsibilities colleges need to be strengthened as institutions. This will require increased funding, and the employment of more staff who should be properly remunerated, supported and employed on decent conditions. It will also require a restoration of trust in the system. The lack of trust is resulting in the imposition of excessive systems of reporting, monitoring and surveillance, which in turn is imposing unnecessary work and undermining morale. But trust cannot be restored until the government removes the incentives for exploiting the system imposed by funding cuts, economic competition, and the prioritisation of profits over education. As Vernell (2010) wrote:

The starting point should be to demand the end of the economic approach which believes that basic human needs like a home, an education, healthcare and meaningful employment should depend on the market. This is not only morally wrong; it also does not work. Social needs, not private profit, should determine what is produced (pp. 34-35).

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Case Study of Further Education in England

Preliminary Report

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