

The Future of Post 18 Education after COVID-19 and into the 2020s (A Review)

By Oliver Corney BSc (Hons)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the HOLEX board for giving me the opportunity to undertake an internship in this interesting area of policy. In particular, I would like to thank Sue Pember and Charlie McKenna for supervising me during this project and providing the guidance needed to see its completion.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Specification

This report was based around the specification of reviewing 12 policy papers focusing on adult education and considering the evidence and research methods that the papers used, the similarities and differences between the papers and analysing the policy recommendations and insights that were provided. This report contains a thematic approach to the review focusing on a review of lifelong learning, learning within the education sector and the impact that coronavirus has had on learning in the UK. This review was conducted through an examination of the policy papers and considering the comments and methods that each of these papers utilised.

Life-Long Learning

It is clear from examining the policy papers that are cited in this report that lifelong learning is seen within the sector as the next major advancement for adult education. Life long learning is defined as *“Individuals need to continuously adapt their skills and competencies whilst acquiring new and/or specialist skills to cope with demographic and labour market shifts. This is achieved by engaging with learning across the lifecourse.”*¹ Considering the economic revolution that is due to take place over the next 10 to 15 years with an increase in automation and a changing of workplace structure, the necessity for a comprehensive lifelong learning strategy is apparent.

Other countries have embarked on a lifelong learning strategy and while some of the policy papers cite them as models in which the UK could draw information from this report cautions a copy and paste approach, given the unique political and economic structures that the UK carries. What is clear is that for the current and next generation of workers, re-training of skills is going to be paramount to ensure that the UK remains competitive and to ensure employer and employee satisfaction in the workplace.

¹ ‘Skills and Lifelong Learning: Learning across the Lifetime’, GOV.UK, accessed 12 August 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-and-lifelong-learning-learning-across-the-lifetime.P.4>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

That is why this report and the policy papers play such an emphasis on the need for the government to deliver significant investment in a lifelong learning strategy made up from a comprehensive policy package rather than only endorsing the concept.

Coronavirus Impact

It could be argued that the education sector has faced no greater test than the coronavirus crisis in 2020. This crisis caused widespread chaos and confusion. Everyone in education has been impacted by the devastating effects of coronavirus. This report shows that many in the education sector were not equipped for remote learning and rapid adjustments to business practices.

The policy papers make it clear that the education leavers in 2020 will be hit by some of the hardest changes that have faced a cohort since 2008. With an estimate of 440,800, 18 to 24-year-olds joining the job hunting England, those who are leaving education will find it difficult with limited opportunities and more significant pressure than ever before to find employment or further education policies opportunities.

The higher education sector in education faces its own challenges with travel restrictions on international students and a push from universities to encourage as many UK students onto undergraduate courses, who are understandably trying to ride out the worst of the unemployment crisis that is occurring because of coronavirus. It has been reported that every area of the economy has been affected by coronavirus, and education is no exception. In fact, because of its critical importance to young people, the policy response must be taken very seriously.

What this report makes clear is that explicit, unambiguous action and direction is going to be needed to ensure that the effects and disruption of coronavirus and young people and adult learners are minimised as much as possible.

Coronaviruses also had a considerable impact on the apprenticeship market with different policy papers agreeing that the apprenticeship market is one of the most vulnerable in the education sector, if not the most vulnerable because of its weakness to extreme market changes. With apprenticeships being cut and firms forced into cost-saving measures, learners are finding it difficult to access apprenticeship courses and even those who have been retained, finding the experience a challenging environment.

REPORT FRAMEWORK

Policy Paper	Policy Paper Methodology	Policy Paper Key Points	Author Comments
<p><i>Adult skills and lifelong Learning Inquiry: Evidence</i></p> <p>https://holex.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Adult-skills-and-lifelong-learning-inquiry-HOLEX-Response-Aug-2019.pdf</p>	<p>(i) Breakdown of the funding of post-18 education.</p>	<p>(1) There is a significant difference for adult learning in the DFE budget compared to other areas.</p> <p>(2) There is a plethora of other countries that lifelong learning can be modelled on</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult lifelong learning saves money for employees as workers make less error (P.3). • Workers require less supervision making the workforce more efficient yielding greater financial returns on long term workers.
<p><i>Lifelong Learning Commission: PESA Report</i></p> <p>https://www.libdems.org.uk/lifelong-learning</p>	<p>(i) WEA Survey of Learners</p> <p>(ii) Education Select Committee Survey</p> <p>(iii) Quantitative Analysis DFE Budget</p>	<p>(1) Lifelong learning needs serious policy commitments, not just warm words from the government.</p> <p>(2) There are clear benefits to lifelong learning such as greater opportunities for career progression</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government policy needs to be thinking about the next generation of workers not simply trying to get to next week. • DFE spends £1.5bn of its budget on the adult training programme.
<p><i>Life-long Learning Commission Labour</i></p> <p>https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Lifelong-Learning-Report-2019.pdf</p>	<p>(i) Comparative analysis to secondary literature.</p> <p>(ii) Expert contributions</p>	<p>(1)The last decade has seen funding for adult education and skills slashed by billions of pounds.</p> <p>(2)Too many potential learners find themselves locked out of the opportunities that returning to education can bring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This review as well as others on lifelong learning, make clear that the government needs to demonstrate that it sees a lifelong learning strategy as a priority. The question remains which is the best model to adopt that is sustainable and has cross party support.

<p>“A Permanent National Necessity...” <i>Adult Education and Lifelong Learning for 21st Century Britain</i></p> <p>http://www.centenarycommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Centenary-Commission-on-Adult-Education-Report.pdf</p>	<p>(i) Expert contributions (ii) Real world case studies (iii) Comparative analysis to secondary literature.</p>	<p>(1) There should be national information campaigns, motivating people to engage in lifelong learning (2) Support the proposal from the Commission chaired by Sir Vince Cable to introduce Individual Learning Accounts, which that report costed at £1.3bn pa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evidence suggests that national informational campaigns delivers a worthwhile response. • The lifelong learning account proposal is replicated in other publications that make an international comparison. This proposal has similarities to the French model.
<p><i>Adult Community Education - Supporting place and people: Characteristics of Success</i></p> <p>https://fetl.org.uk/publications/adult-community-education-supporting-place-and-people-characteristics-of-success/</p>	<p>(i) Interviews (ii) Desktop Research (iii) Expert Commentary</p>	<p>(1) ACE is a leading area of FE (2) ACE has shown it's resolve through financial prudence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This paper has an advantage through its use of a literature review. • A balance of experts with differing opinions would show that the argument is superior.
<p><i>COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact: Brief #3: Apprenticeships</i></p> <p>https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-impacts-apprenticeships/</p>	<p>(i) You Gov Survey of Companies and Learners</p>	<p>(1) Covid-19 is having a significant effect on the apprenticeship market apprentices are vulnerable to extreme market changes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This links <i>Class of 2020 Education: Leavers in the Current Crisis</i> paper and the challenges learners face
<p><i>Class of 2020 Education: Leavers in the Current Crisis</i></p> <p>https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/class-of-2020/</p>	<p>(i) Comparisons to the 2008 financial crisis to model the effects of the 2020 COVID-19 Crisis</p>	<p>(2) The effects of the economic crisis on learners leaving education will be profound (3) The impact of leaving education during an economic crisis has shown to Impact employment and wage prospects for years to come.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people have been conditioned throughout education to have a clear plan for their future • A situation whereby all plans are thrown into confusion must have a detrimental effect.
<p><i>COVID-19 and Post-16 Education</i></p>	<p>(i) OBR Scenarios</p>	<p>(1) With the peak of the pandemic effects hitting in the months from March onwards,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 440k 18-24 young people will join the job hunt in England. With jobs in short

<p>https://www.ncfe.org.uk/blog/ad-dressing-the-impACeT-of-covid-19-on-post-16-education.</p>	<p>(ii) The Government COVID-19 intervention Package</p>	<p>the discussion paper focuses its efforts to ensure that disruptions September can be minimised.</p> <p>(2) The paper anticipates great disruptions to the education and employment markets</p> <p>(3) People should prepare for an increase to FE and HE as a safe haven for young people escaping the job market.</p>	<p>supply, this will cause a sharp rise in unemployment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also, this will have an impact on those young people leaving education, such as university graduates expecting high-quality jobs, after 3 years of HE. With the current unemployment crisis, some see that full-time education as a short term bet. However, there are some issues with such a broad statement. Firstly, the expansion of the cohort at the HE level will not work if there is a dilution of academic standards in a bid to increase numbers
<p><i>Resolution Foundation young workers in coronavirus crisis</i> https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/young-workers-in-the-coronavirus-crisis/</p>	<p>(i) Quantitative analysis of YouGov research on employees.</p>	<p>(1) Younger and older workers have experienced the brunt of the hit to jobs.</p> <p>(2) One-third of 18-24-year-old have lost jobs or been furloughed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical analysis shows that those who are just joining the workforce will face the toughest ride during an expected economic downturn. Youth unemployment is expected to be one of the greatest challenges to the economy should a second wave occur. This report examines the foundation to that scenario with the initial implication to young workers.
<p><i>Skills Commission: England's Skills Puzzle: Piecing together further education, training and employment</i> https://www.policyconnect.org.uk/research/skills-commission-englands-skills-puzzle-piecing-together-further-education-training-and.</p>	<p>(i) Review of the literature (ii) Semi structured interviews</p>	<p>(1) Creating a local focus for skills, based on localised requirements in collaboration with providers to ensure provider strengths are maximised.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This approach has a lot of merits, providing it can demonstrate that the different levels of the hierarchy, from the local provider level to the secretary of state can cooperate effectively. This would ensure that national policy and local needs are in collaboration with each other.

<p><i>Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding</i></p>	<p>(i) Expert contributions (ii) DFE official figures (iii) Comparative analysis to secondary literature.</p>	<p>(1) The decline in FE widespread. Teachers in FE colleges are paid on average less than their counterparts in schools. (2)Funding levels are inadequate to cover essential maintenance. (3) Not surprisingly, the sector is demoralised,</p>	<p>The point of maintenance has been replicated in other publications such as “<i>Putting the learner in the driving seat</i>”</p>
<p><i>Campaign for Learning Putting the learner in the driving seat</i> https://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/news/a-review-of-a-lifetime-new-report-on-the-post-18-review-of-education-and-funding</p>	<p>(i) Qualitative analysis (ii) OBR Figures</p>	<p>(1) Introduce maintenance loans for 19-24 year olds on first Level 3 courses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This proposal would allow FE to be brought inline with the HE system. Additionally this would allow for a cohort who all have a base level of skill as opposed to a large section being left behind, due to a lack of funding support that is already available to those learners embarking on a level 4-6.

METHODOLOGY

- The data and analysis for this report were achieved through the reviewing of the 12 policy papers. These papers are cited in the reference section of this report. The data was compiled using the reports that provided the most specific data relevant to the discussion.
- This report reviewed the papers, based on the following criteria. Firstly the papers were checked to see if references were included for the reader to see the primary resources for the relevant arguments. Secondly, the papers were examined to see how they compared to the other papers regarding clarity of arguments as well as balance. Finally, the papers were reviewed for the research methods used, and a critique is included where necessary for the methods that enhanced an argument or where another method would have been more appropriate.
- In addition to the review process, this report also includes an analysis of the policy discussion within the policy papers. In particular, this reports comments on areas of policy that could be improved within the context of the current economic and social climate.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ANALYSIS

ACE: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ANALYSIS

Policy Paper	Policy Recommendations	Have the Recommendations been taken forward?	Thoughts
<i>Adult Community Education - Supporting place and people: Characteristics of Success</i>	<p>(i) HOLEX will work with the Department for Education (DfE) and MCAs to update their guidance on community learning.</p> <p>(ii) “New Challenges, New Chances (2011)” is relevant, it is dated and needs to be revisited.</p>	(1) Upon investigating this recommendation, it is apparent that at the time of writing there is evidence of an updated government paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next year (2021) the “<i>New Challenges, New Chances</i>” paper will be 10 years old. • Therefore it would be advisable for the government to publish an updated report that takes into account the changes over the last decade as well as considering the future.

LIFELONG LEARNING/SKILLS: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ANALYSIS

Policy Paper	Policy Recommendations	Have the Recommendations been taken forward?	Thoughts
<i>Lifelong Learning Commission: PESA Report</i>	(i) The government will make three contributions to the accounts, each worth £3,000.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This proposal would remove friction and financial burden to learners, which would encourage long term learning.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given that this is a long term financial commitment (25 years). It could be prudent to consider whether the 3,000 figure should go up with inflation to ensure the funding is not diluted in regards to purchasing power over the 25 years.
<i>Adult skills and lifelong Learning Inquiry: Evidence</i>	<p>(i) Lifelong Learning should be at the top of the list for the DfE spending review to replace the £1 billion pounds lost through the austerity measures.</p>	<p>(1) The spending review of September 2019 made no mention of the life long learning strategy instead it focused on 169 million for 16-19 year olds.*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no doubt that the best way that the government can demonstrate its commitment to life long learning is through a sustained financial commitment to the strategy. Without such a commitment the enthusiasm for the proposal will be questioned.
<i>Life Long Learning Report 2019 – Labour Party</i>	<p>(i) Work with employers and trade unions to introduce a right to paid time off for training.</p>	<p>(1) This report was published prior to the 2019 general election. Given that the Labour Party lost the election, and the Conservatives won a sizable majority the recommendations of this report are not in a strong political position to be enacted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would be necessary in order to maintain support from the employer side to ensure that workers were engaging sufficiently with their training. Additionally if this proposal was enacted it would cause a problem for workers who need to retrain entirely as employers will not be keen to fund

			workers who will not be benefiting the business.
<i>A Permanent National Necessity...” Adult Education and Lifelong Learning for 21st Century Britain</i>	(i) A Minister with specific responsibility for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning	(1) Since 2012 this role has remained not in use according to the government website page.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointing a Minister with specific responsibility for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning would show in conjunction with sufficient financial commitment that the government took Adult Education and Life Long learning seriously.
<i>Skills Commission: England's Skills Puzzle: Piecing together further education, training and employment</i>	(i) England should have a long-term framework for skills and lifelong learning. This should be underpinned by medium-term 10-year and long-term 20-year targets for skills and productivity, set out in legislation.	(1) This recommendation ties into other reports which ask the government to make a long term commitment to a lifelong learning strategy. Given its replication in different publications the government has not yet acted upon the recommendation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The implementation of a long term framework would provide certainty and direction on the lifelong learning strategy. Currently there isn't the long term vision for the plan aside from the proposal to create accounts for workers which are to be topped up at three points during a workers career. A framework would be welcome as it would explain how the strategy would withstand the evolutions to the workplace due in the next 10-15 years.

COVID-19: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ANALYSIS

Policy Paper	Policy Recommendations	Have the Recommendations been taken forward?	Thoughts
<i>COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact: Brief #3: Apprenticeships</i>	(i) The priority for current apprentices should be to continue training where possible, even when on furlough or if redeployed within a company.	(1) The evidence suggests that arrangements for apprentices has occurred on an individual basis rather than a national one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A situation whereby apprentice can continue training during this crisis is an advantageous one that should be embraced by all those involved within the apprenticeship.
<i>Class of 2020 Education: Leavers in the Current Crisis</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>COVID-19 and Post-16 Education</i>	(i) Signal there will be no increase in the 18-20 year old rate of the minimum wage above £6.45 and the 21-24 year old rate above £8.20 from April 2021.	(1) The planned increases for the minimum and national living wage as outlined in the budget are still being enacted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disincentivising certain types of employment for young people could encourage them to seek alternative paths such as FE. • However this plan would hurt those already in a job who need to have some certainty that there employment will continue as close to normal as possible during the crisis. • Removing such a planned increase would create instability for

			those already in employment which is precisely what is not needed during an economic downturn.
<i>Resolution Foundation young workers in coronavirus crisis</i>	(i) Comprehensive support across ages and targeted support for the very youngest workers.	(1) The Job Retention Scheme has been extended until October 2020, with a tail off. (2) As of August 2020 unemployment is at 3.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the unprevented level of financial intervention by the chancellor in the first 3 quarters of 2020, the question will be how much further support he has to deploy going forward.

POST 18 FUNDING REVIEW: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ANALYSIS

Policy Paper	Policy Recommendations	Have the Recommendations been taken forward?	Thoughts
<i>Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding</i>	(i) Introduce new finance terms under the banner of a new ‘student contribution system’. Define and promote the system with new language to make clearer the nature of the system, reducing focus on ‘debt’ levels and interest and emphasising contribution rates.	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This proposal would be a welcome overhaul to the education sector. Currently the lack of true understanding regarding the financial contributions made by learners is a worrying problem. So many students do not understand the terms of their financial undertaking which

			<p>can prompt many to shy away from good courses because of a lack of information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This proposal would be vital if other recommendations such as the expansion to maintenance loans to L3 courses were introduced. • In today’s world so much of our understanding of matters derives from the way that information is presented to us. This change would fundamentally alter the way that learners see their financial contributions.
<i>Campaign for Learning Putting the learner in the driving seat</i>	(i) Foster retraining at Level 4-6 through part-time fee loans	(1) This proposal could come under the lifelong learning strategy which as of yet has no further update from the government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part time fee loans would allow workers to retrain whilst employed without immediate financial undertaking. • This would be seen as an investment into the current workforce which as retirement age continues to be delayed is important. • Provided a well planned informational campaign was launched

			explicitly explaining the terms of the loans then this would be a clear benefit for current and future workers.
--	--	--	---

LIFE LONG LEARNING REVIEW

1. One of the areas of adult education that it has been passionately argued in the policy papers is around the debate for lifelong for a lifelong learning strategy. This section will analyse the current state of lifelong learning within the UK, the researched benefits of a lifelong learning strategy and reviewing of the recommendations for lifelong learning made within these policy papers.
2. Three policy papers (*Adult skills and lifelong Learning Inquiry: Evidence, Lifelong Learning Commission: PESA Report and Life Long Learning Report 2019 – Labour Party*) agree that lifelong learning has significant benefits for the economy and for learners in Britain. They cite benefits such as greater opportunities for career progression, increase participation in society, as well as increased life expectancy amongst others.² It is agreed within the research that lifelong learning needs a serious policy commitment from the government and not just warm words with the intention of creating a strategy.³ Additionally, with long-term changes to the job market due over the next 15 years, lifelong training is no longer seen by these researchers as an ideal concept, but rather as a necessity as the economy evolves. To this end analysis of the DFE budget highlights the significant funding deficit for adult education. In particular, lifelong learning, compared to the rest of the education budget year in year out.⁴ Finally, there is a consensus within the research that the economy will change over time and that lifelong learning is going to be needed as a staple to any future long-term education policy.

² Adult skills and lifelong Learning Inquiry: Evidence, P.3

³ Lifelong Learning Commission: PESA Report, P.5

⁴ Lifelong Learning Commission: PESA Report, P.5

3. Two papers (*Adult skills and lifelong Learning Inquiry: Evidence, Lifelong Learning Commission: PESA Report*) cite different models of countries in which the UK could basis a life long learning strategy on. The papers use France, Singapore with lifetime accounts as well as Sweden's "Cradle to Grave approach".⁵ This report would express some caution at this approach of recycling other counties strategies. While there is an advantage to looking towards other countries for inspiration and scouting purpose. The suggestion to mimic a strategy of another country may not be the best approach as it doesn't take into account the different political and economic structures in place in other countries. This means that whilst we can look to other countries when developing a lifelong learning strategy the UK needs a bespoke approach that is modelled to our political and economic structures, as well as a flexible one that will respond positively to the changes that occur in our market economy.

LIFE LONG LEARNING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ECONOMY

4. As we are working longer, the need to re-train and update our skills is going to be ever more vital. COVID shows us that the need for this is now not in 15 years time, since the economic crisis of 2008 our economy has become ever more unstable as we compete with the growth of automation and the expansion of new economies such as China and India. The PWC Report says that in the next 15 years, one-third of jobs could be at risk due to the evolution of AI; this represents a dramatic evolution for working life moving forward into the 2020s and beyond.⁶
5. Due to this rapid forthcoming evolution, government policy needs to be thinking about the next generation of workers not merely focusing on short term targets within this sector. Moreover, England spends £1.5bn of its budget on the adult education sector (*see table I*), which does not represent a long term commitment from the government to life long learning for adults, when compared to the £90bn DFE budget.⁷

⁵ Adult skills and lifelong Learning Inquiry: Evidence, P.17

⁶ Lifelong Learning Commission: PESA Report, P.10

⁷ Adult skills and lifelong Learning Inquiry: Evidence, P.12

Adult Education Budget: Grant		£1,503m	7.60%
Provision Up to Level 3	(FY2017/18)	£1,436m	
Learner Support	(FY2016/17)	£67m	
Adult Training: Grant		£1,120m	5.66%
Adult Apprenticeships: Provision - Level 2-5	(FY2017/18)	£1,075m	
National Retraining Scheme	(FY2019/20)	£45m	
Adult Funding Support: Grant		£340m	1.71%
Adult Apprenticeships: Funding Support	(FY2017/18)	£80m	
Adult Education: Funding Support: Bursary Grants	(FY2015/16)	£35m	
Adult Education: Funding Support: Other	(FY2017/18)	£225m	

Table 1:

DFE budget breakdown multi-year analysis - Adult-skills-and-lifelong-learning-inquiry-HOLEX-Response-Aug-2019

LEARNING WITHIN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION (ACE)

6. Within the literature for this report, one paper focused explicitly on adult community education (ACE). This paper outlines the good practice of ACE within FE, as well as its role within sector moving forward. It highlights the localised role that it plays as well as its ability to deliver high standards, as shown with the place agenda.⁸ This is shown within the data as 88% of services rated as good or outstanding.⁹ Given that this was the only paper to give commentary on the adult community education area, it is challenging to make

⁸ Sue Pember, 'Adult Community Education: Supporting Place and People: Characteristics of Success', accessed 27 July 2020, <https://fetl.org.uk/publications/adult-community-education-supporting-place-and-people-characteristics-of-success/.P.24>

⁹ Sue Pember, 'Adult Community Education: Supporting Place and People: Characteristics of Success', accessed 27 July 2020, <https://fetl.org.uk/publications/adult-community-education-supporting-place-and-people-characteristics-of-success/.P.11>

direct comparisons with the rest of the literature. However, there are some key points to mention.

Evidence and Research Methodology

7. This report primarily used desktop research supported by other methods. In addition to desktop research, it based its findings on interviews which are widely considered the best way to uncover the goings-on in a particular field. However, interview methodology requires a sufficient sample size to be relevant. Therefore one weakness of the methods in this paper is the small sample size used. Thus, they are not sufficient to provide an overall picture for the entirety of the ACE sector. Instead, the method utilised presents a specific idea of a localised area. Additionally, this paper relied on expert findings by experts who generally had a consensus towards one point of view. Therefore this report recommends a mixed group of experts providing alternative opinions so that a balanced argument is presented, and then the clear favourite would become apparent.

8. One of the clear strengths of the methodology of this paper is the inclusion of the literature review which other papers that this report considers do not include. The advantages of the literature review at the beginning, show the readers to the authors have considered the area that they are looking at in detail. Furthermore, it suggests that the authors have studied the existing literature and have found space to contribute to the debate with something new. This is a significant positive as it provides the paper with a greater effect over other papers which do not include such a review as it demonstrates that this paper will have something new to contribute.

9. This paper is an analysis of the role and impact ACE has within the sector as well as its role in providing a localised service. It does very well with a clear outline which ways ACE has an advantage compared to other FE colleges.¹⁰ Furthermore, it also provides clear

¹⁰ Adult Community Education - Supporting place and people: Characteristics of Success, P.11

evidence as to the ways in which ACE is managed effectively and the potentially under looked role that it can provide for a particular group of people, particularly in a time of crisis. This is an important and useful point, given that the current state of the economy is in a crisis and where uncertainty and social challenges are becoming a new normal. This provides validity to the arguments made at the beginning of the paper, which showcases the benefits of ACE and its leadership role within the adult Ed sector.

CORONAVIRUS IMPACT ON LEARNING

- 10.** The coronavirus crisis in the UK has had a significant impact on the education sector. This impact is so significant that three papers, reviewed in this report, are dedicated to examining the effects this crisis will have in education. This section will analyse these effects, specifically focusing on education leavers, the impact on apprenticeships as well as the impact of coronavirus on young workers at this time.

2020 EDUCATION LEAVERS

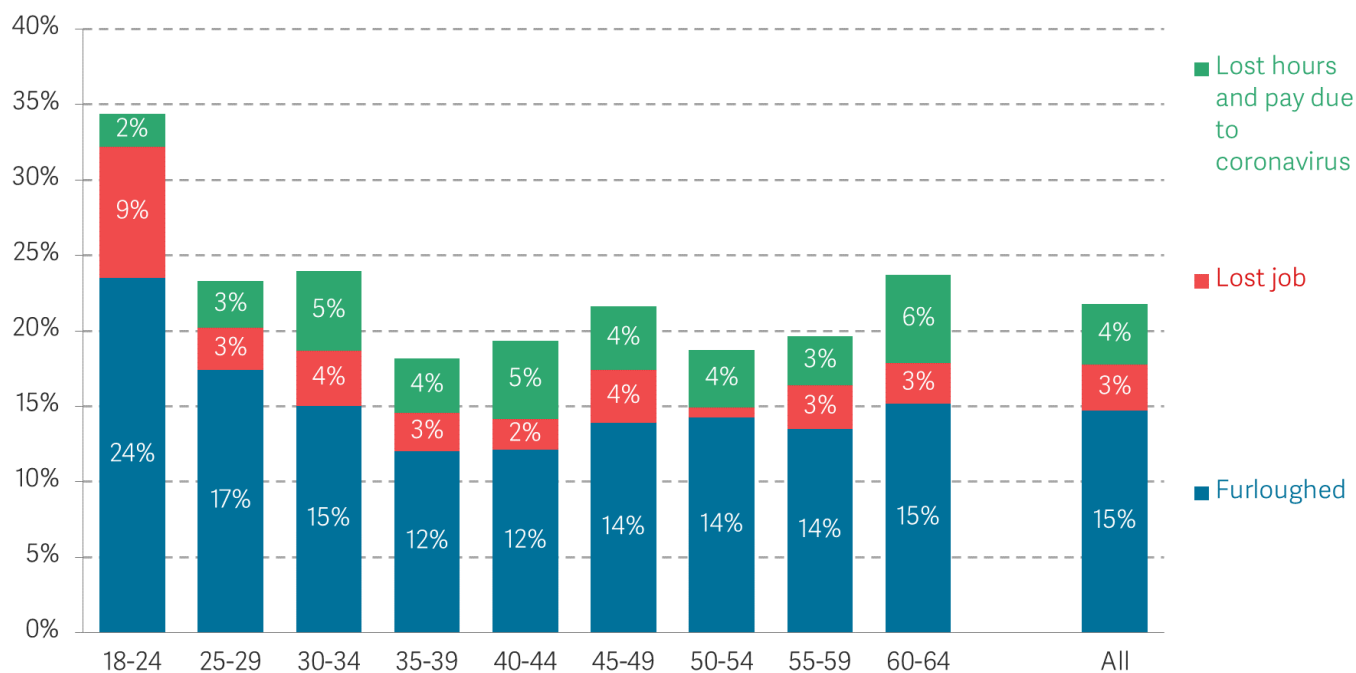
- 11.** It is universally accepted that the economic crisis caused by coronavirus will have a significant impact on learners throughout the education sector. One of the groups who will be affected the most is education leavers. A report by the Resolution Foundation suggests that the impact of leaving education during an economic crisis through historical modelling means that employment and wage prospects will be hurt in the years to come.¹¹
- 12.** This paper recommended that the government must develop a targeted strategy to limit the impact of young people entering the workplace as they will find it significantly harder than other cohorts. As *figure 1* shows the 18-24 age group has been hit hardest by the crisis, and upon reviewing similar research the damning evidence shows that this bleak reality is

¹¹ Class of 2020 Education: Leavers in the Current Crisis, P.5

replicated with, lost apprenticeship opportunities, further employment challenges as well as education courses being affected.¹²

Figure 1 One-third of 18-24-year-olds have lost work due to furloughing or job loss

Proportion of employees (excluding full-time students) who have experienced job changes since the coronavirus outbreak, by age group: UK, 6-11 May 2020



Source: RF analysis of YouGov, Adults aged 18 to 65 and the coronavirus (COVID-19).

13. The Resolution Foundation's paper anticipates that the cohort of 2020, entering the workplace will find will have much in common with the group of 2008 and 2009 during the early years of the last economic crisis and it is on this basis that the modelling is delivered. Another paper suggests that 440k 18-24 young people will join the job hunt in England.¹³ With jobs in short supply, this will cause a sharp rise in unemployment. Both papers agree that the 2020 cohort of young people will face education and employment challenges not seen since 2008/09.

¹² Class of 2020 Education: Leavers in the Current Crisis, P.5

¹³ COVID-19 and Post-16 Education, P.15

- 14.** The data compiled by the *Class of 2020 Education: Leavers in the Current Crisis* has modelled its paper on the 2008 economic crisis.¹⁴ This model is a very profound approach as it is prudent for someone tasked with looking at a crisis to consider the successes and mistakes of the past and the 2008 economic crisis is the closest economic model that researchers have when anticipating the effects of the coronavirus crisis in the UK.
- 15.** Using this approach has lots of merits, as it puts into quantifiable terms, the effect of an economic crisis on a specific cohort. In this case, those young people who are leaving education in 2020. However, it is important to provide some caution when relying solely upon this approach. This is because the crisis in 2008 was very different from the one faced in 2020. This is true, especially when considering the type of economic crisis in 2020 caused by a health crisis which is likely to have has different impacts on the one that was endured in 2008. Therefore considering multiple papers with different methodologies when considering the impact of coronavirus on young people is advised.
- 16.** There are significant concerns on the impact of young people's mental health with this crisis from the learning and work point of view. This arises because young people have been conditioned throughout education to have a clear plan for their future as seen various stages during their education career with A-level options and university choices being incorporated into the progression of learners. The coronavirus crisis has resulted in many of these plans being thrown into confusion, which must have a detrimental effect on the welfare of young people. This point shows that the effects of extreme market changes such as this pandemic has wide-reaching and complex effects on learners sometimes on an acute/individual basis.
- 17.** Another concern with the coronavirus impact on young people is the challenge that young people face, which is specific and unique to them. This challenge is that young people are more likely to be faced with unemployment during a downturn at a critical moment in their career when they have working lives ahead of them.¹⁵ Furthermore, a rise in youth unemployment will have a unique challenge at three different stages 16,18,21. Each one

¹⁴ Class of 2020 Education: Leavers in the Current Crisis, P.3

¹⁵ Class of 2020 Education: Leavers in the Current Crisis, P.5

will have unique challenges - For example, 21-year-old graduates are at risk of being overqualified for the available jobs. Furthermore, 18-year-olds planning to embark on an apprenticeship as an alternative to a degree are very likely to find their options curtailed.¹⁶

- 18.** An additional health concern for young people is the existence of a judgemental and competitive comparative culture with young people through social media and the constant connections between people. Therefore those not able to achieve further education opportunities or employment are more likely to be labelled by peers and even future superiors as failures and unmotivated. This will be detrimental to the health and well-being of these young people, who at this fragile stage are already struggling in the transition from learner to professional or transitioning to a higher level of education.
- 19.** Another area of education to face challenges from coronavirus is the HE sector. This has arisen owing to the travel restrictions on international students. Multiple papers suggest that this deficit should be rectified with UK students who are already looking to shield against the job market job turmoil.¹⁷ However, it is essential to point out that this should not be at the expense of entry requirements (some flexibility is to be expected). This is because it is not right that students should go to university for the sake of it, nor is it fair on those students who have got their grades and worked hard for them in order to meet entry requirements, to seem them diluted by the university.
- 20.** Additionally, higher dropouts by students who cannot meet the rigours of the course during an economic crisis will not do the students or the economy any good. Instead what needs to happen is access to courses at the lower levels need to be increased, with maintenance provided to bring it in line with HE for the short term. This proposal will allow young people to be supported in a credible alternative to degrees. This would allow for a more rounded workforce that could address some of the skills shortage once this crisis is over.

¹⁶ COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact: Brief #3: Apprenticeships, P.5

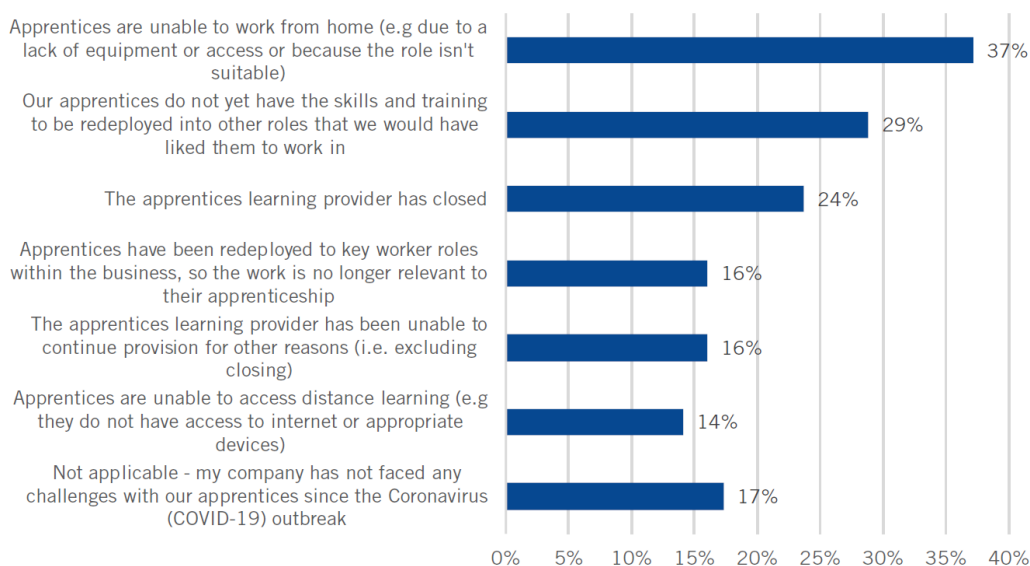
¹⁷ Class of 2020 Education: Leavers in the Current Crisis, P.6

THE IMPACT ON APPRENTICESHIPS

21. The research has shown across different papers that coronavirus is having a significant disruptive effect on the apprenticeship market. This disruption is caused because apprenticeships are vulnerable to extreme market changes.¹⁸ Specifically, apprenticeships are at the mercy of cost-saving measures within struggling firms such that apprentices are finding during the crisis that they are the first to go.¹⁹ Furthermore, young people are at a higher risk than others in the apprenticeship market as they make up proportionally more of the new apprentices that have been taken on before the pandemic.²⁰

22. Additionally, the apprenticeship market is struggling in the areas of working from home, where research has shown that 37% of apprentices lack the equipment to enable them to carry out their duties and that specific roles are not suitable for home working and require on-site facilities.²¹

Figure 4. Problems encountered by apprenticeship employers during the COVID-19 health crisis



Source: YouGov HR decision makers omnibus for the Sutton Trust, April 9th-16th

¹⁸ COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact: Brief #3: Apprenticeships, P.3

¹⁹ COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact: Brief #3: Apprenticeships, P.5

²⁰ COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact: Brief #3: Apprenticeships, P.5

²¹ COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact: Brief #3: Apprenticeships, P.5

- 23.** Within this report, two papers have with separate research has concluded that COVID- 19 is having a significant impact on the apprenticeship market. Furthermore, they agree that going forward; employers are unlikely to be recruiting new apprentices. This will mean that there will be fewer apprenticeship vacancies available to young people. Furthermore, the increase in competition in an already saturated area for young people during this crisis will be an additional challenging factor.
- 24.** The struggles the apprenticeship market is undergoing raises some interesting points for policy debate. As previously stated, some of the effects of coronavirus have meant that learners lack the equipment that they need to work from home and that specific roles are not suited for home working. While the evidence suggests that this is impacting a large proportion of surveyed apprentices, it appears that this issue is a wider employment and economic challenge. This challenge will require clear measures across multiple sectors should the economy need to deal with this health crisis for years to come.
- 25.** This problem means the economy needs to restructure itself to focus on remote working. This restructuring is vital so that the employment market is prepared for the changes that the economy is due to go through over the next 10 to 15 years.

CONCLUSION

This report has been a review of 12 policy papers that are focused on adult education specifically on the areas of lifelong learning, the impact of coronavirus and learning within the education sector. The reports reviewed in this paper make clear that a lifelong learning strategy is vital for education policy moving into the 2020s. The economic revolution that is due to take place in the workplace over the next 10 to 15 years means that the approach of one career for life with no further retraining is not viable going forward. The United Kingdom would do well to consider the ideas of international models that have successfully run a lifelong learning strategy in their economies, whilst also considering how such a strategy could be implemented at home.

The policy papers focusing on the impact of coronavirus leave little ambiguity surrounding the impact that the crisis has had in 2020. Education leavers will be hit by some of the hardest changes that a cohort has endured since 2008 with an estimate of 440,000 18- 24-year-olds struggling to find work in this period. The reports make policy recommendations to try and incentivise further learning for these young people who are trying to weather the economic storm following the coronavirus outbreak.

This report recommends that government studies the papers that are being compiled on the adult education sector and makes clear policy decisions that benefit those who are most in need of legislative support at this time. Upon studying the 12 papers it is apparent that more research can be done in order to further understand the needs of the adult education sector as it evolves over the next month's, years and indeed throughout the next decade.

REFERENCES

- 'Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Post-16 Education'. accessed 27 July 2020.
<https://www.ncfe.org.uk/blog/addressing-the-impACeT-of-covid-19-on-post-16-education>.
- 'Adult-Skills-and-Lifelong-Learning-Inquiry-HOLEX-Response-Aug-2019.Pdf'. accessed 27 July 2020. <https://holex.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Adult-skills-and-lifelong-learning-inquiry-HOLEX-Response-Aug-2019.pdf>.
- 'Class of 2020 • Resolution Foundation'. accessed 27 July 2020.
<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/class-of-2020/>.
- 'The Centenary Commission on Adult Education – Adult Education and Lifelong Learning for 21st Century Britain'. Accessed 16 August 2020. <https://www.centenarycommission.org/>.
- Sutton Trust. 'COVID-19 Impacts: Apprenticeships'. accessed 27 July 2020.
<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-impACeTs-apprenticeships/>.
- 'Lifelong Learning for All'. accessed 27 July 2020. <https://www.libdems.org.uk/lifelong-learning>.
- 'Lifelong-Learning-Report-2019.Pdf'. accessed 27 July 2020. <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Lifelong-Learning-Report-2019.pdf>.
- Pember, Sue. 'Adult Community Education: Supporting Place and People: Characteristics of Success'. accessed 27 July 2020. <https://fetl.org.uk/publications/adult-community-education-supporting-PLACE-and-people-charACeTeristics-of-success/>.
- GOV.UK. 'Post-18 Review of Education and Funding: Independent Panel Report'. accessed 27 July 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-18-review-of-education-and-funding-independent-panel-report>.
- 'Skills Commission: England's Skills Puzzle: Piecing Together Further Education, Training and Employment | Policy Connect'. accessed 27 July 2020.
<https://www.policyconnect.org.uk/research/skills-commission-englands-skills-puzzle-piecing-together-further-education-training-and>.
- Campaign for Learning. 'The Review of Post-18 Education and Funding'. accessed 27 July 2020.
<https://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/the-review-of-post-18-education-and-funding-a-review-of-a-lifetime>.
- 'Young Workers in the Coronavirus Crisis • Resolution Foundation'. accessed 27 July 2020.
<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/young-workers-in-the-coronavirus-crisis/>.