LEADERSHIP, FURTHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

ROB SMITH & VICKY DUCKWORTH

ABOUT FETL

The Further Education Trust for Leadership's vision is of a further education sector that is valued and respected for:

- Innovating constantly to meet the needs of learners, communities and employers;
- Preparing for the long term as well as delivering in the short term; and
- Sharing fresh ideas generously and informing practice with knowledge.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rob Smith attended a multicultural comprehensive school in Birmingham in the 1970s. He followed a traditional route, taking A-levels and, following a year working abroad, studying English in London, before doing a PGCE and becoming a secondary school teacher. He got a job in a further education college in September 1992 and witnessed the changes brought about by incorporation first hand. The next 10 years were characterised by involvement in trade union activity and a long-running contract dispute. These years influenced his perspective on leadership in all its different forms and shaped his doctoral studies, which sought to understand how policy in further education (and more widely) was impacting on teachers' work and the culture of college management and leadership. He worked at the University of Wolverhampton before becoming Director of Research in Education at Birmingham City University. He is now Professor of Education.

Vicky Duckworth left school at 16, starting her first job on the Youth Training Scheme before taking jobs at local factories. The monotony of the work prompted her to enrol at an FE college, setting her on course to become a registered nurse and, later, a midwife. She started to volunteer at her hospital as an adult literacy teacher, a decision that led her back to FE, and then into higher education. FE, she says, gave her a voice that she now uses to empower others. She is currently Professor of Education at Edge Hill University. Her work focuses on adult education and literacy and reflects her commitment to challenging inequality through critical and emancipatory approaches to education, widening participation, inclusion, community action and engaging in research with a strong social justice agenda.

Rob and Vicky together lead the University and College Union's Transformative Lives project that aims to understand and provide evidence of how FE transforms lives and communities.

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FOREWORD

Dame Ruth Silver

Further education is a challenging sector in which to lead. Leaders must learn to negotiate and thrive in an environment in which expectations are high, funding scarce and accountability rigorous and sometimes heavy-handed. In addition, they are overburdened with central demands and regulation, and hampered by acute policy turbulence and ministerial misapprehension. Politicians and civil servants have, in general, little understanding of the sector and those that do are usually in office only fleetingly. Despite these pressures, sector leaders, in the majority of cases, remain highly committed to the values of the sector and demonstrate remarkable determination in delivering against them.

This is the background for the present study, which the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) has been pleased to fund. The authors consider in-depth the social justice dimension of the further education mission, and ask how leaders – at all levels – are reflecting this in their work and how they might be supported in doing more and better work in this area. They conclude their report with a number of recommendations for policy development.

At the heart of the study are three comprehensive and carefully structured case studies. While the three colleges in focus – Fircroft College, City Lit and Hopwood Hall College – may not be perfectly representative of the sector, they nevertheless yield much rich and pertinent evidence as to how leaders view this critical aspect of their work and its place in the missions of

their institutions. Above all, to this reader at least, they indicate a profound commitment to social justice in the work of these colleges, and an impressive resilience of core mission, which has resisted numerous attempts to reshape and refocus.

There are two key dimensions of this kind of leadership, which, as the report suggests, complement and nourish one another. One is reflected in the way in which an institution is run: colleges animated by a commitment to social justice are characterized by a culture of trust, dispersed leadership responsibility and an ethos of collaboration, mutual support and cooperation; reflected among staff and students and in the way in which they relate to one another and to the environment in which they work and study.

The second concerns how leaders see the mission of the college: in particular, their responsibility to their communities, especially to the least advantaged groups, and to ensuring no one is left behind. There are many ways of delivering against this mission but it is clear to me that it remains a powerful motivator and a compelling part of the core values of the sector.

This study is important because it shines a light on a part of the work of colleges that is often hidden or neglected. It does not shy away from the complexity of the sector and resists attempts to boil its mission down to the delivery of skills for employment. We have always been about more than this and while the three colleges featured here are in some aspects untypical of the sector as a whole, the concerns and commitment of their leaders will be instantly recognizable and transferable.

There is renewed interest in the sector, and, as the authors hint, a 'new direction of travel' may be emerging. I very much hope this report will inform it.

Dame Ruth Silver is President of the Further Education Trust for Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Most further education college employees see their work as contributing to social justice. College mission statements emphasise meeting the needs of their communities, local employers and the economy with outstanding provision. But what tensions are there between these needs? What does it mean to meet the needs of communities? How does this overlap with a commitment to social justice? And what does outstanding provision with social justice at its heart look like? This report gathers evidence from a research project funded by the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) to provide answers to these questions.

Further education, the socially situated practice of teaching and learning engaged in by young people and adults in colleges across the UK, has an enormous potential contribution to make in addressing issues of social justice. Almost without exception, colleges of further education have an institutional history closely bound up with history of the town, city or area in which they are based. This historical identity connects colleges, physically and spatially, both to their past and to the communities they serve. However, the advent of marketization, and changes to funding and curriculum since incorporation, have had an impact on this historical identity. Competition with private training providers, school sixth forms and other colleges, a decade of austerity cuts and a turbulent policy environment all encourage top-down styles of leadership over more values-focused approaches, positioning colleges more as agents of central policy, responding to a national skills agenda.

In such a context, how can we articulate alternative forms of college leadership that harness the sector's potential contribution to social justice?

This study explores how leadership in further education can actualise a commitment to social justice both at local level and, more broadly, in responding to the national policy context. Further education providers are often closely connected to local communities and see themselves as serving these communities first and foremost. But, of course, leadership needs also to respond to the external forces (curricula and funding changes as well as mergers and the changing landscapes of investment by local authorities) that impact on this localised purpose and function (Smith, 2017).

Rather than viewing leadership as the psychological characteristic or property of individuals in senior positions, we recognise it as a characteristic of the actions of staff at all levels within colleges. Moving beyond psychology-based notions of connective and altruistic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 1998; Salas-Vallina and Alegre, 2018), this project seeks to tease out and explore the strategies drawn on by leaders to develop and sustain a values-driven approach shaped by a commitment to social justice. Leadership of this kind, *transformative* leadership that recognises social justice as a central purpose, positions itself carefully in relation to the ecologies within which further education colleges sit, while interacting in an interrogative way with the further education system. This study will present critical evidence about the impact of such values-driven approaches to leadership.

The project gathered data from different college settings in order to ascertain the extent to which transformative leadership is possible in further education and the factors that constrain and facilitate it. This data may help reconceptualise further education in ways that make explicit the social justice dimension and thus inform policy thinking on FE.

The current policy landscape

The past quarter-century of further education policymaking has been marked by a disjuncture between the knowledge and experience of those who work in colleges, on the one hand, and the understanding of those who design, tweak and incentivise policy initiatives in central government, on the other. One aspect of this shift is the characteristically narrow view of the purposes of further education that emerged among policymakers following the Further and Higher Education Act (1992), casting 'the further education sector' as, in effect, the 'handmaiden of British industry' (Ainley and Bailey, 1997: 14).

This instrumentalist view continues to dominate. Policy documents from the last two decades reflect the view that colleges cater mainly or exclusively for 16–18 year olds following vocational courses, an emphasis that has sharpened since the financial crisis of 2008/09. The 2015 Treasury publication *Fixing the foundations*, for example, construes the role of FE in almost exclusively economic terms, foregrounding its contribution to the 'productivity gap' and outlining a strategy for a skills system 'responsive to local economic priorities' and focused on training for young people and basic skills for adults (HM Treasury, 2015: 26).

This instrumentalist view of further education, with its emphasis on 'skills' rather than broader conceptualisations of education that stress its social benefits (Duckworth and Smith, 2019), has become a hegemonic pillar of neoliberalisation (see Davies, 2014). However, the reality is somewhat different. In 2018/19, nearly 1.4 million adults (19+) were studying courses or training in colleges compared to 761,000 16–18 year olds. Colleges continue to offer academic courses at GCSE and A-level, and degrees, including Foundation degrees (AoC, 2019). To understand how the broader purposes of FE, which continue to include GCSEs and A-levels, as well as higher education, including foundation degrees, have become marginalised within this instrumentalist, economistic perspective, it is useful to review some of the main policy developments since incorporation.

Further education policy and social justice

The Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 sought to combine the complexity and diversity of further education, which included everything from offender learning to second-chance adult education and work-based learning, into a single 'sector'. The designation of so-called 'non-Schedule 2' qualifications (so-called 'leisure' courses that would no longer be centrally funded) was an attempt to streamline provision that had hitherto developed in an organic way and led to a focus on qualifications that could be more easily mapped against an instrumentalist purpose. It also contributed to the exclusion of the notion that social justice was in any way an integral element of the social value produced by/through further education.

This notion enjoyed a revival under New Labour, which fought the 1997 general election with rallying call of 'education, education, education'. The tone was set by the Kennedy report on widening participation in further education, *Learning Works* (FEFC, 1997). The report accented the social benefits of FE and raised concerns about the potentially detrimental effects of the business culture that had taken hold in colleges. It characterised the second-chance adult education offered by colleges as an important means of addressing the major structural injustices that perpetuated social inequity. This wider appreciation of the value of further education was further reflected in Labour's 1998 Green Paper, *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998).

The Moser report (DfES, 1999), which found one in five adults in England to be 'functionally illiterate', led to a shift in emphasis towards basic skills, notably through significant government investment in the Skills for Life initiative, with its creation of new qualifications for teachers of adult literacy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and numeracy. The new funding supported a huge expansion of adult education in colleges. However, it also heralded greater central control of provision and a growing tendency towards micromanagement.

Success for All (DES, 2002) reaffirmed a commitment both to the heterogeneity of further education providers and to the breadth of its provision, and demonstrated an understanding of the range of social benefits fostered by colleges. This was followed by the 2003 skills strategy (DES, 2003), which aimed to build on achievements in lifelong learning and emphasised the role of further education in strengthening employability, as the primary means of addressing exclusion and disadvantage. The 2005 White Paper, *14-19 Education and Skills* (DES, 2005a), that followed laid out significant reforms that would involve 'breaking down the artificial barriers between academic and vocational education' (ibid.: 3) through the introduction of a new 16-19 diploma. Nevertheless, while government policy continued to reflect a commitment to social justice, this was to an increasing extent understood in narrowly economic terms, as reflected in the Foster report (DES, 2005b) and Leitch review (Leitch, 2006).

The austerity measures introduced in the wake of the financial crisis, and from 2010, when the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition came to power, have shaped further education policy decisively. Colleges bore much of the brunt within the education system, suffering successive rounds of cuts to funding which resulted in further narrowing of provision and substantially reduced numbers of adult students. The social justice work being undertaken by colleges was thrown into relief and given new meaning and impetus. Despite their more limited resources and the financial instability introduced by austerity, colleges responded as best they could, as they strove to meet the needs of their communities as well as the demands of the state.

By 2015, cuts to further education budgets had resulted a big increase in the number of colleges facing financial deficit (NAO, 2015). This situation was the catalyst for the post-16 area review programme that ran from September 2015 to middle of 2017. The aim of these reviews was to 'move towards fewer, larger, more resilient and efficient providers, and more effective collaboration across institution types' (BIS and DfE, 2016: 3). It had a familiar instrumentalist theme as these bigger college

groups would then be expected to ‘deliver high quality education and training which supports economic growth’ (BIS, 2015: 2).

As well as further eroding the autonomy of the FE sector, supposedly assured by incorporation, the review process appeared also to signal that the distinctive local identity of individual colleges was no longer a principle of government policy. This has implications for college leadership and for the ability of colleges to focus on meeting the needs of their local communities.

Social justice as a contested concept

It is important to acknowledge here that social justice is a contested and politicised concept, a discursive field colonised by different interest groups from across the political spectrum. The Centre for Social Justice, a ‘right wing think-tank’ (Slater, 2012: 951), formulates social justice in terms of themes that foreground the ‘choices’ of individuals as primary causes for ‘deprivation’, for example. Such understandings may or may not be congruent with the meaning college staff attach to the concept. What is clear though is that colleges will articulate such meanings in different ways and with different emphases. However defined, though, there are likely to be tensions between locally defined meanings and centrally designated purpose.

Competition within a marketised landscape in which institutional funding is dependent on the production of favourable performance data is, over the long term, likely to engender managerialist, performative and funding-driven practices and foster cultures of leadership in which there is a clear division between managers and teachers. The literature shows that such cultures have become pervasive in further education (Smith and O’Leary, 2015; Smith, 2007 and 2008). The tension between this model of college leadership and one orientated to social justice was raised in the Kennedy report and is still to be resolved.

Project overview

This project draws on research carried out at three colleges between September 2018 and September 2019. The research was guided by the following two questions:

1. What factors enable or hinder individuals in further education settings in actualising transformative leadership?
2. What tensions do staff face in enacting transformative leadership within further education settings?

In answering these questions, the authors hope to conceptualise a model of critical transformative leadership in further education that can inform policymaking and that serves learners and their communities.

The report is divided into seven sections. Section 2 reviews a range of relevant literature. Section 3 details the research methodology that informed the research. We present the college case studies in sections 4, 5 and 6, before drawing some conclusions and providing a set of recommendations in Section 7.

SECTION TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will survey a selection of literature in order to shed light on the key concepts underpinning the research and to lay the foundations for some of the discussion that follows. The review is subject to some constraints. Much education leadership literature is schools-based, though there is a small but significant body of literature about social justice and education leadership – though mostly originating in the United States.

This section first considers definitions before turning to key contributions focused on education leadership that actualises a commitment to social justice. It ends with an exploration of the issues this gives rise to in the further education context.

Defining social justice

As mentioned in the introduction, social justice is a contested concept, used across the political spectrum, sometimes even as a term of abuse (see 'social justice warrior' or 'SJW'). One established view of social justice is based on the idea of the distribution and redistribution of goods/benefits in society, as articulated by Barry:

> Drawing on a perspective of the distribution of any society's benefits and burdens, social justice is founded on redistribution as a response to inequality or 'the defensibility of unequal relations' between people. (Barry, 1989: 3)

Gewirtz (1998) argues for an extension of this definition, drawing on the work of Iris Young (1990) and insisting on a two-fold categorisation of distributive and relational dimensions.

The relational dimension is important as it enables us to focus on power. As Gewirtz explains:

> One way of distinguishing between the distributional and relational dimensions is by thinking of them as rooted within two contrasting ontological perspectives. The distributional dimension is essentially individualistic and atomistic, in that it refers to how goods are distributed to individuals in society … By contrast, the relational dimension is holistic and non-atomistic, being essentially concerned with the nature of inter-connections between individuals in society, rather than with how much individuals get. (1998: 471)

It's important to add that this two-fold categorisation moves beyond the notion of equal opportunities to consider equality of outcomes. Through this, it problematizes structures and hierarchies of power, wealth and privilege. These considerations are important if an understanding of social (in)justice is to be translated into collective action. Gewirtz's article ends by proposing a framework for critiquing education policy:

> How, to what extent and why do education policies support, interrupt or subvert:
>
> 1. Exploitative relationships (capitalist, patriarchal, racist, heterosexist, disablist, etc.) within and beyond educational institutions?
> 2. Processes of marginalization and inclusion within and beyond the education system?
> 3. The promotion of relationships based on recognition, respect, care and mutuality or produce powerlessness (for education workers and students)?
> 4. Practices of cultural imperialism? And which cultural differences should be affirmed, which should be universalized and which rejected?
> 5. Violent practices within and beyond the education system? (Gewirtz, 1998: 482)

This framework is valuable and we return to it below.

Knowledge production and agnotology

It is important to touch briefly on the concept of agnotology or the purposeful production of mis/disinformation. This is relevant because it connects with the understanding that social justice has, in recent years, been colonised by groups and political positions that resist any challenge to the existing social order. Although these groups might agree with the equal-opportunities definition of social justice, they actively work to counteract any model that seeks to challenge the *status quo*. In other words, they refuse to acknowledge the relational dimensions of social injustice.

This is important as colleges operate in an environment in which they are understood as the key determiners of educational outcomes and such outcomes are usually understood in terms of numerical performance data. The use of such data can obscure the relationship between student backgrounds and attainment, and in colleges, of course, there is a disproportionate number of young people from poor backgrounds. The exclusion of broader understandings of local context in favour of quantitative data means that the insights provided are, at best, limited, and can result in ineffective and poorly targeted policy interventions.

Performance data also plays an important role in the relationship of accountability established by incorporation. The careful production of this data has long been a priority in colleges as it is critical for their survival. Clearly, some monitoring of student achievement across courses is important. The question here though relates to the way in which the data is used, by whom and for what purposes. The overwhelming prioritising of performance data, characteristic of organisations with managerialist cultures (see Smith and O'Leary 2013, Smith 2007a, 2007b), can have negative effects, resulting, for example, in a narrowing of the curriculum to focus only on what can be assessed, or in the dominance of a 'transmission' model of 'delivery' (see curriculum

section). This, in turn, can lead to the neglect of other key dimensions of the work of colleges, notably their role in meeting broader social needs and providing unmeasurable social benefits.

In these cases, agnotology is largely unintentional, with unforeseen negative consequences. However, in some cases, it is also more purposefully deployed. Slater (2012: 950), for example, describes how the Centre for Social Justice sets out to:

> manufacture doubt with respect to the structural causes of unemployment and poverty, and… give the impression that 'welfare' is a lifestyle choice made by dysfunctional families despite the fact that considerable social scientific evidence shatters that impression. (Slater, 2012: 950)

Slater's article also demonstrates that social justice is not an apolitical concept. A perception of what is and is not socially just necessarily requires making judgements about the way the world is. To understand the way the world is, we draw on ideas that will hopefully illuminate the issues at hand. In education, as in other spheres of knowledge, this involves engaging with concepts such as class, gender, race and disability among others. In terms of college leadership, a commitment to social justice might involve not only the distribution of social goods and benefits, but also a consciousness of the role played by these relations in achieving this.

Social justice and educational leadership

The literature makes a distinction between transformational, transactional and transformative leadership, three theories that, according to Shields (2010), have dominated thinking about educational leadership. Shields positions them on a continuum. She defines transactional leadership as a reciprocal arrangement that works through 'mutual goal advancement' geared towards the smooth running of the organisation and in which power is largely ignored (2010: 563). In contrast, transformational leadership, for Shields, focuses on aligning the goals of individuals and the organisation, working towards organisational change in order to improve effectiveness. Finally, and most radically in

its orientation to social justice, Shields describes transformative leadership as:

> the practice of educational leaders who want to effect both educational and broader social change.

The key emphasis here is that the educational benefits for students are complemented by a drive for social change outside educational institutions. There is a strong affective dimension to the picture she presents:

> Notions of promise, liberation, hope, empowerment, activism, risk, social justice, courage, or revolution… all of these concepts are at the heart of transformative leadership. (2010: 559)

But these powerful axiological qualities are not situated in a political vacuum. Transformative leadership is grounded in a specific vision of democracy and looks beyond the achievements of the individual to the communities from which students come.

> Transformative leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others. Transformative leadership, therefore, inextricably links education and educational leadership with the wider social context within which it is embedded. (Shields, 2010: 559)

Shields' perspective on the qualities of transformative leadership are summarised in **Table 1.**

Table 1: Characteristics of transformative leadership

Starting point	Material realities & disparities outside the organization that impinge of the success of individuals, groups, organization as a whole.
Foundation	Critique & promise.
Emphasis	Deep & equitable change in social conditions.
Processes	Deconstruction and reconstruction of social/ cultural knowledge frameworks that generate inequity, acknowledgement of power, & privilege; dialectic between individual & social.
Key values	Liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity, justice.
Goal	Individual, organizational, & societal transformation.
Power	Positional, hegemonic, tool for oppression as well as for action.
Leader	Lives with tension, & challenge; requires moral courage, activism.
Related theories	Critical theories (race, gender), Cultural and social reproduction, Leadership for social justice.

Adapted from Shields, 2010: 563.

For Shields, transformative leadership is necessarily dialogical and egalitarian. It is reflexive and situated in a cycle of self-challenge and renewal. It requires a critical engagement with language and 'the careful and consistent deconstruction of old knowledge frameworks that perpetuate… deficit thinking and inequity and their replacement with new frameworks' (2010: 576–7).

Shields' discussion is shaped by the accountability and data demands of schooling in the US. For example, in a passage that has strong resonance with the leadership experience in further education colleges in the UK, she notes how a female headteacher describes the tension between transformative leadership and 'getting the paperwork right':

> In her conversation, Amy frequently made comments like, 'We thought we were doing it properly according to the data. But I would do it differently next time; on paper it seemed right, but in practice, we needed to look more at the individual kids.' (2010: 581)

While Shields writes about leadership as coterminous with a position of authority within an institution, Raelin (2010) explicitly rejects what he calls 'an individual heroic model of leadership', proposing instead a 'collaborative agentic model'. He argues that:

> The concept and practice of leadership have been overused and oversold to such an extent that the meaning of leadership is no longer conceptually intact… (2016: 2)

Raelin highlights the extent to which leaders in all fields are lionised and points out the woolliness of the concept:

> There is no consensus, for example, that leadership be singular or plural, that it be a trait or a set of behaviours, or that it be best viewed as a subject or as an object. In terms of practice, it is not clear what leaders do that is unique or consistent across settings; it is not established that leadership has effects (such as on performance) that clearly differentiate it from other organizational practices such as structuring, teamwork, or rewards; and it is even thought to be differentiated from managing, though the latter is also thought to contain leadership. (2016: 3)

Raelin critiques the 'cottage industry' of literature that distinguishes between leadership and management, characterising the former as 'visionary and strategic' and the latter as 'preoccupied with bureaucratic duties and the fulfilment of contractual obligations' (2016: 6). He conceptualises leadership as practice rather than as psychological and 'trait-based'. It emerges in response to and as a product of material and social conditions, rather than centring on the physical and/or mental capacity of an individual. As leadership becomes institutionalised, it assumes a taken-for-granted status that obscures its origin.

It is important, therefore, to consider the genealogy of leadership within an organisation and to trace it back to its point of origin.

Raelin anchors his model of collaborative leadership as practice in a theorisation of the relationship between *I* and *other*, which he describes in terms of 'I-it' and 'I-thou':

> The former is instrumental and based on functional exchange between people; as in: 'what can I do for you in exchange for what you can do for me.' The I-thou, on the other hand, is based on an authentic recognition of the self in the other that can arise from genuine dialogue. (2016: 8)

This echoes Freire's view that:

> Each time the 'thou' is changed into an object, an 'it,' dialogue is subverted and education is changed to deformation. (1970: 89)

In the I-thou encounter, Raelin writes, both participants can be transformed. In collaborative leadership as practice, we act together in the world:

> through rational critique of text but from a contested interaction among a community of inquirers who mobilize their agency through a critical reflection that is dependent upon not just how one sees oneself, but how one sees others, and how one understands how others see one's self. (2016: 10)

The dialogue that underpins this model is presented as an integral feature of the working environment. In this, Raelin echoes Shields' emphasis of the need for an institutional leadership culture that incorporates ongoing self-questioning and critique:

> whether or not people are talking freely, whether they are deeply listening not only to others but to themselves, whether there is diversity of point of view, and whether the taken-for-granted values and structures of the organization are being challenged. (2016: 13)

Making transformative leadership an integral aspect of an organisation feeds into sustainability, the continuance and resilience of emancipatory practice:

> The dialogue in a collaborative agentic leadership not only considers its democratic and emancipatory processes but the effects of the practice under consideration so as to preserve a sustainable future… participants in social critique tend to have a better chance to resist oppression and other forms of inequitable social conditions than attempting to intervene on their own to alter extant social arrangements. (2016: 26)

Further education, class and curriculum

The view of colleges as promoters of social justice conflicts with the view of Marxist theorists who see education primarily as a mechanism for the transmission of social values and the replication of the existing social order (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; DeMarrias and LeCompte, 1995; Bourdieu and Passeron, 2013). Bowles and Gintis's claim that 'Education reproduces inequality by justifying privilege and attributing poverty to personal failure' (1976: 114) is supported by evidence that social class is the determiner *par excellence* of academic achievement (see, for example, Lupton, Heath and Salter, 2009; Dorling, 2011; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010).

Bowles and Gintis characterise school as an educational 'production process' in which students are alienated by the curriculum and motivated by 'a system of grades and other external rewards' rather than any sense of enjoyment, personal development or a connection of educational experiences to personal plans for the future. The structure of social relations in education, they write, 'not only inures the student to the discipline of the workplace, but develops the types of personal demeanour, modes of self-presentation, self-image, and social class identifications which are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy' (Bowles and Gintis, 1976: 131).

This description is likely to resonate strongly among readers familiar with the further education curriculum in the UK, particularly for the 16–18 age group. Since incorporation, a skills discourse has emerged that sees further education almost exclusively in terms of the production of human capital for employers (see Becker, 1993). Policy documents and reports typically imagine further education not as an interactive and dynamic social process in which students learn and achieve qualifications in order to fulfil their ambitions in life, but as a conveyor belt for the production of a flexible, adaptable and 'skilled' workforce to make the nation competitive in a globalised economy. *Fixing the foundations* (BIS, 2015), for example, views education as, primarily, an aspect of human capital development:

> Over the last century, productivity growth has gone hand in hand with rising human capital, as more people have become educated, and to a higher level. However, the UK suffers from several weaknesses in its skills base that have contributed to its longstanding productivity gap… Results from the OECD show that England and Northern Ireland are in the bottom four countries for literacy and numeracy skills among 16–24 year olds. (BIS, 2015: 23)

Similar themes are evident in the *Post-16 Skills Plan* (2016), where they are used to justify the latest reforms to vocational qualifications:

> Forecasts suggest greater demand for higher-level technical and specialist skills in the future. Greater international competition and faster technological change will put many roles that exist today at risk. We need young people and adults to have the skills and knowledge that better equip them for employment in the 21st century, in order to meet the demands of the future.
>
> Weaknesses in the UK's skills base have contributed to its long-standing productivity gap with France, Germany and the United States. It performs poorly on intermediate professional and technical skills, and is forecast to fall

> from 22nd to 28th out of 33 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries for intermediate skills by 2020. (BIS, 2016: 10)

As well as articulating an instrumentalist purpose for further education, these documents are notable for their apparent rejection of the substantial body of interdisciplinary empirical and theoretical literature that has established the relationship between social class and educational achievement (Ball, et al 2002). This leads *Fixing the foundations*, for example, to conceptualise the improvement of school outcomes as a technical process that can be achieved through the application of new techniques, methods or formulae to teaching:

> Teaching quality is the most significant factor driving school outcomes, and the government will support England's teaching workforce to be world class, including a new initial teacher training curriculum... The government will also encourage greater use of evidence on 'what works' – there remains significant scope for schools to make better use of evidence, such as from the Education Endowment Foundation. (BIS, 2015: 23)

What is missing here is any understanding of how the social background of students impacts on attainment. This enables an almost exclusive focus on the quality and accountability of teachers, which, in turn, fuels the production of performance data. This 'purposing' of education effectively displaces the view that education is valuable for its own sake and, instead, gives primacy to the idea that the purpose of further education colleges is to provide a transition into employment and to prepare young people for the workplace.

This assertion of one set of values over others represents a kind of 'symbolic violence' against further education students (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2013,) through which individuals are stratified and existing inequalities perpetuated. We see this as operating in a triple-layered way (Duckworth and Smith, 2018), through a series of interconnected objectifications that begin at government

level and filter down through structures of assessment and qualifications into the attitudes, practices and expectations of teachers. The 'top' layer of this *triple lock* is the reductive and, in some respects, dehumanising 'skills' discourse outlined above, articulated by government and driven by economic anxiety. The second layer is constituted by a qualification framework that enforces the binary perception of young people as being either 'academic' or 'vocational' and that classes further education and its students as exclusively vocational, with all the negative baggage that, unfortunately, entails. The third layer of the triple-lock is a further consequence of the competitive marketization that has emerged in FE, casting students as 'consumers' in a transactional relationship with providers. This has encouraged providers to take a 'bums on seats' approach to recruitment and progression (Edwards and Smith, 2005) and has resulted in an increased tendency towards gaming (Coffield, 2017).

This triple-lock of objectification has important consequences for social justice in further education. It suggests there are structural constraints that not only instrumentalise the further education curriculum but also objectify students. Given these constraints, how then is it possible for educational leadership to prioritise and enact social justice?

Social justice and the further education curriculum

The direction of policymaking, the skills discourse and the punitive funding system together suggest that further education has an instrumentalist policy focus and based on a 'classed' perception of its students.

This can be viewed as injustice piled on injustice: while the school system continues to fail almost a third of our young people (Dorling, 2011), an instrumentalist further education system compounds social injustice by limiting and narrowing students' opportunities within a socially divided and unequal society.

While there is evidence to support this bleak view, it is equally clear that the furthering of social justice still forms a vital component of what colleges do. The stories of transformative teaching and learning at the heart of the *Transforming Lives* project provide ample evidence that despite the policy and funding environment and the resulting pressures on college leadership, in their day-to-day work teachers are not routinely objectivising students and further education is addressing the issues raised in Gewirtz's 1998 framework through transformative teaching and learning.

Transformative teaching and learning in further education (Duckworth and Smith, 2019) provides strong evidence that teachers in colleges are engaging with students not as 'consumers' or 'clients' or 'bums on seats' but as human beings with an ability to learn and connect educational experiences to hope and plans for the future. In addition, the report reveals how teachers seek to overturn the damage caused to students' learner identities in negative prior educational experiences, when they incorporate students' biographical experiences into the curriculum and when they strive to establish egalitarian relations within their classrooms.

The *Transforming Lives* research illustrates that, despite the triple-lock of objectivisation that threatens students, transformative teaching and learning is taking place, catalysed in the relationship between teachers and students in the classroom. Two examples from the research illustrate how further education can respond to a social justice agenda.

Adam (ibid.: 36) was a student who had been excluded from school for anger-management issues. Adam's sense of being 'dumb' and ignored was, in his mind, connected to teachers' labelling him as coming from a particular estate with a 'reputation'. This created negative expectations that meant his identity as a learner was severely compromised.

For Adam, further education meant moving on from a school experience that left him feeling 'like a nobody'. At college, he

(re)discovered a positive learning identity, finding that he could succeed at learning and connect that achievement to plans for his future. He described how the teachers on his college course spoke to him in a different way.

The research illustrates the broader social benefits of further education. In Adam's case, the knock-on effects for his family and home life were significant. His mother described the relief she felt at no longer receiving phone calls every day and sometimes having to leave work in order to pick her son up from school. Anxiety was replaced with pride.

For Claire, a mature adult student, the impact of further education was different but equally profound. Returning to learn on an Access course opened her eyes 'to a different world'. Claire spoke of the power she experienced in the classroom through simply being listened to and how that became a springboard for re-entry into the world. From there she went on to become a qualified teacher, self-confident and assertive both at work and at home:

> I'm not the same. I used to think men do this and women do that. Now I know that's not how it needs to be. Me and my husband share the jobs. It's not about these are for women and these are for men. We're equal.

Claire's story shows how important it is for college participants not to feel judged and to be accepted for who they are. In both examples, the positive impact of the further education experience carries transcends the individual, reaching into families and communities.

These case studies illustrate how further education learning environments work to promote an ethos of egalitarianism – usually explicitly. Students' backgrounds are taken into account, while their thoughts, views and practices are valued and seen as an important curriculum resource from which to move forward. In such a context, teachers emerge as transformative leaders, subverting the 'symbolic violence' inflicted on Adam and Claire in their earlier experience of education.

Conclusion: Further education, leadership and social justice

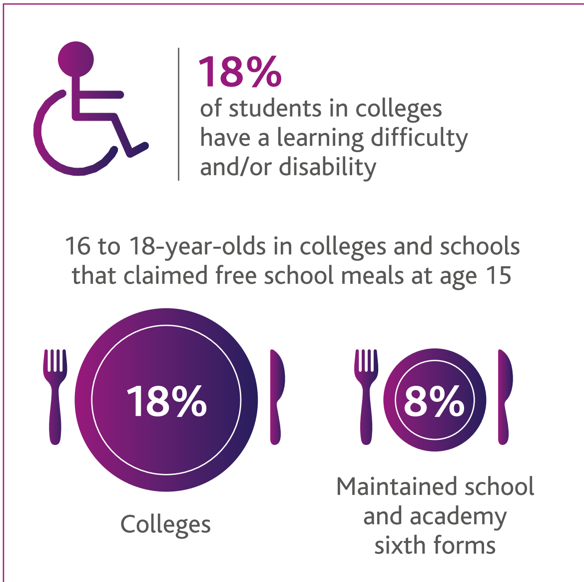
While further education is conceptualised as a 'market' by government, the extent to which this metaphor adequately captures colleges' relationships and interactions with each other and with funding bodies/government is questionable:

> The level of government funding and the role of government and public agencies in the way FE is delivered mean that as a whole, FE is not a typical 'market' in which 'consumers' and 'providers' interact with the resulting outcome presumed to be the best outcome for society. (Snelson and Deyes, 2016: 66)

In fact, the further education market is nothing like a market. Few colleges compete directly with one another and what competition there is concerns private training providers, which can cherry pick the most profitable courses, and school sixth forms, which have a built-in advantage when it comes to recruiting their own students. As we have seen, some aspects of the market arrangement – notably, funding and performance data produced for accountability purposes – are profoundly unsettling for colleges seeking to address an agenda of social justice. This constitutes a serious challenge for leadership in the sector.

Another challenge, which sets further education apart, is the diversity of its student body. For example, according to *AoC Key Facts* (2019: 22), 23 per cent of 16–18-year-old students in colleges have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, compared to 20.9% of school students with special educational needs. Furthermore, as **Figure 1** shows, 16% of 16–18-year-old college students had previously been classified as qualifying for Pupil Premium and as eligible for free schools meals (FSM). By comparison, the number of students eligible for and claiming FSM in secondary schools which is 12.4%. In other words, colleges cater for a much bigger proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than do schools.

Figure 1: The relative social disadvantage of further education students



AoC, 2019: 24

There is an evident tension between these important functions of further education and the narrative of marketisation in which colleges now operate. In such an environment, the overriding concern of leaders with a commitment to social justice becomes how to navigate the (often debilitating) external pressures of incessant policy intervention and a restrictive funding/ punitive funding regime in a way that enables them to continue to offer transformative education. As the discussion above demonstrates, despite these pressures, colleges continue to pursue a fundamental purpose, in healing the damage caused by schooling, and supporting students in positively reconstructing their identities as learners, that connects with social justice.

In this context, transformative leadership as a dimension of educational practice (by principals, senior leaders, managers, teachers and other staff) emerges locally, through institutions and the actions of individuals, against the grain of national-level policy. Incorporation, its attendant accountability mechanisms

and their links to funding, enshrines an orientation towards central policy prescription, which represents a barrier to the advancement of social justice in college leadership.

The three case studies that follow explore further how leadership in colleges connects with social justice and relates to the findings of the literature review.

SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research for this report aimed to explore how further education leaders with a commitment to social justice negotiate current sectoral conditions, such as curricula and funding changes and the shifting landscape of local-authority investment. Building on an expanded notion of leadership as a quality of action that extends beyond the behaviour and practices of senior institutional figures, the research sought to tease out the strategies used by further education staff (teachers as well as manager and senior leaders) to maintain a values-driven approach in the context of a turbulent, instrumentalist agenda.

We approached the project with a desire to maintain congruence between form and content, i.e. between the methodology and the values base we were researching:

> Social justice is a form of politics, a form of critical enquiry, but also a guiding philosophy… It also requires us to enact social justice as part of the research process addressing questions such as 'how does/can my research enact social justice and reflect the cause of social justice in its purpose and in its process?' (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019: 40-41)

We sought to enact social justice and reflect the cause of social justice in the purpose and process of the research. The enactment and reflection of the cause of social justice is embodied in research that illuminates the social benefits of further education. These benefits, while not included in ESFA/SFA spreadsheets, are nevertheless real and valuable contributions to the public

good. Researching leadership in colleges that demonstrate a commitment to social justice furthers the cause by highlighting what has been overlooked and all too often dismissed by policymakers. If, through revealing this contribution in its different forms, we are able to influence policymaker or public perspectives on the importance of colleges in providing social cohesion and a range of other social benefits then we will have succeeded in harnessing the research to a social justice purpose.

Undertaking the research, visiting colleges and talking to students and staff has meant reconnecting with our own experiences of further education (both teaching and learning). Engaging reflexively in this way, sharing our histories made us socially visible as researchers. This was a conscious attempt to avoid a position of spectatorship that might objectify the participants. While the research findings in written form constitute an important part of knowledge production, the understandings generated during the research encounters and, indeed, the understandings that readers take away from this report, have the potential to generate new knowledge and new understandings.

Research design

Between October 2018 and September 2019, we developed a research design and carried out a series of visits through which data was gathered to help address the research questions. The research design focused on three case studies, encompassing a range of further education providers. The plan was to begin the research with an in-house survey in each provider to establish the extent to which social justice values shaped the culture of the organisation. From there, we would carry out a series of in-depth interviews with leaders at different levels in the organisational hierarchy of each provider.

The research was designed to answer these research questions:

1. What factors enable/hinder leaders and others in further education settings in actualising transformative leadership?

2. What tensions do the workforce face in enacting transformative leadership within further education settings?

It involved developing case studies of different institutions. Each would include: i) the historical and geographical context (including interview data from other local stakeholders); ii) interviews with senior leadership teams and governors (where possible); iii) gathering views from a range of staff and students in the organisation to provide a holistic picture; and iv) targeted data-gathering from other sources, including historical documents, interviews with community groups/organisations and/or individual ex-students to assess external impact.

Data-gathering from each college was scheduled through a series of research visits:

1. An initial visit outlining the project and the design with senior leaders in the college. This visit was to be used to begin gathering data to help inform an historical picture/context of the college to trace the origin of its transformative values.

2. A second visit during which interviews could take place with: i) senior leaders; ii) teaching staff; and iii) current students. The survey would be launched for staff and students.

3. A third visit taking in the views of past students – to focus on some specific narratives that exemplify key outcomes of transformative leadership and to gather, where possible, the views of external stakeholders as identified by the college. These might include, for example, employers, community organisations and students' families.

Case studies

Data collection for the three case studies took place between November 2018 and June 2019. We used our professional networks to identify suitable case study colleges. Ultimately, this meant that the three participant colleges were chosen using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. The purposive selection process was complex and involved the following criteria:

- A documented commitment to social justice (in a broad sense).
- A range of different institution types and sizes.
- A range of different regional locations.
- Institutional permission and ability to engage with the project within the research period.

Fircroft College, Hopwood Hall College and City Lit fulfilled the selection criteria. Another college was identified as a participant but had to withdraw.

Case study college introductory visit

At the first case study visit, the project team carried out a scoping interview with senior staff to introduce the project and 'sound out' senior staff as to the central theme of the research. These visits helped identify the 'feel' or distinctive atmosphere of each college. It became clear that the environment of the college was a crucial aspect that we needed to factor into the analysis. While documents and statistics and participants' accounts were important, we wanted to deploy a research method able to capture the embodied and affective experience of students and staff involved in education with a social justice dimension. The link to spatiality – the quality of the teaching and learning environments and the way in which the colleges, staff and students within them produced space was an important feature we wanted to capture. This led us to incorporating photographs, students' visual images and walking interviews as key data.

Interviews and focus groups

The research methodology brought together aspects from a range of different approaches. Oral, documentation and visual data were drawn on in order to help us interpret each college context (Faraday and Plummer, 1979). Life histories were used as a sensitising tool (Plummer, 2001), not only allowing the researchers to share participants' world pictures but also enabling them to engage with each other's narratives (and ours) and open them up for discussion and meaning-making. Poetry and art were used engage respondents in critical dialogue, opening up a space in which aspects of participants' experiences difficult to convey in words could be captured. The research interviews and focus groups provided opportunities to enact and document what Tedder and Biesta refer to as 'narrative learning'; learning that results from 'talking about and reflecting on life experiences' (Tedder and Biesta, 2009: 89).

The methodological approach was participatory. The discussions sought to affirm the ways of knowing of leaders, staff and learners and to recognise their embodied knowledge.

Interviews and focus groups took place over two or more subsequent visits. These meetings were often informal and discursive. We interviewed using video and digital audio recorders.

Documents, images and other sources of data

We drew on a range of documents and other sources of data to support the construction of the case studies. These included college websites, Ofsted reports, college annual reports and policies, student data relating to gender, disability, employment status, and statistical data relating to the Index of Multiple Deprivations (IMD). IMD data covers seven domains of deprivation: income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services and living environment. We also drew on historical books and leaflets about the origins of the colleges.

The approach that we used in relation to visual material was reflexive (see Davies, 1998; Pink, 2007; Duckworth and Smith, 2019). We argue that these materials have the capacity to communicate powerfully what might not be achieved by verbal communication.

Walking interviews

The use of walking interviews stemmed from our emerging awareness of the significance of the teaching and learning environment and spatiality of the students' learning experiences, as described by Evans and Jones (2010: 851) who characterise the data gathered through walking interviews as 'profoundly informed by the landscapes in which they take place'. The central idea is that in walking while talking, the changing environment provides an ongoing stimulus for the participant to convey their thoughts and feelings.

Using video

The project provided a collaborative and democratic space for the sharing and celebration of participants' stories, through video. Their voices were validated and the stories uploaded to the FETL website. The project's creative use of digital tools allowed us to extend engagement with and dissemination of the project findings and enrich the research through the establishment of discursive fora and a virtual space in which ideas and narratives related to transformative leadership, teaching and learning could be shared (Pink, 2007).

Ethical considerations

Sharing life stories gives rise to ethical considerations. Although the participants had given fully informed consent and collaborated in making sense of the findings we were conscious of the need to maintain their dignity. Although fully and frankly offered, some information was too sensitive to include in the findings. This connects with our concern to try to align the

research with our own commitment to social justice. Part of the praxis of the research involved an exploration of participatory and democratic research practices as we sought to understand how transformative leadership counters other dominant models. This meant questioning how power and knowledge interact, and being conscious of how power shapes knowledge and who benefits from this knowledge production.

How the research design evolved

A survey formed part of the original design for the research. In keeping with the model of leadership and our conceptualisation of social justice, we wanted to devise a survey that could be distributed to all staff within each college. This was an ambitious proposal. The nature of the project meant that the data generated could be highly sensitive. While one of the colleges supported and distributed the survey, we took the decision not to proceed with its use. Consequently, no data from the survey appears in this report.

SECTION FOUR: FINDINGS

CASE STUDY 1: FIRCROFT COLLEGE

A case study portrait

As well as 'incorporating' the vast majority of colleges, the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 gave adult residential colleges a new status as 'specialist designated institutions' (SDIs), allowing them to continue operating under the terms of their own trust deeds while receiving public funding.

Fircroft College is one such institution. With around 50 staff, it is the smallest college in the sample. It has just under 2,000 enrolments a year and runs a range of short (two-day) courses in subjects such as personal and social development, functional skills and developing personal awareness for adults. In addition, it has between 20 and 25 students on an Access to Higher Education course, some of them residents. The college has students referred to it by almost 100 different agencies, including community and voluntary sector organisations, mental health charities, rehabilitation charities and others. A high percentage of students have no qualifications. Many also have a disability or are in recovery from a dependency. College courses often act as a bridge to further study at Level 2 and beyond.

The college has an important historical provenance. It was founded in 1909 by George Cadbury, third son of the founder of the chocolate factory that dominated employment in this part of the city for much of the twentieth century. The college migrated between a number of different sites before occupying its current premises in a former Cadbury home in Selly Oak, Birmingham.

From its inception, the college had important international links and accepted students from Finland and Denmark. The connection to Denmark is particularly significant. The college's educational philosophy was shaped, from a very early stage, by the thinking of Danish educationalist, N.F.S Grundtvig, founder of the folk high school movement, which emphasised the fostering of critical citizenship and operated on the basis of collectivism and cooperation. Grundtvig saw learning as a social practice: interaction, discussion and debate between people of different backgrounds was viewed as essential.

Alongside the egalitarian principles that underpinned the college's foundation was a concern for the future of British society and in particular for democracy. The aim of the college was acknowledged in the report of the post-war Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction – better known as the *1919 Report* – as 'to make better citizens'.

Students were, from the outset, viewed as whole people who could benefit from discussion and experiencing a common life within a community. While they came from a range of different backgrounds, both urban and rural, the aim was never to help them transcend their social background but to contribute to their communities' cultural capital thereby safeguarding democracy.

The college is conscious of its historical legacy and seeks to pursue and develop its founding values, describing itself as 'mission-led, values-driven'.

Students F-T and P-T: 2017 data	
Age	Age range = 19-65+ 75% = 30-60 F-T is less than 2%
Gender	55% of students are female
Ethnicity	23% declared themselves to be BME

Employment status	< 10% = employed 85% = not in employment
Disability and/or learning difficulties	64.5% (43% of whom identified themselves as having a mental health difficulty)
Total number of students (F=T and P-T)	1,796

Findings and discussion

This section presents the key findings of the case study, drawing on data arising from the research visits. These included semi-structured interviews with the principal and other senior staff and governors, focus groups with staff and students and telephone interviews with external stakeholders. The evidence for the case study was also enriched by the inclusion of data from a staff survey.

Themes from the data

Theme #1: Temporality and values

The first theme in many ways shapes those that follow. Fircroft's rootedness in its history and in a set of values connected to social justice was evident in a number of different ways. While the college is set in beautiful, tranquil grounds, the friendly, informal atmosphere belies any impression of exclusivity and is evident in the way in which staff and students communicate as they circulate between the common room, refectory area and classrooms on the ground floor.

The principal's study

The first interviews with the principal took place in a study lined with books and pamphlets about the college's history. The principal had been in post for almost two years, in which time she had made some significant changes that involved some staff leaving and new colleagues being appointed. She talked about the college's plan to mark its 110-year anniversary with a social research project examining the history of the college, noting the stability of the college's values and its commitment to social justice and democratic values. She saw ensuring this continuity of mission as an important part of her role as leader, and noted too her desire to see this commitment influence 'the way we do things around here':

> People get into education and they become evangelical about wanting to learn more, and learning more enables you to do different things and opens up different career paths. That was absolutely what George [Cadbury]'s vision was about: it wasn't about going and getting a job.

It was evident that the college's history provides a touchstone that supports and promotes a broad conceptualisation of education that contrasts sharply with the instrumentalist, skills-based view of further education. The principal sees education as opening up a field of possibilities that are advantageous not

only for the individual but also for their communities. There is an implicit challenge here to the dominant discourse that sees social mobility as an individualist escape:

> It was about going back and being a better part of the community from which you came … People ask, 'So what happens to your students?' And here… there's a very strong theme that comes from our student body, throughout [our] history, actually, which is about giving something back and wanting to make the world a better place.

A timeline showing the history of the college

Historical photos throughout the college are a constant reminder of its values and heritage, and a way of ensuring that present-day practice is informed by knowledge and understanding of the past.

Theme #2: funding

Interviews with the principal and two governors provided important insights into the impact of funding on the college. Fircroft is funded in the same way as any other further education college, but with two important differences. First, the college receives 'uplifts' because of the residential element of the courses that are offered. Second, under its charitable trust status, the college manages a small investment portfolio from which it receive an annual income.

The senior leadership team are conscious of how college finances support a commitment to social justice:

> Solvency and financial health are just as important to our governing body as any other college… We do ensure that our investment portfolio is managed ethically. The income from our investments is used to support the costs of running the college (Principal).

However, it is important too that the college does not become over-reliant on the investment portfolio since, unlike most colleges, Fircroft is small with a limited capacity for financial growth.

Having an investment portfolio connected to the college's historical social purpose puts Fircroft in an anomalous position for funding bodies. The college's small size also limits its ability to generate additional income. In many respects, Fircroft sits outside the standardised funding model. This raises questions about whether converging historically disparate funding levels to create a 'level playing field' between colleges sacrifices local context. In the case of Fircroft, there are no comparable institutions within 50 miles. That makes arguments around competition redundant.

Theme #3: Governance and organisational structures

Governance is a key aspect of the distinctive atmosphere and orientation of the college. This extends to the make-up of the governing body. The charitable deed that forms the legal basis

of the college's foundation sets it apart from most colleges and, once more, dilutes the impact of incorporation:

> We're ... a charity and, within our deed, it actually sets out the mixture of the governing body... so we have to have a certain number that are ... in theory nominated by the Cadbury family and we have a certain number which are ... appointed directly by other governors, we have a certain number who are co-opted, we have one ... from the city council, and we have the students.

This arrangement sets the college apart in a significant way. Under the Further and Higher Education Act, governing bodies of further education colleges must be constituted according to specific guidelines, which include securing governors from local industry and business. The Association of Colleges report into the composition of college corporations comments:

> Around one in four independent/external governors (26%) currently work or have worked in the education sector. The next biggest source for independent/external governors is finance, which provides around one in six (18%). These two business areas are followed by HR and Law, which each make up the background for around 7% of independent/external governors. (AoC, 2014: 3)

The effect of the charitable deed that underpins the legal status of Fircroft College is to position it outside these stipulations. This has an important impact on the college's ability to articulate its historical values. As one governor noted:

> One of the key things ... is that the chair ... is always someone who is from an academic background. We actually think that's important, that the academic side of things... is in their core but also what they study and the way they work, understands social justice.

The college's exemption from these requirements effectively frees it up to pursue a path centred on social justice.

The importance of the values of governors cannot be overstated when it comes to an institution's ability to sustain a broader conceptualisation and purposing of further education. Some of Fircroft's governors had personal histories that shaped their understanding of the power of further education, including direct family experience of the value of adult education in transforming lives and prospects.

The personal and professional histories of governors represent an important institutional resource, and have an impact not only on the way in which the college is run and understood, but also on how the board of governors operates, for example in the open, democratic way in which its meetings are organised. Like the principal, the governors interviewed had spent time thinking about how the values of the colleges could be transmitted through its culture and practices:

> I think it's about a bit more than equality, I think it's actually about providing people with the opportunities that they need, at the right time… it's not being equal, it's about saying, actually what do people need, at that right time, in order to enable them to get the best solutions that there are? (Governor)

The college's governing body encourages and supports student representatives to engage actively in governance, viewing student representation not in a tokenistic way but as something that flows naturally from Fircroft's underpinning educational values and its aim to build students' confidence, create the conditions for empowerment and give them a voice.

Governance is also important in terms of strategic decision-making. As with all colleges, the funding environment necessitates continual planning and strategizing. It is in this area of activity, where decisions of governance connect with finance, that values of social justice might be most vulnerable to being overlooked. The governor participants were conscious of this:

> Whenever we get to the point of saying, okay, we need to do a new strategy for the next five years or we need to review the mission statement or someone comes to us with a bright idea for selling something different, one of the first questions you will always get from someone in the governing body is: *What about social justice? Does this fit with the social justice model?* … it's absolutely ingrained, from the governing body right the way through the college. (Governor)

Other organisational and administrative structures also give a central place to Fircroft's values. For example, staff appraisal procedures highlight the college's commitment to social justice and these values also feature in job advertisements and job descriptions.

The interviews give ample evidence of Fircroft striving to integrate a commitment to social justice in all aspects of college life. This commitment includes the cultivation of a strongly supportive relationship with staff, characterised by the way in which teachers and other college staff talked about trust.

Theme #4: Trust

Governors brought to their role substantial experience of working in educational organisations, which, in some cases, had a strong commitment to education as a means of engendering social benefits and social justice. One spoke of the high level of trust experienced in a third-sector organisation, which informed her work as a college governor. This was typical of the attitude we encountered at the college, where it was flagged up as a defining quality of staff and student relationships.

Trust forms the bedrock of the relationships between governors, principal, teachers and students in the college. This is not to downplay the significant issues that the principal felt she had to tackle when she was appointed. As noted above, while the past is an important resource for a college seeking to infuse its culture with a commitment to social justice, any organisation that emphasises its own history still needs to be able to respond to changing circumstances.

Theme #5: Handling change, 'growth' and transition

The recent history of the college has been one of significant change and a revitalisation and reaffirmation of its social justice mission. Like so many further education colleges enduring funding cuts under austerity, Fircroft reached a point where, having had one long-serving principal retire and another temporary principal, the college faced an uncertain future. There were question marks over its ability to continue independently. The appointment of a new principal at this time was a turning point.

> It coincided with a particularly sticky point in terms of funding and getting government funding, because, as a governor, it's just so hard to keep up with who's doing what and where on the funding. At that point, the governors were having serious conversations about, *well, okay, given our finances, how many years can we continue and should we be looking for a partner to merge with?* and things like that. We were really doubting whether there was more that Fircroft could do and there were conversations around how long we can maintain it. (Governor)

In addition to financial concerns about whether the college could continue, the governor participant suggested that, at the time the new principal arrived, the college had built up a pattern of negative relationships and interactions that needed changing.

While this was clearly a challenge to the incoming principal, in her interview she explained how she set about addressing the issues while making explicit a set of focused organisationa values. These values informed the changes that followed:

> I'm a very open and transparent person and I kind of laid it on the line as to, 'This is the way things are going to be done around here now, we're a values-based organisation and your behaviours will be dealt with around those kind of values and if you don't feel that you can be part of that kind of organisation then here's a deal on the table for you to not be part of that organisation really.' And that meant a significant turnover in staff. (Principal)

While, on the surface, it might seem as though there are echoes here of the kind of top-down hierarchical leadership touched on in Chapter 2, the difference here is that the values driving the request for commitment were connected to voice, empowerment, respect and egalitarianism. There was a strong sense in the interviews that questioning of leadership is part of an ongoing discussion connected to the purposes of the college's activities. An important aspect of this was that the principal was actively engage in reading, writing and researching leadership and social justice. Furthermore, the principal aspired to create the conditions in which a cohesive, sociocratic organisational culture can be achieved. This necessitates the full involvement of staff at all levels:

> I believe in Cadbury's philosophy … if I have a workforce that's happy to come to work and believes absolutely in what they're doing and wants to do the best, who are the winners in that? Our students. And we're starting to see that now. And it's reflected in the achievement rates and the retention rates and attendance rates, all those kind of practical tick boxes that we have to do in FE. (Principal)

To bring this about, the college recruits staff with reference to a clear set of values. The college acknowledges that it pays staff below the salary levels available in general further education colleges. The challenge with this is to look after the interests of staff whose altruistic and student-centred values might make them vulnerable.

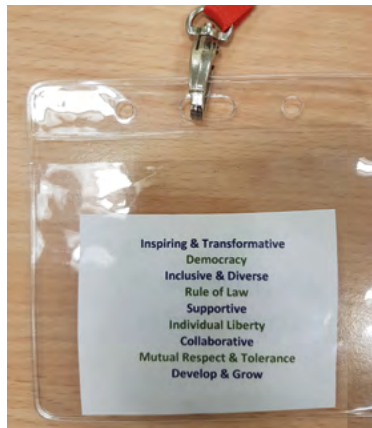
The interviews with managers and senior staff revealed a critical view of the kind of 'command and control' hierarchical leadership style evident in some mainstream colleges:

> I've heard that really recently, the new principal of another local college, when they had a big staff meeting said, 'You're either with me or you're not; if you're not, go now.' (Senior administrator)

Interviews with staff at all levels in the college indicated that staff recognised and rejected this leadership style.

The newly devised appraisal system is an example of how the college's values are integrated into the administrative procedures that shape staff relationships. These draw on the institutional values to which staff have signed up.

> They're in everyone's job descriptions, there's a set of, 'In terms of collaboration this is what we expect for your level on the job.' But we've also brought in a new process around what we call one-to-ones or check-ins for management or supervision … and it is a conversation, it's not a kind of tick-box exercise, it's meant to be a good conversation between people. So 50% of that should be … what are your targets and objectives and kind of things but 50% of it is about, 'So, talk to me about how you've collaborated or how you've supported somebody or how you've done various different things?' And for a line manager to say, 'Well, actually I think you could do more of that and let's think about how you can work on some of those things really.' (Principal)



A staff identity badge listing the college's values

The embedding of values into college processes and other changes brought about by the new principal have fostered a new sense of confidence within the college and a determination to build on relationships with outside agencies and look for new opportunities:

> Whereas before it was very much an approach that we run the access course and we run a series of short courses and that is in our capacity, we haven't got the space, we haven't got the people, we can't do more than that ... now, the approach is very much about, well we should be doing this, we ought to be applying for that, we could work with these, we can do that, if we can get that, we can apply for funding, which means we can increase the numbers to do it…. now [it's] about, okay let's see what we can do now, let's see what we can do to achieve new things, to get out to new communities, to support more people. (Governor)

In many ways, this is a familiar college narrative. Because the funding environment has been so difficult for the last decade, colleges have all been looking for new opportunities for growth and for ways to achieve a greater sense of security and stability going forward.

What is different about the Fircroft story is that strategies for institutional growth and renewal connect at a deep level with the egalitarian teaching and learning practices and relationships we encountered in classrooms, corridors, the canteen and the refectory throughout our research visits.

Theme #6: The teaching and learning environment

How are the values cultivated by the college's senior leadership and rooted in its history and mission reflected in the teaching and learning environment? One important principle is that teaching and learning begin with the students as they are. This means accepting student biographies and backgrounds and any negative prior educational experiences that has often marked their past. Fircroft's teachers spoke passionately about needing to be open to hearing about students' biographies:

> I'm always telling the students how much I learn from them. Any subject allows them to share and enlighten. It's just like with the previous experience of bringing that into the classroom and respecting that and for giving them the platform which you don't have often in other FE mainstream colleges. (Teacher)

The student group interviews provided numerous examples of how the college experience differed from that of school. One former student observed that in the college learning environment 'everyone is treated the same'. In many cases, the short courses offered by the college showed students that education could be enjoyable. They reported improvements in confidence and feeling they had something to offer. One student commented:

> I heard about the Access course and I ended up signing up ... I just thought … I'll just see if I can get in first and see where I go from there… Then I started doing the assignments … and realised that I had potential. My confidence in myself wasn't great. I didn't actually realise that. I never thought that I would be able to go to university. I didn't think that was a path that I was going to take. I carried on doing the access course and completed it and I got all distinctions.
> (Ex-student)

Such stories show how transformative teaching and learning can be for adults who previously saw their life options as very narrow and viewed education in mostly negative terms:

> In society you're taught that you have to be this or you have to be that. I was really nervous but I thought just go in and be myself. That's all I can be. Coming to Fircroft being you is completely acceptable. You feel like you're listened to and you're supported so you feel ready to take that next step then.

Students typically welcomed the acceptance they experienced at the college and the absence of judgement, which enabled them to experience education in a future-orientated way.

The teachers also understood that their own biographies were a significant resource in their teaching, and recognised that their own transformative experience fed into and reinforced the culture of the college:

> Not that many people have the perfect life, do they? But you couldn't have had a perfect halfway life and do the job that we do because it's knowing those students. It's picking up on those nuances and those conversations and you do your job with those students… You see yourself sometimes. (Teacher)

Teachers exercise leadership in the way in which courses are shaped and the materials they use, tapping into their own past histories while viewing those of their student with empathy and understanding. This understanding was often passed on within teachers' families:

> My daughter has just gone into Teach First. She's doing leadership inspired by what I'm doing because she wants to work with in senior schools where there are under-privileged students. (Teacher)

Teachers felt empowered and respected in their work and empowered and respected their students, in turn:

> On a really fundamental level, it's about there are no levels in this college. In terms of people there are no levels. Ground rules are for all, including tutors, including anybody. I think we develop a respect, don't we? (Teacher)

Unsurprisingly, many of the teachers contrasted their experience at Fircroft with their experience in 'mainstream FE':

> It's going back to the basics of teaching. Why did we all come into FE? It was because of social justice in the first place and then working for mainstream FE colleges, which is what I did, that was totally stripped away. This was about bums on seats and how many 16 to 18 year olds can we cram into a classroom. You have to manage their behaviour and all the rest of it… And they had needs. Those kids had needs but they were never met, ever… It just changed. (Teacher)

The college has created conditions in which the teachers are encouraged to view their students in a particular holistic way, as much more than simply 'bums on seats':

> This is not like mainstream FE: just forget them and put them out of your head. This is people's lives you are dealing with. (Teacher)

Instead, Fircroft has managed to create an environment in which staff view their work as profoundly serious: it isn't about 'progression', for example, or passing courses. The teaching and learning environment actively subverts the instrumentalist agenda encountered elsewhere in further education and attaches a different and wider value to the efforts of students. This is important for students who may have been labelled as 'thick' at school or who struggled to learn in rigid, competitive or exam-focused learning environments.

The Fircroft learning environment addresses the fall-out of the negative school experience of many of its students, who often come to the college thinking they are incapable of learning. The social justice purposing that underpins college culture means that staff knowingly tackle students' poor prior educational experience, and this has important implications for curriculum.

Theme #7: Curriculum – Criticality and the whole student

An understanding of how the curriculum at the college is informed by a commitment to social justice was voiced by one of the governors:

> I think it's so important, you hear that message all the time from students, about it taking them out of their day-to-day situation and giving them the space and the opportunity to actually spend some time, concentrating on themselves, rather than what it was before that was stopping them from moving forward. I think just giving people that space and that ability to network and work with other people and learn from others, I think it's just hugely valuable and we do it as well, just in terms of the short courses. (Governor)

Here, curriculum is seen as embodied. The whole student: their biographies, the issues they bring with them that affect their learning and their ability to flourish are the starting point.

> One of the very powerful things that happens here which we try to facilitate through … a critical pedagogical approach is … many of our students are a result of failures in the system, in whichever way shape or form, but for all of their lives that's been individualised to: 'You're the problem'. So that might have been at school ... it starts there because actually lots of issues that come to bear in adulthood are as a result of poverty or lack of education or those kinds of things and particularly what's emerging for us, quite significantly is a lot of undiagnosed personality spectrum disorders … So, some of what we try to do is also about contextualising power and inequality so that people can start to realise that actually some of the things that have happened to them in their lives it's not actually their fault but a consequence of the society and the systems in which we live really. (Principal)

The actualisation of egalitarian relationships within the college is the foundation from which it helps students negotiate their position within and their contribution to society. At a fundamental level, in an educational setting that prioritises social justice and a holistic pedagogical interaction with students, the prioritisation of meeting students' needs means that the pastoral and academic are conceptualised as being interdependent and complementary:

> You've got the pastoral element, you've got the academic element and it comes together just so well. (Teacher)

Here, the teacher is referring to the college's use of a support team who have mental health training and who provide support for individuals as and when it is needed. This support is integral, and runs alongside and within the courses on offer.

The curriculum fosters criticality on the part of students. In general terms, this can be described as supporting students to

question common sense assumptions, values and practices. Teaching and learning is characterised as dialogical. The dynamic is two-way. The courses the college provides enable staff to include students' experience in the curriculum. The inclusion of biography, the critical consciousness-raising that takes place in discussions about politics and broader social issues, leads to a questioning of the purposes of education itself:

> I do feel we genuinely begin to, in our own way on the different courses, enable learners to really start to question [fundamental questions of purpose] for themselves … there's lots of empowerment in terms of local politics as well. Not just the national knowledge. On the politics courses, as an example, they looked at empowering yourself locally and directions you can look in and what you can do. (Teacher)

The criticality of the curriculum also shapes the aims and aspirations of students. While completing a course might set them on a pathway to study at university, their aims often revolve around making a contribution to society to address issues of which they themselves had experience:

> With social work it's all about advocating for the underprivileged society and those people that need a voice. I'm happy to be that voice. I want to help people that feel that they've been oppressed and discriminated against, all of that. I want to help those people and show them that they do belong in this world. They're just as important as any other person. That's what Fircroft did for me, I suppose. (Student)

One consequence of an educational environment that is engaged with social justice is that students want to intervene in the world to bring about positive change. So, there is an inward and an outward movement. We see leadership as a quality of action that can move between people; in this case from staff, via transformative teaching and learning, to students. Here, we see leadership as enhanced agency of the students themselves. The process is one that surprises and delights the students. So much

so that in the interviews there were frequent mentions of 'the magic of Fircroft'.

Theme #8: Space/place and rhythm

The rhythm of teaching and learning in the college, the interplay of space and times and the 'feel' of the college, is the focus of this final section. Some of the most powerful data on this came from the walking interview. An ex-student was asked to take one of the research team around the college, inside and outside, stopping at places of significance and explaining the affective impact of these spaces.

The interview took around 15 minutes. We walked through the main entrance hall, the refectory, the tea and coffee lounge, outside into the garden, past the smoking shelter, into the Access to HE annex, the Access classroom, out into a small garden and finally to the library. When we arrived at the Access annex, the interviewee expresses a feeling of ownership. Revisiting the space has a significant emotional impact for the former student:

> This is where the magic happened. That was my seat there ... It's like I never left here. It feels familiar, comfortable, feels homely. You know when you walk into your parents' house? You know it's not quite yours but there's a sense of something like: this is mine! We would sit round here. All my friends would sit there. We had specific seats.

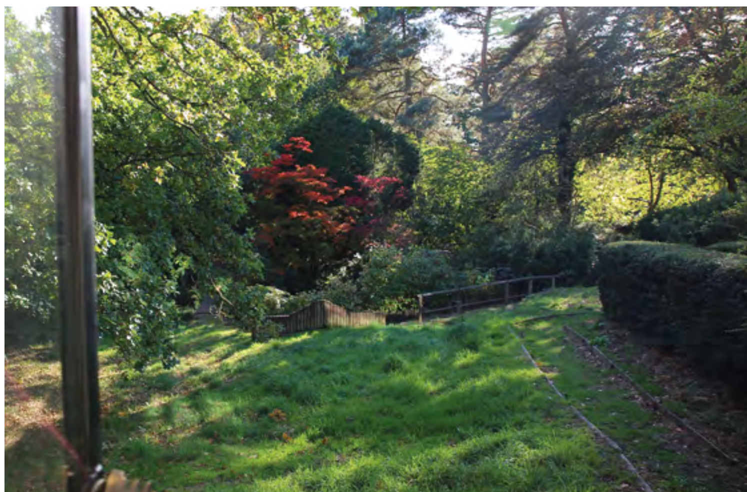
Conducting us into the small garden, she added:

> I feel like I own the place. This garden was like ours. I don't think anyone else really used it. They understood people are going through different things and also that sometimes you just need five minutes to step away. The nine months went so fast, so, so fast. As soon as I went through that arch, that was the Access area.

The sense of belonging and ownership expressed by the ex-student communicate powerfully how the college's values have contributed to the production of a space that is both informal

and formal at the same time. The educational experience is also remembered as collective and social. The teaching and learning that takes place has a centrifugal dynamic: the criticality that is catalysed by education is underpinned by a commitment to social justice that leads to a reconnection with the outside world, *on different terms*.

What emerges very strongly from the interview data is how the friendliness and approachability of the staff, together with the college buildings, create an ambience to which students respond positively. The role that space plays in the social justice purposing is what we will look at in this final section.



A view of the garden and grounds

Participants talked about the beauty of the gardens that surround the main buildings:

> I think the place is beautiful… the tranquillity and just the surroundings, are calming and almost meditative…. I think that helps, I think surroundings does help and if you put a busy street and cars running past and things like that, it can give you that sort of feeling, particularly if you're anxious and you're concerned and it's something new to you. (Governor)

Students, finding themselves in these surroundings for the first time, while being accepted for 'who they are' and encouraged to reflect on their experience, find their learning experiences 'intense'. The college environment offers a sanctuary from the outside world:

> It's a healing retreat where you get an education. It's just like a little oasis, a beautiful oasis in the middle of an environment which is a bit nasty outside those gates.

The peaceful surroundings also influence the students' perception of the pace of learning as unforced and differentiated according to individual needs and preferences. The learning environment blurs the lines between formal and informal spaces and that motivates students to see themselves and their views as an important resource in their learning journey. Once a pattern of educational practice and dialogue is established, students then become autonomous in their learning.

This is the point at which the classroom space merges and becomes indistinguishable from social space and when the dialogical and educational relationship between teacher and students merges fluidly into peer learning. The curriculum in Fircroft is not restricted to or contained within the walls of the classrooms. Discussions and the dialogical interactions, and the personal development that these occasion, can take place anywhere on college grounds.

The personal and individual aspects of the experience are intensified by the residential nature of the courses:

Student drawing: sunset magic

> What's the added value of residency? Some of that is about the space and the place … so the physical environment. Some of it is about a space in which you are free from the chaos and the externalities of the world that can often impinge on a learning experience but a lot of that is about community. So, it's about the short course model in one way and the access model in another way, is very intensive, and so the support of your peers is really critical to the success of your outcomes, for want of a better term, in the end really. (Principal)

Here, the principal identifies a further ingredient: that extending from the differential space that allows for individuals to be accepted for who they are without judgement and through the use of ground rules, students are enabled to experience belonging to a community. The movement from individual to collective experience is a crucial aspect of what the college offers. The principal talks about the significance of further education space, the way it communicates values, expectations and shapes pedagogical practice.

Summary

- The *further* in further education can, given the right conditions, be a furthering of social justice.
- The commitment to social justice that informs the culture and practice of the college is anchored in its history.
- The college's funding arrangements contribute significantly to its ability to continue in its championing of social justice. It is significant that, unalloyed, the funding methodology would undermine the college's achievements in this area and its ability to continue making a difference.

- The values of governors represent a vital contributory factor to the maintenance of the college's effectiveness in addressing social justice.
- Relationships of trust between staff and stakeholders at all levels is a vital feature of the college's culture.
- A full commitment to egalitarian and sociocratic values involves incorporating these values into organisational processes.
- A teaching and learning environment that is shaped by a commitment to social justice accepts students for who they are.
- Students' biographies are an important part of the curriculum, providing a basis for emerging criticality.
- How time connects with learning: the fluidity and particularity of the way students experience this is key: regimentation and rigidity can be destructive.
- To determine where and when learning takes place, to compartmentalise in particular times/spaces, is a function of institutional organisation. It is nothing to do with learning.
- The collective knowledge and experience of learning together can be as, or more, important than individual study.

SECTION FIVE: FINDINGS

CASE STUDY 2: THE CITY LITERARY INSTITUTE

A case study portrait

City Lit – the City Literary Institute – was established through the wave of investment and innovation in adult non-vocational education that took place in London in the aftermath of World War I. Five literary institutes were founded with funding from London County Council, which sought to develop new provision 'for the needs of a large number of students who seek education other than vocational', with 'a coherent programme of studies related to leisure, and an adult setting'. City Lit was set up in 1919 and is the only institute that survives.

The college has charitable status and is a community learning provider located in Holborn, in central London. Its offer emphasises inclusion and the idea of 'learning together' – putting the social and collective aspects of learning at the heart of its mission. One example of this is the specialist provision in lip-reading that the college has historically offered for ex-service people with hearing impairments. These courses are still a key feature of college provision. Speech and language therapy, particularly helping learners with a stammer, is an area of work that has received national recognition, including through the Queen's Anniversary Prize, awarded for outstanding work in 2007.

One of nine Institutes for Adult Learning, City Lit is the largest provider of community learning in Europe, offering nearly 6,000 courses annually to more than 30,000 learners from across

London and beyond. The college caters for adults only and maintains a balance between fee-paying courses and community learning. This means that just under half of its income comes from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). It also means that the college's student body straddles social divides and includes people from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. City Lit's status as an Institute for Adult Learning (along with Fircroft) means that it is able to run courses that do not lead to a qualification and, as a corollary, it sits outside the system of metrics based on achievements and the regime that links funding to achievement.

City Lit has an illustrious list of alumni dating back a century, including T.S. Eliot, David Bowie and Malorie Blackman (City Lit, 2019). The college employs a large number of staff many of whom are dual professionals, working as practitioners in their specialism (e.g. in dance, ceramics or photography) as well as taking classes at the college. The heritage of the college feeds strongly into its word-of-mouth reputation. What is interesting in this is that the college's reputation extends beyond its offer of specialist non-accredited courses to embrace courses that meet community needs as well.

Students P-T: 2019 data	
Age	Age range = 16-75+ 72% = are between the 26-65 age range F-T is less than 1%
Gender	68% of students are female
Ethnicity	23.7% declared themselves to be BAME or other
Employment status	51% = employed 32% = not in employment (seeking and not seeking work)

Disability and/or learning difficulties	9% of students identified themselves as having a difficulty/disability/health problem)
Total number of students (F=T and P-T)	36,500

Findings and discussion

Theme #1: Values: Past, present and future

Like the other case study colleges, City Lit has a heritage connecting it to social justice. In this case, its foundation in 1919 meant that it was ideally placed to respond to a need arising from the experience of soldiers returning from the Western Front:

> I think there are specific communities that we support and our heritage really helps us do that … one of the first courses we taught 100 years ago was for soldiers who had been deafened during the First World War, and it was lip-reading courses. Now that was a very specific social need at the time. Tens and tens of thousands of soldiers returned deafened. It's one of those things that's not really known so much … From that grew our Centre for Deaf Education. We've been pioneers [for] over 100 years around supporting the deaf community and working with the deaf community. I take huge delight in the fact that under my tenure here we have our first head of the Centre for Deaf Education. (Principal)

This strand of the college's historical identity contributes to the cultural capital it draws on in maintaining its distinctive identity and social justice purposing. The college's history is vitally important, not only in anchoring its commitment to social justice but also in contributing an important resource in the college's ongoing struggle within the further and adult education context. The courses on offer straddle fee-paying culture-rich courses and community courses that promote an agenda of inclusion. The maintenance of this balance, we will suggest, is a significant strategy of enablement.

Alongside deaf education, the college also provides specialist courses in speech and language therapy. The health and well-being strand reflects a perception on the part of the senior leadership team (SLT) that the college needs to keep looking ahead and providing courses that are relevant to adult learners in London. The college's value-set is supported by its status as an Institute for Adult Learning, which allows it to transcend the reductive instrumentalism that is the keynote of much policy in further and adult education.

> It's not [just that] we bring people together to teach people. We bring people together to enrich their lives, their physical, their mental, their intellectual wellbeing. All of that is part of adult education, and the time is right and society is changing to be bolder about those statements. (Principal)

This broad conceptualisation of the purpose of adult education connects with the kind of transformative teaching and learning experiences that the college offers (see Theme #6). The SLT has a distinctive view of the purpose of adult education and how the college provides this. One aspect is the lifelong learning element. The college is seen to provide a community atmosphere and ethos in a metropolis with increasingly atomised and isolating patterns of work.

> the nature of, you know, people increasingly working on their own – you know, you can't just spend all your life sitting in a coffee shop with your laptop and your phone. You've got to have somewhere where you can go and be part of a community, and I think adult education really provides that kind of centre for people as well as the learning, as well as all the other stuff. (Principal)

What's important about this perspective is the way it (as with the other case study colleges) provides a fresh take on a stale and unimaginative skills discourse – seeing further education as an essential complement to new patterns of being that intersect with work and employment transitions. College teachers are attuned to the social benefits the courses offer:

> We might have students who come on a course for 12 weeks and don't achieve at the end of it. But I know the impact on them has been so great. Even if they didn't achieve, they still fell they have done something… they got out of the house one day a week and met new people… and it was just a step in the right direction. These benefits are difficult to measure. (Teacher)

The student focused group contained two participants for whom the courses taken at the college constituted a life-changing experience as they had catalysed a switch in career:

> I am a school leader. I have been working as a deputy head and assistant head teacher. And I quit my job to pursue an Art Foundation course. So, I still teach part time. This is me following I suppose a life dream to do this. And if it leads to work in this field then fantastic. And, if not, I love teaching and I will always have that as a qualification and it has enhanced my teaching. There's nothing more valuable than watching other people teach.

These sentiments go strongly against the grain of the economised and instrumentalist view of the purposes of education established in the discourses around skills and employability. Education for self-fulfilment and happiness, in pursuit of self-actualisation and individually defined goals, sounds almost decadent in times when an economised human capital discourse has displaced personal development and joy, thus objectifying students. Another participant in the student focus group, who had moved from a career in HR to creative writing, put this succinctly:

> You don't need permission to be who you are. You choose the course you do. You choose where you do them. You grow. It adds something to you. It gives you another stone under your foundation. I'm not HR anymore. I'm just being me. You can't keep going on two different tracks. It was elation when I made the decision.

Her views articulate the antithesis of objectification; instead we have a student making informed choices about her future and harnessing education to reach her personal goals.

Theme #2: Funding and the 'market'

As outlined above, City Lit maintains an equilibrium between being 'commercially minded' while also striving to provide a broad range of courses addressing issues related to inclusion and community needs.

The governor participant offered a perspective on how the college effectively uses commercial income to fund its social justice work.

> They do get government funding but they also get more money coming in, in fees, than they do in government funding and that's because they offer a wonderful product that people want to buy. There are people around here in central London who want to buy it… What they also do is to use that money to support their other work, which is around communities, which is around people who need to learn to speak to English, people who are losing their hearing… People who often suffer from stammering and have no support and need to be able to get through that. People who've just been needing to return to learning. People who've been made redundant who maybe need a change in their lives. (Governor)

The college engages students from very different socio-economic and class backgrounds. While this could be viewed as maintaining a difficult balance, an alternative reading is that the hybridity of provision is an institutional strength that contributes to both the college's reputation and its ability to adapt to the changing policy climate.

As with other colleges in the sample, the senior leaders at City Lit expressed frustration about the shortcomings of the annual funding cycle:

> …it's one of the biggest frustrations … that, actually, if you're being asked to plan for the future, how can you when … you actually don't receive that letter [guaranteeing funding] until a few months before you're beginning to start? How is it possible to meaningfully plan for any institution? No business would run in that regard, they'd have a realistic forward look. (Senior leader)

The late approval of annual budgets is a serious obstacle to educational planning. The need to maintain an equilibrium between two different kinds of provision is an added complexity. While colleges are asked to be responsive and establish a commercial culture, a number of participants noted that no organisation in the commercial world would be able to operate in similar circumstances:

> How are you meant to start thinking about what could the next one, two, three years be, let alone the next ten, 20 years? And that's the hardest thing. So, we try and … we are now in the process of thinking about our future five-year strategic plan. But we're doing it based on the here and now. We're coming up with aspirations and ambitions around what we want to achieve, and some of the areas we really want to focus on, but actually, we need to be clever around how we make that happen, because of the way our budget is planned, or is released.

The staff focus group highlighted how, in the past two years, there had been much more demand for social justice provision, particularly for those courses that cater for homeless people and asylum seekers. For that reason, there had been a push to raise money through the network of alumni, and other sources. The college is strategic in its recruitment of fellows, not just as potential donors but as advocates and promoters of the college.

In the case of City Lit, the devolution of the adult education budget to six mayoral combined authorities and the Greater London Authority began in September 2019 and has required an investment in relationship building. The 'constant battle' for

funding is reminiscent of a charity or NGO more than a publicly funded college and this highlights once more how strained the market metaphor is when applied to further education, where it appears useful only in as much as it signals the uncertainty and instability of the environment colleges are forced to function in.

The college draws students from every borough of London and beyond. In the student focus group, while half came from within greater London, half had travelled a distance of up to 30 miles. This is only possible because of the well-developed transport links by which the college is served:

> It's every borough of London … that come here, because they work close to here probably, or they choose to come here. But we've also got 10 per cent, nearly 11 per cent of our students [from] outside of London. So, those that are commuting in and come at weekends … It does come back to that, that we are so open. Where else do you see colleges that are open from 8:00 until 10:00, seven days a week…?

In its community work and the work with different areas of social need, the college sees itself not as a competitor but as one organisation within a field in which the work of each complements the others:

> I worked in our community education department for a number of years … One of the things that I feel really proud about is that that work that we did when it started got picked up by the sector itself. So, we almost did ourselves out of a job really but that's a good thing because it's kind of had a lasting impact. Because now, certainly in London all the big homeless charities, you know, St Mungo's, Thames Reach, they all have an education provision themselves.

In its efforts to promote collaboration and coordination in addressing need, the college goes beyond institutional self-interest and is shaped rather by a broader understanding of the social needs generated by the city. To that extent, the

college sees itself as part of a wider community of adult education colleges in London:

> I've also brought alongside with us, and working very closely with us, other London institutes of adult learning. So, Morley College, Working Men's College, Mary Ward Centre, we all work as a collective group. (Senior manager)

Theme #3: Governance and trust

As with Fircroft, governance is an important resource that helps maintain a social justice ethos. And, again, the personal histories and biographies of governors and senior staff play a significant role in sustaining an institutional commitment to social justice and in realising this in the way in which the college runs.

One of the governors interviewed for the project had worked in an adult residential college, first as a teacher then as principal, and had long experience of working in a social justice context:

> After I left school, I went to volunteer in a gypsy and traveller school in the Midlands… What I quickly learned really was how different my life chances were from the gypsy and travelling family I was working with, who largely ... I don't think any of them could read and write. They were really disadvantaged in terms of their position in society, discriminated against really … [T]hey did want their children to flourish and succeed but that wasn't easy at all. They did give me a passion about really wanting to make a difference to people who hadn't had the opportunities that a lot of us have had. I then went onto university and then went on to work in a women's refuge. I was a community worker on some London council estates. The same thing kept striking me that because I'd had the opportunity to go to university, my chances, my opportunities were really very wide. A lot of the people I was working alongside, friends who lived and worked in the communities, were just the same as me, just as bright as me. No difference, but they hadn't had the opportunities.

The principal shared the view that ability ought not to be constrained by social or cultural background:

> Everybody's given different skills. Everybody's given different strengths, weaknesses. We are each a wonderful tapestry of genetics, circumstance, parents, backgrounds, etc., and that makes you who you are, and there's lots of positives and lots of negatives for most people. Adult education at its finest should actually help you mitigate your weaknesses and accentuate your strengths.

Another senior leader described the importance of the connection between the values and outlook of the college and their own personal background and values:

> I'm from a very working class background. My dad worked in the shipyards and he was a big union man as well. I was on picket lines with my dad. Through the Thatcher years, you know. And just witnessing, I saw my dad a broken man through periods of unemployment. In his 50s trying to find another job and what that did for him being unemployed for probably about four or five years. Just the impact that it had on communities. And at that point it felt like governments didn't really care, it was almost about looking after people who had more … Making the rich richer … So, to me, being part of this institution and doing that kind of work is very aligned with my own personal values.

Experience of economic or social turbulence was a theme of the responses:

> I left university in the early 90s… I trained to be a volunteer literacy tutor with our local adult education service ... Then I went back to university and did a postgraduate in adult and community education. Got really interested and kind of inspired with the power of, you know, reading Paulo Freire and all that sort of stuff about the transformational power of adult learning, particularly to tackle social problems and liberate people. Then I worked in community education in

> Glasgow for a couple of years, so that was the early 90s when there was mass unemployment because all the shipyards had been closed, steelworks closed… in areas that had been particularly hard hit by those closures ... So that was involving a lot of working with unemployed worker centres around the borough to look at interventions that the adult education service could provide. (Senior manager)

Senior leaders also drew on their own past histories in reflecting on how education can empower people to become active contributors to society:

> It's the kind of learning opportunities or journeys of self-discovery that people can take through learning to actually be a confident, secure, able, empowered person, it's actually about being able to take control of your own life. And just be able to pay your bills and be a decent citizen. I used to rail at my students, they'd say things like, 'Oh, I don't want to apply for that job because that's not going to pay me a lot more than I would get on benefits'. And I would go mental at them. I'd get all *Daily Mail*, I'd be like, 'Just shut up, get a job and start paying some bloody taxes. That's what you need to do' [laughter]. You know, you need to be an active part of society, this is the next step.

Overall, the senior leaders tended to characterise the purpose of adult education in terms of 'liberal' adult education with a particular emphasis on the pursuit of certain goals concerning social justice. This commitment to social justice owes a good deal to their own personal histories. Clearly, however, these histories can only be a resource if they are allowed to feed into and inform practice within the college and if they resonate with its atmosphere and 'feel'.

One important strategy in ensuring the connection between leadership and practice at City Lit is for leaders to undertake teaching themselves. As the governor we interviewed noted, this underscores the importance of college leaders having an educational rather than a business background:

> [The principal] and I have strong teaching backgrounds and I think that's really important because you're not just leading any organisation, you're leading learning.

The principal teaches a class every year to ensure he remains in touch with the 'demands of teaching':

> I think teaching keeps you relevant and credible with your staff. If I've got a thousand brilliant tutors here and I'm just a glorified bureaucrat at the top then – you've got to be able to look them in the eye and go, 'Yeah, I know, teaching after a day is bloody hard. You've got to re-gear your brain. And, yeah, that classroom's too hot and the window doesn't close properly.'

This shows one way in which the principal symbolically models an egalitarian ethos and indicates a willingness to interrogate and challenge the rigid models of leadership that have become consolidated in many colleges. His enthusiasm for face-to-face contact with staff and his concern with 'credibility' evidence something more than the shallow kind of 'accountability' that market environments have fostered.

In the teachers' focus group, participants ranged from subject specialist teachers to senior managers of different areas of college provision. In the discussion, the staff talked about the high levels of trust between managers and teachers. The participants expressed the view that high levels of trust arose from the autonomy that teachers have to be creative in the way in which they organise the curriculum:

> Once they know you can do the job, they don't micromanage you. It's treating people like adults.

One department manager explained how trust characterised the relationships between her and her team:

> My staff trust me and I trust them. For example, working from home. Staff are on outreach. They might phone me up. If it's late in the day, I'll tell them, *You don't need to come in*.

> *Just work from home*. Because we're here in central London, the distances people travel…

Theme #4: Handling transition while holding onto values

Further and adult education colleges have long had to adapt to periodic changes in the architecture of the different quangos with which they must engage. This includes funding organisations such as the Further Education Funding Council, the Learning and Skills Council and the Education and Skills Funding Agency, as well as regional employer-led organisations such as Training and Enterprise Councils, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Regional Development Agencies. The new regional mayoral authorities are the latest addition. All of this has necessitated the development of an outward-facing college identity to secure the college's reputation and position within the landscape:

> I've worked … to ensure that our relationship is very strong with the Mayor's team… to ensure that they really understand City Lit, and actually understand the difference that we make, to not … lump us in with all other FE and judge us in that way, or ask us to report in that way, and actually really understand the ethos of the college. So, I've worked very hard to try and get them to understand that so that when decisions are made around funding, they're informed decisions ... to date, we've been really pleased with the engagement we've had… he will be launching his new future skills vision and employment vision for London here ... seeing us as a really good platform for him to make those sort of announcements ... [and] an opportunity for him to talk about education and lifelong learning in the sense of his skills vision… obviously, he wants to develop skills for employment, but his team are very much understanding that skill development is more than that. (Senior leader)

While City Lit's senior leadership team quite rightly puts emphasis on the college's skills and employment outcomes, its ethos undeniably transcends the conventional skills discourse.

It is important, therefore, that college leaders develop good relationships with funders and present its distinctive profile as an asset. This, as one participant noted, means overcoming misconceptions about further education in general, and City Lit, in particular:

> Who in the political class … understands adult education and lifelong learning? Some do. And we have brilliant Fellows here at City Lit, Sir Vince Cable, Nick Boles, David Lammy, who really understand the impact of lifelong learning. But the majority of our politicians are educated in a certain way and may not necessarily understand the benefit that City Lit and institutes of adult learning can actually offer.

The overriding challenge for the college is to convince funders, policymakers and the public of its value. And, as the principal was quick to point out, these values transcend his leadership, which is subservient to the purposes of the college.

Once again, the heritage of the college is a significant influencing factor. The college's history – if it is honoured – invites and conditions leadership in important ways. The college's rootedness in social justice grounds the conduct and disposition of senior leaders, lending their roles a custodial dimension. From this perspective, the continuation of the college is not about the survival of a brand within a competitive market. Instead, it is about the 'paying forward' of an ethos and set of values. In that sense, the research data suggests that further education leadership that is committed to social justice conceptualises itself as service and is grounded in humility.

Theme #5: Transformative teaching and learning environment

In this section, we draw on data taken from the focus group with students and the walking interview. Central to the teaching and learning environment on offer at the college is the resistance of staff to objectifying students – an effect typical of managerialised environments in which teaching and learning are seen as means to achieving a qualification and accessing funding.

> I think being open-hearted ... there's lots to it and that's what I mean about culture…. is really important because I have been in places where ... it seems that people don't really like their students or don't value them. Really, they're a bit of a nuisance, and I think here you feel that people love the students and they're valued, and they're important. (Principal)

Of course, high levels of respect and trust can exist within a commercial environment. However, once institutional survival becomes dependent on the recruitment of more students and their achievement of qualifications, the likely result is a 'spoon-fed' curriculum and a bums-on-seats objectification of students (Duckworth and Smith, 2019). The principal and college offer a different kind of discourse, one in which the word 'love' has meaning and value.

College staff affirmed this view; describing an institutional culture of friendliness and welcome that was reflected in the attitude and approach of staff:

> Staff will stop, even if they're rushing down the corridor, they'll stop if a student asks them a question. They'll actually spend the time to resolve the query. Whereas in my last organisation, because of the workload and because of very real restrictions around time, staff didn't have that kind of time for the students. And it would fall back onto learning support ... the staff are so friendly. I had an appointment with a student. I said I'd meet him at the entrance because of

> the nature of his difficulty and he was not familiar with the building. So, I came down to meet him and the receptionist was sitting next to him, talking to him. And I thought, *Oh has something happened?* The receptionist said, *No, the student was early so I just sat down and had a chat*. And I thought, *Wow: that is the City Lit!* (Support staff)

The interviews provided a wealth of evidence of how the college addresses social needs and enables students to transform their lives. So, while the college positions itself carefully with regard to the (dominant) skills discourse, it works hard to document and promote the wider benefits accruing from the lifelong learning experiences it provides:

> We owe it to ourselves and to our staff and our students to be able to say, 'Look at what incredible value for money we deliver. Look at the range of different policy areas that adult education feeds into.' Tackling loneliness. We did a survey of our languages students a few years ago and an interesting theme that came out about why people were continuing to keep coming and progress through a language was, 'I really think it's going to help me stave off dementia.' It's just learning that kind of skill. Lifelong learning is not just about the acquisition of knowledge and skills, it's either feeling more confident, being a more active citizen, being healthier physically and mentally. Being less lonely, less socially isolated. Opportunities to do something different. Be a more engaged parent in your child's learning. (Senior leader)

As with the narratives about transformative teaching and learning that we have brought to light in other research (e.g. Duckworth and Smith, 2018, 2019), the research data from City Lit highlighted examples of the college meeting the needs of people with mental health issues, or those recovering from dependency of one kind or another.

Keith Clapson, a ceramics student, illustrates this type of transformation. Keith experienced bullying at school. As a teenager, he realised he was gay. As with many learners who

talk about further education as transformative, Keith had had negative prior experiences of schooling. He left school with no qualifications but managed to get a job as an office junior in a local firm and eventually worked his way up to managing the accounts department. However, a mental health condition linked to the bullying began to surface and he was diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). The illness affected him so badly that he was not able to leave his parents' flat by himself. After receiving cognitive behavioural therapy and anti-OCD exposure, he began to make progress in controlling his illness, eventually feeling well enough to call himself 'cured'. A key feature in his recovery was the growth of his interest in using the hospital's therapy studios. Here, he discovered pottery, art, woodwork and other crafts. This led him to take a Foundation Diploma in Art and Design at the college.

> The first reason for doing the Foundation was to see if I could get out of bed in the morning, make the journey here and last through the day. The actual art and the learning was an added bonus. I was doing it for the joy and the learning came into it. I was solely focused on the clay. The fact that I could have my hands in the clay and I could cut my hands [on the glaze]. It was an achievement.

In the course of his studies, Keith was diagnosed as dyslexic. The college's team of dyslexia specialists offered Keith the support he needed to complete his written assignments. At Keith's end-of-course exhibition, as an indication of his triumph over his illness, he incorporated a label asking visitors to 'please touch' his exhibits. This was a way of him symbolically defeating his debilitating phobia about touch and cleanliness.

Keith Clapson's ceramics

The student focus group, comprising four women of different ages and social backgrounds, was lively, animated and open. One of the main themes was the collective aspect of the educational experience. While the classes were often very diverse, the best and most rewarding experiences were those in which a group dynamic emerged. This frequently involved students' use of social media (specifically WhatsApp) to communicate with each other:

> At its bests, it's supportive and challenging. It's inspiring. We do a lot of group crit. We have to do self-reflective journals. And you show your work and then speak about it. There's a lot of friendship and collaboration. Where people continue to work along with each other.

The student focus group affirmed many of the views gathered from the other interactions. The emphasis was very much on the developmental, rather than instrumental, purpose of education. One participant described a sense of collective and community identity and the impact it had:

> The group I was involved in, we really clicked… It was an absolutely amazing feeling. You checked in when you arrived and you made sure everyone was there. And we had a WhatsApp group. That also sparked a lot of energy that the tutor then took advantage of and made things happen more. It felt electric sometimes you know.

These quotations articulate an understanding of education that transcends the reductive instrumentalism that has characterised the last 20 years of further education policy. They characterise further education as a social and collective endeavour that enables students to become more human: to seek fulfilment and 'become who they are'. Sovel Cunningham, a City Lit student and poet who will publish her first collection, *Marshalled in Ranks – the Rearrangement of Words,* in 2019, put it this way:

> Our world is changing, the people in our world are changing too. We now need a new narrative which recognises and embraces these changes: a narrative of understanding and peace, to serve us today, and the today of our children's children.

Theme #6: Space and rhythm

The importance of the college environment and how college staff interact with students within it to produce a space in which transformative teaching and learning can take place was one of the key themes to emerge from the research. In this section, we examine the qualities of space produced at City Lit. We draw on the interviews and focus groups, and on the walking interview.

Several participants mentioned the college's central London location. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, there were resonances with the Fircroft data in the way participants talked about the 'feel' of the college. Comments from the governor illustrate this:

> City Lit has a very strong culture and I think it's that intangible feeling when you come into a building. Just coming into City Lit now, today, it's chaos because the ground floor's got a lot of building work going on. It's difficult to find where to get in, it's difficult to know what to do, but there's still that real buzz, that real vibe. I love sitting in the coffee bar because it's full of people signing to each other, students who've got learning difficulties just chatting to each other. There's a lot of elderly people, a lot of young people, it's got a real buzz to it. (Governor)

There are some important ingredients to this 'feel', two of them – acceptance and safety – captured eloquently in the extracts below. The first comes from a senior leader participant who had been involved in various projects for rough sleepers:

> I remember one student, Robbie, saying, 'I feel like I can hold my head up high on the bus coming here and look at the guy sitting next to me in the eye. Because I'm not just some useless junkie who's not able to provide for his family. I'm actually a student and coming to college.' And that in itself was such a powerful thing. And going back to what (the principal) was saying earlier about this being a very open and non-judgemental environment. (Senior leader)

For many students with negative prior educational experiences, it is important that they learn in a non-judgemental space, are accepted for who they are and are not labelled in terms of their social class, race or other markers of background. The second key feature of feel is expressed by this student:

> It's a safe place to learn here. Students are offered opportunities no matter what age they are. The classroom is a safe place with others who may have gone through similar experiences. It's the first place I can come and talk openly about the challenges I've faced. It's a safe place away from isolation. (Student)

A safe environment is necessary for all students, including those with disabilities, learning difficulties or other vulnerable characteristics. Where the student body is highly diverse, the feeling of safety becomes paramount importance. When the inclusion of students who would otherwise be isolated is factored in, the benefits of a safe environment start to spill over from the classroom and into the social areas, including the cafeteria and social learning spaces. The blurring of boundaries between formal and informal learning spaces connects with this.

The walking interview took place on a Monday afternoon with Keith Clapson, the ceramics students whose journey was briefly

outlined above. The 'tour' started at a rooftop garden. From there we went through a library before arriving at what he termed 'my floor of joy', where he was introduced to ceramics, and the kiln room, for Keith a magical space. Throughout, Keith's sense of belonging was noticeable, as was the strength of his connection with staff and other students:

> I don't think anyone feels out of place here ... The people I was on Foundation with… we all meet up. I bumped into someone in the library ... I feel at home here. Whether it be staff or students, it's just a lovely environment. I feel relaxed. I feel happy.

Whereas at Fircroft, the college's magic is linked to its tranquil situation, City Lit manages to create a sanctuary-like space in the heart of London. While setting is important, alongside the history of these places, the transmission of values and ethos may be the most significant factor in creating institutional 'feel'.

Summary

- The history of the college connects with its current commitment to social justice.
- The college's location in central London provides a widely spread geographical catchment area that enables it to run the huge range of courses on offer.
- The college works hard to sustain relationships with politicians and city leaders to make itself visible is an important facilitating factor in its social justice purposing.
- The values of senior staff and governors, often stemming from personal histories and experience, assist in maintaining a focus on the college's commitment to social justice.

- The college's senior leaders work to counteract the teacher/manager divide and the inherent hierarchy of status within this.
- Providing an extra-instrumental curriculum involves holding onto a broad range of courses including 'academic' and 'leisure' courses to establish a student demographic that straddles class divides.
- The college navigates a complex funding environment in order to sustain complementary strands of provision.
- Relationships of trust between staff and managers contribute to staff autonomy in shaping the curriculum.
- The college provides a learning environment in which diversity comes as standard. This instils a sense of collective identity – connected to a distinctive sense of citizenship in London.
- The college's reputation and location are key ingredients in its distinctive offer; these features are drawn on to ensure the college's survival going forward.
- Senior leaders in the college see themselves as having a role in safeguarding the continuation of an institution that is greater than they are.

SECTION SIX: FINDINGS

CASE STUDY 3: HOPWOOD HALL COLLEGE

A case study portrait

Hopwood Hall College, situated to the north east of Manchester, provides courses mainly for learners aged 16 to 18, with almost three-quarters of its full-time learners in this age category. One of the campuses, eight miles from Manchester, is on the site of the ancestral home of the Hopwood family. The other is in the centre of Rochdale.

A Grade 2 listed building, Hopwood Hall dates in the main from the seventeenth century, with parts dating back much further. For 40 years, it was used for teacher education courses; then, in the 1990s, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council bought the buildings and a new two-campus tertiary-level college was launched. When it opened, Hopwood Hall College provided A-level courses for sixth-form students from the local area. However, in 2010, on the opening of Rochdale Sixth Form College, the college discontinued its A-level provision and concentrated instead on providing vocational courses for school leavers, apprenticeships and courses for adult learners.

Rochdale is the tenth most-deprived borough in England. In the last decade, the proportion of young people (aged 16–17) in the borough not in education, employment or training (so-called NEETs) was as high as 10 per cent; today the figure is around 6 per cent (DfE, 2019). Adult unemployment stands at 5.4 per cent, almost 1.5 per cent above the national average (ONS, 2019). Youth unemployment is higher at 16.4 per cent against a national

average of 12.1 per cent (Rochdale Borough Council, n.d.). The proportion of school leavers in Rochdale achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is 54 per cent, although this figure drops to 25 per cent for those with free school meals. The college traditionally recruits strongly from the free school meals cohort. It also recruits a higher percentage of learners from minority ethnic groups than that found in the local population.

More than three-quarters (65 per cent) of the colllege's 16–18-year-old students are from disadvantaged postcodes, according to latest IMD data. In 2017–18, 16–19 year olds made up the majority of its full-time students. Significantly, many of the full-time adult learners are 19 years old and in 2017–18 were in their third and fourth year at college. Often, these are learners who have left school with few GCSEs but have progressed in their learning journey while studying at Hopwood Hall.

Hopwood Hall College employs 415 staff members. Staff salaries account for less than 60 per cent of its overall budget. The college was inspected by Ofsted in November 2016 and graded 'Good with outstanding features', both in terms of learners' achievements and in leadership and management. It has an 85% success rate, one of the highest in Greater Manchester. The college has a well-developed support infrastructure and is recognised nationally for 'value-added'. Among other things, it provides a free breakfast of toast or porridge for students every morning. It also provides free buses to transport students into the college from surrounding areas. The college makes use of a system of student support tutors for students with pastoral issues to help them keep them on track in their studies.

Students F-T and P-T	
Age	66% = 19+ But F-T is 67% 16-18
Gender	51% are female
Ethnicity	27% of students declared themselves to be from ethnic minority groups
Employment status	
Disability and/or learning difficulties	23% of students were identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities
Total number of students (F=T and P-T)	8036

Unlike Fircroft, Hopwood relies on standard state funding and has no residential courses or the financial 'uplift' that this provides. Unlike City Lit and Fircroft, Hopwood Hall does not have Institute for Adult Learning status, catering as it does mainly for 16–18 year olds on vocational course. This means that achievement remains an integral multiplier in the way in which the college is funded: if students do not achieve their qualifications, the college is penalised financially.

Findings and discussion

This section presents our findings in relation to the research questions used in gathering data from the college's two campuses, Middleton and Rochdale. In this section, we will draw on data from interviews with the SLT and focus groups with staff and students to: i) explore the way social justice is conceptualised in the college; and ii) clarify the contextual pressures faced by the college in applying social justice at all levels.

Key themes

Theme #1. Taking account of students' socio-economic background

As the majority of the college's students are 16–18-year-olds, it is hardly surprising that this frames the commitment to social justice expressed by many staff and senior leaders in the college.

> It's about giving that young person every opportunity to achieve what they need to achieve to get better life chances. (Senior leader)

Broadly speaking, the college sees itself as an institution the role of which is to improve the life chances of the students who study there. The 16–18 year olds that the college recruits have a range of needs. An interview with a manager with oversight of the information systems within the college shed light on some of the complex support challenges the college faces:

> The types of students that present themselves, there's those that come from the school who are on the floor and need to be kind of brought up… so they might start at Level 2 … for technical skills, they might start at Level 1 even if they're really that far away from achieving anything that they need to learn how to learn again. Quite often, you'll find that those types of students, when they come from school and they enrol here, they've not attended school really, they've been pretty inactive, they've been inactive throughout Year 10 and throughout Year 11 and actually in Year 11 they've been off-rolled; they're ghosts. And then they rock up and go, 'What course can I do?' Well, they're a long way from doing any meaningful qualification so it's a Level 1 transitional course. So, then, all being well, they'll then progress onto Level 2 the following year, that might take a year, possibly two, and then they're on Level 3. So, to get them to Key Stage 5, they could be 19 years old. (Senior manager)

This passage gives us some important insights into how a marketised approach to further education structures provision

in particular ways. The starting point is that some students who enrol at the college have, according to this participant, not flourished in the previous two years of their schooling. In other words, there is a need to take account of students' engagement with their GCSE courses. In Hopwood Hall's case, as the college takes on all students who apply, the Level 1 transitional courses are its response to students who have not flourished in their GCSE studies and may even have been 'off-rolled', the practice of removing a child from school without the use of a permanent exclusion (Ofsted, 2019).

A constituency of students with high support needs demands a certain ethos and approach from the college:

> I think it's the inclusiveness. I think that's a big thing; we don't select based on anything. I mean we know both factually and anecdotally that some colleges are selective – you have to go and you'll have to have supportive parents, you'll have to have conducted yourself well at the interview and present yourself well, and ultimately you'll have to have the desired qualifications on GCSE, otherwise you don't get a place. And people and parents, in particular, fight to get in those colleges, they'll move house to try and get in those. Hopwood Hall, on the contrary really, we will find a course for you, you know, you can turn up… we'll work with you and that makes it really difficult because we have students with different needs. We have a level of a criminality that we have to contend with, whether that be gangs in north Manchester, in Rochdale or both, gangs from different ethnic origins as well, of different parts of the community, which can cause tension but we overcome it and we work with it but it's hard work. It is something that is about social justice, it's about giving people that chance because we have a lot of students who then look back in 5 or 10 years' time who often come back to this college and are really thankful for the opportunity they were given and so it does work. (Manager)

To view leadership at the college through a lens of social justice is to see the college attempting to address both the distributive and the relational aspects of a commitment in this area. For students who effectively opted out of GCSE courses in schools and/or left school with low grades, the college is positioned within the local 'market' as providing courses that re-open the possibility of connecting education to future pathways, either in education or in employment. This involves providing low-level courses as a bridge. What is concerning here is that the college's commitment to 'inclusion', which is a reflection of its commitment to social justice, appears to disadvantage it in significant ways in a marketised setting. The marketised hierarchy that emerges accentuates social divisions, dividing students by social background and qualifications achieved (and a categorisation of being 'vocational' as opposed to 'academic', as we shall see). This appears to pool students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds with negative prior educational experiences and significant needs in colleges that seek to be inclusive. But the 'hard work' of meeting the needs of this student body and providing restorative and transformative educational experiences goes unrecognised.

Data from the interviews and focus groups demonstrated the impact of austerity on the communities that the college serves:

> In the last couple of years where austerity has really played a key role I feel teaching has become increasingly more of a… almost like a side issue. Young people are coming to this college day in day out and they've got real baggage, real emotional baggage, real financial baggage and with little or no support from home. I think the cuts … have affected home life to such an extent where college is not that young person's priority; their priority could be something dealing with home life. But given where we are, and given our profile of students, it's going to impact on us more than a college in Cheshire or a college in leafy Somerset or whatever because it's just where we are. And it's that compound effect that trickles down. I think we're seeing that now. (Manager)

The interaction between the market environment in further education and national economic conditions is under-researched but this passage provides some key insights. According to this participant, the mechanisms of pastoral support that the college provides (detailed below) not only constitute scaffolding that supports student achievement, but also, as a consequence of austerity, have become so significant that they effectively shift the focus of the college's role. Rather than functioning to provide appropriate education opportunities, the local socio-economic conditions for some families necessitate the college's intervention to address social needs.

Interviews with other participants underlined this view. The examples of the ways in which the college meet the needs of their students are many and wide-ranging:

> When you ask them what they had for breakfast, 'I had a Pop Tart'. 'Right, why don't you go get some porridge downstairs or some toast?' I teach Maths as well, so the other week when they were doing their formative assessment and I said, 'Make sure next week you have some breakfast and your brains are ready to go.' So, we actually brought in breakfast bars and some of them actually went, 'Oh, it was great that, when are we having them again, next assessment?' Things like that, they want to be looked after. (Teacher)

In response to this concern about the nutritional needs of a large number of students, the college introduced free breakfasts in the canteen from 8:30 each morning. This was something we witnessed on one of the research visits to the Rochdale campus:

> If you get here for 8:30, between 8:30 and 9:00 you've free toast, free porridge, because there were so many young people that come without the basic requirements to be able to sit in a classroom. So, yes, we've noticed that; there's lots of social deprivation, it's a poor area … when I started here in 2000 … we had EMA [Educational Maintenance Allowance] … the happy period when people were supported and they just stopped it. (Senior manager)

In addition to nutritional needs, participants also signalled the spiralling incidence of health issues among students:

> There's a lot of mental health issues, an increased amount of young people presenting themselves with a range of difficulties but mental health being one of them. I mean the extreme ones are kind of few and far between but I've worked here now for three years and this year even me just me on my own has witnessed more incidents of student breakdowns, self-harm, you know. (Senior manager)

Many of the needs that the college finds itself addressing relate to poverty:

> We do have a lot of young people that are actually carers. That has an impact so… we have a policy where we want 90 per cent attendance as a bare minimum. We want 100 per cent but 90 per cent is the minimum but for some young people… it might need to be 60 per cent because we won't exclude that young person for not attending. They need to be achieving their targets and it's very difficult when you realise they're not attending because they're actually having to get their dad up or getting their dad ready, make sure he's got his tablets, take the siblings to school, you know… You need to know your learner, you need to sit and listen to what is affecting their attendance or their study and how best can we support and help that and not only from a centre director point of view, but that's really crucial for all staff. (Senior manager)

These caring responsibilities clearly impact on students' ability to progress on their courses as studying has to fit alongside this role in the family home. Participants talked about other, associated issues that in other circumstances might be called pastoral (with its association of being supplementary to a central role), but in this case are fundamental. One participant raised the issue of domestic violence:

> I did a Level 2 two years ago… but when I was doing that, I got into a DV relationship, so I had to sort that out… and I had to move away – not move away, but be put in protected custody by the Police. So, as soon as he got a custodial sentence, that was when I thought, 'This is my chance now'. (Access student)

Safeguarding has become an important element in the 16-18 curriculum, particularly following the high-profile court case concerning the grooming of young women in Rochdale:

> [It] affected some of our students in this college and they needed that support really. Things in the media, attending court, it affected some of my students in particular and we were there for them, you know, we were there for them. These are different, they're like a different skillset that you need now in further education, you're not just stood at the front of a class and teaching, it's understanding the social circumstances and some of the problems that these people [have]. (Teacher)

Students often face significant barriers in their personal lives and the college offers opportunities for them to move their lives forward despite this:

> Yes, every week I say I'm not coming back, because I'm struggling, I can't do it, but then I just speak to [my teacher] Mark. We've got 'Itslearning', which is the online website, we just log into that and you can just message your tutor and just say, 'I'm not coming back', and then they'll send one back saying, 'Come and speak to me, come and see me when you're back in on Wednesday, we'll talk about it.' I work full time as well as do this. So, I do my coursework at night when I'm going to bed, so I just sit up for an hour or two before I go to bed. Get the little 'un to bed ... So, 'Itslearning' is quite helpful because, if you're struggling at night, then you can just log on and Mark does answer straightaway. So he does help. (Student participant)

Focus group

Far from being simply ‘technicians’ responsible for delivering a curriculum, teachers represent the front line in addressing this complex array of issues. The supportive relationships they maintain with students, and their accessibility, are crucial. Encouragement and ongoing support and empathy are essential ingredients. As in the City Lit case study, the background of staff plays a significant role in the educational experiences the college offers. This ensures a contextualised understanding of the range of issues faced by the students:

> I had one yesterday, he had no money for his lunch but he still come to college, because that was his priority. They come with so many different things, that they need somebody to just reassure them sometimes and to lead them in the right way. And hopefully I do do that because of my background and where I come from, I can understand exactly the barriers that they’ve got. (Teacher)

The students are very conscious of their backgrounds, as well as of the negative way in which the area they come from is portrayed:

> We are highlighted across the whole country [as] one of the most deprived areas in the country, which is quite a negative thing for the learners. It’s something they talk about. (Teacher)

That consciousness adds a further layer of significance to the backgrounds of staff. This isn't only about authenticity, but also concerns teachers' ability to relate without labelling students:

> I wasn't brought up in a nice area, nice house, and I think sometimes students say, 'You live in a five bedroom detached in a nice area'. I said, 'Do you know where I was brought up, on Newbold?' …one of the first areas of Rochdale now and it wasn't great when I was brought up there. So I can relate to where they come from. (Teacher)

This shows the importance of 'growing you own': the recruitment of new teachers whose origins are in the area or, better still, who have come through the college themselves:

> I think when you grow your own, you then are able to understand where the students are coming from, so thinking of the staff that did the HNR foundation degree with us and they came to teach at the college, you know, they have families, they have work commitments, they have elderly relatives they were looking after, anything that they might be that our students… I think staff, when they've walked the same walk, they have a much deeper understanding of what them barriers might be. (Senior leader)

The college positions itself as an engine for social mobility and economic growth embedded in the community it serves. 'Walking the same road' is a form of cultural capital that has the potential to contribute to the effectiveness of teachers. Unlike versions of social mobility that imply an abandonment of one's origins, here we see how being socially mobile can consolidate commitment to a local area. During the interviews and focus groups, we encountered a number of staff who had previously been students. One participant had been a classroom assistant for many years but returned to learn, and eventually became a lecturer, after attending an open day with her daughter:

> When I was looking and researching for colleges for my daughter last year, we looked at Hopwood Hall College. She

> was having a look at the travel and tourism course and just while we were on it ... I had a look and there was something there and I mulled it over with a friend … I am not going to lose anything if I popped my application in. Got a call back I was like, 'Oh, what have I done?', and the rest is history and now I am here so I am now a lecturer on the Health and Social Care Team. I am currently doing my Level 5 lecturing qualification. (Ex-student, now teacher)

Old and new buildings at Middleton campus

The college addresses students' needs through a variety of structural interventions. For example, the college funds uniforms for a cohort of students in one subject area. While introducing uniforms for 16–18 year olds in a college setting might seem counter-intuitive, the explanation connects, once more, to poverty:

> [T]his year in my centre, we've implemented a uniform … because that was becoming an issue that people were coming in with the same clothes on or they weren't coming in because they didn't have clothes to wear, you know, like they didn't have any clean clothes or whatever. (Senior manager)

Another participant had a slightly different perspective:

> The driving force has been the placements. They've wanted students going in being identifiable and appropriately dressed, because if you've got a student who hasn't got many clothes and the clothes she has got are tiny little crop tops, and that's

> all she's got. And she's going into placement and being told that's not appropriate, that's not professional. You know, they might not have the money to go and buy two white tops and a pair of pants and a pair of shoes they wouldn't wear at any other point. (Teacher)

This section has provided concrete examples of how the socio-economic background of students shapes the teaching and learning experience at Hopwood Hall. An understanding of this context and a nuanced and imaginative set of responses to this, combined with an empathetic and supportive disposition on the part of teaching staff, are the primary ways in which leadership in the college demonstrates its commitment to social justice. In the next section we look at the support mechanisms that underpin this commitment.

Theme #2: Support mechanisms

In addition to the pastoral support for students, the college offers a bursary scheme to address students' financial difficulties:

> Financial support is first. We do support students financially through bursary and through our own funds as well ... If money is a barrier to them coming to college then we'll overcome that. (Senior manager)

These bursaries can cover travel but also be used to pay for stationery and other essentials. The college also caters for students with special educational needs. However, recent changes to the funding for these students means that the college is unable to get additional resources if needs emerge once the student has enrolled, for example dyslexia:

> There used to be … a budget that you could claim for additional learning support ... Now, it's only funded if students have got an educational health care (EHC) plan, which has to be from school … if it's not been diagnosed and then we diagnose it ourselves at 16 there's no extra funding ... but, then, we can't ignore that need either so it costs us because we still support that student, we can't not… we have

> way in excess of our high-needs placement for our funding, so we have funding places I think for 59 high-need students and we have about 215 I think when I last looked of those that would meet the high needs ... the government say it's protected ... it's capped and there's no more we can bid for, so if our circumstances change we can't get anymore. (Senior manager)

The college also employs a student support tutor in each programme area. In the student focus group, participants said how much this role was valued:

> Every area is allocated what … a student support tutor and that person looks after the pastoral side of that group ... That person is available at any time after [a] lesson so it's like an open door policy, so not only can you make an appointment to go and see that person you can also just turn up at the door and say, 'I need help.' (Manager)

The role is designed to add an extra layer of personalised care.

> The SSTs and the tutors, they're not just to be nosey, it is to understand that young person, to know why they're coming in with dirty clothes or why they're coming in in the same clothes. (Senior manager)

Through this role, the college also activates links with other agencies in a way that was foregrounded in the Every Child Matters agenda as best practice in 'joined up working' in local services/agencies (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2005):

> I mean through our student support tutors they build relationships with young people and we do work with the local authority … so if someone has run away from home or they're living rough or they're sleeping rough … we'll be notified and we'll work with other agencies to overcome that and to work with our students on that. (Senior manager)

Student welfare is a major concern for the college and it plays a pivotal role in ensuring the full range of their needs are addressed, with the support of different agencies. However, as we have also seen, the limited availability of funding means that there is often a mismatch between need and resource. In the next section, we will analyse the research data concerning funding.

Theme #3: Funding and the academic/ vocational divide

College staff at all levels see their work as addressing a range social needs that appear to have deepened since austerity measures were introduced in 2010. In many cases, the college is stepping in to fill a vacuum created by the removal of other services and provision:

> Yes, it's all the additional support that they need. They're the types of things that are being cut left, right and centre, you know, like all the mental health support that was out there, youth, you know, the youth work – it's gone, it's just not there.

As local authority and charitable provision in these areas has shrunk, the college has been forced to field the consequences of this for its student body. Unsurprisingly, funding has a huge influence on the college's ability to address these needs.

> We need to work out how we can make that distinction between those students who require more support. Because what we're doing is working within a funding envelope for a young person, regardless of what their actual demand is, almost because if a young person is on a Level 3 programme and is a high-flyer, they get the same amount of funding as somebody who has got a lot of needs, a lot of baggage, a very low prior attainment, poor literacy, poor numeracy. So, inevitably, there's a lot more work that needs to go in. Now, surely there should be something that says: the more of Type A learners you've got the less funding you need and it just seems to be a little mismatched there… There is some

> postcode and there is an IMD Index Multiple Deprivation whereby they do uplift funding but it's fairly modest really, if I'm honest, and, again, it's one of those things that has been frozen. (Senior manager)

While staff at the college would love simply to get on and teach, they are faced with so many issues that need to be dealt with first in order to allow the young people to flourish and learn. Where uplifts in funding are available, they appear not to have kept pace with the intensification of poverty that has resulted from austerity. Cuts have also resulted in the college withdrawing some of the community-based provision it had previously offered:

> When there was funding, you know, we used to have additional funding for being in the community, we did a lot more outreach, we worked in Haywood, we worked in Castlemere, we worked in Middleton. We haven't got the same funding anymore but if there was a need, like we did a young parents group and we ran that in Middleton, so that was aimed at young parents, women and men, that were under the age of 20 and had fell out of education. So we went there and we did a young parenting course and that actually, from each year we had about 40 per cent so they was only small groups, maybe ten, and about 40 per cent of them actually accessed back into education and came on to do Level 2 in whatever area.

The benefits of this 'outreach' work in terms of social inclusion are clear but funding reductions have made them financially impractical.

There was a perception among staff that while further education had been disproportionately targeted for cuts, the neighbouring sixth form college was better funded *per capita* than Hopwood Hall. In fact, although a funding gap existed in 2010, austerity provided an opportunity for the government to level down the divergence in funding rates between schools, sixth forms and colleges (NEU, 2018). However, the additional needs of college students at this level, and the extra support and pastoral care this

demands, means that they are *de facto* funded at a lower level than their sixth-form peers. The long-term erosion of pay and conditions in further education is another factor that appears to disadvantage colleges in comparison to sixth form colleges.

The division of students into vocational and academic through the establishment of new, or growth of existing, sixth forms, raises questions of social justice, as it appears to reinforce existing social divisions and artificially limits the range of course available in college, as a teacher participant noted:

> There's definitely been a change in the culture really. So, when I first started, we were much bigger, we had a lot more students. We had much more students coming in with the qualifications to do Level 3, to do that in the BTEC course. We used to have two massive courses in the BTEC, whereas now we get more Level 2 and we only have one class of BTEC. I think because we have got the sixth form college, so quite a few go there to do their A-levels. It's right next to us ... and they offer A-levels but they're separate. Some students go outside of the borough. (Teacher)

Other participants expressed concerns about the negative impact of an academic/vocational divide in which A-levels trump all other qualifications and, by definition, disadvantage students taking vocational qualifications:

> I think that one of the things for us is the advice that they get from careers in school. They don't get the right advice a lot of the time. So, I feel that schools careers push A-levels for your more academic students, and don't actually look at the benefits of a vocational route into… because whatever career you want to do, on the whole there's a vocational route they can go down. They obsess on A-levels. (Teacher)

The 'gold standard' of A-levels is seen here to effectively define the terrain, meaning that those students who are unable to gain entry to study A-levels are positioned as second best.

Overall, the evidence from our research draws a picture in which, as a further education provider, Hopwood Hall faces multiple disadvantages in the so-called 'market' environment. The college caters for a greater number of students with greater support and health needs. Its classification as a vocational college with no A-level provision, and the requirement to 'compete' with a nearby sixth form, appears to consolidate structural disadvantage. The academic/vocational divide is affirmed in this and, in turn, contributes to the 'classing' of further education colleges. Quite simply, the implication is that socioeconomic background is likely to be a key determiner of the type of college a student will attend.

Despite the convergence of funding between sixth form colleges and further education colleges, the curriculum divide puts colleges in a position of disadvantage, having to address greater levels of need on the same budget. This represents a major obstacle to social justice.

Theme #4: The policy environment

The disconnect between the churn of national policy directives and the local context faced by colleges is a familiar theme from the literature (e.g. Keep, 2006). At Hopwood Hall, one aspect of this was the imposition of mandatory English and maths qualifications for 16–18 year olds.

> A lot of this government seem to be about introducing policies for the sake of introducing policies and there's not that understanding of what the unintended consequence is of doing something. And the unintended consequence of this English and maths policy, because it sounds great in middle England, well everyone's got to get a GCSE in English and maths by the time you're 18. Well, great, but they're not doing at school so what makes you think they're going to do it at college? It's mad.

Participants were critical of the continuous introduction of policy initiatives in the last decade and the destabilising effect this has

had. There was also a suspicion that many of these policies had a common thread – the systematic undermining of colleges' role as providers of further education:

> What I'm saying is: grow apprenticeships, no-one's going to say that's a bad idea, of course, 'cause apprenticeships have their place. Grow A-levels, no-one's going to argue with that. But let's introduce T-levels, we're going to create traineeships, we're going to create supported internships and all these things actually are at the expense of undermining FE and shrinking FE and that's the bit that concerns me because it's still got to be supported, it's as important as all those other things.

The impetus to 'put employers in the driving seat' (BIS, 2013), shifting the locus of vocational courses towards work-based provision, was keenly felt. The sense of neglect that has taken hold in colleges since 2010, the sense of being overlooked and taken-for-granted by central government springs in part from the narrow instrumentalist lens through which government views colleges' activities. In fact, as with the other case study colleges, Hopwood Hall is forward-looking and strives to be responsive to local 'skills' needs. This involves, for example, annually reviewing curriculum against the local employment opportunities and identifying any skills shortages. However, as we have also seen, the college's function is both wider and more complex than this.

Also like the other case study colleges, Hopwood Hall is situated in a region in which a new mayoral authority has recently been established, bringing with it a devolution of some aspects of further education funding. However, while a senior manager noted a large overlap between the mayor's agenda and that of the college, there was also a sense that devolution might not necessarily lead to a greater level of funding:

> I think it's inevitable there's going to be less because it's going to be decommissioned from central government to regional Mayor, regional, sub-regionals. And, then, it's going to be top-sliced because there's going to be an infrastructure in place to support the process. (Senior manager)

There was a general impression among staff that the struggle to provide educational opportunities that met the needs of local students would be ongoing.

Refurbished historic buildings of Hopwood Hall

Theme #5: Temporality

Time and how it is used to shape learning experiences was an important theme of the project. All the case study colleges see themselves as offering 'second chance' educational opportunities, as one Hopwood Hall participant noted:

> We don't want to be a sink college, because we accept anybody from any background, any walk of life, anyone is welcome at Hopwood Hall, no matter where you're from, what you've done, whatever – second chances, you name it; third, fourth, fifth…

The realignment of the relationship between time and educational episodes as a response to student need, the diverse rhythms of students' life courses and the different rates at which students learn are key influencers of the further education offer. While in Fircroft one aspect of this was the use of short residential courses and the fluidity of learning that passed beyond classroom walls into social time, Hopwood Hall offers a more standard but nevertheless important adaptation. For many 16–18 year olds,

the college provides a catch-up year in which they can pursue course at Level 2 alongside GCSE retakes in English and Maths.

> We have students that are on a Level 2 programme that probably could have achieved had they applied themselves or been given more support or whatever reason so they come and they start on a Level 2 with the intention that they're going to get their GCSEs alongside that Level 2 qualification. Then, they progress onto a Level 3 so that's your three-year programme because they've got the one-year Level 2, which is like a transition year, if you like, and then a two-year Level 3 programme … the intention is by the time they get on that Level 3 they will have had the chance to do their GCSEs.

The notion of the second chance centres on colleges being able to provide additional opportunities and additional time. As such, it is working against the grain of policy that seeks improved efficiency: increased productivity either through an increase in student numbers or a shortening in the time-span needed for them to achieve a qualification. This leads to Hopwood Hall running GCSE retakes in parallel with students' vocational courses. According to one senior manager, the way funding works, once more creates challenges for the college in this area:

> I've got to say one thing about the funding formula that really does impact on FE colleges, particularly inner-city FE colleges, and particularly with those FE colleges that have a lot of second chance English and maths students. It's the funding. I say it's £4,000 but once a student turns 18 it's dropped by £700 to £3,300, just straightaway, regardless of that person's ability, regardless of anything … why? Well, because, in government, they think that [students] don't cost as much when they turn 18. Well, why is it then, when you turn 18 and you go to university, you can fund it at £9,000 in a university, but in a college you're actually worth £700 less? Now … we have 500 18-year-olds, who've left school probably with very little, so they've taken an extra year to get to where they should have been and we get penalised for it. (Senior manager)

The college is effectively penalised when some students require a more flexible timeframe. However, putting students on courses with rigid timeframes for completion would only disadvantage them further:

> In an FE college, that extra year is key and, actually, it's not just 18, some young people will come to Hopwood Hall at 16 and they will leave us at 19, it's taken them four years to get to where they should be because that's just the rate in which they're learning, even with the best will in the world it's taken four years, but then they're ready to go and progress and get a job, an apprenticeship, or even go to university … but it's taken two extra years. (Senior manager)

In a stratified 'market' where sixth-form provision attracts t academic students from more middle-class homes, one of the key things that colleges have to contend with is that the students they do get might take longer to learn and achieve on their courses. Under the normative Key Stage matrix, if a proportion of students achieve a level of qualification, the assumption might be that they are able to learn at that normative rate. For those who do not fit the normative template, the imposition of a tight timeframe appears to be based on the assumption that most of the learning has already happened, that colleges are simply undertaking a 'mopping-up' exercise. In fact, as this study indicates, colleges are often starting almost from scratch. The tapering of funding for students aged 18+ is an example of the structural reinforcement of disadvantage. In this case, Hopwood Hall is striving against the inflexibility of a funding regime that is unable to ensure that funds follow needs so that students can learn at a pace that sits outside a centralised and arbitrary norm.

Theme #6: Transformative teaching and learning

Our research visits to Hopwood Hall brought to light many stories of transformative teaching and learning. The second-chance theme formed a strong strand within the data, as did the sense that many young people had been failed first time around, by the school system. With these students, the social

justice dimension involves colleges picking up the pieces. Schools are also subject to performance metrics and, according to one participant, some college students are, in effect, casualties of that:

> There's this demand for results and if you've got young people in your class that are not performing and not really showing interest to perform, it's easier to concentrate on ones that really do want to achieve and are likely to achieve. So that means that we end up with a lot of learners coming to us for that second chance that hadn't achieved but they wouldn't be able to achieve because they'd actually not been educated. So, they then have, it might take them two years, it might take them three years, to then start maths and English again to try and get their GCSEs. (Teacher)

For the college, providing second chances requires reconstruction and restoration: assisting the students in reconstructing a positive learning identity and the restoration of their confidence in themselves as learners. This undoing of what has been done suggests a pedagogical approach that is not linear, but which has to loop backwards before moving forwards again. The challenge in this is greater when students are studying an unfamiliar subject and must revisit well-trodden pathways:

> The team that we've got at the college for English and maths, you know, they work really hard because they've got a starting point, people coming in that have failed to begin with, so that is automatically a barrier. They don't want to be there, you know, not all of them but most of them don't want to be there, they've come to do, I don't know, brick building or car maintenance or early years, they don't want to then sit back in a classroom and do maths or English because they've already failed at that … staff have to work really hard to change their mindset that actually we're going to do this not only because you need it but because it's going to really benefit you in the long run. (Manager)

This is another reason why the management of time is so important. For the 'second chance' to be worthwhile, it cannot be

simply about continuing down the same (damaging) path. If we look at the imposition of the GCSE retakes in English and Maths in the light of this realisation, we see that without the provision of more time and (ideally) a more flexible and student-centred curriculum, it risks simply visiting further symbolic violence on students who have already been alienated by it.

Confidence-building is a key aspect of transformative teaching and learning, as one participant in the student focus group explained:

> Maybe three four years ago, I didn't have a lot of confidence, but as I have gone along the years, lots of bumps up and down and I think it has improved me and I have gained my confidence. (Health and Social Care student)

The alienation and lack of self-confidence as learners surfaced many times in the teachers' interviews:

> I've actually had students say … 'I'm stupid, I'm thick, I can't do it.' And I had that exactly the same situation, so I can relate to that. When I was in Year 3 at secondary school, my maths teacher told me, 'Don't come next year, you're thick and you can't do it, so there's no point coming.' I went back in the fourth year and it was a different teacher, so on the first lesson I just sat back doing noughts and crosses and talking to my friends. She said, 'Jane B_____, what are you doing?' And she spoke to me after class, I said, 'Well, I was told I can't do it.' 'What do you mean you can't do it? You're not allowed to?' 'No, I was told I can't do it, I'm thick.' 'You will do it and you will pass.' I said, 'Right, okay', and I did. (Teacher)

Teachers enact leadership with a commitment to social justice when they show belief in the ability of students to achieve. In this passage, the participant has a clear understanding of the power of teacher expectation deriving from her own experience. Another of the roles teachers take on is to inspire their students and give them hope.

> Family background: there's one student who lives with parents who are very, very poor, struggles with money all the time, but makes every effort with the work. It's always in on time. Absolutely committed to getting the work done because they can see light at the end of the tunnel. 'This is what I could achieve.' Because we do talk to them, 'When you finish this, this is what you could do.' Because there is hope. I always just think if I don't give them that, they've not got it at home, you can do it, come on, you can do it, just do your best. I always say to them, 'Just do your best.' (Teacher)

Teaching hope is about creating conditions in which individuals feel able to act and, from there, they can engage in the struggle to achieve, to build their prospects for the future. In order to achieve this, teachers have to establish relationships which, while professional and structured by curriculum, sometimes occupy a space that borders on the parental:

> I've had one say, 'I wish you were my mum.' Sometimes it's because they haven't got that relationship with their mum. Sometimes it's just, I'm not the mum, so it's easy to listen. They really do come and talk to you. If they don't, you sort of get a sense of when there isn't something right, and you can't insist, but will probably it will be on the context of: *I could just do with having a chat with you about such and such a thing.* And see if you can get anywhere, sometimes you do, sometimes you don't, but it's just being aware of that. (Teacher)

The quality of the relationship between teacher and student is where the commitment to social justice plays out. It hinges on a communicative awareness: an ongoing dialogue in which teachers make judgements about the affective space that the student is in and intervene in nuanced ways to nurture trust. There is a significant amount of work that is invisible in relation to the pastoral support that teachers carry out in order to create the conditions for educational achievement:

> It's time-consuming if you've got to contact a student in the morning to say, 'Do make sure you'll be in today, won't you?' Or you've got to contact a parent and say, 'No, they've not been in again, I'm quite worried', having to liaise with the student support tutors, having to record everything. The student's not been in again, not submitted their work again, please will you keep an eye on her.

None of this work can be carried out effectively within an environment focused on outputs alone. The underpinning ethic of care is what makes such labour possible and fruitful. Hopwood Hall's achievement lies in its determination to maintain a culture in which teachers have the autonomy to bring their values to their teaching, despite the enormous pressures caused by the imbalance between funding and required resources.

Theme #7: Space and informal and collective learning

We carried out one walking interview at the Middleton Campus. The participant was a former adult student on the Access to HE course who had gone on to study at a nearby university. The participant led the interviewer from the classrooms in the teaching block across the campus to the refectory, then to the library and the IT suite. But the focus of the walk centred on the classrooms in which the participant had spent much of her time at the college.

> This room here is where we started. We called it the goldfish bowl because you can see right in. It's really warm. Cosy. It was very tech with all your plug sockets and everything. And we'd never seen anything like it so. Because, at school, it was just desks and you sat there. It was just really comfortable. That was our favourite room.

Embedded in the description is a sense of learning as a social and collective experience. Throughout the interview, the participant focused on the collective experience she had with her fellow students:

> This was our gathering room where we used to sneak an extra five minutes on our breaks. We had get-togethers where we used to have our tea. We had access to the kitchen areas so it was just like, dead relaxed and comfortable.... The difference between here and [university] is we just feel at home here... When I'm here I'm not fazed at all.

For those who have worked for a long time in educational settings, we can forget how intimidating these spaces can be. This passage communicates how powerful the effect is of creating educational spaces that bridge the boundaries between the formal and the informal and that foster the development of social relationships between students to make learning a collective experience.

The gathering room

There is a striking contrast between Hopwood Hall and the other two case study colleges. However, there is also a powerful commonality in the shared commitment and values of the staff. While the college is located in an urban area with significant levels of poverty and a range of contingent social and health needs, which it addresses with determination, there are significant structural barriers and impediments that constrain its efforts. Hopwood Hall provides educational experiences for students with identical issues to those encountered at Fircroft and City Lit, but

its ability to be creative and to establish an environment in which transformative teaching and learning can flourish is constrained by regulation on curriculum, policy intervention in 16–19 vocational qualifications and funding. As one senior manager put it, such reforms are eroding the traditional further education offer, 'almost putting us in a position where there isn't an FE'.

Summary

- The social justice purposing of the college is focused on addressing poverty and the social needs arising from the effects of austerity.
- The establishment of a specific job role to focus on student support in each area is a key way in which student need is addressed.
- The college's commitment to its students' interests is exemplified in its provision for students with disabilities/special educational needs, despite inflexible and inadequate funding.
- The college's ability to provide 'outreach' in local communities has been reduced by the funding squeeze.
- The recruitment of local teachers, including 'homegrown' talent, is important as this enables the rapid development of empathic relationships with students.
- The loss of A-level provision, coupled with competition with local sixth form provision, works to entrench social class divisions to the disadvantage of further education students.
- Teachers' leadership is inherent in the ethic of care that they invest in their relationships with students.

- The 'second chance' offered by the college often involves undoing the damage done before new learning can take place.
- The rigidity of the funding methodology, particularly in its prescription of course time, interferes with the college's ability to address students' needs.

SECTION SEVEN – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The national and international events of the last five years foreground the crisis we are currently experiencing in western models of leadership. Much of this crisis originates in a tension between a purposing (of institutions but also individuals) that:

i) seeks to comply with and refine responses to existing systems and patterns of culture,

as against a purposing that:

ii) seeks to address issues of the common good and problems generated by existing systems and patterns of culture.

In researching the case study colleges we sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors enable/hinder individuals in further education settings in actualising transformative leadership?
2. What tensions do staff face in enacting transformative leadership within further education settings?

The answers to these questions are, at first glance, specific to each institution. Nevertheless, there are some overarching points that can be made. The tension that arises between social justice and leadership in further education is generated by friction between the demands of the current, marketised system and the desire to focus on pressing issues of social justice. In a context in which, nationally and globally, we are experiencing a crisis of legitimacy in our models of leadership, what options are there?

If leadership is in difficulty generally, then in a sector of education that is tightly constrained by funding and incessant policy intervention, where important social benefits are routinely underestimated, there may be minimal room for manoeuvre.

What we have attempted to show in this report is how, despite these structural constraints, leadership orientated towards social justice is not only evident, it is being fashioned and re-fashioned in imaginative and courageous ways. The 'further' in further education is being articulated in colleges in a variety of ways, as tcolleges attempt to balance the needs of the local ecologies with the demands of a prescriptive and centralised policy environment. All three of the case study colleges recognised social justice as a central purpose of their activities although they realised this in different ways and to different degrees.

The extent to which social justice was engaged with – whether approached as relating to a series of substantive social issues, as a social ideal to be pursued or as a dynamic socio-cultural and egalitarian principle informing interactions between managers, staff and students – was to a large extent a function of the position of each college within the further education landscape. The founding mission and historic values of each institution were also important factors. These differences, combined with the distinct profile of each college, also influenced the distinct ways in which they dealt with the pressures associated with policy, funding and competition in a marketised context.

The navigation of funding, the mediation of this market and the adaptation to (often disruptive) centralised policy initiatives are necessary functions of any college, but for those that are attempting social justice purposing, they are critical. In relation to social justice, in each college setting, leadership was conceptualised and realised in different ways. It is helpful to view the colleges as existing along a spectrum in which financial considerations and market conditions interact with local ecology. Each college mediates the constraints and affordances of its context and this is expressed in the way leadership in which plays out.

Along this spectrum, Fircroft College deploys a model of interaction founded on sociocratic principles; a commitment to social justice permeates institutional, administrative, and teaching and learning practices. City Lit offers courses that address specific issues relating to social justice and has an ethos of diversity and community that has the power to combat the loneliness and atomisation of life in the metropolis. Hopwood Hall tackles concrete manifestations of poverty and the impact of austerity by providing a range of support mechanisms and engaging empathetic staff with an understanding of the local area and students' needs.

Whatever their position within this field, the senior leaders in each college have an important role to play in managing change and planning for the future. Significantly, in two of the three case studies, there had been significant change at SLT level in the previous few years. Indeed, in one case, there was a change of principal during the period in which the research was taking place. This is significant because, as our research has shown, for colleges with a history of committing to social justice, that history is a powerful and vital resource that can serve a bulwark against the turbulence of the further education 'policy present' (Drew et al, 2018). Even for these colleges, adaptation and renewal is important. The great worry is that in a policy landscape fixated on an instrumentalist agenda, the connection colleges have with their histories can be severed. In one sense, incorporation and the realignment it introduced in the relationships between colleges and central, rather than local, government can be seen as a contributing factor. It resonates with the triple lock of objectification of further education students: as a 'bums on seats' form of funding, as 'also-rans' in a race that favours 'academic' students, as human capital rather than human beings with biographies, often with negative prior educational experience and with dreams and plans of their own.

While the impacts of these developments may be various, we need to remember that marketization is in tension with social justice; put another way, it has never been a force *for*

social justice and never can be. Some intervention will always be needed, some democratic counterbalance, if we are to avoid a Darwinian landscape of winner takes all. The impact of marketization is pervasive; it colonises ways of thinking and relating within and between institutions, individuals and government. The extent to which it is effective in contributing to the social and economic gains that are necessary in towns such as Rochdale is questionable.

When we view further education through the lens of social justice, it forces us to re-examine the role of individual institutions as being central to our understanding. While the individual college is the unit of market competition, our research shows it can also be a site for a re-purposing of the instrumental orthodoxy. The abstract space of the 'FE sector' contains within it 'differential space', the potential for renewal and against-the-grain cultures and practices. This insight is affirmed by the evidence from the project that shows how, in a college setting in which social justice values are most fully realised, the pedagogical goals reach beyond college walls. There is a selflessness and altruism in the everyday cultural practices of the college. The college is, in that sense, primarily a vehicle for bringing about change at the level of the individual but also in society more broadly.

Figure 2: The centrifugal trajectory of social justice leadership

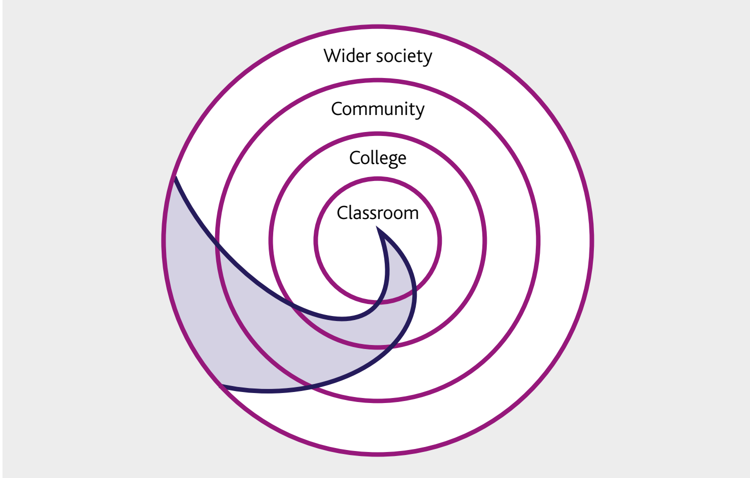


Figure 2 is an idealised graphical representation of the relationship between different domains and social justice. The concentric circles represent the different domains and, within each, are the facilitating factors and constraints that might shape a commitment to social justice. The spiral indicates a trajectory outwards from the classroom, through the college, into the community and into wider society. The growth of the spiral is dependent on 'leadership' in each domain. This conceptualisation of interconnectedness emerged from the literature and informed the research methodology.

College leadership orientated by principles of social justice can suffuse college cultures, encouraging staff at all levels to act on explicit values. The impact of this on students emerged strongly in the research. Whether this then connects and brings about change to the communities and wider society depends on the collective energies and organisation that individual students encounter once they venture beyond college walls. Ultimately, leadership that is committed to social justice will foster the kind of critical consciousness we have highlighted, and will continue to promote socially just practices and to tackle social issues relevant to their communities, informed by an optimism of the heart, however hostile the policy environment.

We have stressed how important it is to remember how the three colleges at the centre of this study operate within specific contexts. It needs to be emphasised that Fircroft and City Lit, as Institutes for Adult Learning, are in many ways anomalies in the field of adult education providers. However, it is important to note that this does not mean that they enjoy a privileged status. As noted in the introduction, the adult education budget has suffered cuts of around 40 per cent since 2010, while the 16–19 funding has been cut by 24 per cent. Like other colleges, Fircroft and City Lit are forced to strategise and calculate for the future while constrained by an unreliable and unstable funding environment. In the face of such turbulence, the colleges draw heavily on their historical heritage, and the cultural capital embedded within that is an important resource in the assertion of their relevance and meaning.

All three colleges were happy to participate in the research and, at least at SLT level, openly espoused a commitment to social justice. How this commitment materialised in terms of the culture and everyday practices of managers, staff and students differed in each case. The circumstances in which colleges find themselves is an important influence but so too is the history of each college. In the current context, our research provides strong evidence that the demands imposed on college leadership make an organisationally pervasive focus on social justice – one that operates at every level of the college and informs interactions between staff and staff (all staff, not just teachers and managers) and staff and students – extremely difficult.

As such, we can describe the relationship between further education leadership and social justice as the enabling of an everyday construction of a layered narrative connecting college activities to social justice. The layering of the narrative is a differentiating feature. If leadership is the quality of action by individuals at all levels of the organisation, the notion of layering is signalling the extent to which these values have penetrated organisational strata. The data also suggest that 'putting the student first' may signal a deeply layered commitment to social justice but it can also indicate a veneer generated in response to a market in which 'Equality and Diversity' have become hollow commodified tropes. To return to Gewirtz and Raelin, social justice is about distribution but also demands a critical (re) examination of relationships, and a commitment to relating to others through I/thou rather than I/it relationships.

The enmeshment of students in a commercial and data-driven set of relationships represents an objectification and is inconsistent with a commitment to social justice. The exploitation and objectification of staff also undermines any college's proclaimed commitment to social justice, irrespective of any claims to be 'putting students first'. Admittedly, this is a tension that further education teachers have wrestled with ever since the funding methodology integrated achievement into its formula the heart. There is evidence to suggest that many retreat

into the sanctuary of the classroom, which becomes a cloistered space in which egalitarian relations can be materialised (See O'Leary et al, 2019: 91–2).

The number of layers into which colleges are able to integrate a commitment to social justice depends on context. A commitment to social justice can start with senior leaders being continuously engaged in a) understanding what social justice issues confront students locally; and b) thinking through how a concern for social justice can be a central concern, not just in the classroom (through transformative teaching and learning) but in their college's administrative processes, institutional practices and culture. The next step is to implement this commitment, cautiously but with an open heart.

The social justice curriculum

The 'classing' of further education has become a fact of policy built on and reinforced by the so-called academic/vocational divide. As such, a narrowing of college curricula to the provision of vocational courses, while an understandable response to the policy landscape, contributes to the social division of students from different class backgrounds. It also imposes a spatial dimension that limits the choice of students. However, a curriculum for social justice also has other features.

A curriculum that is orientated towards social justice has an important temporal element. It is not 'packed'. This means that:

i) there is space in classrooms and in lesson time for students to reflect on their identities and experiences and to connect these to first the course context but then also to wider society, the world and their future;

ii) teachers have access to space/time to create curricular links between the present social political economic global present, the course content and the students.

Figure 3: The social justice curriculum

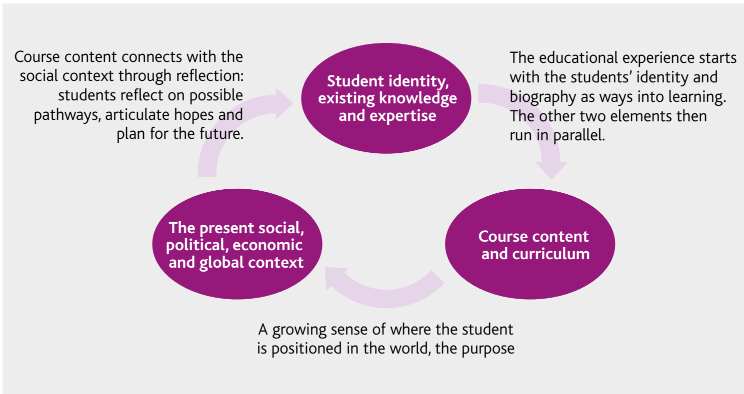


Figure 3 shows a triadic dynamic. The work necessary to connect these three points of the triangle requires time and space. What we are suggesting here is that normally the expectation is simply that teachers connect course content and the students (and sometimes, narrowly, the workplace domain or employment). The third coordinate in the triad is crucial because actually it determines the position andmeaning of the other coordinates.

Recommendations

To enable colleges to enact leadership that is orientated towards achieving social justice, as defined in this report, we recommend the following:

- **Funding** needs to acknowledge and privilege the position of colleges within existing local ecologies. A clear justification and articulation of locally defined aims, and a demonstration of how these are being met, is important. It shouldn't be the responsibility of colleges to develop measures of the social benefits of further education. There is existing evidence of the importance of these benefits and new thinking needs to be undertaken at government level to find ways of recognising the wider social benefits colleges provide for society. That students with most needs (both educational and socio-economic) should have access to more

funding, rather than less, as is currently the case, and this should be a fundamental principle of further education, nationally.

- A further education **curriculum** that is narrow and (only) vocational contributes to a socially divisive educational system, with the worrying consequence of providing separate pathways for people from different social classes. When a divided and divisive curriculum (i.e. one that is divided along an academic/vocational dichotomy) is imprinted with a recognised hierarchy of status that consigns people from a working-class background to low-status qualifications, then structures that contribute to this, especially if they are a feature of an educational marketplace, must be counteracted. Colleges need to cling on to their 16-19 'academic' qualifications and/or consolidate their HE provision. Student biographies sit at the heart of any social justice curriculum. They are best activated as a resource within hybrid informal/formal (what Lefebvre would call 'differential') spaces. To draw on them requires teachers who empathetic and skilled in managing educational relationships that are sincere and caring, and in which the teacher's belief in the students fosters *their* self-belief and confidence.
- College **governors** need to balance the interests of local employers enshrined at incorporation and place much more emphasis on developing governing bodies that are truly representative of the communities they serve and who have a professional background in (further) education wherever possible. These socially situated knowledges and practices need to sit at the heart of college governance. This will enable a commitment to social justice to be anchored at the heart of college cultures and the decisions made around curriculum.
- A college claiming to be committed to social justice is suffused with **trust**. Trust is the key condition that enables leadership at all levels of the organisation.

Recognition of the whole teacher is required on the part of senior leadership teams, taking account of staff's personal circumstances in the same way that teachers take account of students' personal circumstances. A deep level of trust pays dividends and is essential in creating the conditions for authentic transformative leadership from staff.

- **Time** and its manipulation/compression – usually in the interests of efficiency and in particular through the current normative model of progress in schooling – appears to entrench social divisions and to brand many of our young people as failures at 16. Colleges have to work hard to restore students' confidence because of this. We need to re-examine the way course length and funding interact so that it benefits students and enables colleges to address the damage done in their prior educational experiences.
- **Space** is important. The emphasis of the last decade, articulated very eloquently in the Building the Colleges for the Future initiative (see Smith, 2017a), appears to have placed an emphasis on promoting colleges as exciting forward-looking institutions focused on employability. However, these buildings cannot be allowed to replace the community venues that take teaching and learning to where it is often most needed. Travel-to-learn distances, if great, come at the (social) cost of marginalisation.
- Colleges have rich **histories** that are deeply embedded in their local contexts. These are in many cases connected to social justice. Often, these histories connect to particular sites and/or buildings. These buildings are an important feature in the cultural capital of any college. Like schools, libraries and houses, their age may mean that substantial sums are needed to maintain them. Refurbishment and investment is preferable to total redevelopment and relocation. Or, at least, it needs to

be understood that total redevelopment may come at the cost of severing important connections to a valuable cultural and historical heritage that brings meaning to a college.

- In order to enhance colleges' ability to exercise leadership at every level of their organisations, we need to move away from talking about a further education *sector*. It is an artificial and unhelpful construct that disguises the complexity and contextually embedded nature of work in colleges and other providers. The establishment of new regional authorities appears to signal a retreat from the disabling centripetal direction of decision-making that has characterised the last 25 years of marketised education towards a new **localism.** While these are early days, and these new structures need to be made to be democratically accountable, a new direction of travel is beginning to emerge.

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APPENDICES

Edge Hill University

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Transformative Leadership in Further Education

The Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) funded this research project that aims to explore how further education leaders who have a self-professed history of commitment to social justice negotiate the current sectoral conditions to realise these values in their work. The project will involve three contextualised case studies and you are being invited to participate as part of one of these case studies. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

1. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because as a member of staff, a student and/or as someone with a connection to your college you have experience and a familiarity with the college, its ethos and a sense of the values that underpin the educational experience here.

2. Do I have to take part?

You can decide whether or not you wish to take part. If you do agree to take part you will be able to keep a copy of this

information sheet and you should indicate your agreement to the online consent form. You can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

3. What does taking part involve?

You will be interviewed about your experiences of teaching / learning / working at or with the college.

4. What are the possible disadvantages / risks or benefits of taking part?

We do not anticipate that participation in the research will cause you any disadvantages or be of any risk. It is hoped that this work will lead to a better understanding and critique of how colleges can operate while maintaining a commitment to social justice – and what this means for leadership.

5. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

We will anonymise you and your data and we will take all reasonable steps to ensure that you will not be identifiable in any reports, publications or media outlets. Data collected may be shared in an anonymised form to allow reuse by the research team. These anonymised data will not allow any individuals to be identified or identifiable. Your interview will be audio-recorded and transcriptions of what you say might be used in reports, publications and conference presentations. Results of the research will be published and we will share any publications with you.

6. Who is organising and funding the research?

The project is organised by Dr Rob Smith (rob.smith@bcu.ac.uk) of Birmingham City University and Prof Vicky Duckworth (duckworv@edgehill.ac.uk) of Edgehill University. Other researchers will also be involved.

If you have any complaints or concerns over the conduct of this research project you can contact any member of the research team. Alternatively you can contact an independent Ethics Officer at: HELS_ethics@bcu.ac.uk in case of issues being raised.

Birmingham City University ('BCU') is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. BCU will keep identifiable information about you 5 years after the study has finished. BCU will securely destroy information held about you 5 years after the study has finished, unless there is a legal requirement to retain information for a longer period.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. You hold the rights to withdraw from the study. Withdrawing from the study means we will delete all the research data you provide us. We will keep some information about you that we have already obtained. This includes your signed consent form, your name and the contact details you provide us. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible.

BCU will use your name and contact details you provided to us to contact you about the research study, and make sure that relevant information about the study is recorded to oversee the quality of the study. Individuals from BCU and regulatory organisations may look at your research records to check the accuracy of the research study. The only people in BCU who will have access to information that identifies you will be people who need to contact you regarding the data collection activities, to verify the data collected and/or to disseminate findings to you or audit the data collection process.

If you have any concerns about how we use or handle your personal data please contact the University's Data Protection Officer using the following contact details:

By Email to: informationmanagement@bcu.ac.uk

By Telephone on: +44 (0)121 331 5288

By Post to: Data Protection Officer
Information Management Team
Birmingham City University
University House
15 Bartholomew Row
Birmingham
B5 5JU

If you are not content with the how we handle your information we would ask you to contact our Data Protection Officer to help you who will investigate the matter. However, you do also have the right to complain directly to the Information Commissioner at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Information about the Information Commissioner is available at: http://ico.org.uk.

Edge Hill University — BIRMINGHAM CITY University — Cspace — FURTHER EDUCATION TRUST FOR LEADERSHIP

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Transformative Leadership in Further Education

Researchers: Dr Rob Smith, Prof Vicky Duckworth

Please read and initial to signal your agreement.

	Please Initial Here
I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw up to the point where the data is disseminated, without giving reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question(s), I am free to decline.	
I agree to the research conversation I attend being audio-recorded. The audio recording will be deleted after the interviews have been written up.	
I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.	

I agree to take part in the above research project.	

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated Participant Consent Form, and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

Edge Hill University

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

space

FURTHER EDUCATION TRUST FOR LEADERSHIP

QUESTIONS ASKED DURING SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Transformative Leadership in Further Education

Research questions

1. What factors enable / hinder leaders and others in further education settings in actualising transformative leadership?

2. What tensions does the workforce face in enacting transformative leadership within further education settings?

Interview schedules

i) Senior leaders & / or governors

Provide us with an overview of your journey to the role you are in now: how did you get here? What in your life experience led you here?

What does social justice mean to you?

In your view what is the role of further education in achieving social justice?

How does the college fit in with this?

What challenges do you see as affecting the ability of colleges more broadly to address issues of social justice?

Is the college distinctive in its approach regarding social justice? If so, in what ways?

Where does the focus on social justice come from?

How is it sustained?

Are your views on social justice reflected in your work / role in X college? How?

Are there any examples you can provide which illustrate this?

How do you conceptualise leadership in the college?

To what extent do you think the college is able to realise a commitment to social justice in the way it functions and in the experiences of students while studying here?

In your view, what are the barriers that interfere with the enhancement of this aspect of the college / college curriculum?

Are there any enabling factors (that other colleges may not enjoy) that have helped the college to underpin its culture with a commitment to social justice?

How is a commitment to social justice reflected in the environment students learn in?

What factors external to the college (policy funding etc) in enable or hinder the college's ability to realise a commitment to social justice?

If you could change one external factor to help in this regard, what would it be?

If you could change one internal factor what would it be?

ii) Interviews with teaching staff

Provide us with an overview of your journey to the role you are in now: how did you get here? What in your life experience led you here?

What does social justice mean to you?

In your view what is the role of further education in achieving social justice?

How does the college fit in with this?

Where does the focus on social justice come from?

How is it sustained?

How does your work fit in with and reflect this?

In your experience (if relevant) what is additional and / or special about what this college does in relation to issues of social justice?

How is a commitment to social justice reflected in the way you teach and interact with students?

In what ways is a commitment to social justice reflected in the environment students learn in?

In what ways is a commitment to social justice reflected in students' journeys?

Are there any examples you can provide which illustrate this?

How do you conceptualise leadership in the college?

What do you do as a teacher to create an environment that fosters learning about social justice? (in the classroom? In the college context / setting as a whole?)

What do you do as a teacher to create an environment underpinned by principles of social justice? (in the classroom? In the college context / setting as a whole?)

In what ways are you supported to provide a learning environment of this kind?

What role have you played in shaping the curriculum so that it reflects a commitment to social justice?

How would you characterise leadership in the college (at all levels) and its ability to bring about and operate through a culture underpinned by a commitment to social justice?

In your view, what are the barriers that interfere with the enhancement of this aspect of the college / college curriculum?

Are there any enabling factors (that other colleges may not enjoy) that have helped the college to underpin its culture with a commitment to social justice?

What factors external to the college (policy funding etc) enable or hinder the college's ability to realise a commitment to social justice?

If you could change one external factor to help in this regard, what would it be?

If you could change one internal factor what would it be?

iii) Interviews with selected current students (this will be brief in order to inform the questions for the electronic survey)

Give us an overview of your journey to the role you are in now: how did you get here? What in your life experience led you here?

Tell us about your experience at the college.

How have you changed since you started studying at the college?

How has your life changed?

What important things have you learned?

In what ways has your learning experiences at the college changed i_) the way you see yourself? ii) the way you see the world?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) for funding this research project.

We are grateful also to the colleges that provided our case studies for their openness in engaging with the project. We were deeply impressed by the commitment to social justice we encountered at all levels within these colleges.

Our appreciation is due also to the Steering Group and the Catalyst Event participants for their thought-provoking contributions.

Finally, we would like to thank the students who shared their stories of transformative teaching and learning. These stories remind us that further education colleges effect individual triumphs of social justice all the time.

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