

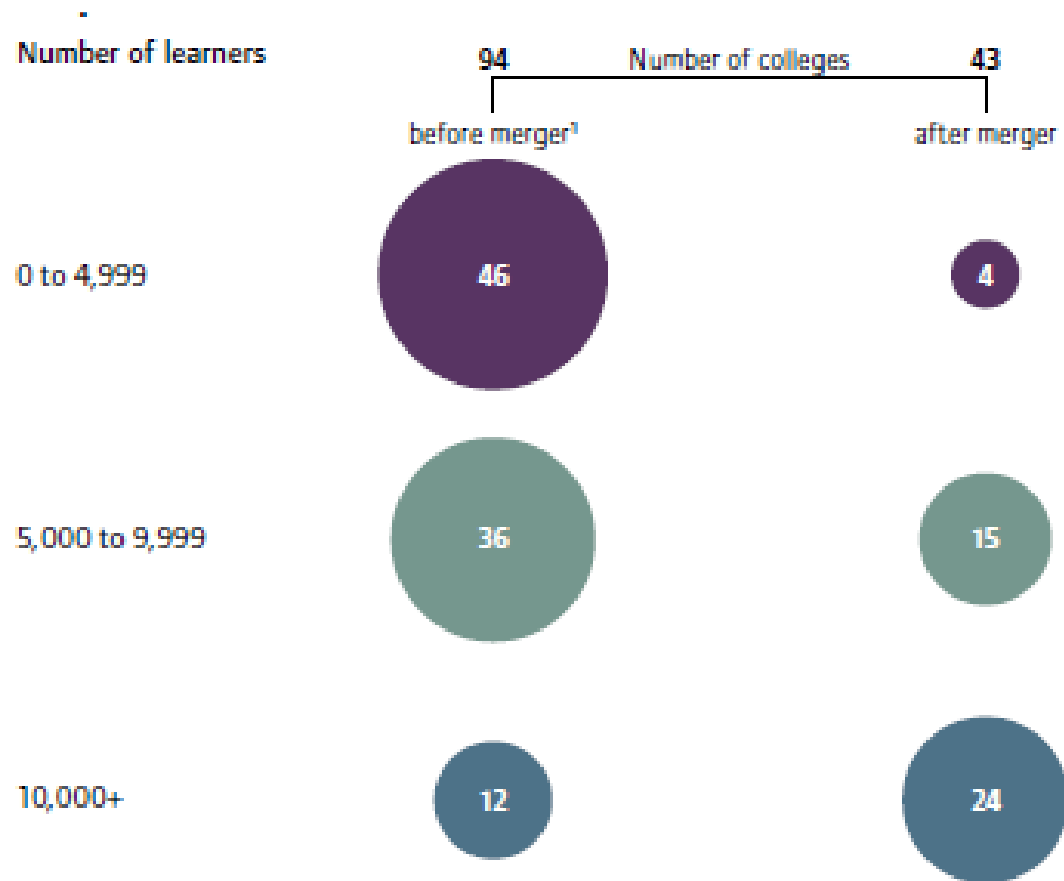
The importance of practice-focused research across the FE and Skills Sector

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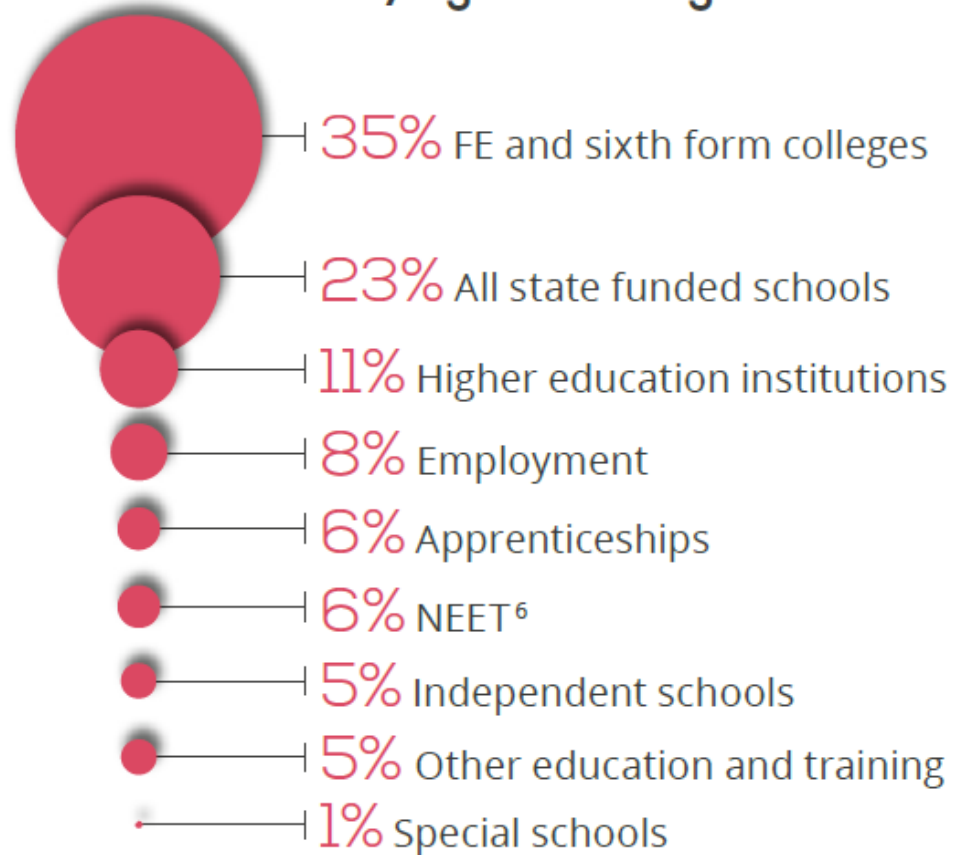
UCL Institute of Education

	Total number of open and funded providers
All further education and skills providers	1,170
Colleges	280
<i>General further education colleges</i>	190
<i>Sixth form colleges</i>	80
<i>Specialist further education colleges</i>	20
Independent specialist colleges	80
Independent learning providers (including employer providers)	490
Community learning and skills providers	230
16-19 academies	30
Dance and drama colleges	20
Higher education institutions	30
National Careers Service contractors	10



- FE and skills sector provides education, training and apprenticeships for around 3.3 million learners aged 16 and above (Ofsted, 2017)
- FE colleges see higher levels of disadvantage among students compared to maintained schools and sixth forms (AoC, 2017)
- Spending per student in an FE or sixth form college is now 11% lower than for pupils in a secondary school (Children's Commission, 2018)

Where 16 to 18-year-olds are studying or working



- 163,000 16 to 18 year olds students in colleges undertaken A Level courses
- 668,000 students in colleges are studying STEM subjects
- 204,000 students in colleges retake GCSE English and/or maths (AoC, 2019)

- Continuing study of English and maths for those without good GCSE grades at the end of Key Stage 4
- Post-16 Skills Plan and Sainsbury Report – technical education and transition offer
- Apprenticeship reforms including the introduction of the levy and new employer-led Apprenticeship Standards
- Area-based reviews aimed at restructuring the FE sector
- Devolution of the adult education budget in combined authorities.

- How would you describe the sector in one or two words?

- Diverse
- Misunderstood
- Complex
- Ever-changing
- Beset with reforms

- Second chance
- Inclusive

- A pivotal role

- The quality of an educational system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers (Barber and Mourshed, 2007: 13)
- Across the sector, eight out of 10 institutions were judged to be good or outstanding at their most recent inspection (Ofsted, 2018)

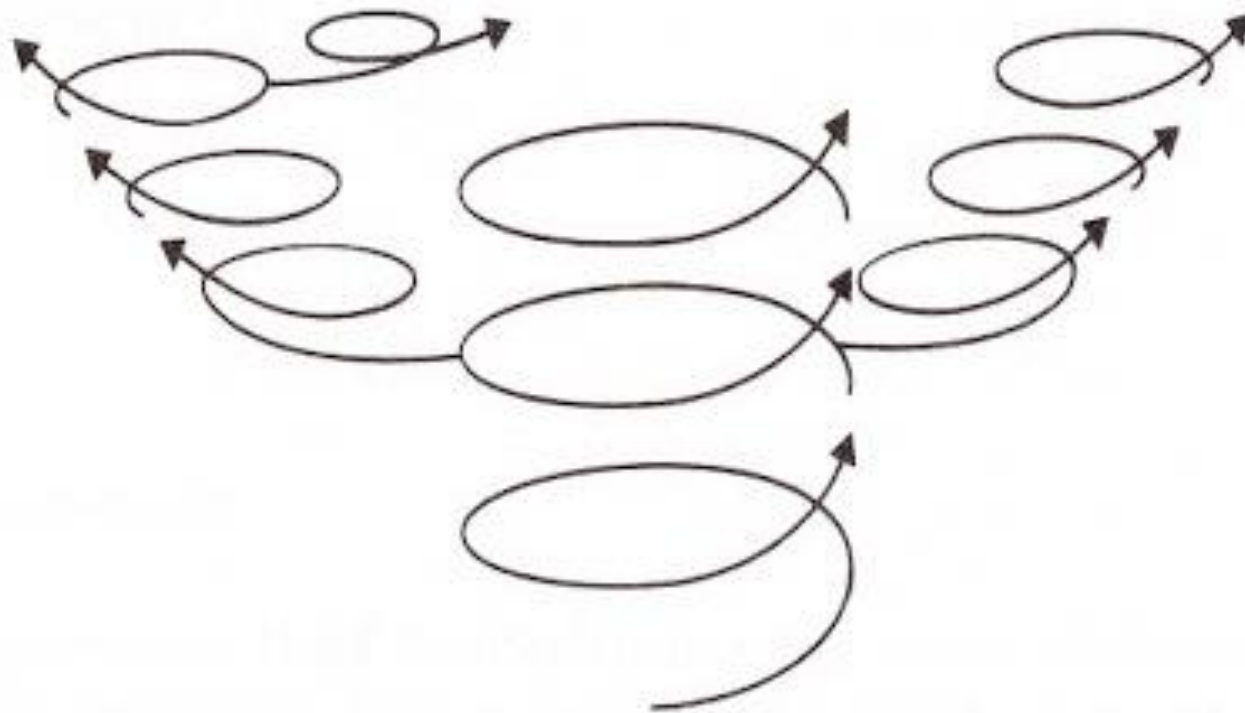
What makes practitioner research work?

- Teachers and trainers are **reflective** and **enquiring** practitioners who think **critically** about their own educational assumptions, values and practice in the context of a changing contemporary and educational world.
- They draw on relevant research as part of evidence-based practice.

- Developing teaching professionals for the future
- Developing an evidence base for practitioners and leaders to access and learn from
- Building capacity
- Enhancing teaching and learning across the sector

- Classrooms are complex places
- Changing technologies
- Organisational change
- Ways of thinking about professional development
- Opportunities for teachers to learn and think about their own work and wanting to improve it

- The unique ‘insider knowledge’ that practitioners bring to improve understanding of educational practices and processes
- Emphasises the agency of teachers and students
- In understanding the local context, wider connections can be made with policy and practice



McNiff 1988:45, Messiness of action research

- Why are my students so stressed about their GCSEs?
- What can I do?
- How do we understand this?

- Practitioner-led
- 'Academic'
- Research and development

- Vocational education and training
- Adult and Community Learning
- Prison education

LONCETT has brought together lots of providers of teacher training and they have talked about teacher training: this forum was not in place before. The fact that it has been bottom up, that you have the partnership, that you have got people involved from a very broad spectrum: FE, ACL, training providers, Prison and Offender learning and got them talking about teacher education in its broadest sense is something that had not happened before.

- New challenges and therein new ways of working
- T levels, increased employer engagement, industry placements,
- Apprenticeships
- Transition offer

- Dual professionalism - with professional expertise in teaching but also as a real-world worker in the area they were teaching about (CAVTL report, 2013)
- Does this capture the breadth of the role that FE lecturers, trainers and managers plan in today's learning and skills sector?
- Triple professionalism – emphasis on a networked approach

‘The new professional is often a networked professional, having to co-operate and communicate with a wide range of colleagues within and outside their chosen profession...this reconstructs the space for reflection – it takes place in shared and networked situations.’ (Frost, 2010:18)

- Strong ethical concern beyond individual student and college performance – all young people and adults in a locality
- Understanding of the role of the college within the community and of the locality/region
- Capacity to research this environment in order to bring about positive change
- Ability to undertake multi-agency working and to collaborate with other professionals using a different language and values
- Understanding of policy and how it is mediated/translated at different levels of the system
- Highly developed communication and people skills (Spours and Hodgson, 2013)

- Many learners have not always attained well in traditional examined courses
- Constrained GCSE curricula offer creates problems for the next step – lack of vocational qualification may necessitate a Level 1 start
- Schools and sixth form colleges raising thresholds for A Level participation
- Drop out at age 17+
- Previous churn of Level 2 qualifications Post-16
- Implementation of T Levels
 - cannot access Level 3 T levels
 - T Levels may be too big a risk

What do ETF need to know about practitioner research?

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