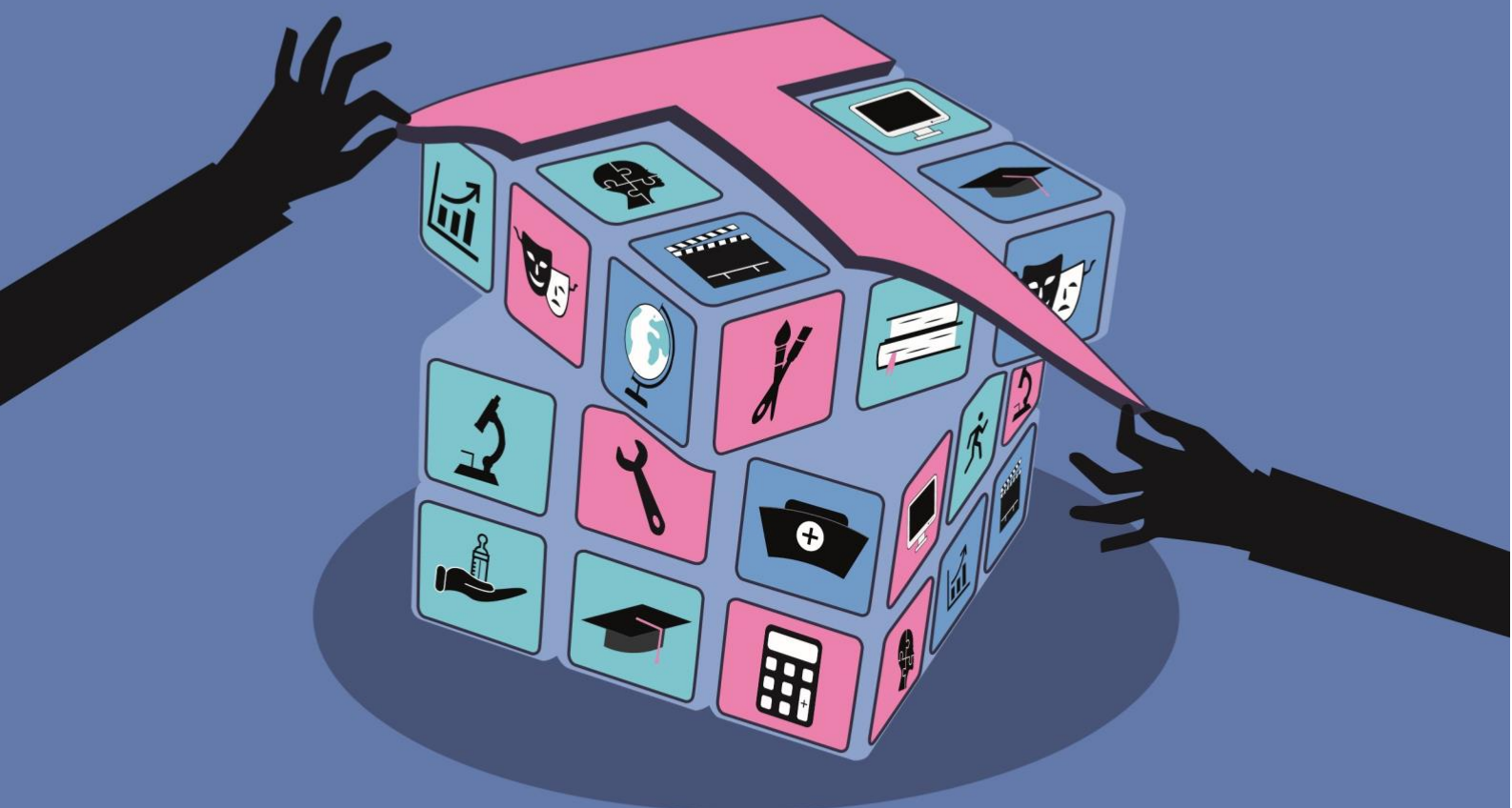


WHAT WILL



LEVELS CHANGE?

The portrayal of technical and vocational education in England: tensions in policy, and a conundrum for lecturers.

LOUISE MISSELKE-EVANS

**What will T levels change?
The portrayal of technical and
vocational education in
England: tensions in policy,
and a
conundrum for lecturers.**

Submitted by Louise Misselke-Evans, to the University of Exeter as a thesis in part for the degree of Professional Doctorate of Education October 2021.

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Abstract

The United Kingdom (UK) government is implementing its latest reforms for technical and vocational education, which include a new suite of qualifications called T levels, being introduced from September 2020 to 2023. One governmental goal of this qualification reform was to address a perceived status issue. There is a portrayal, particularly in relation to Anglo Western countries, of technical and vocational education as lower status than other forms of education. Evidence from literature identifies an interpretation depicted as a common narrative which perceives technical vocational education and training (TVET) as less challenging, or for the less academically able.

This study uses a practitioner-based enquiry approach to explore how TVET is perceived by a small group of lecturers working within the TVET system in England and the study is contextualised by a review of policy documentation related to TVET. The study involved interviewing lecturers using a semi-structured interview approach to better to understand their perspectives. United Kingdom government documentation related to TVET was chronicled, with a focus of the last thirty-five years. This work gave an overview of the extent of policy development, government recommendations and changes impacting TVET over this period. Following the chronology, an in-depth review of the previous ten years of related government documents was undertaken. Both sets of data were analysed using thematic analysis.

The research has uncovered tensions in policy documentation which are as a result of the significant policy churn in relation to TVET, and present a conundrum for those lecturers interviewed in terms of their professional identity and relationship with local employers. Lecturers interviewed may be described as at least dual qualified professionals, they are trained in teaching and learning as well as having professional qualifications and experience from their profession of origin. It can also be argued that these professionals are likely to have multiple identities linked to both personal and professional life. In terms of TVET we can

argue that these all contribute to their identity formation as does the ability to maintain networks within their profession of origin. This connection to networks I argue endorses legitimacy for the lecturer in TVET and is central to the delivery of technical and vocational expertise. Those lecturers who taught in general further education colleges felt disconnected and disempowered by the management hierarchy and performative processes often in place due to policy tension and turmoil at a national level. The analysis identifies that TVET in England has been subjected to frequent political change, causing TVET to become unsettled. This constant change has brought issues of performativity and managerialism into the sector as it deals or copes with the twists and turns of government. I argue that this climate has caused lecturers interviewed to feel a disconnection from their profession of origin resulting in a pervading sense of devaluing the technical or vocational aspects of their sense of self. This detachment from the profession of origin together with the increased pressure to develop generic teaching skills, rather than acknowledgement or investment in the specialist vocational pedagogy, it is argued, will only perpetuate the portrayal of TVET as lower status despite the new government reform.

The analysis and review of the policy documentation highlights that the goal of TVET is designed for and in service of the needs of industry; this emphasis on TVET's purpose is repeatedly found in many documents. In framing TVET in this way, the government recognises the importance of employers as critical stakeholders in TVET. Nevertheless, analysis uncovers a tension in approach in so far as successive government reform has done little to bring employers to the centre of any development of TVET. The government defined purposes of TVET have resulted in this conundrum for lecturers. While the government recognises the need to keep employers close to support TVET, and this is a particular focus for the new reformed T levels; lecturers in this study felt disconnected from employers linked to their profession of origin. This in turn impacted on their perceived ability to support the T level roll out. These aspects of the findings are brought together to argue that the constant policy churn has resulted in a lack of trust and legitimacy for this form of education, and I argue that this offers one

possible explanation for the portrayal and the status issue that new T level qualifications are designed to address.

The study offers helpful insight into a problem related to my practice, and the findings provide a valuable perspective that has enabled reflection on my approach to supporting TVET in my community. Finally, recommendations are presented for my leadership practice, including allowing the lecturers to maintain contact with their profession of origin, particularly enabling back to practice events and involving employers as co-constructors in TVET curriculum and pedagogy.

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Chapter 1: Introduction, Rationale and Overview of the Study

Vocational or technical education is ill-defined in literature. The term is considered at length in various TVET research and literature (Bathmaker, 2013; Coffield, 1999, 2008; Lucas, Spencer, and Claxton, 2012; Unwin, 2014). Furthermore, there is a cultural sense that there is a hierarchy of status. Literature identifies that those people who follow a vocational path through technical, vocational education and training systems are often seen as less important or not as good as those who follow other paths through higher education (Goodhart, 2020; Hyland, 2014; Irvine, 2006; Simmons, 2016; Swift and Fisher, 2012; van Zanten and Maxwell, 2015). A review of the literature identifies a number of explanations for the perceived lower status portrayal of technical or vocational education.

Recent developments in the English education landscape have resulted in a focus on the benefits of technical education to not only individuals, but also to society (Sainsbury, 2016; DFE, 2018). It is clear that changes in technological advances mean the shape of work is changing dramatically, roles which were once common place are now automated (World Economic Forum, 2016). As a result of technological advance there are arguments that a new industrial revolution is upon us, coined the Fourth World Industrial Revolution (4IR) (Avis, 2018; Ernst and Young Global, 2018; Schwab and World Economic Forum., 2016; World Economic Forum, 2016, 2017; Xu et al., 2018). As a result of these changes protagonists state, that we need to be ready; this means ensuring that curriculums include the development of employability skills and technical skills to ensure that we can meet the technological demands made of the future workplace (Schwab, 2016).

Despite the potential for scaremongering, the 4IR debate heralds it is the case that there are differences in the way we work, or work practises; the whole breadth of industry is changing. There is a clear demand for highly skilled, expert people with technical know how to solve problems not yet emerged within the

realms of our thinking (Sainsbury, 2016a). A review chaired by Lord Sainsbury identified that the existing landscape for vocational education did little to address economic skills needs for the future. The report also clearly articulated the divide which exists between notions of academic and vocational education. As a result of the Sainsbury review the Department for Education introduced a new set of qualifications into the TVET system in England, T levels. The new T levels are developed to be equal to traditional A levels, the perceived academic route for young people. Hence these new qualifications will have the same qualification level in the English qualification framework the RQF (Regulated Qualifications Framework) at level 3 and it is hoped will address the parity of esteem debate that exists between technical and notions of academic education (Department of Education, 2018).

The rationale and overview of the issues

The context for this study is vocational education in England. Technical or vocational education in England has been politically cited on many occasions as the solution to a low productivity economy, also identified as the part of education which unites society and supports social cohesion. It is somewhat problematic that the TVET system in England is delivered through a system of education which has been subjected to the highest number of political reforms than any other education sector (Daley et al., 2015; Keep et al., 2021). TVET is delivered through colleges, and training providers which are formed into a market system of education. The vocational education sector in England or as it is called further education, is made up of some 244 Colleges and numerous training providers. They offer education training and educational transformation in the widest possible formats to every part of the English community. The sector delivers qualifications each year to over 2.5 million students, employing over 55,000 teaching staff (AOC, 2019).

However, despite the relative success of TVET described above, further education in England carries with it half a century of a historic metaphor of being

the poor relation '*Cinderella*', frequently referred to as undervalued and underfunded across a range of literature (Feather, 2013; Hyland and Winch, 2007; Randle and Brady, 1997). It is clear from literature and also reported from the sector that in the last 50 years' vocational education in England and other parts of the world in particular Anglo-Western communities, has been subject to immense political interference. There is a perception that TVET has been subject to, or the victim of, a lesser status in our society.

This status divide has been referenced throughout policy in the UK, and a number of key reforms have been implemented to address this divide or concern of a lack of parity of esteem in the education system (DfES, 2002, 2006; Keep, 2013; Sainsbury et al., 2016; Wolf, 2011a). Notions of being less value than traditional forms of academic learning are identified widely, with narratives of '*being hard-done by*' by political reform (Coffield, 2008; Feather, 2013; Hodgson, 2015; Petrie, 2015; Randle and Brady, 1997). These discourses identify that the notion of performativity has been constructed by the commercial nature of the sector in the UK., together with external pressures such as inspection regimes have contributed to a description of this form of education being somehow cognitively easy, for the less able and classically deemed to be for 'other people's children'. Whilst it is widely recognised that vocational and technical education is a good thing for economic wellbeing, TVET is vastly underrepresented in a wider public discourse (Bhattacharya, 2021). An academic pathway continues to hold high status, with the notion of clear progression to university. This conceptual understanding is underpinned by a historical cultural perception that academic higher education is afforded to those who are privileged, able to learn unnecessary things, for example art, philosophy, astronomy and are available to the elite and cultured. Thus, while the public might concur with the argument that vocational and technical education is a good thing and worthwhile for the economy; privately many prefer their own children to follow a traditional academic pathway (Kessell-Holland, 2020).

Governmental reforms have identified the purpose of further education and reinvented these purposes to fill every economic downturn and address the social cohesion needs of many government agendas (BIS, 2015; Department for Education (DfE), 2019; DfES, 2006, 2007; DfES, 2011; McLoughlin et al., 2013). This continual political hegemony, which has existed since the turn of the last century, may be the basis for the cultural understanding of a lesser status. In addition, it could be argued that government reforms have resulted in a disconnection of industry from TVET qualifications and the sector. This situation is a tension in policy, as one of the very functions of this form of education is to feed industry expert and technically skilled people. The latest reform proposes a new way of delivering technical education which is both formed with and linked to industry and the ambition is therefore to use these qualifications to legitimise technical and vocational education, through the endorsement and trust of employers.

If we accept that the nature of technical or vocational education is to develop knowledge, and skills, expertise in order to provide industry with a highly skilled competent workforce, which in turn leads to economic wellbeing and societal health. Then the role of employers in technical professional education is naturally deemed to be important, as this form of education is most closely linked to the market and to the industry which it serves. It follows then that industry should and will be involved in setting the context for the qualifications and curriculum needed to service its workforce.

Analysing the policy discourse, it is not clear the extent that employers have had involvement in developing curriculum, setting standards, delivery and assessment or quality control of curriculum, across the technical vocational landscape in England. However, in the best economically performing nations panels of employers are critical to success of the education system. In these nations, they are involved at a macro and micro level in supporting the education for their industry and developing critical pathways for students to follow and enter into the workplace (Edmonds 2019). Whilst significant policy in the UK has made

reference to the central role employers play it is only recently that there has been explicit reference to the requirement to involve employers by the government agenda. The issue here is that the body of research and historical political narrative associated with TVET has clearly argued that this form of education links to industry and indeed serves the market, but historical reforms have not sufficiently identified how this is to come about.

Whilst it is the case the organisations have been required by government to work with local employers there has been little in terms of support. People who teach TVET, are often referred to as '*dual professionals*'; by this I mean they are knowledgeable, experienced and skilled in their profession of origin and are experts in vocational pedagogy (Bathmaker and Avis, 2007; Feather, 2013; Hillier and Gregson, 2015). Simply, only a qualified hairdresser can teach hairdressing. You can't learn this profession from any other than a qualified experienced professional in this area. Lecturers have the combined pressure to not only keep up to date with pedagogical developments but also with their profession of origin. They must ensure that students have the expertise, knowledge and set of behaviours to successfully enter any given profession.

However, the notion of dual identities can be seen as limiting to lecturers' identities. It is clear that in real terms they may manifest multiple identities. The identity from the profession of origin, the identities of role or even roles that they now hold, the identities they may present in their personal life are at times all present and considered in one form (Briggs, 2007). Bathmaker and Avis (2005) consider that identities are formed from both profession of origin, the role of the teacher, but also cultures of the organization (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005). A more comprehensive description may be to describe the lecturer in TVET as having at least dual professional qualifications and competence. Qualifications and expertise in their profession of origin as well as professional qualifications in teaching practice.

Whilst there are many arguments around vocational education and pedagogy it is clear that there is a need to develop the professional behaviours and language of that profession which is being taught and as such the community of relevant professionals. Lecturers have a key role to play in developing the sense of a community of practice; not only are they immersed in their profession of origin they are connected to this profession by their own professional networks which when enabled, can support the student into professional practice and the community of practice (Lave, and Wenger, 1991).

The role of the lecturer and how they will adapt to qualification reform is key to this work. Lecturers in TVET in England are a professional group who have been both agents of change and subject to significant interference of both political reform and neoliberalistic cultures (Misselke, 2016). In a drive to increase funding levels, student attainment and save costs, lecturers in England have seen increasing demand to develop generic teaching practice. This is both from a macro perspective, the teaching qualifications and status they need to attain, and on a micro level their own continuing professional development in their TVET organisations (Fisher and Webb, 2006; Hanley and Thompson, 2021). There has been a rise in the development of generic teaching skills across a range of teaching professions, but in this case the TVET lecturer's professional standards are concerned with expertise in planning, delivering teaching for learning and planning assessment. There are 20 statements for the professional lecturer to personify in relation to developing their practice; however, only two of these statements are concerned with the vocational background knowledge and collaborating with employers. See figure 1. There is not a professional standard for developing vocational pedagogy (SET, 2014).

1. Reflect on what works best in your teaching and learning to meet the diverse needs of learners
2. Evaluate and challenge your practice, values and beliefs
3. Inspire, motivate and raise aspirations of learners
4. Be creative and innovative in selecting and adapting strategies to help learners to learn enthusiasm and knowledge
5. Value and promote social and cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion
6. Build positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues and learners
7. Maintain and update knowledge of your subject and/or vocational area
8. Maintain and update your knowledge of educational research to develop evidence-based practice
9. Apply theoretical understanding of effective practice in teaching, learning and assessment drawing on research and other evidence
10. Evaluate your practice with others and assess its impact on learning
11. Manage and promote positive learner behaviour
12. Understand the teaching and professional role and your responsibilities
13. Motivate and inspire learners to promote achievement and develop their skills to enable progression
14. Plan and deliver effective learning programmes for diverse groups or individuals in a safe and inclusive environment
15. Promote the benefits of technology and support learners in its use
16. Address the mathematics and English needs of learners and work creatively to overcome support learners in its use individual barriers to learning
17. Enable learners to share responsibility for their own learning and assessment, setting goals that stretch and challenge
18. Apply appropriate and fair methods of assessment and provide constructive and timely feedback to support progression and achievement
19. Maintain and update your teaching and training expertise and vocational skills through collaboration with employers
20. Contribute to organisational development and quality improvement through collaboration with others

Figure 1 The 20 Professional Standards, Society for Education and Training, 2014.

Thus, there is a problem, the purpose of technical and vocational education is defined as serving the needs of industry. If this is the case, we can assume that the closer technical and vocational education is to industry, the more legitimate, trusted and well regarded it will be as employers, and professions will recognise the virtues and quality of the education given. The definitions of teaching vocational and technical education are described as being immersed in and connected to the specialist knowledge and practice of that industry. It can be argued that these factors are therefore critical to the development of technical and vocational expertise. The problem is that despite years of UK government rhetoric to involve employers little has been done to involve employers in the fundamentals of curriculum development. The new qualifications T levels being rolled out in England at present provide a hope that this disassociation will cease. The development of the curriculum has been undertaken with employer partners, although which employer partners and how many employer partners is not

immediately clear. This study will explore whether the T levels are perceived as being able to disrupt the long-held view of technical and vocational education. In tandem to the T level development in government of a hope to build closer relationships with industry there remains a tension for those who teach in TVET. There has been an increasing development towards generic teaching skills requirements in contrast to the specific technical and vocational development they wish to embody.

This study will explore how this disconnection has occurred when the Sainsbury report highlights the importance of a partnership of employers and education systems to legitimise and give credibility to the qualifications attained. Importantly, the research will explore the perceptions of a group of lecturers working in TVET in England on these changes. Lecturers who see themselves as technical experts who have worked in industry, and are experts in teaching vocational or technical education. Are they able to build a bridge to connect in a meaningful way the disconnected?

Practitioner-based enquiry

In consideration of methodological design and approach, I recognise that this research was undertaken to explore, and gain deeper insight into a problem that gives me a sense of professional unease. This problem impacts my own professional practice in so far as the way I manage and lead the organisation for which I am Principal is constructed around the English TVET system.

My context

My role is as Principal for a general further education college. I have worked in the college for twenty years, starting as a lecturer and through a number of promotions have been in the senior post for almost five years. My career journey into TVET is a common story for TVET practitioners in that it started in an unplanned way and on a part time basis. My profession of origin is nursing. Following initial nurse training, I worked in a number of different hospitals

including some time overseas, eventually I ended up working in public health. It was in this role that I started teaching, small amounts at first, in the local university and TVET institutions. Gradually over time I liked teaching more than working in public health and was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time and started working in a college. Moving to Guernsey with a young family I was able to attain a post teaching health and social care and soon begun my career in my current organisation.

I live and work in the small island of Guernsey, Channel Islands. Guernsey is an independent crown dependency with its own government. Whilst we are an independent jurisdiction, the island sociocultural aspects reflect an English community and as such our language, laws, and governance reflect an Anglo-Western community. As an off shore finance centre, Guernsey is a strange mix of city thinking in a rural location. Our nearest neighbours are France fifteen miles off the coast, and Jersey our sister island which is also an independent jurisdiction. In terms of education, we follow the English system, ages, stages and qualifications. We use Ofsted as the external inspectorate and in the main our education landscape feels like a local region in a rural part of England.

The education landscape has been undergoing a transformation over the last eight years. This commenced with a debate about the abolition of the selective system of education. Guernsey is largely very traditional and naturally conservative. We have had an opt out selection system of education for over a hundred years. This system has in many ways resulted in a divided society, with a cultural understanding that those people who passed to the grammar school are generally perceived as more intelligent. The grammar school has a sixth form attached which is open to all secondary school young people at the age of sixteen subject to entry criteria. This system for a time has resulted in a reported feeling of failure amongst young people who didn't pass selection at age eleven and then fail to attain relevant entry criteria to attend the sixth form. The organisation I work in is the main provider of TVET, there are two other smaller providers with whom we are in the process of a merger. The college offers a range of technical and

vocational qualifications for young people post age 16 as well as apprenticeships and part time professional learning including higher education for adults.

It can be argued that the arena in which I live is a microcosm of societal and cultural norms which exist in England but as in the case of many small islands the issues are often magnified (Goransson et al., 2019; Mori et al., 2014). I find myself in a daily situation in my professional life where I am explaining why technical and vocational education requires deep critical thinking skills, requires a student to not only understand the theoretical and expertise aspects of the skill, and also to apply this learning in a nuanced situation with different contexts, people or place. In my context as in many Anglo-Western cultures the idea of technical or vocational education is often portrayed as of less status (Augar, 2019; Bailey and Unwin, 2014; Esmond, 2019; Wheelahan and Moodie, 2017).

As a TVET leader I am frequently challenging statements that pervade, such as *'if you're not academic you have to do something with your hands'* or *'College is for those who can't go to university and want to go straight to work doing something without too much thinking'*. My role as a leader has been to ensure there is a constant message to the wider community of the career opportunities available as a result of technical and vocational education, and how this form of learning is of equal value. As a result of years of work attempting to shift this thinking I was left with a feeling of professional unease, in particular how the new reformed qualifications would make a difference to this perception. Hence my motivation for this research.

The nature of the problem under investigation is to explore whether this latest reform will have a perceptible impact from lecturers' perspectives on the portrayal of TVET. Indeed, from my perspective as a leader I want to gain some understanding as to what will I need to do to ensure that TVET in my context is recognised as a viable, valued and prestigious form of education in my community. As a leader I am responsible for the support and development of the people who work in the college. For the skilled group of people who teach TVET,

I need to investigate what needs to happen to support them to continue to provide excellent experiences and learning for the students who come to our organisation.

Therefore, in search for an approach and design for my study it became apparent from the outset that this research must be a practitioner-based enquiry. Through my position, and my world view, the focus of this work from a paradigmatic perspective inherently immersed in interpretivism and the ideals surrounded in notions of social construction (Murray and Lawrence, 2000). I do feel that this study design is essentially to uncover a way forward for me as a practitioner in TVET.

The goal was therefore was twofold; to offer some explanations for the portrayal of vocational or technical education in England through the examination of both literature and through a review of UK government documentation and policy over at least thirty years and in some depth over the last ten years. Secondly, an exploration of the perceptions of a small sample of those working in the sector regarding their role in the face of another reform for the TVET sector.

Professionals who teach in TVET are at the forefront of any potential to disrupt the long-held deficit description of this form of knowledge and education. As at least dual qualified professionals with links with industry, it is critical to developing practice to understand the views of practitioners in relation to this hierarchical discourse. The current dictum from UK government is to bring employers closer to TVET in order to develop the requisite knowledge, skills and behaviours for the new qualifications; to be able to understand how lecturers see their role in this requirement is important for me as a leader. I see this issue as a problem for leadership of TVET institutions, how can we ensure we are meeting the needs of employers, bring them close to the curriculum and protect the development of technical pedagogical practice.

The research questions

The study has two main questions which will support me developing practice for the organisation for which I am accountable;

- How has the policy context of vocational education in England informed the portrayal of vocational or technical education in our community?
- What do lecturers perceive the impact of the introduction of T level qualifications will be on the portrayal of vocational knowledge and the relationship to their role as dual qualified professionals?

The idea here of at least dual qualified professional is discussed in the literature review, essentially professionals teaching in the TVET system must have a profession of origin and be able to teach, with professional teaching qualifications. The area of research has been designed to better understand how practitioners in the field of vocational education feel about the changes to the qualifications, to better understand whether they perceive this is a system change in education in name only or whether it will disrupt the long-held portrayal of vocational education.

Sub questions

1. How do lecturers describe vocational and technical knowledge?
2. What is their understanding of academic and vocational or technical knowledge? How do they explain or define the role of political reform on the impact of the discourse surrounding these forms of knowledge?
3. What is their perception about the new planned T level qualifications and what difference they understand this will make to vocational education?
4. How do they see their role in developing the new technical qualifications in terms of the relationship with employers?
5. How has the policy context contributed to the discourse surrounding TVET?

Research Design

In order to gain insight from the political landscape for TVET in England the first part of my study was to produce a review or chronology of government

documentation. This review of the policy documents relating to further education in the England examined how these policies may have impacted on the further education sector in relation to qualification changes.

Secondly, my intention was to recruit a small sample of participants from two colleges of further education in England who work in one of the pilot colleges for T levels. These are colleges who have been chosen to trial the new T level qualifications in the first wave of the roll out, which is managed by the Department for Education in England and the Institute for Apprenticeships.

Policy review and analysis

In consideration of policy or governmental documentation in any government it is clear at a basic level there are two kinds of policy or legislation. These are broadly a reactive policy agenda – a response to a problem or emergency and a proactive agenda considered to be preventative in nature, designed to address a concern of problem being formed. From a philosophical perspective the development of policy in the realms of education largely support social cohesion and promote or enable economic development for any nation. Policies focus on the mainstays of any developed civilization environmental, energy, financial, economic, security and defence, education and lastly health. Policy may be both regulatory and or constituent i.e., creative of executive powers.

The study explored UK policy and government documentation for TVET in order to draw out some understanding of how and why the political and social discourse surrounding TVET in England could be described as lower status from a government perspective. This analysis enabled me to develop a working hypotheses to explain the social discourse of vocational education. This involved focusing on not only the content and themes which emerge from the review of this documentation but also the overall purpose and direction change of the government documentation over time.

Methods used for undertaking a policy review are seen as largely interpretivist, seeking ways to construct meaning in the narrative of the policy or government documentation. The use of a chronology of at least thirty years of government documentation, allowed for better understanding of the context and purposes of technical or vocational education for the government over time. In my approach I reviewed in more in-depth manner a number of significant policies developed by the government with a focus on vocational or technical knowledge over the last ten years. During this time there has been a significant number of reports, reviews and investigation which have contributed to and impacted on TVET in England. The data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach for the detailed review of documentation over the last ten years (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This approach enabled an evaluation of how the development of concepts relate to the ideas and themes being constructed and how this is expressed in terms of understanding what problem the policy is trying to solve, and what common language is being used throughout the policy. Elements emerged through the literature review and the following considerations will be relevant to the approach to coding, review and the development of themes throughout the analysis phase;

- The relationship with employers
- What is the value of this form of education from a government perspective?
- The role of lecturers and learning providers
- How knowledge is discussed and its purpose from the reform perspective

These areas for investigation are discussed more fully in chapter 3, with some clarity and justification for why these areas were the steer for my investigation.

Lecturers' perceptions

In order to gain a deep understanding from the lecturers, a semi structured interview was used. Interpretivist approaches use interview methodology to gain deep insight into social phenomena. The interviews were planned to take place in their place of work at a mutually convenient time.

Participants were guided through the questions and asked to reflect on their own understanding. Each interview was recorded. Participants were also be invited to draw a network diagram in order to illustrate their professional network which relates to how they gain insight or keep up to date with their profession of origin. This diagram allowed me to explore with participants how they viewed their professional networks and whether they saw them as supportive of their ability to deliver the new qualifications.

Thesis overview

- Chapter 2: The literature review is written with the goal of providing some contextualisation to the questions identified in this introduction. Thus, the relevant literature related to technical and vocational education in England is considered, a focus on the narrative of the portrayal of TVET as well as some consideration of the policy discourse is explored. The nature of professionals who teach TVET is considered, drawing from both English and international literature to explore how the identity of the professional lecturer in TVET is considered, together with a short review of literature which considers vocational pedagogy. Finally, some assessment of the of the newest government reform, the subject of this thesis, is considered. This together with a short discussion of the T level qualifications and implementation plan in England.
- Chapter 3: This chapter identifies my own position in the research and discusses the methodological approach and design of this study, and considers how and why practitioner-based enquiry is appropriate for this work. Importantly there is an examination of ethical considerations related to the study.
- Chapter 4: This chapter presents an overview and justification of the actual methods employed for the data collection as the approach required adjustment as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Subsequently the chapter is divided into two parts one presents the findings of the review of policy

documentation presenting the findings from an in-depth thematic analysis of policy documentation from the last ten years. Part two gives an overview of the participants who volunteered to be part of this study. The findings from a thematic analysis of the interviews are presented by the main themes constructed from the data.

- Chapter 5: Drawing together the findings from both policy documentation and the participants this chapter discusses the findings in relation to the literature considered in chapter 2 developing arguments and implications for my practice and contribution to knowledge. This concludes with a reflection of the research and recommendations for practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review aims to bring some contextual background to the research problem. The exploration of key literature related to the problem identified for this study aims to bring a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. As a practitioner-based study it is critical for me to explore and better understand the context, history and purposes of TVET in England. In a sense to review TVET through the lens of other work and research, will both broaden my understanding as well as enable me to test out my own position or assumptions in the research. By this I mean to question whether my own interpretations and understanding of the portrayal for technical and vocational education are supported in literature, how the qualification reform is discussed by others, and finally what is the discourse which frames lecturers in TVET in England?

Therefore, the first part of this chapter is concerned with understanding the context of TVET in England, its historical development and purposes. The problem already highlighted in the introductory chapter of the portrayal of vocational education in our community is explored, using literature to offer up some initial explanations, which will be tested against the findings of the research.

The second part of this chapter will explore the literature related to the people who teach TVET to gain a better understanding of the context within which they work. The notion of vocational pedagogy is reviewed, how it is discussed and understood in literature. Finally, examining the new government reform, how this has been framed and proposed as a radical change in technical and vocational education in England.

What is TVET in England?

TVET in England is usually delivered by a section of the wider education system normally referred to as Further Education. Most TVET systems have routes to employment and access to higher education in the chosen subject or vocational area.

The further education sector in England comprises of a number of different organisations, general further education colleges, sixth form colleges, specialist colleges as well as private smaller training providers. The sector in England sees more than two million students per year. It has over one hundred and sixteen thousand staff, fifty-seven thousand of which are teaching staff (AOC, 2019).

Vocational or technical qualifications are the qualification types which are almost always linked to the local and or national economy. The further education sector can be called as neo-liberalistic and exists as a sort of quasi market place for education. It is funded by government through a marketised economy for education, where there is competition for students, as more students retained on more courses means more government funding. Therefore, the sector is strongly influenced by the local national and international business world and market forces (Bailey and Unwin, 2014; Klees, 2008; Petrie, 2015).

A short history of TVET in England

The historical development of technical education was in response to the needs of industry and in the early developments was responsible for delivering knowledge and skills related to specific economic sectors. Indeed, the history of vocational education has not been viewed as a mystery but more as a facility for people. It was developed originally as a requirement for working classes and factory workers. Latterly, it was run by and governed by the state as a service to the people. The origin of vocational learning is often perceived as that which has been developed through apprenticeship.

An apprentice can be considered as one who works for an employer whilst learning specialist skills and knowledge related to a profession. Historically this role was ascribed the idea of developing expertise of skill under the guidance and governance of the 'master'. They were largely unregulated, and were the usually the responsibility of individual organisations or skilled trade labour force (Wallis, 2007). It can be argued that over time the notion of the apprentice working for the

'master' has some sociological connotations of a power relationship. Conceptually we can contend that because the apprentice whilst an expert in training for their profession is likely to be less well educated. It can be argued therefore that we could conceptualise that any educator involved in this form of education is therefore afforded lower status (Misselke.,2016). Post war Britain saw a rise in apprenticeships as a style of developing workforce skills, indeed it could be argued that during this period, we saw an increase in vocational programmes generally with the support of the Government. However, it is useful to consider how this form of vocational and technical education was framed historically, compared to other forms of education.

The rise of private education became popular in the 14-18th centuries for the rich and elite, some charities opened up educational establishments in urban areas these institutions were accessible for wealthy people (Aldrich, 2006). Society holds highly those places where achievement and success are celebrated and held in high esteem, they give huge cultural status to those who attend universities (Gibbons et al., 1994; Holmwood, 2011; Hyland, 2014; Krishnan, 2009). Historically education has not been viewed as essential for life in the manner it was organised. Education was only available for the elite or wealthy until relatively recently. Educated people were afforded special status as usually education meant wealth (Persell and Cookson, 1985). The social status of educated people was not connected with wealth alone, but was also associated with knowledge of inessential cultural practice such as art, music, study of the stars, and classical languages. The knowledge derived from these practices purportedly enhanced what could be otherwise described as a bare life, lacking enrichment (Anderson, 2018). Hence higher status and value were linked to the ideal that those who had knowledge of such elite practice were cultured. In contrast, it was perceived that those who were uneducated, were therefore uncultured and base (Anderson, 2018; Persell and Cookson, 1985; van Zanten, 2009).

Education therefore, whilst holding some degree of power for specific groups, was not seen by the masses in western society as essential for life. During the English Victorian era, education started to become organised for most children. However, the organisation of education can be critiqued as more akin of a factory production line (Gillard, 2011; Giroux, 1980; Robinson, 2015). The first industrial revolution resulted in a demand for increased skills which led to mass education being required and as a result of further technological advances there was an increase in mechanised systems and a surplus of labour.

At this point in history education started to take on a different purpose and function, no longer for 'inessential' knowledge that might enhance a bare life, bringing culture and status, but instead education was essential for everyday life. During this point in our history society dictated that education was needed for all and thus the system of education changed. Nevertheless, there were and remain the notion imbued through a Victorian England that study of classics was worthy for progression. Subsequently, the Peel Factories Act in 1802 meant that all factory owners had not only to provide vocational instruction but also English and reading skills to their workforce (Misselke, 2016).

The first focused Education Act 1902 introduced a state education for all. Hargreaves (2000) gives a history of formal education in England, and highlights that at the turn of the 20th-century, secondary education was established. This form of education had an academic based curriculum, vocational education was left to working classes, which is only fitting for a pre-victorian understanding of education (Aldrich, 2006; Hargreaves, 2000). Specialist vocational private training organisations started to be developed in the early 20th century, receiving some state funding to support the development of skills for industry. Following the second world war the government required local authorities to start providing technical education in an organised manner and that is the start of further education colleges we see today (Gillard, 2011).

Historically provision was delivered through Technical Colleges, they became a place in the first half of the 19th century where those young people who had not had successful elementary education could also attain a good standard of wider skills in English and math's for example (Hodgson, 2015). Concerns for those young people who had not attained a recognised standard of education and were largely described as unskilled or uneducated were provided for in technical colleges sometimes for those as young as thirteen years, when the young person had left school for work. The school leaving age steadily rose and now at age sixteen, young people are able to access technical and vocational qualifications. However, with increasing technological development, work for young people became difficult to attain a as way for addressing youth unemployment colleges were able to offer courses or programmes of study for those who are not considered ready for work or not suitable. Colleges have been able to provide an alternative education which has enabled many young people to redeem their educational trajectory and find success (Hodgson et al., 2015). As the institutions grew it became apparent that colleges could also offer pathways to higher education delivering higher level technical qualifications. This was used this as a route to university for those who would not otherwise have attained this route through the usual academic education thus some polytechnics were formed and more latterly became universities in their own right (Hodgson, 2015). Lastly, this education sector has been able to fill another education void for adults. Learning available in the evening and weekend for those who wished to switch career or after poor schooling experience attain basic levels of education colleges of further education have opened their doors and welcomed in people from all walks of life (Hodgson et al., 2015).

Technical education was largely maintained by local authorities and as such developed in response to local contexts and industry. Immediately after the Second World War there were no requirements for local authorities to provide technical education, therefore the picture of provision across the country was different and unequal. The Education Act of 1944 conferred a duty upon local authorities to provide technical vocational education for young people and adults.

However, in post war Britain housing requirements and education delivered in schools had greater demands as a result technical and vocational education resources were scant and as such there was an underinvestment in this sector (Evans, 2015). This left differences in mixed provision across the country.

It is important to consider that alongside the development of education and specifically technical and vocational education that existed in England as reflected in other countries in the formation of industrial groups. Largely employer representative groups formed together for mutual benefit (Hoogenboom et al., 2018). The historical arrival of the development of technical and vocational education suggests that the education developed alongside the development in the industries and to some degree these developments were supported by the professional representative organisations or as they were called, the Guilds.

These Guilds had some sway over the development of technical education usually through apprenticeship, and in particular negotiated contracts between employers and potential apprentices, in so far as this registration then afforded the apprentices to become a freeman or citizen following the apprenticeship duration. A recognition of status by the completion of training and craftsmanship (Wallis, 2007). The Guilds were largely organised across a national and regional basis, with presence across major industrial areas (Hoogenboom et al., 2018; Wallis, 2007). These organisations through organisational and individual membership gave both companies and craftspeople legitimacy and recognition.

Historically though as the development of TVET in England grew, alongside the political developments of any time, the governance and development of qualifications has fallen to the state and power over qualifications gradually came away from the Guilds, resulting in many disappearing. Today there are few professional organisations, and Guilds remaining who have any oversight over technical and vocational qualifications (Evans, 2015).

In summary, the evolution of TVET in England can be seen as derived from industry, and governed, certainly more latterly, by the state. It is useful to now consider what the purpose of TVET is, and how it has been defined by the state.

The purposes of TVET in England

The purpose of technical and vocational education is as already highlighted is to provide skills for the market. In a sense the development of human capital to fulfil industrial and market needs. As such over time the TVET sector in England has developed following a plethora of government reforms and strategies. The most radical perhaps was to create a marketized system of education for TVET during the 1980's. This move was undertaken at the time to free the shackles of central and local government from organisations in an effort to allow them to better respond to local industry needs (Wisdom et al., 2013). However, this manoeuvre also reduced the expenditure of local authorities as part of a range of measures to save money by central government (Evans, 2015).

The market for qualifications and the neoliberalistic framework means that education and knowledge in this context could be seen as commodified. Objectifying knowledge in this way fits with the cultural context of the market, i.e., something that can be bought or sold. The requirements of the market and thus the economy leads to qualifications being developed to match the requirement of employment. The idea for example that apprenticeships will lead to a flourishing economy by boosting productivity (Gravatt, 2015). This is a demonstration of the neoliberalistic philosophical approach underpinning any sector of the education system (Misselke, 2015). The UK government publication '*The Future of Apprenticeships*' (July 2015), identified the function of TVET as having a single focus to provide workers to meet the needs of the economy, indeed this was clear in 2011, '*impact of the Further Education sector as a whole in delivering its primary function: providing people with the skills they need in the labour market*' (Measuring the Economic Impact of Further Education, 2011).

Historically reforms in the sector have identified that vocational knowledge needs to produce more skilled people to meet the needs of the economy (DfES, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007; Leitch, 2006; Sainsbury, 2016), World Economic Forum, 2016). This form of knowledge is not knowledge for its own sake, instead its purpose is to provide an education for life in terms of employment (Faure et al., 1972). If vocational education's purpose is for the market for industry, then this form of knowledge does become commodified and as such its value is seen in only purely functional terms. It could be perceived that this form of knowledge is only good enough to produce workers for the factory, a production line of people filled with superficial knowledge to be able to undertake simple and repetitive tasks without the need for deeper level criticality or insight (Olssen and Peters, 2005; Roper et al., 2011).

Nevertheless, there is a second clearly defined purpose in government documentation, which has a strong discourse when examining political dogma. Political reforms identify another function for TVET in England. To solve divisions in society by offering an inclusive education system which builds social capital (Coffield, 2000; Daley et al., 2015). This can be seen as a political motivation to deal with perceived 'issues' in society through education, in particular further education or vocational education. Legislation and directives have been developed which address a political understanding of inequality in society, enabling the excluded to obtain education, which allows societal participation (Tomlinson, 1996). UK government policy directives which clearly identify that the work to build an '*inclusive society*' identifies further education (TVET) as central to this cause. Success for All (DfES, 2002), 21st Century Skills (DfES, 2003), Further Education: Raising Skills and Improving Life Chances, (DfES, 2006), Raising Expectations: Staying in Education and Training post 16 (DfES, 2007) are UK Government documentation which calls on TVET to play its part in addressing a division in society and give people another chance (Kennedy, 1997).

Further education offers the opportunity to all to move from one perceived social group to another (Bailey and Unwin, 2014; Farmakopoulou and Watson, 2003; Skellern and Astbury, 2014; Williams, 2011). A notion of widening participation leading to an increase in the societies social capital or conversely will reverse social inequality is inherent within TVET in England. It is true that there is a diverse range of qualifications to deliver flexibly, TVET is open to all, attracting a broad cross section of society. Those who study in TVET in England who may have found education in other forms challenging, will often identify feeling engaged or valued in TVET (Atkins, 2009; Cook et al., 2012; Skellern and Astbury, 2014). So, we can see that the twin purposes of TVET in England is to provide skills for industry enabling economic growth and global competitiveness; with the concurrent purpose of providing a place for those who are marginalised or need another chance at education.

By the very nature of the both the formation of TVET and the defined purposes it becomes clear that there is a possible discourse about the status of this form of education, the notion of a so called academic and vocational divide. This is discussed in the literature and by the examination of the history of TVET in England, taken together with the purposes, it can be argued that the cultural assumption then is that this form of education is therefore cognitively easy or for 'other' people (FE Week Agitator, 2011; Feather, 2013; Goodhart, 2020; Randle and Brady, 1997).

Is there a problem with TVET in England?

The two clear politicised functions of vocational knowledge in the England context are to provide skills for the market, the key to boosting the economy and the place in the state provided education system to pick up all the lost, failing or unqualified people and turn them into worthwhile contributors for the economy. It can be argued that if society views vocational education as cognitively easy, then it might be seen as the natural place to rest those who haven't been successful by our culturally acceptable reference points. By this I mean, if we deem higher learning the acceptable achievement which is key to success, then we can assume

anyone who achieves less than that is not as good or is less. Using the discussion earlier about education being historically central to status in the pursuit of inessential knowledge to enrich an otherwise bare life, leads us to consider that the notion of education of classical subjects for knowledge are linked to associations of those people who are cultured. Thus, this provides what could be seen as a black and white distinction of opposing views of education, those who choose to pursue inessential cultured pursuits and those who study the knowledge required to build, make, perform. The latter could be deemed to be uncultured people.

This argument leads to the conclusion that if places for vocational education are not only centres for producing skills for the workforce but are also places where those who have been unsuccessful must be normalized, then the assumption would naturally follow that vocational knowledge is for the unskilled, lower status, and people on the outside of the elite. It would follow that the elite therefore might attend university if they choose and learn about unnecessary or inessential things such as art, philosophy, astronomy etc. Attending university could be defined as a 'gold' standard benchmark of intelligence. Indeed, culturally we could argue that the development of social capital through higher education has a richer cultural understanding (Hyland, 2014). This notion is the ability for people to develop through knowledge and networks some social advantage, some connection to a particular group, a reputation which is positive and aspirational.

For the others there is TVET, where it could be argued that vocational knowledge is developed to deliver, not enriching and aspirational knowledge, instead to deliver skills for industry, a production line. The difference from an ethical standpoint the notion of academic education or higher education is about the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake and the latter for the good of society for the contribution to all and not merely the development of the individual. It could also be argued that the seemingly self-indulgent enrichment of few individuals in society somehow results in wider enrichment of us all (van Zanten, 2009). Thus, the perception is that university may have had an enriching role in society rather

than just an instructional role, like that of a TVET organisation. It should be noted that this distinction is becoming less black or white but greyer as both universities and TVET are martyrs to the neoliberalist state. Very recently we have seen government cuts to the funding of those courses once deemed to be enriching such as the arts, music, etc. (Phillips, 2019).

The language associated with this form of knowledge acquisition is often reductionist and limiting, being the development of human capital. The notion of human capital is an economic term to define the development of competencies, knowledge and skills in order to perform labour as a value of economic wealth. Indeed Billet (2013), Hyland (2013), Keep (2021) and Daley et al 2015, all demonstrate that TVET is often portrayed as the poor relation (Billett, 2013; Daley et al., 2015; Hyland, 2014; Keep et al., 2021; Petrie, 2015). In so far as this discourse is constant and there are reasons for it, it pervades the TVET sector in England and as a result the notion of TVET being for the less able becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The mass expansion of higher education also contributes to this debate, over the last 20 years we have seen a huge rise in people accessing higher education, not just in England, this is a global phenomenon (Hyland, 2014). At the same time in England there has been a large decline in higher level technical qualifications delivered through the further education sector and not universities (Field, 2018; Wolf et al., 2016). Field (2018) identifies that England performs significantly less well in offering higher level qualifications than global comparisons. Higher technical qualifications offer both a direct route to employment as well as continuing higher education. The decline in higher technical qualifications and participation in England can be as a result of expansion and freedoms for the higher education (university) sector at the same time as a rise in government direction and funding changes for the TVET sector as a whole. Field (2018), argues that this continual sequence of policy initiatives has '*squeezed*' the offer of higher technical education offered through TVET colleges (Field, 2018:43). It can be argued that this decline, has contributed to a view of the TVET sector colleges, at the same time as universities have expanded their offer and become seen as the place to access to higher level learning which

has connotation of being elite. The colleges have had to both respond to multiple government reforms, been subject to a lack of funding and also have to compete with universities for higher level technical education (Bathmaker et al., 2018). The metaphor of a poor relation often applied to TVET in England is used to describe the perceived lack of investment and government attention and the constant state of flux caused by changing whims of political motivation (Keep, 2018; Nash, et al 2008).

The history of the sector is described coherently by Bailey and Unwin (2014), their narrative recognises that the climate of constant change, forced in the most part by changing government agendas, has enabled the sector to remain flexible and agile in being able to respond to the needs of learners. Numerous government reforms, and shifting efforts for national government to adapt and reflect successes in other countries has resulted in a complex and confused TEVT sector. UK government initiatives in some cases have only lasted a few years as successive governments have changed the direction. There is good evidence of policy borrowing, perhaps in an attempt to mirror the success of European partners where economic prosperity is often attributed to an accomplished and established educational system which favours equally both technical and other academic routes (Bathmaker et al., 2018; Esmond, 2019; Hyland, 2014; Norris and Adam, 2017; Sainsbury, 2016a). The biggest government change of, incorporation, which happened in 1985 then in 1992 as a result of government Acts of Parliament is often cited as a change which resulted in the rise of managerialism (Coffield, 1999; Fisher, 2010; Randle and Brady, 1997). The motivation for incorporation was to enable funding to follow students, in the same way as many parts of the public sector changes were framed in the mid 1980's and early 1990's. The goal was to allow organisations to have greater freedom and flexibility. Releasing them from a perceived control of local and central government.

It was hoped that this significant sector change would enable closer working relationships with colleges and local industry. Whilst these goals may have a

place, Hodgeon et al (2015) argue that this change heralded a structural change which instead of freedom almost forced organisations to become business-like commercial organisations in order to remain financially viable (Hodgson, 2015). Young (2011) argues that this concept of managerialism pervades English further education; he describes systems where institutions are under ever-increasing pressure to compete for students and resources (Young, 2011). These pressures include continual funding reforms, ever increasing expectations on quality and productivity as well as dealing with shifting government strategy and direction (BIS, 2011b; BIS and DfE, 2013; BIS, 2011; Technical and Further Education Act 2017, 2017; DfBIS, 2014b; DfES, 2011; HM Government, 2015; HMSO, 2010, 2015; McLoughlin, 2013). These changes have resulted in what could be called high stakes performance cultures pervading in TVET in England (Daley et al., 2015; Nash and Jones, 2015; Ofsted, 2014; O'Leary, 2013; Petrie, 2015; Smith and O'Leary, 2015). The impact of this has caused the TVET sector to become coined as a poor relation, which is driven by the nature of its funding mechanisms, which are based on student numbers. This push for outcomes and attainment results in a sector which values end points instead of learning for learning's sake. Whilst from a critical standpoint the goal of education per se can be described as a production line for workers it is felt most closely in vocational education where there is often a direct route to work, (Biesta and Tedder, 2008; Coffield, 1999; Lucas et al., 2012).

This constant change and context for TVET organisations must impact on the professionals working within them. The need to provide a flexible curriculum and one which is responsive to both individuals and industry, places pressures on the organisations to meet everyone's needs. Professionals working in this climate are then driven by the need to balance the requirement of their own organization, which is to be successful in terms of output and successful achievement in numbers of qualifications (not people); against perhaps their own need to support learning and education (of people).

People who teach TVET

Professionals who work in this sector as lecturers and teachers of vocational education are almost always at least dual qualified professionals. By this I mean they have come to teach students about, what I will call, their *profession of origin*. As such they will hold at least professional qualifications and expertise in this profession as well as professional qualifications in teaching and learning as lecturers in TVET. For example, a hairdressing lecturer was a hairdresser, a plumbing lecturer was a plumber, a health and social care lecturer may well have been a nurse, a social worker or a physiotherapist. This concept is not unique to TVET, in so far as those who teach in universities will be specialist in a discipline or vocation; the same for those who teach in secondary education will often be expert in a discipline or subject. However, all are under a constant pressure to perform excellence in generic pedagogy rather than that subject, discipline or vocational pedagogic practice. This is as a result of the marketized economy of education which in England at least, funds education based on individual student outcomes, and as such there is constant pressure to manage learning in terms of products on a production line for education (Robinson, 2015). Hence there is a rise in ideas around developing generic teaching skills that can catch all, rather than the distinct difference of the development of specialist technical knowledge within a community of practice for that profession.

Whilst we can acknowledge that teachers in schools and lecturers or professors in universities may also have multiple identities it is important here to focus on TVET. Here the notion of multiple identities gives rise to a problem; lecturers who work in TVET could perhaps be confused about the way they view themselves. In simple terms on the one hand, they are teachers of generic pedagogy and on the other they are, and must symbolize the embodiment of their profession of origin.

Notwithstanding personal professional identities, education professionals and in this case lecturers in TVET are also subject to the climate of managerialism and

performativity that pervades this sector and impact on their identity. The neoliberalistic culture means that identity issues and professional status would appear to be continually challenged. Lastly, governance, and professional standards also impact on the professional identity of these lecturers. These factors can lead to multiple identities, lecturers in TVET in England are professionals who '*mediate between policy*' (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2009:16) and operational practice, they must make real any reform, initiative or change (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2009).

However, there is a paucity of academic research exploring the views of this group of professionals in the English education sector (Bathmaker, 2013; Billett, 1996b; O'Leary, 2015; Unwin, 2014). The concept of professional identity is a way to describe how professionals might view themselves and then of course define what they do. Professional identity has a number of differing discourses dependant on which profession is being reviewed (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005; Clark, 1966; Eraut, 1998; Santoro, 2003; Spenceley, 2011).

A sociological perspective for professional identity might argue that it is the crux of '*agency*' and '*context*' (Briggs, 2007: 473). The notion of agency here is the ability to act freely in any context, and perceptions of self and self-efficacy in relation to the context (Briggs, 2007). Ideas of professional authenticity should also be considered in relation to professional identity, as such making judgements which are both rational and based on knowledge, skills and one's own expertise (Ball, 2003; Hargreaves, 2000; Lucas et al., 2012; Misselke, 2016; Webster-Wright, 2009). Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto (2009) explore the formation of professional identity in all sectors of education, suggesting an interplay between goals of education, own personal values, morals, and beliefs about the future (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2009). These notions are negotiated with cultural contextual norms (Misselke, 2016). Billet (2007) argues that professional identities can be in a state of constant transformation through these interplays (Billet, 2007 in Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2009). In considering those who teach in TVET there is a context which is confused by the

historical, political and actual perspectives such as governance and standards required in their organisation, combined with the context of their profession of origin.

Governance, the idea of stewardship over a profession or organisation impacts from a number of differing perspectives. In relation to TVET we can see a form of governance from the political directives. Additionally, there is governance in each organisation which is localised, but could be seen as managerialism, imposed as a result of the requirement to meet confusing government reforms. Finally, there is a notion of oversight or accountability derived from the teaching standards developed by the TVET sector recognised professional body, as well as those derived from the profession of origin (Misselke, 2016).

Accountability has been prevalent in all aspects of further education since the Education Act of 1988 (Randle and Brady, 1997). It could be argued that decision making has been elevated and as such government involved with the formation of a standardised curriculum, including the requirement for review and assessment regimes, as well as qualification frameworks (Taubman, 2015). Whilst the market of education ideas can be applied to schools and universities as a result of the formation of education systems which are dependent on a funding by student basis, it can be argued for TVET that the idea of centralised directive may erode the professional judgment of those working in the TVET sector. In most systems of education in England we can argue that previous inspection frameworks have been defined as punitive, in an attempt to display government-defined standards, without reference to the local agenda or context. Performativity regimes such as these result in increased levels of both internal and external quality surveillance, providing additional impact for the professional who works in this context. Considered through a Foucauldian view, these impacts can be seen as long term (Burchell et al., 1991; O'Leary, 2015). They give rise to a notion of legitimising certain types of behaviour over others and as such lessening the professional judgement of those working in context and eroding their own sense of self (Adams, 2012).

The system of TVET and the people who teach TVET are therefore recipients of major change and as a result the organisations have been subjected to reoccurring change and performativity. Much literature cites this change as a common cause of the rise of managerialism (Coffield, 1999; Fisher, 2010; Randle and Brady, 1997). This is important to consider from a leadership perspective as this is related to my study. The roles of leaders of TVET organisations involve a constant need for balance. Leaders must juggle the requirement for financial effectiveness, with attracting increasing numbers of students as this leads to additional funding, together with the requirement to perform against relatively high stakes external regimes and government ever changing targets. It is no wonder literature identifies a pervading culture in TVET as one of managerialism (Misselke, 2015).

Young, (2011) argues that this concept of managerialism pervades UK TVET; he describes systems where institutions are under ever-increasing pressure to compete for students and resources (Young, 2011). This is also identified by Tolofari (2005), Lee, (2012), Smith and O'Leary (2015) as the '*new public management*'. With regards to those who teach in TVET there is often a constant pressure to perform and be graded as excellent, which is framed by audit or inspection regimes. External inspection regimes enable the sector and the government or policy of the time to demonstrate by measurement, success or excellence. Indeed, it is understandable from a leadership perspective that these pressures have increased greater managerial processes and changes (Lee, 2012; Smith and O'Leary, 2015; Tolofari, 2005). Unwin (2014) identifies that this growing intensity puts additional pressures on those who teach, with ever changing need to flex and adapt in order to maintain currency, in effect to keep up to date with the latest thinking, way of doing, way of knowing (Misselke, 2015; Unwin, 2014).

Leadership in TVET has the common narrative, described as managerialism and yet, Page, (2017), argues that in such an unstable environment the leadership has had to adapt and flex in order to meet the demands in such a complex

environment by creating actions which enable the organisation which they lead to survive in a what could be described as the attack from both government, local government, funding agencies, external inspection regimes as well as their own organisation's governance structures (Page, 2017).

Governance arrangements in the form of a local governing body usually take overall accountability for the success of the organisation as well as for finance, performance and strategy. It can be argued that as the local governing bodies have accountability for overall success, in a sense, they can hold the leadership and indeed the '*lecturer to account for his or her work and output in terms of educational predefined success as largely the number of achieved qualifications*' (Misselke, 2016). These notions of accountability derived from governance could have a debilitating impact on professional agency and judgment (Gleeson et al., 2005). The lens of success for the TVET sector is described by Rouxel (2015) as identified as good rates of student achievement data whilst ignoring the real world of student experience and learning.

Nevertheless, the new Ofsted inspection framework may go some way in redressing this balance as its focus is centred on the quality of education rather than the results of qualifications (Ofsted, 2021).

The notion of professional identity for the lecturer working in TVET will be influenced by both the values of the organisation within which they work but also the values and standards of their profession of origin. The professional standards for lecturers in TVET require the lecturer to maintain up to date knowledge and skills in relation to their profession of origin, as well as fostering a notion of an evidenced based practitioner in relation to research on vocational pedagogy (SET, 2014).

The concept of being a professional in TVET requires that they in a sense embody the values and behaviour of an expert professional working in their profession of origin, while additionally model the values and behaviours of a professional

lecturer. Therefore, in order to balance multiple identifies of an educationalist the lecturer in TVET must consider what vocational knowledge needs to be taught, how is this constructed and how in fact do they as teachers of this knowledge keep up to date with profession of origin practice. I will know consider the nature of vocational or technical knowledge and pedagogy to further explore this area.

Vocational knowledge and pedagogy

This research is concerned with how the newest qualification reform could disrupt a perceived lower status portrayal of TVET. The perceived lower status may be derived from the complex and contested debate between so called academic and vocational knowledge. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine this contested debate in detail it is pertinent to consider key authors and texts in this area. A perfect place to start this overview of key texts is to look at the work of Aristotle. Aristotle hypothesized that you can divide knowledge into three main areas, theoretical knowledge (*theoria* in Greek), practical knowledge (*praxis*), and productive knowledge (*poiēsis*). Theoretical knowledge, involves thinking and contemplation in order to seek answers or the truth. This form of knowledge is derived from thinking rather than doing. However, practical knowledge or *praxis* is derived from learning how we might act in the world, from social or moral perspectives. Finally productive knowledge is concerned with knowing how to make or create something in practice in both an expert and reasoned way (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Aristotle argued that in life we need a combination of all three in order to develop wisdom. Wisdom is not derived from purely theoretical knowledge but also from its application in acting and doing or making. How we act as a result of theorizing and doing (*phronesis*) was what Aristotle considers to be practical wisdom (Buckingham, 2021).

In considering vocational knowledge then, we could argue that it is a combination of practical knowledge - *praxis* and productive knowledge, *phronesis*. The idea here that in order to do something with expertise we must both know how this action or any inaction will impact us or others or the task at hand as well as the

knowledge of knowing how to act and create with expertise embedded within the relevant profession or industry sector. This idea could be described as vocational practice, Billet (1996b) identifies the notion of vocational practice as influenced by social interactions as well as the historical and social context. Billet (1996b) argues that the circumstances in which vocational processes occur can be considered as *practice* when practitioners are involved in problem solving in context which is largely shaped by the socially constructed principles and understanding of that profession (Billett, 1996b). In a sense the practice is shaped not only by the theoretical understanding of what, why and how but its application as a practitioner in X field (Billet 1996a). The notion of practice is then both theory and application in context which requiring skill and expertise. Skill and expertise are two concepts often associated with TVET. Expertise is defined as operating at peak performance, a descriptive term but recognised as resulting from practice experience and development (Bourne et al., 2014; Healy et al., 2014) The idea of skill is a contested concept. There is a debate that skill exists without reference to knowledge or theory. Sennet (2009) identifies skill as well developed practice. Skill develops with observation and '*imitation*' but which is investigated, understood and applied to form an expert habit (Sennet, 2009). This aligns with the work of Dunne (2005), who articulates this skill, or '*craft*' as an expert reasoned and complicated process of actions which lead to mastery (Dunne, 2005). Importantly Dunne (2005) argues that this excellence is further developed and extended by other practitioners in the field, or in the community of practice (Dunne, 2005; Lave, and Wenger, 1991).

Earlier in this chapter I discussed the purposes of TVET and the way TVET is organised in England, to feed industry which is organised as a market of education. In describing the system of education as a market it can be argued that epistemologically, in identifying knowledge for the market, or for industry, knowledge therefore becomes a commodity. By objectifying knowledge in this way, it could be seen as a thing to be established or gained pragmatically. The discourse around vocational knowledge is concerned with the production of excellent vocational knowledge 'in context' (Misselke, 2016). Recognising

knowledge is a commodity, it must be learnt or gained in the relevant industry context. Consequently, there is a tension here, between industry requirements (the market) and the philosophical understanding of knowledge through education (Young, 2008). Hyland (2014) argues that market systems and a global theme of framing TVET in terms of '*reductionist commodification*' has resulted in a pervasive understanding of TVET as concerned with low skill and competence to meet limited employability agendas (Hyland, 2014). This market system has also framed TVET students as learners rather than professionals in training. Biesta (2005) carefully describes the rise in the language of learning as a pose to the mere pursuit of knowledge or education. In the further education sector, the notion of education is discussed as a concept of learning, of adult learning, or lifelong learning. Biesta (2005) suggests these notions become problematic as they assume that the student is referred to as a customer for learning, as a customer the idea that we actually know what we want is not always true. If we view this point from an education perspective, the notion of education is about enlightenment and as such is about empowering or as Biesta (2005) describes '*coming into presence*' (Biesta, 2005:78). Plato is cited as identifying knowledge as 'truth, belief and justification'.

The joint human endeavour of the pursuit of enlightened knowledge has been held in high esteem in many cultures and has been glorified throughout history. Only more latterly, during the twentieth century did we start to see a discourse emerging that knowledge and thus truth is developed by the context or locale and also by its application (Buehl and Alexander, 2001; Dewey, 1916, 1938; Whitehead, 1967). In applying knowledge gained in context it could be argued that this is a concept of procedural knowledge or as Winch (2010) identifies '*knowing how*', a form of knowledge which enables action (Winch, 2010). Vocational knowledge as described by Winch (2010), is formed from two definitions highlighted by Ryle (1946) the concepts of 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'. There is some debate in the literature about whether individuals can develop knowledge of 'knowing how' to do something without or only with 'knowing that' (Winch, 2010). In simplistic terms in order to know how to cut hair

that individual must also know the anatomy of the face and head, the application of knowledge about any contraindications to various chemicals used in say the colouring of hair, actions and interactions applied to the context and the person for which the treatment is being undertaken. Winch (2010) argues strongly that this is the development of expertise, that an expert is able to use synergistically the theoretical context and its relation to practice.

Interestingly, deep procedural knowledge is defined as conscious monitoring, evaluation, and critical thinking (Billett, 1996a; Lewis, 1998). We have here a view of knowledge that can be applied to vocational or technical knowledge, however, the vocational education system is created in a culture where the purpose of learning is interpreted as a means to an end or self-promotion, rather than the concept of education or knowledge, which can be an end in itself. The construction of knowledge from this view, allows the market and in a sense the government to hold the power to direct what is required to fulfil the needs of the economy.

This philosophical understanding has led to the commercialisation of the sector, which is defined by an economic illusion of success defined by numbers of students achieving qualifications in preparation for industry. If we accept that vocational or technical knowledge must be learnt in context and in TVET in England has largely been created in response to the needs of the market, the economy and to create a flourishing society, the way TVET is taught must be underpinned by these assertions and strongly linked to industry and business.

The notion of pedagogy in this context, could be described as the ultimate form of experiential learning (Boud et al., 1985; Caspers, 1997; Fenwick, 2000) or as Lucas identifies learning by doing (Lucas et al., 2012). Additional discourses agree that vocational knowledge gain includes mastery of skills, ideas of communities of practice, and practical teaching practical learning (Klotz et al., 2014b; Lave and Wenger., 1991; Lucas and Hanson, 2016; Mather et al., 2009; Mulder et al., 2007). Dewey's (1938) definition supported a concept of vocational

learning seen as a process to '*learn about the history and meaning of an occupational field through experiencing practice*' (Dewey (1938) in Unwin, 2014:12). Dewey's interpretation relates to the development of professional expertise and competence through the real lived experience of the world of work in that profession (Lewis, 1998; Unwin, 2014). Unwin's work in (2012) defined vocational knowledge as what could be seen on face value as being about work. It is clear from the variety of interpretations so far that we can see any view of knowledge acquisition in this sector must be contextualised into the area of vocational expertise and its context. Vocational knowledge is framed by the experience in the profession skill or sector it relates to. The term vocational can be a literally defined as related to a vocation.

Usually a vocation is developed, historically by years of practice, of specific skills; and from a relatively recent historical perspective by attainment of specific qualifications. Examples could be a skilled electrician, a hairdresser, a nurse, a doctor, and a chef. Literature identifies that the notion that emersion in the area of practise is essential in the development of this form of knowledge, Bathmaker (2013) discusses also that the notion of competence is relevant in the quest for understanding of vocational knowledge, this concept is and must be inextricably linked with the occupation (Bathmaker, 2013). However, a tension exists between the competence required for the occupation and the awareness of the occupation. In essence the development of competence through the development of novice skills cannot happen in the absence of knowledge of the occupation to which the knowledge relates (Bathmaker, 2013). Bathmaker clearly identifies that not only is the expert knowledge and skills inherent within this knowledge, but also the context of the application (Bathmaker, 2013).

From a technical or vocational standpoint, it is clear that the narrative surrounding this form of knowledge consists of not only '*knowing that*' i.e., knowing the theory or discipline but also '*knowing how*' i.e., how that theory of the discipline is applied in any given context (Kuhn, 1970). Kuhn identifies this as part of his work in developing paradigms, in this instance Kuhn argued for the notion of discovery

learning within a scientific paradigm, the idea that the formation of new ideas comes from '*puzzle situations*' discovering how things work in any given situation (Kuhn, 1970). This interpretation leads us to consider this type of theory application requires critical thinking to 'solve puzzles' in a 'given situation' through application of theory or science. These descriptors are useful to understanding how vocational knowledge is viewed and gained, both knowledge developed through a specific vocation and is context specific and as part of, or derived from, a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

In terms of the concept of vocational knowledge, this is often seen as a social construction. Billet (1996a) uses a Vygotskian framework and argues that vocational knowledge is formed and shaped by both history and community. Problem solving and critical thinking enable this knowledge to develop but this must be whilst immersed in a social context (Billett, 1996a, 1996b) Hordern (2016) argues that vocational knowledge is formed by the notion of community and these communities use disciplinary knowledge to develop and support expertise (Hordern, 2016; Lave, and Wenger, 1991). Bathmaker and others argue that vocational knowledge is more than just the development of a technical skill, but also it is concerned with the development of the relevant practice, and the negotiation of theoretical concepts applied into the different areas of knowledge related to the vocation (Bathmaker, 2013; Wheelahan, 2015; Young, 2008). In a sense, vocational knowledge is the concept of both conceptual and procedural knowledge (Billett, 1996a; Wheelahan, 2015).

It can be conceptualised that skill acquisition cannot happen on its own with a reference to expert theoretical knowledge (Bathmaker, 2013; Unwin, 2014; Young, 2008). In addition, vocational learning requires the student to reconceptualise this expert knowledge and skill and apply it to practice in a variety of differing situations and circumstances. Carr (1995) argues that practice is a combination of theory together with the skill and expertise associated with a profession. Our current world view privileges notions of theory over practice, this as a result of the power relationships associated with thinking or theorizing

without application. That is the activity which might happen in a university and is culturally viewed as privileged or of high status. Carr's argument is that practice includes theorizing as well as doing; they are the same (Carr, 1995). The notion of competence is also useful, however Lucas et al (2012) argue that vocational education is more than just competence. The goal of vocational pedagogy is as they describe to develop working vocational competence (Lucas et al., 2012). Lucas et al (2012) argue that there are three elements of competence; '*behaviourist*' competence the idea that there is a set of behaviours which can be witnessed in a craft job role; '*generic*' competence which is the suggestion that there is a set of generic skills which can vary according to which craftsman is undertaking them; and '*cognitive competence*', this is the notion that there are skills to master the knowledge needed to perform any task (Lucas et al., 2012; Mulder et al., 2007). Therefore, developing vocational or technical knowledge requires both knowing that and knowing how, but also it is about a set of behaviours and practice developed in the vocational context.

In contrast to the understanding described above, there are other interpretations of vocational knowledge which are perhaps more superficial than that this form of knowledge is purposed to feed the market. That the skills developed must be defined by industry and be the commodity which enables the economic well-being of any nation.

The way that vocational education is organised is problematic for the development of knowledge in this concept. If vocational or technical knowledge is the development of expertise and mastery then an undemocratic system which favours selling of qualifications with the end point of learning clearly defined by attainment of qualifications is doing a disservice to the point of education. The point Coffield argues is about learning and education as a continuum formed of developing a deep understanding of a body of knowledge related to a specific set of skills and mastering a profession (Coffield, 1999, 2008).

Coffield is clear that the market of qualifications does nothing more than create an illusion of learning in a space and place that cares more about financial targets than deep learning and professional skills. In his work which challenges the education establishment to conceive that teaching and learning was the first priority instead of the constant managerial processes placed on this sector. It could be argued has been caused by government reform after reform, creating a lack of stability which has had the impact of focusing the purpose of education for TVET in England as not developing purposeful knowledge gain, expertise and mastery but instead in overzealous need for churning out a skilled workforce. This Coffield argues belittles the development of vocational expertise and thus impacts negatively on professionalism – leading to a tactical compliance and a denigration of professional practice (Coffield, 2000, 2008).

In contrast from the preceding discussion of the need to develop specialist vocational pedagogy literature identifies that there a push in the TVET and other sectors of education for the development of what I might call generic teaching skills, a move away from specialist vocational or disciplinary pedagogy. This may be as a result of an effort to improve quality, increase student numbers or in response to external inspection regimes (Hanley and Thompson, 2021). Initial teacher education in TVET is voluntary, unlike school teacher education, the notion of a requirement to hold a professional teaching qualification disappeared in a government reform in England in 2010. Instead, what now exists is a suite of qualifications which cover the development of the mechanics of teaching in general terms, understanding of the TVET sector and importantly research approaches to improving practice. However, TVET and the training of TVET teachers is an unresearched area of practice (Crawley, 2018; Springbett, 2018). The TVET teacher education is often defined by the development of generic teaching methods devoid of a body of knowledge related to the specialism or vocation. Hanley and Thompson (2021) argue that the development of subject specialist pedagogy is competing against performative structures in TVET organisations largely bought about Government reform, inspection regimes and cycles of austerity. The lecturer in TVET has little time to innovate and consider

the development of the requirements of their own vocational pedagogical approach.

This idea of the development of generic pedagogy rather than the notion of vocationally specific pedagogies is reflected in the national standards for TVET in England. The organisation responsible for teaching standards in the TVET sector in England the Education Training Foundation has two teacher development programmes which are both concerned with the development of 'generic teaching' skills, the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and the Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) (SET, 2014). Therefore, whilst literature recognises that vocational knowledge is formed by both theoretical thinking and experience in practice, is juxtaposed by the notion of those who teach are not enabled necessarily to develop pedagogical expertise related to practice.

More recently in the literature, there is growing sense of the need to develop specialist vocational pedagogy, Hanley et al (2018) highlight an ongoing debate about what types of knowledge should be taught to vocational students (Hanley et al., 2018). There are emerging deliberations regarding the concept of recontextualisation, here defined as the way that learning occurs located in the real vocational environment, and the contextualised practice of the environments are reordered to be devised as curricula for the vocational student (Hanley et al., 2018). Whilst this form of consideration of pedagogic development is discussed by a number of authors Bernstein uses it to describe how important this approach is in the assimilation of learner identity in the vocational arena (Bernstein, 2000). In consideration of this notion, it could be argued that the emerging tendency to strive for generic teaching development in TVET erodes the potential power of the development of vocational pedagogy and what it may bring to the status of TVET.

A discourse which has been discussed in sociological literature at length is the relationship between knowledge and power. This narrative can be examined from a number of perspectives; including how knowledge has governed society,

structured society, and how forms of knowledge are responsible for position in society. In addition, this interaction is not only about the relationship between knowledge and power but also the idea that knowledge creates power, or how power becomes knowledge. In addition, this idea or reference to the construction of power in society means that through knowledge one can attain power. This conception of knowledge is referred to by Bernstein (Bernstein, 2000) as pedagogic discourse. In his work, Bernstein makes specific reference to the development of pedagogic discourse both in, between and within society. Bernstein's work is wide ranging but in essence, asserts that the division of society or 'labour' is derived from the shifting understanding or 'contextualisation' or 'pedagogisation' of knowledge (Archer, 1995; Bernstein, 2000; Donnelly, 2016; Singh, 2015).

Bernstein's work is useful here to consider how society confirms power in an individuals or structures within that society. The orientation of individuals is dependent on the simplicity of the materialistic basis of existence, for example a peasant leads a simple life, therefore, orientation in the social division is simple and basic, whereas a Lord's orientation is complex therefore social division is more complex (Bernstein, 1990, 2000). The dominant group defines the extent to which others can access other parts of the social divide. The division of labour is usually determined or formed by the education system (Bernstein, 1990). Gregson, et al (2020) argue that an elitist nineteenth century view by science was concerned with understanding the way things work from 'outside', in a sense the development of theoretical understanding without action or practise, thus the action of doing which was inherently understood by people working in the field was largely disregarded. Gregson, et al (2020) explores then that this is a clear separation of theory to practice, and in a sense the association of theorisation with only the elite and educated (Gregson et al., 2020).

By understanding this argument of the relationship between power and knowledge we can argue that the lack of a clear definition of vocational pedagogy

and in addition what appears to be a national drive to move away from its development, in itself compounds the view of TVET as lower status.

In summary, the consideration of vocational knowledge and pedagogy remain under researched or lack definition (Beck and Young, 2005; Lucas et al., 2012; Unwin, 2014). If we re-examine the purpose of vocational education, discussed earlier in this chapter, it is helpful in understanding how lecturers working in TVET have had to develop. These factors together with a lack of clarity regarding vocational knowledge and pedagogy have played a part in impacting professional identity. Lecturers must be up to date and expert with competence and mastery in their profession of origin. They need to be excellent teachers and show high levels of resourcefulness and businesslike acumen in the face of never-ending change and dwindling resources.

The discussion thus far has highlighted a number of key issues found in the literature. Firstly, the perception of TVET as a result of its historical development in England alongside other societal changes over time. The confused and complex changing turmoil metered out to the TVET sector as a result of government change of direction, as well as a discussion of the purposes of the sector. Finally, the exploration of people who teach TVET reveal confused identities and an ill-defined definitions of vocational knowledge and pedagogy. These factors pull together to perhaps start to illuminate explanations of why within the literature there is a reoccurring discourse of the hierarchal portrayal of TVET. The final section of the chapter will overview the newest types of qualifications which have been designed to bring employers as central partners and level up notions of academic and vocational or technical knowledge.

T levels, towards a solution to the portrayal

Frequent government reforms have called for a change, with a focus on a number of factors; how the TVET system is organised; perceived; supported; and how TVET should improve to meet the needs of the changing shape of the world of

work and lead to a flourishing economy. The latest government reform for a mass qualification reform in the TVET sector has been the development of T levels. These qualifications were launched in 2020 and designed to be released over England for the next three years, and have been designed with the ambition to transform TVET.

In these qualifications, the T stands for technical and the basis for their formation was conceived in a government commissioned review of vocational education; the Independent Review on Technical Education, the Sainsbury Review. This report highlights clearly that the confusion in political reforms have done little to address the divide of the perceived status of vocational qualifications and academic routes and pathways. The discussion so far has clearly defined the complexity of understanding surrounding these forms of knowledge and education and the Sainsbury report acknowledges that historic government reforms over the last fifty years have done little to address these issues. It has defined vocational education not about what it is but instead perhaps what it is not (Sainsbury, 2016a).

This review and the resultant government plan set out the case clearly for technical education as an answer to addressing a productivity shortfall in England. The review suggests that despite the fact that participation rates in post 16 education have risen steadily in the last five years at the same time the UK remains low in terms of productivity and economic growth. The case is made for a clear system change in post compulsory education which puts the emphasis on the development of robust technical knowledge and skills up to level 5, which is undergraduate degree level. The report highlights that at the same time employers face massive skills shortages which impact on growth for the economy there has been a steady and dramatic increase in higher education enrolment at university level and increasing numbers of graduate unemployment. OECD highlights that the UK performs poorly on intermediate and professional skills (Sainsbury et al., 2016). In addition, The Sainsbury Review makes the judgement that the TVET landscape in the UK is confusing and unnecessarily complex. It

highlights a lack of clear progression pathways through levels and an array of qualifications which do little to service the labour market. Lower-level qualifications are particularly challenging in this arena as they offer virtually no or little market value for young people as they enter the workplace (Atkins, 2009). Additionally, the surfeit of qualifications at higher levels which have been developed to meet the higher-level skills needs of industry are in some ways '*divorced*' from the very occupations they have been designed to serve (Sainsbury, 2016a). The review makes the case strongly for a move away from the term vocational education. It is argued that there has been a re-emergence the use of the term technical to depict a form of education which enables and includes the development of a robust body of knowledge linked to a profession, in a sense the disciplinary or propositional knowledge required for that profession. This together with the expertise and practical skills needed to become an expert in this specialism. This descriptor narrows somewhat the field of vocational and technical education and training. Here we see a clear distinction from knowledge which is referenced to or linked or related with an occupation to the specific set of knowledge or theory which underpins the practice of the professional working in this field. The recommendations from the Sainsbury Review is that the revised education system will have two distinct pathways, similar in a sense to the most successful education systems found in Germany and Switzerland (Mulder et al., 2007; Sainsbury, 2016a). These pathways will be the traditional academic route and the technical route which will be offered by either full time study at technical level qualifications or through apprenticeship. The proposition within the review that both of these pathways will be of equal value as they are in European countries and the notion of a lower status route will disappear over time.

The review recommends fifteen technical pathways, each pathway offering a common core of knowledge required within that industry and subsequent specialisation related to a particular profession. Importantly, each of these qualifications should contain no less than forty-five days of direct work experience. There is a clear link between this work experience and the qualification, and employers are expected to work with the young person to

develop a log of activities undertaken in the work placement which link to the qualification outcomes and expectations of the development of skills, experience and knowledge linked to the T level. The original plan for T level implementation was over three years up to September 2023. The first teaching in a number of selected Colleges started in September 2020, in three of the pathways. By September 2021 four further routes will be available and an increased number of colleges will be able to deliver them, with in the following September 2022 a number of other colleges and pathways will be available. It is now anticipated that the final pathways will be available for all colleges from Autumn 2024 (Gov.UK, 2021).

The ambition of government for this revised qualification is to link the learning directly with the labour market and underpin the knowledge gain with direct collaboration with employers. This will be undertaken by employer panels being asked to develop the requirements of any of the fifteen pathways and work with government to develop the qualification content. Whilst this seems an admirable aim, particular set against the relative success of our European partners where close collaboration with industry partners is central to the development of TVET, there is a sense of unease. The sociocultural historical and political context for England is very different. A concern has been voiced by parts of the TVET sector that policy borrowing in our context is not likely to be successful. Concerns exist as to whether this new form of qualification will in fact legitimise or give status to technical education in a way that no preceding reform has been able to and whether indeed that development of employer panels at a national level will have real meaning at a local level (Department of Education, 2018; Esmond, 2019; UCL, 2018).

This chapter has considered the nature of vocational or technical education in England. I have explored a number of factors to consider whether there are reasonable explanations for a perceived lower status portrayal for vocational or technical education in England. The short review of TVET development argued that the socioeconomic and cultural development of TVET may go some way to

understand where the lower status portrayal could have emerged. This together with a consideration of the TVET system and the influence of a mass policy changes, which have placed constraints on TVET organisations and as such have impacted negatively on the TVET sector in England. This negative impact has been described in literature as a result of the creation of the market for qualifications and the commodification of knowledge to feed industry. The promise of technical and vocational education to fulfil its described twin purposes, meet the economic development needs of the community as well as provide a space for those who would have otherwise not been successful in education have served to support the perceived cultural understanding of the portrayal of TVET in England.

The chapter examined the literature which considered the professionals who teach TVET, revealing an additional tension. These education professionals operate in a market for education, not dissimilar to other sectors, universities for example. The market for qualifications often means the lecturer is pressed to perform excellence in pedagogy, with increasing lack of time and resources, as well as retain students come what may, as this ensures funding is continuous.

The literature revealed that the professionals who work in TVET have multiple identities which when considered against the backdrop of the history and current system make for a position of professional ambiguity. The lecturer in TVET must negotiate this ambiguity in professional identity within a context which has been subjected to neoliberalistic cultures and performativity measures. The consideration of the aspect of knowledge which they must teach revealed that there is a sense of misconception and a narrative about the cultural understanding of vocational education which contributes to any understanding of TVET in our society.

Finally, this chapter has reviewed the context of the newest qualifications reform for the TVET sector in England, T levels. The motivation for their creation has been considered against a drive to increase English productivity, involve

employers and reframe technical and vocational education as valuable and worthy. In a sense reorientate technical and vocation education in England as having parity with all other forms of education.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology, Approach and Methods

My natural instincts for this study are to recognise that my world view is naturally interpretivist, because the epistemological view of interpretivism is that to know the world, and we must first understand individual perspectives. We must seek to explore and understand the nature of being human and the '*human experience*' (Cohen and Manion, 2007). This paradigm is centred on the principle that the research participant's views and values are essential to the research. Interpretivism recognises the role of the researcher as having the potential to influence the outcome of, or impact upon, any research, as such variables may be accounted for but cannot be controlled. Therefore, as a practitioner enquiry, my voice, my own interpretations, experience and understanding are able to be reflected throughout the work. My own learning as I navigate through this study as well as the impact on my own practice, and that of more organisation is important to reflect as part of this work. Thus, the true value of adopting this approach to practitioner enquiry becomes visible and valid.

Creswell (2009) highlights that interpretivist thinking does not start with the end in mind but allows the research to construct meaning through the development and identification of emerging patterns in the findings (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, interpretivism can be seen as constructionist. This is the ability to generate and build theory based on emerging patterns in the research. This is in contrast to a positivist perspective which understands the natural and social world by testing hypotheses or answering questions by using scientific approaches (Creswell, 2014). Positivist research highly values the notion that any findings can be repeated and generalised through careful, systematic and empirical analysis of results. The natural world can be explained in terms, which identify that, *cause probably determines effect*' (Creswell, 2009). The purpose of research undertaken within this paradigm is to develop universal causal law, that can be repeated and tested and the same results will be found (Robson, 2011). In contrast, interpretivism by its constructive nature is naturally reflective and not

prospective. My area of interest seeks to understand what is understood about the here and now and how are the changes being perceived from this point forward. It can be argued that in order to look forward we must first understand what has been.

My ambition to better understand the lecturer's perspective on the new qualifications and by doing so inform my practice as a leader in my context but also to add to the wider understanding of how these qualifications may be interpreted. My goal here is not to test or measure thoughts and feelings. My intentions are clear; to understand the conceptions and understanding of those working in the technical or vocational education sector about the planned changes and their views and feelings about whether these have any hope of disrupting the perceived deficit portrayal.

The research used both a macro and micro perspective, seeking to firstly understand how policy or government documentation has informed the social discourse surrounding technical or vocational education. Secondly, on a micro level how lecturers understand the new qualifications being planned and what the changes mean from their perspective or context to the notion of vocational or technical education.

Ontological views based on interpretivism presume the world is constructed by social explanations, that we can understand the world in relation to how we interact and construct social nuance. Epistemologically, interpretivist research can accept that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know. In a sense we can't 'un-know' what we know when we consider our own reality. Therefore, from a research perspective, the researcher is able to acknowledge his or her understanding and use this knowledge to define the understanding from the research (Grierson, 2003; Scotland, 2012; Wahyuni, 2012). This conversation between the researcher and the researched allows for a view of the truth to be constructed through this dialogue. Centred in dialogic approaches, interpretivist research allows for data in terms of words which describe thinking to emerge and

be contextualised to the current understanding (Pring, 2004). Therefore, interpretivist approaches can answer questions about what is known or understood in this time in this location, i.e., contextualised to this time and space.

Common methodological approaches for interpretivism include case study or narrative analysis, additionally the use of interviews and observation sit well within this paradigmatic framework (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Interpretivism is not concerned with the generalisation of findings but more in finding meaning for the research question. It is clear that this paradigmatic framework would naturally fit with understanding the nature of the 'here and now' for lecturers working in the English context. This paradigmatic stance or enquiry model aims to understand the nature of being human in any given context. Interpretivism is relativist in that it assumes that my reality may be different from yours but our joint reality is constructed between us (Creswell, 2009; Denzin, Norman Lincoln, 2000).

In choosing to undertake this research from a practitioner-based perspective I was clear that this will support my own development. Literature defines that this design can be both '*democratising and empowering*' (Murray and Lawrence, 2000:7). It was important to me to develop an understanding of the nature of an issue within my practice. My own personal history is developed from an integrative stance, which is centred on understanding and improvement. Philosophically, I am naturally suited to this style of enquiry. Gaining insight can lead to activity to both support people and lead in my context, which will be effective because of the understanding gained as a result of my research.

Research Design

In order to gain insight from the political landscape for TVET in England the first part of my study was to produce a review or chronology of government documentation. I intended to review the policy documents relating to further

education in England to examine how these policies may have impacted on the further education sector in relation to qualification changes.

The second part of the design was to recruit at least 8 participants from two colleges of further education in England who work in one of the pilot colleges for T levels. As well as seeking ethical approval from the University of Exeter, I was clear that I needed to seek permission to undertake this work from the Principal of each college.

Therefore, my objectives were;

- To review UK Government documentation over at least the last thirty years and in detail over the last ten years.
- To undertake up to eight semi-structured interviews with lecturers working in a vocational education setting in England.
- To analyse the findings and uncover key themes emerging from the data, search for meaning and establish a set of emerging findings. I aimed to use thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2013) for both sets of data. This enabled me to use my own position in the research as grounding for the approach, themes and findings.
- To discuss the findings in relation to the literature review and make some recommendations or establish implications of the findings with relation to my practice and contribute to wider knowledge about TVET in England.

My own position in the research

I have claimed at the outset that this study used a practitioner-based enquiry approach, this however requires further exploration and justification. This notion has been recognised over perhaps the last twenty years as an approach for research where the research is applied and contextual, it is also the research which is largely undertaken by a practitioner in the field. The notion of this approach is to engage in a systematic enquiry with the aim to improve or develop one's own practice and understanding in relation to education and educational practice (Baumfield et al., 2013; Hillier and Gregson, 2015; Murray and Lawrence, 2000; Wall, 2017, 2018). Whilst I have claimed that my real-world view

is naturally embedded in interpretivism it is also a truth that boundaries between disciplines and approaches to enquiry have become more fluid and accessible; by this I mean that whilst some years ago the notion of practitioner-based enquiry would have been challenged as not valid, not rigorous and not justified, this challenge is now less commonplace. There are number of recognised principles which can be applied to practitioner-based enquiry which are helpful to consider here in framing this work. There is a notion that the following principles underpin practitioner-based enquiry namely that this form of study;

- is rooted in the practitioner's professional concerns, problems or issues
- utilises others in the field to form views and opinions
- that recognised approaches and methods are rigorous utilised
- that this leads to improvements in practice for the practitioner (Murray and Lawrence, 2000).

The rise of this form of research was first formulated by Kurt Lewin (1946), and was defined as the idea that a practitioner could undertake an investigation in order to improve practice in any complex situation. Lewin recognised that by working with rigour and applying an integrated approach to investigation and practice there was a way to develop and improve (Bargal, 2006). Stenhouse (1975), is cited as a protagonist to this form of enquiry, in essence the idea of practitioner-based enquiry links strongly to the notion purported by Dewey (1904), (Wall, 2017). Dewey (1904) identified that there is an important aspect to developing teaching and that is for teachers to engage with pedagogic enquiry, in an effort to develop greater understanding perhaps beyond what might be the individual professional lens (Dewey, 1904).

Lewin's (1946) approach was coined as action research which can be part of practitioner-based enquiry but not necessarily, Baumfield et al (2013) argue that practitioner-based enquiry may arise from reflection on practice and may lead to action research but sits somewhere at the interface of these two concepts. In this mode it is seen as an enquiry which arises from a problem or issue related to professional practice, this may be reflected upon in context of what else is known about this issue or problem which in itself may lead to a solution or in fact may

lead to further enquiry by the use of action research (Baumfield et al., 2013). The authors consider three vital elements which support the practitioner-based enquiry process that of consideration of the '*intention*' this is the extent to which the researcher has sufficient '*agency*' and control over the study, that elements are central to their practice and relevant to their context. In addition, that the impetus for how the study is derived are clear, it may come from a number of stimulus but it is clear for the audience (Baumfield et al., 2013). In my case the impetus for this study has come from my own professional unease with notions and explanations of TVET and my own professional reflections about the impact of T level changes on this narrative. Baumfield et al (2013) continue to reflect that the tools and approach to analysis used should enable both the ability to answer the original question but also provide deeper insight to the problem at hand. Finally, the process of the enquiry offers the opportunity to share with a professional network as sharing of this work is critical to further development of the research. Whilst my study has been created in response to my own unease about a problem related to my practice, my reflections have highlighted that this problem is known, discussed and reflected in my own professional network. Whilst it could be argued that this form of professional dialogue is naturally subjective, in so far as I talk to like-minded people in similar roles and who work in TVET and we share ideas and discuss problems and issues, the feedback I get invariably supports my thinking of the problem.

In order to create a balance in subjectivity and objectivity there are a number of key actions I took in order to resolve this potential imbalance of being completely grounded in my own arena. This could be problematic from a research perspective as there is a risk that the problem becomes self-perpetuated, in so far as a position is taken, the only evidence explored confirms that position and any findings are viewed through the same lens. This approach would mean a very narrow focus which has not considered the problem from an objective critical stance, and would not lead to deeper understanding of the nature of the problem and issue. There are a number of ways that this balance can be found in any practitioner-based enquiry. In my study for example, I approached the literature

review with an objective focus, is this a problem and why, what then is known about this problem? I used a reflective journal to allow me to critically reflect on my progress and review my actions or inactions, critical reflection using the approach articulated by Brookfield (1998) reviewing my reflections through differing lenses, (Brookfield, 1998).

Reflection is central to practitioner-based enquiry as it helps provide valuable feedback to the researcher about the process, context and approach. Reflective practice as defined by Schon (1987) is inherently about practitioner enquiry, the notion of reflecting on action implies that ability to look at what has happened and seek improvement (Schön, 1983). In adopting a reflective approach to practitioner-based enquiry it is clear that my position in the research had an impact on the processes chosen and the outcomes. I see this as a strength, this research was ultimately being undertaken to improve my practice as a leader in TVET, my aim to gain greater understanding in order to inform my leadership approach to supporting the people who work in my organisation to support our students. The axiom of a clear feedback loop between research and practice is useful to consider here. Whilst traditional research approaches would require objectivity and neutrality, in undertaking this research I have twin responsibilities of research and practice – I cannot separate these two functions and remain authentic. (Reflection can be found in Appendix 9)

As a senior leader in a vocational education setting, I have a view of technical and vocational knowledge, which must be acknowledged. As Scotland (2012), and Wahyuni (2012), accept, the researchers' own values are inherent and important to understanding the outcomes of the research (Scotland, 2012; Wahyuni, 2012) I recognise that my participants may be known to me and as such my inclination is to align with interpretivism as highlighted by Mertens (2009), who suggests the researcher must know, understand and build strong relationships of trust with the community being investigated (Mertons, 2009). However, I recognise that undertaking the research whilst in my current leadership role, there could have been a risk of bias and the possibility of subjects

feeling coerced into participating. Therefore, ensuring that informed consent was of critical importance to any work that I undertook and any notion that may question that feels uneasy from my own professional values perspective. I discuss this at length in the section on ethical perspectives later in this chapter.

For now, I am concerned with an exploration of my position in the research and its impact on the quality of the work produced. Traditionalists may argue for validity as defined as those interpretations made are supported by the data and logical based on other evidence (Silverman, 2013). In terms of validity, I planned to undertake a rigorous approach in selecting the aspects of research methods, selecting participants, policy review processes, interview processes and data analysis. This was supplemented by field notes and a reflective journal. However, I acknowledge in my discussion that the resultant findings are derived from a practitioner-based enquiry and will be used to inform my practice. The findings can only be claimed for this research at this time and cannot be generalised or claimed to be representative of, for example, the view of all lecturers in England in TVET. I do not see this as a limitation to my study, on the contrary it is a strength. That a senior leader has taken the time to undertake an in-depth piece of research which will inform their own practice is perhaps unusual in my experience, but not invalid.

The success of this study can be measured by a number of critical outputs to which I will need to pay attention to ensure that my approach is congruent and constantly aligns to my original perspective. As identified, practitioner-based enquiry can lead to action research, my study could be defined as using an action research approach in terms of methods. Heikkinen et al (2012) offer a useful model for validation of action research, which when reviewed against my study offer some sense of comfort regarding the honesty and authenticity of my proposed work (see Table 1). Validation principles for action research (Heikkinen et al., 2012) applied to my study.

Validation principles for action research (Heikkinen et al., 2012)		My research
'Principle of historical continuity	<i>Analysis of the history of action: how has the action evolved historically?</i>	This is demonstrated through the evaluation of the government documentation related to TVET and examination of literature.
	<i>Employment: how logically and coherently does the narrative proceed?</i>	The study was planned to follow a systematic and logical process. The concluding chapter includes some reflection on the process as well as the findings.
Principle of reflexivity	<i>Subjective adequacy: what is the nature of the researcher's relationship with his/her object of research?</i>	I am immersed in my object of research as a leader in TVET. I have chosen not to hide this instead using this as a platform to undertake this work.
	<i>Ontological and epistemological presumptions: what are the researcher's presumptions of knowledge and reality?</i>	I have claimed my view is naturally interpretivist and rooted in social construction, I used methods which are congruent with this real-world view.
	<i>Transparency: how does the researcher describe his/her material and methods?</i>	My approach, methods and research design are described in Chapter 3.
Principle of dialectics	<i>Dialogue: how has the researcher's insight developed in dialogue with others?</i>	I share the voices of others in TVET through the exploration of the literature, my findings and through the discussion chapter 5, even those which are contrary to my own.
	<i>Polyphony: how does the report present different voices and interpretations?</i>	By the process of interviewing participants, I shared views of a number of professionals from the sector in answering questions posed.
	<i>Authenticity: how authentic and genuine are the protagonists of the narrative?</i>	I have been transparent with my approach and have articulated my own reflections, views and thoughts throughout the work, this study is concerned with developing my practice.

Validation principles for action research (Heikkinen et al., 2012)		My research
Principle of workability and ethics	<i>Pragmatic quality: how well does the research succeed in creating workable practices?</i>	I have developed conclusions which inform my actions as a leader going forward.
	<i>Criticalness: what kind of discussion does the research provoke?</i>	The resultant findings enabled a discussion reflected against the relevant literature and I draw conclusions relevant to my practice.
	<i>Ethics: how are ethical problems dealt with?</i>	There are ethical considerations inherent with my position in TVET and notions of power and coercion. I have discussed these in Chapter 3.
	<i>Empowerment: does the research make people believe in their own capabilities and possibilities to act and thereby encourage new practices and actions?</i>	I intend to share the work with my network of leaders in TVET. My ambition would be that this shared knowledge enables further discussion, reflection and improvements in leadership practices.
Principle of evocativeness	<i>Evocativeness: how well does the research narrative evoke mental images, memories or emotions related to the theme?</i>	I have endeavoured to use a simple narrative style so that my work is accessible to all readers. I will continue to remind the reader why the study is important and what is under investigation.

Table 1 Five principles for validation of action research. (Heikkinen et al., 2012)

Of course, I recognise that it is one consideration to state the intention of any research project such as this, and quite another to be able to demonstrate that these intentions have been sufficiently and robustly carried out. I therefore used these principles to reflect how far I believe I have met them and that this will form a basis on my own personal reflection and judgement on my research practice found in Appendix 8.

As indicated above in undertaking research related to my own practice there is a natural and worrisome ethical dimension that must be managed, this now need some exploration.

Ethical considerations

Inherent within any research within an interpretative frame are a set of challenges and ethical issues, which need careful acknowledgement and recognition. These ethical dilemmas are related to research involving people in this case. Therefore, the ethical challenges of this study relate to the data collection and analysis of the participant interviews. It is the case that within this research situated as it is, within a constructionist framework, there are implicit ethical considerations in the context of consent and in particular the notion of informed consent. As the research design I have outlined is naturally loose, or as described by Punch (2000) can be seen as '*unfolding*', the informed consent of participants is impossible to manage (Punch, 2000). The nature of the methods chosen and discussed later, allowed questions to be explored and adapted in response to the participant dialogue. In this instance participants could not be fully informed. In a sense they did not know, and nor did I as the researcher understand, where the interview conversation would take us (Eisner, 1991; Malone, 2003; Wiles et al., 2005). This presented the research with a dilemma as the notion of consent is central to any research involving people (Marzano, 2007; Ogloff and Otto, 1991; Wiles et al., 2005) This was managed by informing the participants of the framework of the study, the purpose, and alerting them to the notion that the discussion may, and in all probability would, meander down a path for which I had not planned or can knew before the interview took place. In this sense the participants will have had to consent to their role in the unknown.

An additional consideration is that of power and authority (Senge, 1990). Not least of all from an ethical perspective is the influence of power and thus coercion as being possibly present within the ethical considerations of this research (Christians, 2000; Creswell, 2009; Robson, 2011). I am working in a vocational education organisation as senior leader, the notion of the power associated with that role may influence the outcomes of any detailed research undertaken within my own network. My plan to gain the sample was to use my informal professional networks, by the very nature of my professional role - my network is with others in similar positions in the other TVET organisations. By recruiting my sample in

this way, I planned that my 'network' would invite teaching professionals in their organisation to take part in a study. It could have been the case that participants may have felt that it was in their best interests to answer my questions in the way they think I wanted to hear; in a sense to please me and in turn profit from the positive relationship they may have from their senior leader. In the course of the recruitment of participants and during subsequent consent approaches there was the necessity to ensure participants are aware that they could withdraw and were free to choose to participate freely. During the process I needed to take account of how this notion of power may influence their responses, with reference to the context of sector. I discussed in Chapter 2 the impact of managerialism, where power relationships can and do impact on the views of professional identity and thus the potential impact on the views of vocational pedagogical thinking (Busher, 2005; Cohen and Manion, 2007; Malone, 2003; Randle and Brady, 1997; Senge, 1990). In managing these problems, I offered and confirmed anonymity and confidentiality to these participants and their right to privacy (Fontana and Frey, 2000). This had the double advantage in addressing in part these research dilemmas. Firstly, the concepts of anonymity and confidentiality meant that they participated freely and felt a greater degree of comfort in answering, portraying their own views in the context of their organisation. Secondly, this approach assisted in managing the concept of power and coercion. If participants felt that there was no advantage to them being known as participating, they freely choose to take part for no other reason than personal interest in the research under investigation. In addition, I ensured that the participants understood how the data was used and what was to happen with their transcripts and/or the findings I established through the course of the research. This may seem related to an organisational issue of the overall approach, but this approach ensured participants felt confident and trusted in the research process and importantly began to trust the role I played as the researcher in this study. One way to confirm this trust with the participant was to clearly explain that they may view the transcript of the research interview before it is analysed, and if they choose to withdraw at that point, they may do so (Christians, 2000). The ethical approval process with the University required me to not only complete a detailed

application, explaining my research and my approach but also indicate what training I have undertaken to inform me of ethical considerations. It also required me to follow regulatory considerations such as General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) with respect to the data I collect. I ensured that the data was stored securely in a password protected file. In addition, I followed the British Educational Research Association code on ethical considerations for those undertaking research, designed to support the complexity of research involving people (British Educational Research Association, 2018). Details of the information and consent form can be found in Appendix 1.

Data collection methods

There were two forms of data for this research; the policy review and the participant data. Both forms of data were identified as giving significance to developing a better understanding of the issue related to my practice.

Policy Review

The purpose was to gain a strategic overview of how UK government framed TVET in England and whether in depth understanding could offer an explanation or even refute the perception which I hold, which is also found in literature. In broadly reviewing the policy context during the literature review together with an overview of the historical development of TVET in England I determined that it would be useful to pick a point in time to start the review from. This point had to have a significant change on the direction of policy decisions and the structure of TVET. In scoping this through the literature it was evident that the concept of incorporation of TVET organisations in England has had a significant impact on TVET, in effect creating the market for qualifications and learning. Therefore, this seemed like an appropriate place to commence the chronology. Subsequent to this being formed, I knew that I needed to look in detail at documentation, to understand what it might tell me about the context in which TVET exists and how this could help answer my questions around both the portrayal of TVET, and also the motivation for the most recent qualification reform. Therefore, I gathered

together the last ten years of government documentation and used this as data for further review and analysis.

Participant Interviews

Methods used semi-structured interviews with vocational lecturers regarding their understanding of the nature of vocational education and knowledge. The interview allowed a discussion in relation to the new qualifications planned for England. These teachers and lecturers live and work in England. The research framework for this study is interpretivist and as such is conceptual (Eisner, 1991; Punch, 2000). By this I mean that it was anticipated that as the study unfolded the findings may shift the view of what now needs to be investigated or explored. Situating within interpretive allows this negotiation through the research. The research design has been wholly situated within an interpretivist framework and as such the natural selection of data collection is that of interview (Denzin, Norman, Lincoln, 2000; Tomlinson, 1989; Wahyuni, 2012). The use of an interview as a data collection tool therefore is justified for a number of reasons. Building an interview frame or structure was useful to shape the questions related to key themes drawn from the literature review. In a sense the interview allows for these ideas to be tested against each participant's reality. This process allows for a degree of flexibility although while, of course, this is dependent on the level of structure required, there is always the possibility to delve deeper using supplementary questions in a participant interaction (Pring, 2004). Giving the opportunity for me to probe and or gain clarification of meaning was useful in gaining understanding of both the thinking and context which frame the participants' understanding.

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper insight of a problem related to my practice and as such practitioners' understanding of similarities and differences of the topic in relation to my own understanding was important. Therefore, ability for me to check out, ask for deeper meaning and request examples to illustrate was useful. In addition, the use of a face-to-face interview in this context will be more likely to gain data and, hence, results. This is because it builds trust through

the interview process, it also allows the researcher to pick up on non-verbal clues such as looking at a watch, which may indicate that the participants are running out of time and answers may therefore be short and not as insightful. Equally, that non-verbal action could just be a time check. Witnessing this in real life allows the researcher to check that the participant is alright and is still comfortable to carry on with the interview process (Fontana and Frey, 2000; Lavrakas, 2012) It should be recognised that interviewing from a philosophical perspective is not without its problems. There is a concern that the kind of '*negotiated conversation*' as Pring (2004) identifies can be incredibly subjective. Pring (2004) highlights that individual reality may be very difficult to grasp and as such meaning and understanding is gained by a kind of '*negotiated conversation*' by the interviewer, which may in a sense distort the interpretation by the researcher of the researched. The answers to any interview questions will be filtered through the researcher's lens and understanding of the world, which can mean that the respondents' voice in the research may be not wholly reflected in the research findings (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009). It is the conceptual framework of the research design and the nature of interpretivism, which can explain the findings through the lens of the researcher.

In this case I have undertaken a practitioner-based enquiry and as such will be seen the data from my own lens as the researcher. As long as this is clearly understood, the personal construction identified, and the reader can see the perspectives through this lens, the approach can be justified (Fontana, Frey, 2000; Silverman, 2013). Indeed, here it is important to refer to the methodological approach of reflexivity as a tool to acknowledge the inherent bias within the interview situation. Reflexivity within this research framework was necessary to develop an on-going dialogue about the interpretations gained from each interview. In a sense this is what is meant by the unfolding nature of the research design. Invoking a reflexive approach allowed the understanding of the researcher to become present in the findings, leading to deeper, perhaps richer, perspectives. Reflexivity, it is argued, has become more widely adopted to

negotiate through the complexity of bias which potentially exists in this type of approach to collecting data (Grierson, 2003; Mann, 2011; Schwandt et al., 2007).

The tools chosen for both sampling and data collection were deliberately constructionist in approach, taking account of the context, the relationship between the researcher and researched, the social situation of the participants in the study and their views of two forms of knowledge in this time and place (Loftus and Higgs, 2010; Young, 2008).

Sampling

It was envisaged that the sample of participants for interview was purposeful in nature. The nature of the study was to gain a deeper understanding, therefore the population for the study was identified by convenience. By the nature of my role, I was able to access lecturers from a number of TVET organisations. The context within the sample was important, as there will be cultural and local reference points which may have influenced the participants' understanding. The community I intended to recruit my sample from is broadly English. I planned to use two colleges in England only. I recognised that each college would have its own contextual influence which must be taken account of as this may impact the lecturers' perceptions. The population from which the sample intended to be gathered was to be the teaching staff in any of the colleges, and approximately two to four teaching professionals from each organisation, as such the sampling method will be purposeful (Creswell, 2014). Being mindful of ethical considerations and having the desire to create a data rich sample, informal networks and connections of professional colleagues were intended to be used to develop a sample. Wahyuni (2012) highlights that this is a possibility within this research framework, suggesting that the use of informal links can lead to opportunistic or snowballing in sample identification and is useful in gaining voluntary participants who are interested in taking part (Wahyuni, 2012). This approach is not without challenges, which must be acknowledged. For the most part these challenges centre on the problem of maintaining objectivity within the study. Using participants who volunteer through informal networks and join

because their colleague has joined may lead to a lack of objectivity or validity in the findings. However, it is recognised within the field of qualitative research that this type of study is inherently subject to bias (Burke and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In fact, this was welcomed within this study – the type of population was convenient to the researcher – it was likely to be organisations, which were known to me. The individuals who volunteered were likely to be willing and co-operative. My view is that this fact did not lessen the validity credibility, rigour and warrant of the potential findings, instead there was recognition that these people were interested which, in a sense, adds to a deeper understanding of the research purpose (Kemper et al., 2003; Morse, 2003).

The chosen sampling methodology and, importantly, the research design did not allow the research to claim that findings generated were understanding held by all practitioners working to TVET settings. However, the purpose of the work is to gain insight in some shared understanding for this group of professionals. This aimed to contribute to the work already in existence regarding this area of inquiry and add a dimension to the building of understanding of the explanations for the portrayal of vocational and technical education as well as insight into lecturers' perceptions of their role in relation to the latest government reform. The ability to listen to and hear the voices of these participants for this study is important (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009).

The data collection tool

This study used a semi-structured interview guide as a data collection tool. An interview as a data collection tool may be structured almost like a survey, with a set of defined questions with a forced answer response. However, for this study the type of interview was semi-structured with open questions which allowed for exploration of the perception of the terms relevant to the study and the participants' understanding. Therefore, the study used semi structured interviews with loosely defined questions which allowed the relationship between the researcher and the researched to be positive and evolve. This approach can also

lead to deeper understanding of the participant's conceptions of the enquiry in question. It was the aim that in digging deeper into the perceptions of lecturers that comparisons would be drawn about the nature of vocational and technical education.

Literature has identified that there exists a perception or widely held notion that vocational education is a 'poor relation' of academic education and I had expected this to be inferred through the participants responses, however as a practitioner-based enquiry I recognise that whilst I have this perception formed by my own experience and research, my participants may not have held this view. In leading the interview, I planned to guard against asking questions which could be loaded with this concept, instead I formed my questions and interview guide in very general terms. In addition, I used field notes and my reflective journal to better understand how and if I did naturally revert to insider language and my own beliefs.

Working in TVET is usually very busy. Survey methodology, which asks participants to complete either online or by post, would have been unlikely to yield sufficient data to be useful. However, I know from my own experience if I could book an hour with someone, they are usually ready to talk about teaching and learning, and their own experiences and understanding. This type of interview could be seen as a '*directed conversation*', led by the researcher but allowing some freedom for both interviewer and interviewee to negotiate the terrain of understanding (Cohen and Manion, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Tomlinson, 1989).

In any interaction it is important to build a trusting relationship. In the research context, this allows the participant to feel relaxed and, following an initial set of questions designed to build a relationship with the participant, there followed a set of questions designed to gain insight into understanding.

1. General introductory questions

These included how long they have been a lecturer, what subjects - and at what level - they teach. These questions were designed to illicit what their profession of origin was defined as and how they defined this was important. The participants were asked to produce a network map which highlighted their own professional networks in relation to their profession of origin. I asked them to produce a visual representation of their professional networks, with the goal of exploring what these networks consisted of; was there a reoccurring theme to them, were they professional networks form their profession of origin or from their roles as lecturers in TVET.

2. Knowledge concepts

Questions of their understanding of the newest qualification reform, T levels. Their views on the emerging tendency to use technical knowledge as opposed to vocational knowledge. Their understanding of these two concepts, and an exploration about any perceived difference between technical and vocational knowledge?

3. Status concepts and reasons

This involved an exploration of the perception of status of knowledge in TVET and any explanations they may have (or not) for the way this form of knowledge is perceived and discussed in the local community.

4. Employers and qualifications

I wanted to explore here what lectures understood, or thought about the qualification reforms in England and any relationships to Fourth World Industrial Revolution. In addition, an exploration of how they see their role in relation to the development of T levels for their local community.

5. The new qualifications and supporting students

This was designed to explore their understanding in relation to the qualification reform in terms of meeting the needs of students.

These questions, or perhaps topics for discussion, were broad and deliberately loose, the intention was to explore with the participants some themes which emerged through the literature review which would support my ambition to gain deeper insight. Utilising this approach can be justified from a constructionist perspective as Silverman (2013) refers to this approach as having an interview guide (Silverman, 2013). Questions or topics for discussion may be developed but it can be justified to ask supplementary questions or prompts if this leads to a looser type of data, where there are not necessarily pre coded or established categories for analysis (Fontana, Frey, 2000).

I planned that the eight interviews would take place located in each participant's place of work; this was so that the interaction could be as comfortable as possible. It is usual to be able to use a meeting room for such a purpose. Each interview was planned to last up to an hour, as any longer would intrude into the participant's day and could have deterred them from taking part. The interview would be recorded using a specific audio device for this purpose and subject notes will be being taken for each interview, noting the start time, location and a means of identification of each subject, whilst maintaining confidentiality. Holding the interviews in the participants place of work could be both useful and enabling but could also be challenging. I recognise that for some lecturers the ease of taking a short amount of time out of their working day by attending an interview meeting which is held in their place of work seems perfectly reasonable. However, it should be recognised that for some lecturers, the notion of undertaking this interview in work time and in their place of work could be conflicting, they may have felt uncomfortable, worry about being interrupted or worry about things that they should be doing other than being interviewed. Therefore, I planned that as I recruited participants, I would invite them to tell me where they would like the interviews to be held. I would be very comfortable to hold the interviews in an alternative location which is private, such as book a meeting room in a local hotel, or use a local university room.

Data analysis methods

The analysis approaches to any research have a profound impact on the overall validity of the research design. In this study, data was generated by both a review of policy documentation and using interviews with participants from the field. In addition, a reflective journal kept to note the research journey and my account of this study. The journal included an account or reflection of how the participants were recruited, and my own reflections of the interview process.

Policy Review

I determined that in order to be inclusive I would use both policy directive, government legislation, as well as reports of research or review commissioned by a government department related to TVET. In undertaking the chronology, I identified the document and dated it, stated its broad purpose and then reviewed its relevance to this research. I felt would give me an insight into the board policy narrative of TVET in England. I then chose to explore the documentation in detail for the last ten years of policy development 2010-2020. I used a thematic analysis methodology for reviewing the documentation, coding and theme generation to allow me to draw together some broad understanding and informing my thinking (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Participant Interviews

Once the interviews had taken place I planned to carefully and systematically transcribe the interviews, making note of any interpretation from field notes at the time of the interview. The plan was to then review the data to elicit themes and elements, which were similar using thematic analysis methods (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It is important here to recognise the approach of this research is not to view the data as the truth of the lived experience of the respondents but to gain some understanding of their reality, in a sense to construct meaning from the interviews about their own reality (Silverman, 2000).

As themes emerge, they may be coded to gain deeper insight and evaluated to see how these themes are linked together. Silverman (2013) suggests that researchers should then seek to relate these themes to the wider body of knowledge in relation to the research in question. I anticipated I was likely to use some form of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software to assist in the research. As Silverman (2013) describes, this can assist the researcher in coding and the retrieval of coded segments in relation to the context in which they were raised. In addition, the use of keyword analysis will allow for exploration around the themes emerging through the literature review and the concepts emerging to be recognised and established as central to the findings of the study. This type of software also allows for the research journal to be generated alongside the research analysis (Silverman, 2013). The journal in addition to the interview data enables the reflexive approach to the study which is highlighted as necessary in this research (Schwandt et al., 2007). Further exploration of the data analysis methods for both the policy review and the participant interviews are found in Chapter 4.

Reflective account and credibility of research

It is clear that from a theoretical understanding of the research approach outlined in this chapter that there are some aspects which are not explored fully. There are distinct reasons for this, not least of which is that the purpose of the research outlined here is to be situated as interpretivist and within a constructionist framework. As such not everything could be planned and organised in advance. The nature of this type of research is to allow for flexibility in response to the research in question: as the process evolves and develops, the role of the researcher in this context is to remain open minded and open to shifts in understanding.

The justification for this study was contextualised within the literature review, where a discussion that the concepts of vocational or technical education have been described as for the less capable or intellectually deficit. The literature

review discussed that a label of academic thinking associated with classical and thus elitist forms of education often serve to perpetuate the divide in social understanding and status of these forms of education. The literature review explored how policy has supported the formation of this concept. In addition, it explained how the current reform of the qualifications in this context is designed to disrupt the traditionally held notion of TVET. The methodological approaches have been outlined and referenced to the paradigmatic framework and my intention for this practitioner-based enquiry related to my personal context as the researcher. The question, which remains in any research from this perspective, is the issue of validity. Here validity refers to the integrity of the interpretations of the research. The validity of this study and the potential findings were managed by adopting congruent methodological approaches and careful management of the ethical and research dilemmas inherent within the research. However, as literature suggests, the concept of validity is usually associated with positivist approaches and the interpretivist researcher should accept that the social world is always in a state of mutability (Silverman, 2013; Tomlinson, 1989). It is accepted that the interpretation of the views of the participants in the context of new qualifications are undertaken at a time of change and development, therefore it was appropriate to adopt this approach to the investigation. In addition, the interpretation of the discourse threads in the policy analysis can be based on ideas of convergence, the ways in which the review of policy identified repeated emerging concepts. Validity also rests upon the extent to which the analysis identified a broad agreement within the language used within the policies reviewed and the consistency of the linguistic detail.

Then COVID-19

It is clear from the detail above that my intention for inviting participants into my study was to use my own professional network of leaders in TVET in England. This seems logical and appropriate – indeed I was able to obtain ethical approval for such an approach (see Appendix 2). However, that was before the spring of 2020. Once the pandemic started colleagues from my network in England were

very reluctant to invite their staff to take part in my research. I reflected at the time that it was a period of such intense pressure to keep learning going the last thing they or I needed in their position was someone trying to invite staff to be involved in a piece of research. The pandemic also meant that travel to colleges would be out of the question. Therefore, as often happens with this form of research, I had to adjust my approach and following advice from my supervisor and the university I submitted amended approval which enabled me to use Twitter to recruit participants working in TVET in England. In addition, I used an online meeting tool as meeting in person was not possible. I have described these changes in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction to the findings

The ambition of this research was firstly to try and understand how policy documentation had both contributed to or challenged the portrayal of vocational or technical education. The research aimed to establish how policy documentation of recent UK governments had contributed or even perpetuated a discourse discussed in the literature review. I hoped to explore whether the government discourse had changed in the latest reform for this sector, that of a new suite of qualifications called T levels. Secondly, the enquiry aimed to investigate what lecturers perceive of this portrayal, discovering their views of latest government reform of qualifications in England. The findings of the data review will inform my practice, supporting my own development as a leader of TVET. I will use the findings to reflect on my own perceptions of TVET, as well as inform my own leadership practice supporting the development of teaching and learning in the organisation for which I am responsible.

The data generated from the policy review and also the interview was analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This detailed coding of the data, using a complete coding approach and generating researcher derived codes. I used NVivo both to undertake coding and organise my coding. The use of this software, supported the analysis of the government documentation, the interview transcripts and the network maps drawn by the participants to illustrate their current professional networks. I used NVivo to mainly code and recode, and then organise the codes as they appeared to align, this process allowed me to contrast themes that were meaningful to the research context. The themes constructed did not immediately provide simple answers to the two main research questions, however, as a result of a rigorous and repeated approach I was able to develop a rich insight into the perspectives of both the policy review and the participants views. In using this approach, it is important to recognise that as a researcher practitioner, I work in the TVET system as a senior leader, my own frames of reference will have had an impact on the way I led the

interviews, used language, and coded data for the implicit meaning I saw in the narrative of both the participant data and government documentation. In order to account for my position in the research I used a reflexive approach. In coding the data, I kept a set of field notes, then reflected on these in my reflective journal which referenced my own beliefs and judgements and how these have influenced my thoughts, assumptions and conclusions of the findings. An example of an interview transcript can be found in Appendix 3 and examples from the field notes, and journal can be found in Appendix 7.

Braun and Clarke (2013) explain that this approach '*goes beyond the explicit content of the data*' describing coding in this way as, '*latent coding, which invokes the researchers conceptual and theoretical frameworks to identify implicit means within the data*' (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Once data had been coded, and recoded, I started to seek out patterns in the data, which enabled me to construct themes from the codes. All the codes and subcodes can be found in Appendix 5. Each theme had a central organising concept, the codes, and subcodes link to this concept; in a sense the theme provided the link between these codes and subcodes. Making sense of the data is often a challenging process which involves review, reflection and in the case of this enquiry reflexivity. In order to organise my thinking and for simplicity I illustrate my thinking and organised codes in Table 2 and Table 3 found in Appendix 4

Policy Review

In the following pages the findings are presented as a discussion of each theme with associated quotations from the text in the policy documentation or direct quotes from the participants to illustrate the evidence. I have taken a thematic analysis approach to the documentation (Braun and Clarke, 2013), used a complete coding approach to reviewing the data. Having reflected and read the documentation, and re-coded, I have now constructed three broad overarching themes which begin to be visible throughout the documentation. These are illustrated in Table 4, below. The prevalent discourses which have been constructed from the analytical approach used tell us about the how the policy context has contributed to the discourse surrounding TVET in England. The findings are presented by the main theme constructed and subsequently the contributing sub-themes which help to illustrate the divergence and convergence of each theme.

<p>Main Theme 1 Vocational education is portrayed as less</p>	<p>An acceptance by government that there is a view of technical or vocational education as less, less valued by society, less in terms of status.</p>
<p><i>Sub-theme 1.1</i> It's not us it's them</p>	<p>The cause of this portrayal can be identified as either previous governments or the TVET system itself.</p>
<p><i>Sub-theme 1.2</i> What is the purpose of vocational education</p>	<p>There is a divergent purpose of TVET which has caused the portrayal issue, that is the government ambition of the TVET system both to drive up the economy and to be a place for second chance</p>
<p>Main Theme 2 Employers and the Government a confused narrative. Employers play a central role but....</p>	<p>Government documentation situates employers as central to vocational education, of significant and central importance. Employers are frequently referenced however, there are less citations to professions.</p>

Sub-theme 2.1 Employers should do more	The data identifies a notion of government viewing employers as not doing enough to support the TVET system, the places where qualifications and skills are developed and are absent in the development of the TVET system as a whole.
Sub-theme 2.2 Government should do more to support employers	Almost a recognition that government has a role to play in the development and support of employers to collaborate or assist in the development of vocational education.
Main Theme 3 Who are the professionals in the sector?	A contrasting dialogue of professionals in the TVET sector; that professionals both need support and are blamed for the issues of the sector.
Sub-theme 3.1 There is a need to develop practice	More latterly government has concerned itself with a recognition of a need to develop practice and that support should be available.

Table 4 Themes and Subthemes for Policy Review

The policy review consisted of firstly developing a chronology in some detail of almost the thirty-five years of government documentation related to this context. The process of chronicling the documentation was to establish some main purposes of the government work in this area. The chronology also allows the reader to see clearly the amount of government action in the realm of TVET in England. We can see some major policy changes following in quick succession as the role of government ministers change and perhaps each wishes to make a mark on the contribution of TVET to the life of the country. I present the chronology in a table format, with some detail of the type of government documentation and the aim or purpose as I see it of each document. For the purpose of deeper analysis and understanding I chose to review the last ten years in greater detail, these findings are presented in the chronology found in Appendix 10.

The purpose of the review was to gain a deeper understanding and insight of how technical and vocation education is conceptualised throughout both policy but also government sponsored reviews regarding the hierarchical portrayal vocational or technical education in England (Feather, 2013; Hyland and Winch, 2007; Randle and Brady, 1997). My motivation therefore in reviewing political documentation surrounding this form of education is to understand if there is a congruent view conveyed by policy or government authors, then to consider whether this inference, if there is one, has contributed to what appears to be a widely held cultural understanding of TVET in England. The review was by no means the complete picture of all documentation issued by or in the name of government. For the purpose of my study, I chose to not include policy or government documentation papers on annual funding cycles or funding approaches (unless this indicated a complete change of policy or direction), the annual government reports on progress (unless significant and represented a change in direction) or the updates on qualification uptake and progress. The choice to not include these was driven by the motivation to understand the policy landscape in relation to how government has seen its role in developing the purpose of vocational or technical skills for the community and for industry in its widest sense.

I have also reviewed government documentation to examine the extent to which the government sees its role with regard to any relationships with employers, people who work in the TVET system in England and with students. I am not surprised to see that there are significant references littered through a high number of green papers, white papers and government commissioned reports about how the sector is often viewed as 'second class' or not perceived as good as other forms of education (A levels). The metaphor of Cinderella was used by the Minister for Education in 1989. Kenneth Baker the then minister shared that a lack of investment in the sector had given rise to the view of being the '*Cinderella Service*' (Petrie, 2015). This metaphor or associated meanings remain in government documentation today.

Vocational or technical education is portrayed as less value

There are a number of prevalent notions across the documentation which offer some explanation of how Government/s view the system. There are frequent references to the deficit portrayal of technical and vocational education.

....complicated an organism as FE, one which has such a central role in our national life but which is still sometimes called 'the Cinderella sector', (Lingfield, 2012:18).

This references here to a perceived lower status form of education when compared to other forms of learning such as A levels and or higher education which are both understood by the wider community, employers and offer clear reliable progression.

an attitude that vocational education is a second choice, easy option for the less able, which has been reinforced, not tackled, by claims of "equivalence" between qualifications which no one has truly believed, (Wolf, 2011b:2).

The work of the 350,000 16-19 year old's taking 'low' level vocational qualifications, most of which have little or no labour market value (in schools or in FE), (Lingfield, 2012:14).

*This reduces the capacity of qualifications to act as a clear and reliable signal of competence, and can lead to the development of qualifications which have **no real value in terms of employment or progression**, (DfBIS, 2014a:5).*

*The Sutton Trust conducted a survey in 2014 analysing, among other things, teachers' views of apprenticeships. It found that 65% of teachers **would rarely or never advise a student to take an apprenticeship if they had the***

grades for university, (House of Commons Education Committee, 2015:18).

Technical education remains the poor relation of academic education (HM Government, 2016:5).

These references in the government documentation use language which infers both an acceptance or a call to action, to change the portrayal of technical or vocational education which is often seen as less than a notion of academic education. Nevertheless, there are simple messages in the documentation which acknowledge the perception of vocational or technical education. What is interesting throughout the documents are the explanations for the problem are voiced as never normally caused by the current government at the time. There are references throughout the documentation over the last 10 years and prior to this in the chronology, that the problem of the skills system has been caused by other governments.

This degree of churn has damaged higher technical education, particularly in the context of competition with the more stable environment of university institutions and bachelor's degrees, (Norris and Adams in Augar, 2019:122).

It is clear that the most common explanation is articulated by a notion of being caused by previous governments and subsequent governments getting it wrong. However, there is also an explanation that the deficit portrayal is caused by a failing TVET system itself and the blame, if we can call it that is caused by an ineffective TVET system; colleges or disengaged employers.

Thus, I have concluded that the findings illustrate that the government narrative on vocational education is one which accepts a problem exists with how vocational education is portrayed and understood or even valued. The review identified that government offers three main explanations for this; that the problem is caused by successive governments, that this is caused by a confused purpose and that the problem is caused by the TVET system its self. The next

two sections explore the evidence from the data which offers insight into these explanations.

It's not us it's them

The government view of TVET is referenced in the documentation as centred around the ambition of any government to build a flourishing economy and the requirement for human capital that this might need to enable economic growth and prosperity.

We cannot grow as a nation without a skilled workforce and students cannot reach their full potential without good skills, (BIS, 2011a: 5).

So to succeed as a nation strong vocational education is essential, (DfBIS, 2013:4).

The UK's skills weaknesses – and failure to grow a serious system of respected employer-led professional and technical qualifications – are of such long standing, and such intractability, that only the most radical action can address them, (HMSO, 2015:8).

It is clear that successive government's reference previous governments ineffectiveness in building an appropriate TVET system to meet those goals and ambitions. These indications signal that political volatility has had a negative impact on the view of technical or vocational education. In particular the significant number of reforms, policy shifts and changes in approach have done nothing to reverse the wider held view of technical or vocational education.

It is our view that so complex a policy and funding landscape as now exists in England is unlikely to help a sense of coherent professional identity in FE, (Lingfield, 2012:17).

Constant change is the reality for those of us who work in the world of skills. We see changes to qualifications, to

policies, to funding, to Government priorities, and to Government itself. Since 1981, there have been 61 Secretaries of State with responsibility for skills policy, each with their own agenda for change, (City and Guilds, 2014:2).

Indeed, this finding of significant policy change impacting on the portrayal of TVET is played out in other literature; the significant amount of policy change is like no other across the education spectrum in England (Keep et al., 2021). The posturing of various politicians to make their mark on the economic success of the nation as a result of a good skills, technical and vocational education strategy has had an impact on the portrayal of this form of education (Coffield, 2008; Nash and Jones, 2015; Petrie, 2015).

The findings suggest that the way the TVET system is structured contributes to the views formed by government. The documentation references the market of education, which is articulated as bureaucratic and performance driven. This is used as an explanation by government for weaknesses in the TVET system.

The interventions (by Government) have created a more centralised system, unwittingly developed on “low trust principles”, where quantity of vocational qualifications is measured rather than quality or impact, (Whitehead, 2013:16).

The idea of a market in tertiary education has been a defining characteristic of English policy since 1998. We believe that competition between providers has an important role to play in creating choice for students but that on its own it cannot deliver a full spectrum of social, economic and cultural benefits. With no steer from government, the outcome is likely to be haphazard, (Augar, 2019:8).

In addition, there are narratives of the poor performance of colleges as a contributing factor to poor progress of social mobility and thus lack of a flourishing equal and growing economy.

Ofsted reports show that whilst the sector is improving, there is still too much poor quality provision and too many students fail to progress beyond level 1 to obtain the qualifications, or develop the skills, which they will need to secure employment, (DfBIS, 2014b:5).

as a whole the system does not deliver enough people with the right skills and technical knowledge of high enough quality, and is not seen as an attractive option by employers, young people or their parents, (HM Government, 2016:11).

At the centre of these discourses is how the government sees themselves with the other key stakeholders in the TVET system. This is often as an enabler, but my findings indicate in many more incidents where government appears to impute the root cause of the portrayal of TVET as other's fault, that is other governments or students, or colleges or in fact employers.

The wider goals and ambition of the TVET system as articulated by government is less prevalent but there are indicators of recognition throughout the documentation that the education sector is more than filling the human capital needs of any society (HM Government, 2015; HMSO, 2010, 2015). This wider goal can be viewed as the ambition to improve the lives of individuals. That is to increase or improve individual opportunity and improve employment prospects, which in turn creates active citizens who can contribute to economic growth. The notion of how the TVET system contributes to the development and success of individuals who might otherwise not have that chance in a system that may have already let them down is referenced.

What actually is the purpose of vocational education?

This finding suggests that whilst government documentation has referenced the fault of 'others' and not itself for causing the problem with the TVET system it has also articulated a paradoxical view of the goal of TVET to both boost the economy – working on a mass scale thinking priority about the population, whilst at the same time offering something very pertinent to the individual. The documentation identifies a confused set of purposes for TVET.

For good or ill, English FE appears to deliver at least five main areas of activity: Remedial FE, redressing the shortcomings of schooling described in the Wolf Report and acknowledged by the government; Community FE, offering lifelong learning to local people, with benefits to their health, longevity and wellbeing, as well as continuing education....., (Lingfield, 2012:17).

Broadly speaking we can align these confused purposes into two main categories articulated in the documentation. Firstly, the role to provide skills for work, which in turn enables economic growth and thus in fiscal terms a flourishing society. Secondly the role TVET must play in providing a place for those to be successful where other parts of the education system are not able to provide.

These purposes are articulated through the documentation in two main forms. One the disparity between higher education and further education, in particular the role that further education might play in relation to adult and lifelong learning for those who don't go or are not able to go to university.

The country's very small number of Level 4/5 students translates into persistent skill gaps at technician level and also severely reduces opportunities for people who are unable, for whatever reason, to progress directly from Level 3 to Level 6, (Augar, 2019:33).

It (TVET) plays a vital role in supporting people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are overrepresented in

the sector compared to other post-16 route (Social Mobility Commission, 2020:1).

There are references of the purpose of TVET in terms of providing higher level technical education which provides employers with higher level specialist skilled employees, as well as higher level apprentices. Secondly the role that TVET in England plays in being a second chance is indicated in the documentation, that is for those who were not able to attain higher qualifications throughout compulsory schooling, who may be (dependant on the point in history) part of the large numbers of 'low skilled unemployed' or may be people with a disability.

On adult skills;

the result of an unacceptable failure of the education system and that it is therefore only right to give them a second chance to acquire those skills, (BIS, 2011b:25) .

And on wider education in the TVET system

gives a second chance to those who failed (or whose circumstances caused them to fail) at – or have been failed by – school, (DfBIS, 2014b:7).

My perception of the findings from the analysis of the documentation and language portrays a paternalistic standpoint of government providing for these people through the TVET system. Narratives of the system itself creating the problem, reference to the confusion of qualifications and access routes often historically blamed for the portrayal of this form of education.

Successive governments have seen 'vocational' education as the solution to the problem of what to do with young people who don't do A levels, (HM Government, 2016:12).

In summary, the findings identify that government sees themselves as the enabler and solver of problems caused in TVET by others. These others are either other governments - their political opponents, the TVET system itself i.e., how it is organised and education is delivered and the standards of education, or finally by the TVET system's confused purpose. These explanations help to illustrate

why the documentation acknowledges the portrayal of TVET as one of less value. However, the documentation offers another important finding which is of course common sense when considering TVET; that is of course the central role of employers.

Employers and the Government, a confused narrative Employers play a central role but....

There are significant references to employers throughout. Government explanations for the purpose of TVET are clear throughout the documentation as discussed. It is clear that employers are discussed as '*central*' '*critical*' '*key role*' '*leading role*' '*partners*' '*employer influence*' (BIS, 2011a; Department for Education, 2017; DfBIS, 2013; FELTAG, 2014; McLoughlin, 2013; Richard, 2012; Tschofen and Mackness, 2012; Nigel. Whitehead, 2013). It is clear that successive ministers for Business Innovation and Skills or ministers for Education and Skills, or government commissioned review chairs all recognise the pivotal role employers have to play in developing vocational and technical education.

This recognition of the importance of employers is twofold in that they are seen as receivers of the human capital produced as a result of TVET and essential partners in the creation and delivery of this form of education. Thus, employers are acknowledged as the receivers of investment funded by the state or as commissioners of qualifications and skills and of central importance. In reviewing the documents and subsequent coding, reviewing codes and reflecting on the meaning it is clear that government in a sense has two contrasting views of employers. These play out in various forms, at various stages in the last ten years and reviewing documentation prior to that in the chronology above the overarching developed theme is one of a story; and a conversation that government wants to have which can be largely broken down into the two sub themes below.

Employers should do more

This notion can be constructed from a number of perspectives. The central purpose of TVET within of any of these documents is described as '*driving up the*

economy, *'providing more skills*', *'filling the needs of skills gaps*', *'increase productivity*' and in effect keep the economy flourishing, growing, being able to compete on a global stage, getting more people into work etc. (BIS, 2011b; Department for Education (DfE), 2019; DfBIS, 2013, 2014b; DfES, 2011; McLoughlin et al., 2013). The evidence from this review does suggest that as well as a recognition that employers play a central role in the TVET system as partners, they are co-constructors of the skills system on which they rely so heavily. There is also a sense that government feels that employers could do more. There are references to fragmented industry groups, or that fact that small employers don't participate or 'buy in' with local providers.

...help small and micro-businesses to navigate the skills landscape or the industry is fragmented, with large numbers of small and micro-businesses (Department for Education, 2017:6/7).

However, many employers (especially smaller employers) fail to engage with the vocational qualifications system. Only 28% of businesses trained staff using vocational qualifications in the year before the survey. This drops to just 16% of businesses with 2-4 employees, a symptom of the inaccessibility of the system to the smallest businesses, (Whitehead, 2013:16).

There is a sense that many policy documents see a longer-term ambition where employers are active in the TVET system. They would work as real partners in development and construction of qualifications, supporting learning which in fact legitimatises the offering from TVET. The notion of legitimacy is linked with trust and value which can be argued are key requirements to shift any perceived negative portrayal of TVET. If employers trust and value the qualifications and the skills of the students the TVET system produces, then the TVET system is seen as legitimate, essential and of critical value and esteem. As a result, the widely held portrayal of lesser value of TVET is decreased.

*greater **employer ownership** of vocational training, and will be **important partners** for us across all employer facing skills developments (DfBIS, 2013:36).*

*industrial partnerships – **coalitions of leading employers, unions and other partners** (Whitehead, 2013:25).*

*apprenticeship qualifications **developed with industry partners** (FELTAG, 2014:22).*

*What will give the technical option real status and credibility – so that it can lead all the way up to skilled employment – **will be strong employer support** (HM Government, 2016:18).*

This notion often appears to be the ambition rather than the reality at the time of writing this chapter. You might think this notion must surely align to a point in history perhaps at a time of economic downturn. This is not the case; the documents share that this concept is almost put forward by government as an as yet unfulfilled dream and an explanation for why the system is as it is, because of a lack of engagement from employers.

*Central to this long-term vision is **that employers step up and work in partnership with competitors, supply chains, unions, training providers, professional bodies and awarding organisations to take end-to-end responsibility for workforce development in their sectors** (Whitehead, 2013:9).*

*New qualifications, which are directly designed and **developed by employers**, will be a fundamental first step in transforming the credibility and quality of apprenticeships (Richard, 2012:8).*

*The term '**employer endorsement**' should be more clearly defined if it was going to influence practice. (Department for Education, 2013:4).*

In a sense government lays the blame for the TVET system is perceived faults in the laps of employers.

*Employers, schools and colleges **must do more** in partnership together (BIS and DfE, 2013:1).*

*This means that employers **need to take charge** (DfBIS, 2013:18)*

*Employers **should have greater ownership** of occupational standards and qualifications (DfBIS, 2014a:6).*

*It is envisaged that in the future employers and employer organisations will be **increasingly involved in the development and recognition of the qualifications** of greatest value to them (Department for Education, 2011:9).*

This notion is conveyed in the majority of documentation reviewed; that is that employers must do more, play a central role, should be a main player. However, what is missing to a greater extent is the how and what the role of government is to supporting employers to realise the dream that government wants them to create. It is true however, until more recent publications which whilst highlighting the desire for employers ‘*to play a leading role*’ there is a recognition that both government and local TVET providers have a role to play in supporting employers to take action (Department of Education, 2018; HM Government, 2016).

Government should do more to support employers...

This notion can be constructed from many of the documents and is played out certainly over the last ten years, but also is evident in the previous chronology. It is clear that often the central tenant for any form of new policy, green paper or indeed commissioned report is about the role of employers within the strategy of the day. Whilst it is less well articulated throughout the documents, there is a government view that it sees a role for itself in relation to supporting employers

with TVET work. The use language of support, or intention to enable is clear throughout government documentation. Words or phrases such as; supported, respond to or encourage are prevalent, indeed there is explicit reference to support emerging in a number of papers;

We propose that government continues to incentivise emerging and new industrial partnerships (Whitehead, 2013:5).

A 7 million Employer Support Fund pilot will be launched in the 2019/2020 academic year, to trial the provision of financial support (Department for Education, 2019:6)

Significant Government support and investment will be vital (Richard, 2012:39).

Government's industrial strategy is to support growth by working in partnership (DfBIS, 2013:4).

However, until very recently that *how, what, or when* is largely unclear. How government planned to do that support has only been referenced in work since the 2016 Skills Plan and subsequent documentation goes further in explaining how government will support employers in more detailed way.

An Employer Support Package will be developed to support employers across all industries throughout the 2019/20 academic year, designed to equip employers with the information and understanding needed to build their confidence and effectively plan and implement high quality placements, (Department for Education, 2019:6).

This important finding could in some way explain the portrayal of the status of TVET in our community. The UK. government has had bold ambitions for the sector, has acknowledged the significant role employers have in developing the TVET sector but have paid little attention to how this 'significant' role can be enabled. Thus, the very dream or requirement of employers has never come to pass, as Norris and Adam (2017) highlight there is a cost to all the political change (Norris and Adam, 2017). They describe that unlike other European partners

there is only a limited amount of any 'social partnership' arrangements with government. This means in real terms that government has ultimate control of what is created. Whilst the talk of partnership might be prevalent in the documentation reviewed, the action to enable it, is limited. Thus, the ability for employers to truly endorse value, trust, support or in effect legitimise qualifications or curriculum have been limited. This could therefore offer some explanation to the hierarchal portrayal of TVET in England.

However, there are references the government requires colleges or TVET providers to be supporting their local employers more. Using local structures such as Local Education Partnerships (LEP's) or Local Strategic Partnerships or other local structures to bring employers together to better understand their skills needs and invite them to play a role in developing provision to match their gaps.

LEPs have an important role to play here too. They will have increasing influence in ensuring that FE provision is relevant to local labour market needs and supports LEP economic strategies, (DfBIS, 2014b:22).

To support learners and ensure employers have an appropriate, trained workforce, FE colleges and training providers will have more flexibility than ever before, (BIS, 2011b:5) that a closer relationship should be established between employers and FE and Skills providers, (FELTAG, 2014:5).

The responsibility to do more is articulated through government to be fixed at a local level, whether that is local authority, local partnerships or local TVET providers, the documentation has identified that the local role must be enacted. This can be seen in relation to the requirements for work placement which is discussed in many government documents as a desired requirement for TVET providers.

Improved employer engagement and better coordination of work placement opportunities, (Department for Education, 2011:15).

The core content of traineeships will be a high-quality work placement, work preparation training and English and math's. Providers and employers will have the freedom to bring these elements together in the best way to engage and support individual trainees, (Department for Education and Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2013:12).

Indeed, there are many references across the documentation that has been constructed as a critique of the TVET sector organisations needing to do more to support employers.

Where provision is mediocre or poor, we fail to serve the needs of learners, employers and the nation as a whole,' (DfBIS, 2013:10).

There needs to be more widespread engagement with and involvement of employers. In its 2012/13 annual report, Ofsted reported that there is still too much provision that is not responsive to local employment needs, (DfBIS, 2014b:8).

Inferring that the colleges themselves are not good enough and hence the view from government is that the blame for the sector status is because of poor performing colleges not doing enough to support employers. This links with an earlier finding that the TVET system and colleges performance is poor. Thus, government can absolve themselves of the cause of any problem in TVET in England. The documentation has a limited view of people who work in the TVET system, and in particular recognising them as professional teachers.

Who are the professionals in the sector ?

Throughout the documentation there are explicit references to those who work in the sector, what is interesting though is a both a sense of government recognising that the professionals need support, contrasted by explanations that the professionals in the sector do not perform well. If we recognise that the role of government within education is to provide the strategy, the overarching vision and to enable which ever state controlled or market economy of education is able to realise that vision, it would not be expected to reference in any political documentation the role of people who work in the education system. Nevertheless, a theme constructed from the coding identifies that government recognises the contribution of people who teach in TVET in England.

Those who lead and teach in the further education and skills sector play a crucial role in serving people and employers in their communities and raising educational and skills levels – thereby directly supporting both economic development and social mobility, (DfBIS, 2014b:4).

More latterly as a result of government commissioned reports or reviews there is a recognition that people who work in this sector are defined by the education system, and their role as a teacher, but also are defined by and guided by the profession that they originate from.

The government continues to recognise that a system of regulatory compulsion has not proved to be a successful means of achieving a professional workforce, and that colleges and providers, as employers, should be given the freedom and the responsibility to decide what arrangements are most appropriate for their organisations and their staff, (Lingfield, 2012:9).

... Is that practice is inconsistent because of the requirement to work within a system which continues to seek to specify so much from the centre, (McLoughlin, 2013:8).

The best vocational teachers and learners have dual identities, as occupational specialists and pedagogical experts, (McLoughlin, 2013:20).

There is a need to develop practice

In particular, with the latest round of reform from 2016 onwards there are a number of references of the government role in 'supporting' proactive development in terms of vocational or technical pedagogy.

There should be a stronger emphasis on professional updating within continuing professional development plans, (McLoughlin, 2013:20).

Admittedly this subtheme has been constructed mainly from government commissioned reviews on the system. Nevertheless, in the most recent implementation plan of the new qualification reform there is funding being made available for TVET institutions to support their people to develop the appropriate skills or develop the appropriate processes to implement the latest reforms.

We will work with the sector to decide where future investment should be targeted ahead of first teaching of the routes from 2019, (HM Government, 2016:35).

Most recently there is a call for support through an evidence-based centre for effectiveness in the TVET sector in a report commissioned by government from the Social Mobility Commission (Social Mobility Commission, 2020).

Participant data

Six participants volunteered to be interviewed. I used a convenient sampling method to gather the participants. As outlined in chapter 3 the original intention was to visit two colleges in England by invitation from the principal. My goal was that I would have 2-4 volunteers from two colleges who were either piloting or in the second wave of T level qualification roll out. However, the data collection phase of the study coincided with the rise of the global COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020. As a result, and following a revised ethical approval, adaptations

had to made to the approach for obtaining volunteers to be interviewed, (see ethical approval in Appendix 2).

The sample was convenient to the strange and interesting times we found ourselves in 2020. Following contact with a number of college principals in England, whilst all were supportive, there was a reluctance to send anything out to their people who were all working through difficult times. Following consultation with my supervisors and the postgraduate researcher guidance centre in my university early in the pandemic, I decided to use social media to recruit a sample. I used Twitter to invite practitioners in the further education and skills sector in England to participate in my research. I decided to use my already significant number of Twitter followers to help me in this recruitment and used tags which signalled that this was a piece of research exploring aspects of further education. The first two Twitter posts attracted potential participants who indicated they would be interested. I asked them to send me their email address and I then followed up with an email explaining the study and attaching the information and consent paperwork. Following ethical adaptations as a result of updated guidance at the start of the lockdown period, I informed potential participants that I would use Microsoft Teams to capture the interview and it would be recorded. In total I posted three twitter posts between April and July, each post resulted in a flurry of activity (see Appendix 6). People either reposted across their own network or reposted with a yes, I am interested. In total fifteen people expressed interest in finding out more about the research. In the end six participants agreed to take part and I arranged one-hour interviews with each of them using Microsoft Teams to talk to them and record the interviews.

In order to protect anonymity and confidentiality for the participants their name has been changed, in addition the location of their place of work in England has been identified in very general terms. Each participant worked as a lecturer in TVET in England. Four of the participants described themselves as working in general further education colleges one of these was a general 6th form college that also had a good range of technical subjects as well as A level qualifications.

Two of the participants identified themselves as working in specialist college settings. These specialist colleges have a particular focus around a particular sector or range of related professions. In the case of this research one lecturer worked at a land-based college and the other a specialist construction college. Land based colleges primarily focused on a range of qualifications which cover professionals involved in agriculture and food production, land and animal sciences as well as game and wild life management and all related professions. Specialist construction colleges are primarily focused with professional qualifications and skills with a range of professions related to the construction sector, everything from entry level professions to higher education pathways related to the sector. The sample consisted of four male participants and two female participants; I did not look specifically at gender as factor in their responses. The following table, Table 5 provides an overview of salient factors that are relevant to the research

Ascribed name in study	Area in England	Specialist /General Further Education College	Years teaching in the sector	Professional area of Origin
Ian	Midlands	General Further Education College	4	Engineering
Pete	Northern England	General Further Education College	9	Scientist (teacher)
Cal	Eastern England	General Further Education College	20	Business (telecommunications)
Si	Northern England	Specialist College	15	Construction
Bob	Southern England	Specialist College	2	Land Based
Yve	Southern England	General Further Education 6 th Form	6	Early Years

Table 5 Overview of Participants

The participant profiles

What follows is a short description of each of the participants; an overview of each participant's story in relation to their career history and profession of origin. I have taken the opportunity to share how each participant entered into TVET and what their current role is and what they teach. I also describe their salient emerging descriptions of the responses about their network and how they described how they were viewed as a professional by their organisation. These aspects are really useful for the study as they provide some descriptive context of the participants which supports the findings later on in this chapter. This is important from a practitioner enquiry approach as a narrative description of the participants in this way enables their voice to be described. In the same way I have been able to reflect my own position. I accept that the narrative which follows has been constructed through my own lens, however I have kept to descriptions of factually based data they shared through the interview process, in an effort to maintain objectivity as far as possible in this form of enquiry.

Ian

Ian has been teaching in further education since 2016, however, he described that in most of his previous roles since 2002 he had held positions which were primarily teaching in the professional context. Ian identified he had undertaken his professional engineering qualifications within the military, which he left in 2008. He had worked for a large employer prior to entering the TVET sector and was supported to complete teaching qualifications before moving to another part of the UK for personal reasons and applying for and attaining a teaching role in the local further education college. Ian describes his own professional identity now as an engineer but later described himself as a teacher. Ian relays that he has found a vocation now which he loves, he says "*I found myself in that vocation I really did erm, I finally found the one thing in life, like people sometimes do, where they go 'this is me'*". He articulates clearly throughout the interview his own views of education and how he feels enthused by helping people learn, he says "*flicking the switch*". He recognised his own learning journey and shared his own personal education story in a sense to explain his dedication to the ideal of

learning and in particular his own abilities had been untapped until he started learning more. Ian identifies his own journey started as a young child, where he passed the 11 plus and was able to attend the local public school. However, Ian's dad didn't allow him to progress to this school because his three siblings couldn't all go, so in his words he "*ended up*" going to a local comprehensive school. Ian shares he has always wondered what he might be capable of in terms of study and in later life he achieved a first-class degree.

He states he is committed to continuing learning and finds the ability to inspire this love of learning in his students really motivating. I explored with Ian how he kept up to date with his profession of origin and Ian shared that he has a personal professional network. His network is made up of a range of different ex colleagues, from or related to, his profession of origin and to some local employers with whom he has been able to build relationships with, independently of his current role. In addition, Ian identified that he used other sources to keep up to date, such as journals and television programmes. Ian also shared he used Twitter as a really useful source of information and debate in relation to teaching as well as his profession of origin.

In discussing his current role Ian shared that he worked in a large general further education college in the middle of England. He works with a team who primarily teach the range of qualifications and skills related to the engineering profession. He described that often his students are 'disengaged' with learning, and he sees himself and his role as being able to reinvigorate students thinking and enjoyment of learning. He shared that it was his view that his employer is generally reluctant to support him maintaining or growing his own engineering professional knowledge or network. It is his view that his employer is more focused on general teaching skills rather than developing specialist teaching related to the professions. Ian felt this was wrong, he and his colleagues were an untapped resource for working with employers. Ian felt that the advancement of technology was going to make a huge difference to teaching and described the recent experiment of having to teach online as a result of the global pandemic. Ian didn't

teach T levels but shared that he taught a range of students, who were studying at different levels from level 1 to level 3. He taught mostly full-time students and his focus was teaching the range of specialty subjects related to engineering. Ian explained he didn't know a huge amount about the T levels except that there would be an expectation that students would have a lot of work placement. He was also worried that organisations including universities wouldn't necessarily know what the content of the T level qualifications would be and then students may miss out on progression opportunities.

Pete

Pete has been teaching in further education for nine years, when asked he described himself as a teacher, that was his profession of origin. He identified that he had studied chemistry at university went on to study a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) and then attained a role as a science lecturer in a general further education college. Pete didn't share his own educational experience or relate that to his own practice. He had been teaching in TVET since that first post mostly teaching applied science.

Pete was very clear about the range of different organisations and professionals he described as his network. He identified that he valued his network and that he saw this network of professionals and professional organisations as a community of practice. His subject knowledge network included professional organisations such as the Royal Society of Chemistry. He stated that he there was a good network of teachers like himself who were also part of the Royal Society and that they met to talk about the teaching practice of science. Pete also described his positive relationship with local universities to which his students frequently applied. Pete used this network to gain feedback and insight from the Higher Education perspective of any gaps in knowledge of students who he had taught and that had progressed on to these local universities. He also described his relationship with the society of education and training, stating he found this invaluable source of information and used this to provide inspiration for his practice development. Pete also recognised the use of a Twitter network – a useful source of information and links. Pete recognised that he used his network

to feel grounded in his profession of origin and felt quite protective over the network. He said at one point when asked whether he used his network to support his tutees; *“no I am quite selfish with them I keep them for myself”*. Pete works in a general further education college in the north of England. He states he works in a large team of science teachers, with over thirty people in his department. He identifies that he feels his own organisation is less concerned with his professional development, particularly in relation to his profession of origin as a scientist. He states it is not their priority. He does not feel supported to maintain his professional network or keep up to date with his professional area of origin i.e., chemistry. Pete teaches science, he teaches BTEC programmes mostly at level 3 to students who are studying full time. He also teaches on GCSE science for post 16 students as well as A level Chemistry. Pete is aware of the T level development but his college isn't teaching T levels in science. He described what he had heard from others in his network about the challenges of work placement and how this could make it very difficult to teach these qualifications. He felt that whilst they were well intended, he wasn't sure how successful they would be because of this aspect. Pete described that he thought the change in qualifications in England was about drawing a line under something which had a poor reputation. He felt the use of the word technical in the title of these qualifications implied more in-depth study.

Cal

Cal has worked in further education for over twenty years. Cal's profession of origin was as a buyer for a large multinational communication company. Cal worked in marketing and retail, as well as buying products for stores. Cal stated she didn't enjoy this work and had decided to change her career completely and do a post-graduate qualification. In order to support herself she joined the supply list to teach at a local college after doing a short introduction to teaching course. Once she started working there, she then started teaching in business studies to earn some money whilst she was studying. As often happens in further education, a vacancy became available and Cal applied and got the job. She started her career in further education teaching A level business and in higher education a

higher national diploma qualification. Cal is working at the same organisation she started teaching in twenty years ago.

Cal recognised that whilst she started her career in business and identified that as her profession of origin, she now works completely in teacher training and identifies that her network is mainly concerned with both education research and teacher training rather than a business-related network. Cal identified that as she progressed in her career in further education, she used her network to a greater or lesser degree. Cal draws on her own experience with education and learning to support her network. She recalls how her own master's qualification in teaching and learning resulted in her building a large network in pedagogy development. Cal identifies the use of Twitter as a useful source of information but she does cite a caveat that she recognises that you have to be "*quite discerning*" as it is easy to get side-tracked as there is so much information out there. Cal is studying a higher-level qualification at the moment and recognises that this level of study enables her to narrow her field of researching.

Cal works in a large general further and higher education college in the south of England. She works in a team of teacher educators and is mainly concerned with teaching teachers. Cal recognised that the support from her employer to maintain her network was limited. She said at one point that the college "*doesn't make it easy*" to keep up to date. She also recognised her perception of an erosion of specialist knowledge support and pedagogy development with a trend in the TVET system to promote general teaching skills rather than subject specialist pedagogy. Her employer focused on the organisation's lecturers developing generic teaching skills. Cal teaches the teacher training programme and also, she specifically teaches in research methods and practice for trainee teachers. Cal recognised that her current teaching bears little resemblance to her profession of origin. However, it was clear that as Cal has worked in the TVET system for a long time she saw her profession now as a teacher educator, and thus her network reflected this identity. Cal identified that her network of teacher educators or education research professionals was really important to her in order to

maintain currency of her own practice. She explained how she uses her network to signpost her students to relevant research or sources of support in their areas of interest.

Cal didn't identify her college as in the first wave of T level teaching. Whilst Cal said she knew quite a bit about T levels, she suggested that she thought they were not going to make a huge difference to how TVET is viewed. She expressed concern about work placement and how students who got work placement with prestigious employers would be advantaged.

Si

Si had worked in TVET for 15 years "*on and off*". I asked him what he meant by that. He explained that at times there hadn't been sufficient work teaching so he had returned to his profession of origin within the construction industry and taught alongside. Si described that he almost fell into teaching. As if by chance, he saw a recruitment advertisement in his local paper, applied for a job, not really thinking he could get the job and was successful. He identified that he didn't realise how much knowledge he had until he started teaching. Si described the time when he worked partly in his profession and partly on site. He identified that the professionals he worked alongside on site treated him like some sort of '*god*' because he was a lecturer. There was an expectation that he would have all the answers to problems they encountered in practice. He also described the return to practice as straight forward like putting on an old pair of trainers "*just nice*."

Si spent a lot of time talking about his network, expressing that it was very important to him. Si clearly discussed how he used his network to support students and provide opportunities that they might not otherwise have. He identified that his network consists of suppliers and builders as well as the national association of the specialist area in construction within which he teaches. He identified how his network support student competitions, sponsor materials or wider development for students. He also uses his network to supply materials for students to learn with.

Si work in a specialist construction college in the North of England. He identified that he is one member of specialist staff in a very small team. Si was complimentary of his employer, stating that his employer encouraged him to make and maintain the professional networks. He felt that this reflected well on the college, that they recognised that these networks allow greater insight and connection with the relevant industry; in addition, the sponsorship and supply of materials was welcome. Si recognised that the network he had was akin to a productive partnership and that his employer recognised this. They allowed local employers to use the college as a resource for training and also a space for training and development for their staff. This proved fruitful for the organisation as often students could access this training free of charge and indeed local employers were keen to employ students on completion of their studies as they could see them or work alongside them in the college context.

Si teaches a specialist area of construction. Si explained that this was a niche area in construction and that there were a small number (less than 20) of specialist lecturers in his field across England. In order to protect his identity, I have chosen to redact any reference to his specific professional area, hence the reason here I refer to only an expert in construction. Si identifies that he uses the limited number of teachers as part of his network and that this group of specialist lecturers meet together at least twice a year to discuss relevant pedagogy and the specifics of the industry. This is a good source of support to him and his professional development. Si's college is not yet delivering T levels, Si anticipates that this will happen quite soon. He is concerned with new professional standards and changes in qualifications because of revised professional standards from the Institute for Apprenticeships. He suggested that employers hadn't really been sufficiently involved in the development and he was worried because of these new qualifications may not align to industry.

Bob

Bob has been working as a lecturer for two years. He described how prior to teaching his role was as a professional researcher in the animal and marine sector. He identified that he was being supported for further study but recognised that in the industry he was working in there were limited progression opportunities. He was looking for a different opportunity and saw a recruitment advert for a lecturer and felt he could try and apply. He was successful and has since been working and also studied for his teaching qualifications with the employer he is working for. Bob really enjoys seeing student progression and identified that when he was working in his original profession, he helped a student on work experience. He has kept in touch and now that student has just completed their masters.

Bob described how it was quite easy to keep up to date if you taught on higher education programmes as he needed to ensure he was up to date with the latest research to be able to teach his students. He identified he used social media forums on LinkedIn and Twitter as valuable sources of information and support. He identified that he kept in touch with some professionals in the field, but because he was in a very specialist field there were limited opportunities without meeting up with people, he would rather, not from his previous employer. He identified that within his industry there were a number of local employers which he had worked hard to build relationships and join the local network relevant to his specialist area of teaching.

Bob works in a land-based specialty college in the south of England. He is a specialist teacher who works with a small team of lecturers teaching in a specific area of animal care. Bob identified that his college is a specialist college, but is in the process of merging with another general further education college nearby. He was unsure what impact that may have on him. Bob talked positively about his employer enabling local links with relevant employers and having one person in his team, a lecturer, who was responsible for organising all the field trips. Bob recognised that his students had quite a bit of time allocated to work experience

it was really important for his employer to enable lecturers to be in touch with their profession of origin.

Bob's college and has a particular focus in one speciality area. Bob recognised that there were few speciality colleges who offered similar provision and as such he was one of a few lecturers in TVET in this field. Therefore, in order to protect his anonymity, I have taken the same approach as I did with Si, his specialty area will not be identified except to say he works at a land-based institution. Bob teaches across a range of provision at level 1, 2 and 3 as well as on higher education programmes relevant to his specialist area. He recognises that teaching in higher education requires additional planning time and he uses this time to keep up to date with latest research and thinking in this specialist area. Bob identifies that his college will be using T levels, but was surprised that there wasn't yet a T level related to his specialist area. He identifies that there are skills shortages in the UK in this area and felt this was a missed opportunity. He was worried how the college would find suitable work placements for the students on T level programmes, but suggested that his professional network would be useful in supporting students to attain the required work placement hours.

Yve

Yve identified she had been working in the vocational education sector for six years. Yve identified her profession of origin as an early years' practitioner she had trained through the NNEB (National Nursery Examination Board). She displayed great pride in her profession of origin and felt very connected to it still, by virtue of the qualifications she teaches on having a licence to practice competency element. Yve described her journey from her profession of origin and how her original qualification had allowed her to attain a number of different posts across a number of different contexts in the industry. She describes how she recognises that as a parent she had far more empathy and understanding for parenting and children once she became a parent herself.

Yve identified she started teaching in TVET on a very part time contract, this was after she herself was a student on a degree programme at the college she now teaches within. As an older student the college had asked her to be a mentor to younger students and that over time the college had asked her to take on more teaching. As she enjoyed it, she gradually did. She now works full time in a 6th form general college which has a mixture of A levels as well vocational or technical qualifications.

Yve had been teaching since 2012 – she entered the profession not really believing that she would be successful. She described the thing that got her through the interview was because of her significant vocational experience. Yve recognises that her experience has helped her to be a better teacher. She identifies that her profession is very specialist and she recognised that her underpinning knowledge from practice has been invaluable.

She talks to professionals in local employers, she also is an avid Twitter user and Yve identifies that this is for sharing practice, ideas or ask for help. She states she is learning from this experience; as she has kept going into practice. Her employer has allowed her to go back to practice, one day a year. She links to the employers where she sends students for placements. She identifies that the minute she identifies herself by her profession of origin to colleagues, this is respected and there is a mutual understanding of what this means, in terms of the level of occupational professionalism, knowledge and skills.

She describes her team as different from the others who work in the college as everyone in the team has significant vocational experience. Yve states that her employer has finally been supportive of her returning to practice, but recognises that the systems and structure of the majority of the college is geared to A level provision.

Yve teaches professional early years qualifications. This is a specialist professional organisation for professionals working with children and families.

The qualification that Yve teaches are both technical and competency based, which means that students will hold a licence to practice once the qualification is attained. Yve teaches students at level 2 and level 3. Yve has very recently been informed that the college is planning to teach T levels from next year, she expressed concern and would have rather waited to allow the new qualifications to “*bed in*’ a little”, before taking on the changes for the team and the students. She was concerned about what her local employers would make of the qualification changes, would they understand what a T level meant.

The Findings; Participant data

Overview

It is natural perhaps to assume that people working in the same sector with some similar experiences may talk in the same way, and may engage in the professional language talk that is relevant to the day-to-day activity of the sector. Therefore, my interpretations are that of an insider. In addition, as a practitioner enquiry this study could be questioned for its objectivity. In a sense the study is open to questions of bias and invalidity. My response to these arguments is to state once again, that this study arose from my own sense of disquiet about the impact of the portrayal of vocational and technical education on its value in society. I had a growing curiosity and a sense of frustration about this discourse and as such positioned myself in the research as a practitioner and therefore recognise that my inferences, interpretation and the generation of themes which emerged can be seen as subjective.

In chapter 2, I explored my position in the research with reference to the tension between vocational and technical and vocational education and it was useful to use this as a reference point as I analysed the data constructed from the interview transcripts. Following the close review of the data I was able to construct three broad themes that can be seen across the participant data.

The following Table 6. illustrates themes constructed from the data

<p>Main Theme 4 A deficit portrayal of TVET</p>	<p>An articulated notion of TVET of being less valued by society, of poor status.</p>
<p>Sub theme 4.1 There is a battle, a fight</p>	<p>The notion portrayed between academic and vocational or technical education – concepts of a battle, TVET has to compete to gain recognition.</p>
<p>Sub theme 4.2 The system</p>	<p>An understanding that the TVET ecosystem is structured and operates as a complex system which is driven by funding and student achievement. These factors contribute to the views held of TVET and in oppositions the perceived strength of the HE system.</p>
<p>Main Theme 5 'I am a'</p>	<p>Lecturer Identity is defined by profession of origin and the TVET system. Embodied sense of self inextricably linked with the profession of origin</p>
<p>Sub theme 5.1 Dual Identity</p>	<p>Professional identities are impacted by at least dual professional qualifications, centred on the profession of origin. Strong feelings against the notions of being a teacher and the development of what are perceived generic teaching skills. Identity is impacted by network and place of work.</p>
<p>Sub theme 5.2 My network</p>	<p>Recognition of the importance of network in all its forms to professional identity and the use in supporting students.</p>
<p>Main Theme 6 Ambivalent, disappointed and sceptical</p>	<p>Reform will not be successful and will impact on portrayal of TVET.</p>

Subtheme 6.1 Who, what, where and how?	Questioning the drivers for reform, notions of uncertainty about the purpose and incentives Lack of clarity, who is leading employers/ sector/ disregard for TVET.
Sub theme 6.2 Gold Standards	Whose standards/ Gold Standard what are they linked to? Status issues. Notions of how perceptions of being elite or prestige is linked to HE
Sub theme 6.3 The future	What does the future hold, we still need people to do things people do, machines can't do everything? Rebuff to machine learning and any notion of a job's apocalypse.

Table 6 Themes: Participant data

The first of these themes is that in general terms the participants all reflected that a negative or deficit portrayal of vocational or technical education exists and that they face this in their practice. A number of explanations could be seen in the data including the structure of education and the power that is held by higher education institutions. They also see their role as a central to the delivery of vocational and technical qualifications, recognising that their personal connections would be and could be useful as the education reform goes forward. The participants felt strongly that often but not always their own organisations didn't really understand them as a resource. Finally, the participants shared a lack of confidence in the implementation and relative success of the new qualifications and did not believe that the new qualifications would transform the portrayal of technical or vocational qualifications. They recognised the motivation in terms of the changing shape of work but felt that people were still going to be a central driving force. I will now present these themes in more detail giving examples from the interview transcripts to illustrate my findings.

A deficit portrayal of TVET

The data interpretation identified is that the respondents both subscribe to and describe a cultural and community understanding that the position of vocational or technical or skills-based learning is in a deficit position compared to what I have interpreted that they define as traditional academic or declarative knowledge or theoretical abstract learning. In particular that there is an understanding that higher education which happens at university is afforded higher levels of respect or status compared to those higher-level technical qualifications provided for by the TVET system.

There's a bit of snobbery going on with the universities and colleges and I do feel that colleges especially FE are sort of they are like the poor cousin to compare to universities and I think that's where the snobbery comes into it.... so, until they level that playing field... erm.... I think there is always going to be that the technical are frowned upon a bit, are only going to be attended by people good with their hands and want to work on a building site, whereas I don't think that's quite fair (Si).

They understand that there is a continually referenced notion to a view that they either hold or that they understand there to be qualifications not having enough academic thinking.

They (vocational qualifications) are not viewed equally especially from my experience at university applications... so I had a student who was a distinction star student across the board and I had to fight for him to get a place at a university doing ██████████¹ because he wasn't doing A Levels. So, despite all the UCAS points it wasn't. they were saying we will have to start him on the foundation year and all of this... but we got there in the end (Bob).

¹ This phrase has been covered as Bob teaches in a very specialist field and if this phrase was revealed his identity may be compromised.

This contrasts to notions of wider assumptions that professions who use their hands such as construction for example are cognitively easy. Participants are frustrated by this perceived view, as when discussed there is a recognition that in general people are not able to do the tasks or functions of a construction professional. We still need a specialist to undertake specialist tasks that we the people regard negatively or of lower value. It is my view that there were some powerful conversations during the interviews with participants talking with emotion about this commonly held notion. I have noted on several interviews the body language of the participants was significant. Ian held his head in his hands when talking about the “*battle*” as he saw it between academic and vocational knowledge. Yve, spoke with much emotion about how she was personally fed up of this current and historical view that somehow vocational education, skills or qualifications were somehow less.

People dumb it down and I get really frustrated... (talking with a raised voice) I am just turned 55.... I am too old and long in the tooth now to be putting up with this nonsense any more I am hearing the same rubbish that I heard in in 1980 (Yve).

Yve was very frustrated by the “*divide*” as she saw it, and in particular the lack of understanding that the “*system*” which could be the government, the college or the wider community, had about the depth of knowledge and professional understanding for the qualifications and profession that she taught. She talked about “*fighting*” for recognition this was a concept that was conveyed by other participants. Yve says this succinctly “*it’s an ongoing battle. I think there is a lot of lip service paid.*” (Yve). This is in relation to how her employer views the vocational courses taught in the college.

There is a battle, a fight

Here the respondents clearly articulate with the use of their language that there is some sort of a battle to get recognition for TVET. The notion that respect is afforded to all that is cognitively challenging or requires abstract thinking, and in

a sense that there is a perceived understanding that abstract thought and cognitive challenge are not part of vocational education. The notion is often seen as separate for any hands work which is not afforded the same level of respect.

You get it all the way through, the idea that somehow things are easy, you know plumbing - got to be fairly easy, because it's something to do with your hands, I don't really understand it, the minute we have a plumbing issue we don't just roll up our sleeves and say I am going to wade in and do that, it's easy, we get the person in because we know in reality it's not, but we think it's just procedural and process and there's not much in the terms of complex thoughts going on (Cal).

This conveys perceptions that there is a disregard for specialist vocational or technical professions, concepts emerge from the participants like “*it’s an ongoing battle,*” “*getting trampled all over by higher education,*” “*A levels are gold standard,*” as if somehow everything that is perceived to be not academic is therefore not of the highest standard. Notions of gold standards appear in Government reform references and is a widely acknowledged and used term (DfBIS, 2013, 2014a; Lingfield, 2012). Cal talks about this in relation to how we might see a difference between technical and vocational interpretations. Cal describes her understanding about how vocational education has been seen as a second chance option which has had an impact on how it is viewed;

This idea of second chance. So, I think it's... I understand going back 20 years where you had more adult provision people coming in and retaking qualifications that that was the case, but if you think about it if you wanna be a bricklayer or you want to be a horticulturist. it's not your second chance. or you want to be an engineer it's your first chance it's not like you followed that option at school and failed it you weren't ever given that option at school so I think its inherent within everything. ...I think it comes from

that I think it comes from that when you get policies that say things like A Levels are the gold standard and we are going to match them with this... I think even BTEC's moves to try and make their qualifications look more like... you know BTEC'S that kind of thing and move away from that more practical focus they had a few years ago... even that... it is all saying well actually this is the privilege knowledge (Cal).

Indeed, participants identify that vocational or technical education is used as an insult, conveying a simplistic way of doing something, Pete articulates this;

So culturally (he pauses)... it's (vocational education) got a poor reputation, if you google BTEC or go on twitter and type in BTEC, its commonly used as an insult so, it might be described as the BTEC version of something (Pete).

Pete also discusses how he sees vocational qualifications as being the type of education for people who wish to enter their chosen vocation. In terms of a recent change, he felt that the move to include what he perceives as an academic mode of assessment and exam into vocational qualifications as a “*really really strong step forward.*” (Pete). In a sense this is an attempt to equalise the status of forms of qualifications by adding in an alternative assessment methodology.

The process of analysis of the data identifies that the participants recognise an elitist view that is held about different forms of education or knowledge, this is conveyed in a number of ways. Ian, Si and Peter identify a “*snobbery*” surrounding how vocational education is viewed by others. That it is simply not good enough, Ian describes this in relation to some of his own research for a course which he undertook;

.. assignment where I covered this in it where I had to address the fact that academics at the time were talking about... or being very derogatory about the ability of a vocational qualification to step up in any sort of academic sense and meet the necessary standard...because it was

always oh, they are just good with their hands. How are they ever going to get to the necessary academic standard and it becomes a very pretentious thing especially even in engineering you have got level 1 students who are just starting out, who through no fault of their own maybe haven't got any GCSE's but want to come and do engineering who I have given them a taste of some things they might want to do and progress that at a different level. So as long as we give them an opportunity to succeed in English and math's... we can then progress them on to level 2... take them forward to level 3 (Ian).

The notion of elitism is portrayed by a number of respondents. Si highlights his view and compares how he sees the status issue in England compared to another country.

... it's a bit like the builder and the doctor, the doctor is highly respected in his field of study, what he does and performs whereas a builder is just a builder, a plumber just a plumber. But if you go to Germany erm they are really highly sought after, they are really highly reviewed, whereas in this country I don't think builders have made the job any easier by all the cowboys that go around and all the rest of it, but it's like this parity of levels (Si).

Si goes on to say where he works that this notion plays out in relation to courses taught

..there's two categories, there's the higher national diploma and degree side and the lower levels where I work and there's the pecking order and I'm close to the bottom and I don't think that will change, I don't honestly think that will change (Si).

Participants all discussed how this battle for recognition plays out in the interpretation of the forms of knowledge, with relation to concepts around academic knowledge, Bob reluctantly admitted this. In his speech at this point Bob was very hesitant, almost as if he didn't want to complete this sentence. Of course, that is my interpretation of the way that he spoke, his natural mode of speech may be perceived as hesitant I have no way of knowing this other than that which I witnessed. His view was that;

I guess..... personally there is something in my head that says vocational is not as good as A Levels..... but I don't really mean that, ... it's just kind of that A Levels are very academic and I'm quite an academic person.... but FE vocational definitely has a real important place I mean my personal experiences what my Level 3 students learn now I was learning in my Masters ██████████²so they learn more now at Level 3 before I even got to that Level 6 so what they learned is super super important and very practical and that's often missed in academia so if you did an A level biology you might dissect a rat or something or you know and that's all good but my students will know how to (Bob).

Bob goes on to describe in detail how the learning his students are involved with at Level 3 qualifications in a vocational subject are equal to the knowledge gained at much higher levels in university. He says he doesn't think people understand, how much knowledge is involved. Yve also talked about this in relation to the qualification she teaches, identifying it contains a lot of higher-level thinking and knowledge but because it is applied to the specialism a student would need to know and understand to be able to apply this is in a practical situation.

Participants discuss their own perceived differences between concepts such as technical and vocational, all interpreting that a notion of technical knowledge has

² Please see footnote on page 119

more academic conceptualising, and deep learning to enable practice, whereas the interpretation of vocational is more to do with practice. The technical elements are what is learnt in College, the “*theory*”, the “*critical understanding*” (Bob, Pete, Si). Vocational qualifications or learning as seen by participants are leading to progression straight into a career. Participants also identified how technical and vocational knowledge or education is compared to higher education in its traditional sense, i.e., universities. However, the sense that higher level technical education may also start to shift this lack of recognition and by this, that the perceived strength of the higher education sector will impact positively on how technical or vocational education is viewed. Cal highlights in relation to her points about degree apprenticeships she says that students won’t get a university experience and the cost is passed on to the employer – she thinks this will change and states

I think it will probably change, probably more is going to have to come into vocational education, they are going to have to look at the Level 4 or 5 piece, erm, again a lot of it is going to be, the problem is going to be that the university sector is really strong, I think if we led 4 or 5, we would just get trampled all over. When the universities decide that this is a degree or this is a, they are a big strong body, they seem to be able to protect themselves a lot better than FE (Cal).

The TVET System

The way the TVET system is organised has an impact on the portrayal of technical and vocational education. In particular what emerged was that the status afforded to higher education based at university causes a cultural understanding of a more prestigious status. The concept of the high status of higher education was generally identified with a reference to the whole education system being built on progression to university. Participants relay that this has afforded power to the higher education system and the relative status, esteem and legitimacy associated with university education. This is illustrated by the

perceived or expressed notion of the way that higher education is funded. *“Like I say we are the poor cousin and it shouldn’t be the case Universities are really rich colleges are fighting for funding all the time it’s not a fair playing field at all,”* (Si).

Nevertheless, participants discussed that the whilst prestige of degree is a factor from the perspective of employers, the status of a higher education qualification isn’t always as welcome as the practical experience that may be associated with a technical or vocational qualification.

They (employers) seem to be going back to an old fashioned way of getting their site managers, and that is picking the off the building site they are slowly realising that the guy that leaves university with all the whistles and bells, all the degrees comes in and he has never been on a building site, and he doesn't know, he knows it all upstairs, he's got it all written down on paper but the actual practicalities of a building site, he doesn't know them, whereas the guy on the ground, who was worked on a building site..... has got a good feed on things and he knows the actual processes that are involved, so I have spoken to quite a few of them (employers), and there's a couple of them saying they will sort of go down that road with these new technical levels so hopefully (Si).

All participants discussed higher education and their perceived sense of power associated with universities and the relative expansion of higher education. This was spoken about in terms of both access for students that they taught but also the notion that there is an impression that professions now require graduate qualifications for all specialist roles. In a sense participants rebuffed against a notion of a graduate led workforce and questioned why the only way forward was to get a degree, why was technical mastery not recognised.

A further theme has been constructed from coding the data in relation to ideas about the way that the technical, vocational education system is organised in England. The data suggests that this plays into how this form of education is portrayed, that is how the TVET system is funded, or supported by local and national government. Bob highlights this notion of lesser status or importance as problematic – here he is referring to the level of government support offered colleges during the pandemic; Bob states, *'erm but it does very much seem at the moment that the priority was always secondary GCSEs and A Levels, and vocational were kind of an afterthought in terms of support,'* (Bob).

The way that TVET organisations such as further education colleges organise themselves and the pervading culture within them is felt by the participants as all having a contribution to the portrayal of this form of education.

....and underfunding of colleges, so you never going to look at college and go wow, as a parent, I really want my child to go to that college because it specialises in blah blah. I guess, partly to attract students, the latest building we have had on our campus is engineering building and it does look lovely and I do wonder whether that's to you know, look! Bob, Sue, you will be in this beautiful building, so it has got more prestige. The problem is you don't think of, you are going to the local college, as you would I'm going on the Rolls Royce apprenticeship. I think the other thing is you know that if you're on the Rolls Royce apprenticeship or the Jaguar Landover you've got something on your CV that is going to make you stand out, I think because colleges have this disparity in terms of, they are not seen as academic as schools and universities, and they are sometimes seen as not as good (Cal).

How colleges organise themselves to distribute funding is seen as a problem by participants and can be seen as contributing to the portrayals of vocational education. Yve referenced the way the college year is organised for those who

teach what she described as academic qualifications which have exams, the teaching year finishes early, but all those who are teaching technical or vocational qualifications are still teaching. She says that she and her vocational colleagues are made to do things that just don't fit naturally with the delivery of vocational qualifications. Ian, Pete and Cal identify that the way that colleges distribute finance or receive funding for courses mean sometimes it is very difficult to deliver the type of education they want to, for example not having appropriate resources or sufficient hours allocated to teach the professional knowledge comprehensively.

Regarding changes of a market economy of education where funding is not available for certain things, here Si talks about lack of funding that his qualifications get, Si described at length how important the relationship he has with local and national employers who support the teaching, the students and the qualifications

We can't afford to run [REDACTED] without the suppliers support, if they cut their support for us ...without free [REDACTED], free [REDACTED], free [REDACTED] we wouldn't be able to run... we would run at a loss every year....this is what I mean by being the poor cousin... you don't get that funding to give quality training without being reliant on handouts (Si)³.

Conversely, the way of teaching in this area is also seen as a contributing factor to the portrayal of this form of education, with participants highlighting that the notion of personal experience is key. In this I mean the fact that all vocational lecturers have two professional skill sets, that of a teacher and that which I describe as their profession of origin. Yve highlights this, "*We don't just teach from a textbook; we teach from experience*" (Yve).

³ There are phrases in this sentence which have been covered in order to protect Si's identity as he teaches in a very specialist field.

In summary this theme has highlighted that participants see that vocational or technical education is generally perceived as of less value by society. Conversely the subsequent theme identifies how important that technical and vocational mastery is to the participants professional identity and thus their own status in society.

‘I am a’

All respondents identify themselves by their profession of origin and this is also illustrated by their network diagrams in that their identified networks are mostly commonly related to their profession of origin. When asked how they described themselves, all used language which conveyed that they were, as if an embodied state, the profession with which they originally worked or trained for. *“I am an NNEB”* (Yve). *“I am an aerospace engineer”* (Ian). *“I am a researcher, kinda scientific researcher”* (Bob). This conveys an important starting point to understanding and interpreting responses to subsequent questions about their profession of origin and the importance of their network. Only Cal described profession in the past tense, *“I was a senior buyer”* (Cal), identifying now her profession is a teacher educator.

My own position in recognising this theme was developed from listening to the way the respondents talked about themselves, as if being given permission to discuss their profession as separate from themselves as a lecturer. They all spoke in tones that conveyed commitment about themselves and their journey into teaching – as if by accident in most cases. Teaching was not something they had not intended to do but it almost found them *“.....almost slipped into it”* (Yve); *“...I started teaching flexibly to support myself”*(Cal); *“...saw a job in the evening news and I just applied for a job and got it”* (Si); *“...it’s kind of luck really”* (Bob); *“...just found myself in a local college doing a bit of teaching”* (Pete).

In developing this theme I can reflect that I was struck by the verbal and nonverbal cues witnessed when the respondents were talking about their

profession of origin. One respondent talked effusively about their profession and how once other stakeholders knew what the profession of origin was, this fact was a nonverbal way of communicating mutual respect.

I haven't been anywhere in my professional career where I haven't met a fellow NNEB and had a sense of excitement and it's that little knowing look between you, or that little high five, it's like you're in a little, it's like a secret club almost, it's that pride, and I think that's what we need to have back that people have pride in their qualification, pride in their vocation (Yve).

Participants clearly all identified themselves with the exception of Pete by their profession of origin rather than being a teacher or lecturer first. Pete had entered teaching following a specialist science qualification and although he saw himself as a scientist his response was teacher first. "...I would say I am a teacher, yes I would describe myself as a teacher" (Pete). The enthusiasm with which they described their career stories and how much they enjoyed teaching qualifications related to their profession of origin conveyed both authenticity and their own sense of agency as a professional teacher of XX.

Identity

Participants recognised their new identity as a lecturer, a teacher of their own specialist profession, however their identity was impacted by their network and place of work. Respondents discussed how they were often conflicted in consideration of their profession of origin and being asked to develop generic teaching skills. There was reference to the expectations from their employers about developing general teaching skills which respondents identified was useful but not at the expense of them keeping in touch with their profession of origin's knowledge and skills. Here respondents indicated that their employers didn't understand the need to keep up to date or didn't respect their profession of origin expertise and the expertise it afforded them.

We've gone very much to this idea of teaching as some sort of generic thing where as if you put people in classrooms

and set out standards and tell them stuff and it's been very much the focus on teaching as a separate from subject knowledge so its generic it doesn't matter if your teaching animal care or if you teach hairdressing or construction, you just need good questioning technique. You just need de de de de de.I fundamentally object to this, (Cal)

Participants discussed their wish to ensure they kept their profession of origin practice up to date. This was a reference to two main elements, the wish to ensure their teaching was current in relation to professional expertise and mastery, but also the opportunity to make connections and consolidate their network of employers. In a sense to ensure that employers recognised lecturers' skills and expertise in this profession. This would be of benefit to them as lecturers but more importantly participants saw this as essential for their students.

But every institution I have worked at thus far, haven't fostered that at all (developing my skills of my profession of origin) they have been more interested in me as a teacher and improving the professionalism of me in that regard, (Ian)

Cal identified that when asked her employer to return to practice it was possible but her words indicted that *"the College don't make it easy"*, (Cal), or Pete identifies that his employer doesn't suggest this as CPD, *"it won't be suggested, it will be something I have found,"* (Pete), or in relation to request for CPD in relation to vocational expertise his response was *"I wouldn't say it was a priority of theirs,"*(Pete). This was in stark contrast to those participants who worked in specialist colleges, here participants acknowledged that their employers saw value in them developing vocational practice, by both going into practice, and maintaining professional networks and vocational related CPD. Si highlights this by stating his employer really is very supportive of the need to maintain occupational competence;

Yes definitely, if there's a skill build, we go down for the duration of it, make sure the student is okay, we use that

time off to go do all these things, so there is a real help from the managers, the hierarchy at college. Because it does bear fruit for the college, for the last two years have had gold medal winners, in both skill build and the apprentice of the year so it does bear fruit and it does look good both on our CVs and all the rest of it but the college do back us with time etc., (Si).

Bob described how the college supported him to take groups of students out to local employers, and he was able to visit local and national employers to keep up to date. He recognised how important that was to him now and in the future as the nature of work changes. He highlighted how important it would be to keep his profession of origin up to date to be able to adapt.

We train them in the skills they need rather than it being part of the qualification so more on the pedagogy of teaching those erm those students is how I would see it rather than specifically training them in new ways and in some respect in my view as a as a practitioner who likes you know the latest stuff...if the lecturers are constantly refreshing the materials and adapting them to describe what's happening now in industry and then using those examples where possible so there is a new bit of kit, can we get hold of it or can we go see it... that's that's going to be the way to keep them (students) up skilled so the actual qualifications are the same but the experience evolves as the fourth industrial revolution evolves as we teach, (Bob).

Interestingly there was recognition for those that did go back in their profession of origin of being treated like a guru of the profession, Si talks about his experience of going back into his profession of origin to update;

I think some of the expectations of some people, thought that I was this [REDACTED] God that I was going to come and

sort everything out, because I was a college lecturer in [REDACTED], oh he will sort it out... Yeah, (Si)⁴.

This is a really interesting and unexpected finding that in this instance it can be seen as a raising of the status of vocational education because they are a teacher of the profession that the sector respects them as both a professional from that professional sector and also a teacher.

My network

Evidence from this study and literature suggest that high numbers of people who teach in the TVET system have entered the role as teacher following a career in another sector (Hanley and Thompson, 2021; McLoughlin, 2013; Orr et al., 2019; Taubman, 2015; Unwin, 2014). In order to deliver qualifications in TVET in England it is common or essential for those who teach to have gained the professional qualifications in the area they are teaching at a higher level. It is also often a requirement that the teacher must have some relevant professional experience working in that sector. For example, you couldn't teach hairdressing unless you were a qualified hairdresser with some relevant and often extensive experience. Respondents were very protective of networks but recognised the significant value of their personal vocational skills and experience and this aligns with the place/places or people they connected to from their profession of origin. Value was gained from these networks not only for themselves as teachers but they used the networks for the benefit of students, despite their place of work not always seeing the value of these important relationships. Participants all recognised how important their own personal networks were for them as lecturers. They identified the significant value of maintaining and keeping up to date using their networks and how invaluable this was for supporting students. Participants used their own networks to bring in specialists to talk to their students and in one case used networks to support students into a new job role.

Right, we work really closely with suppliers and they give up to date training on new products, new methods that are coming in... so they come into college and they train us on

⁴ Si has described his specialism here, therefore it has been covered as this would identify him

anything that is new that is coming in erm they also do CPD for the students as well so they will come in and give them a brief overview and show them, (Si)

Si described how he supported a struggling student to seek alternate employment and this was made easier because of Si's professional network.

Responses were largely referenced to the importance of these networks as a 'community of practice', to speak the same talk, to share and learn together as well as support for juniors in terms of their students (Lave, and Wenger, 1991).

The employers get a student that they can use because the education system actually understands what it is they want, the education system gets what they want because there is an opportunity to maintain that dual professionalism and keep the tutors and instructors up to date and that's then to make local connections so that they become part of the community of practice as such a hub for education rather than just not disenfranchised, erm what is the word I am looking for barren entities, all in the same game, (Ian).

Participants identified that there was little value seen by their own employers about their networks with the exception of the specialist colleges, "*but nobody in my employment currently has asked me about making those sorts of connections or those sorts of links,*" (Ian). Ian identified that in relation to how his organisation manages employer's liaison – he says it's managed by others in the organisation. This is also acknowledged by other participants where they highlight that employer engagement is usually managed by other teams in the college, not necessarily by people with specialist knowledge and skills. Pete identifies how important the networks are to him and he would be reluctant to hand them to another team in the college for the purpose of setting up work placement for students, or for example those who work in the organisation to build strong links with employers. "*These networks take years to build up and develop good relationships with people and to throw everyone in all at once there will be a fight for these places with everyone that is willing to*" (Pete). This was whilst Pete was

talking about the requirement for work placements in the new T level qualifications. Pete admitted that he felt very protective over his personal professional network; *“I am quite selfish with them I keep them for myself” (Pete).*

Participants had some concerns about how the TVET system had organised itself around building relationship with employers. However, there was an absolute recognition that it was critical to work with employers and the value that positive relationship would bring in terms of student experience and the benefits for the college as a whole in terms of prestige.

Participants who were not in specialist colleges conveyed a general lack of respect of the importance of their networks and for them as experts in their profession of origin. This together with the drive by some of their employers to push them towards general teaching practice away from their subject specialist was difficult for them to understand. Participants relied on their community of practice to keep updated, to discuss and learn from each other, but most importantly to confirm their own identity as defined by their profession of origin.

Twitter and other social media platforms were identified as highly valuable across the participants as a place to learn and share. *“Twitter has been the biggest thing for me over the last few years, it’s kinda changed where I go to get information about my teaching” (Pete).*

having quite a high Twitter and LinkedIn profile, so you’ve seen on all of the research groups, you see a little message come up about a new bit of research so that’s the kind of, the scholarly side of keeping in contact (Cal).

Yve talks about the use of social media to maintain a network of professionals who might also be from the same profession of origin who also teach the same qualifications as she does, but also practitioners still working within the profession of origin as being all part of the same network. This is a significant group of people she uses on Twitter.

people that contribute to that regularly and I think that's helped to inform my teaching as well because I have never worked in a school, and I teach on a unit around school readiness so that's really useful, if I see practice when I am out assessing and I have got a question about it, I can DM (Direct Message) somebody and say I've heard this today I am a little bit concerned', 'is that normal'? erm should I be taking this further? So, yeah, for me it's really helped a lot it has really broaden my perspectives, I am now connected to people in HE private training providers, managers, assessors, so I can't knock it, (Yve).

Data from the network maps was congruent, in that all clustered their networks around people/ organisations from their profession of origin. A significant aspect was local and national employers relating to their sector of origin as well as the use of social media platforms and connections made through these.

Ambivalent, disappointed and sceptical

The theme has been constructed as a result of codes which centred on the role of government, the reforms, the role of lecturers in the TVET system and references to standards and frameworks relating to the professions. The participants didn't express much hope for the success of the most recent English government qualification reform. Pete expressed this as almost a rebrand exercise for vocational education, rather than the fundamental change in delivery, scope and system change that perhaps is portrayed by the Government's current strategy (HM Government, 2016). *"I see it more as wanting to draw a line under the old course and bring in a new version so it gains some separation from what has got a poor reputation," (Pete).* Participants expressed a lack of clarity about the new reforms and what this meant, although they were clear that there would be particular issues surrounding in particular the work placement element.

I know that finding the work experience is going to be an absolute nightmare, I know that the trial at ██████⁵ has gone really badly, they have had real difficulties with it. So, I am not sure, my impression is that it will be difficult to implement,' (Pete).

As lecturers in the TVET system in England they expressed in a sense feeling disconnected from the qualification changes, this was expressed in a number of ways, but the overriding theme was as if this was being done to them not with them.

You never see them (government) asking teachers and you know they constantly fight in the unions and the unions are constantly fighting them, they don't engage us in any way to understand it. They get the odd principal who gets involved. But it was the Sainsbury and what was the other review going on at the same time as Sainsburys', The HE one? 'Yes, the Auguar review the same principal the only person representing FE was one principal I think it was ██████⁶ principal I am sure she is great, but if you're talking about doing all the vocational qualifications you have to wonder if she is busy doing all this stuff when was the last time she stopped to talk to a vocational lecturer, (Cal).

She talks about this in relation to being engaged as a sector or engaging employers with the qualification changes;

I think fundamentally they are engaging with all the wrong people or not sufficient people; they just keep going back to the same pool, the same pool, the same pool, keep

⁵ Pete has named a college, in order to keep this anonymous I have chosen to redact this name.

⁶ Cal has named a principal of a college, in order to protect anonymity, I have chosen to redact the name.

getting the same answers without some of the nuance which might make it more successful. (Cal).

In addition, they all expressed concern as to the perceived value of the new qualifications would people really know what they mean. So, a technical qualification, it's just another round of different labels for qualifications that are not A levels.

I am not sure it is going to be successful, I think it's almost like people internally will hear those differences, I don't know if people, like a parent making a decision and it's a technical course against a vocational course, whether it will have any purchase with them or will make any difference. So, whether it's us all squabbling ourselves about it, I think this idea that it could create a two-tier system, (Cal).

I honestly don't know because I don't know how much the lay person knows how much is meant by technical, I don't think people really understand vocational so to throw the word technical into the mix..., (Yve).

My own position is less clear, I have reflected that I was surprised to hear the level of discontentment in the participants. They all shared a common understanding that the reform would not necessarily be successful in addressing parity issues with technical and academic education systems. On reflection my own position is less decisive. Having reviewed the literature for the development, I can see the relative merit of refining the current market system of education and streamlining qualification awards has some tangible benefit of reversing the current mixed complexity of the TVET English offer. In a sense the construction of this theme was in contrast to my position and thus was really interesting to see and develop the understanding from the participant perspective.

Who, what, where and how ?

Participants were not clear about the drivers for the reforms, and suggested that there was a significant number of reforms in the English TVET system and that these were just another set. This correlates to the findings from the policy review, there has been a significant amount of policy churn in the TVET system. Ian highlights the notion of being subject to constant reforms in the sector and feeling in a sense that the T levels are no more or less than a new minister or government making its mark without really thinking of the broader need for any change. He argued that the new reform does not appear to be keeping up with the need to increase technology in teaching and learning, suggesting that if the T level qualification can be flexible to embrace changes in technology it may be successful.

if they can do that it will work and they will last, if they are in any way short, they could be very quick invention, essentially what happens if the one political sentiment government will do one thing the next thing you know you are in another political state of affairs, another party another agenda, and things change, so one minute its oooh T Levels rah rah rah, the next minute it's no we don't want T levels we want this and you end up being robbed from pillar to post, (Ian).

Two participants explored notions that the driver was to move away from the bad reputation that vocational education had got, so a 'rebrand'. The participants spoke about a perceived disconnection from the sector of profession of origin in developing the qualifications. There was a sense of feeling disappointed at a perceived lack of transparency in which employers were involved with the development of the new qualifications. Through the employer panels, the intention of the Post 16 Skills Plan was to form a set of employer representative groups who would lead the development of the content for the new qualifications (HM Government, 2016). Si expressed some disappointment in not understanding who was sitting on the employer panel for the suite of reformed

qualifications and associated national occupational standards associated with the qualifications;

I have got a list of people that have been to one meeting and then it sort of petered out as it went on, as it went on there was less and less people attending so I don't really know who set these standards and how they have come up with what they have come up with...I would like to have seen a college or some training establishment to be involved with part of this because some of the stuff we have got to do will be really difficult to deliver (Si).

There was recognition that there had been some involvement with employers, but also that it was unclear which employers had been involved. This was particularly true from participants at specialist colleges suggesting a lack of engagement in their professional sectors, and they were concerned that the new qualifications were not designed to meet the needs of the sectors. The data suggests that participants felt that it is not clear how new qualifications could have been developed without reference to anyone who will be required to teach them – a lack of engagement with the TVET community as well as employers. Ian illustrates this when asked what he felt could be improved about the reforms from government perspective.

it (government) can listen to the professionals who deliver it every day who know what the problems are and need somebody in that educational secretary seat who has actually done it, has understood what goes on, who understands you know me, (Ian).

Cal was very concerned that those in government do not appear to engage in a meaningful way with the sector to understand, her supposition is that there will be very limited understanding what vocational education is really like.

You look at the background of all the people they come from background like ours they didn't go to vocational

colleges they didn't even go to state schools and colleges so they have lived a very different life so fundamentally they don't understand it, and why would they, it would be like me trying to understand a life at Eton. I've got no frame of reference for that you know, so why, I've got my own prejudices about probably what it's like I don't know so I couldn't advise on that, I think there are issues like that I think they also deliberately lock us out from any policy decision. So, they shoot themselves in the foot by doing that, (Cal).

It is interesting to note that in relation to the views presented in the data regarding the perceptions of the reformed qualifications T levels, participants reflected ideas about standards and in particular a phrase which evokes notions of being of supreme quality and something by which other forms are judged. That is the idea of a gold standard form of education.

Gold Standards

Notions of the differing levels of skills and a narrative of confusion about how standards and qualification frameworks have been developed is evident in the data. Participants shared a growing sense of uncertainty about who has been involved and when the underpinning standards have been developed, Si highlights that he is hopeful about the qualifications, but he is uncertain regarding its overall success. *“T Levels are going to take over from the standards that we have got for the full-time provision at the moment to give them an actual product at the end. Hopefully that will work, I am not sure,” (Si).*

This is set against a perceived ‘gold standard’ of academic learning. Bob highlights this saying he feels that the T level qualifications have been designed to be similar to A levels, therefore there was confusion about the goal and purpose of the new qualifications.

T Levels, they kind of seem because they are new, erm and they from just reading how it is written it is kind of saying

this is a new A Level kind of thing rather than a new vocational qualification, (Bob).

This view is shared by Cal;

So, they (government) keep saying that A level is a gold standard, and this will be the equivalent to that so it's some kind of gold standard vocational qualification. I still think it kind of undermines itself by doing the parity with A Levels, (Cal).

If these qualifications have been designed to be a new kind of A level, they are not defining the relative difference between the forms of qualifications and therefore the merits of a new standalone technical qualification. Participants recognise that the legitimacy of the qualifications in being a “*gold standard*” for vocational education comes from the relationship with employers. Participants identified the notion of status linked to the employer that students might be able to get for the work placement element of their T level qualification. This was discussed in positive and negative terms. The inference was that it will be very challenging to obtain work placements for students at what might be seen as prestigious employers, against perhaps local employers. Participants did talk of prestige linked to well-known brands such as Jaguar Land Rover. That these links do have some currency and are accessible for only the few students in the TVET system (apprenticeships or work placement for T levels) but there was some discomfort that there are not high-end employers locally linked to every college.

I think the problem is though, there isn't a prestigious employer next to every FE college, getting students there might be an issue, we've got some good employers around us, like [REDACTED]⁷ people, they have apprenticeship courses with us at level 3, 4, 5 and then they go on to careers elsewhere, they are a really good well thought of employer, they have said they don't think they

⁷ Cal has named a large, well known company. Identifying this company may mean Cal is identifiable therefore I have redacted this name.

can take any because of the issues. But if you have got 30 students, they are not going to take 30 are they, and where do the others go is going to be an issue, (Cal).

Participants question whether this will only serve to maintain the lower status of vocational or technical education as the qualification will not be legitimised by employers. This creates the possibility of a two-tier system of vocational education where a student can get a work placement with a prestigious employer which then legitimises their education and status as the employer is a trusted brand.

The future

The motivation for the reform of qualifications is largely associated with the growing sense in the literature that there will be increasing need for advanced technical skills. This is borne out not only from the Gatsby report but is also reported by OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), World Economic Forum (OECD, 2014; Sainsbury, 2016; World Economic Forum, 2017). The shape of work will adjust as technological advances mean that automation will increase in sectors that may have historically relied on human participation. This fact government reports as a motivation for this shift in the TVET landscape in England (HM Government, 2016). The participants all generally discussed the technological revolution as being similar to the experience they were having as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. *“My stuff online at the moment, yes I can’t do practical and there is nothing I can do about that, but if I had access to a College whilst I was still doing this this would become fantastic,” (Ian).* Notions of technology being used rapidly to support student learning was a useful metaphor for consideration of the gradual rise in technological advances and what the future of work held.

if you embrace the fourth industrial revolution because the things I could do with that are amazing, unvented reality, VR you know, taking the students to various places to see how computer designers are doing things with it for real you

know it would be amazing but it just all seems actually that it costs this, yeah, yeah, more than it does about an investment in me, in costs money and shamefully in some way we are back to that wealth argument again where it's about if the College earns enough money they're going to be able to do certain things, if they can do certain things then the students come off better.. we are back to that whole argument about how many students, (Ian).

In general terms the participants shared similar views with regard to vocational and technical education and associated professions that human beings would be needed in the roles they were teaching people for.

However, there was a sense conveyed that there would be an increased need for higher technological skills which could lead to a divided society as some people would be left behind if they failed to redevelop or develop appropriate skills;

I think fundamentally, I think what we were talking about that start highlights this that tech only goes so far. You still need thinking people behind it, in the same way we were talking about teaching, and that despite coronavirus everything has moved on line but it has just shown how pivotal the teacher is in there, I think it is going to be the same I think it will come back to needing thinking individuals. For me I think the problem is going to be but it's more for the lecturer, erm I think you are going to get this continuous sort of suppression of wages, wages, wages, I think, I can only see that ultimately it is going to lead to social disruption, but that's not really an education type of thing, I think people are going to get, the top is going to get so far away from the bottom, historically people tend to react to that, that would happen it is a reasonable summation that if people see it getting too far away, it

causes disruption, I think you see it now to a small degree, I don't know, I don't know how government is going to keep convincing people to upskill when you have generations who have, and haven't got benefit of it, (Cal).

Cal highlights that whilst the advancement of technology will be important to the future of work, she identifies that people will still be important because those human qualities are needed in the world of work. Machine production and automation would be important but would only shift the shape of work slightly. There was a recognition that flexible work skills would be important to ensure that students developed a broad range of employability skills to support their life long career.

I think we definitely look more now at developing skills than we ever have done before rather than the qualification itself and seeing the qualification as the goal, it's been seen as developing the skills that will help them in future. Looking at something similar, students won't have the same job anymore. They won't go into a workforce where it is the same job for 40 or 50 years then retire, (Pete).

Yve highlights the same in relation to the qualifications she teaches;

...Erm... but I mean with children. you can't look after children through a computer, can you? You can't have a webcam and say Francesca gets down off the chair, don't put your fingers in the plug socket.... We are always going to need people to look after children and maybe, maybe we have a population that perhaps I don't know, hopefully will understand the hard work that happens in schools, (this is in reference to the pandemic) (Yve).

All participants recognised the value of technology in terms of teaching and learning however, they were all mostly teaching remotely because of the

pandemic. They recognised that this would be impossible to do without student contact forever.

that despite coronavirus everything has moved on line but it has just shown how pivotal the teacher is in there, I think it is going to be the same I think it will come back to needing thinking individuals,” (Cal).

Yve highlights, *“but it’s definitely also erm demonstrated the importance of face to face that need to be with people and we do,” (Yve).* The requirements of the qualifications they teach made it impossible to complete everything remotely.

with what we are going through now with COVID, we are learning a new way, of a method, but I’ll still be doing what I do in the workshop because I can’t do it anywhere else, (Si).

However, there was a recognition that some aspects of teaching going forward especially in the pandemic situation could really impact on learning. Participants talked about how difficult it was going to be to place students in work experience as part of their course. Employers would be reluctant to have students because of the risk of COVID-19.

A general sense of ambivalence towards the qualification reform emerged from the participants. This, perhaps had been highlighted because of the current future situation where technology had been essential but couldn’t be everything and therefore the notion of still very much needing people and people skills. Finally, this ambivalence to the success of the newest reform because of the general disconnection of employers with the TVET system, despite the purpose of TVET being to develop technical and vocational expertise.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

The outcomes of this study offer some explanation for the construed portrayal of technical and vocational education. In addition, the study informs my own practice as a leader in a TVET organisation in a small community, enabling me to better understand the role of lecturers in supporting the new qualifications.

The following chapter brings together all elements of this practitioner-based enquiry; the literature review, my reflections, my choice of methods, and the findings as a discussion in relation to my two research questions. In attempting to answer my research questions, there were some findings I may have anticipated, however, there were a number of unanticipated findings which support and strengthen the overall main findings of the study.

This research was designed to inform my own practice as a leader in a TVET organisation. I hoped that my ability to provide deeper insight to a problem which impacts my practice regularly could helpfully make suggestions about actions I can now take as a leader. The following discussion is useful to crystallise the results of this work and provides recommendations of a way forward for me as a leader.

Clearly the research goal was to broadly understand why the TVET system in England suffers as a result of the portrayal discourse. Furthermore, whether the exploration of government documentation could contribute to my understanding. In addition, the study aimed to understand the perspectives; of lecturers working in the TVET system in England in relation to the newest government reform and introduction of T levels. The exploration of lecturer's perspectives was to understand whether they felt that the newest intervention in the form of a legislative reform from the UK government would be successful in disrupting the perceived, and evident from the literature, portrayal of vocational education as somehow of less value or status than a traditional notion of academic education.

Evidence from the literature has identified a way that vocational education is understood or perceived more widely as somehow of less value, and that those students who travel down this route are likely to be of lower status from a sociodemographic and cultural perspective.

This study adopted a professional enquiry approach based on action research (Murray and Lawrence, 2000) in which I was able to interview six participants, and undertake a detailed policy review spanning the last ten years as well as create a chronology of policy spanning some thirty-five years. As such any findings and subsequent discussion should be treated with some caution. I can only claim the findings from these participants at the time of interview represent their authentic view. I used a systematic approach to analysing the data, adopting thematic analysis identified by Braun and Clarke (2013) (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The resultant data has allowed me to draw together some conclusions which provide insight for these participants, in this place at this time. The government documentation has also been systematically analysed using a thematic analysis approach. This has enabled me to gather some insight into the repeated themes emerging through the vast number of government documents with policy, legislative or commissioned reports related to TVET in England.

This chapter will explore the findings generated through a rigorous use of thematic analysis which resulted in the construction of a number of key themes throughout the data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The themes reported in the previous chapter will now be discussed. In an effort to understand what these findings mean and how they can be seen in the context of literature related to the study and most importantly how these findings can contribute to a greater understanding of the sector in England. The discussion will result in some recommendations for my practice as a leader in TVET as well as raise possible opportunities for learning for leaders of TVET institutions. Finally, it will offer some reflections for policy makers.

The portrayal

The literature review revealed that the debate between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge is both complex and long contested. The overview in chapter 2, identified a clear position for technical or vocational knowledge not as cognitively easy but involving complex application in context (Carr, 1995; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Hyland, 2014; Hyland and Winch, 2007; Winch, 2010). Eraut (1998) hypothesized that it is by considering the different aspects of knowledge we can bring about a deeper understanding. Discussion of both theoretical and practical understanding defines professional knowledge – which it could be argued is a useful descriptor for vocational or technical knowledge. That is the knowledge which is constructed and applied in a professional context. Eraut (1998) identifies three specific domains of ‘professional knowledge; Psychomotor, cognitive, and affective – these can be determined as process, propositional and personal knowledge (Eraut, 1998). The concept of cognitive knowledge conceptualised as beyond propositional knowledge and forms to become theoretical and practical understanding and application. Rutter, (2009) identifies that this type of post technocratic concept is a good example of the application of theory or critical theory to practice. Eraut (1994) identifies in the practical context; the theory must be adapted, shaped and adjusted to be valuable in the current context (Eraut, 1994). From a theoretical standpoint, this means that true disciplinary knowledge must be critically applied in any given context, theory alone will not suffice. Rutter (2009) identifies that this process requires ‘*practical reasoning, understanding, association, and judgment*’ (Rutter, 2009).

A brief introduction to conceptions of knowledge in chapter 2 reflects on vocational knowledge and the extent to which it can be perceived as the coalescence of theory and application. Winch usefully describes this understanding with an application in the context of the ‘*speculation about a knowledge economy*’ and the development of skills needed to meet economic drivers (Winch, 2010).

Nevertheless, government documentation identified the reference to the commonly held deficit view of vocational education. The findings articulate that government documentation has depicted and endorsed the notion of vocational or technical education being perceived as less value, or lower status. Explanations in policy documentation are given and can be seen as successive government failures, the fault of others and the confused definition of the purpose of TVET. Significant change of direction and numerous strategic developments have left the TVET sector reeling from one change after another (Esmond, 2019; Hillier and Figgis, 2011; UCL, 2018). This together with a recognition of lack of appropriate funding from a number of sources suggests that there can't be a successful re-positioning of TVET, until this changes. This was agreed by the participants who all acknowledged that the TVET system in England has a poor reputation. The newest set of reforms may go some way to bridge the divide between employers and TVET but it is too early to tell. The purpose of the new reforms was to shift towards a more technically enabled workforce, the participants feel ambivalent about this being an outcome. Despite the emergence of the changing shape of work as articulated by OECD, CBI and most recently a social economic disruption caused by COVID-19, and the move to more remote working than ever before which is fuelled by technology, the participants do not perceive that the low status of technical or vocational education will change (OECD, 2014; Schwab, 2016; World Economic Forum, 2017).

Findings suggest the critical importance is the relationship with employers, and whilst more recent government developments have started this process, participants and emerging literature argue this move is not yet sufficient to enable employers, students, the professions and the wider community to endorse or legitimise technical or vocational education. The narrative which is recurrent throughout the government documents is that of policy churn. The first explanation offered by different policy documentation surrounding the '*policy churn*' is borne out by Norris and Adams (2017) who identify that since 1980 there has been a disproportionate amount of policy development, legislation, government department change, and no less than 48 different Secretaries of State

(Norris and Adam, 2017). Political turmoil is referenced in other literature and gives rise to the explanation that the TVET system is unstable and hasn't had the opportunity at least from a political perspective to flourish and define itself the same way as we might compare other education systems, such as primary or secondary education (Bailey and Unwin, 2014; Hanley and Orr, 2019a; Hillier and Appleby, 2012; Hillier and Figgis, 2011; Souto-Otero, 2013; Young and Hordern, 2020).

This notion of operating under a climate of constant change has done little to secure the trust of the TVET system. This in turn has compounded any view held of the TVET organisations and hence the people who work within them and indeed the students both young and old who attend them. My view as a result of the study is that the degree to which the changes on legislation direction and '*policy churn*' has created a view that this form of education is almost tumultuous in nature and as such this makes it very difficult to trust in the quality and efficacy of this form of education. This has had the effect of feeding the portrayal of TVET as somehow unworthy. The findings suggest this is in deep contrast to that of higher education and how its viewed.

The explanations from a literature perspective identify that the policy of successive governments to increase access to higher education has resulted in the massification of higher education. Over the last few decades higher education has expanded at a fast pace, whilst at the same time there has been a relative decline in sub-degree qualifications and importantly a demise in technical education (Wolf et al., 2016). Wolf et al (2016) in discussing the reasons for the expansion of higher education offers some explanations for the government's position; firstly that the massive expansion of higher education has led to influx of international students which is useful from a governmental economic perspective, secondly that government has used the philosophical understanding of justice and therefore has put in place policy which enables all to access university which has, by virtue of this approach, indicated that this is the best and most valuable form of education. Thus, by inference there is a government

endorsed conclusion that technical education is not as highly valuable (Wolf et al., 2016).

Participants reflected the notion of a higher status being afforded to higher education delivered through university, they often used the metaphor of a fight or battle between higher and technical or vocational education. Participant view data reveals that there is an element of prestige associated with universities which was not afforded to TVET. Bathmaker et al (2018) highlight the emergence of applied graduate programmes, initially through the TVET systems, authors hypothesise that this would offer an expansion to TVET systems globally.

However, the opposite has occurred, with higher technical and applied graduate programmes being offered as enrolments in universities both in England and other nations such as USA, Australia and also in Europe. The limitation of growth in college higher education programmes can be explained by ambivalence of government to see the worth of higher-level qualifications and learning being offered at college level, and secondly the marketisation of the education system; where Colleges (TVET system) must compete with hierarchal stratification of universities for enrolments (Bathmaker et al., 2018).

The notion of competing with higher education was borne out by the research participants and also the Augar review (Augar, 2019). The Augar review, commissioned by the UK. government to review the spiralling cost of university and the perceived problem with the student's loan scheme (this is the government devised method for students to access funds for payment of universities fees). In fact, the resultant recommendations were to reinvest in the TVET system. Augar (2019) recognised the sustained underinvestment in TVET, highlighting the need for improved funding and access to further education grants for adults without qualifications at a basic level and that there should be a focus on higher level technical skills delivered by further education colleges. Whilst it is too early to reflect if this research any impact of government policy in relation to the Augar review, there is supportive evidence from literature published both before Augar and afterwards, Bathmaker et al., (2018); Esmond, (2019); Hodgson, (2015);

Hordern, (2016); Peters and Jandrić, (2019), which suggest that these recommendations need to be implemented to ensure not only a fairer system but also one where high skilled people enable economic growth and productivity. This will be especially critical as the demand for higher skills becomes increasingly more important as we move through future technological advances. It can be argued that the T level reform is as a direct result of the global drive for technological advancement in relation to the shape of work. The notion of the 4IR is discussed in the literature review, however, it is important to reflect on this in relation to the findings (Schwab and World Economic Forum., 2016). Whatever your view on the reality of 4IR, it is clear that we will need specialist higher level skills as a result of increasing levels of digitalisation and automation. Whilst the government's newest reform, T level, goes some way in theory to develop specialist pathways in technical subjects, the next steps are not clear. Will these new developments lead to the evolution of TVET higher education at subgraduate level? Field (2018) highlights the lack of sub-graduate technical qualifications as a weakness, citing England as the lowest provider of sub-degree technical qualifications across fourteen OECD countries. Field (2018) argues higher level technical qualifications not only serve as a route to employment at higher level but also with the changing shape of work there is a need for higher level technical skills to meet new demands of labour (Field, 2018). Participants in this study identified a concern for TVET in relation to higher level technical skills and qualifications and there was the perception that the university sector is so '*strong*' that TVET organisations can never compete (Cal).

The trust placed in higher education and thus academic education is historic (Gibbons et al., 1994; Holmwood, 2011; Nowotny et al., 2001). However, the findings together with the literature review have identified that this historic trust and legitimacy has been perpetuated by the portrayal offered throughout the policy documentation. The development of higher-level technical skills qualifications which are situated in TVET systems may also support the shift in the portrayal of technical education; this is the notion that higher level technical skills will be delivered via further education colleges rather than universities. It

was recognised both in the findings from interviews and also the government documentation review that universities are ‘powerful’ organisations and are afforded power by government and are perceived as such more widely. It could be argued that there has been a contribution to the perception of TVET in England as a result of government discourse, and the way the system is organised and funded. In addition, status is influenced, by the organisation of the TVET system and government endorsement of higher education.

The way that the TVET system is organised and funded was identified through both the participants and the policy review as an explanation for the portrayal of vocational or technical education. Policy documentation highlights the complexity of the funding of technical qualifications, as well as successive UK government policy documentation blaming previous governments or ministers for underinvestment. This only serves to perpetuate the notion of the poor relation (Augar, 2019; City and Guilds, 2014; HM Government, 2015, 2016; Lingfield, 2012; Wolf, 2011a; Wolf et al., 2016). This notion is borne out by participants who talk of ‘*being poor relation*’ being ‘*underfunded*’. Participants have highlighted that working with employers who sponsor kit has been beneficial as due to funding constraints kit wouldn’t be possible to purchase without these critical local employer relationships. Participants recognised the importance of their own employer relationships in their own ability to support TVET for their students.

Tensions in policy

Historically vocational education is linked with and derived from a vocation or a set of knowledge expertise and mastery associated with a particular profession. It has often developed as part of apprenticeships or through years of skilled mastery working with one employer (Gillard, 2018; Giroux, 1980; Robinson, 2015). Evidence suggests that this form of education was developed from and with industry (Bailey and Unwin, 2014; Goodhart, 2020; Wollschlager and Reuter Kumpmann, 2004). If we can accept the previous points, it would be common sense therefore to assume that employers, professions and industry were and are leading partners in TVET in England. The findings indicate that the notion of

employer partnership is not yet fully realised, the historical context is useful in considering as an explanation for this lack of partnership.

Over time groups of employers formed together to oversee the training and development needs of any profession (Hoffman, 2020). We term these employer coalitions, although often called guilds, having a membership. Membership gave both support and recognition to individual businesses. Hoogenbaum et al (2018), go so far as to suggest that the Guilds both '*regulated and monitored access to economic production*' thus in a sense afforded citizen rights to individuals (Hoogenboom et al., 2018). The Guilds offered the ability to guide the development of skills and importantly give clear direction as to the requirements for any skilled craft person or profession. It is interesting to note that across Europe the notion of the professional Guild was far stronger than it was in Britain (Hoogenboom et al., 2018).

A short history was discussed in the literature review, we know that as a result of the political and industrial climate in Britain there emerged a number of private training providers during the early twentieth century. Specialist largely private vocational training providers formed, whilst they received funding from the state it wasn't until the post war era that the government organised the provision of technical education through the creation of technical colleges. The notion of the professional guild existed but was largely involved in a consultation capacity for setting and endorsing professional standards instead of the complete oversight of qualifications; whereas in Europe the professional Guilds retained their strength and governance over vocational education (Hoffman, 2020; Hoogenboom et al., 2018). Esmond argues that European systems of education are based on collective ideology, rather than a market economy that we have in England (Esmond, 2019). This is an interesting comparison and important for my study as it is clear that both the policy review and data gathered from participants identified a perceived notion of English vocational education performing less well compared to European partners. As an example, Si identified his perception of a difference between countries such as England and Germany found on page 123.

The data from the policy review highlights that government often portrays a *they do it better* approach in its narrative of European counterparts. The hope is to replicate an education system which produces greater numbers of skilled employees and is referenced to its strong production-based economy. However, in undertaking this comparison it only serves to emphasise how far away the liberal market economy education system of England is from the whole collective dual education system of other countries that can be called successful (Esmond, 2019; Unwin, 2014). Comparisons with the dual system in Germany are reflected throughout the policy documentation particularly in the last 10 years, where successive ministers have identified the difference in economic productivity, and the benefit of a skilled nation that appears in Germany. Ministers have identified that a wish would be to imitate these education system (HM Government, 2015, 2016b; HMSO, 2015; House of Commons Education Committee, 2015; Lingfield, 2012; Richard, 2012). Government would like to emulate these approaches but have not necessarily recognised that the sociocultural, political and historical context is vastly different.

Hanley and Orr (2019) highlight that the government can be accused of as they describe it, *'policy borrowing'*, identified by Raffe (2011). Here the relative success of TVET systems in other countries have been borrowed and applied in England without reference to the context and complexities of the existing system, the historic and current relationship with employers as well a notion of applying *'best practice'* (Hanley and Orr, 2019b; Raffe, 2011). The term *'best practice'* cannot in fact be quantified in any way, as what and whose best practice is it, this notion can only be applied in relation to the evidence (Vettoretto, 2009). Hanley and Orr (2019) argue that this approach used by the post 16 skills plan is reductive and whilst looking to other nations is useful it should only be used as a learning exercise. By using this approach learning can then be contextualised with the goal of making a useful contribution to what is likely to be successful in the current situation (Hanley and Orr, 2019b).

Whilst the historical evolution of vocational education in England is discussed in more detail in the literature review it is evident that in a sense the notion of a set of organised professional employer bodies very close to TVET are perceived to offer a greater sense of structure, oversight and importantly legitimacy to any form of education associated with those industries. By close, I mean not just places for work placement or some employers sponsoring qualifications. Close means so much more, it means that employers or employer professional groups should be co-constructing qualifications and programmes of study, and have governance over the content. They should offer experts to take part in a meaningful way in the delivery of the curriculum and importantly have the ability to agree the competency standards, or required expertise for any novice in pursuit of the qualification or programme of study. The research from a policy perspective identified contrasting views of government; both a recognition that Government itself needs to do more to build a TVET system which involves industry as a central partner, at the same time many policy documents lay the blame for a deficit system in the hands of employers and local providers of TVET that is further education colleges.

Much of the policy documentation identifies the importance of employers, and identifies bold statements of intent, but limited action. There is also an inference of disappointment by government in the work of employers in relation to TVET and an implicit suggestion that employers are somehow to blame for the state of vocational education by their perceived relative absence at the policy table. Whilst this is the case in the policy documentation it is clear that up until relatively recently there has been limited government action to enable industry to be involved in the development of both qualifications and the sector itself. This is recognised by Keep (2018) in exploring how government policy has enabled the involvement of employers in a systematic and structured way, reviewed how England has managed this process compared to the other nations of the United Kingdom and argues that there is a '*paucity of effective English national, sectoral and local and regional level organisation and representation for employers is now quite marked*' (Keep, 2018). My research identifies that successive government

policy change has done nothing to secure these local, regional or national relationships and this may have contributed to the lack of trust in TVET and as such the hierarchal portrayal reflected in government policy and described in the literature.

The literature review discussed the pervading neoliberalistic culture within the TVET system, which has largely been dominated by performative cultures and high stakes expectations by government to meet the skills needs of the future (BIS, 2011b; BIS and DfE, 2013; *Measuring the Economic Impact of Further Education*, 2011; Technical and Further Education Act 2017, 2017; DfBIS, 2014b; DfES, 2011; HM Government, 2015; HMSO, 2010, 2015; McLoughlin, 2013). Thus, the policy review highlights findings that identify how government blames colleges for a perceived failure in the development of highly skilled experts ready to enter the workplace. Whilst the narrative in the policy review is of blaming colleges, it can be argued that government itself has created high stakes performance cultures pervading in TVET in England as a result of constant policy change, demanding ever increasing improvements to meet the government defined goals of TVET. (Daley et al., 2015; Nash and Jones, 2015; Ofsted, 2014; O'Leary, 2013; Petrie, 2015; Smith and O'Leary, 2015). As a result, this has created a self-fulfilling prophecy, that constant change demands an increase of TVET to work in a way that builds employer relationships, not realising that the constant change has only served to decrease the ability and freedom for TVET to work in this way.

The language of the most recent qualification reform the Post 16 Skills Plan, identifies the importance of employers and had in fact put measures in place to foster these relationships at a national and a local level (Department for Education, 2019; Department of Education, 2018; HM Government, 2016). This research has not had the opportunity to explore to what extent these government initiatives to support local employers have been felt, but certainly participants in this research questioned how and which employers had been involved at a national level in the development of the new qualifications.

Participants of my research identify some confusion regarding how standards for qualifications have been developed and which employers have been involved in development of the new T level qualifications. Participants identify that the involvement of employers is not clearly visible to them as practitioners. In a sense they did not trust the development as being created through partnership and collaboration which was promised in the Post 16 Skills Plan (HM Government, 2016) Esmond, (2019) discusses this in the context of the new reform in England in relation to the work placement component and argues that the plan cannot meet its ambitions as the central and critical role that industry actors must play is unlikely to be fulfilled for the total number of young people engaged in technical education (Esmond, 2019). Participants in this study questioned the viability of the new qualifications in relation to work placement, and questioned whether the local relationships with employers were sufficient to ensure that every student was able to access an appropriate placement. Moreover, they were concerned with the discrepancy between the status of employers and how in a sense the new qualifications could unwittingly create a two-tier system. Some students would have access to what participants termed as '*prestigious employers*', these were likely to be well known national or international employers for their placement, whereas other students would only be able to access perhaps small local employers. They reflected that those students who accessed '*prestigious employers*' (Cal), would by virtue of this connection have some sort of enhancement on their curriculum vitae. In a sense legitimising the education they had had as a result. To conclude the discussion surrounding these tensions in policy has highlighted that while of the goal of TVET is to provide experts for industry it would appear that despite the development of a number of government reforms and government actions employers are not seen as trusted partners in TVET. Furthermore, the T level reform may inadvertently perpetuate a divided education system by the allocation of work placement. These two arguments contribute to the trust that employers, TVET and the wider community places in TVET organisations and staff. The notion of trusted employers is important in relation to the legitimacy of TVET and as a result, its status. This is referred to in a recent OECD report Skills Beyond School. The report identifies that unless

there is clear employer engagement with qualifications they will not be trusted by employers and as such the inference would be that they are not valued (OECD, 2014). We can therefore assume as a result the employers will feel that the qualifications are of lower status or value than the profession they are aimed at. Trust and value are inextricably linked.

Donovan (2019) identifies that there is some alignment in literature that identifies that the concept of trust can be largely defined or is mediated by the following notions, those of reciprocity, integrity, benevolence and competence (Skinner et al., 2014). In essence the decision for the employer to trust the education given by a TVET institution or indeed the notion that the population trusts the education given by the TVET system hangs on these concepts. Is there a view that the system is competent – i.e., it is fully able to skillfully realise its intention, whether the system has the best interests of the students, staff, local community, the population at the centre – is there a benevolent approach. Finally in order trust there must be integrity in simplest terms, honesty and action and that any action can be reciprocated (Donovan, 2019). Donovan argues that the complexity of the TVET system with both internal and external agents, together with the fraught policy landscape interpreted locally with performative cultures has resulted in a low trust in TVET in England. Firstly, the policy churn in the TVET sector can be seen as a lack of trust philosophically by government. This plays out as a governments' lack of trust in the TVET system itself to meet the economic and individual needs of the population. Secondly, based on Donovan's (2019) premise we can argue the cascade of low trust metered out by government has created a performative culture within organisations, such that there is a perceived low trust by management of its staff and in particular its teaching staff, to deliver what is needed for the organisation to meet government requirements and targets. Finally, these two elements have then conferred a notion of low trust on to the wider community. This notional low trust has resulted in a lesser status, because after all if you can't trust something, you are not likely to engage and hence we can argue that the notion of TVET for other people's children is perpetuated.

Conundrums for Lecturers

The data generated from the interviews clearly identified how this sample of lecturers working in TVET in England aligned very closely with their profession of origin. They described their identity by their qualifications and expertise of their profession of origin I am a 'X' and secondly a teacher or lecturer. There are numerous discourses surrounding professional identity and importantly how it is formed. Briggs (2007) suggests that professional identity is the interaction between agency and context, in addition, identity is based on own perceptions of self and self-efficacy in relation to context (Briggs, 2007). The notion of context is really important to consider in relation to my research findings. The idea here is that contexts of lecturer's identity can cause identities to be confused and in a state of constant negotiation. Identity for lecturers requires that individuals understand the goals and meaning of education, as well as their own values and beliefs regarding teaching and learning what makes a good teacher of 'X' (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2009). As well as take account of the context within which they work.

In relation to this study, the findings suggest that the vocational teachers' values, beliefs, knowledge and context can and must be applied to the profession of origin. This is often where the conundrum occurs, lecturers in this research defined themselves by their profession of origin but were challenged by having to negotiate the nature of their agency with the profession of origin context and their place of work and role as an educator. This was particularly true of those who worked in general further education colleges. In a sense in a constant conflict between the context of their profession of origin and the notion of being a lecturer and the context of the organisation within which they now worked. This was contrasted by those participants who worked in specialist colleges, where the participants identified themselves by their profession of origin but the organisation valued their profession of origin status and enabled them to negotiate these contexts well. We might understand the alignment to the profession of origin by reference to Billett's, (2011) explanation in which he describes the differences which defines an 'occupation' as encompassing the social facts related to the

industry, as opposed to the personal factors which individuals identify with and acquiesce to as their vocation (Klotz, Billett, et al., 2014). There is a notion that an occupation is not necessarily a vocation. A vocation is described as something an individual is drawn to, they must undertake for their own personal fulfilment (Estola et al., 2010; Klotz, Billett, et al., 2014). It could be argued that by their definition of themselves that the participants in this study identify with their vocation rather than their current occupation. In a sense the notion of professional identity is formed from a profession of origin which is confirmed by the social context of the profession and the personal values and beliefs of the individual in that context. These personal values and beliefs can be impacted and shifted by the social context of the profession and vice versa. In the case of lecturers who teach in TVET their social context is multiple and as such gives rise to a sense of disquiet- who and what do they feel most comfortable being. Billett (2007) argues that professional identity is in a state of constant interdependence anyway, between values, social context practice, personal intentions, situation and cultural norms (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2009). This means that identity is in a state of constant shift and is dependent on individual agency, values, and social context (Klotz et al., 2014a; Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2009).

My research has highlighted that these professional lecturers in TVET in England, are not only negotiating their sense of self as a professional within the organisation within which they work but are also negotiating their professional identity through their profession of origin context. I am arguing therefore that this is an additional challenge, which may explain the sense of disquiet those participants working in general further education expressed about the performative demands made of them to conform to the notion of a generalist teacher. They themselves define themselves as an engineer or a nursery nurse who teaches those professions.

The findings show a clear demarcation in the way that professional identity was discussed by the participants. It is clear they agreed that their profession of origin is central to lecturer identity. They discussed the importance of keeping up to date

and in all cases discussed the usefulness of the idea of going back to practice. The ability to keep up to date with this professional expertise is borne out by earlier government policy documentation, but like many reforms, review recommendations and government strategy action to support this hasn't been forthcoming.

A significant piece of government documentation related to developing vocational educators' expertise is the Commission on Adult Vocational Training and Learning report entitled '*It's about Work*' (McLoughlin, 2013). This report discusses the development of excellence in teaching vocational or technical qualifications and in particular vocational pedagogy. The resultant recommendations in relation to professionals who teach is that professionals should be enabled to keep up to date with their profession of origin not only in terms of skills but of a presence in that profession. Whilst the review recognised the challenges for TVET organisations in doing this, there is acknowledgement that if this is not enabled then TVET lecturers will start to lose credibility with both their students and importantly with local employers (McLoughlin, 2013). From the perspective of legitimising vocational education with employers it would seem logical therefore to assume that lecturers should be both enabled and encouraged to maximise their own professional networks. Participants from general education colleges, highlighted that their employer did not support activities related to keeping their profession of origin network up to date and thus this network was largely kept to themselves and developed in their own time.

The lecturers in my study shared an overview of their networks through an illustration. The analysis from these illustrations demonstrate that participants identify a huge range of support to maintain their profession of origin knowledge and skills, most importantly of course are the relationships they have with either previous employers, or networks developed whilst they were in practice. These included networks developed through the use of social media and in particular the platform of Twitter was acknowledged by participants to be particularly useful

for developing and maintaining networks and developing teaching practice related to profession of origin.

The review of technical education carried out by McCrone et al (2015), acknowledged that as they call it, teaching fundamentals apply to vocational education as they do with all forms of education. Nevertheless, the review highlighted, that contextualisation is required to make effective vocational learning and expertise. This notion is supported by others in the field in so far as that bringing the relevant vocational context into the learning can only happen if those who teach are enabled to coalesce pedagogical expertise with emersion in the profession of origin; in a sense to bring the students to the local community of practice for this vocation (Lester, 2012; Lucas et al., 2012; McCrone et al., 2015; Unwin, 2014).

I will now discuss the idea of contextualisation discussed in McCrone et al (2015) in relation to the notion of professional standards. The professional standards related to the teaching profession in TVET in England are developed by the Education and Training Foundation and were discussed briefly in the literature review. These include amongst other factors the requirement for the professional lecturer to maintain up to date knowledge of research in relation to educational evidence-based practice and to value the application of research based practice in relation to understanding the pedagogy. The lecturer in TVET is to be prepared to evaluate their own practice, model positive behaviour and understand the role of a lecturer in the sector and to maintain up to date knowledge and skills in relation to their profession of origin (SET, 2014).

There are recent developments from this sector organisation concerned with developing expertise in teaching and learning and there has been a move towards developing generic teaching and learning skills excellence which perhaps embody the list of attributes 'teaching fundamentals' suggested by the work of McCrone et al (2015). Teaching fundamentals are important and this is recognised by the Society for Education Training (SET), who have developed a

programme for teacher development. This programme, invites members to follow a programme of professional formation QTLS (Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills), similar to those teachers who work in compulsory education are required to complete Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). For teachers in the compulsory sector of education, there is a requirement to complete QTS, and once completed teachers are then placed on the national register of the Teaching Regulation Agency for England, and are unlikely to be employed unless they are on the register, in a sense this is a licence to practice.

SET is the membership organisation which is dedicated to support professionals working in the TVET sector. SET is part of the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) which is formed to raise the status of the TVET teaching profession and be the champion for the development of excellence in teaching and learning for the profession as well as developing the professional standards for those who teach in TVET. Professionals who work in TVET in England do not have to be a member of these organisations, and there is an argument for this type of 'licence to practice' regulation found in the literature, at present though this is not required. The QTLS programme is recognised as the 'badge' of professionalism in the TVET sector in England however, it is not mandatory. This programme was developed post Wolf review where professionalism was discussed and the ability for those who teach in further education colleges should be able to transfer into secondary schools should they wish to following the attainment of QTLS, which is similar in a sense to QTS (Wolf, 2011a).

The QTLS programme requires candidates to identify 3 areas for improvement, this is following an observed teaching session. Interestingly the observed session does not have to be undertaken by a subject specialist. The three areas for improvement must cover; planning and delivery, assessment, and an area related to profession of origin. It is interesting to note that only one third of this professional recognition is related to profession of origin. The QTLS is then followed by the advanced programme ATS (Advanced Teacher Status) which signifies an experienced and advanced teacher in the TVET system. Here the

focus is both on using research evidence to inform and develop your own practice but also to support and develop others, so has a coaching element. Here the lecturer is required to mentor a junior member of staff, however there is no requirement to mentor someone with the same profession of origin specialism.

It is surprising that the organisations which govern the professional standards and programmes related to professionalism in the TVET sector in England do not have greater requirement for vocational pedagogical development and the idea of contextualisation identified by McCrone et al (2015). McCrone et al (2015) argue that the characteristics of vocational education, of course include the teaching fundamentals identified above but must also include the ability to relate to the workplace or occupation, in a sense be coherent with the profession being taught. The idea of contextualisation means that the education should have a visible link with the profession, the ability for a student to enter the practice of that profession and have a real life lived experience of the profession of which they are learning to be part of. Additionally, this idea of contextualisation must therefore recognise the critical nature of professionalism of the lecturer in this context. The ability of the lecturer to develop profession specific pedagogy will require them to keep up to date with developments from within their profession of origin to be able to relate lived examples for students. The participants in my study from general further education, highlighted that their employers were often more concerned which generic teaching fundamentals than developing specialist pedagogy.

Often the focus is on teaching expertise rather than expertise related to vocational pedagogy of the profession taught. This fact was highlighted by one of my participants Cal who reminisced about a previous programme called subject learning coaches. This role was created by an organisation which has now ceased to exist called LSIS the Learning Skills Improvement Service. Reviewing the chronology developed for the policy review, LSIS ceased to exist in 2013 and was replaced broadly speaking by ETF. This is a good illustration of a policy reform which in hindsight and by reflecting on the findings of my study was a

disappointing change. The notion of the subject learning coach was to develop expertise in vocationally specific pedagogy which Hanley et al (2018) and McCrone et al (2015) argue is required for excellence in TVET (Hanley et al., 2018; McCrone et al., 2015). It is perhaps too commonsensical to suggest that the notion of the development of subject specialism creates an environment of trust and legitimacy between the lecturer and the local related industry. Employers know that people who teach the skills that they require to students, are up to date experts in their fields. The notion of legitimacy is thus reinforced, and I suggest raising the status at the very least locally of vocational education.

Lecturers in this study were keen to go back to practice – this wasn't 'going back' to teaching practice, this was going back to their profession of origin. The idea of development of teacher expertise in all fields of education is important, to know that the skills of a teacher to enable learning are of the highest quality and based on the most recent thinking and evidence for teacher expertise. Excelling in teaching fundamentals and teacher expertise builds respect for all educational professionals across all education fields from primary to higher education. However, the idea of focus on teaching fundamentals and the art and science of teaching per se, fails to endorse the requirement for the development of contextualisation, or to have a requirement to go back to profession of origin as part of the national standards, indeed the national standards have only a small requirement for keeping up to date with profession of origin. Out of twenty different standards, the idea of professionalism from the profession of origin and the relevance to teaching is only referenced in two standards.

This argument for the need to recognise vocational or technical expertise development in lecturers or teachers is true for those teaching in TVET, but also may be true for those who teach specific disciplines in compulsory education, or those who teach specialist subjects in higher education. There is a sense that there is a growing movement of the need to develop teaching practice or tools for teaching and less of a need to develop specialist pedagogies; this is are evident in the proliferation of resources, websites, conferences, blogs, social media

channels, and experts promoting the science of teaching. Examples of these in England at least are @Teachertoolkit, ResearchEd, Teacherhead, The Learning Spy, Funkypedagogy (Bennett, 2021; Didau, 2021; McGill, 2021; Sherrington, 2021; Webb, 2021). I am not presenting a critique of these resources here, this short list of examples represents a much-needed support for teaching and these, perhaps the most well known in England, lead a growing movement for using education research to underpin practice in a rich and accessible way. What is less evident however, is the need to develop specialist practice related to a subject, discipline, or in the case of this research, a vocation.

The participants interviewed rejected the idea that they could and should develop only generic teaching skills, and were baffled by their own organisation's drive to continually seek to push professional development that was not subject or vocation specific. It is interesting to note that one of the findings related to the policy documentation review highlighted a recognition that these professionals were juggling their multiple identity and the historic political football had perhaps done them a disservice in placing TVET organisations under pressure to meet targets instead of developing their people. The Lingfield (2012) review recognised that the '*system of regulatory compulsion*' had not been successful in delivering quality and instead colleges would be better to work on this themselves, in a sense a recommendation to free Colleges from central policy objectives (Lingfield, 2012:9). This leaves one question, if it had come to pass, would that have shifted the culture of performativity which exists within the TVET system in England and certainly from a general further education perspective, that pushed colleges towards supporting their staff to develop what we might call general pedagogy as opposed to specific vocational pedagogy related to their profession of origin (Grummell and Murray, 2015; O'Leary, 2013; Olssen and Peters, 2005)?

Reflecting on the proceeding argument it is useful to consider at a very basic level that the development of teaching expertise in hairdressing for example, isn't necessarily the same as teaching expertise in engineering. Nevertheless, in both cases it is useful to recognise that lecturers need to know how to plan, using tools

which enables learning to be sequential, building on what has been learnt, adapting techniques to ensure that learning becomes established in long term memory. Thus, it aims to secure retrieval and use in any given situation and application. Therefore, as contextualisation is important for vocational education the process of learning described above must be different for each vocation. What I mean by this is that the process for learning is different for engineers compared to hairdressers.

The practice described by participants in this study suggests that the culture of TVET general further education colleges within which they worked, was more concerned with how to teach for learning, teaching tactics if you like and have therefore paid limited attention to what to learn, the curriculum and the knowledge required in any given expert field. As such they were less inclined to support professional development activity concerned with developing vocational practice and knowledge. It is almost as if there is an ignorance about what is a vocational practitioner.

There is an emerging body of research which suggests that the development of subject specific pedagogical development is key to excellence in TVET learning. This is interesting as the policy documentation review highlighted the report the '*Commission on Adult Vocational Training and Learning: It's about work...*' (CAVTL) (McLoughlin, 2013) This commission was chaired by Frank McLoughlin a principal of a large college in the south west of England who recommended that there should be further investment in the development of subject specific pedagogical development for TVET (McLoughlin, 2013). In this report there was a strong argument for the sector to recognise the professional identities of the lecturers who worked within it, meaning that lecturers should be supported to develop further their subject knowledge by returning to their profession of origin to update and learn. The report recommended that lecturers are '*trusted and given time to develop partnerships and curricula with employers*' (McLoughlin, 2013:5). This would enhance the delivery and currency of the teaching. In addition, this review recommended the development of the notion of the '*two-way*

street' that is the close collaborative relationship with employers (McLoughlin, 2013). This report seven years ago recognised the essential nature of close partnership with employers which I have argued for earlier in this chapter. More recent reports highlight that the development of subject specialist pedagogy development in TVET institutions remains under researched and importantly under supported (CEDEFOP, 2015; Hanley et al., 2018; Hanley and Orr, 2019b; Hanley and Thompson, 2021; Wheelahan, 2015). Much of this literature confirms the need to develop strong partnerships with employers, to develop opportunities for lecturers to keep up to date but also to develop the notion of local communities of practice in order to develop vocational expertise for students (Billett, 1996a; Lave, and Wenger, 1991; Lucas et al., 2012; Smith and O'Leary, 2015). The literature suggests that the notion of communities of practice developed by Lave and Wenger are useful to support the concepts of contextualisation identified by Hanley and Orr (2018) and McCrone et al (2015) amongst others. Indeed, as first identified by Aristotle, wisdom is derived from both knowing and doing in context (Buckingham, 2021). It is perhaps common sense to argue that connection is essential to TVET as interactions foster a broader understanding of the historical and cultural context of the profession (Billett, 1996a, 1996b). This notion of learning as not simply the acquisition of decontextualised knowledge, but the opportunity for the student to be engaged in the social cultural practice of the vocation begins to explain what vocational pedagogy is and could be (Hanley et al., 2018; Hanley and Orr, 2019b; Lester, 2012; Lucas et al., 2012; McCrone et al., 2015; Unwin, 2014).

It is evident that in order to develop vocational learning the notion of the workplace or situation in the world of work is key. There is significant literature which confirms that the dual system favoured in some European countries fosters a greater sense of alignment with industry than an education-based delivery (Esmond, 2019; Hanley et al., 2018; Orr et al., 2019; Unwin, 2014). A dual approach means that a proportion of the learning being delivered in the workplace, embedded and in a sense mediated by the workplace. Klotz et al

(2014) suggest that the development of workplace identity is improved by being in the workplace not just a simulation of the workplace (Klotz, Billett, et al., 2014).

It was evident in the findings that the participants recognised the importance of relationships with employers in order to be able to offer their students links with and placement in the workplace to support the theoretical learning undertaken in the college environment. However, the frustration felt by participants, with the exception of those in specialist colleges, was that their place of employment did not support, encourage or even enable those local professional networks to flourish, thus in a sense missing an opportunity for students to benefit from the associated learning that is derived from the local employment context. As discussed earlier in this chapter, it was clear from the policy documentation review that government policy, strategy or commissioned reviews also recognised and called for enhanced relationships with employers as if it is all too easy. From a government perspective these calls for action have all come without significant investment or action. Nevertheless, it is evident that until relatively recently these relationships have not been led at a national level and have not been enabled by appropriate levels of funding in order to carry out the recommendations of the CATVL report of 2014.

The findings indicate that where lecturers were able to build and use their own professional network from their profession of origin then relationship and standing from local and national employers was strong and, in a sense, legitimised the offer of education. One of the participants who was encouraged and given time to develop relationships with local and national employers for his specialist area recounted how when he went back to practice as he frequently did, he was treated as if some specialist hero. He felt that because he was an experienced and up to date practitioner but also importantly a teacher of this craft, employers treated him with significant respect and sought him out to solve practical problems on site.

This is an example where the concept of vocational education is legitimised and respected. In reviewing the literature on the development of vocational pedagogy

and professional identify together with the results of this study I would argue that there is a missed opportunity to start to address this tension in policy and the conundrum for lecturers by enabling and supporting lecturers to not only maintain and develop their own professional networks but also to enable them to return to practice their profession of origin frequently. My findings suggest that those enhanced employer relationships would be improved by being mediated by lecturers employed in TVET institutions rather than separate departments who may be disconnected from the employment speciality. This fact will become increasingly more important as the new T level qualifications require students to have significant work placement hours, surely the best way to enable these placements opportunities to be created is through the untapped resource sitting in professional lecturers.


Conclusion, recommendations, implications for practice and my practice

Against the backdrop of the perceived low value status of vocational education, it is clear that it may be time to rethink the way we deliver vocational knowledge. An additional argument is being portrayed in the literature about the need for higher level and enhanced skills in preparation for the so called fourth industrial revolution 4IR. The notion of another global revolution in the way work is organised, developed and portrayed is a topic of recent debate. The concept started to emerge as technological advancements mixed with biological and production processes. The concept coined in 2016 by the publication of a book by Klaus Schwab who is the chairperson of the World Economic Forum, since that time the concept of 4IR has been used prolifically in literature to enable a disruption of thinking about the nature of society and importantly relevant in this concept, the need for education to become ready to meet the needs of this global phenomenon. This concept of a revolution centres on the significant shift in the way technology has driven change in all parts of industry and society. It is the fact that technology has permeated through all walks of life both in industrialised worlds and developing nations that has afforded the title of global system change to the way we do things, hence the term industrial revolution. On a fundamental





level 4IR is the shift in the way that economic, political and social value is created, mediated and distributed amongst our communities in a way that is both complex and simple by the use of technological advances which include both physical technological and biotechnological advances not yet seen or developed. This current and foreseen change will disrupt the order of everything about the way we live and work, more than just a digital revolution could ever (Philbeck and Davies, 2019).

This is evident in the way we live currently, technologies such as robotic and artificial intelligence, genetic modifications, the internet of things, autonomous vehicles, drones, artificial intelligence even at a simple level are entering our social, political, industrial and cultural spaces at a rapid rate unseen before. This is why the protagonists are labelling this as a massive system change, an industrial revolution (Ernst and Young Global, 2018). There have been three previous industrial revolutions that we can easily identify from history of globalisation and industrial development (see Figure 2). Industrial revolutions have been times in our history where massive changes have impacted on the way we live in transformative ways that we could not have foreseen. The first revolution was the mass industrialisation with the invention of steam power and mechanised production lines of the late seventeenth century. This saw movements of populations for work and as a result the shape of our cities and work places changed dramatically. This was further developed in the late eighteenth century with the development of science and technological advances impacting the way we live

Figure 2 Navigating the Next Industrial Revolution, Schwab (2016).



Navigating the next industrial revolution

Revolution	Year	Information
	1 1784	Steam, water, mechanical production equipment
	2 1870	Division of labour, electricity, mass production
	3 1969	Electronics, IT, automated production
	4 ?	Cyber-physical systems

Mechanised technology such as heating systems, electricity and sanitation impacted significantly on the way we live. The third revolution occurred with the start of our digital communications and electronics, and the evolution of automated processes, power from nuclear energy and technology which resulted in the space race (Philbeck and Davies, 2019; Schwab, 2016).

Whilst, we cannot ignore that there is a global change in developing mass technology, automation and artificial intelligence there are opposing arguments about the impact of the 4IR on the shape of jobs and in particular the need for vocational or technical education. One argument, perpetuated in popular culture is that a change is coming and that education systems are ill prepared to meet the challenges ahead. This confusion has been clearly articulated in the 2016 review on the independent panel on technical education the Sainsbury Review (Sainsbury, 2016). The use of the term technical is therefore justified by the review, by acknowledging that decades of political hegemony have done nothing to reduce the divide and that the time is now to acknowledge that a focus of the technical; and the inference here is on mastery and professionalism in a particular specialism. This can only happen with a move away from the notion of vocational

education which it is argued is unspecific and has historical connotations of lower status and does nothing to address the concept of being a master craftsman. The review highlights the absolute requirement for this knowledge to be developed by and reviewed and worked with the relevant industry bodies. The requirements of underpinning theory have not historically been drawn from industry but just aligned to it, the distinction here for the new technical qualifications and one can argue for technical knowledge is that the core theoretical disciplinary knowledge must come from industry itself. The plan sets out the way this will be developed through new expert panels working to define the core knowledge. In addition, the importance of learning through work placement is evident in this report. Perhaps this was first endorsed fully in the Wolf review, where the need for learning through and in work experience was formally identified (Wolf, 2011a). As a result of this we saw the evolution of work experience being required by the external inspection regime Ofsted (Esmond, 2018). Esmond argues that the concept that learning occurs within a workplace setting is supported well by a number of theories such as situated learning and community of practice theories (Hordern, 2016; Lave, and Wenger, 1991; Rainbird, 2002). Deeper and contextualised learning is clearly related to work offering greater opportunities to confirm disciplinary knowledge not learnt in the abstract, but perhaps in the work setting (Unwin, 2014).

The degree to which the new qualification reform can be successful in the face of the continued portrayal of TVET is not clear by the participants and as yet in the literature. The lecturers view in this study is that there is limited confidence in the success of the newest reform although they recognise the need for change in the system. The fourth world industrial revolution is here and, in a sense, there is a recognition that lecturers must now be at the forefront of their profession of origin in order to prepare students for the future. Of course, it was recognised that there needs to be teaching of students' generic skills for example creativity and research skills, in fact the top ten skills identified as critical for the future, as publicised by the World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum, 2020). There needs to be a recognition that professional expertise and fluency is essential

going forward. Whilst lecturers recognise that the reform is new, they bemoan the perceived lack of involvement with employers and also that there doesn't seem to be very much interaction with people at the front line who have to teach these new qualifications. The findings of this study conclude that the success of the new qualifications to disrupt the hierarchal portrayal of vocational education is called to question, but what will support this development is the lecturers and their role as at least dual qualified and expert professionals.

The evidence from the study is that the direction of the UK government in streamlining qualifications and gaining recognition and the involvement of employers can be seen to be helpful if we consider the legitimacy given by employers on the value of TVET through this closer partnership. However, there is limited confidence in the ability for this reform to disrupt the portrayal significantly because of a number of key reasons discussed above. Firstly, the constant and historic policy churn and change of direction for TVET. The power and government positioning, support and funding of higher education means that unless higher technical qualifications are delivered by TVET institutions they will retain lower status by comparison to higher education universities. As a result of the formation of T levels and the requirement of work placement they may create a two-tier system in TVET in that there could be a perceived difference between prestigious local employers and work placement availability. There has been a lack of attention paid by government and as a result by TVET organisations to the development and need to develop vocational pedagogy. Aligned to this there has been limited attention paid to the profession as a group of professionals still immersed in their profession of origin and the investment of colleges to enable their lecturers to keep up to date, maintain their professional networks and act as a resource to build strong employer relationships.

This study used a practitioner-based enquiry approach, I have reflected that using this approach gave me the ability to carry out this investigation in a way that another approach may not, specifically allowing me to take account of my own position in the work. I have been able to reflect on my own values, practice and

understanding and gain a huge amount of insight into a problem related to my own professional practice. In writing my methodology chapter, I set out the principles of validation for action research which would be useful to judge my study. I discussed how I would approach each of these principles in my methods, approach and dissemination. Appendix 8, shows a reflection in these principles, in essence, I believe this reflection demonstrates my own authenticity in the research, consideration of the nature of practice-based research and my position as part of this work. As a leader in a further education college, I cannot claim neutrality undertaking this research. My perceptions, experience and interpretations are grounded in the sector and as such using a practitioner enquiry approach accounted for my position in the study. I have pursued this study with honesty and authenticity recognising that my own position in TVET will have an impact on my thinking. I used a reflective journal throughout which supported the constructionist nature of the enquiry and allowed me to work through potential subjectivity conflicts. The nature of practitioner enquiry is defined as that which aims to improve practice (Gregson and Duncan, 2020), and the notion of an enquiry which deepens understanding of the subject in hand (Baumfield et al., 2013).

My motivation in undertaking this research was to attempt to gain some deeper understanding of an issue impacting on my practice as a leader in a small TVET institution, albeit not in England. However, the closeness of England to the island in which I live and work means that we mirror and are impacted by the shifting tides in the English TVET sector. I wanted to understand why the portrayal of TVET is as it is, as it is reflected in my location in very similar terms. Additionally, I wanted to know what practitioners in the TVET system felt about forthcoming changes. Ultimately as a leader I have taken this pragmatic approach to my research with a view to gain insight into how I might instigate improvements in my own organisation which positively impacts on TVET in my context.

In undertaking this study, I hoped I could uncover explanations which could contribute to a wider understanding of the portrayal of TVET, and aim to gain

deeper insight into the perception of TVET as somehow of less status in my community. I must acknowledge that the study is limited by its size and scale. I interviewed six participants who work in TVET in England. Their views, thoughts and ideas cannot be related more widely to lecturers working in TVET across England. It can be argued, however, that this investigation does provide some insight and explanations for the hierarchal portrayal of TVET in England.

So, what have I learnt? In summary that TVET in England can be described as a quandary! By this I mean TVET by its very nature is concerned with and designed for the professions of industry. Government frequently refers to TVET in England as the route to flourishing industry which will in turn fuel the economy, leading to societal well-being of the whole population. It is problematic therefore that the government appears to have done little to bring employers, industry and the professions together as central partners into the development of this form of education. The findings indicate that the policy churn, policy borrowing and constant shifts and changes in the political context over the last ten years has done little to secure the legitimacy and trust in this form of education by the industries it claims to serve. It is a conundrum for lecturers who took part in this study as they recognised the critical importance of their own profession of origin to their identity and as such maintained their own networks in order to maintain their vocational or technical expertise. In a sense they recognised the essential need to stay close to industry. The lecturers recognised that for the most part their employer had not enabled them to continue to develop these networks or foster positive relationships with local industry partners related to their profession of origin. Lecturers in the study largely maintained these networks themselves.

In consideration of the title of this thesis, whether T levels will change this portrayal, the findings illustrate that this disconnection from industry was recognised and as a result, the lecturers are non-committal about the introduction of T levels changing the hierarchal portrayal of vocational or technical education. It must be recognised that this study culminates during the first full teaching year of T levels in England, there is more work to do. A recommendation for next steps

is to consider this research purpose and goal at the end of the implementation period in 2024. It could be that new research takes stock and evaluates the extent to which these new qualifications, designed to bring a new era of vocational and technical education in England, supported by employers and make students ready for the new age of automation and the changing shape of work have realised their potential and ambition.

Notwithstanding the previous recommendation, in terms of my practice there is a lot I can learn, adapt and develop. Leadership in TVET has been impacted by the nature of the context, which has been discussed in the literature review. The context is a market, which has been impacted by constant changing political direction and reduced funds with the expectation to do more for less, and with historically punitive external inspection regimes. Whilst TVET in England has two defined purposes, one of which could be seen as social justice. Despite this idea that all are welcome, particular those who have been unsuccessful in other sectors of education, it is clear from the literature that the influence of government continually changing agenda has meant that the strong moral purpose of TVET has been eroded (Keep, 2018).

Keep (2018) argues that the creation and recreation of the market system which often has associated with it a number of '*quasi- markets*' results in leaders within the TVET system to often be faced with very hard decisions about where to focus the finances, time and effort in order to maximise opportunity for students, within the dwindling funds. The position of many leaders is to create situations for learning which are often remedial education for high numbers of students who would otherwise be left without. The moral obligation therefore to support society by both delivering high skills for industry and yet provide a safe place for people to develop skills at often the most basic level is a fine balance on a small budget. Keep (2018) argues this moral dilemma often results in trade-off between best value and a drive to increase income. It would be useful to repeat an exploration of the impact on the new T levels in relation to the status of vocational education once the full roll out of the new qualifications has been implemented. It is also the

case that colleges face national high stakes external inspections, together with a requirement from government to provide continual measurement of impact and indicators of success which it can be explained have perpetuated a performativity culture (Page, 2017; Parrett, 2018).

More recent research considers the role of the leader in relation to developing vocational practice, with a renewed moral purpose to develop education; the idea that the role of leadership in the face of new public management has perhaps had its day. Notions of a type of heroic leadership, sailing a ship through turbulent times with little or no regard to the people in the organisation, does not necessarily fit with emerging literature or more importantly with my practice as a leader of TVET. Binney et al (2012) argue that the notion of a super hero has now had its day, favouring a more connected type of leadership which respects and empowers co-workers (Binney et al., 2012). Democratic leadership models, provide space to take decisions on collective action or enable fresh thinking to emerge which aligns to the moral purpose of education. Mycroft and Weatherby (2017) argue that leadership with moral purpose in TVET allows for education in this context to be reimagined and reframed. This is through refusing to acknowledge past cultures in TVET and moving towards a way of working which embraces research evidence, relishes new ideas from practice, creates positive alliances, looks to the future both championing learning and the moral purpose of education in this context (Mycroft and Weatherby, 2017).

Reflecting about this research in the context of my practice I have embraced the notion of a new moral purpose for education. My goal here was to gain insight into a problem related to my leadership practice; the constant requirement to disabuse stakeholders of the lower status of technical and vocational education. This was complemented by my desire to understand how I could support the people I work with to find an approach to ameliorate the portrayal and instead find a way to develop trust and legitimacy in TVET in my context. The research explored how the newest qualification reform, itself designed in many ways to address the portrayal issue, could be a lever to support the development of

vocational practice. This work has enabled me to view the context for the issue, allowed me the time and space to reflect on literature and draw some deeper understanding of what has been said, written and contested about vocational and technical education. The practice of reviewing policy has offered me some clear explanations for the portrayal of TVET in England. Indeed, the insight gained from the participants in this study focused my lens on their professional identity and their motivation to align with their profession of origin as a way to elevate their own teaching practice. Reflecting on the findings and the literature I can assert that vocational education is not 'not academic'. TVET is infused with critical thinking and high levels of problem solving, skill, as well as expert reflection applied to practice. These aspects create expertise, mastery and accomplishment of a craft (Dunne, 2005; Sennet, 2009). Therefore, my findings have allowed me to develop some recommendations or actions for my own practice, as well as some considerations for others in the field.

In a role as a leader, I now recognise the essential requirement to enable people who teach TVET in my own organisation to stay close to their vocational practice. I have already enabled lecturers in my college to start to plan to go back to practice each year as part of their professional development. Additionally, I considered the importance of supporting lecturers' own professional networks. Going forward I want to work with the team to find creative ways to enable these networks to flourish and grow, facilitating growth in communities of practice with our teaching staff at the heart of these local networks. The development of specialist vocational pedagogy and how this can be enhanced will be critical to my own development going forward. Working in a small provider of TVET isolated by water, it will be essential for me as a leader to continue to foster networks with other TVET providers in pursuit of the development of vocational pedagogy. By enabling my team to connect with others who teach their specialist professional area to discuss teaching that vocation and share approaches and pedagogical thinking, I feel will take my research findings forward. In consideration of other recommendations for colleagues in similar roles to myself I think that my own actions would be worthwhile sharing and considering from the value of these

findings in other contexts. I continue to share my work with my own network of leaders in TVET and recognising the challenge of the new T level reform for leaders and practitioners in England the perspective of my findings may provide some useful insight into the value of supporting a potential untapped resource in the professional lecturer in TVET.

In closing, I am reminded by the citation of one of my participants who was supported to go back to practice by his employer, he worked in a specialist college, which it seemed recognised the wonderful skill, expertise and knowledge of their lecturers. Si remarked when he went back to practice he was respected and highly regarded, he says the employers....

'thought that I was this... God that I was going to come and sort everything out, because I was a college lecturer' (Si).

For me this epitomises my findings in so far as this could be seen as an example of how vocational education is raised to almost divine status by the close, legitimate and trusted relationship of the employer and the lecturer.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 : Interview information, consent form and questions

Dear Lecturer,

I really appreciate you taking an interest in my research project. I know how busy you are but I want to provide you with all the information you need in order to make an informed decision about whether you wish to take part.

If after reading this sheet you would like more information or you would like to be one of my research participants please do get in touch at lm446@exeter.ac.uk. I can also be reached on 07781 409670

What is the purpose of the project?

As you know there are new forms of qualifications on the horizon T levels and one of the driving forces for these developments is to help support a flourishing economy. There have been fewer people taking part in vocational education or it is felt that there are fewer people equipped with the technical skills needed to tackle with changes in job roles going forward.

The T levels have been designed to be more closely aligned to employment and the role of local and national employers are seen to be essential for the success of this qualification change.

I want to understand what the lecturers working in Colleges in England, think about these new qualifications, do lecturers feel they have a role to play in aligning with local employers from their own professional networks. Importantly do lecturers see that these qualifications will have any impact on the portrayal of vocational education.

I intend to use my research findings to inform policy and practice, particularly in relation to supporting professional development and make some recommendations as to how organisations support lecturers. From an individual perspective I hope that should you decide to take part in my research, you will enjoy our discussion and feel you are contributing to wider practice implications.

What would taking part in this project involve?

If you decide to take part, I would like to interview you at a time convenient to you during April and May 2020. The interview will take place virtually using Microsoft Teams. The interview will involve me asking for your views, thoughts and understandings. I will ask you a number of questions and listen to your responses, the interview will take no longer than an hour. I would very much like to record our discussion using the record feature of the digital communication tool we use. I will probably make a few notes as you are talking to me but the recording is so I don't miss any of your thoughts.

I will ask you to hold the interview in a suitable quiet place, preferably somewhere where we can't be interrupted and ensure that you can access Teams and are comfortable with its features. The interview is really to better understand your ideas and perceptions if during the interview you don't want to answer a question you can choose to not answer and of course, if you want to you can stop the interview at any point.

I am really interested to find out about your profession of origin and any professional networks you may still have. In preparation for the interview, I will ask you to illustrate these networks and describe how you keep them active. These networks might be organisations that you are aligned with or people you know who were your colleagues in your profession of origin, or they might be journals or magazines you read or subscribe to, in fact, there might be any of these or something quite different.

What will I do with the information you share?

Your interview data and network diagrams will be held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2016).

Data Protection Notice - The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form.

The following specific information relates to the information you share with me;

1. **Interview recordings**

The digital recording of your interview will be made and then stored securely on a password-protected file and will be deleted after the completion of this project.

2. **Interview transcripts, and the diagram of your professional networks**

Your interview recordings will be transcribed into a written format. I will anonymize your personal details, I will not use your name or job title, I will also anonymise the name of the college where you work. This is important as I realise that you will want to ensure that the information you share with me will be confidential and I want to ensure that too. I will ask you to send me your network diagram using an encrypted email service called EGRESS. If your diagram makes reference to individuals by name or organisations by name I will with your permission anonymise these.

If you would like I am very happy to share with you using an encrypted mail service a transcript of your interview in order for you to comment on and edit if you feel there is something missing or I have not reflected correctly your response. Third parties will not be allowed access to interview tapes and transcripts except as required by law or in the event that something disclosed during the interview causes concerns about possible harm to you or to someone else.

3. **Personal contact details**

Your personal and contact details will be stored confidentially and separately from your interview transcript; these may be retained for up to 5 years. However, they will only be used to contact you in relation to this research. You can ask for your contact details and/or data to be removed at any time.

I will use a recognised research method to analyse all your information and that of the other participant's interview, looking for themes, similarities and differences in order that I can draw some conclusions. With your permission,

the anonymised information from the interviews which has been analysed and your network diagram will be published in my EdD thesis, in any subsequent journal articles or conference papers I present.

Who is carrying out this research?

My name is Louise Misselke, and I am an EdD student part-time at the University of Exeter. I have been very interested in how vocational education is viewed for many years through my work in a General Further Education College, where I work full time. I am in my fifth year of a professional doctorate. My supervisors are Professor Vivienne Baumfield and Dr Deborah Osberg, who work in the School of Education at Exeter University.

Their contact details are at the end of this document together with my own.

I am a member of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), so I am expected to follow the Association's Ethical Guidance in line with its Code of Conduct. More information on this can be found [here](#). As well as complying with the GDPR regulations which is why I plan to take great care with the information you share with me and your personal details. With your permission, I will keep these details until the publication of my thesis for external examination.

Contact details

Researcher Louise Misselke - Lm446@exeter.ac.uk 07781409670

Supervisor Professor Vivienne Baumfield v.baumfield@exeter.ac.uk

Supervisor Dr Deborah Osberg d.c.osberg@exeter.ac.uk

For further information contact the University's Data Protection Officer, Caroline Dominey, based in Special Collections, The Old Library, telephone: 00 44 (0)1392

(26)3033,, email: C.H.Dominey@exeter.ac.uk

CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project. I understand that:

- *there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may withdraw at any stage;*
- *I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me;*
- *any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations;*
- *all the information I give will be treated as confidential;*
- *the researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.*

Please indicate your preferences below:

I am/ am not* happy to participate in face-to-face interviews using a digital communication tool Microsoft Teams

I am/ am not* happy for my interviews to be digitally recorded

I am/ am not* happy for my anonymised network diagram to be shared within the research findings.

*Please delete as applicable

(Signature of participant)

.....

(Date)

(Printed name of participant)

.....

(Email address of participant if you would like to view a copy of the interview transcript.)

.....

(Signature of the researcher)

.....

(Printed name of the researcher)

.....

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher. Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data. My study is supported by the University of Exeter.

Interview Questions

The study is focused on a small group of the lecturers who work in the context for Further Education in England. The study aims to uncover how they perceive the changes to the technical vocational education system in the UK. In particular, how they understand their role in relation to these changes.

Thank-you for agreeing to take part in my study. These questions are designed to stimulate discussion, I will ask you a series of questions and record your answers as well as making some notes as we talk.

General Introductory Questions

1. How long have you been teaching in the FE sector? What is your profession of origin? How do you keep up to date with your profession of origin?
2. Can you draw some of the networks you have which reflect your profession of origin? *(considering asking participants to create a visual representation of their professional networks prior to interview).*

Knowledge concepts

3. What do you know about the qualification reform in England and the new T levels
4. What do you think about the emerging tendency to call vocational knowledge technical knowledge and practice? -prompts
 - a. What do you understand by the term vocational knowledge?
 - b. What is technical knowledge can you define it?
 - c. Do you think there a difference between technical and vocational knowledge?

Status concepts and reasons

5. What are your views on the status of vocational knowledge? Why do you think it is the way it is?
prompts-
 - a. what is the Government's role in supporting technical or vocational learning - with reference to T level development and your role as a lecturer.

4IR

6. Have you heard the phrase the fourth world industrial revolution? (will you offer a definition if they say 'No'?)
7. what impact do you think 4IR could have on your practice?

Employers and Qualifications

8. How do you see your role in delivering T levels? In particular, the relationship with employers and your profession of origin?

The New Qualifications and Supporting Students

9. What impact could the T levels have on the lives of your students?
10. How do you see your role developing in terms of supporting and enabling students to achieve in the context of the T levels?
11. Do you think T levels will change the status of vocational knowledge?

prompts

- a. in the portrayal of this form of education against the back drop of the 4IR narrative

12. Any other comments you would like to make?

Appendix 2 Ethical approval, adjustments and certificate



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project:

The Education Paradox: Human Capital and Social capital in the face of T- Level Reform in England: the views, roles of the lecturers.

Researcher(s) name: Louise Misselke

Supervisor(s): Dr Deborah Osberg
Professor Vivienne Baumfield

This project has been approved for the period

From: 12/02/2020

To: 31/12/2021

Ethics Committee approval reference: D1920-041

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Justin Dillon'.

Date: 08/01/2020

(Professor Justin Dillon, Professor of Science and Environmental Education, Ethics Officer)

Amendment form as a result of Covid

SSIS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT REQUEST

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Louise Misselke Email: lm446@exeter.ac.uk Tel: 07781409670			
SSIS Ethics Reference	D1920-041		
Title	The Education Paradox: Human Capital and Social capital in the face of T- Level Reform in England: <i>the views, roles of the lecturers.</i>		
Start Date	12/02/2020	End Date	31/12/2021

DESCRIPTION OF REQUESTED AMENDMENT *Summarise the main changes proposed in this amendment. Explain the purpose of the changes and their significance for the*

As a result of the COVID 19 Crisis I now need to move from face to face interviews to undertaking interviews via a digital communication tool Microsoft Teams. In my original ethics approval form I identified the use of semi structured interviews using a face to face approach at the participant's place of work. However, due to significant travel restrictions this can now not happen. I will therefore use Microsoft teams as the digital communication tool to undertake the interviews. Microsoft Teams is compliant with GDPR regulations and has enhanced security features. I will continue to recruit the participants of my study using the same approach. However, I have adjusted the Information Sheet and Consent Form to reflect the changes. I will ask the participants to consent the meeting being recorded using Teams record function. I will invite the participants to find a quiet room where they are not likely to be interrupted. I will also conduct the meeting at a time that suits them. It may be the case that my participants are only able to undertake this meeting during the evening as they may have caring responsibilities as a result of the Stay at Home instructions. I will continue to make notes as previously identified. During the meeting if the participant is comfortable I will ask them to use both the Microphone and camera function. However, if the participants is uncomfortable we can

use the microphone function only. I will obtain consent to record the interviews using the Teams function, however, I will explain if they are not comfortable they can stop the recording at any time during the interview.

study.

OTHER DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Consent Form Information Sheet Amended application form

Certificate

Questionnaire Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

SIGNED PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR DATE

13/04/2020



Admin purposes only

APPROVED Date [Click here to enter a date.](#) Reviewer [Click here to](#)

From: SSIS - GSE Ethics Submission and Queries <ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk>

Sent: 16 April 2020 09:25

To: Misselke Evans, Louise <lm446@exeter.ac.uk>

Cc: SSIS - GSE Ethics Submission and Queries <ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk>

Subject: D1920-041 Ethics amendment approved

Dear Louise

Ref D1920-041

Your requested amendment to this study has been approved by the Ethics Reviewers. Please see attached the approved amended version of your application. You may now commence work on the aspects of your research covered by the amendment.

Please retain this email with your ethics approval documentation.

Best wishes for your continuing research.

Kind regards

Mark Slater

Research Ethics Officer

[Research Ethics and Governance](#)

University of Exeter 01392 72 3499

G14 Lafrowda House, St Germans Road, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6TL (Mon, Tue, Fri)

RB20 Richards Building, St Lukes Campus, Exeter, Devon EX1 2LU (Thurs)

[Humanities Ethics](#) | [SSIS Ethics](#) | [GSE Ethics](#) | [SSHS Ethics](#)



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Appendix 3: Excerpt from Interview Transcription

Example 1 interview with coding stripes

The screenshot displays a transcription software interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Interview 6', 'Interview 1', and 'Interview 3 (1)'. Below the tabs, the main text area contains an interview transcript. The transcript is highlighted with various colored stripes (orange, green, blue, yellow) corresponding to different codes. The text discusses 'T Levels', 'CACHE', 'NNEB', and 'Early Years' qualifications. On the right side, there is a sidebar titled 'CODE STRIPES'. This sidebar contains a list of codes with corresponding colored bars: 'History', 'T Levels', 'Standards & frameworks', 'Network', 'Professional development', 'University', 'Academic', 'COVID', 'Profession of Origin', and 'Success of reform and impact on portrayal of TVET'. The bottom of the interface shows a file explorer with 'Data > Files > Interview 6'.

Interview 6 Interview 1 Interview 3 (1)

Interview 6

Coding Stripes Highlight Code Annotations Code Panel Edit

CODE STRIPES

- History
- T Levels
- Standards & frameworks
- Network
- Professional development
- University
- Academic
- COVID
- Profession of Origin
- Success of reform and impact on portrayal of TVET
- Sta

Coding Density

Data > Files > Interview 6

Appendix 4 Codes and Subcodes

Table 2 shows the codes used and subcodes as they were sorted and filtered together with a description of the understanding inferred from the study of the policy documentation in order to explore how the policy context has contributed to the portrayal of vocational education.

Developed Theme	Sub Theme	Code	Subcode	Description	
<i>Government's explanations of why the system is wrong – we are not to blame</i>	Government view of TVET system FE colleges	Political volatility	Successive governments	The reason we are where we are is because of other government failures	
		Status issues		Seen as poor relation to academic qualifications	
		Explanations for 'problem'		The significant change is where we are where we are. TVET is viewed as a lower status option	
		Decline in post 18 education	Academic knowledge	Academic qualifications	
			Missing middle HE tech learning	Level 4 and5 technical qualifications	
		Market system	College's roles	How the system (someone else) has contributed to the problem	
		Young people better skills	Young people don't have the right skills		
	Goal of Social Mobility and purpose of TVET	Government ambition	Drive economy	Our aims of this reform, driving up the economy this is the way	
		HE university investment		A need to increase higher education	
		Student views		Views of students central to how we build the skills system	
		Technological advances	4IR	What does the future hold and impact of Tech on economy	
	<i>Employers and Government what is the narrative?</i>	Employers play a central role; they should do more to help in the TVET system	Government view of employers		Government description of employers
			Role of employers desired		How Government wants employers to act
		Employers play a central role we/providers should do more to support them	Action to support employers	Funding needed	There needs to be support for employers. What Government will do to support employers
Goal for placement			New service to support	Ambition for placement	
<i>Professionals in the sector – who are they</i>	Recognise the need to develop practice	Professionals need support		Professionals in the TVET system need support, colleges need to do more	
		Professionals are skilled		Recognition professionals are skilled dual professionals	
		Too many are weak		The TVET has produced to much weak provision with poor standards of teaching and learning	

Table 2 Themes, subthemes derived from codes- Government documentation

The resultant themes from the participant interviews are illustrated in Table 3 which includes themes constructed from the codes and subcodes developed and used when analysing the transcripts and the network diagrams as well as listening and reviewing the film of the participant interviews. I have included here the description of the code and subcode so that it is clear the inference I took from the participant dialogue

Developed Theme	Sub theme	Code	Subcode 2	Description	
A deficit Portrayal of TVET Knowledge	There is a battle between academic and vocational or technical education – concepts of a battle, TVET has to compete	Divide	Snobbery	Notions of status where skills are described as less	
		Skills		Elitist view, privilege and lack of respect	
		Status	Generic teaching practice	The understanding that TVET system has about vocational pedagogy and lack of respect paid to the need for specialist knowledge	
		Knowledge	Academic	Concepts about the different forms of knowledge	
			Hands	Academic knowledge its <i>meaning</i> and <i>how it is referenced</i>	
			Purpose of education	Disconnection between thinking and doing	
			Technical knowledge	Ideas about what education is for and how this is viewed	
		Vocational	Reference to a more theoretical form of vocational knowledge		
	An understanding that the TVET ecosystem is structured and operates as complex and driven by funding contributes to the views held and the strength of HE system	Employers		How they work with employers/ what employers think about qualifications and TVET	
		Theory practice		This is the notion of the difference between theory and practice and how teaching accounts for this	
		University		Perceived status of HE compared to TVET	
		TVET system		Notions of funding and structures which work against any reform. How Colleges are funded – market system	
			History		How they became an FE teacher personal story

Lecturer Identity is defined by profession of origin and the TVET system. Embodied sense of self inextricably linked with the profession 'I am a'	Professional identities are multiple, centred on profession of origin and rebel against notions of teacher - generic skills. Identity is impacted by network and place of work	My status my role	Profession of origin	What and how this are described who are they Relating to their profession of origin	
			Dual professional qualifications and expertise	How their see themselves	
			Professionalism	Approach and standing in the community	
		Place of work	Employer supporting connections	Support from own employer for vocational expertise	
				The employer values connections and uses them for the wider benefit.	
		My role		My purpose and function of my role why I am here	
		Recognition of the importance of network in all its forms to professional identity and the use in supporting students	Community of practice	Network	How connections are viewed and valued self
					Own network and professional relationships relating to profession of origin
				CPD	What CPD is desired compared to what is offered
	Professional development			CPD requirement from employer	
	Network (2)			Who is the network what do they do for me	
	Twitter		Learning from this medium		
	Teaching and learning			Notions of pedagogy and vocational pedagogy	
	Support for students		My role in supporting students, vocational/ technical knowledge the value of connections to support students		
Reform will not be successful and will impact on portrayal of TVET	Questioning the drivers for reform? Lack of clarity who is leading employers/	Reforms	Talking to the sector	'They haven't talked to the right people' consultation to professionals in the sector	
			Government	Education reforms and what they mean	
				Role of government - what can it do what has it done; does it know.	

	sector/ disregard for TVET			
	Whose standards/ gold standards, what are they linked to? Status issues. Notions of how perceptions of being elite or prestige is linked to HE		Standards and frameworks	
		4IR	Relates to professional standards - who makes the standards that 'license to practice' idea	
	What does the future hold, we still need people to do things people do, machines can't do everything? Rebuff to machine learning and any notion of a job's apocalypse		COVID	
			What does the future hold	
			Learning from COVID	
			Technology	Impact of technology on Teaching and Learning
			T Levels	thoughts on qualifications
			Work placement	Impossible to conceive how this will work

Table 3 Themes, subthemes derived from codes – Participant data

Appendix 5 Coding

▼ <input type="radio"/> Deficit Portrayal of TVET...	16	72	28 Oct 2020 at 15:...	LME	3 Dec 2020 at 16:00	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> Knowledge	3	9	15 Aug 2020 at 13:17	LME	12 Sep 2020 at 16:...	LME	
<input type="radio"/> hands	3	4	12 Sep 2020 at 12:...	LME	12 Sep 2020 at 13:11	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> Technical knowledge	5	22	15 Aug 2020 at 13:17	LME	24 Oct 2020 at 12:...	LME	
<input type="radio"/> Vocational	6	17	15 Aug 2020 at 13:18	LME	26 Oct 2020 at 12:18	LME	
<input type="radio"/> Academic	5	12	15 Aug 2020 at 13:18	LME	26 Oct 2020 at 12:...	LME	
<input type="radio"/> Purpsoe of Education	3	11	15 Aug 2020 at 13:19	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 11:50	LME	
▼ <input type="radio"/> TVET system	8	13	12 Sep 2020 at 15:41	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 13:26	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> Employers	11	34	15 Aug 2020 at 13:...	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 10:02	LME	
▼ <input type="radio"/> Place of work	6	16	15 Aug 2020 at 13:21	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 11:59	LME	
<input type="radio"/> History	5	9	15 Aug 2020 at 13:12	LME	24 Oct 2020 at 10:...	LME	
<input type="radio"/> My Role	4	7	15 Aug 2020 at 13:14	LME	24 Oct 2020 at 10:...	LME	
<input type="radio"/> employer support...	5	12	12 Sep 2020 at 15:...	LME	30 Oct 2020 at 15:...	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> Divide	10	46	15 Aug 2020 at 13:19	LME	14 Dec 2020 at 15:...	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> Skills	4	8	22 Aug 2020 at 15:...	LME	12 Sep 2020 at 16:12	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> snobery	4	9	5 Sep 2020 at 14:35	LME	26 Oct 2020 at 11:44	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> Status	8	46	15 Aug 2020 at 15:...	LME	3 Dec 2020 at 13:18	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> my status my role	1	6	26 Oct 2020 at 11:00	LME	26 Oct 2020 at 12:...	LME	
▼ <input type="radio"/> Profession of...	7	21	15 Aug 2020 at 13:...	LME	10 Dec 2020 at 15:...	LME	
<input type="radio"/> Dual Profess...	4	16	15 Aug 2020 at 13:...	LME	24 Oct 2020 at 12:...	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> Professional...	4	5	15 Aug 2020 at 13:16	LME	3 Dec 2020 at 16:01	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> generic teaching...	2	3	26 Oct 2020 at 11:03	LME	30 Oct 2020 at 15:...	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> Lecturer Identity	0	0	28 Oct 2020 at 15:...	LME	4 Dec 2020 at 14:43	LME	
▼ <input type="radio"/> Community of Practice	5	11	15 Aug 2020 at 13:15	LME	24 Oct 2020 at 12:...	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> Network	5	20	15 Aug 2020 at 13:...	LME	26 Oct 2020 at 12:...	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> Network (2)	4	13	22 Aug 2020 at 15:...	LME	26 Oct 2020 at 11:55	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> twitter	7	19	5 Sep 2020 at 16:06	LME	30 Oct 2020 at 15:...	LME	
▼ <input type="radio"/> CPD	4	6	24 Oct 2020 at 13:...	LME	3 Dec 2020 at 13:59	LME	
<input type="radio"/> Professional de...	1	4	24 Oct 2020 at 13:...	LME	24 Oct 2020 at 13:...	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> Teaching and Learning	6	24	15 Aug 2020 at 13:13	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 10:16	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> theory Practice	3	9	12 Sep 2020 at 12:...	LME	24 Oct 2020 at 11:13	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> Support for students	4	15	15 Aug 2020 at 13:...	LME	24 Oct 2020 at 12:...	LME	
▼ <input type="radio"/> Professionals & Governm...	3	4	3 Dec 2020 at 16:51	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 14:22	LME	
<input type="radio"/> Developing Practice	1	2	3 Dec 2020 at 09:47	LME	3 Dec 2020 at 11:22	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> professionals in the se...	5	9	3 Dec 2020 at 11:54	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 11:53	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> professionals are skilled	2	6	5 Dec 2020 at 13:56	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 14:29	LME	
<input type="radio"/> professionals need support	2	4	5 Dec 2020 at 13:58	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 14:29	LME	
<input type="radio"/> too many are weak	3	7	5 Dec 2020 at 13:57	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 14:42	LME	
▼ <input type="radio"/> Succes of reform and imp...	7	37	28 Oct 2020 at 15:...	LME	8 Dec 2020 at 10:48	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> Reforms	6	13	15 Aug 2020 at 13:15	LME	26 Oct 2020 at 12:21	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> talking to the sector	3	6	22 Aug 2020 at 17:12	LME	12 Sep 2020 at 15:...	LME	
<input type="radio"/> T Levels	6	33	15 Aug 2020 at 13:16	LME	26 Oct 2020 at 12:17	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> University	4	12	22 Aug 2020 at 17:18	LME	26 Oct 2020 at 12:...	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> Government	8	18	15 Aug 2020 at 13:21	LME	3 Dec 2020 at 13:20	LME	
<input type="radio"/> Standards & framew...	8	39	15 Aug 2020 at 15:...	LME	3 Dec 2020 at 15:47	LME	
<input type="radio"/> Work Placement	5	23	15 Aug 2020 at 13:16	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 11:07	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> 4IR	7	21	15 Aug 2020 at 13:19	LME	3 Dec 2020 at 12:51	LME	
▶ <input type="radio"/> technology	6	6	22 Aug 2020 at 17:...	LME	9 Dec 2020 at 15:14	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> Employers & Government	2	3	3 Dec 2020 at 16:49	LME	8 Dec 2020 at 10:50	LME	
▼ <input type="radio"/> new service to support	2	3	3 Dec 2020 at 11:39	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 10:11	LME	●
▶ <input type="radio"/> funding needed	1	2	3 Dec 2020 at 12:03	LME	3 Dec 2020 at 16:45	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> action to support e...	6	8	3 Dec 2020 at 11:27	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 13:53	LME	●
▶ <input type="radio"/> Placement goals	2	2	3 Dec 2020 at 11:31	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 14:31	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> role of employers desir...	12	26	3 Dec 2020 at 13:38	LME	8 Dec 2020 at 11:03	LME	●
<input type="radio"/> Government view of e...	6	7	3 Dec 2020 at 12:14	LME	8 Dec 2020 at 11:42	LME	●
▼ <input type="radio"/> Governemnts explanations	7	12	3 Dec 2020 at 16:52	LME	8 Dec 2020 at 11:37	LME	
<input type="radio"/> student views	2	2	3 Dec 2020 at 11:38	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 10:08	LME	●
▶ <input type="radio"/> the system picture HE	2	2	3 Dec 2020 at 11:46	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 13:50	LME	●
▶ <input type="radio"/> explanations for 'probl...	7	16	3 Dec 2020 at 13:40	LME	5 Dec 2020 at 14:00	LME	
▶ <input type="radio"/> Goal of Social Mobility	2	4	3 Dec 2020 at 09:46	LME	8 Dec 2020 at 10:44	LME	●
▶ <input type="radio"/> political volatility	5	10	3 Dec 2020 at 12:40	LME	8 Dec 2020 at 10:52	LME	
▶ <input type="radio"/> young people better sk...	5	5	3 Dec 2020 at 11:24	LME	8 Dec 2020 at 11:06	LME	●

Appendix 6: Twitter posts



louise misselke #FE @louisemisselke · Apr 26, 2020
Are you working in FE in England & willing to volunteer to be interviewed? I am seeking to understand lecturer's views on their role in the context of qualification changes. DM me if you would like to find out more.
[#EdDChat](#) [#phdlife](#) [#FurtherEducation](#) [#FE](#)

louise misselke #FE @louisemisselke · Jun 1, 2020
Do you teach in [#FE](#)? I am researching views on qualification changes and the part lecturers play. I am looking for a few more people for my study. Can you help? DM me if you would like to find out more. [#EdDChat](#) [#fespeaks](#) @drlizatkins @FEfocus

inSPIRE FE @inSPIRE_FE · Apr 26, 2020
Take a look at this new journal if you are looking for a place to publish FE based research. Submissions now being accepted [#inspireFE](#)

louise misselke #FE @louisemisselke · May 3, 2020
Hi, [REDACTED] Thanks so much. If you DM me your email I will send you some information. 😊

Appendix 7: Excerpts from Field Notes and Journal

good relationship with old employees
 Teaching FE 2016. Areas, since Military
 before 2008. Engineering BA Systems
 Teaching.
 Inconclusive 2011. interested in
 psychology something clicking with
 - keep up to date. dual professional
 non of other contributions not allowed.
 away so long now → not up to date afterwards
 - focus of pedagogy andragogy reflection
 & process.
 - loss of reading - keep in touch something
 keeps in head Psychology cultural. &
 influences → keep up to date examples
 - levels → not for engineering creative
 HSC contribution done. creative
 Apprenticeship links Standards. approach
 someone's ranking qualification
 levels. → his view its 'brand'?
 Vocational or technical → academic
 technical academic vocational
 practical Skills
 - what - things are changing
 → Education - per on the feet of
 wealthy. disenfranchising
 - view of VET is he saying
 now irrelevant. Check

Government are Education should be
 Be pro. → strengthen needed.
 → engage in educational reform.
 look at we done. standards, expectations
 Shove downwards. Learning reform
 & reform.
 Geo because per Robinson aware
 of geek - own reputation
 digital subjects - cultural influences
 more digital practice. or. next
 information to different standards.
 advancing - Shift. future work is
 already here. Core reflection.

Relationship & per employers.
 dual professionalism. links &
 local employers - important critical
 but difficult.
 → employers units connections
 his employe done by
 someone else
 Technical. 10. → ~~authoritative~~
 Government. change - not
 far enough
 funding.

Reflection on
field notes July to 20
interview 1.

Journal

14/07/20.

My intro is leading I need to check this in data.
2016 →

profession left air force 2008. fell back on engineering skills → his profession is this a common narrative.

context: how when to go into F.E. → moved because of family so not teaching but look teaching in previous roles 'I found myself in that vocation' what I am capable of.

next R: check motivation to teach. personal history - grammar context. R his own personal history will influence his view? what about true story?

teaching so many disaffected young kids R. his view of F.E. & others? is this a view? y Kate fucking switch on 11/6 journey. R his view of purpose of education?

person dual professionalism non of organisations have fostered. Dual professionalism - stepped away harder to go back.

Appendix 8: Reflection on my approach using the Validation Principles

Validation principles for action research(Heikkinen et al., 2012)		Reflection of my own research
'Principle of historical continuity	<i>Analysis of the history of action: how has the action evolved historically?</i>	The history of how TVET has been formed both from a professional perspective and the effect of the policy change has been considered. These have impacted on how we might discuss TVET in our community.
	<i>Employment: how logically and coherently does the narrative proceed?</i>	Following a simple research framework has been useful to allow me to draw on both the literature and my findings to construct an explanation to my original questions, which will influence my own practice.
Principle of reflexivity	<i>Subjective adequacy: what is the nature of the researcher's relationship with his/her object of research?</i>	I have declared my own position and used my understanding in the review of literature, the construction of my findings and in the discussion.
	<i>Ontological and epistemological presumptions: what are the researcher's presumptions of knowledge and reality?</i>	During the discussions I have clearly used an interpretivist approach, I have declared my own position and acknowledged how this may have supported or challenged the research process.
	<i>Transparency: how does the researcher describe his/her material and methods?</i>	My approach, methods and research design are described in Chapter 4 in addition I have described my personal biography and given a summary of my reflective journal.
Principle of dialectics	<i>Dialogue: how has the researcher's insight developed in dialogue with others?</i>	My findings have developed in discussion with my participants. I have also talked at length with my colleagues in my own TVET. This has supported and helped me develop my thinking. Importantly my supervisors counsel and guidance has been critical to develop and challenge my thinking
	<i>Polyphony: how does the report present different voices and interpretations?</i>	The findings chapter 5 is in depth, providing an overview of my participants and sharing their voice through as illustrations to my constructed themes.
	<i>Authenticity: how authentic and genuine are the protagonists of the narrative?</i>	The voices of the participants and the 'voice' constructed through the government documentation analysis has been reviewed and considered.

Principle of workability and ethics	<i>Pragmatic quality: how well does the research succeed in creating workable practices?</i>	The findings and discussion allow me to reflect on my own position as a leader and how I might develop practice in my own organisation. I intend to find ways to support my team of lecturers to continue to foster deep and powerful relationships with their own networks from their professions of origin. I also intend to enable them to return to practice for continuing professional development. Finally, I will develop partnerships with local employers, and sector representative organisations seeking their support to develop and enhance curriculum and the development of vocational pedagogy.
	<i>Criticalness: what kind of discussion does the research provoke?</i>	I have been able to draw together the findings with the literature to develop a reasoned argument for what now needs to happen in my practice
	<i>Ethics: how are ethical problems dealt with?</i>	Ethical considerations were discussed in Chapter 4. The issues centre on notions of consent and also confidentiality. I have for example decided to not include any examples of the network illustrations. All of them identified named people or organisations which could indicate the lecturer who was interviewed. I have also redacted some words in the presentation of the quotes from my participants as naming organisations, people and place could lead to identification.
	<i>Empowerment: does the research make people believe in their own capabilities and possibilities to act and thereby encourage new practices and actions?</i>	I will share my research with a network of leaders in TVET. I hope that this supports critical reflection in other's leadership practice
Principle of evocativeness	<i>Evocativeness: how well does the research narrative evoke mental images, memories or emotions related to the theme?</i>	I have used a narrative writing style; this research purpose is to improve my own practice and as such I need to feel that the narrative talks to me.

Appendix 9: Reflexive account of my research journey

Looking through my research journal I can see that I have moved from intense periods of activity and feeling of total emersion to periods of complete lack of engagement. If I am honest, lack of engagement usually occurred when my work life doubled and was all consuming. I have found throughout my completion of this research that my job role and level of responsibility has been a constant juggle to find the time for both, however I am also aware reflecting back through my writing, I have used my learning and study experience in my place of work.

What follows could be described as '*a confessional tale and a transparent account of the research*' (Finlay, 2002), this approach has been critiqued as a self-indulgent narrative of self (Finlay, 2002). However, having taken a practitioner-based research approach to this study, I recognise that my own place within the research is critical to the design and outcomes of the study. Therefore, in an effort to offer a transparent account of my role in this study I have chosen to summarise my reflective journal; it is in a sense a form of data which has contributed to the findings and discussion.

As I started the thesis phase of my EdD journey a peer told me how during the writing of their thesis, they had kept a journal; not every day, but they made sure they wrote something in as they came to the writing. This journal helped form ideas and helped to organise their thinking as they had developed re developed and written more until finally completing after 8 years. I can see now that considering my own experience through my own student eyes has given me insight into the pressures of students who work and study part time at my own institutions. Being able to acknowledge that widely within my organisation has I believe been able to 'give permission' for other members of staff to embrace further and higher learning. On reflection I am aware that the shoes I wear as principal, means that the words I use can be influential, and whilst I have not in any way overtly shared that I am studying, I have not hidden this from my colleagues. I have noticed over the last 4 years higher than normal numbers of staff have come forward to embark on higher-level courses of study. Can I claim that this is because of my influence or action? Certainly not, but I do feel that

having a level of authenticity as a leader has perhaps given permission for others to try something new; this notion is identified by Goffee and Jones (2006) as a positive and enabling leadership behaviour (Goffee and Jones, 2006)

I started keeping a rough journal for my writing in fits and starts. Looking back there are many pages where I have started down one aspect of thinking and ended up reversing or trying another path. Using spider diagrams and imagery helped form ideas and concepts surrounding my topic; this notion exploring themes in the reading was helpfully pulled together by the use of a scoping document. This enabled me to clearly articulate my concepts. Findlay (2002) discusses this process as an aspect of reflexivity and I can see how each of these routes fitted into my study took time. I can see how frustrating I found this element, I felt I was not making progress and that feeling of my own inability to complete *this thing* kept emerging.

This is particularly evident in the first months on the thesis phase, where I can see my own lack of confidence in my ability to undertake this work and a constant reflection of imposter syndrome. This has been an ever-present feeling throughout my adult life. Despite achievement of a range of qualifications and securing a leadership position of a large organisation this notion is always with me. I can see through my reflections my own insecurity has a lot to answer for in terms of my ability to engage and feel a sense of confidence in my own writing. I have never managed to shake this feeling off. On reflection I can see this is a common trait for female leaders and part time students (Ramsey and Brown, 2017). Whilst at times this felt negative and overwhelming, on reflection I can see that I used to recognise that this was a challenge and, in all ways, this was a positive aspect of learning and study. Castrillion (2019) identifies that imposter syndrome is a positive aspect of gaining new experience and knowledge (Castrillion, 2019). Being immersed in these feelings allowed me to consider myself from the student perspective using a different lens (Brookfield, 1998). It was also helpful in realising the where the edges of my study should be as opposed where I initially thought they could be.

At the start of this journey, I wanted to change the world, I can see that I wanted my research to be meaningful and make an impact on how we frame vocational education. I have written in my journal how I saw the notion of vocational education as being less somehow. I see that reflected in my early literature review drafts where I have clearly written or reflected the literature which confirms my thinking. Using the early work of (Coffield, 2008; O'Leary, 2013; Taubman, 2015) for example framed this thinking. I focused on descriptions of the sector which I saw were accurately reflecting a section of the education system which is very challenging to work within and was not student focused but focused more on financial and performance measures. This is a narrow view I see that now.

I can see in my journal I wanted my work to contribute to the change in perceptions about knowledge. I wanted to prove that there was no difference between academic and vocational knowledge. I used this as my focus and spent hours looking at and reading about Knowledge. I tried to encapsulate this learning throughout my literature review with little effect. Engaging with others in the field was incredibly useful to narrow my focus and ensure that I considered literature objectively, not just seeking out work that confirmed my thinking.

Reflecting on my first entries I can sense the constant battle for time and how this impacted on my motivation to do any work. I see many entries starting with today I will work for 4 hours and not achieve this. The constant goals not met and the ability to get distracted has been a common theme of my research. It seems at every turn it is easy to justify not doing the work. Observing my journal entries over the last 3 years I can see that the contact with the university was always incredibly helpful in pulling back my thinking and allowing me to focus on the topic in hand. In the first two year of the thesis phase I was lost in a constant cycle of reviewing the topic and trying to find my focus. I can reflect on many conversations with my supervisors trying to find the focus. I was going down one path and realising that this was not going to end in a successful topic or one that kept my interest and was meaningful for me. Chapman (2012) identified that this process of developing a sense of belonging is essential for mature students in

higher education and is helpful in overcoming or working with the sense of imposter syndrome (Chapman, 2012).

I note in my journal that there were two very low periods in my thesis journey. The first period was in November 2017 – summer 2018. During this period, I felt that I couldn't continue to give the time needed to develop my literature review during a period of intense change in my work life. My island was undertaking a root and branch review of education and the possibility of my organisation closing meant that I had to devote my complete focus on supporting my organisation and the people within it. On my return in summer 2018, I felt a greater sense of clarity and certainly for my thesis and working with my supervisors I began to see a way to focus my topic. I spent the next 6 months reviewing the literature and writing in a purposeful way. I can see from my journal that I realised that I was never just going to write the first time and it all be ok. I had a mementos moment when I realised that my thesis would only be developed from writing and reviewing and rewriting and rewriting and discarding sections and re writing. I can see that despite work pressures I began feel a sense of comfort, always the pressure to take out more time in my week but a definite sense of purpose.

During the summer of 2019 I decided to take two full weeks in university, it was time I can see from my journal to really get to grips with the research understanding my focus and immerse myself. It was during this period that I can reflect my first sense of clarity really came through. I felt I had written as much as I could of my literature review and with the help of my supervisors I started to focus on drawing a clear way forward, planning a timeline towards completion. This included starting to read more on methodology and starting to write an outline chapter. I was confused by which aspects were included in the methodology chapter.

During this summer I can see that I talked more with my peers and felt a greater sense that I could and was able to complete this study; that it was a rite of passage and that I began to believe that I was able and capable to achieve it. This with my greater clarity of focus allowed me to continue working after the

summer school. I used the theme of peer support - this has been a great help during my journey starting out with just the two of us and drawing on the support and encouragement

On reflection I can see that one thing that helped me the most was adopting a writing strategy called 100 days of writing. Using the social media channel of Twitter each day, I posted how many words great or small I had written. Even though it may have been a small amount this public declaration was also an acknowledgement to myself that I was capable of completing this thesis. My notes identify that I was able to draw the structure of my study and by the autumn and winter of 2019 I had achieved a real sense of purpose submitting my research proposals for ethical approval and achieving this was a great sense of possibility. Then came the COVID-19. Like many people I see that I felt it was something out there not really relating to me or my work. By the end of February, the requirements at work to undertake significant business continuity planning was all consuming and the thesis work came to a complete standstill. Lockdown was both horrifying and exciting. During this phase I was, able to get grips with collecting data. Holding my first interviews was I can see by my writing nerve wracking and also helpful in allowing me to believe I was actually capable of completing the research.

I have a number of entries during the data collection phase of my study, these are mostly reflections on how I perceived my participants responses to my questions. On reflection, I recognise that at times I may have read my own meaning into their tone, language used and non-verbal clues in so much as I perceived that they believed as I have or answered in a way that I may have as a professional in TVET. That is the common language and way of working that I recognise. As I was coding my data, these reflections were very useful to self-check my own perceptions; was I reading too much into that pause or facial expression which made me code in a way that another person outside of TVET may not have.

During the video I made some field notes and whilst I did not analyse the interview recordings for participants non-verbal language, I did make notes and annotations about the impression I felt as the interviews progressed. Of course, what is not clear is that the enthusiasm that I saw may of course be the usual way that each of the participants presented. It is interesting to note that I interpreted these attributes as being enthusiasm and commitment to their profession of origin. The language or words used was important but also their body language and use of expression. My annotation across the transcripts indicates and my field notes indicate when in the video recordings their tone of voice increased, they showed facial expressions I had interpreted as really positive, and some of the non-verbal clues such as use of hands conveyed how important the sense of self is to them and their agency as a teacher of that profession. From a practitioner enquiry approach this reflection is useful to frame my thinking as I went on to interpret the subsequent data. I will have undoubtedly formed a view about how I perceived these non-verbal clues and thus in presenting and reading the findings, there is as always caution. However, I would argue that my awareness of this fact caused me to reflect on each step in the coding and recoding process to ensure I took account of this and reflected whether my decisions were as a result of these perceptions.

Looking at conceptions of insider and outsider research has been useful, although this form of theoretical thinking is most often applied to research with marginal groups, it is useful to consider that the notion of the insider having access to the general understanding, culture and perhaps history of a group and acknowledge that the researcher's personal knowledge is inextricably linked to experience (Merton, 1972). Chhabra (2020) describes how 'insiders' are able to gain trust because of the mutuality of a shared experience, which it is argued support the productive process of eliciting rich and 'true' data (Chhabra, 2020). However, I cannot claim I was researching a marginalised group, nor am I a lecturer working alongside any of my participants. There is a danger in my consideration of being a practitioner in the realm of TVET, may mean my interpretations and that this work could become overtly subjective and prone to superficiality. It would be all too easy to consider that my interpretations of these

nuances of our interview conversation were correct and thus shape the outcome of the data analysis as trite.

Reflecting back over the last year, in which a global pandemic raged, I can see that whilst it has been a very stressful period, it allowed me to narrow my focus and perspective. This meant I focused on work, home and study. Reading through my journals now as I write this short chapter, I am fully aware how useful the practice of reflection has been to capture my thoughts, quandaries and questions. The ability to work through them reviewing and re reading has enabled me to refine and develop my thinking.

Appendix 10: Chronology of Government documentation related to Technical, Vocational Education and Training spanning thirty-five years.

The following chronology represents summaries of relevant documentation these include;

Type of document	Colour Coded in Table	Explanation of type of document
Green Papers		These are government produced strategies which are called green papers are in the public domain for consultation. Usually setting out government planned policy change
White Papers		These are government produced statements of policy, they may set out the proposals for any associated legislative changes
Reports		Government produced reports which usually review an action or inaction by government and set out the case for change
Commissioned reviews		Government commissioned review, government has become aware of an issue and will commission a review into this issue. It is usual for the review to be chaired by an expert in the field as well as invite experts to be involved in collecting and developing the evidence as well as developing recommendations for government to consider.
Response to review documents		Government produced response to any commissioned review. May set out plans for further work, or start the process of developing a green paper for discussion on the matter
Acts of legislation		New Law being put into place

Year and Title Document	Detail of this document and relevance to this research
1985 Further Education Act	<p>This Act of Parliament would eventually enable FE organisations to become self-governing by incorporating each organisation as a business in its own right (Wisdom et al., 2013).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The creation of the TVET system as a market for education has created what is perceived by participants as a challenging funding situation.</i></p>
1992 Higher and Further Education Act	<p>This legislation cut FE and 6th form colleges from local authority control and developed the FEFC this was the Further Education Funding Council (Wisdom et al., 2013).The incorporation of colleges and sixth form colleges in the TVET system became incorporated in 1993 as a result of this Act.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The creation of competition in the TVET system, colleges are independent from the state and funded on a per student basis which does lead to challenges.</i></p>
1997 Kennedy Report: Learning Works: Widening Participation in Further Education	<p>The 1992 Act introduced competition between colleges and other VET institutions, this report recognised that competition had in fact caused organisations to be more responsive to student needs . However, this report warned that competition meant that highly attaining students were the most sought after and the marketisation had in fact limited opportunity for perhaps those most in need. This report proposed a set of recommendations targeting those most in need including a set of targets for organisations to meet to ‘a <i>life time entitlement to education</i>’, (Kennedy, 1997). These targets required colleges to demonstrate they had address educational inequality in their areas (Gillard, 2011).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Perhaps some of the first targets that were required by colleges, which caused as a result significant increase in management targets across the organisations.</i></p>
1998 Green Paper the Learning Age: A Renaissance for New Britain	<p>This was the new government’s starting approach to lifelong learning based on two main proposals; 1. that all adults would have individual learning accounts so people could take ownership for their own learning through life and 2. The of a University for Industry was created offering wider access to a learning network which would enable people to gain or engage professional skills (Gillard, 2011).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>this green paper set out an ambition to ensure that TVET was close to industry, with ambitions to create new bodies to link education to industry, National Standards Council, National Skills Task Force for example</i></p>
1999 Dearing Review: Higher Education and the Learning Society	<p>The ‘New Labour’ government led by Tony Blair was committed to increase higher education participation. This report as well as recommending that Higher education students should develop a greater range of skills in addition to cognitive learning. Dearing called for higher education to focus on employability skills citing professional bodies and employers as stakeholder s major recommendation from the review. The major recommendation of this review was an expansion of higher education encouraging underrepresented groups to participate in HE and increased funding should follow (Gillard, 2018).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>This is the first recommendation for mass expansion of higher Education in universities. This impacted the TVET system in terms of future funding and ability to respond to technical higher education needs</i></p>
1999 Moser Report Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start	<p>Adult literacy review which recognised that at least 20% of adults had problems with basic skills. This report recommended a national strategy for basic skills for adults (Gillard, 2011).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Recognition of the dual purpose of the TVET system</i></p>

Year and Title Document	Detail of this document and relevance to this research
1999 White Paper Learning to Succeed: A New Framework for Post-16 learning	<p>This proposed Individual Learning Accounts and the University for Industry (Ufi), based on the green paper of 1998. In many ways this was to support Labour's plans to enable money following students and primarily centred on tackling inequality and build a more 'cohesive society'. This paper considers that rapid technological advances meant that learning could and should happen anywhere not just in educational organisations. This White Paper enabled the formation of the new Learning and Skills Councils to replace the previous created five years earlier the FEFC (1992). This paper also set a set of professional standards for FE teachers which was a first (Department for Education (DfE), 1999)</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>the identification of professional standards for teachers in the TVET system starts the changing shape of the profession from technical vocational experts to embrace eventually pedagogical expertise at the forefront.</i></p>
1999 Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA):	<p>15 pilot schemes launched in September to encourage greater participation of post-16 education. This reflected the idea that giving young people money for attending education again increasing social mobility (Gillard, 2011).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>This proposal was announced in this paper but introduced nationally in 2004 and then withdrawn again only 6 years later in 2011. This is a good example of the policy churn and its impact on TVET</i></p>
2000 Specialist colleges:	<p>Technical colleges as new institutions were announced by the Prime Minister (Gillard, 2011). This formed grants available for COVE's (Centres Of Vocational Excellence) also grants to develop specialists' centres to respond to industry demands.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>A clear intention to ensure that TVET was close to industry and responding to industry – keeping employers close is the message here of government investment to respond to employer demand.</i></p>
2000 Sutton Trust report Entry to Leading Universities	<p>This controversial report showed that the 7% of children who attended private schools had 39% of the places at top universities. This highlighted the divide between rich and poor in fact the report showed that private school children were 25 times more likely to gain a place than those at State schools in poor areas. As results the widening participation agenda came more to the fore with ministers pledging to ensure proportionally more students from low-income group families (Gillard, 2018)</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>the recurring theme of ensuring as wide as possible opportunity for all in higher education.</i></p>
2000 Learning and Skills Act	<p>The law resultant from the 1999 white paper, establishing the Learning and Skills Council and the National Council for Education and Training. The Act laid the responsibilities of the two councils to ensure 'proper' education opportunity for those aged 16-19 and to provide 'reasonable' facilities for those over the age of 19. This Act also the enabled Ofsted remit to cover 16-19 age provision in colleges as well as create the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) ALI closed in 2007 to be replaced by Ofsted as part of the Education and Inspections Act (Gillard, 2011).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>This legislation sets out the responsibilities for TVET to provide high standards of education for young people, and expectations to provide education to those who were aged 19 plus.</i></p>
2001 The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) was renamed the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)	<p>The government use of the word skills becoming of central importance (Gillard, 2011).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Government recognition that this is a specialist form of education which is both knowledge and skills, better reflecting the thinking of TVET at that time.</i></p>

Year and Title Document	Detail of this document and relevance to this research
2001 The Further Education Teachers Qualifications (England) Regulations.	<p>It became mandatory for new lecturers in TVET in England to obtain a teaching qualification which adhered to the new professional standards. The FENTO standards would be embedded into any award in Teaching and Learning (Gillard, 2011).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Important to recognise the professionalisation of teachers in the TVET sector.</i></p>
2002 Success for All Reforming Further Education and Training a Discussion Document (DfES)	<p>This report highlights the desperate need to reform the TVET system, highlighting the good provision across colleges but also critiquing some of the offering as falling short for meeting the skills agenda. This is a governmental discussion report to set out the planned reform of the system to target funding to students, reform staffing to ensure that all staff had teaching qualifications and were skilled at delivering excellent education. The report criticised the previous government's approach to funding and the competitive nature of the sector. The report calls for greater alignment with employers to ensure that the TVET offer is demand led (DfES, 2002).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>A discussion document which places blame for issues within The TVET system on the TVET system, also explanations for problems directed at previous governments.</i></p>
2002 Green Paper 14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising standards	<p>This Green Paper set out proposals for the 14-19 curriculum. This included an entitlement of core subjects Mathematics, English, Science and ICT. As well as the introduction of vocational qualification at 14, this paper set out proposals for a development of apprenticeships 'modern' apprenticeships. Following this publication a wide scale consultation took place (Gillard, 2011).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>This proposed another change in TVET qualifications in an effort to get things right, reformed apprenticeships and increased opportunities for young people.</i></p>
2003 White Paper the Future of Higher Education	<p>This was a controversial white paper which proposed that universities could charge variable top-up fees; formed the basis of the 2004 Higher Education Act (Gillard, 2011).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Sets the ground work for the ability for universities to drawn in additional income.</i></p>
2003 White Paper 21stCentury Skills Realising our Potential: Individuals, Employers, Nation	<p>An attempt at developing a skills strategy, this report sets out the need for a highly skilled and flexible workforce. This White Paper calls for greater investment in skills development to support young people develop skills for the future. The paper identified the uneven distribution of access to opportunity across the nation. The strategy called for greater partnership with employers, putting their skills needs at the heart of the way forward. The strategy called for a different way that funding should be allowed to skills development and for colleges to work more closely with employers (DfES, 2003b).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Recognition that employers are central to TVET and sought to enable greater partnership working.</i></p>
2003 14-19: Opportunity and Excellence	<p>A further report following from the 2002 green paper and consultation exercise. This proposed the core curriculum at 16 as well as the impetus for students to learn about work and enterprise. At this time there were 3 main proposals to address a perceived weakness of the Vocational education system. These were as follows; as well as core GCSE, students could study a new hybrid of qualification in a vocational subject equivalent to a GCSE. Modern Apprenticeships would be expanded and finally the term academic and vocational would no longer be used. (Department for Education, 2003).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Perhaps the first reference to a divide in education, the report referenced the perceived disparity between academic and vocational learning and set out how its reform would change this by developing learning and qualifications which were regarded by employers.</i></p>

Year and Title Document	Detail of this document and relevance to this research
2003 Green Paper Widening participation in higher education	Set out the government's proposals for the creation and remit of the Office for Fair Access. This agency would ensure that universities were meeting their obligation to widen participation, in addition this saw the introduction of variable tuition fees (Gillard, 2011) Relevance to this research: <i>Supported the development and expansion of higher education.</i>
2003 Policy Paper 21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential – individuals employers nation	This policy paper was published was by definition the UK governments skills strategy. This policy was to ensure that employers had access to the right skills for their business to flourish whilst simultaneously offering opportunities for individual to gain those skills. In this paper employers were to be given greater choice and access to public funded training. Despite recent pledges for improvement in apprenticeships there was a decline in apprenticeship enrolments. Under this policy paper, additional funding was to be made available for flexible learning and strengthen modern apprenticeships (DfES, 2003b) Relevance to this research: <i>Commitments from government to support employers with flexible funding, and a national skills strategy to ensure that skills were at the heart of economic development.</i>
2004 Higher Education Act	This was the enactment of the 2003 Green Paper which amongst other things allowed universities to charge fees of up to £3,000 a year (Higher Education Act 2004, 2004).
2004 Tomlinson Report 14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform	This controversial report of a review of the landscape of the 14 -19 education. These proposals saw again the recognition of a common core curriculum at GCSE level including good literacy and numeracy. The report sought to raise the status of vocational education, by simplifying the system with the inception of a new diploma which would be available at 3 levels and the proposal saw A levels and GCSE being shelved. The government at the time largely rejected the proposals, and the 2005 White paper 14-19 had removed the controversially suggested 14-19 Diplomas (Tomlinson, 2004). Relevance to this research: <i>Another change of policy direction and proposed qualification change.</i>
2005 White Paper 14-19 Education and Skills	The white paper rejected almost all the 2004 Tomlinson Report's recommendations, the decision was to introduce new vocational diplomas only whilst keeping the perceived 'gold' standard of GCSE and A levels. The education minister at the time refuted claims that it was a watered-down approach to reform, Ruth Kelly MP rejected those claims and stated that we should keep what is good. There was widespread dismay at the proposals, including the Chief Inspector stating that the continuation of the current system of GCSE and A levels would only serve to increase the divide between academic and vocational courses ' which has ill served too many young people in the past' (DfES, 2005). Relevance to this research: <i>Government rejected reform in favour of keeping two separate pathways which could be described as academic and vocational.</i>
2005 DfES Report Skills: getting on in business, getting on at work	This report was a follow up to the 2003 policy paper, recognised the partnership with employers, proposing sector skills agreements and regional partnerships and the development of a national employer training programme which was later called Train to Gain. Relevance to this research: <i>The recognition of partnership with employers was essential. The Train to Gain programme came in to force in 2006 and was designed to put employers at the centre, however this funding plan was only in place some 4-5 years before this funding was redistributed to other areas.</i>
2005 Foster Report Realising Potential the Future Role of FE colleges. (Foster, 2005).	This short report identified a number of critical problems with the TVET System, confused purposes, poor quality of provision and not being close or responsive to the needs of employers. Importantly this report recognised the poor national image of TVET Relevance to this research: <i>This report highlights problems with TVET, a confused purpose which the review of all policy documentation reveal is a common themes. This report identifies TVET as the middle child and recognises the lack of investment and funding.</i>

Year and Title Document	Detail of this document and relevance to this research
2006 University and Colleges Admissions Report	In this report the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) revealed in October that 15,000 less students had started university compared with the previous year. This was just less than 6 months before the planned introduction of the university top up fees. Other research suggested that the worst hit would be those in 'middle class' families whose income would be just above the threshold for support (Taylor, 2006) Relevance to this research: <i>highlights the issues prevalent in higher education as well as TVET.</i>
2006 LSIS formed	LSIS was a new organisation not for profit company with a mission to improve teaching and learning as well as improvements in leadership, governance and professional standards for lecturers for the TVET education system (Gillard, 2011).
2006 Leitch Review: prosperity for all in the global economy- world class skills(Leitch, 2006).	A government commissioned report which articulates high ambitions to make Britain a leader in skills across the globe. The report critiqued the current TVET system suggesting that money follow students through learning accounts and the Train to Gain budget. The report called for yet another employer facing organisation called The Commission for Employment and Skills. The report also called for greater investment with employers to support their development of industry specific knowledge and skills learning. Relevance to this research: <i>Another report which highlights the challenge of developing industry, employers or professions as partners in the TVET system. This report recognised the need to support industry with funding to enable that closer partnership.</i>
2006 Whitepaper Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving life chances	Another policy paper which aimed to reform and renew the purpose of TVET. These proposed changes were to create learner accounts to help people continue to learn up to level 3, the ability for colleges to develop specialisms linked to local industry. The white paper sets out government intention to reform teaching practice in TVET with the development of a new agency to oversee standards of practice the new Quality improvement agency as well as setting a minimum expectation around professional development for people who teach in TVET. Relevance to this research: <i>Yet another reform, and by its nature a veiled reflection of how government thinks about TVET and the people who teach in this system of education.</i>
2007 Further Education and Training Act	This law brought about new processes for further education and the Learning and Skills Council for England. Primarily concerned with funding arrangements and improvement of quality of offering in TVET, also required leaders to hold a leadership qualification (Department of Education and Skills, 2007)
2007 Green Paper Raising Expectations: Staying in Education post 16	This Green paper was brought forward in order to attempt to curb youth unemployment and kick start skills development for young people. The paper proposed that all young people should remain in education or training up to the age of 18. That such participation should be in school, a college or as part of an apprenticeship. This was to be implemented by the use of fines for those young people who failed to engage (DfES, 2007) Relevance to this research: <i>recognising the purpose of TVET to both support industry but increase opportunity for all.</i>
2008 CPAC Preparing to deliver the 14-19 education reforms in England	This report by the Commons Public Accounts Committee expressed concerns about the government's diploma proposals. In particular the report highlighted that whilst it was commendable to see a more integrated approach to academic and vocational learning there was much work still to be done. In particular the critique highlighted that the new diploma would over complicate an already complex education system of education and skills development and only seek to perpetuate the confusion and status issue of vocational education (Gillard, 2011). Relevance to this research: <i>Another example of government critiquing government and questioning the relative success of any proposal, a good example of policy churn.</i>

Year and Title Document	Detail of this document and relevance to this research
2008 Education and Skills Act	The law enacted in essence the raising of the participation age, this followed the Green Paper of 2007 Raising Aspirations (Education and Skills Act 2008, 2008)
2009 Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill	<p>This act of parliament sought to rebalance how apprenticeships were seen, by placing them on a statutory basis. The Bill gave an entitlement to every suitably qualified young person to a high-quality apprenticeship.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The reaction to this bill was a critique that in real terms it was a centralisation of power. By giving central government the power to dictate the content of apprenticeship, placing a duty on Local Education Authorities to 'secure' that there was enough suitable education and training in their local area for young people up to the age of 18. It also created a statutory framework for apprenticeship and placed duties on employers to facilitate this (Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, 2009).</i></p>
2009 Education for All: The future of education and training for 14-19-year-olds	<p>This report of a review funded by the Nuffield Foundation was formed to look at all aspects of 14-19 age education and training. The report argued strongly for a new vision for education in the United Kingdom which placed an emphasis on gaining knowledge and skills to manage life.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The report called for a reimagining of an education system that held a broader philosophy of education from the current narrow focus of either academic intellectual excellence or skill for industry development. Amongst other recommendations there was a call for a simpler system of education which could move away from divisions and fragmentation and hence inequalities (Pring et al., 2009)</i></p>
2009 Report by the panel for fair access to the professions: Unleashing Aspiration	<p>Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions had 88 recommendations which sought to increase social mobility by a number of key reforms and various stages of life.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The recommendations included improvement in career information advice and guidance as well as greater collaboration between universities, colleges and schools in an effort to enable more young people to enter the professions. The report had cited some stark statistics about the greater proportion of top Judges, finance directors, civil servants and MPs for example who had all been privately educated. In its response in January 2010 the government at the time recognised that it had a role in enabling more people to flourish and as a result pledged to form a Social Mobility Commission. In addition, other promises included improved career information as well as improved routes through vocational education to high status professional careers and that adults had even more opportunity to engage in education to enhance their career (Milburn et al, 2009)</i></p>
2009 Higher Ambitions - The future of universities in a knowledge economy	<p>The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills set out its 10- to 15-year strategy for higher education.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Identifying that employers and business needed to contribute more to the widespread development of higher education through research programmes. Business should jointly fund vocationally orientated programmes for young people (Gillard, 2018).</i></p>
2009 Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act	This was the law which saw enacted an earlier bill that created a statutory framework for apprenticeships. This set-in motion the creation of the Institute for Apprenticeships (Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, 2009).
2010 Browne Review Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education	<p>This review was commissioned to look at how university education could be sustained and in essence made recommendations on how and when should students pay back their loans. The recommendations were mostly ignored by Government, later in the year Vince Cable the Minister for education announced an increase in university tuition fees (Browne et al., 2010).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>illustrates the flexibility for higher education to increase income.</i></p>

Year and Title Document	Detail of this document and relevance to this research
2010 DfBIS Skills for Sustainable Growth	<p>This introduced measures to close the Train to Gain budget introduced only 6 years earlier. Introduction of the idea of adult learning accounts identified in earlier proposals.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>A good example of policy churn, as well as examples of how other funding measures would be cut from the TVET system.</i></p>
2011 New Challenges, New Chances: Further education and Skills System Reform Plan: Building a World Class Skills System A Consultation Document	<p>A consultation document published by the coalition government to consult on a range of transformation in the skills and adult learning sector. This consultation sought to free TVET providers from bureaucracy so that they may respond more fully to employer needs and local communities. This consultation focused on adults only that is the education which is funded by the Business innovation and skills department meant at that time (BIS, 2011b).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>This proposed as well as other measures a new commission on vocational pedagogy, also confirmed that there would be cuts in a number of organisations set up to support or fund TVET.</i></p>
2011 Wolf Review Vocational Education	<p>A Government commissioned review of vocational education undertaken by Professor Alison Wolf, Kings College London.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The review made significant judgements about the quality of vocational education and the progression opportunities to the labour markets, stating at least 350,000 young people were poorly served by the current educational arrangements. The Wolf report made wide-ranging recommendations, these included that funding should be per student and that TVET organisations should have a duty to provide wide ranging programmes of study, and that English and mathematics should be integral to the study programmes. There was a recommendation that awarding organisations should have greater freedoms. Wolf recognised the importance of employers' roles in developing a rounded education the recommendation was that employers should be subsidised to support young people in a work placement or work experience. Finally, the review recommended that apprentice arrangements be aligned to the best in Europe. The Government launched a consultation document on the Study Programme proposals and these were eventually put into place following a further consultation in October 2011, they were required by all Colleges from September 2013 (Wolf, 2011a).</i></p>
2011 New Challenges, New Chances: Further education and Skills System Reform Plan: Building a World Class Skills System	<p>The response to the provision consultation highlights the work now needed to reform the skills system. Promises of putting the student at the heart through support and additional funding, an improved national careers service, it sets out how there will be clear progression pathways, improved teaching and learning, consultation with employers on their understanding of qualifications and their role of the development of national occupational standards.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The plan sets out proposals to allow employers to 'take ownership' in the local skills agenda. This paper enabled the new FE commissioner whose role was to strengthen the intervention process in colleges in 2013 (DfES, 2011)</i></p>
2011 Government Strategy. Building Engagement Building Futures: Our Strategy to Maximise the Participation of 16-24 Years old's in Education Training and Work	<p>This strategy recognises the high number of young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). This strategy sets out the actions to address this which include actions for schools and colleges.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>A recommendation about incentivising employers to take on young people, looking at support organisations to help young people enter education or training, offering more apprentices, a reform of the benefits system for young people as well as a new Youth Contract with £1 billion to get young people learning or earning before too long (DfES, 2011).</i></p>

Year and Title Document	Detail of this document and relevance to this research
2011 White Paper Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System (June):	<p>Published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. This white paper proposed funding and finance reforms for higher education. Changing slightly the time and the threshold for when students needed to repay their loans. In addition, this white paper proposed a new system by which students could make a judgement about the quality of a university, in addition the paper proposed a new regulation to protect standards for quality.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Putting students feedback at the heart of a consumerist approach to choosing a university place (Gillard, 2018)</i></p>
2011 Education Act	<p>This Act recognised some aspects of TVET and prioritised funding for some apprenticeships for certain types of students, the Act enabled some new freedoms for TVET organisations, it also allowed the Department for Education to act in the case of failing TVET organisations.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>enabling freedoms around market of education such as the ability to borrow money, as well removing some duties on providers means increased flexibility in the TVET system and perhaps increased confusion surrounding the purpose of TVET</i></p>
2012 Richard Review on Apprenticeships	<p>A government commissioned review on the state of apprenticeships. A comprehensive review which called for the redefinition of apprenticeships for those jobs or skills which require sustained training.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>This identified a new programme of traineeships which would allow for those not ready to step onto a full apprenticeship. The review called for a focus on industry standards; what should an apprentice know and what should they be able to do with one apprenticeship qualification that works within the apprenticeship. Sets out how employers and employer partnerships should be asked to design and develop apprenticeship qualifications as well as be involved in assessment. Apprentices should have achieved level 2 in mathematics and English. There should be an incentive scheme to encourage innovation. There were recommendations for funding through taxation or social security for employers. The provision of good quality information on apprenticeships as well as government endorsed support (Richard, 2012).</i></p>
2012 Study Programmes for 16-19-year-olds	<p>This sets out the proposals for the government to introduce the proposals highlighted in the Wolf report, that is the implementation of study programmes for all full-time students in vocational education. These study programmes would ensure that qualifications had the appropriate market value, students would need to study alongside English and mathematics as well as increasing employability skills by the use of work placement or other such activities which enable smoother transition into employment.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>In order to enable ethos, there would be a funding reform to put in place funding per student to include the study programme, reformed performance tables to include a new destination measure. There would be a revised inspection framework, and new minimum standards of performance (Department for Education, 2011).</i></p>
2012 Lingfield Report Professionalism in Further Education (October):	<p>A government commissioned review to investigate the training of teachers in TVET. This the final report of the Independent Review Panel critiqued previous governments instigation to professionalise further education teachers by the imposing of standards.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The report sought to remove external controls from the training of teachers in TVET in England, citing that previous government policy had only weakened the quality assurance and controls improvement they had been created to address (Lingfield, 2012).</i></p>
2013 Traineeships Supporting Young People to Develop the Skills for Apprenticeships and Other Sustained Jobs: a framework for delivery	<p>A report written in response to a frequent call to government from employers to support young people to be employable, also, in response to the Richard Review published the year before. This discussion document called for redevelopment of a new traineeship programme.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>One of the ambitions of the new programme was to curb the amount of young people who remained NEET. The new programme of traineeships would be a stepping stone to an apprenticeship (Department for Education and Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2013). In a sense setting out again the dual purpose of TVET.</i></p>

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2013 Rigour Responsiveness in Skills a policy paper	<p>This policy paper explained how the government was to improve the TVET system to shore up the development of a world class skills offering. The policy paper recognised that skills shortages were still prevalent. The paper critiques previous governments' attempts to reform and over ambitious plans which it says failed to stabilise the system. This policy paper sets out how standards and academic rigour will be implanted starting with raising standards for teachers in the system by the development of a new FE Guild with teaching charter status. There was also a pledge to intervene in poorly performing colleges and finally providing more information about colleges to students and employers. It included another reform of apprenticeships with the employer having more responsibility to endorse competence in an apprentice. The creation of traineeships as a route to apprenticeships would be commenced. The plan almost highlighted the confusion surrounding a multitude of qualifications that were largely misunderstood by employers, the plan to remove up to 2,500 different qualifications would likely follow.</p> <p>There was a pledge to revise funding to enable colleges to perform at their best and finally offer students and employers better information (DfBIS, 2013).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>A good example of a government commissioned report trying to grapple with a confused TVET system and critique of previous governments.</i></p>
2013 Report from the 157 Group: Our Manifesto for Further Education and Skills	<p>The 157 Group of Colleges in England was founded in 2006 with a purpose to collaborate, with each other, with employers and with government. This report in 2013 is a call to arms to really get the sector right after years of policy changes. It is a call to the government to cease the myriad of policy changes and give some stability in the sector.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The 157 Group report asked for some transparency in how performance was measure. Importantly recognising that a coordinated approach to employer engagement was needed. Here noting that while research evidence recognised that employers felt that students from TVET were best prepared for work but a lack of a strategic coordinated employer plan inhibited colleges in their work with employers. The manifesto included a call for greater autonomy and finally a sustainable funding system to enable students to flourish (157 Group, 2013).</i></p>
2013 Inspiration Vision Statement Careers Education	<p>This report placed a statutory duty on schools and colleges to provide improved information advice and guidance on careers, in addition for education providers to inspire young people and adults by promoting additional exposure to a range of employers and people from industry.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>This statement called on employers to offer more to schools and colleges, without any detail of how this could happen, except for extending and improve the national careers service. To ensure these new actions happen Ofsted would hold education providers to account as well as a new performance target imposed on institutions (BIS and DfE, 2013)</i></p>
2013 LSIS closed	<p>Following a funding review, it was announced the year before that the Learning and Skills Improvement Service would close. Funding would no longer be available from the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (National Archives, 2013)</p>
2013 Consultation on of Level 3 Vocational qualifications for 16-19-year-olds. A Government Response	<p>This report summarises the consultation on the reform of qualifications at level 3 in TVET sector.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The findings and proposals include the desire that vocational education should be seen as a 'valued alternative to academic study' the requirement for future Vocational qualifications should be designed to meet certain characteristics such as being endorsed by employers and have an element of external of synoptic assessment. Awarding organisations were required to develop new qualifications to meet the full requirements. The requirement here was to refine level 3 qualifications as A level, Occupational or Applied General qualifications as well as apprenticeships being available through other means. The term occupational was to be replaced by technical level or Tech Level and a new performance measure for a new technical baccalaureate. Interestingly in the</i></p>

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	<p><i>feedback to the questions on standards the government response that it was sympathetic to work experience being a requirement of occupational competence but recognises that some learning does not easily lend itself to work based learning, however, this is the way that employers may recognise their role in the design of the qualifications. Interesting feedback from employers that there was a strong appetite to engage as long as government did not make the process overly bureaucratic (Department for Education, 2013).</i></p>
<p>2013 A Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications in England</p>	<p>A commissioned review led by Nigel Whitehead, which identified improvements needed in the adult skills system, its first point was to highlight the employer should be working together with awarding organisations to drive business forward. It suggested the qualification regulator should require awarding organisations to actively engage with employers. There was a requirement to review occupational standards with employers. The qualification regulator should require awarding organisations to design clearly initiable qualifications and amongst a swath of recommendations around regulation of qualifications that there should be encouragement that more leading employers should work in partnership with training providers to deliver qualifications (Nigel. Whitehead, 2013)</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>A further recognition of the inability of government to draw together employers and the organisations which develop qualifications relevant to industry.</i></p>
<p>2014 A Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning It's about Work</p>	<p>A commission established to review what makes excellent teaching and learning. This commission was as a result of the 2011 New Challenges New Chances. This work is the result on the evaluation of what makes good practice in vocational pedagogy, stating that there should be a clear line of sight to work. A recognition that teachers are dual professionals who should have access to industry placements to keep updated with their professional of origin as well as access to industry standard facilities (McLoughlin, 2013) .</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The commission report characterises vocational pedagogy and identifies enabling factors for excellence importantly that there is a clear 'two-way street' of collaboration between colleges and employers. It references to the design of curriculum that has at its heart occupational standards and the 'voice' of employers. This could translate to a deeper richer involvement of local employers over each curriculum area in local colleges (McLoughlin, 2013)</i></p>
<p>2014 Getting the Job Done: The Governments reform Plan for Vocational Qualifications</p>	<p>This policy paper sets out the government reform programme in response to a number of commissioned reviews in the previous years including the 2013 review on Adult Education, the 2013 CATVL, the Wolf Review, the Richard Review, and the Whitehead review. The policy paper sets out its planned actions which are to fund the highest employer valued qualifications. To align the system and ensure that qualifications and apprenticeship are relevant, rigorous and recognised as having value. To ensure that innovation is encouraged. It recommended English and math's qualifications. It provided clarity of what qualifications will be funded and more qualifications are graded (DfBIS, 2014a) .</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>This policy paper states it is a simplification of the TVET system. The paper sets out a timeline for yet more reform spanning 2013 to 2020(DfBIS, 2014a)</i></p>
<p>2014 Further Education Workforce Strategy Policy Paper</p>	<p>This paper sets out the strategy to build capacity in college staffing resources. This highlights the new professional standards for teachers and lecturers in the sector. It highlights the requirements for attainment of English and math's for young people and the resultant requirements for teachers and lectures to be ready to support English and Math's learning. The strategy highlights the needs of the sector in response the CATVL report and Ofsted recent reports on the quality of teaching and learning in the sector. The strategy recognises significant recruitment and retention issues of skilled professionals (DfBIS, 2014b).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Highlighting the need for professional teaching and learning in the TVET system.</i></p>

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2014 Commission Report Further Education Learning Technology Action Group	<p>Commissioned by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills this report highlighted the need for the TVET sector to keep up to date with the advancement of technology. It states that there should be investment in infrastructure and capital investment to ensure that organisations and students are able to respond to changing demands of employment. (FELTAG, 2014).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>A recommendation that regulation and funding should not inhibit future technological development for the sector. There was a need to build capacity in the workforce. Again, a call for employers and the sector to come closer together in a meaningful way. Finally, that students should be empowered to develop their own technological skills.</i></p>
2015 CESC Apprenticeships and Traineeships for 16- to 19-year-olds	<p>This report by the Commons Education Select Committee put forward the case for improved quality apprenticeships which would not be seen as a 'second class option'. The report whilst participation in apprenticeships had increased significantly, participation by 16-18 year old remained low (House of Commons Education Committee, 2015).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The report argued that the excessive messaging that apprenticeship was the way to tackle youth unemployment would only continue to perpetuate the notion that apprenticeships were a second-class option.</i></p>
2015 Ofqual Published report: After the QCF : A New qualifications Framework.	<p>Following consultation and the guidance of the qualifications regulator this report sets out the transformation of qualifications from one framework to another. The new regulated framework RQF proposed has been developed to help people have a greater understanding about the difference in qualifications, how long they take to complete and how they might be assessed. This is particularly relevant to the vocational education sector and comes as a result of a number of government strategies and reforms (Ofqual, 2015).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Another change in qualifications offered by TVET.</i></p>
2015 Fixing the Foundations: Creating a More Prosperous Britain.	<p>The report issued by the HM Treasury department sets out the vision for how the government will change and shift the economy. It includes aspects of infrastructure, environmental aspects, welfare and taxation and amongst other aspects building a world class skills system which includes higher education. Relevance to this research: <i>In particular it references the development of apprenticeships, involving employers in the developing and redefined skills system as well as streamlining Further Education (TVET). It recognises increasing access to higher education through universities.</i></p>
2015 English Apprenticeships: Our Vision for 2020	<p>This report sets out the national vision for apprenticeships following the Richard Review in 2012. It is the document that heralds in a transformed apprenticeship which has been developed by and with employers. Putting employers in the driving seat, a new Institute for Apprenticeships was to be formed as well as the introduction of an employer levy designed to enable more apprenticeship opportunities across all industries in England.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>A proposal for a major change in the way treat both apprenticeships are designed and delivered. Clear proposal for the partnership of employers.</i></p>
2016 Report by the Independent Panel on Technical Education	<p>This report was published in July 2016 and was accompanied by the government response (The Skills Plan) almost immediately. This report called for wide ranging reform to the vocational and technical education landscape. The report recognised that the education system to date had largely emphasised the differences between academic and technical routes to education causing a complex and 'messy' education system (Sainsbury, 2016b).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The recommendations proposed a clear delineation between academic and technical routes, recognising the difference perhaps for the first time. It identified a two-route approach to a technical pathway which is college based and one which is employer based.</i></p>

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	<i>The report stressed the importance of preparation for an occupation rather than an employer specific role. As a result, current and new standards would be developed in conjunction with employer planners, these would be aligned with new apprenticeship standards.</i>
2016 The Skills Plan	<p>The government response to the report by the Independent Panel on Technical Education, the report's recommendations were universally accepted 'unequivocally'. The Skills Plan promised to see the development of 15 core pathways for technical education and the development of a suite of new qualifications developed by employers called T levels. The plan highlighted the need to streamline the current education system of multiple awarding organisations have the qualifications governed by the newly formed Institute for Apprenticeships. Highlighted that these new qualifications would be stepping stones to higher level technical routes and to university as well as importantly pathways to employment and occupational competence. The plan set out a timeline for implementation for the next 4 years (HM Government, 2016).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The first major redefinition of the post 16 landscape to include a new range of qualifications, T levels will have a major impact on TVET system. These are designed to be developed by employers and will require far greater employer partnership.</i></p>
2016 Enterprise Act	<p>This Act made provision for the Institute for Apprenticeships which is responsible for the development and endorsement of apprenticeship standards and assessment methods, the Institute is responsible for creating employer panels to advise on and approve standards for occupational competence within apprenticeship (<i>The Enterprise Act 2016 (Commencement No. 5) Regulations 2017, 2017</i>)</p>
2017 Building Support: The review of the Industry Training Boards	<p>A government review on the Industry Training Boards (ITB). ITB were created following the Industrial Training Act which in effect gave these government funded agencies the ability to impose a levelly payment on employers in their industries and to offer a grant to other employers who were engaged in apprenticeship training. There were 27 ITB's which lasted in the main till the late 1980's. The only remaining boards are the Construction Industry training Boards and the Construction and Engineering Training Board. These two remained following the successful negotiation of the particular needs of the industries in regard of training and occupational competence only gained following a significant period of training (Department for Education, 2017).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>This review recommends that following a consultation because of the nature of this industry these two ITBs should remain and that they play a significant role in supporting an industry which is worth £237 billion a year. This is perhaps the last example of professional industry sector representation</i></p>
2017 Technical and Further Education Act (27 April):	<p>This Act enabled the progress of the Skills Plan as well as renamed the Institute for Apprentices the Institute for Apprentices and Technical Education. In addition the bill set out its ambitious plan for newly developed Institute for Technology a collaboration between further education, higher education and employers (Technical and Further Education Act 2017, 2017).</p>
2017 Skills partner statement of action for government and employers	<p>A commitment statement by government to both invite employers to working with government and local providers and for government to committee to work together. The goals are to build greater links with industry to ensure that qualifications and skills development is aligned with industry needs. This commitment statement is an invitation for employers to work with government in developing new apprenticeship standards and the standards and consent of the T level qualifications as well support the new national colleges as they develop. These colleges are specialist providers of technical qualifications usually at level 4 or 5 (Department for Education, 2017) .</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>A call to employers to support and get involved with the governments change in offering, but as yet no funding or means to support them to do so.</i></p>

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2018 Functional Skills English and Math's Subject Content: Government Consultation Response	<p>In 2017 the Government published a consultation on the proposed reform for these qualifications.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: This with the aim to improve the content and relevance of these qualifications (Ofqual, 2018)</p>
2018 National Leaders of Further Education appointed	<p>The skills minister announced that a newly formed group which would have some of the country top Principals.</p> <p>Relevance to this research: This group was to work with underperforming colleges to help drive up standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning (Department for Education, 2020)</p>
2018 Consultation on the implementation of T levels a government response	<p>Following the Sainsbury review and the new approach to vocational /technical education a consultation was launched between November 2017 and February 2018 on how best to roll out T level qualifications in England. This response summarises the findings and Governments actions as a result. The feedback highlighted the importance of employer engagement throughout the process as well as employer recognition for the new qualifications. The consultation recognised that the work placement would be challenging and government responded by an adjustment in 2019. This consultation sets out the government's response which included to continue to review other level 3 qualifications adjust the funding for those in time(Department of Education, 2018).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>Government recognition that the ambition of the qualification reform may be challenging to achieve without support of employers.</i></p>
2018 Flexible Learning Fund	<p>Additional funding announced to support and encourage more people to take part in new training or courses to support progression, with a particular focus on older workers and those whose jobs may be affected by an increase in the need for more digital skills (Department for Education, 2020).</p>
2019 Independent Panel Report to the Review of Post 18 Education and Funding the Augar Review	<p>This government commissioned review sought to evaluate all parts of the higher education system, that is that which is within a university and that which may be delivered in a college by a university or delivered by a college in terms of a higher-level technical qualification. In addition the review sought to better understand the strengths of the higher education apprenticeship (Augar, 2019).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The recommendations included stretching of the technical education system with better funding and a coherent suite of technical qualifications at sub graduate level, increased opportunities for everyone, removing low value higher education, increased life time learning, making higher education more accessible throughout life, and a focus on those who may be disadvantaged. Improving the offer for higher apprenticeships. The review critiques the current system for apprenticeship stating that the reform was not driven by employers and the needs of the labour market. The report highlights that TVET sector has been grossly underfunded and as a result employers and students do not view it as prestigious (Augar, 2019).</i></p>
2019 the First New Institute for Technology	<p>The Institute for Technology was heralded as part of the 2017 legislation as a new era for technology these institutions focus on STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) areas, such as engineering, digital and construction. There are also able to focus on the specific technical skills needs required in the area where they are located. These organisation objectives was to develop a skilled workforce and students with a clear route to technical employment desired by employers (Department for Education, 2020)</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>These organisation are the first clear collaborations between Higher education institutions and employers and will be delivering level 4 and 5 qualifications as well as T level (Department for Education, 2020).</i></p>

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2019 T level Industry Placements update report	<p>This report is designed to allay worries and concerns which had emerged about the availability of industry placements for the new qualifications. The report sets out the extensive work the DfES has undertaken in an effort to shore up the availability and processes associated with placements including an additional fund of £60m Capacity and Delivery Fund(Department for Education, 2019).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>The report is to update providers of the new requirements which are a slight change from the initial expectations of these qualifications, namely a minimum of 315-hour placement. In addition providing an employer support fund worth £7 million(Department for Education, 2019).</i></p>
2020 'What Works' in Further Education and Adult Learning	<p>A policy brief published in January 2020 by the Social Mobility Commission the report recognised the governments' ambitions to raise productivity and help people adapt to changes in employment with the onset of the digital age. A particular focus on those people who were disadvantaged (Social Mobility Commission, 2020).</p> <p>Relevance to this research: <i>This report centres on the formation of a what works was to support the TVET sector share evidence informed practice with the goal of accelerating improvement (Social Mobility Commission, 2020)</i></p>

End