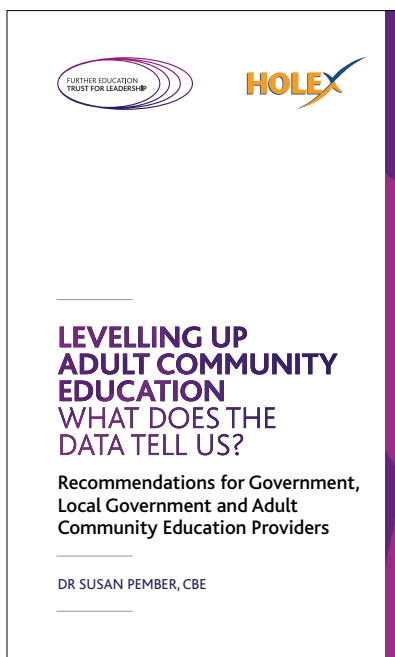


Mind the knowledge gap: Understanding the contribution of ACE

A new FETL report shows what adult community education can contribute to the government's 'levelling up' agenda

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Adult community education (ACE) is a neglected and under-researched part of the further education landscape. Yet while ministers and civil servants know little about it, its unique role in engaging adults from the most disadvantaged backgrounds in making the first crucial steps into education, training and employment means it has much to contribute to the government's 'levelling-up' ambitions.

A new report, funded by the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) and written by Dr Sue Pember, Policy Director of HOLEX, the professional body for adult education services, aims to put the sector on the policy map and give politician and policy-makers the data they need to realise its potential.

Levelling Up Adult Community Education: What Does the Data Tell Us? acknowledges the challenges in this policy area, and argues that understanding what adult education can contribute, particularly in getting the hard to reach back into education and learning, is crucial. It presents key data, collated in a systematic manner, that should be useful to researchers, policy-makers and advocates of adult education in delivering quality ACE. It concludes with a set of recommendations to support policymaking and planning at national, local and regional levels.

Dame Ruth Silver, President of FETL, said: 'While recent policy interventions, notably the new report from the Education Select Committee on lifelong learning, have acknowledged the contribution of ACE, they also bemoan the paucity of evidence on adult education, its outcomes, reach and impact.

'Filling this gap, and setting out clearly and persuasively what adult community education does and how it benefits people and communities, is critically important in ensuring providers can make a full contribution to the government's "levelling up" agenda, and that this contribution is properly understood. That is what this report aims to do and we hope it will support not only government in realising the potential of adult education but also providers in making sense of the levelling-up agenda.'

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