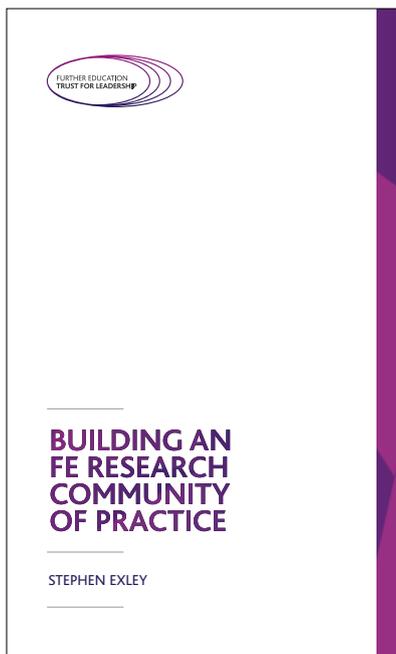


Building an FE research community of practice

A new report from the Further Education Trust for Leadership gives an example of how further education practitioner-researchers can work together to build FE's community of knowledge and ideas

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Further education has long been and under-researched, under-understood and under-valued part of the education system. It has long been recognised that the sector needs to engage in 'collective learning', building not only its body of knowledge and expertise but also the capacity of its staff to research and innovate. A new report from the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) offers one important and instructive example of how this might be done.

Building an FE research community of practice, by Stephen Exley, Director of External Affairs at Villiers Park Educational Trust, describes the beginnings of an attempt to establish a 'community of practice' among practitioner-researchers in further education. A community of practice is defined in the report as a group of people who share a passion for something they do and learn to do it better, together, through regular interaction. The report shows how a community of practice for FE was created online by Villiers Park Educational Trust, combining communication, discussion and peer support. Plans are already in place to begin face-to-face activities will begin once lockdown is ended.

Dame Ruth Silver, President of FETL, said: 'This is a concept which is of particular interest to the further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL). We recognise in it our own DNA – encouraging colleagues in the field to share their thinking and preoccupations and to engage in 'collective learning', being respectful of the views of colleagues, while adopting a questioning stance and mobilising the voices of the deliverers.

'From its inception, FETL has sought to empower colleagues within the sector to think about the future of FE, both through the spaces our work had created and the resources we have produced. The hope is always that the work we fund will have a life beyond the page or screen, and support the sector to take the next generative step in its own story. This project is an attempt to do just this. We hope that the project will provide an example that will encourage others to research in partnership, sharing their knowledge and building a community of people and ideas to nourish the sector of the future.'

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

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