

Further education outside the jurisdiction of local education authorities in post-war England

This paper revisits the three decades following the end of World War Two – a time when, following the 1944 Education Act, local education authorities (LEAs) were the key agencies responsible for running the education system across England. For the first time there was a statutory requirement for LEAs to secure adequate facilities for further education (FE), and the post-war era is generally remembered as a period when they dominated FE. Yet this is not the full story of further education in post-war England: it is often forgotten that a significant amount of FE existed outside the municipal framework. This paper returns to the post-war decades and begins to uncover the largely forgotten history of FE outside local authority control at that time. It highlights how voluntary and private organisations offered various forms of post-compulsory education outside the municipal framework, and how they contributed to the eclectic and diverse nature of FE across England. This, I argue, reflected not only the expedience, compromise and inertia that characterised further education in post-war England but was rooted in a capture of educational policy more generally by a privileged elite intent on maintaining a social order characterised by social, economic and cultural divisions.

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Keywords: further education; governance; local authorities; post-war England

Introduction

The 1944 Education Act placed a statutory duty upon all local education authorities (LEAs) to secure 'adequate' provision for further education (FE). Although municipal participation in FE can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, for the first time LEAs were formally required to become involved with further education in their localities. The term adequate is, however, open to interpretation and with well over 100 local authorities in England, each with their own preferences and priorities, the nature of FE differed significantly across the country (McClure 2000). Whilst LEAs were responsible for the general educational character of institutions under their control the way in which this responsibility was discharged depended, to a large extent, upon a 'local ecology' of individual, political and administrative arrangements (Waitt 1980, p. 402). Many colleges developed strong relationships with employers, typically through providing vocational education and training for apprentices, technicians and craft workers employed in local industry. However, Gravatt and Silver point to the sometimes parochial and insular nature of FE in post-war England – a period in which they argue further education was often dominated by 'cosy closed networks' between college managers, county hall officials, and trade union representatives (Gravatt and Silver 2000, p. 116). Reflecting its varied and uneven nature, Ainley and Bailey have described FE in the post-war era as 'a mish-mash of brilliance and diabolical practice' (Ainley and Bailey 1997, p. 103).

Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of further education may have been, local authorities were at the height of their power for three decades after the end of World War Two and were central to running FE (Simmons 2008). Yet this is not the full story of further education in post-war England: a significant further education sector existed outside the municipal framework. This paper

revisits FE in the post-war era and begins to uncover the largely forgotten history of further education outside local authority control. Using policy documents and research on FE from the post-war decades alongside more contemporary analyses of that period it locates the complicated and peculiar pattern of further education in its broader social, economic and political context. Informed by a critical class-based reading of 1944 Education Act and educational expansion thereafter, I argue that the development of FE in the decades after the War reflected the vested interests of social and political elites rooted in the inequalities of the early twentieth century and before. Just as privilege and inequality were allowed to continue and flourish in other areas of education, a range of voluntary, private and religious bodies were permitted, and in some cases encouraged, to provide various forms of FE outside local authority control.

The first section of the paper provides an overview of the development of further education in England. This is followed by a discussion of the 1944 Education Act, some of its implications for local authorities, and the consequences of the Act for FE in particular. I argue that many of the provisions of the 1944 Education Act were far less radical than is generally assumed, and that the somewhat ambiguous position in which LEAs were placed in relation to FE was due both to the low level of priority given by policymakers to further education and the conservatism of the Act more broadly. The remainder of the paper deals with FE run by three sets of providers operating outside the jurisdiction of local authorities: the responsible bodies, voluntary and direct grant institutions, and private providers. It highlights how, contrary to popular belief, local authorities were never in sole control of FE in the post-war era, and argues that local and national policy decisions were informed both by expedience and a desire to maintain the existing social order. The paper concludes by highlighting narratives of continuity and change in state policy and the position of different providers within this context.

Further education: a brief history

The roots of English further education stem from the Victorian era and technical education for the working classes established by various industrialists and philanthropists at that time. Whilst many

European nations created publicly-funded and centrally-directed education and training systems in the nineteenth century, in England the preference was for voluntary and philanthropic effort to provide education for the lower orders. However, economic competition from overseas, especially from Germany and other Western nations, meant that by the second half of the nineteenth century a laissez-faire approach was proving increasingly inadequate - especially in providing a workforce equipped for the challenges of industrial production and technological change. The need for state intervention became apparent and, whilst the 1870 Elementary Education Act paved the way for the establishment of compulsory schooling, the 1889 Technical Instruction Act and 1890 Local Taxation Act empowered local authorities to raise funds in order to supply or aid the provision of technical education. From this point onwards, municipal endeavour was central to the development and growth of FE and by the beginning of the twentieth century well over 100 municipal technical and scientific institutions had been established (MoE 1951).

The 1902 Balfour Education Act created LEAs as legal entities within local government, and many of these newly empowered bodies established various forms of vocational education and training. Some LEAs also provided continuation classes for those extending their general education beyond the compulsory school leaving age. The 1918 Fisher Education Act attempted to establish free and obligatory Day Continuation Schools for all young people up to the age of 18 not in full-time education. Effectively, the proposal was for all young workers to take part in 'day-release' education and training outside their place of employment. However, many young people and their parents were concerned at the prospect of the loss of wages; meanwhile, many employers were suspicious of formal and theoretical learning, and opposed losing a day's labour from their young workers. Under pressure from business and industry amendments to the Fisher Act made continuation voluntary and, like much else associated with the rhetoric of a 'land fit for heroes', the Day Continuation Schools went largely unfulfilled (Lucas 2004, p. 10). Despite all this, the provision of FE grew considerably after the end of World War One. A combination of civic pride and the demand for technically skilled workers lead to the construction of a number of 'showcase' colleges during the 1920s and 1930s. The number of FE students more than doubled from under 600,000 in

1910-11 to over 1.2 million by 1937-8 (MoE 1951). However, growth was patchy and some major towns and cities were left without any meaningful further education provision (Bailey 1987).

The 1944 Education Act made local authorities pivotal to running FE and LEAs drove a great expansion of further education in the years immediately thereafter. By 1947 there were 680 'major establishments' of further education maintained by LEAs - double the 1938 total (Lucas 2004, p. 14). The number of full-time FE students increased by approximately 130 per cent during this period, whilst part-time students grew by some 300 per cent (MoE 1946). Most LEAs also provided evening institutes offering a range of non-vocational learning in village halls and on school premises outside normal hours of attendance. Over 5,000 evening institutes were in existence by 1946-7, and more than 9,000 were open by 1956 (Cantor and Roberts 1969, p. 5). Following the White Paper, *A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges* (DES 1966), the intention to establish 28 (later 30) polytechnics was announced. These new institutions, formed from over 50 colleges across 31 local authorities, effectively created a 'dual system' of higher education: the universities funded by the Universities Grants Committee and the polytechnics under municipal control (Pratt 2000). LEAs offered a huge range of post-compulsory education and training and were afforded a significant degree of autonomy by the state.

From the 1960s onwards, central government began to exert more control over FE. Increasingly concerned with the UK's relative economic decline, renewed skills shortages and the growing size of the youth cohort; a series of legislation attempted to tie FE to the perceived needs of the economy. LEAs began to be placed under more pressure to meet central targets and to deliver national initiatives (Simmons 2009). Whilst these demands increased throughout the 1970s, more far-reaching changes followed when Margaret Thatcher took office as prime minister at the end of the decade. Imbued with neo-liberal ideology, Mrs Thatcher championed individualism, entrepreneurialism and market forces alongside a commitment to cut taxation and reform the public sector. Traditional forms of bureaucratic organisation, such as local authorities, were presented as inherently inefficient; overly powerful professionals, it was argued, had 'captured' the

public services at the expense of their consumers. Powerful trade unions, weak management, and overly generous terms and conditions were viewed as shielding the public sector and its employees from the rigors of the 'real world' (Winchester and Bach 1995). The public utilities and nationalised industries were steadily privatised but the more politically sensitive public services, such as health and education, could not be sold off so easily. Quasi-market forces were used to force schools, colleges and the other public services to mimic private enterprises. Beginning in the early 1980s, a number of official reports criticised the organisation and culture of local authorities. The Audit Commission's (1985) *Obtaining Better Value from Further Education* was particularly critical of the way LEAs ran FE. Following this, the 1988 Education Reform Act delegated significant financial responsibilities to individual schools and colleges. It also required FE colleges to be far more entrepreneurial in their affairs. The White Paper *Education and Training for the 21st Century* (DES/ED 1991) recommended further far-reaching changes, and subsequently the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act removed all FE, specialist and sixth-form colleges from municipal control. LEAs were recast as bit-part players on the margins of further education. Effectively, central government took control of the FE sector, firstly through the Further Education Funding Council and then via its replacement, the Learning and Skills Council. Currently, the Young People's Learning Agency and Skills Funding Agency have responsibility for funding FE for young people and adult learners respectively.

The final years of the last Labour Government saw some change in stance and the White Paper *Raising Expectations: Enabling the System to Deliver* (DCSF/DIUS 2008) announced that, from April 2010, local authorities would be responsible for co-ordinating all publicly-funded education and training for young people between the ages of 14 to 19 - although FE colleges were to continue as 'independent' corporations outside municipal control, and all forms of adult learning were to remain outside the ambit of county hall officials. However, the change of government which took place in May 2010 meant that this plan was effectively abandoned. Notwithstanding this, the attempt to reintroduce local authorities to running further education, if only in a very limited form, was not insignificant. Avis argues it can be interpreted as part of the 'new localism' which became

popular during Gordon Brown's premiership: or, in other words, the notion that local agencies and citizens rather than central government are best equipped to deal with the complex issues facing them, whether they be concerned with education, housing or 'community regeneration' (Avis 2009a). It is, however, important to note that this did not in any way constitute a return to the politics of the post-war consensus when, for three decades after the end of World War Two, local authorities were afforded a degree of autonomy and discretion in discharging their duties. Under New Labour, they effectively became delivery agents for policies formulated in Westminster and Whitehall, subordinate to and policed by central government (Harding *et al.* 2008). There was never any intention to return FE to the 'good old days' of LEA control. Meanwhile, Coalition discourse may favour the 'empowerment' of local people and community groups but the preferences of its Conservative leadership are to by-pass local government and increase market competition – alongside cutting levels of public spending (Payne 2010).

The 1944 Education Act revisited

The 1944 Education Act is widely accepted as a landmark in the history of English education (Gewirtz and Ozga 1990). Most orthodox social and historical analyses view the 1944 Act as an integral part of the 'settlement' between labour and capital which took place at the end of the Second World War when, between 1944 and 1948, a series of Acts of Parliament signalled not only an expansion of all forms of education but created a welfare state with a far more comprehensive system of social benefits than had existed hitherto (Batteson 1999). Indeed, many regard the 1944 Education Act as the most significant piece of legislation enacted during that period (see, for example, Rhodes-James 1999, p. 281, Taylor 1988, p. 568). Superficially at least, this is understandable: perhaps most notably the 1944 Act replaced the 'all-age' elementary schools with a new system of primary and secondary education, proposed the abolition of fees in all state schools, and increased the school leaving age to 15. In addition to giving local authorities a central role in ensuring the provision of FE, the Act also gave them important new responsibilities for nursery education, special education and a range of other duties (Batteson 1999). Arguably, the

1944 Education Act promoted a 'spirit of partnership' between local and national government: whilst it made LEAs responsible for the maintenance of schools and colleges, the Ministry of Education was concerned mainly with strategic matters such as ensuring an adequate supply of teachers, buildings and providing sufficient funding. Meanwhile, teachers were afforded a substantial degree of autonomy over the curriculum, teaching methods, matters of discipline and other issues (Jones 2003). The Act is often presented as an example of pluralism in action. It received cross-party support, extensive consultation with a wide range of interest groups took place as the Bill progressed through parliament, and significant amendments were made in response to professional, political and public criticism (Whitty and Menter 1989).

There are, however, alternative ways of interpreting 1944. Whilst its measures can, in many ways, be regarded as progressive they were based largely upon pre-war thought. The 1938 Spens Report had recommended secondary education for all, and many within the labour movement had argued for a rise in the school leaving age during the 1920s and 1930s (Simon 1986, p. 35). Despite a widespread appetite for change as the War turned in Britain's favour, there is little doubt that the 1944 Education Act perpetuated elitism, privilege and inequality. Although radical measures such as the abolition of public schools and Church-controlled schools enjoyed significant political and public support, religious bodies, subsidised by the state, were allowed to continue to run schools across the age range and fee-paying schools were left untouched by the Act. Like most other reforms of the time, the 1944 Education Act was far more conservative than is widely recognised (Chitty 1989, p. 12). Key figures within the Conservative Party were among the Act's most vigorous supporters and there is significant evidence that a privileged Oxbridge, public school 'policy elite' within the civil service was able to manipulate the planning process, to dilute the agenda for change, and to ensure continuity in selective and exclusive practice. In many ways, the 1944 Education Act was instrumental in ensuring that the established social order of the early twentieth century was carried over into the post-war era (see, for example, Batteson 1999, Elwyn Jones 1999, Simon 1974, 1990). The consequences of all this for further education are perhaps less clear than for schools – and they are certainly less well researched. Indeed, only a small part

of the 1944 Education Act dealt with FE. This is perhaps unsurprising: even today few policymakers have direct experience of further education and, in class conscious England, FE has always been viewed as something best suited to 'other people's children' (Richardson 2007, p. 411).

What is clear is that the rather ambiguous nature of the 1944 Education Act allowed a range of vested interests and historical peculiarities to remain part of the terrain. Arguably, it invited increased diversity: whilst pre-war FE had been largely synonymous with technical and vocational education Section 41 of the 1944 Education Act classified further education much more broadly, defining it as:

- full-time and part-time education for persons over compulsory age; and
- leisure-time occupation, in such organized cultural training and recreative activities as are suited to their requirements, for any persons over compulsory school age who are able and willing to profit by the facilities provided for that purpose.

The fact that the Act stated that provision need only be *adequate* in nature may seem rather vague and un-ambitious. However, educational expansion, as with other aspects of post-war reconstruction, was carried out against a backdrop of economic austerity: budgets were tight, there were significant shortages in suitable buildings and materials, and teachers were in short supply (MacLure 1970). Furthermore, given that FE was in competition for scarce resources not only with schools and universities but also with the demands of post-war reconstruction more broadly, perhaps the notion of adequacy was realistic, if somewhat vague. It must also be noted that official discourse in the post-war era was generally more measured than is the case nowadays. Whilst, to some extent, this can be explained by the more restrained cultural norms of the mid-twentieth century, the hyperbole of current policy discourses is rooted in dominant neoliberal interpretations of the role of the state within an increasingly globalised economy. Rhetorically, all contemporary social formations, but especially education systems, must be aligned to producing a highly skilled

workforce able to fend off growing international competition - not only from the UK's traditional economic rivals but from also from 'emerging' economies posing new and far-reaching threats to the national interest (Avis 2009b).

Further education and the 'responsible bodies'

Although some local authorities were munificent in supporting FE in the inter-war years, most were less than generous and technical and vocational education was virtually non-existent in some areas, including some of England's major towns and cities (Bailey 1987). Thus, the aspiration for adequacy contained in the 1944 Education Act represented a degree of progress. However, as its requirements were rather imprecise, it is perhaps unsurprising that some LEAs approached their new responsibilities with less vigour than others. Having said this, the fact that the 1944 Act required local authorities only to *secure* rather than to actually *provide* facilities for FE was arguably as important as any notion of adequacy: although it is clear that LEAs were intended to be central to running FE, the 1944 Education Act also allowed them to take a more indirect, facilitative approach. Section 42(4) of the Act stated that:

A local education authority shall, when preparing any scheme of further education have regard to any facilities for further education provided for their area by universities, educational associations, and other bodies, and shall consult with such bodies as aforesaid and the local education authorities for adjacent areas.

Despite the extensive new responsibilities placed upon them by the 1944 Act local authorities varied considerably in their culture and ethos and, in particular, many 'shire counties' were less than radical in their approach to educational progress (Simon 1990, p. 25). Some LEAs preferred to take an arm's length approach to securing certain forms of FE and many made substantial grants to other providers operating within their localities, particularly those offering recreational and

informal learning. The university extra-mural departments and the Workers Educational Association (WEA), known collectively as the 'responsible bodies', were the most significant organisations involved in such arrangements. Usually commissioned to provide various forms of non-vocational education, the responsible bodies ran a variety of educational provision, leisure and recreational activities, usually via evening classes. Sometimes this provision was offered on premises owned and maintained by local authorities but, in other cases, church halls, community centres and various other venues were used. Either way, the responsible bodies ran an eclectic mix of courses and, although provision varied in different localities, typically they offered a diverse range of learning opportunities ranging from flower arranging and yoga through to local history and language classes. Set syllabuses and formal examinations were rare; teachers were normally employed on a part-time basis and usually operated with considerable autonomy (see, for example, Bannister 1955, Foden 1952, McClellan 1948, Melling 1993). In other cases, the YMCA, the Women's Institute, and other voluntary and charitable organisations ran a range of further education courses (Waitt 1980, pp. 18-19). This should not, however, necessarily be interpreted as evidence of a competitive environment. Courses run by the responsible bodies and voluntary organisations usually complemented and augmented local authority provision rather than challenged it. Although the 1944 Education Act left the door open to alternative providers, collaboration rather than competition was the norm (Simon 1990).

In the 1960s, Cantor and Roberts famously likened FE to 'a patchwork quilt' - not only because of its diverse and eclectic nature, but also due to the often expedient nature of arrangements at the local level (1969, p. 3). Writing at a similar time, Kelly describes further education as:

... this fourfold partnership of the central government, the local education authorities, the universities, and the voluntary organisations, lumbering and creaking ...has produced a system of adult education that is varied, comprehensive, and infinitely responsive to individual needs (Kelly 1970).

It is, however, necessary to note that the responsible bodies catered for some parties more effectively than others. The universities were always predominantly middle-class institutions, and the WEA's concentration on liberal adult education tended to exclude the working classes - despite its proletarian name. The growth during the early twentieth century of organisations such as the Plebs League, the Central Labour College and the National Council of Labour Colleges has been linked to the rejection by labour activists of the WEA's rather bourgeois ethos. Such forms of 'independent working-class education' stood fully outside the local authority framework - although the Plebs League and similar organisations were at their strongest during the first half of the twentieth century. Their radicalism declined as they became absorbed into the mainstream trade union movement thereafter (Woodin 2007).

Direct grant and voluntary colleges

The universities were always 'independent' organisations outside local authority control, but the Ministry of Education also financed various other forms of higher education directly. Seven National Colleges, established after the 1945 Percy Report, provided advanced-level study in specialist areas deemed to be of national importance, such as food science, aeronautical engineering, and rubber and plastics technology, before merging into other HE institutions during the 1950s and 1960s. The colleges of advanced technology (CATs) were another example of higher education outside the universities. Formed after the 1956 White Paper, *Technical Education*, the CATs were initially run by LEAs but were soon removed from their jurisdiction to become direct grant institutions. After the 1963 Robbins Report the CATs became universities in their own right (Cantor and Roberts 1969, p. 9). Harold Wilson's (1963) 'white heat of technology' speech captured the spirit of the times – and it was becoming clear that central government regarded strategically important provision as unsuitable for municipal control (Waitt 1980, p. 20).

Direct-grant institutions were also found in certain parts of the FE sector with ten such institutions funded by the Ministry's successor body, the Department of Education and Science, at the end of

the 1970s. These tended to be specialist colleges focusing on areas such as art and design, music or agricultural subjects. Although some general FE colleges offered agricultural courses, most were carried out in specialist colleges of agriculture. Thirty or so of these establishments were run by local authorities during the 1950s and 1960s offering a range of courses including part-time introductory City and Guilds qualifications, basic one year full-time courses, and supplementary courses in specialist areas such as fruit growing, mechanisation or farm management. Seven colleges of agriculture offered advanced work in areas such as dairying, animal husbandry and estate management. The 1958 De la Warr Report recommended increased central government control over agricultural education (MAFF/MoE 1958). In 1962, the National College of Agricultural Engineering was established and, in 1964, five of the advanced agricultural colleges became direct grant institutions – although two colleges serving predominantly local constituencies, Writtle in Essex and Myerscough in Lancashire, remained under LEA control for nearly another thirty years. Voluntary bodies also delivered agricultural education. The YMCA ran three Farm Training Centres offering intensive eight-week training courses for 15-17 year-old boys; the Royal Horticultural Society in Surrey, and the Royal Botanic gardens in London and Edinburgh offered specialist horticultural training; and the Young Farmers' Associations were also involved in providing informal education at the local level (Cantor and Roberts 1969, pp. 141-145).

Arrangements for music education were also complicated. Most music colleges were privately-run organisations financed through student fees and individual contributions rather than by the state. However, some general FE colleges, such as those at Cambridge, Colchester and Huddersfield, had music departments. A few mono-tech music colleges were also under municipal control – for example, the Birmingham School of Music, which eventually became part of Birmingham Polytechnic (now Birmingham City University). Other publicly-funded specialist music colleges fell outside municipal control. Some of these were direct-grant institutions, whilst others were run by voluntary bodies and financed through a 'deficiency grant'. Such arrangements provided state funding to augment resources provided by each college's parent organisation, in some cases amounting to almost 100% of capital and running costs. In part, such arrangements may have

been rooted in expedience and inertia: LEAs had much else to occupy them and specialist provision offered by a local institution could help plug a gap, even if the provider lay outside municipal control. However, just as the responsible bodies provided for a predominantly well-to-do constituency, the direct-grant and voluntary colleges focused mainly on middle-class interests. Whatever the status of particular institutions, many students completing full-time courses in music went on to teacher training programmes, often in colleges of education run by voluntary and religious bodies (Cantor and Roberts 1969, p. 136).

England's first teacher training college was set up in 1789 by the Quaker philanthropist, Joseph Lancaster, and voluntary organisations led the way in teacher training for the next hundred years. It was not until the 1888 Cross Commission on Elementary Education invited the universities to become involved that the state showed any real interest in teacher training. By the end of the nineteenth century, sixteen universities and university colleges in England and Wales ran teacher training programmes but the majority of certificated teachers still undertook training with the voluntary bodies (Hencke 1978). The 1902 Balfour Education Act signalled the start of municipal involvement in teacher training. In 1907, LEAs received considerable encouragement when central government made available a 75 percent grant to assist in building new premises. Nevertheless, there were still fewer than 30 teacher training colleges under municipal control before the Second World War (Gedge 1981, pp. 34-35). After the 1944 Education Act, LEAs became central to teacher training, but voluntary bodies, such as the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Methodist Churches, still ran over 50 colleges of education, (as they became known after the Robbins Report recommended a change of nomenclature), at the end of the 1960s (Hencke 1978, p. 18). Again, arguably, there was an element of pragmatism underpinning the decision to allow religious bodies to continue their involvement in teacher training – LEAs already had much to do and the increased demand for teachers in the post-war era was great. However, there is no doubt that the continued role of the Church was also part of the conservatism inherent in the 1944 Act. The Church was viewed not only as helping to provide moral and social unity but as helping to provide the 'diversity' in the educational system deemed desirable by the architects of the Act (Simon 1986, 1990).

Teacher training changed radically after the 1972 White Paper *A Framework for Expansion* indicated that, by 1981, the number of students in the colleges of education was to be cut by a third. Subsequent announcements reduced this figure to about 30 per cent of its 1972 level (Brewer 1984, p. 143). Twenty or so colleges of education, mainly those run by voluntary bodies, managed to survive as specialist teacher training institutions into the 1980s, but most were not able to continue in their existing form. Twenty-five colleges closed altogether. Others merged with universities, polytechnics or FE colleges, or expanded to become broader-based institutes or colleges of higher education (CIHEs) (Locke, Pratt and Burgess 1985). During the 1970s and 1980s over fifty of these organisations were formed, effectively creating a 'third division of higher education' behind the universities and polytechnics (Pratt 1997) – although, over time, many CIHEs, principally those run by voluntary bodies, became universities in their own right.

Further education: a private function

Undoubtedly there has been a major ideological shift in national politics since the 1980s, and policy decisions taken by governments from those of Mrs Thatcher onwards mean that virtually all the parts of the UK public sector have been subject to far-reaching and on-going change. The commercialisation and marketisation of further education is perhaps emblematic of such processes, and the rise of private FE providers is one symptom of this. It does, however, need to be recognised that the involvement of private companies in FE stretches back much further than the last three decades. In fact, England's first technical college was established in the 1880s by a private company – the City and Guilds of London Institute. Before this, the apprenticeship system had been mainly industry-led with various guilds, private companies and individuals delivering predominantly on-the-job craft and vocational training (Pratt 2000).

Until the 1960s, the training of apprentices was governed mainly by collective agreements between employers and trade unions; there was little direct state intervention and, although the 1958 Carr Report recommended closer links between employers and FE colleges, in practice it achieved little.

The 1964 Industrial Training Act had more success in promoting apprenticeships, however. Amongst other measures, The 1964 Act set up the Industrial Training Boards and introduced a levy-grant system which aimed to share the cost of training more evenly between companies (Cantor and Roberts 1969, pp. 75-77). Following this, reports such as the 1966 Dadd Report on agricultural education and 1968 Swann Report on scientists, engineers and technologists promoted specific areas of technical and vocational education. By the end of the 1960s, a quarter of all young workers were in apprenticeships (FECRDU 1978, pp. 34-35). However, in the main, the growth in apprenticeships reflected existing patterns of inequality, especially in relation to gender and ethnicity. Most apprentices were young men involved in construction, engineering, and the various manufacturing industries which dominated the UK's post-war economy. Apprenticeships were far less commonplace in areas of work where young women were in the majority. Only ten per cent of young people working in retail received any day-release or block-release education or training (Ainley and Allen 2010, p. 16).

Although the main beneficiaries were also male, some large employers provided young workers with vocational training in company-run 'works schools'. Usually located in close proximity to the workplace, typically these establishments provided structured work-related training for a day or a half-day per week – but general education was sometimes also part of the curriculum. Sometimes more general education was also part of the curriculum. During the 1940s and 1950s there were around twenty works schools in England recognised by the Ministry of Education as 'efficient' providers of FE. Often they were run by recognised leaders in particular industries: the Bristol Aeroplane Company in Filton and de Havilland in Hendon, for example, both ran their own works schools. Others were run by employers with a reputation for philanthropy, such as Rowntree in York and Cadbury in Bournville, Warwickshire. In 1952-53, over 9,600 young people were attending works schools in England; over 1,500 students attended each of the two largest works schools – Boots College in Nottingham and Vickers' Metropolitan Works School in Stretford (Venables 1955, pp. 603-604).

Williams and Woodhall (1979) point to the presence of a sizeable privately owned and run FE sector during the 1960s and 1970s. There is a paucity of research on such providers during this period but, in 1975, enrolments with private providers represented 13% of all FE enrolments and 18% of full-time enrolments in public sector FE colleges. 466,500 learners, of whom approximately 52,500 were full-time, were enrolled at 565 private colleges. Over twenty private colleges, most of which were affiliated to the Conference for Independent Further Education, prepared students for GCE examinations (Cantor and Roberts 1986). Many students were foreign nationals studying English at independent language schools but private management colleges, schools of drama and performing arts, and colleges of accountancy and law existed too. There was also official recognition, if not overt government support for private FE. The DES ran a formal scheme whereby organisations could be granted 'approved status' through being recognised as an efficient provider. Over 100 independent establishments possessed this status in the mid-1970s and, although neither the DES nor LEAs had statutory powers over these providers, independent institutions recognised as efficient were liable to inspection from Her Majesty's Inspectorate (Williams and Woodhall 1979, p. 25). Whilst there is no evidence of an overt desire to commercialise or privatise post-compulsory education in the post-war era, it is clear that the state was prepared to allow and sometimes encourage far more diverse forms of provision than is generally recognised today – whether through the Church, via other voluntary bodies or indeed private providers of further education.

Conclusion

Today the English FE sector is a 'mixed economy' of public, private and voluntary sector organisations. A complex web of semi-privatised public sector colleges competes for business with each other and state-subsidised private providers in a quasi-market engineered by central government (Ainley 2007). Contemporary FE is highly commercialised and marketised and in many ways the institutional terrain is more complicated than it has ever been. Much of this has been driven by policy decisions rooted in neo-liberal discourses of globalisation and the desire to force providers of public services to operate as business enterprises in a competitive and

performative environment. As such, the nature of further education in the early twenty-first century is significantly different to the publicly-funded FE sector which existed in the three decades after the end of the Second World War. Culturally, FE is far more entrepreneurial and 'customer-focused'. The nature of the curriculum and the student body has also changed substantially. The supply of craft apprentices and technicians which made up much of the student body until the end of the 1970s has all but ceased to exist and, whilst learners are drawn mainly from lower socio-economic groups (Thompson 2009), the student intake is now more varied. Far greater numbers of women, ethnic minorities and other groups which were previously largely excluded from FE can be found in colleges – both as staff and students (Simmons 2008).

Despite these changes there is continuity as well as change. Even under local authorities many colleges were strongly business-orientated and focused on skills for work – even if these were predominantly the needs of certain relatively privileged sections of the industrial working class. Moreover, it is often forgotten that, although LEAs were clearly the most important providers of further education, central government was always prepared to permit FE to take place outside and alongside provision under municipal and county control. Even during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, direct-grant and voluntary institutions, often with religious roots, were allowed to exist, and were funded by the state to provide various forms of post-compulsory education and training alongside that offered by LEAs. Furthermore, private companies were also directly involved in FE well before the overt commercialisation of recent decades. Whether these were works schools run by industrial enterprises or specialist fee-paying institutions, profit-making providers were always part of the landscape. There may not have been an active promotion of these interests or an ideological commitment to the private and voluntary sectors as is the case today, but it is clear that the state was always prepared to tolerate and, in some ways, encourage such diversity. Even during the 'golden years' of local authority control further education was never fully under the jurisdiction of LEAs. Whilst the 1944 Education Act introduced a statutory requirement for local authorities to ensure the existence of further education across the country, its requirements were loose and individual LEAs were free to interpret the Act according to their own preferences. Alternative

providers helped fill the void as local authorities wrestled with the extensive new responsibilities and there is little doubt that, for many LEAs, expedient solutions based upon local circumstances and existing arrangements were convenient. However, this paper argues that the post-war pattern of FE can only be understood by locating it within a broader explanatory framework, and that policymakers representing powerful social, political and economic interests were able to diffuse the demand for much more far-reaching social and educational change as the Second World War came to a close. Vested interests rooted in cultural, religious and ideological conservatism were able to ensure a continuity of privilege and social order in post-war England. The peculiarities of further education during this period - inside and outside LEA control – can only be fully understood against this backdrop.

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