Skills Development and Further Education in England

Faculty of Wellbeing Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Call for doctoral projects starting in October 2027

The Open University

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Project description

Project Type

This is a PhD project

Please note that a research proposal aligned with this research project will be required from applicants in addition to an application form.

School

Education, Childhood, Youth and Sport

Unit

Institute of Educational Technology

Members

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Aim

The aim of the overall research project is to investigate a number of related themes in skills development and further education to help address long

standing issues about very poor UK productivity growth and a badly functioning English skills system with conflicting stakeholder priorities. A particular focus is how can further education effectively deliver the skills which Industry requires including mechanisms needed for this and the types of small scale interventions which could be scaled up. Such concerns are connected with issues around localism, civic engagement and regeneration.

The PhD project will focus on how further education could support routes into vocational education relevant to particular industrial sectors (especially those with national skills shortages) with respect to effective pedagogical approaches or skills policy change. Possible sectors could be construction or hospitality but it is definitely not restricted to those. In doing so the project will explore ways to reconceptualise skills that inform useful recommendations for teaching or industry practices. The scope of the PhD project is intentionally wide so applicants should suggest a focused project area and methodology aligned to their interests and skills which can be developed in conjunction with the supervisors.

Methodology

The overall research project uses a combination of desk based analysis and system mapping supported by questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and case studies.

The PhD project uses a combination of desk based analysis and system mapping supported by questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and case studies. It is grounded in theory about tacit and explicit knowledge, transversal skills, professionalism and the teaching of it. The methodology aims to clearly

articulate how theoretical and practical issues relate to develop better skills development models which are potentially scalable.

Contribution

The overall research project will make contributions to the theoretical issues in skills development and further education delivery of skills, offer a general mapping of the current English skills system and make practical recommendations for scalable skills development improvements in particular industrial sectors.

The PhD project will make contributions to how further education could support routes into vocational education relevant to particular industrial sectors (especially those with national skills shortages) with respect effective pedagogical approaches or skills policy change.


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