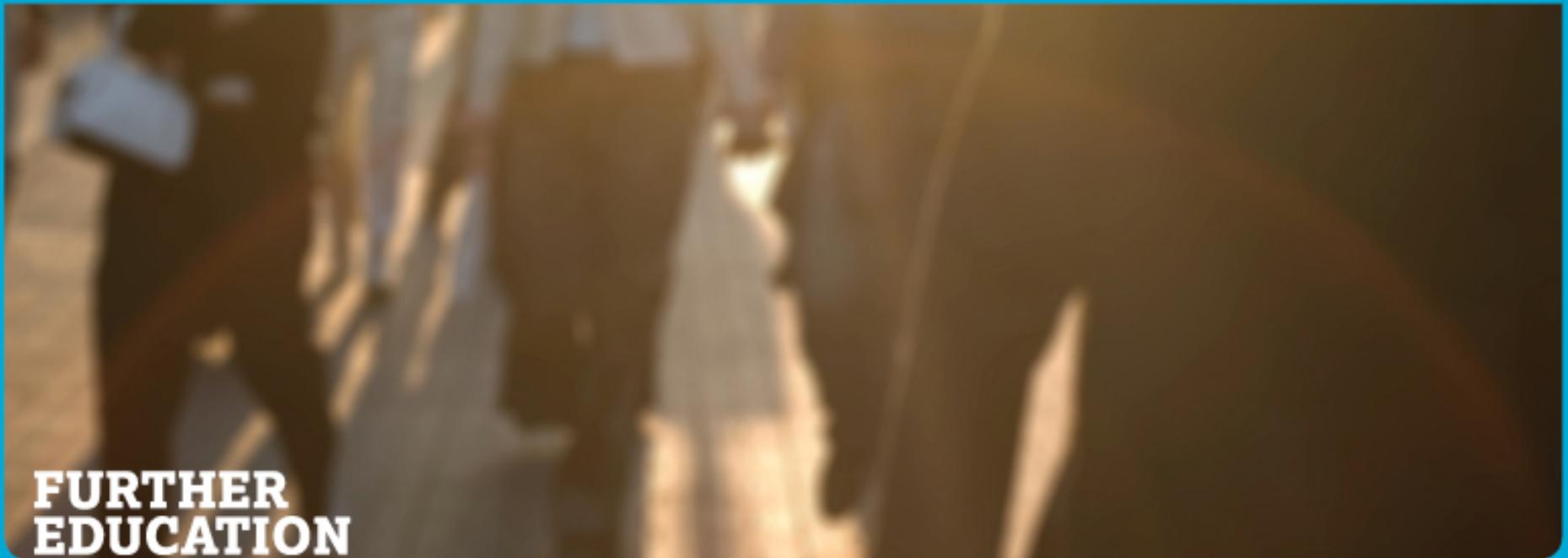




Further Educations Works: Managing Reputation and Strategy beyond Inspection



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FE Reputation Strategy Group (FERSG)

- The need to enhance the national reputation of FE was identified in the 2006 FE White Paper and 'World Class Skills' (2007).
- FERSG was formed in November 2007
- Independent sector-led group
- Working to raise the national reputation of FE
- Activities include:
 - Developing a national voice for the sector
 - Disseminating and acting on latest research
 - Identifying and managing reputation 'hotspots'
 - Maximising opportunities to celebrate successes in FE

Members come from sector organisations including:

- Association of Colleges
- 157 Group
- LSIS
- Association of Learning Providers
- Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
- Learning and Skills Network
- Lifelong Learning UK
- Sixth Form Colleges Forum
- YMCA Training
- York College, Warwickshire College, Preston College, Wirral Metropolitan College and the College of North East London (CONEL)
- Department for Business Innovation and Skills
- Learning and Skills Council

FE Works: Reputation and Strategy

- Chair of FERSG (York College last Ofsted was 'Good')
- Base our work on research
- Two key pieces of research:
 - Mori poll re changes in reputation
 - Lancashire College's reputation research

Key findings relevant here:

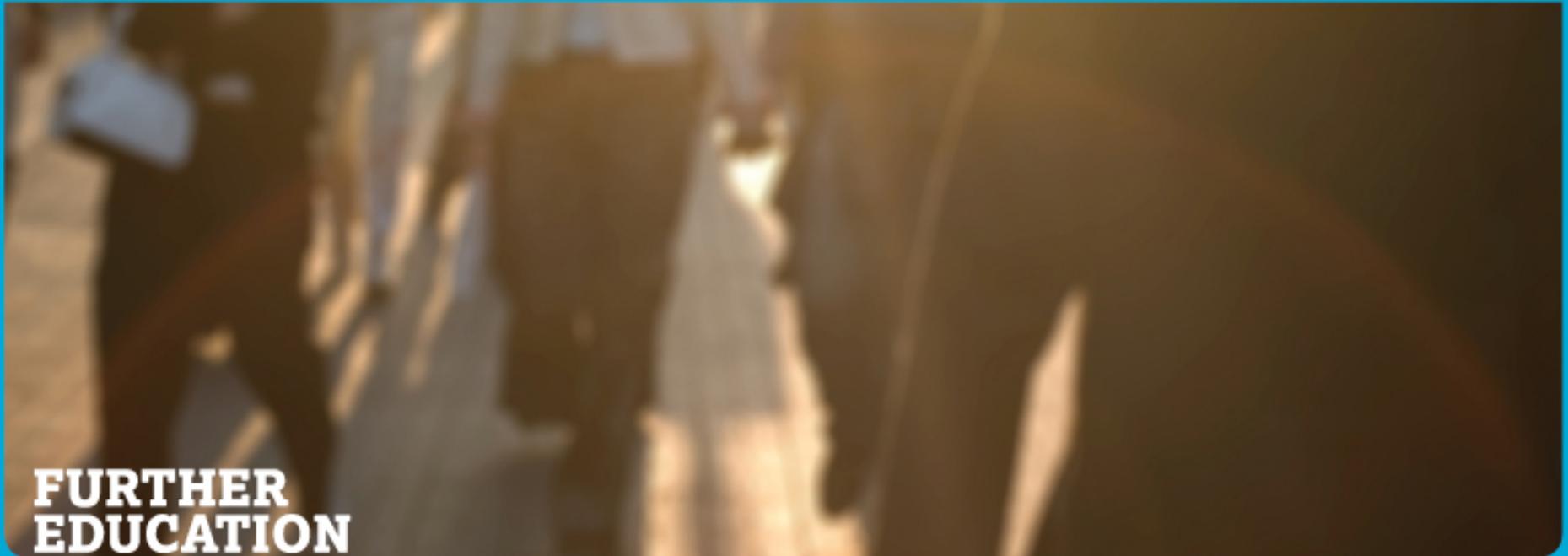
- Inspection results important re reputation
- There is more to do post inspection
- Inspection results do last, and take time to 'shift'
- An 'outstanding' inspection or a poor inspection impact on reputation for some time
- Frequent reference in press particularly to inspection results
- Inspection reports are an important parental influence

But.....

- Inspection is not the 'be all and end all'
- There is more to do, even after an 'outstanding' inspection
- Often complacency can set in with staff
- Often expectations are raised (and disappointments occur) with students, parents and employers
- Reputation post inspection needs to be managed to avoid disappointing those with high expectations



So what else matters?



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Status and Reputation of the FE sector 2009

Research by Ipsos MORI and RCU

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Methodology and stakeholder composition

- Replicates survey in 2007
- 890 telephone interviews with stakeholders – similar composition to 2007
- Fieldwork April to May 2009

Stakeholder composition

- FE/6th form colleges - 20%
- Training providers - 18%
- Employers – non users -16%
- Employers - 15%
- Schools - 11%
- Local Authorities - 11%
- Other stakeholders - 9%

Understanding the FE sector

- 70% stakeholders feel they have a detailed level of understanding – up from 63% in 2007
- The level of those with little or no understanding has decreased from 14% in 2007 to 5% now
- Training providers and employers (users) understand sector significantly more now than in 2007
- The number of employers who have limited or no understanding of the sector has more than halved. However, they are still the group where limited or no understanding prevails.

Key findings of research

Positive

- Greater depth of knowledge, most noticeably among employers and training providers
- Choice, quality and leadership rated positively by the majority
- Significant emphasis on sector's role in meeting skills needs
- Satisfaction with the sector has increased, as has the national reputation and advocacy
- Key drivers of satisfaction are stable through some shift in emphasis for advocacy

Key findings of research cont...

Neutral:

- Generally neutral on responsiveness during the economic downturn
- Training providers and employers continue to be the most crucial focus re reputation building
- Local experience continues to be important

Key findings of research...

Negative

- Confusion over who is part of the sector
- Progress on some key priorities has been tentative

Key points re Progress of the FE sector

Significant progress on virtually all measures since 2007, including:

- Increase in satisfaction with the sector at a national level – up from 54% in 2007 to 65% in 2009
- Performance on key priorities seen as improving for:
 - engaging with young people – 37% (2009), 31% (2007)
 - identifying and responding to local needs – 25% (2009), 19% (2007)
 - engaging with adults who require new skills – 24% (2009), 18% (2007)
- Responding to the needs of learners during the economic downturn – 25% felt the sector had been successful, 60% were neutral
- Responding to business needs during the economic downturn – 17% felt the sector had been successful, 62% were neutral

Progress of the FE sector

- Majority of stakeholders rate quality and choice of provision good.
- Quality of leadership is rated as good by 7 in 10 stakeholders.
- General estates & buildings are unchanged from 2007 – half rate this as good.
- FE and sixth-form colleges indicate higher levels of satisfaction than other stakeholders groups
- Training providers and employers are the most critical

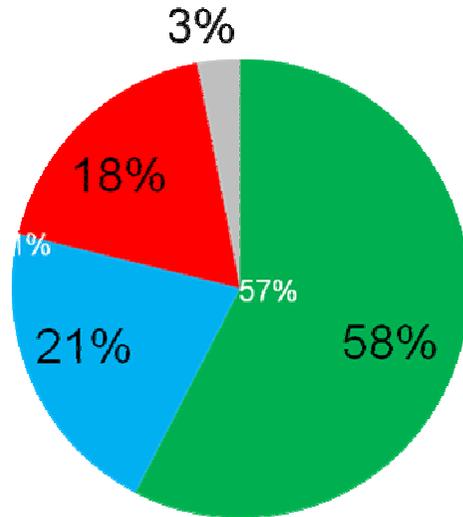
Reputation of the FE sector

- Two-thirds (65%) of stakeholders regard the reputation of the sector as being very or fairly well respected. This is up from 57% in 2007.
- Stakeholders from FE and sixth-form colleges are more likely to perceive the sector as well-respected than other stakeholder groups.
- Training providers and employers (non-users) are more likely to say the sector is not well respected.

How do you perceive the reputation of the FE sector?

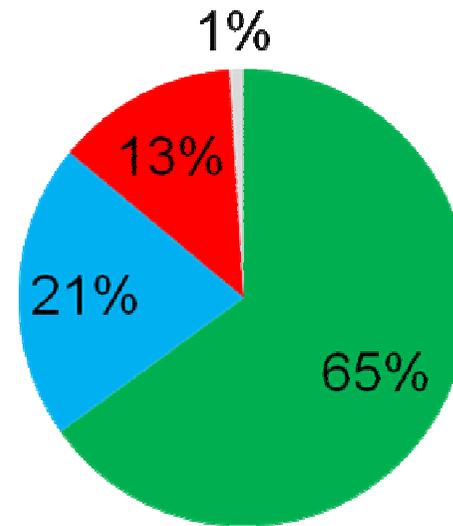
2007

- Well respected
- Neither/Nor
- Not at all well respected
- Don't know



2009

- Well Respected
- Neither/Nor
- Not at all well respected
- Don't know



Key factors driving stakeholders satisfaction

Largely unchanged from 2007:

- Satisfaction with local provision
- Extent the sector is regarded as well respected
- Choice of provision

The sector is seen to have improved performance on all factors above.

Stakeholders are more positive about FE locally than nationally

Advocacy for the FE sector

- 56% of stakeholders would speak highly of the sector compared to 47% in 2007
- Increased advocacy levels with local authorities - 61% 2009 from 38% in 2007.
- Factors driving advocacy:
 - stakeholder satisfaction with local FE provision
 - increasing stakeholders knowledge and understanding of sector
 - supporting local economic development by giving adults the skills employers want
 - continued effort to reduce the number of young people to NEET (less emphasis on this than 2007)

Future priorities

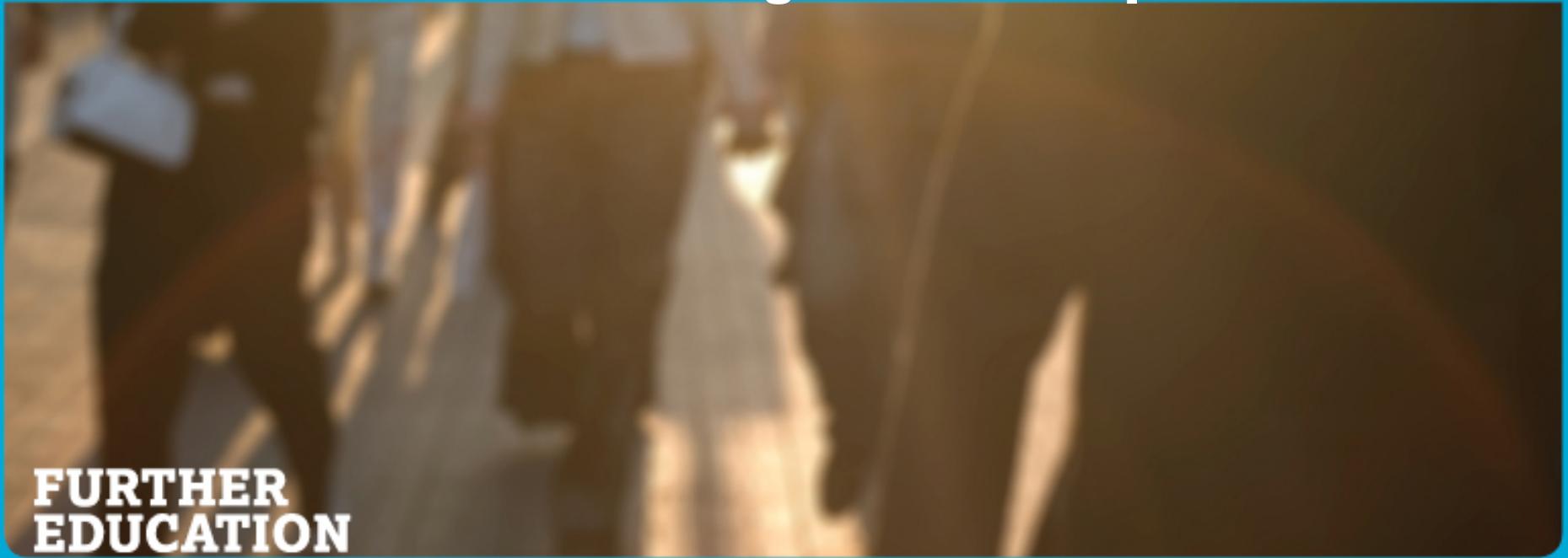
- Offerings are demand-led and responsive to local and national skill needs
- Greater choice for learners and employers
- Continued effort to reduce the number of young people who are NEET (less emphasis on this than 2007)

How to improve our sector's reputation

- Clarity is needed on who is part of the sector
- Focus on key drivers and critics
- Increase employer's knowledge of the sector to increase engagement, satisfaction and advocacy
- Continue to raise satisfaction with local provision
- Performance on key priorities needs to be shifted from neutral to positive
- Greater dialogue needed with training providers and employers



**FE Reputation:
Lancashire Colleges
The Knowledge Partnership**



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College Priority Audiences?

- College students
- College employees
- Parents
- High School teachers and leaders

- Employers
- Local authorities and public agencies
- Local community

- Heads of Departments were more concerned with issues management and with parents and employers

Regional and Political

- Colleges believe regional, funding and education stakeholders to be generally positive
- Systematic stakeholder relations not common
- Agency and regional stakeholders hold both public and private perceptions of individual college
- Evaluating the worth and quality of an FE college (and thus reputation) was considered a challenge
- Sixth-form colleges and specialist colleges had best reputation
- HE thought the FE was very inconsistent

Key Reputation Drivers

- An effective and visible principal
- Quality and effectiveness of senior managers
- Innovation within the core mission
- **Positive inspection results**
- Recruiting/engaging regionally or nationally
- Effective high profile partnerships
- A strong focus with a degree of specialism
- **Examination results/pass rate and grades achieved**

Employers

Key issues identified by colleges:

- Motivations of employers need to be understood
- Relationship between price and perceived quality
- Integrating all employer/business facing teams

Intermediary views

- Quality valued over low cost/free
- Experiences become generalisations
- Colleges neither confident nor systematic regarding employers

Employers

- Generally a positive image
- Colleges thought to be good at sales but poor at strategic PR
- Awareness of individual colleges low
- Preferred colleges that acted like business and actively engaged
- Key drivers of reputation
- Administrative professionalism
- Flexibility and good communication (tutors and business unit)
- High quality special needs provision
- Going the extra mile
- A focus on skills not assessment
- Good value
- Businesslike and sales oriented

Employer Reputation

Risk factors

- Poor delivery (weakest link and word of mouth)
- Poor initial customer enquiry service
- Inflexible systems
- Delivery staff not visible in the pre sale and product development phases

Students

- Students not learners
- Conflict between being inclusive and building reputation
- What drives positive reputation and desirability was felt to be different for those that chose vocational and academic pathways:
 - For academic pathway it was about the range of A-levels and the adult atmosphere/change/being more creative and the quality of results/universities accepted.
 - For the vocational it was about preparing for a job and the thrill of learning real SKILLS and being taught by experienced tradesmen/women (done that and got the tee-shirt).

Students

Factors that depress college reputation

- Poor performance at AS-level (many do not progress at this stage)
- Poor student awareness and knowledge of cross college activities (silo relationship)
- Extra-curricular and sports activities less good than schools (an affinity issue also)
- Bad behaviour by students including drugs, gangs and general menace

Parents

Experienced parents	First time parents
Experience of their oldest child, and that child's friends Did they achieve their potential, where are they now?	Parents and students like us go there and have been successful
Their child is doing well and has a positive attitude	Good results, particularly for A-levels
Personal service and supportive environment – for their child	Clear standards and ethos (culture and values)
The quality and commitment of the tutors - parents will name names - this really matters	Destinations - what does college lead to and how does this compare with schools

		Student View			
		Less relevant	Moderate	Important	Critical
Parent View	Highest				High quality staff - teaching excellence
	High				Learning facilities - library, computers, equipment Higher than average pass rates
	Mod High	A positive discipline ethos	Excellent inspection results		Good student experience and social atmosphere Friendly and accessible teachers and tutors Higher than average proportion of students get a good job or
	Moderate		Can show that it is highly respected by employers Competitive entry requirements		
	Mod Low	Has an academy/specialism in a relevant vocational subject Position in league tables		Small class sizes High quality staff - professional or trade experience Excellent extra curricular activities - music, sports, Located in a safe, positive	
	Low	Is a formal partner of a university Low drop out rate Awards/prizes the Having a separate sixth-form	Offers courses up to higher education level	Accepts students from all types of backgrounds and Opportunity for work	

		Student View		
		Overall untrustworthy	Potential to be trustworthy on the proviso of personal experience	Most Trustworthy
Parent View	Critical		High school careers advisers High school subject teachers	
	Important	Staff from colleges that visit schools		Lecturers/tutors at the college
	Moderate	Connexions staff	Friends	
	Low	Social networking sites	Local business people	

Some key issues in building FE reputation

- **Active Choosers**
- **Communication through trusted experienced sources (word of mouth)**
- **Public and private images**
- **Students or learners**
- **A college for anyone or a college for everyone**
- **Staff and tutors are not given enough priority**

Further work?

- **How well are SMTs geared up to manage reputation?**
How well do FE Colleges communicate with and engage their staff?
Would they recommend as a place to work? Do they actively recommend the College as a place to study? Are they actively advocating the organisation?
- **Test recommendation levels of students in FE**
Benchmark with HE and other 16-19 providers?
Locate the key drivers of willingness to recommend?
Compare by learner characteristics, qualifications and providers?
- **What about relationships with other training providers and employers?**

For further information on FE Works see:

www.feworks.org

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