



Communications and Digital Committee

Corrected oral evidence: A creative future

Tuesday 1 November 2022

3.40 pm

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Members present: Baroness Stowell of Beeston (The Chair); Baroness Bull; Baroness Buscombe; Baroness Featherstone; Lord Foster of Bath; Lord Griffiths of Burry Port; Lord Hall of Birkenhead; Baroness Harding of Winscombe; Lord Lipsey; Lord Vaizey of Didcot; The Lord Bishop of Worcester; Lord Young of Norwood Green.

Evidence Session No. 11

Heard in Public

Questions 90 - 102

Witnesses

I: Dr Paul Thompson, Chair of the Specialists Institutions' Forum, Universities UK and Vice-Chancellor of the Royal College of Art; Corrienne Peasgood OBE, President of the Association of Colleges; Alun Francis OBE, Principal and Chief Executive Officer at Oldham College; Simon Field, Director at Skills Policy.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Dr Paul Thompson, Corrienne Peasgood, Alun Francis and Simon Field.

Q90 The Chair: We are continuing our session today with a new panel. Before I ask our witnesses to introduce themselves, this is a reminder that we are focusing on skills as they relate to the creative industries. The earlier panel was on the pre-16 education system and we are now moving to talk primarily about the post-16 and life learning aspect of this. I thank our witnesses for being here. We have three people in the room and are waiting for another colleague to join us online. Could you briefly introduce yourselves and the organisations that you represent—assuming that you do, as some people may be here as individuals?

Corrienne Peasgood: I retired from being the principal and chief executive of City College Norwich 10 years ago this summer, and I am now privileged to be here as the president of the Association of Colleges, representing 228 colleges across England teaching 1.6 million students a year.

Dr Paul Thompson: I am vice-chancellor of the Royal College of Art, which is a postgraduate-only institution that has been ranked the world's number one for the past eight years. I am also on the board of Universities UK and I chair its specialist institutions forum, which has a large number of creative institutions in its fold. I am also on the board of Creative UK and chair its skills and education committee.

Simon Field: I have spent a lot of my career working for the OECD, leading its work on technical education and looking at skills systems around the world and in England. I am now also an independent consultant.

Q91 The Chair: I hope, if the technology permits, that we will soon be joined by Alun Francis from Oldham College. We are making contact, so I hope that will be sorted soon. I should also say that a recording of this session will be put on our website in due course.

I will direct the first question to Dr Thompson initially. I saw you in the rear seats watching the session that preceded this. I would like your take on the Government's approach to creative skills and how it relates to the creative economy. Do you see an understanding or appreciation of that, or not? What is your general view of how this is working?

Dr Paul Thompson: It has improved dramatically over the past 20 years. I have been working in the sector for that amount of time and the Government's understanding has definitely improved. I was really pleased, in 2021, to see the Government's innovation strategy from BEIS refer to the creative industries and creative economy. We have to keep reminding politicians, particularly every time there is a change, of this sector of our economy. We also need to keep reminding the Government, because sometimes that connection between the fountainhead of skills, the training of higher and further education and the actual industries is

lost. It is sometimes forgotten that we are the fountainhead of training for many employees.

The Chair: What do you mean by “fountainhead”?

Dr Paul Thompson: We are the source of the training, education, nurturing and development of the individuals who go into these fields. They do not just come from nowhere; they come from the arts, humanities and social sciences. They come from STEM subjects as well, but a creative arts subject at university level is typically a vocational training, very often leading into a job in the creative industries.

The Chair: You probably heard us talk about this at the beginning of the first session, but can you be a little more specific about the creative subjects you are referring to? Can you bring to life specifically which subjects are important to the creative economy as you see it?

Dr Paul Thompson: I would point to what we are increasingly calling creative informatics or creative computing, which is the ability of students to work with big datasets, to understand the basics of computation and how one can work with a creative—who may be an animator or a data visualiser—and to make meaning from those datasets. We are talking about subjects that all of us know: architecture, design engineering, the fashion industry, automotive and serious gaming. All these subjects are taught at both HE and FE levels and they are big feeders into the creative industries.

The Chair: Do you have a view on topics such as media studies, which was mentioned in the last Q&A?

Dr Paul Thompson: I have a daughter who did media studies and sociology at Sussex University and is now a very successful freelance TV producer. So, yes, I do have views. She is doing rather well in life, I have to say, and I am very proud of her.

The Chair: I was wondering more about your professional perspective.

Dr Paul Thompson: I refer to the previous session and the idea that one denigrates particular subjects as low-value or low-quality. No politician has actually managed to point to a university degree and cite it as a low-value or low-quality course. We do not teach media studies at the RCA, but I would classify that under social sciences or humanities. We have to stop denigrating particular areas of the education sector and economy, as we need our education system and economy to be firing on all cylinders. We need creative tech as well as biotech. All these companies will create jobs, employment and wealth.

Q92 Lord Griffiths of Burry Port: This is all rather intriguing. I am a graduate of three universities, all in subjects that are considered by some to be low-value and to be dispensed with. There is the irony that I am about to get an honorary doctorate from a university that has got rid of most the subjects in which I am qualified. As we look at the range of subjects we teach, the concepts we develop, and the world we prepare pupils and students for, we have to ask ourselves how we prioritise creative subjects against others. Even better, how do we distinguish

between them?

To be honest, in some of my rhetorical studies, choices have to be made between ideas that work and those that do not. That can be in the law, in the Church or in society at large. If all “creative subject” means is the technological end of things—engineering, construction or whatever it is—is our language sufficient for us to understand the need to have an holistic approach to education? Must we have in mind the people we equip not only for the jobs that we are crying out for, but for the jobs we are not crying out for—the lower-paid, working-class people who will never get into the highfalutin ideas that we tend to focus on in a situation like this? How do we get that holistic ideal, and is prioritisation needed, as we have scarce resources to apply to our various teaching tasks?

Corrienne Peasgood: Sometimes when we think about higher education, we automatically think about level 6 and beyond and undergraduate degrees. But what we are talking about here are the skills people require, both for their roles in creative industries now and looking forward. We miss a trick by not looking at higher technical education at levels 4 and 5. We tend to think that we progress from a level 3 or A-level equivalent and go into a three-year undergraduate degree before asking where we are going, rather than really looking at our creative industries, some technological advances and the technician-level roles that require skills. Is there a higher technical qualification at levels 4 or 5, which is a progression from level 3 in further education colleges, as opposed to an entry point into level 6 and above?

One of the opportunities coming up, where we can start to explore this more with the industry, is in local skills improvement plans. They really look at the skills that employers need in local areas, so that that skills provision is more flexible and responsive. LSIPs, as they are called, are a good start to looking at that, but they need to go further and make sure that they are genuine partnerships between business and education, so that some of the nuances of different qualification types and levels are understood and explained. We need to ensure that they are a really joined-up partnership between further and higher education, and do not pitch one against the other, but recognise that there is a place for higher technical education.

Also, because they are local, it is important that they make reference to an overarching national strategy. That could be reported on for the creative industries, as it would help local skills improvement plans to be based on a national creative industries strategy, as opposed to just responding in local areas.

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port: I support that 100%. I have no problem with that at all, but to argue a case, to analyse a problem, to engender enthusiasm—these are all skills and not just in the technological sector. That is what I feel.

Simon Field: Perhaps I could follow Corrienne’s point, because the higher technical space is very important and has huge opportunities. The Government have been pushing in this direction. The problem is that

quite a lot of our higher technical qualifications are not very creative, in the sense that they are often pale or weaker versions of those level 6 bachelor's degrees. Internationally, there are lots of options for higher technical education that are much more innovative or creative, in a way.

For example, some countries have qualifications that run through from level 3 to level 5, as it were. From age 16, you stay in school until age 20 with a level 3, 4 and 5 qualification. You find those in Japanese kosen, which are elite engineering institutions, in Austrian vocational colleges and in Indian polytechnics. That is one example.

Sweden's higher vocational system has local arrangements whereby the higher technical qualifications are funded only once a partnership between a local employer and provider comes forward. The whole issue of "How do I find a work placement?" just disappears, because the qualification is not funded unless you have that partnership.

Switzerland has professional examinations at levels 4 and 5 that are free-standing, upskilling existing skilled workers, who could be freelancers. You train for them with a bespoke programme, which is tailor-made to your own needs. But you do not need to do any of that; you can go straight to the final examination. All of those are different and have unique selling points.

We can really start motoring with higher technical education by starting to do some of that, rather than just by saying that it is for two years, so you would get a bit less than you would in three years.

Q93 **Baroness Harding of Winscombe:** You have just covered a chunk of what I was going to ask about, as I wanted to explore further the role that technical education should play, specifically with regard to the talent pipeline in the creative industries. A number of the things that Simon just said could apply to all technical education, so could we delve in more detail into what you would like to see from technical education qualifications? What subjects, what structure and what relationship with the creative industries would you like to develop the talent pipeline?

Corrienne Peasgood: Technical education plays a huge part in the creative industries and, uniquely, across almost every strand. I know that T-levels were discussed in the previous panel, and they include some creative subjects. There are aspects of that in the digital T-level with digital production and design coming on stream next September. We have craft and design, and media broadcast and production T-levels. The important thing about T-levels, as we have heard before, is that they include a 45-day industry placement, where young people carry out the actual occupational specialism. They are not doing work experience; they are doing the job for which they are being trained. They are technical in nature and have an industry placement, so they do not suit all the sub-areas that this inquiry is looking at.

We must remember that apprenticeships are a job with training. They go from level 2 right up to degree apprenticeships, as we heard earlier. Again, some apprenticeships are in creative subjects, such as camera technician, props technician, and museums and galleries. I know the

inquiry is looking at these areas. Again, these are suitable for only some parts of these industries. As we touched on before, the employment market does not always meet the requirements of apprenticeships, as some of them take four years and employment needs to be sustained over that time. They do not always fit.

Then we come to other applied general, vocational and technical qualifications, which are normally for two years studying a specific subject, such as fine arts, dance, architecture and 3D, et cetera. Those subjects lead to progression into both work and higher education.

The creative industries and technical education are split across all those pathways. The real issue is that the Government are committing to defunding the third category of subjects I talked about. If we cannot have all the creative industries in apprenticeships or T-levels, we need to make sure that defunding qualifications and taking them out of the education system is done sensitively or we could end up with various parts of the industry not having a route because T-levels or apprenticeships do not fit or do not exist. That is something for the latter 2020s—it will be 2024 or 2025 before it hits—but it is something we need to be careful about.

Baroness Harding of Winscombe: Could you describe in more detail what we risk losing?

Corrienne Peasgood: We would risk losing some subjects that could not be studied as a T-level if they are not technical subjects—you might put dance, performing arts and acting in that area—and probably the same set of subjects in apprenticeships. There are very few employed-status options in some of the areas I mentioned earlier, such as fine art, or photographic or media work. We risk losing qualifications that young people could study at age 16 to get them into this sector.

Simon Field: I am not sure if this directly answers your question, but it is about how the system could better serve freelancers in particular. I very much took the point that was forcefully made on this in the previous session. We normally think that apprenticeships, for example, cannot serve the self-employed, and in England they cannot: you have to be an employee. However, apprenticeship systems in other countries do serve the self-employed. They have routes that allow skilled workers, people with experience in the field, to go directly to the final assessment in the apprenticeship system. Usually, there are rules requiring three or four years of experience in the field. You find that in the German, Norwegian and Swiss apprenticeship systems, for example, and some others.

This is not a small part of their systems, but a large one. In the Norwegian system, for example, roughly a third of those who qualify through the final examination are experienced workers. Typically, they are self-employed people rather than people who have been through an apprenticeship per se. That innovation could be introduced quite easily in England, because we already have a rigorous endpoint assessment built into the system. One would have to work out how to fund those assessments, but it is a soluble problem that would serve the creative industries and many other parts of the economy very well.

Baroness Harding of Winscombe: I notice that we have Mr Francis with us. If you do not mind, Chair, may I put a question to him?

The Chair: Can I explain to him where we are? Mr Francis, we cannot hear you. The technical people in the room think the problem is at your end. We have already started and are now on a question that is directly about technical education, and we wanted to include you.

Baroness Harding of Winscombe: I just wanted Mr Francis's view on the bigger-picture question. He has gone. I wonder whether we could pose the question and Mr Francis could write us a letter.

The Chair: We can come back to the question for Mr Francis. We move on now to higher education.

Q94 **Baroness Harding of Winscombe:** I was going to ask if there was anything else from the panel on this. Mr Field, you gave us a very clear recommendation on where you would like to see government policy on technical education change. Are there any other substantive government policy changes that you would like to see?

Corrienne Peasgood: The pre-16 panel touched on careers education, information, advice and guidance, and about decisions being made at transition points at 16. Of course, there are potentially also transition points at 18 and then, post-18, into adulthood. At the moment, the careers information, advice and guidance system is fairly fractured. Going back to primary, from age seven all the way through your working life you have a need for careers information, advice and guidance. A careers strategy that covers somebody's lifetime so that they can dip in and out of the skills, information and guidance they need would be helpful.

The Chair: I hope to come back to you, Mr Francis, when things are working at your end.

Q95 **Baroness Featherstone:** In previous sessions, we heard that 63% of creative industry workers hold a degree. That is more than the average by a long shot. We also heard the need to question that 63% level, with the suggestion that degree-graduates are overqualified and unequipped with the practical and technical skills the industry needs. I should declare an interest: as a designer, I am a creative. What role does higher education play in supporting the creative industries talent pipeline? We have touched on this, but what changes to government policy and industry activity would you recommend in order to deliver a skilled workforce?

Dr Paul Thompson: The relationship between higher education and the creative industries is symbiotic. We are preparing many young people and mature learners to go into these industries. Similarly, we are also forging strong relationships with our knowledge-exchange programmes. A lot of corporate consulting work goes on that uses the new knowledge and insights that are developed at university to inform industry.

I talked, for example, to the vice-chancellor at Norwich University of the Arts, which has a very strong relationship with October Films and the Lexhag VFX facility. At the Royal College of Art, we work very closely with Burberry, British Land and Jaguar Land Rover. These relationships are very important to our students, our research faculty and the companies with which we work. We do a lot of projects with industry, such as one with Hyundai/Kia looking at the future of luxury. That is true of many creative arts universities. Why we were established to begin with was all about art and industry, and the entrepreneurship and innovation that comes out of these subjects and can inform industry.

Corrienne Peasgood: As I outlined earlier, we need to build on that and not take away from it. But how can we add in higher technical education at levels 4 and 5? How can we make sure that we are providing the right skills at the right levels for the right roles?

Baroness Featherstone: How can we?

Corrienne Peasgood: The LSIPs are a start, because people like the chambers of commerce are bringing post-16 providers together in an area, with all the right people around the table. But they are fairly broad. It would really help if we had national priorities for the creative industries to feed into those LSIPs, but they are a vehicle we can use.

Simon Field: I think I made my points about higher technical education earlier.

Q96 **Baroness Featherstone:** This supplementary comes from a different perspective. I want to know from all of you, particularly Dr Thompson, how important creativity is to original thought and inventiveness. Where does it fit? I am told that I must not be highfalutin about this and that it has to lead somewhere, but my thesis is that creativity is fundamental to every industry. I would like your take on this. My experience of being a creative in government is that it is never referred to in terms of economic success. It is never given credit publicly. The Government do not often bring up the success of the creative industries, yet my thesis is that it is the foundation—the fountainhead—of everything. I would like your comments on that for the record.

Dr Paul Thompson: I agree with you. We talked about this earlier. A lot of these businesses are small, busy businesses, but they add up to a very sizeable part of the UK economy; I believe it is 6%—it is larger than the financial services. We talk a lot about the financial services, for obvious reasons, but we tend not to talk about these industries.

I met the CEO of Miramax Films in Los Angeles about two weeks ago, who was singing the praises of the UK for the creative and technical skills that film production has over here and talked about how much work he is bringing to the UK. But there is a skills shortage here, and we have to make sure that we jump on to the opportunities. We have something that the rest of the world wants to buy. It is a very important export, and we need to give it greater visibility and make sure that we are leveraging the success.

Corrienne Peasgood: It goes back to something that we were challenged on earlier: what are the creative subjects that we are talking about, and what is creativity? Creativity is a core skill, alongside creative problem-solving, teamworking and collaboration, and we should make sure that our curriculum and the way we inspect it through Ofsted enables teachers to explore the delivery of their subjects to cover all those core skills. Creativity is key amongst those.

Simon Field: How we value, teach and assess creativity in our educational training system is quite a difficult question. Mostly, I think, creativity is developed and assessed in the context of real-world work projects. There are ways in which we could do that better and therefore value it better. We would also, incidentally, value some of the other soft skills, like working with others, which we always feel slightly uncomfortable about when we think about how we teach and assess them.

To give some practical examples, we now have T-levels, which we have been talking about, and there is the work placement, which is the student's opportunity to be creative and to work with others, and so on. However, we do not give students any credit for work placements as part of their T-level. That is all on the other parts of the course.

On apprenticeships, the Richard review a decade ago, to its credit, emphasised synoptic assessment at the end of the apprenticeship, so you would look at how someone can do a job in the round. That has rather dissipated in recent years. Recent assessment plans hardly mention synoptic assessments.

In higher technical education, again, in most countries, if you look at the international comparators—I talked about the Swedish one a moment ago—work placements are built in. They are automatic—you have to do them—and they are substantial. There are many higher technical qualifications in England where that is not the case. Building in creativity, teaching and learning through work-based learning is the way to get a real policy grip on this, rather than just saying, "Creativity is important". Of course, it is, but it is about running with that.

Q97 **Lord Vaizey of Didcot:** I am prompted by Dr Thompson talking about Miramax. It seems to me that we are talking about higher and further education here. When I talk to the film companies, and I suspect this is true of the creative industries in general, they feel that the pipeline of young people coming into the industry, and the senior very experienced people, is good. The big skills gap for them is in the middle—the mid-career people gaining the right skills. I was musing about the fact that you have executive MBAs—I am looking at Dido, obviously—where people who have been in business for 10 years go off and do these three-month intense leadership courses. I am completely ignorant on this, so I am asking an open question: is there stuff out there for people in, say, their early 30s who need to upgrade their skills in the creative industries? Is there a marketplace there for them?

Corrienne Peasgood: We cannot get away from the fact that we do not invest enough in adult education and that adult education budgets have been cut by 50% in the last 12 years. There are products there, but are they funded, and are the adults midway through their career, as you describe, able to access them? Probably not at the moment; only in very rare examples.

The proposed lifelong learning entitlement that is being consulted on—we will look at how that comes into being over the next year or so—is critical here, because it would enable the mid-career person, who probably does not need a huge qualification but needs some skills changing or—

Lord Vaizey of Didcot: They are not changing careers.

Corrienne Peasgood: No. They are upskilling within their own career. That would enable them to have that funding for education throughout their career. Obviously there is quite a lot on the Government's agenda at the moment, but prioritising that lifelong learning entitlement is particularly important for those mid-career, as you have described, and for freelancers, which we touched on earlier.

Dr Paul Thompson: I agree. We have to get the lifelong learning entitlement right. It is such a great opportunity. It could be a very transformational.

Lord Vaizey of Didcot: It sounds terribly jargony, but is it a good thing?

Dr Paul Thompson: It could be an excellent thing—learn while you earn. With the upskilling and the continuous professional development, it could be fantastic for exactly that band of individuals that you talked about. So many people are talking about portfolio careers and the fact that we might have seven different careers in our lifetime. If we designed the lifelong learning entitlement well, it could be very important, but it has to address the needs of part-time as well as full-time learners, and it has to be available for subjects other than just STEM, because at the moment focus and the talk is on the STEM subjects.

The Chair: We will come on in a moment to upskilling more specifically and how we can learn from other countries, so perhaps we can come back to that then.

Q98 **Baroness Bull:** Perhaps this question is just for you, Dr Thompson, but the others may be better placed to answer, I do not know. You will have heard Eliza Easton talking earlier about facilitating subjects being an artificial gateway that higher education used and which forced students to pick subjects because they would get university places otherwise. Given that the question was about higher education supporting the talent pipeline in the creative industries, do you think there is a chance that higher education is not supporting the pipeline into the creative industries through that tendency towards facilitating subjects?

Dr Paul Thompson: Actually, I do not think that creative arts faculties at universities are the guilty party here. In my own institution, for

example, about 25% of our students are now from non-creative arts backgrounds. They are coming as chemists, lawyers, historians. It is a trend that we are observing. It is on the increase, and we like it. As to where a programme or a university is not acting in the most imaginative way by demanding physics A-level to get on to an engineering course, I have spoken to deans of some very good engineering schools who have said, "You know what, physics A-level is the kiss of death". For most engineers, a lot of stuff has to be untaught or taught.

Lord Vaizey of Didcot: I have heard absolutely heard that.

Baroness Bull: I think it is particularly where students do not really know what they want their career to be. They just want a grounded education. I am thinking less of people who know that they want to do a creative arts degree and will go down that route, and more of other people who just want to enter tertiary education as a pathway to many opportunities. The facilitating subjects are narrowing the choices they make at school.

Dr Paul Thompson: I think we would all say that that was probably the case in our day. As Eliza said, we were told to group things together to make a neat bundle. A lot of us hear anecdotes about somebody who wanted to do maths, maths, further maths, maths, maths and Italian. "Sorry, you can't do that at A-level". "Why?" "Because it messes up the school timetabling system". It is as simple as this; it is timetabling. We do not timetable for STEAM; we timetable for arts, humanities and STEM.

Corrienne Peasgood: This point comes back to Lord Foster's question to the previous panel about GCSE entries. This also had a knock-on effect on A-level entries in creative subjects, which are down 30% in the last 10 years. This problem becomes a social mobility issue, because if young people are not experiencing creative subjects and exploring their own creativity in school so that they know they want to do those subjects at A-level, where are they going to get that from?

One of the recommendations in Lord Blunkett's learning and skills report that was published last week—I have not read all 137 pages, but in the bit I did read—is this: "Central to building essential skills is ensuring that art and design, drama, music subjects, as well as cultural experiences are available to all students, and can be built on into adult life". That is important, because if you do not know you are good at it and cannot see the opportunity, how are you going to move into the industry?

The Chair: This is probably a good moment to test Mr Francis's microphone. Are you with us? No, we still cannot hear you. That is so frustrating.

Lord Lipsey: Could we ask Mr Francis to drop us a note about the question?

The Chair: Yes, I am sure we can do that. He will want to follow up with a note. It is just such a shame not to be able to have a proper conversation with him, particularly to pick up the point that Ms Peasgood just made, because Mr Francis is also the deputy chairman of the Social Mobility Commission. Anyway, we move on to the next question, from

Lord Lipsey.

- Q99 **Lord Lipsey:** If I may, because I have been quiet as a mouse today—for once—I will ask two questions. My supplementary question is not really a supplementary question.

We are often told that we are world leaders in the creative industries, yet if we are not competing with other countries, either qualitatively or quantitatively, in the education we are giving people who want to get into these industries, we are not going to remain there for long. Where does the solution to that dilemma lie?

Simon Field: One answer goes back to the previous session, but not entirely. There is rather good evidence that something goes horribly wrong in English education at age 16 to 19. Why do I say that? If you look internationally, England's PISA results are sort of okay for 15 year-olds. But then look at the evidence from the International Adult Literacy Survey; for young teenagers 16 to 19, things seem to get a lot worse, particularly at the bottom end of the ability distribution.

The collective effect of that is disastrous, as England is the only developed country in which the numeracy and literacy skills of young people aged between the mid-teenage years and the mid-20s are similar to the skill levels of their parents' generation, who would be 30 years older. That is extraordinary, because in every developed country in that period there has been a huge expansion in education. Universities have gone from nothing to enormous creations.

I will come to your question about what that means for our competitiveness and look at basic skills. Poland is a good example. The average level of numeracy and literacy among adults in Poland—from the 2012 figures, which are the most recent available—is pretty similar to that of England. What that conceals is that young Poles have much better basic skills than young English people. Progressively, as young people enter the labour force and the older population retires, the basic forecast is stasis for England and gradual improvement for Poland.

That is a big contextual point about where the creative industries sit in this. The picture is bleak. Baroness Wolf put her finger on one reason for that a decade ago when she said that this is the only developed country where English and maths are not compulsory subjects for 16 to 19 year-olds. After the implementation of the Wolf review, English and maths are pretty much everywhere, although it is a great pity that we are retreating from that in the requirements for apprenticeships from August this year. There are still English and maths requirements, but they are not as demanding as they were before.

This is a big and challenging issue, which goes to the very fragmented provision we have for 16 to 19 year-olds. That is okay for A-levels—the "royal route" to university—but it is a problem for the rest.

- Q100 **Lord Lipsey:** That is a very good answer, and I totally agree with you. I will move on to my second point, which is much wider. It troubles me that when we hear "skills" in this country we tend to think of riveters,

bricklayers and things like that. To make this relevant to this inquiry, I was chair of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. Every year for years, we came in the top three or four, alongside Cambridge and Oxford, for students getting jobs within six months of leaving. Why? A particular skill comes with music. You have to be an absolutely brilliant individual player, but you also need to play in quartets, orchestras and a range of things. This gives people a flexibility of mind and an ability to work with others that counts everywhere. Is there any danger that we define skills too narrowly as technical skills and do not think enough, particularly in the creative industries and all that that implies, about these wider interpersonal skills? They may be the difference between success and failure.

Dr Paul Thompson: I completely agree that we need to focus on both the attributes of the 21st-century citizen and the skill base. I completely agree with many of those points; there is no point in being a technically superb singer or instrument player if you cannot form some sort of relationship or quartet with others.

Simon Field: I completely agree about interpersonal skills. This is one of the effects of artificial intelligence, computerisation and automation that is not sufficiently recognised. Of course, people need to work with computers, but the other side to that is that individuals increasingly need to concentrate on their unique selling points as human beings, which are the sorts of things that artificial intelligence is not very good at doing—at least not yet. This is about the interpersonal stuff and creativity. We have very good empirical evidence that, in almost every sector of the economy, the relative importance of interpersonal skills is growing.

Q101 **The Chair:** I have a couple of follow-up points from various things that have been said earlier. As a general comment, it is coming through quite strongly from this and the earlier session—Lord Lipsey just gave us a powerful example—that arts subjects are ways for people to develop aptitudes that are applicable in a range of different settings, regardless of the work or careers that they go on to, whether they end up being musicians or not. That point is worth emphasising and not forgetting.

Ms Peasgood, you were talking about three categories: T-levels, which involve work placements; apprenticeships, which are jobs with training; and the third category, where things have been defunded, which is at real risk. Can you follow up on that in writing? I am not entirely clear which things you worry will be defunded. It would be helpful to understand those subjects and the dangers you see from them being defunded, in an industrial or employment setting. I am happy for you say something briefly on that now, but it might be worth a follow-up. I would put the same question to Mr Francis on the technical stuff.

The other thing I wanted to ask is not necessarily exclusive to the creative industries but is linked to a point Lord Vaizey made about middle management. There is a category of learning or status in work that used to be around in the past but seems to have disappeared—something called improverships. This is again to Ms Peasgood and Mr Francis: do you have a view on this? Is that even talked about? These

are for people who are older than the usual age for apprenticeships. They have some skills and have had some development at work, but they then have an opportunity to develop a skill more formally that allows them to go further than they might have been able to at the point of entry to work. Maybe it is just called something different these days, I do not know.

Corrienne Peasgood: That relates back to thinking about all the higher technical skills and the would-be improver from level 3, which we talked about. We go back to the massive funding cuts for adult education. Those programmes might be there, and they are easy to design and for people to join. They are really important so that the current labour market can continue to be upskilled and improved in the roles they are doing for the companies to which have shown loyalty. However, at the moment, there is just not enough funding for them. That is a key point.

The Chair: Presumably, that could come from business. It does not have to be state-funded. I know that applies mainly to larger employers. The formal education settings could provide the training.

Corrienne Peasgood: It could come from business, but we have seen a reduction in the amount that businesses put into training, maybe because the apprenticeship levy makes them think they are already paying for training.

Q102 **The Chair:** Finally—this may be something that either you or Mr Francis could follow up in writing—I want to give a shout-out to those skilled jobs that are very important in the creative industries but have not been mentioned much. I am talking about hairdressers and make-up artists. These types of work are critical in production, theatres and so on. I am keen to understand how much emphasis is given in technical colleges to the potential and possibilities of employment in quite exciting environments, not just in a salon as such. How much is that even discussed and how much awareness is raised? In those categories of learning, how much is brought in that allows for entrepreneurship and the more business side of development in those subjects and is not just about the skills they are learning for the make-up trade and so on?

Corrienne Peasgood: They are really exciting subjects to look at. As a principal, I used to love walking around the media, make-up and hair department to see how I was going to be frightened or shocked by whatever they were doing. You are quite right; it is all about what they are going into and whether they need entrepreneurial or business skills. That comes back to teaching and learning, as ultimately we are making sure that young people get somewhere. We are a gateway to the next step. Actually, colleges do a really good job of making sure they have the skills to move on.

Another good example would be architecture and 3D design. Young people could move into architecture from that, but also into set and prop design. It is about good teaching, but it goes back again to careers education, information, advice and guidance, and understanding what

you can do with those skills and all the great opportunities there are to move into in the creative industries.

The Chair: This is also about electricians, carpenters and that sort of thing. My sincere apologies go to you, Mr Francis. I am so glad that you were able to join us virtually, even if we could not hear from you directly. Thank you for persevering with us, and thank you to the three of you for being with us in person to give your evidence. It has been incredibly helpful.

This is just an advert, in case it is of interest to you. I did a podcast interview about a year ago with a German hairdresser. We talked about the German approach to technical education for a hairdresser and his experiences as a hairdresser working in London, alongside Brits who had been trained in the UK. That was quite an interesting insight into what differences in training do to people's capacity to get on. That was just a little plug for "Tina talks to", something like episode 4. Thank you for allowing me to do that.