

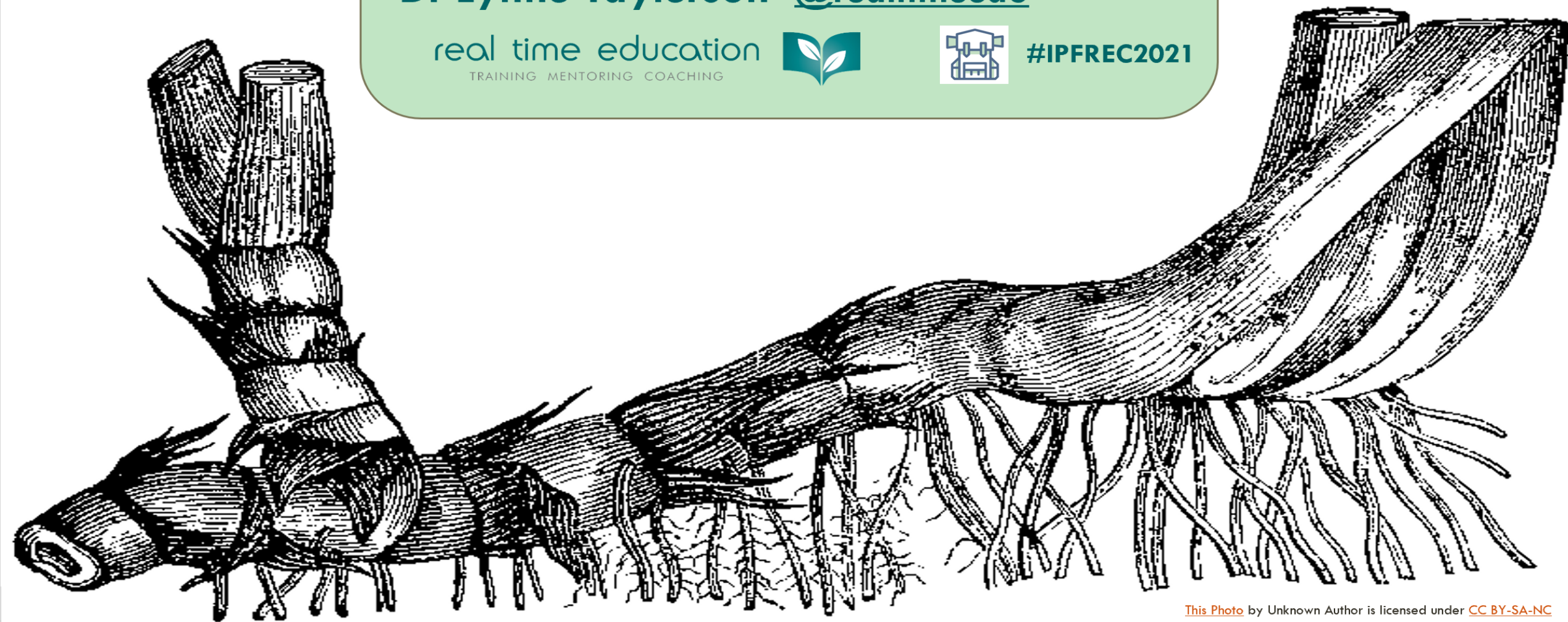
GROWING CONCERNS: PRACTITIONERS' POSITIONS ON ENGAGING IN CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A DEREGULATED FE AND SKILLS SECTOR

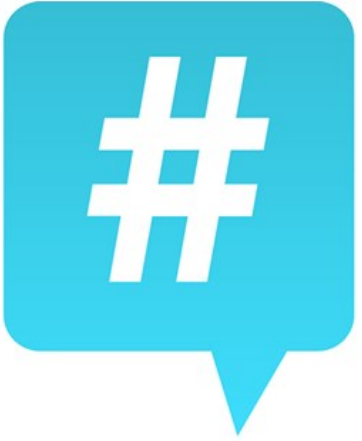
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A WHISTLE-STOP TOUR OF A RESEARCHER'S JOURNEY IN THE RHIZOMATIC TWITTERSPHERE...

- Chart my doctoral research on informal online FE educators' communities
- Review how we scope their value, the intangible reach and impact
- Suggest ways to navigate social media ethics minefields
- Examine how informal communities developed over this past extraordinary year
- Invite you to reflect on how informal, social learning aids your practice.

First, thanks...

To the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) for sponsoring the first stages of my research.

To Sunderland University's SUNCETT team for guiding and supporting me throughout my doctorate and beyond in life as a researcher.

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WHY INFORMAL TWITTER COMMUNITIES?



Dialogues have gained in popularity as some in-house 'event-based' CPD has stalled, especially in 2020/21.

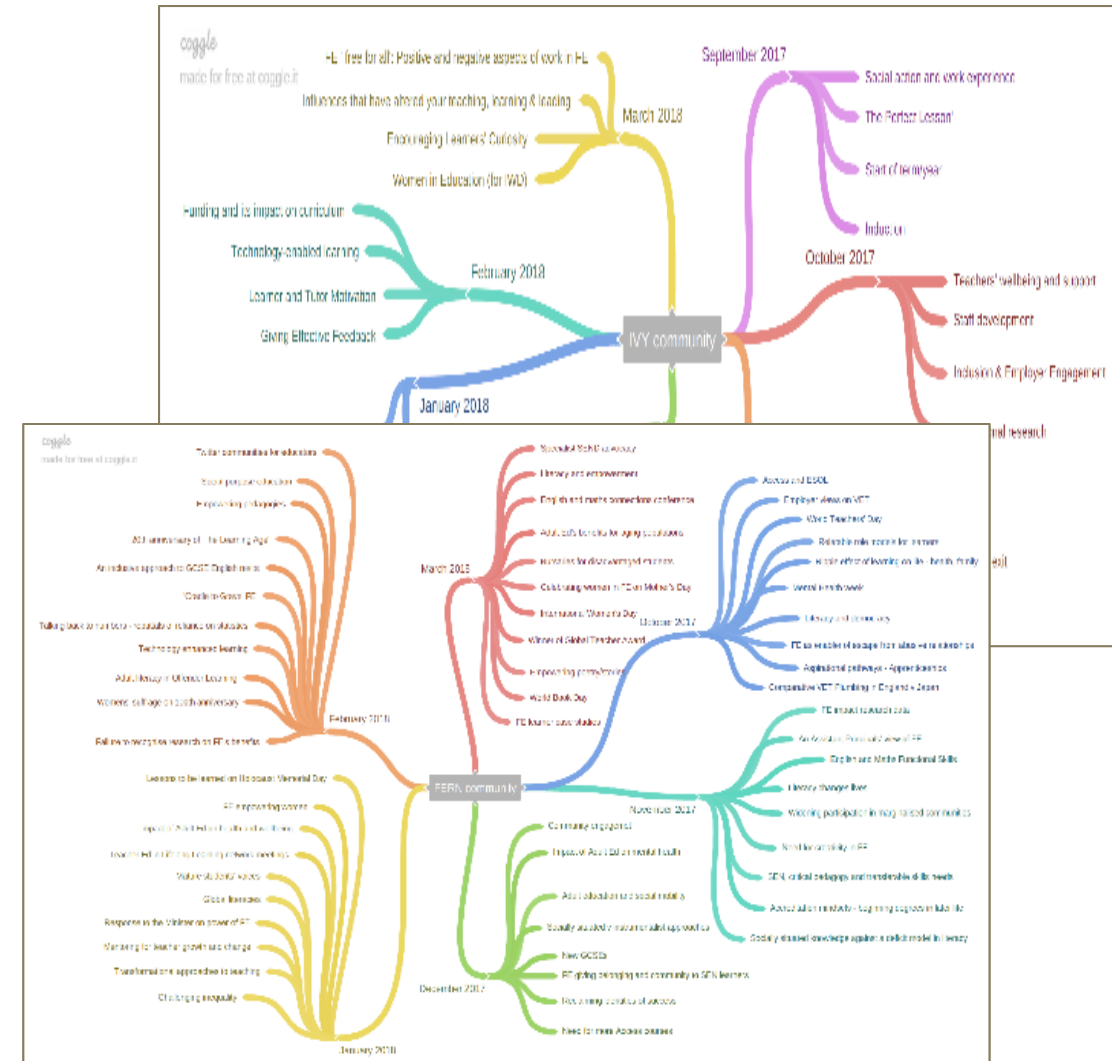
Fascinating '**rhizomatic**' networks with emerging properties and diverse lines of flight.
(after [Deleuze and Guattari, 1987](#))

'Intense and multifaceted' use of social media for teacher CPD.
Research is schools-based, from US/Canada/Australia, **needs further research 'beyond self-reporting'**
[Carpenter and Krutka \(2014\)](#)

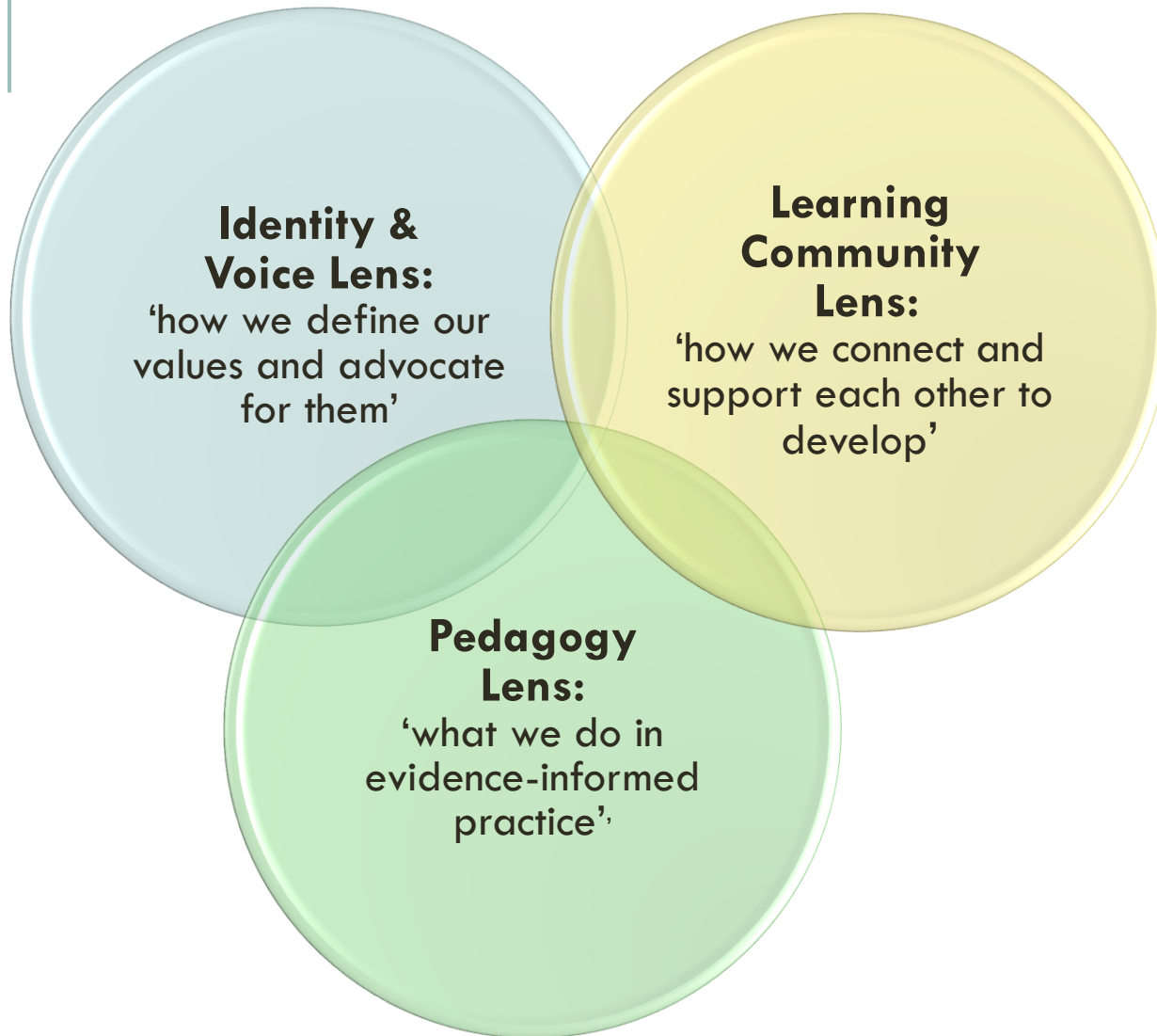
'Burgeoning participation and academic interest'
[Bergviken-Rensfeldt, Hillman and Selwyn \(2018\)](#)

CONNECTIVE ETHNOGRAPHY

- Mixed methods and mixed site research – online and offline investigation
- First, a netnographic analysis ([Kozinets](#)) of dialogue threads on 5 Twitter-based FE communities over a 6 month period
- Low inference descriptors of thread topics possible from Twitter #hashtags, keywords
- Community dialogue topics mapped using Coggle mind maps.



3-LENS MODEL OF EDUCATORS' TWITTER DIALOGUES



Thematic analysis of dialogue maps led to development of 3-lens model with links to [Biesta's \(2015\)](#) domains of educational purpose:

Qualification → **Pedagogy**
Socialisation → **Community**
Subjectification → **Identity and Voice**

Interestingly, over a third of dialogues explored practitioner identity, values and voice – advocacy for learner emancipation, teacher autonomy, social purpose education.



“TO QUOTE OR NOT TO QUOTE,
THAT IS THE ETHICAL CONUNDRUM...”

- ...whether to use direct quotes from Tweets to add to the richness of descriptions?
- Twitter’s terms of use give researchers permission to use names and quotes freely
- **But** - does deletion of a Tweet or removal of a Twitter account have any equivalence to withdrawal of informed consent for participation?
- Researchers must go beyond the minimal expectations of a social media platform’s constructs of accepted use: **‘informed consent and anonymity are further warranted’**

Williams, Burnap and Sloan (2017)

1-1 INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS YIELD RICHER DESCRIPTORS

Kozinets urges us to include all online participant types in netnographic member checking:

- 26 educators, managers and social media actors
- Teachers from General FE, Adult and Community Education, work-based learning
- 2 senior managers with responsibility for TL&A quality
- 2 Twitter forum founder / moderators
- Regular and occasional community contributors
- New and long-term forum users
- 2 'lurkers' who viewed posts and reviewed resources but did not actively participate.

'FAKE TWEETS' RENDERED 1-1 INTERVIEW / FOCUS GROUP OUTCOMES



Julia @TeacherEducator2

The lenses make total sense. All 3 are areas that have broadened my ideas about my role. [Identity lens dialogues] are particularly powerful. My participation is very much about having a voice and exploring identity.



Anya @TeacherEducator1

I agree with the concept of 3 lenses. A lot of topics under the pedagogy lens are mechanistic, what works, a compliance agenda. Teachers are digging underneath to ask more fundamental, critical questions on what underpins what we do.



Rhys @CurriculumLeader1

The 3 lenses stand up... they're worthwhile. We're asking, 'what is there here to learn? in a relaxed setting. What am I seeing, what does it mean, how does this fit with what I already know, my identity?

EMERGING KEY INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP THEMES:

- Adult learning is for social purpose, family/community cohesion, wellbeing, pleasure and learner/educator emancipation
- Tensions as government /sector body focus is on workforce/employers' needs
- Challenging dialogues explore political aspects of identity as well as pedagogy
- Online spaces are somewhat replacing communities lost in erosion of staffroom culture
- A foil to performative, reductive, 'tick box' CPD 'events' – a springboard to learning
- **'Subverting the dominant paradigm with informal learning'**

SO WHAT? CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Practitioners engage in valued, critical dialogues, developing practice**
- **Participating teachers should encourage and enable peers to gain benefits by successfully navigating the challenges of social media environments**
- **New FE teachers and teacher educators should integrate online communities into pedagogy**
- **Use of the 3-lens model and the authentic voices of educators from this thesis can be valuable discursive tools**
- **FE teachers are expert. They should be allowed to exercise agency in professional learning and given investments of time and funding to form learning networks on and offline.**

WHAT'S NEXT IN 2021 AND BEYOND?

2020-21 saw further rhizomatic growth in communities powered by pandemic impetus for elearning.

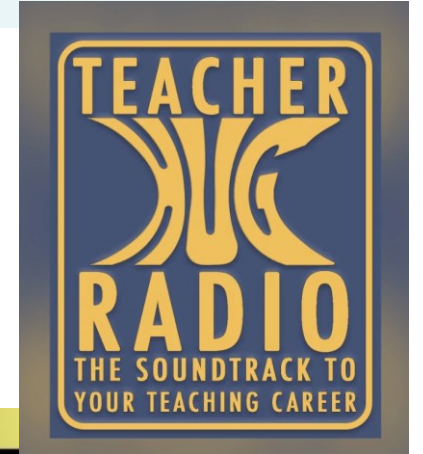
Communities use social media, vlogs, podcasts and livestreamed video.

They merge, collaborate and then diverge again, based on emerging common interest and need.

An unashamed focus falls on educator agency, wellbeing and the inherent benefits of belonging and community - even 'joy'!

#FERESEARCHMEET

A free and democratic movement building and supporting engagement with research in FE, led by practitioners, for practitioners



#BrewEdFE #OktoberFEst

CHANGE IS BREWING

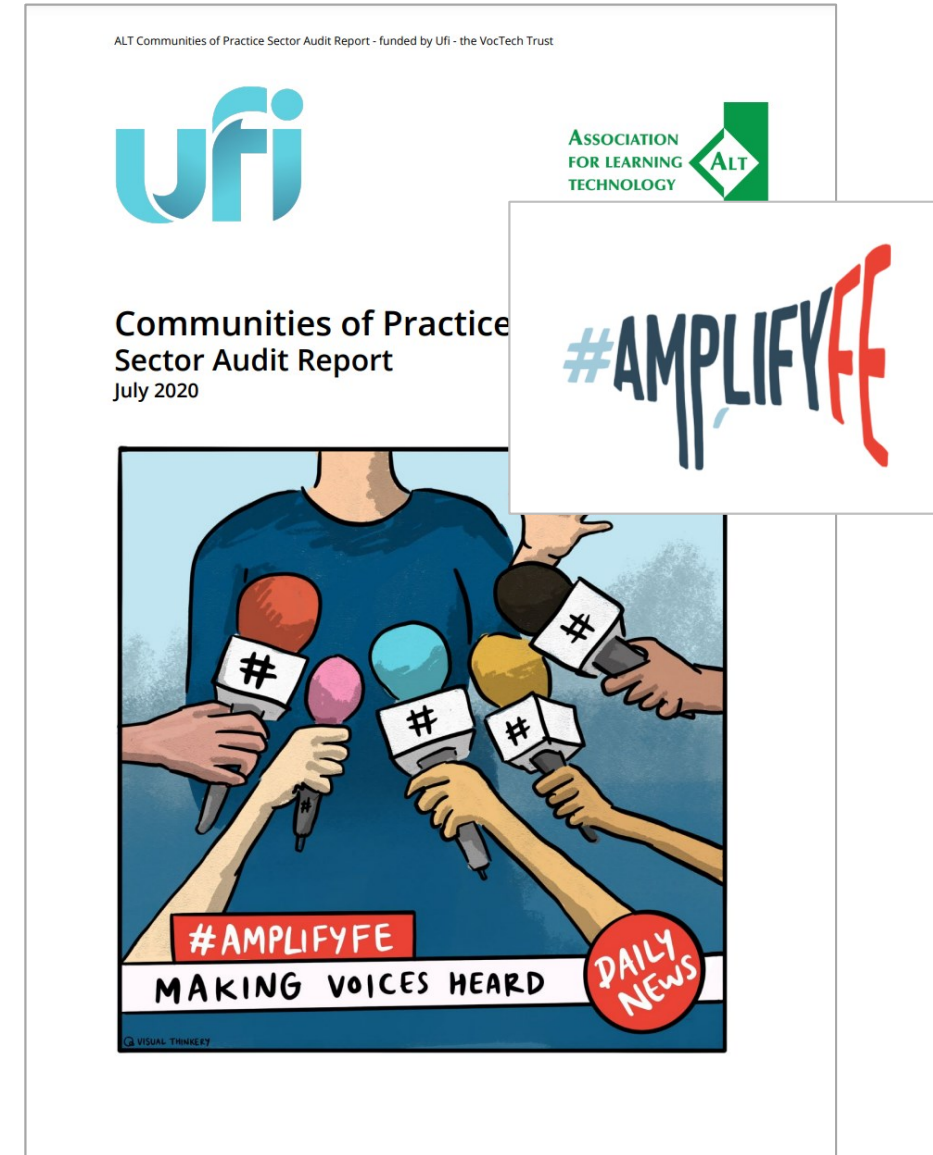


RESEARCH LIFE BEYOND THE DOCTORATE

Important research is mapping the scope and value of online FE communities - encouraging inter-community solidarity and collaboration.

[#AmplifyFE](#), led by the Association for Learning Technology (ALT), funded by Ufi VocTech Trust.

Establishing a successful 'community of communities of practice', where vocational teachers acquire, develop and share digital skills and pedagogy.



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