



Series 4 Episode 1

FE: how do we shift from rhetoric to action?

In this episode, we're speaking to the economist, academic, and life peer, [Baroness Alison Wolf CBE](#), Non-Executive Director at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology since 2023. Author of the [Wolf Report](#) which led to major reforms in vocational education for 14 to 18 year-olds, Baroness Wolf specialises in the relationship between education and the labour market and has acted as an adviser on skills and the workforce in the Number 10 Policy Unit.

We are also joined by [Sir Michael Barber](#), a former teacher who went on to work at the National Union of Teachers before becoming the Government's Chief Adviser on School Standards. As well as heading up McKinsey's Global Education Practice, Sir Michael was also Pearson's Chief Education Adviser, where he helped develop their strategy for education in the poorest parts of the world.

We look forward to your company as we begin Series 4 of our podcast which is shining a spotlight on the education and skills policy issues that should take centre stage at the forthcoming General Election.

About Baroness Wolf

Baroness Wolf is the Sir Roy Griffiths Professor of Public Sector Management at King's College London. She sits as a cross-bench peer in the UK House of Lords. She specialises in the relationship between education and the labour market. She was the founding Chair of Governors of King's College London Mathematics School, and remains a governor and vice-chair.

Alison served in the Number 10 Policy Unit, as a part-time adviser on skills and workforce to the UK Prime Minister, from February 2020 to February 2023. She was a panel member for the 'Augar Review': the independent [Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) chaired by Sir Philip Augar, which reported in 2019. In March 2011 she completed the [Wolf Report](#) which led to major reforms in vocational education for 14 - to 18 - year-olds, and she was also a member of the [Sainsbury Review](#) which led to the creation of T-levels.

Baroness Alison Wolf CBE was appointed as a Non-Executive Director at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology in April 2023.



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About Sir Michael Barber

Sir Michael Barber trained as a teacher and worked in schools in Britain and Zimbabwe for many years before working at the National Union for Teachers. In 1997, he joined the UK Government to become the Chief Adviser on School Standards.

In 2001, Michael founded the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit in No 10 - the first of its kind in the world and something which has been since replicated across the globe. His team was responsible for ensuring delivery of the government's main domestic policy priorities including health, education, crime reduction, criminal justice, transport and immigration.

Whilst a Partner at [McKinsey & Company](#), Michael headed up their global education practice. As Chief Education Advisor at [Pearson](#), he led a worldwide programme of efficacy and research, playing a key role in Pearson's strategy for education in the poorest sectors of the world, particularly in fast-growing developing economies.

Transcript

Shane Chowen 0:01

Hello and welcome to a special pre-election series of Let's Go Further, a podcast from the Skills and Education Group that challenges the way we think about skills and education. In this series, a collaboration with FE Week, we're shining a spotlight on the FE and skills policy issues that should take centre stage at the upcoming general election. We'll be asking what we need from the next government and looking at how well our sector is positioned to fight for the resources it needs. I'm Shane Chowen, editor of FE Week, and I'm delighted to be your host for this series. So in this episode, we want to set the scene. What are the big issues facing the further education sector right now? How did we get here and how do we move forward? Joining me are two giants in the world of public policy. Baroness Alison Wolf is a cross-bench member of the House of Lords and a former skills policy adviser to Number 10 Downing Street. She's a professor of public sector management at King's College London. And in 2011, Alison's landmark review of vocational education for young people, the Wolf Review, paved the way for much of the system that we see today. And Sir Michael Barber was until recently an advisor at the Department for Education and the Treasury on skills policy delivery. He created and led the first Prime Minister's delivery unit under Tony Blair, and has worked on policy delivery and system-wide reforms in more than 50 countries. Welcome to you both. Now, my first question to you both is all about setting the scene. We're hearing a lot at the moment from both of the main political parties about what they're going to be up to after the next general election. And while there are some differences, the big thing that they're both talking about is economic growth. So with the FE

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sector, which has been called many things—the Cinderella sector, has been accused of having an inferiority complex, and sometimes described as the forgotten middle—Alison, I'm just wondering, how would you describe the current political positioning of FE?

Baroness Wolf 1:49

There's a lot of rhetoric and not much sign of the money that the sector needs. This, of course, is a long-standing problem. But I do think it's getting to be quite critical. There's actually, I think, a genuine increase in understanding of the necessity of having a functioning, non-university, non-school sector that is there on the ground near people, helping them to skill, upskill, and get more educated. So I think they genuinely believe in it on all sides of the house. I see no sign that anybody is willing to take any money out of anywhere else in the education system to fund FE properly.

Shane Chown 2:36

Michael, what are your reflections?

Sir Michael Barber 2:37

I agree with Alison, actually. Just to put on the record, I think the present government — so we are talking before the election — has actually done some rather good skills reforms, which have not really been noticed. Obviously, they have been noticed by FE Week, but they haven't been noticed more generally. And the government itself doesn't talk about them that much. But the boot camps have been a big success. The reforms of apprenticeships have been good. The progress on careers education in schools has been really impressive. The legislation on the LLE (Lifelong Loan Entitlement) has gone through, that was generated very much originally by Alison and is a key reform. So there's a whole agenda there that is really strong. And in there are now 38 employer representative bodies setting the skills agenda, region by region, across the country — that's beginning to work. And that's the demand-led system that people have talked about for a while, but now it's coming into reality. And then degree apprenticeships have taken off. So there's a big reform agenda in progress, which is a credit to the current government. And actually, uniquely in history, we've had a prime minister, a chancellor, a Secretary of State for Education, and Minister of State for higher education and skills, all of whom have prioritised skills ahead of higher education.

Baroness Wolf 3:55

Michael, it's really nice to hear you say that, because of course, I agree with you. How could I not, since I was involved in so many of these things? And I think you are right, and actually, if people listening want to go back and find the



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skills speech that Boris Johnson gave, you know, less than a year after the 2019 election, it was genuinely meant, it had some key things in it. And it was, I think this is where we'd agree, Michael, it was about creating a structure from which one really could have a well-functioning skills system. And I suppose the reason I feel so down, in spite of all this stuff, and is this sense that because we are in hard times economically, I didn't see any sign — and I'd love to be convinced otherwise — that when it comes to the brutal last minute, what gets chucked out at spending review, just sort of feel that when it's a choice between childcare and FE, which is what it will come down to, childcare, we'll get it. And FE won't.

Shane Chowen 5:03

As you point out, Alison, the competition for resources going forward is only going to get tougher. It's been said before by a former advisor at Number 10 that FE has comparatively weak stakeholders, low media interest, and I quote, "a low risk of offending important people". So, Michael, I can hear you just wanting to come in there. But I would just like you to reflect, if you can, on that positioning of FE in what is going to be quite a brutal fight for resources going forward.

Sir Michael Barber 5:32

Right. I mean, Alison's right. There hasn't been enough investment in FE, so I was going to come to that. The reforms are good, but the investment behind them isn't enough. As Alison said, that successive what are now called fiscal events, FE's got small amounts of money, but it hasn't got the big investment that childcare got from Jeremy Hunt about a year or so ago, and schools before that. So there is a real investment challenge. I think we can all kind of feel it's the Cinderella or whatever adjective or metaphor we want to use. But the question is how to make the case. And I think two things that are happening will help with that. One is the growth of degree apprenticeships, which puts the ladder apprenticeships right into the top universities so that you set up advocates there. And the second is these employer representative bodies. So, for example, I've been in touch. I live in the South West. I've been in touch with Tata, who are going to build the biggest EV battery factory in Europe, near Bridgewater in Somerset. And it's called Agratas, that subsidiary of Tata will do that. They really want to know how to get a strong pipeline of women and men, engineers, and all the other skilled workforce that they need. And the South West, so far, hasn't yet been applied but will not provide. So if we can get employers like that demanding skills, plus top universities, speaking up for skills, we can begin to change the dialogue a bit. And I think that's why the 2022 legislation that Alison obviously knows inside out, did have cross-party support. So whatever happens in the election, there's a strong case that and then the final thing, I think that there's a problem that skills are not seen as a crucial element of economic growth, which I find absolutely bizarre. But the evidence

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that skills, making sure people in the right places have the right skills to do the jobs of the future is fundamental to economic growth needs to be spelled out and made again and again, because I listened to Jeremy Hunt's recent budget in his Autumn Statement. He talks about skills occasionally, but he rarely makes the case, if ever, that skills are fundamental to growth, but they are and that case needs to be made.

Shane Chownen 7:48

Yeah, Alison, how do we make that case in a more forceful way?

Baroness Wolf 7:52

I'd agree with that, but can I circle back to the bit of what Michael said that I agree with very strongly? I do think that there is real potential in the new employer groups. And it is, I think, up to the FE sector as much as anybody else whether they realize that potential. The point about having these employer groups is that they are employer groups, you know, we've had a succession of Whitehall-created quangos which were supposed to reach out to and bring employers on board. But the point about these is that they are actually employer groups, and most of them are Chambers of Commerce. The idea there was not that they would duplicate number crunching, which is done perfectly adequately at the national level by ONS and others, but they would actually be locally based bodies that would have a clear view about what they needed, that were genuinely employer representative, and which would then talk to the colleges. Now, of course, colleges have to have some money with which to respond to requests; otherwise, you know, it sort of doesn't amount to much. But I think that it's tremendously important if those realize their potential. We've never had chambers that had the position in the skill system that they have in Germany or Austria, or, indeed at the local town halls, not nothing regional, haven't in France. And I think that if we don't develop that, there is a real chance that we don't move forward. I think it is incredibly important. And it's incredibly important that the colleges support this. I mean, there's been cross-party support for the skills legislation of all sorts that's gone through in the last few years. I mean, the Skills Act and the LLE. What you are actually seeing a bit of is sort of pushback from the mayors who go, "well, you know, we should be doing all of this." I think the idea is not to recreate lots of mini Whitehalls where we once had one. The idea was to genuinely commit links between local employers and local colleges and Michael, what'd you say about Tata being sort of really up for it, I think is truly important. But as a stuck disc I will then come back to the fact that there also has to be something with which to respond to that, you know, Tata wants something, okay, they can pay for some of it. But it's time for there to be resources at the local level, which means you can respond to that rather than being tied to shovelling out cheap, low-level qualifications.



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Sir Michael Barber 10:29

I think we all agree that some significant investment is going to be needed, and we all agree that the fiscal and public expenditure climate and context is very difficult.

Shane Chowen 10:40

So, do you think the days of this sort of narrative about FE being sort of weak in comparison with other public sector stakeholders and lobbyists and this risk of you know, not offending anyone important in FE so we can mess about with it as much as we can? Would you, do you both think as people that have been on the inside that those days are over now?

Baroness Wolf 10:58

No, but I think that there is potential in organising employers on FE side.

Sir Michael Barber 11:04

I agree with that. And I think the tone is important. There's a real opportunity on the skills agenda. Now, you look at the future of the economy. I see it visibly in the South West with a spaceport and the rebuilding of the docks in Devon autumn, that whole green agenda around extra in the Met Office and charter and Bridgewater, you look at that economy, it's coming. And you see that skills are fundamental to it. And I think that the skill system has a slight tendency to sound gushy, quite understandably, as a kind of victim. Whereas what it should be saying is look at the opportunity here, seize the opportunity. So instead of being a victim, saying, We're doing brilliant things, you look what Bridgewater and Taunton college is doing with the new nuclear power station that's being built in Somerset, look at what they will do, really well-run college, what they will do with Agratas and Tata, you look at what Exeter college does with a whole range of employers in the area, talk about the great things that are happening and that's why it needs investing in because this is the key to growth. That's one thing. And then the other thing and employers are as often in the past as guilty, as they said, the education system of when there's a problem. They say what's the government going to do about it and kind of wait rather than say, there's a problem, this is what we're doing about it. Come on government get behind us. There needs to be a sense of momentum and not being a victim, but a change agent. I think that would unlock resources in time.

Shane Chowen 12:27

Interesting, I think, while we're on employers, both labour and conservative governments have both talked about, you know, a powerful, influential role for employers in the FE system. Some, though, argue that employers have too much control. But what I think is interesting about where we are now is, the



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British Chambers of Commerce have said recently that the local schools improvement plans are great. But there is a friction between what the employers are saying that they want and what the centre is willing to let go in terms of power and also the funding around particular courses, right. So British Chamber of Commerce is saying their members are asking for short courses, modular courses. Employers don't want full big qualifications anymore. They want short, snappy things, to deal with their skills issues as they see them in front of them. So do you think the next government could and should be maybe a little bit braver in terms of what it relinquishes from the centre in terms of control? How about Michael, I'll to you first,

Sir Michael Barber 13:23

First of all, there's always going to be some friction. And I don't think that's a problem that you need a proper dialogue. And no one stakeholder has the right answers on this or the right answers anyway. So I'm not quite sure that I do agree with the assumption that employers have been demanding better investment in skills rather when you actually often ask them what they want, it's all quite vague. Whereas if I talk about a nuclear power station at Hinkley Point or agrilus, they know exactly what they need. So it's the employers have got to be precise on what they demand and not kind of a give a short courses rather than one month. What do you... what are the skills are needed? And the colleges, the good colleges are responding to that. So there's got to be a variety of things. And the government does have an obligation to define standards in any system, whether it's the health system or the education system, or policing and whatever. So there is a role for government. And the question is to get the dialogue at the right level and the right granularity to make the change. I think I use the word relinquish. I think it's getting the right combination of local, regional and national. And it's not about just government relinquishing stuff, it's about getting the right quality of dialogue.

Shane Chownen 13:23

Anything to add there, Alison?

Baroness Wolf 13:31

I have actually, which is that I really think the mayors need to step up a bit, actually quite a lot of the money is already devolved to the MCA's, Mayoral Combined Authorities. And what has been to me very depressing is how little they've actually done to take advantage of their new freedoms. Now, I do sort of understand the underlying politics of this, that if you do something new over here, it may mean you stop doing something else over there, but they are local, they are talking to their local employers. I just am really disappointed by how few seem to me to have done anything more than essentially just sort of carry over the quite restrictive a pot here a pot their funding regime, which they



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inherited from DfE. So, I do think that we should also be telling the mayors, well you know, you wanted a devolved adult education budget, some of you have now got the bootcamp money as well. Okay, fine. Now, let's now let's see what you do with it.

Shane Chowen 15:36

Yeah, great point.

Sir Michael Barber 15:37

I agree with that. And I think each part of the system can challenge each other, though, we all know skills are important. So the FE system can be saying to government. This is what we want to do. Can you help with the employers can we challenge the education sector to provide the right combination of courses for each region and for each set of skills. And all of them can be challenging government to think this through, I don't think we're ever going to get a perfect system. But if the dialogue right, and there's momentum there, we can make really good progress here. And I think just to go back to the beginning where Alison started, we all agree FE needs more money. So doing things well will attract investment. That's my basic argument, rather than simply wringing your hands and being a victim.

Shane Chowen 16:20

Well, let's talk about another part of the system then, which has had a lot of momentum. And that's the apprenticeship system, which has probably had the most political attention in FE throughout the whole of this period of conservative led government since 2010. Alison, you've been an outspoken critic of the apprenticeship levy, which is probably one of the government's most radical reforms in this space since 2010. And you've criticised Labour's plans to replace it with a different levy that can fund normal training as well as apprenticeships. I'm quite interested at your time in Number 10. Did you hear calls from businesses to change the levy?

Baroness Wolf 16:53

Well, basically, they just wanted to be able to spend it or whatever they wanted. That wasn't true of all businesses, I have to say there are some sterling examples of people who will say publicly, that the levy made them think about their training in a way which actually has been fantastically good for them. And so they have shifted to taking apprentices where they wouldn't have done before. And it's been transformative. But what you mostly got in Number 10 was a combination of businesses lobbying to be allowed to do whatever they want to with the money and Treasury going this is a tax get off our lawn, I actually think there is now an appetite for reform, this may be wildly optimistic. I mean,



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clearly there is an appetite in labour. I was never against a levy. In fact, I wrote a piece for The Social Market Foundation quite a while back, arguing that a levy which is what the most successful apprenticeship systems have something like that a levy or a tax was a good idea. What I certainly never envisaged was the to me completely crazy system. We have at the moment in which all the money has to come from the levy, because Treasury treats it as though it was a sort of a hypothecated pot, even though technically it's not. And so you've got a few companies paying for everything. And I think I also even if I had known at the time that they were going to dream up this completely unique English approach, I would not have guessed quite how passionately determined companies would be to spend the money rather than see any of it go back to the Treasury if they could possibly help it. I actually think this is a deeply inefficient system, which encourages people to spend money on things, which they wouldn't normally and keeps money in large companies that would be far better spent elsewhere in the system. So I actually am not against the levy, I'm against our levy, I think we should do what much the rest of the world does, and have a single system for everybody in which everybody pays in, but you have a sliding scale. So yes, I am very critical, both of the thinking behind the current system, and of the way that it's actually turned out to operate, which I do think leads to a huge amount of wasteful allocation of resources.

Shane Chownen 17:52

Did you come across any resistance while at Number 10, for calls for change?

Baroness Wolf 19:16

You can only work on so many things at a time. And I think when I was in Number 10, it wasn't a political priority. I think it was becoming so actually just before I left, but then you know there are always all sorts of other problems. I do think there is now quite a general recognition that something has to be done, which possibly five years ago there wasn't because also as Michael says, in some ways, the current system is good. I mean, it is good that companies pay indirectly and are directly involved. And it is good that we have a system of standards, which I think is genuinely more demanding higher standard better than its predecessor. But I do think that the current system needs reform quite badly. And what worries me is that Labour made a commitment. Oh, you can spend half of it on training. And, you know, the trouble is if you don't spend half of it on training, there really will be nothing left for the rest of the economy, because companies will manage to spend all of it very easily.

Shane Chownen 20:25

Michael, what sort of discussions if any were going on at the Treasury while you were there about the apprenticeship levy and possibly reforming it?



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Sir Michael Barber 20:32

I'm very sympathetic to pretty much everything that Alison has just said about reforming the levy. I think we need a levy, but the current one could be definitely improved. And, as Alison said, the Treasury is very protective of its levy. And they kind of fend off Number 10. In other parts of the system, but a levy is a good idea. And I just want to widen out because the theme was apprenticeships and we've ended up debating the levy, Alison came back to at the end, the new apprenticeship standards at different levels are a big step forward. The ladder that goes all the way through up to level seven and degree apprenticeships is a big step forward. And Julian Keegan and Rob Hoffman and Alison, before the... and Gavin Williamson actually deserve real credit for putting that in place. That's a big thing that Labour if they're elected can build on. So I do think we've got a better apprenticeship system than we've had before. And we've got significant numbers that we could do with more. But I just want to emphasise this thing about degree apprenticeships, I think they're what they help do is change the status of the word apprenticeship and the idea of apprenticeships in Britain, which because until most of our lives and Alison has been campaigning against this, most of our adult lives, apprenticeships have been seen as a kind of low-class thing for the people who can't get into university to put it crudely. And we know that isn't true and should never have been true. But that is now changing, you train to be a teacher through a degree apprenticeship, you can train to get into all kinds of health careers through a degree apprenticeship, you can train to get into finance through a degree apprenticeship, we have 15 different tracks of degree apprenticeship at Exeter where I am the Chancellor engineering would be another example. When you get the top universities like Exeter and Warwick and others behind the idea of apprenticeship, you begin to shift the climate. So that, UCAS now gives advice on apprenticeships as well as classic university courses. This is beginning to shift. And if you look at what the six formers are saying, look at the recent evidence from what school, not the sixth formers but 14 to 18-year-olds are saying about the careers advice they're getting, they're beginning to see apprenticeships as a genuine possible option to a career. And that leads into my final point, which I think we should do better. I would like to see whoever the next government is a single regulator for post-18 education and looking more consistently at the emerging range of options than we're able to do with the current system.

Shane Chown 22:57

I do definitely want to come on to that before I do, though. Alison, you wrote in the Financial Times recently that there should be a call of what you described as expensive apprenticeships and over supplied occupations. How should the next government after the election sought that situation out?



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Baroness Wolf 23:10

The simplest thing to do actually, if you want sorted out quickly, because we are going to run out of money. That's the downside of the growth of degree apprenticeships, the single simplest thing that I would do and of course, it's a slightly blunt instrument, and I would actually reduce the funding rate for currently employed older apprentices. Because part of the problem is that a very large number of apprenticeships are currently going to people who are employed and in non shortage areas and who are older. I mean, I do not think that the most important thing that this country needs is senior leadership or indeed accountancy apprenticeship, we have just a terrifying skill gaps in some of the areas which apprenticeship in fact, has always been super backed, including construction at all levels and an engineering and we are simply not getting the money into those so. So I actually think that you can shift the incentives quite easily if you're willing to.

Sir Michael Barber 24:10

I just wanted to make that point you made about the funding. If we ever kind of zero sum part of this is the funding for apprenticeships than the trade off, you just described as inevitable. And it's a problem. I can see that. But if you had a single regulator and some of the funds however we reformed the way it's currently the university funding system and in hand looked at this as a whole picture. You could see some of the higher level apprenticeships being funded by in the future the LLE, we just need to begin to see this as a spectrum of opportunity across post-18 education. Because while we're stocking the pot that you're talking about, I can exactly see the tension you're making. So that's why I'm arguing for a single regulator.

Baroness Wolf 24:55

No, I think that's absolutely right. And of course there is enormous potential. but it's a huge job and what worries me at the moment is that effectively, the number of apprenticeships open to 18-year-olds is ..has been shrinking. And we're just not getting people into these coming back to skills mattering to for growth. I mean, it's just critical that we get more apprenticeships in these areas where we are just screaming for that for the skills. One of the other things that has disappointed me over the last five years, which is that colleges are still not as important in apprenticeship training, as you would expect, they would be and they don't seem to have increased their role there. And Michael, I don't know whether with your sort of in depth knowledge of the South West, you can say anything about this. But you know, in most countries, if you want an apprentice, and you're sort of an SME, or indeed a larger employer, you will know exactly where the training takes place, and it will be a local college or apprenticeship centre. And I certainly don't want to imply that all independent training providers should close down because some of them are fabulous. But it just



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seems to me there's an imbalance. I don't understand why so many colleges do so little apprenticeship provision.

Shane Chown 26:15

Yeah, that's definitely been pointed out over several years, several ministers have, you know, stood on stage at the Association of Colleges Annual Conference and really challenged the sector to step up on apprenticeships, not to give it not to give too much away. But here at FE Week, we've been investigating apprenticeships in the social care sector and the declines there. And it's very, very easy to spot how you know, whereas five years ago, the number of the number of colleges delivering those apprenticeships was, you know, maybe 20% of the provider base right now, that's pretty much halved over the five years, we've talked a little bit about the sort of national system of regulators, funders, quangos, and a little bit about the provider base. But I just want to move on now to what you think the next government should be hoping to achieve long term. So what should its success measures for maybe not apprenticeships, because we've talked about that a fair bit, but maybe for young people and for, you know, adult education for people with low levels of skills, because we do still have quite a lot of adults in the working population without basic skills in English and Maths, despite all of the reforms over the last 14 years. So what should the next government's longer term ambitions be for young people? And those and those adults, students? How about Michael, I'll come to you first.

Sir Michael Barber 27:27

let's say, over a 10-year period, we should aim to be the leading provider of skills to the 21st-century workforce in the world, some of the reforms that we've talked about already takes in that direction, some of the reforms in the pipeline, like the LLE, take us further in that direction. And we should aim definitely to do the levelling up that you implied about the kids who have fallen behind them, make sure they get opportunities in the way we distribute funding, we should... And in order to do all that, we need a single regulator, and we need the skill system to operate in the kind of coherent way that has been implied in some of our conversation. It will need more funding over time. I mean at the moment, FE colleges find it really hard to recruit maths teachers, because they pay less than the school. I am in favour of maths teachers in school being paid well, I'm not in favour of FE colleges having to pay people less, we do need to make some reforms. And over time, there will need to be significant investment in the skill system over and above what's been provided in the last few years. And that's where I keep coming back to we have to prove, demonstrate, argue, win the argument that getting skills right is fundamental for the future growth of the economy, I can see it viscerally around me in the South West. I chair the South West social mobility commission. We can't get the social mobility, we can't get the growth, we can't get the higher wages, we can't get the skills that we need,

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without demonstrating to people investing in skills will lead to faster economic growth for our country and for this region.

Shane Chowen 29:00

Thank you, Alison, what would your long-term goals be for the next government?

Baroness Wolf 29:03

Actually, it wouldn't be more adult basic skills, we put a very large proportion of our current funding into this. It's always a challenge, although, as since our school system has been improving for the last few decades, but hopefully it will get less extreme. My top priority would actually be to build on the success of the boot camps and the potential of the LSIPs (Local Skills Improvement Plans) and employers I would like to see, five to ten years from now, a much larger proportion of college activity focused on often quite short, sometimes longer, locally driven, locally relevant skills provision. That's what I'd like to see. And if I were the next government, I would see that as the outcome and then go, okay, what are the multiple bits that I need to tweak or change to arrive there by five and ten years from now?

Shane Chowen 29:54

Thank you. Well, as they say, time flies when you're talking about skills. I'm afraid that's all we've got time. On this episode of Let's Go Further, when I say a big thank you to my guests, Baroness Alison Wolf and to Michael Barber, and to you for listening, we hope you enjoyed the conversation and that it's got you thinking about what we need in the FE sector and what we should be asking for from the next government. And if you have a question for us or a comment on what you've heard, please join in the conversation on social media. And remember to subscribe wherever you receive your podcasts to access earlier and forthcoming episodes of Let's Go Further.