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***'HE in FE Partnerships: what is and  
what might be.'***

**Denise Robinson**

# Introduction

***To consider the development of FE/HE partnerships in terms of their proclaimed objectives to expand the number of HE students and to add a different route for those students who might not be considered to be 'traditional' HE students; to explore such developments, using immanent critique, such that the forces that interact on HE are explored and the true nature of this development is revealed.***

# **What is Critical Theory?**

*Variations on a theme?*

**Critical race theory**

**Critical ethnography**

**Critical race  
ethnography**

**Critical educational  
theory**

**Critical theory of  
educational struggle**

**Critical pedagogy**

**Critical HRD**

**Critical thinking**

**Critical reflection**

**Student critical  
development**

**Critical literacy**

# Critical Theory (CT)

- ***‘Critical Theory draws on Marxist scholarship to illuminate the ways in which people accept as normal a world characterised by massive inequities and the systemic exploitation of the many by the few.’ Brookfield, 2005, p.2***
- **Frankfurt School -1923. Used CT for ‘...gaining methodological insight, theoretical illumination, and political inspiration to carry on the tasks of critical social theory...’ Kellner, 1999, p.3. Forging a unity between philosophy & science, fact & value.**
- **Addressed philosophical *and* empirical issues, including a broadening of issues previously ignored or simply not explored e.g. the family, mass culture**

# Critical Theory

- Attempt to develop a democratic approach to social issues by the methodology of immanent critique
- Freeing analysis from the constraints of a veneer of rationality, freedom and choice (Marcuse, 1964)
- Emancipatory – liberating consciousness from forces of domination (Fernandes, 2003, on Habermas)

# Immanent Critique

- **Based upon the CT dialectical approach to reason – to speculate, to mirror an appearance that is to be investigated**
- **Describes what a ‘social totality holds itself to be, and then confronts with what it is in fact becoming...’ (Antonio, 1981, p.338).**
- **Dialectical method - revealing incompleteness where completeness is claimed**

# Models & Claims of HE

## Traditional – HE ?

- Elitist
- Pursuit of true judgement (Arnold,1983)
- Subject-based
- Research **AND** teaching
- Imagination, scepticism, open-ended enquiry

## HE in FE

Vocational/professional  
Employment and employer -  
Led

Student focused – greater  
support needed for such  
students?

Widening participation

**But - only HE in FE?**

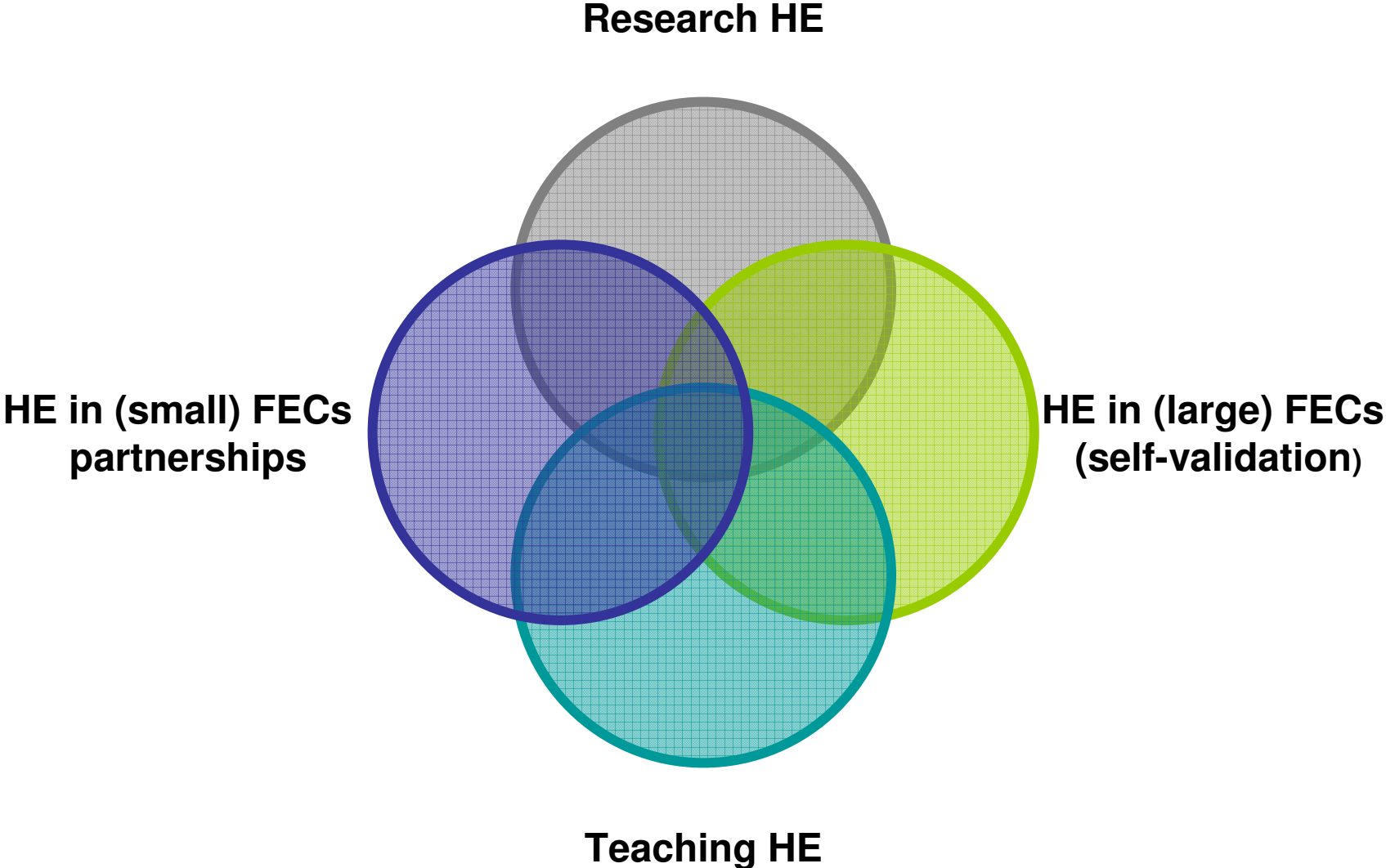


# HE in FE & Partnerships

- CT – attempt to clarify what HE is in HE and how HE in FE is realised – What is
- Is this ‘true’ HE? Or a particular sector and paradigm of HE? Third tier HE?
- Suggested four categories of HE – Research-based HE; Teaching HE; HE in (large) FECs; *Partnerships* - HE in (small) FECs

# **HE in FE Partnerships- *What might be?***

- Potential role of Partnerships when FECs validate their own FDs?
- Weaker? FECs go their own way?
- Stronger? Smaller FECs wanting to enter HE use partnerships as a basis to develop their experience? HEIs seen to provide robust QA/development and support?
- Difference between HE in large FECs and those who deliver HE as a partnership.



# The basic tenets of HE?

- Can we agree on what is core to HE?
- Which model or combinations of models?
- Freedom of speech within the law
- Freedom of thought within society's ethical framework
- Freedom to challenge accepted axioms  
(Wilson, 2008, THES)

# CT on HE in FE – the Students

- **Is HE in FE contributing to Marcuse's 'One Dimensional Man' concept - negating opposition - freedom is not freedom if it is sustained through alienation (are students alienated or liberated?)**
- **Invasion of Habermas's Lifeworld – instrumentality of education (processes and aims) reduces individual autonomy**
- **Concern with potential – the essence - *what might be***