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Robinson, Denise

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HE in FE: Statistics and Stories

Denise Robinson

March 2009

HE in FE – its purpose

- LSC – ‘the FE sector will play an invaluable and irreplaceable role in the provision of higher-level education and training.’ (LSC 2008)
- WP – higher % of HE students in FE are from WP postcodes
- Leitch(2006) Focus on adults & ‘...new types of programme offering specific, job-related skills such as Foundation Degrees.’
- HEFCE (2007) employer co-funded ASNs

The Statistics

- A health warning; 2 separate funding bodies and data
- Errors admitted in collecting HE in FE data (HEFCE 2007)
- HE in FE – prescribed (HEFCE) and non-prescribed (LSC). Non-prescribed—lack of correct data

Types of HE in FE

- HNC/Ds (HEFCE funded)
- NVQs(L4/5) (LSC funded)
- ‘Traditional’ HE - degrees, postgrad, certs/dips of HE (HEFCE funded)
- Professional/technical quals (non-prescribed). Discretionary funding by LSC

HE in FE stats (05/06)

- 180,000 HE in FE learners
- 11% of all HE
- HNC/Ds – fall from 82,700 in 00/01 to 28,900 in 05/06
- NVQs – 24,000 (steady state)
(Pye Tait (2008), LSC)
- FDs – 72,000 in 07/08 (Target is 100,000 for 2010)

Other stats

- Top 20 courses (business, education, health& social care, construction, engineering) enrol nearly 64,000 students (30% of HE in FE students). Many non-prescribed.
- Majority of FD students are FT and in HEIs. Replacing HNC/Ds?
- 384 (of 460) FECs offer some kind of HE work

HE in FE over the years

- *As a result of this differential pattern of growth [in the 1990s], the share of HE students registered at FE colleges fell over this period, from 12% in 1989-1990 to 10% in 1994-1995, and dropped to 9% in subsequent years.*

(Parry and Thompson, 2002, p.78)

- HE in FE has tended to stabilise at 10%

Policy Shifts

- Growth in the shadows: Pre (LEAs) and post 1988 (Polys); early 90s – fees only growth- expansion for Polys in FECs
- Emerging into the sunshine – 1995 (HEFCE); Dearing (1997)
- On the uplands of HE? Employability, vocational and WP. Post 2003 – University Challenge; FE validation of FDs; vocational degrees?

Introduction of FDs

- HNs- said to be outmoded and a new focus on the employability aspect of Foundation Degrees and the close development between the theory/vocational elements and the involvement of employers were all said to make this a qualification that would replace the old HNDs and HNCs with a fresh outlook and greater relevance.
- Widening participation agenda

FDs – the conundrum: reinforcing the divide or widening participation?

- We regard it as crucial that the foundation degree is established as a credible and attractive option to a wide range of students lest it reinforce the concentration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in a narrow group of institutions, including FE colleges.

(LSDA, 2003, p.4)

Perceptions of FD Students

- (Not a research into role and agency; an element in the study of HE in FE from a critical perspective)
- A difference between younger and 'more mature' students emerged.

- Hand outs

Changing the face of HE?

‘...the social composition of our universities remain remarkably un changed. Life inequalities are indeed maintained in higher education.’

(Copland, 2008, p.6)