

Title

Embedding Short Cycle HE in the HE System - Links between HE and VET: The English Experience

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England: historical context:

- History of 3 year cycle degree; Awarded by university or national awarding body for polytechnics
- Demise of ordinary classification from 1960s
- Introduction of Diploma in HE (1970s) – general – ‘unpopular’ . Maintained for - nursing, social work, community work to late 1990/2000s
- From mid-1970s – BEC and TEC=BTEC. Awarded *reorganised* 2 year cycle awards at HE level - HNC (P/T) and HND (F/T) – address development of higher vocational/technician skills.

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- Therefore - 50 years - 2 year cycle awards at HE level – HNC, HND and from 2000/1, Foundation Degrees
- HNC/D delivered at Polytechnics/Colleges
- Also, higher vocational/professional awards – accounting technicians, legal executives, marketing, human resources
- Early 1980s – 20% of all HE delivered in College sector
- ‘Academic drift’ from 1980s in Poly sector – more degree work
- 1992 + – Polytechnics become universities with Degree Awarding powers

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- Mass expansion of degree level HE in early 90s, mainly in new university sector
- 2 year cycle HE, apart from Dip HE, increasingly concentrated in College sector; decline in HNC/D enrolments
- 2000 – Introduction of 2 Year cycle Foundation Degrees; in some cases ‘switching’ HNC/D to FD
- Aim: 100,000 enrolments by 2010 – met
- Approximately – 40% - HNC/D; 60% - FD?
- 2 Year Cycle HE – approximately 10% of all HE Enrolments

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Foundation Degree characteristics:

- Policy Aims: (a) Address regional skills shortages at higher technician level (b) Widen Participation – Tensions?
- Some evidence of latter – mature, part-time, 20% based in workplace
- Work Based / Related
- 2 Years Full Time; more part-time
- Usually 240 Credits (120 – HE1; 120 – HE2
– Some models: 260 / 280)
- Named Honours progression
- Majority – Public Sector / Education; Social Care; Early Years
- Some sectors / teachers / institutions prefer HNC / D – Arts and Design, Engineering

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Issues 1:

- In England – 2 Credit systems – QCF – VET; HE – Various/ coming together, but not integrated as in Scotland
- History – From 19th century – Lack of development of higher technician skills in English VET systems
- Economic – Manufacturing to Service. Collapse of apprenticeship system – 1979-81
- Structural – 50% of FD in FE Colleges; 50% – New Universities
- Funding – 2/3 Cycle – HEFCE; But – ‘non-prescribed/ unregulated’ (higher vocational/ professional) – Skills Funding Agency
- Cultural/Social – About Credit systems: “It is a cultural and moral issue: we fail to use these systems for reasons of conservatism, snobbery and lack of imagination.” (Watson, NIACE 2009)

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Issues 2 – Present Context

- ‘Marketisation’ of English HE system
- Likely entry of more HE Awarding Bodies – Colleges, BTEC, Private Universities: delivery of ‘cheap popular subjects – law , business?’
- More accreditation of in-house training programmes at HE level?
- HE Credit System – at present “provide a reference point for institutions” – not one agreed system as yet
- Relationship between QCF and HE credit systems – some overarching principles agreed

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Issues 3: Apprenticeships and HE:

- 2 levels of apprenticeship: levels 2 (intermediate) and 3 (advanced)
- Less than 5% progress to some form of HE
- Higher Apprenticeships – national framework – Knowledge, competency and functional skills qualifications
- Limited development of Professional / Higher apprenticeships; competing with professional association frameworks
- Less demand for Higher Skills in some sectors – retail?

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Thank You

The Association of Colleges represents the
interests
of colleges and the college sector in England

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