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 unchanged. Life inequalities are indeed maintained in higher education.’

(Copland, 2008, p.6)