

Patterns in the differentiation of English tertiary education

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Higher education is delivered through:

- * universities and higher education colleges
- * further education colleges
- * private providers/corporate universities

Modest increases in competition are being introduced to tertiary education.

English universities and higher education colleges

Universities	91	Self-governing	4,000+ students	DAP	Broad provision
HE colleges	41	Self-governing	Up to 4,000 students	Sometimes DAP	Specialist provision

University Title

use of title relaxed in 2004

previously: only institutions with research and taught degree awarding powers and at least five subjects of provision

now: taught DAP alone and one subject area

Impact: modest to date; HECs apply to become Universities

• Higher Education provision delivered through Further Education Colleges (FECs)

10% of all HE learners study in FE colleges (c.200,000)

No DAP; FEC must be validated by an HEI

Weaknesses: quality of provision, progression

Strengths: vocationally relevant, local, flexible, accessible provision

50% of HE in FE students are part-time (cf. 35% HE ave.)

50% of Foundation Degree students study at FECs

•HE in FE: relevant government objectives

Increase higher skills to compete in globalizing economy

Increase vocationally relevant provision

Increase participation at sub-degree level (Foundation Degrees)

Increase employer contributions towards

Increase participation towards 50% of 18-30 years old

Increase student choice / access (inc. part-time and older students)

Widen participation in higher education

department for

education and skills

creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

The White Paper *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances* (March 2006) sets out government plans to:

increase HE provision through FE Colleges : more delivered by fewer

expand HE with a strong occupational and employment purpose (Foundation Degrees)

improve the quality of HE delivery – creation of centres of excellence in employability and widening participation, reducing weak HE

use FECs to bring HE to geographic areas without HEIs

support collaboration between HEIs and FECs through Lifelong Learning Networks which allow the sharing of teaching expertise, curricula and facilities and improved student progression

review and *improve* funding mechanisms

- **Issues raised by the White Paper:**

managing competition from HEIs with strengths in Widening Participation and vocationally-relevant provision

limiting the number of FECs engaged in HE / ensuring a critical mass of HE learners – in provision where FE is strong

enabling parity of esteem between academic and vocational provision

encouraging FECs to get Degree Awarding Powers?

Private providers and corporate universities

Criteria for Degree Awarding Powers (DAP) also revised 2004. Private providers can apply for DAP if the QAA confirms:

- * experience of at least 4 years provision of honours degree courses validated by an HEI with DAPs
- * majority of HE students enrolled on study programmes which are at honours degree level or above
- * the applicant organization is 'a well-founded, cohesive, self-critical academic community that can demonstrate firm guardianship of its standards.'

Professional and Statutory Bodies tend to apply: eg, the College of Law

Corporate universities

training departments of big companies – can cover HE

from 2004, allowed to use the title ‘university’ for their own training purposes as no risk of being confused for real universities – they cannot offer provision to members of the public.

Conclusion

We are seeing a modest reform of delivery structures for higher education in England to increase institutional competition and student choice to better meet national skills needs whilst maintaining high standards.