

Linking VET & HE: Issues & Challenges

The Scottish and English Experience

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Higher education in the VET Sector

- **Short cycle HE**
- **One or two year programmes:**
 - Scotland: Higher National Certificates/Diplomas (HNC/Ds)
 - England: Foundation Degrees
- **Mainly in colleges (formerly further education) rather than universities**
- **Similar programmes in other countries**
 - TAFE (Technical and Further Education) Institutes in Australia
 - Community Colleges in USA and Canada

Issues of ambiguity

- **While these have been developed primarily as vocational qualifications, are also increasingly driven by other, and to some extent competing agendas**
- **While they are increasingly recognised as higher educational qualifications, they often fail to enjoy equality of status with university bachelors degrees**
- **As a result there are significant challenges in linking these different types of qualifications, and creating 'permeability'.**

The vocational role

- **National policy and guidelines continue to emphasise the role of vocational education and training.**
- **Foundation Degrees (FDs) in England**
 - **New qualifications introduced 2001**
 - **Growing concern over skills deficits at associate professional and technical levels**
 - **Emphasis on importance of employer involvement and WBL integral part of these programmes**
- **HNC/Ds in Scotland**
 - **Well established vocational qualifications, but reviewed and modernised by Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) 2003-08**
 - **Emphasis on preparing for 'technician, technologist and first line manager occupations' (SQA Design Principles, 2005)**

Progression to bachelors degree

- **Emerged as strong theme in national policy from 2000 onwards**
- **FDs - Emphasis on providing progression to honours degrees**
- **FDs validated by universities**
- **HNC/Ds – limited recognition by SQA of importance of creating opportunities for progression to degrees**
- **Increasingly recognised by Scottish Funding Council for Further & Higher Education (SFC) as important policy objective**

Widening access to HE

- **FDs – emphasis on flexibility and access for students from lower socio-economic groups**
- **HNC/Ds in Scotland – importance of articulation, for students from lower socio-economic groups, from HNs to degrees increasingly recognised by SFC as important aspect of widening access strategy**
- **Articulation Hubs established to improve links between HNs in colleges and bachelor degrees in universities – funding for 6 hubs across Scotland.**

Relationship of short cycle HE to mainstream of HE

- **Scott (2009) suggests that HE in FE in England is residual and marginal, while still a potentially important part of a lifelong learning tertiary system**
- **In Scotland there is greater integration through the SFC, but the qualifications structure is distinct, and the level of recognition varies across the HE sector**
- **No explicit recognition of problems in linking two systems with different origins, objectives and cultures**

Sources for paper

- **Comparative study of HNC/Ds in Scotland and FDs in England (Gallacher, Ingram & Reeve 2009 - <http://www.crll.org.uk/media/crll/content/publications/Final%20Report.pdf>)**
- **Tracking study of HNC/D students (Ingram & Gallacher 2011-
<http://www.ggap.org.uk/strands/evidencegathering/hntracking/>)**

Differing Agendas: programme development

- Data from comparative study of FDs and HNC/Ds in UK
- Conflicting agendas emerge at level of programme development.
- *‘...we could have had a more interesting course, had we not had the requirement to have that transfer at the end...’ (Programme Director FD Chem Engineering)*
- *‘...I think sometimes the academic advisors are more concerned about the academic side of it...’ (Programme Director FD Multimedia)*
- Despite differences in national policy occupational sectoral differences continue to be important in shaping development.

The vocational and transition/progression continuum

- **Differential involvement of stakeholder groups.**
- **One end of continuum programmes such as Early Years and Vet Nursing have very strong links with employers, and very much focused on vocational preparation and professional recognition.**
- **At other end programmes such as those in computing have much weaker employer links, and transition/progression to degree level study is recognised as key objective.**
- **Other programmes fall at various points along this continuum.**
- **This continuum also reflected in student choices.**

Destinations of HNC/D Completers

HN Subject Area	Employment only	Further study only	Further study and employment	Unemployed	Other	N
	%	%	%			
Beauty Therapy	71	0	12	12	6	17
Built Environment	30	27	34	9	0	64
Business	23	35	33	6	2	48
Computing	15	52	18	12	3	33
Creative Studies	24	12	56	8	0	25
Engineering	55	21	16	7	1	87
Health Care	13	51	26	0	9	53
Hospitality	53	21	16	11	0	19
Social Care	56	13	18	8	5	39
Social Sciences	14	46	36	4	0	28
Sport and Fitness	21	17	55	7	0	29
Total	34	29	28	7	2	442

Source: Ingram & Gallacher (2011)

Destinations of full-time & part-time HN students

Destinations	Full-time %	Part-time	Total
Employment only	30	58	33
Further study only	33	6	29
Further study and employment	28	29	28
Unemployed	7	5	7
Other	2	3	2
	N=375	N=66	N=457

Source: Ingram & Gallacher (2011)

Type of programme entered by HNC\D completers progressing to further study

Type of programme	%
HNC/D	18
Undergraduate Degree	77
Postgraduate Degree	1
Other	3
N	262

Source: Ingram & Gallacher (2011)

Level of entry to bachelor degree courses for HN students

Level of HN study	Level of entry to bachelor degree courses				Totals	
	Level 1 (SCQF L7)	Level 2 (SCQF L8)	Level 3 (SCQF L9)	Did not answer		
	%	%	%	%	%	N
HNC	47	42	8	4	100	79
HND	8	16	75	1	100	118

Source: Ingram & Gallacher 2011

Percentages of former HN students entering different university sectors by level of entry

	Level 1 %	Level 2 %	Level 3 %
Post 92 Universities	57	71	88
1960s Universities	21	15	2
Ancients	14	4	0.5
Art/music colleges	8	9	10
Total	100	100	100

Source: SFC 2007

Participation of Scottish students in higher education by sector and deprivation quintile 2009-10

	College higher education level %	Higher education institution %
Least deprived quintile	17	30
2 nd quintile	19	24
Middle quintile	20	20
4 th quintile	21	15
Most deprived quintile	23	11
Total	100	100

Source: SFC 2011

Problems experienced by HN students articulating to degrees

- **44% of articulating students felt they were ‘not very well prepared’ or ‘not at all prepared’ for university**
- **46% found the transition ‘quite difficult’ or ‘very difficult’ (Howieson and Croxford 2011)**
- **Emerging evidence that around 25% of articulating students do not complete their degrees**

Progression from FDs: Qualifiers from English HEIs 2007-08 (6 months after graduation)

	Full-time	Part-time
Studying (not employed)	46%	11%
Studying & employed	19%	37%
Employed	28%	48%
Unemployed	4%	1%
Other	3%	3%

Source: HEFCE 2010

Progression from FDs in England

- **54% of FD qualifiers in 2007-08 (full-time & part-time) registered in English HEIs proceeded to honours degree programmes**
- **82% who stayed in same institution got 2 or more years of credit**
- **79% who moved to different institution got 2 or more years of credit**

Source: HEFCE 2010

Conclusion

- **Short cycle ‘vocational’ qualifications are increasingly being used to address a number of potentially conflicting agendas:**
 - Vocational preparation for associate professional and technical occupations
 - Progression to higher education, both as part of national policies, and as a result of student choice in increasingly credential driven societies
 - Widening access to provide routes into higher education for students from under-represented social groups
- **While there is evidence of considerable success in achieving ‘permeability’, there is also evidence of problems associated with linking these qualifications**
- **This reflects differences in the origins and objectives of vocational short cycle education and university bachelor degree programmes.**

References

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