

team leaders in assisting unravelling of how the team framed the challenges and the consequences and summarises that debriefers should undertake an in-depth conversation with their peers.

Editorial: Simulation-Saviour or Satan Advances in Health Sciences Education 8: 1–3, 2003. A commentary questioning the benefits of simulation in medical education when it is still a 'cottage industry' championed by enthusiasts and questions whether more fidelity and time spent in simulators is beneficial – quoting studies that show difficulty in transferring skills from simulator to bedside

The Role of Debriefing in Simulation based Learning. Ruth M. Fanning, Mb, FFARCSI; and David M. Gaba, MD. Simulation in Healthcare Volume 2, Number 1, Spring 2007

A comprehensive and practical summary of debriefing including its origins, process, different models and styles; its structure and outcomes this paper addresses every aspect. It even raises the issues of use and usefulness of video playback and whether to debrief at all.

Teaching Skilful Teaching. Deborah Loewenberg Ball and Francesca M. Forzani. December 2010/January 2011 | Volume 68 | Number 4 The Effective Educator Pages 40-45. Outlines the unnaturalness of teaching in three domains (specialised expertise, the challenge of multiple perspectives and working with many learners) as well as other challenges a teacher faces and

comments on the skillset required – comparing it to other professions

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HE in FE – past, present and future

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Within the post-16 education sector the terms Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) are widely used and understood. Historically, their *modi operandi* and student population have, to a greater extent, been quite different and have operated in discreet spheres with limited overlap. Traditionally the seat of higher learning, universities dominated the HE landscape with

higher education being the preserve of the few, with less than 2% of 18-year olds going to university before the Second World War (Dyhouse, 2007). This figure contrasts starkly to provisional Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) for 2010/11 which indicated that the rate had leapt to 47% (BIS, 2012), clearly illustrating the extent to which the HE sector has expanded since

the Second World War. Traditionally universities concentrated on undergraduate and postgraduate provision whilst FE colleges (FECs) focused on vocational and adult education. However, in recent years these two ordinarily quite distinct sectors have coalesced to create a new HE hybrid; that of Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE). Alternatively, it is referred to in some literature as the Further-Higher sector (Parry, 2009) or as the Mixed Economy sector (colleges that provide both FE and HE provision) (Honeybone, 2007).

HE in FE is a burgeoning sub-sector with 90% of FECs now delivering HE compared to just 20% in 2001 (The 157 Group, 2009), with HEFCE (2009) stating there are 172,000 students studying HE in FE (which accounts for over 10% of the UG population). The significance of HE in FE to the UK HE sector cannot be underestimated and should be on the radar of all policy makers and academics within HE, be they from the college or the university sector. Detractors view HE in FE as being something of a country cousin to its more sophisticated and prestigious university neighbours, but a changing HE landscape has led to FECs carving out an increasingly significant and strategic role for themselves in terms of HE provision. Indeed, like the majority of UK HEIs, our own institution has numerous strategic partnerships with partner FE colleges who are involved in the delivery of HE courses, with many students subsequently progressing to us to study for a top up degree. No doubt many academics in this institution will have taught students who have been through HE in FE (though they may well be unaware of their journey these students have had, or of the kind of HE experience they are likely to have experienced whilst studying HE in an FEC).

Changes to student tuition fees, a rising demand for flexible and part time delivery, coupled with demands for a skilled workforce, leaves HE in FE tipped to enjoy a rising profile within the HE marketplace. This brief paper charts the chronology of key events which has led to the evolution of HE in FE in England and provides a sketch of the current English HE in FE landscape.

According to Greenwood (2010), HE in FE

'refers to all those activities that relate to the management, development, delivery and assessment of higher education qualifications and programmes taught in further education colleges. HE in FE is often described through its provenance and falls into two major categories – prescribed higher education (funded through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and non-prescribed higher education (funded through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)).'

The HE delivered within an FEC is typically vocational in nature with a largely localised/regional pool from which to draw students. In terms of a 'typical' HE in FE student, the demographic profile is one of students being older, part-time, local and living with family, employed, not looking for a lifestyle change, studying vocational rather than academic programmes, career focused and sensitive to financial matters (Cockburn, 2006).

This model of HE provision differs vastly from that seen in England prior to the 1960s. Indeed, the 1960s marked a philosophical and cultural shift away from the then prevailing model of elitism (as propounded by F.R. Leavis (1930), and his 'cultural elite'), towards the development of mass HE via the influential Robbins Report in 1963. Barnett (1990) suggested the need to deal with wider economic needs and the view of knowledge as a commodity needed for society to develop, were instrumental in driving the change to 'open up' HE.

Post Robbins, the formation of polytechnics quickly followed (Scott, 2009). Despite being able to teach degrees, polytechnics were not afforded the opportunity to award their own degrees. This was done via the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) (Gourley, 2008). This demarcation created a clear binary divide between the university and the polytechnic/college of HE camps. Universities operated (and still do) as self-governing institutions with taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) whilst polytechnics and colleges were under the control of the Local Education Authority (LEA) without TDAP privileges.

1988 saw an end to LEA control of polytechnics with the advent of incorporation. This was followed by The Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. This led to emancipation of colleges from LEA control and the creation of new funding councils for the UK: the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE); Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) (now the SFC); and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). Since 1 April 1993, these bodies have funded all higher education institutions in the UK.

The 1997 Dearing Report marked a sea change in HE in England with the introduction of tuition fees and an expansion of HE. Parry and Thompson (2002) refer to the report in terms of its 'official recognition HE in FE and encouraging its development through a process of collaboration and partnership with HEIs'. This policy firmly placed FE within the HE widening participation and ultimately, the employability agenda. Considered as a means of achieving social justice, widening participation (WP) was imperative if the, 'inequalities in participation in post-compulsory education and training by socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity' (Gorard & Smith, 2006) were to be tackled. Described by Feather (2010) as FECs being 'catapulted into the forefront of HE delivery', Dearing acknowledged the FE sector as being fundamental to any expansion in Higher Education (HE) provision (NCIHE, 1997). In order to support this, Foundation Degrees (FD) were introduced with the delivery being focused within FE colleges. Prior to the creation of Foundation Degrees, HE in FE was limited with FECs delivering HE being largely involved with technician level qualifications such as Accounting Technicians or Legal Executives (Barr, 2011), HND (Higher National Diploma) and other sub-degree provision.

FECs were accorded a special mission to increase student numbers, widen participation and build progression in support of a lifelong and diverse system of higher education (Parry & Thompson, 2002). On the back of Tony Blair's 1999 target that 50% of all young people would participate in HE (by 2007), David Blunkett talked of a 'new ladder of vocational progression, leading from schools to degree level, being created to help tackle Britain's

skills gap'. He described how FECs would be, 'encouraged to work closely with schools and employers to build the lower rungs of the ladder, which is designed to lead on to higher education through the new foundation degrees' (THES, 2001). This ringing endorsement from government heralded the arrival of HE in FE as a serious player within the HE market. Despite being 'nothing new to Further Education as HE courses have been delivered in FECs since the early 1950s' (Feather, 2010), the scale of provision was nothing that FE had encountered previously.

The Labour government continued to support its commitment to widening participation (WP) in higher education in 2003 with their White Paper; 'The Future of Higher Education'. Post-publication it produced a specific 'Widening participation in higher education' report stating, 'Widening participation means helping more people from under-represented groups, particularly low socio-economic groups, to participate successfully in higher education. Fair access means increasing opportunities for people from under-represented groups to attend higher education institutions and courses which offer the highest financial return' (DfES, 2003).

This WP agenda is further propounded by The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) (2009) who state, 'college provision is designed to support 'second chance' students, those without a family history of higher education participation and adults in work. The target client group and the small cohorts and high levels of personal support usually found in colleges make it distinctive.'

The continuing drive for 'upskilling' the workforce in order that the UK should remain internationally competitive was given a weighty push following the Leitch Review of Skills in 2006. Leitch presented his 'Prosperity for all in the Global Economy: World Class Skills' Review in December 2006 (HM Treasury, 2006) with FECs and Foundation Degrees being the primary vehicle for delivering the HE skills element of the review.

As a result of The Robbins Report and subsequent landmark policies, higher education has seen far reaching changes in terms of its purpose and its

'client group' since the 1960s. Since Dearing and the advent of Foundation Degrees, HE in FE has developed from a peripheral sub-group of HE to one with a strategic and widely recognised function and purpose. An increase in the number and breadth of new academic disciplines as well as a more diverse student body ensured David Blunkett's belief that, 'Knowledge and skills are now the key drivers of innovation and change...with economic performance depending increasingly on talent and creativity' meant that FE and HE have bled into each other in a way not seen before. As recently as March 2012, the Secretary of State for Business, Vince Cable (2012) commented that the 'HE in FE issue is an important one', and talked of 'breaking down the boundaries between higher and further education and between academic and vocational' by 'ensuring the boundary between higher and further education becomes blurred'. This statement clearly signals the Government's desire to see HE in FE as an even more significant actor within the wider theatre of HE.

In response to HE in FE's developing profile, The Higher Education Academy (HEA) has a Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) Enhancement Programme which is guided and supported by a Reference Group. The HEA also has an entire section devoted to HE in FE with monthly bulletins, resources and research information available in order to support colleges involved in the delivery of HE. In addition to the HEA, a number of key strategic alliances and partnerships have been formed in order to serve the interest of colleges with a significant involvement in HE provision; The Mixed Economy Group (MEG), The 157 Group and The Association of Colleges (AoC).

Many colleges within these groups aspire to be granted degree awarding powers in order to free themselves from partnerships with HEIs. Exley (2011) reported recently how Newcastle College Group and New College Durham have, for the first time within an FEC, been afforded the right to award their own foundation degrees. Seen as a landmark step towards institutions obtaining full degree-awarding powers, Newcastle is seeking to be able to award its own Bachelor degrees. This

move clearly marks how firmly FECs are embedded into the HE delivery sector.

The June 2011 White Paper 'Students at the Heart of the System' shocked the HE sector in terms of the fee structure that students will be faced with from September 2012. The changes in funding and fees are anticipated to lead to greater numbers of students studying locally and using HE in FE as a more cost effective option to going away from home for three years in order to study for a Bachelor Degree. With students facing tuition fees of up to £9,000 per annum within the university sector, the prospect of paying £6,000 per annum or less, for a two-year Foundation Degree with the option of completing Level 6 as a top up student at a university is likely to be one which some students will consider to be a more cost-effective alternative. Government policy appears to be in favour of encouraging HE in FE as illustrated by Baker (2012). He reports that 143 English FECs will get more HE student places (9,500) from a pool of 20,000 which have been earmarked for institutions charging £7,500 or less from September 2012.

In an uncertain economic (and increasingly so, political) climate, the future of HE in the UK is difficult to predict with any certainty. What is more certain, however, is that as a consequence of policy direction, increased HE access and participation, HE in FE has secured itself as being a credible and increasingly influential player in the UK Higher Education sector.

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