The foundation degree: a model for England and Australia?

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The foundation degree

A work-focused sub-bachelor qualification:
• **partners**: employer-college-university
• **features**: flexible ‘delivery’ + demand-led
• **functions**: skills-growth-progression-equity
• **markets**: young people + adults in work
Before 2000

An array of short-cycle vocational qualifications:
• skills formation: the English problem?
• intermediate levels: historic deficit?
• diplomas and certificates: weak demand?
• performance: ineffective and inefficient?
• mass phase: hegemony of bachelor degree?

The English experiment 1997-2010

• 50% participation target
• cost-sharing + fee-funded growth
• invention of new flagship qualification
• projected growth at associate professional
• change supply and ‘break’ pattern of demand
• key role for further education colleges
• employer engagement + co-funding
Design principles still in place?

• national benchmarks
• quality review
• funding premium (10%)
  but
• full-time models
• face-to-face modes
• survival of higher nationals

Colleges or universities?

• special mission to shared responsibility
• direct to indirect funding (‘franchising’)
• transfer + ‘top-up’
• colleges [57%]: full-time+
• universities [42%]= part-time+
• awarding powers for colleges
Free-standing or transfer?

- half of completers move to bachelor degree but
- implications of alignment
- experience of articulation
- concern about identity

Widening as well as increasing?

- significance for women and adults
- broad entry qualifications, including higher
- most studying or employed after graduation but
- narrow progression
- potential for ‘diversion’
Employer engagement?

• design, development and assessment
• private + public, sector skills councils
• support for employees (cash + kind)
• Foundation Degree Forward [fdf]

but

• variations in scope and intensity
• higher fees = employer demands

After 2010

• no favoured status
• premium ended + fdf abolished
• fee deregulation + student number control
• student loans for higher + further education
• opportunities for private providers
• rediscovery of apprenticeships
A preliminary appraisal

- growth target achieved
- dominant sub-bachelor qualification
- significant employer buy-in
- range and reach of coverage
- no common framework
- no change in shape