

The expansion & reshaping of higher education in Australia

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Context, purpose & key argument

- Context

- 2008 Bradley Review of HE having a big impact on tertiary education
- Was of HE, but VET sector adopted it as its own – VET doesn't get to have reviews – the democratic deficit
- Largely endorsed by government (unusual)
- Changes giving impetus to development of a single, more diversified tertiary education sector & blurring of sectoral divide

- Purpose

- Discuss the expansion & reshaping of HE in Australia
- Explore new institutional types that are emerging & the impact this will have on tertiary education in Australia
- Consider the policy implications

- Argument

- Can result in new, less visible forms of inequality unless we have a theory of knowledge related to notions of *higher education*

Overview

- Two ways of organising tertiary education
- Ending the Australian anomaly
- Policy analysis – broad drivers of change
- Nature of the expansion of HE
- Trow's analysis – elite, mass & universal HE
- A new type of HE institution in Australia
- Vocational higher education
- Why access to knowledge matters & why we need a theory of knowledge
- Access to what? Markets, social inclusion & social justice
- HE in TAFE here to stay: dilemmas, navigating sectoral divide & policy implications
- Is there a role for HERDSA?

Two ways of organising tertiary education

- Differentiated systems
 - Tracked VET & HE – relatively stable labour market destinations, allocate graduates to job vacancies & careers draw from differentiated knowledge base in each
 - Northern European systems, social partnerships to match graduates to jobs
- Unified systems
 - More fluid labour markets, changing knowledge & skills, employers need industry-specific but also broader knowledge & skills, less differentiated knowledge base
 - Anglophone liberal market economies – use market as mechanism match graduates & jobs

Ending the Australian anomaly

- Australia unusual: has a liberal market economy, but a differentiated system in a relatively undifferentiated labour market
 - Relatively undifferentiated school system (but VETiS changing that)
 - Differentiated tertiary education system
- Structure of tertiary education – two sectors
 - HE: public universities & small no. of private HE providers
 - VET: TAFEs & thousands of small providers, but TAFE the biggest
 - 5 dual-sector universities
 - 5 TAFEs (out of 59) deliver HE – more will
 - Increasing numbers of private providers deliver both
- Differentiated curriculum aligned with the sectors
 - Curriculum based – or input based in HE
 - Competency-based training in VET
- Pressure for change – blurring of the sectoral divide

Broad drivers for change

- Responding to changes in economy & society
 - Need more educated population
- Loose 'fit' between labour market destinations & qualifications
 - 30% VET graduates work in jobs associated with their qualification, diploma & degree graduates competing for same jobs
 - Hard to sustain argument for curricular differentiation & different sectors
- Government policy & government funding
 - Markets, demand driven etc
 - Equity & expansion - targets
 - Fulfilling higher qualification targets requires filling lower targets – need bigger pool – sectors will have to work together
- Sectors increasingly defined by qualifications accredited in each
- VET in schools, universities with VET – TAFE pressured above & below & within by private providers

Convergences & inconsistencies

- Has changed/will change
 - VET & HE in same 'group' in DEEWR
 - One tertiary education ministerial council
 - New AQF
 - HE standards
 - Fee-HELP for higher level VET
- Remaining inconsistencies
 - Tracked post-school system
 - Different curricular models not seen as a problem
 - Two regulators!!!
 - No public funding for HE in TAFE (yet)
 - Different definitions of equity, how to count students, etc
 - Different industrial awards, funding, reporting, quality assurance etc

3rd wave of HE expansion in Anglophone countries

- 1st period – 1950s & 1960s – new universities & new HE sector in UK & Australia, growth of system in US
- 2nd period – 1980s – creation of a unified *university* system
- 3rd period – 2000s - through 2nd, vocational tier of tertiary education
 - ‘Special mission’ of FE in UK – widening access & foundation degrees
 - US – 10 states CCs authorised offered degrees – vocational focus
 - NZ – polys – degrees – focused on ‘productive capability’
 - Canada – 3 provinces approved community colleges offer degrees
 - Australia? TAFE filling starting to fill this space
- Rationale - vocational ‘applied’ focus – better meet industry needs, more supportive pedagogy etc

Theorising this:

Trow's framework – elite, mass & universal HE systems

- Elite – up to 15%; mass – 16-50%; universal – 50% & above
- Elite – prepare social elite, curriculum 'shapes mind & character', highly structured academic & professional knowledge, strong boundaries between institution & society
 - Train future leaders in elite roles in government & learned professions
- Mass – prepare segment of population for broader range technical & economic leadership roles, curriculum modular, semi-structured, fuzzy boundaries between institution & society
 - Train experts for broader elite occupations – technical & economic roles
 - The technical & vocational begins its ascendancy over the liberal & general (historical – after WW2)

Universal systems

- Universal – prepare whole population for rapid social & technological change in advanced industrial society, boundaries between knowledge & everyday, & institution & society break down. Responding to external imperatives of market, focus on ‘trainability’
- Elite, mass & universal different aspects of one system, & sometimes in one institution (eg, medicine is elite everywhere)
 - Criticisms – very Anglo, didn’t reflect Europe, didn’t foresee pace of change & too sequential
 - Better to see as types of institutions that broadly outline development of HE, but most importantly, describe different types of HE institutions within one system
- Trow thought all this is good & necessary

A new type of institution – mixed-sector

- Blurring sectoral divide resulting in new type of institution
- Single-sectors: more than 97% of student load in one sector
- Mixed-sectors: at least 3% but no more than 20% of student load in minority sector
 - Mixed sectors integrate vertically
- Dual-sectors: at least 20% but less than 80% of their student load in each sector
 - Set up corporate, academic structures etc (still grizzle)
- 10 TAFEs offer HE in 5 states – will grow like topsy
 - NSW – the giant topples
- Mixed sector TAFEs mostly below 3% but trajectory towards it

Franchising – will it become a big model?

- Many TAFEs already had lot of experience
- Accelerate in 2012 – new funding system in universities
- Victorian government HE plan – TAFE to work with universities to expand access to HE in regions
- Got some merit, but also dangers
 - Funding, quality assurance needs to be in place
 - Need to build capacity in TAFE – particularly regions
- Learn from UK experience
 - 2 models – direct & indirect funding (franchising) for HE in FE
 - Benefits from government perspective
 - Economies of scale, quality of outcomes, HE experience for students
 - Both sides sometimes felt ripped off
 - Asymmetry in power, FE applicants to universities, Universities felt too expensive
 - Privy Council gave right to apply to accredit own foundation degrees



Warning, warning, warning

Vocational higher education

- Some are niche degrees, but mostly similar to those offered by ‘new universities’. Distinction through pedagogy & industry focus, & new ‘blend of the practical & theoretical’
 - “The teaching staff [in TAFE institutes] are new ... and they are more in touch with the world of work. They are more able to relate their teaching to practical outcomes. This is in contrast to professors who may be very smart and get published, but who are not in touch with the real world.”
- Emphasise industry knowledge & connections
- However, because most TAFE is competency-based training all participants emphasised theoretical rigour
- Mixed Economy group in the UK – distinctiveness is *vocational* HE
- What does it look like?

What vocational HE looks like – UK example

- “This frees colleges [being able to apply to the Privy Council] from a number of University–imposed constraints and in particular enables them to deal with employer demands for higher-level training with greater immediacy. Post-secondary vocational education and training is traditionally regarded as the specialism of colleges and the new legislation now extends this remit into vocational higher education.”
- “In the opinion of many colleges, progress towards a more skills-oriented curriculum has been impeded by the more traditional academic approach taken by validating institutions. As a result, many programmes continue to contain academic content which has little direct relevance to the work role of the student or the skills required by the employer “
 - Mixed Economy Group, UK

What vocational HE looks like – Australian examples

- Need “an evidence-based industry-focused applied learning methodology” TAFE
- “a more industry-driven and applied curriculum to meet the needs for a skilled workforce, with industry internships and projects forming an important part of the applied degree structure” TAFE
- Two questions:
 - How is this different to the ‘new universities’
 - If it is different, how far can it go before students access a different form of knowledge? What is distinctive about *higher* education

Why access to knowledge matters & why we need a theory of knowledge

- Social justice – provides access to ‘society’s conversation’ & debates & controversies in fields of practice
- Society uses theoretical knowledge to think ‘not yet thought’ & ‘unthinkable’, connect events & objects not obviously related & beyond present to alternative world – socially powerful
- Need access to *systems of meaning* if knowledge is to be under students’ control – if tied to the contextual can’t go beyond the contextual
- Young (2008: 10) those who emphasise increased choices available to students may have a theory of *access* but not a theory of *knowledge*:
 - “... there is hardly a debate about the consequences of creating such choices when many students may lack the cultural resources to make them. Without an explicit concept of knowledge acquisition, policies that give priority to widening participation and student choice could well be the basis for new, albeit less visible, inequalities.”

Education distributes access to knowledge, identity & desire (Bernstein)

- ‘Distributive rules’ mediate:
 - Access (who gets higher education)
 - Curriculum & research (what do they get)
 - Placement (where does it lead them - & with what wider social consequence)
 - Protected space (to think the unthinkable) (Brennan)
- A ‘new’ university – students will develop:
 - ‘the new knowledge & skills required for the development of the knowledge economy’ & also ‘strengthen the work values employers look for in new employees’
- An ‘old’ university – students will be:
 - ‘academically excellent; knowledgeable across disciplines; leaders in communities; attuned to culturally diversity; active global citizens’

Access to 'what': markets, social inclusion & social justice

- Social inclusion through markets – creation of the market individual with market attributes
- Access to what? Some pressure on elite universities, but resulting in further stratification of already stratified system so that TAFEs will be below new universities, & within TAFEs, VET is below HE
 - HE in TAFE students – uncertain student identity & concerns about status
 - One associate degree student tells people she is studying 'half a degree' because when she says she is studying engineering people say 'who!' & she explains 'it is only half a degree'
 - Another 'I tell them the course name [he is enrolled in] and they are usually blinded by the big words'.
- Social inclusion replaced social justice as key concern – focus is on deficits of the excluded & need to get them included, but no real focus on *what* they are included in – no real focus on social distribution of wealth & disadvantage

HE in TAFE here to stay: dilemmas

- Universities & TAFEs – compete or complement?
 - Lost opportunity to negotiate over distinct *provision*
 - Pathways will help increase the status of HE in TAFE
- Tighter links to industry raises questions about academic freedom & autonomy;
- The qualifications of teaching staff not as high as in universities
- TAFE is not funded to undertake research
- Students are more likely to be academically under-prepared
- Sectoral boundaries *will* arise – how can we manage them?
 - Boundaries can enable or constrain – important transition for TAFE students to *be* HE; staff pathways
- Concerns about economies of scale for HE culture, student experience
- Doesn't have the institutional resources of universities to develop curriculum, support teaching etc
 - Universities had 150 years of public investment

Navigating the sectoral divide – important difference between mixed-sectors & dual-sectors

- Australian dual-sectors creating mechanisms to transcend the sectoral divide
 - Single academic board – while teaching & programs remain sectorally differentiated (but for how long?)
- Mixed-sectors (in UK & here) mechanisms in place to recreate sectoral boundaries, while keeping teaching & programs vertically integrated (but for how long?)
- In own way each supports students (& staff?) to navigate sectoral divide & transitions
 - Students need an experience of transition
 - What to do about staff career pathways?

HE in TAFE here to stay: policy implications

- What is *higher* education & how do we know when we see it?
 - Development of standards in various disciplines by disciplinary experts a 1st step – need an anchor, club has got too big beyond the elite
 - Have to work out how to use them
- TAFE needs support – as in England – but question doesn't arise under markets
- Controversy over research – no surrender on scholarly culture
- Need consistent policies & *public funding* – equity issue
- Build capacity in TAFE
 - Economies of scale
 - Support to develop academic & governance structures
 - Scholarly cultures
 - Staff access to research higher degrees

Is there a role for HERDSA?

- HERDSA emphasising *tertiary* education
- “The Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia is a scholarly society for people committed to the advancement of higher and tertiary education. It promotes the development of higher education policy, practice and the study of teaching and learning.”
- Particular challenges with HE in TAFE – requires analysis, research & including HE teachers in HERDSA
- Link HE teachers with scholarly communities
 - Go beyond the institution, develop programs of support

Conclusion

- Need public policy, not just markets
 - Notion of what HE is – not just a role for the regulatory bodies
 - Support to develop HE, HE cultures & scholarship
 - Support for student and staff transitions
- Move towards a single, but more diversified tertiary education sector
- Government policy will matter for shaping sectoral relations
 - Funding & regulatory policies – what will happen after 2012?
- Haven't discussed what happens at the lower levels – this fundamental, danger that lower level VET becomes residual as strong TAFEs become polytechnics
- For researchers & practitioners – particular challenges
 - Our research & theorists as sectorally differentiated as the sectors
 - Not enough any more – we must engage with the other sectors