



What does HE in FE have to contribute to the future of Learning Development?

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Presentation abstract

This presentation provided a viewpoint on the complex relationship between HE in FE and learning development, drawing on two pieces of research carried out during 2023 as part of PhD study at Lancaster University. Both studies support the premise that HE in FE is often overlooked in research and that practitioners have limited access and time to participate in research, leading to a lack of FE practitioner voices in discussions about learning development.

The first study focuses on the relationship, and potential clash, between policy and inclusive classroom pedagogy in an environment where most students have non-traditional routes into HE (Benson-Egglenton, 2022). It used a Bourdieu-infused critical discourse analysis to look at how inclusive pedagogy is viewed in HE in FE strategy documents and how this can contribute to wider discussions about learning development (Fairclough, 2003; 2015; Bathmaker, 2015; Ferrare and Apple, 2015).

In the second study, an adapted version of the Delphi method was used to develop a collaborative and iterative approach between researcher and participants to look at how developments including AI have influenced inclusive pedagogical practices from a social justice perspective.

It was found that whilst HE in FE practitioners are often at the forefront of inclusive pedagogy, and are enthusiastic advocates for it, they are resource-limited in terms of the reach and impact of this expertise. Pedagogical approaches that might be retrofitted to large institutions grow organically in HE in FE due to factors such as proximity, necessity, and student/tutor relationship development over an extended period. This can provide

valuable lessons for colleagues in other institutions about how to implement and encourage similar approaches. There are clear benefits to be gained for learning development and developers increasing engagement with colleagues in FE and fostering opportunities for them to share their wealth of knowledge.

Keywords: further education; staff development; inclusive pedagogy.

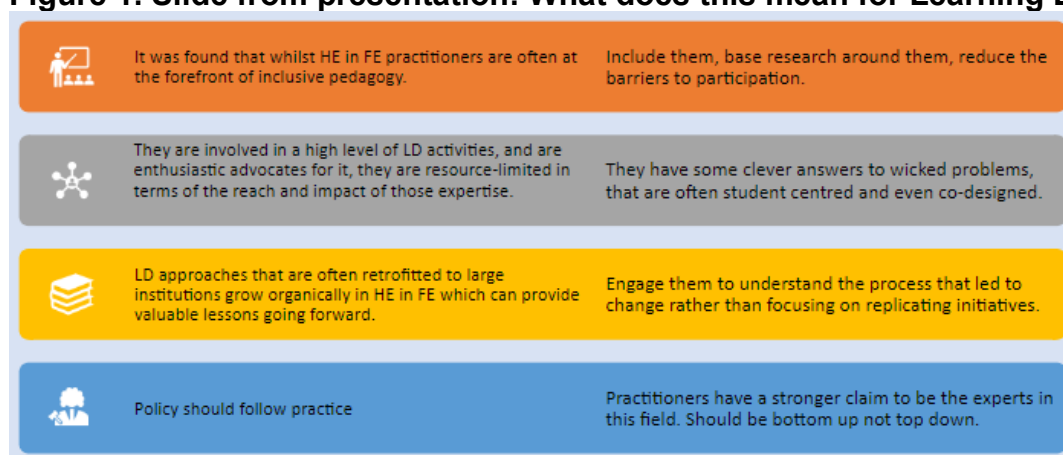
Community response

It was refreshing to see findings presented in this session that focused on experiences and research of HE in FE, an area that feels under-represented despite 5% of HE students studying at FE providers.

The tensions of researching in this space were articulated well by the presenter, utilising findings from two studies involving FE learning development practitioners. As part of study one, the community particularly resonated with the use of Bourdieu’s field to reflect the complexities and interrelated dimensions of working between and across areas. To conclude in this section, a note on the unrealised possibilities provided a nod to the potential of more representation in the future.

A comment from the community highlighted alignment between experiences of HE in FE and the development work happening in universities classed as small, where many of the same challenges are shared, particularly in fostering opportunities to share knowledge.

Figure 1. Slide from presentation: What does this mean for Learning Development?



Given the presentation's focus on what HE in FE can contribute, participants left the session resolute that there is a lot that has been, and can be, contributed from practitioners. It was encouraging and apt to have this session presented at ALDcon24 to a wider audience and I hope it will encourage others working in this space to further share their practice.

Next steps and additional questions

Recognising the value of HE in FE learning development practice was highlighted in this session, with a series of recommendations and findings presented as shown in Figure 1. Are there any next steps planned following the research activity to take these forward? Are there any activities those of us working within HE settings can do to encourage more contributions from HE in FE colleagues? Are there any further plans to help share and disseminate this research you would like to highlight?

Author's reflection

I appreciate the additional reflections and am pleased to have used this platform to raise awareness and profile of HE in FE practitioners. With limited resources and lack of access to research-forward spaces, my request to other HE settings is that they continue to reach out with their networks and actively seek ways to invite colleagues from HE in FE into those spaces in meaningful ways.

Acknowledgements

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The author and contributors did not use generative AI technologies in the creation of this manuscript.

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