

Scoping the Duals: Structural Challenges of Combining Further and Higher Education in Post-Secondary Institutions

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Abstract

Dual sector universities (or duals) are a growing international phenomenon that cut across the divide that typically exists in post-secondary education. Duals combine 'further' and 'higher' education within a single institution providing enhanced opportunities for student transition between post-secondary sectors. This paper reports the results of an international survey of duals in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the UK. The results indicate that duals operate divergent operational models in managing the structural challenges of cross-sector education characterised as unitary and binary. Many duals contend that state and provincial government regulation militates against the integration of structures, processes and human resources within a dual sector context.

Introduction

On an international basis, post-secondary education tends to be separated into two distinct sectors. In many non-English-speaking countries, and certainly in mainland Europe, the post-secondary divide falls along a vocational and academic divide (Pratt, 1997, p. 309). In the UK and the majority of other English-speaking jurisdictions, however, the divide is characterised by a separation of 'further' from 'higher' education. Nonetheless, the massification of education (Scott, 1995) has resulted in a blurring of the boundaries between these sectors, particularly in the English-speaking world. As part of this blurring, the last 10 years has seen a growth in the number of dual sector institutions (or 'duals') that

span the sector divide. Examples can be found in the UK, South Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Duals represent a distinct type of modern university. They include Thames Valley University in the UK formed through a merger between the former university and a further education college (Garrod, 2005) and a number of universities in the state of Victoria, Australia including Swinburne, Victoria, RMIT, Ballarat and Charles Darwin (Doughney, 2000). They are characterised by significant provision and commitment to further *and* higher education, provision of seamless progression and reverse 'articulation' opportunities for students.

Duals have been created through a number of routes. Sometimes this has occurred through merger of universities with further education colleges, community colleges or other post-secondary sector institutions such as Thames Valley University in the UK and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in South Africa. Some duals are created simply through a re-designation of the work that they do by the relevant qualifications authority while others are re-designated as duals through a development of their qualification portfolio, such as Kwantlen University College in Canada and Unitec in New Zealand. Whether through merger, re-designation, or internal development, the creation of duals has been prompted by a variety of social, political and market-based pressures. The principal espoused reason across national contexts is the desire to develop 'seamlessness' within the post-secondary education system in the interests of social justice by improving progression opportunities into higher education (Dennison, 2006; Garrod, 2005; Webster, 2006). National factors have also played a role in justifying the creation of duals. In post-apartheid South Africa, there was a concern to rationalise the number of post-secondary providers and eradicate ingrained racial divisions within the sector. In Canada, university colleges that offer both diplomas at further education level and bachelor degrees at higher level resulted, in part, from a concern to make post-secondary education more accessible for populations in rural areas in the province of British Columbia (Dennison, 2006). At a conceptual level, all duals offer the potential to realise the vision of lifelong learning crossing the boundary between the sectors that exist in post-secondary education.

Little empirical evidence exists with respect to the ways in which duals manage the diversity that results from operating across the divide. In this paper, such evidence is provided through a typology that is developed on the basis of an international survey of duals as a means of scoping, reflecting and capturing the diversity of this grouping of institutions. The typology derived from interviews with institutional leaders and other

senior managers was tested through the use of a questionnaire. This survey instrument includes questions focusing on institutional strategies for faculty and curriculum structures, campus organisation, institutional governance, academic employment contracts, student support systems, and conceptions of further and higher education. The paper will further capture the effect of system-sensitive factors affecting the development of duals across national contexts. It represents the first stage of an ongoing research project, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, examining the challenges of managing across post-secondary boundaries. The analysis of the structural and strategic issues confronting duals contained in the paper will inform further research focusing on the challenges facing academic middle managers at the faculty and departmental level.

What is a dual?

Before discussing the emergence and identity of duals it is important to reflect on the question of definition. What, in other words, is a dual? Definitions of higher education and further education in key UK government reports have emphasised the difference purely on administrative arrangements for existing institutions rather than fundamental defining characteristics. The Robbins Report (1963, p. 317) defined universities for statistical purposes as institutions in receipt of a Treasury grant, although in later chapters of the report the term was broadened to cover Colleges of Advanced Technology and certain other types of institutions. The same report defined further education simply on a default basis as comprising all other institutions providing post-school education. More than 30 years later the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) made a similarly bureaucratic distinction. Furthermore, nomenclature differs across national contexts. For example, this form of education is referred to as further education in the UK and Technical and Further Education (or TAFE) in Australia.

There is a blurring of the gap between further and higher education, as indicated in the UK in the Leitch (2006) Report and in the grant announcement for higher education for 2007–2008 from the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. These developments suggest that contemporary post-secondary education is becoming more of a continuum. At either end of this continuum there may be strong arguments for specialist institutions, but the large area in the centre of the continuum would suggest a role for institutions that span the post-secondary boundary.

While a dual in a unitary system of higher education, such as the UK or Australia, would normally represent a merger between a further education or TAFE provider and a university, the pattern differs in more stratified systems of post-secondary education. For example, in New Zealand there are four categories of public post-secondary education including universities and polytechnics. Unitec is officially categorised as a polytechnic but delivers a high percentage of university-level studies on which basis it would claim to be a 'dual' (Webster, 2006). In post-apartheid South Africa, a series of mergers and incorporations have led to a reduction in the number of publicly funded post-secondary institutions from 36 to 23. Following these mergers, six 'comprehensive' universities have been created to provide a full spectrum of post-secondary education. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University is one such example bringing together the two former universities (Port Elizabeth University and Port Elizabeth campus of Vista University) with a primary focus on degree-level and postgraduate work with a technikon (PE Technikon) that focused predominantly on sub-degree provision.

Duals have also been created through re-designation of an institution's remit and title. In the province of British Columbia in Canada, a number of community colleges were created during the 1960s and 1970s originally based on the Californian model of institutions offering 2-year programmes leading to the award of a diploma. In the late 1980s, the provincial government created five 'university colleges' or 'comprehensive' community colleges able to offer baccalaureate degrees in collaboration with established universities. More recently, one of these university colleges has been newly designated as a 'comprehensive' university while another has been subsumed as part of the University of British Columbia (Dennison, 2006). In a recent provincial government proposal, the university colleges will become 'regional universities' with a comprehensive post-secondary remit (Plant, 2007). Unitec in New Zealand was similarly the result of the conversion of the Carrington Polytechnic into an Institute of Technology in 1994.

Another difficulty in discussing duality is that while at one level it is comparatively simple to define a dual by reference to any institution that contains students registered on both higher and further education courses, there is a question of the extent to which the institution is committed to each sector through student registrations. Most UK universities have at least a small percentage of students registered on publicly funded non-higher education courses such as access programmes or adult education provision. Many universities have also entered into collaborative arrangements with further education providers short of

merger through franchising elements of higher education provision. It would appear perverse to define universities with a small percentage of further education students or with collaborative arrangements with a partner college as a dual.

There is no settled definition of a dual by student numbers across educational categories. However, equal dedication to both further and higher education has been espoused by institutions laying claim to a dual identity. Thames Valley University (UK), for example, is an institution 'with equal commitment given to both higher and further education' (Garrod, 2005, p. 57) while Unitec in New Zealand espouses 'a commitment to seamless educational pathways extending to the highest levels' (Webster, 2006, p. 8). These statements are indicative of a commitment to create a new type of institution and challenge ingrained cultural attitudes and organisational structures that reinforce the division between further and higher education.

Although much has been written about the conceptual and philosophical difference between a further and a higher education (see, e.g. Barnett, 1990; White, 1997; Moodie, 2002) in policy documents, the difference is rarely expressed in epistemological or other conceptual terms. Rather, the language employed at the policy level reflects White's (1997) contention that the difference between the sectors is essentially bureaucratic rather than philosophical. By breaching the separation of the post-secondary sector, duals raise unique challenges to those bureaucratic systems.

Framing of the research

In spanning conventional sector boundaries, duals pose significant challenges for both senior managers and academics working within them. To gain an understanding of structural and strategic issues, exploratory interviews were held with key institutional informants in the UK and Australia in July 2006. The key informants were senior academic managers including vice-chancellors, pro-vice-chancellors, heads of faculty and others with significant managerial responsibility at an operational level within the institution. These discussions focused on the cultural and organisational challenges faced by senior academic managers in managing a dual sector institution.

The principal theme emergent from these discussions may be characterised as the extent to which duals seek to integrate further and higher education processes, structures, and resources within a single organisation. One approach is to strive to be *unitary* by integrating

processes, structures and resources. This approach seeks, wherever feasible, to integrate provision across academic units and campus location(s), and may also result in the creation of a single governing body and a single employment contract to cover academic staff teaching in both further and higher education. At a conceptual level, such a strategy makes a concerted attempt to challenge the separation between further and higher education academic cultures while, at a more prosaic level, sees potential financial and market-based advantages in integrating support services for educational services across sector boundaries.

By contrast, an alternative strategy is to cope with the challenge of duality by keeping the institution *binary*. Here, the institution maintains separate further and higher education divisions. This kind of dual operates as an 'umbrella' organisation seeking to maximise opportunities for students to move between the sectors and exploiting economies of scale and efficiency gains in resources rather than seeking to integrate processes and structures that challenge the divide between further education and higher education. In this type of dual academic staff on the further education or TAFE side of the organisation are kept in separate organisational divisions and even on separate campuses from higher education academic staff. Discrete governance arrangements are maintained and academic contracts or career ladders do not enable staff to move easily between the sectors.

The distinction between unitary and binary duals may appear stark, and it may be more instructive to think of these characterisations as representing extreme ends of a continuum. However, the distinction provides a framework for understanding organisational responses to the challenge of duality and informed the construction of a questionnaire. This survey instrument was designed to explore the distinction between unitary and binary duals and seek out the rationale behind strategic decisions affecting the organisation of institutions as duals.

Scoping analysis

Questionnaires were sent to the vice-chancellor, president or equivalent office holder of 41 institutions from the UK, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. These institutions were selected on the basis of publicly available data (such as university websites) and personal contacts that indicated that they contained a mix of students studying programmes at both further and higher education level. These included a number of colleges of further and higher education in the UK. A total of 31 institutions responded to the questionnaire.

The limited international scope of the survey was determined, in part, by the existing membership of an international network of duals developed by one of the co-authors. It was also limited to institutions in national contexts with former colonial connections to British, and more particularly English, higher education. While it is recognised that these national systems have their own distinctive political and cultural dimensions, there is a common heritage of cultural values derived from the 'mother country' (Duke, 2004). The survey thus excludes consideration of continental European post-compulsory systems that have not been shaped by distinctive English cultural attitudes to industry and vocational education (Wiener, 1981).

Nomenclature

While 31 institutions responded to the questionnaire, only 19 institutions identified themselves as 'duals': seven from both the UK and Australia, three from Canada and one each from South Africa and New Zealand. Twelve institutions stated that they did not consider themselves to be a dual for a variety of reasons. The most commonly stated was that either they had no further education-registered students or they confined their activities in this sector to partnership agreements with specialist providers. Limited information meant that it was not always possible to identify the extent to which an institution made provision for operating across the boundary. One UK institution stated that it did not consider itself a dual even though it had a small amount of further education provision. Another UK respondent felt unable to complete the survey as it is currently splitting off its higher education provision to create a university partnership with two local universities. Finally, an Australian institution stated that it was no longer a dual but had been until 2005.

Among those adopting the dual nomenclature there is clearly a wide variation in the way in which this term is interpreted. This is illustrated by the fact that there was no common pattern in the balance of further and higher education within duals although most contained at least 10 per cent of students from both sectors. The balance between further education and higher education, as represented by student numbers, is widely divergent. For example, one Australian institution defined itself as a dual on the basis of a student population consisting of just 2 per cent registered at further education level at a single regional campus. At the other extreme, a UK college of further education affirmed its duality on the basis of 2.5 per cent of students registered on higher education courses. Predictably, duals with origins as further education or commu-

nity colleges tend to have a larger percentage of students registered at further education level. Duals with university roots are typically dominated by higher education provision.

Some institutions asserted that they were seeking to define themselves as something 'more' than a dual. One institution identified itself as 'triple' sector. This referred to the fact that it provided post-16 compulsory schooling in addition to further and higher education. Two other Canadian duals characterised their institutional identities as 'comprehensives', arguing that they were forging a new type of university.

Academic structure

Institutions self-identifying themselves as duals were asked a number of subsequent questions. These concerned whether or not academic staff were organised in cross-sector academic units (such as departments, schools or faculties); commonly taught at both further and higher education levels; and were expected to undertake research even if their duties were predominantly at further education level. Institutions were also asked to comment on whether or not their curriculum structures were designed to facilitate progression (or 'articulation') between further and higher education and if administrative support was divided or integrated in supporting the needs of academic programmes across the sectors (Figure 1).

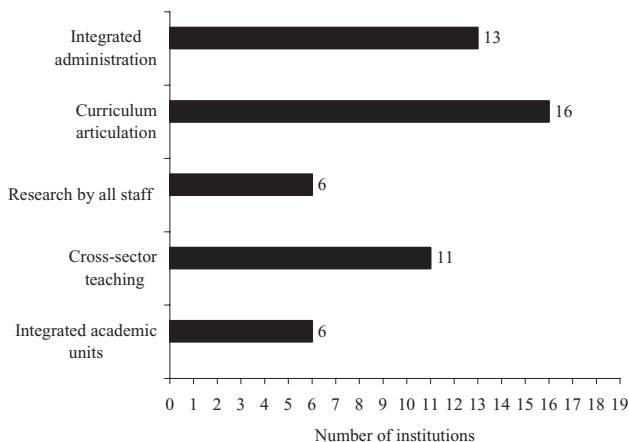


Figure 1 Academic structures

The overwhelming majority of duals claim that their academic structures facilitate student progression within the institution between further and higher education programmes. This is, perhaps, the defining characteristic of a dual even though a small minority candidly admit that their current academic structures are still developing to improve student transition.

Most duals maintain separate academic structures for further and higher education staff. In an Australian context, in particular, it is common to divide higher education from TAFE staff. There is, though, more likely to be an expectation that academic staff will teach courses across sector boundaries than exclusively in one sector and that administrative support services are integrated to support all areas of academic provision rather than divided. However, the nature of this administrative integration is more likely with respect to institution-wide services such as information technology, student services and learning resources rather than faculty support.

Only a minority of duals expect academic staff across both sectors to engage in research. This appears to be partly linked to contractual differences between staff (see later), which, in most national contexts, does not require further education staff to be research active. Where respondents indicated that engaging in research was an expectation for further education academic staff, this term tended to be defined more broadly as Boyer's (1990) different forms of 'scholarship'. Phrases used to describe this work included 'community engagement', 'business development', 'extension work' and 'creative work'. These responses indicate an expectation that staff will contribute beyond their teaching remit in some type of scholarly activity or service work rather than as 'discovery-based' researchers (Boyer, 1990).

Campus organisation

Geography plays an important role in the rationale for duality. This is particularly the case in Australia and Canada where dual sector provision is seen as a means of serving the needs of rural populations often located a considerable distance from the nearest university. This sometimes results in further education-only campuses, which are also to be found in a small number of duals in the UK.

The survey revealed that most duals do not separate further and higher education provision either within the same campus or on geographically separate sites. However, 6 of the 19 duals do separate further education from higher education on different campuses and two separate

them on the same campus. Five institutions also contain a mix of single sector and dual sector campuses. This pattern of organisation is more common among Australian duals than those in other national contexts.

Three institutions have become duals largely through government re-designation of parts of their provision as higher rather than further education. These are often institutions that specialise in a specific disciplinary or occupational field such as the arts, catering or agriculture and have an established history of operating as a single educational entity. As such, these institutions are among the least likely to divide further from higher education on an intra- or inter-campus basis.

Governance

Most duals have created a single academic board or senate at the apex of its academic governance structure with the overwhelming majority ensuring that further and higher education academic staff are represented within such a forum (Figure 2). Institutional governance, though, does not take place without reference to the external environment, and in this respect, the need to respond to sector-specific planning, audit, and funding arrangements imposed by state and provincial government agencies is particularly pertinent. Where duals maintain separate governance structures, and divided arrangements for strategic planning, these tend to be explained by reference to the need to respond to sector-specific planning and audit demands.

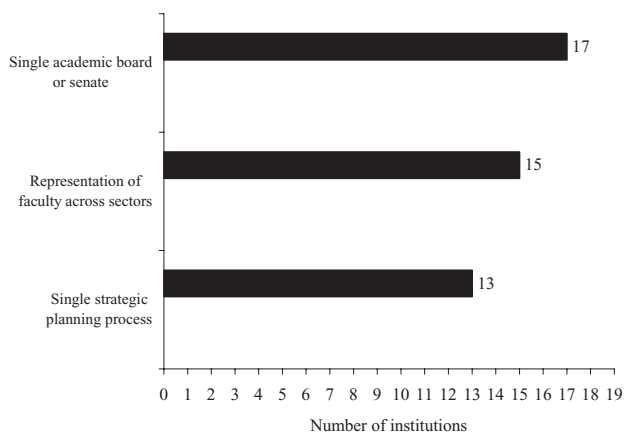


Figure 2 Governance

In both the UK and Australia there is greater power vested in regional-level funding bodies with responsibility for further education while higher education is more accountable to agencies at the national level. Typical comments in this respect included:

FE courses are funded by the state not federal government and there is a need to respond to state priorities.

(There is a) broad university plan but separate strategic plans for FE and HE.

The LSC [Learning and Skills Council¹] requires an annual development plan.

Academic employment contracts

Academic employment contracts are one of the most significant challenges facing duals. In most national contexts there are historic divisions based on separate trade unions organisations and collective agreements. Given the barriers to developing a single contract, it was perhaps surprising that 11 duals indicated that they had a single contract with the same terms and conditions of employment available for academic staff. However, most of the duals with single contracts were derived principally from a further education context. The duals with single contracts are predominantly those that are dominated by provision in one sector and offer only a small proportion of either further or higher education courses.

Nine of the respondents identified differences in academic title and appointments and promotion criteria between academic staff in further and higher education. This was explained normally by reference to the need to align contracts for higher education staff to added expectations for research and scholarship.

Student support and services

The nature of duality has been considered, up to this point in the paper, largely from the perspective of academic, administrative and managerial staff. However, it is important to consider the way in which students are affected by duality. To this end, institutions were asked to comment on whether student support and service mechanisms were integrated or divided and if a single student body, such as an association, union or guild, represented student interests on campus. A single student body was evident in 16 duals and the same number had integrated student support services.

However, two Australian duals pointed out that under federal legislation compulsory student unionism is prohibited. According to one respondent institution, before the advent of this legislation, students from both sectors had belonged to the same union, but subsequently, this was no longer the case.

Differences in provision for further and higher education students are normally marginal and confined to catering to particular additional needs. Examples include basic support for students on the cusp of entry to higher education in areas such as literacy, essay writing and library skills. Additional financial support is also sometimes offered to students registered on higher education programmes where limited central or provincial government support for full-time study can lead to learners facing problems of personal debt. One Australian institution also referred to the additional support needs of its Vocational Education and Training students who were almost exclusively drawn from the aboriginal population. It was stated that these students had social and cultural needs different from those of non-indigenous students.

Conceptions of philosophical difference

Respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which the educational goals of further education and higher education differed, if at all. Responses to this question were analysed on the basis of epistemological, teleological and hierarchical differences drawn from an existing framework (Moodie, 2002). In the context of this analysis, these distinctions provide a useful means of categorising different types of responses to the question. Epistemological differences refer to those comments that relate to alternative conceptions of the nature of knowledge, the teleological category is concerned with remarks related to the aims of further and higher education while other responses indicate that differences pertain to perceptions of hierarchical difference in that they refer to disparities based on status and power (Table 1).

The epistemological basis of further education was explained largely by reference to the development of skills and competencies while the nature of knowledge in higher education was considered to be more general and conceptually complex in nature.

The teleological distinction between the pursuit of education for extrinsic and intrinsic reasons may be traced back to Aristotle and is an abiding dichotomy in debates about the purposes of education (Moodie, 2002). However, most respondents did not make a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic purposes. Instead, they attributed different extrin-

TABLE 1
Conceptions of philosophical difference

Basis	Further education	Higher education
Epistemological	'Skills'; 'competency development and improvement'; 'practical'	'Generalist'; 'complex understanding of key concepts'
Teleological	'Competence to "do" '; 'prepare learners for work'; 'improvement in literacy and numeracy'; 'vocational'	'Build capability in research'; 'high level of transferability in the employment context'
Hierarchical	'workplace requirements'; 'designed for access by the general public'; 'low level key skills'	'At a level of professionalism'; 'best international practice'

sic purposes to further and higher education, associating the former with preparing students for the workplace and the latter with a capability to be more 'flexible' and possess higher-order skills such as the ability to carry out independent research. The emphasis on extrinsic goals for both further and higher education provision may be related to the fact that the educational provision of duals is focused mainly in professional and vocational areas of the curriculum.

Hierarchical distinctions were also apparent with respondents referring to professionalism and international practice in a higher education context. Further education, by contrast, is regarded as offering more short-course provision at a local level and is perceived to be more accessible to a broader section of the population. Further education was characterised in one response as available for the 'general public' rather than for the 'typical student'. A key hierarchical difference between further education and higher education is the bachelor and further degree awarding powers enjoyed by higher education institutions. By contrast, further education institutions must look to external bodies to accredit and recognise their provision (Temple, 2001). This key distinction, however, may be eroded under proposals currently under consideration in the UK Parliament for further education providers to be given the right to accredit 2-year 'foundation' degrees equivalent to an associate degree in a North American context.

The following comment encapsulated the view that further education can be distinguished from higher education on epistemological, teleological and hierarchical grounds:

Further education is of course more vocational and more concerned with 'low level' skills than is higher education.

However, despite the prevalence of such conventional comments, a number of duals stated that they did not distinguish between the educational aims of further and higher education or thought that the aims were 'very similar'. This was explained largely by reference to a teleological rationale:

The philosophical goals are the same. We aim to prepare all our students for 'leadership, service and success' so that they will all be engaged citizens.

Echoing White (1997), others contended that bureaucratic demands represented the only real difference between further and higher education:

In our experience the educational goals are the same but the bureaucracy including validations and assessment management is hugely different.

Moreover, the effect of bureaucratic demands was evident in some of the language used in connection with explaining the educational aims of further education in particular. References to 'defined standards' and 'best value education and training' are illustrative in this respect.

Summary

This survey has tested out the distinction made at the beginning of this paper between unitary and binary duals. Unitary duals seek to integrate structures and processes to maximise integration between further and higher education, often despite contrary pressures for separation through government funding and audit regimes. Binary duals, while seeking to maximise opportunities for internal articulation between further and higher education, essentially maintain separate structures and operations. The countervailing pressures are summarised in Figure 3.

Responses to the questions posed in relation to the structural components identified in Figure 3 indicated that while duals have successfully integrated many elements of their internal structures, especially student support and services and campus development, there are other areas, notably academic structures and contracts, where the binary model is hard to break down.

The unitary/binary dichotomy is a useful shorthand for what is, in reality, a continuum. Scoring each institution as unitary/binary on each of the survey questions provides a guide as to where on that continuum

Unitary/seamless	Structural component	Binary/joined
	Academic structures	
Staff housed in integrated faculty structures	← →	Separate faculty organisation for staff by sector
	Campus development	
Cross-sector provision available at all locations	← →	Distinct campuses/sites by sector
	Institutional governance	
Single senate or academic board	← →	Separate governing bodies
	Academic contracts	
A single contract for academic staff	← →	All academic staff on separate contracts
	Student support and services	
Full integration of information and support services	← →	Distinct support services by sector
	System-sensitive factors	
Cross-sector funding and quality audit arrangements	← →	Funding and quality arrangements organised by sector
Full integration of further and higher education structures, processes, systems, and cultures to develop a seamless articulation		Maintenance of separate further and higher education divisions but maximising opportunities for forward and reverse articulation

Figure 3 A force-field analyses.

each respondent institution sits. Dividing the continuum into four equal quarters, we find that 10 of the respondents sit in the most unitary quarter/section, 6 in the second quartile, 2 in the next and only 1 in the most binary quartile. These results confirm that duals are attempting something different in that the majority of respondents have made significant strides in merging their further and higher education provision (unitary quartile). Nonetheless, the sample institutions lie across the full range of the continuum highlighting the difficulty of achieving complete integration.

A similar analysis of each individual question across all respondents indicates that the most integration has been achieved with regard to representative student bodies (e.g. Students Union) and in establishing a single academic board/senate that considers both further and higher education issues. The next most integrated are curricula across the sectors that are designed to support progression, administrative support and student support. These all have profound implications for the student experience and perhaps offer an insight into the particular role that duals can play in this area.

The least integrated area is that of research expectations across staff teaching in the two sectors in that research is only expected of further education staff in 2 of the 19 respondent institutions. The next most binary issues were the separation of further and higher education academic units, different contractual arrangements for further and higher education staff, and a separate appointments and promotion procedure for further and higher education staff.

It is acknowledged that this survey is far from comprehensive. This is partly because of the number of institutions that, on the basis of a substantially cross-sector student population, are *de facto* duals but are reluctant to adopt the nomenclature. Of the institutions that responded, stating that they did not consider themselves to be duals, several do contain directly funded students on both further and higher education programmes.

There are also institutions that lay claim to a dual identity when politically or financially expedient on the basis of very limited student numbers across the two sectors or organisational integration. These 'convenience claimers' include a number of Australian institutions with a limited number of non-complying national awards or customised programmes for corporate or community groups.

It is further recognised that an alternative methodology might be more appropriate in developing a deeper understanding of the historic divide between the further and higher education sectors (Temple, 2001). While in a British context, this divide has been characterised as an 'enormous gulf' (Trow, 1987), it is also apparent in other national contexts, especially outside North America.

Finally, while the distinction between institutions on the basis of research or teaching intensity may oversimplify historical antecedents and current missions, it is acknowledged that the vast majority of duals are drawn from teaching-led cultures. It would be likely that the structural and cultural differences in merging a research-intensive university with a further education provider might be even more profound than

those faced by the institutions in this survey. Possibly just one institution in the survey fitted such a profile. It is also possible that concerns about the differences between the aims of further and higher education might reflect more emphasis on intrinsic rather than extrinsic aims if this question was posed to institutional leaders of research-intensive universities.

Conclusions

The survey indicated that many duals are in a state of flux: moving in different directions along the continuum between the unitary and binary models. Duality is a comparatively recent phenomenon. In some national contexts, notably Canada, institutions have adopted a unitary approach while elsewhere, especially in Australia, duals have often maintained a high degree of separation in terms of campus organisation and faculty structures. Nonetheless, the survey indicates that there is a considerable national variation also underscoring the variety of responses to the challenges set by operating across the sectoral divide.

The origins of duals appear to play a significant role in the way they approach the challenge of duality. Institutions that have become duals through re-designation of title rather than merger tend to have more integrated structures as they have not been faced with the task of bringing together two different post-compulsory cultures. In these duals, the prevailing institutional culture is less challenged. By contrast, duals that have arisen as a result of merger need to fundamentally rethink their organisational structure to ensure that they are representative of both higher *and* further education perspectives. Otherwise there is a risk that a merger with insufficient integration of academic staff and adaptation of processes and student services may result in the marginalisation of the institutional culture of the former further education institution by that of the university partner.

Differences in ways of approaching the challenge of duality also appear to be strongly related to the regulatory environment created by government. In some contexts, such as the UK and Australia, the further and higher education sectors are starkly divided through regulation and funding mechanisms. These requirements reinforce sector divisions and promote a binary model as the 'path of least resistance'. This is reinforced by national and regional requirements in relation to academic contracts, strategic planning and the auditing of the quality of provision. Institutions frequently expressed a sense of frustration with a regulatory environment that presents time-consuming demands out-of-step with a

dual identity. The following comment from a UK institution is illustrative in this respect:

The questionnaire seems not to cover the greatest challenge to dual sector universities, which is caused by the often conflicting requirements of the two funding councils – LSC and HEFCE – and the differing ways in which they regulate the sector. Nor does it cover the widely differing practices of QAA and Ofsted. These two major challenges consume a lot of time and resource.

The irony is that while government policy often reinforces the sector divide, there is a strong rhetorical support among politicians for seamless progression opportunities that duals may be best placed to provide (Blunkett, 2000; Maslen, 2006). While the university sector has been subjected to criticism for a lack of diversity, duals provide a much under-researched example of differentiation to meet societal needs on an international basis.

Note

1. The Learning and Skills Council has responsibility for funding courses at further education level in an English context.

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