

Participation and policy in further and higher education

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The Research Projects & Teams

- *Degrees of Success? The transition from VET to HE* - Geoff Hayward, Hubert Ertl, Michael Hölscher, Harriet Dunbar-Godet
- *Universal access and dual regimes of further and higher education* - Gareth Parry, Anne-Marie Bathmaker, Greg Brooks, David Smith
- *Widening participation in higher education: A quantitative analysis* - Haroon Chowdry, Claire Crawford, Lorraine Dearden, Alissa Goodman, Anna Vignoles

Sector separation and the English experiment

How do separate sectors of further and higher education impact on efforts to widen participation in undergraduate education?

Impact on: system

Separate regimes for further and higher education have evolved despite the lack of a developed rationale



Further and higher education are not regarded as parts of a common enterprise

Impact on: policy

Policy development for further-higher education is uneven, unstable and led by the sector bodies for higher education



Further education colleges have still to be widely accepted as normal and necessary locations for higher education

Impact on: identity

The primary attachment of an institution is to a sector, and relationships with another sector differ in kind and intensity



Further and higher education remain distinct brands and a dual-sector identity is less evident

Impact on: strategy

Decisions to combine further and higher education are only partially informed by widening participation strategies



Equity and skills agendas are not easily aligned, but require strong and strategic coordination

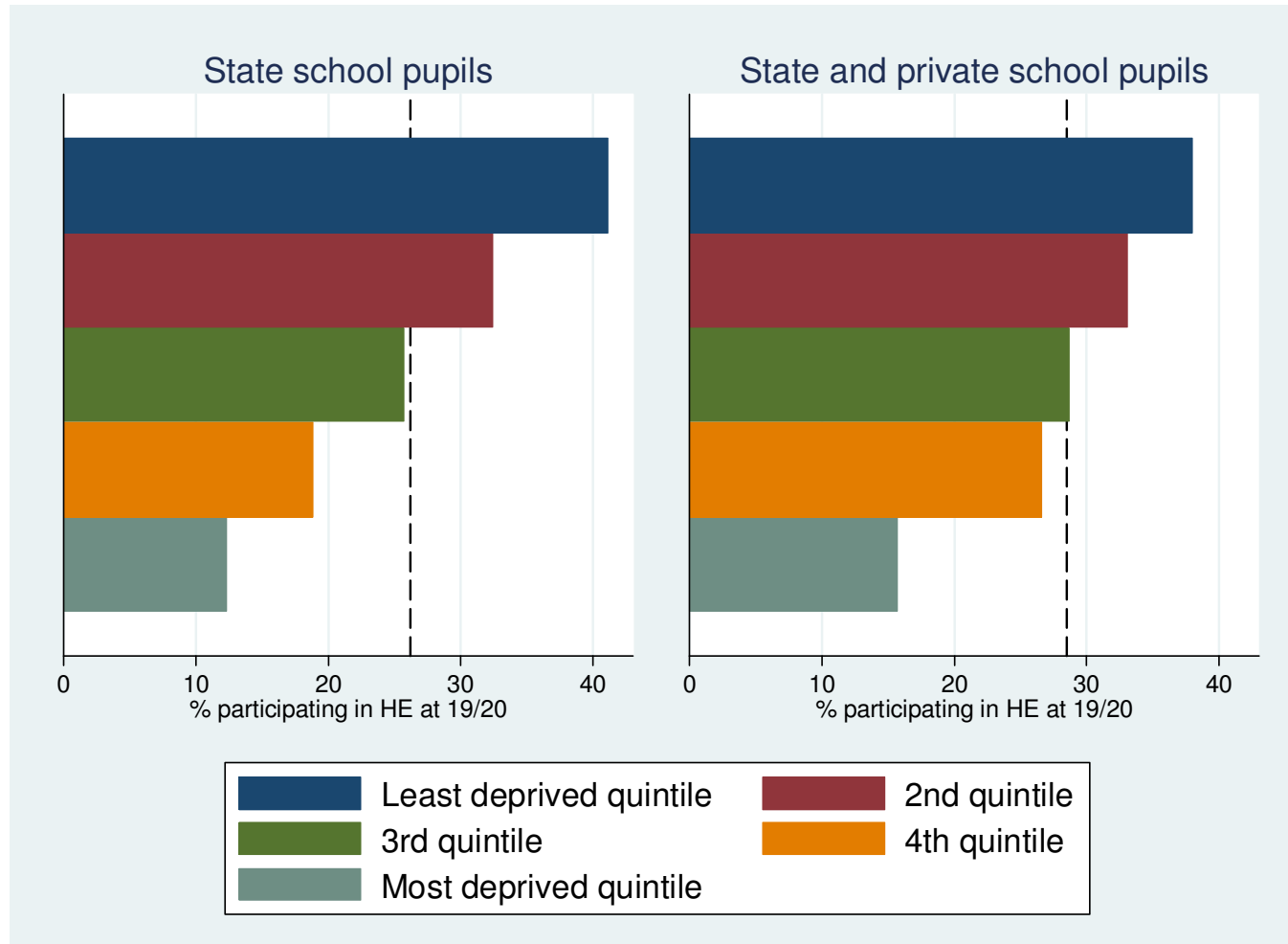
Impact on: progression

The interfaces between further and higher education are configured in different ways and do not enhance internal progression



An expansion of work-focused higher education will place new demands on access and transfer functions

Male HE participation, by deprivation quintile



Participation by deprivation status

- Very large raw differences in HE participation rates by deprivation status
- Controlling for individual characteristics approximately halves the gap
- Disparity all but disappears once we add in controls for prior attainment
 - 1ppt for males
 - 2.1ppts for females

Participation by ethnicity

- Most ethnic minority groups are more likely to participate in HE than White British students
 - Except Black Caribbean and Other Black students
- But these groups tend to go to worse schools and are more likely to be deprived
 - Gap turns positive when we include controls
- Including KS2 results also increases gap
- But declines once we add in KS3-5 results
 - Ethnic minority students improve performance more than White British students during secondary school

So far ...

- Widening participation in HE to students from deprived backgrounds is largely about tackling low prior achievement
- Focusing policy interventions post compulsory schooling unlikely to eliminate raw socio-economic gap in HE participation
 - But does not absolve universities

Do alternative pathways widen participation?

Qualifications held %

	1995	2003	2004
General academic	70.7	75.3	75.7
Vocational	17.8	25.8	24.9
Foundation/Access	7.8	8.6	8.9
Other	5.1	13.5	14.1
No qualification	6.0	3.5	3.2
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>107.3</i>	<i>126.7</i>	<i>126.8</i>

(more than 100%, as applicants can hold multiple qualifications)

Not quite the whole story

Qualification pathways (in %)			
	1995	2003	2004
Academic	63.4	50.8	51.3
Vocational	13.6	10.1	9.5
FaA	6.2	3.9	4.2
Other	3.5	5.9	6.0
Ac + Voc	4.2	14.1	13.7
Ac + FaA	1.5	3.2	3.1
Other combination	1.6	8.5	8.9
No qualification	6.0	3.5	3.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Vocational routes widen access

- Vocational routes open access to HE for non-traditional students.
- Applicants with a vocational background compared to those from the traditional general academic route are
 - from lower socio-economic classes
 - more often male
 - from a non-white ethnic background
 - more often disabled

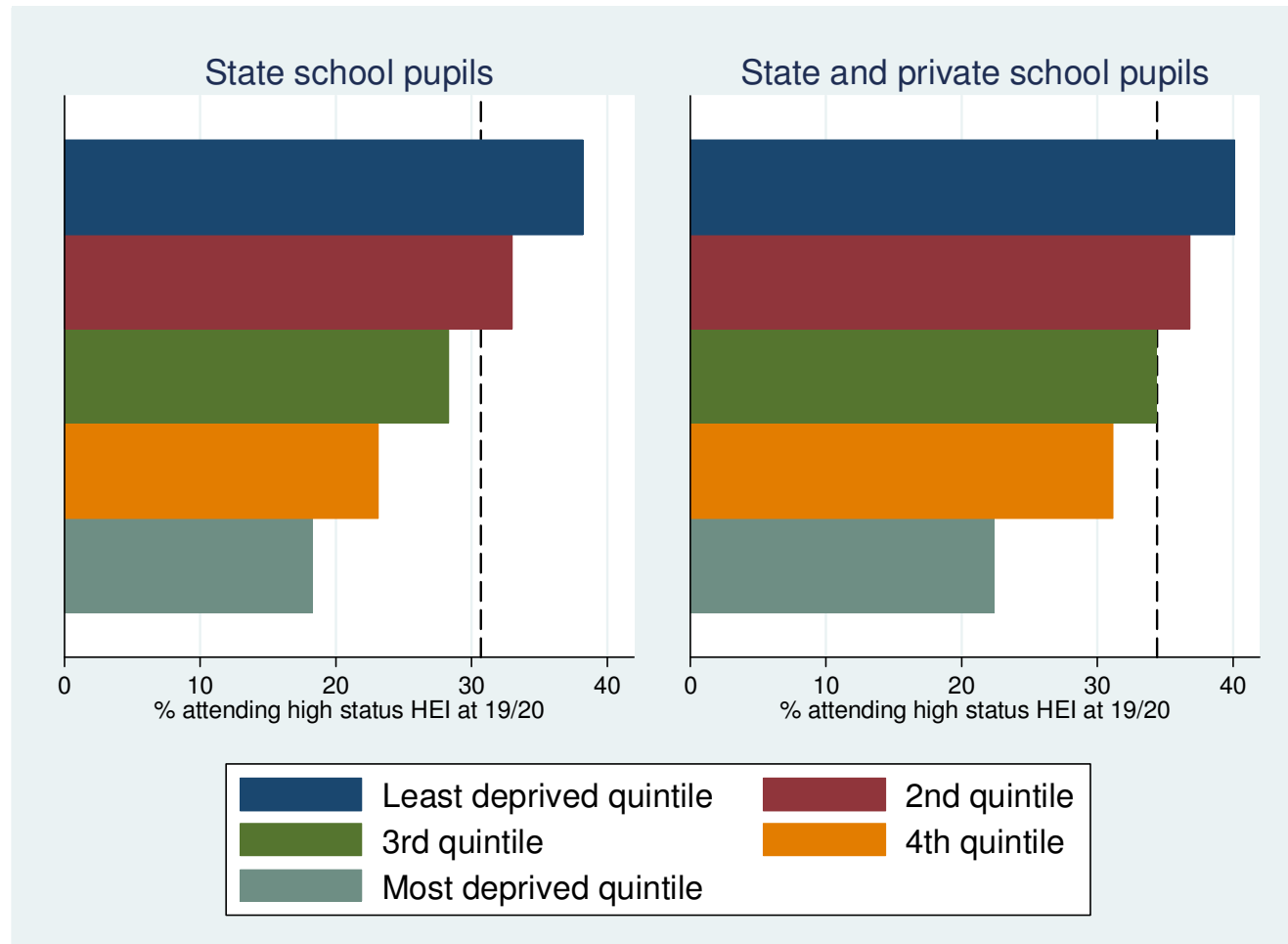
But ...



Type of Participation

- Also consider type of HE participation, because:
 - Students at less prestigious institutions more likely to drop out and/or achieve lower degree classification
 - Graduates from more prestigious institutions earn higher returns in the labour market
- Define “high status” university as:
 - Russell Group university (20 in total)
 - Any UK university with an average 2001 RAE score greater than lowest found amongst Russell Group
 - Adds Bath, Durham, Lancaster, York, etc (21 in total)

Female "high status" participation, by deprivation quintile



“High status” participation by deprivation status

- Students from deprived backgrounds are less likely to attend a high status university than less deprived students
 - Although gap smaller than for participation
- Prior attainment is key to widening participation in “high status” institutions amongst more deprived students
 - Gap disappears amongst students with same Key Stage 4 results

“High status” participation by ethnicity

- Many ethnic minority participants are less likely to attend a “high status” institution than White British participants
- Once we add controls for prior attainment, all ethnic minority groups are at least as likely to attend a “high status” institution as White British students

And those from a vocational background?

- Using any of a variety of measures – UCAS tariff scores, RAE, QAA – and controlling for subjects VET students are more likely to participate in less prestigious universities with lower income per student
- But they tend to take subjects in technology areas and subjects allied to medicine where rates of return can be high
- Exception maybe Art & Design

What happens when VET students arrive?

- Multi-level modelling
- Vocational students on average are doing less well than students from academic background
- In institutions with high drop out rates VET students are at an increased risk
- In institutions with a high proportion of VET students VET students perform better

Conclusion

- Institutional reform may be a necessary component to WP further
- WP strategies need to be targeted towards the early stages of educational careers
- However, qualitative data suggests that HEIs can do a lot to accommodate students with vocational backgrounds
- We do not know enough about the impact of choices early on in educational careers (choice of institutions and programmes) on transitions to HE (→ new project!)