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Abstract

This 'think piece' explores whether new organisational forms are now appearing within English Higher Education (HE). The growth of non-public funding streams and the extension of Degree Awarding Powers to alternative providers might encourage such shifts. We suggested the conventional Private Limited Company is not in principle the only alternative to the publicly funded HE Institution. One consistent national policy driver in strategies of English public management reform has been support for third sector orientated providers which may have had effects in HE. Our empirical conclusions about present organisational change patterns in the sector are, however, decidedly mixed. There is substantial but rather conventional M and A activity between publicly funded HE providers which does not add to organisational variety. A small cluster of for profits has entered the English HE market, alongside another small cluster of non for profits. One site showed evidence of a slight move to a professional partnership form, mixed with private equity. Staff owned

08.7.2025

mutuals seemed very weakly developed. These novel organisations are as yet generally small scale, with a few exceptions. There was initial evidence found of larger scale developments in a novel and hybrid organisational space which combines: recently founded social enterprises, disruptive technological innovation, new forms of on line learning, often supported financially by large philanthropic foundations connected to the high tech sector. Large foundations may emerge as important influencers which complement shrinking government funding. The virtual university is another organisational change to explore further, especially given the rise of ICT dependent inter university and international consortia, but is not necessarily friendly to third sector ideas and forms. Finally, we explore the wider and more international implications of our early work on English HE for future research. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Ferlie, Ewan, E-Mail: ewan.ferlie@kcl.ac.uk