UK FE: Building On Our International Reputation

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Structure of presentation

• International Education
• International Reputation – the good, the bad
• International Students – a good thing?
• Making a difference – how colleges have benefited
• FE Reputation Strategy Group
• FE Reputation Research and next steps
International Education

• Second Prime Minister’s Initiative (PMI2) for International Education
• Emphasis on establishing UK education brand; quality of student experience; strategic partnerships and alliances
• 2006-2011: increase non-EU students in FE by 30,000
• Double number of countries which attract 10,000+ students per year to the UK

Source: Warwick Institute for Employment Research/AoC; Going Global? UK FE/TVET – opportunities in the international market; April 2008
International Reputation

Strengths

• High reputation internationally
• Framework for lifelong learning
• Positive learning environment – e.g. student support; advice; independent learning
• Strong track record of international activities
• Flexibility of delivery
• Demand led provision
• Skills-based practical training

International Reputation

Weaknesses

• Poor performance in OECD league tables
  • Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development helps governments tackle the economic, social and governance challenges of a globalised economy
  • First reference point for potential students and partners
  • Need to strengthen quality assurance for qualifications delivered abroad or through franchising

• Lack of clarification of FE colleges’ status

• Complexity of the quality assurance system
  • 3 large awarding bodies; 100+ smaller or specialised qualifications recognised nationally; 300+ smaller ones not recognised

International Reputation

Weaknesses (contd)

• International work not recognised with FE sector
  • Due to mainstream funding mechanism
  • Absence of reporting requirements
  • No requirement for data on international students

• Quality assurance of qualifications delivered in-country and through franchise training
  • No inspection of awarding bodies
  • No inspection mechanism for courses delivered overseas by FE colleges
International Students – the positives

Opportunities

• Assistance with developing employability by securing part-time work
• Assistance with budgeting and financial planning
• Offering improved social opportunities with UK students & local communities
• Development of ‘life skills’ and employment prospects in home country

International Students – a good thing for Colleges?

- Generates a growth in activity
- Alternative income streams to compensate for reduced funding
- Widen staff and student horizons in light of increasingly global economy
- Build strategic partnerships with international organisations
- Improved access to international benchmarking to support continuous quality improvement
- Provide access to more diverse and innovative teaching and learning opportunities
- Benefit from new and creative ideas through collaboration and sharing experience and best practice
International Students – or a bad thing?

- Distracting from core commitment to UK students
- Negative impact on results
- May affect local communities
- Could lead to resource and residential issues
Making a Difference – lots of good practice

- West Nottinghamshire College
  - Investigating links and exchanges with Delhi & Rajasthani colleges
  - Established relationships with China; first Chinese exchange students Summer 08
  - Initial staff exchanges & training across institutions through to establishing Centres of Vocational Excellence in Rajasthan
  - Strategy to bring more international perspective to local population where <5% ethnic minority
  - Raising aspirations and opening up opportunities by exposing students to the global environment
Making a Difference

• York College
  • Partnership with the Nihon Automobile Technical School, Japan
  • English Study Abroad Programme for high calibre, Level 4 Japanese Motor Vehicle students
  • Students have the opportunity to study abroad; improve their English; gain invaluable experience of the European motor trade (by placing them in locally approved dealerships); gain real work experience in a commercial environment
  • 7 month programme
    » 6 week induction & intensive English summer school
    » 6 week placement with LOTUS Group
    » Mixture dealership experience, EFL Programme, Motor Vehicle studies
Other Partnerships

- Tower Hamlets & City College Norwich; UEA and insurance companies – Delhi’s Indian Institute of Foreign Trade
- Ravensbourne, Newham & Blackburn colleges – Indian colleges of fashion
- Greenwich Community College – Ghana; Iraq; Saudi Arabia; Vietnam
- Bournemouth & Poole College – working with Thai & Russian consortiums; China; South Africa; Kuwait
What are we doing to improve FE Reputation – how does this link with international work?

• Nationally
  – FE Investment: Building Colleges for the Future
    • £3.2bn investment 2008/9-2010/1
    • Helping to deliver world class buildings
    • Opening colleges to employers and the wider community
  – FERSG
    • Cross-sector cross working to enhance FE Reputation

• Internationally
  – International strategy to be developed once national reputation has been enhanced
  – By association, improved national reputation will result in better international reputation
FERSG working to build reputation

With thanks to Frank Villeneuve Smith/LSN
UK FE Reputation Research

• To define reputation in ways that are specific to the FE sector and its primary stakeholder groups

• To use this intelligence to create a framework to enable colleges to manage their reputations more effectively

• To surface specific ideas as to how reputation can be advanced in individual colleges

• To identify how principals can act collectively to enhance the reputation of the group of colleges as a whole

Source:
What counts for students (national and international)?

Critical

- High quality staff – teaching excellence
- Learning facilities – library, computers, equipment
- Good student experience and social atmosphere
- Higher than average pass rates
- Friendly and accessible teachers and tutors
- Higher than average proportion of students get a good job or go on to university
- Good student support services

What counts for students?

Important

• Small class sizes
• Accepts students from all types of backgrounds and abilities
• High quality staff – professional or trade experience
• Opportunity for work experience
• Excellent extra curricular activities – music, sports, community activities
• Located in a safe, positive neighbourhood
**Overarching truths**

- College reputation is not always universal across departments and excellence in one department does not always transfer.

- Poor performance in one department can jeopardise corporate reputation and lead to the loss of other unconnected business.

- Seems unfair but in this context reputation is a one-way street!

* Based on UK research, but the assumption is that this would also apply internationally.

Source:
Colleges have...

• Massive expertise
• Real knowledge of our community
• Good employer relationships
• Valuable experience in partnership working
• Real progression opportunities through to HE

BUT does this matter for international students?
What is the FE sector’s USP?
What next for FERSG?

Need to ask…

• Is the international reputation of FE Colleges worthy of research?

• What is the position re training providers? (FERSG’s role is to work on behalf of the sector)

• Is it one of the vital few?

• Bearing in mind the current climate, has the International Reputation of Colleges changed in any way?

• What are your views?
For further information

Please see www.lsc.gov.uk/fersg

Contact us

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