The role of BTEC courses and colleges in supporting progression to HE: Implications for practices in HE

**BTECs supporting HE progression: evidence from research**

1 in 4 of all HE applicants have studied BTEC qualifications (Gicheva and Petrie, 2018)

BTECs are an entry route for those living in areas with low progression rates, working class backgrounds and BAME students. (Gicheva and Petrie, 2018; Kelly, 2017; Shields and Masardo, 2015)

Increasingly a route into HE rather than into careers (Kelly, 2017)

**BTECs issues and concerns**

Fewer BTEC students achieve 1st and 2:i degrees (Kelly, 2017)

High drop out rates (12% compared to 6.2% of all students) (Gicheva and Petrie, 2018)

Highest completion rates at 1994 Group institutions lowest at Russell Group institutions (Kelly, 2017)

Patchy careers advice means students are confused about routes (Gicheva and Petrie, 2018)

Mismatch of subject matter on some courses, particularly if HE courses contain scientific or mathematical component (Gicheva and Petrie, 2018)

Different modes of assessment (Gicheva and Petrie, 2018)

**Findings**

**BTEC supporting HE and vocational identities**

BTECs provided a progression route for students who had felt excluded from HE

Experiential learning was motivational, providing opportunities to experience and find out about career possible selves

Professional context is important

BTECs offer new learning opportunities and support the development of successful learner identities

But...

The majority of students were progressing to post-92s (wage premium associated with elite HEIs)

BTEC routes often highly gendered and influenced by family (especially in health/caring professions)

**Conceptual Framework**

‘Habitus’ (institutional/ collective, familial and individual), ‘capital’ and ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1986)

‘... various components of institutional habitus influence the choice-making process and, concomitantly, choices of higher education’ (Reay, David and Ball, 2005: 39)

**Possible Selves**

‘According to Markus and Nurius (1986), the repertoire of possible selves held by an individual at a given time is influenced by her or his past experiences, sociocultural life context, and current situation. Further, these future oriented self-conceptualizations, or possible selves, vary according to three factors: valence, level of elaboration, and psychological accessibility’ (Bourdieu, 2000)

**Conclusions and Next Steps**

Rebuild collaboration between all 14-19 providers, employers and HE in order to focus on impartial CEIAG, progression, skills and routes (Hodgson and Spours, 2014)

Further and HE institutions should work much more closely together, particularly on progression routes (Gicheva and Petrie, 2018)

A focus on pedagogical connections and disciplinary fidelity