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**Abstract**

This paper reviews the provision of higher education courses in the further education sector in Northern Ireland. It charts the evolution of policy through the 1990s by examining major policy documents. It notes the chronic absence of reliable statistical and research evidence during this period. The available statistical evidence is reviewed. Key themes are identified including: localism, 'non-evidence based policy making?', higher education versus the demand for skills and community relations and equality. The innovative concept, now it would appear doomed, of the Springvale campus for west Belfast is examined. Finally, the paper notes that there is an urgent need to provide strategic direction to the further education sector as a whole. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)