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**Author**

GRAY, Claire

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**Abstract**

This paper reports on research into the operation of English further/higher education, with a focus on the role of partnerships in supporting the massification of higher education. The research draws on the bottom-up policy implementation tradition to provide analysis of the effects on partnerships of a quasi-marketised environment. The rationale and effects of market orientated policy are discussed with reference to empirical data from college staff and partnership managers. In employing the concept of the 'street-level bureaucrat' as an agent of policy implementation, this research contributes to the interpretation of policy and partnership which has previously been unexplored within the further/higher education context. Conclusions are drawn with implications for the development of college higher education delivered in partnership. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)