Widening Participation
and Lifelong Learning

20/20

The Open University
50 YEARS

Index

Front cover barrister image: © Chris Floyd

Introduction

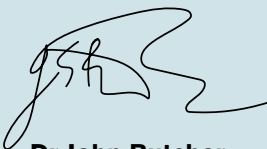It was the Spring of 2019, and I was enjoying the buzz around the Open University's 50th anniversary. As managing Editor, I met with the *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning* team (Wendy and Sattie) and began to reflect with some pride that it was also the 20th anniversary of the first publication of the journal: 'We must do something!'

Thus the 20/20 celebration was conceived. Not quite the 20 greatest hits, neither a compendium of 20 years of published research, but rather a representative sample of some of the most interesting and stimulating articles the journal had published. It was envisaged as a snapshot, some highlights, offering a taster of the very wide range of articles that had appeared in the journal. It took some work but feels worth it as debates about policies aimed at widening participation remain contentious worldwide. 2019 also marks the 100th anniversary of the UK Ministry of Reconstruction's final report on Adult Education, and the position of lifelong learning remains critical to the journal.

Selecting one article from each year was an art rather than a science, and I am certainly not suggesting this is a 'best of'. But it does feel representative, with contributions from the UK, Europe, Australia and Canada, and two editorials reflecting on critical policy decisions at the time they were written. It also illustrates the range of topics in which colleagues have been interested, including the participation of groups under-represented in higher education (Muslim mothers, travellers, care-leavers, students with learning disabilities or mental health issues, remote rural indigenous students, working class men) and issues facing students in relation to access and success (fees, state schools and selective universities, parents/carers as influencers, work-based learning and employability). The selection also includes articles on inclusive and critical pedagogy, too often missing from presentations at WP conferences, and a timely plea for the value of research in informing WP policy.

Reading through twenty years of research on widening participation and lifelong learning was a privilege, but it also revealed one significant truth – despite all the effort put in by practitioners and researchers, as published in this journal, very little has actually changed over the 20 years. There are still inequitable gaps between access to higher education for the least and most privileged groups in societies across the world. There are still gaps in the extent to which students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds persist and succeed in their HE studies. There are still potential students excluded from learning in HE because of inflexible systems. There are still university teachers who resist the implications of teaching a more diverse student body. And there are still students who have to bend themselves to the archaic needs of university systems because institutions are unable or unwilling to become more inclusive. But I remain optimistic – while many barriers to participation persist others are at least more transparent, and as such can be addressed through the kind of practices disseminated in the journal.

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1999

Selecting an article from the very first edition of the journal in 1999, I was drawn to Jean Mills' 'Identity and Aspiration: Mothers, Islam and Higher Education'. While this article, based on interview data with students from ethnic minority backgrounds, introduced an institutional case study of a topic familiar to readers twenty years on, it confronted an issue which receives less attention today than might be expected: Muslim mothers in higher education. In identifying second language issues with a sense of identity, the article describes an institution's responsibility to listen and respond positively to a particular group of students, noting similarities with strategies to offer second chances to mature students.

Findings and recommendations resonate with policy asks today: the need to strengthen Further Education pathways; to acknowledge students' backgrounds and cultures; to ensure curriculum (and especially assessments) build on bilingual and cultural insights and develop literacy skills (in this case through Urdu). This area in widening participation research, focusing on second language issues and student identity, appears ripe for fresh insights.

Identity and aspiration: mothers, Islam and higher education

Jean Mills, Westhill College of Higher Education, Birmingham, UK

This article concerns a study being undertaken with a group of ethnic minority students at Westhill College of Higher Education. The students are multi-lingual Muslim mothers and the study seeks to analyse their perceptions of their languages, in particular the one they designate as their "mother tongue". Westhill College of Higher Education, in strategic alliance with the University of Birmingham has an established profile of courses in BA. Humanities, master's degrees, Community and Youth Studies, Lifelong Learning, and, reflecting its long-standing role and reputation in teacher training, PGCE. Over the 1990s the student population has increasingly reflected the different ethnic groups of the city so that, for example, on current BA degrees 34% of First Year students are of African Caribbean or Asian origin. While this intake is in some cases related to the content of the course (such as, BA. Applied Theological Studies, Islam, and BA. Race and Ethnic Studies), it also reflects the efforts of the College to attract and cater for ethnic minority students. Some of these efforts, such as the establishment of a unique B.Ed. Islamic Studies, have been documented elsewhere (see Mills 1997) and the paper cited describes the efforts made in College to monitor, evaluate and respond to the experience of particular groups of students.

These perceptions have been gathered during a series of taped interviews over the past eighteen months, 1997-1998. Those parts of the interviews which focused on the students' attitudes to their different languages indicated the ways in which these languages contributed to their sense of identity and reflected their educational aspirations for themselves and their children.

At the same time, of course, mature students, who see themselves as having a "second chance" and who are aspiring, are not unusual. Thus, in many ways, the experience of these students has much in common with that of mature students in general.

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Such, then, are some of the insights from the initial part of the study (which is now in the second of four years). What implications might there be for the College in considering the testimony of these students? I believe they are as follows:

- The students' experience suggests there are particular pathways via local Further Education courses which could be enhanced and strengthened.

- Students' backgrounds and cultures need to be clearly acknowledged, both in the courses on offer and in the ambience and ethos of the College. Generally, of course, programmes related to specific faiths and cultures clearly do attract candidates.

- Wider cultural issues need to be addressed. We found that the provision of a prayer room and of halal meat on certain days, were greatly welcomed by students, as was sensitivity by tutors to the implications of Ramadan coinciding with placement experiences and with examination periods.

- The curriculum needs to acknowledge and build on the bilingual and cultural insights of the students, not simply in course content but also in enabling assignments. Thus, one of the students who had difficulty in a traditional examination scored very highly in a negotiated project on bilingual children in special education.

- The particular challenge of acknowledging Urdu literacy skills needs to be met. One way we have sought to do this is by its inclusion in a wide programme of peer tutoring where it ranks alongside a variety of opportunities designed to focus on language awareness and to build on students' existing strengths.

- Finally, it seems evident that the success of the whole enterprise depends on listening to the students' articulated experience; on being prepared to respond positively and constructively to their needs and expertise; and, perhaps above all, convincing them of their rich strengths in the area of bilingualism and of language awareness. As one student remarked: *"if we can't speak our own language we will have lost everything"*.

2000

I was very taken with the historical relevance of the editorial written by David Jary and Liz Thomas for issue 2 of Volume 2 of the journal in 2000. Taking the media storm ('a return to class war') prompted by then Chancellor Gordon Brown around what he referred to as the 'scandalous' rejection of Laura Spence, a state school pupil by Magdalen College Oxford, the editorial offers powerful insights into the problem of access to elite universities (and to highly selective subjects, in this case medicine). The authors remind readers that Laura gained a place at Harvard, and that her case was not a well-chosen example as the five successful Oxford candidates all came from state school and minority backgrounds. However, broader issues in widening participation are identified, notably the advantages afforded by private schools over state schools in low participation areas, and the associated interest in ideas of cultural capital.

The authors conclude the higher education application system privileges previous academic performance over potential, leading to a narrow focus on 'excellence' – which they represent as archaic and aligning more with differentials in school funding. Interestingly they reluctantly regard the issues in schooling as intractable, and recommend the development of social capital in families, communities and universities as necessary for a more equitable access to elite institutions. Sadly, the media storm prompted around equitable access remains all too familiar.

The case of Laura Spence: inequalities in entry to elite universities in the UK

David Jary and Liz Thomas, University of Staffordshire, UK

Since the last issue of this Journal, 'access' has become major news in the UK. The publicity given by the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, to the case of Laura Spence, a state school pupil rejected by the University of Oxford but accepted by Harvard, generated heated controversy and brought to a wider public attention some important issues in access to higher education. Chancellor Brown described the rejection of Laura by Magdalen College as 'absolutely scandalous'. Sections of the press responded by complaining of 'a return to the archaic class war' at odds with the repudiation of ideology by 'New Labour', especially see Economist, (3.6.2000) and the Sunday Times, (4.6.2000).

It turned out that the case of Laura Spence was not a well-chosen example. There were simply insufficient places in medicine at Oxford for all top-rated candidates by A-level score. Moreover, the five successful candidates admitted instead of Laura came from state school and minority backgrounds. This does not mean, however, that the issue of access to elite universities is not one that merits attention. The fact is that it can be demonstrated that pupils from state schools and from under-privileged social categories do obtain substantially fewer places in elite universities than one would expect, taking into account their formal qualifications, and furthermore, some pupils from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds are excluded through indirect discrimination. So much is highlighted by the 'benchmarking' data now available. As a recent analysis by the Sutton Trust (2000) demonstrates, pupils from private schools are over-represented in the 'top five' institutions (Cambridge and Oxford and three London colleges, University College, Imperial College, and London School of Economics). This group of school-leavers gains 48 per cent of university places, as against the 33 per cent that would be expected from their A-level performance. Access based on examination performance is not the only inequality, massive inequity exists in that children attending private schools come from only seven per cent of families.

Yet another telling statistic is that entrants from families in the bottom 50 per cent of the population in terms of affluence (measured by social class) are greatly underrepresented in the 'top five' universities. These students gain only 10 per cent of places compared with an expected 14 per cent based on school performance. Entrants from low participation areas (one-third of families) gain only five per cent of place compared with an expected eight per cent.

If one turns attention to the 'top 13' universities a broadly similar picture emerges. Entrants from private schools gain 39 per cent of places at these institutions compared with the 28 per cent 'expected'. Entrants from families in the bottom 50 per cent of the population in terms of affluence gain 13 per cent of places at these institutions compared with an expected 17 per cent. From the lowest one-third of participation areas they gain six per cent of places compared with an expected eight per cent.

For higher education as a whole, in 1997, 14 per cent of young people from the lower socio-economic group V entered full-time study (CVCP, 1999).

Much of the political, institutional and press reaction was typically grudging in any recognition that there are very real issues underlying Brown's question raising, even if the example of Laura Spence was not well-chosen. Ann Leslie in the Daily Mail portrayed Brown's raising of the issue as 'This archaic class war on Middle England', the latter being portrayed by her as the thoroughly deserving recipients of Oxbridge places. A widespread Conservative view was that in drawing attention to the issues Mr Brown was attacking 'excellence'. This is echoed in the emphasis of the vice-chancellor of Oxford University (THES, 2.7.2000) that 'The important question is how do universities maintain… academic standards' whilst 'recruiting the best students whatever their background'. A number of other representatives of Oxford University, rather than accepting that Oxford may still need to change, suggested that Oxford had changed but that too many students and teachers have prejudices about Oxford.

A number of general points can be made in response to Chancellor Brown's initial raising of the Laura Spence case and the press and institutional response to this. These will indicate that some tricky issues have to be faced if a fully comprehensive access and widening participation agenda is not to be compromised.

First, although he may have been wrong about Laura Spence, Gordon Brown was surely right to emphasise that there is unfinished business in expanding equality of opportunity in entry to elite institutions.

Second, for those gaining high grades, a reform of university procedures that moved selection to the point in which A-level results are already available could be expected to help equalise access to some extent.

Third, it may well be that there are too few applicants to top universities from state schools and underprivileged groups. Where this is so, however, something must be done to change the culture of these institutions to make them less off-putting to such candidates. That something can be done is seen from the fact that two of the newer elite universities, York and Warwick, already meet their benchmarking targets.

Fourth, if we are also to combat the undoubted advantages gained in achieving high A-level performance by attending private schools, much more will need to be done to either enhance the school performance or to evaluate the potential of pupils from less affluent backgrounds and from state schools generally. Unfortunately many of the further solutions being proposed to remedy this state of affairs have complex and potentially mixed implications for a fully comprehensive widening participation agenda. The Sutton Trust's proposals for more state-supported scholarships to private schools, for example, while helping to tackle inequality of opportunity in entry to elite universities to a limited degree, would leave intact or even enhance the current advantages for the few that stem from the possession of private school 'cultural capital', while also seeming to further 'legitimise' entry to elite universities as 'meritocratic'. Government support for summer schools for bright students from deprived urban areas, to familiarise them with university life, will impact on relatively few students, for this approach does not challenge reliance on previous performance as opposed to potential. More radical remedies for private school domination – for example, an ending of the advantageous charitable status of private schools, or the payment of fully economic fees for university places for entrants from outside state education – that might be effective are so politically charged that they are unlikely to be contemplated by any major political party. The suggestion made widely in the press coverage that the real villain of the piece is a declining performance of state schools is disingenuous when it is also suggested that state schools should be enabled to better compete with private schools by bringing back selection, thus adding new dimensions to social exclusion. In such proposals no account is taken of the fact that average funding per pupil in public schools is twice that in state schools. Improving opportunities and achievement in schools, especially for 'disadvantaged' pupils, requires more resources for education, and a more general redistribution to tackle the causes of under-achievement, such as poverty and poor health (Mortmore & Whitty, 1999).

Fifth, if a number of the proposals for tackling the issue in schools may prove intractable, a number of the further proposals made specifically in relation to universities are also problematic. Proposals for universities to make greater use of 'scholastic aptitude tests' and talent scouts raise a new set of issues of equity as well as effectiveness. Though it is as yet rejected by Government, the recent Greenaway proposals from elite universities (Greenaway & Haynes, 2000) for large increases in tuition fees but more bursaries for less affluent and disadvantaged groups may yet prove to be politically acceptable, since it may also help to end a reduction of the research funding deficit in top UK universities compared with their international rivals. The exemplar for such proposals, of course, is the US system. However, there is a good deal of evidence that the US system is in key respects far more hierarchical and socially divisive than the UK system (see Jary et al., 1998). As an Editorial in the Guardian newspaper (8.7.2000) states: 'The portrayal of the Ivy League as 'socially inclusive' is hard to accept.' There is evidence that far more than in the UK, access to US universities has involved what has been described as a 'perverse access' since the opening of entry to previously excluded categories of students has been disproportionately to lower status or special category institutions. While an emphasis on a higher educational 'diversity' can be valuable as a way of opening access to new students, there is an ever-attendant risk that it leads to a marginalisation of students and credentials, especially if associated with differential funding per student. On the more general issue of the introduction of differential student fees, there is evidence from Australia that when top-up fees were introduced in 1996 there occurred an overall decline in admissions by mature students and other kinds of new students, and a sharpening of distinctions between elite and other institutions. There is evidence already that the introduction of tuition fees in the UK has cut applications from some groups, including mature students (Goddard, 1999). Greenaway and Haynes, in the executive summary to their report, themselves assert that 'if differential fees damaged access, that also would make the case against them'.

A sixth and final point, one made by a number of commentators, is that there must be a worry that undue concern over entry to elite institutions risks enhancing the impression that only elite institutions matter, without necessarily guaranteeing improved entry to them. Even if improvements in the equality of entry are made, the risk is that with a disproportionate emphasis on the 'excellence' of elite universities the considerable achievements of other institutions in overcoming social exclusion will be devalued. The fact is that the expansion of all forms of HE has been a major achievement, with a diversity of types of institution playing an invaluable role. A major part of the purpose of the establishment of Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning was to celebrate the ingenuity of institutions in attracting and making provision for new kinds of students. In meeting the problems of a global economy and needs of an ever expanding 'social demand' for education it is the totality of HE provision that is important. If we return to the accusation that a concern with equity is to open the class war or to endanger excellence we can see that this accusation can be turned on its head. It is a narrow focus on excellence that is 'archaic'. The signs are that a new emphasis on building 'social capital' (rather than a narrower 'cultural capital') in families, communities, schools, colleges, and universities is beginning to pay social dividends, although there is a long way to go, and there are many dilemmas. The trick will be for governments to find the right mix of 'elite' and 'mass' provision, so that one does not undermine the other and that both continue to receive adequate funding and esteem. Equitable entry and social inclusion will, of course, be indispensable objectives for all institutions, but only achievable as part of this wider objective.

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2001

Of all the groups disadvantaged in terms of access to higher education, Travellers appear to occupy a particularly marginalised and virtually invisible position in the UK. Despite appalling participation statistics, Travellers remain curiously absent from policy and practice discussions amongst the widening participation and lifelong learning research community. For this reason, I was pleased to find Jim Gornall's article 'The Kerry Traveller's Development Project' in issue 1 of Volume 3 in 2001. Noting that under-achievement at primary and secondary level causes a serious barrier to accessing post-compulsory education and training, the Learning and Education Access Partnership (LEAP) is reported as developing a model of apprenticeship training that aims to combat social exclusion and inequality experienced by Travellers.

Conclusions appear sensible ('empower the Traveller community to work on their own behalf'…'offer Travellers the learning support necessary to undertake a diploma course in youth and community work'), while asserting that racism – individual, cultural and institutional, is the root problem. It would be good to see other examples published which evaluate the impact of similar opportunities aimed at providing a step towards higher education for the most excluded and under-represented groups.

The Kerry Travellers' Development Project

Jim Gornall, Learning and Education Access Partnership, IE

The Kerry Travellers' Development Project was formed in 1994. The development of the project was informed by the acknowledgement of Travellers as a nomadic ethnic group with a distinct culture and it seeks to validate and resource Travellers' culture. The project promoters believe that racism - individual, cultural and institutional - is the root of the problems facing the Traveller community. The aim of the project is to create a partnership of Travellers and settled people which will enable them to challenge inequalities and to bring about positive change for the Traveller community at both individual and institutional level.

The LEAP Programme

Research conducted by Kerry Travellers' Development Project (1996) *Towards Inclusion* found that few Travellers complete second-level education and virtually no Travellers in Kerry have continued onto third-level. Under-achievement at primary and secondary level causes a serious barrier to accessing post-compulsory education and training.

LEAP is an education and apprenticeship programme that will:

- provide the opportunity for Travellers to access post compulsory education;
- establish innovative youth and community work projects with Traveller communities in Kerry;
- offer Travellers the learning support necessary to undertake a diploma course in youth and community work;
- provide role models and a support network for future participants;
- provide trainees with three years 'real' ongoing work placements on a specific project;
- offer a training salary for employing Travellers;
- network with other agencies working with Travellers to sponsor a Traveller apprentice and to offer work placements, thus increasing the visibility of a marginalised group;
- network with universities/training institutions to provide accreditation for the course;
- work with accreditation bodies to devise appropriate modular training for apprenticeship training in youth and community work;
- increase Traveller participation in a professional capacity within their own communities;
- increase employment potential for Travellers trainees; and
- empower the Traveller community to work on their own behalf.

The programme began in October 2000 and aims to develop a model of apprenticeship training that integrates ongoing work within the community with a concurrent training programme. Within this model, work and training are seen as a unified and integrated entity, with training drawing on current and past experience of work and work informed by concurrent training. It is an apprenticeship-styled programme and aims to combat social exclusion and inequality by training young Travellers in a formal way so that they have the opportunity to move on to higher education if they so wish. Practical training with work experience most benefits the participants in terms of future employment. The programme also trains participants in the area of youth and community work so that they can actively participate in their own development and in the development of their own local communities.

2002

Adult education, identity and migrant women

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Jasbir Panesar, Widening Participation Office, University of East London, UK

While the title 'Adult Education, Identity and Migrant women' from issue 3 of Volume 4 of the 2002 edition looks, on the surface, to be exploring similar issues to our first article, Tony Wailey and Jasbir Panesar actually take a far wider lens. Starting with the prescient sentence 'Europe is changing, but is the sense of 'being European?'', the authors report an innovative project supported by the European Commission with migrant women in communities in East London, Italy, Spain and Finland. Taking a multi-dimensional perspective on citizenship as delivered through adult education, the range of European identities was explored. Progression frameworks for Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets were contrasted with Italian recognition of distinct characteristics across migrant communities, supported via migrant women community workers teaching Italian. In Spain, a Catholic University ran training programmes with a charity to support intercultural mediation.

This article was written in the period when Le Pen was gaining considerable support in France, and the Netherlands had been rocked by a political assassination. It is a salutary reminder that reported issues of social exclusion, discrimination and hostility continue to challenge any 'sense of being' in European terms. The role of adult education in enabling equitable engagement with the 'host' community was considered important nearly 20 years ago. I fear it is critically important to social cohesion now, but that austerity has starved its impact.

Europe is changing but is the sense of 'being European'? This piece concerns the role of migrant women. It is based upon an innovative project supported by the European Commission's Socrates Grundtvig Programme (1998 – 2001) and features communities across the regions of East London in Great Britain, Padova in the Veneto, Italy, Bilbao in the Basque country of Spain and Jyvaskyla in Southern Finland. In this article the role of migrant women within courses provided by Adult Education is explored in its relationship to citizenship or 'sense of being' in European terms. These may have the potential to become more significant in providing a more multi – dimensional sense of citizenship. The article attempts, through analysis of such programmes, to assess the complex factors of a narrative which has caused wider identities to become imaginable.

Research by the European Commission on racism and xenophobia in Europe (1999) found that a majority of citizens felt communities should be inclusive and promote equal rights to all citizens, including migrant citizens, but this was contained within certain conditions. Nearly four fifths, (79%) commented that migrants paid less into the social security system than they actually claimed (European Commission 1998b) and a third, (36%) stated that in order to integrate with the host society the migrant communities must give up or adapt their religion and culture. Given the psephological significance of Le Pen in France and the reverberations following the political assassination in the Netherlands, both which had issues of immigration at their heart, it is well to remember Therborn's cautionary note (1995: p233) that, a sense of being European may become only one such element of social identity:

> *'Identities are contingent, not essential. Any given identifier may have an indeterminate number of identities that s/he adopts/recognises, which is why European identities are not identical with identities of Europeans. The latter may have a number of identities, of which the one with Europe is one possibility'.*

The results above clearly show that each European country and region, depending on its history of migration needs to examine its internal policies which often determine the level of migrant communities' participation in active citizenship. In East London, Padova (Italy), Bilbao (Basque Country) and latterly Southern Finland the Socrates Grundtvig project aimed to develop and disseminate models of good practice via short courses in adult education. In the London Borough of Tower Hamlets it developed progression frameworks for Bangladeshi women, the most recently settled community of the South Asian Subcontinent to the United Kingdom, through a series of targeted fairs and outreach educational guidance community-based courses.

In comparison, Padova has only experienced migration in the last fifteen years. Many Italian towns from the 'deep north' including Padova have created cultural mediator posts to assist immigrants. The project led by the University of Padova had identified distinct characteristics of each migrant community existent within the commune. For instance, women from the Philippines were fluently conversant in English; Chinese women were working in restaurants with a heavy work schedule; Moroccan women were housebound; Nigerian women lived in a close-knit community, and immigrant 'aliens', those normally of a transitional communitarian kind, such as Romanians and Moldavians, were not entitled to attend any public courses. The project worked with six women community workers in the above-named countries plus those from Latin America who had actively encouraged their communities to participate in new programmes. Migrant women had been identified to serve as guidance or teaching staff in organising training courses and assisting in teaching Italian classes and have latterly set up their own organisation, the Associazione Colore di Donna.

If citizenship learning and social inclusion were the defining features in Padova, a similar taxonomy was to be found in Spain but possessed of different characteristics. Bilbao in the Basque country has a larger proportion of migrant women from Latin America, Central America, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Zaire and Angola, as well as smaller groupings of those from the Magreb, Morocco, Algeria, China and the Philippines. The Catholic University of Duesto has run educational training sessions in collaboration with selected charities such as Caritas and organised an open day at the university for migrant women. Courses were organised within the School of Social Work with community workers and immigrants themselves, to offer training for intercultural mediation. Finally, as a result of successful community-based new courses, women from the above countries have formed a support group for immigrant women in the San Francisco area of the City.

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Conclusion

Historically the waves of migrant Asian women to Britain have been subjected to the same patterns of social exclusion, discrimination and hostility from the indigenous society as those settled recently in other western European countries. However, the culture, social relations and traditions of different European communities affect in different ways the level of integration of migrant women. Migration to any European state signifies being forced or encouraged to adapt to avoid discrimination whether in economics, employment, housing, health and education as well as the terms of material and cultural survival.

The context of such an adaptation is crucial as is indeed the perceived 'wellbeing' of the 'host' community. Different historical epochs separate the women's experience between our three different European regions but the component parts of the transitional period leading to citizenship is broadly the same. Nearly three decades ago John Berger wrote in the Seventh Man (1975: p124) that:

'Among the migrant workers in Europe there are probably two million women. Some work in factories: many work in domestic service. To write of their experience would require a book in itself'.

In economic terms what was once considered as a temporary expedient for European society has now become a permanent necessity. For migrant women the development from economic necessity to the path of citizenship is often through the initial pathways of adult education. Following the University of East London, the Universities of Padova and Deusto have set precedents in initiating such a provision through the Socrates Adult Education Project within their regions. These have latterly been followed by developments both at the Open University and at the University of Jyvaskyla in Finland. However, there is still much work to be completed at a local level concerning patterns of acclimatisation within the constellation of European states, if the prevailing concept of inclusive identity for migrant women is to have any significant meaning. This piece has attempted to feature their role, the structure of courses provided by adult education and the relationships between them to ideas of citizenship or 'sense of being' in European terms. It is through one such approach that we might begin to assess the complex factors of a narrative which has caused wider identities to become imaginable.

2003

On the fifth anniversary of the journal, David Jary used his editorial to reflect on the 2003 UK Higher Education White Paper, taking particular issue with some of the assumptions in Secretary of State Charles Clarke's foreword. While welcoming the prominence given to widening participation, the editor regretted its use as harnessed to policies antipathetic to its key objectives. For example, the introduction of top-up fees was criticised as being unfair on students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, introducing debt (and fear of debt) into decisions about higher education participation. Rhetorical phrases like 'talented and best' diminished a more general concern to engage the majority in higher education. The tension introduced into the sector by the competing needs of 'world class' universities and their research, versus the rest (teaching only institutions?) was lambasted as introducing inequality of institutions and compared to the demise of the Polytechnics.

The repercussions from this White Paper remain with us in England, amplified by high tuition fees and the dominance of access to the selective Russell Group universities as the main priority for widening access effort. Other elements flickered briefly and declined (Foundation degrees, AimHigher). David identified models from California and Scotland as a more evidence-informed way forward in widening participation – flexible progression for the most disadvantaged students through federation and collaboration. I am not sure such thinking has moved beyond isolated examples.

Widening participation: key equality issues in Australia and the UK: reflections on the 2003 UK higher education White Paper

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Who would have thought when pioneers like our late founding editor Maggie Woodrow first pressed for space on the higher education (HE) agenda for 'access' and 'widening participation' that widening participation would figure so prominently in a UK Higher Education White Paper. But that is now the reality. With the headlining of widening participation in the 2003 White Paper and the fact that this Journal has now entered its fifth year it is time to take stock.

In Secretary of State Charles Clarke's foreword to the White Paper, extending higher education 'to the talented and best from all backgrounds' is one of two areas for improvement placed up front. The other is 'harnessing knowledge to wealth creation'. A third challenge is also mentioned: 'To make the system of supporting students fairer … to ask students to contribute more.'

Even in a brief identification of these three areas it is plain that widening participation, though now having a prominence to be very much welcomed, is being encouraged in particular terms and in a more general context which may sometimes cut across some of its key objectives. As discussed in our previous editorial (*Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 4(3) – Jary, 2002), top-up fees may be 'fair' if they apply only to those who can afford to pay, but if the threshold for repaying fees and loans or receiving grants is pitched as low as proposed in the White Paper, 'fairness' will not be achieved and many potential widening participation students, who take larger risks in entering higher education, are likely to be discouraged.

A second area where the Clarke foreword jars is in its use of a phrase such as 'the talented and the best', suggesting a greater concern with the Laura Spences among applicants to elite universities rather than a more general concern for the majority and in achieving the 50 per cent take-up of higher education sought by the Government. A final crucial area of concern for widening participation, not mentioned in Clarke's foreword, is the tension that runs right through UK HE policy and the White Paper, between the imperative to support what in a global age are now called 'world class universities' and their research role, on the one hand, and the needs of the majority of the system, on the other. These competing needs are difficult to reconcile; nor do we as an editorial team have any ready answers on how to do so.

What we would expect, however, in all three areas mentioned, is that the White Paper and the ministers concerned would be less satisfied with rhetoric and more alert to the ways in which policy in one area is always likely to be compromised by the policy in another.

What, then, can be seen as the positive features of the White Paper's policies on widening participation and where are difficulties most likely to arise?

Policies of the White Paper

The headline objectives for 'expanding participation' in the White Paper, also followed up more recently for England in the HEFCE draft Strategic Plan (HEFCE, 2003), are to:

- 'Continue to increase participation towards 50 per cent of those aged 18-30, mainly through two year work-focused foundation degrees.'

- 'Work with employers to develop more foundation degrees, providing financial incentives for students, strengthening links between further and higher education and creating better pathways for progression.'

- 'Encourage more flexibility in courses, to meet the needs of a more diverse student body and improve support for those doing part-time degrees.'

- The positive thing is that the case for expanding higher education is seen as 'strong'. But 'the bulk of the expansion' is intended to come through new types of qualification, seen as 'better tailored to the needs of students and the economy' (p7).

On 'fair access', the positive point is the clear recognition that: 'the social class gap in higher education remains unacceptably wide … the proportion coming from lower-income families has not substantially increased'. 'Raising participation and standards in our reforms of secondary and further education' is seen as 'the most important step in improving access'. 'Universities and colleges must also do more … in promoting opportunity.' (p. 7). The package of proposals includes:

- restoring grants for students from lower income families and abolishing up-front fees, benefiting about one-third of students;

- requiring universities to draw up Access Agreements before they will be able to charge top-up fees;

- appointing an Access Regulator to oversee Access Agreements;

- expanding the AimHigher programme to build collaboration in raising aspirations;

- properly reimbursing institutions for the extra costs in attracting and retaining non-traditional students;

- doubling the extra money for vulnerable students and introducing a new package for part-time students.

There are obvious further positive points here, including the emphasis on Access Agreements and the proposals to review provisions for part-time students. However, there are uncertainties about the AimHigher programme with its focus, perhaps, laid mainly on 'fair access' to elite institutions. Moreover, rather than something positive, the Access Regulator may turn out to be merely a 'sop' to offset the opposition of top of fees. Similarly, while restoring grants and continuing to pay up to the first £1,100 of fees for students from lower income families the paper also proposes abolishing up-front payments and introducing deferred payments of tuition fees for all students, combined with the introduction of top-up fees. The overall accumulation of debt for all students is likely to considerably increase, creating a major potential deterrent to participation for widening participation students.

Problems of the White Paper

The latter is the most prominent problem for widening participation, and an obvious first contradiction, in the proposed new arrangements, which can be overcome only if the threshold for grants and repayments of fees are considerably raised. There are signs that there may be some movement here, but whether this will be sufficient remains to be seen.

The second major contradiction in the White Paper is the proposal for an increasing differentiation of institutions – also reasserted strongly in the HEFCE Strategy document – between research intensive and primarily teaching or 'teaching only' institutions. The obvious paradox to which this gives rise is a 'perverse access': at a time when participation is to be expanded, the inequality of institutions will increase, with widening participation students least likely to be admitted to 'top' institutions. The UK Government is proposing to offset this by giving particular attention to the access policies of elite institutions, not least via the proposed Access Regulator, but so far the proposed intervention has mainly suggested a focus on fairer access for students from state compared with public schools. It is vital if the social class skew in access to elite institutions is to be overcome that the proposed new benchmark performance indicators in the White Paper – based on family income, parental education, together with attendance at under-performing schools – are fully implemented despite the gathering opposition to these from interested parties such as fee-paying schools.

Even if fairness of access might be achieved in this way, however, there is a further important issue: whether a HE system with the extremes of differentiation between proposed institutions is in any way justified? Even in research terms the question arises. Outside the major areas of hard science, research selectivity may already be far greater than necessary. The evidence cited in the White Paper throwing doubt on the importance of a relation between teaching and research is also suspect.

Regarding widening participation specifically, suggestions in the White Paper that the vocational emphasis proposed for the bulk of the expansion of HE will 'meet the needs of a more diverse student body' must be doubted given the increasing institutional differentiation this involves. The objective of the White Paper to achieve a revaluation of vocational education and appropriate courses for new kinds of students is laudable, but has something like this been attempted many times before – not least in Anthony Crosland's founding vision for the English polytechnics – but the class and HE system as a whole with their greater valuation of academic courses has always frustrated this. There is plenty of evidence that, given a free choice, it has almost always been a better option – economically and in other ways – to choose the academic option, unless the vocational option is in an elite institution. What evidence is there that this will change? In fact, very little, and a successful reform in this respect is most unlikely

when the proposal is that differences between institutions will increase. On the whole, the White Paper and the supporting discussion from ministers which deals with these difficulties is rhetorical and involves a good deal of wishful thinking. For example, it is assumed that a revaluation of teaching also a part of the White Paper will also lead to a revaluation of teaching only institutions. There is just one possibility in the White Paper of a non-rhetorical partial salvation for the damage likely to result from a greater differentiation of institutions: the call for far greater collaboration between institutions. As suggested in *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 4(3) – Jary, 2002), institutional mergers or regional federations, perhaps along the lines of the Californian State University, may help to ameliorate a differentiation

of institutions that would otherwise result in an increasing marginalization of widening participation students. The key ingredients of this would be to ensure, via federation and collaboration, flexible progression for students so they were not locked into particular courses and to bolster the overall esteem associated with the new credentials by associating them with the positive 'brands' of higher status institutions. There has been considerable success in providing a flexible 2 + 1 provision linking further education with higher education in Scotland. Any less satisfactory institutional setting for the new types of awards in England is likely to be rejected by the very students for which they are proposed, and rightly so. The lessons from California, Scotland and elsewhere will be important.

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2004

In England in 2019, the Office for Students has identified care leavers (Care-experienced learners in Scotland) as a key priority for the sector. This recognises the significant gaps in participation and success for young people who have grown up in the care of their local authority. It was instructive to read the article 'Aspiration Raising Amongst Looked after Children' by Neil Moreland and Janet Lavelle in issue 1, Volume 6 of the journal from 2004, reflecting that while the nomenclature may have changed slightly, the issues of multiple disadvantage and traumatic experiences continue to severely limit participation in higher education for this group of young people. In 2004 only 1% of 'looked after children' attended university – at a time when 30% of the age cohort went into higher education.

The authors report on a sports day at a campus university organised for children in care from a nearby rural community. Evaluating the day as enjoyable, and succeeding in its objective to demystify university, they felt 'horizons' had been altered. However, they argued that such one-off events had limitations, as the impact of 'elective affinities' (learning from others in similar situations with similar life chances) was far stronger. In order that children from care backgrounds could be helped to maximise their potential, they advocated similar events scaffolded and supplemented by positive role models/mentors. This conclusion feels relevant in a period when NCOPs (National Collaborative Outreach Programme) are evaluating their impact.

Aspiration raising amongst looked after children: A small-scale evaluation of an activity day on a university campus

Neil Moreland, The Open University, UK
Janet Lavelle, Telford Centre Point Learning Centre, UK (both previously of the Rural Opportunities Project)

Introduction

Looked after children (children in the care of a local authority), are amongst the lowest achievers in the English education system, and thus are amongst the less likely to enter higher education (HE). At a time when the government wishes at least half of all young people under the age of 30 years to have a higher education experience and/or qualification, the plight of the looked after children deserves both recognition and addressing. As part of a widening opportunities project based in the rural west of the West Midlands of England, a sports day at a university campus in Walsall was devised and implemented for looked after children living in Telford, Shropshire. A stakeholder approach to the evaluation of the day was undertaken, and whilst the results of the day suggest that a great deal of aspiration raising was achieved, concern is expressed over the possible 'draining away' of such commitment without further support and development for the children.

There are a great number of studies that deal with the impact of social differences on student achievement in schools, and their predilection for continuing in education beyond the school leaving age (e.g. Gorard, Rees and Salisbury 2001; Chevalier and Gauthier 2002; Demie, Butler and Taplin 2002; Eggleston 2000). At the same time, there is a growing recognition that particular categories of youth, including 'looked after children' who suffer multiple disadvantage arising from their class, gender and ethnicity in addition to being in care. In 1999/2000 70% of those children leaving care had no recognised qualifications, and only 4% had five or more GCSEs graded A-C or equivalent (OFSTED 2002). Currently, only one looked after child in 100 goes onto higher education compared to one child in three in the rest of the population of England (Department of Health, 1999:37)

Perhaps we should not be surprised by such statistics given that looked after children have often suffered traumatic events such as bereavement and abuse which has resulted in them being separated from their immediate families, and the local authority care system can exacerbate these problems, including frequent movement between foster carers (Walker, 1994). And all these factors have a negative impact on their educational opportunities.

It is desirable, therefore, to seek to raise the expectations of looked after children with regard to the possibility of higher education as a future option. In Telford, that is where the Rural Opportunities Project became important.

….

Conclusion: Another Brick in the Wall?

If we take a straight-forward responsive evaluation approach (initial impressions and perspectives) to the data, it is clear that there was a substantial consensus that the sports day was successful for all concerned, not only in terms of enjoyment, but also in terms of 'demystifying universities' as possible places for these children and young people.

At the same time, we have to be more cautious in any appraisal of the lasting effects of the day. Whilst there may well have been an element of changing or altering the 'horizon' (Gadamer, 1979: 269) of possible futures for the children, the reality is that the experiences and perspectives of the children are embedded in a 'web of sociality' that is beyond the immediate situation, including the day itself.

Individuals learn such perspectives through what might be called 'elective affinities' – interacting with, and dialectically learning from – other individuals in similar situations and with similar life chances (Baxter, 1993). For the looked after children, their 'elective affinities' are likely to be children in situations similar to themselves. The looked after children, therefore, are likely to have difficulties in accessing role models and cultural capital appropriate to their achievement in education. Whilst the sports day may have had an 'entressement' outcome - the effect of getting people interested, unless specific long term activities and role modelling occurs, it is unlikely that positive mobilization will occur, given that mobilisation is the process of getting particular world-views and definitions of the situation accepted and not challenged (Clegg, 2000: 204-205). This perspective suggests the necessity to continue with such events as sports day, and to scaffold such developments by positive role models and influences. This is likely to be difficult, but not impossible, and every effort should be made to do so.

In the immortal words of Pink Floyd, the sports day, though very successful in terms of immediate feedback and perspective gaining, has to be accompanied by other developments (e.g. mentoring and follow-up events) to ensure that the sports day is 'another brick in the wall' towards positive images and perspectives of higher education by the children. That way, such activities may not only help the children to maximise their potential, which may include higher education, but also support the attainment of long-term government aims on the levels of educational qualifications considered necessary to support the economy.

2005

Jocey Quinn's 2005 article in this journal (issue 3, Volume 7) 'Rethinking Working-class 'Drop-Out' from University' raises a number of issues around inclusive teaching and support in higher education which continue to prevent students from some under-represented groups succeeding today. Drawing on qualitative data from four 'new' universities in disadvantaged areas of the four nations of the UK, and on international perspectives, she challenges the media and policy assumptions around working class 'failure'. Key findings included the observation that almost all drop-outs intended to return, offering the sector the possibility of implementing lifelong learning policies that enable multiple entry and exit points, with no distinction between full and part-time modes and effective credit transfer between institutions. Sadly, it feels we are still waiting for those flexibilities, despite international models.

She also reported that young working class male drop-outs had felt channeled into subjects that failed to engage them, and that while all universities had support systems, they were considered difficult to access – and students left without any advice. One powerful conclusion (I suspect still relevant) was the need for a fairer extenuating circumstances system, and another conclusion which has come round again is the equitability of paying for credit rather than year. Sadly, the call for teaching and assessment to support a more diverse student body remains a hope rather than an achievement in the sector.

Rethinking working-class 'drop out' from university

Jocey Quinn, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Exeter University, UK

Access to university has been seen as a route out of poverty for young working-class people but, more recently, many who have entered higher education have been choosing to leave early. This research used a range of participative qualitative methods and international perspectives to explore the concept of 'working-class drop out'. Looking at four new universities in disadvantaged areas in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the research found:

- policy and media tend to portray 'dropping out' as a symptom of working-class 'failure';
- seminars with local stakeholders ('research jury' days) revealed 'drop-out' could be a self-fulfilling prophecy, colouring the way young working-class people regard university and affecting regeneration;
- interviews with ex-students revealed that young men felt they had been channeled by schools and careers services into stereotyped subjects that didn't engage them;
- interviews showed that 'dropping out' was not a disaster. Students had sound reasons for withdrawing early. All but one intended to return to education;
- most students interviewed had gained skills, confidence and life experience from their time at university;
- 'research jury' days showed universities have support systems but interviews indicated these are difficult to access. Students often took the decision to leave on their own, without support or advice;
- the current system does not facilitate flexible lifelong learning. International comparisons, which formed part of the study, indicate the benefits of a more flexible system;
- interviews with students and a survey of admissions offices indicated that universities do not encourage students to change courses, go part-time or take time out; nor did students have the confidence to negotiate. In addition, their families did not have the resources to navigate the system;
- interviews and jury days with students, employment agencies, employers, and university careers services revealed a lack of focused services for students who drop out. Students were mostly offered a choice between dead-end jobs and unemployment;
- the researchers conclude that working-class students who withdraw early to refocus and reenter education are real lifelong learners: institutions and policy-makers have yet to catch up with them.

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Conclusion: From Life Crisis to Lifelong Learning

The researchers conclude that leaving early need not be seen as a disaster: the negative implications of early withdrawal for students, institutions and the local area are not intrinsic, but are created by higher education policy and cultural norms. They suggest the following measures to promote lifelong learning:

- a wide range of higher education sites, with parity and transferability between them;
- multiple entry and exit points;
- flexible entry requirements;
- no distinction between full- and part-time study, with all courses offered in different modes;
- wide range of exit opportunities (including, but not restricted to, qualifying);
- effective credit accumulation and transfer scheme within and between higher education institutions;
- tracking of students' progress and transition into and out of education and employment;
- no restrictive assumptions about duration of study and longer time lapses before students are deemed to have withdrawn;
- an effective and fair extenuating circumstances system;
- comprehensive provision of childcare and other services;
- no financial penalties for institutions or students who take different routes through higher education;
- fees payable for units studied, rather than number of years of registration;
- a commitment to maintaining the breadth of the curriculum and expansion as necessary;
- improved teaching and assessment to support a more diverse and dynamic student body;
- follow-up of people who have exited at all points and encouragement for them to re-enter at a wide range of levels;
- transparent policy for students at all stages and staff, in particular admissions officers, personal tutors and guidance and support staff.

2006

The tension between 'old' and 'new' universities is returned to in Martin Franklin's article 'Widening Participation – Narrow Horizons: status hierarchy and inequalities of access to higher education' which was published in issue 1, Volume 8 in 2006. The author acknowledges that mass higher education is established in Britain but argues that expansion has disproportionately benefitted those from more affluent families. He noted class and status differentiation continue to act as mechanisms for social change, and that policies designed to enlarge access to HE through competition have resulted in a narrowing of choice for the most disadvantaged learners.

He researched the perceptions and experiences of mature Access students and identified working class and female students as limiting their applications to 'lower status' universities. He argued a bifurcated system of higher education had repackaged old equalities, and called for high status institutions to make themselves attractive and accessible to non-traditional students. Statements from the Office for Students recently suggest there is still progress to make on that front.

Wider participation – narrow horizons: status hierarchy and inequalities of access to higher education

Martin Franklin, City and Islington College, UK

Mass higher education is now an established feature of the British education system, yet a recent report on social mobility concluded that the expansion of higher education has continued to disproportionately benefit those from more affluent families. (Centre for Economic Performance, 2005). There is also a marked division between elite and mass universities, with 'old', prestigious universities recruiting largely from their traditional base of middle class, largely white students - whilst the 'new'1 universities are widening access to groups previously excluded from higher education. It was found that the percentage of disadvantaged students (working class, ethnic minorities and other groups) finding places in higher status universities stands at 13 per cent (Sutton Trust, 2000). Whilst welcoming advances in widening participation over recent decades we must be conscious that class and status differentiation in higher education continue to act as mechanisms of social closure and exclusion.

My own recent research with a group of mature students on an Access course2 revealed how the status hierarchy in the university system influences and constrains students' choice of university. I found that working class and female students often exclude prestigious universities and limit their applications to lower status (new) universities. I think that the 'status barrier' is an important factor in understanding why the middle class student profile of the old university sector has changed so little and 'non–traditional' working class students are concentrated in the newer universities. If the higher status institutions are serious about equality and recruiting a truly inclusive student body, they must focus on making themselves attractive and accessible to non-traditional students.

Why do people decide to take an Access course? How do they choose a college and a course? What do they get out of the course? What influences their choices of university and degree? These were questions I sought to address in my year of research as an excellence fellow at London South Bank University. In February and March 2004 I interviewed twelve Access students on a Humanities and Social Sciences course at a college in North London. In this summary of the research findings I will focus primarily on the issues that emerged in relation to the way students deal with their University and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) applications, and on the influence of a 'status barrier' embedded in the higher education system, which I see as a significant factor in perpetuating inequalities of access to university.

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Conclusion

The research exposed how the status hierarchy built into the British higher education system interacted with disadvantages related to gender and class to narrow the choices of students to lower status institutions. Thus, I argue, the status barrier is a significant factor in explaining the failure of the prestigious universities to recruit disadvantaged and non-traditional students, including those from ethnic minorities (see a recent report in the Education Guardian; *Black students failing to get into top universities* 3 January 2006). Though the current approach to widening participation is creating a mass higher education system, the bifurcation into elite and open access universities is repackaging old inequalities and creating another layer of class and cultural hierarchy. Universities have an incentive to distinguish themselves in a competitive environment but the market advantage gained from high status perpetuates and increases social and cultural barriers to Access and other disadvantaged students. This situation creates a certain irony in that policies designed to promote choice and enlarge access to higher education through competition, result in a narrowing of choice for disadvantaged groups. There is much yet to be done to enable students to broaden their horizons without old elitist barriers acting to exclude them.

A copy of the full report; *Wider Participation Narrow Horizons* is available from the Access and Widening Participation Unit, London South Bank University, Room 1A13/1A10 Technopark, 90 London Road, C/o Post Room 103 Borough Road London SE1 0AA Tel: 0207815 7036

2007

I was pleased to discover a powerful and honest account of a whole-institution change programme in Australia aimed at addressing a rise in students with a learning disability or mental health condition. Wendy Paulusz's article 'Inclusive practices for an integrated and collaborative support system' was published in this journal in issue 2 of Volume 7 in 2007. The project reported on aimed to challenge the labelling of a 'problem' with a more supportive teaching and learning environment, driven by a belief that the academic environment itself could be 'disabling'. Staff attitudes were addressed in workshops and seminars, which did produce better understanding and greater staff confidence, but resistance emerged to cultural change. A focus on research in the institution trumped space for reflective practice.

Conclusions highlighted a need for a multi-sensory approach to accommodate different learning styles, and the importance of effective feedback (and attention to how it is received). It was noteworthy that attitudinal change required a long-term strategic commitment. The vision was a persuasive one – that changes will enable this student group to succeed, and in doing so all students will benefit.

Inclusive practices for an integrated and collaborative support system

Wendy Paulusz, Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT), Monash University, Australia

Introduction

This article describes an innovative project at one of Australia's largest multi-campus universities. The Inclusive Practices Project was established in response to the significant increase (since 2000) in students with 'hidden disabilities' - students with a learning disability or mental health condition, registered with the Disability Liaison Unit (DLU).

The aim of the project, which commenced in May 2005 as part of a Strategic Initiative Funding grant in the Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT) at Monash University, Australia, is to provide support for students with hidden disabilities. More specifically, the project attempts to demonstrate how the teaching and learning environment can be 'enabling' for students rather than labelling them as being a 'problem' in need of remediation. While the project acknowledges the value of specialised one-to-one support which is offered to students, it also recognises that it is the academic environment which can be 'disabling' for these students. Thus, in developing an 'enabling environment', the emphasis is on staff training and development and the promotion of inclusive (teaching) practices throughout the university in order to increase awareness and understanding of the issues facing students with hidden disabilities.

There are three components to the project:

- Addressing attitudes of staff through workshops and seminars to faculty and support staff on issues of diversity; a website on inclusive teaching strategies by and for staff; and presentations at committees and staff meetings on issues for students with hidden disabilities.

- Offering specialised one-to-one support for students with hidden disabilities as well as a website designed for them to address specific learning issues.

- Providing a network of support for students through close liaison between CALT and the DLU with cross referral from faculty and counselling staff; plus collaboration between CALT and the DLU on staff training and development.

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Evaluation of the project

Feedback and evaluations of the staff training sessions have been very positive so far. However, since limited numbers of staff have been attending it is difficult to gauge the overall impact on staff at the university. There would still appear to be some resistance to cultural change due to the belief that the university focus on research does not require a strong emphasis on reflective teaching practice and development of teaching skills.

Unfortunately, there is still a general lack of understanding of the positive benefits to be accrued from widening access to students with hidden disabilities and the development of an enabling teaching environment. Consequently, not many staff who already have heavy teaching and research workloads are prepared to give up the little time they have in order to do these training sessions.

However, evaluations by the staff who have attended have shown that there clearly is a need for wider dissemination of information on students with hidden disabilities and how they learn.

Feedback from staff has indicated greater awareness of:

- The importance of a multi-sensory approach to accommodate the different learning styles of their students;

- The importance of feedback and how students perceive it, and ways to make it more effective and accessible;

- The impact on study of a disability or mental health condition and how and where to refer students for further support;

- The types of support offered by the DLU;

- Information on DLU accommodations for students with disabilities (during semester and examinations);

- Sharing information between different sections of the university.

Most importantly the evaluations have shown that staff have:

- A better understanding of inclusive teaching and its benefits to all students thus removing the fear of having to provide individualised instruction for every student with a hidden disability;

- Confidence now to implement inclusive teaching strategies in their lectures and tutorials.

This has resulted in information from the sessions being put on the faculty's website such as further support available for students and staff; how to give more effective feedback; and clarification of policies on alternative arrangement for assessments and exam issues.

The staff training sessions have taken on greater significance as the specialised one-to-one support once offered to students is no longer available. Students who indicated in their evaluations that they had benefited from the specialised support given will now have to go to the Library Learning Commons which has recently been made responsible for learning support for all students enrolled at the university. Academic skills advisors are now employed by the Library to provide such support. Since the Library is keen to offer the same level of specialised support to students, they have recently undertaken to provide a series of staff training sessions on inclusive teaching of diverse learners for their staff to be run by CALT. This provides a great opportunity for further collaboration between the Library, CALT and the DLU in staff training.

Many faculty and support staff, in particular sessional staff, have indicated they value the cross-institutional learning support as it offers timely and continuous intervention for both students and staff and breaks down the isolation some staff experience when new to the university.

Nonetheless there is still much work to be done to change the attitudes of many staff in order to make the university accessible to all students. Therefore the scope of the project continues to be widened so that all faculties and support services at the different campuses can participate in the workshops. More faculties are showing an interest in staff training and development as they become aware of the implications of the *Inclusive Practices Disability Plan 2004-2008* within the *Monash Education Plan*. This will enable systemic change to support the view that non-traditional learners can add value to the classroom. Continuing presentations at faculty, staff and equity meetings and committees will continue to raise awareness of the issues faced by such nontraditional learners and the importance of inclusive and reflective teaching practices.

The real value of a project like this depends on a long-term commitment, and on further development and continuing integration into the university as a whole. This needs to come from senior management level which has already extended funding for the project until the end of 2007.

Our traditional interpretations of learning are proving to be insufficient to deal with the problems of today. Many non-traditional learners, in particular students with a learning disability, exhibit the characteristics of divergent and original thinking and the qualities required for success in the real and changing world (Smith, 2005). In fact, they may be the leaders of the future. Inclusive teaching practices will create an enabling learning environment so that such students can successfully complete their studies and at the same time all students will benefit.

2008
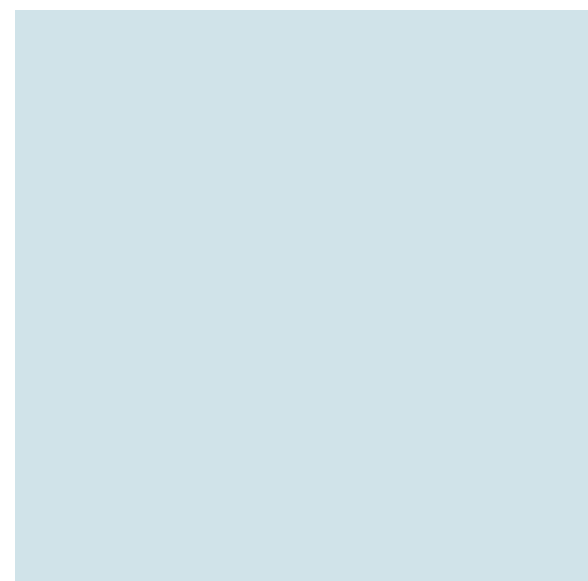
Picking up on the challenge of raising and sustaining higher education aspirations amongst Primary aged pupils, David Allison, Charlotte Rigby and Sue Bates reported on an innovative project at the University of Manchester. In their article 'Informing the informers: an essential aspect of any widening participation programme', published in issue 2 of Volume 10 of this journal in 2008, the authors focus on the problem of non-traditional pupils in inner city schools not applying for professional subjects like Pharmacy. Recognising the potential waste of talent, the project focused on pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds, and certain ethnic groups, whose parents had not attended university. In order to maximise success, the project included the key influencers, often overlooked in WP work, the parents/carers.

So, parents/carers were invited to work alongside their children and experienced university first hand (for the first time). As a result of informal contact with undergraduate ambassadors and course tutors, Pharmacy was seen as an achievable goal for their children.

Informing the informers:
an essential aspect of any widening participation programme

David Allison, Charlotte Rigby and Sue Bates, University of Manchester, UK

Introduction

The ever-increasing literature on widening access emphasises the high academic potential of many non-traditional pupils yet their low application rates to university (Universities UK, 2003). It suggests a large, untapped reservoir of pupils in inner city schools who have much to offer but who require enrichment and support to make it to, and through, university. Research suggests that lack of parental experience of higher education, coupled with growing up in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage, results in low self-esteem and confidence. This is a particular problem for professional subjects such as medicine, dentistry and pharmacy (Greenhalgh et al., 2004; Swain, (2006), where many pupils do not consider themselves to be the right type for courses leading to these 'high status' professions. although recent data suggest that students from these types of backgrounds that do enter university are just as likely to succeed as those from privileged backgrounds (Attwood, 2008), they often require extensive nurturing and support to make it through to graduation.

Equity of access to higher education is one of the University of Manchester's (UoM) core values and much of its widening participation and outreach work involves engagement with underrepresented groups in local boroughs (Bates et al., 2007). For over ten years the UoM has recognised that inequities of access to higher education, often associated with social background, are inherently unjust and wasteful of talent. As part of an overall programme of activities aimed at addressing existing inequity and to support the progression of a talented cohort of young people currently under-represented in higher education, a number of schemes have been introduced, including Mentoring Plus (Bates et al., 2007) and the Pharmacy in Primary Schools (PIPS) project (Allison and Moore, 2007).

One of the aims of the PIPS project was to introduce pharmacy as a viable and attainable career option to non-traditional pupils, namely those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and certain ethnic minority groups, and those whose parents did not attend university. The overall programme was judged a resounding success by both the pupils who took part and by their teachers (Allison and Moore, 2007). However, one crucial but missing element was the views of the associated parents and carers. These are extremely important to take into account as the parents and carers will have the majority of influence over their children. Widening access programmes designed to increase applications to university from non-traditional pupils have had mixed success. Whilst one of the major aims for widening participation activities is to raise aspiration towards and awareness of higher education amongst both pupils and key influencers (Bates et al., 2007), it is often the latter group that are overlooked on any such programme. This article describes the involvement and experiences of parents and carers on the extended pharmacy widening participation programme and reflects on how the information gained may be used to positively enhance perceptions and raise pupil aspirations courtesy of their parents and carers.

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Summary and future developments

It is well established that pupils from poor backgrounds and certain ethnic groups, and those whose parents did not go to university are less likely to apply to a university let alone for a professional subject such as pharmacy. Moreover, widening access initiatives to increase applications from and subsequent retention in such groups have had mixed success. One reason for this might be lack of parental support. In this case study we have shown quite clearly that getting parents/carers involved is an important step in reinforcing and maintaining the notion for their children that higher education is attainable. No matter what tutors say in their workshops, in the long term the majority of children pay more attention to what their parents/carers think. Hence, a key aspect to this study was to get parents/carers working alongside their children, not only to support them, but also to raise their own awareness and aspirations. In this manner they could sample for themselves the same experiences of higher education as their children. In summary, the parents/carers on this programme were able to observe their child's enjoyment of the pharmacy related activities; experience university first hand (for some this was the first time they had visited the university); boost their own confidence and motivation about university; and see that professional subjects such as pharmacy are an achievable goal for their children.

As well as having interesting topics and activities for them to engage with, an important aspect to the workshop was the opportunity for parents/carers to talk informally to the undergraduate ambassadors and course tutors. Such contact appeared to break down any social barriers that might have been there.

Our study would suggest that a key motivational aspect to any widening participation programme would be to include, wherever possible, parents and carers. It is our intention to continue to do so with future workshops aimed at year eight and nine pupils.

2009

The issue of disadvantaged students learning (or not learning) from feedback has already been raised in an earlier selected contribution. Deirdre Burke, Sally Bartholomew and Sue Oldham published an article in the journal in 2009 (issue 3 in Volume 11) offering a simple but effective solution in 'Feedback Tutorial Template: providing links to learning'. Recognising some feedback may be inadequate and problematic, and that some students may not engage with the feedback or act on it, the authors described a template used by Skills Advisors to record a discussion and hyperlink to learning materials aimed at supporting any issues identified in the feedback. Issues of inadequate feedback, and students not learning from feedback, continue to prevent some students from engaging successfully with higher education. It feels a shame this strategy has not been disseminated more widely.

Feedback tutorial template: providing links to learning

Deirdre Burke, Sally Bartholomew and Sue Oldham, University of Wolverhampton, UK

Overview

This article reports on an innovation to help students unpack and then act on tutor feedback on their work. Inadequate and problematic as tutor feedback may be, it appears that students make only minimal attempts to learn from or act on that feedback. Skills Advisors (the term Advisor is used to avoid confusion with subject tutor) play an important role in encouraging students to read and develop a better understanding of tutor feedback. The innovation presented here is the Feedback Tutorial Template (see linked web folio under Burke (2009b)) used by the Skills Advisor to record the discussion and provide a hyperlink to learning materials that address the particular learning needs of the student. This article reports on the initial development of the template, and suggests ways to adapt the innovation for a wider audience.

Tutor feedback: barriers facing students

The Feedback Tutorial Template was developed, piloted and rolled out under the guidance of the Centre for Academic Skills. The purpose of the centre is to develop and deliver academic skills within the School of Law, Social Sciences and Communications. This serves to enhance student progression and retention by supporting the development of subject academic literacy, academic socialisation and key skills. The majority of the centre's work occurs face to face with students in individual or group sessions. Research to underpin such encounters is essential and for the past two years specific research has focused on feedback tutorials. Bartholomew and Walsh (2008) and Bartholomew and Oldham (2009) have applied aspects of Burke's National Teacher Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) project on Feedback within the school, integrating it into a range of academic skills service provision.

'Now I've got the feedback, what do I do with it?' asked a first year student. What indeed should students do with the feedback? Weaver (2006) drew attention to the lack of guidance for students on what to do with feedback, and this finding was confirmed by Burke's (2009a) report on student understandings of feedback. Research within our school by Bartholomew and Walsh (2008) identified student views on assistance that they required in order to overcome the barriers they faced in unpacking the message in tutor feedback.

The first barrier was the wording used by tutors that obscured their feedback. Thus, students needed help to translate feedback into terms they understand. If a student does not understand the concept of critical thinking enough to deliver it in an assignment, is it likely that they will be helped by comments which state that they should provide more critical thought? Secondly, issues around the transferability of academic feedback were raised by students. Assignment specific comments were often linked to points of information in the assignment, or to the degree of fulfillment of specific assignment criteria. Such comments did not allow students to make the cognitive leap necessary to apply feedback constructively to another piece of work and thus, crucially, to understand what they might do differently in subsequent work to improve. Interestingly students were more motivated to seek guidance in understanding tutor feedback when they had failed a piece of work and needed to resubmit the same assignment. This suggests that students possess the will to engage with feedback; the will does exist when it is recognised to be directly relevant to their progression. Finally students faced a barrier in identifying future targets from tutor feedback. Students are, or feel, unable to extract sufficient direction from the written tutor feedback in order to plan concrete actions to improve their academic performance.

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Concluding thoughts

One reason why students do not act on tutor feedback is that it is difficult to do so. Part of the difficulty clearly lies in the feedback provided by tutors, but skillful reading by Skills advisors can help students identify a learning need from feedback. The Feedback Tutorial Template provides both a strategy and practical materials to support student learning from feedback.

One respondent at a dissemination session at an academic conference noted that, whatever bur efforts or strategies, or other developments in feedback, we still face the same challenge: for students to take notice and act on advice. Hyperlinks are not a magical solution to the problem; they will only work if students click on the link, and read the materials and relate them to the issues raised by tutors in their feedback.

A parallel strand to the Feedback Tutorial Template is a version for subject tutors to provide a summary of feedback tutorials and hyperlinks to materials to help students work on the areas specified for improvement.

2010

Starting with a suitably chilling quotation from Huxley's *Brave New World*, Peter Jones reflects on the legacy of the all-too-brief Lifelong Learning Networks. His trenchant article 'From alpha to epsilon: a brave new world for vocational higher education' appeared in Volume 12 of this journal, in a special edition published in 2010. Peter's focus is on the tension between 'academic' HE (aligned with 'gold standard' A level entry by middle class students – and what else are A levels for?) and 'vocational' (a term diverted into policies aimed at increasing social mobility by widening access to higher education and redressing the UK skills deficit). The author reminds us Newby argued this academic/vocational distinction was made only through the lens of the English class system (using oft-quoted examples of subjects like Medicine).

He also suggested the HE system does not exist in a vacuum, otherwise universities would have remained an 'exclusive club of male aristocratic heirs studying theology'. His conclusion is persuasive – we must resist the marginalisation of non-traditional learning while avoiding progression pathways predestined by social class.

From alpha to epsilon:
a brave new world for vocational higher education progression?

Peter Jones, Staffordshire University, UK

Alpha children wear grey. They work much harder than we do, because they're so frightfully clever. I'm really awfully glad I'm a Beta, because I don't work so hard. And then we are much better than the Gammas and Deltas. Gammas are stupid. They all wear green, and Delta children wear khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They're too stupid to be able…
(Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, 1932)

Back in the seemingly dim and distant days of the early twenty-first century, a new dawn for lifelong learning and widening participation was heralded in the form of the Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs). It seems like only yesterday that we were discussing the merits or otherwise of the new networks and the extent to which 'lifelong' was a misnomer for networks focused so narrowly on redressing the 90%–50% differential in progression to higher education (HE) between 'academic' and 'vocational' pathways (Duke, 2005). The networks were very much a creature of their time: they were perceived as a means of attaining the 2010 target of having 50% of 19–30-year olds in some form of HE, they were a means to redress the UK's skills deficit and they were a means to increase social mobility. As these networks have drawn or are drawing to a close much will be written about their achievements and their legacy.

What follows is not an attempt to evaluate the success or otherwise of the Lifelong Learning Networks. It is instead a warning with regard to how the evaluation of the networks may be taken out of context, willfully misunderstood or oversimplified as we move into a very different HE landscape than that in which they were created.

At the inception of the networks, Howard Newby was clear in pointing out that the traditional distinction between 'vocational' and 'academic' courses was not overly helpful. In any case, the embedding of 'transferable' skills across all disciplines in higher education was making these distinctions increasingly permeable. Similarly, the societal and economic need for a higher skills base was self-evident, and the only real distinction between 'vocational' and 'academic' was that made by the English class system (Newby, 2005).

The debate as to what constitutes vocational as opposed to what is an academic pathway is age old, and the definitions are often built on shifting sand. It is all too easy to view the debate as a simple battle between the functionalists in one camp and the purveyors of radical discourse in the other. However, this would be to oversimplify. Any attempt to redress the skills deficit through a more functionalist HE model meets with a deeply entrenched opposition to such a narrow approach. On one hand, any failure to embrace the skills agenda is considered elitism, while on the other, anything that could be viewed as remotely 'vocational' is seen as an erosion of academic standards (Jones and Williams, 2008). Such extreme standpoints are not helpful and quite often rendered somewhat ridiculous with the passage of time. Very few would now argue that Law or Medicine are not worthy of study at university. Herein lies the rub: surely, law and medicine are vocational areas of study. Perhaps what distinguishes them from other areas of vocational study is the kind of person who studies them.

It has long been established that higher education is not completely divorced from wider societal trends. The HE sector does not exist in a vacuum, and the type of learning, subjects studied and type of student change over time to keep in step with the shifting economic needs and societal norms. If this was not the case our institutions would be an exclusive club of male aristocratic heirs studying theology. That this is no longer the case is a cause for celebration and needs to be reiterated very loudly in the current policy context.

By its very nature higher education is elitist; there is a clue in the name. The last quarter of a century may have seen a massification of the sector, but, as Wagner noted in 1995, we seem to have developed a mass higher education sector that clings to the elitist values of the past. If we cast our minds back a mere twenty years we can remember when the vocational course was the core of the polytechnic system, while even the most traditional and ancient seats of learning equipped their students for professional life (Heyler, 2008).

2011

Lifelong Learning Network attempts at redressing the imbalance are to be lauded; however, when we write up the achievements, we need to guard against any oversimplification. While we may be aware that the 'academic' and 'vocational' distinctions at best provide us with a useful shorthand we must be aware that the terms carry an enormous cultural baggage. Unless we take great pains to nail down the distinction, we may fall foul of oversimplification by others. At its most unsophisticated this may read as:

- A Levels = Academic = Good
- Other = Vocational = Not so good (with the possible exception of the International Baccalaureate)

As for new diplomas, there is a blinking sign reading 'vocational qualification' that has flittered in and out of sight as the new qualifications have developed.

Unsurprisingly, the chief concern for many universities is how to translate the new qualification into old money (if, indeed, as looks doubtful now, these qualifications ever see the light of day).

Part of the problem lies with the perceived inequality between qualifications that the networks were created to counter. What we do know is that more middleclass students (SOC 1–3) sit A Levels, while they tend not to study other Level 3 qualifications or engage in work-based learning or modern apprenticeships. Here the problem does not necessarily lie with the qualification themselves but with who takes what. Furthermore, A Levels are really of little use other than as a stepping stone into higher education, whereas vocational qualifications have an intrinsic value in themselves. It should not be surprising that more A Level students enter HE, as what else are they going to do? Similarly, universities are happier with the A Levels … they understand them (and those who sit them).

Obviously, the above is a gross oversimplification and ignores much of the work of the last quarter of a century to make the HE sector more inclusive, accessible and relevant. However, we should know by now that just because something is oversimplified and misconceived does not mean it will not inform policy. After all, we are dealing with a Prime Minister who believes the success or otherwise of the widening participation agenda can be measured by the number of students from the most deprived areas who enter Oxbridge.

There are dangers ahead both from within and without the widening participation community. We must continue to campaign against the shibboleth of the A Level as the 'gold standard' and promote the perception of other Level 3 qualifications as at least its equal. We also need to continue to develop pathways and progression routes into relevant HE provision. We need to look at our terminology: what do we mean by 'vocational', 'academic' or 'applied'? Can we demonstrate that skills acquisition and higher learning are not mutually exclusive? (The latter is rhetorical.) Above all, we need to make the 'self-evident' relationship between higher level skills, economic growth and wider societal good, evident.

There is another danger that we must guard against. We know the A Level is often perceived as the preferred entry route into higher education; we know it is the course of choice for the demographic that is perceived to populate higher education; and we know students from lower social classes do not traditionally study A Levels. We need to make a conscious effort not to actively promote the status quo through information and guidance, terminology and pathways that push students from lower social classes into 'vocational' qualifications.

The developing wider HE policy environment may look to refocus the university as a predominantly 'academic' institution for those able to pay, with workforce development sitting firmly within the tertiary or a somehow 'second rate' higher education system. We need to be mindful that in an environment that places less value on 'vocational' qualifications we have to resist categorising students as vocational or otherwise on the basis of where they live, which school they attend or other proxies for social class. Our mission, if we choose to accept it, is to strive for a real equity of opportunity for all students and to resist the marginalisation of 'non-traditional 'higher learning while avoiding progression pathways predestined by social class.

2011

Tom Bourner and Juliet Millican's article 'Student – community engagement and graduate employability', one of the journal's most often cited, includes the memorable line 'All work experience is not equal' (a welcome nod to Orwell). Published in issue 2 of Volume 13 in 2011, the article claims graduate employability is enhanced by student – community engagement, through a framework of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Carefully marshalling evidence, the authors report the benefits of one or more modules in a programme of higher education being about learning from a project within a community-based organisation. Students are able to discover talents and strengths valued by employers which may be less easily identified in subject studies. Such social capital appears to help graduates gain employment.

Key elements include integration as a parallel aspect of learning (not an add-on) and being sustained over a period of time. In terms of all work experience not being equal, the most effective is: structured; supervised by the university; with learning distilled through reflection and application. The latter may enhance success in academic modules. This adds significantly to current debates about employability and the civic role of higher education.

Student-community engagement and graduate employability

Tom Bourner and Juliet Millican, University of Brighton, UK

Abstract

This article is about the effects of student-community engagement on the employment prospects of graduates. Its aims are to examine critically the reasons for the belief that student-community engagement enhances graduate employability and to assess the strength of the case for that belief. The article seeks to contribute to the development of a theory of how student-community engagement affects graduate employability. It offers a 'knowledge, skills and attitudes' framework for student-community engagement that can be related to graduate employability. It concludes with lessons to enhance the contribution of student-community engagement to graduate employability.

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Conclusions and discussion

The aim of this article was to explore the relationship between SCE and graduate employment. This link is important for universities that are concerned about the employability of their students; it is important for those with an interest in university-community engagement; and it is important, of course, for the students themselves. The article has focused on student-community engagement where students take on one or more modules within their degree programme to learn from working on a project (or projects) within a community-based organisation. And it has focused on the ability of students to gain employment after university. In principle, SCE can increase forms of social capital that enhance employability, it can provide an opportunity for students to discover talents and strengths that are valued by employers but that would not be recognised so easily in their subject-centred studies and it can provide an opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes that are valued by employers. On the other hand, it could, in theory, divert students' attention and energies from their subject-specific studies. Empirical evidence in the USA suggests the reverse – that is, that it contributes to student academic success elsewhere in their subject-specific studies (Astin et al., 2000). We could find no systematic studies on the impact of SCE on graduate employability in the UK to test the anecdotal evidence that SCE enhances graduate employability and possibly also overall degree performance. However, there are relevant studies of the impact of work-experience and student volunteering on graduate employability from which lessons may be drawn.

Most of the empirical research has focused on the link between work-experience and graduate employability. Such research as has been done on the impact of student volunteering on

graduate employability is consistent with the research on work-experience with the additional finding that a substantial proportion of employers prefer to recruit candidates who have gained their work-experience through volunteering activities.

As a very broad generalisation, the evidence indicates that work-experience does enhance graduate employability, but it does so more for some students than for others and it does so more for some forms of work-experience than others. All work-experience is not equal. At one end of the spectrum is a substantial period of college-supported work-experience aimed at widening the student's experience and integrated into a programme of higher education, as exemplified by the 'thick sandwich' degree. At the other end is casual work, such as temping or bar work, undertaken in addition to a course of higher education and with the main aim of raising money. In other words, work-experience can mean a structured period of supervised work-experience integrated into a programme of HE, and it can also mean casual work to earn money. The empirical evidence indicates that students who gain work-experience as a result of a structured period of supervised work integrated into a programme of HE are likely to gain more in terms of employability than those who undertake part-time casual work. What is the difference that makes the difference? There seem to be several factors that differentiate the sort of work experience that enhances graduate employability. First, it is integrated within the student's programme of studies. Second, the student are supervised, or otherwise supported by the university, during the work-experience. Third, the main aim is to widen student's experience rather than earn money. Fourth, attention is paid to distilling the learning from the experience.

There are some important lessons here to ensure that SCE contributes employment advantage to the students when they graduate. First, it needs to be structured within the student's programme of studies rather than being an 'add-on'. The sort of work-experience that seemed to convey most employment advantage was the sandwich placement where a period of work-experience is interleaved with a periods of academic study. Typically, SCE is not integrated in this 'serial' way but is integrated in a 'parallel' way as students take one module of SCE alongside several subject-specific modules. The important point, however, seems to be that the experience that SCE offers should not be in addition to the demands of the academic course. The evidence in the literature suggests that the latter arrangement can disadvantage mature students, particularly those with domestic commitments and students from poorer backgrounds.

Second, students and student learning need to be supported by the university during their SCE experience. This could be by visits from supervisors (in the way that sandwich students are typically supported by placement tutors) or occasional workshops for SCE cohorts or action learning sets that rotate around the community-based organisations or in some other ways. Online support is an attractive option, but it is not yet clear how effective it is in providing the sort of emotional support that is appropriate when the going gets difficult for a student who is feeling isolated from the university and other students.

Third, the SCE experience needs to widen student experience. There is all the difference in the world between 50 hours of student experience working in a community-based organisation and one hour of student experience repeated 50 times. This is one reason why SCE so often focuses on project-based work; it ensures sufficient variety of experience. By contrast, work that is too repetitive does not provide the necessary range of experience. It might be very helpful for a community-based organisation to have someone to take care of all the photocopying, but this experience would be too limited for a programme of SCE. Insufficient variety of experience is presumably a significant part of the reason that most casual work does not offer the sort of employment advantage that sandwich placements convey.

Fourth, SCE needs to offer a structured approach to reflection and learning. In other words, provision needs to be made for the students to distil significant learning outcomes from their SCE. It is this aspect of SCE that seems to make a significant difference to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and capabilities that are not present in simpler forms of volunteering (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996).

Little's survey of employability and work-based learning concluded that, 'Work experience is not necessary intrinsically beneficial. It is the learning that an individual derives from the experience that is important' (2006:14).

In order to explore the impact of SCE on graduate employability this article has introduced a framework of knowledge, skills and attitudes. This framework could be used by those developing SCE modules to ensure that the learning outcomes of such modules contribute as fully as possible to graduate employability.

An important difficulty in distilling lessons from the literatures on work-based learning and student volunteering has been that there are many different forms of work-based learning and student volunteering and some studies have treated each as a homogeneous variable. It has become apparent that different forms of work-based learning and student volunteering have different impacts on graduate employability. There is no reason why this should be any less true of SCE.

At the end of this article we still cannot be entirely certain about the impact of SCE on graduate employability. That would require primary research to fill the gap that exists on this issue. The research on work-experience and student volunteering informs us that such research would be best if it could differentiate within it between different groups of students (including by age and by social class background) and different forms of SCE. The knowledge, skills and attitudes framework used in this article to discuss reasons for and against a link between SCE and graduate employability offers a theoretical framework for such empirical work.

We are left, however, with the clear impression that the weight of argument and evidence (albeit indirect) supports the view that SCE has a positive impact on student employability, at least initially. It looks as if the most common form of SCE yields employability gains comparable with the better forms of work-experience and its affinity with student volunteering may raise its advantage further.

2012

It is important to recognise that issues associated with widening participation and lifelong learning are international, and as such crossnational boundaries. The journal can be rightly proud of the dissemination of international research in an area which can occasionally appear parochial and context-bound. One example of this is the article by Melanie Greene and Dale Kirby published in this journal in 2012 (Issue 1, Volume 4): 'The impact of tuition fees on access and student migration: lessons from Canada's Atlantic coast'. The authors discuss students' choices, movement across countries and devolved regions in relation to the impact of fees. This is arguably even more pertinent than when originally published.

The article establishes that students' post-secondary decision-making is influenced by a range of online resources as well as family, friends, educators and university alumni. While many consider studying closer to home (usually part-time via distance learning) the younger students tend to relocate, with choice of institution significantly influenced by perceived cost, reputation and programme availability. This is an important contribution to debates about the impact of tuition fees.

The impact of tuition fees on access and student migration: lessons from Canada's Atlantic coast

Melanie Greene and Dale Kirby, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

Abstract

Memorial University of Newfoundland, located in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador, has seen significant increases in the enrolment of both out of province Canadian and international students over the past several decades. Since the mid-1990s, the enrolment levels of students from the nearby Maritime provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have increased almost tenfold. Much discussion has been generated as a result of this increased enrolment, and the reasons for this increase have been the subject of much speculation. It has been suggested that Memorial's low tuition fees relative to other institutions in the Atlantic Canadian region have had a significant impact upon students' institutional choices and enrolment patterns. This research study was carried out to provide further insight into the changes in enrolment patterns among Maritime students and to provide a contextualised account of the reasons why these students choose to attend Memorial University. This research adds to the ongoing dialogue on the changing structure of higher education, the cost of fees, and efforts to widen university access and participation.

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Discussion

This research study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the changes in enrolment patterns among Maritime students and to provide a contextualized account of the reasons why these students choose to attend Memorial University. From this study, it is now known that Maritime students consult a wide variety of sources before arriving at a choice of university and frequently consider the option of studying close to their home. They utilise a wide range of resources including family, friends, educators, co-workers and Memorial University alumni, as well as services and programmes available from online sources and university promotional materials. These findings are consistent with research that has been conducted with migrant students in the UK, as well as Canada and the US (Brooks and Waters, 2010, 2011; McNeill, 2000; Morphew, 2005).

The research results show that migrant students who relocate in order to study on-campus tend to enrol on a full-time basis and are typically younger than those students who stay in their home province and pursue their studies at a distance, usually on a part-time basis. While they expressed somewhat different priorities in their selection process, particularly with regards to cost, the factors influencing the selection of institution were similar for both groups of students. Further inquiry is needed into the reasons students enrol in distance education outside of their jurisdiction, and how these compare to the reasons given by those who physically migrate.

Perceived cost is believed to be a significant factor in the decision-making process for those considering a university education; this was the case for the majority of Maritime students attending Memorial University. Tuition fee costs are an especially important consideration. This has important implications for policy-makers, as decisions regarding tuition fee levels must factor in the benefits of continuing to subsidise low tuition in order to maintain post-secondary enrolment levels, sustain an educated and competitive workforce, and for society to realise the many economic contributions of the post-secondary education sector.

It is important to note that, while university fees are comparatively lower in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, they are one influencing factor in the interwoven decision-making context of students originating in nearby provinces. University reputation and programme availability were also found to be influential in students' post-secondary decision-making. In light of this, a sustained focus on these attributes should be emphasised in the recruitment efforts of universities seeking to increase participation and to ensure enrolment sustainability over the long-term. Future research should reveal whether these factors are unique to this institution or are influential in student mobility and migration trends in other regions.

This research study was carried out to provide insight into the underlying reasons for university student migration on Canada's Atlantic coast. Not only are the findings of this study of local and regional importance, they are relevant to the broader literature on students' post-secondary choices and their relationship to tuition fee levels. In addition to making a contribution to the research on student aspirations, post-secondary choice and inter-provincial student migration in Canada, this study can assist in the development of strategies for recruiting out-of- jurisdiction students to post-secondary institutions.

2013

Further underlining the international focus of the journal, Michael Cuthill's 2013 article 'Initial results from a longitudinal impact study focusing on a higher education 'widening participation' program in Australia' (Volume 15, Issue 1) reports on a project to engage regional/remote students (some a 4-hour drive from Brisbane) with higher education. Acknowledging multi-causal disadvantage (the participants are indigenous, low socio-economic status, first in family), the author identifies a range of strategies which combined, can empower students. These include financial support (to mitigate fears around affordability); advice on how universities work (increasing knowledge/awareness); entry pathways; careers advice; support services.

This suggests universities can have an impact by working with families, schools and communities as well as the individual pupils in order to break the cycle of youngsters in communities not going to university. Crucially, the article concludes these youngsters already aspire, but 'didn't know what they didn't know'.

Initial results from a longitudinal impact study focusing on a higher education 'widening participation' program in Australia

Michael Cuthill, University of Southern Queensland, AU
Danni Jansen, University of Queensland, AU

Abstract

In Australia, the issue of social equity within higher education has been a focus of national policy since 1990. While this has resulted in some increases in participation by particular equity groups, access rates for people from low socioeconomic backgrounds remain persistently low. The most recent government review of Australian higher education has set a 20% participation target for people from low socio-economic backgrounds by 2020, with some institutional funding linked to achievement of that participation target. Understandably, universities are now developing program responses to meet these targets. This paper reports initial results from a five-year study which explores the impacts of one such program on participants, their families, schools and community. Four key 'impact' themes identified through this research are discussed: 'Recognition', 'Raised awareness', 'Relief' and 'Social connections'. Collectively, these themes underpin participants' higher education decision-making processes.

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First year outcomes and second year directions

It is clear that Cohort 2 Young Achievers are not short on aspiration for higher education, which contradicts some previous assumptions. Although it is surprising that so many of the cohort already had this aspiration before participating in the Program, it is perhaps a reflection of the Program selection process that seeks students who demonstrate an interest and ability to engage in a university education, and have supportive families and schools.

However, aspiration can be a fuzzy term. It can be argued that all young people (disadvantaged or not) dream about what they might be or do, when they grow up. Senior school is a time to come up with a plan to turn those dreams into action. However, bringing such plans to fruition can be difficult with young people having to make constant adjustments according to what information is available to them, what their peers are doing, and what levels of support they receive.

While Cohort 2 Young Achievers, before starting the Program, already had aspirations of studying at university, they and their families had few ideas and limited resources to achieve that dream. There was little first-hand experience of university among these families. As a result, they literally 'didn't know what they didn't know', nor even who to ask,

> …yeah, I suppose it's hard because we're – because none of us have been to university we don't really know what they [Young Achievers] should be looking at doing (Interview 29, Parent/Guardian, April 2011).

The role of facilitating the transition from school to university, especially for young people from rural and regional communities, has been an ongoing logistical challenge for governments and universities, and a clearer articulation of responsibility for that transition is still required. However, this impact study, focusing on the Young Achiever's Program, provides some initial description of one approach which shows promise in bridging those information and resource needs through a developmental process which engages with young people, their families and schools.

Before starting the Program there were clear concerns by Young Achievers and their families relating mainly to university entry requirements, employment options, access to reliable information, associated costs, and leaving friends and family and the potential for social isolation. For example, regards costs, there was an on-going question as to whether university was an affordable post-school option,

> Yes, we were telling [Young Achiever] they were going to have a big fee because they wanted to go to university… but the only way we could see was having a huge fee when they came out of it (Interview 9, Parent/Guardian, March 2011).

While cost was a recurring concern, and perhaps a motivating factor in joining the Program, other benefits soon became evident,

> Well the first thing that came to my attention was the money because you know we're not particularly throwing it 'round … But I think once you've gotten into the Program you see that there's so many more benefits… once you're into it all the other Young Achievers with similar sorts of ideals to you, and then we've got all the Mentors they've all done it before and they can tell you exactly what it's going to be like… (Interview 10, Young Achiever, March 2011)

Some positive outcomes and impacts are already evident after the first six months of program activities involving Cohort 2 Young Achievers, their families and schools. There is a general excitement relating to the opportunity to access a university education. For Young Achievers this excitement relates primarily to taking steps towards realising their dreams – a well-paid job and career, new social opportunities, and gaining some independence. The Program has already increased their preparedness, establishing a bridge between school and university, and enhancing their confidence and commitment. As one teacher describes,

> I am just thrilled to see the difference in one of the kids, absolutely amazing ... they didn't really believe in themselves, and it's just made the most tremendous difference ... [to their] self-esteem, confidence and willingness to try (Interview 27, School Staff, April 2011).

Clearly, having access to appropriate information is important and the Program appears to be supporting planning and decision-making processes. Young Achievers and their families now report being aware of what's involved with becoming a university student, what career and study options are available, the steps they need to take, and what support is available. Interviewees also identify mentors as playing a key role in providing information,

> They [Mentors] definitely tell you, they help you to get your goals and stuff... they don't really set a boundary on anything, like you can choose what you really want to be, and they help you, tell about like time tabling and doing time management, and they showed us how they timed out their days... how they worked their first year of university... how they worked their way around... so that helps a lot (Interview 32, Young Achiever, April 2011).

There is also some early indication of community cultural change towards greater support of young people's learning opportunities,

> I think for some students in the past I've seen, they do very well at school, get an exceptionally great OP, but they still don't... go to university because no one ever has... it's just not the done thing. This program seems to be breaking that cycle from what I can see with the way the students are talking (Interview 17, School Staff, March 2011).

However, this is still early days for the Program and some concerns remain, both in terms of doing well enough to gain university entry,

> I just don't know whether [Young Achiever] will ever get the marks they need... they're doing the subjects to get there, but whether they get those results... yeah, I don't know (Interview 3, Parent/Guardian, March 2011).

and also whether the levels of support offered are enough to cater to some families' needs,

> ...a couple of them that I can think of I couldn't see how their parents could afford to send them away, and I still don't know even at $6,000 a year whether their parents would be able to afford to send them away (Interview 27, School Staff, April 2011).

Nevertheless, this impact study suggests that by working together with families, schools and communities, utilising existing structures, providings, financial support, and disseminating relevant information in appropriate ways, there is an opportunity for universities to facilitate higher education access for young people from low socio-economic backgrounds (Cuthill & Schmidt, 2010). As illustrated by this study's first-year findings, such facilitation can have empowering effects for young people and their families as they explore the complexity of post school options. The second year of this impact study will see the Young Achievers in year 12, eighteen months into the Program and close to making decisions about their future directions.
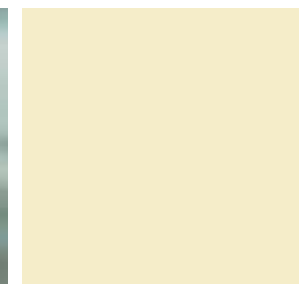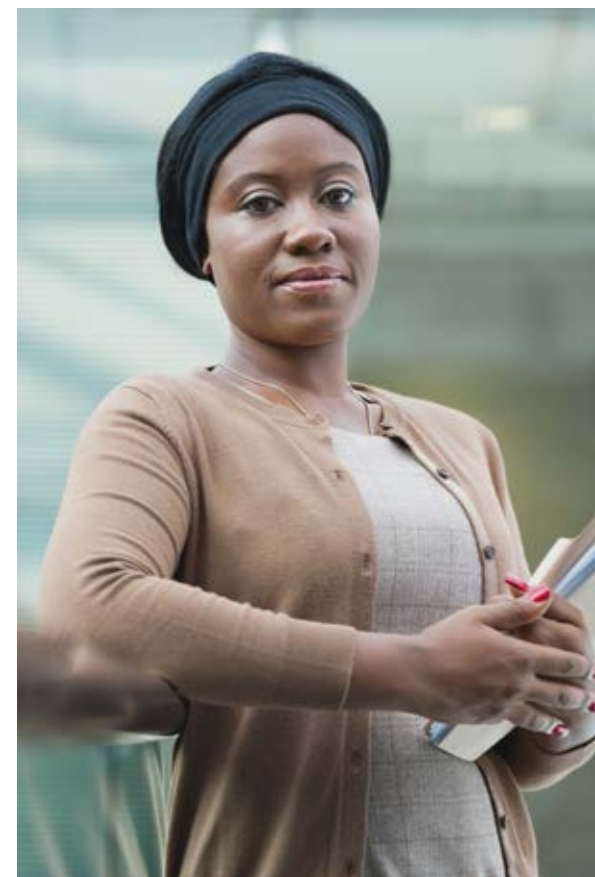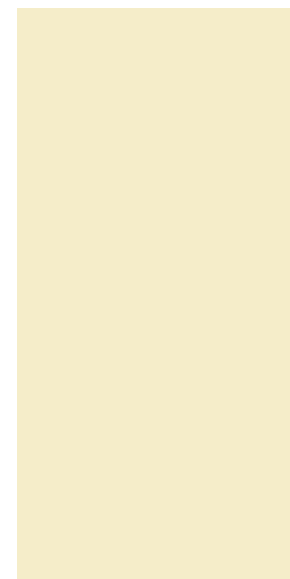
2014

Returning to a topic included in our selected article from a decade earlier, Debby Cotton, Patricia Nash and Pauline Kneale reported in 2014 how universities might successfully support care leavers. In 'The Experience of Care leavers in UK Higher Education (Issue 3, Volume 16), the authors explored risk and protective factors through interviews with final year care leaver students, using a resilience framework for analysis. Key factors for institutions to implement included: a 'safety net' to mitigate risk – specified officers (significant adults) to provide 'corporate parenting', and financial support. Importance was also attached to opportunities for peer and staff interaction to 'be heard' and to support integration and to make retention (in Tinto's terms) more likely.

Interestingly, the care leavers felt their prior experience had a positive impact on their university experience. All succeeded.

The experience of care leavers in UK higher education

Debby R. E. Cotton, Patricia Nash and Pauline E Kneale, Plymouth University, UK

Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a qualitative study into the experience of care leavers (students who have previously been in local authority care) at a UK university. Working with a small group of final year care leaver students, the research used a narrative interview approach to explore their experiences throughout their time in Higher Education (HE), and their future plans after completion. Analysing the interviews using a resilience framework, the findings illustrate a range of risk and protective factors which impact on success in higher education (HE) for this group of students. Like other non-traditional students, key factors include motivation for participation, good preparation for university life and learning, and academic, personal and financial support. Particularly important for this group is the availability of a safety net, and support from a significant adult. This was often provided by the university care leavers' service which offered a crucial source of support for students without another obvious point of contact. Perhaps surprisingly, all students felt that being in care had had a positive impact on their university experience although for varying reasons. All of the students in the study went on to complete their degrees successfully despite the challenges encountered.

….

Discussion and Conclusion

The information provided by these care leavers provides a rich picture of their experiences of university life through the three years of study. The analysis gives depth to the findings of other research (e.g. Jackson et al., 2005; Stein, 2008; Driscoll, 2013; Hyde-Dryden, 2012, Munson, 2013) about the factors which enhance care leavers' access to HE, including high intrinsic motivation, encouragement from teachers and family, and the support of the Local Authority. They also offer a more detailed view of the potential protective factors that can lead to resilience and therefore subsequent retention and success at university level. To reach higher education for care leavers is a significant achievement in itself, and these students undoubtedly display a number of characteristics which make them more likely to achieve their goals. Half of the students had considered withdrawal when their difficulties were very profound, but all had persevered, suggesting a strong resilience within this group. The analysis of risk and protective factors indicates the importance of ensuring support while they are at university, as this may 'tip the balance' between the two, and help them demonstrate the resilience required for successful completion.

There is increasing evidence that care leavers have specific academic, personal and financial support needs which universities can assist with. Whilst financial incentives have rarely been demonstrated to impact upon students' decisions to participate in HE (Corver, 2010), they may make withdrawal less likely and they certainly ease the transition for students from non-traditional groups, making the full university experience more accessible. Moreover, personal and academic support can make a huge difference in care leaver students' persistence. In the context of the fees and maintenance costs incurred by UK students, it is even more important that these students have opportunities to succeed in their studies, especially given the impact of educational qualifications on future life chances for care leavers (Jackson and Martin 1998).

In terms of support for care leavers in HE, Jackson et al.'s research in 2005 reported little targeted provision and limits on even the most basic student support:

> *Participants with problems did not get appropriate help from Student Support Services in their institution and many had no contact with personal tutors. (p. 10)*

However, our research suggests that this does not have to be the case, and that specialist provision can provide a lifeline for students at risk. It is not clear from our study how widespread such provision is, although it was certainly unusual in 2005:

> *Most HEIs now have officers in post with a widening participation remit. However, very few of those who responded to the questionnaire had any special provision in place for applicants or students with a care background. (p. 11)*

Arguably, there has been a change in the university culture regarding student support since that research was undertaken. There are certainly a large number of institutions with the Buttle Trust (2013) Quality mark indicating that they have a 'robust strategy in place to support students from a care background'.

It is particularly important that universities review the support which they provide for care leavers given the evidence here that Local Authority 'corporate parenting' is frequently lacking, with support being haphazard in most cases. The widely-used term, 'corporate parent' is used to describe the responsibility of the local authority to promote the best interests of the child or young adult. Our research raises the question of whether universities can take on the role of corporate parent, and what

is required in order to conduct this role effectively. Jackson et al. (2005) note that students without supportive foster parents can feel very isolated in the early weeks of university, and our study indicated the importance of the care leaver advice officer in supporting students during this time. The advice officer took on something akin to the role of 'parent' for some of these students, offering psychological support, co-ordination with other services, and sometimes intervening on a students' behalf - echoing the ways in which birth parents support their own children. It is notable that for some students, the care leavers' service is one of the few protective factors which they have (see table 1). It provides an essential safety net for the most 'at risk' students, and enables them to continue with their education. Although it is arguable whether a university should be responsible for providing this kind of support for students, existing corporate parenting of children in care (and beyond) is often deficient and contributes to poor educational outcomes. Research on school-age children in care indicates that teachers were generally seen as assisting educational progress whereas social workers were more often seen as hindering it (Harker et al., 2003). This suggests that support which is embedded in the educational institution may be more effective.

In addition to the direct support role, the care leaver service also offered opportunities for social interaction and support from peers. This may enhance the integration into HE experienced by these students, which has been identified as an important factor in retention. Tinto (1993) identifies aspects of the academic environment (including interaction with staff), and social system (such as extra-curricular activities and peer group integration) as playing a key role in the student experience. He concludes that students who are less well integrated into the academic and social settings are more likely to withdraw from study. This is not to ascribe to an 'integrationist viewpoint' – whereby the responsibility for student withdrawal is placed in the hands of students themselves:

> requiring the student to assimilate to the institution and the ways of studying within that institution, rather than any institutional transformation (Rose-Adams, 2013: 97)

Rather, Tinto's model is viewed in this context as providing a guide for universities about the issues which are of importance in making students feel part of the institution. In the current climate, where increasing focus is placed on the student voice, it is even more important that vulnerable students are given opportunities to be heard:

> Having a voice partly depends on someone hearing that voice with understanding, and coaching it forth. Certain qualities in listening, and listeners, increase the chances of recovering vulnerable student voices. (Batchelor, 2006: 799)

Arguably, the care leavers' service in this study provided a unique context where the voices of this marginalised group were heard.

The success of the care leaver students in this and other studies – despite their difficult childhood experiences – provides a counter to the narrative, epitomised by Gorard et al. (2006) that the influence of early life experiences is so overwhelmingly powerful as a predictor of educational success that university efforts at enhancing access are doomed to failure. Whilst it is clear that early intervention is crucial in influencing the educational aspirations and success of care leavers – as with other widening participation groups (see Hart, 2010) – the actions of universities and their academic and support staff can have significant impacts on care leavers' success in HE. However, in order to provide a HE experience which is transformative, which does not simply reproduce the 'social status quo' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), institutions need to make special provision for those students for whom entering university is simply the next stage in an ongoing battle against the odds.

2015
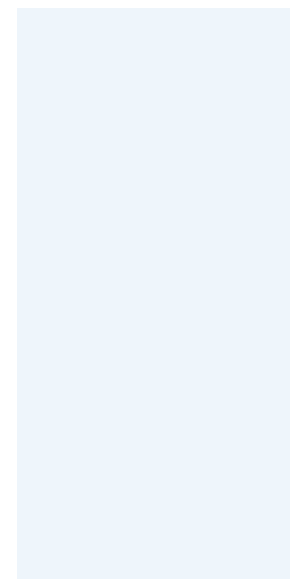
Before the toxic schism prompted by Brexit, it still felt possible to explore the potential for emancipatory conversations envisaged by Freire through adult education pedagogies. As I write this just before 'Brexit day', it becomes even more important to carve out a space in which to teach for transformation. Alyson Jenkins' article 'Critical Conversations: Dialogue in Global Citizenship Education' was published in Issue 2 of Volume 17 of this journal in 2015, and confronted the problem facing tutors when discussing political and ethical issues – potentially leading to a tense, unsettling and emotional classroom. She advocated for an inclusive, plural and flexible pedagogy, in which dialogue and discussion encourage multiple perspectives. Key is listening attentively, allowing the personal/local to be linked to the political and ethical.

Jenkins' focus on how we teach being as important as what we teach resonates with the need to engage learners from under-represented groups by valuing their prior experience – easy to assert but less easy to do.

Critical conversations: dialogue in global citizenship education

Alyson Jenkins, Department of Adult Continuing Education, Swansea University, UK

Abstract

Global Citizenship Education is problematic. Dealing with issues of rights, responsibilities, identity and participation in a classroom is challenging for tutors, and this is one of the main reasons that this educational paradigm is not engaged with as much as it could be. In Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC or ESD), classroom discussion becomes tense and unsettling as emotions arise and beliefs are challenged. The issues are political and ethical. What is an appropriate pedagogy? One that is inclusive, plural and flexible? It is suggested that dialogue and discussion, as advocated by radical adult educators, should be at the heart of integrating ESDGC/ESD into teaching and learning. An educational practice that supports classroom participants to speak and listen, with not just their rational and critical faculties but with their whole being, might be what is required. Critical conversations, be they face-to-face or online, take place in safe, democratic learning environments, where multiple perspectives can be introduced and all voices heard, where participants learn to be attentive and critical as they listen to others and clarify and express their own thoughts.

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Critical Conversations

Social justice, democracy and the moral demands of love, care and human flourishing form the basis of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy (2004) which is concerned with emancipatory conversations. It is only a short step to consider Global Citizenship as part of this ongoing educational project. Critical conversations are at the heart of an open, plural and inclusive ethic and can include and begin with the individual learner's story or with community, public or global issues. Even though tensions and conflicts in a learning environment might be difficult and painful, these are better than the clashes that occur because of exclusion and non-communication. Moral and political philosophies are part of everyday discourses and learning that places Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship at its centre is where these discussions can become transformative. Linking personal concerns and local issues with global ones in a political and ethical framework can bring about new perspectives as individual and collective concerns are contextualised, shared and examined through dialogue.

Creating learning environments where everyone can contribute, but where at the same time, individuals and groups are protected by recognising the limits of dialogue and discussion, is important.

Whilst there are many factors influencing whether or not students learn how to discuss highly controversial issues effectively in classroom, the single most important factor is the quality of a teacher's practice (Hess, 2009: 53).

Tutors need training and support in creating safe, democratic learning environments and in facilitating discussion, dialogue and debate; this should be a priority in adult education. Pedagogy has to take centre stage because it is as much about how we teach as what we teach. Apart from learning by example and from practical experience, dialogue and discussion, a theory and practice that includes speaking and listening with not just our rational and critical faculties, but with our whole being, is the focus for developing practice in ESDGC/ESD. It embraces a holistic ontology, where emotions and feelings and our lived experience are included and valued and can be the starting points for learning. Aligning the ecological with the ethical and political within the composite concept of ESDGC presents challenges for curriculum and pedagogy. However, it also offers an opportunity to reassess and re-define adult education theory and practice.

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world (Arendt, 2006 [1961]): 196)

This form of education is not searching for 'truth': it is seeking to facilitate conversations and to envision positive change. The aim is ultimately to address creatively and collectively the question about what sort of world we can leave to our grandchildren, and as Global Citizens to act in our own unique ways, individually and collectively to this end.

2016

The place of widening participation research remains contested in the academy. Despite the best efforts by many colleagues (a number included in this selection) the conceptualisation of equitable access to and success in higher education remains on the margins of sector and institutional strategies. We have not been able to lead sector thinking – rather, too often, we have found ourselves responding to ill-founded knee-jerk policies. This conundrum is illustrated in the article 'Troubling ideas for widening participation: how higher education institutions in England engage with research in their access agreements' published in Issue 2, Volume 18 of this journal in 2016. The authors undertook a lexical analysis of Access Agreements in England (recently replaced with Access and Participation plans) and reported a significant gap in how research is understood and funded as part of the process of widening access. There was little evidence of alignment between rigorous research and widening participation activity and policy. As a consequence, research tends to be mobilised to defend or justify expenditure – effectively maintaining a status quo, rather than forming part of an ongoing dialogue to transform higher education.

I would hope this journal can continue to contribute original research to challenge assumptions made by policymakers.

Volume 18 | Issue 2

Troubling ideas for widening participation: how higher education institutions in England engage with research in their access agreements

Alex Wardrop, Maggie Hutchings, Bethan Collins, Sue Eccles, Vanessa Heaslip, Clive Hunt and Colin Pritchard, Bournemouth University, UK

Abstract:

This article explores how higher education institutions in England engage with research in their access agreements. Through an analysis of access agreements from 2014-15 to 2016-17, a picture of how research is understood, undertaken and documented emerges. A lexical analysis of the texts was used to establish the different ways research is being referred to or funded as part of the access agreement process. The analysis shows a productive relationship between national policy and institutional activity. But there appears to be a lack of infrastructure at an institutional and sector level to join up sustained and rigorous research with widening participation activity and policy. This means that, even after ten years of access agreements, widening participation is not fully embedded into the academic practice of higher education. We argue that research undertaken as part of the access agreement process can provide much needed evidence of impact and situate activity within an institution-wide context. However, we also suggest that widening participation research has the potential to offer productive troubling ideas to dominant rhetoric and, in so doing, shape new ways of thinking about, and doing, widening participation within institutions and across the sector.

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Discussion and Conclusions

The findings outlined here suggest that although institutions are building their capabilities in the area of WP research, the primary role of research in access agreements appears to be mobilised to defend or justify expenditure.

However, given that there remains a long way to go before HE in England can claim to be fair, equitable and enabling wider social justice, developing, undertaking and disseminating more systematic and socially aware research which examines why there remain significant differences in participation and outcomes must be a priority for the sector. From what is being reported in access agreements, at least, the future of widening participation research that Kettley (2007) envisaged has not yet arrived. Perhaps the clear guidance from OFFA for the 2017-18 access agreements about sustainable, collaborative research could help bring that horizon a little nearer to us.

This analysis appears to confirm the WP culture that Stevenson et al., (2010) outlined whereby "the responsibility for supporting WP students once in higher education was variously regarded, with some staff feeling that that it was either not their responsibility or that they could leave students 'to it' once they were on their courses" (2010: 113). Because WP, as such, remains not fully or sustainably embedded in the mainstream practice of HE (although this varies across the sector), research for WP remains a troublesome facet of that discourse. This means that although we can see a collective effort to invest resource in this area and build understanding, research risks being used in access agreements to maintain a status quo rather than change practice.

That the Government's White Paper proposes incorporating the single focused regulator for fair access within a larger HE regulatory body (the proposed Office for Students) is a concern for WP research (BIS, 2015; BIS, 2016). This is because our findings suggest a sector that is, slowly, responding to guidance and working with policymakers and each other to build capacity and communities for research. What is a worry is that without a single-focused regulator of fair access that productive relationship could be put at risk.

Ensuring that there remains a focused Government infrastructure to support institutions to draw on their knowledge-base and expertise in this area is one of the major recommendations of this paper. Finding ways to support institutions to build internal links, enhance reflexive practice and embed WP into HE practice could be one way for the Government to ensure that the collective effort of WP does not get forgotten. Given the varied resources available at different institutions, making sure that research, in some form, underpins all activity (and, in turn, that that activity shapes and informs research) is important. This will require a courageous and collective effort of learning and sharing expertise, in the face of a highly competitive and stratified sector, both in terms of research and student numbers. This in itself could be a troubling idea for researchers and practitioners in the field.

This paper set out to elaborate how HEIs in England engage with WP research their access agreements. We found that within the highly controlled and negotiated discourses of access agreements, research occupies a troubling position. There remains a persistent hesitancy to include academic-focused research in these texts. If research for WP is to be an "integral part of practical initiatives and to encourage an iterative learning process between practice, research and policy", the disengaged use of research within publicly available policy documents that outline practice presents a very troubling idea for all those invested in and committed to transforming HE in England (Jary and Thomas, 1999: p7).

By seeing research activity as part of a transformative process that should be central to WP we have suggested that access agreements have the potential to be seen as an ongoing dialogue between institutions, students and the Government. In an uncertain time for HE in England, embracing uncertain ways of knowing could enable a more transformative way of (re)engaging with WP in England.

2017

Widening participation issues are too rarely represented in tensions between social class, gender and pedagogy. Sam Broadhead's article 'All I want to do is make things: Class, Men and Art and Design Higher Education' is an intriguing contribution based on creative arts in higher education. Published in this journal in 2017 (Issue 2, Volume 19), the author uses narrative enquiry to explore invisible pedagogies through a contrast between the doer (a Master/apprentice vocational model based on practice) and the thinker (a fluid and integrated pedagogy based on theory). Making the crucial point that teachers and universities should not assume ideas about the way people are taught are shared, conclusions include the need for greater reflection on the impact of teaching approaches (not defaulting to a deficit construction seeing some students as problems), and recognising that mature working class students do not lack aspiration, but perhaps need support in getting in a position to pursue them.

All I want to do is make things: class, men and art and design higher education

Samantha Broadhead, Leeds College of Art, UK

Abstract:

Working-class men are under-represented in art and design higher education. This article explores the experiences of one such mature student who had fulfilled his dream to go to an art college later in life in order to study a degree in Interdisciplinary Art and Design. Using an approach based on narrative inquiry, the student's learning journey over three years was captured through six verbal and transcribed accounts. Bernstein's work on visible and invisible pedagogies, as well as his comments on vocational education, provided a lens through which to look at the student's experiences. It argues that the strong framing and classification of his previous vocational education led the student to expect to be taught in a particular way. He found the fluid and integrated arts curriculum different to the kind of training a 'master' would transmit to an 'apprentice'. He constructed himself as a doer rather than a thinker, which remained constant throughout his degree. The findings suggest that educators should discuss with students from all backgrounds the pedagogic approaches commonly used in art and design and how these may be different to previous ways of learning. Academic staff should also challenge the theory and practice dichotomy, so that students understand they are drawing on theory not only when they are writing but also when they are making. Finally, even though invisible pedagogies dominate art and design education, staff should reflect on the need for more visible, explicit modes of teaching when students are less confident in their abilities.

….

Conclusion

The approach of narrative inquiry was effective in showing how Bob reflected on his educational experiences over time. It captured what his expectations were at the beginning of the course and how he felt at the end of his degree. The method was also an opportunity for Bob to reflect on his own learning and his own aspirations. Narrative connected Bob's educational history to how he thought about education in the present. Due to his class and gender he was encouraged to study a vocational course that would give him a secure trade; even though he had aspirations to go to art school. This confirms the work done by Burke (2006) when she said that working-class men did have aspirations but were not always in a position to pursue them. Bob's vocational education socially constructed his identity as a doer rather than a thinker, and the frameworks that regulated how Bob perceived education were very resilient. His experience of higher education did not totally dismantle these frameworks, which led to Bob feeling frustrated and not feeling 'good enough' at times.

Bernstein's work was useful in showing how pedagogic frameworks advantage some social groups rather than others. It was also in sympathy with Burke's assertion that aspirations and attitudes to learning are socially constructed. It also challenged the deficit model that constructs students as problems (Burke, 2006; O'Shea, 2014). This article argues that it is the ways people are taught that need to be reflected upon and addressed by educators, so that more inclusive forms of pedagogy are used.

The findings from the project suggest that practitioners in art and design higher education cannot assume that the students they teach have shared understandings of pedagogy or that they have common learning aims. Open discussions about the philosophical and pedagogical approaches taken on art and design courses would help students, who may have been taught differently in the past. Art and design education relies a lot on an invisible, student-centred pedagogy; however, there may be instances when students could benefit from a more explicit way of learning, especially when students need extra support in an area like academic writing. The binary opposition of theory and practice should be challenged. Students should be supported in seeing how their practice draws upon theory constantly and theoretical concepts should not be only considered when providing a written response to an assignment.

2018

An international perspective on both lifelong learning and the integration of work and studying was offered in the article 'Back into your arms – Exploring models for integrated university-professional learning in a lifelong perspective', published in the special UALL edition in Volume 20 in 2018. The authors report on a Norwegian university collaboration with learning in a local enterprise. By developing a dual model of permeability, the learning based in the workplace and in the university is brought together in a double loop. This benefits the individual, who can complete a degree and professional certification while still at work, and the employer, who gains a higher qualified professional. This model offers flexibility and builds on a student's prior qualifications. The article references the apprenticeships being developed in the UK, and signals the need (a call for further research?) to develop a system through which to acknowledge non-formal learning in the academic credit system.

Volume 20 | Issue 2 – UALL Special Edition

'Back into your arms' – exploring models for integrated university-professional learning in a lifelong perspective

Hedvig Skonhoft Johannesen, Petter Øyan and Ellen Merethe Magnus, OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

Abstract:
The purpose of this article is to explore different models for integrated university-professional learning within Norwegian higher education institutions in a proposed collaborative initiative with enterprise. The suggested model is a dualised model for a bachelor's degree in engineering, involving a collaborative effort between higher education institutions and enterprises. The objective of the model is to develop expansive, lifelong learning for continuous development by transcending traditional boundaries between learning in university and learning in the workplace. Work is an important means for securing social inclusion, and an investment in lifelong learning is thus an important contribution to the requalification and reintegration of adults into the workforce. Norwegian higher education is, with a few exceptions, governmental and constitutes a central element of the tripartite system of collaboration, where labour organisations, employer's organisations and government collectively bargain over welfare policy and there is a long-standing tradition of autonomy within the professions.

The increasing need for the requalification of professionals calls for a renewed approach to the integration of university- and working-life learning. The research question of this article is: to what extent can different models of integrated university-professional learning facilitate lifelong learning? The predominant models concerning lifelong learning do not incorporate the full benefits of learning from practice.

Our new model, a dualised model, has the potential to fulfil the key requirements for university and working-life boundary learning, as it provides a greater permeability between work-based and university-based learning and includes adult learners. Expansive lifelong learning and double-loop learning constitute the theoretical perspectives of our proposed new model.

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Conclusion

The employee/student's benefits of the dualised model is making it easier to achieve personal ambitions they already hold of completing a bachelor's degree and a professional certification while still at work. The model's design, offering a combination of work and university studies, makes it possible for adult learners with family and financial obligations to attend university. The employees/students are subsequently given the opportunity to fulfil their own life goals, mutually benefiting their workplace's requirements for employing higher qualified professionals, while participating as members of a lifelong learners' community.

The funding scheme of Norwegian HEIs implies that educating adult learners is an integrated component of the wider social responsibility of HEIs. From the perspective of the welfare state in the tripartite model, attending to the particular needs of adult learners in qualifying and requalify necessitates taking advantage of the talent pool of the population. Additionally, the model of dualised education contributes towards reducing the number of persons relying on social security benefits, taking advantage of more people being able to perform specialised and professional work while simultaneously expanding their learning, both at work and as university students. Subsequently, this proposed community of lifelong learners could encourage universities to make available the necessary courses and tools for requalification that are demanded by rapid changes and emerging topics within a framework of innovative pedagogies regarding the boundaries between university and work.

Aligned with Engeström's (2001) model of expansive learning, the research presented in this article where students and the learning organisations at university and workplaces are perceived as one: the subjects of learning. The students learn to become lifelong learners who can dip into expansive, lifelong learning in a context of continuous professional learning that provides greater porousness in-between university and workplaces. Questions regarding why, what and how they learn will be explored in further empirical studies. These studies will include analyses of the activity systems used and how mediating artefacts, rules and communities interact to develop learners' competencies, skills and knowledge in manners much sought after in our society (Engeström, 2001). In particular, we will look at how students are given scope to design and evolve their own expansive, lifelong learning in skillful manners (Fuller and Unwin, 2006; Billett, 2015).

As proposed in Model 3, integrated education and professional learning between universities and work entails providing accredited studies that give academic qualifications and, alongside this, courses of practice-based learning. Methods of acknowledging non-formal education in the academic credit system must be established, i.e. by introducing a means by which former merits may be documented, validated and recognised as equal to a formal education. Missing elements can be identified as part of courses constructed to give students the opportunity to perform self-managed studies, and be supplemented by existing courses where necessary. The integrated learning model, in which universities and workplaces collaborate in providing students in different life stages with relevant experience and training, can also be regarded as double-loop learning in Argyris' sense (Argyris, 1976). Our proposed model contributes to a renewal and questioning of practices, values and beliefs that can lead to the development of universities as organisations, as well as improvements in the collaborating partner workplaces.

Much of the potential power for change within the lifelong learning community lies in the reflective process of challenging and changing underlying assumptions of how learning, tasks and work procedures should be performed. The UK Apprenticeship Certificate, among others, has shown that practice-based learning might be a more sustainable pathway towards qualifications, and such an approach could be extended to bachelor's degree programmes in engineering in Norway. The contribution of expansive lifelong learning to the amalgam of learning between HEIs and enterprise in our suggested model could play a part in widening participation in higher education. In addition, it could help to develop renewable modes of experience-based learning appropriate for a time of rapid change.
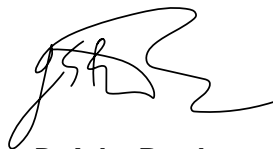
The dualised bachelor's education in engineering might be a road to travel for learners to expand in a lifelong perspective about how they can advance their learning epistemologies. It would also enhance integrated boundary learning in-between universities and workplaces, and create transformative, sustainable organisations. Furthermore, the proposed model is potentially better suited than the one currently in operation to accommodate students with prior qualifications.

Editorial conclusion and acknowledgements

This collection provides food for thought in relation to important questions about the current health of widening participation and lifelong learning, and where we might want it to be in 20 years' time. Enjoy, and please contact us with ideas for future articles. If this has whetted your appetite, I recommend our special edition earlier this year, published in partnership with colleagues in Australia and the US, which focused on refugees in higher education.

I am very grateful to the members of the journal's editorial board for their assistance in selecting articles from the more recent editions. Thanks to: Darlinda Moreira (Portugal), Stephanie McKendry (Scotland); Margaret Heagney (Australia); Wendy Fowle (England), Audrey Cooke (Australia), Stéphane Farenga (England), Annette Hayton (Ireland); Eva Cendon (Germany); Sam Broadhead (England) for undertaking additional reading and sending insightful comments.
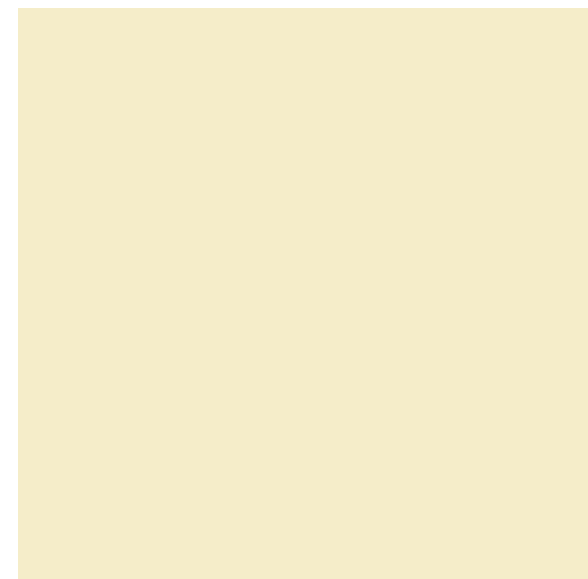
I sincerely hope you enjoy reading some highlights from 20 years of *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*. The journal was initially nurtured by Staffordshire University, and my thanks go to those colleagues for having the foresight and energy to kick it off. For the last decade it has been managed through the Open University, and in that institution's 50th anniversary it feels appropriate to instigate a related celebration.

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