

CUVP Changing Landscapes Conference 2005

**From here to diversity :
reflections on widening
participation in Higher Education**

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Introduction



Hats and Perspectives

- Continuum, Centre for Widening Participation Policy Studies – University of East London
- Action on Access – WP National Co-ordination Team
- FACE – Practitioners Network

Presentation Plan



- Background
- Policy drivers
- Targets
- Approach: funding and strategy
- Future prospects
- Concluding issues from successful student diversity

Background

Policy history: How did we get here?



- Dearing, “HE in the Learning Society” (1997)
- Kennedy, “Learning Works” (1997)
- “Learning Age” (1998)
- HEFCE Consultation (1998)
- HEFCE Request for initial Widening Participation statements (1999)
- Revised Widening Participation strategies and 3 year action plans submitted to HEFCE (2001)
- Partnerships for Progression Policy (2003)

Background

Policy history: How did we get here?



- 'The future for Higher Education', January 2003, White paper
- Integrated Aimhigher (2004-06)
- OFFA (2004)
- Widening Participation strategies withdrawn (2004)
- Lifelong Learning Networks (2004)

Background

Dearing recommendations set WP policy direction



We recommend to the Government and the Funding Bodies that, when allocating funds for the expansion of higher education, they give priority to those institutions which can demonstrate a commitment to widening participation, and have in place a participation strategy, a mechanism for monitoring progress, and a provision for review by the governing body of achievement.

(HE in the Learning Society, Ron Dearing p. 14, 1997)

Background

The HE Participation Gap – key factors



- Socio-economic status the key barrier
- Social classes I and II get over 60% of full-time undergraduate places
- Social classes IV and V get around 10% of full-time undergraduate places
- Disability, specific minority groups also greatly under-represented

Background

The HE Participation Gap – key factors



- % of state school/college entrants is less than half in some universities
- Age (full-time, 3 yrs model)
- Academic/Vocational progression routes
- Where you live matters (regional/interregional)
- Deep, broad and persistent inequality in young participation in HE (HEFCE, young participation in HE)

Policy Drivers



- Economic – more highly qualified workforce leads to improved economic performance in global economy
- Social Inclusion – Widening Participation policy to reduce gap between “learning rich” and “learning poor”

Policy Drivers



“Widening access and improving participation in HE are a crucial part of our mission. Participation in HE will equip our citizens to operate productively within the global knowledge economy. It also offers social benefits, including better health, lower crime and a more tolerant and inclusive society.”

HEFCE Strategic Plan 2003-2008

Quiz Question

What does this mean?



a = 30
S Entry, a
Popy, a
a = 17

Targets Numerical/Aspirational



- Current Initial Entry Rate (IER) 43%
- Target: 50% of 18-30 year olds should have some experience of higher education by 2010
- Increase of 300,000 by 2010-11

Targets



- The percentage of lower social class 18 year olds who enter HE will be increased by 2010 (no numerical target)
- Fair Access: that there should be no unjustified variation between institutions in terms of the proportions of students from lower social groups (Access Regulator)
- By 2010, the non-completion rate for English HEIs will remain the same or be less
- Regional participation targets (less significant post white paper)

Funding Approach Providers



Institutional

- Mature and part-time premiums
- WP allocation
- Aspiration funding (posh premium) £6million

Partnership

- Aimhigher
- Lifelong Learning Networks

Funding Approach



Student debt (02-03)

- 92% students anticipate leaving university with debts
- Average debt is £8666
- Students who are poor before joining are more likely to be in debt and to leave with the largest debt
- Poor students' average debt £9708 and half have debts over £10392
- Poor students have 43% higher debts than wealthier students

Source: C. Callender & D Wilkinson (2003) 2002/03 Student Income and Expenditure Survey, Research Report 487, DfES, Nottingham

Strategic Approach



Institutional Change

- 3 year WP Strategies and Action Plans submitted in October 2001
- Condition of grant 2002
- Action Plan provides breakdown of spend against WP funding
- Annual Monitoring Statement
- Links with Teaching & Learning and other strategies
- Strategies removed as condition of grant 2004
- Embedding WP in corporate plans

Strategic Approach

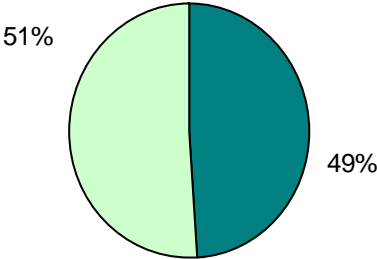
Impact of WP strategies



- Greater links between WP and other related areas (admissions)
- Institutional and in some cases departmental targets established (embedding)
- Development of monitoring and evaluation systems
- More focus on student success
- Continuing development of partnership arrangements (colleges, schools)

Strategic Approach

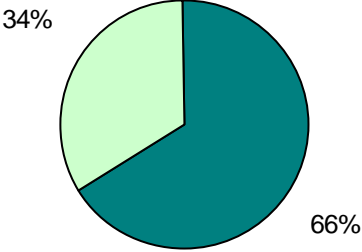
Impact of WP strategies



Percentage of Strategies Indicating Student Growth

Source: Action on Access

■ Yes
■ No



Percentage of Strategies Indicating Social Inclusion

Source: Action on Access

Current WP Policy Landscape Case Study 1



Aimhigher Programme

- Partnership based (HE, FE, Schools, LEA, RDA)
- 45 area plans and 9 regional plans
- National Partnership Board Area Steering Group
Regional Partnership Boards Regional Forum
- Vision: to deliver a coherent national outreach programme operating most intensively in the most disadvantaged areas

Current WP Policy Landscape Case Study 1

Aimhigher Programme



Target Groups

Primarily 13-30

Young people (13-19) from low participation neighbourhood
no previous experience of HE
lower socio-economic groups
disabled people

Formulaic funding

Based on: attainment of schools within area + level of HE
participation within area

Current WP Policy Landscape Case Study 2



Office For Fair Access and Access Agreements

- Guidance on form and content of access agreements given in Secretary of State's guidance letter
- OFFA will have the power to (though not duty to) promote good practice in relation to access
- OFFA's remit to promote and safeguard fair access has been extended to part-time study
- OFFA does not have a remit to look at admissions

Current WP Policy Landscape

Case Study 3



Lifelong Learning Networks

- Partnership model
- Joint strategy (HEFCE, LSC, DfES) on encouraging progression from vocational track into and through HE
- 'Royal Route' – 'Tradesman's Entrance' (90% - 40%)
- Group of HEI's and FEC's coming together to offer new progression opportunities for vocational learners
- Development funding for planning
- LLN to look to offer additional HE places (ASNs)

Future Prospects – Is diversity in sight?



- Balance between institutional/partnership
- Regionalism
- Relaxation of targets
- Access Agreements
- Role of WP research (HEA, HEFCE, ESRC)
- WP included in corporate plans for HEIs
- Valuing learner diversity is critical

Concluding Issues Successful Student Diversity



The following are a selection of comments which emerged as feedback from a variety of HEIs on their experience of implementing Widening Participation strategies:

- Clarify long-term institutional commitment to widening participation
- Establish institution-wide policies and procedures that foster co-operation and collaboration between interested parties, rather than working in isolation
- Ensure that resource strategies take account of the real costs of widening participation for different institutional services
- Devolve funding and implementation of strategy to departments, and ensuring that schemes are adequately monitored and evaluated and that experiences are disseminated across the institution and beyond

Concluding Issues

Successful Student Diversity



- Encourage departments to make concrete plans for activities rather than vague aspirations or claims of existing excellence
- Provide adequate and relevant central services to support students and staff; integrating strategies for teaching and learning, widening participation and disability strategies; and co-ordinating the efforts of academics and specialist support staff in central service centres
- Recognise staff contributions to widening participation in criteria for appointment and promotion
- Set up compulsory staff development programmes to support widening participation

(HEFCE 02/48 – Successful Student Diversity)