



Forum for Access and Continuing Education

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2006 Annual Conference

**Transformation, Progression,
and Hope:
whatever happened to
lifelong learning?**

**Abstracts of papers
delivered at the conference**

held at the

**The University of Wales,
Swansea**

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Forum for Access and Continuing Education

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Overcoming Barriers to Intergenerational Engagement

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Abstract

Intergenerational Practice (IP) can be defined as: ‘structured activities, projects or programmes that enable younger and older people to work together to their mutual benefit, promote greater understanding and respect between generations and help to build more cohesive communities and promote lifelong learning.’

The University of Glamorgan has a long tradition in offering opportunities to diverse learner populations, in particular through its Centre for Lifelong Learning, and the Glamorgan Outreach (GO) Unit. GO has developed an intergenerational project which is now in its fifth year. The aims of the project have been to improve communication between different generations and improve community relations. It has proved a sustainable model of working, bringing participants together weekly over eight months. Following its continuous development including the creation of an accredited version, a number of different approaches to our intergenerational work have been tried and tested this academic year. These have included one off ‘taster’ events and a shorter-term project with intermittent sessions over three months. The location and targeting have also been varied, involving particular disadvantaged sections of the older generation’s communities, predominantly residents of sheltered accommodation.

This paper outlines how and why the project has developed, particularly in relation to meeting learner needs, overcoming barriers to intergenerational engagement and widening access to lifelong learning opportunities. It also discusses the comparative merits and challenges of the different approaches which have been adopted. This paper illustrates the good practice we have employed through our flexible and responsive approach to communities’ needs. It also confirms the need for a sound intergenerational approach such as planning, structured activities, mutual benefits, common and shared experiences, evaluation etc. which are essential for effective IP engagement regardless of the model employed.

The Wales Centre for Intergenerational Practice (CCIP), is an initiative of the Beth Johnson Foundation, funded through the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)’s Strategy for Older People, and hosted by the University of Glamorgan. Our IP programme has informed and is being informed by the development of this innovative area of work.

The Beth Johnson Foundation – which aims to support the development of IP throughout the UK, has recently developed good practice guidelines and an approved provider standard for organisations providing or aiming to provide intergenerational projects or programmes. This is a UK quality benchmark, endorsed by WAG, and UoG has been chosen as one of the organisations to pilot this new scheme.

E-Learning : judicious use of assessment for new and hard-to-reach learners in a distance learning environment

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Abstract

This proposal is practitioner-oriented and as such does not include any final conclusions but discusses key issues, reporting on work in progress and includes guidelines for future programme development in e-learning. This paper shows how the college has approached the use of assessment to make a real difference for its students both on and offline - in particular hard-to-reach learners.

The paper addresses one of the key themes: social transformation, wider benefits of learning.

The assessment tool/strategy can influence the accessibility for hard-to-reach learners - planning the intervals and the content of the assignments is the key to controlling the pace.

Pedagogy and andragogy are discussed in a distance learning context.

Two issues are addressed:

- major fundamental differences between teacher-focused and learner-focused module design;
- module size is an important issue in the development of distance learning materials.

The Open College of the Arts has recently completed a three-year research project funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Lankelly Foundation and The Tudor Trust to explore distance learning methodologies and their impact on new learners (including those with various disabilities).

‘Don’t Leave Me Behind’: older women learners leaping the internet generation gap

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Abstract

The imperatives of lifelong learning appear to regard ‘life’ as the years of productive employment, where the acquisition of computer skills will be an asset to the increasingly technological requirements of the workplace. For older learners, however, the danger of being “left behind” in retirement, through lack of computer literacy threatens to widen the generation gap between them and younger generations and leave them stranded on the wrong side of the “digital divide”.

Surveys have suggested that older people have an interest in computers but lack confidence. If gender and age stereotypes are to be believed, computers are still seen as the toys of young males rather than of their grandmothers, reinforcing the aversion to technology of women who were born in the steam age, when educational structures led girls away from science subjects towards paid and unpaid careers in caring.

However, in a rural adult education centre in Wales, I identified an interest in learning to use the internet by retired women. Focusing on three aspects of this phenomenon, their motivation, experience and the impact of the classes on their lives, I interviewed twenty-seven older women daytime students and four tutors, in order to compare the personal needs of the students with the provision of formal learning in this context.

The theoretical framework for this research is based on feminist interpretations of the relationship between women and technology, blended with the concept of a changing and developing sense of self in later life. Findings relate the acquisition of internet skills to gender and age identity issues concerning family, friends and marriage and revealed a strong sense of personal empowerment.

The findings from these three overlapping areas of research have implications for policymakers and practitioners in adult education in terms of the availability, accessibility and suitability of educational provision for older learners as well as raising questions about the balance of power in post-working gender relationships. It is important that the concept of lifetime learning, rather than predominantly learning for work, prioritises the wider benefits for everyone of enhancing the social and cultural capital of the post-working age group.

Overcoming Barriers to Social Work Education

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Abstract

This paper describes the strategies employed by one university to remove obstacles and create a pathway for people to enter higher education (HE) in the year that they had intended. It outlines how a national change to the admissions policy for social work, which attempted, in part, to give greater access to a younger age group, had unintended consequences for another group of students. This policy had an unforeseen impact on the mature and educationally disadvantaged group that had hitherto been recruited to social work courses. Drawing on the student profiles of HE's in metropolitan areas, this group is usually female, often black and although well represented in social work is often under-represented in other subject areas. The paper represents a case study of good practice by demonstrating how one pre 1992 university was able to respond by the creative use of commitments given in their widening participation strategy. By interpreting pre entry guidance in a particular way that allowed central funding for this project, this university was able to remove the obstacles for this group of potential students. Drawing on the commitment of particularly key individuals involved, the paper also describes how a small-scale research project was undertaken that tracked a group of social work students from pre entry to final year and gives an analysis of the impact of this institutional intervention on their university careers.

Such work is undertaken in the context of the potential tensions that arise when universities seek to be research-led and yet have a commitment to widening participation. There is much national concern about the perceived lowering of standards of university entrants and how this impacts on academics who have the other pressing priority of maintaining their research output. The particular approach of the paper is to demonstrate how creative solutions can be sought that allow universities to maintain their commitment to fair access to higher education whilst maintaining standards and aiding the retention of students.

Redefining Personal Learning Identity: adults returning to learn at the community access mainstream learning (CAML) programme

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Abstract

This paper will examine the work undertaken with ‘adult returners’ who attended the first delivery of the Community Access Mainstream Learning (CAML) programme in January 2005. The CAML programme is aimed at community-based adult learners who wish to make the move to mainstream college or university-based learning from informal community based provision.

The programme is not an accredited programme nor was it set out to be a programme where learners pass or failed or achieved or didn’t achieve. Instead, the programme was promoted as an aid to progression in learning where the main aim is for the learner himself or herself to decide whether, how and where they would take the next step in their learning career.

The CAML Programme has three main objectives, which are that the learner will:

- develop and use ICT skills for learning purposes;
- plan for, identify and secure a place on the programme that provides progress in their learning career;
- engage in self-evaluation, development planning and where appropriate the development of the learning skills required to meet the challenges of their next learning experience.

The basis of the CAML programme is learner self-evaluation. Students are encouraged to explore how they, as learners, wish to develop and the steps required in this process. This self-evaluation and subsequent personal planning provides the learner with the opportunity to realistically and critically consider their learning goals, their current skill/ knowledge level and construct a strategy for achieving progression.

The CAML Project represents an opportunity for the authors to interact with a group of adult learners who traditionally engage in community-based education, but fail to progress onto credit bearing mainstream provision. This project provides the opportunity to support learners and track their learning progress over a two-year period as they make their desired transition. The project is currently in its second year and this paper represents a review of work in progress.

Adult Learning, Social Transformation and Widening Access: examples of projects and practice in South Yorkshire and South Wales

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Abstract

This paper will examine the process and practises of adult learning, social transformation and widening access in excluded communities, drawing upon examples of community regeneration projects in South Yorkshire and South Wales.

It will argue that people from excluded communities ('the hard to reach') can be tempted back into learning, particularly where it is linked to the skills and abilities needed to run community-based projects whose aim is to improve the quality of local life. It will also review this return to learning in the light of practical barriers that such adult learners habitually face. Adult learning in excluded communities will be shown to have important links to community development and regeneration, in itself the beginning of the process of collective leading to individual social transformation.

The paper will also examine how this kind of learning, and the projects that form its incentives are organised and financed, how the funding systems influence what is possible and will also look at the nature of the voluntary and community groups behind them.

Finally it draws out from the evidence collected a number of issues and implications for colleges, universities, government policy and the future direction of the adult learning and education agenda, particularly in relation to concepts of exclusion and active moral citizenship.

Community Progression: negotiating the curriculum in action

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Abstract

The Community Progression Project is an established partnership between higher education and communities in the West Wales & Valleys region. The project focuses on widening participation in HE through community and campus-based developments, aimed at changing both the supply of and demand for learning.

Negotiation is at the heart of developments, with learners, organisations and communities encouraged to feed into and benefiting from transformations in learning delivery and learning experience. The paper will outline our experiences of negotiating changes in organisational structures and in shaping positive attitudes to learning within disadvantaged communities. Using the example of University of Wales Swansea's community-based foundation programme with progression to its part-time degree, we will illustrate the interplay between partnership (internal and external), diversity, professional development and student support in our experience of learning negotiation and learning transformation. The particular focus will be on the work of community progression workers with community groups and learners. They are the brokers between community, learners and institution and we will highlight their work with ethnic minorities, their approach to advice and guidance and student support, and the development to support Welsh bilingual needs.

In recent years policy suggestions have been made that non-participation is due to negative attitudes or individual inadequacy. It can be argued that a more likely cause is the focus of funders on economic development, rather than on social inclusion and a subsequent inflexibility of educational institutions to create opportunities for all.

The ability to present well-supported new learning opportunities for socially excluded groups is crucial to widening participation in higher education. In order to be transformative, adult education needs to respond to the needs expressed by local communities and a quality curriculum that is negotiated and inclusive, with relevance to local people's lives.

Teaching and learning strategies need to include adequate support structures to progress from a teaching curriculum, where the tutor is the expert, to a learning curriculum where active participation in the learning process, by the learners, will develop essential learning and life skills.

Towards a Framework of Learning for Refugees: a portfolio-based approach to integration

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Abstract

It has been established that a significant number of refugees come to this country with a range of professional skills and qualifications that largely go unrecognised and which leads to widespread unemployment and under employment among refugee professionals. In a previous paper I put the case for the use of APEL-based training programmes to help this group overcome the multiple barriers to education and employment that they face. Building on this idea, I am proposing the development of an integrated framework of learning that starts at the initial claim for asylum stage and supports the individual's development towards cultural understanding and social integration and into appropriate education and employment.

The model I have proposed comprises three-stages and aims to support refugees in a range of skills areas and with a variety of aims and outcomes. The common feature of all stages is the creation of a portfolio that provides an accessible account of their current skills and abilities. The first stage deals with developing communication and ICT skills and cultural orientation. Stage 2 is APEL-based and focuses on identifying and describing transferable skills gained through education and employment. This also includes sessions on personal development and career planning. Finally, stage 3 focuses on developing skills at work through a work placement, reflecting on this experience and setting career goals. The overall aim is to provide a clear teaching and learning structure that encourages early identification of skills and knowledge and offers the necessary support to help individuals towards realistic and relevant career goals.

This model draws upon RAGU's own innovative work with refugee professionals and a number of existing models and examples of good practice in the fields of refugee training, APEL and work-based learning.

Widening Participation in North Merthyr Tydfil by Employing Peer-to-Peer Support

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Abstract

The North Merthyr Tydfil Regeneration Partnership serves the wards of Gurnos, Penydarren and Dowlais. Working in the most deprived areas of a borough that has been dubbed 'the sickness capital of Europe', our project attempts to engage those that are socially excluded or at risk of becoming excluded. Through the relationship that develops between community members and action researchers involved in groups of soft-entry learning, we aim to understand the underlying reasons for their social exclusion. The partnership employs an Action Research team, funded by the European Social Fund's Equal Community Initiative.

The nature of the paper is to present research in progress, describing the emerging findings of the action research project. The main issues considered will be how we have widened participation and how we will continue to engage, often vulnerable, local people in the process. The approach is truly bottom-up, community-led and adopts the perspective of local residents.

We are widening participation in learning by recruiting local people to engage others. Four out of five people on the team are local people who work and live within the communities we are supporting. Two of these have had personal experience of long-term unemployment. Our approach is learner-led and employs peer-to-peer support.

The soft-entry learning groups that have emerged from the action research are a basic life skills group, a computer repair-and-build group and a cookery group. The basic life skills group in particular is dynamic and steadily expanding. Since its inception it has grown from a core of seven known individuals with confidence and or literacy needs to a group of 13 plus regular members including men and women, younger and older. New members are warmly welcomed by the existing groups.

For our learners, the groups provide a focal point to their lives. They become interested in learning and, as their confidence grows, look towards more formal learning opportunities, voluntary work and paid employment. Issues arise when the demands of their own health and the health and social needs of their families coincide with their desire to learn.

We have encouraged people from our local communities to sit alongside agency professionals on our partnership's management board. Local people take an active role in leading us, exerting considerable influence over the direction of our project. The relationship is an effective one and has included transnational visits to France and Poland.

Shifting the Widening Participation Goalposts: Raising Achievement and Aspirations Through Football

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Abstract

Raising Achievement and Aspirations Through Football is an Aimhigher National project that was awarded HEFCE funding in July 2004 until July 2006. The Widening Participation Unit at Manchester Metropolitan University is working in partnership with Football in the Community to explore the use of football as a vehicle to widen participation.

In collaboration with staff from schools and football clubs, homework clubs were set up in 60 schools across all nine Aimhigher regions in England. The purpose of the homework clubs were to encourage selected pupils (n=1200) from Years 9, 10 and 11 from disadvantaged areas, who had the potential to perform well academically but who were underachieving as a result of unsatisfactory homework and/or coursework completion, to obtain better scores at SAT and GCSE levels.

Linked to each school is one of 27 professional football clubs. The incentive for those who attended the homework club was to be given the opportunity to engage with professional football coaches who offered football skills and coaching qualifications. Parents were encouraged to get involved in the scheme and were also offered the opportunity to gain coaching qualifications from the football clubs as well as information, advice and guidance about how best to support their son/daughter in raising levels of attainment from school staff.

The objective of this national project was to help to raise attainment, to raise awareness of higher education as a possible future, and to raise aspirations. Utilising a case study approach, narratives have been captured from stakeholders involved in the project as well as drawing on pupils' predicted attainment scores, attitude questionnaires and attendance data to assess the impact of the scheme. This paper will elucidate the mechanics of the project as well as exploring the value of piloting innovative ways of raising the achievement and aspirations of large numbers of diverse students through effective communities of practice at a national level.

Aligning South African Universities to Societal Priorities, Government Policies and Economic Imperatives

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Abstract

The main issues raised in this paper are the extent to which universities are aligning their curricula, programmes and access policies to meet the priorities which government has outlined for the development of the country and society in general.

South Africa's educational system up to 20 years ago made provision for a school system which provided for compulsory education up to Grade 9. Thereafter, learners could either leave school and join the ranks of unemployed or workseekers; take up an apprenticeship; or continue in general or technical education up to Grade 12. Thereafter, the latter could continue studies at a technical college, a technikon (polytechnics) a university, or join the ranks of work-seekers or the unemployed.

In the last 20 years, the apprenticeship system has disappeared; technical colleges have dwindled; technikons have become universities of technology; universities have merged or downscaled; and unemployment has risen to 40 per cent. These, and a change in government and emerging economic priorities, have drastically affected access to education, opportunities for lifelong learning and created a massive skills shortage. Today, the working force is generally under-educated, under-skilled and insufficient to meet the demands of a burgeoning economy.

This paper will look at the way universities are having to address the skills shortage and societal needs by creating greater opportunities and access for adult learners, working adults and the unemployed. Universities have in the past concentrated on school-leavers, but are now having to rapidly embrace the concept of lifelong learning to meet societal priorities.

The Glamorgan Outreach Dyslexia Project

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Abstract

Knowledge about dyslexia is confused. There is a desperate need for knowledge transfer from professionals, to people who may be affected by dyslexia. Public pronouncements sometimes confuse rather than clarify. For example the Channel 4 programme, 'The Myth of Dyslexia', is credited by some with having promoted despair, anger, and misunderstanding.

The British Dyslexia Association estimates about ten per cent of the population are affected by dyslexia, and about four per cent severely so. Some people with dyslexia have had such bad experiences of perpetual failure in school that their self-confidence is damaged, and they have an aversion to education that they have grown to hate and fear.

As Sir Jackie Stewart says, 'By the time of my diagnosis, I'd won ... three World Championships, closed major deals and was financially independent. But I was still thinking, "I've got to try harder because they might find out I'm stupid."'

The University of Glamorgan's Disability and Dyslexia Service provides help for existing students and staff. However, there is a substantial body of people within reach of the university who could benefit from studying, but who never consider that possibility because of their previous educational experiences. Glamorgan Outreach is running this project, to transfer knowledge about dyslexia and its effects to people such as these, in their local communities.

Alternative Discourse in Education: case study from Egypt

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Abstract

We would like to propose an alternative discourse around lifelong learning for social transformation. Our core interest is to explore learning approaches that move away from merely receiving or transmitting information to engaging learners in constructive dialogue and sharing, and where personal experiences and local knowledge are valued in the learning process.

We would like to take this opportunity to present a case study from Egypt, where we have worked with disadvantaged communities for the past seven years. The case study is a project implemented in a marginalised poor community in Cairo through an intermediary organisation called Fathet Kheir. The project is called 'Zeyadet Maarefa', meaning 'Expanding our Knowledge', and it targets illiterate women who have received a loan from the same organisation to start a small project in their community. Zeyadet Maarefa started as a regular literacy and numeracy programme, but quickly shifted its focus to create a learning environment allowing the group of women and the facilitator to engage in discussions around international and local events, culture and literature, as well as individual experiences and issues facing the community as a whole.

Finally, we would like to address possible avenues to transfer my experience to a Welsh context. Although illiteracy is not a concern in this region, we believe that there is a need for lifelong learning opportunities that stem from existing local knowledge and skills, and that respect personal experiences. Such an approach can be of particular value to target young people excluded from traditional forms of education, as well as persons with an interest to redefine Welsh identity in contemporary times.

The Education of Entrepreneurship in Wales

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to report on one key aspect of the findings from a four-year European-funded project, E-College Wales, especially on how the second phase of the project assists in promoting and developing the entrepreneurship culture throughout Wales, based on pedagogical blended learning. The study provides a critical evaluation of the impact of ECW2 being implemented across potential entrepreneurs in socially deprived areas (Objective One area). Freire emphasised that the aim of good pedagogy is to enable people to increase their understanding of their own objective conditions. This paper outlines the way in how teaching and learning practices in a HE institution changed to accommodate the very different needs of these lifelong learners in order to achieve social inclusion.

Ever since the formation of The National Assembly for Wales, the agenda of making Wales an 'Entrepreneurial Country' has been a strong priority. The University of Glamorgan and six of its partner colleges received a second phase of funding from the European Union to deliver accessible education with an aim to encourage entrepreneurial activities in Objective One area in Wales. ECW2 delivered online courses including Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Enterprise, Foundation Degree of Arts (FdA) in Business Administration, Master of Arts (MA) in Professional Development in order to provide different levels of accessible learning to lifelong learners across Wales.

A typical educator-learner relationship often involves a narrating subject (the educators) and listening objects (the learners). The educator's task is to 'fill' the learners with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality. This conventional type of education method is not applicable in the entrepreneurship environment as most of the students enrolled in ECW2 are lifelong learners. These potential entrepreneurs required learning initiatives which consisted of theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills on business with flexible pedagogical drivers. This paper will explain how Glamorgan has to change its learning and teaching practices and policies such as the use of open entry policy and the provision of free laptops to achieve its social inclusion agenda for lifelong learners in Wales.

The data collection was quantitative and qualitative including questionnaires and focus groups with students where they express in their own teams what they have achieved from the course in terms of entrepreneurial and other skills. Interviews and focus group with tutors and management across the university and partner colleges also provided us with detail information on institutional changes that happened as a result of the project.

The paper will report on the effective blended learning strategy of ECW2 aligned with business relevant knowledge and practical skills. It will look in depth at the responses of the stakeholders of how the online environment enables the initiative, flexibility and accessibility of learning process, and the impact on entrepreneurship transformation in Wales.

Student Ambassadors: high credibility persuaders and agents of change

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Abstract

This presentation relates to work in progress in the form of small-scale research.

Student Ambassadors play an important part in the Aspire Aimhigher partnership which is aimed at increasing the number of 19 – 30 year olds who progress into higher education from under-represented groups, or who have no family history of degree level study. Our previous small scale studies have looked at how they can support learners on vocational programmes. This study centres on the impact of being an ambassador on the ambassadors themselves.

It is clear from the two earlier studies that ambassadors had a cluster of qualities to contribute to encouraging our target learners to consider progression. Their closeness in age gave them a perceived accessibility especially when they come from the local area or from similar socio-economic groups. By contrast with teachers or lecturers, they are not seen as authority figures and can be questioned more closely; at the same time, their opinions and experiences as students are seen as having real credibility.

This small-scale study based on small group discussions round a series of topics asks the student ambassadors to reflect on the effect that being in that role is having on their own development. Preliminary indications are that:

- responding to learner questions can help articulate ambassadors' sense of how they manage their studies and the life work balance;
- dealing with the demands of e.g. activity days develops resourcefulness and interpersonal skills
- Ambassador work is inherently more fulfilling than their other low skill part time employment;
- when learners tell them about how contact with them has had a positive impact on their attitudes to HE study it can give ambassadors a real sense of agency;
- when lecturers become involved with ambassadors on shared activities or simply take an interest in ambassador work, it increases the sense of belonging to and even being a full member of the learning community.

The first part of the study is confined to HE student ambassadors but this academic year we have also started to develop FE ambassadors in some of our partner colleges and a later stage will look at their experiences

O' Fangor i Amlwch: Pontio'r Gagendor, Bangor to Amlwch: bridging the gap

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Abstract

The University of Wales, Bangor (UWB) has been working with the Amlwch Regeneration Scheme for three years. Amlwch is a Communities First (CF) area and this proposal is for a bilingual workshop focusing on a case study of good practice between UWB and Amlwch CF. Although residents of Amlwch and its surrounding area are within distance of higher education courses in Bangor, many lack confidence to venture outside of the psychological safety zone of their community.

An introduction will be given to the context of this partnership: how it was set up, the purpose of the activity and how to implement the plan. There will be an exploration of the andragogy employed and the contribution of the project to the notions of participative democracy and community development, central to these being the social justice and social purpose arguments. There will be a discussion of issues of delivering higher education courses to varied groups of students with regard to age, background and language and an outline given of the support structures in place. Examples of good practice will be cited but such work has had and will have challenges, such as sources of funding and lack of adequate resources, convincing UWB of the validity and value of such provision, dealing with competition and criticism and perceived negative effects on a community. The workshop will attempt to provide answers to facing these challenges and overcoming negative situations. As stated, this activity is a partnership and a student perspective will be provided by Cath Radcliffe who is an active member of the Amlwch community and one who has been instrumental in the success of the partnership.

Before UWB began working there, Amlwch CF felt disillusioned by some previous learning providers as courses had been abandoned after two or three sessions and there was no progression from completed courses. The workshop will therefore look at outcomes and future development.

Widening Access and the Learning Transition to HE: a catalyst for learning development

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Abstract

University activities to widen access to their courses delivers recruits with an increased diversity of academic qualifications, range of level of academic achievement and variety of previous learning experiences. The impact of the learning transitions on the learner required by higher education can lead to significant early drop-out rates and/or underachievement.

Discussed in this paper are methodologies and experiences gained from a successful pilot, preparing demanding, mature, part-time learners, with a range of educational backgrounds and experience, for achievement in work-based learning environments.

The programme develops a parity of academic learning status, which enhances the ability to successfully learn and progress through the acquisition and implementation of a series of transferable learning tools and skills. This has been shown to markedly reduce early drop-out rates and to have gained considerable support from the learners.

This paper proposes the rationale for transferring, the programme to full-time learners.

The collateral implications of such a supportive programme are briefly explored in terms of:

- learning culture;
- student learning experiences and their implications to university perception;
- learner retention;
- tutor development;
- employer perception of university graduates;
- student satisfaction; and
- enterprise culture.

Community-based Higher Education: a site for social change?

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Abstract

Part-time learning in the community has a hugely important role to play in education for social change for students and for challenging and ultimately changing institutional structures, especially in higher education institutions (HEIs). By its very nature, part-time learning offers opportunities to widen participation to people, who, for various reasons, cannot or will not participate in more traditional, often front-ended, full-time education programmes. It also challenges especially the more traditional institutions to change the way they deliver educational programmes and to attract a more diverse student body. The importance of part-time learning for higher education in Wales has been highlighted by the fact that the Rees Review Group, which in 2005 had been given the task to conduct research and make recommendations for a comprehensive structure of student fees in Wales, decided to advise the Welsh Assembly Government to set up a separate review group to tackle the difficult issue of funding for part-time modes of study. The Graham Review Group, which is currently engaged in gathering and discussing evidence around part-time studying and funding, will publish its findings and recommendations later in 2006.

Even though the importance of part-time learning is undeniable in the massified university system, the way in which part-time learning in the community can influence both an education for social change and instigate institutional change deserves some closer scrutiny. Firstly, what kind of social change is envisaged? Is the current focus on increasing opportunities for engaging in higher education primarily designed to enable the individual student to change his or her circumstances or are there opportunities for social change within communities – and what do we mean by that? Secondly, which institutions are amenable to the changes in programme delivery necessitated by an increasing number of part-time students? Are existing inequalities between HEIs reinforced by an unequal intake of part-time students? And do part-time students really have the power to change the way institutions operate or is there a tendency at least in some institutions to force part-time students into a pseudo full-time mould? Is Malcolm Tight's pessimistic assessment that 'higher education remains essentially supplier-led', which leads to 'an underlying uniformity in [HEIs'] assumptions and practices, which despite the apparent diversity within the system (...), sustains a dominant model of teaching and learning' still justified?

This research paper interrogates the available statistics for part-time participation in higher education in Wales and argues that part-time learning is set to become increasingly important. It then critically interrogates notions of institutional change as well as social change and discusses what opportunities and problems arise when part-time learning is seen as a driver for change. The research will include both historical and contemporary sources and will discuss the findings of the Graham Review, which are certain to be available by July.

University-Community Engagement, Capacity and Culture

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Abstract

The paper draws upon a recent evaluation of the Progression Through Partnership 2 project.

The Progression Through Partnership 2 project is a partnership between University of Wales, Newport, the University of Glamorgan, The Workers' Educational Association in South Wales, and The Community University of the Valleys Partnership. It is working in the Welsh counties of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Torfaen to help people to progress to higher levels of learning in their own Community

The evaluation by the People and Work Unit included a statistically robust survey of 1,400 current and past learners and a series of in-depth focus groups to explore issues raised by the survey in greater depth.

Main Issues: The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) is committed to widening participation in higher education in order to support economic and social development within Wales. In support of this, the WAG's Strategy for Higher Education in Wales, Reaching Higher, promoted collaboration between further and higher education (FE and HE) providers and, with the help of European Social Fund monies, supported the development of innovative approaches to university-community engagement, such as the Progression Through Partnership 2 project.

This paper discusses evidence from an external evaluation of the project completed in early 2006. It focuses upon the added value of this type of partnership that brings together a HE provider with local FE providers and community-based organisations. It explores the extent to which the project has strengthened learning pathways from the community to the university and the links between the university and the communities they serve.

The paper goes on to discuss the impact of this type of partnership upon individual learners, their communities, and the partner organisations. For example, it examines:

- changes in learners' perceived 'capability' and their willingness to participate in community life;
- the contribution of university-community engagement to the promotion of a lifelong learning culture; and
- how ideas and approaches were shared and taken up by different providers.

Workplace Learning: building a sustainable framework

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Abstract

The effectiveness of workplace learning is enhanced via a democratic approach, which harnesses the contributions, rights and responsibilities of each of the partners. This holistic approach not only sustains the framework over the long-term but also ensures that all participants have ownership as well as a clear and agreed understanding of what is expected of them as well as recognition of the value of their respective contributions.

This paper defines employability in terms of the acquisition of relevant technical knowledge and professional skills within the context of the learner's current and potential career status. It identifies the role and ongoing contribution the underpinning elements make to each of the tripartite and learning components that are combined to produce holistic learning environments.

Within this context the roles of the following are explored:

- the workplace learning paradigm;
- common understandings;
- outcome-based assessment;
- characteristics of the learning environment;
- learning cycles.

The framework discussed:

- recognises and encompasses the notion that there is a diversity in workplace experience available within a given industry sector and within organisations within that sector;
- is currently in validation at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels at the University of Wolverhampton.

It identifies the qualities and characteristics of the learning framework necessary to support the development and attainment of participant employability through:

- effective reflective practice;
- the development of emotional competencies;
- the identification, acquisition and application of appropriate knowledge, technologies, understandings and skills;
- the application of the continuous improvement cycle to both the learner, tutor and the model.

Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA)

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Abstract

The Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group report on fair admissions ('The Schwartz Report' 2004) recommended the creation of a central source of expertise and advice on admissions issues. Following consideration of this recommendation by Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP), a National Steering Group for Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) programme was established earlier in 2006. Stakeholders include the UK HE funding bodies who fund the programme, the HE Academy and representatives of the pre and post 16 educational sectors. The SPA programme will offer an invaluable resource for institutions that wish to maintain and enhance excellence in admissions and will lead on the future development of admissions and the dissemination of good practice. In addition, SPA will also aid the commissioning and evaluating of related research, providing an important evidence base for the development of effective student recruitment and admissions services in HEIs.

Although SPA will be based at UCAS in Cheltenham, it is not a UCAS programme and will operate independently. The Director of SPA, Janet Graham, was appointed in May 2006. At the conference she will outline the aims and priorities of the programme which covers all aspects of supporting professionalism in admissions to HE in the UK, including widening participation, part-time and mature admissions, and seek the views of those attending.

Voice and Transformative Learning: a study of critical reflection and rational discourse in transformative learning as experienced by economically disadvantaged women

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the essence of the lived experience of transformative learning for women who have successfully made the transformation from economic dependency to economic self-sufficiency. The study also sought to explore the relationship between the woman's epistemology and the steps in the process defined as critical self-reflection and rational discourse by Mezirow's transformative learning theory.

I will be discussing the findings in three areas:

- how the findings reflect the unique way in which the context influenced the way in which the women experienced a transformative learning experience;
- how each of the woman's epistemology influenced the way she experienced critical self reflection;
- how each of the woman's epistemology influenced the way she experienced rational discourse.

I will discuss how the findings of my study support the premise that critical reflection and rational discourse are central to the transformative learning experience but the findings will show that the experience of critical reflection and rational discourse is not a universally consistent experience. The findings suggest that the women in this study did experience these activities differently depending on their epistemology.

This study adds more information to the body of literature addressing the theory of transformative learning, specifically the theory introduced by Jack Mezirow. The powerful and dynamic stories of the participants challenge some of the premises that surround the nature of critical reflection and rational discourse by demonstrating that not all women experience these processes in the same way. The evidence demonstrates that a woman's epistemology (Belenky, *et al*) has an influence on how a woman will engage in the act of reflection and rational discourse. The woman's epistemology also influences how the woman chooses to act upon her new learning. The findings add to the evidence that there is a relationship between emotions and rational thought. The evidence displays the importance of rational and critical thought in the management of emotions. The findings support the idea that relationships are important to a woman's learning experience and that trust is essential when engaging in discourse. These conclusions emphasise the importance of transformative learning to the success strategies of women who have successfully made the transition from welfare dependency to economic self-sufficiency.

Sbarduno Rhugledd – Stimulating Fluency

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Abstract

This paper explores some of the practical aspects of teaching a new language - in this case Welsh - to adults: in particular of meeting the challenge posed by encouraging and supporting fluency.

I recently had the satisfying experience of organising and running, for the first time ever in South Pembrokeshire, a residential activities weekend for adult learners of Welsh. Among the 40 or so participants there were one or two native speakers/tutors, but the majority by far were learners who were at the time attending regular classes in the (predominantly non-Welsh) locality. I had realised in advance that such an activity would be of benefit to the learners, but I had not realised exactly how - or to how great an extent.

The value of the weekend principally resided in the emphasis placed upon activities which had to be engaged in through the target language – i.e. Welsh. Based on this experience, the paper will make a strong case for including such activity elements in language teaching courses as valuable and essential, rather than as an occasional - and frequently optional - component.

Elements of the presentation will be as follows.

- Brief consideration of principal relevant theoretical aspects in the literature.
- Background situation of Welsh Learning in Mid and South Pembrokeshire.
- Initial thoughts connected to the creation of the activity weekend.
- Examples of the materials used to facilitate and encourage use of the Welsh language.
- The weekend itself - through anecdote.
- Success of the weekend - including comments by learners.
- Making the case for inclusion of similar elements as an essential part of adult language teaching programmes. Considerations of cost, duration, location, and of potential components for inclusion in such ‘practicals’ will all be considered.

Universities and their Communities: lifelong learning opportunities

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Abstract

Work-based learning is a new approach to adult learning, with many UK universities developing their own work-based learning provision. There is a realisation that some change in learner communities is necessary to accommodate part-time, work-based learners. The traditional marketing of 18 year olds is insufficient to meet the 50 per cent Government figure and skills-based, vocational routes need to be increasingly developed.

This paper explores, via specific case studies, work undertaken by the University of Teesside with local companies from their immediate geographical community. Via several funded projects, staff from the university's Centre for Lifelong Learning have been able to engage employers and employees with HE level learning. This has been a combination of accrediting current in-house training provision, offering existing university modules and devising new learning opportunities in collaboration with company staff. There is also the potential to offer HE level credit for any experiential learning, using the APEL process.

It is not just the new students who learn from this experience; the university has to be flexible and innovative to make this activity attractive and useful to these companies, many of whom are small and medium enterprises with very limited time and resources for training. Initiating a sustainable learning culture within these busy environments is extremely rewarding. Many of the students involved have progressed to further HE level study and embraced the ethos of continuous professional development and lifelong learning. The paper will explain many of the benefits to this approach whilst also recognising some of the problems concerned.

Adult Learning, Risk and Preventive Factors

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Abstract

This paper draws upon the evaluations of two projects, Build It and Life Support, based in the South Wales Valleys that are supporting adult learners' progress through further and higher education. The paper is based upon an in-depth analysis of the experiences and biographies of 30 of the project's learners, all of whom were non-traditional learners, that is to say, adults living in economically-deprived communities, with no or low qualifications and negative experiences of school.

The paper offers a robust critique of the concept of barriers to learning, developed by K.P. Cross and Veronica McGivney. The paper draws upon the concept of 'risk' and 'protective' factors, in order to explore not only the range of factors that held the projects' learners back, i.e. barriers, but also the factors that helped and supported their progress.

By viewing the learners' experiences and biographies through the framework of risk and protective factors, the paper is able to paint a far richer picture of their complex lives than would be possible if they were viewed solely through the concept of barriers. The paper will also demonstrate that thinking about risk and protective factors helps imbue learners and non-learners with a degree of agency: they are no longer simply passively constrained by barriers (or structures), waiting for providers to dismantle them (and release them), whilst recognising that learners' (and non-learners') agency is both enabled and constrained by the risk and protective factors they face.

A London Tale: vocational progression pathways in hospitality and building crafts

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Abstract

In this paper the authors report on the findings from a short research project to assess the extent to which vocational progression pathways have been developed and enhanced in two occupational areas – building crafts and hospitality in nine London Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs). The objectives were to ascertain: firstly, how well CoVEs have performed in the provision of vocational progression pathways; secondly, the impact on learners and their participation; thirdly, the development of external relationships, and finally the likely impact of the Olympics 2012.

In theory, vocational progression routes exist in most sectoral areas from pre NVQ level 1 up to foundation degree and beyond. The London CoVE network provides the key to driving up vocational progression. This project aimed to explore the changes brought about by two specific CoVE areas: Hospitality and Building Crafts and the practical reality for London's vocational learners in these two sectors.

The UK Government's PSA target of 50 per cent of young people entering higher education and the 2005 14-19 white paper demonstrate the national importance attached to raising progression levels through vocational pathways. The project aimed to evaluate the specific barriers learners face at each NVQ level from entry onwards. Relatively low WBL performance; a highly diverse and often transient population are combined with complex travel to study patterns in London. The interaction of these complex issues reinforced the need for a clearer understanding of what is happening in London 'on the ground'.

On the ground both sectors are characterised by workforces with low or no formal qualifications. This is compounded by the fact that level 2 qualifications have currency and employers who are unwilling to support training at level 3 or beyond. With the emphasis placed on making a step change in progression from level 2 to level 3, this clearly presents a challenge to the CoVEs.

The research was undertaken between October 2005 and April 2006 and involved: desk research into existing literature; analysis of college data on participation and achievement; semi structured in-depth interviews with providers, employers, Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), and partner organisations; and focus groups with learners.

The authors will present their findings from the research together with policy recommendations for CoVEs, SSCs, employers and the Learning & Skills Council. In the findings we report on a range of issues including the nature of learner and employer demand – high at level 2 but low at level 3; the barriers to progression – currency of level 2 qualifications, the relevance of NVQs and the challenges of placing employed apprentices on building crafts courses, which appears to be a London-specific issue; and widening participation – CoVEs are working hard in this area but there are concerns in both sectors about health and safety for learner and workers with a disability and in the hospitality sector a number of CoVEs found it a challenge to recruit young white males.

ROUTES Project

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Abstract

This is completed research, drawing on an independent evaluation of the ROUTES project, carried out by Katherine Hughes, Alain Thomas and Michael Warden in 2004.

Reaching Out Extending Skills (ROUTES) was a demonstration project, funded by the New Opportunities Fund from 2002-2004 and hosted by the National Library of Wales as part of its Social Inclusion Agenda. It aimed to teach disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities about computers, offering 'taster' sessions and small group work in libraries, in four local authorities in Wales - Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Swansea and Wrexham.

The role of the library as learning provider was a unique feature of this project. Although ROUTES was ostensibly about supporting people's learning about computers, the tools that people need to use libraries effectively and systematically are much broader, including basic skills, the ability to select, manage and store information in different formats, and skills in using a computer.

The European concept of citizenship – is becoming enshrined in our political culture in Wales. The role of the professional librarian supports this, by providing effective ways of linking people with the information they need. In the 'Information Age', when much information is most easily accessible electronically, libraries also have a crucial role in overcoming barriers to information access, thus supporting people's rights as citizens.

The evaluation sought to assess the effectiveness of ROUTES as a vehicle to deliver routes to learning within the setting of the library service, and it was able to identify positive outcomes and lessons learned, based on interviews with project and library staff, partnership organisations, and clients. Set in the context of the Welsh Assembly Government's education strategy and strategic ICT framework, the evaluation suggests that there is potential synergy between libraries and community education providers in supporting citizenship through information literacy, basic and ICT skills. Some success was achieved in reaching out to disadvantaged communities, but less in reaching non-traditional library users.

Key questions raised in the evaluation

- How far should library services' role extend to making people computer literate as a route to 'information literacy'?
- How should resources be allocated to where they are most needed?
- How can learning provision be adequately co-ordinated through collaborative use of learning networks to support seamless progression?
- What is an appropriate balance between reaching out to communities and in supporting learning within libraries?
- How can library services better underpin information literacy as 'the Fourth Right of Citizenship'?

Coming in from the Margins

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Abstract

This is a workshop exploring the benefits of partnerships in lifelong learning opportunities for individuals with mental health issues. We will critically explore the synergy between the advantages of this approach and the difficulties that arise when working in partnerships.

The Adult Education Department at Swansea University provides a wide range of courses, which are not formally assessed, in what is known as the Open Programme. It has been funded since 2000/1 by the University of Wales Widening Access Fund. The programme provides a foundation for the department's work in relation to its widening participation agenda and gives a clear route to various accredited programmes including a part-time degree scheme. It is specifically targeted towards socially excluded groups and educationally disadvantaged adults. A vital aim of the Open Programme is to offer learning opportunities to individuals with mental health issues provided through partnership with statutory and voluntary health organisations in different communities.

The Mental Health Development Service works closely with voluntary organisations, service users and carers. Many service users have severe enduring mental health issues and spend much of their time within Mental Health Day Services. The Open Programme has allowed us to work with marginalised groups of individuals. It offers flexible learning with a negotiated curriculum which meets individual needs in a supported environment where the learner feels comfortable.

This workshop will provide opportunities for participants to actively contribute to an engaged discussion on making the best use of partnership working.

Widening Participation by Widening Professional Participation in the Learning Agenda

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Abstract

There will be a brief presentation with examples of partnership-working and integrated agendas in the courses and activities the Carmarthenshire Learning Network have been putting on. The workshop will be participatory and draw on people's experience.

The Carmarthenshire Learning Network (a European-funded project) has successfully been widening participation in lifelong learning over the last two and a half years. It has engaged with a diverse range of people; people who thought learning was not for them and people who hadn't thought about learning in any way.

Patience, hard work and a belief in the value of learning and its ability to transform lives have paid off. The Network has raised awareness of opportunities that already exist and continues to find out what people would participate in and puts on free courses where and when people want them in local, accessible venues. Successfully engaging with learners and potential learners and building a supportive network of tutors and providers has been the focus of the first two years. Now there is a second phase and if widening participation and the development of a lifelong learning culture are to continue and thrive then there must be a strategic move towards the integration of learning into all other aspects of community planning.

In Carmarthen there are the five strands to community planning: health and well-being, regeneration, environment, community safety and lifelong learning. Integrating learning into the other four strands and working in partnership with the local authority departments is essential. The voluntary sector is also an important partner in building bridges and delivery. Health, leisure, safety, environment and community regeneration are the things people are interested in and the benefits derived from these motivate people to learn. All providers, colleges, community education services, universities and voluntary sector groups must work with public services such as the criminal justice system, the health service, job centres and the welfare system to ensure learning is a part of people's whole life experience.

The workshop will explore how those involved in lifelong learning and the widening participation agenda can successfully make collaborative working relationships with other organisations and services in order to make inroads into all aspects of people's lives. We have to demonstrate to those working in regeneration and health that working in partnership with lifelong learning can help them realise their goals. How can those working in other areas become aware of the benefits and potential of learning and build it into their work? How can we in lifelong learning best support this?

Transforming, Progressing and Hopeful: what has lifelong learning done for me?

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Abstract

This paper reports on the second stage of a research project, the first stage of which was presented in the 2005 FACE Conference held at Cork. The first stage took the form of a quantitative analysis of a survey carried out on graduates from the part-time degree scheme based at the Department of Adult Continuing education at Swansea University. The aim of the survey was to explore graduates' perceptions of the benefits of lifelong learning.

The second stage of the project is concerned with the gathering of qualitative data and consists of 12 semi-structured interviews and two focus groups. The participants have been selected as a random stratified sample of the graduates who responded to the original questionnaire and gave their permission to be contacted further. By this process of triangulation the researchers hope to validate and explain further some of the interesting results obtained from the quantitative analysis stage. Some of the issues examined in detail which showed various statistical correlations are:

- differences in previous educational experiences of various sub-groups of graduates;
- attitudes to job/career improvements before and after studying;
- involvement in family learning and activity in community activities among campus and community based students;
- changes in self concept/attitude and identity amongst different sub-groups of students as a result of studying.

Language in Use: participating in the learning society with confidence, independence and motivation

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Abstract

The intention behind this paper is to contribute to a deeper understanding of 'the learning society' through arguing the case for maintaining a conscious pedagogical focus on three basic, interdependent, learner concepts: confidence, independence and motivation. We suggest that, in the current climate of profound change, complexity and increasing speed brought about through globalisation, multiculturalism and information technology, these three learner concepts can easily be undermined. Yet they are still crucially important for a successful venture into lifelong learning.

The paper draws on the experiences of a project group, Uni4U, at King's College London, concerning two components of a project funded by the Higher Education European Social Fund (HE ESF) with other support from the South-East London Workforce Development Confederation (SELWDC) of the National Health Service (NHS) and the Central London Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In both projects the clientele are mature participants from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Whereas those participating in one project are already embarking on higher education study, those participating in the second project are seeking ways of enhancing their opportunities in academic-professional-related settings. The first project, presented at the previous FACE conference (Jones, 2005), has been very helpful in informing the second, which began in November 2005.

Uni4U focuses on the experiences of running one component within the second project, viz. a short Communication Key Skills course in adult literacy at Level 1 for mature participants living in disadvantaged areas of South-East London. In this component, the development of language in use is fore-grounded. Through adopting a psycho-socio-cultural pedagogical approach to interpret government guidelines and standards, we question how these participants might overcome invisible barriers and seek their own routes towards a more interesting future than they had previously envisaged: thus becoming lifelong learners. The three learner concepts are considered by synthesizing four perspectives:

- the criteria for success according to Key Literacy Skills at Level 1;
- the pedagogical framework of the course;
- the participants;
- an analysis of the qualitative data collected from the participants' work, their questionnaire responses and their spoken and written reflective comments during and at the end of the course.

Don't Pack the Parachute: how can a university move into a disadvantaged community and form partnerships successfully?

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Abstract

The communities in the Llynfi Valley area rank amongst the most socially deprived and disadvantaged in Wales. Surveys show that over half of the adult population have no recognised qualification and there are significant skills gaps in the local economy. In order to help address these issues, the Llynfi Valley Project was developed by the University of Glamorgan in 2003, on the basis of detailed consultation with a variety of local partners. Supported by the European Social Fund and Big Lottery, the project complements existing provision within the area by delivering a range of non-accredited and accredited courses to people living or working in the Llynfi Valley. Students who wish to engage in further learning are then signposted to local learning providers.

During the first phase of the project, 672 students were recruited, with 593 completing one or more courses. This exceeded the original output targets by 169 per cent and 197 per cent respectively. Furthermore, 99 per cent of students confirmed that the courses they completed 'suited their needs' and were taught at an 'appropriate pace', whilst 98 per cent stated that the 'standard of teaching was good'.

This workshop builds upon those presentations delivered at both FACE and UALL Annual Conferences in 2004, by providing an update as to the current position of the Llynfi Valley Project, which is now well into its second phase. It uses the project as a case study for good practice, and examines how a university can move into a disadvantaged community and successfully:

- form close working partnerships with local learning providers and key community organisations;
- appoint the right staff to promote courses, recruit students and deliver teaching;
- utilise a variety of methods to promote courses to a specified target market;
- address barriers to learning, such as low self-esteem, peripherality in terms of access to learning and financial constraints;
- deliver courses that meet student demand and expectations;
- retain students so that they complete at least one course of study and progress onto further learning;
- ensure students have tangible skills to offer local employers on completion of their course(s).

Recognising and Valuing ‘Other’ Learning: a new role for accreditation of prior learning?

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Abstract

This discussion paper seeks to contextualise the role of accreditation of prior learning policies within a higher education sector which is in the process of rapid change. The paper suggests that these changes reflect wider societal flux particularly in the areas of work and leisure and that the changing work environment experienced by many employees and the rate of technological change requires a continuous upgrading of skills and competencies. Within this continuously shifting environment, individuals have increasing responsibility for their own working and leisure life. Increased demand for workforce and personal development requires the role of the HE sector to change.

The paper maintains that the traditional model of an elite liberal higher education system based on a hierarchical classroom knowledge transfer is beginning to be replaced by a mass system which is increasingly based on a combination of knowledge and competence-based approaches in a diverse variety of learning sites. There is a move toward a more structured approach with an emphasis on ‘learning to learn’. It is acknowledged that this is by no means a new phenomenon; however, competency in learning is becoming a more explicit tenant of higher education, with demands for more quantitative measures of its outcomes. The sector is being increasingly tasked with supplying quantifiable frameworks and outcomes for the skills and competencies developed as a result of undergraduate and post-graduate study.

In response to these changes in the role of HE, the sector is being charged with developing processes by which competencies in learning can be promoted, developed, measured and recognised. This is evidenced by an increasing onus on such processes as Personal Development Planning (PDP), flexible learning, work-based learning, and the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). As the ethos of the sector moves away from a teaching, producer-led model toward an increasingly student-supported learning, client-driven model, such processes will become the core of HE activity.

The paper then goes on to outline proposed changes to the APL policy at a mainstream university which attempt to not only to recognise ‘other’ learning, but also to value it.

Ethnicity, Education and Employment: permeating ‘Widening Participation’ - how higher education institutions can bring changes

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Abstract

Throughout the 1990s, research drew attention to the increase in participation of minority ethnic (ME) students in higher education. The latest research, however, shows that there are differentials in progress in higher education, attainment, and employment outcomes for some minority ethnic groups. Minority ethnic graduates are less likely to obtain higher degree classes and enjoy fewer advantages in the labour market from their educational qualifications than graduates from non-ME groups. The Ethnicity, Education and Employment Project funded by the European Social Fund is a partnership research project with five higher education institutions (HEIs) in England including; University of East London, University of Bradford, Brunel University, Edgehill, and Leeds Metropolitan University. The project explores stakeholders’ (students, academics and other practitioners, and employers) perception of effective measures to promote student success. It also examines the relationship between widening participation initiatives and strategies to enhance graduate employability. The interim findings demonstrate the existence of complicated and interrelated factors that cause disadvantages for certain ME groups. There is, also, an implication that social and/or personal capital, if not the class factor, have a significant impact on student’s success. The paper will present the final findings from the five case studies, sharing good practice, as well as some recommendation developed to improve HEI’s support for ME and non-ME students during all phases of their study from the point of entry to graduation.

From the Margins to the Mainstream: embedding widening participation in higher education

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Abstract

This proposal is intended as a presentation reporting on the third research study completed in 2005 as a result of commissions from Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) to examine the impact of access to higher education by people from lower socio-economic groups across the UK. Leading on from the two earlier studies, *From Elitism to Inclusion* and *Social Class and Participation*, this work looked particularly at the nature of embedded widening participation practice.

By analysing recent UCAS statistical data, re-examining 23 previous case studies and adding 11 new case studies, it focuses on an institution-wide approach to widening participation and considers types of interventions and the groups they target. The findings illustrate that considerable progress has been made across the sector to embed widening participation initiatives. However, many challenges remain with regard to targeting, admissions to some institutions in some subject disciplines, and in monitoring and evaluating overall impact.

The work will be of interest to the FACE conference because of a link between continuing education and good practice in access to higher education and the connection the study makes between parents as learners and achievements by young underrepresented groups.

Of particular note in the picture drawn by the research results is the increasingly different nature of initiatives in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England caused by new kinds of governance and policies.

The research team who were drawn from across the UK HE sector were led by the European Access Unit at University of Westminster and Dr Liz Thomas of the Higher Education Academy in York. This presentation will be the first dissemination of the work in Wales and the first in a continuing education forum.

Industrial Decline and Cultures of Learning

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Abstract

The paper discusses a comparative research project that is exploring the impact of industrial decline in three parts of the UK: Teesside, Merseyside and the South Wales Valleys.

In the wake of the decline of heavy industry, such as coal mining, ship-building and the docks, the craft apprenticeship has crumbled as the pathway into well-paid work for those with few qualifications. In the past, many of those with few qualifications moved straight from school at 15 and 16 into apprenticeships, en-route to highly skilled, well-paid work. In contrast, the current generation is faced with more complex, extended transitions, often involving periods of post-compulsory education, vocational training, employment and unemployment. The 'first rung' apprenticeships and jobs, which did not require qualifications, have been stripped out and young people who have low or no qualifications are seriously disadvantaged in labour markets.

This paper discusses comparative research that is exploring similarities and differences in the impact of place upon attitudes toward education, training and employment. It seeks to explore whether some of the lessons that have been drawn from research in Teesside and Merseyside, are equally applicable to the South Wales Valleys, which have experienced a comparative process of industrial decline. In particular it focuses upon the ways in which negative attitudes toward education, training and employment may have developed and become entrenched in each of these three areas, even in the face of changes in the industrial structure and education and training sector. These changes have seen responsibility for education and training, increasingly passed from employers to young people themselves, who are now responsible for charting their own learning pathways, if they are to find highly skilled, well-paid work.

Men and Community Education in the South Wales Valleys

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Abstract

This paper will present a socio-economic overview of male experience in the South Wales Valleys, taken from findings of a literature review for doctoral research at DACE. It is intended to generate discussion around current understanding of men accessing community education in the Valleys.

There is a rich historiography surrounding community education and adult learning in South Wales. A brief journey into the past, demonstrates the significant contribution of South Wales, to the development of community-based adult learning. From the chapel to the pit heads, we can see how education has been absorbed within the Valley's communities, and used as a tool for change, enlightenment, activism and employment.

Adult education in its earliest days was confined to men and used as a means of progressing, either into colliery management, or as an escape from the mining industry altogether. As industry developed, so did the provision of adult learning. There was a growth of both formal and informal learning opportunities for men, with a shift from learning traditional skills, to new technical competences required to meet the demands of a changing economy. This begins to highlight an association for men, between employment and their own education.

Significant change occurred for men with the collapse of the mines and associated industries in the valleys. With re-industrialisation came a growth in public sector employment. One consequence of this was more women entering the labour market and accessing education in increasing numbers. This contrasts to the past participation patterns.

Ongoing disadvantage is evident in South Wales, with high levels of economic inactivity and concentrated pockets of poverty. This resulted in the European Union qualifying the Valleys for Objective 1 status in 1999.

In a pilot study, 'Engaging Young Men in Learning Barriers and Motivations,' carried out for the Community University of the Valleys, the author stated, *'Those interviewed felt that there was little point in going beyond compulsory education as employment is not available locally.'* Also of interest was the interpretation that these young men appeared lacking in motivation, uncertain about their future and had little in the way of aspirations.

So what is the view of the Valleys for men and community-based education? In recognising and exploring the possible barriers faced by men accessing community education, we can begin to inform professional practice. In placing this information in the context of a broader historical perspective, it may be possible to begin to understand the dynamics and intricacies impacting on men and their associations with work and value of adult education in their communities. This may also allow an opportunity to explore the balance between governmental policy objectives and outcomes and the outcomes these communities and men have for themselves.

‘Coed -y-Lan DRWS’ Project: a study of good practice

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Abstract

This is a case study of good practice. ‘The Learning Country recognises a phenomenon of key stage three (KS3) underachievement in secondary schools located in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These results have to be viewed as disappointing when compared with earlier key stage two (KS2) performance by the same pupils when they were in the primary sector’. (Learning Country)

With this in mind the First Campus project at the University of Glamorgan in collaboration with the Coed-y-Lan Cluster have developed further the Coed-y-Lan Cluster Joint Literacy Project (DRWS). The DRWS project addresses the low reading and writing ability of key stage two (KS2) pupils which can lead to disaffection at key stage three (KS3) as a result of pupils not being able to effectively access the curriculum.

The Coed-y-Lan DRWS project was established in 2002 and the university provided the venue to host this project. In 2003 First Campus evolved through funding from HEFCW as part of the Welsh Assembly Government’s Reaching Wider – Reaching Higher project.

Research has shown that the Coed-y-Lan DRWS project has been successful in improving the individual’s self esteem and self confidence, encouraging positive thinking, reinforcing positive behaviour and raising reading and writing ability at key stage two (KS2) by half a National Curriculum Level.

Gateways to Learning - Widening Participation

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Abstract

The aims of the 'Gateways to Learning' project are to promote libraries as information sources for the community, to widen participation in learning and help people become confident and critical information users.

The project is funded by the European Social Fund and is placing libraries across the Greater Gwent area at the forefront of lifelong learning support. It is based on a collaboration between the public and academic libraries in South East Wales who are working together to improve the support for Information Literacy.

The project is based on the following:

- linking the library catalogues of all public and academic libraries that operate in the Greater Gwent Area;
- a 'Gateways' card for lifelong learning customers which will allow borrowing from any of the partner libraries;
- learners will be able to request resources from partner libraries and these resources will be delivered to their local library via the project delivery service, free of charge;
- Information Literacy Co-ordinators providing 'Information' skills, supporting learners aiming to progress to accredited learning in Information Literacy at OCN level 1,2,3.

Many people consider learning to be 'formal' education and skills training. Few realise that every time they find information on a topic, evaluate it and then use this information that they are in fact learning for themselves.

A key element of this project is the Information Literacy co-ordinators who are working with people and using their interest in specific topics to show them how to find and evaluate information. The topics covered are diverse, ranging from parenting skills to local history. Once people have taken the first step on an 'introductory' session they are then encouraged and guided to build a portfolio of evidence to gain accredited OCN Units. This is the start of building their confidence not just in their information skills but also their ability to return to learning.

This paper discusses two aspects, firstly the success in encouraging non- traditional learners back to learning from an environment in which 65 per cent of adults had indicated that they had no intention of engaging in learning in the next three years; secondly, the promotion of libraries as key information sources within the community. As libraries are welcoming, they are well- placed for learning in an informal setting thus removing some of the barriers. They will also provide wider access to learning resources and a 'gateway' to social inclusion.

Development and Use of Faculty Profile: datasets as a tool to support embedding institutional strategic objectives

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Abstract

The presentation will illustrate how provision and analysis of faculty profile datasets at one higher education institution (HEI) have enabled the reassignment of widening participation institutional objectives to a level where they can start to be implemented.

We will demonstrate how, from consideration of the widening participation aspects of a five-year strategic plan drawn up in the light of the UK Government agenda, objectives are being implemented across one HEI through the development and use of faculty profile datasets based on HEFCE funding and performance indicator criteria; and go on to explore the range of resultant issues raised in the faculties and potential uses of further qualitative and quantitative data to enable initiatives to be planned, monitored and evaluated.

The HEI set itself goals to be inclusive in recruitment and admissions at undergraduate level by actively encouraging applicants from a broad range of backgrounds and with diverse previous educational and life experiences. It also aimed to develop new widening participation strategic objectives that promote fair access to all with the ability to succeed and to include strategies for ensuring the success of a diverse student body.

To achieve this, it has strengthened its planning process to ensure closer integration between its strategic plan, various sub-strategies and faculty and departmental plans. The ways in which the university level strategic objectives flow into faculty and departmental plans are now being identified and supported by the development and use of the faculty profile datasets. These consist of entrant profiles by social class, derived from HESA performance indicator underlying data; and by neighbourhood as defined by HEFCE funding criteria for access of non-traditional students. In addition, details of student progression from the first year are given by entry qualifications based on HEFCE funding criteria for retention of non-traditional students. From this data, faculties were asked to describe those of their current action plans which have contributed to their present performance on access and progression, and to provide their plans for future actions on supporting the recruitment (to existing, newly introduced and planned new courses) and retention of students from under-represented groups.

The use of performance indicator and HEFCE funding criteria has helped to ensure the transferability of this methodology across institutions and to sharpen the focus of Admissions, Teaching and Learning, and Student Support planners and practitioners onto the need to prioritise access and retention issues.

From Breaking Point to Inclusion and Transformation

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Abstract

The workshop is practitioner-based, a case study of good practice.

The University of Aberdeen Centre for Lifelong Learning has been delivering two projects specifically designed to support people with mental health issues since 2000. The Breakthrough and Building Bridges programmes engage learners recovering from mental illness who are often marginalised and disadvantaged within our communities. The programmes work with students wanting to begin to return to work, education or training.

The Breakthrough Programme provides first steps enabling students to develop the skills to decide next steps based on their ideas and interests and to develop an action plan to carry them out. The Building Bridges Programme moves on from the foundation of Breakthrough and provides a progression route, preparing those students who wish to enter Access, Summer School for Access, Part-time undergraduate study or to re-enter HE.

The programmes deliver workshop sessions that increase the confidence and self-awareness of the students in addition to building the skills for life, study and employment. Courses have flexible entry points with no one set route, but are organised so that students move from first steps to progressively more challenging workshops. Exit strategies are carefully planned and supported by the project. The programmes work through a number of individual and group activities, the materials are thematic and are designed to be inter-changeable and effective for a wide range of abilities.

Both programmes are delivered on campus, which has been identified as a strength within the evaluation process; the students find it conducive to learning and feel part of the university community. The Monitoring and Evaluation Committee that was formed as a sub group of the Aberdeen Mental Health Framework note, "Students are treated in the same manner as any other student body in the University of Aberdeen".

The workshop will provide an overview of the projects and materials, how they have developed, how they are funded and evaluated and how the learners are involved in the process. This will inform the discussion relating to the wider issues of how institutions are engaging with disadvantaged communities and how this forms part of an institution's mission or not.

Engaging ‘Hard to Reach’ Learners Through Innovative Approaches to Exploring Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC)

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Abstract

Presented in an 18 foot yurt, which is part of the ‘Down to Earth Project’ and demonstrates the approach which Glide adopts, Mark McDonald, Coordinator of Glide, will facilitate an interactive workshop exploring innovative approaches to working with ‘hard to reach’ learners and exploring Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC). Drawing on findings from his MA thesis exploring complementary approaches to ESDGC and working with disaffected young people, this workshop will also include a short taster of activities which the young people experience as well as an opportunity for questions about the approach which Glide adopts.

Glide has been working in Swansea with ‘disaffected’ young people who are excluded or at risk of exclusion for nearly five years.

Using a diverse range of indoor and outdoor environments, Glide offers young people a unique combination of learning experiences which are designed to develop self-esteem, as well learn skills relating to Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC).

Young people are referred to Glide from a number of agencies for one day a week, normally for an entire academic year. Group size is small – normally up to eight young people – and levels of support are high.

Glide workshops are hands-on and include learning how to bake bread and cook meals, building with earth, exploring racism and cultural diversity, learning how to grow food organically, exploring the difference between needs and wants, arts therapy, woodland survival skills and much more.

Funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), the Welsh Assembly Government and Oxfam, Glide has been recognised as a highly innovative approach to learning.

Oxfam Cymru Education Adviser Rhod Griffiths considers Glide ‘to be both inspirational and ground-breaking... Young people benefit from a diverse, holistic approach to learning, which prepares them for living more sustainably, and encourages them to become better global citizens.’

Adult Learners of Welsh and the Welsh Speaking Community: how can we qualify success?

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Abstract

The paper is based on research undertaken recently for an MPhil degree and although it will present research findings, it is also very much intended as the basis for further discussion and debate and as such should be viewed also as a discussion paper.

Based on a fairly large questionnaire sample and interviews conducted with a cross-section of fluent adult learners of Welsh (in a predominantly English speaking, urban part of Wales), the following issues will be discussed:

- Why is there a need at all to qualify 'success' in the field of adult learners of Welsh?
- Concepts of what constitutes 'success' to the students themselves. How do these concepts compare with their original objectives in attending courses?
- Is there a correlation between theories of 'success' and completion rates/progression routes taken?
- Concepts of 'success' amongst adult learners who are now fluent in the Welsh language;
- How does 'success' relate to the interaction between adult learners of Welsh and the Welsh speaking community? How can a contemporary Welsh speaking community in an urban mainly English speaking context be defined and what role do 'successful' adult learners of Welsh perceive for themselves within this community?

The author will attempt to place the discussion within current language planning policy in Wales (for example, the WAG document *Iaith Pawb* 2003) whilst also considering more general issues which might apply throughout lifelong learning provision (students/universities and their interaction with different communities).

Supporting the Transition to Higher Education

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Abstract

This session will present some examples of initiatives at Southampton Solent University (SSU) to ease the transition to university of students from a range of backgrounds. At the heart of successful transition is accurate information, good preparation and access to appropriate support when it is needed.

For choosing higher education there is a wealth of general information (e.g. via prospectus, website, open days), but experience is showing us that more targeted measures can really make a difference. For example: Mature Student Open Days address the needs of older applicants; the Student Ambassador scheme enables prospective applicants to hear from, and question, currently enrolled students about their own experiences at university; our liaison with colleagues in local further education colleges is helpful to local applicants.

Good preparation can have a significant effect on a student's approach to learning and student life. Two introductory programmes at SSU aim to prepare specific groups - adult returners and severely disabled students - for the university environment:

- For mature students, the pre-entry Gateway to Higher Education course provides an opportunity to develop key skills and is a confidence-booster for adults returning to education. This programme has been running for 14 years and is continually modified and updated in line with student needs. It is now supported by a local sponsor.
- For students with significant disability support needs, a special induction before Freshers' Week was piloted in 2005 and is being further developed for 2006. The focus is on familiarization with the university environment and building social relationships, in order to boost the confidence of the new students.

Once enrolled, there is support for students across the university readily available year-round at the Study Assistance unit. The team of tutors and disability advisers provide appropriate guidance and encouragement to students on a one-to-one basis. More than 12 per cent of students at SSU use Study Assistance each year and their feedback, plus research into academic progression, demonstrates the value of such support towards the retention and improved performance of students.

Delegates will learn more in this seminar about these measures at SSU to support transition and they will have the opportunity to share and discuss their own experiences.

The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales: exemplary learning -a review of activity in non-formal learning

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Abstract

This is a completed report summarising learning gained, and recommendations resulting from five projects commissioned by The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) during 2004-05.

Credit as a tool for measuring achievement is a successful and durable model. Recognition and award of achievement in non-formal learning can stand alongside learning gained through regulated qualifications - the CQFW is model fully inclusive. There are recommendations for capacity building to develop guidance and illustrate examples of good practice that can further inform implementation and promote uptake.

Five exemplar projects, covering a diverse range of learning, produced separate reports on commissioned activity. The project co-ordinators came together with CQFW staff to identify common themes. The results of these discussions, and the recommendations arising from them, form the basis of the report.

The CQFW became Welsh Assembly Government policy in 2003. Work on testing principles in practice has been developed through a series of projects across all sectors, and has been the subject of internal review and external research and evaluation. The results of this work form the basis for guidance and the phased implementation of CQFW.

Effective Knowledge Transfer in the Community

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Abstract

Universities are the cornerstone of many communities and therefore have an opportunity to influence, and a duty to engage, with their local environment. This study examines the consultative process by the University of East London with Asian Women in the Thames Gateway region conducted through a series of fairs. An ethnographic approach has been applied to this investigation encased with personal reflection. Data has been collected via questionnaires, interviews and focus groups over a 24 month period. The research has been conducted with the Havering Local Strategic Partnership in an attempt to create a sophisticated and effective consultative protocol with this hard to reach group. The consultative process resulted in a better understanding of the learning needs of this community, which has led to the delivery and provision of better targeted programmes. This study identifies potential problems that exist with the prevalent top-down approach utilised by many universities when attempting to cater to local needs, and defines a formula for community engagement which can deliver a more democratic learning environment.

Reaching Adult Learners: strategies and structures

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Abstract

This presentation will draw on extensive research conducted by staff at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)'s Welsh Unit into the area of adult community learning, mainly in Wales but also in some areas of England.

In response to social and economic imperatives in Wales, increasing participation in learning has become a key feature of the Welsh Assembly Government's vision as outlined in its paving document *Wales: The Learning Country* and subsequent policy documents.

This has led to the development of a number of initiatives in different parts of Wales which have sought to encourage adult participation. These have included innovative approaches in order to reach groups who had not generally been engaged in learning. Some such projects have been supported by European Objective One funding while other work has received little public money.

This paper will examine different approaches which have been developed in different parts of Wales to encourage participation in learning. It will focus on three main areas:

- the structures which have been developed;
- the strategies employed;
- the relevance of the curriculum.

Structures will be examined to assess their impact. For example, a number of projects have developed partnerships between voluntary sector organisations and education and training providers to reach and engage more learners. This paper will examine the dynamics of such relationships, especially in cases where some partners did not have education and training as their main focus.

The paper will then consider effective strategies to engage learners. This part of the presentation will focus on issues such as:

- the extent to which such work was undertaken by existing organisations working in communities;
- the role of dedicated learning champions and how they contributed to increasing engagement;
- the relationship between learning champions and their work and other stakeholders in structured partnerships.

A third focus of the paper will be the curricular issues; a deliberate attempt was made by a number of partnerships and organisations to develop informal learning opportunities which reflected individuals' own interests. The extent to which this has promoted engagement in further learning has been examined by the NFER on behalf of a number of sponsors. These issues will be examined and analysed in the context of current debates on the purpose of education and training and the extent to which provision should be tailored to meet economic targets.

Career Guidance for Adults in Wales – Lifelong Learning – How Do We Know We are Making a Difference?

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Careers Wales.

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Abstract

This paper is based on completed research ‘Career Guidance for Adults in Wales – Making a Difference’ Reed, K., Mahony, K., Gration, G.

The main issues are:

- would adults be prepared to take part in telephone research to gain their perceptions of their guidance interview?
- do adults believe that a guidance interview makes a difference in their lives in terms of impact?
- do adults believe that their entry to education, employment or training is as a result of their guidance interview?
- do adults believe that there is a positive outcome in ‘soft skills’ as a result of their guidance interview?

The development of the impact assessment survey was managed by the Careers Wales Quality Managers Group together with a representative of the Welsh Assembly Government. In the initial development stage the group worked closely with consultants from the University of Derby, Centre for Guidance Studies.

A high volume longitudinal study was carried out with Adults. The study sought to produce robust evidence of the impact of guidance. The evaluation was designed and carried out in-house across Wales seeking the views of 1,000 adult clients.

GWLAD Development Partnership

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Abstract

The GWLAD DP is a unique and innovative partnership working across rural areas of North Wales. The partnership is lead by The Department of Lifelong Learning, University of Wales, Bangor and includes partners in the community, voluntary and private sector. The GWLAD DP has successfully secured funding from the EQUAL programme and is carrying out research into the barriers faced by people from marginalised groups and individuals in accessing education and training opportunities in rural areas. The funding will also offer opportunities that would not otherwise be available, to pilot innovative approaches to learning, designed to meet the particular needs of people living in rural areas.

It will be a testing ground for new ideas where successful results could be mainstreamed into other policies and programmes

As a result of field work carried out, a community development organisation acted as gatekeeper for us to access a group of women in a small rural town in North West Wales. The women had already carried out their own research into possible gaps in the employment or self-employment market; but not the steps that would lead them there. During discussion the group identified their training needs and the barriers preventing their participation. The group were encouraged by the possibility of following courses that would be recognised by future employers, or provide expertise in the case of self-employment, which would be financially out of their reach without the intervention of a project such as this. Other individuals were encouraged by the possibility of accessing courses at higher education (HE) level; again previously considered beyond their reach.

Outreach university provision is often only able to offer limited resources in terms of support and resources. Drawing on the experience of UWB and the experience of one of our partners (the Open University) we are hoping to offer the group innovative methods of delivery other than what often appears to be the norm in delivering courses in the community. The innovation we hope to include is the opportunity of bringing 'community' courses into the mainstream by offering access to blackboard (intranet for extra course notes and discussion), occasional events at the institution, networking, face-to-face or remotely, with other groups following the same course, accreditation at HE level, and advice and guidance.

The intention behind this is to explore the possibilities of bringing community courses from the margins, financed by short-term funding programmes, into the mainstream of institutional activity and the accompanying funding arrangements, thereby ensuring sustainability.

‘Time to Learn – An Evaluation of the ‘Learning Time Credits’ Pilot Project at Cwm Café, Blaenau Gwent.’

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Abstract

This presentation will summarise the findings of a 12 month pilot project between Wales Institute for Community Currencies and The Workers’ Educational Association at Cwm Café, Blaenau Gwent. The pilot set out to test the proposition that ‘learning time credits’ increase learner recruitment, retention and motivation and help to create a ‘learning community’.

The Wales Institute for Community Currencies was established in 2003 as a partnership between University of Wales Newport, Time Banks UK and Valleys Kids and exists to: establish effective community currencies as tools for sustainable community development; research the effectiveness of these tools; and disseminate the results to practitioners and policy makers.

The Institute assesses existing community currency models and designs new models with community practitioners to achieve negotiated, collective goals.

Time to Learn was designed around the situation of a small adult learning centre with an average annual attendance of 60 adult learners and aimed to increase their attendance, improve their motivation and to assist them to create a learning community around the centre.

The presentation will summarise the main issues around the following headings:

- Theory and practice of time currency – what it is, how it works e.g. learners receive time credits for each hour of participation or activity in the learning community:
 - o Attending classes
 - o Teaching or mentoring other learners
 - o Recruiting new learners
 - o Organising learning groups, events, festivals, exhibitions etc.
 - o Taking part in governance activities e.g. branch meetings.
- Learners use their time credits to gain negotiated Awards e.g.:
 - o Educational trips e.g. St.Fagan’s for Welsh class, National Portrait Gallery for art class etc.
 - o Group learning aids e.g. computer memory sticks, psychology books, art materials etc.
- Administrative issues – how to record participation, integrate into existing systems etc.
- Implications for policy and practice – what we can learn from the experiment about this innovative tool for recruitment, retention and integration into best practice.

The presentation will draw these strands together to offer insights into future potential for the development of community currencies within the adult learning sector.

Developing a FACE Proposal for Submission to Research Council

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Abstract

The FACE research working group would like to develop a FACE-managed research project which benefits from dedicated resources via the employment of one or more research assistants or students. We will therefore be convening a workshop at the annual conference in July which has as its aim the identification of a collaborative research proposal that could be developed into a bid for research funding. The workshop will have five objectives:

- the identification of one relevant and popular research query within the broad field of widening access;
- the involvement of collaborative research partner organisations drawn from universities, colleges, and access networks associated with FACE;
- an estimation of resources needed for the research project;
- guidance about preferred research methodologies to be used within the project;
- guidance about an appropriate funding source for the project.

Lifelong Learning Networks: progress and issues

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Abstract

In June 2004 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) invited institutions to consider establishing Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs), to provide a focus on vocational routes into and through higher education, in the context of lifelong learning. The main emphasis for the networks is on:

- the establishment of mechanisms and network-wide progression agreements to ensure progression for vocational learners;
- the information, advice, guidance and support to engage and re-engage learners;
- adjustments to the curriculum required to facilitate this.

This conference session aims to explore the progress made and the issues raised by the LLNs. There will be presentations from three LLNs as well as an input from the HEFCE. An open forum at the end of the session will provide an opportunity for questions and discussion.

Changing Lives Through Telling Stories: individual and community development through digital storytelling influenced by storytelling and forum theatre

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Abstract

This session will present the outcomes of a pilot project in digital story-telling in the Clase & Caemawr Communities First Area which will run from April to July. The purpose of the project is individual and community development.

Other Digital storytelling projects in South Wales and working with the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling at the University of Glamorgan have inspired exploration of a new direction from the model established by the BBC Capture Wales team and take more principles from storytelling as well as making greater use of the digital medium, in order to make digital storytelling more digital and more storytelling!

The pilot project will work with three groups of 4-5 residents from the area to create 2 minute videos of a story they want to tell. Some of these stories will form part of the presentation. The evaluation of the work will form an important part of the pilot and will make extensive use of digital media.

The presentation of the project, the ideas and the outcomes will be extremely visual and interactive and could be run as a workshop or a lively paper presentation.

Community Learning: the way forward

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Abstract

This discussion paper with evidence from pilot activity presents proposals for the way forward in community learning planning and provision in Wales.

Utilising the combined strengths of colleges, the voluntary sector and local authorities, community learning plays a significant part in tackling social inclusion and hard to reach clients. Research by NIACE and DYSG has shown the positive impact community learning has on tackling social inclusion and economic participation. This is a particular strength of community learning in Wales. It develops progression routes into work-based, further and higher education for those who have been out of learning for some time.

Estyn and ELWa assessment has identified the need to build on these strengths and characteristics by focused strategic planning and prioritisation. Research by Estyn and ELWa identified that lack of clear national policy, and strategic planning on a geographic basis, have resulted in fragmented delivery, duplication of effort and variable quality of community learning.

ELWa's original concept was to introduce strategic planning work through CCET subgroups. This is evolving as a consequence of the proposals contained in the 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Action Plans. A focus for community planning needs to be made, within the context of the National Planning and Funding System (NPFS).

Funding for community learning comes from a number of different sources. ELWa/DELLS is not the only source of funding, nor should it be. Future funding priorities will increasingly centre on 16-19 provision: including trainees on the work-based learning guarantee, 16-19 further education provision and the post 16 elements of the 14-19 initiative. In this limited funding environment funding into community learning must achieve maximum value by focusing on key priorities including basic skills, tackling social inclusion and combating economic inactivity.

Planning for community learning will need to identify resources to support priorities. Greater partnership work is needed to determine the sources of funding from these different areas and, where appropriate, to bid for additional funding where there are gaps. Community learning plans should serve to rationalize funding arrangements and provide a basis for joint bids. Based on pilot activity, recommendations on the way forward for planning and provision of community learning have been agreed by the National Council, ELWa. These will now be forwarded to the Minister for consideration.

The paper will concentrate on findings of pilot and partnership activity across Wales and proposals for change.

De-Institutionalising Lifelong Learning: a radical proposal for Wales

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Abstract

The Wales e-Training Network is a collaboration between all the higher education (HE) and further education (FE) institutions in Wales developing e-Training solutions for SMEs. The current phase of development involves 15 different institutions contributing modules to an on-line Foundation Degree in e-Commerce. The modules are being piloted with SMEs across Wales and plans for validation as an accredited Foundation Degree programme are being formulated.

This presentation is part research in progress, part case study and partly a discussion paper. It describes a model for the validation, delivery and management of the on-line foundation degree that is radically different to conventional HE systems and methods. It demonstrates how de-institutionalising the entire process makes logical, educational and economic sense and provides direct and current evidence to support these assertions.

The presentation will draw on the experience of the University of Glamorgan in delivering its e-College Wales programme of graduate and post-graduate on-line courses. It will also use the eight years of experience of FE e-learning delivery at Coleg Sir Gar. Both institutions have delivered their programmes on-line by distance learning to SMEs across Wales. Both are also lead organisations in the Wales e-Training Network.

Issues to be discussed:

- The delivery model: it is proposed that the delivery model for the foundation degree should be as collaborative as its development. All the institutions in the network will be able to contribute to the programme delivery team.
- The validation model: the validation process should be inclusive and allow all eligible institutions to be included in the validation outcomes. It will be a joint validation by all degree awarding institutions in Wales.
- The management model: The management of the programme should be independent of the network institutions. It will be a legal entity, recognised by ELWa and HEFCW, and funded directly on behalf of the network partners.
- The logic of collaborative development and delivery: evidence will be presented that shows how collaborative working is beneficial from both an educational and a financial point of view.

Finding a Voice: protest poetry in apartheid South Africa

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Abstract

In this paper I explore the impact that studying poetry, particularly protest poetry, had on students in South Africa during the 1980s. The context was the University of Fort Hare, one of the few universities where black students could study. 16 June 1976 – known as Soweto Day – had already happened. This was a key day in the liberation of South Africans from the oppressive regime of the Nationalist Party elected in 1948 and responsible for the institution of apartheid, the dreaded policy of systemic discrimination against people of colour. It was the day when schoolchildren attempted to take charge of their own educational future and were mown down by police with brutality which shook the world.

In this climate of oppression, the Department of English introduced into the curriculum an anthology of poetry entitled *Voices from Within*, which was taught in the tutorial programme where students were guided into forming – and especially articulating – their own thoughts, feelings and opinions. This proved to be an invaluable and empowering process.

On an obvious level, these students clearly improved their English-speaking skills. All being second-language students, now given the opportunity to express themselves within a safe space, they naturally improved both their confidence and their fluency. But most importantly, they discovered that there were African writers, or in this case, more particularly South African poets, who articulated movingly their concerns about the very same issues the students had but had largely suppressed for fear of the repercussions if they dared make their feelings known. The articulation of bitterness, passion, aspirations and despair alternating with hope gave their own mixed emotions legitimacy and provided the wherewithal for giving vent to their own difficulties and dreams. A deep relationship of trust and openness made this possible.

The government of the country at both national and local level is now in the hands of students such as these who went on to make their dreams of a democracy and a fair political deal a reality by believing in themselves and the legitimacy of their dreams.

My argument is thus that learning and articulating one's thoughts and feelings within a shared community – both in and out of print – builds the potential for leadership.

The Architecture and Design of the PDP (Personal Development Planning) and its Use in Learning Transitions

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Abstract

Interpreting competing maps, illustrations and signposts for learners is an important part of the methods of teaching and learning across the undergraduate curriculum. In terms of widening participation, this paper will centre on the transition period of foundation degree students to the final year of a BA honours programme and the statistical categories of final awards upon completing their honours programme.

What we shall also focus upon in the discussion is the elearning package, Blackboard which offers a series of contexts for the development of academic and professional learning in terms of the reflective self in aligning academic and professional contexts, especially within a transitional period. Personal and Professional Development within this environment forms the context to the concept of 'hybrid spaces' as developed in the work of Anders.

The discussion presented here is that PDP and ONLINE PDP can only work if it is fully integrated within the academic curriculum, if it is seen to have a context and a history, if it is assessed and credited separately, primarily by academics, and that an audit trail can be made of what constitutes its activity on the part of each individual learner across their undergraduate programme. E-learning has to consolidate this position and discussion will focus upon this space.

This sense of 'situated knowledge' and its construction between personal experience and academic discourse is at the heart of PDP, but it is also at the heart of widening participation for learners within programmes both equally at the heart of what PDP offers to foundation degree and to honours degree students: the discussion will suggest that the same diet of curriculum assessment enhances the FdA and that the assessment process is in turn enhanced by a virtual learning environment.

Personal Development Planning (PDP) has a provenance and a history, wider than a 'key skills' employment agenda, although as a state sponsored initiative it is ineluctably associated with that process. Personal and Professional Development with all of its tensions is part of a greater story and indeed wider social paradigm in the sociology of knowledge. This discussion will suggest its enhanced role in terms of a more learner-centred curriculum and, if we consider elearning, what it might mean in the context of critical reflection and widening participation.

Meetings! Partnerships!Action?

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Abstract

University staff who are engaged in the promotion of lifelong learning in communities are frequently members of a diverse number of partnerships. These partnerships fall into two types, the formal and the informal, examples of the formal are structured committees such as Community Consortia and Communities First boards. Informal partnerships are defined as a university working to provide higher education (HE) provision in collaboration with a community-based organisation in disadvantaged geographical areas. This workshop continues the investigation of HE working in partnership that was presented at FACE 2005 by Saunders and Payne but enhances the theoretical with practical examples and considers the role of how the learner is represented and involved in both the formal and informal.

This abstract is submitted under the *learning communities: learner democracy and in particular in the section on Universities and their communities*. Saunders and Payne argued at FACE 2005 that although HE were overwhelmed by requests to attend meetings and consultations, the ‘bookend productivity’ before and after meetings was important for developing relationships. In this paper the continued discussion is centred upon the quite distinct divide between what formal and informal partnerships achieve for the learner. The work reported continues the analysis previously reported and considers areas of good as well as limiting practice. The workshop will be proactive in stimulating debate and will encourage others to share experiences from a range of perspectives.

The main issues raised by the paper centre around the tensions that exist in an HE establishment providing community learning. One such example is providing courses in a strategic manner to comply with local and national policy yet at the same time providing local learners with hope, encouragement and the skills to contribute to a more fulfilling citizenship or for employment. The angle that is taken in the workshop is to boldly propose that, from an experience viewpoint, the informal partnerships seem to provide learning opportunities, yet is it always strategically appropriate to be demand or market led? This is a contested viewpoint and the role of community gatekeeper is paramount and vital in determining educational provision, yet at the same time may actually disadvantage some learners.

In conclusion we hope to stimulate discussion around the dichotomy of formal/informal partnership based on previous work on formal partnerships demands on HE and to share some good practice in treading the route of keeping learners, policy makers and HE managers content.

The Importance of Self Affirmation in Adult Learning

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Abstract

The proposed paper will be based upon ongoing research which I am currently conducting as part of my part time PhD course, at the University of Wales Swansea. My research looks at the wider benefits of learning, specifically in respect of returning adults to higher education.

The main issues which will be raised within the paper are around the importance of social capital and the development of the 'self' within the learning environment, and how this impacts upon learners beyond graduation.

At present I am still developing my literature review; therefore this paper will be based upon work done by Schuller, Field, Putnam, Harper, West and others.

I will be taking a qualitative research approach with some quantitative data analysis. Phenomenological and observational analysis will form the basis of my interview approach and assessments. However, where an ethnographical approach is being taken this will be with action research methods applied. This is to allow the research to move towards a timed conclusion in line with the desired research period. Inductive theory building will allow me to gather data and analyse this before moving on to the next stage, therefore allowing me to be guided by the dataset being gathered. The study group is expected to be made up of graduates over a broad span of time to allow for as wide a range of benefits to be assessed and analysed within the study.

Extensive work is currently being undertaken by the Wider Benefits of Learning Unit which was set up DfES in 1999. It is intended to build on this work, by looking specifically at those adults who have returned to learning later in their lives and have chosen to take a part-time degree. The wider benefits this learning has brought to them will be the basis of my research study and the impact this has brought to bear on their lives will form my conclusions, regarding learning in later life.

Diversity and Disability - The Open University in Wales' Approach to Staff Development for Tutors

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Abstract

The following quote is taken from the introduction to the on-line diversity training for Open University (OU) staff.

Encouraging, fostering and nurturing diversity in the workplace are extremely important to the success of the Open University as an educational institution and as an institution that lives up to its 'open mission'.

Brenda Gourley, Vice Chancellor, The Open University

Supporting diversity is implicit in all our staff development and with recent changes in legislation a more formal approach was required. The e-learning module was produced in partnership with an external provider and is used by other institutions as well as the OU. The material is made available to all full-time staff via our intranet site and to our associate lecturers' site - TutorHome.

My aim will be to look at the electronic materials in the e-learning module and to demonstrate how we follow up this initial training with associate lecturers in face-to-face sessions using a variety of resources including case studies and teaching toolkits.

The session would end with an informal discussion of issues for higher education institutions in Wales and an opportunity to share good practice.

Supporting Non-traditional Entrance to Higher Education: the DALLAS library services at Swansea University

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Abstract

Libraries can play a pivotal role in combating social exclusion and breaking down barriers to education. As the Adult Continuing Education's Library at Swansea University, the South Wales Miners' Library has a key role in supporting and developing the department's mission to providing educational opportunities in socially excluded areas.

As a model of good practice, this paper will outline the library and information services South Wales Miners' Library has developed to support part-time and distance students taught on campus and in their own communities.

It will outline the importance of providing targeted library services and the benefits the support the library staff offer can bring in terms of attracting students in the first place and then retaining them.

The outline of the library and information (DALLAS- Distance And Lifelong Learners At Swansea) services will include discussion of the following services:

- Postal loans
- Photocopying service
- Book fetching service – this service been made available through DALLAS fairly recently and is a big hit – particularly with those part-time degree students being taught in the community
- Book return drop
- Telephone renewals
- Telephone enquiries
- No fines
- Remote access to library catalogue, databases, e-journals
- Leaflets and guides
- Provision of study skills books and resources
- Library/IT skills sessions (1:1 or entire class) OR Visiting classes and explaining services available to them (not as formal as traditional library induction)
- Book boxes

Finally, the South Wales Miners' Library's new partnership with the City & County of Swansea's Public Library Service will be explained and discussed. The initiative involves the South Wales Miners' Library placing books for courses taught in the Clydach area in Clydach Community Library for the duration of the course.