

Impact and Effectiveness of Widening Access to HE in Wales

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Background

- Inequitable rates of participation in HE.
- Welsh Government's widening access agenda.
- HEIs under pressure to invest in widening access activities.

Overview of project

- Field work: Explores approaches adopted by HEIs and RWPs to implementing and evaluating widening access.
- Secondary data analysis: Explores factors which predict progression on to HE and success in it.

The Fieldwork

Explores the approaches adopted by Welsh HEIs and RWPs to...

- Implementing widening access.
- Evaluating widening access.
- Aim to develop a 'toolkit' for evaluating widening access activities.

Challenges to measuring impact

- Lack of control group.
- Separating out impact of activity from other influences difficult.
- ‘Impact’ (i.e. on HE participation) may not be immediate.
- Data protection issues.
- Not able to access the right kinds of data.

Secondary data analysis

Chowdry et al.

- Linked individual level data from the NPD, the National Information System for Vocational Qualifications and HESA.
- Tracked 2 cohorts of young people from age 11 through to age 20, using data for both (non)participants in HE rather than individual-level administrative data from HE alone and assess the effect of socio-economic status on (1) propensity to participate in HE; and (2) propensity to attend a high status HEI; once attainment has been taken into account.
- Stratified gender analysis
- Fixed effects models
- Linear regression (rather than logistic regression)
- Only considers the effect of schools

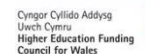
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- Linked individual level data from the NPD, LLWR and HESA.
- Track 3 cohorts of young people from age 15 through to HE, using data for both (non)participants in HE rather than individual-level administrative data from HE alone and assess the effect of socio-economic status on (1) propensity to participate in HE; (2) propensity to attend a high status HEI; (3) likelihood of success; (4) degree outcome; and (5) subject studied; once attainment has been taken into account.
- Full and stratified gender analysis
- Multilevel modelling
- Logistic regression
- Consideration of other contexts e.g. local authorities, neighbourhoods and region

Advantages of multilevel models:

- It produces an interpretable parameter relating to the higher level variance (absent from the fixed effects model)
- It partitions out the variance at each level of the model, e.g. How much difference does a school make to an individual's likelihood of going on to HE?
- Area-based approaches remain the corner-stone of WP strategies (Taylor et al, 2013) – Communities First (Wales) and POLAR (England) – how are we going to critically evaluate current policy without analysing the neighbourhood level?
- We can *additionally* add in contextual-level variables e.g. School type, to try and explain the school-level variance.

Questions and comments welcome.





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