

Approaches to widening access in Wales: Implications for policy and practice

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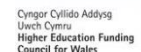


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Background

- Patterns of participation in HE deeply unequal.
- Welsh Government has supported a widening access agenda.
- Project contributes to debates about what we mean by ‘widening access’ to HE.



The qualitative strand.

Aims and objectives:

- To explore the methods used by higher education institutions (HEIs) and Reaching Wider Partnerships (RWPS) in Wales to implementing widening-access strategies.
- To explore methods and approaches to evaluating widening access.

Approaches to widening access

- Implemented at different ‘stages’ of the student life-cycle.
- **‘Pre-entry’**
- **‘Entry’**
- **‘Inside the institution’**



Approaches to widening access

'Pre-entry'

Outreach activity:

- Raising aspirations
- Raising attainment



'Pre-entry'



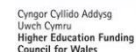
Raising aspirations and attainment

- Residential visits (e.g. 'Summer university').
- Advice, information and guidance workshops (debunking 'myths' about university).
- GCSE revision workshops

'Pre-entry'

- Qualification 'top ups.'
- HE 'study ready' programmes.

Often delivered through 'widening access/lifelong learning centres' within the university.



'Entry'



Admissions:

- Contextualised admissions
- Recognition of prior learning experiences or non-traditional qualifications.



'Inside the institution'

Curriculum design and delivery

- Foundation degrees/HNDS.
- Accessible HE (i.e. part-time or flexible study options).



Points for discussion

What do we mean by widening access to HE?

Different approaches reflect different understanding about...

Where the responsibility for widening access lies (individual or institution)

The causes of inequalities in access to HE.



Evaluation

Some examples of good practice:

- Post-event feedback forms
- Longitudinal tracking
- Assessment of attainment change
- Case studies

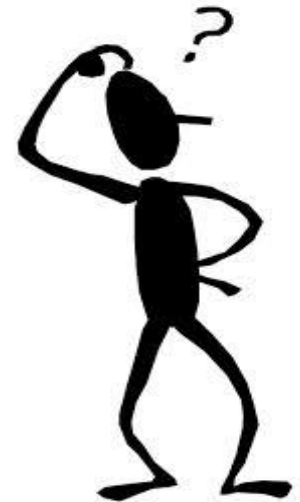


Challenges to evaluation

- Lack of guidance on what and how to evaluate
- Access to data
- Lack of a control group
- Longitudinal or delayed impact
- Data protection

Implications (and questions)

- What guidance is needed from HEFCW?
- What sort of information/data is needed to improve measurement of impact?



Questions and comments welcome.



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