



Disadvantaged adults and HE success metrics: how might transformative learning be measured?

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This workshop will engage participants in exploring potential metrics to help universities and policymakers measure the transformative impact of HE on adults from disadvantaged backgrounds. The facilitators will draw on and synthesise data from their research with adult learners studying on Access modules in HE. Examples of rarely heard voices will be shared from two sources. First, Wendy's (2022) doctorate 'Widening Participation to Higher Education for Adult Learners: the past matters' which used a theoretical framework from transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) to critique the extent to which HE met the needs of adult students:

'Through study I think I have found myself...I think it's taken until doing this Open University course to actually become the person I should have been...'

Second, John's (2020) research published as 'Unheard: the voices of part-time adult learners' which synthesised qualitative data collected from hard-to-reach adult learners on Access modules preparing students for undergraduate degrees in Arts (Butcher & Clarke, 2021) and STEM (Butcher et al, 2020):

'I'm 50 years of age now, a recovering addict – ten years sober. I work full-time and study in the library on my days off. I'm pretty kind of raw and new to learning...it's hard but my confidence and my outlook has changed in life as well.'

The workshop will contextualise the 'problem' as one with origins in Widening Participation policies dominated by a simplistic Office for Students and government paradigm of measuring success in HE as purely resulting in 'a good degree' and culminating in a 'graduate job'. In the workshop we will share stimulus material of individual transformation, make the case for the fundamental importance of valuing learning transformations amongst adults, and facilitate group activities aimed at sharing ideas to develop a usable metric for measuring transformative learning. Participants will leave with ideas, (adaptable for their own institutional context) offering an alternative measure of success.