

Graduate Prospects for Widening Participation Students: Does Higher Education Broaden Opportunities?

UALL Networks Conference

Thursday 13 November 2014 , The Tetley, Hunslet Road, Leeds, LS10 1JQ

parallel workshop sessions

MORNING

The right university or the right social class? How social class shapes the higher education experience of 'the degree generation'. Findings from The Paired Peers Project

Professor Ann-Marie Bathmaker, Professor of Vocational and Higher Education, University of Birmingham

This session compares the experience of middle-class students in a post-1992 university in England, with those of working-class students attending an elite university in the same city. The presentation is based on data from the Leverhulme-funded *Paired Peers* project, a 3 year longitudinal study (2010-2013) comparing the experience of middle-class and working-class undergraduate students at Bristol's two universities. The expansion and diversification of HE over the past 30 and more years in many advanced economies is closely linked to differentiation and stratification. Previous research has shown how working-class and 'non-traditional' students may explicitly or instinctively seek a higher education institution within such a stratified system, where they feel that they will fit in - where in Bourdieu's terms, they are 'fish in water'. Amongst working-class students who attend elite universities, recent research by Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2010) suggests that they may seek to stand out as a strategy for survival, in order to cope with the mismatch between habitus and the field of elite higher education. However, very little research has examined the contrasting experiences of middle-class students attending lower-ranking institutions.

Ann-Marie Bathmaker worked as a local authority advisor for equal opportunities and technical and vocational education, before moving into higher education. She directed the Bristol Research Centre in Lifelong Learning and Education at UWE Bristol with Professors Jacky Brine and David James, and in 2012 moved to the University of Birmingham.

Start from the Outside and Work In; Supporting non-traditional students build their social capital through professional mentoring

Julia Clark and Anna France, University of Leeds

Julia Clarke is Pro-Dean for Student Education at Leeds University Business School. Anna France is the School's Professional Development Officer. The Business School established the Nurturing Talent Mentoring Scheme in 2011 and last year over 140 students benefited from the connections, skills and commercial awareness that they developed through the scheme. Our mentors are employers or professionals drawn from all sectors and many of them are alumni of the University. By 2016 we hope to be recruiting mentors who themselves benefited from the scheme whilst at university; thus creating a virtuous circle of student and alumni engagement and lifelong learning. Students who have joined the University through its Access scheme are given priority in being matched to a mentor but, as we will discuss in the workshop, the extent to which such support should be targeted or not is a complex issue.

AFTERNOON

Social Capital Compass

Rosy Jones, Head of Employability and Enterprise, Southampton Solent University

An expert in student enterprise, Rosy was the first head of a joint careers and enterprise service to be appointed from the entrepreneurial side of the business. Charged with taking the focus forward on employability across the university, Rosy restructured the department and appointed Richard Sant as Employability in the Curriculum Manager. Together, identifying the broader needs of employability for SSU's widening participation majority, they brought together her experience of management consultancy in business and his understanding of positive psychology to create the Solent Capital Compass in 2013. Since then it has been used as the model for all curricula embedding of employability and now enterprise at Solent University, and has been picked up as a valuable model by services around the country. Rosy has previously worked as a consultant in student enterprise and regional economic growth 'helping students set up businesses and small businesses get bigger'; as business development manager in a Russell Group institution and spent 12 years working in information technology.

Careers guidance and social mobility – practitioner perspectives

Fiona Christie, University of Salford

This interactive workshop will share findings from a small-scale insider research project which explored how university careers advisers experience their role in guiding clients within a labour market where barriers to social mobility prevail. Findings will be presented from research with advisers in north-west England. The research discovers that advisers' daily work gives them a depth of insight into social mobility. The professional turbulence in which advisers operate and the evolution of their role from in-depth work to a focus on breadth is revealed. University environments appear to vary with regard to the scope advisers have to impact lives, but a strong set of values anchors them. Recommendations are made with regard to how high quality careers information, advice and guidance can support social mobility for traditionally disadvantaged students into the labour market.

Fiona Christie is an experienced careers guidance practitioner in higher education who is also an active researcher in the field of careers and employability. Her interests include social mobility within the graduate job market.