

Challenges of Diversity for Widening Participation in Higher Education in the UK: Policies, Pedagogies & Practices

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Summary

- Review of diverse research on social change and policies on the expansion or 'massification' of higher education in the 21st century
- Personal perspective as a sociologist and educational researcher and through TLRP role on social diversity and higher education
- Changing conceptualizations of social diversity and inequality or inequity in research and policy e.g widening participation
- Changing policy contexts on HE and notions of participation
- Transformations of social/education research on/in higher education
- Review of **four themes** about higher education and diversity
 - from context of international/US literature on changing research perspectives on/in higher education
 - TLRP projects on widening participation to, and in, Higher Education (WPInHE) and lifelong learning in the UK
- Future challenges of researching learning and teaching in higher education for social diversity

Introduction

- TLRP role is to synthesise research on social diversity, and also work with 12+ projects on higher education, including widening participation, and lifelong learning.
- 7 projects on WP in HE commissioned just over 2 years ago in context of constantly changing policy debates about HE
- Policies on WP now being revised and augmented, eg March 2008 John Denham, Secretary of State for DIUS announced 20 new HE centres based on FE colleges in towns without universities
- Review for *British Journal of Sociology of Education* (2007 28 (5) 675-690) on 'Equity and diversity: towards a sociology of higher education for 21st century'.
- Now contested and diverse research about teaching and learning, pedagogies, policies and academic practices

Conceptual considerations

- Troubling concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion: from ethnicity/race to class, gender, sexualities and dis/abilities and age (young versus mature students)
- Contested meanings of post-compulsory or post-secondary Higher Education versus Universities
- Changing notions of education, teaching and learning and 'pedagogies'
- Notions of access to or 'participation' within higher education or universities
- Contexts of market economy or 'academic capitalism'
- Changing Pedagogies and Academic Practices, including personalised learning as a new approach

4 themes within research about policies on/in higher education

- Equity, equal opportunities, social stratification and role of HE in relation to social mobility;
- Diversity is a changing concept about ethnicity/race, social class, age and gender for individuals and institutions;
- Globalization, marketization and higher education (HE) or 'academic capitalism' nationally or internationally;
- Discourses around teaching and learning, critical or feminist pedagogies and academic practices.

Globalization and social change in HE: *academic capitalism*?

- Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) on '*academic capitalism*'.
- 'At the turn of the 21st century the rise of the 'new' global knowledge or information society calls for a fresh account of the relations between higher education institutions and society. Our analysis of these relations has led us to develop a theory of academic capitalism which explains *the process of college and university integration into the new economy*. The theory does not see the process as inexorable; it could be resisted...nor... 'corporatized'...sees actors...as using a variety of state resources to create new circuits of knowledge that link higher educational institutions to the new economy...it moves beyond thinking of the student as consumer to considering the institution as marketer.' (2004 p.1)
- New discourses to specify the shifts and changes as: 'colleges and universities shifting from a *public good knowledge/learning regime to an academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime*' (2004 p.7)

Privilege and Diversity in the Academy by Frances Maher and Mary Tetreault (2007).

- They also draw on Slaughter and Rhoades' (2004) concept of '***academic capitalism***'.
- 'we are both puzzled and energized...about how to explain the wide discrepancies between the warnings sounded by national publications about the 'kept university' or 'academic capitalism' versus the sense of autonomy and scholarly integrity...as for progress of diversity initiatives...another perspective ...show[s] that the 35 years between the sex discrimination suits of the 1970s and today is too short a period of time to overcome *long-entrenched sexism and racism* of the academy...It may take the innovators of this generation, ...of faculty and administrators to fully institutionalize diversity.' (pp 194-5)

Shavit et al 2007 *Stratification in Higher Education: A comparative study*

...present a range of different hypotheses about the relationships between ‘...expansion and differentiation’ and whether ‘higher education expansion is primarily a process of ***diversion*** (sic), channeling members of the working class to lower-status postsecondary opportunities in order to reserve higher-status opportunities for the elite (Brint and Karabel 1989) or aprocess of *inclusion*’ (ibid p. 5-6).

More Inclusion Than Diversion: Expansion, Differentiation, and Market Structure in HE

- *diversified* systems of Israel, Japan, Korea, Sweden, Taiwan and the US; (Arum et al, *Introduction* pp 1-35)
- *binary* systems of Great Britain (sic), France, Germany, The Netherlands, Russia, Switzerland;
- *unitary* and other systems of Australia, The Czech Republic and Italy.
- The key question about educational expansion is whether it reduces inequality by providing more opportunities for persons from disadvantaged strata, or magnifies inequality by expanding opportunities disproportionately for those who are already privileged' (2007, p.1)

Shavit et al 2007 *Stratification in Higher Education: A comparative study*

- Conclusions match previous studies of comparative educational systems.
- But do not include countries in Latin America.
- Expanding education and opportunities may lead to maintaining broad social inequalities, despite the changing economic and social structures and systems.
- Greater ***diversification or diversion*** (to coin their terms) for both *individuals and institutions*.

Shavit et al 2007 *Stratification in Higher Education: A comparative study*

- findings from this project provide evidence of the relations among institutional expansion, differentiation and privatization, and stratification of individual educational opportunity.’ (2007, p. 27).
- They find overall ***persistent inequality*** (sic) (ibid p.29) but that it may have policy implications about how to transform class inequalities in an expanding situation where they ‘reach a more optimistic conclusion’ (ibid p.29).

Shavit et al 'a note on gender inequality' (2007, p.25-6).

- 'although it was not the main focus of our inquiry, *we would be remiss if we did not mention the findings related to variation in gender inequality* (my emphasis) ...consistent with other researchers ...our findings indicate that men's advantages in educational attainment declined dramatically during the second half of the twentieth century. The erosion of male advantage is especially pronounced for participation in postsecondary education. In all countries for which data are available, and in both the conditional and unconditional models, men's relative advantage declined ...
- In sum, our data show *an average widening of the gender gap* in higher education favoring women, and indicate that the gap expanded fastest in systems where attendance rates expanded most. While there are differences across systems in the rate of change, overall there is a fairly uniform pattern of women's increasing participation in higher education, closing the gap, and then often coming to outperform men in higher education enrollment (2007, p 25-7).

The Context of Massification of HE: Changing UK rates of 'student participation'

- Expansion of undergraduate student numbers over last 40 years in UK Higher Education
 - from 0.5 million in 1960s to 2 million in 2005-6
- Questions of social class, gender, race, ethnicity, dis/abilities and age (young vs mature) remain central policy dilemma, now about ***diversity***
 - Women have outnumbered men since 1996/7
 - Women are 60% of full-time student population in British universities (Scottish, Welsh, Irish and English differences)
 - Men remain the majority in overseas undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments in 2006-7

Researching Diversity and WP in HE: Projects from TLRP (end 2008)

- 7 projects commissioned by ESRC but funded by Hefce as ‘policy relevant’
- Address ‘evidence’ on themes of
 - policy and policy change around notions of HE and/or universities
 - social diversity variables and practices about ‘participation’ in types of education
 - types of pedagogy or teaching and learning strategies

Researching Diversity and WP in HE: Projects from TLRP (end 2008)

- **Dual systems/regimes of FE and HE:** Role of FE in HE and vice versa (Parry & Bathmaker)
- **Quantitative cohort studies of young people** and stages of education (Vignoles et al)
- **Degrees of success? Vocational & Educational Training (VET)** (Hayward & Ertl)
- **Maths Education as a demanding subject for HE student identities** (Williams, Black & Davis)

Diverse Access to/in FE-HE

- Professors Gareth Parry of Sheffield University and Ann-Marie Bathmaker of University of West of England have studied the impact of the dual structures of further education (FE) (college) and HE on strategies to widen participation in undergraduate education.
- Their main focus has been on the policies and practices of colleges [of further education] and their role in the expansion and diversification of higher education.
- They consider both wider changing education policy context and the specifics of institutional difference with the implications for student experiences of learning.
- They argue about 'the boundary paradox' where
 - Duality is associated with dependence and difficulty or
 - Dual regimes have been permissive, with the boundary permeable and workable, leading to integration rather than elimination of sector regimes and territories.

Quantitative Analysis of HE

- Dr Anna Vignoles of the Institute of Education, London University has undertaken a quantitative cohort analysis of widening participation in HE. They
 - used an innovative linkage of newly available data sets and sophisticated modelling techniques to examine determinants of entry into and progress within HE.
 - have created a definitive baseline study of full- and part-time undergraduate students, their educational achievements in school and HE, demonstrating complex social class and gendered pathways.
- Aspects of their analysis have shown that neither *poor* (defined as Free School Meals) nor *mature students* perform academically less well than traditional students (aged 18 plus) in access to HE. Indeed mature students may get better results at the end of their HE courses.

Degrees of Success?

Vocational & Educational Training

- Drs Geoff Hayward, Michael Hoeschler & Hubert Ertl of Oxford University investigated the development of vocational and educational training (VET) and links with HE by institution (HEI) and subject. They studied students' progression routes into, and through, HE and into the labour market. Analysis of largescale datasets and case studies shows that:
 - for students' institutional choice, GCE A levels remain the major route into more prestigious HEIs (mainly Russell group pre 92)
 - Students with VET backgrounds are more likely, on average, to start their studies at post-92 HEIs
 - Rational choice models do not explain HEI choice well
 - Subject choices are highly individualised, lead to different kinds of HEI, and also different subjects, connected with diverse wage premia in the labour market.

Mathematically Demanding Subjects for Higher Education

- Professor Julian Williams, with Laura Black, Pauline Davis, Paul Hernandez-Martinez, Maria Pampaka & Geoff Wake of Manchester University, focused on pedagogic cultures in relation to learning mathematics and mathematical *identities*, given the importance of mathematics to science, technology, engineering and medicine (STEM) in HE.
 - They studied over 1700 students ‘on the cusp’ of participation in mathematically-demanding programmes in FE or HE ie students mainly ‘at risk’ and studying for HEI access. Using 40 students:
 - They found four distinct ‘repertoires’ that students used to account for their aspirations for HE with ‘influences’ and ‘the role of maths’ and parental influences.
 - These ‘repertoires’ are strongly associated with socio-cultural backgrounds, albeit in complex, intersectional ways.
 - Diverse students’ (class, ethnicity and gender) accounts, life aspirations and mathematical identities, important for understanding mathematical literacy.
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Researching Diversity and WP in HE: Projects from TLRP (end 2008)

- **Networks of intimacy and decision-making as an embedded social practice** (Alison Fuller, Sue Heath & Brenda Johnson at Southampton University)
- **Socio-cultural and learning experiences of working class students** (Gill Crozier, Sunderland University with Diane Reay of Cambridge University)
- **Social Diversity and Difference: academics engaging diverse students** (Chris Hockings at Wolverhampton University with Sandra Cooke of Birmingham and Marion Bowl currently in Auckland New Zealand)

Networks of Intimacy: routes to participation or non-participation?

- Professors Alison Fuller and Sue Heath of Southampton University have studied choices of participation in HE by focusing on
 - decision-making as an embedded social practice not individual
 - the notion of ‘networks of intimacy’ as a key theoretical concept linked to ‘ambivalence’ as a nuanced concept in relation to continuity and change in family, community and the life course.
- They have produced 16 case studies of family decision-making around a key informant qualified to enter HE (level 3) and exploring their choices in relation to work and benefits of HE to subsequent lives in education, family and work.
- Heath (2007: BJSE) looked at GAP years and their relation to gaps in achievement by social class.

Socio-cultural & Learning Experiences of Working Class Students in HE

- Professors Gill Crozier, Sunderland University & Diane Reay, Cambridge University studied the socio-cultural and learning experiences of students in contrasting HEIs, including one with further education.
- They interviewed 89 (mainly white British and female) middle & working class students (parental occupations and/or first generation in their family to go to HE), followed the progress of 27 working class students, & interviewed key informants across the 4 diverse HEIs in 3 geographical areas.
- The 4 HEI embody different missions, attracting different types of students with different learning dispositions, and they found that:
 - The middle class students have learned dispositions to fit with the university context, generate ‘habitus’ through further social interactions.
 - The working class students’ lives were often fragile and subject to disruption, although they may have been doing well academically.
- They argue in ‘*Different Strokes for Different Folks*’ that the institutional or structural differences interweave with the middle class students’ capitals to perpetuate privilege and advantage: ‘classed privilege’, links educational success to cultural behaviour. Whilst widening participation has opened up HE for working class students which hitherto they would not have had, inequalities continue, and impact on life chances within and across HEIs.

Diversity & Difference in HE: *academic engagement?*

- Dr Chris Hockings of Wolverhampton University's centre for excellence in teaching and learning (CoTL) focused on teaching or pedagogies for social diversity in different subjects (computing, biology, business, nursing & social work) in 2 diverse HEI. Marion Bowl, co-director, wrote about *Non-traditional Students in HE (2004)* Sandra Cooke, co-director, of Birmingham University worked with non-traditional students conducted the Hodge Hill study of Young Participation (Hefce, 2007)
- Using the concept of 'academic engagement', they explored the conditions under which students engage with, or disengage from learning, in the context of student diversity.
- They explored diverse pedagogies for learning, and in a case study focused upon uses of video methods among computing students.
- Over the 2 year course of the study the computing teachers
 - Became more aware of their influences on engagement in classrooms
 - Experimented with intervention strategies, including problem/enquiry based learning, collaborative/cooperative groups to 'personal knowing to socially identified knowledge' to develop a climate of trust for inclusive learning environments.

Researching Students within HE in TLRP: some other examples

- Disabled Students in HE (Mary Fuller, Sheila Riddell, Mick Healey et al)
- SOMUL (John Brennan, David Jary, Mike Osborne et al)
- Music Education in HE (Graham Welch, Rosie Burt et al)
- Dai Hounsell and Noel Entwistle's work on enhancing teaching and learning environments in undergraduate courses (ETL)
- A Values-based Approach to Teacher Education in Northern Ireland (Alan Smith et al)
- Learning Lives (Gert Biesta, Phil Hodgkinson, Flora Macleod et al)

Diversities in Learning and Teaching: Policy & Practice Implications

- TLRP projects focused on '**equity**' or equal opportunities as social class rather than other diversities (gender, ethnicities) in relation to students across subjects/disciplines and institutions
- **In terms of WP**, show that complex questions about **individual** or family 'choices', linked to class and gender, and subjects eg VET or maths, and about present, not imagined future careers.
- Some about **teaching and pedagogies** which influences 'choices' or pathways through prior experiences of education, eg Hounsell, Ivanic, Brennan and Hockings on engagement.
- **Contexts and communities** are very important in respect of when and how individuals participate, including 'networks of intimacy' and prior educational experiences of socially just pedagogies, e.g. feminist or critical pedagogies.

Conclusions: Equity and Diversity in teaching and learning in HE

- Rich and diverse studies of differing notions of **participation** of students, researchers and/or academics
- Range over diverse social science methods and concepts from social statistics to qualitative/ethnographic
- Diverse research on equity and diversity, teaching and learning and diverse pedagogies
- Social evidence confirms that social stratification and inequalities maintained through **diversified** not inclusive forms of HE (Shavit, Arum & Gamoran 2007)
- The diverse HEIs created are part of **academic capitalism** (Slaughter & Rhoades 2004) in the new market economy with new teaching/learning regimes

Challenges of Diversity for Critical Pedagogies in HE in the 21st century

- Processes have created and sustained social diversity across HE, creating new opportunities for socially just and personal pedagogies as well as maintaining 'classed privilege'.
- Inequality & Diversity i.e. Age, Class, Gender, Race/Ethnic inequalities in relation to participation in HE.
- Social divisions and inequalities across HEIs linked to a highly selective professional and/or graduate labour market. What are graduate premia for many students and their future employment?
- How can our academic practices for teaching and research in the 21st century develop new forms of academic engagement and intellectual love?
- Can we meet the challenge of building upon the creative potential of critical and feminist pedagogies and practices for social diversity and social justice?