Widening Participation and Access

Maximising and capturing the impact of university interventions

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  - Qualitative Research Design & Analysis
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- NERUPI evaluation framework (co-developer)
- Evaluator: Widening Participation Interventions
- Researcher: youth identity; youth culture; student identities (possible selves)
- Youth worker; youth participation worker
Widening Participation

• What is widening participation?
  • What are we aiming to achieve?
  • Who is it aimed at?
  • How are interventions targeted?

• How might wider participation be achieved?
  • What interventions might be effective?
  • How can we design effective interventions?
  • How can we predict the effect of an intervention?

• How might we assess and capture the impact of an intervention?
  • How do we assess the short-term impact of a complex intervention?
  • How do we assess whether or not an intervention has achieved its aims?
  • How do we assess the long-term impact of an intervention?
Progression to university
A historical elitist system (Whitty and Hayton, 2015)

- Traditional historical associated with Christian church/education of ruling class
- 19C
  - shift towards education serving wider economic, social and political aims.
  - state recognition potential of HE to provide skilled and educated workforce/support growth and competitiveness of British industry
  - Women admitted to UK universities

Early 20th century
- Some opening up of HE, but still overwhelmingly the preserve of the upper/middle class
- Significant financial, cultural and social barriers to HE for other groups (Archer et al., 2002).
- Shift from an ‘elite’ to a ‘mass’ system of higher education in England
The Robbin’s principle

“Courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so” (Robbins, 1963, p. 8).
Education...Education...Education

• Tony Blair’s New Labour government’s three priorities
• Enhance economic competitiveness and social justice

2nd term:
• Increase participation rates to 50% of school leavers
• Tackling social exclusion: social and cultural factors prevent some people from realising potential
• Not just economic factors affecting progression to university
Widening Access to Higher Education
UK domiciled 18 year old entry rate by POLAR4 quintile

UCAS end of cycle report 2018
Estimated percentage of 15 year old state-funded and special school pupils by Ethnic Group who entered HE by age 19

UK HE Providers and English FE Colleges

Source: Matched data from the DfE National Pupil Database, HESA Student Record and ESFA ILR
Increasing Student Diversity

**Traditional students**
Middle/Upper class; white; male

**Non-traditional students**
- First in their family/first generation
- Low participation neighbourhoods
- NS-SEC 4-7
- BAME
- Students with disabilities
- Under-represented groups: women in Engineering, Science etc.
SCHOOL

HIGH LEVELS OF PROGRESSION

LOW LEVELS OF PROGRESSION

UNIVERSITY

NERUPI evaluation FRAMEWORK
Cultural association with HE

- Normalised cultural experience
  - Parents/siblings progressed to higher education
  - University is a familiar cultural setting
  - University is a site of cultural resonance

- Unfamiliar cultural experience
  - First in family to progress to university
  - University is a unfamiliar cultural setting
  - University is a site of culture clash
“I think I was always going to go. Cos my sister, I have an older sister who’s five years older, she went to university. It was just like a conversation, like as natural as you progress from primary to secondary school. That progression was secondary school to sixth form, and then sixth form to university. That was just like, er, not even a thing of like ‘why wouldn’t you do that’.” (Jack, 2018)
“I think I was quite young when I got this idea of university. I’d say I was a child, because I just saw this thing on TV and movies and it looked amazing. Getting to that level was a goal for me, it was something I could set my sights on…, yes…that’s what smart people did- I wanted to be one of those people. I wanted to be at that level. I have two older siblings and neither of them ever went to university.” (Jane, 2018)
After Access
Disparities in attainment

• POLAR4 attainment gap

• Percentage of young 21016-17 qualifiers gaining a first or upper second class degree by educational disadvantage quintile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quintile</th>
<th>% first or upper second</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quintile 1</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintile 2</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintile 3</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintile 4</td>
<td>79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quintile 5</td>
<td>83%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: HEFCE (2018) Differences in student outcomes: The effect of student characteristics
Disparities in attainment

• BME attainment gap

Source:
UUK NUS (2019) Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: #Closing the Gap
Disparities in progression

A degree does not have the same value for all graduates. Even when institution and subject is accounted for, students from higher income families earn around 10% more. In addition Black African qualifiers are 14% less likely than their white peers to be in professional work 6 months after graduation. Social Mobility and the Professions 2016

Source: Social Mobility Commission (2016) Social Mobility and the Professions
A New Approach
New approach to access and participation

• Our ambition is that future generations should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in higher education, and to achieve successful and rewarding careers.

• To make this sort of transformational change happen, we and the higher education sector need to be bold and ambitious.
Access and participation plans

Access and participation plans set out how higher education providers will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education. They include:

- the provider’s ambition for change
- what it plans to do to achieve that change
- the targets it has set
- the investment it will make to deliver the plan.

The OfS monitors access and participation plans to make sure that the providers honour the commitments they make to students in these plans, and take action if they do not.
Interventions and Impact
The challenge of evaluating WP interventions

• Demonstrating causal link between a well-received intervention and subsequent progression to HE is challenging

• Random control trials, longitudinal studies & tracking participants inform understanding, but can’t inform day-to-day practice

“That advocating specific interventions often claim success for them, but most interventions have had no rigorous evaluation. We encountered no randomised controlled trials or similar. This makes it difficult to judge the success, or otherwise, of any attempts to widen participation in the short term.” (Gorard & Smith, 2006)
‘Applying’ a medical model

‘RCTs often premised on students having a problem or ‘symptoms’ that require treatment ... these students are pathologised first by naming their problem (often expressed in terms that match the solutions at hand) and then by being treated with an intervention by some external agency or person. (Gale, 2017: 4)

Picciotto warns against the ‘lure of the medical model’,
‘Experimental black boxes are poorly suited to the evaluation of complicated or complex programmes in unstable environments’ (Picciotto, 2012: 223)
Theorising students success
Why do some students succeed?

• Economic capital
• Social capital - who you know
• Cultural capital – what you know
• Habitus
• Pierre Bourdieu

Resource differences and collective efforts and investments made or not within families become translated into individual ‘ability’........ (Ball 2010, p.162).
Bourdieu’s Theories

Bourdieu – Capitals and Habitus and Field

- **Capitals:** economic, cultural or social which impact on opportunities to engage with education, careers etc.

- **Habitus:** cultural identity & dispositions related to family & community

Theoretical basis for a great deal of academic research into widening participation e.g Diane Reay

Cultural model of Widening Participation that locates interventions within a context or **field** of engagement
Science Capital (Archer, 2018)

Main dimensions of science capital
1. Science literacy ("what you know")
2. Science-related attitudes and values ("how you think")
3. Out of school science behaviours ("What you do")
4. Science at home ("who you know")

Interactions of habitus, capital and field produce patterns in science engagement and participation (Archer, 2018)
The NERUPI evaluation framework
The NERUPI Framework

Designed to maximise the impact of Widening Participation interventions providing:

• a robust theoretical and evidence-based rationale for the types of intervention that are designed and delivered

• clear aims and learning outcomes for interventions, which enable more strategic and reflexive design and delivery

• an integrated evaluation process across multiple interventions to improve data quality, effectiveness and impact
Uptake across the sector

Anglia Ruskin University
Aston University
Bath Spa University
Birmingham City University
Bishop Grossteste University
Bucks New University
Cardiff University
City University of London
The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission UK
Cosmos Engagement Ltd
Durham University
First Campus (Reaching Wider Partnership South East Wales)
Imperial College London
Lancaster University
Leeds Trinity University
LinHigher NCOP
London Metropolitan University
Make Happen Essex NCOP
NCOP York and North Yorkshire
NCOP York and North Yorkshire partner colleges
Newcastle University
North and Mid Wales Reaching Wider Partnership
North East Collaborative Outreach Programme NCOP (NECOP)
Northumbria University
Next Steps South West NCOP
Oxford Brookes University
Queen Mary University of London
Reaching Wider Partnership Wales
Sheffield Hallam University
SOAS University of London
South West Wales Reaching Wider Partnership
St George’s University of London
St Mary’s University Twickenham London
Study Higher NCOP
Teesside University
The Open University
University of Bath
University of East Anglia
University of East London
University of Essex
University of Hull Federation of Regional Colleges for Engagement (FORCE)
University of Lincoln
University of Manchester
University of Oxford
University of Reading
University of Sunderland
University of Sussex
University of York
York St John University
Wessex Inspiration Network NCOP (WIN)
## The NERUPI Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC CAPITAL</th>
<th>HABITUS</th>
<th>SKILLS CAPITAL</th>
<th>INTELLECTUAL &amp; SUBJECT CAPITAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRESSION CURRICULUM</strong></td>
<td><strong>STUDENT IDENTITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>SKILLS CURRICULUM</strong></td>
<td><strong>KNOWLEDGE CURRICULUM</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KNOW</strong></td>
<td><strong>CHOOSE</strong></td>
<td><strong>BECOME</strong></td>
<td><strong>PRACTISE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop students’ knowledge and awareness of the benefits of higher education</td>
<td>Develop students’ capacity to navigate Higher Education sector and make informed choices</td>
<td>Develop students’ confidence and resilience to negotiate the challenges of university life</td>
<td>Develop students’ study skills and capacity for academic attainment</td>
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### Aims and Objectives Level 3

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social and Academic Capital</th>
<th>Progression Curriculum</th>
<th>Enable students to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td><strong>KNOW</strong></td>
<td>Develop students’ knowledge and awareness of the benefits of higher education and graduate employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Habitus</strong></td>
<td><strong>CHOOSE</strong></td>
<td>Develop students’ capacity to navigate Higher Education and graduate employment sectors and make informed choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Capital</strong></td>
<td><strong>BECOME</strong></td>
<td>Develop students’ confidence and resilience to negotiate the challenge of university life and graduate progression</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Intellectual Capital</th>
<th>Knowledge Curriculum</th>
<th>Enable students to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>KNOW</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNDERSTAND</strong></td>
<td>Develop students’ understanding by contextualising subject knowledge</td>
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Aim 1: Develop students' knowledge and awareness of the benefits of higher education and graduate employment

Evaluation Question: I now know more about opportunities in Higher Education and for university graduates

"It was good to be learning something new. It showed you where you could go if you continued doing Chemistry and it was really interesting."

This has really confirmed that I want to go to university and I want to study Social Science."
Aim 2: Develop students' capacity to navigate Higher Education and graduate employment sectors and make informed choices

Evaluation Question: The Summer School has helped me to make an informed choice about university and my future

"The Summer School really strengthened my knowledge of what course I want to do. I wasn’t sure if I wanted to take a Science or Engineering course, but now I definitely know what course I want to do."

"Coming on the summer school has really helped me work out what I want to do."

NERUPI evaluation FRAMEWORK
Aim 3: Develop students' confidence and resilience to negotiate the challenge of university life and graduate progression

Evaluation Question: The Summer School has helped me to feel more confident in my ability to succeed at University

STEM Summer School

HSS Summer School

“This has shown me that university study and the course work isn’t really that daunting. I didn’t know what to expect, but this has shown me it is something that I can do.”

“I had never done anything like this before, and university just seemed really scary. Doing this has made me feel much more confident about going and like I really want to go to university.”
Aim 4: Develop students' study skills and capacity for academic attainment and successful graduate progression

Evaluation Question: The Summer School has helped me to feel more confident in my ability to succeed at University

"The experience has certainly fuelled my enthusiasm to continue to study hard and get the grades that I need for taking a chemistry degree. Within this I will be looking at Bath as an option."

"I have learned loads of things about how to do research, and simple things like referencing. We don’t have to do that really at college, so it has been really useful to get this experience."
Aim 5: Develop students' understanding by contextualising subject knowledge

Evaluation Question: The Summer School has increased my understanding of my subject area

**STEM Summer School**

**HSS Summer School**

“I definitely know that I want to do Social Science. I didn’t know that much about it until the summer school, but now I know it is what I want to do.”

“The Biology project gave you a real insight into how Science really works. With GCSEs you don’t really go down to the source of the information. The lecturer gave us a real insight into her work. You feel much more exposed to the scientific world that you do in a school classroom.”
“Every effort must be made to avoid pathologising lower attainment and therefore it is important to focus on strategies for success and not reasons for failure when seeking to enable students to improve on their performance.” (Singh, 2011)"

“Successful interventions are likely to focus on reinforcing the young person’s perceived ability to be successful through supported short-term tasks and a process of reflection that actively demonstrates their potential for more sustained forms of success.” (Harrison, 2018)