

30 Years of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning: The lessons learnt

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Adults and Higher Education in UK Universities

- Now a more diverse student population by age, social class and ethnicity
- Since 1980s introduction of new entry routes for adults such as APL and APEL
- Access courses as an entry route

University of Warwick's Approach

- Department of Continuing Education established in 1985- Chris Duke as Chair
- ‘The Warwick Model’
- Department's role to contribute to ‘a coherent policy for continuing education for the institution as a whole
 - To work closely with other Warwick departments to develop adult education across the University

- To work 'in a very close liaison with other providers in the community, in particular the local authorities and the Workers Educational Association'

RPL at Warwick

- For entry
 - To enable non-traditional students to join undergraduate study
- For credits:
 - Distinct module
 - Academic judgement
 - Central administration judgement
 - Open Studies Certificate programme

Department Initiatives

- Open Studies Certificates
- Access
- Part-time Degrees
- 2+2 Degrees
- Foundation degrees
- Gateway programmes
- WP at PGT

Issues

- Coping in an elite university – issues of social class – feelings of not belonging – Bourdieu ‘fish out of water’
- Financial problems experienced by many students
- 2+2 students – managing the transition from college to campus and joining year 2 younger students
- CLL students but also part of other departments – coherence and identity

- Problem of evening and weekend module choices for Part-time students – previously money available
- Working class students distancing themselves from family and friends
- Difficulty of getting science and Business studies departments involved
- Implications of changes in funding

Lessons Learnt

- Importance of a range of student support within the Centre and across the University
- Flexibility of provision to meet the needs of part-time and full-time students eg 2+2 within school hours
- Adult students are not homogeneous- differences by age, class and ethnicity
- Need for a designated centre or department rather than mainstreaming
- Institutional disincentives include declining demand, reduced funding, perceptions that part time students are more difficult and expensive to support and impact negatively on league table performance
- Value of varied entry points and study pathways

- Need to work collaboratively with partners outside the university and within
- Strong university policy and commitment to widening participation to non-traditional students
- Importance of pastoral and academic support
- Fractured trajectories of adult students – relatively high drop-out rates
- Value of distinct provision rather than ‘fitting into’ existing provision – to *‘avoid making uncritical assumptions that part time students can simply be accommodated on programmes designed for their full time counterparts’ (Yorke & Longdon, 2008 – cited in HEA, 2013).*
- Institutional advocacy – minority student cohort are less visible
- Need the support of senior university management
- Value of high quality pre-course information and induction, credit accumulation and transfer schemes, flexible approaches to teaching and timetabling and the provision of ‘child friendly campus’ facilities.

Student Voices

- gave me a taste of what university might be like. I liked what I saw and what I was learning and I liked the feeling that I got. I wanted to learn more... I had a lot of support from my lecturers... that was a nice feeling to see that we could actually achieve and accomplish things... For the first time I thought it might just be possible that I could go on to do something else.

Julia after completing certificate course in community development

Studying for a Degree

- Julia found that some lecturers were ‘very different from myself, from different backgrounds’. She was also conscious of her class position in seminars: ‘I definitely felt like I was in a different class to most of the people that I was learning with, that was quite clear’.

- The feedback from tutors has been great. When I got my first essay back from Social Welfare I got 54 and I was devastated. I thought all this work and this is the mark I have got. But after I spoke to her and we had gone through the structure of it then I felt much better. For my first essay that was quite good and I didn't appreciate it and her comments were quite useful and I have always found the feedback that I have had very, very useful and constructive. That's great now I know where I'm going.

Donna, part-time Social Studies

Student Support

- It was fantastic to have the Personal Tutors. It was great that one of my Personal Tutors was the person who had taught me in my first course. I didn't think that I would use the personal Tutor. I thought 'Oh no I'll be fine, I'll manage'. But actually it's really important that some of the lecturers understand your personal life as well as your study life. I found that a lot of them had a really good way of putting things in perspective for you and then putting it back to you so that you're like 'Oh yes now I understand why this is happening or what can I do to change that'.

Julie, 2+2

Confidence Issues

- I never actually thought I'd make it to the end, so, each year that went by was quite a shock because I'd got through another year but I was determined to make things different for myself and for my son.
It is determination that I wanted to change things and make a difference and be able to support us financially and move out of the neighbourhood that I was in.

- I feel very privileged to be here. However, I do feel like I shouldn't be here because of its reputation. I think I'm just a 2+2 I shouldn't really be here. Have I got in the easy way? Not having qualifications so I do feel that at the end of it when I've got a degree from X that perhaps I've cheated a little because I haven't gained entry the same as everybody else the traditional way. I do feel a bit guilty. I do think that people may not value it being a 2+2.

Angela

Distancing

- I couldn't talk about University to any other mums as I walked to school because I felt that they had snubbed me - 'look at you with your big briefcase'. It was really tricky to explain to people why I wanted to progress myself. I withdrew from my friends on the estate a little bit because I found it hard to explain to them why I wanted something different but I understood why they didn't or why they were happy in the situations they were in.



Impact of Learning

- Some of the highs were when you had a really good lecture and you came out feeling you've got ever so much information – it was like buzzing. And meeting people that I would probably never had met. Just learning. I think it just gave me, absorbed me and gave me another life away from what I had.

Jane