



'Exploring Learning Trajectories' Conference to launch the Widening Participation Research Centre, Edge Hill University

Tuesday 20th and Wednesday 21st May 2008
Edge Hill University: Education Building
Ormskirk, Lancashire, UK

Conference theme

Exploring Learning Trajectories. Research evidence suggests that people's chances of participating in higher education are largely influenced from an early age by factors such as parental education and background. Throughout the life course other processes and factors come into play: family income, family size and structure, age and health of parents, attitudes, values and beliefs, choices and decision making. Learning trajectories are influenced structurally and culturally by neighbourhood, pre-school and school opportunities and by the quality of education systems, policy expectations and power relations.

This conference offers a forum for the discussion of research and evidence-based practice that seeks to understand learning trajectories and to explore ways of overcoming educational inequality and to explore meanings of widening participation in education. The conference will be addressed by Professor Diane Reay, University of Cambridge and Professor Gus John, Institute of Education, visiting professor at University of London and University of Strathclyde who have a wide experience in researching equality in education.

Context and conference overview

Edge Hill University has recently established the Widening Participation Research Centre, which is directed by Professor Liz Thomas. The Centre brings together academics, practitioners, policy makers and managers who are interested in research and knowledge transfer activities in relation to all aspects of educational equality and widening participation. This two day conference is being organised to formally launch the Centre.

The conference aims to provide a space for participants to learn from each other and work together in relation to the conference theme of exploring learning trajectories. On Day 1 we will share research and evidence-based practice from a broad range of methodologies and perspectives on educational equality and widening participation. On Day 2 we will facilitate workshops to develop ways of working together focussing on research, publication and practice. The outcomes of the workshops could include research bids, an edited book, journal articles and a practitioner network to share expertise.



Conference aims and objectives

The overall aim of the conference is to launch the Widening Participation Research Centre and raise awareness of its work across the university and region, and to UK and international colleagues. The objectives of the conference are to bring together colleagues with an interest in educational equality and widening participation to:

- Enhance understanding of the factors contributing to educational inequality across the life course.
- Share research and experience to explore ways in which access to learning and equality of outcome can be understood and promoted.
- Network together effectively and productively
- Develop capacity to work together to undertake research and disseminate findings
- Explore ways of working with the Widening Participation Research Centre and its networks now and in the future

Outputs and outcomes

A primary outcome of the conference will be recognition of the opportunities offered by the Centre for colleagues to work together. This will include:

- Learning about the research and practice of others and how it could be relevant to one's own work;
- Meeting people who you may want to work with in the future;
- Finding out about the networks, resources and expertise the Centre has to offer and how these could be useful; and
- Collaborating with others to create a joint outcome, such as a research bid, an edited book, a journal article or a practitioner network to share expertise.

Target participants

The conference aims to be participative, rather than to have an "audience". It should be of relevance to everyone with an interest in educational equality and widening participation, including:

- Researchers
- WP managers and practitioners
- University leaders
- School and college staff
- Local, regional and national policy makers
- Those with an interest in social and economic regeneration
- International partners

**OUTLINE PROGRAMME****DAY 1: Learning from others**

Time	Title	Location
11.00	Registration and refreshments	Faculty of Education Foyer
11.30	Opening Session and Keynote Speakers Dr John Cater , Vice-Chancellor Edge Hill University Professor Gus John 'Access to HE : 30 years on' Professor Diane Reay 'Who goes where in higher education: an issue of class, ethnicity and increasing concern' Professor Liz Thomas Widening Participation Research Centre: Collaborating for Success	E1
1.00	LUNCH	Water's Edge
2.00	Parallel Sessions including refreshments break Presentation and discussion of research and evidence based papers	Various (See separate sheet outlining papers)
4.40	Plenary and Reflection: Learning from others	E1
5.00	Free association and refreshments Campus Tours (Optional)	Faculty of Education Foyer
6.15	Reception and Launch of the Widening Participation Research Centre Speaker: Dr John Cater	Sages
7.00	Conference Dinner	Sages
9.00	Close	

**DAY 2: Working together**

Time	Title	Location
9.00	Registration and refreshments	Faculty of Education Foyer
9.20	Opening Session Mark Flinn , Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic)	E1
9.30	Parallel Sessions: Facilitated workshops on collaborative research, writing for publication and practitioner research	
	Joining the dots to create collaborative research opportunities Facilitated by Professor Jocey Quinn, London Metropolitan University The workshop will focus on identifying shared research interests which can be developed into collaborative research proposals, and developing an action plan to take this work forward. The plenary input will discuss the process of applying for research funding.	E2
	Shaping the Script: exploring collaborative opportunities through academic writing Facilitated by Claire Penketh, Edge Hill University The workshop will encourage participants to work together to develop a common focus on writing for publication, and the plenary input will focus on collaborative publications, such as an edited book or journal articles.	E3
	Making it Count: How to build evidence and share learning and practice Facilitated by Dr Liz Marr, Manchester Metropolitan University This workshop will enable participants to share expertise on evidence-based practice and researching practice.	E4
12.00	Plenary : Taking collaborative work forward Close of conference	E1
12.30	Lunch	Water's Edge



Booking and cost

The cost of the conference is £100 for the 2 days (£50 for students and no charge for Edge Hill University staff). This includes lunch on 20th May, Dinner on 20th May and lunch on 21st May, plus refreshments during the two days. It excludes accommodation and breakfast costs. On request a list of hotels of varying prices is available. It is the responsibility of delegates to book their own accommodation and arrange transport to the conference venue.

To reserve a place at this conference, please complete the attached booking form and return it by to Margaret Carleton, carletom@edgehill.ac.uk by 25 April 2008. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

For further information about the conference please contact Angela Daly:
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