**Evaluation and Tracking of Widening Participation/ Equity Initiatives**

Literature Review written by Katie Osborne-Crowley

Over recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on robust evaluation of widening participation programs to ensure that program planning is based on evidence and not just on “good intentions” (Thomas, 2000) and to demonstrate effectiveness to funders (Palmero, Marr, Oriel, Arthur & Johnston, 2012). Additionally, in the Australian context, decreasing government funding for WP interventions has put pressure on universities to use evaluative data to direct limited funds most effectively (Haintz, Goldinggay, Heckman, Ward, Afrouz & George, 2018). However, evaluating the impact of WP interventions on progression to HE has presented a major challenge for the HE sector, since student decisions about higher education are multi-determined and situated in complex social realities (Hayton & Bengry-Howell, 2016; Go8, 2010; Holland, Houghton, Armstrong & Mashiter, 2017). Many WP interventions are still not evidence-informed and do not explicitly set out a rationale for their content or delivery (Hayton & Bengry-Howell, 2016). Further, there is still little *systematic* evaluationand most WP evaluations rely solely on participant perception and pre- and post- survey methodology (Gale, Sellar, Parker, Hattam, Comber, Tranter & Bills, 2010). Thus, there is considerable scope to improve WP evaluation practices, and a number of suggestions are discussed in the literature reviewed below.

Much of the literature on best practice for evaluating WP interventions emphasises the need for a *clear conceptual framework* and *clearly identified objectives* (Wilkens & de Vries, 2014; Naylor, 2014). A common approach to this is the use of a theory of change framework, which sets out an organisation’s theory on *how* and *why* their initiative will work. This approach acknowledges the complexity of outreach activity and the inter-related environments in which they operate, instead of ignoring them as more clinical approach’s such as RCTs do (Childs, Hanson, Carnegie-Douglas & Archbold, 2016). A theory of change is a useful framework for evaluation as it allows an organisation to explicitly set out its intended outcomes (against which success can be measured) as well as the mechanisms assumed to underpin the effectiveness of the intervention, which can then be examined (Barkat, 2019). Critically, in measuring success against pre-determined outcomes, WP evaluators should be careful not to attribute observed changes directly to their work, but instead must instead recognise that their interventions can only ever be a *contributing* factor to a student’s decision to attend HE, or to their increased school attainment. Indeed, to attribute the positive outcomes you observe to your work alone negates the hard work of and input from teachers, schools, parents and communities (Hayton & Bengry-Howell, 2016).

The literature also emphasises that evaluation must encourage *strategic learning* and inform the future direction of the program via an organisational commitment to critical assessment of what needs to change (Reed, King and Whiteford, 2015). Participatory action research (PAR) is an approach which recognises the need for an intrinsic relationship between evaluation and practice. As Thomas (2000) says, the PAR approach “goes beyond simply understanding and reporting what is happening, but evaluation research that has an impact on practice and changes people’s lives” (p. 99). The PAR approach recognises that research that can truly change practice for the better needs to recognise local context and the unique features of each project, offering local solution for local problems (Thomas, 2000). Evaluation which is effectively informing program design also needs to be flexible enough to adapt to such changes over time.

A number of authors have also emphasised the need for evaluation to occur at all levels of WP work; the activity level, the program level and the cross-institutional level (Haintz et al., 2016). Program level evaluation, which is often missed, gives a more holistic picture and acknowledges the intersecting and cumulative effects of various activities. Holland and colleagues (2017) observed in the UK context widespread inconsistency in the focus or wording of questions used to evaluate different activities within the same institution, which prevented analysis at the program level. Further, cross-institutional evaluation is rarely undertaken but would provide an opportunity to locate broad patterns of effectiveness (Walton & Carillo-Higueras, 2019).

Finally, many authors point the value of incorporating richer qualitative data into evaluation practices to generate a more complete picture of the complex impacts that WP interventions have on student’s ‘learner journey’ and on their decisions about higher education (Holland et al., 2017; Raven, 2015). As such, there has been a growing interest in the use of data gathered through focus groups and interviews, as well as the use of more creative methods such as photo elicitation. This is in resistance to a long standing orthodox in the evaluation field which places a premium on quantitative data and methods, based on the idea that numerical evidence is more objective and persuasive (Raven, 2015). Additionally, qualitative data has great potential in informing the development of new outreach activities which service students self-identified needs (Raven, 2015). Attention has also been given to the potential of longitudinal evaluation and tracking to provide critical evidence of cumulative impact of WP programs (Palermo et al., 2015; Lam, Jackson, Walstab & Huo., 2015).

**Equity and Higher Education Annotated Bibliography Series**

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| Citation | **Annotation** |
| Barkat, S. (2019). [Evaluating the impact of the Academic Enrichment Programme on widening access to selective universities: Application of the Theory of Change framework,](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/berj.3556) *British Educational Research* Journal, 45(6), 1160–1185.UKAnnotation written by Katie Osborne-CrowleyKeywords: *Theory of change, evaluation, academic enrichment* | **Context:** A theory of change (ToC) is a theory on how and why an initiative works. Theory of change approaches to evaluation acknowledge the complexity of outreach activity and the complex interrelated environments in which they operate, instead of ignoring them as approaches seeking to determine causation (eg RCTs) do. Once the ToC has been developed, it can be used to plan the evaluation to test whether the change theory actually materialised by testing the assumptions and monitoring intended (and unintended) outcomes.**Aim:** To demonstrate the use of a ToC model for evaluating an academic enrichment program at the University of Birmingham.**Theoretical frame:** Theory of change**Methods:** Mixed methods- student attitudinal surveys (pre & post), end of program survey, post-program telephone interview and institutional monitoring data**Findings:** Knowledge, understanding and confidence: Measured using pre-post data - ‘I feel I know enough about university to help me make a decision about going’ increased 36% to 74%, ‘I feel confident about my ability to meet the academic requirements of university’ increased 12% to 34%, ‘I am very clear about the university application process’ increased 67% to 81%, ‘I am very clear about writing personal statements’ increased 26% to 74%.Increased application rates to selective universities: The percentage of applications made to Russell Group universities increased (unclear what the comparison group was?).Raised academic attainment: Participants had better A Level results compared to national averages (but participants were selected partly on GSCE results, so unsurprising?) **A screenshot of a cell phone  Description automatically generated****Core Argument:** ToC approach lends itself well to evaluating widening participation interventions. ToC is not an evaluation method per se, but is a useful guide to the evaluation process from defining evaluation focus, identifying research questions, mapping data collection requirements, analysis and reporting findings |
| Beckley, A. (2014). [Widening participation to disadvantaged groups: one university’s approach towards targeting and evaluation](https://novaojs.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/10), *International Studies in Widening Participation*, 1(2), 2–14.AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker Keywords: *evaluation* | **Context:** Sets out a case for WP in terms of being “essential for future economic and social well-being” of Australia (abstract) – to get “‘value for money’… to ensure sustainability and to record rationale behind funding decisions” (p.3)**Aim:** To present the case for evaluation to “ensure optimum learning” from WP (abstract); to describe the 3-tier approach taken at WSU: appropriate project management tools; careful and sensitive targeting of students; non-intrusive and confidential evaluation**Findings:** WP activities in WSU = access/ retention focused. Access = direct work with schools/colleges, aspiration raising, support (p.4): range of interventions from Years 3, 5-12. Pathways/VET program = “identifies alternative pathways” (p.4). Aspiration raising = events for targeted groups (indigenous, OOHC, Aus Rules FootballUWS evaluative approach: based on HEFCE model (?) which has 4 parts: “basic monitoring; assessment of targeting; measurement of outcomes; assessment of value for money (HEFCE, 2007)” (p.5). Beckley lists motivations for evaluation as (cites UTS, 2012):* students’ aspirations and motivation for higher education are enhanced;
* students’ knowledge about university increases including access pathways, university life and career options;
* students’ academic potential is enhanced;
* students’ family knowledge about higher education is broadened;
* widening participation projects are valued by community partners and stakeholders (p.5)

Targeting: it is “good practice to have accurate and responsive targeting processes that can identify the focus for the participants of the project” so as to comply with gov’t funding reqs (p.7) for easy completion, compliance with ethics and precision of reporting. All evaluation = via surveys (?) = all include demographic Qs “to enable accuracy, comparison of data and long-term tracking” (p.6) = standardised questions for quant measurement + qualitative evaluation collected for ‘balance’. Notes that different groups may be more expensive (e.g. OOHC; see p.8)Cost-benefit: “WP programs are subject to cost-benefit analyses by means of detailed management consideration of funding for programs based on the number of students benefitting, the perceived outcomes and the relative cost in terms of finance and resources, including opportunity costs. Cost benefit analyses are usually applied to the subject of ‘economic returns to education’” (p.8) Argues for WP on basis that current enrolment patterns won’t meet Bradley targets. Concludes with “These are overwhelmingly convincing arguments for universities to pursue WP programs and persist with equity and diversity themes; demographics illustrate that to get the numbers of students to maintain organizational and government growth goals, students from LSES backgrounds must be recruited for purely commercial reasons let alone philanthropic aspirations” (p.11)**Core argument:** Evaluation of WP is worthwhile because it permits managers to “highlight the success of their work” (p.10) |
| Childs, R.; Hanson, M.; Carnegie-Douglas, S. & Archbold, A. (2016). Investigating the effects of access initiatives for underrepresented groups, *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education,* 21(2–3), 73–80.CANAnnotation written by Sally Baker Keywords: *Access; admission criteria; evaluation; higher education; underrepresentation; diversity* | **Context:** Evaluation of initiatives to widen participation (purposeful) to post-secondary education (PSE) in Canada. Initiatives included = outreach programs, changed admissions requirements, financial assistance = all premised on assumptions about underrepresented groups (e.g. that money is a defining factor). ‘Underrepresented’ based on population parity **Aim:** To examine underpinning assumptions in development/implementation of access initiatives**Theoretical frame:** Deliberately uses language of program evaluation (intervention, determinant, outcome. Change model)**Methodology:** Evaluation. Initiatives categorised as cross-institution access initiatives or institution-specific access initiatives**Findings:** Offers case study of change model for BEd at University of Toronto **Core argument:** Suggest that using a change model to evaluate access initiatives can expose assumptions and underlying determinants and help to plan and evaluate. |
| Haintz, G. L., Goldingay, S., Heckman, R., Ward, T., Afrouz, R., & George, K. (2018). [Evaluating equity initiatives in higher education: Processes and challenges from one Australian university](https://novaojs.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/94/0)*,* *International Studies in Widening Participation*, 5(1), 92–105.AUSAnnotation written by Katie Osborne-CrowleyKeywords: *equity initiatives; evaluation; socio-ecological; widening participation; higher education* | **Context:** Increasing emphasis on evaluating interventions to demonstrate effectiveness and to inform program planning, especially int eh context of decreasing HEPPP funding such that universities will need to make decisions about how to prioritise funds.**Aim:** Provide discussion of the evaluation approach undertaken at Deakin University**Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu habitus and capital and socio-ecological approach**Methodology:** Qualitative – 42 participants took part in individual interviews, paired interviews and focus groups.**Findings:** No findings are reported. Challenges of the evaluation process are discussed.**Core argument:** While quantitative data can provide information on population trends, understanding the more complex impacts of WP activities on students lived experience requires qualitative. Evaluation should be of the breadth of HEPPP interventions at an institution, not individual activities, to acknowledge the intersecting influences across the socio-ecological context on the students habitus and their HE experiences. |
| Hayton, A. & Bengry-Howell, A. (2016). [Theory, evaluation and practice in widening participation: A framework approach to assessing impact,](https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/ioep/clre/2016/00000014/00000003/art00004?crawler=true) London Review of Education, 14(3), 41–53.UKAnnotation written by Katie Osborne-CrowleyKeywords: *widening participation; evaluation; research; impact; reflexivity; Bourdieu*  | **Context:** The evaluation of WP interventions has posed a major challenge for the HE sector. The call for greater evidence of impact has gathered momentum within government and among HE senior managers, and this has moved evaluation beyond logging number of participants engaged in WP activities. While research has elucidated some of the factors behind low participation and attainment among underrepresented groups, many interventions in the field are not overtly informed by theory or research evidence and thus there is often little rationale for their design, content and style of delivery. Demonstrating causal links between WP activities and increased participation in HE is challenging. However engaging and ‘successful’ an activity may be, it could only ever be one element contributing to increased attainment, for instance. Further, to claim greater impact would be to negate the hard work of teachers, schools and cultural factors. **Aim:** To describe the development and use of a theoretical framework for evaluating WP interventions. **Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu: Cultural, social and academic capital are important for educational ‘success’. **Methodology:** None **Findings:** The framework was developed by the Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI) and is a tool for designing and evaluating WP interventions aimed at developing student’s cultural capital and habitus and fostering agency and a sense of belonging in HE settings. It is informed by a Bourdieusian approach, which recognises power differentials between social groups, thus allowing the authors to circumvent a deficit model, where individuals are deemed responsible for their perceived failure and lack of certain capacities.The framework has 5 broad aims. The first two relate to the evidence that although students from low SES backgrounds may have aspirations to attend HE, they may not have access to accurate knowledge about HE in their social networks and thus may be unable to develop the navigational capacities to make informed choices about university; 1) *develop students’ knowledge and awareness of the benefits of higher education and graduate employment* and 2) *develop students’ capacity to navigate higher education and graduate employment sectors and make informed choices*. The third aim is theoretically underpinned by Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and acknowledges the complex challenges that students from underrepresented backgrounds face when accessing and experiencing unfamiliar HE environments; 3) *develop students’ confidence and resilience to negotiate the challenge of university life and graduate progression*. The fourth aim is theoretically underpinned by Bourdieu’s notion of ‘skills capital’, which is developed through academic practice; 4) *develop students’ study skills and capacity for academic attainment and successful graduate progression*. Finally, the fifth aim relates to developing students ‘intellectual capital’ and recognises that universities are well placed to contextualise students’ subject knowledge and demonstrate the links between the school curriculum, research and careers; 5) *develop students understanding by contextualising subject knowledge*. The framework also describes levels based on year groups (eg Level 0 is year 6 and below, Level 1 is years 8 and 9, and so on). Learning outcomes are assigned to each of the 5 aims for each level. The stratification of learning outcomes by level and aim provides a rationale for a more nuanced and meaningful evaluation process, which is attuned to the level of delivery and anticipated outcomes. For example, for the WP program at the University of Bath, the Level 3 (post-16) learning outcome for aim 1 was ‘e*nable students to investigate course and placement options, and social and leisure opportunities at the University of Bath and other universities*. The learning outcomes should be assessed through a mixed methods approach, including pre and post student questionnaires and post-event semi-structured reflective discussion with students. **Core argument:** A framework was developed for designing and evaluating WP activities which aim to develop the capitals and capacities that students need to effectively negotiate the transition from school to HE. By integrating a clear theoretical approach with practical learning outcomes, this framework provides a comprehensive structure for the planning, delivery and evaluation of WP programs.  |
| Holland, N., Houghton, A., Armstrong, J. & Mashiter, C. (2017). [Accessing and assessing appropriate widening participation data: An exploration of how data are used and by whom,](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0158037X.2017.1290596) *Studies in Continuing Education*, 39(2), 214–233.UKAnnotation written by Katie Osborne-CrowleyKeywords: *Widening participation, targeting, monitoring, evaluation, data* | **Context:** The Dearing Report (1997) incentivised higher education institutions (HEI) to ‘demonstrate a commitment to widening participation, and have in place a participation strategy, and mechanisms for monitoring progress’ and called for the ‘creation of a framework for data about lifelong learning, using unique student record number’. Currently in England, HEI’s wishing to charge ￡9000 or more in fees must produce an institutional access agreement that includes evidence of progress against institutionally set targets relating to WP recruitment, retention and progression. According to the ministerial guidance to OFFA, there needs to be a commitment to basing decisions about WP on evaluation and evidence. **Aim:**  To review the current use of data for monitoring and evaluating WP activities in the UK. **Theoretical frame:** None**Methodology:** Review of literature**Findings:** The review identified the followingcommon issues with WP data in the UK:*Policy change and changing definitions:* Changes in government policy have implications for the way categories of targets groups are constructed. Changing definitions can prevent longitudinal analysis and can be a frustration in terms of communicating criterion changes to schools and checking eligibility of participants, which has implications for the robustness of targeting. A further frustration is that gaining access to consistent government data about schools is hindered by frequent changes to the format of data sources and tools. *Assessing social class*: There are debates about the accuracy, relevance and robustness of many proxies used to indicate social class, such as parental occupation, household income and previous education experience. For example, the reliability of using postcode data as a proxy for disadvantage has been questioned due to specificities and anomalies associated with particular areas. There is also concern over the accuracy of data which relies on student or parent self-completion. Problems occur because the categories provided are open to interpretation and the guidance provided is typically brief. There is also considerable suspicion and resistance from parents to providing financial information, and this may particularly be the case for some ethnic and religious groups. For example, a review of Lancaster Medical School application process found that a high percentage of students withheld financial information, and that this was more pronounced for certain groups (eg students from Asian/Pakistani backgrounds). There are also privacy concerns around asking for financial information from students on evaluation forms where other students may see their answers. Finally, issues were identified with some students, parents and teachers ‘cheating the system’ by providing information they think would make them eligible for WP activities. *Assessing disability*: Disability data is often based on self-declaration during undergraduate application process with UCAS where students may choose not to disclose for a variety of reasons. Decisions about identifying with the disability label appear to be related to fear of discrimination, especially for students with mental health conditions. *Evaluation of WP activities*: A lack of consistency in evaluation approaches across the sector was identified. For instance, a review of feedback forms used for Lancaster University OFFA-funded projects revealed considerable diversity in the focus and wording of questions, preventing analysis at the institutional level. There is a growing interest in the sector in the use of qualitative data gathered through focus groups and interviews as well as creative new approaches such as photo elicitation or naturalistic data generated during activities. **Core argument**: Attempts to use data to establish casual links between WP activities and student awareness, aspiration, access and achievement are not straightforward. Collection of WP data is often dependent on individual self-disclosure and should thus be considered carefully for accuracy and the potential for misunderstanding and manipulation. The most pressing issues identified were the absence of a unique learner number recognised across different educational sectors and limitations associated with accuracy of different data sources resulting from a multiplicity of definitions, sensitivity around certain information and the reliability and relevance of claims based on data. While metrics based on numerical data are valuable, we should move to supplement these with more qualitative research for assessing the effectiveness of WP activities.  |
| Gale, T.; Sellar, S;. Parker, S.; Hattam, R.; Comber, B.; Tranter, D.; & Bills, D. (2010). *Interventions early in school as a means to improve higher education outcomes for disadvantaged (particularly low SES) students*, National Centre Student Equity in Higher Education, Adelaide.**Component A**AUS/UK/CAN/US/NZAnnotation written by Sally Baker  | **Context:** DEEWR-funded project: *Interventions early in school as a means to improve higher education outcomes for disadvantaged (particularly low SES) students*. Based on CSHE (2008) report that claims educational disadvantage = result of patterns that begin in the earliest years of schooling. International context: UK = high SES are 5-6 times more likely to enter HE, and is even more pronounced in Oxbridge/ Russell Group universities. Canada = experience of indigenous Canadians is similar to that of indigenous Australians (only 65% of ind.Can. graduate from high school, compared with 80% of non-ind. Youth), especially for those living on reservations. USA = low SES students more likely to attend community college (shorter courses, no RHD)**Aim:** To identify early interventions in schools, where early means before Year 11, primarily in Australia but also in other OECD countries. Asks these questions:1. In what ways might higher education institutions and schools collaborate on sustainable equity initiatives?
2. How might a program of longitudinal research studies be designed to provide evidence of impact of various strategies and initiatives?
3. How might the best practices of specific interventions be implemented in ongoing infrastructure and policy? (p.5)

**Theoretical frame:** Uses Anderson & Vervoon (1983): 4 As (conditions of entry) – availability, accessibility, achievement, aspiration as organizing heuristic to explore and discuss key examples of early equity interventions.**Methodology:** Literature review**Findings:** The review identifies four major barriers to student participation in higher education: (i) the restrictions of distance and time; (ii) the cost of higher education; (iii) non‐completion of schooling and low academic achievement; and (iv) student expectations, motivations and aspirations (all p.5)*Availability** The bond/ guaranteeing availability (scholarships/ guaranteed [early offer] places [ p.18
* The pledge [dangling a carrot – e.g. reduced fees/ free places – on successful completion of academic course/ demonstrating particular behaviours/standards – p.19
* The sponsored: reserving availability (sponsorship programs) – p.20

*Accessibility** Access via philanphropy (e.g. Smith Family/ World Vision) – p.24
* Access via example (expose/taster/ ‘warm’ information) – p.26
* Question of cost -p.27

*Achievement** Targeting the talented – p.30
* Targeting the academic middle – p.30
* Targeting national priority areas – p.33
* Targeting particular under-represented groups (holistic schooling/ targeted approach/ staff training/ holistic student support/ parental engagement/ intensive learning support/ school-based VET/ scholarships) – p.36
* Targeting the middle years – p.39

*Aspiration** Aspiration inspired by knowledge – p.43
* The taster: aspiration by experience – p.44
* The combo: aspiration inspired by collaborative networks – p.46

Discussion of Canada’s national interventions (p.52-56)Discussion of the USA’s national interventions (p.56-59)Discussion of the UK’s national interventions (p.59-63)Discussion of NZ’s national interventions (p.63-69)**Core argument:**“Interventions which foster higher participation are characteristically: (i) collaborative; (ii) early, long‐term and sustained; (iii) people‐rich; (iv) cohort‐based; (v) communicative and informative; (vi) experiential (familiarising students with university sites and how they operate); (vii) cognisant of difference; (viii) academically challenging; and (ix) financially supportive” (p.5). Little systematic evaluation conducted of initiatives. |
| Gale, T.; Sellar, S;. Parker, S.; Hattam, R.; Comber, B.; Tranter, D.; & Bills, D. (2010). *Interventions early in school as a means to improve higher education outcomes for disadvantaged (particularly low SES) students*, National Centre Student Equity in Higher Education, Adelaide.**Component B**AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker  | **Context:** DEEWR-funded project: *Interventions early in school as a means to improve higher education outcomes for disadvantaged (particularly low SES) students*.**Aim:** Presents analysis of survey data (26 universities responded = 70% of all Table A universities, reporting on 59 programs) – survey conducted 2008. No responses from TAS/NT**Methodology:** Online survey/ additional comments emailed directly to research team**Findings:** * Most initiatives aimed at Year 10
* Most common type = aspiration-raising; financial assistance = least common
* Many = one-off events (tasters/campus visits)
* Equity Units in universities = drive/fund large amount of activity (40%)
* Universities receive between $10,001 and $50,000 per program (most funded for 5 years +)
* 39% include 20+ schools; 27% involve 6-10 schools
* 31% of programs include 201-500 students
* Low SES = most common target group, then indigenous, then rural/remote
* Most programs were evaluated on basis of participant feedback
* Most common outcome = rise in student aspirations, then better familiarity with admissions/ enrolments/ procedures (all p.6)

Institutional Issues26 unis, 59 programs. Half of universities reported on one activity; 2 SA unis reported on 6 programs each. 36% direct responsibility of Equity Unit; some indicated collaborative activity with faculty/academics; 5% responsibility of Indigenous Unit. 12% = responsibility of Marketing Dept.70% of programs started after 2003; 20% started after 2008; 12% = anticipated (2009) start date; 5% started pre-200065% = university-initiated; 10% came from school/ 8% from federal gov’t dept./4% from community organisation. In-house, Equity Units = major funding source34% of programs = state-wide; 21% in particular area/region/ 35% in particular group of schools; 5% in particular schoolProgrammatic issuesMost common aim = build aspirations (19%) followed by familiarise students with university (17%), career planning (13%), subject-specific intervention (10%), finances/accommodation (12%). 25% focus on improving student achievement.Most common approach/strategy = school visit by uni staff or students or campus visits. Common approaches = mentoring/ working with parents/ uni students tutoring school students/ scholarships/ holiday programs.83% of programs are evaluated; 71% rely on participant perceptions. Very few programs have publicly-available evaluation reports (often scant in content and narrow in scope). Most evaluations (58%) undertaken by university staff, 33% by program partners, 22% of which by school partners. 9% = undertaken by external evaluators. Figure 15 (p.28 = overview of program outcomes)Qualitative data Analysis of program titles reveals many different themes, activities and relationships. Qualitative data suggests respondents have a strong commitment to equity work/outreach. Also provide overview of barriers/challenges.**Core argument:**Future research agenda could include: investigation of how equity policies are developed; best practices (initiatives and implementation); investigation into extent equity policy is marginalised/mainstreamed in unis; exploration of effect of equity policy on HE ‘market’; research into collaboration between schools and universities; more research into relationship between aspirations and attainment; exploration of long-term effects of outreach (longitudinal research); research-driven interventions to improve equity policies/practices (p.7)One more characteristic for successful outreach: research-driven interventions |
| Gale, T.; Sellar, S;. Parker, S.; Hattam, R.; Comber, B.; Tranter, D.; & Bills, D. (2010). *Interventions early in school as a means to improve higher education outcomes for disadvantaged (particularly low SES) students*, National Centre Student Equity in Higher Education, Adelaide.**Component C**AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker  | **Context:** **Aim:** To offer case studies of leading practice in early intervention/outreach in Australia:* Access and Success (Victoria University): Sam Sellar and Trevor Gale
* Uni‐Reach (Griffith University): Deborah Tranter
* Uni Connections (University of Wollongong, Shoalhaven Campus): Dianne Bills
* Koori Express (RMIT University): Robert Hattam
* Make it Reel (Sydney Summer School Program, University of Technology Sydney): Barbara Comber
* YuMi Deadly Maths (Queensland University of Technology): Sam Sellar and Trevor Gale
* Regional Schools Outreach Program (University of Ballarat): Dianne Bills

**Findings:** ‘Equity orientation’ evident in each of case studies is based on 3 characteristics: “researching ‘local knowledge’ and negotiating local interventions; unsettling deficit views; and building capacity in communities, schools and universities” (p.4)**Core argument:** There is no simple formula for designing successful outreach activities. Activities should involve consultation/partnership with range of stakeholders, secure funding, and “sophisticated equity orientation” (p.5) |
| Gale, T.; Sellar, S;. Parker, S.; Hattam, R.; Comber, B.; Tranter, D.; & Bills, D. (2010). *Interventions early in school as a means to improve higher education outcomes for disadvantaged (particularly low SES) students*, National Centre Student Equity in Higher Education, Adelaide.**Component D**AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker  | **Context:** Presentation on behalf of National VET Equity Advisory Council**Overview:**Design and Evaluation Matrix for Outreach (DEMO): summarised in Figure 1 (p.12)Groups 10 characteristics into four strategies (see Fig.1); program composition = “assessed in terms of a balance between the total number of program characteristics (depth) and the number of program strategies from which they are drawn (breadth)” (p.13) – see Fig.2 (p.14). Both axes measure the number of characteristics (1-10) rather than particular characteristics or strategies. “The strength of a program’s composition increases from Weak, through Moderate and Strong to Very Strong as its depth and breadth increases” (p.14). Weak = 3 or fewer characteristics from just one strategy; Moderate = 3 or more characteristics from at least 2 strategies; Strong = 4 or more characteristics from at least 3 strategies; Very Strong = 5 or more characteristics from all 4 strategies. Program effectiveness connected to ‘comprehensive equity orientation’: unsettling deficit views, researching ‘local’ knowledge, building capacity in communities, schools, universities.**Core argument:** Although research = unable to answer the question ‘how early is too early?’, long term appears to be important (typically beginning in middle school) |
| Group of Eight Australia (2010*).* [*Framework for Evaluation of Equity Initiatives*](https://go8.edu.au/oldcontent/sites/default/files/docs/go8equity_initiative_evalfwork_0.pdf). Prepared by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE), University of Melbourne.AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker  | **Context:** Commissioned work to support Go8’s equity strategy. **Aim:** To help Go8 universities to evaluate efficacy of equity initiatives/ interventions. To provide a range of methods and methodological complexities**Overview**: The equity initiatives included in the report are classified into “three conceptually distinct areas” within the framework: • \_access and participation; • \_attainment and achievement; and • \_graduate outcomes” (p.3)Outlines Go8’s responsibilities and objectives with regard to equity initiatives (p.4)Discusses complexity of evaluation: definition/ measurement issues (e.g. postcode method for ascertaining SES); interdependence of equity initiatives (how to identify ‘what works’ and why, within context); importance of context (impossibility of ‘proper control’); cost and intensity (“effectiveness (or perhaps efficiency) determinations should take into account the resource intensity required to make gains”, p.6); evaluation/continuous improvement (need to ensure connections between evaluation and ongoing development); academic achievement (evaluation depends on conceptions of academic standards/ achievements not decided by universities).Chapter 3: key indicators of overall equity performanceChapter 4: guides for evaluating effectiveness:Access & ParticipationA) Long-term relationships with target communities (p.13)B) Long-term relationships with target schools (p.14)C) Student selection (p.15)Attainment & AchievementD) Orientation/ transition (p.16)E) Course structure/ curriculum design (p.17)F) Learning experiences (p.18)G) Student services (p.19)Graduate OutcomesH) Pathways to further study (p.20)I) Employment (p.21) |
| Lamb, S.; Jackson, J.; Walstab, A.; & Huo, S. (2015). [*Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out*](http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Educational-opportunity-in-Australia-2015-Who-succeeds-and-who-misses-out-19Nov15.pdf)*.* Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, for the Mitchell Institute, Melbourne: Mitchell Institute.AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker  | **Context:** Examines notion of Australia as a fair and egalitarian society through education system in modern times.**Aim:** To draw together information on the opportunities being provided to young Australians as they negotiate the various stages of education and training (Executive Summary, p.iii). Education conceived as four milestones: early years (children who as ‘developmentally ready’ at start of school), middle years (Year 7 children), senior school years (completers of HSC/ Year 12), early adulthood (24 year olds in education, training or work) = measured across five domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills.**Methodology:** Statistical/ quantitative analysis**Findings:** * On average, 78% of students ‘succeed at milestones’ and a quarter do not.
* Boys are more likely than girls to miss milestones (by 1.82 times) – this is largely due to social and emotional dimensions of readiness
* Indigenous students are 2.07 times more likely to miss out on milestones
* Low SES students = 2.08 times more likely to miss out on milestones (mostly in terms of school readiness) = strongest effect

At each milestone, children are succeeding but some are missing out: “insufficiently prepared to take on the challenges of the following stages of their lives” (Executive Summary, p.iii). Data suggests that 6 out of 10 children start with academic and social skills needed at all four milestones. Approximately 10% are not developmentally ready and remain behind in all milestones = these people are “not gaining the preparation needed to take up later opportunities in life” (p.iii). 1/6 students fall behind somewhere after Year 7 and fail to complete Year 12, and a similar proportion are not fully engaged in work or education at 24. Disadvantage = significant: “Success at each stage varies by Indigenous status, language background, region and gender, and markedly by the socio-economic status (SES) of students” (p.iv). However, students can recover ground (but this is easier for high SES students).*Early years** Learners = more likely to meet milestones the earlier they engage with education system
* Communities with higher levels of children who do not meet milestones tend to have lower quality early childhood education and then schools with ‘low standards of performance’

*Middle years** According to NAPLAN data, 28.4% of learners have not developed ‘core skills’
* Boys are more likely to be below benchmark with reading but more likely than girls to meet numeracy benchmark
* By Year 7, Indigenous learners = 2.32 times less likely to meet milestone
* Children whose parents did not complete Year 12 = 3.72 times more likely to miss out. Plus low SES students = more likely to go into government school
* Learners behind at Year 7 milestone = lower levels of self-efficacy

*Senior school** 26% of young people do not complete Year 12/ Cert III equivalent by age 19
* This can partly be explained by geographic/ remoteness (especially location)/ population differences: “
* Remote and very remote communities have high numbers of young people not completing – 56.6 per cent and 43.6 per cent respectively” (p.vi)
* SES = very significant. 40% of lowest SES quartile do not complete Year 12 or equivalent; similar figure for Indigenous – all in comparison
* Girls = more likely to complete school
* LBOTE = more likely to complete school but with average lower educational attainment – but differences between language groups (Southeast Asian languages = higher achievers)
* Only 56% of young people get an ATAR

*Early adulthood** 24% = not fully engaged in education or work; “This represents a significant loss of economic opportunity for the nation as well as vulnerability for the young people themselves” (p.vii)
* Young people missing out at this point = disproportionately female, low SES, from regional and remote locations and Indigenous.
* Not completing Year 12= good indictor of not achieving later outcomes
* University = very important for making transition from school
* 50% of women enroll in university compared with 40% of males
* SES = important: 2/3 high SES go to university compared to ¼ of low SES students; urban students = more likely than regional/remote
* By 24, 50% of young Australians = enroll in VET; 36% complete studies
* VET and apprenticeships = important pathway for early school leavers

**Core argument:** No longitudinal tracking data to make comparisons across lifecourse or with US data.“The challenge of helping young people who are falling behind to catch up and take advantage of opportunities over later stages is no easy task, because those missing out are far more likely to have disadvantaged backgrounds” (p.90).Need to ensure better quality of early childcare for low SES areas = currently ‘game of chance’ because it serves needs of parents rather than meeting right of child to learn and be supportedAt school, governments should fund accordingly to ameliorate intergenerational disadvantage – funding increases have been targeted disproportionately at non-government schools. Policies need to consider contextual/ environmental factors.“Australian school leavers are caught in a difficult position, between an increasingly constrained labour market, which pushes young learners (especially women, who have lower uptake of apprenticeships) towards tertiary education, and competitive thresholds for university entrance. The squeeze at this critical transition point has severe consequences for learners who have not stayed on track throughout their schooling, and who are thereby disadvantaged in relation to their peers in accessing tertiary study and employment” (p.92). |
| Naylor, R. (2014). [*Understanding Evaluation for Equity Programs: A Guide to Effective Program Evaluation*.](https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/understanding-evaluation-for-equity-programs-a-guide-to-effective-program-evaluation/) Centre for the Study of Higher Education: The University of MelbourneAUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker  | **Context:** NCSEHE-funded research. Designed to help equity practitioners to develop effective evaluation strategies (initial introduction rather than definitive guide). Works from initial position that “Equity in higher education is based on the idea that those with the capability and desire to attend university should be able to, and that staff and students should work in an inclusive and supportive environment, regardless of their backgrounds” (p.5). Also, based on premise that good practice = contributes to evidence base and intuition is not sufficient to decide ‘what works’.**Aim:** To offer evaluative framework for equity practice/practitioners**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** **Framework:** 4 steps: establish criteria, construct standards, measure performance and compare against standards, synthesis and integrate evidence into ‘a judgement of worth’**.** Every program needs “clear, unambiguous and measurable aims and objectives” (p.2), which need to be aligned with evaluation methodology, methods and evidence (to be) gathered. Evaluation (form/ questions asked) will change through the lifetime of the program. Offers 3 questions to guide practice:1. Are our programs consistent with our strategic objectives (institutional or government, as well as program goals) in relation to equity and social inclusion?2. Are our programs achieving the desired outcomes?3. Do any aspects of our programs need improvement? (p.5)Need to use SMART objectives**Core argument:** Evaluation should be everyday business |
| Naylor, R.; Baik, C.; & James, R. (2013). [*Developing a Critical Interventions Framework for advancing equity in Australian higher education*](https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Critical-Interventions-Framework-20-August-2013.pdf)*.* Melbourne: Centre for the Study of Higher Education.AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker  | **Aim:** To add to the evidence base – to help build a stronger platform for research and evaluation**Context:** Critical Interventions Framework (CIF) was designed “to assist in advancing equity in higher education” (p.5). Report includes – summary of patterns of access and participation post-Bradley Review, literature review, typology of equity initiatives (CIF), summary of plausibility and evidence base for initiatives in CIF, broad summary of national patterns of equity initiatives (analysis of HEPPP reports) against CIF.Access/Participation since Bradley Review: uncapping system (demand-driven system) “may have been the single most significant factor in the rising numbers of students from equity target groups who have been admitted to higher education” (p.5), but rise in numbers = “across the board”, meaning that proportional representation has not changed. **HEPPP** funding has allowed “institutions, often working in partnerships, to influence particular key points in the student ‘life cycle’ to encourage more students from equity target groups to, among other things, consider higher education to be a possibility for them, to build academic attainment and to be more fully conversant with the opportunities available to them” (p.6). *Key issues*Student share (1.0 = parity): * low SES = 0.62
* indigenous = 0.55
* remote = 0.39

High levels of differentiation between institutions (% of low SES)Assumptions that changing student profile = drop in quality/ retention. Retention/success is generally the same (96% of domestic students overall) but this is not the case for indigenous (85% retention; 81% success) or remote students (91% retention; 94% success).CIF typology (Fig. 1.1): 1) plausibility or theoretical case for types of equity initiatives based on timing and method; 2) available evidence on effectiveness; 3) analysis of HEPPP reportsTypology “derived from widespread assumptions about potential barriers or inhibitors for low SES students rather than a comprehensive empirical conception of the terrain, for none exists” (p.9). Literature suggests there are 5 broad periods in a student’s life cycle: a) prior to seeking access, b) at point of selection/admissions, c) during transition, d) during studies, e) post-completion period of finding work. Outreach is core of initiatives for aspiration-raising but there is little effectiveness. Literature points to school performance/ low SES so there is “an argument for implementing early initiatives aimed at improving students’ academic achievement and year 12 retention rates; scholarships/ financial support are important but cost might not be the only barrier to participation. Literature strongly supports idea that transition/orientation initiatives are valuable. Evidence suggests that low SES students less likely to make use of support services – better/ more extensive support services doesn’t necessarily increase retention.*Prior to starting HE* – discussion of Year 12 (p.15); aspirations (p.16); VET-HE (p.17)*Selection/ Admissions* – scholarships and grants (p.18-9)*During transition* – transition/ transition programs (p.19-20*During studies –* effective factors in successful completion for low SES, childcare, mature age, not seeking/using support servicesp.21-2**Methodology:** Draws on gov’t (DIIRSRTE) data to examine % representation. Two methods use for determining low SES: postcode and census collection districts (CD measure) = see page 31-2. Examined 38 HEPPP reports for 2011**Findings:** Data analysis shows that population parity was still far off in 2011 (disability = 5.07 std pop v. 10.6% Aus pop; indigenous = = 1.38 std pop v. 2.5% Aus pop; NESB = = 3.1 std pop v. 3.8% Aus pop; WINTA = = 17.47 std pop v. 50.6% Aus pop; low SES = = 16.76 std pop v. 25% Aus pop; Regional = 18.63 std pop v. 29% Aus pop; Remote = 0.91 std pop v. 2.3% Aus pop**).** Studentsfrom equity groups “are almost as likely to successfully complete their studies as any other student” (p.25) – but see lower retention and success rates of indigenous students and attrition rates of remote students, especially in Year 1. Chapter 4: CIF and evidence/ plausibility table. Chapter 5: Distribution of HEPPP against CIF. 49.3% of HEPPP = pre-entry initiatives; 34.5% on post-entry and 16.2% on costs associated with management of equity programs. Highest % of HEPPP funding spent on provision of student services, scholarships and later-year outreach to schools. Lowest % was spent on marketing, school curriculum enhancement and adult ed outreach |
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| Palmero, J.; Marr, D.; Oriel, J.; Arthur, J.; & Johnston, D. (2012). [Tracking student success: Using an action learning approach to better understand the](https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Tracking-Student-Success%3A-Using-an-Action-Learning-Palermo-Marr/dca5e2c2ffe3e19a0bc1d71c5319618c96d185ef)[how, what, where and why](https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Tracking-Student-Success%3A-Using-an-Action-Learning-Palermo-Marr/dca5e2c2ffe3e19a0bc1d71c5319618c96d185ef), *Journal of Institutional Research,* 17(1), 39–50.AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker Keywords: *participation and access, equity groups, cohort tracking, student progress* | **Context:** ALTC-funded research on tracking student success (Deakin & Southern Cross & AAIR). Set in post-Bradley context; makes argument that HEPPP necessitates new evaluation methods to monitor and track students. In project described, tracking = “to identify those factors in their life that impede or ‘boost’ academic excellence” (p.40)**Aim:** To present first phase of longitudinal research that examines how Deakin and SCU approach student tracking, systems used and lessons learnt**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Action learning methodology and comparative case studies. Team has developed a cohort tracking system over 5 years [action research cycle model = similar to model presented in Naylor, 2015]**Findings:** Describes process for design tracking system, based on 3 elements: * Considering criteria that enable and/or inhibit the sustainability of student tracking over time
* Learning through international and shared practice
* Learning through research (p.42).

System designed but team mindful of differences between campuses and institutions. Two different approaches taken. Teams collecting baseline data via key informant interviews + observations. Both universities had existing programs/ intentions to track students from diverse backgrounds (SCU) and low SES backgrounds (Deakin) as part of core equity work – both related to student data systems. SCU = interested in collecting data via Course Management System (based on relationship between activity data and student success). Deakin = interested in data collection based on pre-entry student characteristics (SES/ FiF/ ATAR) in partnership with local schools/colleges. SCU = intend to develop “predictive model that will be able to identify particular cohorts of students who may be at risk and the type of risks to which they may be susceptible” (p.48)**Core argument:** Tracking students = important because “By investigating methodologies that more effectively track student cohorts, this study will provide longitudinal and empirical evidence for the effect of current strategies to address educational disadvantage and recommendations for how to more effectively track performance into the future” (p.48). |
| Raven, N. (2015). [Evaluating the long-term impact of widening participation interventions: the potential of the life story interview](https://novaojs.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/23/63), *International Studies in Widening Participation*, 2(1), 43–55.UKAnnotated by Katie Osborne-CrowleyKeywords: *life story interview, qualitative, decision making* | **Context:** Life story interviewing is a method intended to generate rich, narrative data and has been used to explore social and cultural issues impacting upon individuals lives, including education. However, it is relatively new to the widening participation literature.**Aim:** To assess the case for adoption of this approach.**Method:** Employing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of the method. Reporting on a small pilot study conducted with 3 undergraduates who had participated in various WP activities. **Findings:** *Strengths:* Insights into students ‘learner journey’, including their educational experiences going back to early childhood and the influences that informed their progression to HE. Evidence gathered from the pilot study identified the potential for developing new outreach activities. *Weaknesses:* The time and resources to conduct life story interviews (between 60-90 minutes per student). Samples sizes are small – raising issues of generalisability of findings. Quality of data was dependent on ability of researcher to facilitate (same with all qual methods but semi-structured interviews are more reliant on interviewer skill than structured interviews). Method is dependent on the student being able to remember experiences that sometimes happened years earlier. *Opportunities:* Most WP evaluation uses student pre and post surveys which is limited in demonstrating impact. Calls for qualitative studies which explore learner journeys and more deeply understand decision making process around HE.*Threats:* Principle threat to adoption of this method is the orthodox which places a premium on quant methods, based on the idea that numerical evidence is more persuasive and objective.**Core argument:** Qualitative analysis is better equipped to understand the complexity of engagement with WP and evolving decisions about HE. Life story interviews, while time intensive, are a good compliment to quantitative data in their ability to examine this complexity.  |
| Reed, R.; King, A.; & Whiteford, G. (2015). [Re-conceptualising sustainable widening participation: evaluation, collaboration and evolution](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07294360.2014.956692?journalCode=cher20), *Higher Education Research & Development,* 34(2), 383–396.AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker Keywords: *diversity, equity, indigenous, media studies, mentoring, widening participation* | **Context:** Explores future of equity-based initiatives (access and participation-focused), using mentorship program for Indigenous students in Media Studies at MQ. Mentoring program = HEPPP-funded and targeted at CALD students. Offers overview of European efforts/ commitments to WP (p.384). Authors question the generalised approach taken by governments (block funding) because it asks “universities to mediate the tension between the need for continuing investment in teaching and research activities, and diverting funding to support students from traditionally under-represented backgrounds” (p.385). Macquarie’s Media Mentorship program = partnership between MQ and SBS – originally for NESB but then extended to Indigenous students. Mentoring program = focused on transition and success, diversification, visibility. **Aim:** To draw from evaluation of Macquarie’s Media Mentorship program**Methodology:** Critical evaluation + essay**Findings:** Evaluation of Macquarie’s Media Mentorship program suggested that it had met the first aim (transition and support): increased capacity, increased confidence and sense of belonging, increased motivation and increased social capital + 100% retention rate. 3 components that could be applied more broadly to WP work: evaluation, cross-sectoral collaboration and conceptual evolution.*Evaluation*: has created a “reflective space in which evaluators and programme facilitators have worked together to translate research findings into programme development” (p.387). Authors make the case that dissemination of evaluation helps to maintain stakeholder interest; “evaluation serves as a critical tool for evidence-based advocacy” (p.387). But disseminators of evaluation needs to be aware of political climate and sensitive to contextual lived student experience. Authors notes that critical sociological work = useful for contestation but not for translating into the kinds of results that funders respond to: “In some sense the shift towards critical and constructivist epistemologies means social science research is at its most useful when deployed to critique and contest settled orthodoxies and status quos. It works less well when asked to translate what is in essence a ‘best-fit’ interpretive exercise into the kinds of ‘scientific facts’ on which governments can stake billions of dollars of taxpayers’ money” (p.388).*Collaboration*: Macquarie Media Mentorship = form of WiL. Many benefits include: better understandings of future careers in media, additional funding/resources offered. To be successful, program needs to align with goals of all partners. Authors note risks in top-down organisations (possible disconnects between managers and operational staff).*Conceptual evolution*: “widening participation should not only adapt to political vicissitudes, but seek to actively bridge them, thereby retaining a constancy of purpose by engaging more deeply with non-political actors in civil society” – should make widening participation “everyone’s business” (p.391). WP should be weaved into other policy/political agendas to broaden scope and possibilities (e.g. multicultural agenda) and with interests oflobby and advocacy groups, charities, private and public industries or political campaigns.**Core argument:** It’s time for WP “to embark on a fundamental reappraisal of its function in society” (p.393).Argue for 1) more evaluation for program development and to build evidence base, 2) need more cross-sectoral collaboration, 3) should align widening participation with other societal goals |
| Robinson-Armstrong, A., King, D., Killoran, D., & Fissinger, M. X. (2009). [The Equity Scorecard: An Effective Tool for Assessing Diversity Initiatives,](https://web.b.ebscohost.com/abstract?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=14479532&AN=37130875&h=tLuiZq9BfuA6aEY6CONSFhg5nBvxuo%2fHD3B%2b2WSOT8qo7EhPwELTywTLDit8lRdl4rT8MNSGBQxK1AoDkzh94A%3d%3d&crl=f&resultNs=AdminWebAuth&resultLocal=ErrCrlNotAuth&crlhashurl=login.aspx%3fdirect%3dtrue%26profile%3dehost%26scope%3dsite%26authtype%3dcrawler%26jrnl%3d14479532%26AN%3d37130875)*International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities & Nations*, 8(6), 31–39.USAnnotation written by Katie Osborne-Crowley | **Context:** The Equity Scorecard is a diversity assessment tool designed to foster institutional change in higher education by helping to close the achievement gap for historically underrepresented students. It focuses attention not on how students can change to meet the rigors of college but instead on institutional change. The Scorecard’s premise is simple and strategic; members of the campus community use established institutional data to measure student educational outcomes and assess factors that influence those outcomes and develop self-generated corrective strategies. It helps institutions monitor progress in four areas: access, retention, excellence, and institutional viability using both macro-measures (large-scale picture of the institution) and micro-measures (examining specific trends and student outcomes at a more fine-grained level). After examining selected micro measures to determine the success and educational gaps in institutional units or programs, campuses should move to the next stage which involves defining goals and improvement targets. **Aim:** To determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the Equity Scorecard at Loyola Marymount University (USA). **Findings:** Several structural, attitudinal and cultural components of institutional transformation, which did not exist prior to implementation of the Scorecard, were now present in the campus community. Examples are provided.**Core argument:** The Equity Scorecard is one of the most effective assessment tools available to help institutions of higher education achieve educational equity. The Scorecard raised the level of consciousness about educational equity and its relation to academic excellence and provided the evidence necessary to support institutional change.  |
| Thomas, L. (2000). [“Bums on Seats” or “Listening to Voices”: evaluating widening participation initiatives using participatory action research](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/713695716), *Studies in Continuing Education,* 22(1), 95–113.UKAnnotation written by Sally Baker  | **Context:** Relatively new context of WP in English/ UK higher education; “The access movement needs to be supported by research, evaluation and dissemination, and not just founded on good intentions and individual creativity.otherwise there will be good (and bad) re-inventions of the wheel” (p.95). Argues that evaluation = undefined and multiple understandings exist – Thomas explicitly resists the ‘positivist hegemony’ of quantitative measurement approaches**Aim:** To “outline the importance and process of evaluation research in the widening participation agenda” (abstract); to argue for ‘formative’ evaluation approaches that focus on processes rather than measurement of inputs and outputs.**Methodology:** Participatory Action Research (PAR): “A participatory action research (PAR) approach that goes beyond simply understanding and reporting what is happening, but evaluation research that has an impact on practice and changes people’s lives” (p.99). PAR = takes place in ‘the real world’, starting from lived issues and involving all stakeholders. “The aim of the research is for practical outcomes to be achieved, so there is an intimate link between research and action” (p.100). PAR = developmental process, thus facilitating lens on processes rather than input and output. PAR recognizes local context/ ‘unique features’ of each project/ individual characteristics of local cohort. Need to identify internal and external inputs. Range of methods can be used to ‘listen to voices’. PAR = holistic approach.Offers case study of using PAR**Core argument about PAR for evaluating WP:** PAR offers local solutions for local problems, promotes learning and engagement, , encourages enthusiasm, ownership and sustainability, promotes active citizenship and stakeholder society, bridges gaps between theoretical/ academic knowledge and experiences of community members and practitioners. Limitations = gaining entry/ trust, people choose not to participate, conflicts of interest, validity as academic method. |
| Walton, T. & Carrillo-Higueras, F. (2019). [Evaluating the effectiveness of university widening participation activities in rural Australia,](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02602938.2018.1538446?journalCode=caeh20) *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 44(5), 799–819.AUSAnnotation written by Katie Osborne-CrowleyKeywords: *Widening participation, outreach effectiveness, multilevel modelling, mixed-methods, rural students, Australia* | **Context:** School students in rural areas of Australia have historically accessed HE at lower rates than students from metropolitan areas, and this has been linked to an attainment gap. The scale of outreach evaluation is often limited to single institutions, which means that isolating the effectiveness of certain activities is easily conflated with the influence of other variables. Further, the amount of quantitative survey data needed to adequately quantify success is often difficult to achieve in rural Australian contexts. Reporting increases in enrolment rates for students who have attended outreach activities is not sufficient evidence. **Aim:** To determine the influence of university-run rural outreach in NSW on progression to university.**Theoretical frame:** None**Methodology:** Mixed methods, including quantitative statistical multi-level growth modelling predicting ATAR eligibility as well as applications, offers and enrolments to university from outreach engagement in schools. This quantitative analysis was supported by qualitative narrative analysis and 35 semi-structured in-depth interviews with schoolteachers. **Findings:** On-campus experience programs were the most common outreach activity reported and were thought of as having the most impact by practitioners. Generally, teachers held outreach programs in very high regard. Despite this, though, the quantitative analysis showed that the total impact of outreach in NSW (the impact of all outreach themes combined) did not significantly predict any outcomes (ATAR eligibility, application, offers and enrolments in university). In fact, the only outreach theme to significantly predict an outcome were programs to ‘boost parental and/or community involvement and support’, which had a significant positive effect on number of university enrolments. This was despite that only three teachers though having familial or community support was the best source of student motivation for university attainment. Instead, teachers cited financial issues and physical distance to a university, or other distance-related factors such as being separated from family and friends, as the biggest barriers to university attainment. Further, despite a general positivity towards outreach programs, teachers did express uncertainty that the programs had a lasting effect on students’ decision to progress to university, as supported by the quantitative results. **Core argument:** Despite general positive regard for rural outreach programs among rural schoolteachers, quantitative modelling showed that overall, outreach programs did not predict ATAR eligibility, or applications, offers or enrolments to university. The authors argue that the fond opinion of outreach programs among teachers may stem from staffing issues commonly experienced in rural Australian schools. Further, the authors suggest that outreach programs being viewed as university marketing strategy may hinder their effectiveness. Other problems with such programs may be in presuming low aspirations among students or in challenging or imposing on students’ cultural identities, which may be very different from those of the outreach practitioners. As such, outreach messages may contain paternalistic, colonial and neoliberal undercurrents interpreted as irrelevant by their target audiences.  |
| Wilkens, P. & de Vries, J. (2014). [*Monitoring and Evaluation of Higher Education Equity Initiatives: Expert Summary 01/2014*](https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Expert-Summary-Monitoring-and-Evaluation-Final.pdf). National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education: Curtin University.AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker  | **Context:** Evaluation of Outreach, Access, Support initiatives to improve student equity and social inclusion**Aim:** Identifies key issues to assist practitioners – commissioning/planning/starting evaluations of equity initiatives**Core argument:**Evaluation in general: “requires systematic, rigorous and objective approaches to answer specific questions about how well initiatives and strategies are working” (p.1). Evaluation should be: scoped, planned, reported on. Need clarity on objectives. Evaluations = address performance at different levels of ‘performance hierarchy’ (inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, impacts). Evaluation should address each individual objective.Equity evaluations: needs conceptual frameworks; clear identification of equity groups in planning stages should be matched in monitoring/evaluation; engaging in research analysis can help to differentiate disadvantaged students and see who benefits from interventionsStudent equity evaluations: equity-focused initiatives grouped as outreach, access, support; understanding those who do/don’t enroll is important; contribution analysis could enable the significance/ interplay of participation, retention and success; Group of Eight proposed evaluation framework for equity initiatives.Offers list of references relating to evaluation. |