### Reviews of Equity/ Widening Participation in Australia

Literature review

There is a body of work that traces the history, evolution and development of equity in Australian higher education policy. The work of Gale & Tranter (2011) was very useful in this regard, presenting a historic overview of Australian higher education through the lens of equity/ social justice as well as tracing how higher policy is shaped by (and shapes) social and economic drivers, policies and social justice intentions. Their exploration of the evolution of Australian higher education highlights how little is known about higher education prior to World War II, other than noting the establishment of state capital universities from 1850 (the University of Sydney) onwards. There has been a marked increase in the number of students entering higher education, growing from 15,600 students studying in seven universities in 1945 to 1,373, 230 students (domestic and international) in 2014 (Australian Government, 2016). There have been several policy drivers behind these increased numbers, which can broadly be categorised under neoliberal and social justice imperatives.

However, as discussed later, the growth in student numbers – and the project of widening participation – has been achieved through increases in both under-represented student groups and from the ‘traditional’ audience of higher education – the middle and upper classes. According to Gale & Tranter (2011), this has resulted in a situation whereby “equity in higher education has now become as much a matter of economic necessity as a matter of social justice” (p.32). The ties between education and the economy were first made explicit in the Dawkins reforms of the late 1980s, which “injected neoliberal logic into every sector of the education system” (Connell, 2013b: 104). The two major advances in the Dawkins reforms - the creation of the unified system (resulting from the merging of universities and Colleges of Advanced Education) and the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) – foregrounded the individual benefits of higher education as a way of justifying the passing part of the financial responsibility for funding higher education to the student. As Gale & Tranter (2011) surmise, the “private gains of higher education became paramount in policy discourse, replacing the previous emphasis on the overall public good” (p.36). This opened space for neoliberal discourses and practices to spread throughout the sector, with the subsequent Howard government making further cuts to public spending (in the form of a reduced threshold and increased student contributions) on the basis that both industry and individuals profited (see Marginson, 2004 for detailed discussion). The market-gain arguments for diminishing public contribution to the project of higher education have continued through subsequent governments to the present day.

However, despite neoliberal discourses and the push of responsibility to the individual proliferating over nearly three decades, the focus on equity and widening participation has remained constant, albeit in part because of the economic imperative to widen participation to contribute to Australia’s future economic growth and productivity. The Dawkins reforms may have opened the door to the neoliberal forces that have continued to shape higher education for over two decades, but they also formally identified six social groups were/are under-represented in university study[[1]](#footnote-1). This identification named, and therefore inscribed in policy and funding, a need to focus attention of opening access (as opposed to increasing numbers) for groups who had been traditionally less likely to seek entrance to higher education. However, since their inscription in policy in 1990, these six equity groups have remained ‘the’ equity groups, albeit with a narrowed focus to three groups (low SES, Indigenous and rural and remote students), on the basis that women, NESB and people with disabilities had showed improved participation rates by 2002. Other ‘equity’ groups have also been suggested, for example men in non-traditional areas was a suggested group in the Nelson review of 2002; however, as Harvey, Andrewartha & McNamara (2015) note, “Remarkably, there has been little change to the groups in the 25 years since they were first canvassed” (p.185). This, it is argued, ill-reflects the changing needs and profile of an increasingly diverse and multicultural Australian society. Coates & Krause (2005) examined the options for identifying new equity groups based on a review of ten years of equity data and found that the existing ways of collecting data were prohibitive for identifying new groups. They found that summative and diagnostic roles of performance indicators (which produce a picture of performance of higher education) are often in conflict, as the need for generalisability at the national/systemic level does not always help institutions to be locally responsive and vice versa.

In their 2015 paper, Whitty & Clements (2015) examine efforts to widen access to higher education in the UK and Australia from the dual lenses of quantitative and qualitative inequality. Quantitative inequality examines inequity at the level of how participation and access are measured, with ‘Maximally Maintained Inequality’ leading to saturation from ‘traditional’ sources of students [see also, Pitman, 2015; Gidley et al. 2010). ‘Qualitative inequality’, on the other hand, can be explained by the theory of ‘Effectively Maintained Inequality’, whereby the more privileged look for new ways to enhance advantage (see also the argument made by Marginson, 2004, 2011 about wealthy Australians seeking to maintain their positional advantage by attending high ranking foreign universities). Gale & Parker (2013) take a similar view, arguing that despite equity being on the agenda for two decades, questions are still “emerging about its usefulness in pursuing social justice in HE into the future. The concerns are with both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of equity” (p.59)

An alternative approach to reviewing equity in higher education takes a different approach.

Lamb et al. (2015) examined the notion of Australia as a fair and egalitarian society through the opportunities available to different social groups at four milestones in contemporary education system. The milestones used as points of measurement are: early years (children who as ‘developmentally ready’ at start of school), middle years (Year 7 children), senior school years (completers of HSC/ Year 12), and early adulthood (24 year olds in education, training or work). Lamb et al. (2015) measured opportunities across five domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills. The major findings include the figure that, on average, 78% of students ‘succeed at milestones’, meaning a quarter do not, with boys more likely than girls to miss milestones (by 1.82 times). In terms of opportunities by equity groups, Indigenous students are 2.07 times more likely to miss out on milestones and low SES students are 2.08 times more likely to miss out on milestones. The authors attribute these sizeable differences to school readiness in the first milestone, and call for better quality of early childcare for low SES areas so as to address the opportunity gaps for low SES and Indigenous communities. Lamb et al. (2015) describe current childcare provision as a ‘game of chance’ because it serves needs of parents rather than meeting the rights of the child to learn and be supported. Moreover, Lamb et al. argue that governments should fund public schooling accordingly to ameliorate intergenerational disadvantage and policies need to consider contextual/ environmental factors.

**References**

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**Equity and Higher Education Annotated Bibliography Series**

**Reviews of Equity/ Widening Participation and Higher Education**

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| **Citation** | **Annotation** |
| 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.  AUS  Annotation 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 Football  UWS 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) |
| Butcher, J.; Corfield, R. & Rose-Adams, J. (2012). [Contextualised approaches to widening participation: a comparative case study of two UK universities](http://oro.open.ac.uk/33147/), *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 13(SI,: 51–70.  UK  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords**:** *strategy; discipline; leadership; policy; practice; comparative.* | **Context:** Examines staff perspectives on WP from two different UK universities (Northampton = post-1992 and OU = distance/open university). WP in UK = traced back to Robbins Report (1963) but has been particularly dominant in preceding 15 years (New Labour gov’t). Equity groups [term not used in paper] in UK = BME, students with disabilities, ‘disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds’, FinF, OOHC, part-time, non-traditional qualifications. New universities in particular attracted higher funding during New Labour years; post-Conservative-Liberal gov’t, funding = cut (e.g. EMA, increased student fees). Paper based on hypothesis that leadership perspectives on WP = “likely to be major determinants affecting how WP is conceptualised and translated into practice as part of the university’s mission” (p.53).  University of Northampton = WP university; new VC in 2010 with strategic business plan to reposition uni in terms of research performance/capacity.  Open University = open access policy (no entrance requirements); majority of students = p/t and 70% also work f/t. OU student population mirrored demographic profile of UK in 2010. OU also got new VC (in 2009) with mission to expand more into international markets and move more to online environments  **Aim:** To report research that interviewed senior staff members on personal perspectives of “a passing ‘golden age’ of WP, in which generous resources flowed in support of a national strategy, and an emerging ‘austere’ age in which the architecture underpinning WP is being drastically dismantled and a very different business model of student fees is being introduced” (p.53)  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Research conducted in 2011 (between two major policy moments: acceptance that student fees could rise and HEFCE’s ‘drastic cuts’ to teaching grants). ‘Senior stakeholder interview methodology’ used to study policy effects (from national/HEFCE to institutional policy), grounded in context of economic, political and organisational forces. Staff interviewed = VC, PVC and Deans of schools at Northampton (x8) and Unit Directors in OU (national, regional, WP, student services and Diversity and Equality staff; x9)  **Findings:**  Literature review illuminates 4 ‘connecting terms’ with WP: diversity (synonymously used with WP), inclusion (used predominantly with disability in UK), equality (legislative context and equity (Australian context; see p.55) – see Thomas et al.’s (2010) analysis of themes in 129 institutional WP Strategic Assessments.  Widening Participation as conflicted discourse = number of different conceptualisations suggest sense of confusion, sometimes at level of mixing policy and personal/values-driven discourses (strategically?). Staff in professional areas = more definitively either pragmatic (about recruitment) or principled (based on ideas about social justice). Many participants articulated a sense of not knowing what WP is, particularly with regard to public phrases such as ‘fair access’ and ‘social mobility’. For OU, WP = umbrella term to describe supporting students and widening access = focused on generating higher student numbers – but lack of central clarity (due in part to differentiated UK context). WP = “a conflicted discourse, an educational space in which contradictory impulses around pre-entry aspiration-raising and university-based support for learning are still not embedded in any coherent way into the strategic approach to WP” (p.61)  Widening participation = conceptualised and delivered in disciplines = At Northampton, WP = organised/conceived/ delivered at school level = interviews illustrated “clear customisation of the WP agenda” (p.62), e.g. activities based on gender imbalance; focus on access to Arts courses (less BME students). Preparedness of WP students = continuing challenge. All Deans identified the preparedness of some WP students for HE as a continuing challenge. (p.62) – issues with self-referral to generic support (less confidence= disadvantage) – WP funding = insufficient to support all interventions ideally needed. Many participants identified issues with greater inclusivity in curriculum = related to dominance of “anglocentricity and ethnocentricity” (p.63) and lack of diversity in staff.  Impact of WP: acknowledgement of difficulty of measuring impact; “the actual impact may be difficult to measure unequivocally because of the complexity of educational, economic, social and cultural factors involved, their interplay, and the long timeframes involved” (p.64). Recognition of individual journeys (rather than homogenous view of WP students) = suggests a “values-informed leadership role for universities in making social mobility a reality” (p.65). Interviewees recognised that quant metrics = important but is also important to include qualitative, student-centred measurements.  Danger of WP = becoming ‘tired cliché’ – Northampton changed name of WP department to ‘Access and Achievement’; similar for OU: changed to ‘Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum’  **Core argument:** Research highlights shifting notions of WP as universities changed strategic plans/ vision/ direction. Tensions exist between broad national target measurements and more student-centred measures. There is a lot of slippage between different/differing understandings of WP as policy discourse and enactments in practice.  “The key message from senior stakeholders for WP practitioners is to adapt and evolve, or risk extinction” (p.69). |
| Clarke, J.; Zimmer, B.; & Main, R. (1999). [Review of the under representation in Australian higher education by the socioeconomically disadvantaged and the implications for university planning,](https://eprints.usq.edu.au/10288/) J*ournal of Institutional Research in Australasia*, 8(1): 36-55.  AUS  Annotation by Sally Baker  Keywords: *low SES, equity, planning, postcode method* | **Context:** Equity planning: based on idea that equity planning needs to be improved. Offers brief scope of historical-political context  **Aims:** To provide a ‘structured context’ for exploring participation of low SES students in Australian higher education, in terms of definitions, how they are identified and reasons for under-representation  **Methodology:** Essay, draws on previous research for strategies: Postle, Clarke & Bull (1997)  **Discussion:**  Measurement of SES: notes little international agreement on how to identify low SES – problems with all three traditional scales (parents’ occupation, class, postcode). Also parents’ education does not help with identifying mature age students’ SES (also see arguments about postcode). Also, notes how different universities may recruit from different constituencies within a postcode (because = not homogenous locations).  Barriers to participation: financial barriers, including “the impact of limited flexibility or range of income sources; a lack of confidence in committing to significant debt (through HECS or other loans); a lack of financial support networks; or limitations in the ability to arrange relief from family or other responsibilities” (p.4); cultural differences (reproduces arguments that low SES families have lower aspirations), influence of schooling, limited awareness of HE. In 1994, NBEET produced a list of factors that impede low SES success in HE: “lack of time to study; underdeveloped or rusty learning skills; competing claims of employment or family; social isolation at university; and separation from familiar social networks” (p.5). Also notes intersection of multiple disadvantages (p.6).  Offers overview of institutional strategies in place:   * *School links programs* [aka outreach] as long established “means of recruitment” (p.7) * *Enabling programs*: Postle, Clarke & Bull (1997) = reported that 23 universities had some form of enabling program in 1995 equity plans, but these were mostly small – only 7 had more than 100 EFTSU. Bridging programs for Indigenous students = 40% of enabling load. * Special admissions schemes: e.g. RPL and non-traditional entry for specific groups (e.g. WINTA). * Few universities surveyed in Postle, Clarke & Bull (1997) offered additional financial support to low SES students beyond routine arrangements * Most universities offered some form of generic student support   **Core argument:** Implications for planning: need to improve measurement tools for identifying SES, more research on catchment, especially for regional universities, and more analysis of cohorts (tracking extent and pattern of retention, persistence and successful completion) + qualitative research to understand lived experience of factors of disadvantage. Equity planners need to set objectives regarding environmental/ contextual analysis and need to consider older (non-school leaving) students. Better evaluation and monitoring needed [still the case 17 years later!!] and better linkages need to be developed to make equity everyone’s business.  Suggestions for universities:   * Improve low SES students’ awareness (not just school links) * Provide more financial support * Expand ‘bridging and remedial’ programs and develop links with TAFE * Consider role of technology |
| Coates, H. & Krause, K.L. (2005). [Investigating Ten Years of Equity Policy in Australian Higher Education](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13600800500045810), *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management,* 27(1), 35–47.  AUS  Annotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Reports on findings from longitudinal (1991-2002) study of Australian HE equity data and outlines the difficulty/ makes the case for defining new equity groups.  **Findings:** Discusses three options for identifying new groups: exploratory empirical approach, new groups might develop from overlapping membership of multiple existing groups, generated from research/ practice insights.   1. exploratory empirical approach: depends on appropriate data about HE students being available for comparison with census/survey data and on the idea that collecting data on student groups = ‘circular’: “unless an attribute had already been considered important to measure, then it is only by accident that relevant data would exist” (p.37-8) 2. Identifying multiple group membership: hypothesis = belonging to multiple groups = greatest educational disadvantage 3. Identifying through research/practice: cites HEFCE (2003) project on ‘first in family’ as example or Australian research on under-represented schools   Authors also discussed analysis/ reporting using performance indicator data – tension “between generality and specificity must be address to maximise the relevance and productivity of the equity policy” (p.40) – current groupings might have been “obscuring salient patterns of group performance” – thus performance indicators of groups derived from demographic variables should be interpreted using contextual/ enrolment variables (p.41). Summative (producing objective data/painting picture of performance of HE) and diagnostic roles of performance indicators = often in conflict as the need for generalizability at national/systemic level doesn’t always help institutions be locally responsive and vice versa. Authors suggest this is evident in relatively little improvement in opening access/success for low SES and NESB students.  Authors argue that equity practice/ programmes attend to aspects not reflected in policy framework (accommodation, financial support, transition arrangements).  **Core argument:** Alternative ways of measuring and monitoring equity = more likely to improve performance of students who experience(d) educational disadvantage (p.45) – at heart of potential reform is critique of the necessary aggregation of data at national level and the impact at the local level |
| David, M. (2008). [*Widening participation in higher education: A Commentary by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme*](https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv:71548)*.* ESRC: London  UK  Annotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Examines WP in UK to 2007 based on 7 TLRP projects:   * Universal Access and Dual Regimes of Further and Higher Education led by Professor Gareth Parry, University of Sheffield * Widening Participation in HE: A Quantitative Analysis led by Dr Anna Vignoles, Institute of Education, University of London * Degrees of Success: Learners’ Transitions from Vocational Education and Training to HE led by Dr Geoff Hayward, University of Oxford * Keeping Open the Door to Mathematically-demanding Programmes in Further and Higher Education led by Professor Julian Williams, University of Manchester * Socio-Cultural and Learning Experiences of Working Class Students in HE led by Professor Gill Crozier, University of Sunderland * Learning and Teaching for Diversity and Difference in Higher Education led by Professor Chris Hockings, University of Wolverhampton * Non-participation in HE: Decision-making as an Embedded Social Practice led by Professor Alison Fuller, University of Southampton   Overview of key dates in UK policy (1919-2007) on p.4  **Aim:** To report on TLRP-funded projects (x7) which collaborated to tell story of student access, success in participation, outcomes (educational and other), institutional practices, inclusive pedagogies, participation of particular participants (by age, social group, institution, lifecourse)  **Theoretical frame/ Methodology:** 7 reports = collected diverse data; chose different definitions of students (social class) and different types of institutions. Mixed methods (quant and qual).  **Discussion:** 3 policy events = mark from elite to mass HE system:   1. Robbins report (1963) followed by Labour government decision to create ‘distinctive’ HE sector (universities, FE, polytechnics) 2. Thatcher Conservative gov’t of 1980s = reformed sector included recognition of access quals/ vocational quals/ alternative routes into HE. 1992 reforms created unified HE sector (making polytecs into universities) 3. Dearing report (1997) = New Labour reforms and target to achieve 50% participation to ‘close the social class gap’   1998-2008 = authors note influence of global economies on rationales for expanding post-compulsory education (esp. HE), with focus on funding (including marketization + student fees) and opening access for ‘non-trad’ students. Research unpacked key debates (about social class, women, multiculturalism), but “ideas about social stratification, social mobility and equal opportunities in the labour market remain strongly entrenched” (p.7).  Findings:  *Project 1 (Universal access/ FurtherHigher Education) =* looked at impact of two-sector system. Findings suggest that legislation in 1992 and 1998 = addressed short term/ immediate needs rather than any long term vision for unified tertiary system; policy developments for HE in FE = “uneven and unstable” and “FE colleges have yet to be widely accepted as normal and necessary locations for higher education” (p.10). Sector is complex and each institution = idiosyncratic. Data suggests varying degrees of transition and dialogue between the two sectors, underpinned by variety of rationales = only partially informed by WP strategies; “At the corporate level, market-related considerations were often the most powerful drivers” (p.11).  *Project 2: (Quant analysis of WP to HE)* = to examine whether poorer students/ minority ethnic groups = less likely to attend HE (allowing for prior educational attainment at 17/18 and earlier in school). Main finding = “children from poor backgrounds remain far less likely to go to university than more advantaged children” (p.12) – whereby poor children = measured by access to free school meals. Ethnic minority students = more likely to participate in higher education than white students. Poor students more likely to attend lower status institutions if they do go to university. These patterns = “largely explained by the weak academic achievement of poor children in secondary school” (p.13), suggesting that WP efforts need to happen much earlier in education.  *Project 3: (Learners’ transitions from VET to HE)* = quant basis. Analysis suggests VET pathways do widen (rather than just increase) participation. People applying to uni from VET = more likely to be ‘from disadvantaged backgrounds’ and male (52% = male). VET articulants = much higher chance of not getting a place and dropping out in Year 1. VET students = heavily under-represented in higher status unis; “This uneven distribution is a result of processes operating at the level of both students, with their own perceptions and self-limitations, and institutions, which can have problems tracking and admitting people with non-traditional qualifications” (p.14). Data with students suggests barriers = lack of prep in VET for HE: demands of specific subjects (e.g. maths) and assessment types; balancing study with life.  *Project 4: (Sociocultural experiences of working class students in HE)* = Working class students at 4 x institutions (post-1992, civic pre-1992; elite and FE college). Middle class students = more knowledge of/ prep for/ expectations of/ entitlement to HE. Key difference in students between unis = self-confidence; thus “social class processes are played out in the students’ experiences via what we term an institutional effect” (p.16) = institutional habitus. Also explored social field of each institution (e.g. ‘social facilities’) = differences across insittutions. Thus sociocultural experiences = different across social classes and has implications for students’ sense of self.  *Project 5: (Mathematically demanding programs in FE & HE) =* looked at issues of extending and enhancing maths learning, especially for students ‘on edge’ of further participation in education. Questionnaire + interviews + case studies + analysis of programs and pedagogies. Findings = programs designed for this can make a big difference, especially using connectionist pedagogies (but performativity concerns can promote ‘transmissionist’ approaches). Program appears to encourage persistence and pass AS, but not necessarily A2. “Students, teachers and college managers are acutely aware of the currency of qualifications and grades and all make strategic choices on this basis” (p.19).  *Project 6: (Learning and teaching for social diff/diversity) =* sought “to facilitate the development of inclusive learning environments and to enhance the academic engagement of higher education students, by informing policy and practice in university teaching” (p.20) – focus on student and teacher identities in context of increasing diversity across range of disciplines. Used multidimensional definition of diversity. Main finding = in context of classroom, students “want teachers to recognise them as individuals with particular needs and interests. They value teachers who make time for them, who willingly engage with them outside the classroom, who share their own recent research or professional knowledge and experiences, and who show enthusiasm and passion for their subject” (p.20). This ‘high-level contact’ = largely not available and students turn to peers instead. Teachers need to find ways of getting to know students better.  *Project 7: (‘Non participation’ in HE –decision making = social practice)* = examines decisions of adults who have not participated in HE and examines how decision = embedded in family and friend networks. Drew on desk research, interviews (n=107). Data = “no agency currently takes responsibility for providing impartial advice and guidance on educational and employment decisions to adults across the life-course and, specifically, in relation to higher level study opportunities” (p.22), with no evidence that universities reach out to disengaged adults. Younger people accessing HE = “participation pioneers” = critical for shaping experiences/ decisions/ aspirations of older network members.  **Core argument:** Implications for further research include:   * Gendered access (young men with vocational qualifications) * More focus on WP and students’ ethnicity and age * Need to focus on WP earlier in childhood * Need to examine subject choices/ mixes – especially maths and VET * Quality of maths teaching pre-HE |
| Dawson, P.; Charman, K. & Kilpatrick, S. (2013). [The new higher education reality: what is an appropriate model to address the widening participation agenda?](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07294360.2013.776520), *Higher Education Research & Development,* 32(5), 706–721.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *associate degree; diversity; participation; pathway; transition* | **Context:** Set in context of Australian higher education/ massification/ diverse students, especially those who articulate into HE from VET (authors note issues, such as cultural differences). Based on Aus gov’t-funded ‘Deakin at Your Doorstop’ project (offers Associate Degrees to R&R students  **Aim:** To introduce new Associate Degree at Deakin as alternative pathway to respond to diversity and in the context of regionality in Victoria  **Methodology:** Mixed-methods exploratory study. Data = retention/ progression data, student evaluations of teaching, survey at 3 points (n=35, 35, 28), semi-structured interviews with students (n=26), teaching staff (n=4), project staff (n=3)  **Findings:** Describes the model (partnership with TAFE/ structure etc.) = p.709-12  Students said that they would not be at university if not for the Ass. Degree; brought in more traffic to TAFE sites (mostly mature age students; students on campus = more school leavers)  Students progression and perceptions of challenges = comparable to UG (‘mainstream’) students. 64/75 students remained enrolled at the end of the course.  Relationships emerged as important in the interviews  Technology did not get in the way  Multiple learning methods were effective **Core argument:** Offers a not-very-critical account of a new model of alternative pathway |
| Gale, T. & Parker, S. (2013). [*Widening participation in Australian higher education: Report to the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) and the Office of Fair Access (OFFA), England*](https://www.deakin.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/365199/widening-participation.pdf). Leicester, UK: CFE Research.  AUS  Annotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Report commissioned by HEFCE and OFFA to describe current approaches to WP in Australian higher education. Authors point out the expanding access to university has had a long history in Australia [see also Gale & Tranter, 2012]. Scopes history of ‘equity’ post-1990 (target equity groups, proportional representation, HECS, Bradley targets) – explicitly uses British terms (WP) throughout for British audience.  *Chapter 2: Australian education system*, role of government in education.  System effects = low SES students tend to be concentrated in government schools/ high SES tend to be in selective or non-government schools. Academic achievement = strongly correlates with SES (p.10).  *Chapter 3: Higher education* – overview of Australian sector (Table A and B), funding, dual sector, revenue. Examines institutional diversity and university networks, admissions, supply and demand in the system (section 3.12 = increases in enrolments for equity groups, p.16). Discusses transfer between institutions on p.16-17.  *Chapter 4: WP data*  Table 4.1 = target group references from 2011 (p.19)   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Aged 15-64**  **in 2011** | **Low SES** | **NESB** | **Disability** | **Regional** | **Remote** | **Indigenous** | **Women** | | **Reference values** | 25.0% | 4.66% | 8.0% | 23.32% | 0.6% | 2.23% | 40%\* |   Access rates on p.20 (2006-2011)  Participation rates/ratios on p.21 (2006-2011)  Retention rates on p.22 (2005-2010); rates by equity group on p.23/ ratios by equity groups on p.24  Success rates/ratios on p.24-5  Completion rates on p.26 (all levels of course; 2006-2011) and by discipline p.27  Comparison of discipline by SES on p.29  Rates of employment on p.33  PG participation rates by low SES/ Indigenous on p.34  *Chapter 5: WP policy*  Starts from Bradley review: participation targets, HEPPP (p.37-8), mission-based compacts/ performance funding  *Chapter 6: Target groups for WP*  Starts from ‘A Fair Chance For All’ (1990) = groups + operational definitions on p.42. Discusses methods of ascertaining SES (p.43); Behrendt review (p.44)  *Chapter 7: Widening access* **–** HEPPP, Queensland consortium, outreach (p.47-8)  *Chapter 8: Retention, completion, progression* – partnerships, study support (inc. ALL), teaching and learning strategies – transition pedagogy, effective t&l of low SES students, safeguarding student learning = see Kift, Nelson, Devlin et al.; progression to further study/ employment on p.52  *Chapter 9: Financial support ­*­- HECS, Youth Allowance, specific support for Indigenous students/ students with disabilities, scholarships.  *Chapter 10: Critical review* – despite equity being on the agenda for two decades, still questions “  emerging about its usefulness in pursuing social justice in HE into the future. The concerns are with both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of equity” (p.59) **Core argument:** Equity = proportional representation – debates shift from inclusion to fairness. Equity groups concentrated in particular discipline areas (nursing, education, engineering). Little focus on PG and equity. |
| Gale, T. & Tranter, D. (2011). [Social justice in Australian higher education policy: an historical and conceptual account of student participation](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17508487.2011.536511), *Critical Studies in Education*, 52(1), 29–46.  AUS  Annotation by Sally Baker  Keywords: *Keywords: education policy; higher education; social inclusion; social justice; student equity; widening participation* | **Context:** Historic overview of Australian HE through the lens of equity/ social justice. Tracing how HE policy is shaped by (and shapes) social and economic drivers and policies and social justice intentions in HE.  **Theoretical frame:** Draws on Gale & Densmore’s (2000) three-part characterisation of social justice: distributive, retributive, recongitive.  **Discussion:** 1850 – University of Sydney opened, 1853 – University of Melbourne opened, 1874 – University of Adelaide opened, 1890 – University of Tasmania opened. Little is known about Australian HE students before WWII. In 1945, there were 7 universities with 15,600 students; in 1975 there were 17 universities and 7- AEIs with 273,000 students; in 2007 there were 39 universities and other private HEIs with 772,000 domestic students and 294,000 international students.  Widening participation has reached saturation point for the middle-classes; “equity in higher education has now become as much a matter of economic necessity as a matter of social justice” (p.32)  **1988-90 (Dawkins reforms**) – brought in HECs and merged universities and CAEs: “private gains of higher education became paramount in policy discourse, replacing the previous emphasis on the overall public good” (p.36). The Howard government then pushed the neoliberal agenda (cut the threshold/increased HECs) on the basis that industry and individuals profited.  **In 2002-3**, Nelson commissioned a review of equity groups and performance – findings: women, NESB and people with disabilities showed improved participation; low SES, remote/rural and indigenous – little/no progress. The question was here raised as to whether men in some subject areas should be considered an equity group. Gender was removed, but universities were to continue monitoring it and the other equity groups.  Rudd/Gillard government (Labor) were voted in on an ‘education revolution’ platform; they created the Ministry of Social Inclusion. The Bradley report (2008) placed emphasis on social justice/ equity – foregrounding the transformative role of HE (“must be a core responsibility of all institutions that accept public money” (Gillard, 2009). Subsequent created of HEPPP provided the financial means for more collaboration between schools/VET/HE.  **Core argument:** Each attempt at expansion has been accompanied by distributive notions of social justice with periods of consolidation and retributive notions of social justice. Social policy become subsumed by economic policy. Finally, there is no equity without epistemological equity – it’s no good letting people in if academic knowledges and discourses and practices prevent engagement and participation. |
| Gibson, S.; Baskerville, D.; Perry, A.; Black, A.; Norris, K. & Symeonidou, S. (2016[). ‘Diversity’, ‘Widening Participation’ and ‘Inclusion’ in Higher Education: An international study](https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10026.1/6678/Gibson_Diversity_Widening_Participation.pdf?sequence=3), *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 18(3), 7–33.  INT (UK/USA/NZ/ CYP)  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *Widening Participation, diversity, inclusion, student experience, higher education* | **Context:** Looks at WP through international lens – seen in higher education policy across the world, although the terminology is different: WP in Engliand, focus on Maori students in NZ, ‘special criteria’ in Cyprus, ‘diversity’ in the USA. Authors note Quinn’s (2013) argument that WP and massification are not the same thing; inequitable patterns of under-representation stubbornly persist [often the word ‘inequality’ is used]. Authors make the point that most WP policies orginate from committees where ‘the other’ is rarely represented: “Devoid of relational connections with the groups of students they supposedly represent, their policies fail to deliver in meaningful ways beyond recreating the same problem in their ‘solutions’” (p.10-11; see Ahmed, 2012). Authors note Ahmed’s (2012) argument about the linguistic value/ misappropriation of ‘diversity’ for martketese (see also Kimura, 2014)  **Aim:** To draw on international research to “show how institutionalised cultures and non-relational practices result in further student marginalization” (p.11); specifically probes ‘normalcy’ v. ‘other’; to develop understandings of what ‘diversity’ means/ how it plays out in positioning of ‘non-traditional’ students.  **Theoretical frame:** None explicit  **Methodology:** Multisite participatory project between 6 universities in UK, USA, CYP, NZ. Started with online questionnaire to students to ascertain ‘diversity’ (definition given p.13) of students (174/373 respondents = ‘diverse'), who were then invited to participate in 4 x focus groups (n=25 from 4/6 universities). Questions in FGs: who/ what students perceived as ‘diverse’  **Findings:** Key themes: binary of diverse/ non-diverse; university assemblage and bureaucracy; relationships  *Binary of diverse/non-diverse*: noted in other literature; “Cultures of difference, when not acknowledged or suppressed, add further to covert practices of institutionalised segregation and stigma” (p.16). Most participants viewed term ‘diverse’ as signifier of ‘minority status’, as political, and –for some- as a negative label. Participants viewed the use of term as creating stereotypes, and one American student questioned whether a ‘non-diverse student’actually exists (see p.17). Self-disclosure (and what of) = noted as problematic; external labeling (assignation of labels by others) = also concerning/ disempowering/ exposing. Several participants suggested that tutors aren’t able to sup port students; peer support = also important: “For some using the term ‘diversity’ to describe who they were resulted in their personally held self-definitions and identities being forcibly simplified and their sense of ‘self’ being mis-represented, redefined by institutionally directed practice, whilst others felt academics and other staff didn’t necessarily want to engage with ‘diversity’ when considering their teaching practices” (p.20).  *University assemblage:* Concerns voiced about ineffective university bureaucracy and resulting feelings of anger and disconnect (students to institution and disconnections between services within university) = ‘disjointed forms of communication’.  *Relationships:* relationship practices lead to both exclusion and inclusion (see Table 3, p.22). Participants found that supportive relationships with tutors and staff = inclusive relationship practices; however, these can be eroded by managerial processes. Authors note connections with affective literature. Emotions = significant result of relationships: “Within the focus groups students shared where they had experienced anger and frustration, the impact of being ‘othered’ by bureaucracy and fellow students” (p.24). Raising of emotional issues = methodological limitation/ note for future research (see p.25). **Core argument:** ‘Diversity’ (and its use by institutions for marketing/ support/ identifying ‘non-traditional’ and ‘at risk’ students) = needs to be carefully reconsidered so as to avoid the negative impacts (disempowerment, stereotyping, exposing, disconnecting) students. More consideration needed of affective/ emotional dimension of this kind of research and impacts of ‘diversity’/ WP agenda. More is needed: “there must be a recognised space for dialogue about the university’s aims and objectives, where discussion and debate about the need for and possibilities of how to push against established cultures reinforcing insiders and outsiders, a binary of ‘what does’ and ‘what does not fit’ can take place” (p.27-8). |
| Kettley, N. (2007). [The past, present and future of widening participation research](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01425690701252531), *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 28(3), 333–347.  UK  Annotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Examines research that has examined WP over 45 years (mostly UK-focused). Argued that at time of writing, contemporary research = driven by ‘third way politics’ (new right + new Labour) = balance social + economic concerns.  **Aim:** To “trace the origin, history and (dis)continuities of widening participation research” (p.334)  **Theoretical frame:** Historical literature review and analysis (not explicitly set out)  **Methodology:** Essay  **Findings:** Influence of critiques of HE structure, political context and sociological approaches have limited the debates/ discussion of barriers to participation: “Contemporary research is in danger of reinventing the wheel and replicating the errors of earlier approach” (p.334) – fails to recognise work that came before.  Offers historical overview of WP in UK HE (from 1825 onwards) and notes the enduring context of privilege and elitism due to private (‘public’) schooling; Scotland’s HE system evolved differently because of less public schools. Discusses evolution of ‘access’ as concern/discourse (first focusing on daughters of higher classes. Early research into HE experience = three strands: “the desire to extend citizenship rights, the quantitative monitoring of participation rates and the qualitative exploration of student lifestyles” (p.335) = reflect scholarly divisions in sociology = limiting. Post 1945, discussion and critique = narrowed to ‘structural functionalism’ (“recreate value consensus and the division of labour”) and class analysis (following Weberian traditions in sociology). In UK in 1944, secondary education = made free and compulsory to age 15 and 3 different streams depending on results of 11+ exam: grammar, secondary modern or technical schools. Research = focused on social class and schooling at this time: “Functionalists located the barriers to university participation in the value orientations of particular social classes” (p.336), whereas “Educability researchers located the barriers to HE in the structure of the family, rather than wider processes of cultural deprivation” (p.337).  Post 1970s = rise of “phenomenological, neo-marxist, feminist and ethno- graphic approaches to schooling” = paradigm shift in sociology of education which corresponded with policy changes (increased age of compulsory schooling/ expansion of HE. “Phenomenologists were primarily interested in the stratification of knowledge in education and society, neo-marxists with the relationship between schooling and capitalism, feminists with the reproduction of patriarchy and ethnographers with the exploration of student life” (p.338).  More recent research = “the resurgence of official, managerial and monitoring studies of widening participation; the extension of ethnographic, feminist and postmodern research related to access and non-traditional student life; and studies that have deconstructed access discourses”(p.339). Research trends again mirrored/reflected political shifts (declines in HE funding and enrolments in 1980s; New Labour in 1997. Findings of more modern research echo findings of previous work (e.g. higher numbers of privately educated students in most elite institutions; selective mechanisms of admission by social class): “recent access research often represents the re-emergence of old ideas in new guises“ (p.340) – but ‘new access’ studies extended knowledge by focusing on over- and under-representation in HE **Core argument:** Future research into WP needs to reconceptualise the field: “Future research must deploy an inclusive definition of the social processes shaping higher learning ranging from those that promote (bridges) to those that inhibit (barriers) differential participation in, progression through and outcomes from HE for certain individuals and social groups” (p.343) and avoid separating out cultural and material experiences. 5 criteria for future work:   1. must establish intellectual basis 2. provide simultaneous accounts of patterns and causes of differentiated participation/ progression/outcomes 3. provide holistic accounts of students’ characteristics 4. more longitudinal research (to investigate impact of early education/ childhood) 5. explore both reproduction and transformative of bridges and barriers to HE (not distinct entities) = p.344 |
| 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/reports/educational-opportunity-in-australia-2015-who-succeeds-and-who-misses-out/) Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, for the Mitchell Institute, Melbourne: Mitchell Institute.  AUS  Annotation 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 supported  At 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). |
| Leach, L. (2013). [Participation and equity in higher education: are we going back to the future?,](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03054985.2013.791618) *Oxford Review of Education,* 39(2), 267–286.  NZ, AUS, ENG  Annotation by Sally Baker  Keywords: *equity, higher education, access, widening participation policy* | **Context:** Overview of policy developments in New Zealand, Australia and England from 1960s-2011.  **Aim:** To provide an overview of policy and practice with relation to equity and participation in higher education in NZ, Aus, England over 50 years  **Theoretical frame:** None explicit  **Methodology:** Policy/ literature review  **Findings:**  *Section 1: from elite to massified system* – massification driven by two forces: 1) increasing participation and widening access. SES = common framing but is measured differently in each country (see p.269).  Higher education in NZ: pre-1980s = elite. Major changes in 1980s/90s in post-compulsory education sector, with access opened to ‘disadvantaged’ groups (socioeconomic, ethnicity, disability and gender disadvantage in NZ educational policy). Funding arrangements of HE shifted (fees set, students assumed part of cost, student loans system started). In 2001, obligations to indigenous students recognized. Six strategies outlined in *Tertiary Education Strategy 2002-2007*: Maori aspirations, raise foundation skills (including literacy) – for indigenous, migrants, refugees, ‘at risk’ youth, long-term unemployed, students with disabilities, people with few/ no qualifications - , educate Pacific People for development and success. Next policy paper (2007-12) focused on equity of access and achievement.  England: framed as widening participation (to under-represented students) and lifelong learning. Robbins Report (1963) recommended expanded HE system; 1970s = new polytechnics – creation of binary system. *Educational Reform Act 1988* recognised access courses as alternative pathway into undergraduate study – paved way for end of binary system. *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* abolished binary system, making all polytechnics into ‘new’ universities. Widening participation = large focus of Dearing Report (1997) and New Labour government elected in 1997 set participation target of 50% of 18-30 year olds by 2010. *Higher Education Act 2004* increased student fees to 3000GBP per year (variable top up fees). Office for Fair Access (OFFA) established in 2005 and WP = strategic objective of HEFCE, which supported Aimhigher and Action on Access.  Australia: Martin report (1964) – Fraser government (1974): Commonwealth assumed full responsibility for cost of HE. In 1988, unified system (FE and HE) introduced; HECS introduced (sold as equity mechanism). *A Fair Chance for All =* identified six equity groups. Review in 1996 (West Report) suggest some improvements in participation rates of 6 groups, but not for Indigenous, low SES and R&R students. In 2002 (Nelson reforms), HECS contribution (aka cost to student) increased, but policy reform included requirement for institutions to do more to ensure equity. Access and equity = key drivers/ foci in Bradley Review (2008) – Australia seen as lagging behind.  Higher Education post-GFC (policy 2008-2011)  New Zealand: Cap on enrolments in 2008; 2009 = $500mNZD reduction in funding to HE, with further incremental decreases until 2014. Universities turning many students away. New performance review funding introduced (5% based on completion/ progression to higher study/ retention). Financial penalities for insitutions that exceeded capped enrolments. People under 25 = remained target group. Financial pressures increased by earthquake in Christchurch in 2011. Loan repayments increased in 2012.  England: *Browne Report* (2010) = recommended increase in tuition fees (resulting from austerity politics). Under-represented students still targeted as long as they had ‘talent’. Access agreements introduced with Higher Education Council – all universities charging more than 6000GBP had to have access agreements with OFFA. National Scholarship Programme introduced to support low income full-time students. HEFCE required all universities to provide WP statement in 2012.  Australia: ‘counter-cyclical’ approach taken – introduction of demand-driven system in 2010. Aus gov’t invested $500m in Teaching and Learning Capital Fund for infrastructure and facilities (as per Bradley Review recommendations). Introduction of HEPPP and equity targets 20/40 set in 2010. Additional regional loading funding ($110m) added in 2011 plus additional infrastructure investment for regional universities. Additional funding also added.  **Core argument:** Australia took a different funding approach (investment) in face of GFC compared to NZ and England. Equity policies = limited success in 3 countries, despite redressive policies: “These data show that even at times of expansion, with policies that support widening participation in higher education, the proportion of under-represented students in each of the three countries has not increased as hoped” (p.298). Similar shifts in discourse occurred in line with GFC: NZ = ‘extent of ability’; England = ‘potential’; Australia = ‘capable’ – move towards ‘merit based’ approach. Institutional approaches (such as cutting staff numbers) had an impact on possibilities for equity: “Class sizes and increased staff–student ratios may also decrease the quality of teaching, a key factor in student outcomes”, particularly for traditionally under-represented students (p.279) and particularly when funding =contingent on completion. Costs of higher education = also understood to be prohibitive for low SES students |
| McLennan, J.; Pettigrew, R. & Sperlinger, T. (2016). [Remaking the elite university: An experiment in widening participation in the UK,](doi:%2010.1177/1757743815624117) *Power & Education,* 8(1), 54–72.  UK  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *Widening participation, higher education, pedagogy, diversity, foundation year* | **Context:** Examines WP in elite universities in the UK; offers differing analysis (from idea that equity = ‘intractable problem’) whereby WP = viewed as aspect of pedagogy rather than administrative issue through case study of Foundation Year in Arts/ Humanities in Uni of Bristol. Authors refer to Russell Group statement, which blames underrepresentation of equity groups in high status unis/ disciplines on schools. Authors note that academics = also disenfranchised by increasing neoliberal pressures on HE. Foundation Year = “a way into university for people without conventional educational qualifications” (p.57). Students = recruited via community engagement/ short courses/ local advertising. Foundation Year = informed by WP, by critical review of existing HE system, and by radical adult education tradition.  WP = seen as administrative *process:* “Widening participation as process is also a consequence of the increasingly target driven culture in universities” (p.60). Gives example of OFFA access agreements (which deny/ reduce impact of unsanctioned/ compound disadvantage): “While this renewed focus on widening participation was welcome, in practice it encouraged universities to aim for ‘low-hanging fruit’, such as middle-class students who fulfil the ‘state-educated’ criteria” (p.60)  **Aim:** Asks questions of elite universities in context of WP: “what is the role of an individual elite university, and of larger groups of such institutions? Do they have sufficient agency to widen participation or does the climate militate against creative attempts to diversify intake?” (p.55). Ultimately, it asks whether WP = ‘intractable’ or can elite universities be changed from within, and can a small-scale shift (Foundation Year) have broad ripple effect? (see p.55)  **Theoretical frame:** Critical theory  **Methodology:** Case study (no explicit discussion)  **Findings:** When designing FY = designers wrote ‘pen portraits’ (imaginaries of particular kinds of excluded students) and used these fictional case studies to ask pre-emptive questions of the course. Also helped to mitigate interviewer bias: “The pen portraits forced us to focus on specific individuals who face specific obstacles to engaging with higher education, with consequences also for how they might realise other possibilities in their lives” (p.10).  *Successes*: first cohort (n=27) was diverse (mature age, no A-levels, local). 89% completed the year and qualified for progression to undergraduate study and strong improvement in grades on written assignments.  Qualitative data = suggests growth in confidence (see example of Rosie on p.11). 21/27 students in undergraduate studies when paper was written. Anecdotally, students were “acting as a magnet for other non-traditional students” (p.64). Furthermore, there were many positives for staff – not just course designers, but also other staff who taught into the course.  Discussion of limitations: funding, small cohort numbers, course content = designed according to volunteer lecturers (it “tended to focus on Western interventions or legacies” despite efforts otherwise, p.18), arguably does not do enough to disrupt traditional teacher-student relationships **Core argument:** Resistance against creeping uniformity: “within a mass higher education system in which uniformity is increasingly emphasised (and necessary for administrative purposes), there is an urgent need for forms of pedagogy that resist and revitalise the dominant university culture” (p.59).  WP as pedagogy “abandons the idea that it is some other part of the educational system that is responsible for low participation in the elite institutions – the schools, the applicants, or the families and social backgrounds of the applicants” (p.63).  “[It is clear that] elite universities are clearly culpable for failing to admit a more representative group of students. It is clear that widening participation is not an ‘intractable’ problem: in fact, it is something that can be addressed quite readily with materials and expertise that universities have in abundance” (p.70). |
| Minter, C. (2001). [Some flaws in the common theory of ‘widening participation’,](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13596740100200106) *Research in Post-Compulsory Education,* 6(3), 245–259.  UK  Annotation by Sally Baker  Keywords: *lifelong learning, widening participation* | **Context:** Outlines and critiques WP model, drawing on international research from USA, Palestine and Singapore. Offers critique of intention to expand access (from 3 UK reports on lifelong learning: Kennedy, Dearing, Fryer)  **Aim:** To outline a critique of WP as articulated by 3 UK reports and other UK-based work  **Theoretical frame:** Foucault and Bourdieu  **Methodology:** Essay  **Findings:** Critiques positioning of WP/ expanded access in key publications/ reports:  Maguire et al. (1996) – report for DfEE: “This was very much an approach based upon individual commitment to learning rather than seeking to identify structural barriers that were inhibiting these groups” (p.246).  Macrae, Maguire & Ball (1998; ESRC-funded) – looked at 16-19 year olds and classified into typology of 5 ‘crude’ categories: outsiders, hangers in, pragmatic acceptors, notional acceptors, embedded acceptors. Minter = critical of visual descriptor (concentric circles) for suggesting that these are separate categories with ‘traditional’ students placed in centre (which Minter describes as “narcissistic” (p.248), thus rendering the analysis as overly-simplistic.  Discussion of what actually counts as ‘non participation’ and what counts as ‘lifelong learning’ – is it only formal education? (and contesting the ‘bolt-on’ approach taken by FE colleges). Minter notes argument by Ilon (1997) about how educating ‘the poor’ is not based on altruistic rationale, but instead an economic one.  Identifies four flaws in the premise of WP (using Bourdieusian and Foulcauldian theory):  Flaw 1: WP = single loop learning (resolve an issue without questioning how it evolved); WP focuses on strategies rather than the underlying causes of inequity.  Flaw 2: WP often focuses (blame) on the individual, rather than questioning the inadequacy of the education on offer: first, ‘blind acceptance’ of poor schooling leading to non-participation in post-compulsory education; second, tendancy to label students into groupings that don’t really exist = Minter makes connection to habitus here.  Flaw 3: Ignorance of ‘trajectories’ (drawing on Bourdieu) and habitus.  Flaw 4: Ignorance of power to normalise patterns of participation (Foucault); aka ‘it’s not for me’ **Core argument:** Need to acknowledge that WP is complex |
| Murray, N. (2013). [Widening participation and English language proficiency: a convergence with implications for assessment practices in higher education](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03075079.2011.580838), *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(2), 299–311.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *widening participation; English language proficiency; post-enrolment; language assessment; language competence of non-traditional students* | **Context:** Explores interconnections between WP agenda and English language proficiency (assessment and support) in context of diverse student population (as a result of massification). Examines the efficacy and argues for/against the use of post-enrolment English assessments (PELAs). Interconnection between WP & language proficiency = not restricted to NESB, although NESB is often focus. Issues with proficiency prevail despite entry requirements leading to some teachers ‘toning down’ their courses to accommodate linguistically diverse cohort [but this is not often the case; perhaps tutors are toning down marks/grades]. For students, lower than needed proficiency leads to attrition, lack of engagement, stigma, “potential source of real trauma”, reinforcing “latent feelings of a lack of self-efficacy” and can lead to issues getting work after graduating (p.300).  Policy context = DEEWR doc ‘Good practice principles for English language proficiency for international students in Australian universities’. English language also aligned with national economic (neoliberal goals) in Bradley Review (p.xi). **However**, English proficiency causes issues for native speakers too (acknowledged in DEEWR doc): Native speakers (inc. domestic LBOTE students) often not asked to demonstrate ‘adequate’ proficiency (p.302): “few if any students, whether native speakers or NESB, domestic or international, will come adequately equipped with the specific set of academic literacy practices they require for their particular degree” (p.303) – makes case for embedding ac lits into curriculum based on notion that “subject lecturers can reasonably be expected to have an implicit knowledge of the academic literacies and communication skills [of their discipline]… many will require professional development by English language and communication specialists to help them articulate and acquire a good understanding of [what they] demonstrate unconsciously on a daily basis, along with the associated pedagogies for their delivery” (p.304). Embedding = acknowledged as likely to be challenging and long-term, requiring cultural change; argument made that if done sensitively and collaboratively, it will reduce need for English language specialists and professional development (as new academics replace old) if embedding/ awareness raising = common place in academic teaching courses.  **Aim:** To consider some issues related to the implementation of post-enrolment English tests  **Theoretical frame:** Draws on own posited notion (Murray, 2010) of language proficiency as composed of three intersecting but distinct components: proficiency as “a set of generic skills and abilities” (grammar, punctuation, fluency, skills), academic literacy (refs to Lea & Street) and professional communication skills [prosaic, pragmatic features?]. Uses word ‘skills’ a lot  **Methodology:** Essay  **Core argument:** How to implement PELAs? Need to be cost-efficient and bring required improvements (p.305). Need to think about validity and reliability of assessment design (definition of valid PELA offered on p.307), but also think about the potential reputational risk/ kudos that PELA could bring: English language learners may look on it favourably (if follow-up provision also provided) or less favourably. Poses questions: what should be tested, who should be tested and how should they be tested? Proficiency can be the “only sensible focus” given that academic literacy and professional communication should be taught as part of course.  Issues: how to identify who to test? Who are the at-risk groups? Who might slip through the net? If PELA is elective, some ‘at-risk’ students may not be assessed; thus “the only watertight alternative is to test *all* newly enrolled students” (p.306) – but this would be (more) expensive and logistically complicated. Alternative to PELA (as a test) is to use early piece of assessed work as diagnostic (under controlled conditions and within prescribed rubric/ length rules). This would have to be conducted early enough for support needs to be identified and implemented. Who would mark? Faculty staff or English language specialists? Needs broad consultation within institutions: “Only then can institutions feel confident they are meeting their ethical and educational responsibilities to those non-traditional student cohorts whose interests they espouse, and whose successes or failures both during and following their studies will reflect on their graduating universities” (p.309). |
| 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.  AUS  Annotation 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 of  lobby 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 |
| Riddell, S.; Weedon, E. & Holford, J. (2014). [Lifelong learning and higher education in Europe 1995-2011: widening and/or narrowing access?](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02601370.2013.873216?src=recsys&journalCode=tled20) *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* 33(1), 1–6.  UK  Annotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Introduction to SI on changes to equity of access in Europe over 15 years. Context = two major pushes: 1) resurgence of capitalism post-fall of socialism in Eastern block; 2) rapid growth of EU. Underlying this = increasing push of globalisation and neoliberal ideas/ notion of ‘knowledge economy’. Lifelong learning = shaped by the historical-political context and neo-socioeconomic pushes. Context of Bologna Process and Social Dimension = significant; also post-GFC context.  **Aim:** SI poses these questions:   * How do patterns of participation in higher education—considered from a perspective of social equity—vary across Europe? How do these patterns differ between old and new member states? What are the main trends in old and new member states? * What approaches to widening participation have been adopted in different European countries and what lessons can be learnt from various experiences? * Which groups are defined as under-represented in various countries and, of these, which have been encouraged to engage in widening participation initiatives? * To what extent have widening access policies resulted in the reduction of social inequalities in access to higher education in different countries? * Which social groups have been the major beneficiaries in different countries? * If higher education is to counter rather than reinforce social inequality, what changes are needed and to what extent are these changes possible during the ongoing economic crisis which continues to threaten the economies of the developed world, including the US and Europe? (p.2-3)   **Discussion points/ themes of SI:**   * Higher education, social Europe and global capitalism * Higher education expansion, second chance routes and institutional differentiation * Widening inequality, middle class anxiety and the position of low skilled workers   Contributions include foci on Sweden, Norway and Germany; Scotland, UK (England v. Scot, Wales, NI) **Core argument:** Authors make point that despite variation across Europe in terms of strength between class and participation, patterns of social inequality = broadly similar. Raises question of how much power individual nation states have to challenge concentration of elites in most prestigious institutions |
| Rissman, B.; Carrington, S. & Bland, D. (2013). [Widening Participation in University Learning](https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol10/iss1/2/), *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice,* 10(1), 1–20.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *Higher education, widening participation, secondary education, socio-economic disadvantage, student equity, benefits, barriers, workload, university and school partnership* | **Context:** Describes an outreach initiative at QUT with QLD Dept. Education and Training to increase enrolments of low SES students. Initiative (‘QUTeach’) involves university lecturers and school teachers working together to deliver and assess 4 x B(Ed) units to Year 11 and 12 students at one secondary school. Scopes literature on under-participation of low SES students (WP/ equity agenda in Australia), transitional barriers and first year programs  **Aim:** To describe OUTeach and report on data collected through evaluation of program in early stages; to answer 2 RQs:  How do students, parents and staff describe the QUTeach program?; and  Do students, parents and staff perceive that the program is effective in increasing LSES student enrolment in higher education? (p.7)  **Theoretical frame:** Draws on notion of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977); positioned as informed by ‘social constructionist perspective’ (see Crotty 1998).  **Methodology:** Evaluation: focus groups and individual interviews with parents and students (n=26; 5 x m; 21 x f). Explicates qualitative, thematic approach to analysis (Patton, 2002)  **Findings:** Long discussion of benefits (e.g. making university appealing, increased sense of pride, course visits = convenient for students/ timetabling, academic writing focus = benefits for school work, access to university library and on-campus visits = well received). Discussion also of challenges (stress, time management, difficulty in balancing work-study-study+) **Core argument:** Offers theorised and critical example of school-university partnership that is designed to specifically promote success with multiple benefits for all involved. |
| Southgate, E. & Bennett, A. (2014). [Excavating Widening Participation Policy in Australian Higher Education: Subject Positions, Representational Effects, Emotion](https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Excavating-widening-participation-policy-in-higher-Southgate-Bennett/828c350990f48ff42eb581fc7b1a6faf16a9f9d0), *Creative Approaches to Research*, 7(1), 21–45.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *widening participation, higher education, policy, Foucault, discourse, subjectivity, emotion, aspiration, capability, meritocracy* | **Context:** Australian widening participation (UK term used, not sure why)  **Aim:** To ask critical questions about neo-liberal forms of social justice  **Theoretical frame:** Uses Foucauldian discourse analysis on policy documents (2008-2013)/ ‘feeling-rules’ = modes of emotional existence: “techniques of the self that are inherent in neo-liberal ideologies where each person is considered to be their own entrepreneur responsible for the cultivation of their own personal human capital” (p.26)  **Methodology:** Bacchi’s ‘What’s the Problem Represented to be?’ (WPR) = ‘digging tool’ comprising 6 questions:   1. What’s the problem represented to be in specific policy/ policy proposal? 2. What presuppositions/ assumptions underpin this representation? 3. How has this ‘representation’ come to be? 4. What is left as unproblematic in this representation? Where are there silences? 5. What effects are produced by this representation? 6. How/where has this representation been produced, disseminated and defended?   **Findings:** Identifies two subject positions and ‘feeling-rules’ within Australian WP policy: *the cap(able) individual* and *the proper aspirant*.  The cap(able) individual: a “quintessential neo-liberal subject who possesses ‘natural ability’, hope for social mobility and highly individualised and entrepreneurial disposition”. ‘Capability’ = “a floating signifier” (p.29) – left as commonsensical but it is informed by a suite of tacit assumptions about structural, sociocultural and environmental factors that are lacking in WP documents. Links with biological essentialist views (Cartesian views of identity?) = ‘natural ability’  The proper aspirant: “must display an ability to rationally calculate pathways to and through higher education… for maximum benefit” (p.35). This subject position is based on a normative hierarchy (e.g. university is better than TAFE ), which privileges middle-class ideals (p.34). This subject position “diminishes the feeling-rules that permeate governmental power relations” and allows some ways of being/doing/knowing to be valued more than others. Here, ‘working-class’ subjectivity is positioned as ‘unknowing’ with ‘deficits on quality’. **Core argument:** Aspiration is a ‘neo-liberal form of hope’ (p.38) |
| Stevenson, J.; Clegg, S.; & Lefever, R. (2010). [The discourse of widening participation and its critics: an institutional case study](https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/ioep/clre/2010/00000008/00000002/art00002?crawler=true), *London Review of Education,* 8(2), 105–115.  UK  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *widening participation, higher education, policy, values* | **Context:** Explores contradictory discourses of WP and contestations between public policy and practitioners. WP = “a contradictory and unstable amalgam of economic rationality and social justice arguments” (p.105). Scopes UK HE landscape (1960s – 2010), through Tory policies of 1979-1997, and impact of New Labour policies – looking at language used, from “the drive to increase participation as an act of social justice was overtaken by a policy discourse which saw mass higher learning as fundamental to the future prosperity and competitive advantage of the UK” in Tory policy to New Labour ethos: “knowledge-economy, higher education becomes a potentially powerful instrument of social justice, since it serves not only as a driver of wealth creation, but as a critical determinant of life chances’” (all p.106). Currently, UK HE policy is underpinned by discourse positioning students as ‘consumers’ of free market – with non-participation seen as a deficit (Burke, 2009). In UK = ambiguity about who WP groups are  **Aim: “**to interrogate how these public debates and policies are realised in practice, and what interpretative work is engaged in by those who see themselves as WP advocates and practitioners” (p.108) – how do WP staff make sense of WP in context of competing discourses  **Theoretical frame:** takes Trowler’s (2002) view of ‘loose coupling’ between policy and outcomes  **Methodology:** Institutional case study of post-1992 HEI; tools = documentary analysis, online q’naire, interviews as part of internally commissioned audit of practice. 94 staff members completed q’naire  **Findings:** Documentary analysis showed that there was no longer a WP policy (other terms used such as diversity, inclusion, equality), which was reflected in confusion in staff interviews. When prompted, staff gave multiple definition of who WP is for, and many used the interview to seek clarification from researchers. One theme: staff interviews suggested = “heavily values-based orientation towards WP” (p.110). Examples given related most to public policy and aspirations building (Aim Higher). Interviews with staff also suggested who staff considered having responsibility for WP (most saw it laying equally with all staff; others saw it as the work of a particular department) and there was ‘confusion’ about whether students or staff should be proactive in offering support. In terms of the case study university’s commitment to WP, senior managers perceived a strong commitment to WP but this wasn’t ‘filtering down’ and believed that other staff were negative about WP. Staff lower down the hierarchy were less convinced of institutional commitment to WP and, according to one participant (an academic) the university was “lucky to have a lot of willing and dedicated staff and individual commitment to WP that really needs to be harnessed more effectively” (p.111). Discourse of blame = likely result of an unclear and inconsistent use of WP terms and practices, meaning individual staff drew on own local/personal values and blamed ‘others’ for lack of support/engagement with WP. Blaming others “,mirrors the individualism of the WP discourse itself” (p.112) Clear sense of frustration within WP practitioners and advocates because of lack of consistency/ confusion messages from institution.  **Core argument**: “as long as the policy context and the philosophical rationale for WP remain unclear, WP practice is likely to remain the preserve of committed individuals, and, at the local level, will be largely incapable of having a sustained impact on broader institutional cultures and discourse” (p.105) |
| Stewart, A. (2010). Widening Participation? Yes we can! Insights from policy and leading practice in three countries; England, Ireland and USA. The University of Queensland  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker | **Context:** Report from a study tour of key higher education institutions, leading universities and partner schools to investigate widening participation to low SES students.   * WP in UK: 1997 Dearing Report – disparities of access and participation of particular groups and linked to contribution of graduates to national economy – led to introduction of tuition fees/student loans system (initial cost = £1000 per year) * Specific reference to travellers in Irish WP context * Across UK and Ireland, recognition of need for “coordinated national response” to issues related to social class (not SES) * UK: HEFCE established in 1992 in UK; HEPI founded in 2002; HESA – collects HE statistics and regularly reports on WP; OFFA safeguards and promotes fair access * In Ireland, the HEA has responsibility for planning, development and advice   WP practices in UK   * Aim Higher = national WP program in UK (disbanded since report written) * Action on Access =supports strategic national aims of WP and Aim Higher – Higher Education Progression Framework * Discussion of evaluation p.12   WP practices in Ireland   * Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) – places at reduced tariff for low SES school leavers. Similar program for students with disabilities (DARE). Overview of HE in Ireland – p.10   Most effective WP activities combine awareness-raising and aspiration-building and academic outcomes (provides list: p.8)  WP in USA – focus on *diversity* - “visible minorities and people with a disability” (p.10) and “low income first generation learners. Federal outreach programs include *Know How 2 Go* and *Gear Up* = collaboration between universities in Washington state [and others?] Tracking of students is undertaken by Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  **Aim:** The visit was intended to develop deeper understanding of national policies in the different national contexts  **Findings:** Investment in widening participation “**does** give return” (p.2)  Long term investment in UK has resulted in “sustained and substantial improvement in participation figures” from 2005-2010  Sustainability – long term activities have had ‘generational’ impact post-first in family  First in family – keeping FinF as primary focus picks up other target groups  Early intervention – at an age as early as possible is most effective  Collaboration between sectors, universities and philanthropic organisations can increase funding opportunities that are community driven. “There is a strong link between community development, school achievement and increased aspiration to higher education” (p.3)  University-school research links between faculties of education and schools/ communities are useful to help school teachers develop pedagogies that cater for diverse students (esp. low SES) in developing academic achievement + child/parent aspiration.  Combining aspiration-building with lifting achievement: prior academic achievement is significant indicator of success – access and success in HE.  Separation of aspiration-building/ recruitment enables “true partnerships and meaningful collaboration” (p.4)Pathways  Transition and student achievement: maintaining pre-entry transition work gives “greater guarantee of success in the following years” (p.4)  Evidence-based policy – it would be good to track students from early childhood through to further and higher education  Success of WP students “Academically capable and well prepared students from WP backgrounds will perform on par with the remainder of the student cohort” (p.4)  Career advice: crucial to informed course choice and improved retention. |
| Tett, L. (1999). [Widening provision in higher education – some non-traditional participants’ experiences,](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0267152990140107) *Research Papers in Education,* 14(1), 107–119.  UK  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *access; adults; community; higher education; participation; working-class* | **Context:** Examines barriers to accessing university education for ‘non-traditional’ students (working class, black, disabled community activists accessing degree in Community Education in this case) = ‘Lothian Apprenticeship Scheme Trust’ (LAST) = designed to deliberately circumvent the personal/institutional barriers that prevent participation – allowed community workers to study alongside community work. ‘Non-traditional’ label comes from under-representation.  **Aim:** To report on project designed “to enable community activists from the working-class, disabled, and minority ethnic communities to participate in higher education” (p.107); to explore pre-course and on-course experiences  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Not explicated but clearly longitudinal and qualitative. Analysis of documentation on planning course, recruitment and selection + interviews with students/ LAST staff and Trust members. None of student-participants had ‘standard’ entry qualifications (all = working class, 2 = disabled, 3 = black)  **Findings:** Analysis from pre/on-course interviews with students = thematically organised around: academic/ financial support, school experience, transformative learning experiences (non-formal/ pre-university), attitudes to HE. Themes from later interviews = motivation, evidence + experience, changing attitudes to HE.  Students didn’t necessarily choose to participate in formal learning for instrumental reasons; “positive learning derived from their life experiences and associated with their community activism has been identified, often by community education workers, as valuable in its own right” (p.113). As confidence grew over time, attitudes to HE changed.  LAST offered supports that facilitated continued engagement (e.g. funds to pay for childcare, providing access to computers) = appears to help to reduce attrition **Core argument:** LAST responds to institutional and dispositional barriers explicitly. Critical element to LAST = “a course that develops awareness of the ways in which working-class people are excluded from education helps to change perceptions away from an emphasis on education as a private consumer good that can be purchased on to the ways in which access to education is socially and economically structured” (p.114) |
| Tight, M. (2012). [Widening Participation: A Post-War Scorecard](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00071005.2012.697541), *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 60(3), 211–226.  UK  Annotation by Sally Baker  Keywords: *widening participation, higher education, United Kingdom, post-war* | **Context:** WP in UK as a historic and ongoing concern for all universities as they seek to maintain and increase rates of participation (but beyond ‘traditional’ cohorts). In UK, the label ‘widening participation’ = 2 decades old, but activities and underlying intentions pre-date this. Definition/discussion of ‘traditional’ students on p.212, as well as pre-HE context (issues with schooling and entrance requirements).  **Aim:** To examine achievements in WP; “to review post-war initiatives at widening participation, and produce an overall assessment, a ‘score card’, both of what has been achieved and what remains to be done” (p.211). To focus on participation of 4 groups: women, lower SES groups, mature (often p/t) students, ethnic minorities, but problematizes multiple membership of groups (‘multiply disadvantaged’?).  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Analysis of documents post-1945 and statistics (but notes limitations of comparisons due to different ways of collecting and measuring data)  **Findings:** Discussion of 4 groups and ‘achievements’ to date:  *Women*: Literature/ statistics illustrate the substantial rise in participation of women, from less than a third (reported in 1957) to nearly 57% in 2009/10. Themes emerging relate to intersections between gender/discipline, women taking up HE later in life, participation of women in postgrad study. Two main points: 1) women now outnumber men in HE, but there are more men in PG study and in positions of leadership; 2) participation of women is concentrated in particular subject areas.  *Lower SES*: Similar pattern to women: less than 1/3 of applicants = working class (reported in 1957); however, unlike women there has been limited increase in participation of lower SES students (citing Crozier et al., 2008: ‘range of cultural behaviours’ = not learned by unprivileged children = inhibits HE participation).  *Mature age*: Interest in this group started in 1980s. Author discusses research that survey older (21+) learners; Woodley et al. (1987) found that patterns in mature age tended to replicate patterns with school leavers along class and gender lines: In 2009/10, 6% of FT students = aged 30+ but 2/3 PT students = aged 30+ (see p.219). Mature age students much more likely to study part time (often in lower status universities). Strong connections made with social mobility.  Ethnic minorities: Also more recent interest (like mature age students). Early research from 1987 (Brennan & McGeevor) found concentrations of particular ethnicities in discipline areas (e.g. Asian student = Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Science and Pharmacy; little participation in Humanities). Patterns in under/non-participation with Caribbean men and Bangladeshi women least likely to study in HE (see p.221). **Core argument:** Efforts to widen participation since 1945 to women, mature age, and ethnic minority students have largely been successful. However, efforts to increase participation of lower SES students has consistently been stunted. |
| Walton, T. & Carillo, F. (2017). [Mechanisms for fulfilling equity targets at the elite Australian university: a review of scholarship and practice,](https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/openu/jwpll/2017/00000019/00000002/art00009) *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 19(2), 156–162.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *Educational Access Scheme, widening participation, Group of Eight* | **Context:** Widening participation in elite contexts — specifically in Go8/ Australia. Set against context of 20% participation rate for low SES students (following Bradley review of 2008). Educational Access Scheme (EAS) is most commonly used by Go8 univerisites to increase low SES numbers. Application using EAS is responsibility of students, depends on their knowledge of the system, their social network, meaning that students with ‘hot’ (ogten higher SES) family/school backgrounds make better use of the system. For students who attend certain, identified low SES schools, they automatically get bonus points added to their admissions application. Authors argue that there is an alarming lack of transparency about this part of the system  **Aim:** To “take aim at the government initiated Educational Access Scheme (EAS); to argue for “a more transparent method of identifying disadvantaged students for application-free bonus points” (abstract)  **Methodology:** Essay; authors draw on public data about low SES participation rates  **Discussion:** The average increase in low SES participation in EAS elite universities between 2008–2014 was less than 0.5% **Core argument:** Authors argue that the EAS doesn’t work because the methodology behind identifying WP students is not sound. They argue that future work should address these questions:   * How important is the role of transparency when defining equity access schemes? * What should be the relative weights for each of the factors involved in contextual admission?   To what extent can the method of applying to equity schemes improve or undermine its results? (p.160) |
| Whitty, G. & Clements, N. (2015). [Getting into Uni in England and Australia: who you know, what you know or knowing the ropes?,](https://novaojs.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/33) *International Studies in Widening Participation,* 2(2), 44–55.  AUS/ ENGLAND  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *England; Australia; higher education; access; widening participation* | **Context:** Examines access to higher education in Australia and England works from understanding that access for ‘socially disadvantaged’ groups = more complex than a social democratic or neoliberal explanation. Authors “take the view that, if higher education as currently constituted is taken for granted as a desirable ‘good’ for some social groups, it should not be systematically denied to others” – but not the right thing for everyone (p.44). Attends primarily to traditional school-leavers. Offers brief historical account of WP in England and Australia (cites Whitty et al. 2015), focusing more extensively on New Labour (UK) with 50% target, and post-Bradley (Aus) with 20/40 targets  **Aim:** To compare Australia and England in terms of policies and measurement of access/ WP  **Theoretical frame:** Not explicit; critical sociological account of higher education  **Methodology:** Essay  **Discussion:**  ‘Quantitative inequality’ – at level of how participation/access =measured. Notes that in UK, a new measurement was introduced in 2007 that painted a more positive picture of WP, but when analysed in-depth = “major disparities and differences in participation between diverse social groups when you dug beneath the surface” (p.46). Offer argument of ‘Maximally Maintained Inequality’ = saturation from ‘traditional’ sources of students [see Pitman, 2015; Gidley et al. 2010 for same argument]  ‘Qualitatively inequality’– explained by theory of ‘Effectively Maintained Inequality’ = more privileged look for new ways to enhance advantage [see argument made by Marginson, 2011 about rich Australians travelling to Ivy League universities to gain competitive advantage]. In UK = “clearly uneven distribution” of students at Russell Group universities- similar picture noted in Australia with Go8.  Authors argue that two countries appear to be competing at level of policy and view each other as “laboratories for testing out policies that they may want to introduce” (p.47) – e.g. introduction of higher student contributions in UK and abolition of Aimhigher.  Barriers to ‘fair access’ = student finance arrangements (not enough), aspiration and awareness (dispels idea that low SES students have lower/fewer aspirations), school attainment (strong links with SES), importance of social and cultural capital (including access to information – choice/ advice)  **Core argument:** WP should be reconceptualised as social justice in widest sense possible (see Gale, 2015 & Burke, 2012) but need more policy direction around encouraging entry/ narrowing attainment gaps/ ‘radically improving’ quality of information given to young people about HE, strengthening links between schools and universities. Research priorities = need “more sophisticated research and datasets” (p.52) and how to link different datasets and more work that questions normative assumptions about WP: “We need to improve access to what exists *and* change what people gain access to. In our view, social justice demands both” (p.52). |

1. These students are: students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, Indigenous students, students with disabilities, students from rural and remote locations, non-English speaking background students and women in non-traditional areas [↑](#footnote-ref-1)