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CONTINUUM
WIDENING PARTICIPATION

FE & HE Collaboration to Widen Participation: A Tale of Two Initiatives

Professor John Storan
Director, Continuum, University of East London
Director, Action on Access

Presentation

- Setting the Scene
- ‘The Aimhigher Effect’ on HEIs
- Getting Strategic – Widening Participation Strategic Assessments
- Approach Adopted
- SAM Analysis
- Final Thoughts

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Setting the Scene
Changing WP Policy Landscape

- Changing policy landscape for WP:
  - Fees Review (Nov 2009)
  - Higher Ambitions (Nov 2009)
  - Unleashing Aspirations (July 2009)
  - General Election!

Setting the Scene
HEFCE's Young Participation Survey Results

"The fact that young people from areas that traditionally have some of the lowest participation rates are 30% more likely to go to university than even five years ago clearly illustrates that the Government's long term investment in raising aspirations and widening participation through programmes such as Aimhigher is working"

David Lammy, Universities Minister
(The Telegraph, 28/1/10)

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Setting the Scene
Two WP Initiatives

- Aimhigher and WPSAs as part-proxies to FE/HE collaboration to WP
- Analysis of WPSAs may help us understand:
  - Extent of mainstreaming of WP across the HE sector
  - Types of strategies, activities and measures being taken forward by HEIs
  - How significant FE/HE partnerships are to the WPSAs

‘The Aimhigher’ Effect on Universities

- 44 autonomous area partnerships
- Local planning and delivering of WP activities , but nationally funded
- WP knowledge/practice exchange
- Deepening understanding of opportunity structures
- HE Progression framework

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Getting Strategic

- Widening participation strategic assessments, an opportunity to:
  - Develop an institutional strategy
  - Combine full range of WP activities
  - Measure, evaluate and monitor progress
  - Explore the impact of Aimhigher on HEIs WP planning
  - Undertake continuous improvement
  - Report and evaluate progress - Dec 2010

Approach Adopted

- **Phase 1 - Content analysis**
  - 129 WPSAs and assorted appendixes
  - Setting up software (Nvivo)
  - Developing a coding framework
  - Applying coding and running thematic reports
  - SAM structure

Approach Adopted

- **Phase 2 - Meta-analysis**
  - Analytical review of coded data
  - Identification of emergent trends and issues
  - Headline feedback

- **Phase 3 - Reports and feedback**
  - Integration of strand reports
  - Preparation of first briefing report
  - Publication and dissemination of briefing paper

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SAM Analysis
Strategy Headlines

- Mainstreaming and embedding of WP features strongly.
- Staff engagement and capacity building for WP an important emphasis.
- Whole institution responsibility for WP with management lines and remit explicit.
- Developing collection of and commentary on external and internal data.
- The value and significance of Aimhigher partnership working features strongly.

SAM Analysis
Strategy Headlines

- Part-time provision has a strong presence.
- Increasing penetration of cross institutional understanding of WP in mission statements and corporate plans.
- Definitions of WP operationally related.
- Extensive cross-referencing between WPSA and other policies/strategies. E.g. admissions, learning and teaching, equality and diversity.

SAM Analysis
Activities - Headlines

- Concentration of activities at early lifecycle stages – Aimhigher type activities

- Referred to target groups were:
  - Disabled students
  - BME groups
  - Gifted and talented
  - NSEC 4-7
  - Care background

SAM Analysis
Activities - Headlines

- Partnership programme of work with FECs and schools widespread. Links with Academy and Trust schools developing
- Positive intentions to work on 14-19 curriculum, rather than in progress now.
- HEIs identify regeneration in local communities as an aspect of their WP mission.
- FE/HE collaborative provision

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SAM Analysis
Measures - Headlines

- No major changes planned - incremental development.
- HESA benchmarks are a principle measure.
- Development of evidence base for WP strategies and actions ongoing

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SAM Analysis
Measures - Headlines

- Key areas of FE & HE collaboration mentioned in the WPSAs were:
  - Progression Agreements
  - Foundation Degrees
  - Associate College Scheme
  - Subject led HE progression – Music, Dance etc.
  - Local/national/rural

Final Thoughts

- ‘The Aimhigher Effect’ is widespread in WPSAs
- Local and wide FE/HE partnerships central to WPSAs.
- Data collection common - application less so
- Combination of a national programme with WPSAs crucial to further WP progress

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WIDENING PARTICIPATION

Thank You

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