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'Working-class' education: notions of widening participation in the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries.

Denise Robinson
and
Martyn Walker
Introduction

• Background – our particular interests and perspectives
• Aim – To explore Widening Participation (WP) in the 19th and 21st century contexts and whether WP is not a new notion.
Definitions of working-class

• a social group that consists of people who earn little money, often being paid only for the hours or days that they work, and who usually do physical work (Cambridge dictionary)

• Socio-economic groups - From 2001 the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) has been used for all official statistics and surveys. It replaces Social Class based on Occupation (SC, formerly Registrar General's Social Class) and Socio-economic Groups (SEG). 8 categories. NS-SEC has been constructed to measure employment relations and conditions of occupations. Conceptually these are central to delineating the structure of socio-economic positions in modern societies and helping to explain variations in social behaviour and other social phenomena. (http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/classifications/current/ns-sec/history/index.html-Office for National Statistics)
Widening participation
Questions

• Definitions of W/P Widening participation is presented as a means to achieve two main objectives for government – social justice and economic success within a globalised context.

• Is Widening Participation new?

• More of the same?
NS-SEC

1. Higher Managerial & Professional occupations
2. Lower M&P Occupations
3. Intermediate
4. Small employers/own account workers
5. Lower supervisory/tech occupations
6. Semi-routine occupations
7. Routine occupations
Definitions of Widening Participation (HE)

HESA

- Lower NS-SEC 4-7
- No previous higher education
- From a low participation neighbourhood
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Full time undergraduate entrants 2007/08</strong></th>
<th><strong>Number</strong></th>
<th><strong>Percentage</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total UK</td>
<td>352,400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>302,875</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature (over 21 years of age) entrants - England</td>
<td>63,600</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No previous higher education and from a low participation neighbourhood (mature)</td>
<td>6,906</td>
<td>11.5 (of mature entrants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*<em>Other Full time Undergraduate entrants <em>1</em></em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>47,195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature entrants</td>
<td>28,555</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No previous higher education and from a low participation neighbourhood (mature)</td>
<td>2,850</td>
<td>11.2 (of mature entrants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part time undergraduate entrants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total - England</td>
<td>253,695</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>19,205</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>234,695</td>
<td>92.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No previous higher education and from a low participation neighbourhood</td>
<td>13,660 * 2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19th Century Working Class Criteria


Occupations

- **Table 1**
  Known Occupations of those who attended Keighley Mechanics’ Institute 1840.

- **Table 2**

- **Table 3**
  Known Occupations of those who attended Huddersfield Mechanics’ Institute 1876.

- **Table 4**
  Known Occupations of those who attended Huddersfield Mechanics’ Institute 1881.
Yorkshire Union Mechanics’ Institutes
The North East
Yorkshire Union Mechanics’ Institutes
The Dales and Pennines
Challenging the WP model

- Maintenance of social & economic inequalities through a hierarchical differentiated HE structure (meritocracy supports enhanced opportunities for m/c)?
- Exacerbates the academic/vocat. divide; debases vocational routes?
- Alternatives that offer real value in informal adult education?
Conclusions

• Both WP and class as it is applied to education are contested notions
• WP is not new
• Importance of structure and individual agency
• Awareness of historical developments can be illuminating