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Robinson, Denise and Walker, Martyn

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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 19\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} 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.
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>Full time undergraduate entrants 2007/08</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</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>Other Full time Undergraduate entrants *1</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>Part time undergraduate entrants</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
Yorkshire Union Mechanics’ Institutes
Huddersfield and District
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