Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

0488

New Pedagogic Spaces for Mature Students in Higher Education in a Post-Pandemic Era

Nalita James[1]

[1]*University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom*

Research Domain: Higher education policy (HEP)

Abstract: The closure of universities, adult education centres, and other educational institutions, as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the subsequent shift to online learning has highlighted and compounded existing inequalities in education at all levels. At the same time the Covid-19 pandemic has offered an the opportunity to rethink not only new digital, online, and pedagogical possibilities but also the basic purposes of higher education, and how a renewed vision might be harnessed to develop more democratic and just societies. This paper will encourage discussion about what a post-pandemic pedagogy might look like in higher education. How can universities become places where prior privilege is not given priority in engagement, and where instead recognition of diversity, equality and inclusion are the premises of formalised education in new pedagogic spaces. In addressing these issues the paper will look at the way in which local authority adult and community education providers have been at their most responsive in supporting their students and their communities, and the lessons that can be learnt. The paper concludes by arguing that the global pandemic present opportunities for elevating adult education in higher education, rather than reducing adults' opportunities to learn.

Paper:

Introduction

The closure of universities, adult education centres, and other educational institutions, as a consequence of the covid-19 pandemic, and the subsequent shift to online learning has highlighted and compounded existing inequalities in education at all levels (Milano et al, 2021). At the same time the COVID-19 pandemic offers an the opportunity to rethink not only new digital, online, and pedagogical possibilities but also the basic purposes of higher education, and how a renewed vision of education might be harnessed to develop more democratic and just societies. The COVID-19 pandemic offers us the opportunity to rethink not only new digital, online, and pedagogical possibilities but also the basic purposes of education, and how a renewed vision of higher education might be harnessed to develop more democratic and just societies.

Post Pandemic and New Pedagogic Spaces

This paper will encourage discussion about what a post-pandemic pedagogy might look like. How can universities become places where prior privilege is not given priority in engagement, and where instead recognition of diversity, equality and inclusion are the premises of formalized education in

new pedagogic spaces. In addressing these issues the paper will look at how local authority adult and community education has been at their most responsive in supporting their students and their communities. In higher education there has been a lifelong education through the narrowing of the curriculum to focus on employability and vocational skills,or by cutting courses in the arts and humanities, and reducing adults' opportunities to learn. Stanistreet (2020, p.450) has argued 'If lifelong learning is to play its full part in recovery and in securing a post-COVID world that is fair, inclusive and worth living in, for everyone and not just the privileged few, we have to start doing things differently. Similarly too Hall and Tandoon (2021) have argued that in the post-pandemic era, higher education must find holistic approaches to re-connect with community and society. 'As educational institutions embedded in local contexts, their core missions of teaching, research and service need to be integrated in a proactive manner' (Hall and Tandoon, online). During this time of crisis, enabling access to HE for mature students is even more invaluable to their socioeconomic wellbeing and the social mobility of communities. COVID-19 crisis has also seen adult and community learning at its most responsive. Those working in adult education have launched themselves into supporting their students and their communities. This support includes creating imaginative online teaching resources and providing one-to-one support to setting up foodbanks and making PPE for their local hospitals. Local authority adult education services have produced online responses to lockdown reducing isolation, improving mental health and wellbeing, whilst increasing support for people affected by job insecurity.

Conclusion

As part of the pedagogy possibiltiies adult education needs to be prioritised, notably because the development of adult capacities assumes major strategic importance in times of crisis. In part this has been reflected in the the recent FE White Paper (2021) although it can be argued that the reforms presented in it are merely a list of good intentions rather than a serious attempt to improve adult education and skills. Further, for online learning to represent a valuable alternative to face-to-face teaching and learning, the way in which it is delivered needs to provide high-quality reskilling and upskilling opportunities for mature learners, that can then translate into sustainable employment opportunities and also addresses Issues of inclusiveness to ensure that all adults can benefit from online learning, This does not mean a reshuffling where online, hybrid or blended forms of teaching and learning are a replication of poor quality teaching. Online learning, in its broadest sense, must also be reformed, for it to play a positive social and educational role, particular during these times of incredible challenges. It should not only be viewed as a tool for making teaching and learning more efficient. The focus should be on both pedagogic techniques but also on pedagogic purposes, located within broader discussions about the future of higher education. The global pandemic present opportunities for elevating adult learning and restructuring higher education practices and policies in more equitable and efficacious ways rather than an add-on to the continued policy focus of the 19-24 year old learner. Universities should be at the forefront of providing everyone with a fair chance and access to participate in higher education.

References: References

Field, J. (2021) Lifelong Learning in the COVID-19 Crisis: Where Next? https://blog.insidegovernment.co.uk/further-education/lifelong-learning-covid-19

Further Education White Paper (2021) Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth, available
at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957856/Skills_for_jobs_lifelong_learning_for_opportunity_and_growth__web_version_.pdf

Hall, B. and Tandoon, R (2021) Covid-19: Re-connecting Higher Education to Lifelong Learning, https://thelifelonglearningblog.uil.unesco.org/2020/08/03/covid-19-re-connecting-higher-education-to-lifelong-learning/

Stanistreet, P. (2021) Thinking diferently, together: Towards a lifelong learning society, International Review of Education, 66:449–455