

London-centric widening participation?

THE CAPITAL'S MACHINERY OF WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND WHY IT
CAN'T SIMPLY BE TRANSPLANTED TO PROVINCIAL CITIES

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The 'London Effect': The widening participation angle...

Reports and research since 2012 about the success of London's schools both at GCSE and on entry to HE (first reports of this attainment gap actually in 2004...).

Has led to some political and media tub-thumping at times about London's 'excellence' in clear contrast to some of the rhetoric applied to other parts of the UK, Gove described how schools in East Durham 'smell of defeatism'.

This 'London effect' literature says nothing about inequalities *between* schools in terms of HE access, either within London or England as a whole.

Coinciding with this period of improvement in the attainment of London schools, dramatic expansion of NGO's providing widening participation activities.

These organisations beginning to extend beyond the capital:

- Political implications of this – what is their model and where does their finance come from?
- Practical difficulties and complexities of expanding beyond London – London vision, or the problem with metropolitan policy goggles...

Overview

1. The 'Other' London Effect – structural inequalities in access to HE and Sheffield-London differences
2. London's machinery of widening participation and its politics
3. Replicating London models in provincial settings and vice versa

Data:

Part one draws on data from the NPD and DfE data.

Parts two and three draw on interviews with HE advisers and WP coordinators in London working at post-16 institutions

Part One: Structural differences and the 'other' London effects...

Series of excellent studies examining the high performance of FSM students at GCSE in London compared to elsewhere (Cook, 2012; IFS, 2014; Burgess, 2015).

Different reports have seen different causes – success of the London Challenge and the high proportion of BME families generally seen as central

Some related evidence for HE participation – tends to be higher across the board and especially for accessing elite institutions (Sutton Trust, 2011)

Periodically used by politicians (or OFSTED chief inspectors...) to attack schools in the North

What is not on the political or the research radar is the inequalities between schools within London, or the continuing concentration of institutions which serve as *de facto* feeder schools for elite HEIs

These are the 'other' London effects and I want to throw a little light on them...

Private sector access to Oxbridge

Well-known that the private sector over-represented at Oxbridge

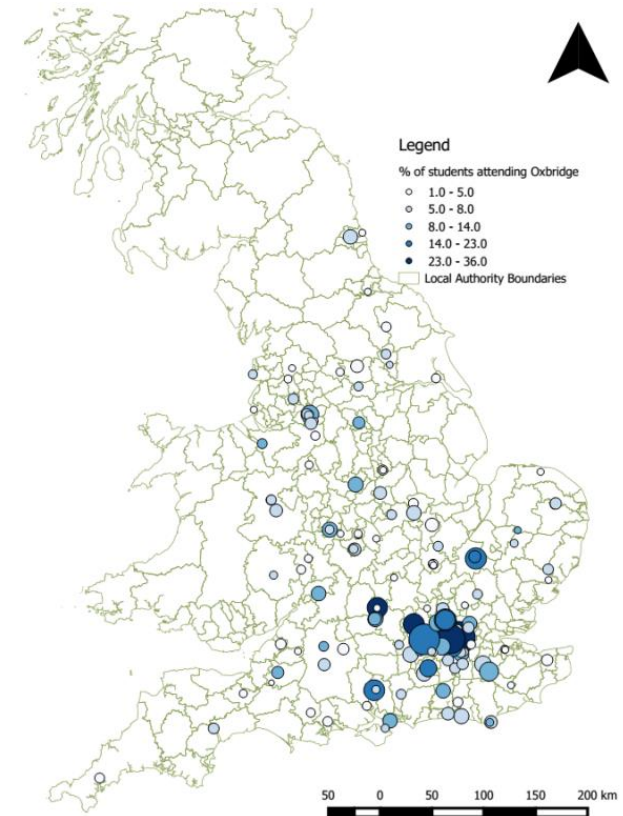
Less well-known is what the geography of access to Oxbridge looks like.

Map the percentage of students from each school attending Oxbridge

Threshold of 1%

Jenks breaks to classify schools into 5 breaks

1-5%, 5-8%, 8-14%, 14-25%, 25-36%



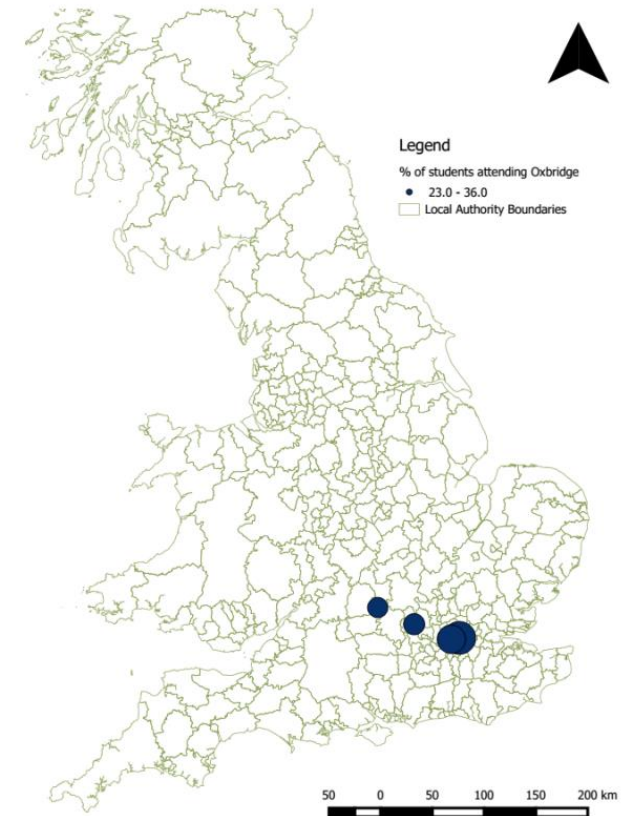
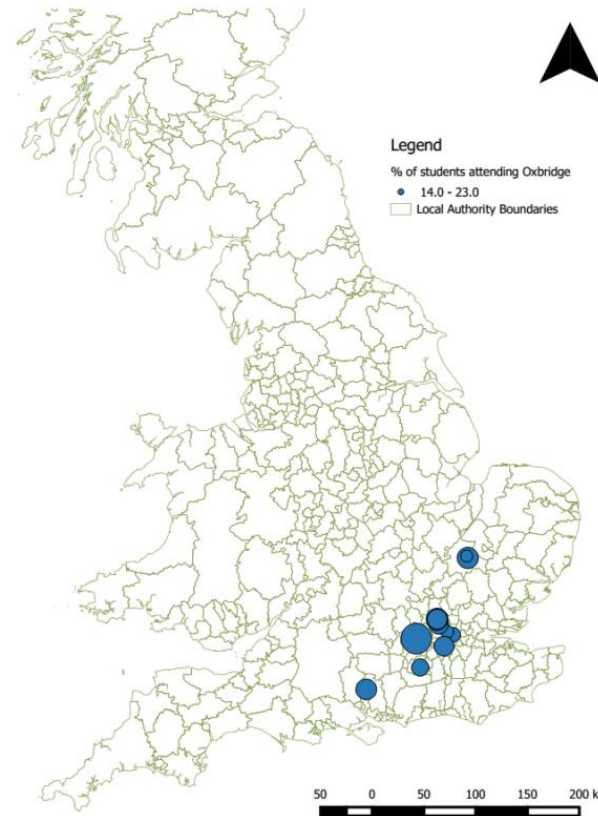
The higher you go up the scale the more concentrated on the South-East

Last two bins are shown here – clear concentration on London, Oxford/Cambridge and the Home Counties.

Similar patterns evident for grammar schools and to a lesser extent for non-selective state schools.

Oxbridge recruitment happens in two ways – the cream off over large areas and they have ‘feeder schools’.

The role of the latter is never questioned.



School to university in London – still a binary system?

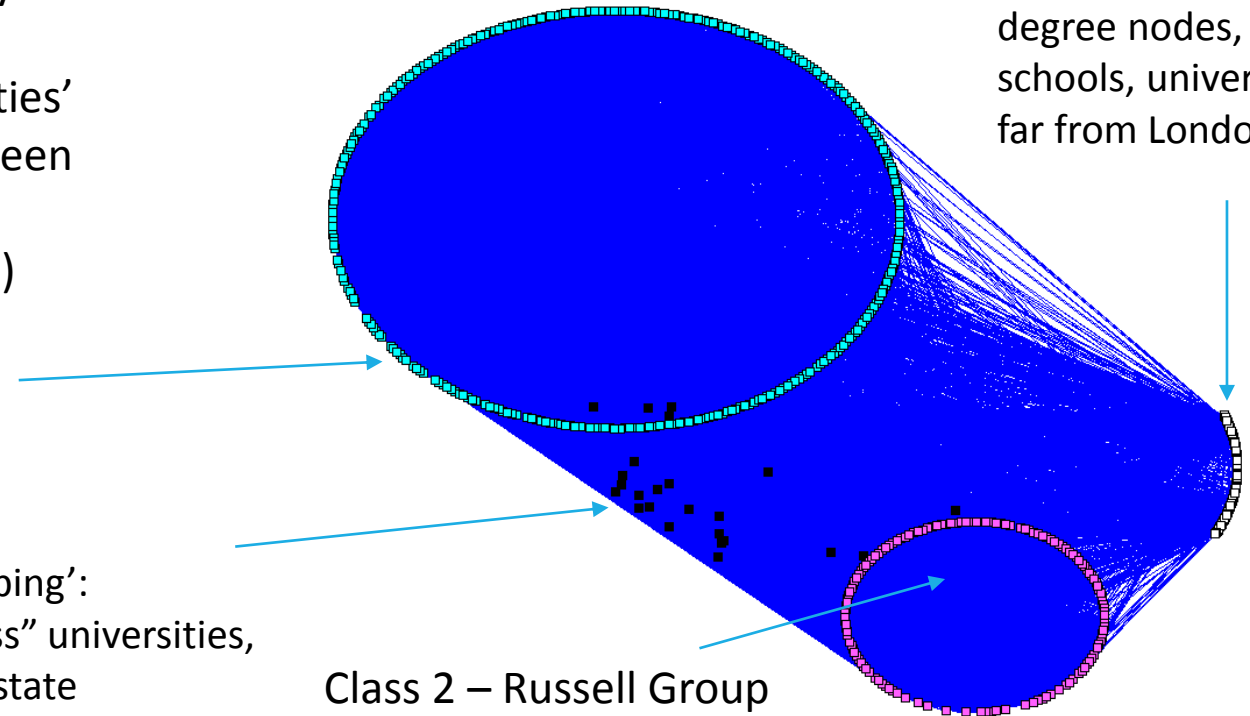
- Students entering university from a London school in 2010-11/2011-12 aged 18/19 (youth participation rate).
- Modularity analysis - Clusters/‘communities’ based on density and weight of ties between different nodes.
- OSLOM method (Lancichinetti *et al.* 2011)

Class 1 –most state secondary schools, FE and sixth form Colleges most closely, purely post-1992/post-2000 universities

‘Over-lapping’: “Plateglass” universities, also KCL, state schools/colleges with mixed destinations

Class 2 – Russell Group universities, the “super-states”, private schools.

‘Homeless’ – low degree nodes, small schools, universities far from London



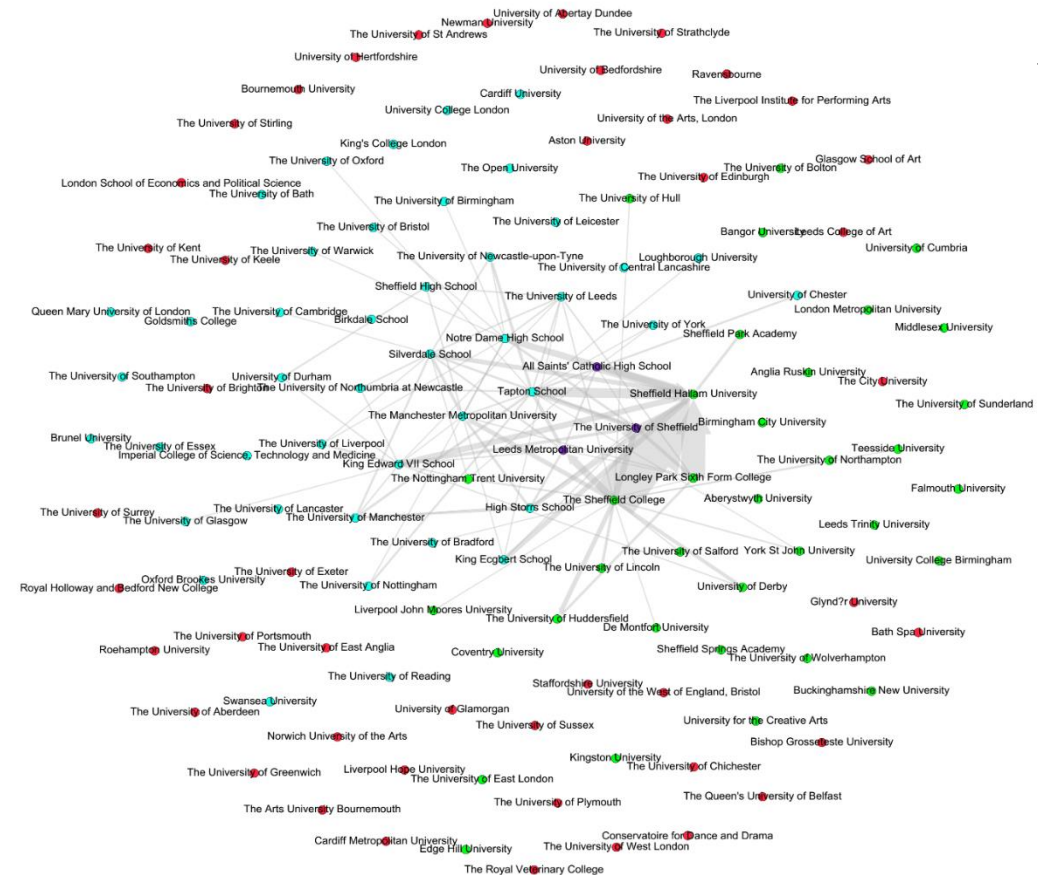
School to university in Sheffield – a binary system too?

Again the analysis produces a similar binary division with certain overlapping institutions

What is very different however, is the profile of HE destinations amongst the locally 'elite' cluster of schools

Across all schools and colleges in Sheffield, Birkdale and Girls High aside, the largest single destination is *always* Sheffield Hallam, usually followed by the University of Sheffield.

This is also true for the suburban sixth forms of Hallam which is a distinctive difference to schools in the 'elite' cluster in London.



The other London effect: inequalities in HE destinations in London

Another method for looking at inequalities between post-16 institutions in terms of access to HE is to look at how diverse or concentrated a school's profile of HE destinations are.

The Herfindahl Hirschman Index (HHI) is used in economics to assess the amount of competition between firms – a score closer to 1 indicates a monopoly situation, closer to 0 indicates more 'competition' between firms.

In terms of HE destinations for a school, a score closer to 1 would mean that a school or college would send nearly all of its students to, for example, Russell Group or post-1992 institutions, a score closer to 0 would show a more balanced range of HE destinations

What this allows is an alternative metric for thinking about inequalities in access to HE.

Instead of 'judging' a school on raw HE participation or Russell Group or higher tariff institutions, you could instead examine how well-balanced a school's destinations are.

This is useful if we were aiming for a school system which was genuinely more equal.

HHI: Sheffield

Classification based on Oxbridge, Russell Group, Post-1992, Post-2000, Arts and specialist institutions.

Experimenting with this technique:

- Still some problems (including students who don't go to uni or not?)
- Small numbers can also be problematic.
- Nevertheless interesting output

Results for Sheffield show Sheffield College, Park Academy have the most diverse set of HE destinations, Birkdale and King Egbert's the least.

Gap between most and least diverse relatively small.

| KS5EstablishmentName | HHI_HE |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| Sheffield Park Academy | 0.13 |
| The Sheffield College | 0.18 |
| All Saints' Catholic High School | 0.19 |
| King Edward VII School | 0.21 |
| Sheffield Springs Academy | 0.22 |
| Tapton School | 0.26 |
| Notre Dame High School | 0.26 |
| Longley Park Sixth Form College | 0.27 |
| Sheffield High School | 0.27 |
| High Storrs School | 0.27 |
| Silverdale School | 0.28 |
| King Egbert School | 0.32 |
| Birkdale School | 0.33 |

HHI: London

Far more polarised system than Sheffield:

- Existence of this sub-set of elite grammar and private schools sending almost all their students to the Russell Group
- These schools are simply not present in Sheffield or for that matter in most provincial cities (perhaps with the exception of Birmingham and Manchester)

| KS5EstablishmentName | HHI_HE |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet | 0.717 |
| George Green's School | 0.635 |
| The Henrietta Barnett School | 0.595 |
| The Gladys Aylward School | 0.566 |
| Notting Hill and Ealing High School | 0.562 |
| The Tiffin Girls' School | 0.535 |
| Channing School | 0.527 |
| Putney High School | 0.52 |
| Kingston Grammar School | 0.487 |
| North London Collegiate School | 0.485 |
| Wimbledon High School | 0.468 |
| Tiffin School | 0.467 |
| The Latymer School | 0.465 |

The 'Other London effect' ...

Problem with the framing of London's success at attainment for students from disadvantaged backgrounds is that it obscures the problems of inequality at the top

If we use other metrics to analyse HE participation, this challenges both the political rhetoric and the inequalities between institutions in terms of access to HE.

Simply looking at the percentage of students from any particular school attending a certain type of HEI tends to place pressure on lower performing schools and areas, whilst those institutions or cities/neighbourhoods which are effectively elite, are lauded.

We have an education system which is designed with the needs of those at the top of it in mind.

- This is true of facilitating subjects, Ebacc and so forth...
- There is a specific geography to this and it is one which views London and the South-East in a much worse light.

Part two: London's machinery of (third sector) widening participation

Vast concentration of third sector organisations on London.

Hard to quantify this geographical divide specifically for education organisations, but crudely:

- 7847 'Education/Training'-themed charities in the UK.
- 7345 of these based in London, majority of which play a local role (Data: NCV0, 2015; LVSC, 2015)

Large number of organisations with a specific 'widening participation'/access to HE remit

- Into University, Social Mobility Foundation, Debate Mate
- These three specifically now beginning to expand beyond the capital

Offer various combinations of activities – some mix of mentoring, residential programmes, homework clubs, UCAS assistance, work experience...

Hard to quantify their impact though some serious evaluations have taken place – unlikely that their role in the 'London effect' was substantial

More important is the implicit politics of these organisations

Connections to Big Capital – where does the money come from?

Close connections of many of these organisations to funding from the City of London

These organisations are very good at getting money from financial institutions

Into University – turnover of £2.1m in 2013-14.

- Major donations from financial institutions - £240,819 from BlackRock, Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation - £200,000, UBS - £89,377, JPMorgan Chase £70,000.
- Very big donations from charitable trusts, especially The Queen's Trust – new donation of £1m

Financial links to the City often provided for specific programmes

- The Social Mobility Foundation received £276,729 from JP Morgan Chase in 2014
- Went towards running a JP Morgan Chase residential programme and work experience

Contradictory implications of this

Into University ran a day at Deutsche Bank in the City for students at 'North Ham Sixth Form College' doing BTEC Business. I went with them and the students loved it. It was very well-organised, Into University know how to get people engaged and excited. The problem with it was that no-one at Deutsche Bank has done BTEC Business – it just doesn't work that way.

Dan, Widening Participation Coordinator, North Ham Sixth Form College London

Reality of Deutsche Bank's graduate recruitment is somewhat different.

- Deutsche Bank tends to recruit from small subset of universities (LSE, Cambridge, Imperial, Oxford, Birmingham – the top 5 according to Linked In)
- Very hard to access these universities through BTEC route – 2.3% of acceptances to higher tariff universities held BTECs (UCAS, 2015)

Whose interests are being served with this sort of activity?

- Students clearly benefit.
- But how meaningful is this?

These contradictions not limited to conventional forms of HE

And of course, the other thing that we've not done in this country, we've never developed a good technical alternative to higher education. And when I hear now, governments banging on about higher apprenticeships- they're not there! Students come to me and say, "David, where are the higher apprenticeships website, couldn't find anything, it's crap." And I say "Yeah, it's crap." "Couldn't find anything on the website and when I do get it to work, there's nothing there." The message they're getting is, this is a wonderful option to higher education- No it's not! There are a few marquee things like KPMG, Deloitte, BT that gets 1000 applicants for one place. **I mean this is rubbish you know.** And I get on my email, someone from Credit Suisse will say we've got this great internship, immediately I get worried I see the word "internship" - what's that? Is it money, or what is it, where does it lead? And it says, we want 300 UCAS points, so what they're saying is that we don't want you to go to uni, we want you to come to us and then we might fund you to go part-time, but we still want you to have at least 3 B's at A-level

David, HE and Careers Adviser, Link Sixth Form Consortium, London (my emphasis).

Political agenda of philanthropy-led education policy

Political agenda around social mobility – issue of access to professions has been pushed to the fore. WP seen as key to overcoming these issues.

Post-crisis, finance and banking in particular under public pressure - clear political incentive for financial institutions to provide substantial funding to WP organisations that can show clear ‘impact’.

Major corporate/financial backers have a direct interest in supporting WP activities – it shows that they are ‘serious’ about reducing inequality in access to the professions and their institutions in particular.

The issue is with the framing of the solutions to the problem – the new wave of NGO-run measures, of which WP initiatives are only one, to ‘tackle’ the issue of social mobility limits the horizons of action – there is no possibility of a more egalitarian model of society, here it is inequalities of access that matter in this model.

There is also, obviously, no questioning of the role of these financial institutions themselves. This is particularly pertinent to thinking about geographical inequalities within the UK.

Implicit to this whole political agenda is that no serious alternative is possible. Pragmatically and immediately these programmes have positive outcomes, but there is extremely limited scope for meaningful change.

The broader move towards philanthropy-driven and finance-led education initiatives

This is part of a much broader shift in education policy (Ball, 2012; Ball and Junemann, 2012)

- with the Academy reforms having opened up secondary education in particular to the influence of policy networks which connecting high finance to education policy
- political control moving away from direct government control, especially at local level.
- Opening up of education policy to networks of philanthropy, largely stemming from the City. Personnel overlap with Teach First – governing board of the Chapeltown free school a clear example.
- Also a weakening, or at least dilution, of direct university control over widening participation activities
- These organisations also outside the remit of OFFA
- London's proximity to the City of London has meant that it has seen a lot of these developments much sooner
- These organisations are expanding their geographical remit

Part three: Leaving the capital – some problems of geography



(Source: Debate Mate, 2015: 10)

National expansion

Some of these organisations expanding nationally

- Into University – Nottingham centres opened, 2012-13. Further centres in Bristol and Brighton in 2013-14. Oxford, Brighton and Leeds added in 2014-15.
- Debate Mate – began in London 2008, from 2009 in Manchester and Birmingham, then Bristol, Nottingham and Liverpool more recently.
- Social Mobility Foundation – opened their second office in Manchester 2014, are targeting schools in Leeds, Nottingham, Birmingham, Glasgow and Liverpool.

This has not always gone according to plan...

Into University's first foray outside of the capital

Organisation runs on a community centre-style model

One centre running activities for all ages, from primary upwards. Ideally retaining a cohort of students right the way through.

Homework clubs, trips to universities and museums, mentoring.

Provide assistance for, and in, local schools.

Very successful model.

Sign-up usually by open day, in London word of mouth generally sufficient – highly-motivated and largely ethnic minority intakes. Results in long waiting lists and quick uptake.

In Nottingham, one of the first centres opened in a predominantly white working-class estate – very different experience...

When London tactics don't work...

Rachel: When we opened up the first one in Nottingham, the person who went up to open it and the team who went up had previously been in London, and so they like just did everything they did in London and they were just like "Woh, what's happening!?" It was really a struggle as well.

Sol: Is it the same team that's still there?

Rachel: No, they all, they all left. I went up there, I think part of the reason they left was because it was so difficult for them to make it successful.

Recruiting in London vs. Nottingham

Rachel: We recruit from where we see the students in the schools [...]. Or we might have open days, **that's what we did in London, family open days, like we've only been open since mid-November and this week we've already got a waiting list for our primary groups in London, [...] that's pretty quick, it's just 6 or 7 weeks after we opened,** it's like people just came and friends of friends of friends, it just filled up so quickly. And we haven't really had much trouble with people coming back every week. **But in Nottingham it took about, I'd say almost two years, a year and a half to properly get a good amount of people going. [...]** We had to do *a lot* of phone calls [at the Nottingham Centre], in London, well in my centre now if you've got a register of 30 students you can pretty much guarantee that 25 of them will show up [...] In Nottingham you'd have maybe 30 children and 11 would come

Solving retention problems

But they're really good now they've put loads of measures in place for like retention, they've had like family meetings with all the families who sign up because now if you miss more than three sessions without a good reason then you lose your place. **So they've put loads of measures in place which we've never had in London because it wasn't necessary.**

[...] It's different, you have to kind of copy what the community want. It was very different from setting a centre up in London.

Further limits to London WP approaches...

Into University overcame the difficulties associated with working in a very different local community.

Implicit assumptions that education in provincial cities should simply 'be more like London' is clearly problematic.

Do provincial white-working class students fit less easily in the model of WP developed with the help and encouragement of philanthrocapitalism in London?

These provincial-metropolitan contrasts were not limited to Into University, they also appeared in interviews with an HE adviser/WP Coordinator who had worked in a sixth form college in the North-West and had attempted to use similar strategies to those developed in an Inner London sixth form college. He subsequently briefly worked in WP for a Russell Group university in London

'Trendy deprivation' in London

Sol: I think it's something interesting which you kind of come across with the schools and colleges that I go into in London, and you see at North Ham Sixth Form College, they've got this access to you know, "Oh an MPs coming in this week and another one's coming in that week." And then "Oh we've got a trip to x/y uni and Into University are coming in and..."

Paul: I'm *really* glad you mentioned that, I *do* think that's key [...] if you're, and I say this very carefully, in an ostensibly trendy area like Hackney, it kind of suffers from 'trendy deprivation.' [...] It's easier to kind of supply your students with that. I found it *very* difficult sometimes to replicate some of the things that North Ham Sixth Form College were trying to do in Manchester. You're faced with, what is at the most basic kind of level, the same kind of problem, but the provision that you can access is very different.

Problems of geographical transfer (again)

Paul: [...] I thought you could very much just transfer the kind of North Ham programme into Greater Manchester, and I realised very quickly that it just wouldn't match, and there's a lot of good ideas in there but the things that were kind of discouraging our students, or the attitudes our students held, or the kind of things we could provide for students, you know aside from the kind of strict pot of cash, were very different [...] I think the assumption's maybe, "Oh there up there near Manchester and they've got a city, it's the same kind of thing." But it's not like that at all, the distance Hackney is from central London is probably comparable to what Ashton is from Manchester but there's a very considerable disconnect between like the Metropolis [of Manchester] and the suburban outpost of which Tameside is kind of like one.

[...]

You're not only faced with the most basic socio-economic advantage, but there's that whole kind of cultural bubble that I think the whole higher education system is kind of constructed on, that they just don't have access to and perhaps not by virtue of their parents aspiration [...] I know for a fact that they want it, it's that it kind of doesn't exist in the area. Even the simplest things like closing libraries, no theatres, maybe one art gallery- closed now, very little music scene and these things don't sound very middle class, but they are. That's the preserve of middle class culture and it doesn't really exist there.

The centralised demands of the market-driven WP bureaucracy...

Paul: I went to a roundtable at HEFCE when I'd just started the job [at a London Russell Group University], the problem is always scarcity and how efficiently you deploy resources, and I think the marketized structure of the widening participation system creates a self-referential bureaucracy which kind of mires universities in a situation where they provide things that satisfy the needs of this amorphous centralised widening-participation bureaucracy. I've spent a year working at it and I can't get my head around it still. [...]

Anyway, at this roundtable I just said you could save a lot of cash if you just allocated schools a certain amount of money and just let them make requests of the universities. It's more labour intensive but in terms of resources that would be far more useful. [...] I left the sector with that feeling that there's a lot of work and good intentions being done by universities, is it as effective as it could be? I'm not so sure.

...and the hyper-local needs of students

And the other problem is, the university of whatever offers X widening participation event, well, it makes the assumption that we were talking about at the start of this interview, that a student coming from a school in Liverpool or one in Manchester or Newcastle or London, has the same requirements or will get the same benefits from that, well that's just not... Well that *isn't* true. So these centralised things I think are almost a way to kind of self-reflexively satisfy the demands of WP rather than addressing these like hyper-local WP or aspirational demands that students actually have.

I suppose that the point that I'd make if you're thinking about differences between London and Greater Manchester [...] there's an assumption somewhere in WP that centralised provision can be provided for students regardless of where they're from and I'm not sure that that works

Market perversities

So, for example with the grade requirements for widening participation programmes, we get all these things from UCL and its like, all these students must have 5 A*s to come on the programme and you think well, we've got 1600 students and there's like 3 students who would have that, and those students are already getting bags of support, what about the other... and I sent an email to that effect to the person at UCL and she was defensive about it. And also the other thing is that, it's not unrealistic, we sent two students to Oxford last year who wouldn't have got onto the UCL programme, which I tell them and they sort of shrug

[...] I was in a seminar with someone from UCL, the head of outreach but she um, she said "We used to run a thing with students that got Bs and Cs at GCSE and we worked with them for a couple of years and we worked with 250 students and actually only 1 of them got into UCL so we've stopped doing it."

Dan, Widening Participation Coordinator, North Ham Sixth Form College, London.

The need for local models and the contradictory pressures of a marketized WP system

These comparisons between activities in a sixth form college in London and one in Greater Manchester reinforce the problems faced by Into University in adapting a model developed in London to a provincial urban setting.

This is partly a question of activities and the student body, particularly in relation to ethnicity.

But these issues are also structural – there is a clear inequity in provision of cultural institutions and funding, not to mention the concentration of elites and professionals who are willing to volunteer time.

Ironically, these inequalities are being shaped, if not exacerbated, by the very bodies that fund much of the new philanthropic model of WP

This all affects how possible it is to replicate models initiated in London. Both the Into University examples, and the HE adviser who had moved from the North West to London highlight the necessity of a locally-oriented approach.

The broader centralised political pressures on widening participation and how these contradict the very localised and spatially specific needs of students remind us of the deep contradictions and pressures on widening participation work more broadly.

Conclusions

Expansion of philanthropically funded forms of third sector widening participation beyond London.

There are important political ramifications of this, particularly in relation to accountability and the political agenda that lies behind corporate funding of education initiatives.

These organisations are confronting the differentiated geography of education in England. Schools, communities, the value of education culturally and economically – all of these vary hugely across the country.

The concentration of the model of third sector WP has combined with the discourse surrounding the 'London effect' to create the illusion that the London model can be easily replicated elsewhere, the reality is much more complex.

Moreover, the London effect focusses attention on the low-attaining and disadvantaged when our (geographical) problems with elites in education are just as deep and intractable.

These geographical complexities and contradictions form part of the broader pressures on schools and universities of a centralised and market-oriented WP system. But we should not underestimate the possibility to pose pragmatic but more radical alternatives within and beyond the current models.

Extra slides

