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**Gaining entry, gaining confidence:
a study of the Glasgow Access to Primary Teacher Education
Project**

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Abstract

In spite of strenuous efforts to improve the take-up rate of higher education places by students from non-traditional backgrounds, some communities remain relatively isolated from the national trend to increased participation. Located in discourses of access and community, this paper describes a two year project run in partnership between Glasgow City Council Department of Education and the University of Glasgow, which concentrated not on changing entry tariffs, but on increasing the motivation of students, and upon working with them within their own communities and schools in order to enable them to achieve the entry standard demanded for courses of initial teacher education. The methodologies used are described, and the success of the project relative to its objectives is recorded. Further, the conceptualisation of the project within current debates is discussed.

Introduction

Despite the growth in wider access initiatives to higher education since the 1980s, the reality for most young people who live in areas of deprivation remains one of non-participation (SHEFC, 1998). The political and academic rhetoric may have shifted from notions of working class failure to concepts of social exclusion (Whitty, 2001) but class-based inequity is stubbornly entrenched within the UK's education systems. As Keir Bloomer (2001:5) comments:

Educational success was increasingly seen during the 1990s as a social, as well as an economic, priority. Generally improving living standards had been accompanied by increasing inequality. The concentration of poverty among particular social groups and, even more evidently, in defined areas of deprivation, had proved stubbornly resistant to decades of egalitarian initiatives.

The complexities of the relationship between social deprivation and educational outcomes notwithstanding, social class is still one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement, and making higher education accessible to non-traditional groups remains problematic.

Inroads are being made: overall trends of non-participation may have changed little in the past 30 years (see Robbins, 1963) but, at local levels, differences can be made in encouraging young people from areas of deprivation to regard entry to higher education as achievable.

This article discusses a two year project (the Glasgow Access to Primary Teacher Education Project) which worked with a group of school pupils who had expressed an interest in becoming primary school teachers, but whose family background was not one where university entry was the norm. The project, funded in part by the Scottish Higher Education

Funding Council (SHEFC), concentrated on promoting and consolidating the pupils' self-esteem, academic confidence and motivation, and aimed to familiarise the students and their families with university study and location. It arose from a partnership between the Faculty of Education of the University of Glasgow and the Education Department of Glasgow City Council, and focused on a key area of concern to both institutions: that young people from disadvantaged communities are under-represented in higher education, particularly in professional courses like initial teacher education. The generative effect of this, of course, is that these communities are therefore unable to provide the professionals they need from within their own resources. Although Glasgow may have reinvented itself as a post industrial city of culture, architecture and expensive wine bars, it remains ill divided in terms of access to higher education. While some areas have Standard Participation Ratios of over 150, there remain others whose SPR is below 65 (SHEFC, 1998).

This paper firstly addresses the wider context for the Glasgow Access to Primary Teacher Education (GAPTE) Project by discussing the project's conceptual framework, before briefly describing the Scottish context for widening access, with particular reference to the University of Glasgow, where the GAPTE project was initiated within the Faculty of Education. It will then describe the aims and methodology of the study, together with analysis of the findings.

Conceptual framework and context

The GAPTE project was underpinned by the following rationale:

- encouraging non-traditional entrants to university (specifically to the 4 year Bachelor of Education in Primary Education honours degree course at the University of Glasgow) within the expanded higher education sector;

- belief in social justice;
- investigation of factors affecting decisions to apply for university study;
- awareness of the links between social class and academic outcomes;
- awareness of the effects of self-esteem and motivation on academic achievement.

The conceptual framework which arose from this rationale informed the subsequent research aims, methods and questionnaire design, as well as the content of the programme.

Arguably, it is incumbent upon higher education institutions (HEIs) to continue to develop strategies which attempt to widen participation. Widening participation is a practice which rests upon concepts of social justice as well as having a basis in the current economic realities of mass higher education. Since the 1987 White Paper *Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge*, published by the DES, widening participation has been seen

both as desirable in its own right and as the key to achieving cost efficient expansion of student numbers in HE. Further expansion, it was suggested, could only be achieved by widening the entry base... (Smith & Boccock, 1999: 285).

Increasingly, HEIs have to market themselves to their target entrants (Maguire *et al*, 1999), but marketing can only go so far in encouraging participation: where school pupils or college students do not aspire to university entry, marketing of a university's courses and facilities will not raise awareness of their own *potential* to attend. HEI marketing policies and practices may well be located within discourses which have the potential to exclude those from non-traditional backgrounds. Concepts of 'what is normal for 'people like us'' will differ across social groups (Archer & Hutchings, 2000: 557): discourses of university marketing may conflict or may concur with individuals' concepts of themselves as potential

applicants. Where conflict occurs, the idea that university is not for them may be strengthened.

The present government intends that, in the UK, 50% of the age cohort will attend university by 2010 (Reay, 2001). This intention does not mean that the 50% will be spread equitably across all social classes. The authors of this paper have a commitment to widening access to higher education in general and to teacher education in particular, but recognise the attendant difficulties in encouraging participation amongst non-traditional groups. As Watt and Paterson (2000: 108) comment, it is evident that

though crude numbers entering further and higher education are greater, the social groupings of these students remain proportionately almost exactly the same as before. Three-quarters of all students in higher education seem to come from one-third of the population.

Moreover, teaching is a profession which can be seen as being bound to middle class constructs and values: Maguire (1999: 14) argues that the cultural process involved in becoming a teacher is itself 'classed'.

Students from socio-economic groups IV and V are still under-represented in higher education in the UK and in Europe as a whole, and many young people from such backgrounds do not aspire to university entry. In part, this may be due to an assumption that the entry-level of qualifications will be unattainable for them, or that universities are elitist,

or that attendance at university will be financially prohibitive (Hutchings and Archer, 2001). For those from non-traditional backgrounds who do enter university, finance can certainly have an impact on their ability to enter and remain in higher education, but there is a complexity of factors which can have an impact on recruitment and retention of non-traditional students. These factors are well documented (see Walker, 1999): prior achievement in secondary school, family socio-economic level and previous educational background, personal attributes of the learner, and university-associated characteristics.

In the last five years the rhetoric has altered from providing access (that is, positive discrimination towards non-traditional entrants) to widening participation within a social inclusion agenda. However, gaps still exist between the point of encouraging entry, and delivery in terms of HEIs delivering flexible provision in ways which suit the needs of a wider variety of learners. The experiences of non-traditional students in terms of teaching and learning within university can be one of having to fit into the traditional lecture and seminar model; this pattern does not cater best for students who have a range of learning styles and which views them as not requiring high levels of pedagogic or pastoral support. Rather, the traditional model sees the student as ‘someone whose learning is their own business’ (MacDonald & Stratta, 2001:253).

It is important, then, that universities work within notions of inclusivity which see ‘educational contexts as concerned with successful participation which generates greater options for all people in education and beyond’ (Nunan *et al*, 2000:65). It is crucial that universities do not translate the concept of widening participation into little more than access strategies which focus only on facilitating entry and not on supporting and empowering

students through the academic and social processes of studying for a degree (*see* O'Dea and McPhee, 1994). To do so seems initially to increase options for non-traditional students, only to close them off because of factors within the traditional university model which may militate against such students completing degrees. This is particularly the case when the importance of the interaction between academic and social experiences and student retention is considered. It is known that 80% of drop out occurs in the first year at university - 30% occurring in term 1 (Brunsden & Davies, 2000:305). The importance of ensuring non-traditional entrants are familiar with the university setting, and in helping them to build social networks *before* they attend in year 1, may well be of direct impact upon student retention.

Linked to social networks and academic confidence is the concept of self-esteem which not only affects young people's decisions to enter university but also impacts upon their subsequent academic achievement. Following Michie *et al* (2001:458) we take self-esteem to be

the evaluative dimension of the self and is a conscious experience which is accessible to introspection and description... A high level of self-esteem is an integral part of both personal well-being and as a pre-requisite for educational achievement...

Two factors which aid resilience to the stresses of university study are self-esteem and self-concept (Michie *et al*, 2001). Arising from the results of their study, Michie *et al* indicate

that students' 'academic self-concept was found to be positively associated with global self-esteem, participating in HE for cognitive interest, and having positive approaches to studying at school'. Encouraging and maintaining realistically high self-esteem would be central to the aims of the Glasgow Access to Primary Teacher Education Project.

The Scottish context

Scottish HEIs have a strong track-record in setting up access initiatives. Yet, in terms of participation rates for the 16-18 cohort, Scotland has had the lowest participation rate in higher education of the four UK countries during the 1990's (Raffe *et al*, 2001). When compared to England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Scotland has 'the least equitable distribution of participation in terms of social class and other indicators of family background' (Raffe *et al*, 2001: 63). Clearly, the indication is that 'targeting initiatives have achieved variable results' (Smith & Bocoock, 1999: 286).

Some of the initiatives which have been put in place in Scottish universities are as follows:

- University summer schools run in all Scottish universities offering university-style short courses: the first of the summer schools was begun in the University of Glasgow in 1986 (Walker, 1999);
- The Greater Opportunity of Access and Learning within Schools (GOALS) Project which aims to give children from areas of low participation in higher education access to a range of experiences to introduce them to, and prepare them for, university.

- The Scottish Wider Access Programme which facilitates entry to university for adult returners.

The pre-entry guidance and study typified in these Scottish initiatives may well play a vital part in helping young people to decide to stay in secondary school to present themselves for qualifications in years 5 and 6 , as well as in helping them to decide on whether to apply for university (Watt & Paterson 200: 109). Moxley *et al* (2000:339) identify the importance of HEIs ‘reaching out to candidates in the community’ to empower them with ‘information, knowledge , skills, and opportunities to become ready to apply’. The twin concepts of community outreach and student empowerment were crucial to the thinking behind the Glasgow Access to Primary Teacher Education Project, as was the shift from access (concentrating on the point of delivery at university) to widening participation (emphasising a more student-centred conception of what non-traditional entrants need in terms of pre-entry support to empower them towards application for university study). The GAPTE project concentrated on the need to support pupils within their communities and schools to ready them for application and entry to university.

The Glasgow Access to Primary Teacher Education Project: aims and methodology

The project was designed as a case study to assess whether there were benefits in university liaison with schools and communities, and whether direct intervention to assist pupil motivation and study would result in non-traditional pupils gaining confidence to apply for university. The findings of the study were not intended to be generalisable, but were intended to explore the efficacy of outreach for the University of Glasgow Faculty of Education.

In consultation with Glasgow City Council’s Education Department, 3 Glasgow secondary schools were selected. The schools are all situated in areas classified by the City Council as

being disadvantaged and identified by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) as having low Standard Participation Ratios (SPRs) in terms of uptake of higher education. In collaboration with these schools, 11 pupils self-selected to participate in the project following the publication of their 4th year results. The 4th year (Standard Grade - roughly equivalent to GCSE) results were an important indicator of which subjects they would take into their 5th and 6th years of secondary schooling. All participants expressed an interest in exploring the possibility of becoming primary school teachers. All participants were female and this, sadly, reflects the overwhelming female-male imbalance in entry to the BEd Honours degree programme. Of the 11 pupils who began the project, 6 continued to its close. All 6 subsequently gained entry to honours degree programmes of the University of Glasgow, and are now in their first year of study (2001-2002). 5 are students on the Bachelor of Education (Primary) course and 1 has chosen the Bachelor of Technological Education course. The 6 students who continued to the end of the project were equably distributed within the 3 schools.

The aims of the project were:

- Working with teachers in the schools, to encourage the participants to confront the academic challenges of 5th and 6th year study and to provide a scaffold of support for them in areas required for entry to Primary Education in which they felt weakest (notably mathematics).
- To provide campus residential weekends for participating pupils to create a sense of a small learning community and to allow for sharing of experiences and to introduce pupils to the university structures and university life.
- To arrange school experience for the participants in primary schools in their home areas.

- To appoint mentors from within the existing student body in the Faculty to work with pupils in the schools. The mentors were chosen from the pupils' own communities, or from postcode areas contiguous to them.
- To meet regularly with the participants' parents to build on parental involvement.
- To enhance or maintain pupils' realistic levels of self-esteem and motivation with regard to academic achievement.
- To give guidance to pupils in completion of UCAS (Universities and Colleges Application Service) forms, particularly in writing their personal statements in support of application.
- To provide information on the university (its admissions procedures, its learning resources and facilities).

During the first year of the project, participants attended campus weekends which concentrated on introducing them to Faculty staff who are involved in initial teacher education. The weekends included social and recreational activities designed to facilitate a sense of belonging and cohesiveness. In the second year of the project, pupils and their parents were invited to an evening at the main University campus; the focus being an introduction to entry mechanisms for teacher education within the Faculty. This gave pupils and their parents the chance to ask questions within a supportive atmosphere provided by Faculty staff. This evening also introduced pupils to the university library and gave information on what is to be expected at interview for entry to initial teacher education. This last aspect was consistently supported and developed within the schools during the second year of the project. Other events for parents were held in the first year, introducing them to the University and to the project itself. These events were all supported by the parents of the participants, including those who did not finally apply for entry.

An academic residential weekend was set up to meet the needs of the participants with respect to competence in mathematics (which the pupils had identified as representing the greatest difficulty for them, and therefore possibly the greatest barrier to entry, since competence in Math is a compulsory element of an applicant's entry profile and is required by the General Teaching Council for Scotland). A member of the Faculty's mathematics team worked in collaboration with mathematics teachers in the designated schools to design a short programme which would enhance the pupils' math abilities and their confidence in approaching the subject. In addition, an afternoon workshop, supported by an educational psychologist from Glasgow City Council with a specialist interest in student motivation, was held in the first year of the project, to encourage pupil awareness of the importance of motivation, and to equip them with strategies for maintaining the motivation which they felt at the start of the project. This also was designed to offset the 'incredible lack of confidence' (Cody, 1990) which many young people from non-traditional backgrounds feel on entering higher education.

School experience placements were arranged in local primary schools, and head teachers in the participating schools were appraised of the aims and goals of the project. The placements gave the participating pupils the opportunity to be involved in the activities of primary classrooms and, under the strict supervision of the class teacher, the chance to work with groups of pupils in agreed activities. The placements also gave the pupils an opportunity to assess whether or not primary teaching was the job for which they were suited.

(Subsequently 3 participants of the original 11 decided to pursue other career choices, but, interestingly, to remain within further education.)

In order to give the pupil participants experience of what would be expected of them on a teacher education course, the placements were run to a similar model as placement on an ITE

course. The participants were given a workbook in which to record aspects of each day's work: for example, school ethos, classroom routines, teachers' encouragement of learning and positive strategies for discipline. The workbook was submitted to the Faculty of Education at the end of the placement and returned to the participants with comments. Whilst on placement, a tutor visit was arranged which involved a member of staff from the Faculty of Education. This visit was not designed to assess the participants but rather to give them support in placement and to help them to consider in detail the range of classroom experiences they had observed through supported discussion and reflection.

At regular stages in the project, participants were interviewed and, at the end of the project, questionnaires were issued to participating pupils, teachers and parents to assess the perceived efficacy of the project and to assess the impact which the project had on the learners and their families. The semi-structured questionnaires were completed anonymously, and included two basic statement types: those responded to by rating scale and those responded to by semantic differential.

Research findings

From semi-structured interview and questionnaire data it emerged that the participants, their families and teachers all valued the GAPTE project and saw it as a feasible means of introducing pupils from non-traditional backgrounds to university. The data supported the project's aim of going beyond the university marketing rhetoric to directly reach out to pupils within their own communities. In terms of academic success, the 6 pupils who completed the project all gained entry to the University of Glasgow to study on the Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree or the Bachelor of Technological Education degree, and *gained entry with no lowering of academic requirements*. This last had always been an aim of the project in that the researchers wished to move away from the concept of targeted access which might

link summer-school type provision to lower initial entry grades for those from non-traditional backgrounds. It was our firm belief that, given quality liaison and input from school and university staff, coupled with the participants' own motivation and hard work, entry could be gained with no lowering of entry qualification standards. Additionally, it was recognised that dilution of entry qualifications would potentially cause difficulties for the students in terms of their ability to cope with the demanding nature of the course itself.

Interview and questionnaire data from 5 pupils, 7 teachers and 6 parents were analysed by the following groupings in the attitudinal and affective domains:

- pupil self-esteem
- pupil motivation
- attitude towards schooling
- pupil attitude towards university and commitment to university entry
- assessment of campus sessions
- assessment of school experience
- effects on community (family, peers and others).

Self-esteem and motivation

The use of a psychological evaluation of self-esteem was not deemed appropriate for use with school pupils. Instead, pupils were asked to rate their own self-esteem on a rating scale, and their self-assessment was cross-referenced with the assessments of their parents and teachers. The pupils' self-assessment varied: three felt fairly positively about themselves without rating themselves as having high self-esteem, one felt negatively and one had no opinion. This assessment was supported by teachers and parents who rated the pupils' self-

esteem as fairly good, without being high. By the end of the project 3 pupils said that their self-esteem had improved as a result of taking part.

In addition, as the project progressed, the pupils noted that they became increasingly more motivated to do well in their 5th and 6th year exams. 2 teachers stated that the pupils they knew were committed learners, and all teachers stated that they felt that the motivational afternoon had positively affected the pupils' determination to succeed. Parents concurred: there were no negative effects on motivation and 4 pupils were said by their parents to be more motivated towards school work and towards entering teaching as a career. Parents of 5 pupils noted that their daughters were more motivated to gain university entrance as a result of the project. One parent commented that his/her daughter's 'failing at times is that she lacks confidence in herself. Being part of this project has helped this very much'. The increased confidence (see Cody, 1990) was noted by all 6 of the teachers who completed questionnaires, one writing that the project 'enhanced [the pupils'] self image. They are much more confident in their abilities and have greater belief in themselves'.

Attitudes towards schooling and university entry (including commitment to university entry)

4 of the 5 pupils stated that they were doing well, or at least coping with school work, but none of the pupils were highly positive about the experience of schooling (one stating that it was something to be 'put up with'). The one pupil respondent who felt she was not coping with school work did not have strong attitudinal commitment to primary teaching initially, but it should be remembered that all pupil participants subsequently gained entry. All had ambitions to attend university (3 strongly and 2 in a more generalised way, expressing the ambition as a wish to attend). As a result of the project, all pupil participants were more committed to primary teaching as a career, and 4 were more positive about education in general. One teacher reported that his/her pupils in school 'often seem reluctant to apply for

university courses and require encouragement and persuasion'. 5 of the 6 teachers who returned questionnaires felt that the pupils' attitudes towards education and schooling had become more positive.

Assessment of campus session

Pupils' attitudes towards the residential weekends were positive: all rated the social activities highly as a means of getting to know others involved in the project as well as getting to know university staff. The one pupil who could not attend the campus weekends in year 1 of the project stated that she subsequently 'found it difficult meeting the other girls as I didn't know any of them. I felt like a bit of an outsider and a little uncomfortable'. Her comment highlights the degree of bonding which occurred among the pupils at the year 1 residential weekends: while this had positive effects for the 5 girls in the questionnaire sample who attended, the effect was obviously negative for the girl who was not initially involved. Encouraging early participation in group events was therefore important if pupils were not to feel excluded.

The Mathematics weekend was rated highly, with 3 of the 5 pupils highlighting an improvement in their confidence in handling mathematics. All pupils welcomed the opportunity to learn about math with university staff, and all welcomed the chance to work with the other participants in an academic setting. The participating school teachers also rated the campus weekends as being a valuable introduction to university work: 4 teachers rated all aspects of the campus weekends very highly. However, there was a feeling amongst teachers that too much was covered on the year 2 campus evening visit which introduced parents and pupils to aspects of university entrance. The positive aspects to the evening visit were that it gave parents experience of what the university campus is like, allowed parents to

feel involved in the processes surrounding their daughters' decisions to apply for and attend university, and allowed the parents to meet one another with a shared interest.

Assessment of school experience

All pupil respondents enjoyed the school experience and stated that they had learned valuable information about, and gained knowledge of, the nature of primary school teaching. None felt disappointed or discouraged by the experience, although 4 of the 5 pupils stated that the work of a primary teacher was more difficult than they had imagined. One pupil did suggest that on school placements she would have preferred to see a variety of classes across the age range instead of being placed with the same class for the week.

Participating teachers all rated the placement highly and felt that pupils had benefited in gaining experience of working with groups of children, and in broadening their perceptions about, and understanding of, the role of the primary teacher. In particular, placement was felt to have been of real benefit in preparing the pupils for their university interview: 3 pupils specifically mentioned the feeling of support gained from liaison with Faculty staff in the period of preparation for interview. At interview one pupil said that she had not done herself justice and had no confidence that she would succeed because of this. The preparation had therefore been of limited success for her in some ways, but she was accepted on to the BEd course despite her low appraisal of her interview performance so her actual performance was most probably higher than she estimated it to be. Other participants highlighted the inevitable feelings of nervousness associated with interview procedures but stated that they had coped well and had been reasonably confident.

Effects on community (family, peers and others)

The effects on the pupils' immediate community of family, friends and teachers was largely positive. In-school support was generally high, but one pupil stated that she had little support from teachers. This was underlined by one teacher from the school who noted that support had been 'patchy'. School friends of pupil participants were said to be largely supportive with some showing active interest in the project. Parental participants had been pleased by levels of information from schools and the project coordinator. All 6 parents had been interested to see the university and found the events either highly or generally useful.

Gauging impact on the wider community is more difficult to assess: indeed, the project could not do so directly given that its sphere of influence related only to the pupil participants, their teachers, friends and parents. Some parent participants thought that the project represented a much-needed involvement in their community: comments ranged from the need for children in their communities to feel that they can 'compete on level terms' with children from more affluent areas, to a recognition that children from areas of disadvantage do not 'have as many opportunities' with respect to higher education, and a belief that projects like the Glasgow Access to Primary Teacher Education Project can let a community 'see that people can go to university and get a career no matter where they live'.

Participating teachers were less positive about the community benefits: two felt that the communities in which they worked placed little value in success in learning, and one commented that there were 'too many social and structural problems' within the community for young people to succeed, although this was mitigated to some extent by the fact that the community had had little experience of success in learning with university seen as being 'for others, not for them'. Teachers were more positive about the direct benefits of the project for the participating pupils and their families: comments included:

- ‘The project demystified university.’
- ‘The practical opportunities and the very real support developed in the project surprised me. People involved made genuine efforts to assist and encourage the students in real and practical ways.’
- ‘I have noted that, although some of the participants will not apply for university immediately, they have been encouraged through the project to make this their objective in the next few years.’

Discussion

The GAPTE project was built on the belief that the rhetoric of social justice must be translated into viable strategies which will encourage non-traditional groups to regard university entry as being an achievable aim. The project team worked with a small group of students to enable them to achieve entry standards and to develop academic skills which would allow them to work successfully on an undergraduate course of initial teacher education (ITE). This aspect was considered to be of particular importance given the negative effects of drop out. As Brunsten *et al* (2000: 301) comment:

The high percentage of students who fail to complete their degrees continues to cause concern within the academic world. Student attrition carries a wide range of detrimental costs, which are shared between the individuals concerned and the institution. Tinto...suggested that departure is analogous to suicide and occurs when students fail to integrate into both the university’s social and academic worlds.

While the analogy to suicide has been criticised (see Brunsdon *et al*), Tinto's model still contains much that is of merit. The GAPTE project followed the concept of retention based on Tinto's model where 'a student must be academically and socially integrated in order to produce subsequent commitment to the institution and to the goal of graduation in order to persist' (Walker, 1999: 225). Project activities were designed around the twin goals of academic support and social integration.

Furthermore, it was apparent from participant interviews that involvement in a high status inter-agency project gave greater self-esteem to the participants and encouraged parents' and teachers' belief in the pupils' potential to succeed. It was felt important that participants' self-esteem should not be raised unrealistically, but should reflect actual potential to gain entry qualifications. As Michie *et al* (2001: 458) highlight, self-esteem is a conscious experience: because it is a conscious experience it is also accessible to change. The GAPTE project sought to encourage participants to assess their existing levels of self-esteem and motivation, while working with them to develop these aspects in a way which would support their concepts of themselves as potential university entrants. Levels of self-esteem are also related to 'coping strategies for stress and change' (Michie *et al* 2001:458), so the project built on the premise that increased self-esteem coupled with appropriate academic support would enable participants to develop skills that would make them more likely to cope with the move into university study. Walker's research (1999:228) indicates the main difference between students who drop out and those who continue as being situated in 'attitudes, lack of motivation and unsuitability for academic study'. These areas were key to the GAPTE project aims.

In addition, the project was centred on the issue of the under-representation of non-traditional groups in the teaching profession, with specific reference to those from areas which have low

SPRs. It was seen as vital that the professional dimension was emphasised and that the participants were given the opportunity to have an introduction to teacher professionalism in the form of school experience based on the undergraduate ITE model. It was important that this aspect should not simply be a block of traditional work experience, but that it should contain professional elements such as having responsibility for work with small groups of pupils in literacy and numeracy tasks (supervised by the class teacher), social and professional interaction with teachers in the staffroom, and in being required to record and evaluate the school experience. In this way, it was hoped that the participants would make a conscious transition from regarding themselves solely in the role of school pupils, to regarding themselves as being potential beginning teachers.

The project was successful, within its limited parameters, in encouraging a small group of young people from areas of disadvantage, their parents and teachers, to regard university application as achievable. The data did not indicate any wider impact on the community: the project was on a small scale and its ability to raise awareness on a large scale was limited. However, a more extensive application of the project model would have more scope to raise awareness within communities of the possibilities of university attendance.

While the project aimed to encourage participation in HE, it also stressed the belief that the participants could access relevant university courses with no lowering of entry standards. Watt and Paterson (2000: 112) comment that the university practitioners in their survey felt that widening access 'may mean lowering standards and providing more places for young people who are unsuccessful in application to universities'. Mindful that such attitudes exist, the project wished to encourage a view that pupils from non-traditional backgrounds can meet entry requirements and do not necessarily have to gain access with lower entry qualifications.

In addition, awareness of the high rates of drop-out in the first term of university informed the belief that it was necessary for project participants to begin from a position of preparedness for academic work as far as was possible within the scope of the project.

Achieving sound results in their 5th and 6th year SQA examinations was therefore viewed as important within a wider framework of academic support. Longitudinal research indicates that pre-university preparation and support can help students academically once they are at university, with the caveat that academic results are only one of a complexity of factors which affect retention rates (see Walker, 2000). We believe that pre-university support located within schools and communities can have positive effects on pupils' motivation and self-esteem, potentially leading to enhanced academic achievement. GAPTE located itself within communities which have been distanced from the university experience and saw this location as essential in attempting to address social dislocation from HE, albeit in a limited way given the pilot nature of the project. As Skeggs notes (in Hutchings and Archer, 2001: 70): 'To think that class does not matter is only a prerogative of those unaffected by the deprivations and exclusions it produces'.

The GAPTE project is now embedded within the GOALS project (see above) which includes all schools in the West of Scotland in areas with low SPRs. The project model is currently being expanded to involve all secondary schools in the Glasgow area.

Conclusion

The Glasgow Access to Primary Teacher Education Project illustrates the benefits of university outreach to communities which traditionally have low participation rates in higher education: we believe that the evidence of the research dimension of the project is that such outreach has the potential to raise self-esteem and confidence, to encourage school pupils to consider university entrance as an achievable aim, and to strengthen motivation to do well in

fifth and sixth year secondary school examinations. Arguably, motivation and positive self-image are key to academic success and more work should be done with pupils from low participation communities to encourage them to view higher education as appropriate where it fits with their career aspirations.

Partnership between schools, universities, pupils, teachers and parents is key to widening participation and to attempting to overcome the continuing difficulties which some communities face in terms of educational attainment and outcomes. Moving beyond the rhetoric of marketing was seen as vital to the success of the Glasgow Access to Primary Teacher Education Project: universities must go beyond words to work within communities to encourage non-traditional entrants to consider higher education as one of a range of options for their futures (see Schuetze and Slowey, 2000: 8). Projects which aim to widen participation need to see the learner not as an individual struggling alone, but as part of their community, and as part of a society which values learning. As Coffield (2000a:242) remarks, 'studies of individuals within the... UK have produced one iron law: the more education and training you have received, the more you continue to receive.' It is to be hoped that the pupil participants now successfully involved in primary education can continue to benefit from the academic and social aspects put in place by their involvement in the GAPTE project, and that the skills and knowledge they developed in partnership with their schools, their families, and with the university assists them to complete, and to do well in, their chosen degree course.

Moreover, the study is located within the various discourses of 'lifelong learning', 'access' and 'empowerment' which have formed much of official rhetoric both nationally in the UK and in Scotland. Coffield (1999) takes a sceptical view of the concept of the 'learning society' as articulated in UK governmental pronouncements: but in the same year, the manifesto for the 1999 elections for the Scottish Parliament by the Labour Party in Scotland, refers to the

centrality in policy of 'lifelong learning'; 'opportunity for learning' and the 'knowledge economy' (The Scottish Labour Party, 1999). It is easy, perhaps to articulate these phrases in terms of political spin. This project has looked beyond the fine words and the perhaps under-researched and under-theorised concepts they represent (Coffield, 2000b: 1) into the lives of 11 young people to observe the real and imagined barriers which they have to negotiate in order to access the education which is theirs by entitlement.

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