



Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

Motivations, Aspirations and Barriers to Adult Learning: An FE and HE perspective from south Wales

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Introductions

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Purposes today

- Share research findings so far
- Ask for your expertise and insight in discussing the findings
- Use your discussion and ideas in shaping a forthcoming report for Welsh Government

Current Landscape

- 2017 only 37% of adults in some form of learning in last 3 years – some growth in HE in last 2 years
- Motivations complex – personal, social, economic, previous education
- Education supports health, well-being, social, skills for life & work/volunteering
- ‘Triggers’ to learn complex– family, community, previous education, expectations of work, age, social class, gender
- Barriers – funding, disability, health, family, cost, travel, access, support, awareness, fear
- ‘Hook’ courses / engagements can support transition
- Widening Access and the Neo-Liberalist University (Evans et al, 2017)

Setting the Scene

- The strategy for Adult Learning in Wales was released in 2017 - Flexible learning opportunities for adults, in community venues to meet local needs.
- Support development so that AL's have more enriched lives and better work & life opportunities.
- No recent research in a Welsh context – a greater focus needed on FE / HE with greater focus on Level 1 & 2 essential skills focus
- L&W Institute & DACE at Swansea University research collaboration 2019

Research Design

- Pictorial Narrative Mapping & Analysis (Lapum et al., 2015)
– see own responses / inclusive & powerful
- FE & HE learners from Swansea University, UWTSD, Gower College
- 4 Focus groups – DACE level 4 & 5/6; UWTSD mixed HE level, Gower College Level 3.
- Short survey across adult learning sector (200+ responses)
- Include adult learning sector to be involved in discussing findings & creating responses / offering insight

Demographics

- 30 participants across 4 focus groups
- 29 women & 1PNS
- 28 white / 1 mixed background / 1 PNS
- 1 Romany Gypsy Traveller (White)
- 10 with caring responsibilities
- 6 with a disability – 5 with a mental health experience
- Aged early 19 to 65
- All lived in South Wales
- Studying at level 3-6

Themes discussed

1. Motivations to start education
2. Barriers/problems/challenges
3. What support was provided / worked for you
4. Previous educational experiences
5. Personal development since starting education
6. Motivations now & Future
7. Barriers now
8. Benefits to Adult learning

Have a walk around a look at the pictorial analysis

Motivations to start

- Family & Friends
- Career / Employment
- Health & Well-Being
- Social
- Security & Future
- Prove to people I could
- New identity



“Go back & better myself”

Barriers & Challenges

- Cost – travel/child care
- Confidence & fear
- Process - ‘The System’
- Funding
- Family / children
- University setting
- Location / Access / Time

“Felt too old and stupid”



Support – What worked

- Family & Friends
- Tutors
- Advice & Guidance
- Interactive & supportive
- Respect
- Peers
- Community setting – safe
- Introductory courses

“Made me feel I can do this”



Previous Educational Experiences

- Most hated it
- Some loved it
- Isolation
- Felt stupid
- Disability not supported
- Hated way taught
- Not real to life
- Social Pressure
- Physical punishment



“I wasn’t ready to learn.”

Own development

- Confidence & Proud
- I'm a role model
- Life Skills
- Values Education
- Self-belief
- Respected
- Greater awareness of society & life



“I feel empowered & ready for life.”

Motivations NOW / Future

- Complete study
- More Education
- Be a role model
- Support my peers
- Knowledge & skills
- Family & friends
- Keep feeling positive
- Better Job

**“Carry on finding myself
‘cause I felt lost before”**



Barriers NOW

- New technology
- Better feedback
- Employability advice & guidance
- Funding & Progression
- Juggling everything
- Intimidating campus
- University doesn't meet adult learner needs
- Time

“University is still scary.”



Benefits to Adult learning



“Opens your head.”

First Layer of survey analysis

Motivations

- Interest 52%
- Personal development 49%
- Enjoyment 46%
- Qualification 37%
- New Employment 35%
- Current job 28%

Development

- Skills 36%
- New job / expect to 32%
- More productive 19%
- Social 64%

- Confidence 59%
- Life skills 26%
- Health 14%
- Parenting 12%

Barriers

- Time 41%
- Cost 27%
- Childcare 11%
- Right Information 23%
- Confidence 23%
- None 27%

Support to start

- Close location 49%
- Good information 36%
- Timings 35%
- Tutor 30%
- Friends & family 29%
- Free 26%
- Tasters 13%
- Childcare access 4%

Support once studying

- Tutor 80%
- Peers 64%
- Location 63%
- Growing confidence 58%
- Funding / Financial 18%
- Childcare Access 4%

Benefits to Learning

- New skills & knowledge 90%
- Confidence 53%
- New friends 53%
- Mental Health & well-being 32%

Group Discussion

- What do you see as the main challenges or questions the FE and HE sector need to address?
- In your table can you discuss and come up with key themes / questions that need address
- We will feed back to whole group in 10 minutes

Some Themes to consider..

- How do we communicate the success of adult learning to the communities we seek to engage & inspire?
- How can we support AL's to see themselves as potential University students?
- What responsibility does HE have to appear less classist & intimidating to AL's?
- How do we better support and guide adult learners in FE and HE in terms of progression to work / Education?

Where to next

- Survey analysis
- Use today to support writing of draft report for sector / Welsh Government
- Research publication & further dissemination to sector

References

Evans, C., Rees, G., Taylor, C., & Wright, C. (2019). 'Widening Access' to higher education: The reproduction of university hierarchies through policy enactment. *Journal of Education Policy*, 34(1), 101-116.

Lapum, J., Liu, L., Hume, S., Wang, S., Nguyen, B., Harding, K., . . . Megan Nguyen, L. (2015). Pictorial Narrative Mapping as a Qualitative Analytic Technique. *International Journal Of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5), International Journal Of Qualitative Methods, 2015 Dec, Vol.14.