



RANLHE

Access and Retention: Experiences of Non-traditional Learners in HE

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The RANLHE project is located within a context of increasing policy concern across Europe to widen participation in, and provide fair access to higher education to under-represented and excluded groups and to enhanced successful completion. This project will study the factors which promote or inhibit the access, retention and drop-out of non-traditional students in higher education.

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Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

EAC
EA
Education, Audiovisual & Culture
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About RANLHE

Our research will look at how non-traditional students in higher education experience the processes of learning, how they perceive themselves as learners and how their identity as learners develop. Our definition of non-traditional adult student draws on a definition used in our previous research on access and adults in HE (EU TSER project): a new mature student entrant with no previous he qualification whose participation in HE is constrained by structural factors additional to age . In relation to younger students this refers to those who are first generation entrants to HE and are constrained by structural factors.

The project involves eight universities from seven countries: Ireland, Spain, Poland, Sweden, UK, Scotland and Germany.



Key objectives of the RANLHE project are:

- to identify the factors which promote or constrain the access, retention and non-completion of non-traditional students (working class, gender and ethnicity issues) to higher education
- to increase knowledge and understanding through interdisciplinary research of what promotes or limits the construction of learner identity of non-traditional students to become effective learners and which enables or inhibits completion of higher education
- to identify the policy, cultural and institutional processes, including disciplinary sub-cultures which help or hinder completion
- to illuminate and theorise, using in-depth biographical and collaborative methods, the structural, cultural and personal dialectics of learning and agency in students' lives
- to assess the benefits for self and society of participating in learning in HE, whether or not study is completed, and reassess the proposition that it may be worse to withdraw than not to begin
- to consider the implications of the study for the development of policy and practice across Europe in widening participation, promoting lifelong learning and enhancing the learning experiences of students from under-represented groups
- to disseminate the findings of the research through regional workshops, national and European conferences and a range of publications aimed at practitioners, policy makers and academics

Partners

P1 (Lead Partner): University of Warrick, UK (England)

Barbara Merrill - barbara.merrill@warrick.ac.uk

Rennie Johnston - rennie@tinyonline.co.uk

P2: Georg-August University Goettingen, Germany

Peter Alheit - palheit@gwdg.de

Frank Schoemer - fschoem@gwdg.de

P3: University of Stirling, UK (Scotland)

John Field - john.field@stir.ac.uk

P4: Canterbury Christ Church University, UK (England)

Linden West - linden.west@canterbury.ac.uk

Mehri Holliday - mehriholliday@hotmail.com

P5: Stockholm University, Sweden

Agnieszka Bron - Agnieszka.Bron@ped.su.se

Camilla Thunborg - Camilla.Thunborg@ped.su.se

P6: University of Lower Silesia, Poland

Ewa Kurantowicz - ewa.kurantowicz@wp.pl

Adrianna Nizinska - projectan@gmail.com

P7: University of Seville, Spain

Jose Gonzales Monteagudo - monteagu@us.es

Miguel Ballesteros - miguelanba@us.es

P8: National University of Ireland Maynooth, Ireland

Ted Fleming - ted.fleming@nuim.ie

Fergal Finnegan - fergaltf@yahoo.co.uk