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Where shall we widen it? : higher education and the age participation rate in Wales

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Abstract

This paper examines the range and quality of data sources available to calculate the representation of minority ethnic groups and different social classes in higher education. The focus is on widening participation in Wales, although some of the datasets and the implications of their re-analysis are more general. The paper also identifies a number of problems with many existing pieces of research in this field including the routine, and ironic, exclusion of nonparticipants from studies of widening participation, and the small scale of much work. Using the limited datasets that are available for re-analysis shows that the qualified age participation rate for traditional undergraduate entry to university is near 100 per cent. Social classes and ethnic groups are, therefore, represented in proportion to their prevalence in the more general population, and in proportion to their prior attainment of entry qualifications. The solution to widening participation for these groups lies not in universities but in schools, colleges and the wider society. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)