

**Project Name: 'A study of the impact of locally delivered HE on students, their families and the community'**

**Name of Project Manager**  
**Contact Details**

Professor Chris Robertson  
[c.robertson@worc.ac.uk](mailto:c.robertson@worc.ac.uk) 01905 855231

## **Background**

We currently operate a Foundation Degree in Teaching and Learning in the South West region, delivered at a number of venues, under the aegis of the Learning Institute at Callington College and Somerset SCITT in Somerset LA. We have over 200 full time students on roll and expect to expand our degree course provision to include a full and part-time BAEd top-up degree as of September 2009. A further Foundation degree in Integrated Children's Services is currently under development with an intended roll out in 2009-10.

As the introduction of locally delivered HE provision in the South West region on this scale is a recent development, the partners involved in its delivery believe that it is timely to begin a research project to evaluate impact of this provision on the individuals and their communities. Capturing valuable data at this point in time would seem significant and will enable the research team to track evolution and impact in what we intend will be an ultimate longitudinal study.

## **Objectives of the Project**

To explore the nature and extent of the impact of delivery of HE within a specific rural locality upon communities in social, economic and cultural terms.

## **Project Approach**

### **Phase 1**

We are seeking funding from the LLLN for a pilot project which will provide strong foundations for a proposed, longer-term longitudinal study. The pilot study will enable the research team:

1. To complete desk top research re existing data on the HE experience and existing research on community impact of HE delivery within a locality.
2. To use the data generated to refine the research questions we want to explore.
3. To devise a robust and appropriate research methodology, informed by the pilot.
4. To devise a working definition of 'community' with academic references vis a vis the individual, family or community/local groups.
5. To set appropriate parameters about how and if the experience of pursuing a locally delivered programme of HE has an impact upon the community in terms of raising aspirations, increasing job opportunities, changing social circles, raising self esteem/happiness quotient, and whether the impact may be different in terms of gender.

### **Phase 2**

To test out the findings of phase 1 through a case study based on current delivery in the South West. Data collected through, for example, interviews, focus group participation, paper based evidence, statistical evidence and observation will be analysed and will

contribute to the evaluation of the impact. The methodology will ensure data is triangulated to ensure maximum validity and reliability.

The use of participant researchers will be encouraged which will, in itself, contribute to developing local capacity and research sustainability, whilst also providing additional academic research (HE) experience for those involved. Training for participant researchers will be provided by UW researchers as part of the project.

Phase 2 will lead to the production of a research report to include the findings of the project, both phase 1 and 2. It will pose questions for possible further exploration which may ensure greater reliability, validity and generalisability of data generated by the proposed follow on longitudinal study.

### **Scope:**

#### **A Key Products from the project**

1. Provide a robust academic context of existing data and research on participation in locality delivered HE programmes and studies of the impact of that participation.
2. Establish a clear and referenced definition of community(ies).
3. Produce case study research findings on the impact, positive and /or negative, of HE locality delivered study which will explore aspirations, employability, career development opportunities, social networks, self esteem/happiness of participants, their family members and community/ies.
4. Involve research participants including tutors teaching on HE programmes in the South West as researchers as a way of building capacity and HE skills in the region, thus contributing to sustainability.
5. Generate research findings that will inform and impact on the existing knowledge base, generating new knowledge and understanding and informing other LLLN and similar rural based projects. The finding should also be of wider application and interest to other HEIs, FE colleges, schools and other agencies.
6. Inform the development of an extended longitudinal study for which we would intend to seek external funding from other sources, for example Esmee Fairburne, Joseph Rowntree or Leverhulme.

#### **B Out of Scope**

For phase 2:

1. Students engaged in HE outside rural communities.
2. Students engaged in HE who are not studying vocational programmes.
3. Students engaged in HE outside the specified regional locality.
4. Students who are attending traditional HEIs for their study, i.e. not studying within the locality.

#### **Constraints**

1. Financial.
2. Time for completion.
3. Rhythm of term based year and tutor and student accessibility.
4. Geographical distance.
5. Inability to access data at this early stage of development thus constraining breadth and depth of the study

## Initial Project Case

By initiating a research project at this point in time, that is, in the first three years of delivery, the research team anticipate capturing rich data which will inform a longer research project, data which will be lost as the HE programmes become more established and participants perhaps become more used to dealing with impact.

The findings of the project will inform a wide range of educational providers and agencies working in this field. It is an innovative project which chimes with the objectives of the LLLN and which will inform understanding of community based HE learning in other regions and sub-regions such as Herefordshire, Shropshire and, further afield, such as Cumbria, Northumberland and Cambridgeshire to name but a few. We would anticipate the findings would also be applicable beyond England to other countries in the UK and beyond where hard to access communities for HE provision exist in abundance.

## Benefits of the Project

1. Production of data and research on participation in locality delivered programmes of HE study.
2. Generation of case studies on the impact of locally delivered HE on factors including aspirations, employability, enhanced career opportunities, social networks, self esteem /happiness from one English region.
3. A consideration of gender on impact within the findings
4. Research skills capacity built up in the tutors delivering Foundation Degree programmes of study in the South West of England.
5. An enriching of the existing knowledge base and that of other LLLN funded rural based and other similar projects related to educational provision.
6. The creation of baseline information that will be used effectively to inform understanding and research validity, reliability and generalisability and leading specifically to a proposed extended, longitudinal study.

## Key Assumptions

1. The experience of HE study has an impact upon the participating individual in terms of aspirations, employability, career opportunities and self esteem.
2. The experience of HE study may have both positive and negative impact on the participants.
3. There may be gender differences in how the impact is experienced by participants.
4. The experience of HE study delivered on locality has an impact upon communities within which the student operates.
5. The experience of HE study delivered on locality has impact within rural and economically disadvantaged areas.

## Timescale

Phase 1: September 2009 - 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010.

Phase 2: February 2010 - 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010.

## Costs

### Phase 1:

Activity	Cost
Research assistant	£3,000
Steering group meeting x 4 for 6 participants: travel, hospitality	£1,000

Stationary, phone, photocopying etc	£300
Research group time – research, writing, etc	£5000
Admin support	£250
<b>Total</b>	<b>£9,550</b>

## Phase2:

Activity	Cost
Participant researchers – focus groups = interviews, travel	£2,000
Participant researchers – training 2x 2hr sessions plus travel	£500
Steering group meeting x 3 for 6 participants: travel, hospitality	£875
Stationary, phone, photocopying etc	£300
Research group time – research, writing, final report production etc	£6000
Admin support	£250
Evaluation – objective, impartial	£400
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,325</b>

**Total across both phases £19,875**

## How will the project be evaluated?

1. It will be evaluated by an impartial objective evaluator, external to the project team, with a report provided.
2. The steering group will monitor and evaluate progress against targets on a day to day basis and outcomes and impact at each phase.
3. The research outcomes should be useful and purposeful to the wider academic and HE/provider communities, including the LLLN and their feedback will be sought via dissemination processes (conference presentation, academic papers, workshops, website, UW and the final report).
4. In the longer term the research group will evaluate impact dependent on whether further funding can be successfully sought to develop the research as proposed beyond phase 2.

## How will the project be sustained?

1. By building capacity in the South West, we anticipate sustainability in the process of carrying out research as part of impact evaluation and that as a process this can be applied to other provision.
2. The research will feed in to a review in three academic years and thus sensitive to completion of the next cycle of Foundation and top up degrees.
3. Future research could include expanding the review to investigate future graduate perceptions of the locality delivered HE access route/factors that impact upon educational achievement.
4. Follow up research from a member of the steering group including the two members of the Steering group from the partnership in the South West.
5. The findings from this research project should also remain valid and applicable to other projects in other regions by other providers including by the LLLN itself, thus providing sustainability of application.

## Implications for Equality & Diversity

The findings will have impact upon recruitment and retention procedures, course evaluation and delivery, sustainability re the following;

1. Communities-particularly those under-represented in HE and hard to reach.
2. Locality delivered HE programmes of study.
3. Rural course provision.
4. Economically disadvantaged groups.

### Initial Risk Log

Risks	Probability	Impact	Containment Plan
1. Non availability of key researchers e.g. illness, change of role, employment	Low.	Medium	UW has sufficient staffing capacity and expertise to be able to cover.
2. Access to data and willingness of subjects to participate impacting on data collection.	Medium	Low	There are large numbers of participants enabling options to be available. Possible also to reduce the number of focus groups/areas of impact to be examined.
3. Recruitment of a suitable research assistant for phase 1.	Low	High	UW has capacity to recruit appropriate researcher from a range of sources – staff, students and also there is capacity in SW team through h/p staff.
4. A breakdown of communication due to geographical distances.	Low.	High.	The Steering group have worked together for some time and strong working relationships exist. We are confident that issues could be resolved if they arose. Members of the partners have systems in place for regular contact outside of this project.
5. Reduced funding allocated by LLLN	High	Medium	The project would be reconfigured and scaled down in coverage with an expanded timeframe. Other funding sources would be explored.
6. Loss of opportunity to collect data at this point in time vis a vis the roll out	Medium	High	It is critical that data is gathered at this evolutionary stage – although the depth would be affected, strategies as above would be implemented to mitigate impact.

### Project Team

Professor Chris Robertson - UW  
 Dr Hugh Somervell - UW  
 Angela Oxley - UW  
 Nick Appleby – Callington College  
 Tony Whitely – Somerset LA