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IABA 2010

Biennial Conference

Dr Richard Waller & Dr Bob Pitt (presenters)
Dr Helen Bovill (non-presenting co-author)
Bristol Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning and Education (BRILLE)
University of the West of England, Bristol
‘Parents, Partners and Peers: Bearing the hidden costs of lifelong learning’
(forthcoming in Int J. of Lifelong Ed, 2011)
Format of presentation

1. Introduction (RW)
2. First Study (RW):
   Partners - Jo
3. Second Study (BP):
   Peers - Abe
4. Third Study (RW & BP):
   Parents - Cathy
5. Conclusions (RW & BP)
The three studies

Paper uses data from three longitudinal studies of adult learners:

1. Adults returning to formal learning via Access to HE course at FE college [RW]
2. Learners on professional doctorate programme or trade union ‘return to learn’ course encouraging members to engage with HE/FE opportunities [BP]
3. Working-class women in secondary education during three periods: post-war; 1960/70s; and 1988 onwards and their re-engagement with FE/HE [HB]
Hidden costs of lifelong learning

We consider participants’ reflections upon their educational biographies - from childhood memories of schooling, through FE and, for some, to HE experiences.

We explore how engaging with post-compulsory education impacts upon their wider lives; particularly the hidden costs of lifelong learning in risks to existing relationships.
First study: Partners - Jo
‘No room in my life for a relationship.’

◆ Why Jo?
Split with partner, father of her young child, soon after starting course

◆ Jo’s story
Not enough room in her life for relationship
(Ex-)partner blamed course itself; Jo saw it as catalyst hastening break-up

◆ Theorising Jo’s account
Wakeford’s (1994) - risk to femininities
Peters (1997) – growing academic confidence transferrable
Baxter & Britton (2001) – neutrality = support
Brine & Waller (2004) - Re-assessment of own life
Second Study: Peers - Abe
‘Wanting to wear an eagle’s feather.’

Why Abe?
Impact of peers both limiting and expanding his ‘horizons for action’

Abe’s story
Escaping worlds, changing identities

Theorising Abe
1. Ball et al. (2000)- taking on different identities as “some form of chameleon”
2. Scott et al. (2004)- ‘intrinsic motivation’ to seek his ‘eagle feather’
Third Study: Parents - Cathy
‘I did it in spite of you, not because of you!’

- Why Cathy?
  Strongest sense of parental culpability

- Cathy’s story

- Theorising Cathy’s account
  1. Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’ (1990a; 1990b)
  2. Cultural capital ‘deficit’ (Reay, 1998; Lareau, 2000; Plummer, 2000)
  3. Differential socialization (Crozier et al. 2008)
  5. Familial separation/distance (Christopher, 2009)
Concluding remarks - BP
Emergent themes across the studies

Entitlement:
Familial and institutional processes leading to differential perceptions of entitlement:

1. Expectation of HE participation (Crozier et al. 2008)
2. Limiting and limited ‘horizon for action’ (Ball et al. 2000)
4. Lack of middle-class confidence (Skeggs, 1997)
5. ‘Abortive lift-offs’ (Christopher, 2009)
Concluding remarks – RW
Themes to emerge across the studies

Risk

References (1)


Brine, J. and Waller, R. (2004) Working Class Women on an Access Course: Risk, opportunity and (re)constructing identities, Gender and Education 16, 97-113

References (2)


Peters, H. (1997) An Exploration of a Group of Mature Students' Perceptions of and Approaches to Writing at University, Carried Out on a Twelve Week Pre-Entry Course, Journal of Access Studies 12 , 198-211


References (3)


