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Exploring the participation of first in family students in university with particular reference to how this impacts upon intergenerational choices around, and perceptions of, Higher Education

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Abstract

Abstract of a paper presented at The Forum for Access and Continuing Education's (FACE) 21st Annual Conference, 2-4 July 2014, Salford, United Kingdom

Keywords

education, higher, perceptions, around, choices, intergenerational, exploring, upon, participation, impacts, this, reference, particular, university, students, family, first

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This paper presentation provides the preliminary findings from a research project conducted in 2013 with first in family students attending an Australian university. The objectives of this project were two fold; being both to better comprehend the intergenerational implications the decision to return to education can have and also, to develop strategies designed to 1) support older, first in family students and 2) engage family members who may be considering attending university. Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted with first in family, first year students in order to explore the wider repercussions of their return to education. The participant group was predominantly older, many were returning to education after a significant gap in learning. The main focus of this qualitative study was how the participation of these students in the higher education environment impacted upon the wider family of the learner. Participants were asked to reflect how they navigated this return to education and negotiated this with broader family responsibilities, things that supported this return to higher education and also how family members responded to this move to tertiary studies. The research responds to Wainwright and Marandet (2010) recognition that institutions of higher education need to create a 'culture of learning' (p449) that embraces not only the students as parent but also 'between parents and their children' (p449). The presentation will provide an overview of the project, present the rich qualitative data derived from interviews and provide a summary overview of the findings.

Reference

Wainwright, E., & Marandet, E. (2010). Parents in higher education: Impacts of university learning on the self and the family. *Educational Review*, 62(4), 449-465. doi: 10.1080/00131911.2010.487643.