

CONTINUUM

where policy and practice come together

Welcome to the launch issue of the Continuum Newsletter. Continuum is the name of the newly established Centre for Widening Participation Policy Studies at the University of East London. Continuum is the first centre of its kind in the UK, has a clear mission to support and inform developments concerned with widening participation in post compulsory education. The centre aims to become a strategic national and international resource for the research and development of widening participation policy and practice. Partnership and networking are major features of Continuum activity. Widening participation to Higher Education is a major government priority and consequentially there is considerable policy activity linked to the achievement of the target of a 50% participation rate for 18-30 year olds by 2010. What does this target mean in practice? What is the effect of the measures that have been put in place to achieve this target? What changes and developments are needed both within the HE sector and beyond to increase and widen participation? Continuum will be addressing these and many other questions as a core part of its activities, over the coming months.

International Developments Widening Participation Swedish Style

The Swedish government's special committee on recruitment to Higher Education has commissioned Continuum to provide a programme of professional staff development workshops on widening participation. Small groups of staff, who are involved in Widening Participation developments in universities and colleges from across Sweden, will undertake study visits to the UK. The series of staff development workshops will focus on different aspects of widening participation in higher education; for example HE progression pathways, the use of data in widening participation and institutional strategies. Through the combination of institutional visits and dialogue with UK practitioners the workshops will enable Swedish practitioners and policy makers to gain first hand experience of UK policy and practice. Participants will receive a comprehension study pack, which will contain the latest research and policy documents as well as full set of briefing papers on the particular workshop theme.

Links between the work of Continuum and the Special Committee include a keynote speech given by the Director of Continuum at a major conference on widening participation in Swedish Higher Education in Stockholm. The conference brought together representatives from all the universities in Sweden and also included a keynote address from Sweden's Minister of Education, Thomas Östros.



from the left: Erik Nilsson, Vice Mayor of Stockholm, Thomas Östros, Minister of Education, Sweden, and John Storan, Director of Continuum

Minister to launch Continuum

We were delighted that the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning and Higher Education, the Rt Hon Margaret Hodge MBE MP, accepted our invitation to formally open the Centre for Widening Participation Policy Studies –

Continuum, here at the University of East London. The next edition of the newsletter will include the full details of the launch event. With up to 100 participants expected to attend from across the UK, it promises to be a special occasion.

Transfine – linking informal, non-formal and formal learning

Transfine is a major European partnership project built around an inner circle of five European networks covering the field of Socrates, Leonardo and Youth: EUCEN (lead partner) and four other networks form the main partnership. This project partnership is responsible for carrying out the work to achieve the objectives of the project but works with an outer circle of experts and stakeholders for information, advice and feedback on the results as they emerge. Phase II of the project has involved the preparation of five country studies. The UK was selected to be one of the five, the other four countries being Estonia, France, Norway and Italy. Continuum,

working closely with the Forum for the Advancement of Continuing Education (FACE) was invited to co-ordinate the UK Study. A UK research team was appointed, each member of which was asked to provide a report from their part of the UK. Each report was to cover the “state of play” in the field of recognition and accreditation of informal and non-formal learning at the present time and the feasibility of a Europe wide “architecture” for recognition. As the UK has been a leading developer of APEL systems, credit accumulation and transfer services, it is anticipated that its country study will make a major contribution to the final report and proposals to the

commission. The UK Study research team members are:

Professor Bob Johnson, England (Johnson Associates)

Professor Raymond Thomson, Scotland (Strathclyde University)

Dr Celia O’Hagan, University of Ulster (Northern Ireland)

Professor Danny Saunders, University of Glamorgan (Wales)

**Copies of the “UK Study Report” may be ordered from Jenny Berlin at the Continuum Office*

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APEL Seminar – June 5th

On the 5th June, Continuum will host a major seminar at the Docklands Campus, focusing on the Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) in the UK. With reports from every part of UK, this seminar will provide a unique guide to the current spread and impact that APEL services are having for adult learners. The seminar will crucially address the question of how far APEL arrangements are engaged with Widening Participation developments.

For further information, contact Jenny Berlin at the Continuum office

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Celebrating diversity and challenging exclusion in Texas

In February, John Storan – Continuum director, gave a keynote address on “Celebrating diversity and Challenging Exclusion” to the National Association for Development Education Conference held in Austin, Texas. Drawing on a wide range of widening participation policy and practice from the UK, John explored the development and impact that widening participation developments are having across the HE sector.



John Storan and Melody Shore, President NADE

Supporting and Co-ordinating Widening Participation throughout England

Continuum is a partner in Action on Access, which is jointly funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to Co-ordinate and support Widening Participation development, as part of the Aimhigher:

Partnerships for Progression programme. As well as supporting partnership work in the South West region and Northern Ireland, the Continuum Director is also a member of the National Steering Group for Aimhigher P4P.