

LLAKES Newsletter

Issue 8, Spring 2015



**Professor Pauline Leonard,
LLAKES Project Leader,
'Getting in and getting
on in the youth labour
market: entry practices,
under-employment and
skill formation in regional
economies'**

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Editorial: How do people make their way at work?

Welcome to the Spring 2015 issue of the LLAKES Newsletter. With a newly elected Government pledging to build on the economic recovery, and to help more people into work, our focus is especially timely. We are profiling two new research collaborations that are studying different aspects of work - how people find jobs, and how those who are in work create new types of employment.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), employment rates are reaching 'record highs'. In the final quarter of 2014, the employment rate for 16-64 year olds rose to 73.2%: as high as in December 2004-February 2005. Indeed the figure is the highest since records began in 1971. However 'getting in' to the labour market is only part of the employment story. Also important, not only to young people but to those of all ages, is 'getting on' within work and careers. Here the ONS presents a more mixed picture: that regular pay declined slightly in November 2014 and average wage growth is still well below the 4% nominal increases seen before the financial crises. It is important to ask,

therefore, what the quality of jobs is, and how people may progress within them.

These are key questions for two new research collaborations that this issue of the LLAKES newsletter is profiling. Following the successful connections forged during LLAKES Phase 1 (2008-12) LLAKES staff at UCL Institute of Education are again working with colleagues at the University of Southampton's Work Futures Research Centre (WFRC) in Phase 2 (2013-17), this time on related projects in two of LLAKES's three themes. These are Youth, Inter-generational Mobility, and Civic Values (Theme 1) and Learning, Work and the Economy (Theme 2). Although they look at people at very different points in their work and career life courses, as well as at quite different industrial sectors and forms of employment, the projects are united by some common research questions which are of fundamental importance as the UK's labour market shows signs of recovery.

The two research projects are connected by an interest in how people 'get on' at work, albeit in different ways. 'Getting in and getting on in the youth labour market: entry process, under-employment and skill formation in regional economies' (Project 1.3, led by Pauline Leonard, WFRC, and Rachel Wilde, LLAKES) looks at schemes offered in different regions of the UK and in different sectors designed to enable young people not only to access work but to acquire the skills necessary to develop sustainable careers. These include internships, apprenticeships, volunteering, enterprise and work experience bootcamps.



The second project, 'Work organisation, lifelong learning and employee-driven innovation in the health sector' (Project 2.3, led by Professor Alison Fuller, LLAKES, and Professor Susan Halford, Dr Kate Lyle and Dr Rebecca Taylor, all of WFRC) also takes a nuanced approach to workplace skill development. As the contribution from Susan Halford shows, it is through the ways in which workers may harness and adapt their skills to challenging contexts that work-related innovations can occur.

This newsletter begins with some 'reflections from the field' by Rachel Wilde, the Research Fellow working on the 'Getting in and getting on' project. They are derived from her ongoing engagement with a volunteer centre in Glasgow which runs short employability courses for young people based on gaining work experience through volunteering. As this contribution thoughtfully demonstrates, for many young people of diverse backgrounds, 'skill formation' needs to be interpreted broadly and sensitively. Far more than a 'tick box' exercise of acquiring a set of workplace competencies, it embraces a wealth of complex social experiences and relations.

Kate Lyle's reflections on her ethnographic experiences of a health care charity (Project 2.3) vividly demonstrate how employee-driven innovation may lead to people 'getting on' in their professional careers in ways which they may never have previously envisaged.

We are delighted in this newsletter to welcome our newest member to the LLAKES/Southampton collaboration, Dr Rebecca Taylor. Rebecca joined Project 2.3 in February 2015 as a Research Fellow, working as a job-share with Kate, following the arrival of Kate's wonderful little boy, Jesse, last year!



Notes from the field: motion and emotion in Glasgow

By Rachel Wilde

A woman waiting in the airport security queue asks me where I'm going. Glasgow, for work, I reply. She says she's always wondered what it was like doing a job where you get to travel. Well. I think for a moment: It's a privilege and it's tough. Seeing new places is exciting, and hearing people's stories is always fascinating. But travel wears you down and strains the emotions.

My hotel room, right above the central station, has a background hum of platform announcements and the sense of lots of people in motion. Outside the window, ridged roofs march into the horizon, sheltering waiting people and welcoming train carriages as they ease into the city.

I'm here to find out how far the volunteers I met in the summer have travelled. Has the scheme they took part in meant that they are any closer to work?

Volunteering has been feted as a way to create better citizens, to engage young people in helping their communities and in doing so to become more embedded in them. The Glasgow third sector scheme 'Volunteering Makes Sense' (a pseudonym) seeks to help volunteers become more employable. Employability classes such as CV writing, interview techniques and workplace behaviours support the young people to move into employment as they gain work experience on volunteering placements.

The scheme is run by Micky and attracts young people (under 26) from a range of backgrounds. Some have never worked, have problems at home or with their mental health, lack confidence and are unsure what life holds for them. Others – often migrants keen to become involved in their new community – are studying at university or are already graduates.

The scheme evokes a troubling mixture of hope and frustration in me. Micky is fantastic with young people, understanding their differing needs, supporting them with an informal, friendly form of encouragement that many have never experienced from formal education or employment. And yet the stories the young people tell me about the restrictions they have encountered are hard to bear.

One young man is epileptic. He's been told by the job centre that no employer will take "the risk" of employing him. And yet it's legitimate for him to volunteer doing the exact same work an employee would: he just won't see any money from it. I ask him

healthcare policy. The first is those that aim to shift the provision of care from (very expensive) hospital settings to (less expensive and often far more preferred) community settings. The second is innovations that aim to transcend traditionally inflexible professional boundaries and develop creative inter-professional responses to workload and work organisation.

Alongside the UK case studies, in 2014 we started two international comparative studies looking at Norway and France. These countries share the structural challenges facing the UK, but the different models of welfare provision, different economic circumstances and local particularities will allow us to explore if and how employee driven innovation might be done differently, more/less effectively, and to consider what the UK might learn from these comparisons.

In Norway we are working with Dr Aud Obstfelder from the University of Tromsø (200 miles north of the Arctic Circle), her colleague Bente Norbye, a nurse professional and educator, and PhD student Helle Hjertstrøm.



Alison and Aud in the University of Tromsø Sami meeting room

In September 2014 Alison Fuller and Susan Halford spent a week in Tromsø and Oslo, interviewing policy makers and practitioners. Whilst the same broad challenges are faced, it is clear that Norway has some additional challenges linked to geography and population: very small communities long distances apart that make the provision of specialist care in the community particularly difficult. Innovative solutions are being pursued at the local level, in the face of

legislative changes that penalise municipalities for residents' stay in hospital once they are fit to be discharged.

Ultimately these pressures could feed into a broader transformation of municipal government to scale up the capacity of local organisations. Meanwhile, 'active ageing' has become a policy driver for the new Conservative government in Norway and this is challenging traditional nursing practices in the community (framed more in terms of 'care' than preventative or even rehabilitative approaches to ageing) and repositioning Occupational Therapy further up the professional hierarchy. With this overview we are now pursuing further understanding of the conditions under which 'bottom-up' innovation takes place in Norway.



Tromsø Fjord

In June this year the research team will visit Françoise Le Deist, our partner at the Business School in Toulouse, to interview a similar range of French policy makers and practitioners.



Françoise Le Deist, Toulouse Business School

Innovating work: the making and remaking of job roles

By Kate Lyle

One of our case studies for the project *Work Organisation, Lifelong Learning and Employee-driven Innovation in the Health Sector* is of a charity that aims to improve healthcare for homeless people. It has provided a wealth of data about how innovation can be inspired by personal determination to address failings in care, and the work involved in achieving that vision. I have interviewed many employees who work with homeless patients and observed their daily work, and it has been a pleasure and honour for me to spend time with such dedicated and motivated people. Witnessing the patience, compassion, and respect with which they treat their patients and each other has been a very humbling experience.

One theme emerging from the data that I have found particularly fascinating is the way that job roles are continually made and remade to enable new ways of working. Sometimes this necessitates the adaptation of traditional roles, while at other times completely new roles must be created.

Remaking traditional roles

The charity employs several nurses to work with homeless patients. However to fulfil this function the traditional nursing role has been remade, with the addition of new responsibilities and the removal of other aspects of nursing. Rosie (not her real name) is a nurse with 20 years' experience. In her current role with the organisation she works with homeless people who are being treated in hospital to ensure that they have a place to go and access to continuing care when they are discharged. Rosie once took a 150 mile round coach trip to accompany a patient to a court hearing in order to prevent him from losing a place in a detox clinic.

Acting as a chaperone and social worker in this way is certainly not a traditional feature of nursing, yet for Rosie this absolutely fell within the remit of her job – if the patient had missed the hearing he would have lost his place in detox. So Rosie's job incorporates new ways of working that are not common-place in nursing, but she has also given up other more traditional nursing responsibilities. In her previous nursing roles Rosie particularly enjoyed performing clinical tasks, such as dressing wounds, but these skills are rarely required in her current job.

Making new roles

To help patients access health and social care services, the 'care navigator' role has been created. In some teams this role is undertaken by people who have themselves experienced homelessness. Not

only does their personal experience give them unique understanding of patients' needs, but it also adds authenticity which is valuable in winning patient trust.

One care navigator, Stephen, explained that he often draws on his own experience with alcohol addiction in supporting patients. In one particular incident a patient was being treated in hospital for an acute condition, although the root cause of his ill health was alcohol addiction. Several health professionals had tried to persuade him to attend a detox programme, but he refused and became upset and angry. When Stephen met with the patient, rather than trying to persuade him into a detox place, Stephen talked about his own experiences of overcoming addiction. This opened up a shared space between Stephen and the patient that enabled communication. The patient subsequently accepted a place in detox.

Other teams have a different approach to the care navigator role, employing people who have experience working with the homeless, or other disadvantaged groups. One such care navigator, Jim, has worked with homeless people in various capacities for 18 years. His knowledge and skills in engaging and supporting homeless people are invaluable to the role, and indeed shape the nature of his work. Yet the uniqueness of the care navigator role makes it difficult to package up the competencies that are required to perform the job – in many ways Jim's skills are intangible.

This was illustrated by Chris, one of the senior medics in Jim's team, who told me about a meeting he had attended about 'complex patients' - those with multiple health and social care needs. At the meeting Chris suggested that the team already had people with the skills and experience to support these patients with all of their problems, but others insisted that the patients needed separate specialist services. Chris felt that the skills and experience of somebody such as Jim can be undervalued by external bodies because they do not fall within the remit of traditional job roles, such as nurse or social worker.

Even people who support the idea of such skilled professionals find it difficult to understand what it takes to perform the role. Chris explained that when securing funding for the care navigator roles he was told: "what you need is two band seven nurses"! From observing the work of the care navigators it is clear that their skills and experience cannot be encapsulated in such a crude categorisation.

We will continue our research with this case study over the next few months. We are also working with two other case studies – a community organisation that runs a GP practice (among other initiatives), and a hospital-based initiative that aims to aid the transition between child and adult services for children with chronic conditions. And we hope to take on a fourth case study as well.

Inequalities and volunteering: who gets to work for free?

By Bryony Hoskins

The concept of volunteering has been reinvented during the economic crisis to fit with an agenda of reducing unemployment. The distinction between volunteering and work experience has become increasingly blurred. At the height of the economic crisis in 2011 youth unemployment was about 22% and volunteering was being advocated as a strategy for young people to get work experience for their CV. In this context I, together with my LLAKES colleagues Professor Pauline Leonard and Dr Rachel Wilde, have been researching access to volunteering experiences using both quantitative and qualitative data from the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Survey (CELS).

Descriptive statistics from the CELS survey show that about a quarter of young people aged 22-23 were involved in some form of unpaid work in 2014, mostly in the voluntary or charity sector. These young people obviously thought that unpaid work was important for finding paid employment as almost three quarters of those doing volunteering used this information on their CV. Perhaps surprisingly, only about half of those doing unpaid work in the public or private sector used this information on their CV. However, across all the sectors only about 20% of those who had done unpaid work were offered or informed about paid employment while they were volunteering, with little difference between the sectors.

This raises questions about whether these strategies are effective for finding work or alternatively whether these figures reflect the lack of employment possibilities for young people.

In terms of inequality of access to volunteering, parents' education levels had a significant relationship with private sector unpaid work – sometimes, presumably, in the form of the more prestigious unpaid internships. However, there was no significant relationship between parents' education and volunteering or unpaid work in the public sector. This may appear to suggest that there is now much more equal access to these experiences.

However, the CELS qualitative data show that the voluntary experiences differ greatly. Volunteering in a charity shop hanging out clothes, for example, compared to volunteering in a Citizens Advice Bureau, where a young person might be solving people's problems or compiling reports, offer very different sorts of work experiences and employment prospects. Nevertheless, the issue of access is even more complex than this. Careful analysis of the qualitative interviews showed that the key role is often played by the Job Centre. If you are unemployed and do not have the privilege of living at home with parents who are contributing a daily allowance, your access to volunteering is frequently controlled by the

Job Centre. In order to collect their job seekers allowance, many young people with low education levels are being made to perform unpaid work in the charity sector. These young people were often happy to do this unpaid work, at least in the first instance, but later expressed resentment when they could not get a job based on these experiences.

In contrast, young people with higher levels of education appear to be directed away from volunteering, in order to be able to prove that they are in a position to take on any form of paid work. As one participant put it, they need to demonstrate that they are 'professionally unemployed' by showing that their days are comprised of job interviews and job searches. The types of volunteering that they were directed away from were often highly sophisticated and related to the careers they wished to pursue.

The LLAKES project on volunteering will be investigating these experiences further by conducting follow-up interviews and interviews with some more disadvantaged young persons.

New Staff: Rebecca Taylor



I have recently joined the research team for the LLAKES project 'Work organisation, lifelong learning and employee-driven innovation in the health sector', working with Alison Fuller, Susan Halford and Kate Lyle. The project, which started in 2013 and will run until March 2016, is exploring how employee driven innovation can develop and flourish in the healthcare sector, with a particular focus on how different forms of work organisation and models of education and training impede or facilitate this. As one of the research team I am conducting interviews and ethnographic fieldwork with the project's case study organisations. These cases are organisations from the public and third sectors which have, in different ways, demonstrated innovation in the provision of health services.

I'm really excited about the opportunity to work on this project, particularly the chance to do some in-depth organisational ethnography. The study fits really well

with my research interests and experience. I'm a sociologist of work and organisations with an interest in organisational, professional and sectoral boundaries and the delivery of services. I've written and published on ways of conceptualising paid and unpaid (voluntary) work and more policy focused pieces on employment services and older workers.

Before coming to Southampton, where I am a lecturer in Sociology, I worked as research fellow in the Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) at the University of Birmingham. One piece of research I was involved in at Birmingham was a qualitative longitudinal study of third sector organisations, exploring changing organisational strategies and practices. Another looked at the role of third sector organisations in delivering employment services, specifically the Work Programme. Prior to TSRC I was a research fellow in the employment group at the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) where I worked on a wide range of studies with a work, policy and service delivery focus.

LLAKES in the news

English 16-19 education and training failing to reduce skills inequality

Research has shown that England has very high levels of skills inequality by age 15 in comparison with other developed countries. New research from LLAKES has found that the next phase – 16-19 education and training – only adds to the problem.

Between ages 15 and 27 literacy inequality barely reduces, and social class gaps in achievement increase significantly. In numeracy the situation is even worse, with the spread of scores widening substantially and the social class gaps in achievement growing more than in any other country studied. The result is that 27-year-olds in England show a more unequal distribution of literacy and numeracy skills than any of the other 23 countries surveyed.

Raising the participation age to 18 may start to improve this situation, but the Government is not setting high enough standards to compete with Europe and East Asia, the study concludes.

LLAKES Director Professor Andy Green and Dr Nicola Pensiero compared findings from 24 OECD countries using data from the PISA 2000 survey at 15 and the 2011 Survey of Adult Skills (SAS) to assess changes in skills inequality during the life course. They explain that the high inequality in literacy and numeracy skills "is not due to the most able doing exceptionally well, but rather because of the familiar long tail of under-achievers". Amongst 25-34 year-olds, for instance, almost a fifth (19 percent) score below level 2 in numeracy on the OECD's six level scale. Level 2 capability is considered to be the very minimum level at which people are able to function effectively in modern societies. This is compared with 11-13 percent in German-speaking, Nordic and

central and eastern European (CEE) countries, and only seven percent in East Asian countries. The study shows that England – along with the other English-speaking countries included (Canada, Ireland, Northern Ireland and the USA) – is relatively poor at closing skills gaps after age 15. Countries, like Austria and Germany, with Dual Systems of Apprenticeship (three-year apprenticeship combining work-based training and education), and other countries with high rates of upper secondary completion, like most of the Nordic and CEE countries, appear to have better systems in place to close the skills gap. The authors say that "the key to reducing skills inequality during the upper secondary phase is to have everyone completing two or three year programmes of study in either general or vocational education. The additional years studying mathematics and the national language help lower achievers to narrow the skills gaps in literacy and numeracy."

The high rate of early school leavers in England and some other English-speaking countries led to too many young people taking short, low quality vocational courses that give too little dedicated time to improving their English and mathematics skills. "The raising of the school leaving age in England to 18 in 2015 is a step forward but it still allows young people to take an ad hoc collection of short general or vocational courses (including part-time study) many of which do not lead to a useful qualification" say the authors. Green and Pensiero conclude that "England needs more standardised pathways through upper secondary education for all 16-19 year-olds, with higher expectations on students and mandatory dedicated classes in English and mathematics taught by specialist subject teachers as is the case in most other countries. At present England remains a long way from establishing an upper secondary system capable of closing the inequality gap."

Early school leavers less than half as likely to vote as those with degrees

Eighty per cent of young adults say they have little or no trust in politicians – but this does not mean they aren't interested in politics, according to [Young Adults and Politics Today: disengaged and disaffected or engaged and enraged?](#) Launched in March by LLAKES and the Citizenship Foundation at the House of Commons, the publication draws on new data from the latest phase of the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS), a long-running study of civic engagement and the role of citizenship education.

The results show that young adults with lower levels of education are substantially less likely to vote and to be politically engaged than those with degrees or A-levels. The gap is apparent from a young age, and widens over time. Students who reported receiving a lot of citizenship education were more likely to hold positive attitudes to civic and social participation.

LLAKES events and publications

Summer 2015 Events

12 May 2015

Martin Weale

The Relationship between Parents' and Children's Education

15.00-16.30, Room 822

26 May 2015

Karen Evans & Michela Franceschelli

Exploring inter-generational differences in the educational journeys and aspirations of Black African and Black Caribbean families

15.00-16.30, Room 739

28-29 May 2015

LLAKES-Amcis conference

Inequality of active citizenship: can education mend the gap?

13.30-1800 (28 May) & 09.30-16.30 (29 May), Room 728

9 June 2015

Nic Pensiero

Income distribution in times of austerity: the impact of spending and pro-labour versus pro-capital policy

15.00-16.30, Room 822

4-5 June 2015

Research conference

The crisis for contemporary youth

Brunei Gallery, SOAS

23 June 2015

Tom Wilson

Unionlearn and Union Learning: a review of the first ten years

15.00-16.30, Room 728

9 July 2015

Francis Green & Golo Henseke

The benefits to individuals of private schooling

15.00-16.30, Room 744

To book places, please e-mail

llakesevents@ioe.ac.uk

Publications

Research Paper 49: "Interdisciplinarity in Action: building and using a conceptual infrastructure for interdisciplinary studies of risk", by Karen Evans, Seppe Kontiainen, Ingrid Schoon and Martin Weale

Research Paper 50: "The Changing Graduate Labour Market: Analysis Using a New Indication of Graduate Jobs", by Francis Green and Golo Henseke

Research Paper 51: "Supporting an Ageing Workforce: Implications for Working Life, Training and Skills Policy in England – a Literature Review", by Lorna Unwin, Gayna Davey, Alison Fuller and Pauline Leonard

Research Paper 52: "Vocational Education and Training as a Career Path for Young People: Making Choices in England and Denmark", by Natasha Kersh and Ida Juul.

These papers, along with the others in the series, are available to download from the LLAKES website, www.llakes.ac.uk.