

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE NETWORK 2009

The SEN held several meetings in 2009 in which we addressed the experience of undergraduate students in the widest sense, not seeking to 'improve' it in the usual sense but just to explore its variety as well as find commonalities – basically whether there is still (if there ever was) a unitary student experience. We returned to this question in relation to our preoccupation with social class in a discussion at Manchester Met' in March between Fiona Devine from Manchester University and Ken Roberts from Liverpool plus Carlton Howson from de Montfort on black and minority ethnic student experiences. Like our other meetings this year, this was advertised and held jointly with the British Sociological Association's Researching Students Study Group and the HEA subject for Sociology Anthropology and Politics.

The book collecting together *Student reflections on their educational journeys* that we published with SRHE last year and which has now covered its costs has become more pertinent this year when the its main title quotation '*Twenty years of schooling*' is completed by 'and they put you on the day shift!' It has involved us in the 'biographical turn' in sociology and other subjects and so we also held joint day events hosted by the Centre for Research Informed Teaching at Central Lancashire in June and the ESRC-funded Pedagogic Quality and Inequality in Undergraduate Degrees Research Project at Nottingham University in September with contributions from student chapter authors. Also at a C-SAP event in London in January.

Holding joint meetings with host organisations who provide the venues and collaborate in advertising the events has been a new way forward that we have developed this year. It is exemplified by the other September day event we held at the Information Commons of Sheffield University hosted by the Centre for Inquiry-based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences on student use of 24-hour libraries – uses not always directly related to books, as became clear! This attracted wide interest from University librarians and was advertised through their networks. It ended in the University Arms, once the Sheffield Students' Union. Especial thanks are due to Matthew Cheeseman who reported his research on *Cramming together in the IC*.

Our next day event on January 27th will also be of this type – hosted by the Business School at Greenwich University on *The Student Experience of Business Studies* with contributions from Stefano Harney from Queen Mary College, reports from an ESRC-funded comparison of Business Studies at 10 UK HEIs and Dr. Martin Allen on *The New Business Studies Generation*. Already one in seven students in the UK study some sort of Business Studies – are their experiences the pattern of the future?

Once again the Network has a stream at Conference and thanks are due to the co-convenor of the Network, Mark Weyers of UCL, for tidying up all the submissions and also Martin Gough of Kent Uni whose Postgraduate Network merged with us for the occasion and who therefore also contributed to refereeing submissions. We aim for a joint meeting with the PG Network in

2010 and it may be that we will hold regular meetings in London next year while continuing to share joint events hosted as above outside the capital. Our efforts to raise the impending fee rise as critical to the future student experience have continued to fall on deaf ears but we bat on!

Patrick Ainley 9/10/09