



International Studies in Widening Participation

Editorial

Mahsood Shah

The *International Studies in Widening Participation* journal was established in late 2013. The journal is published by the *English Language and Foundation Studies Centre* and the *Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education* at the University of Newcastle, Australia. The journal is aimed to engage academics, practitioners, and students on a wide range of topics related to widening participation. The second volume includes six papers. All papers are peer reviewed by national and international scholars with research strength in primary, secondary and post-secondary education, access and equity, widening participation, and other disciplinary areas.

In this volume *Beckley*, discusses how government funding for widening participation projects is evaluated in a large multi-campus University. He argues that the evaluation of widening participation projects has enabled the University to measure outcomes of funding. The evaluation found high levels of success and attainment rates for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. *Crawford* examined the impact of a bridging program for undergraduate students. Her study found that bridging programs developed academic skills, confidence in learning and connections with University and peers, and empowered students to understand the expectations and demand in undergraduate study. Her study also found that students who completed bridging programs had taken leadership roles in their first semester of undergraduate study, and had changed their long standing attitudes towards and understanding of people from cultures different to their own.

Southgate et al. present the findings of a study with first-generation and first in family status students. Their study with 211 students enrolled in undergraduate education, nursing and liberal arts programs found that first in family students had poor academic outcomes compared to non-first in family students. The study further found that the difference was only significant after the first year of study when students were less likely to receive targeted learning support. Their study found that first in family students were more likely to seek support from various support services. *Toumu'a and Laban* examined factors that contributed to success in undergraduate study with Pasifika students in one New Zealand University. Their study found that personal maturity and, independence, clear goals and the ability to be at the University played a key role in success. Their study also found paid employment was a necessity for many but at the same time it directly hindered retention and completions.

The Fijian education system is currently going through significant change. Various policies are introduced to increase the access and success of all groups of students in schools and tertiary education. *Ali* examines the effectiveness of a postgraduate leadership program which is targeted to education practitioners such as principals, and teachers across Fiji Islands. His study found that the postgraduate program provides leadership skills to teachers who are confronted with challenges in rural and urban schools. Finally, *Khaled's* paper outlines the need for curriculum reforms in Bangladesh school education to ensure sensitivity to learners' cultural and religious backgrounds and needs. She argues that the secular education system in Bangladesh focuses on human capital, and the religious system focuses on the self or the spiritual growth and a whole curriculum needs to be developed for both systems that encourages knowledge and skill development.