



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

# The Foundation degree experience: Expressions of transformation and dual identity

Liz James & Julie Wintrup  
School of Health Sciences  
University of Southampton



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

# Overview of presentation

- Background to research project/HI-LLN
- Fd in Health & Social Care – key features/learner profile
- Research focus & methodology
- The student voice/emerging themes
- Future implications (curriculum development/integrating work-based learning & employer engagement)



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

## Background to research project/HI-LLN

- Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE) national initiative to increase progression opportunities for adult learners to access education, Further and Higher
- Regional LLN groupings of different Curriculum Groups (Childhood and Early Years, Retail and Management, Construction, Engineering)
- Our CG is Health and Social Care



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

## Fd in Health & Social Care: key features/learner profile

- Foundation degrees: 2 year, diploma-equivalent, work-based HE qualification
- Designed in partnership with employers to meet the needs of the workforce (Leitch, 2006)
- Fd in Health & Social Care: offers new career opportunities for intermediate level/associate practitioner roles
- Learners: working and learning, often employer-sponsored, usually vocationally educated and trained



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

## Research focus & methodology

- Study to explore students' work and educational pathways prior to, during and following their undertaking a Foundation degree in Health and Social Care
- Qualitative study, longitudinal, self-selecting sample, face to face interviews, thematic analysis
- Purpose - to improve knowledge and understanding of our students' journeys, from entry through to graduation and beyond. To be more effective in providing support and advice to prospective and current students



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

# The student voice/emerging themes

- Transition
- Transformation
- Critical thinker
- Dual identity



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

# The student voice/emerging themes

## Transition

- Challenges: multi-layered (practical, social, academic)
- Practical - where to park, finding way around, time management, child care issues
- Social – unfamiliar territory, feeling of trespassing
- Academic – anxiety about engaging in HE study, feeling unprepared



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

# The student voice/emerging themes

## Transformation

- Increase in self-confidence and autonomy as a learner, as an employee and as a person
- Impact on family dynamics – children, spouse/partner
- Use of reflection to facilitate transformation (Schon, 1983)
- Contrast with previous learning environments – school, abroad





Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

# The student voice/emerging themes

## Critical thinker

- Develop sense of empowerment that learner/employee can challenge practice and effect organisational change
- Ability to develop as a perceived expert in the organisation
- Voice of practical experience/expertise – developed through debate & discussion



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

# The student voice/emerging themes

## Dual identity

- Learner / employee – potential source of tension
- Identity defined by ‘place’ (student at University, manager at work) rather than internalised and consistent
- Important that learner’s voice is heard when negotiating the learning agreement



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

# The student voice.....

## A voice in the wilderness?

## .....or part of the conversation?



Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Lifelong Learning Network

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**  
School of Health Sciences

# References

- DfES (2003). *Foundation degrees: Meeting the Need for Higher Level Skills*. London: HMSO
- Foskett, R. (2003). Employer and needs-led curriculum planning in higher education: a cross-sector case study of foundation degree development. *British Educational Research Association Annual Conference 2003, Edinburgh, UK, 11-13 Sep 2003*, Education Online, Leeds.
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (2000), *Foundation Degree Prospectus*, HEFCE, London.
- Leitch, S. (2006). *Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills*. London: HMSO.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Sternberg, R.J & Grigorenko, E.L. (2000) Practical Intelligence and its development, in: R. Bar-On & J.D.A. Parker (Eds) *The handbook of emotional intelligence: theory, development, assessment, and application at home, school and in the workplace*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass: 215 – 243.