

# The World of WP

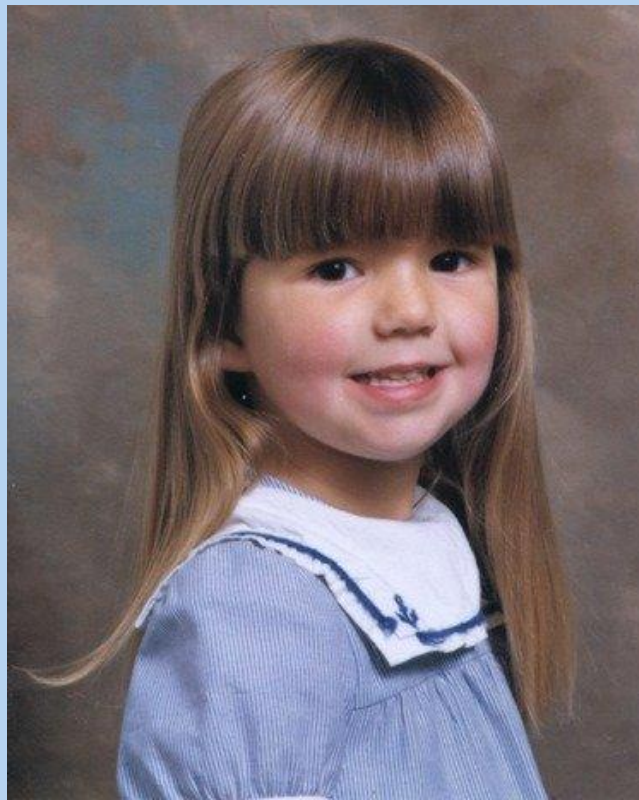
Liz Routhorn, Head of Widening Participation and Outreach

## Content

- Why widen participation?
- Education inequalities
- Understanding your purpose
- Challenging your practice



Who am I?





## What is Widening Participation?



## **What is Widening Participation?**

“Widening participation strategy aims to address discrepancies in the take-up of higher education opportunities between different under-represented groups of students.

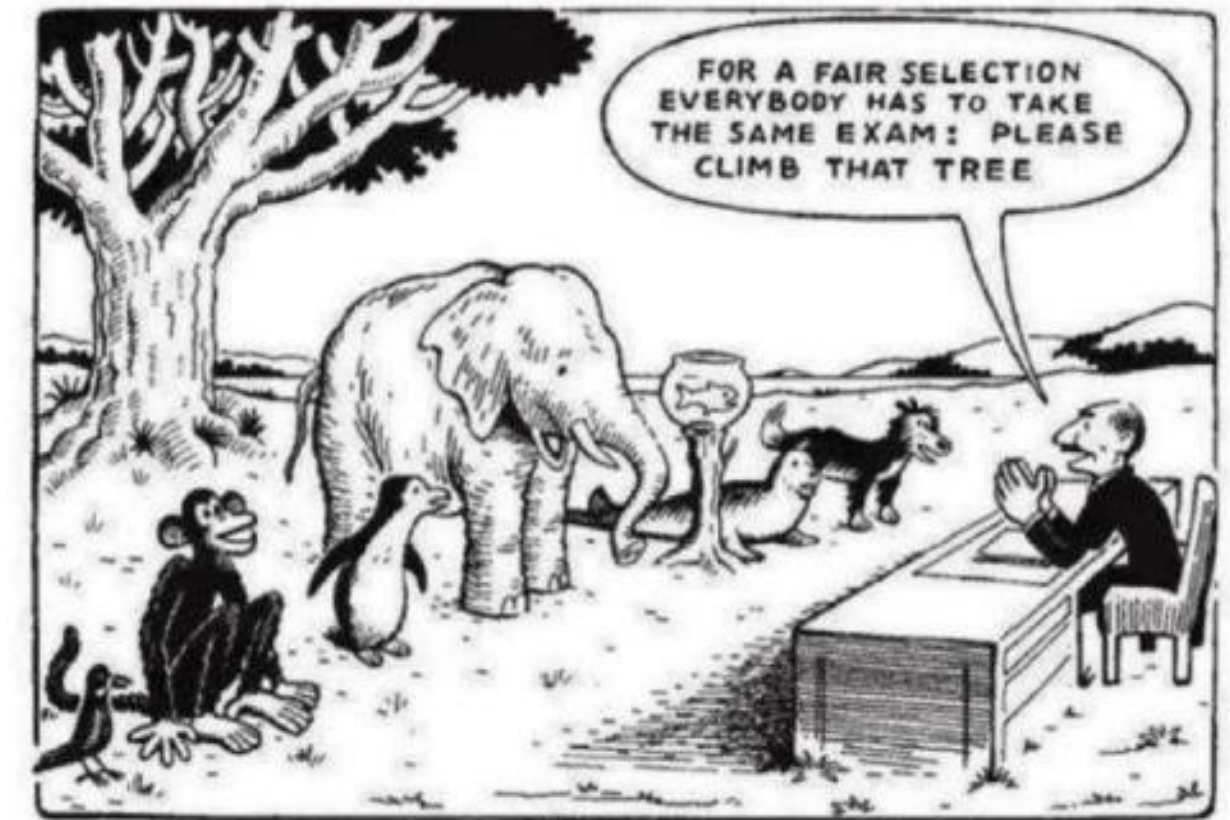
We aim to ensure that all students, from all backgrounds, with the ability and desire to undertake higher education, are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education”.

(Office for Students, 2023)

**What is it to you? And your institution?**

## Structural inequalities

- 2023 - 14.5 million living in poverty in UK
- Children eligible for free school meals behind at every stage of education
- Only 13% of care leavers progress to HE by age 19
- Disparities by gender, ethnicity, age, geography...
- Context matters



Our Education System



## Context is everything – Free School Meals progression rate (age 19)

28.1%



> 50%

< 20%

## Deficit model

Attributes failure to an individual's personality or circumstance, rather than failures in the education system.

Tries to 'fix' these weaknesses

And yet....





## Are we changing students to fit the system, or should we change the system?

### **Bourdieu**

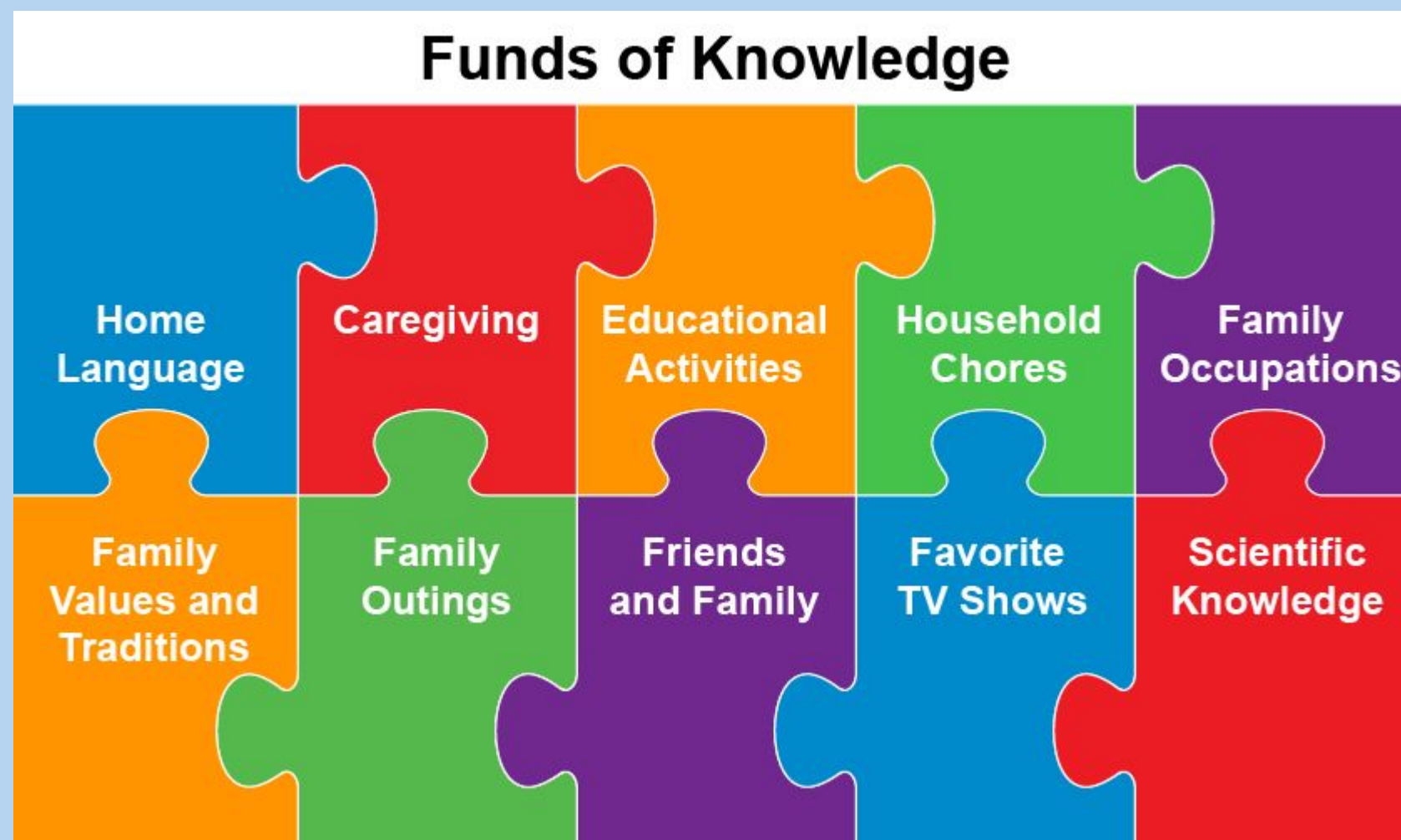
Social / cultural / economic / symbolic capital

### **Moll / Gonzalez**

Funds of knowledge

### **Sen / Nussbaum**

Capabilities approach



## Access and Participation Plans (APP) - 2024 and beyond

### Equality of Opportunity Risk Register

#### 5 access risks:

- Knowledge and skills
- Information and guidance
- Perception of HE
- Application success rates
- Limited choice of course

4 year plans (from 2023 or 2024)

#### Personal characteristics

Disability  
Free school meals status  
Care experienced  
Estranged  
Household residual income (HRI)  
Armed forces family  
Ex-prisoner  
Child in need  
Ethnicity  
Sex  
Gender identity  
Age  
Religious belief  
Sexual orientation  
Parental education  
Refugee or asylum seeker  
Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boaters (GTRSB)  
Service leaver

#### School-based indicators that may interact with personal characteristics

Average attainment 8 score of school  
State/independent  
Selective state/non-selective state school  
Proportion of students eligible for free school meals in the past six years  
Progression to higher education rates  
Subjects offered at Key Stage 5  
Average points score of A-levels


#### Area-based indicators that may interact

IMD  
IDACI  
Rural/urban  
Coastal/non-coastal  
TUNDRA

## Progression and success







“Remind me again... why  
are we doing this?”





## Realistic evaluation



or...





## Reflective practice

- ~~How was lunch?~~
- Objectives
- In advance - theory of change
- Data collection / tracking / risks
- Ethics / GDPR
- Share
- Repeat?





## Data collection – what do you collect?

- Free school meal eligibility
- First in family / first generation
- Postcode data – IMD, POLAR
- Carer, care
- Ethnicity, gender...

## Questions

- Is it valid / robust / too simplistic?





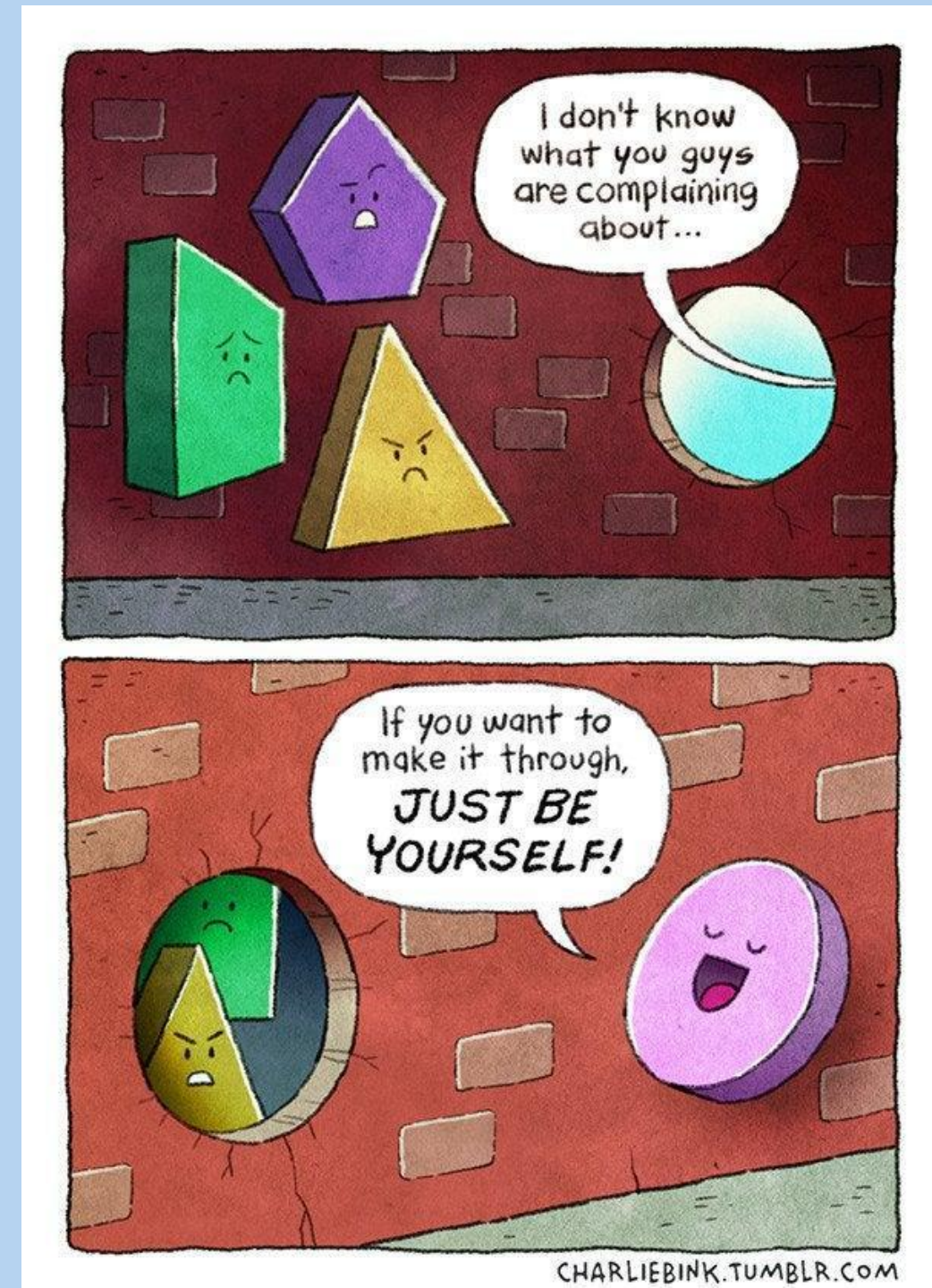
## Power of a story





## What can we do?

- Read / listen
- Share best practice (and failures!)
- Listen to what students want/need
- Challenge deficit language / solutions
- Challenge your institution
- Work WITH teachers
- Collaborate with other unis
- Provide amazing opportunities





## Challenge your 'common sense' practices?

- Who didn't hear about your programme?
- Which schools didn't engage?
- Which students didn't apply?
- Who did you say no to?
- Who didn't show up?
- Who dropped out?
- Would your students have attended uni anyway?

**Why?**



## Supporting organisations and why I love them

The logo for WONKHE, featuring the word "WONKHE" in a bold, dark blue, serif typeface.

Best practice

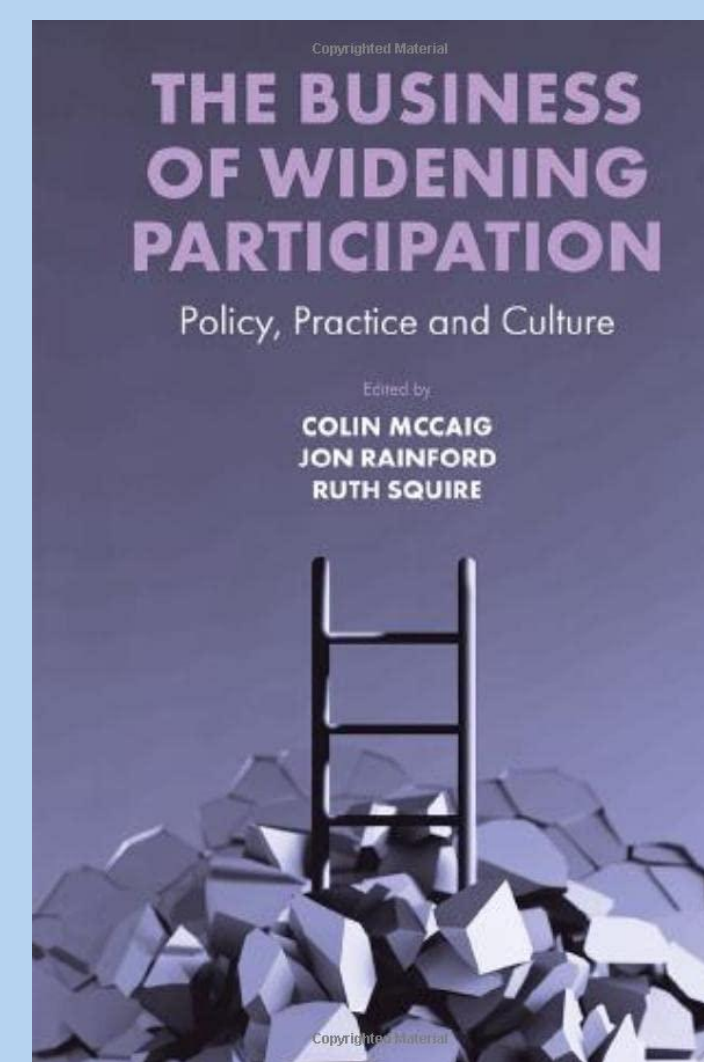
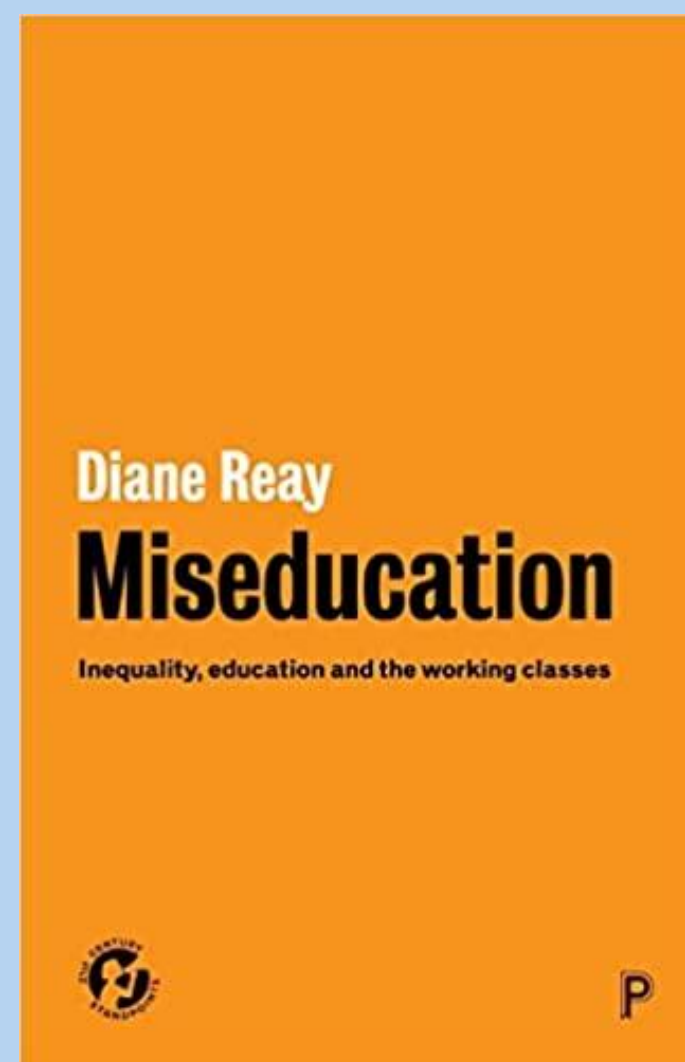
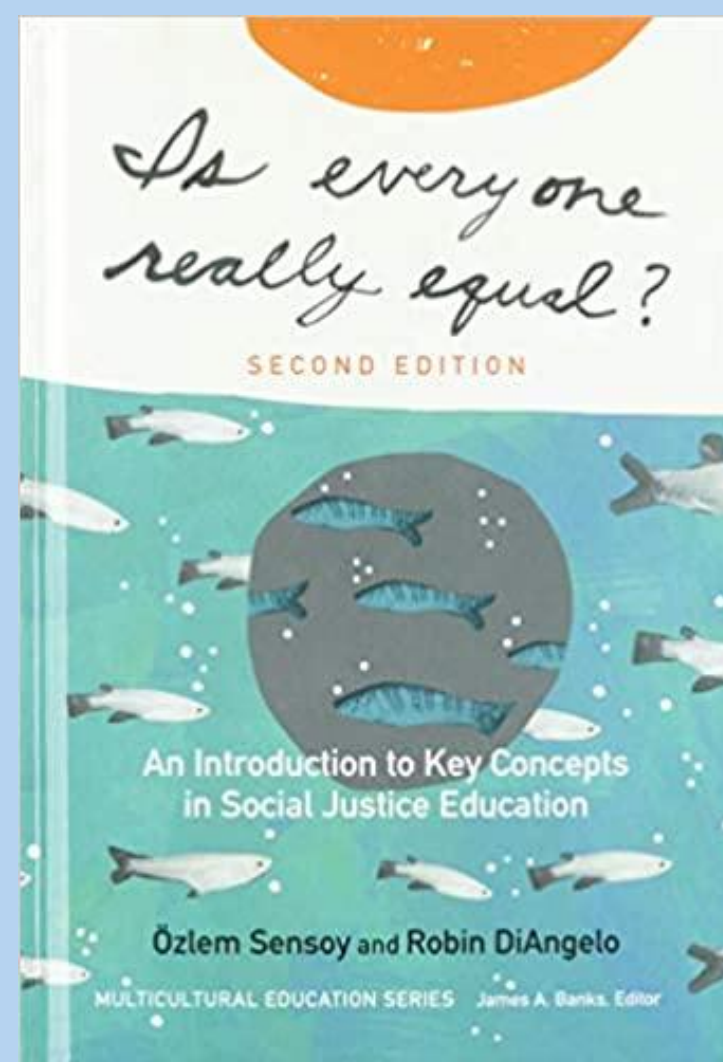
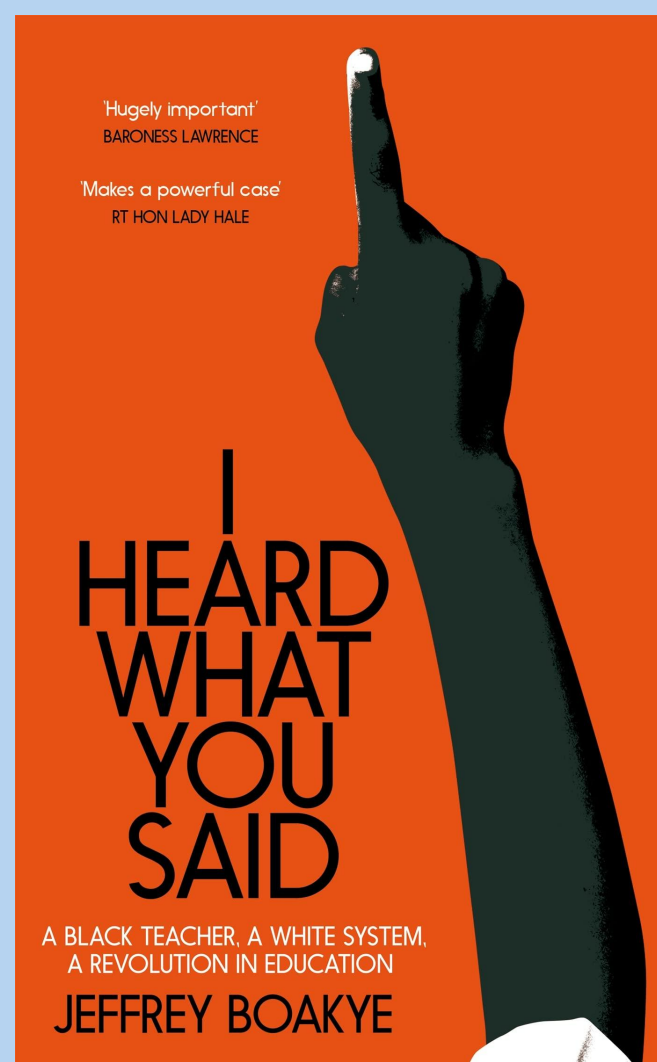
The logo for TASO, with the word "TASO" in a large, teal, sans-serif font. To its right, the text "Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education" is written in a smaller, dark blue, sans-serif font.The logo for HELOA, featuring the word "HELOA" in a blue, sans-serif font. The letter "O" is replaced by a stylized blue circular icon with a white dot in the center.

Theory and te

The logo for the NERUPI network. It features a vertical purple bar on the left. To its right, the word "NERUPI" is in a large, teal, sans-serif font, followed by the word "network" in a smaller, italicized, purple, sans-serif font. Below this, the text "Evaluating & Researching University Participation Interventions" is written in a smaller, teal, sans-serif font.



## My go-to books





**We DO have an impact!**





# Questions?

[e.routhorn@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:e.routhorn@londonmet.ac.uk)

 @lizrou

[londonmet.ac.uk](http://londonmet.ac.uk)

   @LondonMetUni

