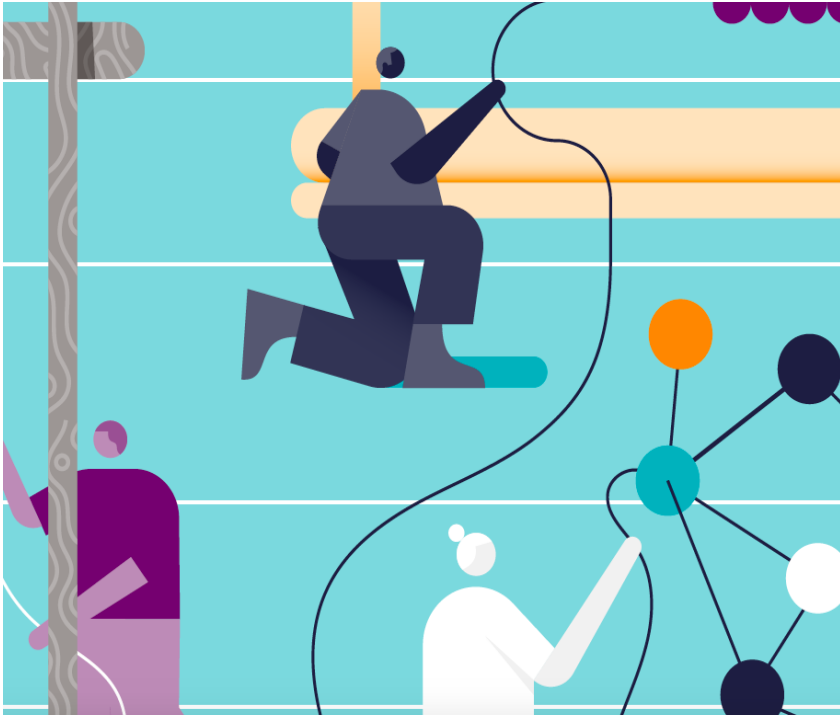# centre of **excellence** for **equity** in higher **education**

A Praxis based framework
Professor Penny Jane Burke
Director and Global Innovation
Chair of Equity

aims

- To outline **CEEHE's praxis based framework**

- To outline **Pedagogical Methodologies** (PM)

- To share what this means for researching & evaluating **differently**

- How this is **reframing** our research, evaluation and WP programs & approaches

- To have a **discussion** about these approaches in relation to your own diverse contexts and perspectives

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A praxis-based framework

- CEEHE brings together research, evaluation, theory and practice in continual conversation because one of our guiding principles is that **equity practice should be informed by research, and equity research should be informed by practice**. CEEHE fosters this dialogue by drawing on the notion of **'praxis'**, an approach that brings theory and practice together in cycles of **reflection-action and action-reflection**

- The **dialogic relationship between critical reflection and critical action** is reflected in the **collaborative and participatory ways of working** that CEEHE encourages. A **process of ongoing exchange** helps sensitise participants to the multiple layers, contexts and challenges that characterise the field of equity in higher education. These methods help us to question and disrupt **entrenched and historical inequalities** that are often sustained by **taken-for-granted assumptions**.

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Research-informed practice/Practice-informed research

- "Evidence-based" policy and practice – broadening this scope to focus on "**research-informed**" policy & practice.

- 'Evidence' emphasizes generalizability & objectivity, -focus on the tangible, observable and measurable ('barriers').

- **Broader methodological frameworks -** capture the **contextual** and **insidious** layers of inequality, which are often **unwittingly reproduced** through taken-for-granted practices, values & assumptions.

- **Practice-informed research** to ensure that **research is grounded in the the issues, challenges and dilemmas confronting practice** and that the insights and knowledge of practitioners deeply informs research.

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Implications of peripheral approach

- Understanding equity/WP as at the **peripheries of HE** & **failing to ensure that equity strategies and initiatives are research-informed often unwittingly reproduces inequalities** (Jones and Thomas, 2005; Burke, 2012).

- Equity seen as **someone else's responsibility** & as **marginal** to teaching, curriculum development & assessment

- equity research & practice are separated rather than brought together in dialogue to co-produce & deepen understanding

- knowledge emerging from equity practice is not fully recognised, valued and disseminated

- Results in **fragmentation and individualisation** of what should be a **collective, institutional and community-wide commitment** to creating equity in & through HE

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Problem with peripheral approaches…

• Creating equitable higher education is often seen as someone else's responsibility, as outside the core work underpinning education, such as pedagogical practices. Furthermore, **academic research on equity and social justice and equity practitioner knowledge are separated rather than brought together in dialogue to co-produce and deepen understanding about the complex processes by which inequalities are reproduced through our taken-for-granted practices**. This often means that the knowledge emerging from equity practice is not fully recognised, valued and disseminated. As a result, there is fragmentation and individualisation of what should be a collective, institutional and community-wide commitment to creating equity in and through higher education. **Detaching equity from the main work of the university fails to embed an ethos of equity and social justice into the structures, practices and values of the university, at best framing equity in tokenistic and superficial ways. At worst it leads to the reproduction of pathologising constructions of those groups associated with policies of access, equity and widening participation (both staff and students) (Burke, 2018)**

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We are all re-searchers

- **We are all re-searchers – we search for meaning through our human capacity to reflect and this shapes our doing in the world.** It is the way that we imagine a problem that constructs the way we approach the problem. That premise can create possibility – open up creativity – but often it can also do the opposite – close down possibility – reduce or misframe the questions we ask and the solutions we identify. This is because our **personal imagination is always profoundly shaped by wider social and institutional discourses** (Burke, 2018). So **reflexivity is crucial** (Burke, 2012)
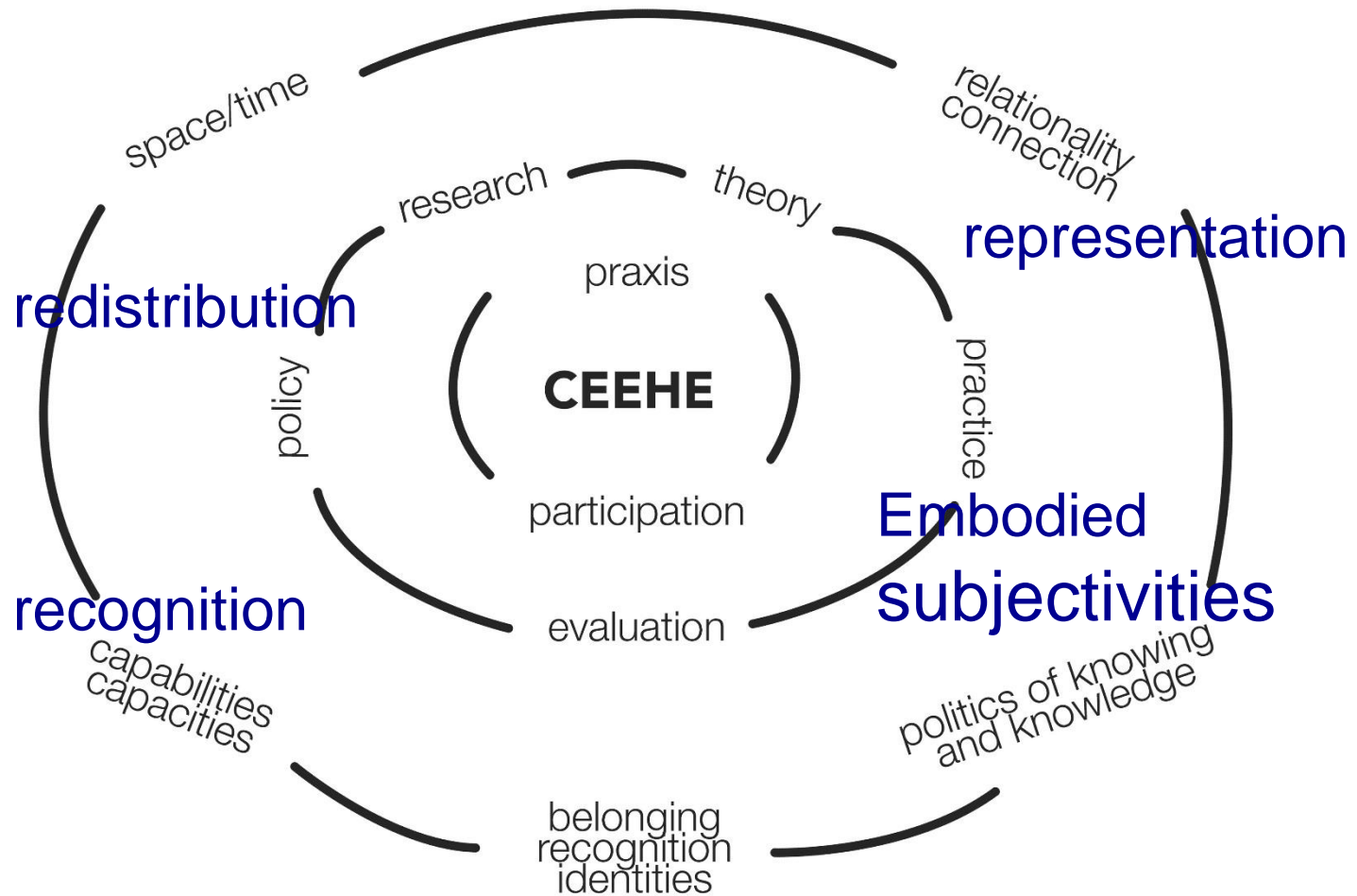
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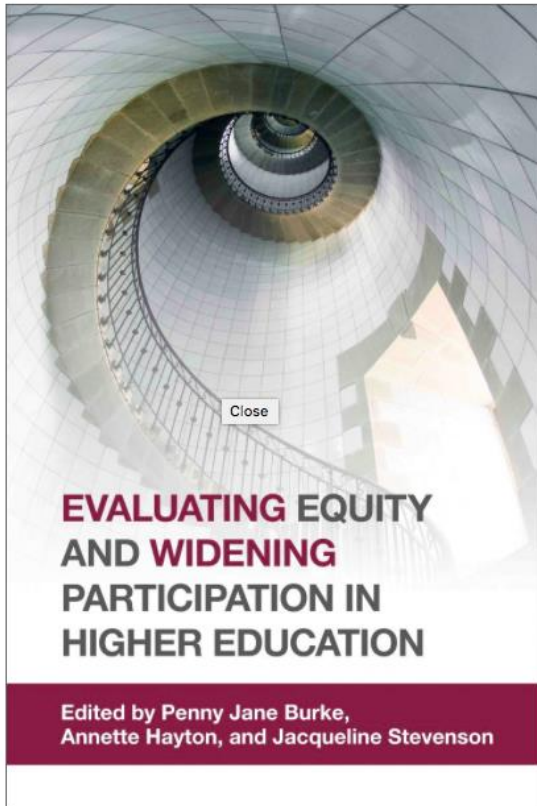# Methods with greater sensitivity to complex inequalities

- **It is important that we collect data that identifies and reveals unequal patterns of access to, participation in**, impact of, and outcomes through, higher education. However, such data needs to be gathered and analyzed within broader methodological frameworks that seek to capture the contextual, intersecting, multiple and often contradictory layers of inequality. Such approaches are sensitive to the *intersecting social differences and systems* that play out in complex ways to form *participatory possibilities*. **Critical research methodologies embedded in praxis are attuned to the explicit forms of inequality at play but also to the processes by which inequalities are *unwittingly reproduced through taken-for-granted methods, practices or assumptions*** (Burke, 2012).

space/time

relationality
connection

research

theory

representation

praxis

redistribution

policy

CEEHE

practice

Embodied
subjectivities

participation

recognition

evaluation

capabilities
capacities

politics of knowing
and knowledge

belonging
recognition
identities

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Parity of Participation

EVALUATING EQUITY AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Edited by Penny Jane Burke, Annette Hayton, and Jacqueline Stevenson

- Praxis-based frameworks emphasize notions of 'parity of participation'; **seeking to 'empower those involved in change' as well as in critically understanding the social world** (Lather, 1991, p. 3).

- Praxis deepens engagement with the multiple dimensions of equity & WP practices, engaging participants in **subjecting their assumptions & perspectives to interrogation** by engaging with difference.

- As Lather (1991, pp. 11–12) explains, the '**requirements of praxis are theory both relevant to the world and nurtured by actions in it; theory that emerges from "practical political grounding"**'

(from Burke and Lumb, 2018 in Burke, Hayton and Stevenson (Eds) *Evaluating Equity & WP in HE*. UCL IoE Press).

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E-**valu-**ating is about **social values**

Challenging assumptions about the assignment of value is central to tackling the chauvinisms and bigotry that are still rife in our society and the world (Narismulu, 2016, p. 88).
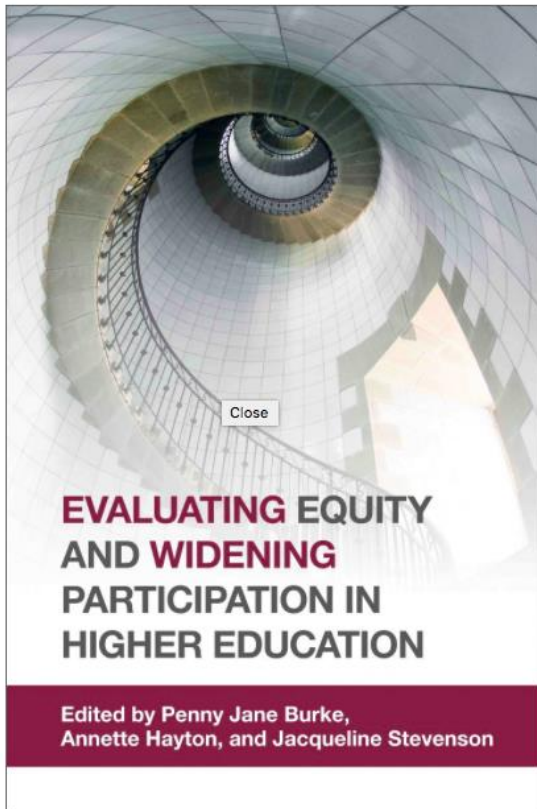
- Evaluation is ultimately about **social values**

- the conventional frameworks used often **work to reinforce the values of the researcher-evaluator**.

- evaluation tools are **underpinned by the hidden values** of those conducting the research -- the evidence produced is shaped by those values.

- this privileges particular dispositions and not others -- those dispositions that are valued tend to be those that mirror the dispositions of the evaluator or researcher.

- reproduces particular value judgments & generates an array of 'evidence-based' misrecognitions that perpetuate rather than challenge wider social inequalities (Burke and Lumb, 2018)

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Pedagogical Methodologies

- premised on aim to provide **parity of participation** through **praxis-based approaches**.

- Aim to create & open up collaborative, collective, dialogical, participatory methodologies and spaces, which **engage participants in processes of collaborative sense- and meaning-making**.

- create opportunities for refusal, resistance, & doing things differently, **provoking our pedagogical imaginations**

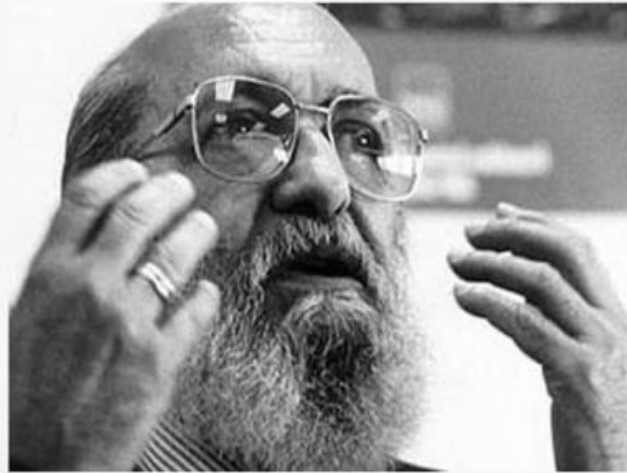- **(see Burke, 2012; Burke et al, 2017; Burke & Lumb, 2018)**

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Pedagogical Methodologies (PMs)

PMs help to broaden the ways we think about 'pedagogies' in HE [more than classroom teaching – about the ways we generate understanding & meaning]; **to create pedagogical spaces through research and evaluation** frameworks. Participants work together to challenge those exclusionary processes that regulate practices and personhood through maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation. (…) participants co-produce meaning and explicitly examine the values circulating across and within particular pedagogical spaces and contexts…

Burke & Lumb, 2018

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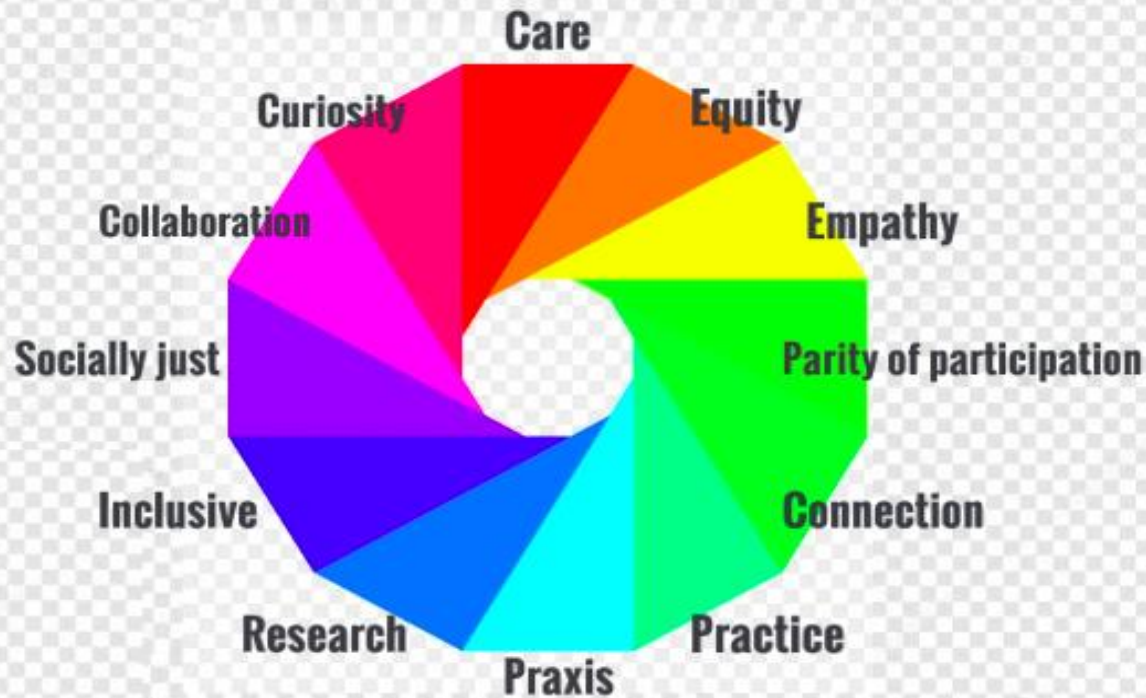
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Re-humanising research

"This framework also draws upon key principles of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921-1997) who sought to rehumanise our understanding of education communities.

Humanisation is characterised by valuing empathy, connection and care, which ...is being eroded through neo-liberalism, managerialism."
Burke et al. 2016, p.53

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Pedagogical Methodology combines these important human elements of research in a cycle of critical-action and critical-reflection that includes all participants.

Thinking about value

While statistics may draw attention to demographic trends as an evaluation team we asked ourselves - what do we value?

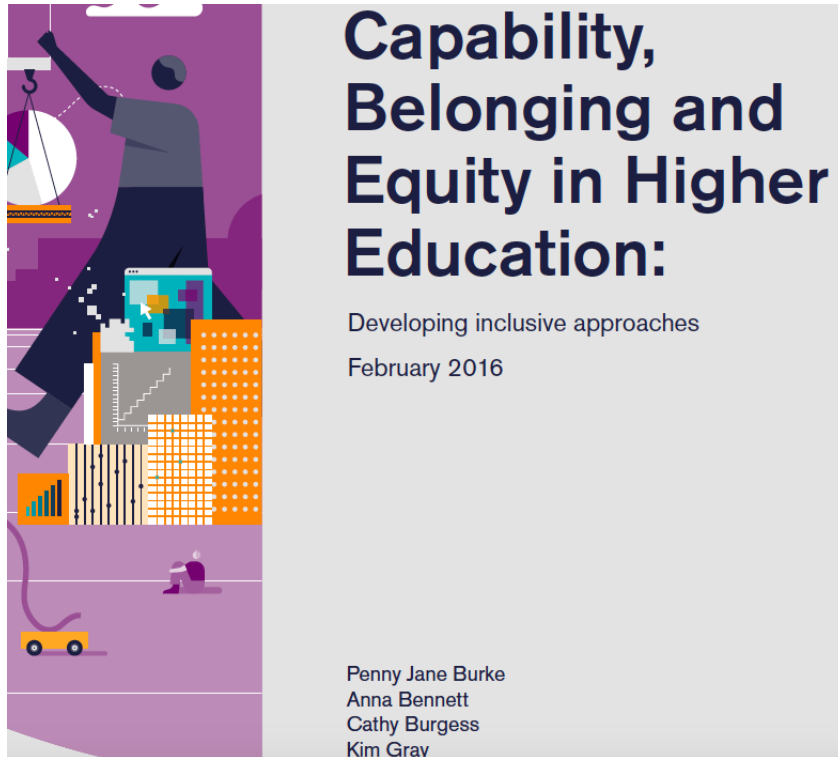Recent CEEHE research has found that [we] can improve the evaluation question:
'*What works*, for whom, in what circumstances, over what duration, and why?'

via a prior question:
'*What is valued*, by whom, in what circumstances, over what duration, and why?'"
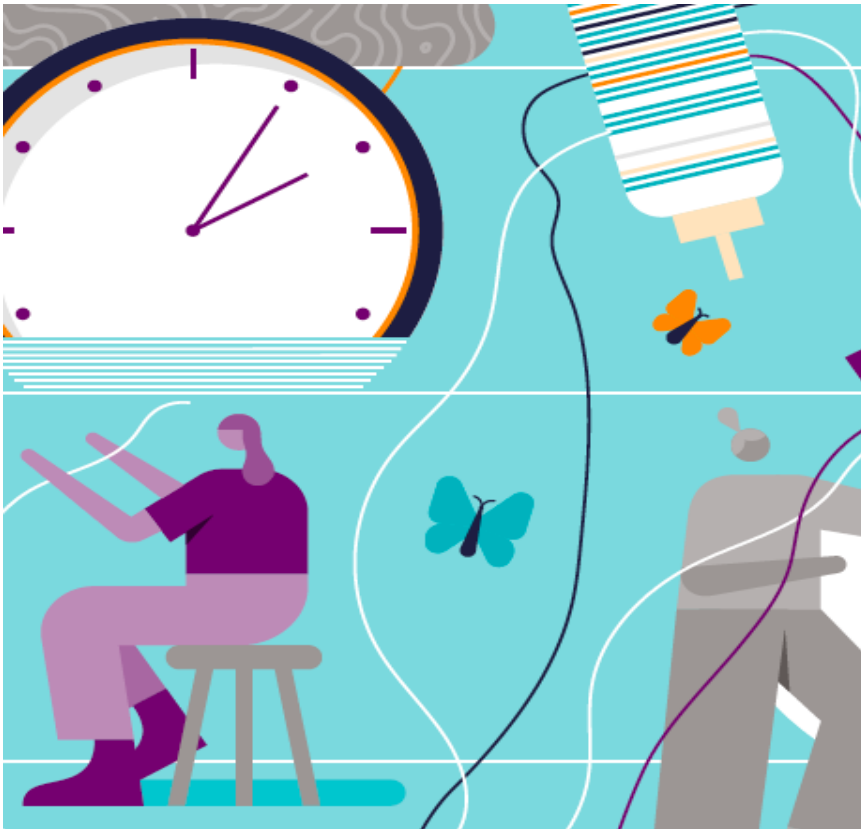
Burke & Lumb, 2018

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Example

Capability, Belonging and Equity in Higher Education:

Developing inclusive approaches

February 2016

Penny Jane Burke
Anna Bennett
Cathy Burgess
Kim Gray

- Drawing on research praxis to provide cutting edge CPD resources

- Grounded in a praxis-based framework, this suite of conceptual film **'think pieces'** opens up time and space for deep engagement with complex questions of equity and WP

- The aim is to provide accessible high quality resources that create **communities of praxis** in which we engage with meaningful dialogue about the challenges we face in our work

- www.equityhe.com

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Misrecognition

Praxis-based framework

- Bringing research together with practice to create **spaces of *reflexivity***

- **Pedagogical Methodologies create spaces of learning for *all* participants** through research & evaluation

- **Parity of Participation** – across dimensions of **redistribution, recognition, representation (Fraser, 1997, 2003, 2010) & embodied subjectivities (McNay, 2008, Burke, 2012, Mirza, 2013).**

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Why a praxis-based approach

- Translating research to practice is challenging but crucial – and practice-informed research is similarly crucial – **overcoming dividing/divisive practices** – foregrounding the politics of knowledge and knowing – bringing together the knowledge of different communities of praxis

- **Disrupting competitive, individualising, performative cultures and fostering equitable, inclusive, participatory and compassionate spaces.**

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