**Prof Liz Thomas,**

**Edge Hill University**

**Using higher education to achieve social justice: Reflections on the implications of national policy changes in the English context**

Across European higher education there is a call for more social justice (Europe 2020 strategy): to increase the number and diversity of students benefiting from tertiary education.  Higher education in England is used here as a case study to consider the national policy agendas that impacted on the goal of using HE as vehicle to achieve social justice.

In particular it charts:

* The limits of expanding the size of the higher education sector, and the problems of effectively maintained inequality.
* Meeting the cost of an expanded higher education system, shifting more responsibility to students and their families and ameliorating the negative impact on non-traditional students.
* Recognising the limits of access and the need for successful outcomes to achieve social justice.  Promoting institutional responsibility and change.
* A ‘social justice’ regulatory framework in a neo-liberal system: what is entails, what has been achieved and what the future challenges and priorities are.



**Dr Liz Thomas** is professor of Higher Education at Edge Hill University in the UK. She has more than twenty years’ experience of undertaking and leading research about widening participation, student engagement, belonging, retention and success, and institutional approaches to improving student experiences and outcomes.  Liz has been a widening participation expert on the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) main panel since its inception, championing the experience and outcomes of students from non-traditional groups.7

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2101-0067>

This address will be informed by:

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