mpadure@gmail.com 05 Oct 2023

Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level

Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World

Edited by Jamil Salmi

Lumina™ FOUNDATION

STARSCHOLARS NETWORK

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&
STAR Scholars

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Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level:

Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World

In the ever-evolving landscape of global education, the quest for equitable access to quality higher education remains a pressing challenge. Across the world, countless children and young individuals confront daunting circumstances that impede their educational opportunities due to factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic background, and geographical origin. This particularly affects those in developing countries and marginalized groups globally. To address this issue, promoting inclusivity and pluralism within higher education institutions has become an imperative driven by the principles of social justice and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Throughout *Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level: Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World*, readers will gain profound insights into various equity-focused initiatives. From integrating low-income students into university cultures and implementing student aid programs to promoting balanced regional selection and supporting students with disabilities, the case studies offer a wealth of knowledge and good practices. They delve into affirmative action, indigenous inclusion, coaching programs, and many more initiatives aimed at improving access for underrepresented groups. This volume underscores the importance of comprehensive equity promotion policies that encompass financial and non-monetary aspects. It emphasizes the need for coordination between national and institutional actions, with an equal focus on both access and completion. Long-term perspectives and well-established information systems are essential in effectively addressing equity gaps and measuring progress.

Editor

Jamil Salmi, Global Tertiary Education Expert, Emeritus Professor of Higher Education Policy at Diego Portales University, Chile. E-mail: jsalmi@tertiaryeducation.org

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Praise for this book

Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level

Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level: Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World, edited by Jamil Salmi is a timely and important resource providing insights into innovative policies and practices as well as barriers inhibiting access to and equity in higher education. Drawing on case studies from diverse geopolitical contexts, including East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, North America, Oceania, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Europe, the chapters in this volume help to enhance our understanding of mutual learning opportunities across different systems and regions in the world to more effectively create and sustain equity in education.

Professor Ly Tran, Professor of Education, Deakin University, Australia

***

What a fantastic collection of case studies from around the world! The book is so timely, given the increased focus on the transformative role of higher education, in the light of current geo-political events and increasing precarity of higher education's mission, influenced too narrowly by the economic benefit perspective. The book is a must read. The innovative methodology of bringing researchers together to talk to each other about regional challenges to do with equity in higher education makes the book distinctive and offers an innovative analytical framework for comparative studies.

Aneta Hayes, Associate Professor of Education, Keele University, UK

***

At a time when too many countries are backsliding from the principles of democracy, including human rights protections for ordinary citizens–which at their very core demand access to educational opportunity–this book could not be more timely. But how do we correct course? This book provides some answers. The intellectual endeavor of Comparative Education is to learn from the successes and failures of others, whether in regional initiatives, national systems, individual institutions, or other configurations that are ripe for analysis. The case studies in this important new book do just that to provide us with some much needed lessons.

Bernhard Streitwieser, Associate Professor of International Education & International Affairs, George Washington University, Washington DC, USA

***

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Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level: Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World edited by renowned higher education expert, Jamil Salmi presents successful case studies of the implementation of equity policies at the institutional level from around the world. This book will become a must-read book for all policymakers at the national-level and administrators at the institutional level. Equity in higher education is still a far cry around the world. In order to build higher education systems that are just and inclusive, we need to study successful case studies, like the ones presented in this book. The case studies in this book demonstrates that the diversity of the learning environment is not just the road to equity and social justice, it is also the road to excellence in higher education"

Mousumi Mukherjee, Associate Professor & Executive Director, Centre for Comparative and Global Education, O.P. Jindal Global University, India

***

Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level: Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World is an exceptional scholarly work that sheds light on the critical issue of equity in higher education. Jamil Salmi and his team of esteemed contributors have meticulously researched and compiled an extensive collection of case studies that showcase innovative policies and successful interventions at the institutional level. This volume is an invaluable resource for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to understand and address the equity gap in global education.

Shyam Sharma, Associate Professor of Writing and Rhetoric Studies, Stony Brook University, New York, USA

***

With Jamil Salmi's vast expertise and the collective insights of renowned contributors, this book presents a remarkable exploration of equity promotion policies and practices. As an expert in the field, I commend the comprehensive analysis of case studies from various regions, which offers valuable lessons for policymakers, institutions, and practitioners worldwide. This volume showcases the transformative potential of inclusive higher education and serves as a guiding light for those dedicated to dismantling barriers and fostering equitable opportunities for students globally.

Ravi Ammigan, Associate Provost at the University of Delaware Center for Global Programs & Services, Delaware, USA

***

This seminal volume edited by Jamil Salmi provides a much-needed roadmap for institutions striving to bridge the equity gap in higher education. By presenting a wide range of innovative initiatives from around the world, *Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level* highlights the importance of coordinated efforts

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between national and institutional actions. It is an indispensable resource for those committed to promoting social justice and fostering inclusive learning environments.

Chris Glass, Professor of Practice and Diretore of Exectuvie Doctoral Program in Higher Education, Boston College, Massachusetts, USA

***

Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level: Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World, edited by Jamil Salmi, is a highly recommended resource for institutions, policymakers, and practitioners striving to create inclusive learning environments in higher education. The case studies in this book provide valuable insights into the various current equity-focused initiatives, and highlight the impacts and challenges that institutions face in promoting equality in education in different regions across the globe.

Misty So-Sum Wai-Cook, Deputy Director at the Centre for English Language Communication and Director of Student Life at the College of Alice & Peter Tan, National University of Singapore.

***

Jamil Salmi's edited book, *Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level: Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World*, offers an important and necessary collection on the lessons learned and best practices of equity promotion in higher education. Using several case studies from seven regions around the world, this timely volume provides examples of innovative policies or measures used to promote inclusion, justice, and belonging at the institutional level. The book is a must-have for both teacher-scholars and practitioners who seek to advance equity promotion policies in the post-COVID-19 era.

Roy Y. Chan, Assistant Professor of Education & Ed.D. Program Director, Lee University, USA

***

The book *Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level: Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World* edited by Jamil Salmi is a testament to the importance of postsecondary education in its multiple forms to fit the society, wherever it might be. The case studies show the depths to which education is used to enact equity, provide training, build a foundation for transformative change, and enable postsecondary access to underserved groups. In so doing, higher education in its many forms can open the doors of opportunity.

Rosalind Latiner Raby, Senior Lecturer, California State University, Northridge, California, Director, California Community Colleges for International Education, USA

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Preface

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.
Nelson Mandela

In a world characterized by acute wealth inequalities, growing threats against democracy, continuous political violence, and alarming global warming, Nelson Mandela's famous statement about the transforming role of education has never been more pertinent. Strong education systems do not only prepare qualified professionals to serve the local economy and their communities, but they can help lift deprived population groups out of poverty, and they are expected to nurture cultural, scientific, environmental, and health literacy. They are also meant to educate tomorrow's leaders to become role models for a fairer and more cohesive society, and they offer pathways for social mobility.

In my case, education allowed me to escape from the poor rural village where I was born in Limpopo Province, South Africa, during apartheid. In high school, I was one of only two girls in my class. I graduated as a medical doctor in 1972 and, in 1996, I was appointed vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, becoming the first black woman to hold this position at a South African university. But the accomplishments of one individual cannot occult the devastating impact of the walls of discrimination that denied education opportunities to millions of South African children under the racist regime that ended in 1994.

Against this background, I see the publication of *Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level: Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World* as an important contribution to the body of policy work on the role and contribution of universities and other types of higher education institutions to the reduction of social disparities. This book represents a comprehensive exploration of innovative initiatives aimed at enhancing access and success in higher education for traditionally excluded and under-represented groups. With case studies spanning East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, North America, Oceania, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Europe, it brings together a diverse collection of perspectives and experiences from various regions, offering invaluable insights into successful equity promotion interventions at the institutional level. By documenting both effective practices and enabling conditions in the specific context of each case study, this volume will serve as an essential resource for institutions, policymakers, and practitioners striving to create inclusive learning environments and bridge the equity gap. Each chapter offers a detailed exploration of the impact, challenges, and potential for replication and scalability of these initiatives, reflecting the extensive research and expertise of the contributors to this book.

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Besides showing the range of possible equity interventions in various geographical, political, and cultural contexts, and documenting several innovative approaches, the book identifies crucial patterns that hold relevant lessons for many countries. It reminds us of the need to implement both financial and non-monetary measures at the same time, recognizing that students from historically excluded backgrounds do not face only financial barriers, but are also held back by limited cultural capital, poor academic preparation, lack of information, and low motivation. In addition, the book emphasizes the importance of looking at disparities along a continuum that starts very early in life, with critical steps at each stage, including access to basic education, access to secondary education, access to higher education, graduation from higher education studies, and integration into the labor market. This requires outreach interventions to motivate and prepare high school students, measures to ensure equal opportunities in admission, programs to ensure retention and success once students are admitted into a higher education institution, and career advice to facilitate the transition to the world of work.

One of the other merits of this book is that it contains several case studies that address important aspects of inequality linked to the historical, cultural, and epistemological foundations of modern higher education systems, which are essentially shaped by their colonial origin and the Eurocentric biases embedded in their programs. The Scottish example presents a worthwhile attempt to decolonize the curriculum in a systematic way, while the Mexican case study documents how a university designed in collaboration with indigenous groups offers a welcoming environment that promotes local languages and culture. The New Zealand case study is another instance of transformative efforts to better respect the distinctive culture of Māori students. The story of the Roma Civil Society Organisation illustrates the importance of creating a favorable learning environment where students from marginalised cultures who are usually rejected by mainstream society can feel welcome and empowered.

However, much more work is needed to analyze the structural biases inherent in modern universities, challenge their premises, and document successful experiences that seek to redress the cultural distortions playing against students from traditional cultures and rehabilitate indigenous knowledge, following the example of the few intercultural universities that have been established in several Latin American countries in the past decades. Other regions of the impoverished world need institutions designed according to the same principles, with the purpose of giving a sense of belonging to students from marginalized groups through epistemic dialogue, the promotion of local languages, and research on indigenous knowledge as a basis for the preparation of future professionals in domains that are directly relevant to local development needs. Offering equal opportunities for academic achievement should not require young people to become alienated from their culture of origin and aspire to foreign models of success. Progress in eliminating disparities in higher education cannot be

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sustained unless the primary and secondary experience of children instills in them a sense of pride in their cultural roots.

Finally, it is worth noting that the publication of this book, which documents innovative experiences that have positively transformed the lives of thousands and thousands of students from deprived backgrounds, is all the more important today as several countries have backtracked from their efforts to bridge the equity gap and adopted hostile positions against the global diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda enshrined in SDG-4. While the United States had been a pioneer in promoting greater equity over the past fifty years in several areas, including student aid, admission, and retention policies, it has paradoxically become the most antagonistic country in recent years, with a growing number of states introducing legislation that prohibits the pursuit of equity promotion policies and the teaching of critical race theory, even punishing institutions involved in such practices through severe budget cuts. The United States are not alone in this reversal. Among the former socialist republics of Eastern Europe, Hungary and Poland have distinguished themselves as the most aggressive countries against anything perceived as "liberal" higher education. Even in Western democracies as diverse as Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, and the United Kingdom members of government or parliament have taken adverse positions against what has been disparagingly labelled as the "woke" agenda.

In this challenging context, I am convinced that this book will serve as a valuable resource for all those invested in promoting equity and inclusion in higher education. By sharing the successes, challenges, and lessons learned from innovative initiatives across the world, the book will undoubtedly inspire positive change and foster a more equitable higher education landscape.

Dr. Mamphela Ramphele

Co-President of the Club of Rome, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, former Managing Director of the World Bank.

Cape Town, July 2023

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Generously sponsored by the Lumina Foundation, this book is the result of a truly collaborative endeavor involving researchers from all regions of the world who joined forces and worked on a set of common themes and methodologies to assess the impact of equity promotion initiatives at the institutional level. I am deeply indebted to Andrée Sursock, Gerry Postiglione, Kata Orosz, Nadine Zacharias, Nasima Badsha, Nidhi Sabharwal, Renato Pedrosa, and N.V. Varghese, who not only contributed to the deep understanding of institutional case studies in 31 countries but also helped to enrich the research methodology and analysis throughout the project. The COVID-19 pandemic prevented our expert group from meeting in person during most of the project, but a series of online meetings allowed us to have fruitful discussions and ensure the integrity of the final output. We were eventually able to meet in Vienna in November 2022 for a final round of collective peer reviewing, with helpful contributions from Dora Webb and Nidhi Sadana Sabharwal. I am grateful to Courtney Brown, Lumina Foundation's Vice President for Impact and Planning, who believed in us and made this project possible. Our sincere thanks go to Michael Kozakowski and the Central European University, who kindly hosted our Vienna meeting.

NOTE: In order to ensure authenticity and respect for the individuals featured in our case studies, we acknowledge the importance of using language and terminology that align with the perspectives of informants and experts in each respective region. As such, readers may notice variations in language and vocabulary throughout the book, as we aim to provide an authentic voice for each case study.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Around the world, many children and youths face challenging circumstances beyond their own control—due to discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, geographical origin, socioeconomic background, or other attributes—that drastically affect their opportunities to go to school, stay in school, complete secondary education, and access higher education. This has a particularly strong impact on young people in developing countries and disadvantaged groups across the world. At the tertiary level, young people encounter barriers reflecting the cost of studying, lack of social capital, insufficient academic preparation, low motivation, and lack of access to information about labor market prospects. The need to achieve greater inclusion and promote pluralism in higher education responds to a strong social justice imperative, as reflected in target 4.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Experience shows that to be effective, equity promotion policies must be defined in a comprehensive way, taking both financial and non-monetary aspects into consideration, coordinating national and institutional actions in a complementary manner, and putting as much emphasis on completion as on access, which has traditionally received more attention. A long-term view is key to guaranteeing continuity and consistency in effective equity promotion policies. These require well-established information systems to identify all equity groups, measure equity gaps, and assess progress in terms of access and graduation (Salmi, 2018 and 2019).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions and students have experienced unprecedented disruption and new challenges. Severe reductions in financial resources, the digital gap, and the lack of preparation of instructors have exacerbated disparities in access and success and created widespread social distress, especially among vulnerable students. Countries and institutions must therefore accelerate efforts to remove barriers to quality higher education for all learners from underrepresented groups.

In the United States, the Lumina Foundation is the most active foundation involved in promoting equity measures to improve access and success in colleges. To complement and inform its mainstream work, the Lumina Foundation has explored international experiences through three studies carried out over the past four years. The first one, **All Around the World – Higher education equity policies across the globe,** documented the range of equity promotion policies designed and implemented in 71 countries. The second one, **Measuring the Impact of Equity Promotion Policies: Lessons from National and Institutional Case Studies,** analyzed what worked and did not work in five

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national settings (Australia, Austria, Colombia, South Africa, and Vietnam). The most recent one, **COVID's Lessons for Global Higher Education: Coping with the Present while Building a More Equitable Future,** reviewed the impact of the pandemic on higher education through the equity filter.

1.2 Objective

Against this background, this study seeks to explore which equity promotion interventions appear to be most successful at the institutional level and to assess under what conditions some interventions work better than others. It documents good practices and failed approaches in many different country contexts that could provide relevant lessons to inform the Lumina Foundation's domestic work on equity promotion in tertiary education.

1.3 Methodology

This study followed a mixed-method approach reflecting the results of the following activities:

- A series of virtual meetings involving 8 researchers with extensive experience working on equity in higher education and Lumina Foundation representatives to share and discuss equity policies around the world. The group included the following geographical representation:
    - Australia and the Pacific;
    - East Asia;
    - Eastern Europe and Central Asia;
    - Latin America;
    - North America;
    - South Asia;
    - Sub-Saharan Africa and
    - Western Europe.
- Formulation of an analytical framework and template to document relevant examples of innovative equity policies or measures from the respective regions/countries of the participants at the institutional level.
- Preparation of mini case studies in each region (four in most regions, five in East Asia) based on interviews and available documentation. Each short case study provides a summary description of the context and background, the rationale behind the launch of the innovative policy or measure, a presentation of the policy and measures, an identification of linkages with national policies when relevant, a discussion of obstacles encountered and mitigation measures adopted, an analysis of the impact based on available information, and an assessment of the potential for replication and scaling up. All studies were analyzed and written up using a common template (see Annex 1).

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- Preparation of a synthesis chapter on common issues and lessons learned from successful and less successful approaches.
- Final meeting of the group in person to review the draft publication and define relevant dissemination activities.

The following analytical works guided the elaboration of this template:

- The 2008 OECD study *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society*, which defines equity in higher education, looks at the role of higher education in reducing disparities and reviews country policy responses.
- 2011 World Bank study *Opportunities for All? The Equity Challenge in Tertiary Education proposes* an analytical framework to measure the scope of inequalities in higher education, understand their determinants, and assess equity promotion measures.
- 2014 Sutton Trust study *Higher Education Access: Evidence of effectiveness of university access strategies and approaches*, which reviews a number of evaluations of equity programs in the United States and the United Kingdom.
- 2018 Lumina study *Access and Completion for Underserved Students: International Perspectives*, which explores the range of equity promotion policies that can be observed at the national and institutional levels.
- 2019 World Bank study *What Works to Reduce Inequalities in Higher Education*, which reviews 76 impact studies on retention and financial aid from from all over the world.
- 2019 Lumina study *Measuring the Impact of Equity Promotion Policies: Lessons from National and Institutional Case Studies*, which examines national and institutional policies in five countries across the world: Australia, Austria, Colombia, South Africa, and Vietnam.
- 2020 Lumina study *COVID's Lessons for Global Higher Education: Coping with the Present while Building a More Equitable Future*, which looks at the impact of the pandemic on higher education through the equity lens.
- 2022 background paper on *Equity, Inclusion and Pluralism* prepared for UNESCO's World Higher Education Conference (Barcelona, May 2022).

1.4 Outline of the Study

The report successively presents case studies from seven regions of the world, with a brief overview of each set of studies to set the stage. The last chapter is a synthesis of lessons learned, reflecting the cross-cutting findings of the case studies.

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Chapter 2.
East Asia Case Studies

2.1 Overview

Author: Gerry Postiglione

When examining equity across East Asia's higher education systems, it is helpful to begin with northeast Asia and move southward. The rate of transition from elite to mass to universal higher education raced ahead in the northeast because it aligned with the rapid pace of economic growth across its countries and jurisdictions. It is worth noting that the northeast's neo-Confucian traditions took longer to provide parity in access to women and are yet to provide equitable access in some fields of study, notably science and engineering. It is also evident in examining equity across different racial, ethnic, or indigenous groups that the northeast is far more ethnically homogenous than the southeast --- which is one of the most multiethnic regions of the world. Finally, indigenosity is a complex concept in East Asia. Indigenosity is recognized in Taiwan, where there are approximately 12 native groups, but not in the Chinese mainland.

Japan is relatively homogenous except for the indigenous Ainu in the far north and Okinawans in the far south. Japan has less inequality than the USA, but the stratification by income and wealth is reflected in who gets into the best Japanese universities. Likewise, the two Koreas are culturally homogeneous in ethnicity, with some Chinese guest workers. The Koreas do not have indigenous minorities, but the Republic of Korea has an active scholarship about ethnic minority education due to the growth in the number of children of marriage between Koreans and their spouses from other parts of Asia and beyond. The Republic of Korea also has a disparity in access to higher education across regions of the country. Seoul National University has been working with the Korea Education Development Institute to recalibrate the application criteria across regions of the country to ensure a balanced degree of equity. The SNU Balanced Regional Selection promotes equity by selecting students with potential in each region through high school GPAs and a faithful school life rather than on the singular basis of the top-ranked College Scholastic Aptitude Test.

The largest country in East Asia by far is China, with an urban population that has grown from 20 to 50 percent in four decades. China is important for the enormous influence it has on its Asian neighbors, from where most of its foreign students come and where there is an increase in the number of its professors going there to take on university posts in neighboring counties. China is the multiethnic outlier in East Asia, with an ethnic minority population of 116 million. Although it is relatively homogenous in its east coast regions that face Japan and Korea, China has borders with 14 countries as well as four maritime countries on its borders.

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However, China, with 55 designated ethnic minorities, does not recognize indigenosity, even in its peripheral areas (that include Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia).[1] China's non-Han Chinese ethnic minorities, more religious in orientation (especially Muslim and Buddhist), and most with their own languages, occupy half the land and ninety percent of the border, making the role of higher education in national unity almost existential. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), nationality (ethnic) colleges have been established to co-opt leaders of ethnic groups and provide a path for ethnic unity. The nationality university in Beijing, (known as Minzu University), is one of 13 and is included in China's 985 excellence initiative that includes approximately ten percent of approximately 3000 HEIs. Nationality universities have become more multiethnic, with both majority and minority ethnic group students. China's preferential treatment policies for ethnic minority higher education have included the option to take the entrance examination in ethnic languages, extra points added to scores on the national entrance examination, and a remedial year of study upon entering university to improve language and mathematics skills before commencing regular degree study. Approximately ten of the 55 officially designated ethnic minority groups are equal to or above average in levels of literacy and college access. It is not surprising that most ethnic minorities attend second- and third-tier public colleges. The top tier universities have initiatives to ensure that ethnic minority students are represented. The result of these preferential policies is that the proportion of ethnic minority students entering higher education compares well with the proportion of ethnic minorities in the country. The government has also instituted preferential policies for students from poor rural areas to gain access to the country's top hundred universities. The Chinese higher education system is somewhat unique in that until recently, HEIs have tried to find ways to address central government policies. This is more straightforward with respect to preferential policies.

However, aside from making minor modifications to central government policies, there are two ways that HEIs can innovate on equity issues. Here are two examples from China where the proportion of students from poor rural areas at top tier universities has declined, making them more easily marginalized within the campus culture of elite urban universities. The Ford Foundation began a focus on the issue of rural students in universities in the early 2000s, but most of their programs to support rural students were targeted at the expanding number of provincial universities.

In the mid-2010s, the Ford Foundation supported a research project to assess how students from poor rural areas were adjusting to elite universities. It conducted a four-year experience survey of a representative sample of 2,000 students from both urban and rural backgrounds in four top-tier elite

1 Unlike Inner Mongolia, the Republic of Mongolia is also ethnically homogenous except for its small Kazak population. Additionally, more than the rest of northeast Asia, its universities overwhelmingly cater for women students.

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universities.[2] The researchers categorized all participants of the survey into four groups according to their origins, academic performance and social success achieved (based on a high/low measurement for each achievement). Academic success was defined as performing substantially above average, measured on the basis of students' self-reported academic ranks and their official scores. To the researchers' surprise and in contrast to studies of top-tier elite university students in the USA and elsewhere, there was no significant difference between rural and urban students in academic performance measured by their GPAs.

However, it appears that rural students are left behind socially. They are less likely to be appointed or selected as class monitors or committee members. They are less likely to be appointed or selected secretaries of the faculty or university branch of the Youth League. The data also suggest that compared with their rural counterparts, urban students are more likely to obtain access to cultural capital investment measured by parental participation in their development, precollege cultural activity participation and material resources. Pre-college cultural activity participation has a significant positive effect on grade point average ranks that students achieve while in university. Both family economic capital and cultural capital have an effect on their participation in extracurricular activities measured by their appointment as class monitors or committee members or as key members of student union committees. In fact, students from rural origins "suffer a sense of embarrassment caused by feeling that their rural culture is inferior to the urban culture, which brings a painful dislocation between an old and a newly developing identity and barriers to integration at universities."[3] Accordingly, rural students are less represented due to the cultural habits required by student organizations on campus. This can lead to alienation and a sense of rejection among students from underserved rural communities.[4] Rural students at top tier universities in eastern China have less confidence and social engagement than their more sophisticated, competitive, status conscious, and socially connected urban middle-class counterparts.

Some elite universities are taking innovative steps to address this problem. Fudan University has created an outreach project to promote low-income students' social integration into university and to generate psychological support

2 Xie A.L., Kuang H., Postiglione, G.A., Liu Q.Q. (2018) Cultural capital investment and social adaptation of rural students in elite universities, *Journal of Higher Education* (Shanghai), 36:9: 30-37; Xie A.L., Hong, Y.B., Kuang, H., Postiglione, G.A (2018) Cultural capital and adaptation on elite university campuses: Academic and social achievement of rural students on 985 project universities, *Peking University Educational Review.* 16:3:89-108; Xie Ailei, Hong Yanbi, Kuang Huan, Gerard A. Postiglione, (2018). "The Poor Family": Lack of Cultural Capital and Adaptation to the Elite Field ——Based on the follow-up study of rural college students in "985" colleges and universities, Peking University Education Review, 16:4, 45-65.

3 Xie Ailei (2015) Inside the College Gate. Rural Students and their academic and social success. *Chinese Education & Society*, 48: 77–80, 2015.

4 Zhu Xinzhuo, Shi Junhua, and Dong Zhihui (2015) The Impact of Family Background on College Students' Chances of Serving as Student Union Cadres. *Chinese Education & Society, 48: 128–142.*

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from peers with similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Adhering to the idea of "financial aid goes hand in hand with growth support", the university's Office of Student Affairs established the "*Undergraduates' Home for Growth Support*" to be an innovative platform, reaching out to low-income students to boost their social integration. While targeting all low-income students in particular, Home is open to all undergraduate students, making it less likely to lead to stereotyping and providing more opportunities for rural students to interact with their urban peers in a supportive environment. The initiative generates sociopsychological support from peers with similar backgrounds for low-income students. In developing a semi-bounded community, the Home connects them together without explicitly sticking them with any stigmatized label (e.g., the poor). It cultivates students' positive emotions and social responsibility by involving them in volunteering activities. Finally, the initiative provides low-income individuals with opportunities for organizing, participating in, and managing extracurricular activities by themselves to develop transferable skills and to be better integrated into campus life.

Students from underserved communities also have struggles due to a lack of family financial resources to support tuition and expenses. To address this in an innovative way, the China University of Mining and Technology promoted student aid instruments for low-income borrowers. In the context of constrained financial resources, the university reaches out to and assists rural students in financial need. Their needs are balanced against policy instruments with different value orientations. While no single targeting method is appropriate in each situation, with broad participation, more flexible and less intrusive measures seem more readily acceptable and fiscally accountable. Loan forgiveness breaks the curse of "poverty-returning through higher education," allowing low-income borrowers a head start in their adult lives. This relief policy ties education loans to industry demand. It can make student loan programs look more attractive, just as student loan debt and its forgiveness programs are designed to be more responsive to specific human resource priorities and to support development in certain areas of social importance. Finally, this finance-based policy relies on proactive institutional engagement and linkages to national policies. Centralized decentralization in project design and implementation has emerged as a key driver.

Hong Kong, as a special administrative region of China, has a population of ethnic minorities, most with roots in South Asia, including Nepal, Pakistan, and India. Hong Kong is notorious in not instituting preferential policies based on income, ethnicity, or gender. Nevertheless, no student yields a place in university due to an inability to pay for tuition because all students who enter university are eligible for interest-free government loans. Beyond that, higher education institutions have a high degree of autonomy to innovate, and they do, with mentor schemes, student counseling programmes, and other measures.

Most institutional innovations for improving the success in higher learning of students from underrepresented groups based on ethnicity, gender, income,

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or disability. The University of Hong Kong recognizes the cross-sectionality of these social categories in its "First-in-the-Family Education Fund." This initiative supports first-generation university undergraduates pursuing outside classroom learning. Its objective is to provide financial assistance for students who are the first generation in their families to attend university and have financial constraints to participate in experiential learning activities. The Fund allows students to engage in social activities both on campus (outside of classrooms) and off campus. Moreover, reciprocity is built into the relationship between student and donor. It goes beyond financial assistance and seeks to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. The First in the Family Fund promotes the act of "paying forward." Recipients are expected to serve the community, create opportunities for others and share with other students what they have learned, thus raising their social conscience during the early days at university. Upon graduation, they are supposed to further engage in the advancement of society. The fund supports students to participate in the following university-administered/supported outside classroom learning activities: Exchange, overseas programs, overseas internships, volunteering activities, language, hall accommodations, sports/music/arts/other skills, and professional certificates/courses.

Moving southward, we find one of the most ethnically diverse areas on the planet where the transition to mass higher education has been slower than in northeast Asia. The strongest economy, Singapore, and the emergent economies of Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia have greatly expanded higher learning opportunities. Only Singapore has universities listed in the top 20 in Asia. Throughout the rest of the region, the gap has widened between the urban majority and students from rural, low-income urbanite, and ethnic minority families. One major exception is the Chinese, who are a significant ethnic minority in Malaysia and Indonesia (both majority Muslim) and a majority in Singapore but are usually better off economically than the general population with higher levels of education. The preferential policies in Malaysia advantaged the native Malay majority students, something that has led many Chinese toward private or overseas higher education. The Chinese, in largely non-Muslim countries such as Thailand and the Philippines, have been more successful in assimilating into the mainstream population over many generations.

In most of East Asia, the state has taken the lead in the funding and expansion of higher education, especially in the socialist leaning countries of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Lao. The access rate in Vietnam for higher education was only *9.4 percent in 2000, jumping to 30.5 percent in 2014*, and continues to expand toward mass higher education. This is in contrast to the gross enrollment rate in Cambodia of only 12.98 percent in 2021 and 13.8 percent in Lao in 2020. Like socialist China, the Vietnamese state designates its ethnic minority groups (54 groups, one less than China), which have also fallen behind along with their rural neighbors on indicators of access and equity in higher education.

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However, thus far, we have focused on ethnicity, gender, region, and income with a high degree of intersectionality. The same holds true for disability.

In Indonesia, the Universitas Terbuka, ICE Institute, Brawijaya University, and Sebelas Maret University provide distance education (multichannels and various means) for deaf and blind students. Together with the National Research and Innovation Agency, they have identified a cohort of approximately 40 students per year who are disabled in higher learning by hearing or sight. They begin study at Universitas Terbuka via online distance education mode for two years. Printed materials are prepared and distributed to students with appropriate audio-visual learning tools. In 2017, the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education (now Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology) issued a Ministerial Decree for the sector of special education and services for students with special needs. The Directorate General of Higher Education has since provided competitive grants for HEIs that provide education for students with different abilities.

As Asia becomes the region of the world with the greatest disparities in wealth, the institutions of higher learning reflect the inequities of society and, to a large extent, begin to reproduce inequalities and marginalize students from underserved communities. With expert advice and assistance from development agencies, governments in East Asia, north and south, have instituted laws and policies to ensure at least a modicum of equity in access to higher education. Within national frameworks, institutions of higher education have begun to innovate with their own policies, programs, and measures to attract interest, investment, and commitment from stakeholders so that students from all sectors of the underserved communities enter and excel in higher education.

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2.2 Integration of Low-Income Students in the Culture of Fudan University, China

Name of institution

Fudan University

Link

https://www.fudan.edu.cn/

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

The official website of the Office of Student Affairs of Fudan University http://www.stuaff.fudan.edu.cn/; Interviews with students and former student leaders

Type of initiative

An outreach project to promote low-income students' social integration into an elite university and to generate psychological support from peers with similar socioeconomic backgrounds.

Introduction

The past few decades have witnessed a market transition process of China's economy and public services since 1978. In the context of a transitional society where the social structure is characterized by rapid change and broadening income gaps (Nee & Cao, 2005; Wu, 2002; Zhou & Xie, 2019), class inequalities in attaining higher education have been heightened (Li, 2010; Wu, 2010). Despite the unprecedented higher education expansion and greatly increased overall enrollment since 1998, students from economically disadvantaged families persist to fall behind, especially in attending higher quality colleges and universities (Li, 2010, 2014; Yeung, 2013). As a result, students from low-income families and rural areas remained greatly underrepresented in China's top-tier universities (Du, 2018). For example, Du (2018) found that the proportion of rural students in the undergraduate population of four "985 Project" universities in Beijing decreased from 35% in 2008 to 18% in 2015 and that of students coming from families with income less than 40,000 RMB per year dropped from 72% in 2008 to 26% in 2015.

Against this backdrop, China's central government has implemented a series of preferential policies since 2012 to increase the enrollment of students from poverty-stricken regions and rural students in key universities to promote social equity. In response to the national initiative, many key universities started to carry out university-level special admission projects, sparing approximately 2% of the quota each year for recruiting students from underrepresented groups

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(Li, Cui, and Wu, 2018). These preferential policies have achieved remarkable results and continue to function. From 2014 to 2017, the proportion of rural students admitted to key universities increased by 10% each year (see the Prime Minister's Report, 2017).

However, to facilitate equity and meritocracy, merely broadening access is not enough. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students often encounter difficulties in adapting to the sociocultural milieu of top universities (Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2009; Stuber, 2011; Zheng, 2022). Therefore, how to support them to better integrate into the new community is a great challenge.

Fudan University (FDU) is a flagship public university that was founded in 1905. The university is located in the metropolis of Shanghai and is spread across four campuses. As one of the most selective universities in mainland China, Fudan University was ranked 10th among Asian higher education institutions and 60th out of more than 1,600 universities all over the world according to the *Times* Higher Education rankings[5]. More than 30,000 students are enrolled at Fudan University, with approximately 3500 freshmen enrolled each academic year. FDU takes a liberal arts approach to undergraduate education and prides itself on having an international outlook and sending over 60% undergraduates to embark in exchange programs with almost 200 overseas universities.

FDU is at the forefront in expanding access to rural and poor students. Since 2014, FDU has implemented its preferential admission program for rural students, the "Tengfei Project". As a result, the proportion of rural students among freshmen increased from 10.2% in 2012 to 18% in 2014. In recent years, this proportion has leveled at approximately 18%. According to the statistics disclosed by the university's Office of Student Affairs, approximately 550 freshmen in 2014 were low-income students who were supported by financial aid. More recent data are unavailable, but it is reasonable to expect that the income cutoff number has not changed or only slightly.

Description of policy/programme/measures

The challenges confronting low-income students extend far beyond financial difficulties after entering FDU. With a great sense of unfamiliarity and inferiority, these students often find themselves out of tune with the majority of affluent urban students. They are less equipped with the cultural know-how to effectively navigate their studies and lives. More importantly, with a sense of psychological insecurity and less desirability, they are usually not active in participating in extracurricular activities. Even if they have the courage to join some societies, they are more likely to be excluded because of a shortage of many soft skills, such as vlog-making and photoshop. Therefore, a special student organization for generating peer support is needed to facilitate low-income

5 Source: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/fudan-university

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students' integration into the social aspect of campus life. (A vlog is a short video that records anything as a blog by video).

Practitioners in FDU are fully aware of the importance of providing support in aspects beyond financial aid. Adhering to the idea of "financial aid goes hand in hand with growth support", the university's Office of Student Affairs established the "*Undergraduates' Home for Growth Support*" ("本科生助┌成才家┌", hereafter called the *Home*) to be an innovative platform reaching out to low-income students to boost their social integration in November 2008. While targeting all low-income students in particular, *Home* is open to all FDU undergraduate students.

The core objectives are threefold. The first is to generate sociopsychological support from peers with similar backgrounds for low-income students. In developing a semibounded community, the *Home* connects them together without explicitly sticking them with any stigmatized label (e.g., the poor). The second objective is to cultivate students' positive emotions and social responsibility by involving them in volunteering activities. Third, *Home* aims to provide low-income individuals with opportunities for organizing, participating in, and managing extracurricular activities by themselves to develop transferable skills and to be better integrated into campus life.

At the beginning of the freshman year, all registered low-income students receive emails from student counselors inviting them to participate in a welcome meeting. During the meeting, the whole program and its affiliated societies are introduced to students, stories of senior fellows are shared, and newcomers are warmly encouraged to follow the relevant social media of *Home*. In the following four years, they are regularly informed of activities at *home*. When necessary, student counselors encourage low-income students to join flagship activities such as summer voluntary teaching and short-term social investigation programs.

Implementation modalities of equity promotion initiatives

Home mainly consists of eight volunteer student societies, mostly named after the contributors of financial aid donations. All low-income students are given membership in one of the societies. Each society has its flagship extracurricular activities, mostly in the form of some kind of social service. Low-income students' involvement in these activities is encouraged without any obligation, giving them the opportunity to get to know new friends among students from similar backgrounds, with the expectation that it can generate psychological closeness and a sense of belonging.

Notably, *Home* does not present itself in public as an organization for low-income students only. Instead, it opens its activities to all undergraduates for two important reasons. By deliberately blurring the boundary between low-income students and other students, it can protect low-income students from harm caused by a sense of inferiority and social stigma. Moreover, it creates opportunities for low-income students to interact with and learn from peers

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with heterogeneous backgrounds in a "safe" community in which they are many, if not the majority.

In addition, to provide more opportunities to practice leadership and intrapersonal skills for low-income students, the managerial and functioning positions of the *home* are open to them. With the barriers to entry deliberately lowered, they can freely join the operation team, in which approximately 100 positions are provided by four functional departments: the Media Center, Personnel Management Center, Activities Development Center, and Societies Management Center. A "double mentor" system is there to lend support. Each position is supported by an internal mentor from the Office of Student Affairs and an external mentor from the donors.

As an entity under supervision of the Office of Student Affairs, *Home* is financed by both internal funding from FDU and external donations from companies and alumni.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

The *Home* initiative is aligned with the state's evolving policy emphasis from financing help only to an all-around assistance system beyond financial aid6. In 2018, FDU was showcased as a good example on the official website of China's Ministry of Education[7].

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

Home was not established overnight. In implementing the initiative, some dilemmas were encountered. It is still in the process of coping with some of these challenges.

The first dilemma is how to create a supportive community for low-income students while keeping their identities (i.e., as low-income students) confidential. At the beginning of implementation, *Home* could not engage students because it was mainly perceived as a low-income student community. To solve the problem, they started to remove the signals related to low-income students and present *Home* as a student organization dedicated to volunteering. To ensure the involvement of target students, the "insiders" lean implicitly toward them in recruiting participants for activities. At the same time, they deliberately allow a small proportion of nonlow-income students to diversify the composition of students to avoid stigmatization of the *Home's* membership.

The second dilemma is that although this initiative aims to promote the psychological well-being of low-income students, it is difficult to achieve the goal because they are generally in poor emotional status and show strong psychological defense. To melt the wall inside, *Home* fully utilizes influences

6 See a document of the Ministry of Education at http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/xw_fbh/moe_2069/xwfbh_2015n/xwfb_151209/151209_sfcl/201512/t20151209_223934.html

7 Source: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s6192/s133/s164/201811/t20181105_353674.html

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from peers by inviting exemplary senior students and graduates, who are low-income students as well, to share their experiences in *Home* and their gains. As the sense of belonging starts to grow, they are invited to join volunteering activities to help the disadvantaged in society, such as teaching the children of migrant workers and serving an employability training project for homeless youths. In practicing the idea of "helping others to help ourselves", they are gradually softened and able to regain self-efficacy and confidence.

Last but not least, even though *Home* has established a platform for low-income students to organize activities, cultivate leadership, and harvest excellence, it has to face the fact that low-income students often lack sufficient skills to play their roles well. To realize the goal of growth support, *Home* sticks to the notion of building a supportive rather than a competitive environment. Meanwhile, it pours many resources in training its members, especially the core members, for managerial and leaders' positions. Mentors are available to give advice and feedback.

Results of the innovative equity approach

Since the initiative aims to promote students' social integration and peer support, which are subtle processes that are difficult to monitor and assess, the university does not use any indicator to evaluate the results.

The available statistics have shown that approximately 100 low-income students are intensively engaged as core members in charge of management and operation of the *Home* each year. Approximately 300-400 students are involved in regular volunteering activities in various forms annually, most of whom are low-income students. It is estimated that every year over 1500 students are impacted in terms of peer interaction and personal development by the activities held by Home.

Longitudinal survey research indicates that *Home* has achieved significant outcomes as well. According to Niu and Zheng (2018), among over 200 student clubs of FDU, students spend the most time volunteering in their sophomore year. In particular, rural students and students admitted by special projects are more involved in volunteering activities than other students. Further analysis and follow-up interviews show that *Home* is an effective institutional mechanism that is "pulling" these students into volunteer student clubs.

The leaders and members of the *Home* reported significant impacts on their personal development and social integration as well. For example, a former leader of *Home*, a female low-income student, said:

> "In fact, when I was a freshman, my ability was also very weak. To be frank, I think I may not get so many opportunities in other student organizations, but the *Home* gave me sufficient opportunities, which truly helps and makes who I am."

Given that low-income students are often reluctant and uncertain in participating in extracurricular activities (Xie, 2022; Niu and Zheng, 2018; Zheng, 2022),

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Home has exerted an effective institutional pulling force for these students in facilitating their integration into the social aspects of campus life.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

Home is embedded in the cultural milieu wherein volunteering activities are institutionalized as one of the "must-do" events of FDU undergraduates. In FDU, there are over 20 volunteer student clubs, outnumbering all the other categories of registered student clubs. Moreover, as a form of ideological and political education, short-term social investigation programs are open for application for all undergraduates during every summer and winter vacation. Therefore, the activities held by *Home* enjoy high legitimacy in FDU, which is partly why it cannot be recognized as a special organization for low-income students.

In response to the state's policies on promoting equity and supporting low-income students, many first-class universities of China have built up similar supportive projects to assist low-income students. *Home*, as an innovative form of facilitating peer-to-peer interaction and social integration, has great potential to be replicated in other universities.

In the particular context of mainland China, the neo-communist political regime facilitates the initiative in some sense. First, supporting low-income students in an all-rounded manner to promote equity is highly legitimate in the public policies of higher education. Second, the college counselor system is a key aspect of higher education with Chinese characteristics. In implementing *Home*, student counsellors play a facilitating role in encouraging the target students to join.

As the sociocultural adjustment of low-SES college students has been a common problem across many countries, we believe that the Home initiative, especially the notion of building a semibounded community to facilitate peer-to-peer support, can be largely replicated in other countries and contexts, although the contents of activities and implementation methods could be adapted according to the specific context.

Concluding Comments

Establishing a peer-to-peer interactive community to enhance social support is not innovative. What makes the *Home* innovative is that the community is built to be a semibounded one, which successfully avoids the risks of raising social pressure. Another feature of *Home* is the "default" membership approach, which skips the complicated process of choice-making and therefore effectively "pulls" low-income students into the community.

What are the main take-aways?

- In attempting to socially support marginalized students, a precarious balance should be attained between gathering them into a supportive com-

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munity and keeping the community free from stigmatization and open to opportunities of cultivating a heterogeneous network.

- To do so, practitioners can obscure the true colors of the community by building a semibounded community and, on the other hand, manage the composition of the members in the "backstage" and grant default membership to ensure that the target group is chiefly served.

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2.3 Student Aid at the Chinese University of Mining and Technology

Authors: Hanwen Zhang and Gerry Postiglione

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

China University of Mining and Technology http://global.cumt.edu.**cn/**

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Interviews (dissertation related)

Type of initiative

Student aid instruments for low-income borrowers

Contact

Hanwen Zhang: hanwen.zhang@aliyun.com

Introduction

The massification of higher education has been a global trend for over half a century. Inevitably, as a newcomer or latecomer, China mirrored this international movement to expand its tertiary education sector in the late 1990s. China's mass higher education system is responding to a broader economic restructuring from a manufacturing to a knowledge-based economy. It can also be a sensible fiscal policy to address the economic turmoil resulting from the financial crisis in Southeast Asia in 1997-98, which aimed to boost the economy by encouraging additional investment in education and training.

China's higher education expansion has resulted in a rapid rise in college enrollment, increasing from 1.08 million in 1998 to 2.75 million in 1999; it then rocketed to 6.39 million in 2009 and increased to 7.61 million by 2017 (China's statistical bulletin on the development of national education in 1999, 2010, 2018). It is estimated that nearly three million college students from low-income families required student aid nationwide in 2002. This tuition cost, however, represented 55 percent of the urban household's annual disposable income per capita in 2002 and equaled 1.7 times the disposable income for rural dwellers (F. Li, 2012).

The surge in college students has called into question how the government will fund post-secondary and college education. Traditional student funding policies can no longer meet growing financial needs because non-repayable scholarships and grants cannot match rising tuition costs. To ensure that students from low-income families have equal access to higher education, a more innovative system of financial aid should be put in place. This paper investigates innovative ways a

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higher education institution implements financial aid policies to promote equity in education from entry to graduation.

Description of student funding

Student financial aid has frequently shifted from relying on a single source of government funding to a more diverse and comprehensive approach. It took the Chinese government a decade to establish its student financial aid system in 2007, which attached great importance to equal opportunities for students from economically disadvantaged families and underprivileged groups. As advocated, students from all walks of life, particularly from poverty-stricken regions and marginalized communities, should have equal access to a college education. It is an important measure to actively promote equity in education, achieve social equality and justice, and alleviate poverty in the population.

Chinese student finance is a complex package of financial aid covering a wide range of programs and projects, including state-subsidized student loans, grants and scholarships at the national and school level, work-study programs, tuition reimbursement and loan forgiveness for employment at the grassroots level, tuition subsidies for enlisted military service and retired soldiers, a free teacher training program, freshman enrollment assistance, meal grants, and tuition remission and exemption. The Ministry also requires higher education institutions to allow first-year students to go through a "greenway" and obtain registration even if they cannot pay full tuition when the school year begins.

In 2020, financial aid for the higher education sector from central and local governments, higher education institutions, and social funds amounted to 124.38 billion yuan. The government budget provided more than 65.30 billion yuan, representing more than 50 percent of the total. The student loans scheme received 37.81 billion yuan from lending banks, which accounted for 30 percent of the total aid package. Universities and colleges spent 18.36 billion yuan of their business revenue to provide financial assistance to low-income students, representing 15 percent of the total funding. An additional 2.9 billion yuan, or approximately 2.5 percent, came from social donations, including from social groups, businesses, and individuals (China student financial aid report in 2020).

State-directed student funding points to the top-down decision-making process in a centralized higher education system for the implementation of student financial aid policy; that is, the nature of government intervention implies a quota system, including eligibility criteria, funding levels, subsidy proportions, and the allocation of monetary funds. In short, the government controls or regulates student funding, with little autonomy for higher education institutions. A centralized structure, however, may not always be appropriate to the local context or respond to the needs of students and other stakeholders, and at times it even fails in specific circumstances, as evidenced by the confused approach to targeting resources for low-income students in the early 2000s and the loan forgiveness program that flopped once it was initiated in 2006.

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The transition to repayable student loans is often viewed as a panacea for financing students. A student loan scheme often serves multiple purposes: it bridges the financing gap by raising funds to expand the tertiary sector and contributes to equity in education and social mobility. Nevertheless, student loans can be burdensome or wasteful without the required resources. Such much-needed infrastructure requires eligibility for student funding and a debt repayment mechanism. Unfortunately, this necessary infrastructure was fragmented and underdeveloped in China during the 2000s.

The nature of Chinese student loans is a means-tested benefit program for fiscal austerity and ideological reasons. This need-based student aid, however, has no working beneficiary eligibility rule. A simple criterion for student borrowing is that students and their families struggle financially to meet their schooling and basic living needs. The vagueness and scope of this provision have vexed college finance officials, who are often overwhelmed by school practitioners and student counselors due to the lack of specific operating standards. As a result, failure to appropriately target credit can cause a loss to student borrowing, either by denying access to credit to those in need or by extending too much credit to those who cannot manage it.

With regard to debt repayment, at the time, abnormally large defaults caused commercial lenders to pull out of the student loan market altogether at the end of 2003. In an effort to reconcile student aid and business practices, the central government is expected to impose loan forgiveness to reduce student defaults. The Office of the State Council called for a student loan forgiveness mechanism as far back as 2004. The loan forgiveness program was pilot tested in September 2006, with the first batch of 164 college graduates nationwide. The eligibility rules were strict: graduates of universities affiliated with central ministries were required to serve at the grassroots level in twelve western provinces, including Tibet, Guangxi, Gansu, and Xinjiang, for a minimum of three years. To mitigate the impact of the 2008 financial crisis on employment, the Ministry has further relaxed its rules regarding access to tuition reimbursement, which nonborrowers may apply for as well; it also covers ten other central provinces, including Anhui, Henan, and Hubei. Although the waiver program is designed to ease the repayment burden on student borrowers and inject new human capital into economically less developed areas, this centralized, top-down decision-making appears inefficient, with little response from the colleges and their graduates.

The education authorities must adapt their approaches to achieve policy objectives from enrollment to graduation and strike a balance between centralization and decentralization. Against this context, two innovative student financing practices of the China University of Mining and Technology (CUMT) in Xuzhou have already been replicated and scaled up in other educational institutions and provinces to promote student funding and equity in higher education.

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Characteristics of the Equity Initiative

As a national key university, the CUMT is directly affiliated with the Ministry of Education of China. It is located in Xuzhou, the northernmost city in Jiangsu. It takes three hours to get to Beijing or Shanghai by bullet train. CUMT offers 57 undergraduate programs and has an excellent academic reputation in engineering-related majors: mining engineering, safety science and engineering, and science and technology in surveying and mapping. The shift from traditional manufacturing to a service-oriented economy, accompanied by inevitable structural and economic reforms in the country and a growing focus on carbon emissions and green energy, has reduced the size of the mining industry compared to the past. A number of disputes over wages, working conditions, and community safety continue to plague the mining industry. In addition, it still faces an ongoing threat from employee retention, changing supply chains, and increased automation technologies.

Such crucial issues facing the mining industry are also reflected in the higher education sector. On the one hand, these engineering-related majors have struggled to attract college candidates with declining entrance exam scores, in stark contrast to the sizzling fields of finance and computer science. On the other hand, perhaps the digital divide, information asymmetry in college admissions, and fierce competition for prestigious programs could result in more economically disadvantaged students entering mining-related college majors. All this poses new challenges to the CUMT's student funding efforts. The following cases vividly illustrate the university's approach to delivering targeted financial resources for students from more deprived backgrounds and helping undergraduates benefit from job start-ups through student loan forgiveness.

In terms of financing students upon enrollment, the CUMT has been a pioneer in the targeting of financial aid to low-income students. As a means-tested benefit in a constrained fiscal budget, not an open-ended entitlement, prioritizing more disadvantaged students for government-sponsored student loans can often generate greater educational equality and progress in poverty alleviation, enhancing other dimensions of empowerment, such as human capital accumulation. Effective targeting is a screening tool used in social security to maximize limited fiscal space, but how do student finance officers and practitioners differentiate eligibility and benefits among college students?

CUMT attempted to define its targeting and eligibility criteria in 2007. "Exclusion" as a primary targeting method, for example, owning a laptop and buying a ¥600-plus cell phone, consuming branded skincare, renting off-campus space, frequent leisure trips, smoking, and alcohol abuse, all were declared ineligible for student aid, including state-subsidized student loans. Interestingly, these precise guidelines and metrics have sparked a debate about eligibility rules across social platforms. Such rigid provisions did not adapt in time to the changing living standards of college students. It has also been

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criticized for unduly interfering with low-income students' privacy and campus lives.

These debates and criticisms have undoubtedly put some pressure on student funding allocation. A more flexible review process has gradually replaced the detailed eligibility determination to achieve a fair and transparent allocation of benefits since the fall semester of 2011. The current approach is a more participatory and democratic style: first, a six-panel member is selected from all classmates, plus a student counselor, making a total of seven committee members. Seven panelists vote on the list of applicants, and the ones with the most votes are elected eligible for benefit allocation.

Those exclusionary practices may seem more or less absurd today, but they are still an initiative of grassroots practitioners. The subsequent selection seems more logical and reasonable. Indeed, it reflects the different values attributed to student financing as a policy tool. Student aid is primarily an economic tool to encourage more low-income students into higher education by providing financial incentives such as interest-free student loans. Second, it is a regulatory tool for the government to ensure that prospective students do not exclude themselves from higher education in financial difficulties. Finally, it is also an information tool that responds to society's educational equality and social justice concerns.

In practice, however, there is an inevitable choice between different value orientations of policy instruments: precision, resource-intensiveness, public visibility, and intrusiveness (McMartin, 2009). To verify the accuracy of eligibility determination and benefit allocation levels, the chief trade-off of an intrusive tool is public visibility. In this case, the debate on the rationality and legitimacy of such accuracy and targeting errors affects policy implementation. While subsequent participatory governance requires more intensive resources, such as an agreement of student stakeholders, it appeared less rigid and coercive. Good targeting is dynamic: this participatory approach's fairness, transparency, and engagement make it the most mainstream practice for student funding allocation today.

On the graduation side, the CUMT takes full advantage of mining-related majors to encourage college graduates to work at the grassroots level in remote central and western regions. As of January 2015, the CUMT had funded more than 5,000 college graduates through the tuition reimbursement and loan forgiveness program, representing nearly ten percent of the country's total recipients. However, to a large extent, the lack of cultural capital and social networks makes low-income student borrowers one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of job placement, exacerbated by debt burden upon graduation. Successful job placement and adequate monthly income were associated with a lower likelihood of default (Hillman, 2014), with unemployment contributing more to default outcomes than lower-paying jobs (Bocian et al., 2012). Along the way, CUMT's approach is simply a case of using the right policy tool in the right place and at the right moment.

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On the surface, however, college students are skeptical of grassroots work: coal mines are located in rural and remote areas, and dealing with coal dust and dirt in real life is a far cry from a white-collar job. This can be a tricky and even dangerous task. A three-year absence from family and city life, perhaps longer, is too much. CUMT's role is to approach, connect, familiarize and reacquaint college graduates with grassroots front-line jobs and loan forgiveness programs: the university has signed practical training agreements with more than 70 large and medium-sized coal enterprises, including the Henan Coal Chemical Group and Shenhua Ningxia Coal Industry Group. More than 1,000 graduates are organized each year to visit these companies and production lines for internships so that students can form a good atmosphere to experience employment at the grassroots level. CUMT also invites alums who work at the grassroots to share their experience as role models for graduating students. It has also set up a school-level "coal-orientation scholarship," which gives more than 1.6 million yuan a year out of school funds to reward student borrowers in the coal industry.

A college graduate eligible for tuition reimbursement or loan forgiveness will receive a one-off subsidy of 20,000 to 30,000 yuan as part of a three-year installment plan. In addition, the CUMT has partnered with some coal companies to provide job placement fees and special allowances for outstanding graduates to remain in grassroots business for extended periods. As graduates have reported, "working at the grassroots is not necessarily a scourge; instead, financial incentives and working conditions are attractive; personal spiritual pursuit can also be achieved."

CUMT's proactive practices relieve job placement stress while freeing low-income borrowers from paying down their student loan debt so they can devote themselves more to their work and family lives. Fortunately, their practice is recognized by the Ministry of Education and soon spread to other institutions. Subsequently, when local governments such as Jiangsu and Shanghai education authorities articulated their forgiveness project for local educational institutions, they adopted CUMT's approach as a form of policy borrowing.

Conclusion

The attempts and practices of CUMT in student funding have nationwide implications:

First, in the context of constrained financial resources, reaching out to and assisting those most in need must be balanced against policy instruments with different value orientations. While no single targeting method is appropriate in each situation, with broad participation, more flexible and less intrusive measures seem more readily acceptable and fiscally accountable.

Second, loan forgiveness breaks the curse of "poverty-returning through higher education," allowing low-income borrowers a head start in their adult lives. More importantly, this relief policy ties education loans to industry

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demand. It can make student loan programs look more attractive, just as student loan debt and its forgiveness programs are designed to be more responsive to specific human resource priorities and to support development in certain areas of social importance.

Finally, the achievement of policy objectives in student funding relies on proactive institutional engagement and linkages to national policies. Centralized decentralization in project design and implementation has emerged as a key driver of policy success in a Chinese context.

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2.4 Balanced Regional Selection at Seoul National University, South Korea

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https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20221018000643

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Type of initiative

The SNU BRS promotes equity by selecting students with potential and sincerity in each region through high school GPAs and a faithful school life rather than the top ranked CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test) scores.

Introduction

The Ministry of Education is responsible for higher education in South Korea. The Ministry of Education formulates the policies, oversees and administers the institutions, and exercises control over the requirements of teaching staff and academic requirements.

Institutional accreditation in the higher education sector is the responsibility of the Korea Council for University Education (KCUE), while programmatic accreditation is carried out by specialist authorities recognized by the ministry. The Universities in South Korea should abide by the guidelines laid down by the Korea Council for University Education-KCUE.

Seoul National University is a national public research university located in the capital city of South Korea. Founded in 1946, Seoul National University is the most prestigious university in South Korea. The university has four campuses: the main campus in Gwanak District and three additional campuses in Daehangno, Pyeongchang County, and Siheung City. The university comprises sixteen colleges, one graduate school and nine professional schools. The student body consists of nearly 17,000 undergraduate and 11,000 graduate students. According to data compiled by the Korean Education Development Institute, the university spends more on its students per capita than any other universities in the country that enroll at least 10,000 students.

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Description of the Equity Initiative

Many Koreans believe that the university they graduate from has an impact on an individual's life, and the competition to get into a good university in Korea is fierce and inequitable. In this regard, the admission process of universities is very important.

Since 2005, Seoul National University has selected some students through the balanced regional selection process. The balanced regional selection selects students who have been recommended by the principal at each high school across the country based on separate criteria. It is a model that tries to evenly select students with potential and commitment in each region through high school GPAs and a rich school life rather than just the top ranked CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test) scores. Seoul National University introduced this system for the first time in Korea despite some internal and external objections. The Seoul National University's balanced regional selection is intended to contribute directly to improving equity in Korean society.

Design of the Initiative

The academic achievement of students in rural areas was significantly lower than that of students in urban areas, and the number of students entering Seoul National University in rural areas decreased. SNU introduced the balanced regional selection system in recognition of its responsibility as a national university to promote national development by alleviating regional and socio-economic educational environment imbalances and nurturing talented people in each region into future leaders (Jung, 2012).

The core objectives of the BRS initiative are to increase the diversity of campus members by selecting students from each region in a balanced way and providing excellent higher education opportunities to local talent with potential. SNU tries to select approximately 20% of the admission quota through BRS every year. Table 1 shows the implementation timeframe of BRS since 2005.

Table 1 - Number of people selected for balanced regional selection each year (2005 to 2022)

Academic year	Recruitment capacity	Number of people selected (%)
2005	3,260	651 (20.0)
2006	3,260	677 (20.8)
2007	3,162	800 (25.3)
2008	3,162	817 (25.8)
2009	3,114	765 (24.6)
2010	3,114	747 (24.0)

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Academic year	Recruitment capacity	Number of people selected (%)
2011	3,096	725 (24.0)
2012	3,096	667 (21.5)
2013	3,124	752 (24.1)
2014	3,169	779 (24.6)
2015	3,135	692 (22.1)
2016	3,135	681 (21.7)
2017	3,136	735 (23.4)
2018	3,181	757 (23.8)
2019	3,182	756 (23.8)
2020	3,179	756 (23.8)
2021	3,178	756 (23.8)
2022	3,171	652 (20.6)

Implementation of the BRS Initiative

BRS targets all high school 3rd grade students nationwide. The Seoul National University Admissions Office mainly handles this work and designs and implements BRSs. The national government and the Ministry of Education also support the BRS system, and the region of Seoul National University students' origin is a major concern as a result of the state audit. No additional funding is needed, as BRS is administered as a redesign of the regular selection process.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

Seoul National University was the first to introduce BRS in Korea. Severe imbalanced development between the central and local areas is a major problem in Korean society. Uneven development continues a vicious cycle that hinders the development of local industries and becomes a social cause that structurally blocks opportunities for local people. Accordingly, the Korean government introduced a balanced regional human resource selection system to address this problem. The balanced regional talent selection system is a selection system that grants a certain rewarding opportunity to local talent in the selection of public officials to solve the problem that local talent, such as local school graduates, are disadvantaged or discriminated against in various social selections. To this end, Korea introduced the 'Local Talent Recommendation and Recruitment System' in 2005 and the 'Local Talent Recruitment Target System' in 2007, and

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the 'Local University and Regional Balanced Talent Development Act' came into effect on July 29, 2014.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

There is a widespread criticism that students who do not have sufficient skills to enter Seoul National University who are admitted through balanced regional selection will prove to have lower academic ability and be unable to compete at the university. This perception leads to resentment against the beneficiaries of the positive discrimination policy. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE ABOUT IT?

Results of the innovative equity approach

BRS aims to select students from more diverse regions, so SNU collects data on how diverse income students are in terms of which high school they studied at. To monitor the effects of the BRS initiative, SNU collects and discloses data on students' areas of origin and type of high school. The data shown in Tables 2 and 3 reveal that the university's efforts have been successful diversifying the regions of origin of students.

Table 2 - Distribution of hometowns of successful applicants to Seoul National University (2005 to 2022).

Academic year	Seoul	Metropolitan City	City	County
2004	38.1	26.6	32.7	2.6
2005	37.2	29.7	29.4	3.7
2006	36.1	27.4	32.3	4.2
2007	36.5	27.5	31.8	4.0
2008	37.6	25.5	32.2	4.6
2009	36.7	24.9	34.3	4.1
2010	34.7	25.8	34.8	4.8
2011	34.0	24.7	36.1	5.1
2012	37.4	23.9	33.1	5.6
2013	36.0	22.7	34.4	6.9
2014	38.4	21.2	34.4	6.0
2015	38.6	21.6	34.0	5.8
2016	38.0	20.8	36.2	5.0
2017	37.2	20.7	36.7	5.4

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Academic year	Seoul	Metropolitan City	City	County
2018	36.9	20.3	37.7	5.2
2019	36.7	21.5	37.0	4.8
2020	35.9	21.6	38.0	4.6
2021	35.3	23.1	37.2	4.4
2022	35.4	22.6	37.7	4.3

Source: Internal materials of Seoul National University Admissions Office.

Table 3 - Number of successful applicants to Seoul National University by high school (2001 to 2022)

Academic Year	Number of High School	Academic Year	Number of High School
2001	703	2012	906
2002	618	2013	912
2003	724	2014	831
2004	775	2015	853
2005	813	2016	838
2006	846	2017	858
2007	883	2018	885
2008	928	2019	884
2009	963	2020	910
2010	1,013	2021	942
2011	983	2022	891

Source: Internal materials of Seoul National University Admissions Office

Examining the distribution of successful applicants to Seoul National University in Table 2, it can be observed that in 2004, the proportion of applicants from county areas was extremely low at 2.6%, with Seoul accounting for 38.1%, metropolitan cities accounting for 26.6%, and cities accounting for 32.7%. Meanwhile, the number of high schools that produced successful applicants to Seoul National University, as shown in Table 3, steadily increased from only 703 in 2001 and 618 in 2002 to the highest number of 1,013 in 2010. Although it has decreased slightly since then, as of 2022, there are still 891 high schools producing successful applicants, indicating an increase in the number of high

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schools producing successful applicants to Seoul National University compared to before the implementation of the regional balanced selection.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

Seoul National University will increase the number of students admitted through the RBS system by approximately 130 individuals next year. Since the implementation of the RBS at Seoul National University, other top universities in Korea have introduced and implemented similar systems. This can be seen as a recognition among Korean universities that the RBS system contributes to enhancing educational equity and diversifying the student population within universities. It has been shown that the RBS system is replicable in countries where there are differences in educational opportunities across regions.

Concluding Comment

Seoul National University's balanced regional selection program aims to achieve a more balanced distribution of incoming students to increase the share of young people coming from socially disadvantaged groups. It is special in that it tried to contribute to the balanced development of the country by selecting incoming students from each region in a more equal way to avoid overconcentration of students from a specific region (Seoul metropolitan area). In other words, the BRS system is meaningful in that it has successfully managed 'to reduce imbalances in the regional and economic educational environment' and 'to provide fair educational opportunities to talented people with potential'.

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2.5 Equity-Focused Endowment Fund at the Technology University of Malaysia

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Type of initiative

UTM Endowment Fund: an access-driven fund that provides financial assistance (full study fees and expenses) for students from underprivileged backgrounds to pursue higher education.

Introduction

As of April 2022, the Malaysian higher education system was composed of 20 public universities, 54 private universities, 39 private university colleges, 10 international branch campuses, 331 private colleges, 36 polytechnics, and 104 community colleges. The system enrolled over 1.2 million students across public universities (48 percent), the private higher education sector (43 percent), and the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector (8.4 percent). Percentage enrollment for students in postsecondary education stood at 42 percent. The system also hosted a total of 97,237 international students in 2021, constituting 74 percent of the total international students across primary, secondary, and tertiary education segments. A total of 70,319 academic staff served the system, with 40,051 (56.9 percent) female and 2,654 (3.7 percent) international.

UTM started out as a technical school in 1904 before it became a public university in 1971 and a public research university in 2010. As of December 2021, it hosted over 16,000 undergraduate and 9,300 postgraduate students across seven faculties in three locations: Johor Bahru, Kuala Lumpur, and Pagoh. It delivers academic programmes in mainly engineering, science and technology, with a large concentration of its students in the Faculty of Engineering. It also

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runs a private wing called the UTM School of Professional and Continuing Education (UTMSPACE), offering its academic programmes via part-time, franchised, or executive education modes to working professionals since 1993. To date, the university has provided higher education to over 190,000 students, with over 8,600 of them international alumni from 98 countries.

Description of Equity Promotion Initiative

Under the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020) and the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-2025), the B40 (bottom 40% household income group) – approximately 2.7 million households with a mean monthly household income of RM 3,166 (or approximately USD 730) per month – are given priority in terms of access to and success in higher education. Accessibility to higher education and skills training among students from B40 households is being enhanced through special programmes, while institutions of higher learning and skills training institutes are encouraged to provide more places for these students through preferential entry qualification criteria, enrollment quotas, and scholarships. Various programmes/projects are carried out by higher education institutions to aid poor students.

The UTM Endowment Fund began in 2009 as the Merdeka Endowment Fund, when the then Vice Chancellor endowed a total of RM 64,000 (or equivalent to USD 18,800 at that time), which he received from the Merdeka Awards (https://www.merdekaaward.my/) as scholarships to UTM students. By 2011, the university rebranded the fund to its current name. It also established the necessary organizational structures to ensure the long-term sustainability of the fund, in particular:

- Providing scholarships and study aids to UTM students
- Developing endowed chairs, laboratories, and university facilities for academic and research activities
- Sponsoring high-impact academic, research, publication, and community-based activities

Through the UTM Endowment Fund, individuals and organizations may contribute donations all year round, either as a one-off affair, monthly contributions (e.g., salary deductions), or committed pledges to specific academic or research activities. Contributions that come from the industry are eligible for double tax deduction under Subsection 44(6) of the Income Tax Act 1967. Receivable funds would then be invested through fixed deposit schemes approved by the Board of Trustees of the fund.

A large proportion of funds from the UTM Endowment Fund is allocated to scholarships. Selected students will receive RM 12,000 per semester to pursue their studies in the university and are required to maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 per semester. Philanthropic contributions that are tagged

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specifically for scholarships will be named after the contributors, such as the Azman Hashim Endowment Fund for undergraduate and postgraduate studies or the Al-Bukhary Endowment Fund for undergraduate studies. To date, over RM 25.5 million in funds have been disbursed in the form of scholarships, benefiting more than 720 students since its inception in 2011.

At the start of each academic term, students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) who have gained admission to UTM are invited to submit applications for scholarships offered under the UTM Endowment Fund. Shortlisted students go through a series of interviews before the final list of students is selected based on two main considerations: excellence in academic and cocurricular activities, as well as household income. Students attend meetings (both in groups and on a one-to-one basis) and are required to maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) every semester. There are no distinctions in terms of academic attainment between students obtaining scholarships under the UTM Endowment Fund and students who are funded through other financial means; both groups are subjected to the same academic rigor and standards mandated in the UTM Academic Regulation.

The UTM Endowment Fund also accepts endowment from organizations for professorial chairs specific to research. To date, two professorial chairs have been set up for this purpose: the Iskandar Malaysia @ UTM professorial chair contributed by the Iskandar Malaysia Development Authority (IRDA), as well as the Syed Naquib Al-Attas professorial chair contributed by QSR Brands (M) Holdings Sdn. Bhd.

The Board of Trustees also enables the UTM Endowment Unit to be the main implementation body for all activities related to the fund, which includes fund disbursement, promotion, and advocacy, as well as fundraising both within and outside the university. To date, the unit has initiated a business venture with academics from the School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities to offer therapy and training services to children with autism in Johor Bahru, as well as publication agreements with academics, where full proceeds of books published are channelled into the UTM Endowment Fund. It also experimented with in-campus café service, merchandise distribution, and consultancy services on endowment, particularly to public organizations that are keen to explore philanthropic contribution as an alternative source of funding.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

UTM became among the first public universities in the country to develop interest and subsequently mechanisms in initiating, identifying, and sustaining endowment income for its academic and research activities.

In 2016, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Malaysia launched the University Transformation Programme (UniTP) Purple Book on Enhancing University Income Generation, Endowment and Waqf. This guidebook enables

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public universities to explore philanthropic contribution as a sustainable source of funding for their institutions. The chapter on university endowment (pages 44-50) outlines steps that can be taken by university leaders and their boards of governors to develop institutional capacity in endowment development.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

At its inception, the idea of the UTM Endowment Fund received a lukewarm response from the university community. Scholars and practitioners in the US higher education system are familiar with the concept of philanthropic contribution and have greatly benefited from the culture of giving from individuals and organizations. Individuals and organizations in Malaysia have yet to fully embrace the idea of making individual/organizational contributions to a system that is heavily funded by the state. As a result, much effort at the early stages of UTM Endowment Fund establishment (2011-2015) was spent on introducing the concept to communities within and outside the university, as well as garnering sufficient buy-in from key stakeholders. Among the initiatives organized to increase awareness on endowment within the university include roadshows, forums, and promotional sign-up events at faculties and offices.

Two externalities drove the UTM Endowment Fund into full implementation between 2015 and 2018. One, public universities in Malaysia received reduced public funding from the state in this period, with as much as a 10% reduction in annual operating and development funds receivable. The reduction in public funding necessitated university leaders to revisit their institutional expenditure and identify new sources of revenue to support university operations. The university's positive experience in managing the UTM Endowment Fund also became a case practice for other universities to emulate. With a starting capital of RM 2.1 million in 2010, the UTM Endowment Fund grew to over RM 52 million in 2016, providing strong grounds that endowment is a viable source of income for Malaysian higher education.

The second externality relates to the socioeconomic demography of its students. Between Q4 2015 and Q1 2016, various media platforms highlighted cases of public university students who were unable to manage their daily meals and sundries. Within the UTM context, it was found that up to 70 percent of undergraduate students came from B40 income groups. These students not only require funds to support their academic endeavors but also need additional funds to manage their livelihoods throughout their studies. As a result, the university used the UTM Endowment Fund as an anchor brand to develop supporting funds that branched out beyond the conventional scholarship offerings, such as funds for sports development and critical illness, as well as funds to sustain internships and attachments, among others.

Fundraising and diversification are primary activities for the UTM Endowment Unit in sustaining the fund in the long run. The UTM Royal Gala Dinner is a biennial event hosted by the unit with the primary objective of raising funds

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for university endowment. The event will be graced by the queen consort of Johor, who is also the university's chancellor. The 2019 edition of the UTM Royal Gala Dinner generated a total of RM 1.4 million in pledges from donors and sponsors. It was also in this event that the university launched a special car plate series with the "UTM" prefix for sale, which became a seasonal source of income generation for the fund to this date.

Results of the innovative equity approach

The university is obligated to report progress made under the UTM Endowment Fund to the UTM Board of Directors. It is also required to report the progress made in its annual report. The UTM Endowment Unit also publishes reports and periodicals on its website.

Based on information from the UTM Annual Report, the total contributions from 2010-2020 are as follows:

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
RM million	2.1	6.7	27.8	34.2	41.5	43.8	52.8	67.8	86.3	97.2	113.6

*Cumulative value

Based on information reported in the UTM Endowment Unit bulletin (January 2022), a total of 716 students have benefited from the fund since its inception. The breakdown of students receiving the UTM Endowment Fund since 2011 is as follows: Merdeka Endowment (621 recipients), Azman Hashim Endowment (56 recipients), Al-Bukhary Endowment (21 recipients), UTM Alumni Endowment (14 recipients), Daing Abdul Rahman Daing Mohamad Endowment (2 recipients), and Hitam Abdullah Endowment (2 recipients).

Of particular interest within the context of this section is the university's ability to leverage the fund as a contingency during the global COVID-19 pandemic. When Malaysia was hit with waves of lockdowns throughout 2020 and 2021, a significant number of teaching and learning activities had to be pivoted online. As a result, some students did not have access to broadband subscriptions or appropriate digital devices to attend lectures and learning activities online. Funds from the UTM Endowment Fund were used to support students in need of procurement of needful broadband subscriptions and laptops for their studies. The funds were also used to support students who remained on campus throughout the lockdown period in terms of procuring their daily meals and sundries until they were sent home through a nationwide repatriation exercise by the MOHE and supporting agencies. Additionally, funds from the UTM Endowment Fund were also used to procure facial masks, hand sanitizers, and other medical devices for the UTM Security Division, which

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were tasked with managing routine inspections at the university's COVID-19 isolation center.

The institution, however, does not use any forms of assessment for their initiative, either on how the initiative is impacting students' success and their academic achievement or to provide recommendations for further improvement. Data on student attainment (by semester and graduation rate) were captured but not made available in the public domain, and multiple requests for such data were not entertained. As it stands, the UTM Endowment Fund is branded as a fund to support the academic endeavor of students, with particular attention given to underprivileged groups in need of aid, such as the B40 population.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

At the institutional level, the UTM Endowment Fund has been part of a larger institutional strategy since 2011. Despite the significant commitment granted from university leadership, contributions from individual faculties to the UTM Endowment Fund remained dismal. In 2019, individual faculties only contributed 7 percent to the total funds received by the UTM Endowment Fund. While the culture of giving is widespread and well acknowledged throughout the institution, there has not been enough traction for individual players at the faculty level to be active contributors to the UTM Endowment Fund.

There is great potential for the UTM Endowment Fund model to be replicated in different contexts beyond Malaysia. Even though higher education is a public good, the state may not have sufficient capacity to fund the increasing operating costs of public higher education institutions. Non-State actors, particularly industry players and concerned individuals, can and should provide monetary support to fund higher education, provided appropriate incentives such as tax breaks are provided by the State.

Higher education institutions that are keen to initiate initiatives such as the UTM Endowment Fund should take note of the following critical aspects:

- Leadership – Are institutional leaders committed to stewarding the development of the endowment fund?
- Culture – Is the culture of giving prevalent in the local community?
- Purpose and outcome – What are the endowments used for? How can the effectiveness of the intervention in addressing inequities among the student population/equity gaps be measured?
- Governance – What are the organizational structures in place to maintain accountability of the endowment to institutional stakeholders?
- Capacity – What is/are the talent pipeline in place to manage the strategy and operational aspects of an endowment fund?
- Patronage and networking – What are the networks that the institution should leverage to build the diversity and volume of the endowment fund for the future?

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Concluding Comments

This case study presents the UTM Endowment Fund, an access-driven fund that provides financial assistance (full study fees and expenses) for students from underprivileged backgrounds to pursue higher education. Launched since 2011, individual and organizational contributions to the UTM Endowment Fund enabled more than 700 students to access higher education and funded a series of academic and research projects for the university. The UTM experience demonstrated that philanthropic contributions, particularly from the public, can be harnessed as a source of funding to support higher education in its academic and research activities and to hold students accountable for reducing equity gaps.

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2.6 First-in-the-Family Fund at the University of Hong Kong

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Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

The University of Hong Kong www.hku.hk

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Gerard Postiglione, May Lau, and Janice Chan (Office of Alumni Affairs and Development) The University of Hong Kong,

Type of initiative

The **First-in-the-Family Education Fund** (FIFE Fund) supports first-generation university undergraduates in pursuing outside classroom learning,

Introduction

As a Special Administration of Region under the PRC's one country-two system framework, Hong Kong's universities continue to operate under the autonomy law established by the British before the resumption of sovereignty in 1997. The Hong Kong Basic Law (Article 37) states, *"Educational institutions of all kinds may retain their autonomy and enjoy academic freedom. They may continue to recruit staff and use teaching materials from outside the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Schools run by religious organizations may continue to provide religious education, including courses in religion."* Institutional autonomy covers the selection of staff, the selection of students, the control of curricula and academic standards, the acceptance of research programmes, and the allocation of money within the university. Direct legal protection of academic freedom and institutional autonomy is mainly through the Basic Law (BL). However, BL does not provide a detailed definition of the meaning of academic freedom.

Twenty-five years after the retrocession of sovereignty in 1997, Hong Kong managed to have more world-class universities than any other city in the world (5 in the top 200 of the Times Higher Education Rankings), with the University of Hong Kong as the world's most international university. On the national level, Hong Kong's universities will be positioned within two new initiatives. First, the One Belt and One Road initiative will deepen educational and academic cooperation with other countries, especially those in South and Southeast Asia. Second, the Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Macao, Bay Area initiative will give a role to universities in making the region competitive with the high-tech centers in San Francisco, Tokyo and New York. Locally, Hong Kong is a global center of finance and banking with a common law legal system. As a center of trade and commerce guided by a minimal government economic philosophy, it tolerates vast inequalities in wealth and income with a Gini coefficient of 0.533, lower

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than that of New York City (0.542), Washington DC (0.540), and Los Angeles (0.538) but higher than that of San Francisco (0.514) and Shenzhen (0.49).

The University of Hong Kong (HKU) anchors globalization by capitalizing on its century of heritage with the Western academic model, its strategic positioning as the leading international university of China, and its ability to attract top students and scholars from all over the world. This model is best viewed as a product of a long-term process that has required the university to recognize opportunities and take calculated risks in planning and implementation at different phases of its development. In the longer term, its future will depend on how it positions itself during its second hundred years within a region of the world that will be the major driver of the global economy by 2050.

HKU is a comprehensive university with Faculties of Arts, Business, Dentistry, Education, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Science, Social Sciences, Graduate School, and Professional/Continuing Education. In the academic year of 2020-2011, The University had a student population of over 31,800, including 17,500 undergraduates and 14,300 postgraduates. Coupled with an active alumni network and generous endowments for program research and development, the university is a dynamic institution. Regarding income, 31.4% of the students come from households below HK$20,000 per month and 52.5% below HK$30,000 per month. Regarding parents, 51.3% of the respondents' fathers and 55.7% of their mothers had attained secondary education/ matriculation, 23.0% of the respondents' fathers and 19.5% of their mothers had attained postsecondary or university education, and 3.6% of the fathers and 3.3% of the mothers had not received any formal education.

The majority of new students were locally born (74.7%) and had been living in Hong Kong since birth (70.9%). Most of them are ethnic Chinese (96.5%) and speak Chinese (96.5%) at home. The rest of the students are nonlocal students, including those from the Chinese mainland and overseas. Regarding property, 61.2% of the students lived in public housing (including Housing Authority or Housing Society Rental and Sale Flats, as well as Home Ownership Scheme (HOS)). Most of the students were from households of 3 to 5 members (83.1%), and only 54.8% of the students had their own rooms at home. Most, 85.5%, rely on family support regarding their financial sources for study and daily expenses. The three other major sources of financial support are summer or part-time jobs (69.8%), personal savings (57.2%) and financial aid (45.7%). Only a minority of respondents would rely on other sources of support (i.e., Comprehensive Social Security Assistance) to cover their living expenses.

Description of equity promotion initiative

Rationale

Higher education today places an increasing emphasis on experiential learning activities, such as field trips, internships, study tours, overseas service learning and exchange programmes. However, these cost money. Despite financial

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assistance provided by the Hong Kong government to cover tuition and basic expenses of tertiary education through the Tertiary Student Finance Scheme (TSFS) of the Student Finance Office, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency, it does not help cover the aforementioned learning activities and thus places students with limited financial resources at a disadvantage. HKU believes that no student should be deprived of a good education due to financial constraints. It tries to address the issue and shows its commitment to the promotion of equal learning opportunities among students despite their family backgrounds by providing financial support to those who are the first generation in their families to attend university to take part in different extracurricular activities.

Core objectives of the initiative

The objective of the FIFE Fund is to provide financial assistance for students who are the first generation in their families to attend university and have financial constraints to participate in experiential learning activities. The FIFE Fund differs from other giving programs at HKU in its core concepts of social mobility and serial reciprocity. The Fund allows students to engage in social activities both on campus (outside of classrooms) and off campus. Reciprocity is built into the relationship between student and donor. It goes beyond financial assistance and seeks to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. The FIFE Fund also promotes the act of "paying forward" (受恩施恩、薪火相傳). Fund recipients are expected to serve the community, create opportunities for others and share with other students what they have learned, thus raising their social conscience during the early days at HKU. Upon graduation, they are supposed to further engage in the advancement of society.

The FIFE Fund supports students to participate in the following university-administered/supported outside classroom learning activities:

- Exchange
- Overseas programs
- Overseas internships
- Volunteering activities (including service trips)
- Language (a maximum of $5,000 from FIFE Award)
- Halls/colleges (a maximum of $4,500 **from Sept 2019, 2019-20* from FIFE Award)
- Sports/music/arts/other skills (a maximum of $3,000 from FIFE Award)
- Professional certificates/courses (a maximum of $3,000 from FIFE Award)

How was the initiative designed (actors and process)?

The initiative was executive led. It was proposed and launched by the President/Vice-Chancellor, who himself was a first in the family student who grew up in

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Hong Kong, received his doctorate, and became a distinguished professor of medicine in Canada. His stature helped to bring in donations to support the launching of The First-in-the-Family Education (FIFE) Fund in April 2008 to meet its aim.

Implementation modalities of equity promotion initiatives

A Steering Committee was set up in June 2008 to monitor the FIFE Fund. Comprising academic and donor representatives, it works on a voluntary basis to oversee the administration, set the policy direction and select applicants of the FIFE Fund. The FIFE Scheme won the Overall Grand Gold medal and a Gold medal in the Fundraising Programmes Category of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Awards 2009.

Membership of the Steering Committee is based on a term for 3 years for each member. The Chairperson is appointed by the President/Vice-Chancellor. Other members include the Dean of Student Affairs or his/her representative; the Director of Development & Alumni Affairs Office (DAAO) or his/her representative; Director of Counseling and Person Enrichment, Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS) or his/her representative: The Secretary appointed by the Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS).

Equity Amount

An amount of HK$15,000 is provided to each successful applicant for participating in one of more of the eight learning activities (listed above) over the entire course of study. Applicants with special needs and valid justifications may be granted an extra amount of HK$20,000 maximum (i.e., HK$35,000 in total). The application is made prior to the commencement of the activity. The Fund may be held concurrently with other scholarships, grants and/or loans administered by the University provided that the total value received by any student does not exceed the maximum amount of financial assistance/ scholarship that a student can receive in a year as stipulated by the University. The value of award has been adjusted to HK$15,000 since the 2015-16 academic year.

Students who meet the following criteria are eligible to apply:

- Local full-time and full-degree undergraduate students who were admitted to the university in or after September 2008. This refers to students who are upon their first entry to study at HKU (regardless of their years of study) in or after September 2008 and students who resume their studies at HKU as first-year students after deferment.
- Being the first-generation university students in their families (i.e., their grandparents and parents do not have any university education);

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- Having a monthly household income of HK$19,751 (US$2,532) or less. The monthly family income of HK$19,751 is a reference calculated for a 4-person family. The total monthly household income includes (a) 100% of the gross monthly income of parent(s) or spouse (for a married applicant) who provide(s) financial support to the applicant, plus (b) 30% of the income of unmarried sibling(s) residing with the family. There is also a limit on total family assets.

How was the initiative financed?

The financing comes from a variety of sources:

- There is a fund for donors in which they can choose where to direct their donation, one choice being the FIFE.
- Each student's FIFE fund can be named after the donor. If the donor wishes, his/her name can be attached to the FIFE, and the donor would be invited to meet with the FIFE student, if they choose.
- There are periodic campaigns to raise funds for FIFE;
- For example, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its graduation, the HKU Class of 1983 made a collective effort to raise funds for the "First-in-the-Family Education Fund". Many members of the Class were the first generation in their families admitted to the university, and therefore, they recognized the value of the Fund.
- A walkathon was held in September 2008, which was followed by a dinner in October.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

This initiative came from the university itself. There is no link to local, regional, or national policies. The incentive to establish the fund came from an original idea from the higher education institution itself, specifically by a former Vice Chancellor/President of the University.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

- A major difficulty that arises in administering the fund if allocation. Family income and assets are not always easy to track. Documentation is needed, and it can be very labor intensive to check the veracity of documentation. There are a number of times when the Steering Committee or its subcommittee needs to meet to examine particular applications for the FIFE.
- Problems in implementation arise when a student may be from a divorced family or one in the process of divorce. That makes income and asset data difficult to interpret.

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- Another difficulty concerns the limitation of the number of applications that can be funded in any year. When that occurs, there may be several applications pending, and only some can be approved. The steering committee of the subcommittee must make the final decision.
- Implementation also requires careful record keeping because FIFE students are required to produce invoices and receipts when they use the fund.
- CEDERS staff are expected to perform detailed follow-up with each student to examine their financial needs and the difficulties they encounter and propose means to overcome unexpected problems that arise.
- The pandemic made implementation difficult because some of the implementation for use of the fund was impossible. Student exchanges, overseas programs, and overseas internships were impossible. Student Halls were vacated due to COVID-19, making that option unworkable. COVID-related restrictions also foreclosed sports activities as an option. During the pandemic, many FIFE students used their funds for online professional courses, including language courses. In one case, an FIFE student had the dream to have violin lessons, something that children from wealthy families take for granted. This was approved.
- The FIFE program required many cases by case studies, consultations, and decisions about the usage of grants during the pandemic.

Results of the innovative equity approach

HKU clearly defined how the results of the initiative would be monitored and assessed. When the initiative was designed and launched, a website was set up with all the information about the aim, application process, criteria, steering committee members, donor back, fundraising examples, and FIFE student feedback.

As the FIFE reached its 15th year, there were 250 to 300 successful applicants, and the success rate of applications has risen to approximately 75%. Evidence is being gathered about how FIFE contributes to individual cases.

One lesson of FIFE has been that at a certain historical period in Hong Kong's history after the onset of mass higher education, there is a growing number of people in the community who were first in their family to attend university, and they see it as their public duty to support those who of the next generation who are also first in the family to attend university.

Another lesson learned is that every government should ensure that no student is unable to attend university due to financial challenges, but even government loans for poor students cannot cover the cost of what they need to obtain access to the advantages of affluent students.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

The FIFE is fully embedded in the institution. It is well known by teachers and administrators. The initiative has been and continues to be scaled up. The

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advantages of affluent students at university continue to grow, while low-income students are barely able to cover the cost of their education. FIFE gives them opportunities formerly only open to affluent students who can afford it – to cover the fee for a university dormitory on campus rather than live in a cramped two room apartment with their family in a noisy part of the city, to experience an overseas semester that can change their life, or an overseas internship that can change their career path.

Given the high degree of university autonomy in Hong Kong from both the local and national governments, there are no constraining factors that limit the initiative. The FIFE has not been replicated locally but has great potential for replication in other countries where there is an opportunity gap in opportunities to learn outside of the classroom between affluent and low-income students.

Concluding Comments

The initiative is made more special by the relationship between the institution and the state and by the timing of its implementation. Any society moving toward mass higher education at a time when the inequalities in income and wealth are expanding and creating an uneven playing field on campus with non-classroom activities can institute the FIFE initiative as a leveler.

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Chapter 3. Eastern Europe and Central Asia Case Studies

3.1 Overview

Author: Kata Orosz

The following case studies describe four equity promotion initiatives in three countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Hungary, Kazakhstan, and Romania. The initiatives were designed to address different access and equity issues and challenges facing higher education students in each country. In Romania, the initiative at Babeş-Bolyai University is focused on making the university accessible and supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities. In Kazakhstan, the initiative at Satbayev University is focused on addressing differences in incoming students' academic preparedness, with a view to promoting academic persistence and degree completion. In Hungary, the programs run by the Romaversitas Foundation are focused on addressing the personal cost of social mobility for Roma students, facilitating the formation of a Roma intellectual community, and increasing the number of Roma higher education graduates. The initiative at the Budapest Business School, also located in Hungary, is focused on easing the psychological burden of transitioning between educational levels for first-year students, also with a view to promoting academic persistence and degree completion.

Despite the different focus areas of each initiative, there are several similarities that can be identified across all of them. One of the main similarities is that each of the initiatives targeted specific groups of students. The Satbayev University initiative in Kazakhstan and the Budapest Business School initiative in Hungary are aimed at first-year students, the Babeş-Bolyai University initiative in Romania is aimed at students with disabilities, and the Romaversitas programs in Hungary are aimed at Roma secondary school and university students. Each initiative was designed to address specific issues facing specific groups of students rather than being a general approach to improving higher education for all students.

Another similarity is that each initiative was designed to promote the academic success and degree completion of university students. The Satbayev University initiative is aimed at decreasing the academic failure rate in the first year and promoting the academic success of students throughout their degree program. The Babeş-Bolyai University initiative, in addition to making the university more accessible and inclusive for students with disabilities, also focuses on the provision of academic guidance and support for this student group. The Romaversitas programs are aimed at facilitating the formation of a Roma intellectual community and increasing the employability of Roma in Hungary; increasing the number of Roma higher education graduates is seen

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as an important foundation for achieving these goals. The Budapest Business School initiative is focused on helping first-year students' academic and social integration – all with the goal of ensuring that students persist in their academic studies.

There are several distinctions between the higher education access and equity initiatives discussed in the case studies, however. First, the initiatives were implemented in different ways. The Satbayev University initiative is a top-down initiative that was introduced by new leadership that arrived from a small, private, UK-style university upon direction from the country's leadership. On the other hand, the Babeş-Bolyai University initiative is part of a comprehensive institutional strategy that builds on bottom-up initiatives, and the initiative analyzed here (the Office for Students with Disabilities) is embedded in the host university to a considerable degree. The Romaversitas Foundation is also a bottom-up initiative that has been led by Roma people for over 25 years. The Budapest Business School initiative also started as a bottom-up program, which was embraced by university leadership. The initiatives were implemented in different ways and may have different levels of success depending on the implementation approach.

Another difference is that the initiatives have different levels of sustainability. The future of the Satbayev University initiative is uncertain due to the arrival of new leadership. On the other hand, the Babeş-Bolyai University initiative is embedded in the host institution with a steady source of funding from the university itself. This internal funding has been supplemented with external grants since the initiative's inception. The initiative at the Budapest Business School is also internally funded and enjoys the support of the faculty as well as that of institutional leadership. The Romaversitas Foundation relies on external donation revenues, and thus, financial unpredictability remains a concern.

The similarities as well as the differences in program design and implementation are influenced by the social, economic, and political context of the region and of each country. In Kazakhstan, the expansion of higher education after the postsocialist transition raised concerns about massification and quality in higher education and led to a policy focus on addressing differences in incoming students' academic preparedness. The student success initiative at Satbayev University was designed to address such concerns about higher education quality.

In Romania, the low participation rate of disadvantaged groups in higher education and the country's commitment to aligning its higher education system with the Bologna process have led to a focus on making the university accessible and supportive of the inclusion and success of students with disabilities. In Hungary, as in many other countries of the region, higher education participation is substantially influenced by socio-economic background. Due to the educational disadvantages accumulated earlier in the educational pipeline, Roma students have extremely low participation rates in higher education, which

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explains the focus of the Romaversitas programs on promoting the educational access and success of Roma secondary school and university students.

In conclusion, the four initiatives discussed here all share the legacy of higher education massification in the aftermath of post-socialist transitions in the region. On the one hand, this legacy of massification in some instances led to concerns about higher education "quality" and was met with initiatives designed to promote academic success and degree completion. On the other hand, massification also led to disadvantaged student groups finding their way to higher education in increasing numbers (though still at very low rates) and universities in the region finding themselves ill-equipped to address their unique needs. Some of the initiatives discussed here exemplify institutional responses to the changing needs of their increasingly diverse student bodies.

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3.2 Supporting Roma Students in Hungary: The Case of Romaversitas

Authors: Dóra Weber, Angéla Kóczé, Kata Orosz

Name and weblink of the organization

Romaversitas Foundation

https://romaversitas.hu/en/

Main contacts and sources of information

Boglárka Fedorkó, current CEO; Angéla Kóczé, one of the founders and founding Executive Director of Romaversitas; Gábor Daróczi, former director of Romaversitas; Erzsébet Báder (Roma Education Fund Scholarship coordinator); Evaluation Study by Gábor Héra (2014)

Type of initiative

A Roma-founded, Roma-led 'seed' programme and community with the aim of establishing a strong Roma intellectual middle class by providing academic services and support for Roma high school and university students to become educated professionals who can assert the interests of Roma communities and can create narratives for Roma people.

Introduction

Despite being the most numerous ethnic minority group not only in the Central-Eastern European region but also on the European continent with a dispersed population of approximately 10-12 million, Roma people have experienced social, economic, and political marginalization for generations. In the case of Hungary, there is a rapidly growing Roma population that is highly concentrated in the most deprived settlements of the country. According to estimates, approximately 9-10% of the overall population is Roma, and as of today, approximately one million people are Roma.[1] The marginalization of the Roma population has deep historical roots that were reflected in their employment and

1 There are only estimates of the number of the Roma population due to various reasons, including the subjective nature of the existing definitions and the different methodological approaches that are employed to measure the number of the Roma population. For instance, census data relies on self-identification and the number of people who self-identify as Roma varies according to the perceived level of discrimination, stigmatization, or the presence of racist discourses in the social-political environment at the time of data collection. As a result, data based on self-identification is usually only 30-40% of the actual Roma population as measured through the perception of others. Pénzes, J. & Tátrai, P. & Pásztor, I. Z. (2018). A roma népesség területi megoszlásának változása Magyarországon az elmúlt évtizedekben [Changes in the Spatial Distribution of the Roma Population in Hungary During the Last Decades]. Területi Statisztika, 58(1): 3-26.

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educational opportunities – an educational gap emerged between the Roma and non-Roma populations at the time of the introduction of compulsory education in the late 18th – early 19th century. Relative achievements in closing this gap were achieved during the postWorld War II period, but only in the lower levels of education and in vocational education, which meant that Roma people were mostly employed at the bottom of the industrial hierarchy. The educational gains that manifested in the high employability of Roma people in the socialist period vanished when the planned economy of the 1980s showed signs of crisis. With the country's transition to a market economy, heavy industry was dismantled, leaving a large share of the Roma population unemployed. By the early 1990s, the relative value of elementary and vocational education decreased compared to higher secondary and tertiary level qualifications, and people with low qualifications could not reenter the labor market, which hit the Roma population the hardest.[2] The pressure of cumulated social inequalities and the high territorial concentration of Roma people in deprived areas, coupled with a highly selective education system and a fragmented school network, led to segregated school environments where Roma children are more likely to receive lower quality education, face lower expectations, show worse performance and are significantly more likely to become early school leavers compared to their peers.[3]

At the tertiary education level, the systemic discrimination and segregation that Roma people face within the education system translate into such low levels of participation that only approximately 1% of the Roma population becomes higher education graduates.[4]

In Hungary, the process of segregated and selective schooling was enabled by a combination of factors that can be traced back to the period of democratic transition in the country. A set of educational legislative measures during 1989-1993 introduced market elements to the education system that mirrored the demands of the social elite. These came with the cost of increasing inequality and segregation within the education system.[5]

Free parental school choice and the relative freedom of schools to select students were some of the new measures that facilitated the process of selection and segregation. The introduction of various secondary school types offered further routes for enhanced selection. During the 2010s, the selection and segregation were enhanced by outsourcing the maintenance of schools to

2 Kertesi, G. (2005). Cigány foglalkoztatás és munkanélküliség a rendszerváltás előtt és után [Roma employment and unemployment before and after the transition] in: Kertesi, G: A társadalom peremén. Budapest: Osiris

3 Radó, P. (2020). *Social selection in education: The wider context of the segregation of Roma pupils in Hungary*. Center for Policy Studies. Working paper series. 2020/4

4 Morley, L., Mirga, A., & Redzepi, N. (2020). *The Roma in European higher education: Recasting identities, reimagining futures*. London: Bloomsbury Academic

5 Lannert, J., Mártonfi, Gy. & Vágó, I. (2006). The Impact of Structural Upheavals on Educational Organisation, Attainment and Choice: the experience of post-Communist Hungary. European Journal of Education, Vol. 41, No. 1

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churches and by establishing an increasing number of denominational schools that could rely on selective enrollment practices. School populations that reflect parents' educational and socioeconomic backgrounds[6] are homogenized to the extent that Hungary ranks last among the OECD countries in terms of social mobility.[7]

Vast inequalities are found in the educational qualification between the Roma and the non-Roma population. According to employment statistics from 2014-2017, while early school leaving increased from 57% to 65% among the Roma youth (18-24 years old) within this period, meaning their highest qualification was 8 years of primary education, early school leaving only concerned approximately 10% of the non-Roma youth population.[8] Those Roma students who continue their studies to the secondary level are more likely to enter vocational schools, while non-Roma youth are more likely to enter high schools, which is the main trajectory for applying to university. Due to the high drop-out rates among Roma students, approximately 25% of Roma youth acquire only a vocational qualification, approximately 15% finish secondary school where both a vocational qualification and high school leaving qualification can be obtained, and only approximately 5% of Roma students graduate from high schools with a high school leaving qualification.[9]

As a result of the post-2011 higher education reforms in Hungary, gaining a "state-funded place" at universities became increasingly difficult, and paying tuition at the "self-funded" places was not possible for many Roma families. Even when scholarships are available for Roma students, they might be discouraged from applying or starting their studies without the support of a dedicated organization that assists them in the process. In 2018, approximately 30% of the non-Roma 25–54-year-old population in Hungary had a higher education qualification, while the rate of Roma graduates remained approximately 1% of the Roma population.[10]

6 Radó, P. (2020). *Social selection in education: The wider context of the segregation of Roma pupils in Hungary*. Center for Policy Studies. Working paper series. 2020/4

7 OECD. (2018). *A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility*. OECD.

8 KSH [Central Statistical Agency of Hungary] (2018*). Munkaerőpiaci helyzetkép. [Snapshot of the Hungarian Labormarket.]*

9 Based on an educational cycle analysis of Roma students born in 1991, by the time they reached 20-21, the following could be seen about their educational trajectory: 93% finished primary school, 88,6% continued to secondary school where drop-out rates are very significant as only 24,7% of the Roma students acquired vocational qualification and 21,6% obtained high school leaving diploma that is a pre-requisite of university entry. The rate of Roma students who started their tertiary education was 4,2% within this age cohort. (Hajdu, T. & Kertesi, G. & Kézdi, G. (2014). Roma fiatalok a középiskolában. Beszámoló a Tárki Életpálya-felvételének 2006 és 2012 közötti hullámaiból) New employment figures (KSH (2018). Munkaerőpiaci helyzetkép) show that the percentage of Roma students who gain secondary qualifications is decreasing.

10 Lukács J., Á. (2018). *Roma egyetemisták beilleszkedési mintázatai kapcsolathálózati megközelítésben. [Patterns of social integration of Roma university students, from a social network perspective.]* PhD Dissertation, Semmelweis University.

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Romaversitas has been built on the premise that the Roma emancipation movement must be based on and driven by a community of highly educated Roma individuals who can formulate their own narratives and can assert the interest of their own community. Therefore, increasing the number of Roma graduates and closing the education gap between Roma and non-Roma Hungarians is at the core of the mission of the Romaversitas program.

Description of the program

Being one of the few and often the first person in a family or even in a community to enter higher education can be a lonely experience, especially when coming from a racialized minority group that is often being stigmatized or discriminated against. While upward social mobility is mostly portrayed as an unambiguously positive process, it can put a high emotional toll on young people, in Hungary and elsewhere.[11]

Responding to the challenge of the high personal cost of social mobility for the Roma in Hungary, the Romaversitas initiative was conceptualized by a collective of Roma graduates and intellectuals during the second half of the 1990s. The founders, who were also part of the political reform movement in Hungary at the time, wished to create a formal structure and space where they could connect, support each other and coconstruct and nurture their own intellectual, cultural, and social capital. In 1996, a summer university organized by the Roma Civil Rights Foundation together with the Gandhi High School and College (the first ethnic Roma secondary school in Europe established in 1994) became an event that catalyzed the materialization of the idea. The concept of the initiative was developed by a small group of Roma and non-Roma intellectuals: Angela Kocze, Aladar Horvath, Janos Bogdan and Marton Jozsa.

Angela Kocze became the founding director of Romaversitas in 1996-1997. The program was established within the legal framework of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation and was modeled after the organizational and academic structure of the 'Invisible College', an elite college established in the early 1990s for university students in the field of social sciences with a highly selective academic nature, where mostly non-Roma Hungarians could gain access due to being a place of elite reproduction.

Romaversitas can be characterized as a 'seed programme', in that the goal of promoting the access and success of Roma students in higher education was envisioned as part of a broader, long-term vision for producing a Roma elite; an elite of young intellectuals and professionals who will in time continue and expand the work of promoting access and success for Roma youth in higher education, and beyond. The idea of 'elite creation and reproduction' was an appealing aim of those Roma intellectuals who wished to create a framework

11 Nyirő, Zs. & Durst, J. (2018). *Soul work and giving back: Ethnic support groups and the hidden costs of social mobility. Lessons from Hungarian Roma graduates*. Intersections. EEJSP 4(1): 88-108.

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for their community formation where identity work was key to establishing a solid intellectual base for a Roma emancipation movement. The core pillars of Romaversitas were designed based on those of the 'Invisible College' – personalized, pastoral work such as mentoring, tutoring in various academic subjects, opportunities for learning foreign languages and a scholarship assigned for each student who was selected with no limitation to their area of study but with the requirement of being in at least their second semester at university (a criterion that was gradually relaxed over the years).

The Romaversitas program was set up in 1996 with a grant from the Soros Foundation (which had an office in Budapest at the time) and supported 10-12 people in its first year. Romaversitas was established in 2011 as a stand-alone foundation to ensure the institutional identity and continuity of the program. In the first 15 years, the program's main donors were the Open Society Foundation's Roma Initiative and the Roma Education Fund (REF), an international foundation established in 2005 with the aim of closing the educational gap between Roma and non-Roma. The Norwegian Civic Fund became the third major donor by the mid-2010s. While revenue sources gradually became more diversified with an increasing number of corporations and individual donors contributing to the sustainability of the program, the financial circumstances of the organization were still characterized as 'unpredictable', as no more than half-to-one-year planning could be securely made in advance. Romaversitas Foundation currently operates with an approximate budget of $200.000 per year.

Due to the lack of resources and apparatus to launch in-person recruitment campaigns, the main channels of recruitment are informal: prospective beneficiaries are reached through word of mouth and personal and family connections of the alumni network, partner organizations, and the social media presence of Romaversitas.

The organization supports between 40-50 students each year who self-identify as Roma. Romaversitas has served a total of approximately 450 students since 1996. As community building is a core component of the program, community weekends are organized regularly where all former students are invited, setting the space for forging strong personal ties and maintaining a Roma intellectual hub. Alumni stand as role models with expertise in various disciplines and professions while also providing a professional network for young Roma graduates, which is central to their social capital building.

The objective of Romaversitas is thus not only to deliver personal support to help students navigate the predominantly middle- and upper-middle-class environment of universities and to ensure that students can successfully obtain a university degree and enter the labor market but also to form a community and a network of Roma intellectuals in Hungary who can support each other, form their own narratives, become active participants in civic matters, and actively seek to support their communities.

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Identification of linkages with national policies

Since 1996, Romaversitas has operated as a stand-alone, unique initiative of its kind in Hungary, established and managed by Roma people, to exclusively support Roma university students. The program and the subsequent foundation have been led by various Roma intellectuals. In 2001, when Romaversitas became an independent legal entity, Angela Kocze introduced the Romaversitas model as a Roma higher education support program to Roma NGOs operating in other countries, such as Romania, Bulgaria, FYROM- Macedonia, Albania and Serbia. Some of these projects came to be founded by the Roma Educational Fund (REF).

As far as governmental policies in Hungary were concerned, while there were an increasing number of scholarship opportunities and talent programs operating, alongside a range of civil society initiatives that focused more on disadvantage compensation, on the structural level, it became increasingly more difficult for Roma children to access quality education through the public education system. The educational restructuring measures during the 2010s, such as decreasing the compulsory school leaving age from 18 to 16 years, incentivized early school leaving.[12] Educational policies also created new avenues of selection between Roma and non-Roma Hungarians, for example, by increasing the number of denominational schools and giving them the right to select which students to enroll at ages 6-7.[13]

These shifts in educational policies further constrained the schooling opportunities of Roma children, intensified the educational segregation process, and steered young Roma people toward lower qualifications. This meant that even fewer Roma students entered and finished high school or planned to apply to university than before; thus, the aim of Romaversitas to increase the number of Roma university graduates became constrained at an earlier stage than where the program initially aimed to deliver its services. As a result, in addition to supporting students through their university years, the Foundation now had to start mentoring students from their secondary school years.

A more direct challenge to the operation of Romaversitas came as a result of a government initiative that established the Christian Roma Colleges for Advanced Studies Network[14] in 2011 as part of the higher education scene.

12 Fazekas, K., Csillag, M., Hermann, Z. & Scharle, Á. (2019). Munkaerőpiaci tükör [Mirror of the labor market]. Közgazdaság – és Regionális Tudományi Kutatóközpont

13 Radó, P. (2020). *Social selection in education: The wider context of the segregation of Roma pupils in Hungary*. Center for Policy Studies. Working paper series. 2020/4

14 'Advanced colleges' build on the concept and heritage of 'folk colleges' which were conceptualized and established during the 1930s – 40 s after sociographic research gave insights into the appalling deprivation of the Hungarian countryside (the movement was resumed by the Communist regime in 1949). The folk colleges aimed to give the opportunity for children coming from poverty and disadvantaged circumstances to study, pursue an academic path and become intellectuals rather than melting into the working class of the cities. This was realized by establishing community living spaces and pursuing an academic curriculum that gave the backbone of these students' social and cultural capital. Today, advanced colleges still preserve

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Romaversitas, a civil society organization that was run by Roma intellectuals and had 15 years of experience in supporting Roma students, did not qualify to apply on the tender, as only higher education institutions or church-based organizations could be the maintainers of Roma advanced colleges.[15] Seeing the Christian churches as the appropriate actor to whom the task of Roma talent cultivation and social inclusion should be outsourced reflected the Hungarian government's philosophy where a strong commitment to Christian identity is emphasized.

On paper, both Romaversitas and the Roma advanced colleges shared the same mission: supporting the growth of an educated Roma intellectual middle-class. However, the Christian Network's philosophy is somewhat contradictory to that of Romaversitas since the Network places a strong emphasis on the cultivation and commitment to a Christian identity rather than nurturing a strong and independent Roma identity. While Romaversitas is a bottom-up initiative, the establishment of the Christian Network reflected the priorities of the Hungarian government in delegating more power to the churches. The Christian Network also became a competitor to Romaversitas, as now they practically competed for the same students only with different resources. [16] Gábor Daróczi, the director of Romaversitas during this period (2008-2016), saw this as a way of pushing the organization out of a shrinking market – as the number of university students, including the number of Roma university students, was already decreasing in Hungary.[17] Many Roma students opted for the Christian Roma Advanced Colleges when facing the choice of enrolling in an NGO-run program with uncertain, year-to-year funding that offered no accommodation on the one hand and a state-backed program that included accommodation in student dormitories on the other hand.

The idea behind the governmental initiative, according to Daróczi, was to create a counterinstitution to Romaversitas that raises Roma intellectuals,

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the initial principle of talent cultivation but in general, the doors are open both for students from more and less affluent backgrounds who live together as a community and pursue an academic curriculum besides their university studies.

15 https://www.oktatas.hu/pub_bin/dload/felsooktatas/roma_szakkollegium/A_Roma_Szakkollegiumi_Tanacs_ertekelesi_szempontjai_es_minositesi_kovete.docx

16 While Romaversitas has not been granted money from the EU funds which were flowing through the government, financial means were allocated both from the central budget and from the European Social Fund to the financing of the Christian Network. While the financing of the Christian Network became an integrated part of the central budget since 2018 which could be a great achievement as far as Roma emancipation is concerned, concerns about the authenticity of this aim and its cost effectiveness were raised by Romaversitas, given that only 60% of the student population of the Christian Colleges has to be of Roma ethnicity – a ratio they failed to achieve on various occasions. At the same time, Romaversitas has not been granted any financial support from the government budget even though they exclusively support Roma students (40-50 yearly) with considerable expertise and provide a broader set of services from a fraction of the money allocated to the operating churches of the network.

17 https://www.portfolio.hu/gazdasag/20171227/folytatodik-a-hanyatlas-20-eves-melyponton-az-egyetemistak-szama-magyarorszagon-272007

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who will be loyal to the state and can be employed within the state apparatus. Establishing parallel structures and pushing smaller organizations out from the market by channelling more funding to preferred entities and barring others from receiving those funds is a tactic that the Hungarian government has deployed in several spheres – including the media, civil society, and the education sphere.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

Reaching and recruiting eligible Roma students and the unpredictability of funds have been the main challenges Romaversitas faced over the past 25+ years of the program. In addition, tensions in program leadership emerged around the initial program vision, which had to be conciliated with the increasingly hostile policy environment. The services offered by Romaversitas were gradually adjusted to the changing circumstances of the target population.

The initial vision of the organization was driven by the desire to create a community of talent cultivation and intellectual elite (re)production. As one of the founders mentioned, there was always a tension between mitigating the social and economic disadvantages that most Roma students faced on the one hand and a vision of "elite education" on the other hand. Despite the expansion of higher education enrollment in Hungary, very few Roma students benefited from it due to the structural disadvantages discussed before. This trend had to be acknowledged and integrated into the vision of the Romaversitas Foundation to ensure its legitimacy and sustainability. As a result, from the mid-2010s, the foundation shifted toward a more inclusive approach where services were offered for Roma students starting already at the secondary school level.

Gradually offering various programmatic activities to secondary school students led to the establishment of the University Preparation Programme of Romaversitas in 2017. Building partnerships with different civil society organizations to provide coordinated support to Roma students at various stages of their studies was also a means to address challenges with outreach. Among the partners of Romaversitas are different civil society initiatives, including the after-school (*tanoda*) movement that works to counter the educational disadvantages of those students who are underserved by the public education system[18] and the Milestone Institute, whose "Bridge Program" targets talented Roma high school students so that they can study at the best higher education institutions worldwide.

An evaluation study of Romaversitas covering the period 2011-2014 that was conducted by an independent researcher found that financial barriers were a key factor in determining whether students supported by

18 Szűcs, N. & Fejes (2021). Csodafegyver vagy pótcselekvés? A tanodamozgalom története és legitimációs kérdései. [Magic weapon or displacement activity? The history of the afterschool movement and questions around its legitimacy] Iskolakultúra 2021/01

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the Romaversitas Foundation could enroll at a university. As Romaversitas was only able to provide scholarships but was not able to cover the tuition fees for those students who were not accepted to state-funded places at Hungarian universities, this prevented some of the students from enrolling at a university altogether.[19] The same study also found that an increasing number of Romaversitas alumni imagined their futures abroad – a challenge to the long-term sustainability of the Romaversitas community and its vision of integrating the narratives of Roma people into local and national policy-making in Hungary.[20] According to one of the former directors, the reasons behind program alumni envisioning their futures abroad were largely similar to the general population's motivations: better employment prospects and the wish to escape a politically antagonized society for a less divisive and more inclusive one – a desire that is even more pronounced when one belongs to an ethnic minority.

Results of the innovative equity approach

Students who have been part of the Romaversitas program considered the role of Romaversitas as a turning point both in their personal and professional lives. They emphasized that being a member of Romaversitas was important not only in terms of successfully finishing their university studies but also in terms of their Roma identity formation as part of a community of young Roma intellectuals – which for many became a community for life.

The 2014 evaluation study assessed the impact of Romaversitas programmatic activities along four dimensions, which corresponded to the four stated aims of the program: foreign language proficiency, good academic performance, graduation from university, and employment after graduation.

Correspondingly, the following metrics were defined to assess program impact:

- the number of foreign language certificates obtained,
- the percentage of successful university graduations,
- GPA of the supported university students,
- the share of university graduates who find employment within a year of graduation.

The table below shows key performance indicators of Romaversitas programs for the years 2011-2014. (The program has been sustained beyond 2014, but Romaversitas did not have the capacity to collect data systematically beyond the 2014 evaluation study, which was conducted by an external contractor.)

19 Héra, G. (2014). *A Romaversitas Alapítvány monitoring vizsgálata. [A monitoring study of the Romaversitas Foundation.]*

20 Héra, G. (2014). *A Romaversitas Alapítvány monitoring vizsgálata. [A monitoring study of the Romaversitas Foundation.]*

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Main indicators, 2011-2014			
Expected results	**Reported results (2011/2012)**	**Reported results (2012/2013)**	**Reported results (2013/2014)**
All graduating students will have obtained at least an intermediate foreign language certificate during the period of their studies	14 students (77,7%)	7 students (87,5%)	12 students (100%)
All of the students (50 at the time) will achieve a minimum of 3 GPA (on a scale of 1 to 5)	3.92	3.95	4.2
100% of the students will graduate on time (within 4 or 5 years depending on the length of their programs	11 students (58%)	7 students (47%)	7 students (58%)
100% of the students will find employment within a year of graduation	10 students (55%)	8 students (100%)	n.d

Source: Héra, G. (2014).

In terms of foreign language certificates, the stated aims were almost always met, as at least an intermediate language certificate was obtained by most of the students in the years observed. Regarding GPA, the program's stated aims were achieved, as the GPA of students was one GPA point higher than expected by the program (approximately 4.0 on a scale of 1.0-5.0, instead of 3.0).

In the case of employability, there was a promising trend: in the two years for which there were data available, 55% and 100% of Romaversitas graduates found employment within a year of graduation. The only problem was on-time graduation, as in the observed period, only slightly over half of the students could complete their studies on time.

As of 2022, to facilitate the transition of Roma university students to the labor market, Romaversitas launched a new initiative, the "Leadership Training Program", in partnership with various companies, the municipality of Budapest, and civil society organizations to offer paid internship opportunities and comentorship to the students of Romaversitas. This is also an important step toward giving an opportunity to students to earn money during their studies within their professional field of interest rather than having to work in a manual or nonspecialized job to be able to support themselves.

Since 1996, the Romaversitas program has supported over 450 Roma students. According to available evidence, 85-90% of these students successfully obtained university degrees in various disciplines and became professionals

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within their fields. An important aspect regarding the choice of profession in the case of Roma students is that whereas Roma graduates are increasingly represented in a diverse set of professions, social pressure, expectations and the marginalized situation of the Roma population can lay heavy on Roma students and intellectuals' shoulders to "give back" to their communities. Beyond personal motivation, this might explain why Roma university students are highly represented in pedagogy and social science degree programs and later in the social field and care professions.[21]

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

The Hungarian Romaversitas Foundation served as the model for an international network that was set up by the Roma Education Fund (REF). NGOs for programs targeting Roma university students were established in Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, and Kosovo. While the Hungarian Romaversitas is a bottom-up initiative, the international network has been built with the coordination and grants of REF. The Hungarian Romaversitas Foundation remained a stand-alone entity and a strategic partner of REF, while the entities established to run the Romaversitas programs in other countries were handled under the grant scheme of REF.

After three management cycles, REF changed priorities, and in countries where the local organizations were exclusively dependent on funding from REF, the programs were discontinued. In those countries where new funding sources could be secured, either by convincing governments to integrate the Romaversitas program into their central budget spending (Macedonia) or by finding international donors (Albania, Kosovo). The continuing Romaversitas programs in these contexts often had a broader scope than the initial Romaversitas model, which focused on the higher/tertiary level, whereas the broader concepts often included secondary outreach and employment support elements. The personal leadership, social network, and ability of local NGO leaders to secure a diversified source of funding were the key success factors in the replicability of the Romaversitas model.

Concluding comments

There are several reasons why the Romaversitas program in Hungary is an innovative higher education access and success initiative. One of them is that the programmatic activities have been conceived and implemented by Roma intellectuals to mitigate the personal and socioemotional challenges, or the so-called "hidden cost of mobility", experienced by Roma university students. The mission of Romaversitas is also innovative because it goes beyond providing support to Roma students during their secondary school and university studies to improve their academic performance or to ensure

21 Gulyás, K. (2022). Roma/cigány fiatalok pályaválasztási preferenciái. [Roma/gipsy youth's career preferences] Acta Medicinae et Sociologica Vol. 13. no. 34. (33-62)

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their retention and graduation. By delivering a strong academic and mentoring component, the Romaversitas program also wishes to raise future generations of Roma intellectuals who are proud of their Roma identity and are committed to being the drivers of the Roma emancipatory movement that forms its own narratives and supports the causes of their communities.

A personal recollection of one of the beneficiaries, Henriett Dinók, who later became one of the directors of Romaversitas, speaks eloquently about the impact of this special and essential initiative and about the role of Romaversitas in young Roma students' lives: "Romaversitas gave me almost everything that I treasure today. Romaversitas is not just a training and scholarship program for Roma university students. Romaversitas means a whole world for most of the students, Romaversitas made us the people our parents wanted us to be, who we wanted to be… Romaversitas gave us not only financial support but a community, values, a mission, a dedication".

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3.3 Diagnostic Testing and Differentiated First-Year Curriculum at Satbayev University, Kazakhstan

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https://satbayev.university/en/about

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Type of initiative

This initiative introduced a digital diagnostic test and differentiated mandatory coursework for first-year students at a major research university in Kazakhstan; the aim of the initiative was to identify incoming students' level of academic preparation and assign them to level-appropriate courses to ensure the persistence and success of all students.

Introduction

As in other former Soviet and Central Asian countries, higher education in Kazakhstan underwent profound transformations in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet period, higher education institutions were centrally governed and were charged with fulfilling the industrial as well as ideological aims of the Soviet Union and the Kazakh SSR. In the 1990s, systemwide educational reform was implemented in Kazakhstan, and private HEIs were allowed to operate, which enabled a quick expansion of higher education enrollment. The government maintained centralized control over the entire higher education sector through the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as through presidential orders.[22]

Higher education reforms in the first 15-20 years of the postSoviet transition were mainly characterized by governmental efforts to emulate the policies and practices of Anglo-Saxon (predominantly American) higher education

22 For a detailed account of the transformation of higher education in Kazakhstan in the 20th and early 21st century, see Anh, S. E., Dixon, J., and Chekmareva, L. (2018). Looking at Kazakhstan's higher education landscape: From transition to transformation between 1920 and 2015. In: Huisman, J. et al. (Eds.) 25 years of transformations of higher education systems in postSoviet countries, Palgrave, p. 199-227.

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institutions, while the 2010s saw an increasing effort to align the Kazakhstani higher education system with the Bologna Process and thus with the higher education systems of continental European countries.[23]

In 2022, 122 universities will operate in Kazakhstan, 48 of which will be private. In 2020, the gross tertiary enrollment ratio in Kazakhstan was 71%[24], by far the highest among former Soviet and Central Asian countries. In the 2021-2022 academic year, there were 575,500 university students studying in the country, out of whom 160,000 were first-year students.[25] The revenue of public universities in Kazakhstan is heavily dependent on students who are financed through state grants. In the 2018-2019 academic year, there was a great expansion of state grants awarded to university students in Kazakhstan (see the change in the number of state grants awarded in Kazakhstan in Table 1).

Table 1. State grants for higher education in the period 2014-2022 in Kazakhstan.

Levels of education	**Academic years**							
	2014-2015	**2015-2016**	**2016-2017**	**2017-2018**	**2018-2019**	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**
Undergraduate	34 115	32 168	31 700	37 932	53 594	55 009	59 261	54 261
Masters	6 737	6 682	7 400	10 004	12 504	12 465	13 588	13 588
PhD	656	585	628	1 285	2 240	1 852	1 890	1 890
Total	**41 508**	**39 435**	**39 728**	**49 221**	**68 338**	**69 326**	**74 739**	**69 739**

Historically, public universities in Kazakhstan did not have autonomy in setting admissions standards. This was partially due to the highly centralized governance of public HEIs and partly a legacy of the major reform that aimed to increase the transparency of university admissions processes in the 2000s. The admissions reform entailed the introduction of a central exam, the so-called unified national test (UNT); all universities in Kazakhstan must consider the UNT scores in making their admissions decisions.[26] Prior to 2019, a minimum

23 Discussion based on Anh et al. (2018).

24 Data source: World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR?locations=KZ

25 Source of enrollment data: http://ranking.kz/ru/a/infopovody/13-iz-100-studentov-ne-okonchivshih-obuchenie-pokinuli-vuzy-rk-iz-za-finansovyh-zatrudnenij
Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan #199 dated April 16, 2018 on allocation of State educational grants for years 2018-2021 https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1800000199#z318

26 A detailed discussion of university admission reforms in Central Asia can be found in Drummond, T.W. & Gabrscek, S. (2012). Understanding higher education admissions reforms in the Eurasian Context. *European Education, 44*(1), p. 7-26.

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score of 65 out of 140 on the UNT was set by the Ministry of Education and Science as the minimum criterion for admission.[27]

Kazakh public universities are also mandated to allocate a certain number of seats based on quotas for special student groups, such as students who attended high school in rural areas of Kazakhstan. This policy is warranted by the underrepresentation of rural students at universities in Kazakhstan: in 2020, 56% of the country's schools were in rural areas and 44% in urban areas, yet only 38% of first-year university students came from rural areas in that year.[28] According to 2018 PISA results, rural students in Kazakhstan were one year behind their peers in the cities, and the difference between highest achieving regions [*oblast*] and the lowest achieving regions was two years in terms of academic preparation. A comparison of UNT scores also showed that high school students from urban backgrounds in Kazakhstan were much more likely to receive the UNT scores needed to obtain state-funded scholarships for state-funded university seats.[29] The major increase in study grants awarded by the state in 2018-2019 meant that more students who would have historically not been accepted to public universities were now able to enroll. Regardless, major gaps persist between high school graduates from urban and rural backgrounds in Kazakhstan in terms of their academic preparation, higher education aspirations, and choice of degree program.[30]

Located in Almaty, Satbayev University (SU) is one of the eight designated national universities[31] and the oldest technical university in Kazakhstan. Founded in 1934, it is considered the flagship engineering university in the country, currently offering engineering degree programs mainly in oil and gas, mining, and architecture. SU was ranked 501-5010 in the 2022 QS World University Ranking and 64th in the QS regional ranking for the "Emerging Europe and

27 The minimum score of 65 pertains to applicants to the so-called "national universities" (most prestigious and well-resourced public universities) in Kazakhstan; applicants to degree programs in pedagogy, agriculture and the veterinary fields need a minimum score of 60 and applicants to other public and private universities need a minimum score of 50 on the UNT to be admitted.

28 Data source: Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan, *General Education School by Area*, https://bala.stat.gov.kz/en/obscheobrazovatelnye-shkoly-po-tipu-mestnosti

29 For an empirical study comparing the academic preparedness, HE aspirations, and study choice of Kazakhstani students from rural and urban backgrounds, see Chankseliani, M., Gorgodze, S., Janashia, S., and Kurakbayev, K. (2020). Rural disadvantage in the context of centralized university admissions: A multiple case study of Georgia and Kazakhstan. *Compare, 50*(7), 995-1013.

30 Beyond the rural-urban divide, there is also an important difference in the academic preparation of high school graduates coming from "high quality" schools and other schools in Kazakhstan. According to a local higher education professional, the "high quality" schools are mainly the private schools, the network of Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, and the network of Bilim Innovation Schools (also known as Turkish high schools).

31 More information about the profiles of national universities in Kazakhstan can be found in Anh et al. (2018).

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Central Asia" region, making it the 4th highest ranked university in Kazakhstan in 2022.[32]

In the mid-2010s, important changes in management occurred at SU, which contributed to the emergence of the digital diagnostic testing initiative that this case study focuses on. In 2015, there was an attempt to merge a small but distinguished private university, Kazakh British Technical University (KBTU), with a university that is now known as SU. KBTU is a prestigious private university that was established in Kazakhstan after the visit of then President Nazarbayev to the UK in 2000.[33] By order of Nazarbayev, in 2015, the rector of KBTU was appointed as the rector of both KBTU and the Kazakh National Research Technical University named after K.I. Satbayev (as SU was then known).[34]

Although a full merger of the two universities eventually did not materialize and the two universities separated in 2017, KBTU's former top and middle management remained at SU and administered it for the following 4 years.[35] The rebranding of Kazakh National Research Technical University as Satbayev University in 2017 was part of the many changes the new leadership introduced; additional changes also included replacing most faculty members with new hires.

Description of the program

On average, SU admits around 2500 students per year; slightly over 80% of newly admitted students are funded through state grants. At SU, courses are offered in Kazakh and Russian languages, and some degree programs also offer English language tracks. Students can decide in which language to take their courses, but they need proof of intermediate-level proficiency in the given language to take them.

SU introduced the mandatory digital diagnostic test for all incoming students in 2017. The main rationale for introducing the test was to address the weakness

32 Source of ranking information: https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings

33 The Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, the UK Embassy in Kazakhstan, and the British Council played a key role in founding KBTU. KBTU has highly selective admissions, a joint degree program with the London School of Economics, and its graduates are employed by international oil and gas companies. Since 2003, the national oil company KazMunaiGas is the owner of 100% of the shares of the university.

34 Tengrinews (2015.12.15.) Назарбаев предложил объединить два казахстанских вуза . https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/nazarbaev-predlojil-obyedinit-dva-kazahstanskih-vuza-286361/ The presidential order itself did not elaborate on the purpose for the merger, but according to an interview with the newly appointed rector of the merged institutions, the "decision [was] intended, on the one hand, to optimize overall public spending on education and science. On the other hand, it [was] designed to combine the strengths of both universities". The full interview with Rector Beisimbetov can be read here: https://bsh.kz/news/8616

35 Rector Beisimbetov, the rector appointed by Nazarbayev to lead both universities, resigned in 2021. Tengrinews (2017.09.17.) КБТУ и КазНИТУ имени Сатпаева вновь стали отдельными вузами https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kbtu-i-kaznitu-imeni-satpaeva-vnov-stali-otdelnyimi-vuzami-327255/

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of cohort-based teaching, which limits faculty members' ability to address the diverse academic needs of individual students. In the mid-2010s, there was a widespread perception at universities in Kazakhstan, and among them at SU, that the expansion in higher education enrollment – supported by the increase in state grants discussed in the introduction – has "reduced student quality". There was also a concern among SU leaders and faculty members that high schools were "teaching to the test" and spending the last year of high school exclusively on prepping students so they can score a minimum of 65 points on the unified national test (UNT), ensuring they get a state-funded place at one of the country's public universities.[36]

The perception that student academic preparation varied greatly across the entering cohorts was evidenced by the high "failure rate" of first-year students at SU. Based on an interview with a leader at SU, "failure rate" at SU was defined as the percentage of first-year students who did not pass any of their first-semester courses. According to the interviewee, in 2016, more than a fourth (27%) of first-year students failed at SU based on this metric. University leadership also flagged an issue with English language proficiency. State standards in Kazakhstan mandate that all university students must take two English language courses in the first year of their degree programs. SU leadership noted that 70% of their first-year students took both mandatory English language courses at the beginner level.

To decrease the first-semester failure rate and to increase the English language proficiency of its student body, SU leadership introduced a mandatory diagnostic test for all incoming students. The first subject covered by the mandatory diagnostic testing requirement was English language. For this subject, the university required students to take the freely available trial tests of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). For the other core subjects tested on the UNT – mathematics, physics, Kazakh language, and Russian language – SU developed its own bespoke IT platform, with which to test students' level of academic preparation. Funding for the development of the IT platform came from the university's core budget.

The digital testing platform developed by SU's internal IT team offered adaptive testing in the four subjects mentioned above; that is, the tests automatically calibrated the level of difficulty of subsequent questions based on the student's performance on the first five relatively easy questions.

Taking diagnostic tests in English, math, and physics is mandatory for all incoming students.[37] The testing platform includes an introductory script that explains to students the purpose of the testing, emphasizes the importance of

36 More information about the Unified National Test (UNT), which is used for admissions decisions at universities in Kazakhstan, can be found in Winter, L., Rimini, C., Soltanbekova, A. and Tynybayeva, M. (2014). The culture and practice of assessment in Kazakhstan. In: Bridges, D. (Ed.) *Educational reform and internationalization: The case of school reform in Kazakhstan*. Cambridge University Press, p. 106-132.

37 As of 2022, SU no longer requires entering students to take the IELTS test if they have another accepted English language certificate.

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showcasing their actual level of knowledge and proficiency, and reassures them that their admission to the university program is final and is not dependent on their performance on the diagnostic tests.

First-year students are assigned to mandatory first-semester courses that are commensurate with their performance, as assessed by the adaptive diagnostic test. The new courses, with differentiated levels, were developed as part of the implementation of the initiative. The new management of SU replaced most of the university's faculty when it came on board in 2015, and the new hires (as well as the few faculty members who were retained) were enrolled in intensive training for delivering the new first-year curriculum. The Director of SU's English Language Department led the training and mentoring of course instructors and encouraged peer learning among SU faculty members.

To increase the English language proficiency of the student body, SU leadership decided to require SU students to complete not only the state-mandated two but also a total of four English language courses as part of their degree program. Along with this requirement, SU began to offer five different levels of English language courses (from basic to advanced), and students are assigned to courses based on their proficiency, as demonstrated in the IELTS test taking at the beginning of their first semester. For the other mandatory first-year subjects, SU also introduced differentiated courses. As a result of the policy change, SU now offered three different levels of courses for Kazakh and Russian languages and two different levels for mathematics and physics (high school math and calculus I and high school physics and physics I, respectively).

The completion of lower-level courses prepares students to take higher (university)-level courses, and thus, they can be considered a form of remedial education. At public universities in Kazakhstan, a total of 240 credits are required for graduation[38], and the state grant covers the cost of these 240 credits. State-funded students must pay out of pocket for any additional credit-bearing courses completed beyond this 240. Students who start with the lower-level (remedial) courses receive academic credit for them, and these count toward their 240 state-funded credits. While the coverage of lower-level (remedial) courses by the state grant is beneficial for low-income students, and so is the fact that these courses count toward degree completion, the policy restricts these students' choice of electives down the line – as they will have fewer state-funded credits left for electives.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

Implementation of the new testing policy and differentiated first-year curriculum resulted in an increase in teaching hours required to deliver the new, differentiated first-year curriculum. For example, prior to the change, there were only two compulsory English courses offered at SU; with the new policy, the number of English language courses offered doubled. The increase

38 From a first-cycle (bachelor) degree program.

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in mandatory English language courses resulted in some previously mandatory courses no longer being offered, which caused resentment among faculty members whose teaching hours (and thus income) were reduced as a result of this change.

To facilitate the implementation of the new policy, the university leadership changed the governance structure to accommodate the new curriculum. They created a new department, called the Foundations Department, which was responsible for teaching all the mandatory first-year courses. These courses, referred to as the "general education disciplines", were previously contributed by individual schools and departments.

Another important change that came with the introduction of mandatory diagnostic testing and the differentiated first-year curriculum was the mandatory, ongoing tracking of student performance starting in the first semester. End-of-semester grades were now framed as indicators of teaching outcomes, and the tracking of the grades was meant to increase the accountability of faculty members for these outcomes. The grade tracking itself and the rhetoric of accountability were met with some resistance from SU faculty members. The university took several measures to overcome this resistance. On the one hand, systematic trainings were held for faculty to explain the needs for change, discuss new policies and procedures, widen the perspectives of staff, and share innovative teaching approaches. SU faculty and staff were freed from other responsibilities for two hours on Thursday afternoons to attend these professional development activities. On the other hand, higher education institutions in Kazakhstan hire faculty members for one- or three-year terms, and everyone must undergo an evaluation at the end of their term. Lack of compliance with the new institutional policies and lack of attendance at the professional development activities outlined above could negatively affect faculty members' evaluation.

Another implementation challenge concerned the capacity of SU faculty members to deliver more advanced-level courses, especially mandatory English language courses. To help with the professional development of the teachers of English language courses, the English Language Department (whose leadership was also "transplanted" from KBTU) organized ongoing training and peer learning events for faculty. At the end of the training process, the most capable course instructors were selected and assigned as leaders of the various curricular tracks. A differentiated pay scale for faculty members was also introduced: faculty members who earned their degrees abroad, with support from Kazakhstan's government-funded Bolashak scholarship program[39], were offered higher salaries than local graduates.

39 More information about Kazakhstan's Bolashak program, and its role in higher education capacity building in the country, can be found in Perna, L., Orosz, K., and Jumakolov, Z. (2015). Understanding the human capital benefits of a government-funded international scholarship program: An exploration of Kazakhstan's Bolashak program. *International Journal of Educational Development, 40*, p. 85-97.

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Results of the innovative equity approach

The initiative allowed the university to gauge the academic preparation levels of incoming students more accurately and to address differences in academic preparation by offering remedial courses and a differentiated approach to first-semester course work. 2017 was the first year when diagnostic testing was used and differentiated coursework was introduced, along with new standards of academic quality and accountability. Suggestive of the impact of these new practices, the first-year "failure rate" at SU, which was 27% in 2016, dropped to 11% in 2017. The evolution of the number of students expelled from SU due to "academic failure" also suggests a positive impact. In the 2015-16 academic year, 780 students were expelled due to academic failure. This number increased to a record 1385 terminations in 2016-2017 but decreased to 493, 349 and 629 in the following three years.

Another change, also suggestive of the positive impact of the diagnostic testing initiative and the revised first-year curriculum, is the increasing proportion of students who demonstrate English proficiency at the intermediate level within 2 years (4 semesters) and who continue taking professional courses in English throughout their studies at SU. However, it is important to note that according to institutional data sources, in 2016, only 1 percent of the SU students had an English language level of B1 [IELTS 4-5], and by 2020, it increased by 39 percent. In 2018, 5 percent of the newly admitted SU students already had a B1 level of English, and by 2020, it increased to 8 percent. These data suggest that SU was successful in attracting more students with high English language skills. These incoming students were most likely graduates of highly reputable national and international schools where the language of instruction is fully or partially in English.

In 2019, higher education regulation at the national level changed, allowing public universities in Kazakhstan to set their own minimum admissions scores. SU started increasing its minimum admission scores to its degree programs from 65 to 70 and then to 85. The average UNT score of admitted students at SU increased from 51.9 in 2017 to 94.1 in 2020, and the median UNT score increased from 71.9 in 2017 to 85.2 in 2020. Along with an increase in UNT scores, the number of self-paid students declined. In 2015, 812 self-paid students were admitted to SU. The number dropped to 189 in the following year and did not exceed 300 until 2020. This is indicative of the increasing academic preparation of students applying to SU, as self-paid students tend to have lower UNT scores compared to their peers who receive state-funded scholarships.

As the above data points suggest, the documented decrease in "academic failure" and documented increase in the proportion of students with higher levels of English proficiency at SU is likely the result of a combination of selection effects (as the university is becoming more effective in its recruitment efforts and more selective in its admissions) and the innovative practices related to diagnostic testing, differentiated approach to first-year coursework,

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and changes in quality and accountability standards at the university. In the aftermath of the implementation of the more selective admissions policy, the number of SU students from rural areas decreased: in 2016, 47% of incoming SU students hailed from rural areas, and this proportion dropped to 41% of incoming students by 2020. The proportion of local students (i.e., students graduating from high schools in Almaty) also increased slightly over this period.

According to institutional surveys conducted at SU in the year that the diagnostic tests were first used, adopting the curriculum for those with lower levels of academic preparation and providing more advanced curriculum to academically better prepared students was seen by university leadership, faculty, and at least some students as an effective way to ensure the academic success of all students. Faculty members teaching the first-year courses at SU reported that they found it easier to teach student groups that were more homogenous in terms of academic preparation.

Students who were assigned to higher-level courses were also happy with the new system, as it allowed them to progress toward degree completion faster or to take elective courses in lieu of the mandatory English language courses if they could already demonstrate proficiency at the time of enrollment with the IELTS test or another language certificate. The differentiated coursework and the subsequent opportunity to complete degree programs faster had an unintended and undesirable consequence, however. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some SU students asked friends or upper-class students to take the diagnostic tests for them so that they could also complete their degree program faster.

Based on feedback from course instructors, a change was made to student assignments. First-year students continue to be assigned to their first-year courses based on their performance on the diagnostic tests. However, if the course instructors find that a student's actual performance in the course is not aligned with the results of the diagnostic test, they have up to two weeks after the start of the first semester to move the student to a different level course.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

The mandatory diagnostic testing system at SU, and the corresponding changes to the first-year curriculum (including the provision of lower-level or remedial courses), has itself been replicated from the admissions system of KBTU, a small, private, UK-style university in Kazakhstan. Introducing this system represented a major innovation at a public university in Kazakhstan, and SU remains the only public university in the country that has implemented a similar system.

What enabled this innovation to occur was the championing of the initiative by the leadership and top management of the university, the entirety of which was "transplanted" to SU as the result of a presidential order. In this respect, it represents a top-down initiative, where the presidential order for institutional

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merger first created the institutional leadership required for change, and then the new leadership introduced the initiative within the institution.[40]

In addition to leadership and management who championed the initiative, the availability of an appropriate IT infrastructure, including an online learning management system, facilitated the implementation of the initiative. An unexpected, positive side effect of the launch of the digital diagnostic testing initiative was an expedited transition to online/remote teaching during the coronavirus pandemic. SU was able to transition to online/remote teaching quicker than other universities in Kazakhstan because it already had in place a relatively advanced IT infrastructure and online learning management system that was used to launch the digital testing initiative.

Another interesting aspect of the design and implementation of this initiative was the fact that the university (KBTU) where the leadership was "imported" from had autonomy in its admissions decisions and has been practicing highly selective admissions. A move toward more selective admissions could also be seen at SU after the (temporary) merger, as the number of admitted students was 1142 in 2017, a marked decrease from 2960 admitted students in 2015. (Admitted student numbers started gradually increasing again after 2017.) The new leadership's familiarity with autonomous and selective admissions processes, as well as their understanding of "student quality", influenced the design and implementation of institutional reforms at SU. While most of the new institutional policies and practices were designed to promote student success for all in terms of completion and learning, the concurrent introduction of a more selective admissions policy restricted access for students from rural areas and from outside of Almaty.

The presidential order that was responsible for the (temporary) merger of KBTU and SU resulted in a fast-paced and effective implementation of the diagnostic testing policy and differentiated first-year curriculum. However, the initiation of policy change through presidential order with little or no input from institutional stakeholders may have put the diagnostic testing programme and the differentiated first-year coursework in a precarious position. With another change in institutional leadership at SU in 2021, the future of the initiatives established under the previous leadership remains uncertain.

Concluding Comments

Similar approaches to diagnostic testing and differentiated coursework in the first semester could be successful at other universities in Kazakhstan and more broadly in the Central Asian region, as long as university leadership is committed to change and the legislative, political, and governance context provides universities with sufficient autonomy to introduce differentiated curricula.

40 In comparing higher education system characteristics in Kazakhstan to other former Soviet countries, Anh et al. (2018) identified governance through presidential orders as the most idiosyncratic feature of Kazakhstani higher education.

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Successfully implementing a similar initiative requires, above all, a major restructuring of the first- and second-year study plans of university students. At Kazakhstani universities, in the first year and in part of the second year, students take their mandatory courses, which account for 30% of their total degree requirements. The sequence and content of these mandatory courses is set centrally by the Ministry of Education and Science, which leaves little room for individual universities to tailor their curricula to the academic preparation of their students. A higher degree of autonomy in curricular matters is a prerequisite for successful program implementation. In addition, there is a need to develop the capacity of university administrators to exercise this autonomy and fully implement various international standards (e.g., the ECTS adopted by Kazakhstan as a signatory of the Bologna Process). For most academic administrators working at public universities in Kazakhstan, challenging the status quo would require unlearning and relearning processes.

Consultation with faculty members is also required for successful implementation, as faculty members might resist the differentiated curricula if this would result in a loss of teaching hours. Course instructors in Kazakhstan are paid by the number of teaching credits, and having larger, undifferentiated cohorts allowed them to accumulate more teaching credits. As such, changes to faculty remuneration policies might also be required to align the incentives of course instructors with the goals of the initiative – which is to decrease the incidence of academic failure and promote the successful degree completion of all entering students.

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3.4 The Office for Students with Disabilities at Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania

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Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution or NGO working in higher education

Babeş-Bolyai University, https://www.ubbcluj.ro/en/

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Type of initiative

This initiative introduced a dedicated office for students with disabilities, along with other institutional innovations (including a new quality assurance center and the establishment of the office of the ombudsperson), at a large research and teaching university in Romania to promote the success of students with disabilities – a highly underrepresented student group in Romanian higher education.

Introduction

Higher education participation in Romania

Romania's higher education system underwent a substantial expansion during the postSocialist transformation of the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s. The initial expansion was followed by a decline in enrollment numbers in the late 2000s, and the country's gross tertiary enrollment rate has leveled out at 49%-50% of the university-aged population.[41] With this level of massified but not quite universal enrollment in higher education, Romania is on par with neighboring Hungary (50% gross tertiary enrollment ratio in 2019) and is ahead of the Slovak Republic and the Kyrgyz Republic (both at 46%) but lags behind other Eastern European and Central Asian countries such as the Czech Republic (66%), Poland (69%), Kazakhstan (71%), or Bulgaria (73%).[42] In 2020, 120 425 first-year students enrolled at the bachelor level in Romanian universities; 73 532 students started their studies at the master's level, and 5379 at the doctoral

41 Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/ro

42 Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics via The World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR

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level.[43] Women in Romania participate in tertiary education at higher rates than men: 58% of the university-aged population of women participated in tertiary education in 2019, compared to 45.1% of men.[44]

The number of universities in Romania expanded substantially during the early transition to accommodate increasing demand. Much of the expansion in enrollment was absorbed by newly founded private universities: in 2010, 35% of total university enrollment was at private universities in Romania. Another 35% of university students were enrolled at public universities but were paying tuition fees in 2010, while the remaining 30% of university students were enrolled at public universities with state support (meaning that these students did not have to pay tuition fees and were eligible for various equity instruments).[45] The number of universities declined in the 2010s along with enrollment numbers. In 2020, 90 universities operated in Romania.[46] Three of these universities serve the country's ethnic Hungarian population – constituting approximately 6% of Romania's population – with degree programs and instruction offered in the Hungarian language.[47]

While participation in higher education increased in Romania over time, Salmi, Hâj, and Alexe (2015) found that higher education in the 2010s continued to "favor the wealthiest segment of the population… data show low participation rates for students from disadvantaged groups such as rural students, students from low-income families, disabled students or Roma students" (p. 67). A study by Veres (2017) also noted the low higher education participation rates of Romanian students from rural backgrounds and emphasized the interactions between ethnicity, locality, and gender. His analysis showed that Hungarian men from rural areas were significantly less likely to enroll at university in Romania due to the limited availability of Hungarian-language degree programs in technical and agrarian fields offered at Romanian universities.[48]

Students with disabilities constitute a small segment of the student body at Romanian universities. Salmi and colleagues (2015) found that "[b]etween 2005 and 2010, at national level, the percentage of students with disabilities has never been higher than 0.07 % of the total number of students… [At] bachelor level, at the beginning of the academic year 2011–2012, there were 333 disabled students in the entire Romanian student population (539 852 students) of which

43 Data source: Eurostat, New entrants by education level, programme orientation, sex and age [EDUC_UOE_ENT01].

44 Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/ro

45 Data source: Salmi, J., Hâj, C.M., Alexe, D. (2015). *Equity from an institutional perspective in the Romanian higher education system.* In: Curaj, A., Deca, L., Egron-Polak, E., Salmi, J. (eds) Higher education reforms in Romania. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-08054-3_4

46 Data source: Statista, *Number of universities in Romania 2011-2020*, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1252114/romania-number-of-universities/

47 The three Hungarian-language universities are the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Sapientia Hungarian University from Transylvania (with multiple campuses in different cities), and the Partium Christian University in Oradea.

48 Veres, V. (2017). Social effects triggered by the expansion of higher education in Romania. *Hungarian Educational Research Journal*, 2017(1), 76-93.

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309 were in public universities and 24 in private universities (p. 71)." In 2020, individuals with disability constituted only 0.23% of total student enrollment in higher education, while the prevalence of disability was 0.75% in the relevant age group.[49] This more recent statistic suggests that the participation of students with disabilities in Romanian higher education has increased (and perhaps also that the reporting of disabilities by university students has increased), but students with disabilities are still grossly underrepresented in Romanian higher education.

Low participation rates in higher education translate to low completion among Romanian youth with disabilities. In 2018, only 18% of disabled youth (30-34 years old) completed tertiary education in Romania, compared to 28.8% of 30-34-year-olds with no disabilities.[50] (Both rates were well below the European Union average.) Partly due to lower rates of tertiary education completion, people with disabilities in Romania (and elsewhere in the EU) are more likely to be discriminated against and excluded from the labor market.[51] The employment rate for persons with disabilities in Romania was 45.5% % in 2018, compared to 74.2% among people without disabilities.[52]

Babeş-Bolyai University

Babeş-Bolyai University (henceforth BBU) is currently the second-highest ranked university of Romania according to the Times Higher Education rankings.[53] BBU is the oldest university in Romania (established in the 16th century as a Jesuit college) and the largest in terms of the number of faculty members (22 faculty members) and students (48 620 students, corresponding to 37 000 FTE student enrollment, in 2021). The university is located in the city of Cluj-Napoca, where approximately one-fifth of the population is ethnic Hungarian. The majority of students at BBU are ethnic Hungarian, but it is a multicultural, multilingual university where degree programs in law, languages, and a variety of disciplines in the fields of business & economics; clinical, preclinical & health sciences; computer science; education; engineering & technology; life sciences; physical

49 Data source: Ministry of Education of Romania, as cited in Dervis, O. A., Trifan, E., Jitaru, G. (2022). *The socioeconomic challenges in access to Romanian higher education: Student perception and funding policy directions*. In: Curaj, A., Salmi, J., Hâj, C.M. (eds) Higher education in Romania: Overcoming challenges and embracing opportunities. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94496-4_5

50 Data source: European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2018, as reported in European Commission (2021), *European Semester 2020-2021 country fiche on disability equality – Romania*, https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23953&langId=en

51 Lecerf, M. (2020). *Employment and disability in the European Union*. European Parliamentary Research Service briefing, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/651932/EPRS_BRI(2020)651932_EN.pdf

52 Data source: EU-SILC (2018), as reported in European Commission (2021), *European Semester 2020-2021 country fiche on disability equality – Romania*, https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23953&langId=en

53 Data source: The Times Higher Education university rankings, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/babes-bolyai-university

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sciences; psychology; and social sciences are taught in Hungarian, Romanian, English, French, and German languages. Due to its history, size, and proactive institutional leadership, BBU is considered a "relevant [higher education] actor at national level" and a "model of multiculturalism" in Romania.[54]

Veres (2017) found, based on the analysis of institutional survey data, that many BBU students tend to come from advantaged backgrounds: "While the proportion of university graduates within the total [Romanian] population is approximately 15%, 31-34% of [BBU] students' parents are university graduates, and 39% of their mothers and 33.5% of their fathers are high-school graduates. The proportion of parents with a general school education is only 3.6-4% …, while more than 40% of the adult population from Romania has only graduated general school or a lower-level school (p. 89)."[55] The same study also found that BBU students' parents were overrepresented in the occupational categories associated with middle- and upper-class livelihoods (e.g., leaders, managers, entrepreneurs).

In 2021, two-thirds of BBU's students were women, and 4% of the student body were international students.[56] In 2017, close to a third (31.3%) of BBU students hailed from rural backgrounds.[57] This proportion compared favorably to the national average (in 2011, only 16% of all Romanian university students came from rural backgrounds) but was still below the proportion of the 20–24-year-old population living in rural areas (41%). The proportion of rural students was higher (36.2%) in the subgroup of Hungarian students at BBU than in the subgroup of Romanian students (29.6%). In the 2014/2015 academic year, 63 students of BBU were registered as having some form of disability, representing approximately 0.5% of total enrollment.[58] In 2021/2022, this number grew to 174 students, representing approximately 0.4% of total enrollment at BBU.

National policies regarding equity of students with disabilities

Analysis of the implementation of national and institutional equity policies by Salmi and colleagues (2015) found that the number of students from underrepresented groups (including Roma students and students with disabilities) are supported through specific social services in Romania. Social services for students with disabilities include free or reduced-price accommodations in university dorms, free public transportation, meal vouchers that can be used

54 For more information on BBU, see Cramarenco, R. E. and Burcă-Voicub, M. (2021). Resilient universities in pandemic times. The case of Babeă-Bolyai University, Romania. *Romanian Journal of Regional Science*, 15(2), Winter 2021.

55 Data points in this and following sentences: Veres, V. (2017).

56 Data source: The Times Higher Education university rankings, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/babes-bolyai-university

57 Data source for data points in this and the following sentences: Veres, V. (2017).

58 Meier-Popa, O. and Rusu, A. (2015). Offices for Students with Disabilities: From addressing individual special needs to increasing public awareness toward disability. *Educatia 21*, 13, 10-25.

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in the university cafeteria, and – depending on the severity of the disability – a monthly stipend. However, Salmi and colleagues (2015) indicated that the number of students receiving targeted social benefits is small, and the meritocratic policies of universities often preclude the targeting of benefits to students from underrepresented groups. They concluded that Romanian higher education is characterized by "the individual approach to students needs instead of developing institutional strategies with clear objectives and action plans."[59] This view was also held by BBU staff members, who perceived that national legislation regarding equity and inclusion of underrepresented student groups in Romania is vague, and it is mainly up to the institutions themselves to design strategies for becoming more supportive of underrepresented student groups.

Description of the program and its implementation

The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) was founded in 2013 at Babeş-Bolyai University. The office had a precursor at the university in the form of the Centre of Assistive Technology and Access (CATA) hosted at the Department of Special Education of the Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education of BBU. The mandate of the CATA was to "promote the assistive and access technology among the visually impaired students, at institutional and individual levels".[60] This center received funding from a Dutch NGO in 2004/2005, and in 2011/2012, it received another grant from the charitable foundation of Orange, a multinational telecommunications company operating in Romania. Five Romanian universities (BBU was one of them) received grants from the Orange Foundation at the time, with the explicit purpose of establishing offices for students with disabilities at each recipient university. The grant covered the salary of a staff member at each university, whose responsibility was to create study materials for blind and visually impaired students. The grant funding was not extended after one year, and the universities did not continue the activities – except for Babeş-Bolyai University.

In contrast to CATA, which focused on serving BBU students with visual impairments, the OSD's mandate was broader: to offer inclusive services for students with all forms of disabilities at BBU.[61] (The CATA and OSD continue to coexist at BBU, with CATA listed as a collaborator of OSD on the unit's website.) OSD, the new unit with the broader mandate, was established in 2013 and was funded by the university's core budget. It was established as a separate unit reporting directly to the Rector's Office, and its setup and activities were

59 Salmi et al. (2015), p. 76.

60 Website of the Centre of Assistive Technology and Access (CATA) of BBU, http://centre.ubbcluj.ro/cata/

61 According to the English-language version of the OSD website, the office's mandate is to "[facilitate and support] the inclusion of students with educational needs into the academic life, by identifying these needs and by informing the academic personnel about the learning needs of students with disabilities." Source: http://bsd.centre.ubbcluj.ro/for-students/

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modeled after European and North American examples of offices with similar mandates.

Staff perceived the mission of the new unit to be a natural fit for BBU: a university renowned locally and internationally for its "multicultural openness". Cluj-Napoca is also known as something of a magnet for families who raise school-aged children with visual and hearing impairments due to several special-mission secondary schools operating in the city. The ethos of BBU as an open, multicultural institution and a steady pipeline of high school graduates with disabilities in Cluj-Napoca were seen by OSD staff as contributing factors in the decision to establish an office dedicated to the inclusion of university students with disabilities at BBU. In its first year of OSD implementation – the academic year 2014/2015 – the office offered a variety of activities, which included a total of 18 awareness-raising events (attended by 595 participants) and the extension of individual psycho-pedagogical counseling to five BBU students with disabilities.[62] The following activities were carried out in the first year – many of them with a view to be repeated periodically:

- Providing BBU students with disabilities with information on BBU's inclusive policies and keeping them appraised on their rights and responsibilities in reference to the national legislative framework;
- Providing BBU students and academic staff with information about opportunities at local, national, and international NGOs and institutions that operate in the area of accessibility;
- Facilitation of direct interaction with persons with disabilities for all BBU students and academic staff through presentations, sport events, and flash mobs;
- Organization of fundraising activities to finance projects related to improving the physical accessibility of BBU buildings;
- Collection of annual statistics (voluntarily declared) about UBB students with disabilities;
- Periodical assessment of UBB academic staff regarding their knowledge and attitudes toward persons with disabilities;
- Periodical assessment of UBB academic staff members' information and training needs regarding working with persons with disabilities;
- Providing individual counseling and institutional support services (such as recommendations for special accommodations) to UBB students with disabilities who request it.

In 2022, the OSD continues to offer services to BBU students and staff. Its activities are carried out by the head of unit (who also doubles as the coordinator

62 The brief account of the first year of program implementation of the Office for Students with Disabilities at BBU presented here builds on a much more detailed account by Olga Meier-Popa and Alina Rusu, referenced above. Alina Rusu was the founding director of the Office for Students with Disabilities at BBU, who served in this capacity until 2017.

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of CATA), a full-time administrator, a part-time special education teacher, and approximately 15-25 student volunteers annually. The student volunteers are predominantly, but not exclusively, from BBU's Special Education department (where CATA is also hosted). The volunteers are trained by the head of unit in November-December of each academic year and carry out their volunteer work January through June. Student volunteers mainly assist with running administrative errands (e.g., picking up meal vouchers) for students with disabilities. Approximately half of the volunteers returned to continue their work the next year.

In addition to delivering its own activities and services, OSD plays an important role in coordinating the work of other university units regarding student support. The office collaborates with BBU's General Administrative Directorate, which implements OSD recommendations on improving campus accessibility. OSD also liaises with BBU's Office of Social Services – the unit that is responsible for the administration of student dormitory room allocations and social grants. Specifically, OSD provides recommendations to the Office of Social Services regarding students who need to stay in a room with a personal attendant or who need to receive rooms adapted to their needs (e.g., students with motor disabilities).

Implementation challenges

Implementation of CATA and its transformation into OSD grew out of the work of faculty members at BBU's Department of Special Education, and there is some indication that the visibility of the initiative has remained confined to a relatively small group of internal stakeholders. An institutional survey was conducted by Costea-Bărluțiu and Rusu (2015), focusing on BBU faculty members' attitudes toward persons with disabilities, their experiences with persons with disabilities, and their information and training needs regarding working with students and colleagues with disabilities.[63] The survey revealed very low interest in this topic: only 41 BBU faculty members participated in the survey (out of close to 1700 faculty members.)

Funding initiatives supporting students with disabilities at BBU remain a challenge. According to the head of OSD, the unit's personnel expenses are not excessive. The unit also proactively engages with local and national NGOs, which in turn provide various benefits and services to BBU students free of charge. It is mainly the funding required to invest in specialized equipment and software and in outfitting campus buildings with ramps, special carpets, signs, and other accessibility devices that poses a challenge. OSD personnel expenses are covered by the university's core budget, and fundraising activities are undertaken to cover the costs of purchasing and maintaining specialized

63 Costea-Bărluțiu, C. and Rusu. A. S. (2015). A preliminary investigation of Romanian university teachers' attitudes toward disabilities – A premise for inclusive interaction with students with disabilities. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 209*, 572-579.

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equipment. The ongoing commitment of university leadership to promoting the issue of equity for students with disabilities is crucial in this respect. This ongoing support is exemplified by the matching funds allocated by the Rector's Office to meet a fundraising goal for purchasing specialized equipment to help students with wheelchair mobility on campus.

Results of the innovative equity approach

The OSD at BBU has been in operation for close to a decade now. The number of students served by the OSD at BBU is relatively small compared to the entire student body, and annual statistics about service usage by BBU students with disabilities are not being collected in a systematic manner, despite initial plans to do so. However, anecdotal evidence from program staff indicates that the office has a positive impact on the access and success of BBU students with disabilities.

The number of BBU students who declare a disability has increased over time. A slightly higher proportion of BBU students with disabilities utilize the services offered by the OSD, suggestive of the benefits provided by the office. In 2014/2015, only five out of 63 students (7.9%) with disabilities participated in individual psycho-pedagogical counseling offered at OSD. In 2021/2022, 17 out of 174 students (9.8%) with disabilities utilized these individual services. Individualized services, in addition to psychosocial counseling, include hiring and paying for sign language interpretation for deaf students.

The OSD also continued fundraising activities, such as the 2018 concert performed by students from the special education schools of Cluj-Napoca in 2018. The event was successful in raising funds (including matching funds from the Rector's Office) to purchase equipment to help students with wheelchair mobility on campus. Program staff also perceive that specialized study materials (e.g., textbooks, lecture notes, recordings) produced or procured by program staff have become more accessible for students with disabilities at BBU over time.

Assessment of potential for sustainability, replication and scaling up

The OSD is embedded in its host institution to a considerable degree. The office reports directly to the Rector's Office and receives funding from the university's core budget. It works in close collaboration with BBU's Qualitas Center, which was established in 2020, and its mandate is to implement and monitor the university's quality assurance policies. As part of its monitoring mandate, the Qualitas Center collects information about students with disabilities as part of the entrance survey that all BBU students participate in upon enrollment. (Declaration of disabilities is voluntary. In addition to having a dedicated office for students with disabilities, BBU was also among the first universities in Romania to institute an ombudsperson in 2020. (The first institution in Romania to do so was the University of Bucharest.) The

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BBU ombudsperson, in collaboration with the university's Ethics Committee, developed a Code of Anti-Discrimination and an implementation guide titled "A Guide to Fight Discrimination" – both documents the first of their kind at a Romanian university. The code addresses various forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, and disability, and includes a detailed protocol for tackling cases of discrimination at the university.

The data collection efforts of the Qualitas Center, the anti-discrimination efforts of the ombudsperson's office, and the supervision and budgetary support provided by the Rector's Office show that the OSD at BBU is not an isolated initiative; rather, it is one component of a comprehensive institutional effort to promote the success of students with disabilities. For a similar office to be successfully replicated at other universities, a similarly comprehensive ecosystem of institutional units and policies should be in place.

Concluding comments

In the context of Romanian higher education, where as Salmi and colleagues (2015) put it, "the concern for equity at the national level is mainly rhetorical", and benefits and services disbursed to students with disabilities and other underrepresented groups only represents "a small dimension in otherwise largely meritocratic higher education policies" (p. 83), the Office for Students at Babeş-Bolyai University is special and represents an important innovation. While other universities at Romania also provide support to students with disabilities on an individual basis, the OSD at BBU represents a more strategic approach to promoting the success of students with disabilities.

The OSD predominantly focuses on providing individualized support and services for students with disabilities, but the provision of these services is streamlined through a single office with a specific mission to include students with disabilities in university life. Moreover, activities carried out by the OSD target not only members of the underrepresented group but also all BBU students and faculty members through various awareness-raising activities. In pursuit of the inclusion mission, the office also provides support for BBU faculty who teach students with disabilities. The large number of BBU students and faculty members and the university's multipronged approach to facilitating the inclusion of students with disabilities were the main motivating factors for coalescing BBU's various disability-related initiatives and services into one unit. Investment in making the BBU campus buildings more accessible for students with disabilities also represents a more holistic and strategic approach.

The founding of the OSD at BBU was built on a decade of bottom-up initiatives within the institution. The presence of the Centre of Assistive Technology and Access at the Department of Special Education of BBU and the expertise embodied in faculty members working at the department and at the center provided fertile ground for establishing the OSD with a broader mandate. Student volunteers at OSD also predominantly hail from the

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Department of Special Education. The relationship between CATA, OSD, and the Department of Special Education suggests that the presence of in-house expertise among faculty members and students regarding the needs of students with disabilities played an important role in the inception and sustainability of BBU's more holistic and strategic approach to promoting the success of students with disabilities.

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3.5 The Mentor Program at Budapest Business School, Hungary

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Sources: interviews, documentation of the program, online shared platform (CooSpace)

Type of initiative

Student-led, faculty-facilitated semester-long mentoring programs for first-year students aimed at easing the transition of students from high school to university and fostering a sense of community among students to increase student engagement and reduce drop-out.

Introduction

Hungarian higher education landscape

There are 63 higher education institutions in Hungary, with nearly 25,000 academics and more than 293,000 students (approximately 207,000 in full-time form) (https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/okt/en/okt0020.html). In accordance with the Bologna system in Europe, study programs are offered at three levels: bachelor's (6-8 semesters), master's (2-4 semesters) and doctoral (4+4 semesters). Approximately 58% of students study at the BA level, 13% at the MA level, 3,6% at the PhD level and 25% at other levels (such as tertiary level vocational training, undivided training, and postgraduate specialization). 32,9% was the share of young people with tertiary educational attainment in 2021 (https://www.ksh.hu/education). Slightly more than half of the students were female (54% in 2019); however, there were significant differences in the different study fields. Nearly half of the students (46%) hardly experienced or did not experience any financial difficulties, whereas 24% had financial difficulties or experienced very serious financial difficulties. This could be connected to the proportion of students having paid jobs while studying: While

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45% of students never work during the academic year, 14% work from time to time, and 41% work throughout the academic year (though not necessarily full-time) in addition to their studies.[64]

Budapest Business School, University of Applied Sciences

Budapest Business School (BBS) is a large, public, teaching-oriented, practice-oriented applied university. BBS is the largest university in terms of forming business professionals in Hungary, with nearly 18,000 students in economics, including Tourism and Catering, International Economy and Business, Commerce and Marketing, Finance and Accountancy, Business Administration and Management and Business Information Technology and Human Resources. Three faculties of the university currently operate in Budapest: the Faculty of Commerce, Hospitality and Tourism (FCHT), the Faculty of International Management and Business (FIMB) and the Faculty of Finance and Accountancy (FFA). Almost half of BBS's Hungarian students live in Budapest (the capital city) and its agglomeration (49.5%), while 50.5% come from the rest of the country, representing all counties. Full-time students are typically under 26 years of age (96.6%). The ratio of women at the BA level is 56.1%, at the MA level it is 60.3%, and at the doctoral school level, their ratio is 62.5%.[65]

The *mentor program* was established at the Faculty of Finance and Accountancy (FFA), which has nearly 7 000 students and more than 140 instructors. FFA offers mainly Hungarian-language programs: 5 short-cycle vocational programs, 4 undergraduate courses, and 4 master's degree programs. However, there are 2 undergraduate courses taught in English, which are open for Hungarian and foreign students as well.[66]

Description of the program

The *Mentor-program* at BBS FFA aims to provide support for first-year students by senior university students. The reasons behind the initiative are three-fold. First, with the growing number of freshmen, an increasing number of students felt themselves lost to the numerous rules and regulations, had different learning opportunities and experienced difficulties with community involvement. This

64 Source and further details: https://www.felvi.hu/pub_bin/dload/felsooktatasimuhely/eurostudent/eurostudent_VII_flashreport_2021.pdf

65 Due to legal restrictions, ethnic minority data cannot be collected and registered during the admission process, so we do not have information on the ethnic affiliation of BBS students.

66 FFA faculty offers undergraduate programs in four areas: finance and accountancy, business administration and management, human resources, and business information technology. In addition to the four master's programs (finance, accountancy, business management, economist in management and leadership), FFA offers specialized courses and postgraduate programs. The short-cycle, nongraduate higher-level vocational programs are offered parallel to the undergraduate programs in finance and accountancy (with economist assistant specialized in entrepreneurship, banking economist assistant and public finance economist assistant specializations), business administration and management, and business information technology majors.

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was not only the intuition of the teachers but was also confirmed by the Student Union and the Office of Student Services. Second, the opportunity for freshman camp at the faculty is available to only one-quarter of students (due to lack of space). This camp provides much information about university life and contributes to relationship building among first-year students and seniors; therefore, they felt themselves 'at home' right at the beginning of their first year. However, the remaining (appr. 1,300) students lack this preuniversity experience, and many of them are lost in the new buildings and among their peers. Third, success at a university requires different learning modes, time and self-management than previous educational levels. The difficulties of this new learning style and the lack of self-discipline and goal-mindedness often become apparent at the end of the first semester, which could lead to low grades or even drop-out. Previous analysis of the reasons behind drop-out at BBS revealed that it can be attributed to a mixture of personal lack of motivation, the inadequacy of the institution's services, and students' academic difficulties. The data showed that attrition is the result of a complex process in which professional commitment; content, form, methods of education; infrastructure of the institution; the flexibility and customization of student administration; the number of participants in the given program; consistency of exams; the provision of course materials; and the quality of human relations between students all play a role.

To prevent these negative experiences and help first-year students' integration, the *Mentor program* was established in 2019. During the summer of 2019, on the initiative of the deputy dean for education and the deputy dean for research affairs in close collaboration with the Student Union, 63 mentors were chosen from among the senior students. By the leadership of the two vice deans and the involvement of 5 faculty members, a program centered approximately 6 themes was installed. The faculty members and the vice deans served as so-called 'theme hosts', helping the mentors to prepare. All first-year students were assigned to groups with 20-24 members. The mentors' task was to guide them throughout the first (autumn) semester. The mentors received training from vice-deans and teachers (and later on, from the previous mentor-students), and then they worked with first-year student groups independently.

The aim of the training activities was to obtain first-hand experience with workshop tools and facilitation techniques that mentors can utilize in their respective groups. Moreover, these training sessions were also supplemented with prerecorded instructional videos to provide the theoretical basis for the given themes. Six main themes were introduced to the mentors, which were then used as guiding topics throughout the semester with the first-year student groups: relationship building, university rules and regulations, learning methods, time management, self-efficacy, and envisioning personal futures. The first-year students on their first day in the university were introduced to their group and their mentor during a (semi)obligate kick-off event. After the kick-off event, participation in the group's programs (on at least five more occasions) during

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the semester was optional. At the end of the semester (December-January), a so-called '*Mentor-evening'* was the closing event with colorful programs, such as panel discussion with alumni members, interviews with elite athlete students or successful graduates living with disabilities.

The program aims to help with the psychological burden of change between educational levels and institutions (and sometimes even a change in residence) and reduce the difficulty of transition, which may cause anxiety and depression among first-year students. Furthermore, it contributes significantly to lowering drop-out rates by developing self-management, helping integration into the community, and introducing new learning modes more appropriate for universities. Additionally, the outline of the process and the mentoring role provide great skill-development opportunities and first-hand experience to senior students, which could help them in the labor market.

One further important aspect is that faculty members are only facilitators in the program, and their role and involvement are expected to decrease year by year. The plan is that the program with time will be fully managed and carried out by senior students and the Student Union.

The program works with a very modest budget. The vice deans and faculty members did not receive payment for their work (approx. 2-5 days per semester); however, these tasks are recognized through the university's performance evaluation system for faculty members. One of the participating faculty members serves as a coordinator, working 4-6 hours per week in the autumn semester. This is not a paid position either, although it carries a greater weight in the performance evaluation system than in the training tasks. The chosen mentor students either receive a so-called 'public life scholarship' [közéleti ösztöndíj], which is a one-time 20,000 Forint (appr. 50 EUR) paid from the university's core budget or obtain 3 academic credits for volunteer work, which can count toward the students' degree completion as an elective course.[67] Additional expenditures include the food and drinks for the '*Mentor-evening'* and T-shirts designed for mentor students. These are covered from the FFA's own budget and amount to a maximum of 5 million Forint (~12,200 EUR) per year.

Furthermore, the *Mentor programme* serves as a platform to guide students toward other student-oriented initiatives and well-being facilities of the Faculty and the University. These cover two main areas. First, 7 student organizations currently operate at the university, and they share information and recruit members during the *mentor programme*.[68] Second, general well-being initiatives

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67 The 'public life scholarship' is nonmandatory allowance paid for a student performing activities beyond the curriculum requirements for a specified period of time, monthly or once. (51/2007. (III. 26.) Government Regulation, https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a0700051.kor).

68 The student organizations operating at BBS FFA are: the FFA Student Union, Sándor Lámfalussy Advanced College for Students, Hungarian Economic Association (HEA) FFA Youth Organization, AISEC, Luca Pacioli Accounting Club, Business IT Club, University Business Club.

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and programs are offered to all students at the Faculty and the University, which include the English-language mentor program for foreign students; a Success Center with immersion help; availability for counseling, study coaching, and skills training both in Hungarian and in English; teacher-mentors for MA students and for students in short-cycle vocational programs; and the FFA+ talent-management program.

Identification of linkages with national policies

This program is not connected to any local, regional, or national policy. It is a faculty-level program initiated by the leadership and the Student Union of the faculty. The program was not based on some established model but was built from the inside, based on the initiatives and the needs of the academics and students at FFA. There is anecdotal evidence of a few similar initiatives operating at other Hungarian universities, but there is no sector-level policy or initiative promoting the launch of similar programs. Mentoring programs and student-facilitated introductions to first-year students at Hungarian universities tend to be department or organization-level programs and are typically operated as bottom-up, student-led initiatives.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

The difficulties that have occurred since the launch of the *Mentor program* 3 years ago are connected to the large number of students that need to be served by the program (and therefore the necessarily large number of mentors) and the typical problems of volunteering. That is, the intensity of engagement fluctuates both among mentor students and among first-year students. Furthermore, during the semester, the academic tasks are constantly growing as the exam period comes closer; therefore, the time and energy toward the *Mentor program* is decreasing. On the one hand, this could lead to frustration and exhaustion among mentors, especially if their group gradually dissipates. Mentors could even regard this as a personal failure, not an elevating experience or an opportunity for personal development. This is completely opposite of the aim of the program. On the other hand, if the mentor is not involved and active enough, the first-year students could feel themselves left behind. This again goes against the objectives of the initiative. Furthermore, mentors receive money or academic credit for their work during the semester, which requires some monitoring to avoid free riders.

The solutions implemented during the last two years addressed these problems by fostering closer connections among mentors and asking for regular feedback from them. Before every group event that the mentor organizes with his/her group (there should be at least 6 occasions related to the 6 themes throughout the autumn semester), he/she is required to write a reflexive note about the topic planned, experiences from the prior event, any problems or questions that have emerged, and possible solutions to the problems or questions. The

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theme hosts and the student coordinator from the Student Union process the theme-specific notes, and the program coordinator scans the event-specific notes. In this way, not only is the continued engagement of the mentor assured, but difficulties can be detected as soon as possible, and solutions could be implemented immediately. For example, if the number of actively engaged first-year students in some groups is decreasing, then two groups can be integrated, so both the mentors and the remaining active group members can benefit from the program in the remaining part of the semester.

In this way, the mentors were not left to themselves to try solving their problems, but they could reach out to other mentors or to the faculty members and members of the student union. The difficulties could be detected sooner, and interventions could be implemented before the groups split up or the mentors gave up. Additionally, this regular feedback system ensures the continued engagement of mentors and maintains the information flow between mentors and program staff. Reflexive notes provide a transparent basis for assessing mentors' performance, which is required for receiving scholarships or academic credits. An added element for this assessment is that the mentors may not miss more than 1 occasion from the 6 preparation events held by the involved faculty members and previous mentor-students. If a mentor does not provide reflexive notes or is inactive for a month, then the student coordinator steps in to ensure that the first-year students are not left alone. If the problem is temporary (e.g., short illness), then the program resumes its due course. However, if larger difficulties arise, then the group is integrated with another to provide continuous support for the first-year students. When a mentor shirks his/her responsibilities (miss occasions more than once, does not provide feedback), then he/she is removed from the program as mentor and does not receive academic credit or financial allowance.

An additional change during the three years of the *Mentor program* was that initially, the first-year student groups were configured by mixing students from all programs. After the first semester the feedback came, that it would be better to build up the groups from the same degree programs, because this way students could meet more students from their classes, they could help each other better with learning and study-tips, even work together on assignments, exam-preparation and so on. This change further helped maintain the activity level of the groups during the semester.

The pandemic situation brought special complications when every activity was directed into the online space. However, all involved participants tried their best to maintain interest and participation in the program, offering online forms of involvement and community building. However, the *Mentor program* works much better in an in-person environment, with different outdoor activities and varied locations. Especially because the building of the FFA faculty is not suitable for small-group activities, there is only very limited space for organizing free-time activities and group meetings.

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Results of the innovative equity approach

Although the first idea stemmed from the deputy deans of the FFA faculty, the whole initiative was embraced by the Student Union from the first minute. Therefore, it is more a bottom-up initiative than a top-down regulation. Accordingly, there is no strict measurement system connected to the program. However, the leadership of the FFA faculty supports the program completely. The Student Union is responsible for mentor selection. They conduct a small survey every year among mentors about problems that emerged and about good examples and well-functioning ideas. Good examples and ideas are then incorporated in the next year's preparation phase.

Although an official evaluation of the mentor program has not yet been implemented, one indicator of the success is the growing number of mentors year by year: in the first year, 60 students were involved, in 2020, their number was 76, while in 2021, it reached 123 (during this period, the number of first-year students remained relatively steady at 1800-2000 students). The success of the program is not measured by the number of participants in mentoring sessions throughout the semester, and the demographic characteristics of participants are not tracked either. Observations from program staff indicate that approximately half of the first-year students stop attending mentoring sessions by the midpoint of the first semester. Typically, students who remain in the program are those who have some difficulty finding their place and community during the first 2 months. This could be connected to demographic and social background, although the faculty volunteers and peer mentors could not detect any distinct groups or special features linked with dropout from the program. However, it seems that personality traits, openness, different commitment levels toward learning, motivation and self-management are among the characteristics that play some role in a student's successful integration into university life.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

The *mentor program* was implemented in the autumn semester of 2019 and operates every autumn semester with new first-year students. It has been a faculty-wide program from the beginning. While the number of first-year students is approximately the same (1800-2000 student), the number of mentor students is increasing year by year, as the program became widely known, and the initial cohorts of participating first-year students turned into senior students.

In 2020, a subproject was started, which aimed specifically to involve international students studying at the FFA faculty. Their problems and main topics are somewhat different from the challenges encountered by local students, involving issues such as visa, accommodation, and cultural differences. This subproject was implemented at another faculty of the university (FCHT – Faculty of Commerce, Hospitality and Tourism) in 2022.

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Regarding the national and local context of BBS, we should be aware of the facilitating and constraining factors. Regarding the latter, it is important to note that volunteering is not as prevalent in Hungary as in other (typically Anglo-Saxon) countries. Therefore, the first obstacle is to help students understand its importance and value. Furthermore, Hungarian culture, as part of the Western cultural sphere, is a rather individualistic value system in comparison to, for example, Asian culture. Therefore, it is an important part of the initiative to provide incentives (such as credit or financial allowance), which could ensure senior students' interest in participating. This leads us to one of the facilitating factors, namely, that the Hungarian higher education system allows university students to collect academic credits for volunteer work, and the core budget of public Hungarian universities (called locally the "state normative support system") contains a dedicated line for the so-called 'public-life scholarship', which enables universities such as BBS to provide a financial incentive to mentor students.

Another crucial factor in the success and maintenance of the program is the support of the leadership at the FFA faculty, which made the implementation trouble free.

Overall, the Mentor program can be carried out at other universities in other countries considering local specialties. It is important that the program should have so-called 'intrapreneurs'[69], i.e., enthusiastic and innovative employees of the organization who are tasked with and committed to developing the program. However, the idea was so easily and promptly picked up and carried on among the students that this kind of need and openness is probably not a local characteristic but a general demand among university students. Naturally, the involved themes and the applied incentives can vary from place to place, similar to the level of formalized procedures, measurement, and control processes.

Concluding Comments

The *Mentor program* is innovative for two reasons. First, it relies on a community-based approach, which can be regarded at different levels: community of the first-year students, community of the mentor students, the whole active student community of the faculty and the whole community of the faculty. The *Mentor program* connects these communities and helps participants develop a sense of belonging and a sense of connectedness. This is extremely important in a mass-educational, rather individualistic environment, where thousands of students and hundreds of academics and staff work together on a daily basis. Second, although the initiative stems from the deputy deans of the faculty and in the

69 As Antoncic and Hisrich (2001) define it:intrapreneurship is defined as entrepreneurship within an existing organization. It refers to a process that goes on inside an existing firm, regardless of its size, and leads not only to new business ventures but also to other innovative activities and orientations such as development of new products, services, technologies, administrative techniques, strategies, and competitive postures. (https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(99)00054-3)

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first years of implementation it involved faculty members as trainers for the mentor students, faculty members only play the role of facilitators. Therefore, year after year, their role and importance have been decreasing, as previous mentor students train the new mentors, and the plan is to make the whole program not only student-focused but entirely student-led.

Overall, the *mentor program* designed and implemented at BBS FFA showed that there is a definite need among students to build communities and help each other. When the idea was first introduced, all the involved parties wholeheartedly threw themselves into implementation, and enthusiasm is even growing every year. Who is the most reliable source of university life if not the senior students themselves? This initiative found a general need for belonging and was able to answer it with a flourishing project, where faculty members as facilitators created a space for the students to build and develop their own community, their own values and relationships.

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Chapter 4.
Latin America Case Studies

4.1 Overview

Author: Renato Pedrosa

Latin America is formed by countries in the Americas that were colonies of France, Portugal, and Spain up to the 19th century. They form the majority of countries of South America, all of Central America, Mexico in North America and some Caribbean countries. All of them are classified as developing economies by the United Nations[1]. Chile is the only country classified as a high-income developing economy in the region, while the other countries with institutions included in the case studies, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, are considered upper-middle-income developing economies.

Higher education disparities in Latin America are significant and pervasive. The region has the highest levels of income inequality in the world, and this inequality is reflected in access to higher education. Indeed, the relatively high per capita income averages of the three Latin American countries included in this book hide very high levels of inequality. The GINI indexes[2] of these four countries, with classification among 117 countries with data for at least one of the years 2016-2019 (thus, before the COVID-19 pandemic)[3], are Argentina (43, 99th), Chile (44, 103rd), Mexico (47, 107th) and Brazil (54, 116th, next to last). The country in South America with the lowest index is Uruguay, at 40 (85th). For comparison purposes, the countries with the 10 lowest GINI coefficient values (least unequal) score in the range 23 to 27. Most of them are located in Eastern and Northern Europe. Typical Western European countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom score in the 31 to 36 range. The United States' index shows a higher level of inequality at 42 (90th).

For the four Latin American countries in our study, the proportion of the population living under the $5.00/day poverty line was as follows: Argentina – 5.9%, Brazil – 17%, Chile – 2.8% (2017), Mexico – 18%. As another reference, Canada's figure was, for 2017, 0.25%. Thus, we see that there is a correlation

1 https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP2022_ANNEX.pdf Download 2023/01/19

2 "Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Lorenz curve plots the cumulative percentages of total income received against the cumulative number of recipients, starting with the poorest individual or household. The Gini index measures the area between the Lorenz curve and a hypothetical line of absolute equality, expressed as a percentage of the maximum area under the line. Thus, a Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality." From https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI

3 The most recent value available was used. World Bank Data. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI

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in the case of the four Latin American countries studied between the Gini index and the percentage of the population under the $5.00/day poverty line, as Argentina and Chile show lower levels in both cases, while Brazil and Mexico show higher levels in both cases. Canada and the US show very low levels of poverty but very different levels of income inequality, which, various studies show, are related to educational attainment levels.

The reasons for the differentiated levels of income inequality are varied. For example, in countries such as Brazil and Mexico, they are directly linked to ethnicity and race, with indigenous and black population groups forming the majority of those in the lower income strata. That stratification is also reflected in other areas, such as differentiated access to education (including higher education), in the job market, in housing location, and so on. Argentina and Chile show, by comparison, lower levels of inequality, as shown from both GINI and poverty level indicators, with Chile being in the best overall situation.

The United States, despite its high levels of absolute average income, is the most unequal country among highly industrialized economies, as the relatively high GINI index shows. In addition, as is the case in Brazil and Mexico, blacks and recent Latino immigrants form the majority of those in the lower economic and educational strata of US society. In other words, the high levels of income distribution inequality present in Brazil and Mexico in Latin America and in the United States (in the latter case, in comparison to other highly industrialized countries) show a strong association with the race/ethnic characteristics of those countries' populations and with their educational attainment levels. Thus, it is not unexpected that when Brazil and Mexico (and the United States) decided to address the issue of inequalities regarding access to higher education, race and/or ethnicity, they relied to a large extent on affirmative action policies. In the cases of Argentina and Chile, much less emphasis has been placed on such issues, and policies have usually been focused mostly on general socioeconomic disparities.

The theme of affirmative action and inclusion in higher education was and continues to be a major topic under debate in many countries, and it is not different in Latin America, the United States and Canada. Recently, the US Supreme Court has been back to consider the issue, and in Brazil, the national quota law is up for revision. At the same time, many institutions, even those not affected by the legislation, continue to pursue innovative programs to promote diversity. Learning from institutional experiences, their histories, and their impact on national policies is a relevant way to move forward on this important aspect of educational policy.

A major issue faced by higher education in Latin America is the unequal distribution of resources and funding for universities and other tertiary education institutions. Wealthier countries such as Brazil, Argentina, and Chile have relatively well-funded universities with high-quality facilities and research

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programs. In contrast, poorer countries such as Bolivia, Haiti, and Honduras struggle to provide even basic resources to their universities. In addition to the differences in funding levels, there are significant disparities in access to higher education based on socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity. Indigenous and Afro-Latinx populations are often underrepresented in higher education. Women face significant barriers to accessing and completing higher education programs in STEM disciplines.

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4.2 Affirmative Action at Unicamp, Brazil

Authors: Renato H. L. Pedrosa, Ana Maria A. C. da Silva and Rafael. P. Maia

Country

Brazil

Institution

Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp) https://www.unicamp.br

Location

Campinas, State of São Paulo

Contacts and sources

Ana Maria Fonseca de Almeida – Admissions Offfice/Unicamp

Type of equity innovation

social inclusion in access, remedying pre-college education disparities, reducing dropouts, enlarging academic opportunities

Introduction

Brazil has one of the largest higher education (HEd) systems in the world, with 8.68 million students enrolled in undergraduate programs (INEP 2020). It went under a recent period of intensive expansion (from 1.7 million enrollments in 1994), increasingly concentrated in the private system, now responding for 77% of the total enrollment (INEP 2020), which includes a large for-profit subsector. The resulting system is highly heterogeneous and unequal, leading to typical stratification and diversion effects (Shavit et al, 2007), with most students belonging to lower socioeconomic *strata* being admitted by low prestige institutions. The public universities, comprising federal and state systems, have remained a much smaller and selective subsystem, enrolling less than a quarter of all students.

In Brazil, admissions are based on a strict *numerus clausus* model, as each institution establishes, yearly, the number of students it will admit the following year. Brazilian public HEd institutions (HEIs) used to base their admission systems solely on highly selective entrance exams, as was the case of the State University of Campinas (*Unicamp*), up to the early 2000s. *Unicamp* is one of the three state universities in São Paulo, the most developed state in Brazil, home to 45 million people (22% of the country's population) and source of 30% of its GDP. In addition to the 20,000 students enrolled in undergraduate programs, *Unicamp* is also a leading graduate and research

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institution, with 900 PhD degrees granted and over 4,500 scientific articles published every year[4].

Regarding undergraduate admissions, *Unicamp* is the most selective university in the country: in 2021, it had 78,125 applicants for 3,353 vacancies offered, which gives a 23 applicant/vacancy ratio. Such a system, if based solely on academic criteria, such as entrance exams, would have negative effects on the chances of disadvantaged groups to be admitted to the university. Starting in 2005, *Unicamp* adopted a series of programs designed to increase the chances of admission for members of vulnerable groups, employing both socioeconomic and ethnic/race criteria. Those initiatives, their results and limitations, as well as a brief historical overview of how they came about to be, are described below.

Background: UN Durban Conference and its Impact in Brazil

In 2001, Brazil signed the final declaration of the UN *Conference Against Racism* (UN 2001) held in Durban, South Africa. This immediately sparked a growing demand for effective actions to reduce the underrepresentation of afro descendants in various sectors of Brazilian society. Until 2001, universities and the statistical agency of the Ministry of Education did not collect data on the ethnic background of students. When data started to be collected, it showed that African descendants were a very small group among students.

In the same year, the *Ford Foundation* launched its global initiative *Pathways to Higher Education* (see the Mexico chapter in this volume), with the stated goal of reducing the underrepresentation of vulnerable sectors of society in HEd. *Pathways* have been adopted by institutions in many countries, including Brazil. One of those was the *State University of Rio de Janeiro* (*UERJ*), the first university in Brazil to have a quota system for blacks. In the wake of *UERJ*'s initiative, other public universities started to develop their own programs. *Unicamp* was the first to do so in the state of São Paulo.

PAAIS – a general socioeconomic and ethnic inclusion program (2005)

In early 2003, the then President of *Unicamp*, C.H. de Brito Cruz, asked the Admissions Office to help respond to an enquiry by the State Assembly about the university's views on a law proposal regarding quotas for underrepresented groups, including blacks and those from poor families. The Office conducted a study that showed that students who had attended public secondary schools would typically graduate from university programs ranked higher in the class rank (by final GPA) than they ranked according to the entrance exam scores. In other words, the entrance exam model did not fulfill its mission of selecting the best students in terms of potential for academic success at the university (Pedrosa et al, 2007).

Motivated by those results, *Unicamp* developed *PAAIS*, the Portuguese acronym for *Program for Affirmative Action and Social Inclusion*. Bonus points

4 2021, Web of Science/Clarivate, Articles, Proceedings Papers and Reviews.

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were added to the final score of the entrance exams for students who had graduated from public high schools (HS). Some extra bonus points were also added for those declaring themselves black or indigenous, among those who had graduated from public high schools. Various supporting programs for the beneficiaries, including financial support for housing and other needs, were also established.

The initial impact of the program was very positive: participation by public high school graduates increased from 28% in 2004 to 34% in 2005, the first year of the new program, and participation by blacks and indigenous students increased from 12% to 16%. The program was most effective for the most selective programs, which had the lowest participation rates by the target group. For example, for medicine, which is an undergraduate program in Brazil and the most selective program at *Unicamp* (83 applicants per vacancy in 2005), participation by public high school graduates increased from 9% in 2004 to 31% in 2005, while for blacks and indigenous students, it increased from 9% to 15%. Participation by students whose mothers did not have a college degree increased from 33% to 38%, an indication of the progressive inclusion effect of the new program.

Regarding the academic performance of the new university population, a study conducted after 4 years on the academic performance of the incoming class of 2005 (STF 2010, pp. 371-382) showed that those who had benefited from the program and who would not have been admitted without it were doing well academically and graduated, especially in more selective programs such as medicine and engineering. For example, none of the 33 public high school graduates admitted to the medicine program in 2005 had dropped out by 2009, and most of those in the group who would not have been admitted without the affirmative action program were now among the top third of the class (accumulated GPA average).

However, *PAAIS* never reached its implicit goal of achieving a 50% participation level by public high school graduates used in the various quota programs by other universities or 30% participation by black/indigenous students about their participation in the general population of the state of São Paulo. The main reason for that was the lack of quality of the secondary public system in the state (and in Brazil), which translated into the low numbers of applicants from that group for admission at *Unicamp*. In fact, in 2010, only 25% of the applicants for admission had graduated from a public high school, a lower figure than in 2005, when 34% of applicants came from that system. The original perspective of the program was that, gradually, participation by students in the target groups was going to increase. As it did not happen, pressure increased for a change in the system, as a few federal and state universities had already developed quota systems reserving vacancies for those students. It happened a few years later, as we will see, with the development of a hybrid bonus points/quota system, but in between, *Unicamp* developed yet another affirmative action (AA) program, which we discuss next.

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Nevertheless, *PAAIS* was very important to help break the resistance against affirmative action initiatives, not only at *Unicamp* but also on the national stage. In 2010, the issue had reached the Brazilian Supreme Court, as the constitutionality of the existing quota systems had been questioned, mainly by one of the main political parties from the center-right. *Unicamp* presented the *PAAIS* system and its results in public hearings (STF 2010, STF 2012). A basic issue in the debate was whether affirmative action programs would have a negative impact on the quality of education at the best public universities due to the lack of academic preparedness of the newly admitted group of students. *Unicamp*'s *PAAIS* data showed that not to be true, helping convince the Court and other relevant actors that inclusion and academic excellence were not incompatible goals in higher education. The national law providing a quota system for federal universities and institutes was passed by Congress in 2012, just a few months after the Supreme Court decision affirmed the constitutionality of the programs in existence.

PROFIS (2011)

As it became clear that the numbers of students graduating from the public secondary system were not increasing as expected, as mentioned above, by 2008, *Unicamp* was already looking for alternative affirmative action models. The Admissions Office, inspired by the state of Texas's "*Top 10% Law*", which established that the top 10% students of the graduating class of *every* high school in the state would be admitted to the University of Texas, proposed that *Unicamp* adopt a similar system.[5] The main motivation behind the new proposal was that over 50% of the 96 high schools in the Campinas region did not have, at the time, any of their graduates among *Unicamp*'s undergraduate students.

The inclusion perspective came from the fact that the high schools without students enrolled in the university were all located in the poorest areas of the city of Campinas. Moreover, students from those schools did not even apply for admission, a negative self-selection phenomenon well known to education specialists. Another relevant aspect to be addressed was that, from previous experience, students coming from such backgrounds presented serious deficiencies in academic preparedness and often failed in their early courses and eventually dropped out. A third issue was that since most of the intended beneficiaries of the new program would likely be first-generation HEd students, they had no information about the various programs and possible formation paths that the university had to offer.

In 2010, the new administration of the university, led by Rector Fernando Costa and Marcelo Knobel as Dean of Graduate Education, appointed a committee to develop a new program, which was put in place in 2011, called the *Interdisciplinary Higher Education Program*, known by its Portuguese acronym *PROFIS*. It offered 120 places yearly, filled by selecting at least one of the top students in each school in Campinas who had graduated in the previous

5 https://news.utexas.edu/topics-in-the-news/top-10-percent-law/

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years, according to their scores in the National Secondary Exam (*ENEM*). The program increased the participation of public HS graduates at *Unicamp* by approximately 3 percentage points. In addition to its innovative admission system, it introduced a novel academic format based on an interdisciplinary general education syllabus, the only one offered by the university, which has remained restricted to only *PROFIS* students. It also included a broad range of student support programs, such as transportation, meal, scholarships, and other *Unicamp* assistance programs, such as medical, dental, psychological, educational and career guidance. In this way, the program sought not only to enable equity of access but also to help permanence of beneficiaries.

After successfully completing the 2-year general education program, students apply to the university's regular undergraduate programs and are selected according to their performance during the 2-year program and the available places. Currently, all programs offer opportunities to *PROFIS* graduates, more than the required 120 in total. Thus, all students who graduate from the program have the opportunity to stay and complete a regular B.Sc. or Teacher's degree offered by *Unicamp*.

Due to the homogeneous geographic distribution of places, the socioeconomic profile of *PROFIS* students is very similar to that of students at the end of the secondary education system in terms of family income, parental education, race/ethnicity and gender (but see below) (Carneiro et al., 2017; Pereira, Carneiro & Gonçalves, 2014; Andrade et al. 2013), which means a much more progressive profile than that of the general admission system. For example, over 80% of mothers of those students do not hold a college degree, compared to 47% for the general admission system (see next section). Over 35% of the students declared themselves black or indigenous, which was, in 2011, the first year the system was used, more than twice the rate for students admitted through the general admission system. An unexpected outcome of the program has been the very high level of participation by women, with over 70% of students admitted every year. This is in sharp contrast to the general admission system (see next section), which has a 45% level of participation by women. However, it confirms a trend in Brazil that women are doing much better than men regarding basic education, especially among the poor population.

A study on the first five classes (2011 to 2015) showed a significant decrease in the dropout rate from 49% to 32%, which is similar to rates of other Unicamp programs. As of 2022, of the 701 students who, after finishing *PROFIS*, were admitted to regular undergraduate programs since 2013, 69.2% are enrolled, 18.4% have graduated, and 12.4% have dropped out. Given that, on average, students take approximately 6 years to complete a regular degree, we still need to wait a little longer to have a complete picture of the success rates of PROFIS graduates, especially considering the effects of the pandemic on time to graduation, which have been observed in Brazil.

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Despite strong affirmative action effects, PROFIS's impact is clearly limited given its relatively small scope, in numbers of students admitted and in geographic coverage. The program has not yet developed stronger interaction with the school system, a desirable outcome. There have been discussions of expanding the number of schools to the Campinas metropolitan area, which would almost triple the number of students to be admitted, but thus far, it has not been adopted. One of the reasons for not expanding the *PROFIS* model was that the university decided to develop a broader inclusion system, including quotas, described next.

The new bonus/quota hybrid system (2019)

The national quota law, passed by Congress in 2012, caused federal universities to move quickly toward reaching the goal of 50% participation by students who had graduated from public high schools and increasing participation by blacks. Meanwhile, in the 4-year period of 2011-2014, among students admitted to *Unicamp*, including those in the *PROFIS* system, participation by the target groups was still at the same level as for 2005: approximately 35% for those who had graduated from public high schools and 15% for black/indigenous students (COMVEST 2022).

During the years 2015 and 2016, the university administration, led by Rector Tadeu Jorge, responding to growing pressure from faculty, students and staff groups that asked for changes in the inclusion model of Unicamp, organized a series of seminars and debates, and it became clear that the university was ready for a new proposal, now including quotas with clear inclusion goals. The following administration, now led by Rector Marcelo Knobel, had a committee formed by academic senior members that developed a new, encompassing model, which was put in place in 2019. The model adopted was of a hybrid nature, keeping bonus points for applicants who had graduated from public schools but now adding quotas for that group and/or for black and indigenous students. The complete system is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Unicamp's hybrid bonus/quota system

System	Exam	% Vacancies/total	Bonus		% Reserved vacancies/total		
			Public lower-secondary	Public upper-secondary	Public upper-secondary	Black	PublUpSec and B/I*
General admission	Unicamp	65%	+20 points	+40 points	x	x	x
Quota	Unicamp	15%	x	x	x	15%	x
ENEM	National	20%	x	x	10%	5%	5%%

*Public upper-secondary education and black/indigenous
Source: COMVEST/Unicamp - http://www.comvest.unicamp.br/vestibular-2003/manual-do-ingresso-2023/

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First, *PROFIS* has been kept separated, as described above, without changes. Second, 20% of the vacancies are filled by students graduating from public schools, and the other half is split between those who, in addition to the schooling requirement, declare to be black or indigenous and those who only declare themselves to be black (last line in the table). Those spots would be filled according to the results of the National Exam of Secondary Education (*ENEM*), which helped turn the system broader, as students from anywhere in Brazil could take part in the admission process.

The remaining vacancies (80% of the total) are filled by those taking *Unicamp*'s own entrance exam. Of those, 65 percentage points are reserved for the *PAAIS* model, with bonus points only for school system origin, and the remaining 15 pp for those who declare themselves as black, no schooling criteria. *Unicamp* has also started a new multi-institutional admission system dedicated to indigenous students, not included in the table (but included in the results below).

Despite the apparent complexity of the system, it has worked as planned since 2019. The impact of changes was immediate, as Table 2 data, comparing the periods 2011-2014 and 2019-2022, show.

Participation by target groups increased significantly: for those who had graduated from the public secondary school system, from 33% to 46%, and for black/indigenous students, from 15% to 34%. By adding *PROFIS* students' data to the table, both figures would increase by approximately 2-3 percentage points. Considering only the indigenous students, their numbers increased almost 10-fold, from 37 (2011-2014) to 361 (2019-2022). The latter figure implies a participation of almost 4% of the total admitted students. This is a much higher level of participation than that of the whole indigenous population in the country's population, which is approximately 0.3%.

Table 2. Admissions: total, students who graduated from upper-secondary public schools, who are female or whose mothers do not have a higher education degree. Unicamp, 2011-2014 and 2019-2022

	2011-2014		2019-2022	
Students admitted	N	%/Total	N	%/Total
Total	13,760	100.0	13,537	100.0
Upper-secondary public schools graduates	4,538	33.0	6,184	45.7
Self-declared black/indigenous	2,118	15.4	4,549	33.6
Female	6,077	44.2	5,939	43.9
Mother w/o higher education degree	6,364	46.3	6,381	47.1

Source: COMVEST/Unicamp (COMVEST 2022)

There was little impact on participation by women[6] or on the schooling level of mothers of students, which tends to have a close relationship with their educational attainment and their family's socioeconomic status. Thus, one

6 *Unicamp* has a strong hard sciences and engineering emphasis, which is related to the historically stable participation by women approximately 45%. The new admission system did not have any impact on that, either way.

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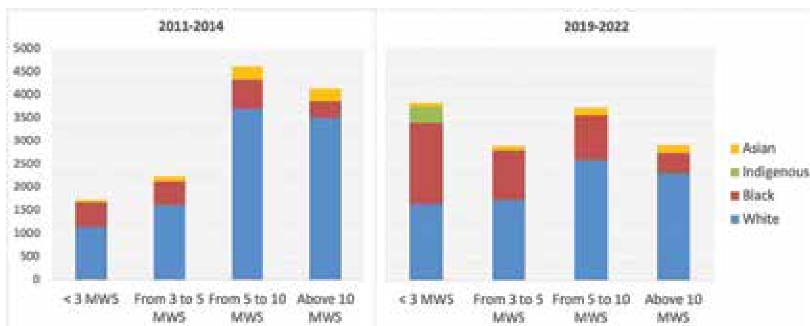
would be inclined to think that the system has had little effective impact from a socioeconomic point of view, just replacing white/Asian students with black/indigenous students of similar socioeconomic levels. However, that is not true, as Fig. 1 shows: the income distribution of the students' families changed significantly, which depended closely on the changes in the ethnic/race profile of students.

Students are grouped by family income into four subgroups: below 3 minimum wage salary units (MWS)[7], from 3 to 5 MWS, from 5 to 10 MWS and above 10 MWS, and the columns are split by race/color. The socioeconomic effects of the expanded AA program become explicit if one compares before and after its adoption and the role played by color/race. There is a change in the income profile of whites as well, which comes from the incentives and quota systems for public school graduates with no relation to color/race. Of note is the group of indigenous students admitted since 2019, almost all of whom belong in the lowest income bracket. For other income groups or for the previous period, their numbers are so small that their participation is just a trace and practically invisible in the graph above.

Figure 1. Admissions according to family income (minimum wage salary units) and self-declared color/race, Unicamp, 2011-2014 and 2019-2022



Source: COMVEST (2022)

As a final comment on income, the average income for the 2011-2014 group was 9.2 MWS, while for the more recent class, it declined to 7.1 MWS, or by 23%. The decline occurred for all color/race subgroups. For the more recent group of new students, the values ranged from 1.3 MWS for indigenous students to 9.0 MWS, for Asian Brazilians, with intermediary values of 4.9 and 8.3 MWS for blacks and whites, respectively.

7 In Brazil, there is an official minimum wage which is established every year by a presidential decree. During the period considered, the correction was based on inflation plus some extra value depending on real economic growth of the economy, which has declined since 2011. Thus, it may be considered relatively constant, in real terms, between the two periods considered in Fig. 1.

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Conclusion

Unicamp is possibly the research-oriented university in Brazil with the most developed set of inclusion programs dedicated to increasing the probability of underrepresented groups being admitted by the university. These programs are the result of continuous development over two decades. Despite all the advances, there is still much to be done. Since the most recent changes took place just before the COVID-19 pandemic, some time is needed before evaluating academic performance as a function of new student demographics. Are the beneficiaries of the new program performing well? Are there retention issues? These and related questions will have to wait until the pandemic effects, mostly expected to be of a negative character, have dissipated.

Regarding broader limitations, many of the issues that higher education affirmative action programs such as those of *Unicamp* try to address have their origins in precollege education. In that respect, there are two main aspects that have certainly been aggravated by the recent pandemic: the poor quality of precollege education and the low levels of completion at the upper secondary education level. Approximately one-third of the country's young adult population (18-29-age group) does not have a secondary degree (IBGE 2019). Given the poor quality of results even for those who succeed in graduating, exemplified by various assessment systems, including PISA (for 15-year-olds) and the national assessment system for those finishing secondary education, all efforts developed by universities such as *Unicamp* will have to address limitations that are beyond their reach. The fact that even now, with all incentives, participation by public school graduates applying to the general admission system is still far below 50% of the total applicants, at 31% (2022), while over 80% of all high school graduates in the state of São Paulo studied in the public system (INEP 2021), is an indication that if inclusion in HEd is an important objective, action should be focused on basic education, especially at the upper secondary level. However, affirmative action at selective institutions, such as *Unicamp*, will likely remain necessary for the foreseeable future, as structural inequalities in the Brazilian educational system are not going to be resolved even under optimal policies. Regarding universities, such programs should be under constant evaluation of results, including those of academic nature, and improvements should be developed if deemed necessary.

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4.3 The PACE Access Program at the University of Santiago de Chile

Authors: Karla Moreno Matus* (Chile), Renato H. L. Pedrosa (Brasil)

*Karla Moreno Matus is a professor of Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Santiago de Chile and has conducted extensive research and participated in the implementation of policies to encourage access and success for underrepresented students in Chile.

Country

Chile

Institution

Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Santiago - https://www.usach.cl/

Objectives

Equity, inclusion, diversity in higher education.

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Patricia Palaviccini – Directora Cátedra Unesco de Inclusión en Educación Superior

Type of initiative

Affirmative action program to promote the access of low-income students

Introduction: National, Regional, and Institutional Context

Chile's higher education (HE) system has, as is the case for other countries in Latin America and other regions of the world, undergone substantial expansion in recent decades. Currently, the system has 1.21 million students enrolled in undergraduate programs in 132 higher education institutions of three types: 47 Technical Education Centers (*Centros de Formación Técnica*), 31 Professional Institutes (*Institutos Profesionale*s) and 54 Universities (*Universidades*). Participation by institution type in the total enrollment is 11%, 33% and 56%, respectively.

A majority of the institutions are private, including all Professional Institutes and almost all Technical Education Centers. The overall split in enrollment is 84% for private and 16% for public ("estatales") higher education institutions (HEIs). Among universities, the private subsystem is split into those that are members of the *CRUCH* group[8], the more prestigious ones, which also include

8 The Council of Rectors of Chilean Universities (*Consejo de Rectores de las Univerisades Chilenas*) – *CRUCH* brings together the 30 most prestigious universities in Chile, including all 18 publics and 12 privates, of which 5 are catholic universities (Mineduc 2022). https://www.consejoderectores.cl/en/

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all public universities, and those that are not. Universities' participation in total enrollment is 16% for public universities, 16% for *CRUCH* private universities and 25% for the remaining private universities (Mineduc 2022).

Chile's HE system also includes another 55 thousand postgraduate (master's and doctoral) students, all enrolled in universities. Public ones enroll 23% of those students, *CRUCH* privates 29% and privates 48% (Mineduc 2022). Chile has the highest gross tertiary enrollment rate in Latin America, and it also leads the region in the number of scientific publications per capita.

Geographically, institutions located in the capital, Santiago, account for approximately half of the total student enrollment in HE in Chile. The *Universidad de Santiago de Chile* (*USACH*), a major player in the development of the program to be presented in this case study, is one of them.

Despite numbers that would be seen as very positive in the Latin American context, less than half of all admitted students are starting college right after graduating from secondary schools, and that rate has declined in recent years: 45% of those graduating from high school in 2020 were admitted by HEIs in 2021, a drop from the rate of 53% for those admitted in 2017 (Mineduc 2021).

An important development in recent years was the 2014 reforms that affected access, financing and quality assurance of the system. These reforms were introduced in response to students' demonstrations of 2011, which had financing issues as central motivation, as it became clear that the student loan system used since the 1980s had become unsustainable because of the debt burden on students. Other issues involved deregulation effects on quality and lack of control of private institutions.

One of the main points of the reforms had to do with the national standardized tests used for admissions (Prueba de Selección Universitaria - PSU). It had become clear that the results of the test were highly correlated with the socioeconomic level of students' families, with clear negative equity effects in terms of access to the system, especially enrollment in universities (Pearson, 2012).

Given that scenario, in 2014, the Program to Improve Access to Higher Education (*Programa de Acceso Efectivo a la Educación Superior - PACE*) was developed. *PACE* provides a path for secondary level students who had good academic records but could not reach the cutoff point scores in the national test (PSU) to be admitted by HE institutions, given the prevailing inequalities in basic education. Before *PACE* is described and how it came to be, we briefly outline the university that was fundamental in its development and the basic current enrollment information that are relevant for inclusion analysis.

The Universidad de Santiago de Chile

The Universidad de Santiago de Chile (*USACH*) is a century-old public university located in the capital Santiago, with a distinctive academic trajectory. One of its hallmarks has been the creation of programs of inclusive access to HE, for

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which it has been granted a UNESCO Chair of Inclusion in High Education, which has played a central role in the development of social inclusion policies in Chile, including the development and establishment of *PACE*.

USACH currently has 23,787 undergraduate students enrolled (Mineduc 2022). As evidence of its leading role regarding social inclusion, its student body presents one of the lowest rates, among universities, of participation by those who graduated from paid private high schools, as shown by data in Table 1. The table presents data about the type of secondary school system of origin of enrolled students, for the whole system, for universities and, for direct comparisons, for USACH, Universidad de Chile and the major Catholic university in Chile, PUC-Chile.

Table 1 - Type of secondary institution of origin of students (TES)

	Total enrollment	TES* (identified)	% TES/Total	%Municipal/ TES	%Private subsidized/TES	%Private/ TES	Other**/ TES
Total Chile	**1,211,797**	**1,098,085**	**90.6**	**30.4**	**53.0**	**11.9**	**4.7**
Total Universidads	683,217	648,798	95.0	24.8	54.1	17.9	3.2
Universidad de Chile	34,833	34,302	98.5	26.6	40.2	32.2	1.1
U. de Santiago de Chile	23,787	23,093	97.1	25.4	60.2	10.2	4.1
PUC-Chile	30,636	30,214	98.6	11.0	27.4	60.9	0.7

*TES: type of secondary institution of origin ("tipo de establecimiento secundario")
**Institution of delegated administration and local educational services
Source: Database Higher Education (Mineduc 2022), authors' processing

First, more than 90% of all students had their schools of origin identified, a figure that increases to 95% for universities and is more than 97% for the three universities with data included. *USACH* has only 10% of its students with paid private high schools (among those with schools identified), while the average for the universities is 18%, and for the two comparison universities, the figures are 32% for *U. de Chile* and 61% for *PUC-Chile*. This is a clear indication of the impact of the affirmative action policies at USACH, including the program to be presented in this report, as the stratification of the educational system of Chile is well documented, with students from the higher socioeconomic strata tending to concentrate in the paid private system (Bellei, Orellana and Canales (2020), Villalobos et al (2020)).

Regarding the sex of students, *USACH* shows a slightly different outlook compared to the whole system or to that of public universities. There are more male than female students enrolled, 54% to 46% in participation rates, respectively, while for the whole system, the split is exactly reversed, 46% to 54%, respectively. Similarly, we observe reversed ratios, 47% and 53%, for male and female participation in public universities. This is a direct consequence of the fact that engineering is a much stronger field at *USACH* when compared to health, and, not only in Chile but in most countries, engineering is a mostly male field and health is a mostly female one. The figures confirming those remarks are described next.

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At *USACH*, engineering and related fields account for 40% of the total enrollment, while only 21% of students are enrolled in those fields for the whole system, and 26% are enrolled at public universities. On the other hand, only 10% of the enrollment at *USACH* is in health-related fields, while for the whole system, the figure is 24%, and for public universities, it is 22%. When we check the split by sex, women account for 21% of the enrollment in engineering-related fields for the whole system and for 30% for *USACH* and for public universities, so that, actually, *USACH* is doing relatively well in that regard, including more women than the overall average and similar to other public universities. For health-related fields, participation by women stands at 77% overall, 73% for *USACH* and 72% for public universities; thus, again, *USACH* is not an exception in that regard. The figures above, put together, explain why women's participation at USACH, overall, is lower than that of other universities and of the whole system: it follows from the academic structure of the institution and is not related to inclusion issues specific to USACH (Mineduc 2022).

Development and description of *PACE*: the institutionalization of inclusion efforts

Early initiatives

Since the early 1990s, a group of researchers at the *Universidad de Santiago de Chile* (*USACH*), led by Francisco Javier Gil, undertook studies showing how, historically, a large group of students who had finished secondary education had not had access to the more prestigious group of Chilean universities, despite having attained the minimal scores in the national entrance examinations. Those students were in their majority from poor and vulnerable families. As a result of these studies, USACH started to provide funding for a series of programs, such as the *5% Bonification Program* (1991), Unesco's *Propedeutic Program* (2007) and the *Ranking Point Program* (2012), which paved the way for the development and adoption of *PACE* a few years later. USACH also set up an institutional umbrella for all its inclusion programs, the *Inclusive Access, Equity and Permanence Program* (*PAIEP*), which was established in 2012 under the UNESCO Chair of Inclusion in Higher Education and with support from the Ministry of Education (for details of the history and features of these programs, see Lizama, Javier Gil, Rahner, 2018).

The UNESCO *Propedéuticos* Network (2007)

This program, created in 2007 by *USACH* under UNESCO's *Chair of Inclusion in Higher Education*, is directed at students in the last year of secondary education in schools considered more vulnerable in the regional context of the institution. Students in the top 10% of their class are admitted to the university without use of the national test scores after a preparatory phase. They would not have been

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admitted if the standardized test had been used. The results of this initiative were positive, despite differences in pre-college education, when compared to the students admitted with high scores in the national test (Koljatic, Silva, 2011). Presently, the model has been expanded, and other Chilean universities have adopted the system, always in accordance with the original UNESCO's Chair vision (Lizama, Javier Gil, Rahmer, 2018).

The *Ranking Point Program* (2013)

Until 2012, to be admitted to a university, the main criteria were the score obtained in the National Standardized Test and the grades of secondary education (to a lesser extent). As of 2012, the Council of Rectors of Chilean Universities (CRUCH) decided to incorporate a new criterion: **the ranking score**. This score seeks to measure school performance in context, that is, within the educational establishment of each student. In this way, the best student in each school will have the maximum possible score, taking into account the differences of each educational establishment and its evaluation practices. This scoring system had been created years before by the University of Santiago de Chile (USACH), and although it did not have the support of the Ministry of Education, CRUCH began to use it because it provided greater guarantees of equity than the National Standardized Test. In the first year of use, it was given a low weighting in the admission processes (10%), but over the years, this has increased in many Chilean universities, reaching 40%. The PACE program, on the other hand, uses this score as its main mechanism for student selection.

Unlike the National Standardized Test (in which the scores correlate strongly with the socioeconomic status of the students), the ranking score ensures greater equity, since the best students in each school will obtain the maximum score, thus responding to the principle of "talents are equally distributed between rich and poor" and therefore in every school there are good students.

PACE (2014)

The accumulated evidence of positive results of programs dedicated to improving the admission opportunities of vulnerable and poor students, developed since the early 1990s, as well as a favorable political context, not to mention the impact of the 2011 student demonstrations, form the general background for *PACE*. This was the first national public policy of inclusion in higher education in Chile involving positive discrimination for those studying in underresourced high schools in the country, with legislative and executive support. It was created in 2014 by the Ministry of Education by a team led by Francisco Javier Gil, who had also led many of the previous initiatives, especially at *USACH*.

Currently, *PACE* involves 29 universities, of which 28 are *CRUCH* members, and 581 secondary schools considered to be of high vulnerability, distributed

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across the country. It offers programs of academic preparation and support for students during the last years of high school and the first year of college. This last aspect is very important for the success of the program. Thus, its objectives not only include improving the chances of access for the target population but also increasing the chances of success during their undergraduate education. Between 2015 and 2018, the program reached over 90,000 students in the last 2 years of secondary education, with more than 7,000 students admitted to universities through *PACE* (Lizama, Javier Gil, Rahner, 2018).

There are three criteria for participation:

1. To have attended the last years of secondary education in a *PACE* school and to have graduated the year before applying for admission to a higher education institution.
2. To be in the top 20% of the ranking point scores of the high school's graduating class.
3. To have taken the admission test in the same year of graduation from the school.

The program involves two parts: a. preparation during secondary education and b. support during the college years.

a. Academic preparation during secondary education

In this phase, the program works together with secondary schools through affirmative action initiatives developed by higher education institutions (HEIs). The objectives are to develop competences and skills at various levels, cognitive, inter and intrapersonal, which will help students to define their postsecondary paths in accordance with their interests, motivations, and necessities. The actions include in-school and out-of-school activities and are designed to help students in the processes of application to, selection by, and enrollment in their program of choice at the participating HEIs.

b. Support during the college years

This component of the program is dedicated to following and supporting students during the first two years at the university, with the objective of helping them stay enrolled and improving their chances of academic success. It involves academic and psychological evaluation and support and has an early alert monitoring system to allow for intervention if needed. Tutoring is an important part of the system, provided by the HEIs, and especially designed to respond to the needs of the incoming students. Special attention is given to subjects in which failure is more common, such as natural sciences and mathematics, as well as language and communication, which are important for all other subjects.

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Results

We present the results of two detailed studies on *PACE*: the first one was developed by the Ministry of Education of Chile on the *PACE* pilot program, and the second one was developed under the auspices of the Ministry of Economy of Chile by the Budget Directorate (*DIPRES*) with the Ministry of Education. Before we go forward with describing those studies, we observe that data in Table 1 in the Introduction already show a very relevant performance by *USAC*H, in part due to *PACE* but also helped by other equity programs developed by the university over the years, as mentioned in the previous sections.

a. **Ministry of Education Report**

This report (Mineduc 2017) presents an analysis of data related to the first cohorts of students (2014, 2015, 2016) who finished their secondary education in *PACE* schools, using students from schools with similar characteristics that were not part of the program as a comparison group. The results show a clear increase in the chances of students from the *PACE* schools being admitted by the participating universities.

There was no significant difference regarding academic development during the last years in high schools or in the success chances of graduating from the schools between the two groups. However, regarding applications to higher education, there was an increase from a 24% rate for the 2014 graduating class to 43% in 2016 in the *PACE* schools, thus almost doubling the admission rate. In the control group, the change was from 23% to 29%. The success rate for admission increased by 3.1 percentage points (pp) in the Pace schools from 2014 to 2016, compared to an increase of 0.4 pp for the control group. This study did not include an analysis of the academic results of students after admission to college.

In conclusion, the preliminary analysis of the *PACE* pilot data showed a substantial positive impact on the admission rate for students from *PACE* schools compared to non-*PACE* schools. The first point must not be dismissed as irrelevant, as the phenomenon of self-exclusion regarding admission to higher education for high schools in vulnerable and poor areas is one of the major sources of inequality and stratification in higher education systems (see the Unicamp/Brazil case in this volume).

b. **The Budget Directorate study**

According to the Budget Directorate study (DIPRES 2019), *PACE* had a positive impact on the chances of students being admitted by universities in the participating group of institutions but had no effect on increasing general participation in higher education (which was not part of its objectives). This is expected, as the program did not involve a policy of expansion of the whole system. Nevertheless, when university undergraduate enrollment in Chile is split

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among *CRUCH* and other universities, one notes very distinct trends. From the year before *PACE* was developed (2013) to 2022, undergraduate enrollment at *CRUCH* universities has increased by a third, from 288 to 381 thousand students enrolled, while it has decreased by 11% in non-CRUSH universities (which are all private HEIs), from 337 to 301 thousand students[9]. As 28 of the 29 *PACE* universities are also in the *CRUCH* group, *PACE* students' admissions are certainly part of the recent increase in enrollment in the most elite group of universities.

Confirming these remarks, in its summary of results, the report states that *PACE* "*increases the probability of entering institutions ascribed to the Unified Admission System (SUA in Spanish). In addition, differentiating by type of HE institution, we find that PACE increases the probability of entering university, while it decreases the probability of entering a professional institute. We also find that students enter programs that they would have not had access to without PACE by estimating a positive and statistically significant "boost" in terms of application score. Along with these results, we find that PACE increases the expected economic return of students and probability of access to better-ranked institutions.*"

In the conclusions section, the report expands on that point: the results "*suggest that students in the program are having access to programs of better chances of higher future returns and that the program, more than having an impact on the number of students in higher education, is impacting the quality and types of programs and institutions in which the students can have access to*" (p. 45). Regarding the institutions, the report states that the results show that "*PACE has a statistically significative effect of increasing the probability of being admitted to the 10 best universities in the country*" (p. 30).

The study also finds a lack of impact of the program on the academic results of students during the last years of secondary education, even though this may be more an issue resulting from the statistical models used and availability of data to develop the analysis than one relating to the actual situation in the schools. Nevertheless, the study concludes that the top 15% of the students in their classes at the end of secondary education are positively impacted in their chances of having access to higher education.

Regarding the overall impact of *PACE* and other equity programs at Chilean universities, two relevant examples follow. Data for the most prestigious public university of Chile, Universidad de Chile (*UC*)[10], show that not only has *PACE* had a direct impact on admissions, but the university has also developed other inclusion programs in recent years. In 2012, less than 10% of the admitted students were beneficiaries of inclusion programs, a number that has increased to approximately 15% in 2022. The results may be seen in the figures included in Table 1, which show that more than half of all enrolled students at *UC* in 2022 have studied in high schools other than paid private schools.

9 Matrícula Sistema de Educación Superior (Online), Consejo Nacional de Educación. https://www.cned.cl/indices/matricula-sistema-de-educacion-superior Access: 2022/07/26.

10 The authors thank Bárbara Prieto and Andrés Bernasconi for providing detailed data about admissions at the Universidad de Chile and PUC-Chile (personal communications).

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Despite being lower in volume, *PACE* and other equity programs at the Catholic University (*PUC-Chile*) have also gradually helped increase the participation of students who graduated from municipal and subsidized high schools. In 2010, such programs comprised only two very small programs, one providing scholarships for students from local schools and another for students with disabilities, benefitting only 46 of the 3,773 students admitted in that year. In 2022, 385 students were admitted through various programs, ¼ of whom were admitted through PACE. Accordingly, 37% of the students admitted in 2010 had graduated from schools that were not paid privates, while in 2022, that percentage has increased to 42%. Accordingly, Table 1 shows that approximately 40% of all students enrolled at *PUC-Chile* in 2022 are in that group.

Conclusions

PACE is a clear positive development for a society such as Chile, marked by historical inequalities of various types, especially those related to access and chances of success in higher education. Another important aspect of PACE is how the government eventually recognized the need for such a program, which developed as a result of initiatives by individual academics and institutions. PACE was not initially designed to increase general participation in higher education but to increase the chances of vulnerable young adults, especially regarding their secondary schooling, having access to and succeeding in college. It is also correctly designed to have the most impact on the more elite and selective institutions, as they are the ones that have been closed to students from the most vulnerable groups in Chilean society. Directly and indirectly related to the program, the *PACE* participating universities have shown a significant increase in enrollment in the period since the *PACE* was in place compared to other subsystems in Chile's higher education system.

Despite a relatively large group of institutions already participating in the program (29 universities), much more can be done, as the other half of the group of universities (essentially private institutions) are not yet taking part in the program.

In any case, PACE is certainly an example to be followed since it has had political support at a scale not found in most countries, especially in Latin America. The philosophy of those involved in this 30-year-old effort to develop inclusion policies for the Chilean higher education system, as proposed by Francisco Javier Gil, is "… *talent is equally distributed among rich and poor, in all ethnic groups and cultures*".

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4.4 Indigenous inclusion at Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo, Mexico

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Country

Mexico

Institution

Universidad Autonóma de Chapingo (UACh)

Objectives

Equity, inclusion, diversity in upper secondary and higher education

Type of initiative

Increasing participation and chances of success of indigenous people in higher education

Introduction: National, Regional, and Institutional context

Mexico has the second largest higher education system in Latin America, after Brazil. Undergraduate enrollment was 4.41 million in the 2020-2021 school cycle, of which 53% were women. Among those graduating that year, women represented even a larger share, totalling 55% of the 405 thousand who received a *licenciatura* degree[11]. The system also included 290 thousand students enrolled in master programs and 52 thousand in doctoral programs (ANUIES 2021).

Regarding indigenous language speakers[12], the 2020 Census put their population at 7.36 million, or 6.1% of the total of 120 million Mexicans of age 3 or older (CENSO 2020). Their participation in education in general has steadily increased in recent decades. For example, for that group, the percentage of those considered illiterate has dropped from over 50% for those aged 65 or older to less than 5% for those in the 15-29-year-old group (CENSO 2020). However, as one moves up in the educational ladder, their participation is still much lower than for the general Mexican population: as recently as 2015, only 6.6% of the total indigenous population in the 25-64 age group had completed

11 *Licenciatura en Educación Normal* (Teachers' Education) and *Licenciatura Universitaria y Tecnologica* (Bachelor's degree) are the two types of programs in Mexico which would be considered undergraduate degrees by international criteria (ISCED 5).

12 Mexico has three different ways of identifying someone as part of the indigenous population: a) members of a community living in a recognized indigenous location or someone not living in such locations but who speaks an indigenous language; b) someone who self declares as indigenous; c) those of age 3 or more who speak an indigenous language. The latter is the most restrictive criterium and is the one which we will employ in this report, as it is the one used by official documents of *Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo* (INEE/Unicef, 2019).

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a higher education degree, compared to 19% for the whole population, and in the school year 2016-2017, they represented only 1.12% of the total higher education enrollment (Didou Aupetit, 2018).

Among the more traditional universities of México, the *Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo* (*UACh*), with its main campus located in Texcoco, state of México, has the largest indigenous population participation rate, 26% of the total undergraduate enrollment (2021). *UACh* is dedicated to agrarian sciences and was founded in 1854 as the National School of Agriculture, with its original site in the country's capital. It was moved to a farm near Texcoco in 1923, which is the main campus today. It is the main agricultural and animal science and technology institution in México.

UACh currently offers 22 programs in engineering and 5 in *licenciaturas*, all related to agrarian sciences and technology, with 5,899 students enrolled in those programs. It also enrolls 692 students in masters and doctoral programs in similar areas. In addition to higher education programs, it has 4,631 students enrolled in the university's upper secondary programs. These programs are an essential part of the inclusion program for indigenous people who *UACh* developed in the last two decades, as they determine who has access to the undergraduate programs and will be discussed in later sections describing the inclusion program and its results (and limitations). Over 90% of UACh's students study at the main campus in Texcoco, also called *Chapingo*. However, UaCh also has 9 smaller sites across Mexico.

Of the population of 16.3 million aged 3 or higher in the state of Mexico, 418 thousand, or 2.6%, speak an indigenous language, which is a much lower rate than the national average (6.1%). If one considers those aged 15-24, the indicators of indigenous participation in the population are even lower, 1.4% for the state of México and 5.6% for the whole country (CENSO 2020). The city of Texcoco shows similar figures as the state of México: 2.3% of the population speaks an indigenous language, and 1.8% of those aged 15-24 do so. However, their participation among *UACh* students, at all levels, is much higher.

***UACh*'s upper/postsecondary education programs and its admissions system**

To understand how *UACh*'s admission system works, we start by describing upper secondary education at the university, as students are only admitted at that level, then advancing, if successfully completing it, to the university's undergraduate degree-granting programs (*licenciaturas*, in the Mexican system).

There are two types of upper secondary programs at *UACh*, *propedéutico* and *agriculture preparatory*. The first type lasts one year and is dedicated to students who have finished the *bachillerato*, which is the usual degree of secondary education in Mexico, and enrolls approximately 15-20% of upper secondary students. This is a postsecondary preparatory program for access to higher education that has similar programs in many countries. There are 8 centers

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across Mexico where these programs are offered. The agriculture preparatory programs last 3 years, to which students are admitted after completing lower secondary education, usually at 14-15 years of age.

This is a distinctive system of *UACh*, as students are admitted to its higher education programs only after completing *UACh*'s own upper/postsecondary programs. Even at those levels, most students have scholarships, and many live in student dorms on campus. Since UACh has campuses all over Mexico, this admission process is used to promote the inclusion of indigenous students throughout the country, making the university a truly national university.

The Ford Foundation's *Pathways to Higher Education* project in Mexico and *UACh*

In 2001, the Ford Foundation launched a global 10-year program called *Pathways to Higher Education* with the main objective of supporting "*efforts that transform higher education institutions outside the United States to enable greater numbers of poor, minority, or otherwise underrepresented students to obtain a university degree*" (Ford Foundation, 2008). As of 2008, it had supported over 125 institutions across the globe, with many of them in Latin American countries[13]. In some cases, the support was basically dedicated to the development of studies, research, and analysis about underrepresented groups in higher education, but in others, the funds were also used for direct interventions.

That was the case for Mexico, as the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (*Associacón Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior, ANUIES*), a nonprofit organization, assumed the responsibility of coordinating the program in the country. When *Pathways* ended in 2010, 23 Mexican institutions had taken part in the program, known as *PAEIIES*[14] (Badillo Guzmán, 2011).

One important consequence of *Pathways/PAEIIES* was that, for the first time in Mexico's history, data about the participation of the indigenous population were collected and maintained by official organs and universities. The inclusion of indigenous people at the highest levels of education became part of institutional and national policy agendas.

UACh was among the first group of 6 universities to participate in the project. It used the funds and resources of *Pathways* to develop a program dedicated to increasing the participation of indigenous peoples among its students, also developing initiatives to support them and to help them succeed academically after they were admitted.

13 In Brazil, one of the first universities to develop an affirmative action program for afrodescendants, in 2003, was the State University of Rio de Janeiro (*UERJ*), which received *Pathways*' support. *UERJ* was instrumental in helping establish support for affirmative action programs in Brazilian HE. The University of Campinas (*Unicamp*), whose programs are the subject of another chapter in this book, was among the first to start an affirmative action program in Brazil (in 2005), although its programs were unrelated to the *Pathways*' project.

14 For *Programa de Apoyo a Estudiantes Indígenas en Instituciones de Educación Superior*, or Support Program for Indigenous Students in Higher Education Institutions.

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Changes in the Admission Model and Early Results

Before the inception of the new inclusion program, most of the students were admitted solely by what is called *General Qualification* (*GQ*), which employs the classification given by the results of a selective admission exam developed by *UACh* itself. As late as 2004-2006, over 70% of the students were recruited through that system, while the remaining students were already being admitted through nascent equity programs, starting in 2002, which became dominant afterwards (see Table 1 below) (UPOM 2009).

By 2009, UACh had developed its admission model, including a multiquota system with the following criteria:

- Federative entity (state)
- Indigenous group
- Marginalized municipalities
- Secondary schools (*bachillerato*)
- Country region
- Agricultural technical centers (*bachillerato*)
- Special *Uruza* admissions[15]

First, admission follows these criteria for established quotas; then, the remaining vacancies are filled via the *GQ* classification. All applicants still take the entrance examination, but then only the national average of all applicants is used as a cut-point for qualification in the non-GQ system, with those above that threshold being admitted via the other criteria.

Table one shows how the system quickly evolved from one where the *GQ* criteria were dominant to one where the other criteria became increasingly more important. Values are the percentage of admission via the criterion.

Table 1 - Students admitted according to selection group (% of total), UACh

Criterion	2004-06 average	2007	2008	2009
General qualification	73	69	20	13
Federative entity	18	18	33	35
Indigenous group	7	8	33	35
Marginalized municipalities	0	0	3	5
Country region	0	0	19	20
Technical agriculture center	1	4	4	4
Special admission URUZA	1	1	1	1

Source: UPOM (2009)

15 *URUZA* stands for *Unidad Regional Universitaria de Zonas Áridas*, or University Arid Zones Regional Unit, one of the special programs developed by *UACh* in order to stimulate in some specific agricultural areas in the country. It includes a general secondary educational school and an agricultural technical school. https://uruza.chapingo.mx/88.qu-es-la-uruza

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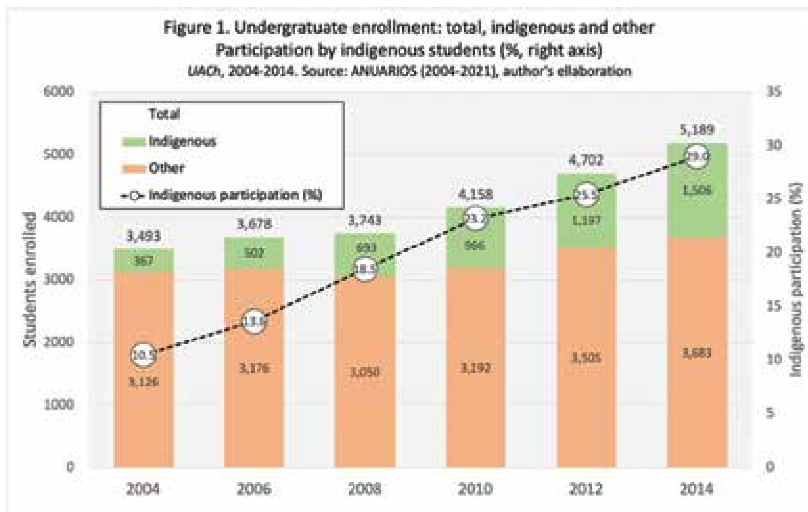
From the table, it is clear how fast the admission system changed between 2004-06 and 2009, as the other criteria, in addition to *GQ*, became more relevant, especially those involving state/regional and indigenous population criteria. As the UPOM report observes, the regional criteria were adopted to "*compensate for the geographic differences that exist regarding access to educational resources*" (UPOM 2009, p. 5). Thus, the university not only became a truly national institution with respect to students' state/region of origin, but the program had as stated an objective of improving the chances of students from poorer areas in the country to be admitted. Moreover, indigenous students (those speaking an indigenous language, the most restrictive way to qualify as part of the indigenous population in Mexico) accounted for over 1/3 of the students admitted to *UACh* in 2009, representing a 5-fold increase in participation compared to 2004-06.

The geographic distribution also changed significantly: in 2007, 32% of the incoming students were from Mexico State, a percentage that dropped to 19% in 2009, with Oaxaca leading, having grown from 11% to 22% participation.

It is worth mentioning that *UACh* is a very selective institution. In the last year covered by the report, 2009, 22,563 students applied for admission, and only 2,377 were offered admission, 1,317 for preparatory programs and 1,060 for *propedéutico*.

This change in admission policy had an immediate impact on the number of indigenous language speakers admitted to undergraduate programs, as the graph below shows. It is interesting to observe that not only did the participation of indigenous students increase from 10.5% to 29% in the period from 2004 to 2014 but that *UACh* also significantly expanded the number of students enrolled year after year, from 3,493 in 2004 to 5,189 in 2014, with most of the expansion occurring for indigenous students. As a result, the number of indigenous students increased by 310%, or 4-fold, from 367 to 1,506.



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Thus, the inclusion program developed by *UACh* under the auspices of the Pathways initiative was a huge success from the point of view of expanding access of indigenous language speakers to the university. *Pathways* ended in 2010, but the university kept implementing the inclusion plan that it had put in place and created a program to support its development to help indigenous and other vulnerable students during their college years. As a result of those efforts, the success of indigenous students at the undergraduate (*licenciatura*) level was also guaranteed (next section).

During the *Pathways* years, up to 2010, similar to other participating institutions, *UACh* not only changed its admission model, as we have seen but also developed a structure for supporting the growing population of indigenous students. In many of the participating institutions, a unit with those objectives was established under the general name of the Unit of Academic Support for Indigenous Students (*UAAEI*[16]*)*. These units not only started collecting and organizing information about the indigenous students but also developed various supporting actions directed at them, such as tutoring and support for instructors, starting in the upper secondary programs, in the case of *UACh*. Such structures have been kept, and there are continuous efforts to improve their effectiveness, according to official planning and reports (Segura Salazar & Chávez Arellano, 2016).

Current Upper Secondary Enrollment

As admissions to *UACh* depend on enrollment at its upper secondary units, we describe here current data, which confirm that *UACh*'s inclusion programs at the upper secondary level, the one at which students are admitted to the university, have been kept and have been expanding up to 2020, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2 - Upper secondary enrollment (Matriculas), total, by ethnic group and gender, 2016/18/20

	2016				2018				2020			
	Total	Indigenous	Nonindig	% Indig	Total	Indigenous	Nonindig	% Indig	Total	Indigenous	Nonindig	% Indig
Total	4,068	1,018	3,05	25.0	4,316	1,300	3,016	30.1	4,579	1,381	3,198	30.2
Women	1,742	461	1,281	26.5	1,844	589	1,255	31.9	2,070	629	1,441	30.4
Men	2,326	557	1,769	23.9	2,472	711	1,761	28.8	2,509	752	1,757	30.0
% Women	42.8	45.3	42.0		42.7	45.3	41.6		45.2	45.6	45.1	

Source: ANUARIOS (2004-2021), author's ellaboration

The first line in Table 2 shows that indigenous participation increased from 25% to 30% from 2016 to 2020. The second line indicates that among women, those who are indigenous have also increased their participation from 27% to 30-31% in the period. For men, indigenous participation also increased, from 24% in 2016 to 30% in 2020. Thus, at the end of the period analyzed, there is very little

16 Acronym for Unidad de Apoyo Académico para Estudiantes Indígenas, Indigenous Students Support Unit.

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difference in indigenous participation by sex group, both at approximately 30% (last column).

The last line's percentages show that, among all students, women had participation rates that increased slightly in the period, from 43% to 45%. For indigenous students, women's participation was approximately constant at 45-46%, and again, in 2020, rates of women's participation were approximately the same for indigenous or nonindigenous students at the upper secondary level (last line for 2020), also in the 45-6% range.

These figures confirm that *UACh*'s inclusion program, regarding admissions (enrollment at the upper secondary level), for indigenous people has evolved very consistently since its start in 2001, having reached a relatively mature status. The same may be said about inclusion regarding sex, as women's participation has also increased since 2004. In that year, the participation of women among students enrolled in upper secondary programs was 34% (1,024 of 3,019) (ANUARIOS, 2004-2021).

Current developments regarding enrollment and graduation rates

Tables 3.a/b present the data regarding enrollment (*matrículas*) and graduation (*egresados*) figures for the undergraduate programs (*licenciaturas*) for 2019 through 2021 at *UACh*. Comparing figures for graduates and enrollments, we see that there is very little difference in indigenous participation, for total, women and men groupings, between the years (4th column in each year), which, again, indicates that UACh inclusion programs have reached a mature status.

Women's participation in each group (total, indigenous and nonindigenous) shows that there is a difference, with a larger participation of women in the indigenous group, both for enrolled students as well as for graduates (last line, 2nd column in each year). Almost 50% of indigenous students enrolled in 2021 were women, while among non-indigenous students, their participation was 45%. For graduates, the participation of women was 48% among indigenous students and 44% for the complementary group. Thus, one may say that the inclusion programs for the indigenous population had a secondary positive effect of also increasing women's participation in *licenciatura* programs, a very interesting result deserving further analysis and research. Retention issues may be behind these results, as it is known that women tend to persevere in education, at all levels, at higher rates than men.

Table 3.a - Licenciatura enrollment (Matriculas), total, by ethnic group and gender, 2019-2021

	2019				2020				2021			
	Total	Indigenous	Nonindig	% Indig	Total	Indigenous	Nonindig	% Indig	Total	Indigenous	Nonindig	% Indig
Total	5,648	1,421	4,227	25.2	5,557	1,335	4,222	24.0	5,899	1,549	4,35	26.3
Women	2,49	671	1,819	26.9	2,489	654	1,835	26.3	2,738	766	1,972	28.0
Men	3,158	750	2,408	23.7	3,068	681	2,387	22.2	3,161	783	2,378	24.8
% Women	44.1	47.2	43.0		44.8	49.0	43.5		46.4	49.5	45.3	

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Table 3.b - Licenciatura enrollment (Egresados), total, by ethnic group and gender, 2019-2021

	2019				2020				2021			
	Total	Indigenous	Nonindig	% Indig	Total	Indigenous	Nonindig	% Indig	Total	Indigenous	Nonindig	% Indig
Total	1,165	297	868	25.5	1,267	319	948	25.2	1,003	271	732	27.0
Women	463	122	341	26.3	562	146	416	26.0	452	130	322	28.8
Men	702	175	527	24.9	705	173	532	24.5	551	141	410	25.6
% Women	39.7	41.1	39.3		44.4	45.8	43.9		45.1	48.0	44.0	

Source: ANUARIOS (2004-2021), author's ellaboration

Another aspect that is worth noting from the data in Tables 3.a/b is that, at least at the *licenciatura* level, the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have had little adverse impact thus far.

Thus, one may say that *UACh* has reached a high level of indigenous language speaker participation among its students, much higher than their participation in the population at large. Additionally, that it has reached, despite the fields of study it offers (which used to be a stronghold for male education), a very high level of female participation, almost 50%, a development which seems to be related to the indigenous inclusion programs, from preliminary analysis of the data available.

It is also worth mentioning that *UACh* has recently created an inclusion program dedicated to afro-descendants. The early data (ANUARIO 2021) show 266 students enrolled in upper secondary programs in that group (who are not also indigenous language speakers). It will certainly be a new aspect of *UACh*'s constant efforts toward social/ethnic inclusion in its programs that will bear fruit in the coming years.

Finally, a few words regarding graduate education at *UACh* are warranted. In 2021, the university had 692 students enrolled in master's or doctoral programs. Of those, 80, or 11.6%, were speakers of an indigenous language. Despite a much lower participation rate for indigenous students than in the case of undergraduate students, it is twice the participation of that group in the general population, which was 5.7% in 2020 (in the relevant age group population, 20-29-year-olds, CENSO 2020). Regarding gender, 360, or 52%, were women, and of those, 38 were from the indigenous group, or 10.6%, thus a similar percentage as in the whole group of students enrolled in graduate programs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *UACh* has been at the forefront of inclusion policies dedicated to increasing the participation of the indigenous population not only in Mexico but also in Latin America. Its model has many important features, the most relevant being how it integrates affirmative action in higher education with actions already at the upper secondary level, certainly a feature that is closely related to the success of the programs in all aspects.

UACh's model of admission, however, is not easily scalable, as it depends on the university integrating a well-developed upper secondary school system as

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UACh does, one that has a strong technical training curriculum associated with the university's academic outlook, focused on agricultural sciences. It seems that Chile's model is used intensively by the *Universidad de Santiago de Chile*, described in the chapter on the *PACE* system in this volume, despite being less effective compared to that of *UACh*, employing a more flexible structure of integrating universities and the upper secondary system.

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4.5 Universidades Populares at the National University of Córdoba, Argentina

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Country

Argentina

Institution

Universidad Nacional de Córdoba https://www.unc.edu.ar

Location

Córdoba, Argentina

Objectives

university-community integration, cultural development, scientific dissemination, equity, learning throughout life and inclusion in higher education

Type of initiative

Expansive extension and community engagement in a regional context

Introduction

Argentina has one of the most developed higher education systems in Latin America, enrolling 2.32 million students in undergraduate programs (DIU 2022). Undergraduate enrollment grew steadily in the decade between 2011 and 2020, from 1.81 to 2.32 million, an accumulated growth of 28% in the period. It is also one of the leading countries in the subcontinent regarding scientific research and graduate education, with 158 thousand students enrolled in graduate programs (DIU 2022) and approximately 14,000 scientific publications published yearly (WoS 2022).

The net enrollment ratio (18-24-year-old reference group) was 22% in 2020, and the gross enrollment ratio reached 44%. This means that approximately half of the student population is 25 years of age or older, which is similar to the situation in Brazil, for a regional comparison.

Access is much less effective for those in the lower socioeconomic strata in Argentina, of which only 1 in each 8 reaches college-level education, while in the higher decile of income, more than half has access to higher education. The situation worsens as college years progress, as those graduating are even more concentrated in the higher socioeconomic strata of Argentina's society. The lower decile group comprises 7.9% of the first-year class but only 1.1% in the last year of college programs. The situation is reversed for the top decile,

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which makes up 5.3% of the first-year class and 12.7% of the fifth-year class (Templado et al, 2022).

As in every country with available data (OECD 2021), having a higher education degree means higher income levels and better job opportunities. Estimates for Argentina indicate that for each extra year of education, one would get a 10% increase in income, and there are extra returns for those completing degrees at each level of education (Adrigué et al, 2022). Given the above facts and figures, measures are certainly required to fulfill higher education's mission of reducing structural inequalities in the country's society. One such initiative has been developed by the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*, the development of the *Popular Universities Program* (*Universidades Populares Program, UPP*), which is the subject of this case study.

The *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba* (*UNC*) is one of the most distinguished and traditional among public Argentinian universities, founded in 1613 by Spanish settlers. Throughout its history, the *UNC* has played a central role in Argentina's educational development, including the well-known university reform of 1918. Today, *UNC* enrolls approximately 170,000 students at all levels and fields of study, of which 149 thousand are enrolled in undergraduate programs (UNC 2021). There are over 10,000 academic and teaching staff and another 3,000 non-teaching employees. It offers 93 undergraduate, 119 specialization, 58 master's and 36 doctoral programs. Every year, the *UNC* grants almost 200 master's degrees and 260 doctorates. It is the third university in Argentina in terms of the number of scientific articles published yearly, with over 1,000 articles registered in international databases per year in recent years (WoS 2022).

The university is also involved in community affairs, with a very active extension unit, reaching out to over 37 thousand people in the metropolitan area of *Córdoba*, which has a population of 2.2 million people. These activities of *UNC* have many facets, including a large variety of educational programs dedicated to the external community, which are seen by the university as an articulating point between traditional academic activities, such as teaching and research, and its role as a direct transforming force within society. The extension school (or secretariat) of the *UNC* perceives its mission as a "dialog of knowledge" that allows for a process of listening to, encountering, debate, conflict, and concertation with the public and private spheres of society at large. This mission helps the university focus its integration and participation in problems and in the definition of actions through various programs across the region of Córdoba.

UNC was the originating institution of the Córdoba Reform of 1918, which is considered a historical milestone in the development of universities in Spanish-speaking America (Tünnermann Bernhein 1998, UNC 2022). The *Manifiesto de Junio de 1918*, which was written by students at *UNC*, is seen as sparking a higher education renovation process in the subcontinent with connections to the European university reforms started by von Humboldt in Berlin. The *reform* proposed eventually included calls for the democratization of access and

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emphasized the development of the extension mission of universities, directly connected to the social function of the institution. Currently, the *UNC* sees that mission is also relevant as a way of establishing interaction venues dedicated to the construction of collective work agendas and the strengthening of public policies on behalf of the most vulnerable sectors of (the local and regional) society.

Among its many extension activities, *UNC* has developed the most encompassing initiative known as *Universidades Populares (UP)*, which is presented in this case study. Another program, the Student Social Commitment Program (*Programa Compromiso Social Estudantil, CSE*), was developed in parallel, which made participation by students in the university's extension activities a required curriculum item.

UNC's Universidades Populares Program

UNC´s Universidades Populares Program (UPP) was established under the university´s Extension School by a Rectoral Resolution in 2017, with the explicit mandate of fulfilling inclusion objectives: "To promote the university´s insertion in the community, in terms of local, regional and national issues, allowing for the detection of problems in that process" (Storani 2021). That is, it constitutes a true public policy of inclusion with strong links to the *Sustainable Development Goals* (*SDG*s) as proposed by the *United Nations*. In a general formulation, its objectives could be expressed as those related to "not leaving anyone behind". The *Program* has seen continuous progress since its inception, as many local communities in the Cordoba Province and *UNC* signed agreements with the purpose of installing *UPP* units in their areas. As of 2022, there are 210 municipalities and communities (*comunas*) in the province with such agreements in place.

The program may be described as an integration of the old schools of arts and crafts, popular libraries, cultural associations, sports clubs and other dynamic institutions that have been part of communities and cities for some time now and that provide a universal and participative character to all types of formations, not restricted only to the younger population. They form a learning venue where knowledge, values and competences are acquired through collaborative and experiential activities. However, the main novel and distinctive UP characteristic is that of having an integrative force behind all those activities, given by a comprehensive higher education institution of the university category, in this case, *UNC*.

UNC´s *Universidades Populares Program* extends itself across the whole provincial territory, succeeding in interacting with local communities that support one *UP* from an inclusive perspective, with the objective of reaching decentralized solutions to problems emerging from the same social milieu. The *UP*s should be seen as bridges linking the university, state, civil society, businesses, unions, and other organizations of those communities, generating a

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collaborative synergy and helping push for local transformations. They develop capacity building programs on various themes related to the local environment: skills and labor reconversion, gender and diversity themes, cultural management, entrepreneurships, health, tourism, foreign languages, digital inclusion, arts, environment, and sustainability. Themes are defined locally, depending on the needs and characteristics of the communal and regional socio-productive environment.

The Student Social Commitment Program

An important initiative linking students' academic curriculum to the extension activities of UNC was developed while the *UPP* was being designed, the content of two *UNC*'s Superior Council resolutions (Ordenanza 04/16 and Resolución 02/17), the Student Social Commitment Program (*Programa Compromiso Social Estudantil, CSE*). This new program had as its main objective that students should participate in extension activities with social content developed in the regional community. Among its detailed objectives, one finds the following:

- Strengthen the institutionalization of extension projects.
- Strengthen the links between teaching/learning, research and extension.
- To promote the active participation of the university's community in the analysis and intervention are socially oriented projects.
- To promote the commitment of faculty in the development of projects designed to help students adopt interdisciplinary methodologies for approaching problems of social interest and relevance.

The program was passed just before a similar resolution was approved by the Ministry of Education (ME 2018), which called for socially relevant educational practices by students to be introduced as required items for graduation in the curricula by public universities. The resolution by the Ministry had as main objectives to promote "*the formation of graduates (of public universities) with social commitment and public universities which are socially legitimate*". The introduction of the proposal explicitly cites the Córdoba Reform of 1918's extension orientation among the motivations for the resolution's development. It does not directly cite *UNC*'s Universidades Populares or Student Social Commitment programs, but it is clear that *UNC*, being the most active Argentinian university regarding such initiatives, was relevant for the development of the Ministry's resolution.

There are two other programs that are also related to Universidades Populares, developed by UNC since 2016, *Escuela de Oficios* (Skills School) and *Raiz* (Root). The first one had its origins in a resolution by the Ministry of Education (RME 4390/2017), following previous initiatives by the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, responding to Unesco's call for "lifelong learning" policies at the tertiary level. The second is designed with the

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objective of supporting municipal governments to incorporate new models of public administration (Storani 2021).

Results and further initiatives

Since the Universidades Populares Program started, 40,105 people received certificates in 2,520 areas throughout Cordoba Province. Almost 60 thousand hours of activities developed under the guidance of approximately 1,000 trainers were delivered, most of them people from the area where the programs were developed. In this way, UNC has been able to be present in all provincial municipalities, making it possible for people of all ages, but especially for young adults, to benefit from the *program* without having to move to the university's own campuses. This is particularly relevant, as most of them would be unable to move to the larger urban areas where the university is physically present due to their limited economic means.

Regarding the Student Social Commitment Program, 289 projects were developed from 2017 through 2021, involving 1,161 faculty members and reaching 8,200 students. Another 831 people participated in the program, totaling over 10,000 people (Storani 2021).

After the first few years, two new programs were developed, closely linked to the UPP. The first is called *UNC goes out rolling*, developed with the Student Affairs Secretariat, which focuses on creating awareness in local communities and schools about university programs and degrees. These activities, developed with the UPs, have reached approximately 520 schools across the province and over 42 thousand secondary level students every year. The central mission of this program is to help break the self-exclusion pattern that is so common in vulnerable communities regarding higher education access and opportunities. It is important to observe that Argentina's system of open access puts no initial limits on the number of students admitted to each institution, as it does not follow the traditional *numerus clausus* model employed by other Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Chile and Mexico (see other cases presented in this book). Thus, the main objectives of social inclusion programs in Argentinian universities are to reduce the level of self-exclusion by vulnerable groups and to help them stay and complete their education. That is why a program such as *UNC goes out rolling* is so relevant in the Argentinian case, as is the one described next.

A second related program is called *Nexos*, which is dedicated to helping students transition between secondary education and university. Again, this is a major issue for vulnerable groups, which may see university education as an unattainable goal. This program was particularly relevant during the pandemic, when those from outside the province's capital Córdoba were at a clear disadvantage regarding admission to the university. *Nexos* project people approached those responsible for the *UP*s to obtain support in their mission, as the *UP*s already had the necessary contacts and local connections that

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could be used by *Nexos* to help students from underprivileged groups to apply successfully for admission, scholarships and other forms of support available for a successful college career.

During the months of February and March, November and December of 2021, and then February of 2022, *Nexos* developed programs in seven municipalities of the province (*Arroyito, Jesús María, Río Ceballos, Río Tercero, Villa del Rosario and Villa Dolores*) to strengthen the strategies of helping students to finish their secondary education and then apply and be admitted to UNC, given the difficulties that they had endured since the beginnings of the pandemic in early 2020. This last example shows how a community-oriented program such as the *Universidades Populares* may have a much larger role than that for which it was originally designed. The results were considered very positive and have been used by the *UPP* leadership, which has support from the rectoral office, that the program is bearing fruits in many aspects, some beyond its original objectives.

Before the development of the *UPP*, the articulation between local governments and the *UNC* had been at best sporadic and discontinuous. In the six years after its inception and development, these ties are now much stronger and well established, with continuity being the most important aspect of that relationship. They have become well integrated with local institutions, making it possible to plan and develop educational and cultural initiatives and programs that have close ties to local developmental needs and traditions. They also include a relevant democratic character, given local participation in the program's agenda. The *UP*s are seen, accordingly, as "*citizenship manufacturing enterprises*".

Challenges and scalability

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, in early 2020, the *UP*s had to readapt some of their programs, courses and, moreover, their offering models, which had to be developed now in hybrid or virtual models. Given its ability to respond to those challenges, one must say that, almost three years after the pandemic started, the *UPP* has developed a higher level of sustainability, but many challenges remain, which the *UNC* has considered with care. The previous experiences between 2018 and 2020 have helped UPs stay relevant and active, given their ability to rely on local resources and support, one of their most relevant characteristics.

The concept of *Universidades Populares* is actually an old one in Spanish speaking countries, including Spain, but not only there, as various similar initiatives were developed in other European countries (Sosa Gonzalés 2021). The modern Argentinian version, adopted by the *UNC*, has its origins in the 1918 Córdoba Reform, as it made explicit the need for universities to play a relevant social role in their neighboring communities. By 1940, there were forty Universidades Populares en Argentina (Sosa González 2021). The military

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governments of the 1960s and 1970s changed their denomination to *Institutos Argentinos de Capacitación*, given that the original denomination and their origins had links to the Argentinian leftist movements. Gradually, these institutions declined in activity and lost state funding (Sosa González 2021, p. 21).

Since the end of the last military government, gradually, the concept of the Universidad Popular has resurged in Argentina, with the UNC again playing a central role, as described in this chapter. From the description provided here, it is clear that the model is clearly scalable nationally, and in fact, there is a growing family of UPs being developed throughout Argentina, as described by Sosa Gonzáles (2021). The idea has even been considered in the subcontinental context, as the final declaration of Unesco's Cartagena Regional LAC Conference of 2008 puts it (IESALC 2008):

> *"It is indispensable the inclusion of all the population in the dynamics of knowledge, which requires, on the part of the higher education institutions, the development of alternatives and educational trajectories conducive to certification for work, for digital literacy and the recognition of experiences and knowledge acquired outside of the formal system (of education). In that sense, the experience of the Universidades Populares of the beginnings of the university reform movement, among others, should be rescued."*

In conclusion, the *UPP* at *UNC* is certainly a relevant and significant inclusion experience, involving many different approaches dedicated to making the university a very active actor in its regional context. Its results, potentialized by its links to other UNC programs, are already visible, despite the program being still in its earlier years. For it to have even more impact nationally and internationally, it would be important to further analyze the results, detailing possible changes in the student population of the university itself and the impact of students' experience in the *UPP* via the Student Social Commitment Program.

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Chapter 5.
North America Case Studies

5.1 Overview

Authors: Jamil Salmi and Andrée Sursock

The US higher education system is widely recognized as the most prestigious system in the world. This reflects the excellence of its top research universities and their outstanding contribution to innovation in leading-edge fields such as medicine, technology, and engineering and the high degree of institutional diversity. However, despite these strengths, serious disparities in access and success persist. Students from low-income families and marginalized communities—notably Afro-Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and students with special needs—have lower enrollment rates. Those who manage to access higher education have lower graduation rates, resulting in a widening achievement gap. Furthermore, the proportion of female students in STEM programs (25% in engineering, for example) falls short of the OECD average. Out of the 4,000 higher education institutions operating in the United States, it is estimated that only 8% have a diverse student population that is representative of the overall population of the country.

Students from traditionally underrepresented groups face substantial financial obstacles as a result of the rapid rise of tuition costs and nonmonetary barriers such as insufficient academic preparation, lack of motivation, and inadequate information about academic and professional career prospects. Once in college, they may encounter a range of challenges, including financial instability, lack of academic support, and an unwelcoming culture that undermines their sense of belonging.

The disparities in graduation rates are the outcome of inequalities throughout the education system. Students from underrepresented population groups complete high school at lower rates than White and Asian students and appear to be less academically prepared for college. Moreover, available data indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated disparities at the high school level, which affect the pipeline of incoming students in colleges and universities. On average, the proportions of Asian and White 18- to 21-year-olds attending undergraduate programs in 2020 were 64% and 41%, respectively, compared to 37% of Black students, 36% of Hispanic students, and 22% of American Indian students.[1]

1 College enrollment rates, NCES, US Department of Education, May 2022. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cpb/college-enrollment-rate#:~:text=The%20overall%20college%20enrollment%20rate%20of%2018%2D%20to%2024%2Dyear,%2D%20or%204%2Dyear%20institutions.

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Although many higher education institutions have made substantial efforts to increase student diversity in access and improve retention and graduation rates, progress has been very slow. A 2022 McKinsey study revealed that from 2013 to 2020, only one-third of four-year institutions had improved both racial and ethnic representation and completion rates for students from underrepresented populations at a higher rate than underrepresented populations' natural growth rate in that period (2 percent).[2] Analyzing progress in racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic representation among students indicates that only 7 percent of four-year institutions have improved.

Representation in faculty and leadership jobs is another factor that fuels inequality in the US higher education system. The same McKinsey study found that 88 percent of not-for-profit colleges and universities have full-time faculties that are less diverse than the US population. That number increases to 99 percent for research-intensive universities. The fact that students from marginalized communities are underrepresented in senior academic and administrative positions limits their ability to identify with positive role models from the same community and have an enriching educational and cultural experience, thus bringing about a feeling of alienation that may influence their academic results negatively.

In contrast, it is worth noting that Canada is doing much better than many peer countries, including the United States, in mitigating both income inequality and status inequality. When looking at intergenerational equity in access to education and comparing the educational background of students' parents to those of the population as a whole, Canada comes third among OECD countries, behind Australia and the Netherlands, well ahead of Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[3]

A distinctive feature explaining why disparities are much lower in Canadian higher education than in the United States is the fact that the top Canadian research universities, which account for a fifth of the total student population, are not exclusive, unlike the US Ivy League institutions, the French "grandes écoles", the top Chinese and Japanese universities, and the Indian Institutes of Technology, the most selective higher education institutions in the world. Canada, New Zealand, and the Netherlands are perhaps among the few countries in the world that offer high quality without high stratification of prestige. While it does not mean that disparities among social and ethnic groups do not exist, they are certainly much smaller than in the higher education system of the Southern neighbor, owing to broad access, a diversified set of institutions that include strong community colleges and polytechnics, and a university system where academic excellence is spread widely rather than being restricted to a very small elite.

2 McKinsey (2022). Racial and ethnic equity in US higher education. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/racial-and-ethnic-equity-in-us-higher-education#/

3 Usher, A. (2018). "Canada's Secret Weapon Against Inequality". HESA Blog. 22 January 2018. https://higheredstrategy.com/canadas-secret-weapon-inequality/

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Against this background, the four studies presented in this section showcase initiatives to make students from underprivileged groups more welcome in colleges and universities and to support them during their studies with the aim of increasing retention and graduation rates. The Canadian case study documents how the University of British Columbia (UBC) has successfully put in place both academic and nonacademic measures to prepare Indigenous students better and, as a result, ensure an effective transition into degree programs.

The three cases from the United States document equity initiatives at various community colleges. The first one looks at the experience of six colleges in the Western part of the country that have worked together to improve access and success for American Indian and Alaskan students. Similar to the UBC experience, they have implemented a series of complementary support measures designed as a holistic approach to increase access and improve completion.

The second one analyzes a project implemented by North Carolina community colleges to increase success opportunities for first-generation students through technology-based coaching. Recognizing that the academic results of students are influenced by their personal situation and past experience of discrimination, the project sought to offer personalized support based on a technology-mediated association with coaches available to offer advice on the personal and academic challenges faced by students.

The last case study documents an initiative carried out by a network of colleges in Amarillo, Texas, to help students from vulnerable groups overcome the financial, family, and health obstacles that prevented them from graduating. The good results obtained by the initiative hinged on a cultural shift on behalf of the Colleges' leadership team and faculty members that allowed them to prioritize meeting the students' basic needs (income, housing, food, health) as a precondition to their being able to achieve good academic results.

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5.2 The University of British Columbia: Aboriginal Access Studies Program (Canada)

Authors: Andrée Sursock & Ian Cull

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

The University of British Columbia (UBC), Okanagan Campus

University website: https://ok.ubc.ca

Aboriginal Access Studies Program website:

https://students.ok.ubc.ca/indigenous-students/access-studies-program/

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Ian Cull, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Principal on Indigenous Affairs at the University of British Columbia (Retired) and creator of this initiative

Type of initiative

Entrance program that prepares and transitions Indigenous learners into degree programs at UBC.

Introduction

The Okanagan Campus is one of the four campuses of the University of British Columbia. It was opened in 2005 in Kelowna, the third largest city in British Columbia, and the research and innovation hub in the southern interior. The campus is situated in a traditional Okanagan territory.

UBC's Okanagan campus offers a wide range of undergraduate programs (Arts, Education, Engineering, Fine Arts, Human Kinetics, Management, Media, Medicine, Nursing, and Sciences) and master's and PhD programs (Biology, Biochemistry, and Molecular Biology, Chemistry, Computer Sciences, Education, Engineering, English, Earth, and Environmental Sciences, Fine Arts, Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies, Management, Mathematics, Medical Physics, Nursing, Psychology, and Social Work).[4]

UCB Okanagan enrolls 10,806 undergraduates and 11,989 graduate students. It hosts 15 research centers and employs approximately 500 faculty members.

The Access Program enrolls approximately 40 Indigenous students per year who come from across Canada. Today, indigenous students constitute 8% of UCB Okanagan's undergraduates, which is higher than the proportion of indigenous people in the Canadian population (5%) and 5% of graduate students. A first alumnus of the Program has received a PhD.

4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_British_Columbia_(Okanagan_Campus)

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Initially, indigenous students tended to enroll in nursing, education, social work and arts, but their interest is now expanding to other fields, such as engineering and the sciences, to respond to the needs of their community.

Description of Equity Initiative

Starting with the University of Manitoba approximately 45 years ago, several Canadian higher education institutions developed transition and support programs for indigenous populations.[5] The initiative at UBC Okanagan stands out from the others in that it facilitates access to a research-active university without requiring a high school diploma.

This specific initiative was started in response to a requirement from the Province of British Columbia in 2006 asking that the school and higher education sectors provide better access to Indigenous students.

The campus signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the seven Bands that compose the Okanagan nation. The MoU laid down the obligations of each party toward the other. One of these obligations was for the UBC to provide access to curricula to students that would be (i) respectful of the indigenous culture, (ii) relevant to the Okanagan nation and (iii) reciprocal to the extent that the university would acknowledge indigenous knowledge and be of benefit to the nation.

The main challenge for UBC was twofold: the percentage of indigenous students graduating from high school was very low, while the threshold admission requirements for UBC were very high. This meant that only 4% of the indigenous high school graduates could qualify for admission. An alternate pathway, with three key features, was created to address this issue:

- The Access Program should comply with the student financial aid requirements of the Province of British Columbia.
- The program would provide holistic support to the students.
- The students admitted to the Access Program would not have to reapply to the University but could continue seamlessly from the Access Program on to their majors upon successful completion of the program.

Design of the Initiative

The program was designed and operated in partnership with the En'owkin Centre, the Okanagan Nation's Centre for Higher Education.

The initiative was designed as a three-year pilot. The University Senate agreed to the pilot and confirmed it as a successful initiative three years later. The leadership of both the university and the Senate supported the initiative.

To increase the program's attractiveness, negotiations with faculties led to opening certain university courses to pathway students.

5 https://catalog.umanitoba.ca/undergraduate-studies/extended-education/access-aboriginal-focus/

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Core objectives of the initiative

To provide Indigenous students access to university and to ensure their success.

Implementation timeframe

The initiative was developed in 2006 as a three-year pilot program. Following a positive evaluation, the University Senate approved it as a core program of UBC Okanagan in 2009. It is now an established program of the university, with its permanent staff and budget.

The Indigenous Access Program is embedded in the Indigenous Student Programs and Services. In addition to the fourteen staff members within the center, there is a large cohort of peer tutors and peer mentors. There are four staff members who are advisors and program coordinators for the Access Program. However, all members of the Centre play a role in the Access Program.[6] There is a strong preference for staff members to be indigenous; however, in exceptional circumstances, an indigenous person may be appointed to a position. In the current staff cohort, thirteen are indigenous.

Implementation Modalities

Aboriginal Access Studies is an entrance program that prepares and transitions indigenous learners into degree programs at UBC. The program combines both academic and nonacademic activities to form a rich, full-time schedule in a supportive university setting. Students may start the program in September or January. The program welcomes a diverse range of indigenous applicants who may not be prepared for direct admission to a degree program. Applicants may include the following:

- Recent high school graduates
- Mature students
- Applicants whose grades do not reflect their academic potential
- Applicants who would like additional support as they transition into university

Students enroll in up to three university-level courses per term, which are applicable to their intended degree program. These courses are combined with noncredit-bearing, academic bridge courses (e.g., writing, math, biology). This combination of courses means that students experienced two types of environments: they interacted with indigenous peers in the bridge courses and with nonindigenous peers in the university-level courses. University-level courses allow students to acclimate to a wider academic environment and transfer to another institution if they wish.

6 The number of Indigenous staff across the university is not known. The institution depends on self-declaration and many Indigenous staff prefer not to declare to their employers.

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Students can apply to a degree program after successfully completing a minimum of six courses (18 credits). Those who achieve a minimum of 60% in each of their courses and who meet program requirements are considered eligible to transfer into their desired undergraduate degree program on the UBC Okanagan campus. Courses taken in Aboriginal Access Studies will apply toward degree programs as either required or elective credits.

Students must attend mandatory tutorials and workshops to enhance their academic skills and knowledge and must participate in a mandatory, intensive advising scheme (20 hours per week). Indigenous student advisers provide individualized academic planning and help access students choose courses based on their academic backgrounds and degree goals.

A central feature of the Program is the "Indigenous Centre", which includes a study and social space, computer lab, kitchen, and meeting room. The scope of the center's activities encompasses the academic, social, and cultural aspects of student life. Specifically, it includes the following:

- Indigenous orientation
- Academic planning specific to personal goals
- Mandatory weekly workshops on academic, health/well-being, and career topics
- Individual support, referrals, and advocacy
- Social, cultural, and recreational events throughout the year
- A supportive team of indigenous peer mentors and tutors

UBC's Okanagan campus prioritizes housing for all self-identified indigenous students. On-campus housing provides the opportunity to obtain help for academic and personal challenges. Among the available residential options, both indigenous and nonindigenous students can select a thematic residence focused on indigenous history, identity, and culture.

How was the initiative financed (external and internal funding)?

The pilot phase was funded by the Province of British Columbia. Today, the Access Program is funded by both the Province and UBC. Students pay regular UBC tuition and student fees for each course they take. All Indigenous students have access to Provincial financial aid.

Linkages with national/regional/local policies

This initiative was in response to pressure by the Province of British Columbia requiring all education institutions to address access to Indigenous populations. This political pressure met with interest from some quarters within the university who genuinely wanted to address the needs of the indigenous population.

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Provincial funding was made available to launch the initiative and to support it over time provided that the program compiled with provincial financial aid requirements.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

Faculty was initially resistant to the initiative. Some were worried about the reputational risks to the university if it lowered its admission threshold. Others were concerned about having to teach underprepared students. There were also some questions raised about the optimal number of Indigenous students.

This resistance was overcome by a combination of factors: the University and Senate leadership was fully behind the initiative; the province applied political pressure and provided project funding that could not be used for anything else. Resistance was reduced as the program acknowledged the faculty's contributions to the students' success. Today, most faculty take pride in the program.

The MoU with the Okanagan nation included the principle of reciprocity. Community-engaged research is an important way of putting this principle into action. Indigenous researchers are those most interested in this type of research activity, and other faculties, such as Nursing and Arts and Science, are also engaged in this work. Some other faculties, such as in STEM fields, are less familiar.

Results of the innovative equity approach

The key metrics include the following:

- Enrollment counts
- Progress and retention
- Academic performance
- Graduation rate

At the end of the 2nd year, there is no noticeable difference in the academic performance of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students.

- The student progression after they graduate shows the following:
  - 60% of a cohort continue their study at UBC
  - 20% transfer to another institution
  - 10% are not ready to progress further with their study

What lessons arise from these results?

Key success factors include the following:

- A solid and authentically developed relationship with the host indigenous nation upon which the institution is situated. This can be a formal written

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agreement that lays out mutual obligations, responsibilities, and goals for all parties. Alternatively, it can be a living relationship such as an Elders Council that has long-standing significant influence within the institution.

- Beyond providing the requisite knowledge and skills, the key to academic success is to build students' self-confidence. This takes a great deal of time and effort and is achieved by engaged academic advising that requires students to attend tutoring sessions and provide a targeted orientation and strong peer-mentoring programs.
- A peer community based on cohorts. Even when students disperse across different majors, they are encouraged to remain in contact with one another and participate in the life of a peer group. Additionally, these students remain engaged with Indigenous Programs and Services throughout their undergraduate and graduate studies. This is important to support their retention and progression.
- The community extends to the growing number of indigenous faculty across the university (e.g., 7 in nursing, 4 in engineering, etc.)
- The program is attuned to students' personal obligations and accommodates short-term leave when students must return to their family.
- The program recognizes the different needs of indigenous students. Those who come from urban centers wish to deepen their cultural knowledge; those who come from remote areas need to acclimate to a nonindigenous environment.
- The university recognizes its bicultural environment. Campus signposting is both in English and Colville-Okanagan, and many references to the indigenous community can be found on campus, whether it is in vernacular architectural elements, specific land use, or artifacts.
- Strong relationships with the Institutional Research Office and Enrollment Services are imperative. The collection and utilization of accurate student data are crucial to the success of these programs. Understanding application, admission, student enrollment, the progression success from the pathways program to diploma or degree studies, success and progression in the students' academic journey and graduation success is critical to evaluate the usefulness of the pathways program. Only by collecting and strategically using these data can program improvements be made and an overall assessment of the usefulness of the program be acquired.
- Adequate financial resources.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

When the initiative was launched, Nursing was one of the most popular majors for Access Program students. From the Access Program, the Supportive Admissions Program in Nursing was developed with Nursing. It offers Indigenous students who met the published admission minimum but not the annual admission grade point average (GPA) an option for admission.

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In this opportunity, students are provided extra support. This option is very successful and resulted in an annual attrition rate of 3%. Indigenous Programs and Services is now negotiating this type of arrangement with other interested disciplines, such as engineering. Furthermore, a modified Access Program is being developed to provide an access pathway to graduate studies.

The success factors included the following:

- The holistic approach to student support (academic advising, tutoring, workshops, and social and cultural events) supported the transition of students into degree programs.
- Providing students with an indigenous community while offering them the opportunity to acclimate to the nonindigenous environment.
- Leadership support at both the University and Senate levels.
- Tracking the Program's achievements in the yearly "enrollment report" that is presented to the Senate.
- Including the Program in the University's core budget.
- The engagement of faculty members in embedding the program across the university.
- A critical number of Program staff to ensure that diversity and inclusion issues are not the purview of lone, isolated individuals.
- Political and financial support from the Provincial government.

Could this initiative be successful in other countries/contexts?

Yes, the holistic and community approach is particularly important regardless of national origins.

Concluding Comments

The roots for successful indigenous activities at the university lay in having a longstanding and authentic relationship with its host nation. Having an agreement about mutual obligations and responsibilities that include but are not limited to admission policies, curriculum, hiring, research, and intellectual properties and having mechanisms to purposefully carry these out is very important.

It is of paramount importance that the Board of Governors, the Senior Administration and Senate are committed to supporting and resourcing these kinds of initiatives and that they are engaged and informed. This requirement provides institutional support and direction to the university community without which such programs and initiatives will wither.

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5.3 Coaching North Carolina Community College Students (USA)

Author: Andrée Sursock

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

"Carolina Works" is a project led by Central Carolina Community College on behalf of a consortium that includes nine other North Carolina community colleges: Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Carteret Community College, Cleveland Community College, College of the Albemarle, Isothermal Community College, Pamlico Community College, Randolph Community College, Roanoke-Chowan Community College and Southwestern Community College.

https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/carolina-works-first-in-the-world/

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

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Derek V. Price, Principal and Founder, DVP-PRAXIS LTD

Jessa Lewis Valentine, formerly director of research, evaluation & analytics, DVP-Praxis LTD

Valentine, J.L. and Price, D.V. (2023). Coaching to Completion: Impacts of Success Coaching on Community College Student Attainment in North Carolina. *The Review of Higher Education,* https://muse.jhu.edu/article/879739/pdf

Price, D.V., J.L. Valentine and A. Leader (2021). Success coaching impact on retention for community college students. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*. 9(3) https://www.aacrao.org/docs/default-source/sem/semq-0903-price.pdf?sfvrsn=1a1d76ec_1

Type of initiative

Technology-enabled holistic coaching for students

Introduction

Approximately nine million students are enrolled in community colleges across the United States. Community colleges are two-year public institutions that provide open access to postsecondary education at low cost. Community colleges enroll a disproportionate percentage of students of color and low-income students. It is estimated that approximately 55 percent of all Hispanic

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undergraduates and 45 percent of all Black undergraduates enroll in community colleges.

Nearly two-thirds of community college students do not earn a postsecondary degree or credential.[7] Barriers to retention and completion include academic deficits (math, English) and nonacademic issues. According to the US Government Accountability Office[8], nearly 40 percent of US undergraduate students are from low-income households, of whom three-fourths are single parents, and first-generation college students, who are increasingly at risk of food insecurity and homelessness. Even those not struggling with basic needs are often trying to balance their studies with other responsibilities, such as work or family obligations. These issues are particularly relevant for the community college student population.

Furthermore, the yearly public subsidy that community colleges receive is approximately $9,000 less per student than four-year institutions, which means that they can invest less in student support. Moreover, their education provision is presented in a "cafeteria-style menu" that can be bewildering to the students if they are not properly guided.

With respect to student demographics, students enrolled in the North Carolina community colleges were more likely to be female (65%) and underrepresented students of color (30%), with Black students representing the largest non-white racial group. On average, they were 26 years old with a high level of financial needs (55% received Pell grants), and more than 40% were enrolled part-time (i.e., in fewer than 12 credits).

Description of equity initiative

The Department of Education provided funding through the "First in the World" (FITW) program to support the development and dissemination of solutions in improving the retention of at-risk students (*inter alia*, adult learners, working students, part-time students, students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, students with disabilities and first-generation college students).

"Carolina Works" was one of two Validation Grants awarded by the Department of Education in 2015 to test the impact of technology-based success coaching.

This initiative aimed to support students in a holistic manner because it recognized that academic success is also dependent on non-academic factors such as professional and family responsibilities or past experience of discrimination. It is part of a general drive in the US to address the need of students in a personalized and proactive way and is based on several studies that

7 Shapiro, D., A. Dundar, F. Huie, P. Wakhungu, A. Bhimdiwala, and S. Wilson (2019). *Completing College: A State-Level View of Student Completion Rates* (Signature Report N°16a). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

8 Government Accountability Office (2018). Food Insecurity: Better Information Could Help Eligible College Students Access Federal Food Assistance Benefits.

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have shown the effectiveness of intensive advising or successful coaching to improve student outcomes.[9]

Building on the studies of successful coaching, this initiative was the first large-scale multi-institution experiment to isolate and test the impact of technology-enabled coaching in a community college setting. The approach that was adopted was student-centered (i.e., driven by the needs of each student) and provided sustained academic advising, mentoring, and counseling overtime to improve retention and completion.

How was the initiative designed (actors and process)?

In 2011-2012, Central Carolina Community College took the initiative to implement a success coaching scheme that had a very positive impact on the success and engagement of students. The chief academic officer wrote to his counterparts at the other 57 community colleges in North Carolina to ask if they would be interested in extending this initiative across the state. Applicants were interviewed and selected based upon their profile (rural/urban), their geographical location, their willingness to innovate and their commitment to students from underprivileged backgrounds.

The Project Lead at Central Carolina Community College coordinated and led the consortium. Each college appointed a project lead who had a direct report to the president usually, a vice president of student services; more rarely, an academic dean.

A call went out to college staff to recruit those interested in becoming success coaches. A job description was produced by each college, which was free to adapt it to local circumstances. Most of the coaches were locally employed staff, but three retired staff from community colleges applied and were selected.

Fifteen months elapsed between the time of the first contact with the 57 community colleges and the start of the initiative. This time was taken up by the selection process and the coach training.

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Once the initiative was launched, the lead coordinator convened all the local leads every other week.

Coaches worked with faculty and staff from across the college (career services, financial aid, academic advising, etc.) and off-campus resources to address the needs of individual students.

Core objectives of the initiative

Through a holistic approach to coaching, success coaches – professionals who build relationships with a caseload of students – serve as a single point of contact to guide students on their educational pathway. In addition to academic advising, coaches helped students address food and housing insecurity, transportation, childcare needs, internet access, etc.

The coaches had access to a digital platform that provided predictive analytics and early alert systems. The platform helped coaches prioritize their outreach and support students before they reached a crisis point. Coaches were encouraged to "close the loop" by reaching faculty and staff, thus ensuring a solid safety net. Similarly, faculty were invited to provide information on students to ensure that the alert system worked as planned.

Implementation timeframe

This was a five-year study (2016-21) that was designed as a research and implementation project to test the effectiveness of technology-enabled success coaching. All students in the study had access to any student support services already provided at their college, but some of the new students were randomly assigned to success coaches. In other words, there were two groups, a treatment group assigned to coaches and a control group with regular student support. Over the five-year period, 10,700 students were involved in this research across the ten community colleges, 50 percent of whom were assigned a success coach.

The study was constructed to ensure that the impact of the success coaches could be isolated. All students in the study, whether in the treatment or the control group, received automated alerts on the basis of their attendance patterns and grades. Any faculty could generate early-warning alerts and refer students to coordinators in charge of a response. For students in the treatment group, their success coach also received these alerts and followed up with them proactively. The software allowed the coaches to identify and triage the students according to their risk level.

They were 37 coaches across the ten colleges. Coaches' caseloads ranged from 41 to 286 students, with a median of 143 students per coach. Some coaches had advising or counseling experience. All received a two-day training that included an introduction to the digital platform, advice on how to communicate to students as a group or individually, and on how to respond to specific types of alerts. They received training and professional development in the theory and

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practice of Appreciative Advising, which involves the "intentional collaborative practice of asking generative, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potentials".[10] Continuous training on a variety of topics was also available during the five years.

An important aspect of this training was to prepare coaches for their first meeting with their students. This meeting was meant to introduce the students to the coach and to ensure that the students could develop their own understanding and their own expectations of this relationship.

Most colleges had one coach for all the students, which meant that all students were assigned automatically to one coach. Those who had more than one coach assigned the students according to broad academic fields.

How was the initiative financed (external and internal funding)?

Department of Education grant

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

This initiative was a response to a funding program by the US Department of Education.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

What difficulties arose during implementation? How were they overcome?

The project faced several challenges:

- Structural challenges: these refer to the low level of community college funding, particularly in rural areas. The federal grant allowed colleges to recruit new staff, but not all colleges were able to provide core funding for the salary of the new staff. This challenged the sustainability of the intervention. Furthermore, some colleges were so underresourced that they used the newly recruited staff not only for coaching but also to take on other responsibilities.
- To the extent that this was a technology-mediated intervention, it had to be compatible with existing IT systems. This was challenging to some colleges for financial and technical reasons.
- The automated alert system depended on faculty buy-in, which was not automatic. This depended on the robustness of the campus-wide com-

10 The phases of Appreciative Advising are: disarm (establish rapport with students), discover (learn students' background and context), dream (coach and student explore goals together), design (coach and student cocreate academic and personal plans, deliver (plans are enacted), and don't settle (new goals aimed at continuous improvement are established). See https://www.appreciativeadvising.net (from Valentine and Price 2021).

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munication about the Success Coach role on campus so that all faculty and staff were aware of this function and would route students to this service. Faculty in particular had an important role to play in the Carolina Works Success Coaching model by entering up-to-date information on student attendance and grades that coaches can then act upon to catch students before they fall behind and by submitting alerts within the technology system resulting in additional support/outreach to students. Some campuses were very innovative in the ways they got the word out about success coaching and use of student support technology, for example, having campus-wide competition and awarding faculty who were "superusers" of the technology.

Results of the innovative equity approach

The experimental aspect of the study aimed to isolate the impact of technology-enhanced coaching on retention and completion. An independent evaluator designed and executed an experimental study that involved ten community colleges. It sought to respond to two questions:

- Does being assigned to a success coach – a college staff person trained to deliver proactive, data-informed student outreach – improve community college students' retention and completion outcomes? Do impacts vary by student characteristics?
- To what extent do the impacts of success coaching on student outcomes vary by college- or coach-level implementation factors?

The ten campuses were rated based on a set of institutional indicators such as the strength of campus leadership, campus-wide communication and engagement, technology adoption and use, faculty and staff commitment to this initiative, and coaches' fidelity to the data-informed intervention.

What is the available evidence about the outputs, outcomes, and impact of the initiative?

Quantitative and qualitative study (campus visits and semistructured interviews of 244 college personnel).

What lessons arise from these results?

The value of the coach-student relationship is at the core of the success of this initiative. Successful coaches are employed by the college; this ensures that they are knowledgeable about policies and resources. They are caring, reliable, proactive mentors who help students identify and address barriers and provide encouragement and accountability, career advice, and information about on- and off-campus resources.

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Institutional support for coaching–as measured by the strength of campus leadership, campus-wide communication and engagement, technology adoption and use, etc.–generated a positive impact on retention and completion. Strong institutional support, evidenced by frequent communication about success coaching, ensures that all staff are aware of this approach. Ensuring coaching continuity through core institutional funding is very important as well. Colleges that scored high on these aspects also showed a higher rate of retention (4%) and completion (9%).

While the long-term retention was increased by 4% on average, some categories of students benefited more than others:

- Full-time students (6% increase).
- Male students (9% increase).
- Students assigned to coaches who remained in place for the full study (12% more likely to complete a credential) because the benefits of coaching emerge overtime.
- Black students (18% increase): An unexpected finding of the study is that, as a group, Black students benefited most from their success coaches: 8 percent were more likely to stay enrolled for one year and 18 percent for two years. This suggests that a trusting relationship is particularly important to students of color in making them feel welcomed, understood, and supported.

The better performance of males and black students was most likely because they tended – for different reasons – not to form personal relationships readily. The scheme gave them the opportunity to do so.

The retired staff who served as coaches were very successful. Students appreciated the wisdom imparted by older coaches.

Coaches were assigned randomly, but to the extent that they came from the same location as their students, they tended to match the students' demographics.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

Embedding the initiative in the institution is key to its success. Ensuring the retention and completion of students requires a collective effort to ensure that the safety net is strong. Success factors include:

- Giving time for trust-based relationships to develop between coaches and students
- Ensuring the commitment of leadership, faculty and administrative staff
- Communicating about the benefits of the intervention

Access to the digital platform might be a constraining factor to the extent that it requires resources, appropriate staffing support and training.

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The North Carolina funding model of community colleges militated against scaling up. Fees collected by each community college go to the state level, which is responsible for disbursing these funds. At the system level, however, there is a lack of recognition of the need to fund the required IT system that would generate alerts and support this type of initiative. The lack of strong political commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion acts as a further barrier. The sociological split between rural (relatively homogenous communities) and urban communities (relatively heterogeneous) resulted in a lack of consensus at the state level on the need to target specific populations and ensure their access to and success in higher education.

Could this initiative be successful in other countries/contexts?

This initiative is certainly applicable in other countries and contexts, but it requires resources to develop and maintain the digital platform and train and guide coaches.

Concluding Comments

This initiative combines technology solutions with highly trained success coaches who can build relationships of trust with students. The use of technology ensures that interventions are timely and prevent failure.

Success coaching is particularly important for minority students (whether males or students of color). While coaches are central to this initiative, they can only be successful if they receive support from leadership, faculty, and staff and if they are permanently employed. This means that organizational management change and institutional support are critical and must embrace the whole campus community.

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5.4 Serving Native Students with Holistic Student Supports (USA)

Author: Andrée Sursock

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

Six colleges catering to Native American and Alaskan Native students in the USA have initiated this activity: Fond du Lac College, United Tribes Technical College, Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College, Stone Child College, Ilisagvik College and White Earth Tribal and Community College.

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

This case study is a summary of Deal, S.A., Clay, J., Curtis, D., Gritts, J., Johnson, K., Valentine, J.L., & Price, D.V. (2022). *Serving Native Students with Holistic Student Supports: How Tribal Colleges and Universities Embed a Community Feeling into Academic Culture*. DVP-PRAXIS LTD: Indianapolis, IN.

https://www.dvp-praxis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/TCU-HSS-Final-Evaluation-Reportemail.pdf

Type of initiative

Grant to provide holistic student support services to improve retention for native students.

Introduction

The history of native education in the US has been a succession of tragic initiatives until the Tribal College and University (TCU) movement, which led to the creation of Navajo Community College (now Diné College) in 1968, soon followed by other similar initiatives. Currently, there are 38 accredited higher education institutions located in rural and isolated Native American Reservations or Corporations.[11] All offer associate's degrees, 14 offer baccalaureate degrees, and five offer master's degree programs.

Education is provided at a comparatively low cost. In 2020, the median undergraduate tuition fee at TCUs was $3,320 compared to the national median of $10,080. TCU students have access to federal student aid programs such as the Pell grant, work-study programs, and the supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant. Other NGOs and agencies provide financial support to TCUs, communicate on their achievements, and advocate on their behalf.

TCUs are chartered by their respective tribes. Each is governed by an all-Native Board of Regents appointed by the tribes. They respond to the specific

11 A "state-chartered" tribal corporation is a corporation wholly or partially owned by a tribe organized under state law. It is the Alaskan equivalent to a reservation.

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educational needs of their communities and include teaching of native language and culture by Native Elders (often without a terminal degree).

TCUs serve more than 30,000 students, many of whom are young adults. The average TCU student is a single parent with two children who needs access to higher education as a part-time student and does not have to leave his or her community.

During the project period (2019-21), nearly 40% of first-time students were 25 years or older when they first enrolled, approximately a quarter of students enrolled part-time, and 64% of students received either a Pell Grant or an American Indian College Fund scholarship.

Enrollment patterns during the grant period changed due to COVID-19. Student enrollment declined. Those who enrolled were less likely to enroll full time and more likely to be older than 25 years and female. The shift to online learning, however, increased access to students who would have not been able to enroll otherwise.

Description of policy/programme/measures

Rationale for innovative equity initiative/policy/program/ measures. What specific challenges did it aim to address (access, retention, financial, nonfinancial, several issues at the same time)?

The initiative aimed to improve student retention and attainment by examining and improving campus structures and processes to provide holistic, strategic, systematic, and proactive student support.

How was the initiative designed (actors and process)?

The project was codesigned with faculty, administrative staff, and students from the six campuses.

Core objectives of the initiative

The initiative addressed two core areas of transformative change: structure and process. Structural change refers to reshaping the college experience and is an actionable first step toward Holistic Student Support (HSS) redesign. It requires resources and buy-in. Process change refers to the network of people who enable the structure to function. A third crucial component refers to attitudes. These are often the most difficult to cultivate and are the critical foundation for HSS redesign. However, the project felt that this foundation preexisted the project and was at the core of the TCU ethos.

Implementation timeframe

The project started in Fall 2019 and ended in Fall 2021. It addressed two core areas – structure and process. Achieving the Dream (ATD), the most

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comprehensive nongovernmental reform network for community colleges, focused on students' success by providing coaching, network support, and subgrant financial support.

Implementation Modalities

The ATD intervention was on two levels: building a community of practice across the TCUs and providing tailored coaching and guidance to each TCU. This translated into three foci, as detailed below.

(i) Tracking the implementation and understanding success factors included the six following key developments:

1. Recruit support staff in each TCU: Senior TCU leaders supported this step, which was crucial in making support more visible to students and more effective. The recruitment focused on broadening support capacity by creating new roles, such as success coaches, retention coordinators, and mental health counselors, to ensure that individual support was offered to students and included personal considerations.
2. Focus on building relationships with incoming students through an improved orientation, which included information about the college, culture and values, introduction to faculty and staff, overview of resources and student support, and academic advising. Due to the pandemic, this orientation shifted to online platforms, while making sure that the online portion was informational, freeing time for a focus on building relationships with students when they visited campus. The online format had the added advantage of allowing students to access resources and services after orientation.
3. Strengthen the availability and quality of online learning. After an initial learning curve for both students and staff, hybrid and online classes were well received as long as they constituted a supplement rather than a standard delivery mode. Face-to-face teaching continued to be perceived as being superior, but the online format allowed adult students to balance their personal and professional responsibilities.
4. Redesign advising through the following initiatives:
   - Include support staff as part of the pool of advisers rather than rely on faculty-led advising models; some colleges introduced co-advising whereby staff advise of the nuts and bolts of course selection and faculty serve as mentors. The co-advising scheme allowed students to have better and more timely access to advice.
   - Streamline program pathways to ensure that advisors are equipped with clear guidance on academic planning.
   - Communicate program pathways by sharing educational plans with students before they first register for classes, revisiting them each

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semester and storing them electronically for easy access by students and their advisors.

- Clarify the role of the advisors so that faculty and staff know their responsibilities and students understand who to contact for what kind of issue.
- Perhaps most importantly, identify key touchpoints with advisors to support students during their academic journey.

5. Implement and leverage new technology to track student progress more easily and to enable the institution to grasp and respond to college-wide trends in student demographic and academic outcomes. This included student information and alert systems at key points during the academic year.
6. Bolster the capacity to meet students' basic needs, such as access to emergency funds, direct assistance for food, housing, transportation, and childcare. COVID relief funds (Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund and College Fund) were used to loan laptops and wi-fi hotspots to students. They could keep the laptops if they passed their courses successfully.

(ii) Understanding the faculty and staff experience and addressing any structural, process or attitudinal concerns.

Faculty and staff were committed to continuing to serve and support students in the face of the pandemic. They adapted their practice to accommodate students' evolving needs (e.g., those who fell sick or were caring for their sick relatives).

They appreciated the improved data information system and the newly developed alert system.

Technology contributed to improving and streamlining communication. This was noticeable across departments and in bringing faculty and administrative staff closer together.

The advising redesign (see section i.4 above) helped faculty redirect their energy toward ensuring the success of first-year students.

(ii) Replicate and scale up based on the identification of the most impactful activity or lesson.

The student orientation system was improved through active consultation of students and the encouragement of staff and faculty to reach out to students. It helped not only in contributing to the success of the initiative but also in ensuring that students felt engaged in their community. This is particularly important given the hesitancy of native students to seek advice if they do not feel a personal connection to their advisors.

The students' voice and feedback were included when making changes. This allowed students to take ownership of their academic journey. It also had a twofold impact on faculty and staff: (i) they now ask more routinely if the students have been consulted and (ii) they integrate the students' views in their practice. As an example, at one college,

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> Staff reported that they thought they knew what student success looked like, but when "[the college] asked students what their definition of success was - [because] as administrators we think about retention and graduation - [students] told us that success was about being a role model, making a difference in their community. Now we're including their [definition of] success in our core curriculum." (p.22)

How was the initiative financed (external and internal funding)?

The TCUs received support from Achieving the Dream (ATD) from Fall 2019 through Spring 2022, with supplemental funding from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund and The College Fund.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

Are there official policies/incentives in support of this type of initiative, or was it an original idea from the higher education institution itself? How have official policies facilitated or constrained the initiative?

The Department of Education set aside programs and funds for Tribal Colleges and Universities and Native American Serving Nontribal Colleges, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs offers a workforce development program that coordinates employment, training, education and economic development for tribes.

In addition, the initiative received several types of national support, including Pell Grants for students and resources from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund for the institution, which was used to finance students' access to online learning platforms.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

What difficulties arose during implementation? How were they overcome?

The following obstacles were identified by the staff developers and the users (faculty, staff and students) and further refined with their input:

- The improved data information systems generated more data but not necessarily more information. They were challenges in turning newly available data into timely and appropriate actions. Staff were provided specific training to learn to use the data efficiently and effectively.
- The training of faculty and staff about the data information system was focused on "training the trainers". This was not found to be sufficient and had to be supplemented with more direct training.
- While the use of the data information system increased efficiency, it also increased the workload of the smaller IT units that had a constrained ca-

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pacity to learn the system and maintain it at the same time. The Colleges had to strengthen their IT units as a result.

- Staff capacity was further strained by significant turnover across all administrative levels. This was due to retirements and the remoteness of the colleges, which made it difficult to recruit and retain staff. The TCUs used subgrant funding and coaching support from ATD to maintain institutional knowledge, provide staff incentives (e.g., wellbeing resources) and hire social workers and coaches to alleviate pressure on faculty and staff.

Results of the innovative equity approach

The initiative involved an evaluative partner, DVPPRAXIS, LTD, that conducted an evaluation based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative aspects. The evaluation framework was developed in association with the six TCUs.

The initial indicators of attainment included completion of key credit thresholds, enrollment in and completion of college-level Math and English courses, and term-to-term and year-to-year retention. The focus on these "momentum metrics", particularly in the first year, provided evidence that was critical to support the students' academic success over time. According to the report (p. 15),

> First-time students enrolling in the final year of the grant period (AY 2020-21) – in the midst of a pandemic – made similar progress on a variety of momentum metrics compared to students first enrolling in academic years 2018-19 or 2019-20. That these outcomes remained consistent is a testament to the TCU's efforts to support students as they navigated the effects of the pandemic. The relative stability of student outcomes within TCUs despite the pandemic is notable given declines in public 2-year student outcomes in recent years at the national level.

By comparison, the College Board reported 5% decreases in one-year retention for students whose first year was interrupted by COVID.[12]

What is the available evidence about the outputs, outcomes, and impact of the initiative?

The following outcomes were achieved (p. iii):

1. TCUs broadened the capacity of support staff by creating new roles to enable staff to know students on a more personal level and provide proactive, personalized support.

12 Howell, J., Hurwitz, M., Ma, J., Pender, M., Perfetto, G., Wyatt, J., & Young, L. (2021). *College Enrollment and Retention in the Era of Covid*. The College Board.

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2. TCUs improved orientation by focusing energy on relationship building with incoming students and, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, moved content online for easy reference.
3. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, TCUs strengthened the availability and quality of online learning, giving students flexible ways to stay engaged with their courses, even when challenges get in the way.
4. TCUs redesigned advising to share ownership between faculty and staff and to ensure students are engaged at the right times to achieve key milestones.
5. TCUs implemented and leveraged new technology that facilitates how faculty and staff keep track of student progress and allows leaders to make decisions based on large-scale trends in student demographics or academic outcomes.
6. TCUs bolstered students' basic needs to allow students to navigate personal and academic challenges and stay on track to achieve their goals.

What lessons arise from these results?

The report emphasizes the following (p. 25):

1. Prioritize proactive outreach and relationship development with students, using new technologies and paired or co-advising models to provide students with additional support.
2. Empower students to be co-owners in their educational journey, including elevating student voices to improve college support and arming students with the knowledge and tools they need to make informed decisions about their personal, educational, and career goals.
3. Provide students with flexible, virtual learning methods to accommodate their caretaking and other responsibilities while prioritizing a return to the in-person experience in which students say they learn better, feel more connected to the college, and can more easily build meaningful relationships with peers, faculty, and staff.
4. Coaching support and regular facilitation of this network by ATD were useful to TCUs, especially ATD services that provided colleges meaningful feedback on HSS redesign planning, launch, and rollout and connected colleges with one another as peer institutions to share best practices.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

The initiative was embedded from the start: it was co-created and refined with all key actors, including faculty, staff, and students. It was replicated across six institutions with local adaptations.

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Fundamental success factors include the engagement of the campus community in ensuring students' success and their deep understanding of the students' culture and personal situation (e.g., caregivers, workers). Furthermore, the TCUs host community events that are important in promoting and preserving the native community culture. Through these events, students perceive that their culture is important and the TCU cares about them.

The remoteness of the campuses and their reliable access to affordable internet, cell phone service and computers were addressed through special funding that was available during the COVID pandemic. It will be important to find a way of addressing these issues to sustain the program in the future.

Could this initiative be successful in other countries/contexts?

Yes, this could be replicated elsewhere, whether they are native communities or not. It could be replicated in other environments as long as the following elements are retained: the coconstruction, co-ownership process; the attention given to training faculty and staff; the commitment to student success; the availability of need-based financial aid; an institutional culture centered on students; and the appropriate technical platforms.

Concluding Comments

What makes this initiative special?

This appears to be a very successful initiative in the face of great odds due to the history of how the Native population has been treated over time in the United States. Mainstreaming native students is very challenging because the specificities of their cultures and their family situations are not always recognized or fully understood outside their communities.

The remoteness of the TCUs may look like a disadvantage – and in some ways it is (e.g., for staff recruitment and retention problems, internet and cell phone coverage) – but it also serves to provide of locus for the community, and a place where Native cultures are validated and affirmed. This cultural affirmation is an important success factor. An article on rural resilience with respect to school children makes a similar point: remoteness increases close-knit relations and a shared culture of responsibility, which serve to increase retention and attainment.[13]

What is the main takeaway?

The main takeaways include the co-ownership of the project (involving faculty, staff and students) and the critical capacity of the project leaders to evaluate how the project is proceeding and to fine-tune it.

13 White, S & Boyle, J. (2021) Collaborative Action in Rural Settings: Insights from Resilient Southern Illinois. https://edredesign.org/files/edredesign/files/rural_case_study012521.pdf?m=1611763374

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5.5 Culture of Caring at Amarillo Community College (USA)

Author: Jamil Salmi

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

No Excuses Poverty Initiative at Amarillo College (AC), a multi-campus community college in Texas.

https://www.actx.edu/

Main Source of Information

Case study prepared by the Hope Lab: Goldrick-Rab, S., and C. Cady (2018). Supporting Community College Completion with a Culture of Caring: A Case Study of Amarillo College. Available at: https://www.actx.edu/president/files/filecabinet/folder10/Wisconsin_HOPE_Lab___A_Case_Study_of_Amarillo_College__print_version_.pdf

Type of initiative

Culture of caring to improve completion rates among low-income students.

Introduction

Approximately nine million students are enrolled in community colleges across the United States. Community colleges are two-year public institutions that provide open access to postsecondary education at a substantially lower cost than universities. The yearly public subsidy that community colleges receive is approximately $9,000 less per student than four-year institutions.

Community colleges are unique in their potential contribution to social mobility by enrolling and graduating students from families with limited economic security. Community colleges enroll a disproportionate percentage of students of color and low-income students. It is estimated that approximately 55 percent of all Hispanic undergraduates and 45 percent of all Black undergraduates attend a community college.

However, completion rates at the nation's community colleges continue to lag behind the demand for educated workers. Most community colleges struggle to advance students through their programs. Nearly two-thirds of community college students in the United States do not earn a postsecondary degree or credential.[14]

Barriers to retention and completion include academic deficits (math, English), nonacademic issues such as lack of motivation and information, and financial challenges. According to the US Government Accountability Office, nearly 40

14 Shapiro, D., A. Dundar, F. Huie, P. Wakhungu, A. Bhimdiwala, and S. Wilson (2019). *Completing College: A State-Level View of Student Completion Rates* (Signature Report N°16a). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

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percent of US undergraduate students are from low-income households, of whom three-fourths are single parents, and first-generation college students, who are increasingly at risk of food insecurity and homelessness.[15] Even those not struggling with basic needs are often trying to balance their studies with other responsibilities, such as work or family obligations.

Students at Amarillo College are predominantly Hispanic and come from low-income households. A large proportion (70%) are first-generation students, and 38% qualify for federal Pell Grants. Many students are married and/or have children, and most attend college part-time. In the period 2016-2017, 11% of Amarillo College students were homeless, and a total of 54% of the student body had difficulty obtaining food within one month of taking the survey.[16]

Description of equity initiative

Amarillo College participated in a community program to promote economic growth and reduce poverty in the early 2010s. Faced with very low graduation rates among poor students, the college president launched an initiative, the No Excuses Poverty Initiative, designed to boost retention and completion rates, with the ultimate goal of promoting higher college attainment among the most underprivileged groups in the community. Community revitalization efforts have recognized the importance of education as a key component of future economic growth. The No Excuses Poverty Initiative focused on poverty as the most dangerous threat to degree completion and set out to mitigate its effects.

The new policy to improve graduation rates departed from the traditional view that separated academic and nonacademic constraints on students.[17] It recognized the cognitive impact of conditions of scarcity, especially food and/or housing insecurity, as a major impediment in regard to learning.[18] The main idea behind the intervention was to help students escape from their conditions of poverty long enough to graduate.

Design of the Initiative

The president of Amarillo College played a decisive role in envisioning and launching the No Excuses Poverty Initiative. The core premise is that "in regard to helping area students succeed there truly are No Limits No Excuses" for failure.[19] In particular, the initiative emphasizes the importance of ensuring that

15 Government Accountability Office (2018). Food Insecurity: Better Information Could Help Eligible College Students Access Federal Food Assistance Benefits.

16 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarillo_College

17 Goldrick-Rab, S. Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL. (2016); Goldrick-Rab, S. "Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Community College Student Success." Review of Educational Research 80(3): 437-469. (2010)

18 Mullainathan, S., & Shafir, E. Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much. (2013)

19 Amarillo Area Foundation. No Limits No Excuses: Amarillo Partners for Postsecondary Success. Retrieved from https://www.amarilloareafoundation.org/no-limits-no-excuses

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financial limitations are not a barrier to success once admitted to the community college.

The initiative began by educating college staff, from administrators on down, about poverty's multiple dimensions and how they can impact and disrupt students' lives and ability to concentrate on their studies. Drawing on those lessons, leaders at all levels created an on-campus social services office called the Advocacy and Resource Center (ARC), instituted an emergency fund to cover student economic crises, and established a network of organizations, businesses, and individuals committed to supporting students. Established in 2016, the ARC supplements the No Excuses Fund, providing additional support with a social services case management program that includes access to public benefits programs, coaching, career guidance, counseling, and a food pantry and clothing closet. The personnel costs of supporting the ARC plus release time for the two faculty members managing the counseling and legal centers amount to approximately $250,000 per year.

The efforts of Amarillo College went well beyond the usual steps taken at community colleges around the country, such as the creation of a food pantry or stand-alone emergency grant. Amarillo College supplemented those actions with dedicated support interventions, including case management, academic help, curriculum development, and new college-wide hiring and evaluation practices aligned with the "No Excuses Poverty" agenda. The Initiative represents a comprehensive "culture of caring" that is woven into the fabric of the entire campus.

As Amarillo Community College President Lowery-Hart described a typical college student during his Senate testimony in 2018, "Maria is a 27-year-old Hispanic mother who is a first-generation student going to college part-time while working two jobs." While she may have little in common with students who attended AC twenty or thirty years ago, Lowery-Hart emphasized that she is smart, determined, hardworking, and church-going, and that if higher education does not serve her well, then "Maria will more likely be sitting on the sidelines needing more government assistance, when she desperately wants to earn a living wage." Lowery-Hart explained that his team strives to help everyone working at the college know Maria and the role they play in helping her succeed. He testified, "As the Amarillo College president, I am ultimately responsible for ensuring excuses do not derail our ability to more creatively, effectively, and efficiently serve our students and community." This helped cultivate a sense of both awareness and caring among all academics and administrators. A 2017 survey fielded by the Faculty Senate revealed that faculty still remembered and "applauded" the college's work to "train us in what it means to live in poverty and how to assist students in finding assistance."

The ARC is a key piece of the initiative, but the No Excuses approach to serving students in need is integrated into all aspects of student life at Amarillo College. Most people working on campus are aware that there is "no excuse" for students not to be successful and that they are part of the response. Faculty

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members connect with students through an online platform, answering questions in real time and reaching out to students if they miss class. Many instructors also make students aware of the ARC services through class announcements at the start of the semester or stepping in to make a referral when a student needs help. Mandatory tutoring is offered to students who are struggling academically. Faculty members also intervene outside of the classroom through personal conversations with students to address any issue affecting a student's academic results. Student Life offers the Coaches and Champions Mentoring Program to support first-generation, low-income, and academically at-risk students.

Core objectives of the initiative

The main objective of the initiative was to remove the constraints arising from the poverty background of the students to allow them to focus on their studies and increase their chances of completing their degrees. This, in turn, would raise their labor market opportunities and the possibility of getting out of poverty.

Implementation timeframe

The program was launched in 2014 and has been in place for almost a decade.

How was the initiative financed?

Amarillo College has mostly used its own resources, but it has also leveraged federal and private grants to build up its programs and services. It has also benefited from in-kind support provided by many actors and agencies in the wider Amarillo community through formal and informal partnerships with the College. It is estimated that the College saves approximately $300,000 per year in personnel costs through these partnerships.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

This program was a contribution to a community-wide initiative, called No Limits No Excuses (NLNE), with 26 partners committed to creating accessible pathways to postsecondary credentials that lead to living-wage employment. Amarillo College has been a key player within the NLNE coalition.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

The project has faced several challenges. The first was the difficulty of attracting male students. Approximately 80% of the students using the ARC are females, whereas Amarillo College's student body is only 65% female. While this could be due to a higher rate of poverty among women, it could also reflect a culture of machismo and a trade-off between a culture of pride and a culture of caring. The surveyed male students revealed feelings of embarrassment among those who are seen as not being able to provide for their family.

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Resources have been a major constraint. Amarillo College was hit with a 4-million-dollar budget cut from the state when President Lowery-Hart took office in 2014. This has made it difficult to increase ARC staffing as demand for its services rose. Its three-person staff reported being overworked and not having sufficient space to take care of the students seeking help.

The third challenge has been to improve the relationship between Amarillo College and its community through better communication and systematic feedback on the effectiveness of the services offered to AC students by local members of the community.

Results of the innovative equity approach

Available evidence indicates that the efforts being made at Amarillo College have improved the lives of students and those of faculty, administrative staff, and the wider Amarillo community. The College has gradually evolved from an institution enrolling some students living in poverty to a College that explicitly acknowledges the barriers inflicted by poverty and works carefully to overcome them.

The outreach carried out by the ARC seems to be functioning well. During Fall 2016, the ARC served almost 450 students, representing 5.4% of the entire student population. By October 2017, it was serving 1,062 students, equivalent to 13.2% of enrolled students. The growth has been helped by the predictive analytics system put in place by the College to identify and target students likely to benefit from additional support.

In terms of outcomes, it is impressive to observe that over an eleven-year period, the graduate rate rose from 9% in 2010 to 31% in 2021.[20] In recognition of this outstanding achievement, Amarillo College was named a 2021 Top Five Institution and Rising Star for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.

Amarillo College has tried to develop a culture of evidence since the beginning of the No Excuse Initiative by strengthening its institutional research unit and developing a predictive analytics system. It now intends to carry out a rigorous evaluation of the No Excuse Initiative through a randomized controlled trial that would estimate the impact of the ARC in a more systematic manner.

What lessons arise from these results?

The positive results achieved by the initiative demonstrate the need for a comprehensive approach that links the academic difficulties experienced by students from underprivileged backgrounds to their objective condition of poverty at home. The interventions have attempted to provide support on all fronts, from ensuring that the students were well fed to giving them counseling and academic tutoring as needed.

20 https://www.collegetuitioncompare.com/trends/amarillo-college/graduation-rate/

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A related lesson is the importance of embedding the initiative fully into the institutional culture, making sure that each member of the community college community—academic and administrative staff—is committed to being an agent of care in support of vulnerable students.

This kind of cultural change must build on data-driven analysis of the issues at hand. The success of the No Excuses program stems from a firm commitment to ensuring that both academic and administrative staff clearly understand the impact of poverty on people's lives and educational experiences. A person living in conditions of poverty is not deficient but constrained in her/his ability to succeed academically.

The last point is about effective leadership. While President Lowery-Hart played a key role as initiator of the No Excuses Poverty Initiative on his campus, his real success as a leader derives from his ability to inspire all the stakeholders within Amarillo College and the wider community to take on important responsibilities in shaping and implementing the initiative with the conviction that they could work collectively to change students' lives for the better.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

The approach implemented by Amarillo College, which recognizes poverty as a barrier constraining the intellectual and academic development of students, can be reproduced in other settings where poverty is a paramount concern. To be successful in alleviating the effects of poverty on student learning, it is important to keep the following two principles in mind:

- It is not sufficient to implement a program in support of low-income students, and a thorough cultural shift is needed to transform the entire institution and generate a positive commitment among all academic and administrative staff.
- Efforts must focus on prevention in a systematic manner rather than having a reactive approach to address problems affecting individual students as emergencies arise.

This initiative could certainly be effectively implemented in other countries and contexts where students face significant poverty-related barriers. It requires, however, a comprehensive approach and adequate resources to overcome poverty conditions (income, housing, food), preventing students from dedicating themselves to their education.

Concluding Comments

This initiative stemmed from the recognition that poverty is essentially a social problem rather than the product of personal failure. On this premise, Amarillo College's substantial progress in improving graduation rates among low-income students is the result of a fundamental cultural shift that sought to remove

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financial, family, and health issues as barriers to academic performance. By educating staff on the challenges faced by impoverished students, the College leadership team has managed to concentrate on the students' basic needs. Lessons learned during the pilot phase of the program were fully incorporated into institutional programs and policies.

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Chapter 6. Oceania Case Studies

6.1 Overview

Author: Nadine Zacharias

Australia and New Zealand have long histories of higher education policy that supports the equitable participation of population groups who have traditionally been underrepresented at university. In both countries, almost all universities are publicly funded so that national government policy can wield significant influence on university affairs, including their strategies and programs to widen participation.

The Oceania case studies focus on innovative practice to increase the participation of First Nations peoples (Māori in New Zealand and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in Australia) as well as people from low socio-economic status (SES) and/or regional and remote backgrounds. The federal government of Australia is unique globally in having made a substantial (>AU$1.5 bn) and long-term (13 years and counting) investment in equitable participation of students who belong to nationally recognized equity groups, especially students from low SES backgrounds[1]. Australia also has 30 years of time series data on student participation[2], which enables sophisticated analyses to track the effectiveness of student equity initiatives at the institutional and national levels.

Between 2010 and 2017, Australia pursued ambitious higher education participation targets, recommended in the 2018 Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, in that 40 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds were to have obtained a degree level qualification by 2025 and that 20 percent of enrolled undergraduate students were to be from low SES backgrounds[3]. The policy and funding levers to achieve these ambitious goals were the demand-driven funding system, in which universities would be funded for as many students as they could enroll, and the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP), which funded universities to attract and support students from low SES backgrounds to complete undergraduate degrees.

Australia overachieved the participation target in that 44.6% of the target group population had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2022[4]. However, while it achieved a significant increase in equity student participation, Australia did

1 https://www.education.gov.au/heppp

2 https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/student-data

3 Australian Government (2009). Transforming Australia's Higher Education System. Canberra: Australian Government

4 ABS (May 2022). Education and Work. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/education-and-work-australia/latest-release

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not attain the 20% participation of low SES students[5]. The peak was at 17.1% in 2017. After higher education funding was frozen in 2018, and the system essentially recapped, participation rates have declined.

Moreover, the focus on participation rate masks the enormous increase in the number of individual students from underrepresented groups who enrolled in Australian universities over the past decade. Between 2013 and 2019 alone, there was a net growth of 20 percent students from low SES backgrounds, a 49 percent increase in First Nations students, and a 59 percent increase in students with disability[6]. Total enrollments increased by 13 percent over the same period, meaning that the policy settings disproportionately increased the participation of equity group students.

The New Zealand policy approach has a strong focus on Māori and Pacific students with the aim of achieving parity of participation and outcomes. For post-school education, the New Zealand government has issued a Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) and the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) under the Education and Training Act 2020[7]. The TES sets out the government's long-term strategic direction for tertiary education, including economic, social, and environmental goals, and the development aspirations of Māori and other population groups. The TES requires all universities to develop Learner Success Plans.

The four Oceania case studies document innovative and/or effective institutional approaches to developing and implementing widening participation initiatives and to support students from target group cohorts to degree completion. The two First Nations case studies, the Moondani Toombadool Centre (MTC) at Swinburne University in Melbourne, Australia, and Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland, New Zealand, highlight different points on the spectrum to reconciliation. For the MTC, the focus is on dedicated services for First Nations students, provided by staff with lived experience, i.e., personal knowledge about the challenges students might face in navigating their university experience, so that they can participate at university on a safe and level playing field.

Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland, on the other hand, has developed a strategic plan based on Māori principles that speak to the University's commitment to positively impact society, to advance and explore knowledge and to uphold its responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840. With this strategic agenda, the university aims to transform the student experience, including through the curriculum. A senior leader, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori), has been appointed to support the Vice-Chancellor and the University in achieving this ambitious goal.

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5 https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/student-data/selected-higher-education-statistics-2020-student-data-0

6 https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/data/national-data/

7 https://assets.education.govt.nz/public/Documents/NELP-TES-documents/FULL-TES-2020.pdf

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The other two case studies are situated in Australia's largest states: Queensland and Western Australia. In Queensland, a unique Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium was formed in 2009 to ensure coverage of outreach activities across the state. The Consortium attracted significant (>AU$21 m) funding from the Australian government in 2012 to deliver a coordinated and centrally monitored program of activities in metropolitan Brisbane, large regional towns, and remote communities across Queensland's vast outback.

In contrast, the case of the University of Western Australia documents how an elite university, based in metropolitan Perth with a regional campus in Albany, developed a deeply embedded equity strategy and large-scale outreach program to significantly increase the participation of equity group students in a selective university.

Together, the Oceania case studies hold learnings at the macro (policy), meso (institutional), and micro (initiative) levels. At the macro level, the Australian example illustrates that the combination of demand-driven funding and equity funding shifted the dial on equity student participation. As soon as the system was recapped, equity participation started to decline. While co-funding with institutional money remains important for the sustainability of equity initiatives, the injection of significant and long-term equity funding by the government has the potential to drive transformational change in universities. This is impressively illustrated by the University of Western Australia case.

At the institutional level, the New Zealand example shows most clearly that institutional practice, particularly in relation to First Nations students, is enabled or constrained by the cultural context set by wider society. In supportive cultural contexts, universities can take bold action toward reconciliation and recognition of Indigenous knowledge. For Indigenous students in less supportive cultural contexts, cultural safety and a sense of belonging at university are paramount.

Moreover, all case studies highlight the importance of working with the community, and the Australian cases show what can be achieved when partnership work is explicitly funded by the government. Universities were recognized as trusted and valued partners of very disadvantaged schools and created a virtuous cycle of cultural change in favor of postschool education. In Queensland, the Consortium demonstrated that outreach work makes a measurable difference in application rates to higher education.

Finally, at the micro level, best practice approaches to common initiatives, including outreach, have been established in Australia since 2010. These need to be systematically shared and adopted to prevent equity practitioners from re-inventing the wheel. Systemic sharing would also enable the sector to identify any existing gaps and trial some truly innovative solutions to fill those gaps.

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6.2 Queensland Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium, Australia

Authors: Geoffrey Mitchell and Nadine Zacharias

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

The Queensland Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium is a whole-of-state initiative involving collaboration between the eight public universities in the Australian state of Queensland, with early leadership provided by Queensland University of Technology. An overview of Consortium activities in 2013 (during the most expansive phase of the collaboration) can be found at this Weblink.

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Geoffrey Mitchell, Project Manager, Widening Participation; Strategic Policy and Inter-Governmental Relations, Queensland Department of Education

This case study draws on a large research project funded by the Australian government through the National Priority Pool in 2016, which was published in a research report by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education in 2018. It also includes the latest available outcome data for the program (2021) as well as information from background documents and reflections from key project personnel.

Type of initiative

Collaborative widening participation outreach

Introduction

The Queensland Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium (the Consortium) is a whole-of-state initiative involving collaboration between the eight public universities that operate in equal numbers across metropolitan and regional parts of the state (see Table 1). Together, they are responsible for over 95% of Queensland's domestic higher education students[8].

The Consortium provides coordinated pre-access activities that aim to improve the participation of traditionally underrepresented groups in higher education, namely, First Nations peoples[9], people from low socioeconomic status (low SES) backgrounds, and residents of regional and remote locations. At its peak in 2014, the Consortium worked with 550 primary and secondary schools in disadvantaged areas across the State (see Table 3).

8 Department of Education (2022). Selected Higher Education Statistics – 2020 Student data

9 Please note that the terms 'First Nations peoples' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' are used interchangeably in this case study.

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The Consortium was established in 2009 in response to the 2008 Bradley Review of Higher Education[10] and in anticipation of major increases in equity funding through the Australian Government's Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) from 2010. Prior to the Consortium's establishment, there was limited funding for university pre-access programs addressing the needs of underrepresented groups. Existing programs were small in scale and, in most cases, ad hoc and uncoordinated.

Table 1: Queensland public universities and regional classification

UNIVERSITY	REGIONAL CLASSIFICATION
Australian Catholic University: Queensland Campus (ACU)	Metropolitan campus of multistate university
CQUniversity (CQU)	Regional University
Griffith University (Griffith)	Metropolitan University
James Cook University (JCU)	Regional University
Queensland University of Technology (QUT)	Metropolitan University
The University of Queensland (UQ)	Metropolitan Headquartered University
University of Southern Queensland (USQ)	Regional University
University of the Sunshine Coast (USC)	Regional University

Queensland faces unique geographic and demographic challenges in terms of increasing participation in higher education. It is Australia's third most populous state and the second largest by land area. In comparison, Queensland is 2.6 times the size of Texas but has less than 20% of its population (5.2 m in Queensland vs 28.6 m in Texas).

Queensland's population is disproportionately located across a number of large provincial cities as well as more sparsely settled regional and remote locations (37% of the population compared to 29% nationally), with the state's capital, Brisbane, being home to only half its population (2.6 m). Using the ABS 2016 census data[11], in comparison to the rest of Australia, Queensland has a higher proportion of residents located in the lowest SES postcodes (32% of 15-65-year-olds in Queensland compared to 25% nationally) and a higher proportion of First Nations peoples (4.0% of the population compared to 2.8% nationally). These factors have long been considered a contributor to lower rates of higher education attainment in Queensland in comparison to the rest of Australia (see Table 2). In 2021, Queensland had the lowest proportion of persons aged 25-34 years old with a bachelor's degree qualification or higher compared to all other Australian states and territories.

Description of the program

Faced with Queensland's geographic and demographic challenges and the findings of the national review of higher education, Queensland's

10 Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H. & Scales, B. (2008). Review of Australian Higher Education Final Report. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

11 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2022). Search Census Data, Australia Government. https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area Accessed 22.08.2022

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state government and Vice-Chancellors decided to explore collaborative approaches to improving higher education participation. Building on prior discussions by equity, marketing and First Nations leaders, the eight public universities set about developing a collaborative state-wide approach to stimulate interest in tertiary study and to increase the participation of students from low SES and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in tertiary education.

Table 2: Proportion of persons aged 25-34 years with a non-school qualification at the bachelor's degree level or above (%), 2013-2022[12]

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Queensland	26.8	28.5	28.3	26.4	33.8	29.6	34.2	35.7	32.4	36.6
Australia	35.2	36.9	37.3	37.1	39.4	39.7	40.7	42.8	43.5	44.6

The strategy behind the Consortium approach was that universities would deliver similar programs in different locations, with each university taking responsibility for developing partnerships with a cluster of schools that was proximate to its main campus location. Thus, the Consortium approach sought to avoid gaps and duplication in school outreach activities and to maximize benefits to students through a noncompetitive, learner-centered model of widening participation.

The result was the formation of seven school clusters of unequal size and complexity, with two metropolitan universities sharing one of the clusters. Regional schools were represented in all clusters, with three clusters exclusively serving regional and remote locations. A state-wide school outreach funding proposal was developed for significant (AU$15.8 m), multi-year funding from the HEPPP Competitive Partnerships Grant scheme in 2011[13]. Upon receipt, the funding was distributed to universities based on the size, complexity, and distance factors in each cluster and the associated costs of delivery. In 2012, the first year of grant-funded outreach, school engagement numbers ranged from 12 to 154 per cluster (see Table 3).

Table 3: Number of schools engaged in widening participation activities by each Queensland University, selected years, 2010 to 2021

	ACU	CQU	Griffith	JCU	QUT	UQ	USQ	USC
2010 secondary school engagement only	n/a	11	16	6	16	n/a	n/a	n/a
2012 all school engagement	24	154	38	101	33	12	51	39
2014 all school engagement	29	169	40	115	33	15	105	43
2016 all school engagement	12	89	42	48	51	11	n/a	31
2021 all school engagement	15	51	30	44	66	20	63	30

12 ABS (May 2022). Education and Work. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/education-and-work-australia/latest-release

13 https://www.education.gov.au/heppp/heppp-2011-partnerships-competitive-grants-round

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A separate First Nations funding proposal (AU$5.4 m) sought to trial a range of local, innovative approaches to improving the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in tertiary education. These trials were underpinned by a community engagement approach as well as leadership and decision making by First Nations peoples. University engagement with First Nations peoples was also not bound by school cluster arrangements in recognition that this work was based on different histories and family relationships and not necessarily on geography.

Consortium collaboration and implementation of widening participation activities in Queensland has occurred in four phases:

- **Phase 1 (2009-2011)** consortium establishment and piloting of widening participation programs, including some scaling up and trialing of activities utilizing limited HEPPP funding allocated to each university. This period included extensive consensus-building work to establish a shared understanding of the task at hand and what universities were best able to deliver; agreed ways of working together; and a consortium approach to seeking competitive grant funding.
- **Phase 2 (2012-2014)** scaling up and implementation of coordinated 'School Outreach' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement' projects utilizing HEPPP competitive partnership grant funding made to the eight-university *Queensland Consortium*.
- **Phase 3 (2015-2020):** ongoing widening participation activities delivered utilizing institutional HEPPP funding allocated by formula to individual universities. During this time, the Consortium continued to function with six universities participating in ongoing joint evaluation activities, a shared community of practice, national research projects and policy advocacy.
- **Phase 4 (2020-2022)** is a reinvigorated eight-university Consortium with an increased focus on interuniversity collaboration, including the codelivery of widening participation activities funded through HEPPP institutional allocations as well as institutional and philanthropic contributions. New reporting arrangements implemented for more direct engagement with university leadership through the newly established Queensland Vice-Chancellors Committee.

Throughout these phases, each consortium university has maintained a commitment to delivering high-quality school and community outreach programs and First Nations engagement tailored to local contexts. Collaboration has strengthened both the quality and range of programs delivered through ongoing sharing of program information and learning between practitioners. The range of outreach and engagement programs delivered by each university in 2022 is summarized in Table 4.

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Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

In Australia, higher education policy is led by the federal government in Canberra. Their 2008 Review of Higher Education (the 'Bradley Review') [14] led to the establishment of two key national targets—that by 2020, 40% of 25- to 34-year-old Australians had a degree level or higher qualification and that students from low SES backgrounds made up 20% of undergraduate enrollments. This translated into national policy reforms as well as the establishment of the HEPPP in 2010.

Table 4: Widening participation program types offered by consortium universities in 2022

	ACU	CQU	Griffith	JCU	QUT	UQ	USQ	USC
On campus experience	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
Camps	√	√	√		√	√		√
In-school workshops and activities	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Curriculum Enrichment	√	y	√	√	√	√	y	√
Awards and scholarships				√	√			
Career development	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
First Nations programming	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Other cohort specific programs	Pasifika	Students with a disability, students in out of home care	Pasifika, students in out of home care		Pasifika			
On-line/digital information and experiences	√	√			√	√	√	√
Parent engagement		√	√	√	√	√	√	

In response to the Bradley Review, the Queensland Higher Education Forum (HEF), comprising the State Minister for Education and Queensland Vice-Chancellors, established five interuniversity working groups to investigate collaborative responses to the national targets and to address higher education participation in Queensland, which was stubbornly below national averages. The Widening Participation Working Group, comprised of senior officers, equity practitioners and First Nations representatives from all eight Queensland universities, moved quickly to utilize existing interuniversity goodwill and the alignment of federal and state ambitions to draft a collaborative state-wide approach to widening participation in Queensland. This approach was endorsed by the HEF and was subsequently formalized as a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the State Minister for Education and the eight Vice-Chancellors. The support for collaborative action at the state and national level together with anticipated increased funding to support national participation

14 Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H. & Scales, B. (2008). Review of Australian Higher Education Final Report. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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targets provided an important context for equity practitioners in Queensland to realize their ambition for an organized and coordinated approach to undertaking widening participation activity in schools and communities.

Until 2014, HEPPP funding explicitly supported universities to deliver both *Partnership* activities (focused on partnering with schools and communities to build interest in and preparation for higher education study among priority group students) and *Participation* activities (to ensure students from these groups are able to participate successfully once enrolled and complete their higher education qualifications) through separate funding streams. Additional large competitive *partnership* funding rounds in 2012 and 2013 added to the available money to support this work. Since 2015, no dedicated partnership funding has been made available, which has significantly challenged the sustainability of large-scale outreach work, such as the Consortium, especially in regional and remote Australia.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

The Queensland consortium is a complex partnership arrangement that has operated for over a decade across a vast geographical area. We highlight the key challenges that emerged through the comprehensive evaluation of the program in 2017/18 and through more recent observations.

Program Design and Policy changes over time

The Queensland Consortium model was based on universities partnering with a cluster of schools proximate to their campus location. This model resulted in large differences in the number (between 15 and 159 at the peak of the Consortium) and geographic spread of schools across clusters. Regional project managers reported difficulty in reaching all schools in their cluster due to the number of schools, their geographic dispersal and the cost of servicing them. In some clusters, the most remote schools were only serviceable by air or by 8-10 hours of road travel. In contrast, urban project managers had a smaller number of schools to service, and all were within a relatively short commute to the nearest university campus.

The Consortium grant ended in 2014, and this coincided with a change in the HEPPP funding mechanism, which, from 2015, allocated both *Participation* and *Partnership* funds by formula. This meant that while universities were expected to continue *partnership* work, there was no required minimum level of activity and no dedicated grant funding available for large-scale outreach programs, including the Queensland Consortium.

These changes had major implications for the regional clusters in terms of program continuity and reach, as funding changes coincided with, or prompted, institutional changes to their outreach program. In one region in particular, the formula-based HEPPP allocation proved inadequate to sustain a comprehensive and costly regional and remote outreach program. A further two regional

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universities chose to leave the Consortium altogether and expanded delivery of outreach activities to schools outside their original cluster while leaving gaps in regional provision across the State. Primary schools were also clear losers in the wake of the funding changes, as only two universities have maintained any significant widening participation activities in primary schools.

Other changes to the HEPPP had more beneficial outcomes for the Consortium and its members. From 2021, the funding formula was changed to include the proportion of First Nations students and students from regional and remote locations as priority groups. The Queensland Consortium was well prepared for this change, having specifically worked with First Nations peoples since inception and a large number of regional and remote communities who were also classified as low SES.

The funding uncertainty and annual funding cycles of the HEPPP have also impacted universities' ability to attract and retain experienced staff and to maintain consistent program delivery and effective partnerships. Pandemic-related reductions in university funding and consequent institutional restructures and staff losses have impacted widening participation activities. Queensland's Consortium arrangement has in some ways mitigated staffing impacts through the development of interinstitutional staffing networks and support.

Engagement by schools

There are several reported challenges that relate to universities' engagement with schools, many of which are more severe in regional and remote areas. While universities sought to integrate programs with school needs, turnover of school personnel was seen as a major risk to effective school-university partnerships, and this risk was more acute in regional and remote locations than in urban ones. University students from regional backgrounds mostly experienced ad hoc widening participation programs at school compared to more comprehensive and integrated experiences reported by students from urban locations.

School staff and project managers acknowledged challenges in engaging effectively with parents, and several project managers identified this as an area for further development. Several school leaders reported leveraging widening participation activities to increase engagement with parents. Since 2018, more universities have offered parent engagement activities, although engaging parents who may be fearful or untrusting of education institutions or have limited time availability continues to be a challenge.

Project managers also reported that, in some schools, additional effort and persistence was required to challenge teacher expectations of low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. School staff were also sometimes reluctant to provide access to whole cohorts of students rather than selected high achievers; however, as experience and trust with widening participation programs grew, greater student access could be achieved.

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Achieving the right mix of awareness and preparation activities is also emerging as an issue for Consortium universities to address. Traditionally, a majority of Consortium programs have focused on information and experiences (e.g., career development activities, on-campus experiences, university demystification activities). However, a shrinking number of students complete high school with adequate academic preparation to commence university study, forcing a rethink of program offerings. Two recent initiatives that have emerged to address student academic preparation are the provision of a university preparation program directly to students as part of their senior school studies and a consortium-wide trial focused on building learner capability from the early years of schooling.

Pandemic lockdowns and restrictions on school access in 2020, while less severe in Queensland than in other Australian jurisdictions, did result in temporary reductions in program delivery. Schools were keen to reengage with universities once access restrictions eased, and 2021 engagement numbers returned to close to prepandemic levels.

Results of the innovative equity approach based on available information

The key measure of program success was the rate of direct school-to-university applications by students attending partner schools. Those rates were broken down by SES, regional and remote vs urban, and First Nations vs non-First Nations students. These data show that outcomes have been most positive for First Nations students for whom there was a net increase in university application rates from 2011 to 2021. Application rates for students in low SES and/or regional schools increased in the early years but, since 2016, have seen a state-wide decline. Participation in widening participation activities seems to have slowed the decline in application rates across the partner schools, somewhat buffering them against the trend.

There are many factors that need to be considered to explain these outcomes. An important variable is changes to higher education policy and funding of university places since 2014 in that a series of Australian government reforms have sought to limit growth in higher education expenditure, including by recapping the system from 2018, after a period of demand-driven funding[15], and by shifting more costs to students who now pay for more than 50% of their qualification. The most recent changes, which took effect in 2022, have dramatically increased the cost of some degrees and are penalizing students for failure to pass a sufficient share of their units, which have the potential to disproportionately affect students from priority groups who are more attuned to cost and risk than more privileged students.

15 https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/policy-submissions/diversity-equity/the-demand-driven-system/

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Further explanation can be found in a major research project undertaken in 2017/18[16] that investigated the sluggish pace of change in the regional and remote low SES cohort in terms of their level of application for university study compared to their urban low SES counterparts. The quantitative analysis found that the Queensland Consortium approach had a positive impact on students' applications to higher education institutions. However, from the evidence considered for its evaluation, it seemed that the widening participation program could not overcome the systemic disadvantage experienced by students from low SES backgrounds in regional and remote areas, including the distance to university campuses, the quality of schooling and the relative scarcity of role models. While there were higher proportions of First Nations students in regional areas in comparison to urban areas, this was not a major factor in explaining differences in outcomes.

It is important to note that the data collected by the Consortium only consider direct applications to university from school. We know from other studies[17] that many students from low SES and regional areas transition to university via Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs or after some time in the labor market, including for a 'gap year'. These students were not captured in our study, and the findings should be considered conservative estimates of the impact of the widening participation activities delivered by the Queensland Consortium. National higher education application data[18], which includes Year 12 and all other applicants, have shown that between 2012 and 2021, the proportion of First Nations, low SES and regional and remote applicants in Queensland has increased at a faster pace than the national average for each of these priority groups.

The qualitative analysis undertaken for the 2017/18 evaluation, including data collection at nine case study schools, revealed that three main factors contributed to the positive outcomes of the Consortium approach, which has lessons for other universities:

- The program's positive influence in demystifying university as a post-school option;
- Improving students' understanding of postschool options and pathways; and
- First-hand experiences of university life made the biggest difference.

16 Zacharias, N., Mitchell, G., Raciti, M., Koshy, P., Li, I., Costello, D., & Trinidad, S. (2018). Widening Regional and Remote Participation: Interrogating the impact of outreach programs across Queensland. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education.

17 Tomaszewski, W., Perales, F., & Xiang, N. (2017). School Experiences, Career Guidance, and the University Participation of Young People from Three Equity Groups in Australia. Perth: National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Curtin University.

18 Department of Education (2022). Undergraduate Applications, Offers and Acceptances Publications – 2012-2021 data

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The analysis suggests that sustained exposure to university as a desirable postschool option as well as first-hand experiences of university life through widening participation activities, especially on-campus visits and interactions with university ambassadors and staff, started a virtuous circle that led to more informed and confident decision making to pursue a specific course or pathway and, ultimately, higher enrollment at universities from urban students. However, the prominence of these factors was consistently lower in regional areas than in urban areas. This might stem from the consistently lower exposure to widening participation activities in these locations, especially to on-campus experiences. This is in line with the findings by Vernon and colleagues[19] that students in regional areas need "concrete opportunities to support and develop their aspirations" over time so that student aspirations turn into an expectation to attend university after school.

Due to the lower levels of engagement with the widening participation program, the virtuous circle was not as strongly established in the regional locations included in this study, and the impact of widening participation activities was more muted. While regional participants in the case study schools expressed similar sentiments with regard to the benefits of widening participation activities to their urban counterparts, they had less opportunity to participate in those activities, which led to less positive and more temporary effects throughout the circle and, ultimately, contributed to little change to rates of application for university places by students from regional and remote locations. This is congruent with the findings by Vernon and colleagues[20] that the expectation to go to university declines with increasing distance from a major city. The only exceptions were programs that targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Participants in the case study schools reported the success of targeted programs and the ongoing need for such programs.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

After more than a decade of continuous operation at scale, Queensland's Consortium approach has become well embedded in partner institutions. This is evidenced in the post 2020 recommitment by all original partners to consortium membership and the comprehensive range of initiatives delivered by each partner institution (see Table 4 above).

Two other state-wide and one large metropolitan consortium were established in Australia between 2011 and 2014 to undertake HEPPP Partnership grant funded initiatives. However, they have not been maintained post grant completion. Since that time, several enquiries have been made from other state representatives to understand how the Consortium's approach could be replicated or to make use of Consortium tools to better coordinate outreach

19 Vernon, L., Watson, S. J., & Taggart, A. (2018). University aspirational pathways for metropolitan and regional students: Implications for supporting school-university outreach partnerships. Australian and International Journal of Rural Education, 28(1).

20 Ibid

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activities. These enquiries and earlier state-wide collaborations suggest that there is an appetite for partnership arrangements but currently a lack of sufficient facilitating factors.

In Queensland, the more dispersed nature of the population as well as the location and different missions of the Queensland universities may have facilitated interuniversity collaboration due to the absence of intense competition in the same catchment area. Engagement with the Queensland state government has assisted in embedding an institution-agnostic approach, improved access to state level data, and provided other practical and symbolic support of the Consortium.

It is difficult to compare the outcomes of outreach programs across different states with consortium versus individual approaches because the Australian states are so different in terms of size and population density. What can be said is that, at the national level, regional and remote outreach has not been delivered at a scale sufficient to counter falls in regional and remote participation rates over the past decade. The Queensland experience demonstrates that without an increase in dedicated funding to compensate for the costs of regional and remote outreach and coordinated action by the higher education sector, gaps will remain, and increases in participation will not be achieved in a sustainable way.

Collaborative approaches such as the Queensland Consortium are replicable where there is interinstitutional goodwill, commitment to building and maintaining a shared vision that respects different institutional missions and approaches, clear benefits of collaboration, and processes and governance structures that are clear, simple and adaptable to changing circumstances.

Concluding Comments

The collaborative approach taken by Consortium partners has provided benefits to students and communities as well as the institutions themselves. In acting together, the consortium universities have been more effective than acting alone, benefiting from joint funding applications and shared expertise across the Consortium and providing a coherent and unified strategy to state and national stakeholders. Working together and maintaining openness and transparency around program delivery has provided a level of internal accountability that has improved institutional commitment and the quality of programs. The Consortium's success can be seen not only in its impact on individual participants but also in the resilience and longevity of the Consortium arrangements over a 13-year period.

The Consortium approach taken by Queensland universities has proven to be effective where the outreach program has been fully implemented and sustained over time. Quantitative analysis has found that in schools that had experienced high levels of engagement with widening participation programs, university application rates have increased in a statistically significant way. This

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has principally been in urban areas and in some provincial cities where ongoing partnerships with schools have been more easily maintained. However, qualitative analysis has found that scale, resourcing and institutional demands have meant that the program has not been able to be maintained at scale and depth across the entire state of Queensland with rural and remote schools most likely not to have achieved full program reach over a sufficient time period. Urban and regional students were found to share similar ambitions and fears related to tertiary study. However, the social, emotional and financial costs associated with leaving home to study exacerbated the risks for students who were a long way from a university campus. Well-designed and sustained interventions appear to be the best way to prepare young people for these difficult decisions and help them transition to positive postschool outcomes.

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6.3 Indigenous Student Services at Swinburne University of Technology Melbourne, Australia

Authors: Nadine Zacharias, John Evans, and Vicki Peters

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

Moondani Toombadool Centre, Swinburne University of Technology: https://www.swinburne.edu.au/about/strategy-initiatives/moondani-toombadool-centre

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Professor John Evans, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Engagement

Ms. Vicky Peters, Manager Indigenous Student Services

Members of the Indigenous Student Services team

The case study also drew on existing published material on the MTC as well as data from student focus groups and interviews that were collected as part of a large research project led by Dr Zacharias in 2021 to develop an institutional evaluation framework for equity initiatives at Swinburne.

Type of initiative

Dedicated services for Indigenous students

Introduction

Australian universities have made concerted efforts, and real progress, over the past decade to increase the participation of Indigenous peoples in higher education and to ensure the progression of Indigenous students toward completing their degrees. The Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Final Report in 2012, often referred to as the Behrendt Review, made recommendations that would produce Indigenous graduates to take up professional, academic, and leadership positions[21]. The review also made recommendations about the role that universities had to reduce systemic barriers and ensure equitable participation in higher education by Indigenous Australians. To this end, significant support was provided by successive Australian governments to assist universities in establishing dedicated Indigenous education centers to deliver services to Indigenous students. This included financial support for a range of measures, such as tutorial support and scholarships. The success of this approach can be seen in the doubling of enrollments over the last 10 years. and the share of Indigenous graduates of the total completing cohort increased

21 Please note that the terms 'Indigenous'' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' are used interchangeably in this case study.

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by 0.5 percentage points between 2010 and 2020[22]. Indigenous graduates now make up 1.3% of graduates across the Australian higher education system.

Swinburne University of Technology is a dual sector institution, offering both higher and vocational education programs, across three campuses in Melbourne and online through Swinburne Online, a joint venture with Online Education Services (OES). In 2022, Swinburne enrolled 50,000 students across its programs, including almost 1,000 Indigenous students. The university has demonstrated a commitment to not only Indigenous students and staff but also to the broader responsibility of reconciliation through the implementation of its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)[23]. RAPs are an important tool for Australian organizations, including universities, to take strategic, sustainable, and meaningful action to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Australians[24].

Description of the approach

The Moondani Toombadool Centre (MTC) was established in 2018 in response to the Behrendt report and led by the Vice-Chancellor with the support of the Executive Director, Reconciliation Strategy and Leadership. It is responsible for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters at Swinburne, including governance, student services, teaching and learning, research, staff, culture, engagement and governance. Moondani Toombadool means 'embracing teaching and learning' in the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin nations, who are the traditional owners of the lands along the Yarra River and the modern-day city of Melbourne, Australia, on which Swinburne's three campuses are located.

The MTC is committed to institutional transformation, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and knowledges are the foundations on which Swinburne leads educational change. For the purpose of this case study, the focus is on the Indigenous Student Services team of the MTC, which is made up of seven Indigenous staff and led by Manager Vicky Peters, a proud Wurundjeri and Yorta Yorta woman. The team is responsible for all Indigenous student matters, including recruitment, retention, progression, completions and cultural safety. These services are available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in both higher education and vocational education, whether they are online, on campus, in workplaces, or in the community.

The team leads specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student activities, events and community engagements to support students' connections to each other and to culture as well as contributing to university-wide student activities and events, including Orientation Week and Open Day. The team also promotes

22 Department of Education. Section 16 - Institutional Student Equity Performance Data, 2009 to 2020. https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/resources/2020-section-16-equity-performance-data

23 https://www.swinburne.edu.au/about/strategy-initiatives/national-centre-reconciliation-practice/reconciliation-action-plan/

24 https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation-action-plans/

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures throughout the wider university and organizes many events, open to all staff and students, to commemorate events of national significance, such as National Sorry Day[25] and NAIDOC Week[26].

The team has developed several innovative outreach programs and student recruitment initiatives in collaboration with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organizations and industry networks, including the Clontarf Foundation and Worawa Aboriginal College.

Swinburne had an Executive Director, Reconciliation Strategy and Leadership from October 2015 to October 2022, who established the MTC as the first Indigenous center at Swinburne and led it until April 2022. Leadership on matters of reconciliation also had a great ally in the Vice-Chancellor, who created the inaugural Executive Director position and championed Swinburne's RAP.

The first Indigenous Student Advisor was appointed in 2017 to support Indigenous students enrolled in the vocational Health Sciences and Community Services program. An experienced Indigenous manager of student services was appointed in 2018, and this decision is seen as critical to the success of the team.

In 2018, the MTC was established to centralize service provision to cover all Indigenous students. Efforts to establish a strong identity, including through a logo, and secure a dedicated space for the center began immediately. The new space was opened in early 2022. The appointment of the inaugural Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Engagement in April 2022 and the launch of the National Centre for Reconciliation Practice in June 2022 were further important milestones for the MTC, Indigenous matters, and reconciliation at Swinburne.

The Indigenous methodology that informs the approach of the MTC is personalized and holistic, adopts a service mindset and is grounded in deeply entrenched obligations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and young people. The team works from a commitment to empower the student, which enables them to build strong relationships, usually for the duration of the student's time at Swinburne.

In addition to recurrent contributions provided by the University, the MTC is predominantly funded through state and federal government programs that drive its priorities to a significant extent, including the following:

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25 Every year on 26 May, National Sorry Day remembers and acknowledges the mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were forcibly removed from their families and communities, which we now know as 'The Stolen Generations'. For more information, see https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-sorry-day-2020/

26 National NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia in the first week of July each year (Sunday to Sunday), to celebrate and recognize the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NAIDOC Week is an opportunity for all Australians to learn about Indigenous cultures and histories and participate in celebrations of the oldest, continuous living cultures on earth. For more information, see https://www.naidoc.org.au/about/naidoc-week

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- Victorian State Government funding provided under the Murrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026[27]: to halve the gap for Aboriginal Australians aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent rates by 2020 and improve the rate of transition of Aboriginal young people aged 18–24 to employment and/or further education.
- Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP)[28]: the Australian government provides supplementary funding to universities to help students take on the demands of university and succeed. Universities can offer scholarships, tutorial assistance, mentoring, safe cultural spaces and other personal support services to Indigenous students using ISSP funding. The flexibility of the ISSP assists universities in tailoring their services to match student needs.
- Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP)[29]: the Australian government provides funding to universities to implement strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses for people from regional and remote Australia, low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, and Indigenous persons. HEPPP also helps to improve the retention and completion rates of those students.

It is important to note that all staff members of the MTC's Indigenous Student Services team are funded entirely by external state and federal funds. This is in contrast to the majority of other Australian universities that contribute internal funds to employ Indigenous student service staff and represents a challenge to the sustainability of the approach.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

Swinburne has been a leading university implementing the recommendations of the major policy platforms related to Indigenous higher education. The university is a signatory to the Universities Australia (UA) Indigenous Strategy[30], which supports students in completing higher education programs and transitioning to post-study outcomes and strengthens the career advancement of Indigenous staff in higher education tuitions. Furthermore, Swinburne works closely with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC)[31] to ensure that its work reflects Indigenous values within the sector.

27 https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/aboriginal/Marrung_Aboriginal_Education_Plan_2016-2026.pdf

28 https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/education/indigenous-student-success-program#:~:text=The%20Indigenous%20Student%20Success%20Program%20%28ISSP%29%20provides%20supplementary,services%20to%20First%20Nations%20students%20using%20ISSP%20funding

29 https://www.education.gov.au/heppp

30 https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/UA-Indigenous-Strategy-2022-25.pdf

31 https://natsihec.edu.au/

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Swinburne has also appointed a Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Engagement, to further extend its success across the whole university. As mentioned previously, the RAP forms an important part of reconciliation for Swinburne[32]. The RAP is part of Swinburne's organizational framework and complements the work of the MTC by addressing a broad range of issues that are changing the culture of the organization.

The RAP has three priorities – self-determination, cultural safety, and Indigenous knowledges. An integral part of this is the ongoing process of embedding Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum while at the same time providing staff with cultural competency training to increase the understanding of Indigenous knowledges and culture in the wider community.

The RAP articulates a comprehensive set of targets to increase on-campus and online enrollment, retention, and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students[33] in line with the priorities of UA's Indigenous Strategy. It allocates responsibility for their implementation to members of the Executive Group and sets out regular reporting requirements for all major student-facing areas of the university. The targets include the following:

- Implementing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Recruitment and Retention Strategy, including a higher education student alternative admission process
- Increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrollments over three years to 1.3% of all HE and 3% of all VE student enrollments
- Increasing the retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to 83% for on-campus students and 68% for online students (current retention rates for all Swinburne students)
- Implementing and delivering four targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student VE and HE scholarship schemes and offering funding to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates to fully fund their graduation fees
- Implementing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Charter and amending existing policy to ensure that student learning, work-integrated learning, and professional placements are culturally safe experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Developing best practice models for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander online students.

32 https://www.swinburne.edu.au/about/strategy-initiatives/national-centre-reconciliation-practice/reconciliation-action-plan/

33 https://www.swinburne.edu.au/about/strategy-initiatives/national-centre-reconciliation-practice/reconciliation-action-plan/

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Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

Many Indigenous students arrive at university as the first in their family to participate in higher education, without the necessary cultural capital or financial support, and from rural and remote locations, which has presented pastoral care challenges. The MTC Student Services team is comparatively small, but due to its commitment and passion as well as its ability to be flexible and responsive to changing conditions, it has been successful in helping students navigate difficulties and complete their studies.

In 2020, the Indigenous Student Services team developed several innovative initiatives to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on students. These included extending communications to students through newsletters and social media, conducting a student survey to determine the impact of COVID-19, and organizing Wayapa Wuurrk (Indigenous yoga and mindfulness) workshops for students.

In recent times, there have been significant changes to senior management responsible for the policy and strategic direction of the MTC. There have also been unexpected consequences on MTC staff with the implementation of the RAP, which, at times, has added to the workload. This has been mitigated to some extent by the appointment of a Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Engagement who now leads the engagement with senior managers and partners across and beyond the University.

Results of the innovative equity approach

Swinburne has substantially increased its intake of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students over the past eight years, thanks to the leading work of the MTC's Indigenous Student Services team and concerted efforts to implement the University's RAP.

Institutional data show that in 2022, 895 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were studying in higher education and vocational courses at Swinburne. Among higher education students at Swinburne, Indigenous enrollments have increased 5-fold between 2014 and 2022 (from 80 to 403 students), and they now make up 1 percent of the total cohort (up from 0.31 percent in 2014).

Impressive gains have also been made regarding the retention of Indigenous students. The retention rates of higher education students have improved from 66.2 percent in 2014 to 71.4 percent in 2019[34] (last year for which data are available). Success rates, i.e., unit completion as a share of unit enrollment, have increased more moderately from 72.4 percent to 73.3 percent in 2022.

The benefits of the support provided by the MTC to Indigenous students were qualitatively investigated as part of a large research project in 2021 to

34 Department of Education (2022). Selected Higher Education Statistics – 2020 Student data

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develop a HEPPP Evaluation Framework for Swinburne[35]. The project identified three key benefits to Indigenous students:

1. **Service provision adapts to individual needs and can play a critical role in a student's experience:** Indigenous student participants identified the MTC as an accessible and positive connection to the university that provided multiple activities that were experienced as more personal and effective than the general student services provided by Swinburne. This individualized support and connections with staff were seen by students as being more than just provision of general information about university life; it was empowering knowledge that enabled Indigenous students to successfully navigate their university experiences. The extensive communication with students and long-term relationships fostered by the MTC were seen as responding holistically to the needs of students.
2. **Fostering community for Indigenous students is a strength of the MTC, and this should be further utilized for online students:** On-campus students were able to connect through the MTC's dedicated student spaces at each Swinburne campus, which added an important dimension in building strong relationships. Indigenous students enrolled in online courses asked for the establishment of more online community engagement activities, particularly those that would enable them to connect directly with Indigenous student peers regardless of whether they study online or on campus.
3. **Indigenous students often have culturally informed notions of success:** several of the Indigenous students interviewed for the project stated that their cultural identity informed their definition of success at university beyond just completing their studies. The students explained that success is providing family and community with a positive role model, demonstrating alternative pathways to formal education, and pursuing a career through which they can give back to their communities. The community-driven approach taken by the MTC validates these notions of success, but it was important to the students that these ideas were also acknowledged university-wide.

These quotes are indicative of the praise the MTC received from the students who participated in the study:

> "Without MTC, I would not be in a position where I would be able to graduate."

35 Zacharias, N., Kostanski, L., Heckenberg, S., Burova, S., Waters, J., Brownfield, N., Lowe, M., Pateraki, S., Sterland, C. (2021). Swinburne's HEPPP Evaluation Framework: Understanding Equity Student Experiences to Enhance Engagement and Success – Final report.

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> "Student services I did not find useful at all – the Aboriginal program is perfect. Kind of feel bad for students who aren't Indigenous because they don't have our program…"

> "The only person I've met was through the MTC because we did a weaving class... We both have kids and do study dates, it's been amazing... I think if people were given more opportunities to connect like that they would put their hand up to participate."

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

The MTC operates at scale in that it covers all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, regardless of their enrollment in vocational, higher education, on-campus, or online programs. It is constituted as a specialist unit of the university and works in partnership with academic schools and departments as well as mainstream student service areas, especially in admissions, student recruitment, marketing and student engagement.

The team identified several key success factors to establish a personalized and holistic service model:

- **Working from a common vision,** the team was united in their desire for the young people they were working with to achieve their absolute best. The shared belief was that every student has the capacity to grow and change their communities. They felt strong ownership of the work, a sense of pride in the success of their students, and a sense of achievement from driving change across the institution. The focus was on delivering excellent student support rather than on numerical targets.
- **An ethic of care:** the team strongly articulated how they cared for their students and for each other. Mentoring was an important developmental tool for students and staff at each level. One of the team members described the ethic of care: "We all have family and are part of community. We all want them to be treated like we are treating young people. We are role models." The team also spoke about the word of mouth that creates the "Koori Grapevine", where the MTC team is known as the crew that goes the extra mile. This reputation in turn assisted the team in making connections with the families and support networks of prospective students, in addition to reaching out to interested individuals.
- **A stable team grounded in lived experience:** the manager was explicit about hiring staff for their relationship building skills and their willingness to subscribe to the team's vision for the students and its ethic of care. Students often experience the university as a foreign and white space. Staff need to understand these challenges from lived experience. In addition, MTC staff bring a personal skill set that is relevant to the advisor role, such as teaching, career development learning, or work in the community sector. The manager invested heavily in the skills and on-

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going development of her people as well as the culture of the team. The consistency in the team is seen as an important success factor to build and maintain trust with students as well as develop and retain institutional knowledge.

- **Build the relationship first:** the MTC's approach is based on building connections early, either through outreach to prospective students or immediately upon enrollment. The relationship is usually between a team member and the student and maintained across the student's time at Swinburne to build and maintain trust. From experience, once the relationship is built, students will come back, and the support cycle feeds itself.
- **Intensive support at the start:** the team focuses their attention on the early stages of the student lifecycle and assists commencing students with enrollment, fees, and accommodation. Students receive a welcome letter and are invited to a stand-alone orientation program. From there, a more individualized learning plan is developed for students who need it (approximately 10 percent of the cohort). These students are case managed and provided with wrap-around support. Staff "walk alongside them", taking the whole person into consideration. This approach means that staff need to have an awareness that there may be much more going on for the student than is obvious or shared and that connections to other students and services are critical for success.

The success of the MTC challenges the University to scale its personalized approach to other cohorts with complex needs, e.g., international students or even the entire student cohort. The team reflected that three conditions were critical to make the approach work:

- A triage team for all student enquiries that they refer to the relevant specialist area
- A team of highly skilled case managers to support students with more complex needs
- Excellent relationships between the triage and case management teams and internal specialist units to get things done.

If student success is considered the most critical outcome of the university, this type of investment would pay off in the long run.

Concluding Comments

The MTC has demonstrated impressive outcomes in terms of the attraction and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to vocational and higher education courses at Swinburne in a relatively short period of time and with a small team. The student users described a personalized service model

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that was fully cognizant of their cultural context and fostered community in a learning environment unfamiliar to many Indigenous students.

The success factors of the Indigenous service model provided by the MTC were seen in the shared vision of the team to work with each student to achieve their full potential. This was underpinned by an ethic of care and the lived experience of staff members. The service model prioritized building strong relationships between students and staff, which often lasted for the duration of a student's time at Swinburne. While the team provided intensive support to commencing students, most were eventually able to self-manage and use mainstream services when needed.

The service model has implications for mainstream services, especially in the context of our growing understanding that a student's sense of belonging is correlated with their academic outcomes, including retention in their program of study[36].

The sustainability of the model is somewhat compromised by the heavy reliance on external funding predominantly provided by the Australian and Victorian governments. However, the commitment to the equitable education of Indigenous Australians at all levels has strong bipartisan support, so it is reasonable to assume that substantial funding will be made available by governments to universities to attract and support Indigenous students into the future.

36 See for example Kelly, M.L., Willis, R. & Nieuwoudt, J.E. (2021). A sense of belonging at university: student retention, motivation and enjoyment, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 46(2), 1-12. DOI:10.1080/0309877X.2021.1955844

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6.4 Embedded Equity Program at the University of Western Australia

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Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

The University of Western Australia. Weblink.

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

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This case study draws on a large research project completed in 2016 as part of the Fellows Programme funded by the Australian Government through the National Priority Pool, which was published in a research report by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. It also includes the latest available outcome data for the program (2020) as well as information from background documents and contemporary reflections from key project personnel.

Type of initiative

An embedded equity program at an elite university

Introduction

Widening access and participation in higher education has been on Australia's national policy agenda for over thirty years, since the government white paper *A Fair Chance for All*[37] articulated a focus on six equity target groups that are still in place today. However, it took the 2008 Review into Australian Higher Education[38] to see the Government commit significant funding to equity programs that meant institutions could and did implement major initiatives purposely designed to raise awareness, aspiration and capacity of students from underrepresented groups in higher education. The introduction of the *Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program* (HEPPP) was a major catalyst for The University of Western Australia (UWA) to significantly scale up tailored and multifaceted programs addressing the underrepresentation of students from equity cohorts[39].

UWA is a small, selective, research-intensive institution situated in the vast and sparsely populated state of Western Australia (WA). It has a main campus

37 Commonwealth of Australia (1990). A Fair Chance for All: Higher Education That's Within Everyone's Reach. Canberra: AGPS.

38 Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H. & Scales, B. (2008). Review of Australian Higher Education Final Report. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

39 Skene, J., Pollard, L., & House, H. (2016). Aspire UWA: a case study of widening access in higher education. Student Success, 7(2), 11-20. doi:10.5204/sssj.v7i2.337

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in metropolitan Perth and a regional campus in Albany, 420 km southeast of Perth. It has a traditional undergraduate student cohort of approximately 25,000 students. In 2020, approximately 68% of students were from metropolitan Perth, 6.5% were from regional and remote WA, and 24% were international students.

In its mission statement, the University articulates a strong commitment to equity and merit as well as to its region, the state of Western Australia. Just over 50% of students articulate directly from high school, with the majority using an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), which comprises school scores and state-wide examination marks. In 2012, the University instigated a new course model introducing four main generalized undergraduate degrees that articulate into an expanded set of Master's and Doctoral programmes. The undergraduate programs had standard entry scores with the opportunity for students with high ATARs to secure postgraduate places in professional courses, including in medicine.

Description of program

The reality of being a selective institution in a large state provided the context for the design of a layered outreach and transition program that spans the pre-access, access and transition phases of the student lifecycle[40]. The UWA model combines long-term, sustained engagement with students, schools, communities, and internal partners in the University's flagship pre-access program - Aspire UWA - with addressing locational disadvantage and individual disadvantage in three major access schemes that provide pre-access and transition support - Fairway UWA, Broadway UWA, and the Mature-age Access Pathway (MAP).

Aspire UWA works in close partnership with schools to challenge low educational expectations, creating a school culture where university pathways are embraced and students are supported through the university. This is achieved through whole-cohort engagement from Years 7 to 12 and immersive on-campus experiences, including residential camps. Three-year partnerships are formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding between the school and university, outlining the opportunities and roles of both parties.

Fairway UWA provides an alternative entry pathway to UWA for students completing Year 12 facing financial hardship and challenging circumstances. Students form a strong network of peers through on-campus residential and day events prior to starting university and are provided with rigorous academic support once they enroll at UWA.

Broadway UWA is a positive ATAR adjustment scheme for schools located in low socioeconomic communities, and the **Mature Aged Access Pathway**

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40 Bennett, A., Naylor, R., Mellor, K., Brett, M., Gore, J., Harvey, A., Munn, B., James, R., Smith, M., and Whitty, G. (2015).Critical Interventions Framework Part 2: Equity Initiatives in Australian Higher Education: A review of evidence of Impact. https://www.newcastle.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/261126/UN001_Equity-Initiatives-Framework_Part-2_A3_AW.pdf

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(MAP) provides entry and support for students aged 20 and above who do not have an ATAR**.** These programs engage and build relationships with students during the preaccess and transition stages of the student lifecycle.

The program also works closely with the **School of Indigenous Studies**, which provides targeted outreach and entry pathways, such as a provisional entry scheme and an enabling course, for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The core objectives of the outreach and access initiatives were to support aspiration, build academic attainment, and demystify the university experience. The approach was based on a deep understanding of the systemic disadvantage created by poverty and geography and a belief in the transformative power of (higher) education. All initiatives explicitly targeted individual students, secondary schools and communities who experienced socioeconomic disadvantage.

For enrolled students, however, the university had made a decision to adopt an inclusive approach to student support rather than a deficit model that identified individual students based on their level of financial disadvantage. The approach was summarized with a metaphor: "We [Student Support] are not the Rolls Royce for a few; we're the bus for the many." The aim was to develop effective support mechanisms that could benefit all students while providing equity students with a 'bridge' into mainstream services.

All funding, program development, and the coordination of delivery were centralized in the Student Support area in a deliberate decision by the leadership to keep a small institutional allocation in the same portfolio rather than dispersing it across the university. Building off a pilot project that began late 2009, UWA secured a 3-year AU$6 m Competitive Partnership Grant through the HEPPP in 2011, which enabled a major expansion of the equity program.

In 2012, Aspire UWA was substantially scaled up and taken to new regions of WA, and an additional access program, Fairway UWA, was introduced alongside Broadway UWA and the Mature Age Access Pathway. Between 2012 and 2015, programs were refined, and opportunities were identified for sustainability in the future. From 2016, the program was beginning to be culturally and financially embraced as a strategic initiative by the university. 2019 marked a decade of Aspire UWA, and despite internal and external funding challenges, the ongoing long-term commitment and reputational success of the program saw the University continue its investment.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

The university's mission is to serve the entire state, and its charter articulates equity and merit as fundamental principles and dual goals. Despite this, students from low SES backgrounds had not traditionally been a key target group of the university and, in 2009, made up a very small proportion of the domestic undergraduate cohort (6.1%). It took some conscious realignment of equity

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strategies and initiatives to respond to the focus adopted by the government following the Bradley review[41].

The institutional commitment to the dual goals of equity and merit was operationalized by a committed group of senior individuals who had lived experience of the transformative power of education. This group turned the commitment to equitable outcomes into a strategic priority and 'university ambition' and, thus, ascribed its value. The key enabler of strategic changes, however, was seen in the availability of external competitive funding for equity initiatives:

> We always had a reputation as being a university that had a focus on equity, and our previous VC was seen as an equity champion. But the funding wasn't there to run these kinds of programs. The funding gave us the opportunity to show that this was something that the university could do well and should have been doing well beforehand. (Equity Director)

Since 2009, when competitive equity funding first became available, the University had expanded its equity and access activities considerably, recognising its 'patchy' performance against national equity indicators. The new initiatives were evidence-based, including learning from selective institutions in the UK. When HEPPP was introduced, the university was able to build on existing programs and expertise generated by earlier competitive funding. These initiatives were significantly expanded again with institutional and competitive HEPPP funding, the latter secured between 2011 and 2016.

Moreover, the equity leadership was very skilled at leveraging energy generated elsewhere in the university to advance its own agenda. Because the equity strategy was driven out of one organizational area by a well-connected group of senior change agents, it could take full advantage of changes brought about by the new course model, which was introduced at the same time as HEPPP for full implementation in 2012. This enabled changes to the curriculum, established a centralized admissions system, and resulted in an equity strategy that became deeply embedded in the academic enterprise rather than being established as an add-on programme. One of the Executive sponsors reflects on the approach:

> The university used [HEPPP] funds to truly drive its diversity and equity programs. I think a key aspect of [the University's] approach, and how this came about, not because of the demand-driven [funding] system but because of the curriculum change. Undergraduate admission is completely centralized. [...] It has made it very easy to have the entire equity program driven centrally.

These structural changes at the institutional level were an important success factor for UWA's equity program.

41 Australian Government (2009). Transforming Australia's Higher Education System. Canberra: Australian Government.

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Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

On the whole, practitioners, the university leadership and its partners regarded the approach taken by the UWA as having exceeded expectations. The University had made the national program work in its context to near-universal acclaim. The most obvious and discussed challenge was the small institutional HEPPP allocation in the context of very high costs of delivery in a geographically vast state.

HEPPP design: The constraints of a small institutional allocation

Between 2010 and 2020, the HEPPP formula was based on the number of undergraduate students from low SES backgrounds enrolled at an institution. This did not account for a university's geographic location and the disproportionate cost of delivering outreach activities in large states. The challenge inherent in the funding formula for UWA was described in its 2010 HEPPP progress report:

> By way of illustration, a university visit to a school in regional New South Wales, three or four hours' drive from Sydney, could expect to pay $100 a night for standard accommodation in a country town. In some regions of WA, accommodation of a similar standard costs $350 per night, needs to be booked two months in advance and is reached only after a three-hour flight costing upwards [sic] of $1,000 return.

The small institutional allocation, commitment to covering the whole state and disproportionate costs per student reached meant that the university continually needed to apply for significant amounts of competitive funding to increase capacity, especially in the pre-access phase. This created an extra workload and employment insecurity for staff as well as challenges for program sustainability.

Addressing educational disadvantage as an elite institution

For a selective university in a large state, the focus on low SES communities enforced by HEPPP provided particular challenges due to the correlation between the distance of communities to major centers, the quality of schooling, which was reflected in attainment levels of students, the low number of students finishing high school, and the cultural capital that students and parents could draw on in their decision-making about post-school options. The Equity Director described the original challenge:

> So, if we were going to look at the groups of people who would fall under low SES disadvantage, a lot of them were going to be a long way away. They were also going to be in very disadvantaged communities, and it was going to be a long-term process to raise aspirations and then a long-term process to lift

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academic standards to a level that they would get entry to a Group of Eight [university].

The university was conscious of multiple disadvantages that put students at a disadvantage, particularly in a selective institution. This awareness underpinned the decision to adopt inclusive approaches to retention support rather than a deficit model and was thought to benefit all students.

Over time, the university had to pay more attention to the retention of equity students. As the university's demographic profile started to shift, and especially the mature age cohort was increasing, there are now more students with financial difficulties and complicated lives who need targeted support. With more recent admissions changes introduced in response to COVID as well as new progression policies introduced recently by the Australian government, new work is being undertaken on identifying students and providing early intervention strategies to support success.

Protecting an embedded equity strategy during times of organizational change

In 2015, the integrated strategy came under real threat in an institutional context of large-scale structural and personnel change within a tight financial situation.

The widening participation agenda was known across the university by a collection of high-profile initiatives in the (pre)access phase rather than being understood as an integrated equity strategy that addressed systemic educational disadvantage and spanned pre-access, access and transition phases. Because of its embedded nature in the Student Support area, the retention program in particular had low visibility. In addition, the efficiencies and economies of scale generated by grouping all equity activities within the same organizational area were largely unknown to people outside of the division.

Taken together, these factors made the equity program vulnerable to being split up in a change process or having funding withdrawn, with potentially serious ramifications for the program's effectiveness and efficiency. While equity practitioners across the sector were very conscious about the vulnerability of HEPPP funding, their colleagues at UWA were aware that institutional equity funding was not necessarily any more secure.

However, in the end, the embedded nature of the program acted as a protective factor and allowed for continuous adaptations and improvements while core initiatives were preserved.

Results of the innovative equity approach

The embedded approach to equity strategy and programs adopted by the UWA translated into demonstrable success in attracting and retaining increased numbers of students from low SES backgrounds over time. The national equity data show that the participation rates of the undergraduate low SES cohort

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have almost doubled over the past decade, from 5.43% in 2011 to 9.33% in 2020.

The national focus of HEPPP and the availability of competitive funding made the difference to the university. It extended capacity and broadened existing offers so that the scale of the flagship pre-access initiatives rivaled that of much larger and more diverse universities. The introduction of the new course model and a standard university entry cutoff score (ATAR) made a significant difference in the ability of equity students to access high-status professional degrees, especially in medicine.

In 2015, the success of the access programs was easily demonstrated in admissions data: most of the students participating in the intensive access program - Fairway UWA - had gone on to university, and just under half of them enrolled at UWA. More recently, participation numbers have fallen due to the introduction of additional alternative pathways and scholarships in response to the COVID pandemic. In response, the Fairway program is currently being reviewed and is likely to change focus in 2023.

School partners: changes in attainment, attitudes and culture result in successful transitions to HE

UWA has demonstrated consistently positive outcomes to the school partners involved in pre-access and access initiatives since the programs' inception. There is evidence that Aspire UWA, the flagship outreach program, enhanced students' motivation and engagement with learning, increased their awareness of HE options or specific areas of study and that teachers became more proactive in encouraging students to consider the university as a postschool pathway.

Furthermore, school partners reported that the embedded activities increased attainment levels and changed attitudes and school culture. The latter was mainly brought about by growth in the school's ATAR cohort, for which the flagship outreach initiative was seen as a key factor. Moreover, the equity programs were perceived as being entrenched in the school's culture, which had lifted expectations of students by teachers and themselves:

- It mattered that the partnership was with an elite university that contributed to the cultural changes at the school.
- The long-term commitment by the university had been noted as a success factor, but it was also crucial to sustained outcomes for the school.
- The achievement focus of the programs made a difference to school partners in that it enabled the schools to foster high achievers and be outcome focused.
- The ongoing support provided by the integrated widening participation model was credited for the successful transitions of students to university and UWA in particular.

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Because the HEPPP-funded initiatives spanned pre-access to transition phases, the positive outcomes for school students accrued further for those who enrolled at the university.

Current students: improved study outcomes through personalized support

HEPPP-funded activities were also seen as having strong benefits for current students in terms of retention, progression and grades. There was anecdotal evidence of the pathway programs channeling disproportionate numbers of equity students into high-status degrees, especially medicine.

The UWA case study illustrates the benefits to the individual and their communities when equity students have the opportunity to access high-status degrees.

Positive outcomes for current students also included employment in student-led or peer programs and volunteering opportunities to build a profile of community engagement. Employment had the direct benefit of payment but also the more intangible benefits of enhancing graduate attributes and employability.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

The model of HEPPP implementation at UWA was built on a sequence of targeted, high profile components that were part of a coherent and embedded equity strategy and, thus, codependent. As a whole, they effectively addressed different challenges of widening participation to a selective university. There were three key success factors that relate to the design, funding and staffing of the program and should be addressed by any institution trying to replicate the approach.

1. *Pearls on a string: A tailor-made program for a selective institution*

The program design had three core components: layered outreach, alternative admission processes, and personalized transition support. The consistent focus on attainment was critical to translating outreach efforts into increased participation rates at an elite university. Together, the component parts appeared like pearls on a string that reinforced each other and provided a clear pathway for prospective students to access a selective institution. The approach also had advantages for the institution in that the programme was more than the sum of its parts: the centralized operating model fostered collaboration across teams, which created economies of scale and learning for equity practitioners. Finally, the tight control of funding and targeting of interventions resulted in an efficient, expert-driven and low-conflict model of implementing HEPPP.

2. *Diversification of funding sources as a conscious strategy for growth and sustainability*

UWA only received a very modest institutional HEPPP allocation due to the university's low number of students from low SES backgrounds. A deliberate

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funding strategy was developed that combined central control of institutional allocation with strategic diversification of equity funding sources, including institutional, donor and corporate funding. The equity directors consciously leveraged HEPPP-funded initiatives to access other funding sources as years of scaling up the program on competitive government funding with associated reporting requirements had demonstrated its success. By the time the final external grant ran out, the program had proven itself and was seen as a sensible investment by university executives. Continuing to adapt and find efficiencies has kept the program relevant and feasible within an increasingly fiscally constrained environment.

3. *Success is a team effort: Investing in teams*

The equity programs were people-rich and demonstrably able to attract volunteers among students as well as academic and senior staff by embedding the program into the core business of the university. For external stakeholders, the university was seen as an important and trusted partner because it placed young people at the center of the partnership, was prepared to work within the constraints and preferences of the school partners, was willing to listen, and worked through problems to come up with the best possible solution. The partnership model was also identified by practitioners as a key success factor.

While the key success factors can be replicated in selective institutions elsewhere, it is important to recognize that there were significant changes in both national and institutional policy that coincided with the UWA's establishment of an embedded equity strategy and were critical to its success.

The university introduced a new course model and centralized undergraduate admission, which enabled the development of a highly centralized and deeply embedded equity strategy. At the same time, the Australian government provided significant equity funding through the HEPPP, including substantial amounts of competitive partnership funding, and implemented a demand-driven funding approach for higher education, which meant that universities were funded for as many undergraduate students as they could attract. These significant policy changes at the institutional and national levels provided the vehicle to carry the equity agenda across the university and embedded it in the new strategic priorities, operational structures and institutional culture that emerged.

Concluding Comments

The University of Western Australia developed a targeted, integrated and demonstrably effective equity program with benefits to its community, prospective and current students, school partners and the university itself. It was driven by a group of senior equity leaders and champions at all levels of the university who leveraged the energy generated by large-scale institutional and policy change to advance the equity agenda at a selective university. The UWA

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model is noteworthy for its investment of HEPPP funds into the access phase as well as the consistent attainment focus in all its programs. The metaphor that best describes the approach is that of pearls on a string: a tailored and layered equity program provided a clear pathway into an elite university. For a selective institution, the approach taken seems entirely fit-for-purpose.

UWA has prioritized and invested in its equity programme that supports students from diverse backgrounds across the student lifecycle. This investment has seen the suite of initiatives continue for over a decade and become leading examples of widening participation initiatives in the sector, often being singled out among the Group of Eight universities. It has also attracted corporate and philanthropic support and subsequently enabled meaningful engagement opportunities with industry and alumni.

This case study is an inspiring story of how an elite institution can create effective access routes for equity students and be a valued and trusted partner to the most disadvantaged communities in its realm of influence.

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6.5 Indigenizing an elite university in New Zealand: Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland

Authors: Nadine Zacharias and Te Kawehau Hoskins

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Weblink

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Associate Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins, Ihonuku Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori)

This case study draws on published reports and press releases by the university as well as relevant websites, including New Zealand government departments.

Type of initiative

Indigenizing an elite university

Introduction

Tertiary education for Indigenous peoples is a critical challenge worldwide. Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland, aims to become New Zealand's leading institution for Māori students and staff in tertiary education by adopting a whole-of-institution approach to indigenizing an elite university.

New Zealand has eight public universities and three wānanga (state-owned Māori teaching and research institutions)[42]. Founded in 1883, the University of Auckland is New Zealand's highest ranked and largest university with over 46,000 students, predominantly of Asian and European descent. In 2021, the University of Auckland was gifted the Māori name of Waipapa Taumata Rau by the local Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei iwi (tribe). It relates both to the place (Waipapa) and to the concept of 'Taumata Rau' (many peaks of excellence), referencing both the many mountains of Auckland and the excellent research produced by the university.

In 2021, 3,363 Māori and 4,058 Pacific students were enrolled at Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland, making up 7.3% and 8.8% of the student population, respectively[43]. Of its total student population, the majority are enrolled in undergraduate programs (73%), but the university has a sizable

42 The wānanga teach according to āhuatanga Māori (Māori tradition) and tikanga Māori (Māori custom). They offer certificates, diplomas and degrees. Some teach in specialized areas up to doctorate level. https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/our-role-and-our-people/education-in-nz/

43 All figures taken from the University of Auckland 2021 Annual Report, https://cdn.auckland.ac.nz/assets/auckland/about-us/the-university/official-publications/annual-report/University-of-Auckland-Annual-Report-2021.pdf

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cohort of postgraduate research students (8%) and graduated almost 500 PhDs in 2021.

Description of the approach

Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland, launched its new Vision Statement and 10-year Strategic Plan *Taumata Teitei* in 2021. *Taumata Teitei* can be interpreted from te reo Māori, the Māori language, as pursuing excellence, despite the uncertainty posed by the concerns of our age[44].

Taumata Teitei sets out a number of priorities for the student experience and the kind of education students will receive at Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland. This includes a connection to knowledges of place and the ability to be conversant in Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledges), Kaupapa Māori (ways of doing things from a Māori worldview), and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty) principles and accountabilities. These aims are to be achieved through the curriculum and the richness of experiences of university life that students will be immersed in.

Ihonuku Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) Associate Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins (Ngāti Hau, Ngāpuhi) says:

> "The project is making space for Maori students so that it is not such a big transformation for students coming in. When will I feel that I belong? Maori tend to have a loyalty for institutions. Waipapa gives people an opportunity to feel confident and proud about the university."[45]

At the same time, the University is co-creating a framework titled *Toitū Waipapa*, drawing on its Māori name, to elucidate enduring indigenous ideas important to the University beyond the 10-year strategy, including the principles of *manaakitanga* (caring for those around us in the way we relate to each other, practices that uplift the dignity of others), *whanaungatanga* (recognizing the importance of kinship and lasting relationships), and *kaitiakitanga* (valuing stewardship and guardianship and our relationship with the natural world). These principles speak to the University's commitment to positively impact society, to advance and explore knowledge, and to uphold its responsibilities under the 1840 Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi[46].

To achieve the priorities set out in the strategy, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) provides cross-institutional leadership and chairs the Rūnanga, a

44 https://cdn.auckland.ac.nz/assets/auckland/about-us/the-university/official-publications/strategic-plan/2021-2030/taumata-teitei-vision-2030-and-strategic-plan-2025.pdf

45 https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/news/2021/08/02/te-kawehau-hoskins-building-relationships-vital.html

46 The Treaty of Waitangi is New Zealand's founding document. It takes its name from the place in the Bay of Islands where it was first signed, on 6 February 1840. This day is now a public holiday in New Zealand. The Treaty is an agreement, in Māori and English, that was made between the British Crown and approximately 540 Māori rangatira (chiefs). https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/treaty-of-waitangi

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Māori staff and student committee of the University Council and Senate. Unlike most other PVC roles, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) is part of the University Executive Committee and reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor, which recognizes that the role is framed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty). The office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) works with each of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor portfolios to establish strategic priorities for Māori in those areas and sets independent priorities.

Associate Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins (Ngāti Hau, Ngāpuhi) was appointed to the role in April 2021, replacing Dame Cindy Kiro, who held the inaugural position for two years. Dame Cindy Kiro is credited with establishing the University's language strategy in the revitalization of te reo Māori and for her strong influence in the development of the *Taumata Teitei* strategic plan.

Associate Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins says that indigenizing the university also means improving all levels of engagement and experience for students and staff. That includes the built environment – spaces that are cultural and inviting. "Indigenizing isn't just assimilating bits of Māori stuff into the University. It's about making it a place where Māori students and communities feel they can come."

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) advises the university at all levels, from the Vice-Chancellor to the University Executive Committee and managers in the faculties where she works with Maori academic leaders (Associate Deans - Māori) and Kaiārahi (Professional Māori leaders) to support both academic and professional staff. She also maintains working relationships with Māori student groups and is responsible for Waipapa Marae (the Māori cultural center).

Associate Professor Hoskins is supported by a growing team that includes a research lead (Māori data sovereignty), Māori cohort lead (senior, student journey), deputy and strategic project lead. The team also includes Marae staff, Māori student experience leads, and the head of the Tai Tokerau campus in Whāngārei, 165 km north of Auckland.

Working in partnership with Māori and non-Māori colleagues in academic and professional roles as well as students, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) coleads a number of university-wide projects emanating from the Strategic Plan:

1. **Targeted programs to improve retention and progression for Māori students and Pacific students:** In the Learner Success Plan submitted to the New Zealand government, the University articulated its ambition to achieve parity in the retention and success of Māori and Pacific students. This is to be achieved through the development of a cross-institution cohort plan and leadership of University-wide Tuakana (elder brother/elder sister) pastoral care and academic support program for Māori and Pacific students.
2. **Curriculum Transformation projects:** co-developed by the faculties and a team of central experts with leaders in kaupapa Māori pedagogies and mātauranga Māori. Three main initiatives:

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- Compulsory for credit (15 point) course: covering place, treaty, social relationships, and Mātauranga Māori in relation to each faculty's programs;
- Zero-point Te Reo Māori pronunciation course: to be completed by all students before graduation; and
- Commitment to Mātauranga Māori pathways for students from Māori and non-Māori schools.

3. **Review of the University's Graduate Profile:** emphasis on the enduring framework of *Toitū Waipapa* and its focus on connection to place and knowledge of social history.
4. **Development of competencies for all teaching staff:** Te Akoranga Kairangi (TAK) is a cultural competency program being rolled out across the university for all academic and professional staff. Originally developed in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, the program focuses on meeting staff where they are and providing a safe environment to engage with New Zealand's history, including the following:
   - Te Tiriti (Treaty);
   - Māori concepts, language and practices; and
   - the politics of Māori-non-Māori engagement.
5. **Māori staffing plan:** to reach at least parity with non-Māori staff. Focusing on growing numbers and improving the experience and advancement of Māori staff.

These projects are funded by institutional allocations and have been approved by the University's Executive Committee for implementation from 2021-2025.

Identification of linkages with national policies

Achieving parity in educational outcomes for Indigenous students is a long-term endeavour spanning the entire education system. At the school level, Aotearoa New Zealand has a 30-year education vision and objectives that sit at the heart of its wellbeing approach. Ka Hikitia is the Māori Education Strategy, and Tau Mai Te Reo is the Māori Language in Education Strategy. Together, the documents set out the strategic direction for Māori education and Māori language in education and the actions that need to be taken across the Ministry of Education, education agencies and the schooling sector[47].

For post-school education, the New Zealand government has issued a Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) and the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) under the Education and Training Act 2020. The TES sets out the government's long-term strategic direction for

47 https://www.education.govt.nz/news/refreshed-maori-education-strategy-released/#:~:text=Ka%20Hikitia%20is%20the%20M%C4%81ori%20Education%20Strategy%20and,reo%20M%C4%81ori%20for%20both%20M%C4%81ori%20and%20non-M%C4%81ori%20learners.

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tertiary education, including economic, social, and environmental goals, and the development aspirations of Māori and other population groups[48].

The TES requires all universities to develop Learner Success Plans (as noted above). The stated aim of those plans is to achieve parity of numbers and outcomes for Māori and Pacific students.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

The aspirations articulated in the *Taumata Teitei* Strategic Plan are very ambitious, especially in the context of the University's history. As the elite institution in New Zealand and its largest and most prestigious university, Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland, has traditionally been a relatively conservative place that was not particularly cognisant of the needs of Māori and Pacific students.

Associate Professor Hoskins says her focus is on indigenizing the university:

> "We have to think hard about what this means, and I strongly believe we need to do it together. For me, indigenizing the university is about finding ways where Māori knowledge, ways of being, thinking and doing can thrive."
>
> "I have always been drawn to positive, grassroots Māori community ways of working. Mostly it's not about opposition or resistance, although that is called for at times. It says 'we can do this, when we've got trust, then actually we can do anything'. So even though 'decolonizing' the University is part of our project, my feeling is that indigenizing is much more a Māori approach."[49]

An important vehicle of the change process is the indigenization of the curriculum to initiate a shift in the institution's perspective and identity. Some of the key questions for the university are as follows: How is the university experienced by students and others? How does it nurture a sense of belonging in Māori students? How does it follow Kaupapa Māori in everything it does? Māori logic is the privileging of relationships; knowing who we are and why we matter to each other.

> "One of my main messages is that it's not about how much Māori you know, although being inquiring is absolutely the orientation. It's about an enduring and positive orientation to the Māori world."[50]

In that sense, culture change leads to strategy change.

> "Cultural change across the whole University is required because a lot of Māori kids from the north, for example, will bypass Auckland and go to

48 https://assets.education.govt.nz/public/Documents/NELP-TES-documents/FULL-TES-2020.pdf

49 https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/news/2021/08/02/te-kawehau-hoskins-building-relationships-vital.html

50 Ibid

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> Waikato because there's a perception that Waikato is the 'Māori university'. Well there's nothing more Māori there than there is here. We need to challenge that perception and work on communicating and shifting our identity a little bit. Then, we'll see those communities thinking 'oh maybe Auckland is for me'."[51]

An important forum for discussion to bring about the shift in perspective was the working group tasked with rewriting the University's Equity Policy established by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity). It enabled a different way of approaching equity through the Waipapa Toitū (Māori principles) lens: What about the Equity Policy of this place? What underpins equity here is Aotearoa New Zealand? The group followed an iterative ontological approach and provided the university with 'new' language and concepts to frame the policy.

> "The dominant culture can have all sorts of fears, such as 'Māori want to be separate'. You know, we don't. We do want a celebration of diversity and unity – that's quite fundamental. We need to embrace the idea of how much richer our worlds are with two cultures."[52]

> "Māori don't want you to be Māori, they want you to think positively about how you can have productive relationships with Māori. What sort of University and world do we want? Do we want a place where the Māori world flourishes and we all move in a positive direction? Of course we do."[53]

The role of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) is developing. It is a very senior role with visible influence across the university. How the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) office appropriately partners with other portfolios in the cosponsorship of projects is currently being worked through. Universities in other countries that have committed to the indigenization of their institution and its curriculum, such as the University of Regina in Saskatchewan (Canada), have demonstrated that it is critical to build infrastructural support to realize their ambitious goals[54].

Results of the innovative equity approach

The most visible change in the University's orientation toward indigenizing is adding the name Waipapa Taumata Rau to the University of Auckland, replacing the former more literal translation used in the University's brand – Te

51 https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/news/2021/08/02/te-kawehau-hoskins-building-relationships-vital.html

52 ibid

53 ibid

54 Sammel, A. & Arturo, S. (2020). Supporting Indigenization in Canadian Higher Education through strong international partnerships and strategic leadership: A case study of the University of Regina. In Sammel, A., Whatman, S. & Blue, L. (Eds.), *Indigenizing education*. Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4835-2_7

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Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau[55]. The name Waipapa Taumata Rau was developed in partnership with the Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei iwi (tribe) and gifted to the university. 'Waipapa' locates the University in the city of Auckland and the nearby shoreline, which also informed the naming of the University's marae (the Māori cultural center). 'Taumata Rau' is an exhortation to excellence and achievement in which 'Taumata' refers to peaks or points of ascension and 'Rau' means many or one hundred[56]. The new name better connects the University to its location and highlights the significant partnership with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei.

Associate Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins says:

> "This new name underpins a new strategic direction. It is one that champions building respect for Māori knowledge and challenges us to understand that we are part of a whakapapa (genealogy) of historic and current relationships."[57]

Vice-Chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater welcomed the gift from Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, saying that the name resonates with the University's new strategy and vision, *Taumata Teitei*, and its commitment to excellence and high achievement in teaching and research.

> "We interpret *Taumata Teitei* as pursuing excellence, despite uncertainty. It recognizes the exciting challenges posed by the concerns of our age and is a contemporary statement of our purpose, vision and values. This is underpinned by Waipapa Toitū, the enduring framework of principles based in mātauranga-ā-whenua and mātauranga-ā-iwi (knowledge of place and people)."[58]

The University is reviewing how to best incorporate its new name further into its organizational culture and visual identity.

In terms of representation, the recent review of the Equity Policy shows that the 2020 KPIs for Māori undergraduate and postgraduate students were not quite met, nor were the number of Māori staff in academic and professional positions. However, both the number of Māori students and their share of the total student population have increased over the past 10 years (from 2,737 students and 6.8% in 2011 to 3,363 students and 7.3% in 2021[59]). This compares to the share of Māori people in the total population of 17.1%[60]. An ambitious Learner Success Plan has been submitted to the TEC to increase Māori student numbers and achieve parity in Māori student retention and success.

55 https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/news/2021/07/22/university-gifted-name-waipapa-taumata-rau.html

56 https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/about-us/about-the-university/waipapa-taumata-rau-university-of-auckland.html

57 https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/news/2021/07/22/university-gifted-name-waipapa-taumata-rau.html

58 ibid

59 University of Auckland Annual Reports 2011 and 2021

60 Māori population estimates: At 30 June 2021 | Stats NZ

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The university has also started to scale up existing programs to achieve its ambitious indigenization agenda. Te Akoranga Kairangi (TAK) is a cultural competency program being rolled out across the university for all academic and professional staff. This program is led by pairs of Māori and non-Māori facilitators and grapples with these themes and content within the context of the university itself. A total of 230 staff members undertook the program during the second half of 2021 and 2022. It is perhaps too early to tell what changes have been observed, but the program has been well received by participants and has a full calendar of cohorts for 2023,

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

The level of ambition articulated in the Strategic Plan, *Taumata Teitei*, of the University of Auckland, Waipapa Taumata Rau, is impressive, and the value ascribed to Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing is most unusual for a successful elite institution.

It needs to be acknowledged that New Zealand is perhaps the most advanced country in the world on the path to reconciliation with its Indigenous peoples. Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty) has been in place for over 180 years and formed the basis of Māori and non-Māori engagement across all aspects of society. The dual naming of places is commonplace, and there is a high awareness, understanding and knowledge of Māori culture in the non-Māori population, which enables New Zealand universities to progress advanced programs targeted at Indigenous students and staff as well as institution-wide culture change initiatives. This is difficult to achieve in societies where reconciliation efforts with Indigenous peoples have not yet progressed as far.

Concluding Comments

The University of Auckland, Waipapa Taumata Rau, is in the early stages of the implementation of its ambitious plan to comprehensively indigenize an elite and traditionally conservative institution. The university has articulated clear targets to the government in its Learner Access Plan and published its Strategic Plan, *Taumata Teitei*, built on Māori principles.

The University has a senior position, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori), with membership in the Executive Group and a reporting line to the Vice-Chancellor, which is now being resourced to work across the University on an agenda of sustained cultural change. Most recently, the University appointed two female leaders with strong relationships with the local community to the PVC (Māori) role to lead the work on behalf of Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland.

Key programs are in the process of being scaled up to drive cultural change across the university. Institutional funding has been made available to progress the work over the next 3 years.

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To what extent the ambitious vision articulated in *Taumata Teitei* can be realized remains to be seen. However, the courage and conviction of a group of Māori and non-Māori leaders, most of them women, to build strong relationships across historical divides is to be admired.

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Chapter 7. South Asia Case Studies

7.1 Overview

Authors: N.V. Varghese and Nidhi S. Sabharwal

The most common equity strategy followed in several South Asian countries is affirmative measures targeting students belonging to disadvantaged groups. This includes a compulsory quota system, relaxation of age and scores at the stage of admissions to study programs and at the entry level in the employment market. The identification of disadvantaged groups to target them in public policies has not been an easy task in many countries. It seems that the basis for identification of the disadvantaged in Asia is broadly economic, social, and regional.

Higher education expanded rapidly in the past decade in South Asia, and most countries in the region moved from an elite stage of higher education development to a stage of massification with the GER crossing 15%. India leads the region for having a relatively higher GER for tertiary education (27.1%), followed by Bangladesh (22.8%) and Sri Lanka (21.6%). Although Bhutan and Bangladesh experienced the fastest progress in GER in the past decade, they still lag behind India in terms of GER. India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar made moderate progress, while the GER almost stagnated or declined in Nepal during the period between 2011 and 2020.

It is equally important to note that the GER is higher among women, i.e., the gender parity index (GPI) is more than one in five out of the seven countries. In the South Asian region, Sri Lanka registered the highest GPI at 1.61, and Bangladesh had the lowest at 0.77. South Asia has reached reasonable levels of gender equality in participation in higher education at relatively low levels of GER. This may reflect positive equity policies followed in case of expanding access to higher education of women. However, inequalities in higher education enrollment by income and rural urban areas continue to be high. Enrollment in higher education in South Asian countries shows a bias in favor of urban locations and high-income families.

Equity Strategies in South Asia

It can be argued that the basis of equity policies in South Asia can be broadly divided into economic and social policies. These are not mutually exclusive categories of strategies since they at times overlap. Most countries, while emphasizing one criterion, may be following certain strategies based on another criterion. It can be further seen that countries with a higher level of diversity follow social criteria for equity policies, while those that are more homogenous

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follow economic criteria for targeting the disadvantaged. At times, regional backwardness based on economic indicators may also be adopted by countries. Very often, a social criterion is relied on to extend economic benefits such as financial support to students and institutions.

South Asian countries are more diverse than other countries in the East Asian region and countries on other continents. India and Nepal, having a high degree of diversity, rely on social criteria as the basis for equity policies in higher education admissions for disadvantaged groups. Countries such as Myanmar, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are relatively less diverse and have therefore relied on economic criteria to support disadvantaged population groups. Sri Lanka (and to an extent Pakistan) has relied on both economic and regional criteria as the basis for equity policies.

Among the South Asian countries, Bangladesh is a relatively homogenous country, with 89% of the population belonging to Islamic faith and 98% of the population speaking Bengali. The equity policies are based on economic criteria, and these policies target economically poor (low-income) students, especially from rural areas and female students, to benefit from equity policies such as stipends, student loan programs, scholarships, and residential facilities. After admissions to higher education institutions, the country also extends remedial teaching, tutoring support, social care, and access to learning resources to improve the conditions of learning among the disadvantaged.

Nepal is more diverse than Bangladesh. Although the Hindu population constitutes a majority, disadvantaged groups account for more than 12%. Nepal relies on social criteria to target affirmative action policies. The constitution guarantees free education with scholarship, from primary to higher education, for Dalit (socially disadvantaged students) students. They have also mandated scholarships for pursuing medical and engineering studies and master's and research degree programmes. The quotas for Dalits are specified for scholarships (45%), Freeships (50% of freeships) and Fellowships.

Pakistan, although homogenous in terms of religion (96% Muslims), is diverse in terms of ethnic groups consisting of Punjabis (46%), Sindhis (14.1%), Pashtuns (15.4%), Mohajirs (7.8%) and Baluchis (3.57%), occupying four different provinces of the country. The equity policies in Pakistan are based mainly on economic criteria, mainly in the form of the Merit and Need Based Scholarship Program (MNBSP), targeting students from economically disadvantaged groups and female students. Social criteria-based affirmative policies such as quota systems and relaxation in age limits for admissions and employment are also followed.

Sri Lanka has a majority of Buddhist religions (70.1%), followed by Hinduism (12.6%), Islam (9.7%), and Christianity (6.2%). The ethnic composition consists of nearly 75% Sinhalese origin and 15% Tamils and an indigenous population of 9.3%. The equity policies in higher education are based on regional criteria since many disadvantaged groups are concentrated in some districts. Students from educationally underprivileged districts are allotted nearly 60% of seats

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in admissions to higher education institutions (De Silva, 2020). Furthermore, policies to favor Sinhalese speakers include a change in the medium of instruction in higher education from English to Swabasha to encourage the participation of Sinhalese in HE and their chance of gaining employment in Sri Lanka (Liberman, 2009).

India initially relied on social factors and later expanded to economic factors to identify disadvantaged groups. The disadvantaged groups in India are broadly classified into four categories. They are the scheduled castes (SC), the scheduled tribes (ST), the other backward classes (OBCs) and the economically weaker sections (EWS). The non-disadvantaged social groups are termed the general category. In 1950, the Constitution of India recognized the scheduled castes (SC) and the scheduled tribes (ST) as the two most backward groups needing special protection. The Constitution of India guaranteed 15% reservation in admissions to higher education and in employment for the Scheduled Castes (SC) and 7.5% for the Scheduled Tribes (ST) in 1950.

In 1987, an additional quota of 27% was extended to other backward classes (OBCs) in education and jobs. In 2019, the amendment to the constitution included a 10% reservation of seats in educational institutions and in jobs to economically weaker sections (EWS) within the general category. In other words, the reservation or quota of seats will now cover nearly 59.5% of admissions in institutions of higher education. It needs to be added that some of the state governments follow quota systems in admissions to higher education institutions and in the labor market that exceed this level.

Apart from the quota for admissions, governments (both central and provincial) have introduced financial incentives to encourage the participation of disadvantaged individuals in institutions of higher education. These measures include fee concessions and the provision of scholarships and hostel facilities. Students belonging to disadvantaged groups, especially the SC and ST categories, are exempted from paying fees and are offered scholarships in schools and higher education institutions. A monthly stipend scheme is provided to help students meet non-tuition costs, such as the cost of books and stationarity.

The hostel facilities provided are of two forms. Some of the higher education institutions have created separate hostels for the disadvantaged – sometimes referred to as welfare hostels. In other cases, there are quotas for the disadvantaged in the hostels where all categories of students live. (Varghese, Sabharwal, and Malish, 2022). Since the STs live in remote rural areas, the Central Government established Tribal universities in India to promote their education.

The other equity programs include support extended to the students after admissions and while continuing their higher education studies. The coaching schemes include i) Remedial coaching at the undergraduate and graduate level to reinforce the curriculum transacted in the classrooms; ii) coaching to appear in the competitive examinations for job selection; and (iii) coaching for

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national eligibility test (NET) – the competitive examination introduced by the UGC to provide fellowships for doctoral studies and to decide eligibility for academic positions in universities. Initiatives at the institutional level include the establishment of equal opportunities cells (EOCs) and the creation of SC and ST Cells in institutions of higher education.

Public policy-related reservations are closely monitored for their implementation. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued instructions to strictly adhere to the reservation policies in all public institutions of higher education. However, the extent to which these measures have helped in the upward mobility of the disadvantaged is debatable.

A more challenging task is to analyze how institutions are implementing national equity policies on the one hand and try to analyze the extent of institutional strategies to address student diversity to improve learning outcomes, developing inclusive campuses and improving employment outcomes. The experiences of some institutions in offering compensatory classes, organizing programs for improving performance in competitive examinations in the job market and courses to improve English language proficiency are found to be very helpful to students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Malish and Sabharwal, 2021). Public policies may focus on these measures to develop inclusive campuses and to improve higher education outcomes.

Equity Strategies at the Institutional Level

In an attempt to understand the varying institutional approach to equity and the strategies in operation, the present study selected four universities for detailed empirical study – three universities from India and one university from Nepal. These are prominent higher education institutions in India and Nepal. Tribhuvan University is the prominent and the first university established in Nepal in 1959. The institutions selected from India include a central university, an elite nonuniversity and a state (provincial university). These institutions are drawn from different regions of India and reflect institutional diversity in higher education in India. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) is a prominent Central university located in Delhi, the capital city of the country. The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), located in the western state of Maharashtra, is one of the most prestigious technology institutions in India. Bharathiar University (BU) is located in the southern state of Tamil Nadu and is a large multidisciplinary state university. These three institutions selected from India represent diversity in terms of the ownership, governance, and orientations of the institutions.

Equity strategies followed by the South Asian higher education institutions documented in this book can be broadly divided into two types: a) Equity strategies as compliance with national commitments and mandates and b) institutional initiatives in addition to the implementation of nationally mandated policy measures.

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Conclusions

The study attempted to analyze equity policies in South Asia based on secondary and primary sources of information. While diversity is a common element in most countries in the region, it is high in countries such as India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. While the secondary sources covered all the countries in the region, the primary sources covered institutions from the most diverse countries, such as India and Nepal. The detailed analysis of institutional policies is based on three institutions from India and one institution from Nepal. All the institutions selected are public institutions that are mandated to strictly adhere to national equity policies. The institution selected for the study in Nepal is the first and foremost national university of the country. The institutions selected from India are federally funded institutions - a technological institution, a research-oriented university and a provincial (state funded) university.

The analysis based on secondary sources of data and studies of selected institutions indicates that most equity policies are either based on social factors or economic factors. Countries that are more diverse follow equity policies based more on social factors, while less diverse countries follow equity policies based on economic criteria. One interesting trend noticed is that irrespective of the criteria relied on for the identification of target groups for equity policies, the support involves a quota system in admissions and financial support after admissions.

The study clearly indicates that most institutions follow nationally mandated equity policies. In fact, equity policies are nationally determined, and institutions are implementing these policies. In addition to nationally determined policies, many institutions have introduced measures supporting the disadvantaged in terms of scholarships and hostel facilities.

One disadvantage of nationally mandated equity policies is that they are mostly efforts to bring students to institutions of higher education. Little attention is given to support students after admissions. In fact, institutional initiatives become more important and relevant in this context. The studies indicate that most institutional initiatives were related to making students comfortable on campus, focusing on mental wellness to overcome initial adjustment problems and remedial teaching.

In fact, language plays an important role in integrating new students with institutional culture. The medium of instruction in many of the prestigious universities in India is the English language. Many students, especially from disadvantaged groups and rural areas, find it difficult to follow classroom transactions in the English language since their orientation is in regional languages. The support system provided by institutions, especially language classes and compensatory education, is a very important support system for the disadvantaged.

It can be fairly conclusively argued that nationally mandated equity policies and their implementation at institutions of higher education have helped

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tremendously expand higher education opportunities to disadvantaged groups. However, this opportunity will become more meaningful when students are in a position to perform well in academics. Institutional initiatives in many instances have helped students perform well and progress quickly in their academic pursuits.

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7.2 Equity Policies of IIT Bombay, Maharashtra, India

Author: Malish C.M. [1*]

Name of the Institution

Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Maharashtra

Weblink

https://www.iitb.ac.in/

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Primary Sources

Professor Rowena Robinson, Former Convenor of the Gender Cell, IIT B

Professor Madhu Belur, Co-Coordinator of SC-ST Cell, IIT Bombay

Ms. Hima Anaredy, In charge of the Student Wellness Cell, IIT Bombay

Mr Naveen Gurrapu, Student representative of SC-ST cell, IIT Bombay

Informal conversation with students and faculty members of IIT Bombay

Type of Institutional Initiatives

Student Mentorship Programme aims to provide mentoring support to first-year students

Student Wellness Cell for providing counseling services to students

Academic Rehabilitation Programme reduces the academic workload of students and provides one-on-one faculty guidance

Gender Awareness Course is a compulsory online course for students to develop sensitivity toward the issue of gender equity and awareness about provisions in the law prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace and campus.

Introduction

IIT Bombay (IIT B) is located in the city of Mumbai, Maharashtra. Mumbai is known as the economic capital of the country and the capital of the state of Maharashtra. The strategic location of Mumbai in the Arabian Sea helped the city emerge as an ancient center of trade and commerce. It was further strengthened during British rule. In 1944, a few industrialists proposed an economic plan for an independent India. This plan is known as the "Bombay Plan", indicating the city's historical significance. The "Bombay Plan" was influential in setting up the

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Reserve Bank of India and the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the leading industry association in the country. The city is one of the larger cities on the globe. University established in Bombay is one of the first three universities established in 1857, the other being universities in Calcutta and Madras. The university model of education began with establishing these three universities in 1857 under British rule.

According to the latest estimates of the All-India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE, MOE 2020), there are 65 universities and 4494 colleges in Maharashtra. Of the 65 universities, 65% are in the public sector, including government-aided universities. College density (number of colleges per lakh population) is 34, above the national average of 30. The average enrollment per college is 670, indicating a significant number of colleges with a small student intake. Out of 4494 colleges, 61% are general colleges offering arts and science courses. Nineteen percent of colleges are professional colleges offering engineering, management, nursing, pharmacy, and teacher education courses. Only 12% of colleges are in the government sector, while nearly 62% of colleges are in the private unaided sector. The government (12%) and government-aided colleges (25.76%) together constitute 38% of colleges in the state of Maharashtra.

The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education (HE) in Maharashtra is 32.3%, above the national average of 27.1%. Furthermore, 40% of total enrollment is in privately managed colleges (unaided sector) and, along with private aided colleges (51%), the private sector accounts for 91% of total enrollment in colleges in the state. The dominance of HE enrollment in the private and private-unaided sector in Maharashtra is more prominent than in the national scenario, wherein the share of enrollment in the private sector (private and private-aided) is 66.3%. Maharashtra has a Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.93, indicating near gender equity. However, GPI for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) are 1.00 and 0.78, respectively, reflecting the relative deprivation faced by women from Scheduled Tribes.

IIT Bombay: Profile of the Institution

In 1945, during British rule, N. Sarkar Committee was constituted to advise on developing higher technical education to meet the growing demand for technical personnel and experts in emerging industrial sectors. The committee submitted its interim report in 1948 recommending the establishment of four higher technical institutions offering undergraduate and postgraduate studies in engineering and allied disciplines. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) model was recommended to start higher technical institutions. The Union government took this recommendation forward and established the first Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) at Kharagpur, near Calcutta, in 1951 with the support of the U.S., U.K., the Soviet Union and UNESCO. IIT Kharagpur was established in Hijli, a British detention camp. In 1961, the Parliament conferred IITs the status of “Institute of National Importance”. The government of

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India fully funds IITs. IITs are a top-ranked Indian institution in global and national rankings called NIRF.

IIT Bombay, the case study institution, was the second IIT established in 1958. IIT Bombay was established in collaboration with the Soviet Union. After independence, IIT Bombay was the first technical institution to be set up with foreign assistance. The funds from UNESCO came as Roubles from the then-Soviet Union. The vision of the institution is "to be a leading global technology university that provides a transformative education to create leaders and innovators, and generates new knowledge for society and industry". Integrity, excellence, accountability, transparency and empathy are the core values upheld by the institute.

IITB has emerged as one of the top technology universities in the world. According to the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF, 2021), IIT B occupies the third position in the "overall category", "engineering", and "research". The IITB also secured the second position in the Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) for centrally funded institutions. ARIIA ranks institutions based on the assessment of "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development" among students and faculties in colleges and universities. Along with assessing the startup ecosystem, ARIIA considers innovations in the teaching-learning and governance process. Apart from the national ranking, IIT B occupies the top position in the global ranking. IIT B has secured 177th (World University Ranking) and first among the Indian institutions in Q.S. World University Rankings 2022.

"Institute of Eminence" (IOE), a scheme to promote world-class universities in India, was introduced in 2017. According to the UGC (Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2017, the IOE would enjoy high autonomy in academic and administrative domains. The purpose is to create conducive conditions for institutions to emerge as top-ranked global universities over a stipulated time. IIT B was one of the first five public higher education institutions to receive IOE status. Along with more autonomy and freedom, IOEs in the public sector are eligible for additional funding of 10 billion Indian rupees.

IIT B offers engineering, science, humanities, and social sciences study programmes. There are 15 departments, three schools and six centers offering academic degrees. A 'department' is a unit that offers a range of academic programmes from undergraduate to doctoral degrees. A 'Centre' hosts only postgraduate and research programmes. Schools are set up in targeted areas, with significant funding from external sources. The engineering departments at IIT Bombay offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes leading to B.Tech., M.Tech. and PhD degrees. Other programmes include Master of Public Policy, Master of Business Administration, Bachelor of Science (Economics), and Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)

As per the IIT B annual report for 2020-21, there are 690 faculty members. Presently, the total student enrollment is 12005, of which 5020 (41.81%) are

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at the undergraduate level, and 6985 (58.18%) are at the postgraduate level. In 2021, 2545 degrees were awarded, including 381 PhD degrees. Other degrees awarded are engineering U.G. (857), MSc (258), Engineering P.G. (819) and MBA (110). The Liberal Arts, Sciences, and Engineering (LASE) programme is a new study programme that will be offered by the IITB coordinated by the Centre for Liberal Education. LASE would be admitting students who have completed first-year engineering at the U.G. level in any branch. In this 3-year course, the first two semesters are for developing foundations. In the remaining two years, students can concentrate on domains such as natural science, engineering science, social science and arts & design. LASE is the first liberal arts programme in public universities in India. The first batch of LASE will commence in the current academic year (2022-23).

Description of Equity Policies/Programmes

A. Implementation of national equity policies

Being an "Institute of National Importance" under the Ministry of Education, IITs are committed to adhering to the equity policies of the Government of India. Equity policies in India address questions of access, participation, and student outcome. Constitutionally guaranteed "Reservation Policy" ensures adequate representation of disadvantaged groups in India. Reservation policy mandates institutions to recruit students according to quotas for various equity groups. The reservation policy applies to the recruitment of faculty and staff. Four major social groups enjoy the benefits of reservation in India. These are broadly classified into Scheduled Tribes (ethnic aboriginals), Scheduled Castes (former untouchable castes), Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Economically Weaker Section (poor among advantaged social groups). The Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota was introduced in 2019. As of now, reservations for various social groups in centrally funded institutions are as follows: 7.5% (STs), SCs (15%), OBCs (27%) and EWSs (10%). Thus, 59.5% of seats in the IITs are reserved for equity groups, and 40.5% of seats are on open merit.

There is also horizontal reservation for people with disability and a supernumerary quota for women candidates for the undergraduate programme. Five percent of the seats are reserved for students with disabilities. Considering the underrepresentation of women in science, technology and engineering math (STEM) disciplines, the government of India has been promoting reservations for women in IITs since 2016. According to the latest information brochure of the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), at least 20% of supernumerary seats are earmarked for women candidates. As a result of this critical equity initiative, women's representation in IITs increased from 8% in 2016 to 18% in 2018.

Apart from the reservation of seats, IITs follow various strategies to facilitate students from equity groups to take admission in the IITs. Application forms are made available for students from equity groups at a discounted rate. Relaxation in entrance scores also aims to enhance the pool of eligible candidates. Once the

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open merit cutoff is decided, the cutoff for various equity groups is fixed in the following order. The OBC cutoff is 90% of the open merit cutoff. The cutoff for SCs and STs is 66% of the open merit cutoff. If quotas for the SCs and STs are not filled due to eligible candidates, a proportionate number of students below the cutoff are admitted to a preparatory course. The preparatory course for the SCs and the STs is a two-semester (one-year) course. The course aims to teach the foundations of Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and English, which are believed to be essential and basic for undergraduate study programs at IIT. Students are admitted to first-year undergraduate programmes after completing the course.

Students from the SC and the ST groups are eligible for the tuition fee waiver, free messing (exempted from payment of boarding charges) and pocket money. There are also many scholarship schemes for students. It includes those sponsored by the central government, central government corporations such as the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, state government and alumni groups. Through a book loan scheme, students from SCs and STs can borrow relevant books for six months. There is special funding for procuring books through the book loan scheme.

There are various institutional mechanisms to address the welfare of students from equity groups. Some of them are mandatory according to the rules of the land and regulatory agencies in higher education. Mandatory mechanisms include SC-ST Cell, Gender Cell (Internal Complaint Committee), and SC-ST and OBC Liaison Cell. The SC-ST cell is tasked with monitoring reservation policies and promoting the social and academic well-being of SC and ST students. The fellowship schemes for SCs and STs are coordinated by the SC-ST Cell of the Institute. In case of on-campus sexual harassment, students and staff can directly launch a complaint to the Internal Complaint Cell, a statutory body as per the All-India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and UGC (prevention, prohibition and redressal harassment of women employees and students in higher education institutions) regulations 2015.

B. **Institutional Level Equity Initiatives**

This section provides a brief outline of four institutional interventions to promote equity and inclusion. They are:

1. Student Mentorship Programme
2. Student Wellness Cell
3. Academic Rehabilitation Programme
4. Gender Awareness Course

Student Mentorship Programme (SMP)

Objectives: The Student Mentor Programme (SMP) aims to promote constructive and positive student interaction and facilitate guidance and mentorship to junior

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students by senior students. SMP provides a comprehensive support system from within to motivate students to excel in both academic and nonacademic fields.

Modus Operandi: SMP comprises three wings: Institute Student Mentor Programme (ISMP), Department Academic Mentor Program (D-AMP), and English Learning Program (ELP). Mentors are senior students who are selected based on interviews. Mentors in ISMP and D-AMP are provided training to acquire the necessary skills in mentoring. All Freshers are mandated to attend a workshop in their autumn semester called EQ 101 to help them positively adjust to life in IITB. Currently, there are 131 Institute Student Mentors and 311 Department Academic Mentors. The ISMP website provides an overview of the academic and social life of the campus and how to navigate and become acquainted with new places. The Dean of Student Affairs selects ISMP mentors.

Rationale: Students in their first year face various forms of adjustment problems. It includes social, emotional and emotional adjustments. The IIT administration recognized that administrative mechanisms alone are not adequate to reach out to all first-year students considering the size of the student population. This recognition is the source for exploring the potential of peer support to help students overcome initial adjustment problems. The introduction of the mentorship scheme is an outcome of such thinking. The mentorship scheme aims to develop a friendly atmosphere and provide a support system for newly enrolled students.

Organizational structure: SMP is coordinated by senior students who act as mentors. There are two coordinators and one associate coordinator. Students in the Counseling and Training Cabinet (CaT Cabinet) organize training sessions for mentors and mentees. They are also responsible for preparing Freshmen Handbooks and handbooks for mentors of DAMP, ISMP and ARP every year.

Financing: The scheme is fully funded by IIT Bombay.

BANDHU is a self-help website for students. It was launched in 2020. BANDHU is funded by Alumni of IIT B.. The BANDHU website provides self-help modules and talks on various topics such as time management. Alumni testimonies are also provided. Support from BANDHU is available anytime, that is, 24X7. service is provided online to needy students through BANDHU.

Highlights: The SMP website provides all necessary information regarding preparation to travel to campus and settle down at IIT. Information includes weather conditions, hostel allotment, purchase of necessary personal stuff, and arts and sports facilities on the campus. The announcement section on the website provides formal notices and officer orders that are relevant for students.

Challenges: One of the challenges is training mentors on how to provide mentoring support.

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Inclusivity: All first-year students are included in the mentorship scheme

Potential for scaling up and replication: This scheme can be scaled up by increasing the number of mentors. Therefore, the mentor-mentee ratio can be reduced. Adequate attention may be paid to ensure that selected mentors reflect student diversity on campus.

The idea of mentorship can be replicated in other institutions within India and abroad. Structured training for mentors and an effective mechanism for overseeing the mentorship can enhance the quality of mentoring. A survey can be carried out among the mentees periodically to understand the effectiveness and identify areas where improvement is needed.

SC-ST cell is planning to start a mentorship scheme among the students. Senior students belonging to the SC and the ST group will be imparted training to provide mentoring support to newly joined SC and ST students. The aim is to provide social and academic support to first-year students to successfully navigate academically and benefit from higher education opportunities. The scheme is in the advanced stage of planning.

Student Wellness Cell (SWC)

Objectives: SWC provides counseling services to students to equip them to overcome various challenges they may face during their stay on the IIT campus. Challenges include social, emotional and academic adjustments.

Modus Operandi: Details of the aims and services provided by the SWC are provided on the website. https://www.iitb.ac.in/swc/en/contact-us. Profiles of each counselor are also provided. Students can make an appointment by logging into the SWC platform. All students of the institute are eligible to seek counseling services from SWC. Apart from students who voluntarily seek support, SWC reaches out to vulnerable students through a survey. SWC engages with other cells, such as Gender Cell and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC-ST Cell), and takes part in institutional activities targeting students' mental health and well-being. The SC-ST cell is a mandatory cell to be constituted in colleges and universities. They oversee the implementation of affirmative action policies in student admission and provide academic and nonacademic support to students from SCs and STs.

Origin: IIT B set up a counseling care center (CCC) nearly three decades ago. The primary aim was to provide counseling support to needy students. Earlier, counsellors visited each hostel to provide their service regularly. It was later felt that counseling has a negative connotation among the student body, and the terminology would prevent students from approaching the counsellors. To facilitate students to avail themselves of counseling services, CCE was renamed the Student Wellness Centre in 2015. SWC is currently located on the third floor of the main building.

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Organizational Structure: There are six full-time counsellors in SWC. Out of six counsellors, four are permanent employees of IIT B. Two are working on a contract. In addition to six regular full-time counsellors, there are two part-time counsellors. SWC works in collaboration with doctors of psychiatry in IIT hospitals. The senior counsellor is the in-charge of SWC. She directly reports to the Dean of Student Affairs. There is a provision for a monthly meeting of SWC with the Dean of Student Affairs. The Cell has two office staff members for managing office and counseling appointments. SWC is fully funded by IIT B.

Highlights: In addition to counseling, SWC organizes workshops and events on mental health. It includes sessions on managing stress and relationships, to list a few. SWC is also part of other flagship student support programmes, such as Institute Student Mentorship (ISM) and the Department Academic Mentorship Programme (DAMP). SWC conducts a training programme for mentors of ISM and DAMP.

Challenges: One of the significant challenges is the availability of an adequate number of counsellors at a time when the demand for counseling is high. It should be noted that the counsellors are unable to follow up and cover all students who have been identified through the survey with mild and moderate levels of mental distress and emotional disturbance. There is immense scope for evidence-based interventions to strengthen the service. Active collaboration with experts on student issues is required for this to happen. It is felt that the availability of faculty members from disciplines such as psychology and sociology is not adequately tapped to bring in research expertise in the functioning of the cell. During the pandemic, SWC continued their activities. As the institute was closed and students were in their homes, SWC relied on video conferencing and call-based counseling services to reach out to needy students. Interactions with students suggest that counseling through online mode could not reach to all.

Inclusivity: To reach out to all categories of students undergoing psychological stress and emotional disturbances, SWC has been conducting an annual mental health survey among undergraduate students since 2017. The survey classifies students into four categories: red, yellow, orange and green. Red indicates severe mental problems. Green indicates that the mental health of the student is satisfactory. Yellow and orange, in descending order, indicate less severe mental health problems. The SWC immediately contacts students who are categorized as red.

Benefits: As informed by the in-charge of the SWC, students greatly appreciate counseling support. A massive jump in the number of students availing services indicates the perceived benefits of the SWC service. While 310 students sought services in 2020-21, the number increased to 626 in 2021-22. It also indicates how COVID-19 has impacted the mental health of students.

Suggestions to Improve: With the available strength and capacity, SWC heavily emphasizes the curative dimension in their intervention. The approach followed both in the case of those who voluntarily come forward to seek support from the cell, and those who are identified through mental health surveys is curative.

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SWC can explore increasing preventive action such as capacity building and training for students to remain mentally fit.

Potential for Scaling up and Replication

There is enormous potential for scaling up the activities of the cell. SWC is integrated into the institutional plan. The capacity of the cell has expanded over some time. Considering the growing student strengths and post-pandemic scenario, the scope for scaling up the initiative on the campus is immense. The SWC model has the potential to be replicated in other higher education institutions in India. Facilitating conditions would include a recognition of students needing support during their transition from adolescence to adulthood and from learner to productive person, especially in an institutional context of higher education. The concept of student wellness covering counseling services for students has the potential to be replicated in other institutions in India and other country contexts.

Academic Rehabilitation Programme (ARP)

Objectives: ARP is an initiative to support students who accumulate academic backlog. ARP addresses language challenges, transition and retention of students. It is a system for reducing the academic load of students. ARP includes provision for counseling services and opportunities for developing English language competencies so that students can progress without any cumulative academic arrears. ARP students are allowed to register for the regular course based on the evaluation of the students in the semester.

Mode of Operandi: On average, students must earn 30-35 academic credits per semester. If anyone has a backlog of 36 credits, they automatically move to ARP. Students will then undergo an English proficiency test and counseling service. Needy students are provided English language sessions to improve their written and verbal communication skills. ARP students would undergo counseling sessions. Counseling sessions aim to address psychosocial challenges that hinder students' academic performance. Each academic department has an ARP coordinator. The ARP coordinator, a faculty member in the academic unit, provides one-on-one advice to students on choosing courses and developing a study plan. The coordinator monitors the overall progress of the students in the semester. It is envisaged that during the initial week, students meet the ARP coordinator once a week and later on at intervals of mutually agreed time. One hundred percent attendance is mandatory for all the courses in which students are enrolled during the ARP. Students must submit evidence of full attendance to the ARP Committee at the end of the semester.

Application Software Centre and the academic unit interact with each other to identify those students needing support. Once a student is included in ARP, the communication is automatically sent to the parent(s)/guardian(s), the hostel

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warden, the faculty advisor(s) in the student's department and the head of the department, with the information that the concerned student is placed in the program due to poor academic performance.

Rationale

Considering the diversity of academic exposure and experience that students bring to the campus, some students, particularly those from equity target groups, may face challenges in coping with the academic workload of the initial semesters. It may lead to cumulative academic arrears, compelling students to withdraw from the study programme. ARP interventions aim to provide individualized attention and care for students to overcome academic setbacks. This is achieved by reducing academic workload, providing academic support, and offering counseling services.

ARP has been in existence for many years. Those who fail to earn the required credits are in a vulnerable situation, as in the following semester, the academic workload will be even higher. An increase in workload further leads to more failure and deterioration of academic confidence. To help students overcome this cumulative deprivation, IIT introduced ARP.

Organizational Structure: The Academic Rehabilitation Program Committee (ARPC) coordinates the ARP. A Professor is the coordinator of ARP at the institute level. Each department has one faculty coordinator for ARP. The institute appoints ARP coordinators at the institute and academic unit levels. ARP follows a systemic approach by involving various stakeholders and institutional structures.

Financing: ARP does not involve any direct financial expenses.

Inclusivity ARP is not a targeted intervention focusing on any of the equity groups. Any student who fails to perform well in a semester is automatically moved to ARP. Since moving to ARP is based on academic performance, no one is excluded from the initiative.

Compulsory Course on Gender Awareness[2]

Objectives: The compulsory course on gender awareness is an online training program addressing gender discrimination and sexual harassment. It was developed by the Gender Cell, IIT Bombay, for students, staff and faculty of the institute. It aims to sensitize students and employees to broader gender discrimination and inequality issues and promote gender amity among members of the institute. The compulsory course on gender awareness is the first of its kind in the country.

Modus Operandi: Every student needs to complete this course. Pass is compulsory for the award of a degree. The duration of the course video is over an hour. Students must answer the question to navigate further and complete

2 While a limited attempt has been made to assess the impact of this initiative, women students who have taken the courses appreciate the content and pedagogy.

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the tests. It ensures that students understand gender equity, the provisions of the Internal Complaint Committee (ICC), and the procedure to be followed for seeking remedies through the ICC.

Rationale: Gender awareness and sensitization, including awareness about the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (SHWW) 2013, is mandatory. IIT B has been conducting in-person sensitization for several years. However, the whole IITB community has not been covered due to the large numbers. Hence, it was felt that an online training program was necessary to promote awareness about gender equity and develop equitable campus culture.

Gender Cell took the lead in developing this online module. The first challenge was to produce a script and tailor it to the needs of higher education institutions such as IIT. The module has been produced in-house, including its script, visuals, shooting, direction, editing, etc. The module is prepared based on legal research and the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace (particularly across educational institutions) worldwide. The module included a unit on policy and how the Internal Complaint Committee works. The module has hypothetical examples to show what sexual harassment is, how to recognize it, how the institute deals with it, and whom to contact in case of a complaint.

Financing: Modules were developed with funding support from IITB.

Highlights: As the course unfolds, the learner understands that there are systemic issues of gender discrimination, power and patriarchy that play a role in sexual harassment in the workplace, and these are a product of the society that we live in. It is essential to understand this social and cultural context to bring about a change in attitudes and tackle sexual harassment seriously. Gender-based behaviors need to be acknowledged and addressed to achieve the goals of a safe, equal and thriving campus for all. Hence, the course is called 'Gender in the Workplace'. This course shows how the institute exercises its responsibility to promote gender equity on campus. The assumption is that gender equity issues must be addressed collectively with each individual having an important role toward achieving the objective of realizing gender equity.

Inclusivity: Since it is a mandatory non-credit course, all are included in the scheme. Another module for employees as a part of this initiative. is being finalized.

Challenges: The main challenge faced by this initiative was to develop a script, visuals and hypothetical situations to which the student and employee community of an institute of higher learning such as IIT could relate. Furthermore, the challenge was communicating ideas about patriarchy or discrimination in understandable ways. Since it is online, it needed to be interesting for the learner to retain his/her attention and enthusiasm to proceed with the training program. This increased the workload of preparing the module. Currently, students can complete the course before the completion of the study programme. Some opinioned that it would be more beneficial if students were mandated to complete the course in their initial years.

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Benefits: The responses and feedback from students on this course are very positive. For example, after completing the course, students feel that it has opened their minds, and they have found new ways of looking at issues of gender equity.

Potential for Scaling up and Replication: The idea of compulsory noncredit courses has excellent potential for scaling up. The same model can be replicated for addressing other forms of inequities regarding class, caste, and linguistic differences. It was informed that Gender Cell would make the module available for public consumption. It is envisaged that any institution planning to offer an awareness programme on gender equity can access the modules. Currently, the module targets the student body only. Efforts are in progress to develop a similar module for staff members of the institute.

The course and inclusion of the course as a compulsory one has the potential to be replicated across the country and other country contexts.

Concluding Comments

IIT Bombay strictly follows the equity policies of the government of India. It is reflected in the student's intake in various U.G. and P.G. programmes. Four major initiatives are in addition to the mandatory equity interventions as per the rules and regulations. Once joined, students may face various academic, social, emotional and financial challenges. IIT B duly acknowledges this. Institutional interventions described in the case study thus aim to address the rounded development of students by providing an adequate support system for equity groups. The interventions are fully embedded in the institutional fabric. Some of the initiatives launched have greater scope for replication in other higher education institutions. However, evidence-based insights may be necessary to develop targeted interventions addressing specific challenges of equity groups.

The role of the Student Mentorship Programme (SMP) is vital here. SMP includes the Institute Student Mentor Programme (ISMP) and Department Academic Mentor Programme (D-AMP). They aim to facilitate positive student interaction and peer support for students. SMP thus facilitates the smooth introduction of new students into the system and provides support for developing capacities to live in an academic community.

Student mentors can provide crucial support for first-year students. However, there are adjustment issues that demand attention from trained people. Students' wellness cell addresses psychological or emotional challenges faced by the student community. The SWC thus supports students to fully use academic and sociocultural opportunities provided by higher education and navigate to formulate and achieve their aspirations. Every institution must have facilities for providing professional counseling support to needy students.

The Academic Rehabilitation Programme provides additional support to those who fail to earn the required credits. The ARP is fully integrated into

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institutional activities. Each academic unit holds hands to extend support to needy students. The ARP addresses academic challenges faced by students.

Cells such as Gender Cell and ST-ST Cell have come forward with innovative interventions to promote equity. The development of a course on gender awareness is one such critical intervention. Since it is a compulsory course, all students are covered in this awareness development process. Apart from regular activities, such as coordinating scholarships for SC-ST students, the SC-ST Cell regularly organizes events such as talks on caste and discrimination. Mentorship schemes launched by the SC-ST Cell also aim to foster the rounded development of students from deprived groups.

SMP, SWC and ARP address various challenges faced by the student body. However, a systematic effort is not adequate to understand the efficacy of such initiatives. There is immense scope to design studies and indicators to assess the efficacy of equity interventions. Moreover, the lack of efforts to acknowledge the complementarity and interlinkages of equity initiatives is an issue to be addressed. It also indicates the need for a strong institutional perspective on equity. Recently, a course on gender awareness was extended to faculty and staff. It is a good indicator of concerted efforts to achieve the equity goal. Discussions are also progressing to launch a course on "caste" similar to "gender awareness".

In conclusion, the institutional initiatives of IITB aim to promote equity and inclusion on campus. Since IIT Bombay is a premier institute in the country, institutional equity interventions can act as a model for other institutions. The four equity interventions discussed aim to address the student body's emotional, social, and academic challenges. All schemes can be scaled up, strengthen the targeting, and be more effective. These schemes have tremendous potential to be replicated in other institutions within India and abroad. However, IIT Bombay may explore how periodic evaluation can help to fine-tune interventions. A systematic and periodic assessment of the effectiveness of such initiatives would further help IIT Bombay strengthen those activities aiming to develop an inclusive campus.

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7.3 Equity Policies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

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Name of the Institution

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Weblink

https://www.jnu.ac.in/node

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Selected members of the university community comprising students, teachers and administrative officials. Interviews and discussion and published reports were the main sources of information.

Type of initiatives

The type of initiatives discussed include deprivation points in admission, linguistic support, and specific committees like Equal Opportunity Office, Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GS-CASH) (replaced by Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) and Student Faculty Committee (SFC).

Introduction

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) was established in 1966 in New Delhi. It is a premier research university funded by the Union (federal) government. It is ranked as the second-best university in India according to the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF, 2022). JNU primarily offers interdisciplinary programmes at the postgraduate and doctoral levels. JNU is structured into 14 schools and 22 centers (JNU, 2021) associated with schools offering an extremely wide range of study programmes across 79 disciplines (JNU, 2018). JNU enrolls approximately 1117 at the undergraduate level, 3500 students at the postgraduate level and close to 4232 students at the doctoral level (NIRF, 2022).

Institutions such as JNU have been exemplary in giving space to the students and their thinking processes, having *scientific socialism* as its core motto. The then administration headed by Prof G Parthasarthy as Vice Chancellor and Prof Moonis Raza as Rector worked toward making JNU a 'different' institution with strong foundations in equity and diversity. The admission policies provided

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opportunities for ensuring access to students from underprivileged and disadvantaged groups.

Since then, the university has developed platforms where students participate in its functioning. The sense of ownership and belonging to the institutions has been strong and nurtures camaraderie among students and across the other members of the university family—teachers and nonteaching officials and the staff in the academic as well as residential spaces. Students, teachers and *karamcharis* – officials of all ranks – have interacted on issues of common interest and expressed solidarity in others' matters. It has ensured a gender-sensitive and socially conscious safe environment.

The university aims to promote knowledge and understanding by teaching and research and to strengthen national integration, social justice, secularism, democratic way of life, international understanding and a scientific approach to the problems of society. The uniqueness of JNU is evident from its basic philosophy, policies and programmes to generate a distinct national resource base in higher education. The University thus has been concentrating on programmes that are of relevance to national progress and development. The university, therefore, has taken the following initiatives (AR 2020-21):

- Promote ideas of national integration, secularism, scientific outlook, cosmopolitan and humanistic approach toward life.
- Students and faculty should be drawn from all over the country to ensure the national character of the university.
- An interdisciplinary approach to teaching and research is mandated in the programmes offered by the university. The research programmes included integrated MPhil/PhD until the 2019-2020 academic year. From the following academic year, MPhil and PhD programmes were disintegrated, and from the following year, MPhil programmes were discontinued. Graduate (MA, MSc, MTech, MPH) and undergraduate programmes (BA Hons) are continuing.
- A system of academic decisions, such as the courses to be taught, their content and the methods of evaluation, are taken by the teachers themselves.
- In accordance with the policy of the Government of India, the University provides reservations in students' admissions.
- There are provisions for merit-cum-means scholarships/fellowships for students. Both students and teachers and officials are provided with financial support to undertake field trips in connection with their research and training both within the country and abroad.
- Participation in exchange programmes with universities/institutes of repute, abroad and within the country is encouraged to promote international understanding. The university has signed the Memoranda of Understanding with a large number of foreign and Indian universities and institutions.

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Students' Demographics

The student strength of the university has ranged from 8000-9000 in the last 5-6 years. Female students were outnumbered by male students during the academic year 2017-18, when fewer women (3927) than men (4155) were registered as students in the last 7-8 years. It is noteworthy that the number of students decreased between 2014-15 and 2017-18, which is also the time period when the UGC Regulation 2016 (UGC, 2016) was enforced (Table 1). The UGC 2016 regulations require the Universities to make the entrance test the main qualifying criteria for admission to these programmes, in turn negatively impacting the equity initiative of 'deprivation points' in admission implemented by JNU. There were fewer women, students from marginalized groups, such as the scheduled castes (SCs) and the scheduled tribes (STs), and physically challenged students who were registered in 2017-18 compared to 2014-15. In sharp contrast, an increase was recorded among male students and those from other backward classes (OBCs). Additionally, evident is the reduction in the students joining for research programmes. Their number decreased from 4990 in 2014-15 to 4594 in 2017-18 to 4403 (lowest) in 2020-21.

Table 1- Demographic Characteristics of the Students at Jawaharlal Nehru University

Characteristics	2014-15	2017-18	2020-21
GENDER			
Women	4197	3927	4991
Men	4111	4155	4083
Total	8308	8082	9074
Sex Ratio [men/100 women]	98	106	82
SOCIAL			
Scheduled Caste	1201	1171	1365
Scheduled Tribe	643	611	690
OBC	2434	2577	3026
Physically Challenged	219	203	346
Others	3480	3192	3495
Foreign Nationals	331	328	153
Programme of Study [Currently Enrolled]			

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Characteristics	2014-15	2017-18	2020-21
Research	4990	4594	4403
(MPhil/PhD/MTech, PhD/Direct PhD			
Graduate MA/MSc/MCA	2050	2291	3001
Undergraduate BA Hons	1115	1053	1436
Part time Undergraduate Level	153	144	234
Completed/awarded			
Graduates	224	264	281
MPhil	611	613	48
PhD	623	622	716

Source- JNU Annual Report 2014-15 P3; 2017-18 P3; 2020-21 P 4

Description of the Equity Initiatives

National Equity Policy: Reservation of Seats (Quota System)

JNU follows the nationally mandated quota system. Accordingly, 27% of seats are reserved for the Other Backward Classes (OBC), 15% of seats are reserved for the scheduled castes (SCs), 7.5% of seats are reserved for the scheduled tribes (STs) and 5% of seats are reserved for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Furthermore, 10% of seats are also reserved for persons belonging to the economically weaker sections (EWS) who are not covered under the scheme of reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs (JNU, 2022).

During the 2020-21 academic year, the statutory requirement of 22.5% reservation for SC and ST candidates (15% SC and 7.5% ST) was short by 2.57%. Only 19.93% of candidates (13.21% Scheduled Castes and 6.72% Scheduled Tribes) belonging to these categories joined the university. In contrast to the requirement of 5% reservations for PWD candidates, however, 5.27% of candidates joined the university. As opposed to the reservation of 27% for OBC candidates, only 24.82% of OBC candidates joined the university. For the 10% of EWS candidates, the shortfall was minimal (0.4%), as 9.96% of EWS candidates joined the university. It is noteworthy that the number of candidates from reserved categories who were selected on their own merit and joined the university is as follows:

- Scheduled Castes [SC] = 56
- Scheduled Tribes [ST]= 25
- People with Disability [PWD] = 19 ST

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- Other Backward Classes [OBC] = 288
- Economically Weaker Sections [EWS] = 129

However, approximately a decade and a half ago (2004-05), against the statutory requirement of 22.5% reservation for SC and ST (15% SC and 7.5% ST), 23.73% of candidates (15.50% in SC category and 8.23% in ST category) belonging to these categories joined the university. A total of 249 OBC candidates (i.e., approximately 18.3%) were selected for admission to various programmes of study. It is noteworthy that a total of 369 candidates (i.e., 29.10%) belonging to OBCs and those who hailed from backward districts were the beneficiaries of deprivation points as opposed to 415 during 2003-2004. Regarding the benefits to the economically deprived, of the total 1373 candidates, 556 (40.50%) came from the lower- and middle-income groups whose parents' income was less than Rs. 6000/- per month and 817 (59.50%) from the higher income group with an income over Rs. 6000/- per month (Annual Report 2004-05) (JNU, 2004).

Scholarships

The university institutes a number of scholarships/fellowships for students in addition to those offered by various government and nongovernment agencies. This is largely to cover those students who do not secure financial support from such agencies in the form of scholarships/fellowships and come from humble backgrounds with economic hardships. There are scholarships/fellowships available to the meritorious students offered by other institutions such as the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR), Council for Scientific and Industrial research (CSIR) ASPIRE, NIPPON, and Commonwealth Fellowships. The university is residential and therefore provides a hostel to all students using certain priority criteria based on the distance between the university and the place of domicile.

A system has evolved whereby main academic decisions, such as the courses to be taught, their content and the methods of evaluation, are taken by the teachers themselves. Admissions are made entirely on merit through an open all-India Entrance Examination. In accordance with the policy of the Government of India, the University provides reservations in students' admissions. There is provision for merit-cum-means scholarships/fellowships. Students as well as faculty members are provided with financial support to undertake field trips in connection with their research both within the country and abroad. Participation in exchange programmes with universities/institutes abroad is encouraged to promote international understanding. The university has signed the Memoranda of Understanding with a large number of foreign universities and institutions (Annual Report 2020-21).

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Institutional Level Initiative

JNU envisaged social parity as an important ingredient for this and therefore introduced many initiatives toward materializing it. It introduced special eligibility criteria that ensured support to students disadvantaged in terms of regional variation, gender disparities, social origin, linguistic skills and finances. By providing institutional scholarships and fellowships and giving deprivation points for admission to girls, to the domicile of backward regions and to those financially deprived, JNU set an example for other institutions of higher education. These instruments for ensuring scientific socialism are unique in many ways and need to continue and be emulated by other institutions. Employing the rigor to examine, understand and measure the social, economic and psychological status consequent of historical deprivation and exploring the way forward has paved the way to engage with equity beyond equality in the process of imparting education. This explains 'Scientific Socialism' and its association with the equity policies formulated and implemented by the university. This is especially in light of the NEP, which aims to facilitate an inclusive, participatory, and holistic approach to education and make *"India a global knowledge superpower"*. In this very context, sensitivity toward social disparities that block the equity process is important and was recognized and reflected in the liberal policies of the university until approximately 2016-17.

Deprivation Points for Disadvantaged Groups

In its liberal outlook and concern toward the underprivileged, sensitivity toward disparities-social and regional; and the mandate *'to strengthen national integration, social justice, secularism, democratic way of life'*, the founding members of JNU fraternity laid down its vision that allowed formulating initial policies beyond the national affirmative action policies. The ***Deprivation Points Model*** has been the most unique feature of the admission policy of JNU, which has facilitated the entry of students from disadvantaged groups and women. There are four categories of deprivation points used. A student can enjoy a maximum of 10 points under this model with which they fall in multiple categories of deprivation points.

1. **Deprivation points based on development disparities**

The deprivation points system was first introduced in 1973 with the objective of making the university more inclusive by creating an enabling environment for students from diverse backgrounds to enter its programs. However, the model was reportedly withdrawn in 1984 but restored in the following academic year. Taking cognizance of regional disparities, JNU evolved this unique way to incentivize aspiring students with regional and social backwardness. The Centre for the Study of Regional Development, situated in the School of Social Sciences, was instrumental in developing

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the deprivation points by dividing the districts into quartiles based on the regionalization of the country on selected development indicators. This was undertaken on the behest of the first Rector, Prof Moonis Raza, who was also a professor in this center. Students hailing from the districts falling in Quartile 1 are least developed and fetch five points, while those falling in Quartile 2 fetch three points.

2. **Deprivation points based on Kashmiri migrant status**

All Kashmiri Migrants are eligible for 5 Points to bring parity between students from vulnerable (due to migration) and non-vulnerable groups.

3. **Deprivation points based on Defense Categories**

Defense categories as follows are eligible for 5 points. Widows/Wards of Defense personnel killed in action; Wards of Serving personnel and ex-servicemen disabled in action; Widows/Wards of Defense personnel who died in peace time with death attributable to military service; and Wards of Defense personnel disabled in peace time with disability attributable to military service.

4. **Deprivation points based on gender**

All girl/woman candidates are eligible for five deprivation points in recognition of the vulnerabilities of the girls and the patriarchal system, which puts women and girls in disadvantaged positions and denies them equal opportunities for access to education.

Deprivation points based on gender were introduced in 1994. Female candidates were given 5 points. Apart from that, if they also belonged to backward areas listed by JNU under Quartile 1 (demarcation of backward areas) and Quartile 2 categories, they received the additional privilege of 5 and 3 marks, respectively. However, after the High Court's order to follow the 2016 UGC guidelines without any deviation, JNU abandoned the deprivation points system for admissions in MPhil and PhD programmes in 2017. 'The Standing Committee for admissions took the decision to modify the policy after deliberating upon all factors' (A senior university official, as cited by Livemint, 2017). The reason given for this modification was that girls were getting a 'disproportionate' advantage, and more competent male candidates were being left out. Due to this policy, the girls could get a relaxation of 10 marks due to deprivation points' (interview with JNU officials: IDIO1; IDIO2).

Women and transgender candidates from the areas in JNU's list of backward areas are entitled to the relaxation of four marks. Women and transgenders not belonging to any backward areas can get relaxation of only two points," (JNU official as cited in India Today, We Desk April 16, 2016). Although a total of

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20 deprivation points can be accrued, there is a capping of 10 points maximum that can be earned by any single individual. Since 2017, however, this model has been replaced by the 2016 UGC guidelines, which have suggested that the entrance test should be the only qualifying criterion for these programmes. It proposed an entrance test as the qualifying round followed by the viva voce of 100% weightage for admission into the research programmes – M.Phil. and the PhD. Despite the testimonies from the students across the schools and centers of the university who have benefited from this affirmative action policy, what could be retained is the 80:20 ratio of written entrance test and viva voce examination, respectively.

In 2018, the university modified its regulation to reintroduce a 70% weightage to the entrance tests and a 30% weightage to the viva-voce. This was necessary for the university to ensure access to the disadvantaged and marginalized candidates. However, his modification could not salvage much in terms of the students from marginalized communities aspiring to study in JNU for their research programmes. The research programs were divided into two streams. One by qualifying the JNU Entrance Examination and the other by qualifying the UGC JRF. It is noteworthy that less than one percent of the candidates taking the JRF examination are awarded the fellowship. In 2019, 60,147 qualified for 'Eligibility for Assistant Professor only' (NET), and only 5,092 qualified for JRF, that is, fellowship and are eligible for Assistant Professorship. The pass percentage of UGC NET exams is low because of the stringent qualification criteria (Singh, 2019). Additionally, it is difficult for students from marginalized groups to possess resources that enable success in such examinations. Thus, as evident from Table 2, there is a huge gap between the intake and the seat offered both for the candidates who have qualified for the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) examination and those who have not (non-JRF). However, the gap is considerable in the case of JRF seats. From less than a quarter to less than half the seats are taken by students with JRF compared to nearly 30 percent to more than 77 percent in non-JRF seats from 2017 to 2019.

Table 2 - Reserved seats for the research programmes

Year	Non JRF Seats		JRF Seats	
	Intake	**Offered**	**Intake**	**Offered**
2017	94	26 (27.6%)	28	6 (21.4%)
2019	406	313 (77.1%)	95	43 (45.2%)

Source- Kidwai, 2021 Table 2

In addition to the Deprivation Points Model, JNU is also unique because of some of its other parity instruments in the form of various committees that have ensured a conducive environment of learning (including unlearning) and teaching. Some of the committees are as follows:

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Student Faculty Committee [SFC]

The Student Faculty Committee is a unique platform provided under the ordinances of the university in each center of various schools. It comprises equal numbers of faculty members (course advisors for each year) and student members (one from each year). The students are elected as members of the committee. The elections to this committee are usually held in September-October in a regular academic year. The committee is responsible for discussing matters pertaining to the academic work of the center except:

a. Faculty positions, recruitment, conditions of service and academic freedom, and
b. Actual processes of evaluating the academic performance and merit of students.

Matters of general relevance are discussed in special meetings of all concerned students and faculty members of the center. The objective of the committee is to create a forum for dialog between the students and faculty on matters of academic relevance.

Equal Opportunity Office

Mandated by the UGC, this is a body that ensures that students who are excluded due to any form of discrimination caste, ethnicity, minority status, being differently abled all are addressed. Remuneration of volunteers to conduct linguistic empowerment programmes, travel grants, training, workshops, etc., are organized under its aegis. Not all institutions have such a unit, which is necessary for creating a conducive environment for the students of all hues.

The Equal Opportunity Office (EOO) was established under the 11th Five Year Plan, when Sukhadeo Thorat was the chairperson of the University Grants Commission. The core idea was to ensure inclusion in education with schemes such as remedial coaching, hostel facilities and special fellowships for students from SC, ST, OBC and minority backgrounds, persons with disabilities, women, and other marginalized sections of society. All universities were supposed to set up EOOs to bring these schemes under one umbrella for effective implementation. Under the 12th Five Year Plan, Equal Opportunity Centers [EOCs] were planned to be established in institutions of higher education (Guidelines for Equal Opportunity Centers, UGC, 12th Plan 2012-17). The objective of this initiative was to oversee the effective implementation of policies and programmes for disadvantaged groups, to provide guidance and counseling with respect to academic, financial, social and other matters and to enhance the diversity within the campus. The EOCs were envisioned to ensure equity and equal opportunity to the community in the institutions of higher education. The purpose was to bring about social inclusion and eliminate discrimination by creating a socially congenial atmosphere for academic

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interaction and for healthy interpersonal relationships among students from various social backgrounds.

These centers also make efforts to sensitize the academic community regarding the problems associated with social exclusion as well as the aspirations of marginalized communities. JNU engaged with these initiatives even before the 11th and 12th Five Year Plans (Planning Commission, 2013) mandated EOOs/EOCs, given its principles of *'… national integration, social justice, secularism, democratic way of life, international understanding and scientific approach to the problems of society'* (JNUa, *n.d.*) *(https://www.jnu.ac.in/sites/default/files/6.pdf). 'The Jawaharlal Nehru University is the first University in the country to formalize it following the objective of inclusive growth vested in the 11th Five Year Plan (Planning Commission, 2008)'.* It was set up *to aid and advise students belonging to marginalized sections, including scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward communities, minority communities, persons with disabilities, etc., pursuing various programs of study at the University* (JNU b, *n.d.*) (https://www.jnu.ac.in/eoo). Under this initiative, logistics support such as lifts, ramps, toilets, wheelchairs, sticks for visually challenged, and financial support for attending academic activities abroad are vested.

Linguistic Empowerment Cell (LEC) English as an Additional Language (EAL)

JNU is known to get students from varied social and economic backgrounds, with equally varied English language capacity. Amidst linguistic plurality, it may be argued that knowing '*others'* language (or other languages) is important, but mentoring in English has been singled out for specific reasons. The language of instruction is English, and most of the reading material is also available in English across disciplines, except for literature in specific languages. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the institutions to train and nurture the skill for enabling stress-free reading and comprehension of the text, as well as interpersonal expressions on varied platforms of the educational institutions. In a linguistically diverse campus such as JNU, English has played a vital role in communication. To inculcate parity in terms of reading, writing and comprehension of the English language, proficiency in the English language has been envisaged as a capacity-building exercise that feeds into the smooth execution of academic activities. For this purpose, remedial classes have been organized for students who face difficulty in dealing with study material and classroom interactions in the English language. Such initiatives have also infused confidence in the students. Many of them, despite having performed well in their respective universities where they studied in their respective vernacular languages, faced difficulty in understanding classroom lectures and readings of their courses. *"…it was very depressing for me to not be able to understand what the teacher was teaching… even the readings were tough to understand. My batchmates who had studied in English medium school too had difficulty comprehending some of the readings. Me with my hindi medium education… felt like leaving the university… could not do that… parents had a lot of hopes pinned on me…'* (Interview with Student F1SSS). Similar expressions

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were also evident from others (Interviews with students: F4SL; M2SSS; M3SIS; M1SCSS; F2 SES, F3SIS).

The Remedial Classes organized by the university support students from different backgrounds through the Equal Opportunities Office and the Centre for English, School of Languages and Cultural Studies, by offering opportunities for acquiring skills in reading, writing, and speaking English. Additionally, the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, provides support through the English as an Additional Language Programme, run with the help of faculty and student volunteers. Other centers, such as the Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, also offer tutorials for reading and comprehending Public Health literature (Medical and Social Sciences) published in English. This programme is also run with the help of student volunteers. Such programmes include regular meetings and discussions. Students are encouraged to express themselves verbally and in writing, and concepts and readings are discussed to bring in clarity of understanding. There are occasional lectures and provisions for mentoring and other modes of support.

Gender Sensitization Committee against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH)

The university formed a committee for ensuring an environment that is free from sexual harassment. Following the guidelines on the prevention and deterrence of sexual harassment in the workplace laid down by the Supreme Court of India in its 13 August 1997 judgment on the Writ Petition (Criminal) Vishaka vs. State of Rajasthan, a Working Group on Sexual Harassment was constituted on 5 September 1997. The Karuna Chanana Working Group report was submitted in October 1997 (JNU-GSCASH Archives, 1997). It proposed the formation of the GSCASH on the campus. Subsequently, the Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH) was established in 1999. The university resolved to provide a place of work and study free of sexual harassment, intimidation, or exploitation. All students, faculty, staff, *karamcharis* and officials were to treat one another and visitors to the university with respect. All members of the university community, including those in temporary or short-term positions, were subject to this policy. Anyone violating this policy was subject to disciplinary action. Reports of sexual harassment were taken seriously and dealt with promptly.

While intense interaction among students and between students and faculty is part of the vibrant world of the center, faculty, students, and administrative staff are sensitized to the need to ensure that such interaction takes place in situations where everyone feels safe and secure. Institutionally, at the level of the university, the Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH) offers support to prevent, investigate, and if necessary, recommend punitive action against perpetrators of sexual harassment. The committee comprised students and faculty members, officers and staff members to support its activities and programmes in a variety of ways. This committee became a

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model for other institutions. However, the Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH) was replaced by the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) by the administration in 2017. In its 269th Executive Council meeting held on September 18, the administration dissolved GSCASH, which has been a model for many universities in India and Bangladesh since its inception in 1999.

There have been various modifications to GSCASH, the recent one being the Saksham Committee Guidelines by the *University Grants Commission* (UGC) in 2013 (Outlook Web Bureau, 2017). Members of the UGC-appointed 'Saksham Taskforce' for ensuring gender sensitization in universities have questioned Jawaharlal Nehru University's decision to disband the Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH). *"Our report made it clear that our proposals for the composition of Anti-Sexual Harassment committees were intended for campuses where ICCs were not in existence or were not Vishakha – Compliant- they were never intended to replace or supersede committees like those of JNU's GSCASH which we had found to be fully Vishakha-compliant*" (SAKSHAM Committee Members as cited in Boda, 2018). The reason for replacing GSCASH with ICC offered by the administration was that the former was against UGC 2015 regulations (UGC, 2015). This, however, appears to be contradictory, as the guidelines proposed by the SAKSHAM Taskforce were based on the gender sensitization committee's recommendations. The taskforce recommended a GSCASH-like structure in institutions where there was no such body existing, but JNU misinterpreted it to replace it with ICC as an anointed, not elected, body, overlooking the Taskforce suggestion. The members of the Task Force questioned the varsity's decision in making the ICC a nominated body (Boda, 2018).

Along the lines of GS CASH, there is a need to constitute bodies to address the grievances pertaining to other forms of harassment. For instance, similar guidelines can be prepared and instituted to be displayed as the ICC (or GS CASH). To deter exclusion and discrimination due to caste identity, regional or ethnic identity, minority status, disability and alternative sexuality, such a mechanism is important and necessary.

Clause 9B for Re-Registration

Last, but not the least, the university has facilitated doctoral students to deregister, return subsequently and submit their research thesis. Recognizing the support needed to complete the thesis in case of a valid reason requiring more time for submission of research, such an initiative was provided. Initially, the builders of JNU as an institution were aware of gender imbalances, economic inequality, and social disparities. Therefore, the reasons for such a provision emanated from gender sensitivity and recognition of socioeconomic disparities. Female students were likely to be delayed in submission due to marriage and childbearing. Securing a job while doing doctoral research was also seen as a cause of delay. Recognizing that economic compulsions would necessitate

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taking up the job and academic quest will require continuing the pursuit, such a provision was deemed necessary. In recent years, the timeline for returning to re-register for submission has been reduced. Initially, the University had the provision to re-register under Clause 9B, within nine years of deregistering. This was reduced to 'six years' of deregistering. This duration was reduced, and at present, this clause has been replaced with extension after the completion of four years or eight semesters of being registered as a PhD student.

In addition, there are a number of informal platforms that endeavour to create a conducive environment for learning. Student groups for academic learning- Study Circles, post dinner talks and lectures delivered by eminent personalities from all walks of life; and passionate discussions in the vibrant spaces around the eateries on campus contribute as much to the learning process as the classrooms.

Implementation Challenges

The Deprivation Points Policy (DPP) of JNU enabled students from deprived backgrounds and regions to access higher education in a central university of international repute. Institutions that do not have DPP have remained out of reach for most students from underprivileged backgrounds and regions. The biggest challenge faced by the university after the implementation of the new UGC regulations in 2016 is that it has affected the intake of students into the university's programmes. The number of students from families with an annual income below 6,000 decreased from 25.8% in 2016 to 9.8% in 2017-2018. The academic year 2017-18 experienced the lowest intake of students with incomes below INR 12000/-after the UGC regulation 2016 was implemented (Table 3).

Table 3 - Economic background of students enrolled (in percent)

Year	Income Below Rs 6000 pm	Income Below Rs 12000 pm	Income above Rs 12001 pm	Not Specified
2014	24.2	20	55.6	00
2015	23.4	19.4	50.3	6.9
2016	26.6	20.6	53.4	8.9
2017	7.6	12.2	58.0	22.1
2019	22.7	20.5	52.4	4.4

Note- As per the notes on the Factual data on admissions to various programmes of study presented to the JNU Academic Council in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019 (Data for 2018 not available)
Source- Kidwai, 2021. Table 3

The number of students from rural backgrounds also decreased from 48.4% to 28.2% (JNUSU, as cited in Financial Express, 2019). There has also been

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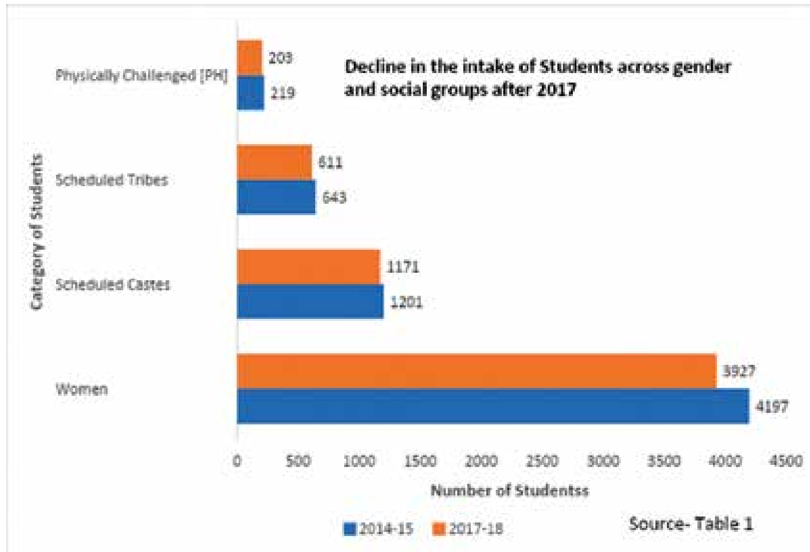
a reduction in the number of students in the university's research programs over the past couple of years, which has led to a loss of regional diversity. (Interviews with FMSS1-3; FM SAA1, FM SCSS1). A similar decline is visible in the students coming from scheduled communities, those who are physically challenged and women (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Decline in the intake of students across gender and social groups after 2017



Challenges to be Addressed

According to the Annual Accounts 2020-21 of the University, a deficit carried to the capital funds was INR 1,46,27,63,973/-. and it was INR 2,36,82,65,112/- for the Financial Year 2019-20 (JNU Accounts 2020-21). It increased from INR 108 crores reported in 2014-15 (JNU Accounts 2014-15) (JNU, 2014). Such a trend seems to suggest that the university has been experiencing systematic neglect. According to the Union Ministry of Education[4], the annual percentage increase in funding was the lowest for JNU among the five central universities—Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jamia Millia Islamia, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Rajiv Gandhi University, and Banaras Hindu University (BHU). The funding for JNU was Rs 336.91 crore in 2014-15 and was raised only marginally to Rs 407.47 crore in 2021-22. However, the funding for BHU has almost doubled from Rs 669.51 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 1,303.01 crore in 2021-22. Rajiv Gandhi University experienced a similar rise in funding over the last seven years—from Rs 39.93 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 102.79 crore in 2021-22 (Agrawal,

4 The Union Ministry of Education on July 18, in response to a question by Congress MP T N Prathapan in the Lok Sabha, informed about the low funding for JNU

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2022). Amidst such a scenario, the present Vice Chancellor received some funds to salvage the deficit now grown to INR 130 crores. "I was able to get Rs 56 crore, we are running at a Rs 130 crore deficit. You can't do this to an institution you rate as number one" (Hon VC JNU Prof SD Pandit, as cited in Agarwal, 2022). The Central Government has directed the university to prepare a budget to reflect on the needs of the university (Agarwal, 2022), giving hope for some support. It is noteworthy that in 2019, the administration of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) raised the hostel fees to meet a deficit of Rs 45 crore but had to roll it back because it went against the basic principles of the inclusive policies professed by the university (Khanna, 2019).

The challenge is to continue the DPP in the present state of resource crunch due to budgetary deficit to garner resources—both financial and human. The shortage of teachers reported in August 2012[5] corresponded to missing positions for 77 professors, 100 associate professors, and 87 assistant professors who were vacant. Five years later[6], the vacancies had increased to 96 professors, 125 associate professors, and 87 assistant professors (Khanna, 2019). Along with the funds, replenishing human resources is needed. Considering that the outcome of the opportunities created due to this policy is enormous, funds need to be allocated and provision of 'borrowing/taking grants' from other budgetary heads and institutional provisions need to be encouraged. There must be a conducive environment for externally sponsored projects and funds for academic activities. Channels for purchase of equipment, etc., has to be viable and institutional overhead cost reasonable.

- UGC Guidelines for admission on the basis of common entrance tests are not the best way to tap the special and unique attributes of different institutions of higher education. Many unique features of the university, such as its admission procedure and institutions such as the Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH) and Equal Opportunity Office, have been impacted negatively. JNU came into being for producing quality research and teaching with an inclusive outlook. 'The admission procedure, deprivation points and progressive institutions like the students' union and GSCASH were evolved so that those students who were excluded from other education systems would somehow make it to JNU and not be left out' (Former JNUSU president and PhD scholar N. Sai Balaji, as cited in Bhan, 2022). By modifying such institutional systems, inclusiveness is being eradicated. In addition, EOO with the potential to materialize an inclusive environment has remained neglected. Few universities have sincerely engaged with setting up an EOO, and JNU is also reeling under the resource crunch.

5 In response to a Rajya Sabha query, a JNU official reported on the vacant positions in the university

6 Responding to the question on the position of vacancies in the Lok Sabha, the university stated that the numbers have increased in last five years.

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Suggestions to Improve the Functioning of the Initiatives and Required Support

Regarding linguistic skill building, while the Linguistic Empowerment Cell (LEC) has a full-fledged unit for the purpose, every center has customized the remedial programme to fit their respective needs. Students are encouraged to participate in the peer learning process by organizing sessions on readings and comprehension of readings provided for different courses in a given programme (IDI FM1-CHS, IDI FM2-CSMCH, IDI FM3-CPS, IDI FM4-CSRD). While such initiatives address the need for additional human resources, they also challenge the pool of existing resources that often remain inadequate and paradoxically unutilized. Students who receive fellowships are expected to assist in teaching and research. Engaging with such activities will add to their curriculum vitae. Most importantly, this will strengthen the interactional element among the students as well as between teachers and students. However, the challenge to incentivize them for such a peer learning process through remunerations and certificates of appreciation remains to be mitigated. While EOO has funds allocated for such activities, they are often used for other purposes. Therefore, a specified share of funds needs to be allocated for such peer learning activities.

Using the case of Deprivation Points Policy, linguistic empowerment has the potential to be pegged as an important initiative. While English teaching is important for academic purposes, linguistic empowerment can also be relevant for interregional communication. Therefore, skills to read, write and comprehend in English, as most academic material is available in the English language, become critical. Additionally, given the linguistic diversity of the teachers and English as a medium of teaching, assignments are expected to be written in English. It may therefore be an essential and meaningful initiative to begin every academic year with 3-4 week rigorous sessions of English language reading, writing and comprehension geared toward linguistic empowerment.

Assessment of Potential for Replication and Scaling Up

- The Deprivation Points Policy is unique and has the potential to address the vison of social justice embedded in the mandated principles of the University. Its implementation needs to be scaled up by expanding it to other vulnerable sections (such as transgender) and to other institutions of higher education.
- The initiative of linguistic empowerment is "embedded" throughout the institution and integrated with the institutional plan. Capacity building through linguistic empowerment has been an integral part of university teaching. Situated in the School of Cultural Studies and Languages, the programme was initiated as part of remedial classes during the 1990s.
- This initiative has also been replicated and scaled up. Initially, during 1990, the then School of Languages was responsible for conducting

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remedial classes for English language and comprehension. Subsequently, the programme was scaled up under the Linguistic Empowerment Cell of the School of Cultural Studies and Languages during the mid-2000s.

- This is an initiative that has the potential to be scaled up. Peer learning can be inculcated by engaging students with linguistic privileges to impart their skill through carefully designed sessions for students with linguistic deprivation. The budgetary allocation at present, if used meticulously for the proposed purposes, is likely to be adequate. There is the provision of annual grants for the Equal Opportunity Office (EOO).
- Like any initiative, there ought to be facilitating and constraining factors in the scaling-up process. The facilitating factors could be the very process of peer learning where linguistically privileged students can become tutors/trainers. Some input of center-specific 'training' will be needed. There may not be any major constraints because of the existing budgetary allocations, plausible camaraderie among students, and healthy interpersonal relationships between the academic community across teachers and nonteaching officials and staff members.

Concluding Comments

The unique instruments of affirmative action of JNU, ranging from deprivation points to Equal Opportunity Office, to GS CASH [ICC], to Linguistic Empowerment Cell to Student Faculty Committee, have worked toward bringing parity across the university community. They need to be nurtured and emulated by other institutions. These initiatives can be successful in other countries and contexts for a very strong reason. JNU is a multicultural space. This is a sample of plurality of varied kinds—region, language, and most of all social identities—religion, caste and ethnicity. The evidence of its success (and failure partly as a result of UGC 2016 guidelines), along with after the implementation of UGC 2018 Guidelines (UGC, 2018), (put in place to amend UGC 2016 guidelines), encourages Universities to boost admissions of candidates from marginalized groups is a reason enough to expect that such initiatives will be successful in other such spaces and contexts too. UGC 2018 guidelines provide for the relaxation of 5% of marks to candidates belonging to SC/ST/OBC/PWD in the entrance examination, encourage universities to launch special admission drives for candidates from marginalized groups and devise their own admission procedures to ensure that reserved seats are filled. Most universities have units/centers that cater to the needs of multiculturalism. Along similar lines, this initiative and its activities, especially linguistic empowerment, can be materialized and nurtured toward parity across students, fulfilling the basic aim of the NEP: *'achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development'*.

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3. M1SES; M2SSS; M3SSS; M4SAA; M5SSS
4. JNU Teachers- FMSSS1-3; FM2SCSS; FM3SLLCS; FM4 SBT
5. Abbreviations used [F= female; M= male; O= official; FM=Faculty member; SSS= School of Social Sciences; SL= School of Language, Linguistics and Cultural Studies; SES= School of Environmental Sciences; SBT= School of Biotechnology; SIS= School of International Studies; SCSS= School of Computer and Systems Sciences; SLLCC= School of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies;
6. The numerical value indicates n^{th} student/faculty member/official

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7.4 Equity Policies Bharathiar University, Tamil Nadu, India

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Name of the Institution

Bharathiar University, Tamil Nadu

Weblink

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Main Contacts and Sources of Information

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2. Nodal Office, SC/ST Special Cell
3. Professor and Head, Dept. of Extension and Career Guidance
4. Member of Syndicate, Professor and Head, Dept. of Textiles and Apparel Design
5. Former member of Syndicate, Professor, Dept. of Media Studies and Mass Communication

Type of Initiatives

1. Communal reservation prescribed by State Government in UG/PG admissions
2. Government scholarships available for SC/ST students
3. Government scholarships available for girl students
4. Free seats (one per department every year) for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds

Introduction

Higher education, in general, is considered to be one of the fundamental factors for the holistic development of an individual. It is also critical for the social, economic and cultural development of society. It empowers individuals and makes them valuable human resources in society.

At independence, admission to higher education in India was very limited, with an enrollment of 0.2 million students in 578 colleges and 27 universities (Varghese 2015). The state of Tamil Nadu (TN) has colleges and universities that were founded before Indian Independence. Eminent personalities such as Sir. C.V. Raman, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and Chakravarthi Rangarajan, who have contributed to various fields, such as physics and economics, gained their foundations in universities and colleges in Tamil Nadu. Since independence, the growth of higher education in Tamil Nadu has been very impressive. The

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government of India listed Tamil Nadu as one of the most literate states in the country, having above-average literacy levels (MHRD,2011). This may be due to the thrust given to education policies at the state level. This is elaborated elsewhere.

Higher education in Tamil Nadu has a predominant structure of a council that formulates the policy depending on the requirements of society, which enables students to find employment and provides equal opportunity to all. The members of the council, mostly from the central and state civil services, decide upon the additional policy and structure of higher education in Tamil Nadu other than those that are provided by UGC. They focus on the quality of higher education and reach out to those who have limited capacity and resources, which restricts their access to quality education.

This case study presents the evolution of the higher education system in Tamil Nadu, the role of the state and private sectors in higher education in Tamil Nadu, the structure of governance and management of higher education in Tamil Nadu, and various recent state policies and programmes that influence equity and inclusion in higher education.

Evolution of the Higher Education System in the State: Higher Education Policy of Tamil Nadu from 1967

Until 1967, only three universities, namely, Madras University, Madurai Kamaraj University and Annamalai University, fostered university education in the state. Their jurisdictions were extended after the adoption of the Higher Education Policy 1967. The government and aided colleges in these regions were affiliated with them. The University of Madras opened extension centers at Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli in 1972 in addition to extending autonomy to several colleges, including Ramakrishna Mission, Vivekananda College, Loyola College, and Madras Christian College.

The Annamalai University: On [24] June 1920, Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar established Meenakshi College at Chidambaram to provide higher education in Tamil Nadu, which was later upgraded as Annamalai University. In 1974, this university introduced a semester system along with Tamil Medium courses, and a continuous internal assessment system was introduced to all PG courses. MBBS courses and job-oriented courses were introduced. This university also introduced distance education for students who could not obtain their education through a regular stream. Now the university has been taken over by the government.

New Courses in Madurai - Kamaraj University: Madurai Kamaraj University, established in 1966, is a statutory university owned and funded by the government of Tamil Nadu and the UGC. The university's administrative jurisdiction extended to four districts: Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari. On the direction of the government of Tamil Nadu, the university introduced a semester system in 1976.

The Emergence of New Universities: The Bharathiar University, the Bharathidasan University and the Tamil University were established in 1981 through an act

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passed in the legislature of Tamil Nadu. They were established in Coimbatore, Thiruchirappalli and Tanjavore, respectively. Tamil University was recognized as a center to conduct research and award D.Lit./D.Sc.

Expansion of Collegiate Education: To meet the needs of economically backward students, the Tamil Nadu government in 1967 ordered that (a) no fees should be levied for Pre-University Courses (PUC) from students whose parents or guardians' annual income did not exceed Rs.1500 per annum and (b) no fees should be levied from any student belonging to SC, ST, MBC, and OBC if the annual income of the parents or guardian did not exceed Rs.2000. The following year, the government abolished the tuition fees for university courses, making college education free for all students.

Introduction of Tamil Medium in Higher Education: To help students pursue higher education easily, the government of Tamil Nadu introduced Tamil as a medium of instruction in pre-university courses. The DMK government in 1968 introduced a B.A. course in Tamil medium, which was gradually extended to science courses. However, to help students obtain their textbooks in Tamil at a low cost, the government established the Tamil Nadu Textbook Society in 1970.

Autonomous Colleges: The Kothari Commission suggested the system of autonomous colleges. It has been the new higher education policy of the government of Tamil Nadu since 1978. The University of Madras, with the cooperation of UGC, granted autonomy to four colleges, namely, Loyola College, Madras, Madras Christian College, Tambaram, P.S. G College of Technology, Coimbatore and Vivekananda College, Madras.

Semester System: In 1975, the Tamil Nadu government announced a new policy in the field of higher education to change the curriculum and introduce teaching reforms. As a result, the semester system was introduced. The University of Madras first accepted it in 1975. Other universities, such as Madurai-Kamaraj and Annamalai Universities, also introduced this system. It was put into operation in 15 colleges of 115 Arts and Science Colleges in the first phase and later extended to other colleges.

Encouragement of Professional Education: The government decided to encourage professional education that would be helpful for students to gain employment. Therefore, it is approved and affiliated with few private, professional colleges.

Policy on Self–Financing Colleges: As the Government of Tamil Nadu could not open new colleges due to the financial crisis, the problem of accommodating the rush for college admission had to be met with new policy decisions. In 1985, the government gave the approval to start new unaided science and art colleges, and as a result, few self-financing arts and science colleges were started.

Higher Education in Tamil Nadu during 2019-2020

In 2013, the Tamil Nadu government started 6 arts and science colleges in educationally backward districts such as Krishnagiri, Namakkal, Tirupur,

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Kancheepuram, Thanjavur and Cuddalore. Apart from this, the government has been distributing free laptops to all undergraduate students to develop the use of ICT.

It is interesting to note that several types of universities that exist in other states (central open university, state private university, state private open university, institution established under the Legislation Act, and Deemed University-Government) are absent in the state of Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu has a greater number of private universities, contributing close to one-third of those in the country. In the table presented below, Central refers to federal government-funded institutions, while State refers to state-funded institutions (Table 1). The institutions that are indicated as 'Private' are self-financed, while those referred to as 'Government' or just Central or State represent institutions that are funded by the Government either Central or State government.

Table 1. Number of Universities in Tamil Nadu

Type of University	Tamil Nadu	All India	Share of Tamil Nadu in All India
Central University	2	48	4.2
Central Open University	-	1	-
Institution of National Importance	7	135	5.1
State Public University	21	386	5.4
Institution Established under Legislation Act	-	5	-
State Open University	1	14	7.1
State Private University	-	327	-
State Private Open University	-	1	-
Deemed University - Government	-	36	-
Deemed University – Government Aided	2	10	20.0
Deemed University - Private	26	80	32.5
Grand Total	59	1043	5.6

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 201920, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, New Delhi.

Table 2 presents the Gross Enrollment Ratio in Tamil Nadu (TN)

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Table 2. Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for TN and All India in 2019-2020

State/Nation	All Categories		Scheduled Caste		Scheduled Tribe	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Tamil Nadu	51.8	51.0	38.8	40.4.	43.8.	37..7
All India	26.9	27.3	22.8.	24.1.	18.2.	17.7

Source: *Ministry of Education (2020). AISHE report 2019-2020. Ministry of Education New Delhi*

As shown in the table above, the GER for males and females for all categories at the state level is higher than the All-India GER. A similar trend is seen in the case of females from scheduled castes and other backward class categories. Various policies of the state government, including the emergence of new universities, expansion of collegiate education, introduction of Tamil medium in higher education, autonomous colleges, encouragement of professional education**,** and policy on self–financing colleges mentioned elsewhere, may explain this trend witnessed in GER in the state.

Profile of Bharathiar University

Bharathiar University was established at Coimbatore in 1982 as a public, affiliating university funded by the State Government of Tamil Nadu. The Postgraduate Centre of the University of Madras, which was functioning in Coimbatore before 1982, formed the core of Bharathiar University. In May 1985, the University received recognition from University Grants Commission (UGC) New Delhi for the purpose of grants. The university named after the great national poet Subramania Bharathi.

The Vision

The vision of the university is to provide internationally comparable quality higher education to youth. The aim is not only to focus on imparting subject knowledge and skills but also to mold students with better conduct and character committed to societal needs and national development. Enshrined with the motto "Educate to Elevate", the University strives to realize the vision of India and excel in promoting and protecting the rich heritage of our past and the secular ideals of the nation.

Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution of student enrollment and faculty members at the university, respectively.

The university has 53 professors, 37 associate professors and 121 assistant professors.

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Table 3. Student Enrollment 2020-2021

Students (only UDs)	UG		PG		M. Phil		Ph. D		PG Diploma	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
From the state where University is located	39	15	455	748	9	20	67	95	13	06
From other states of India	0	01	36	94	6	4	8	23	--	--
NRI students	--	--	05	01	--	--	1	--	--	--
Total	39	16	492	848	15	24	76	118	13	06

Source: Secondary data from office records of Bharathiar University

Table 4. Genderwise Distribution of Faculty Members

Gender	Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Professor	Senior Professor	Total
Male	74	26	34	01	135
Female	47	11	19	Nil	77
Total	121	37	53	01	212

Source: Secondary data from office records of Bharathiar University

Description of Equity Policies/Measures

State-Level Equity Initiatives Implemented in BU

1. *Communal Reservation by the State Government*. The communal reservation prescribed by the government of Tamil Nadu in UG/PG admissions during the academic year 2022-2023 in the order given below is followed at the university (Table 5):

Table 5. Reservation Norms

Rules of Reservation	
Open Competition	31%
Backward Class	30%
Most Backward Class	20%
Scheduled Caste	18%
Scheduled Tribes	1%

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2. *Government Scholarship for SC/ST Students*. The state government also provides scholarships for students belonging to the SC/ST community with an annual family income of less than INR 2.5 lakhs (USD 3000) and for students belonging to BC communities with an annual family income of less than 2 lakhs (Table 6).

Table 6. Scholarships Available for SC/ST Students

Details of scholarship available for SC/ST students										
Name of Scholarship	**Number of SC/ST students availing the scholarship**									
	2021	**Amount INR**	**2020**	**Amount INR**	**2019**	**Amount INR**	**2018**	**Amount INR**	**2017**	**Amount INR**
Govt. of India Post Matric Scholarship for SC/ST/SC(A) PG Scholars	353 (23.22%)	3903070	296 (20.93%)	2888615	324 (22.96%)	4021362	369 (27.17%)	4525660	470 (33.17%)	6378967
Govt. of Tamil Nadu Higher Educational Special Loan Scholarship for SC/ST/SC(A)	178 (11.71%)	1412000	46 (3.25%)	368000	225 (15.95%)	1776500	203 (14.95%)	1612500	98 (7.02%)	750000

Notes: The percentages in brackets are the percentage of students receiving scholarships out of the total number of

students admitted in the specified year.

SC= Scheduled Castes; ST= Scheduled Tribes; SC(A) = Adi Dravidar

Source: Secondary data from office records of Bharathiar University

3. *Government Scholarship for Girls*. The details of the number of students who benefitted from this scheme are given below (Table 7):

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Table 7. Scholarship for Girl Students

DETAILS OF SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE FOR GIRL STUDENTS										
Name of Scholarship	Number of girls students availing the scholarship									
	2021	Amount INR	2020	Amount INR	2019	Amount INR	2018	Amount INR	2017	Amount INR
Govt. of India Post Matric Scholarship for SC/ST/SCC PG Scholars.	201 (13.22%)	1824343	160 (11.31%)	1487118	181 (12.83%)	2113392	212 (15.61%)	2494890	270 (19.34%)	3657617
Govt. of Tamil Nadu Post Matric Scholarship for BC/ MBC & DNC	569 (37.43%)	3300760	593 (41.94%)	2703319	636 (45.07%)	3506143	708 (46.03%)	3806261	737 (52.79%)	3986965
Govt. of Tamil Nadu Higher Educational Special Loan Scholarship for SC/ST/SC(A)	81 (5.33%)	677500	21 (1.48%)	168000	119 (8.43%)	946000	103 (7.58%)	819000	51 (3.65%)	405500
Tamil Nadu Government SC's/ST's special Scholarship for Full time Ph.D.	18 (1.18%)	1500000	7 (.50%)	400000	10 (.71%)	350000	9 (.66%)	450000	9 (.64%)	450000

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DETAILS OF SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE FOR GIRL STUDENTS										
Name of Scholarship	Number of girls students availing the scholarship									
	2021	Amount INR	2020	Amount INR	2019	Amount INR	2018	Amount INR	2017	Amount INR
Minority Scholarship for Christian and Islam	7 (.46%)	-	7 (.50%)	-	6 (.42%)	-	-	-	-	-
UGC - Indira Gandhi Single Girl child Scholarship	22 (1.45%)	-	11 (.78%)	-	06 (.42%)	-	33 (2.43%)	-	44 (3.15%)	-
UGC - University Rank Holder Scholarship	11 (.72%)	-	18 (1.27%)	-	02 (.14%)	-	03 (.22%)	-	08 (.57%)	-
UGC - Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship	5 (.33%)	-	3 (.21%	-	--	-	-	-	02 (.14%)	-

Note: SC= Scheduled Castes; ST= Scheduled Tribes; BC= Backward Classes; MBC= Most Backward Classes; DNC = Denotified Communities; SC(A) = Adi Dravidar

The percentages in brackets are the percentage of students receiving scholarships out of the total number of students admitted in the specified year.

Source: Secondary data from office records of Bharathiar University

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The ***Moovaloor Rama Amrutham Ammaiyar Scheme*** is newly instituted by the Government of Tamil Nadu for female students entering higher education, supporting female students who have studied class 6th to 12th in government schools and are now entering higher education. These students are provided Rs.1000/- per month for 3 years to cover the period of undergraduate study.

4. ***Internal Complaints Committee (ICC).*** The ICC is constituted in the university as per the University Grants Commission Regulations, 2015. The focus of the Internal Complaints Committee is to give effect to the policy of zero tolerance of gender-based violence on university campuses. This committee consists of a professor, 2 assistant professors, 2 non-teaching staff at the officer level, 2 research scholars, 1 legal advisor from the university, and all women except an external member from an NGO.

The committee is open to receive complaints from the students, faculty members, and staff of Bharathiar University. The victim and the offender should belong to the university campus. Complaints are received in person or through registered posts. Complaints can be lodged by the victim or parents/guardian of the victim. Proper enquiry/investigation is initiated within 5 working days. Depending upon the complaint, a course of action is taken, and recommendations are forwarded to the university authorities for necessary action against the offender(s). Necessary steps are taken to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations and disposal of the complaint. Statistical data of cases handled by the committee will be sent to the Ministry of Human Resource Development every year.

5. ***Nodal Officer for SC/ST Special Cell.*** A nodal officer for SC/ST teachers and nonteaching as directed by the State Government is appointed at the university to adopt and monitor State Government policy. The nodal officer particularly looks into reservations for recruitment and discrimination/grievances by SC/ST students and employees of the university.

Institutional Level Equity Initiatives Over and Above the National or State Level Initiatives Implemented in BU

All state universities are found to meticulously implement all the special schemes for SC/ST students, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and women students that are put forth by the state and central government. However, there are few institutional-level initiatives for equity groups in place in state universities. It may be noted that these universities receive some financial support from outside agencies, such as private trusts/foundations. Certain schemes such as 'earn while you learn' and one free seat per department for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are found in another State University.

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Institutional-level equity initiatives are generally taken based on the needs of students in the field that are represented via debates and recommendations of the senate and syndicate.

Free Seats at the University Departments. Free education for one student per department in the university departments is provided to students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This innovative equity initiative, introduced in 2008, aims to improve retention by providing financial support to students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The tuition fees, boarding and lodging cost for 2 years are covered for these selected students. The details on the number of students who benefitted from this scheme are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Free seats at the University Departments

S.No.	Year	Total
1	2016-2017	35
2	2017-2018	41
3	2018-2019	38
4	2019-2020	39
5	2020-2021	31
6	2021-2022	41

Source: Secondary data from office records of Bharathiar University

Free Seats in Colleges. The Syndicate, the governing body of the university, in 2022, has directed the government and government-aided arts colleges to provide free seats to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds through the university. All self-financing colleges are also directed by the university to provide free seats for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds through the university. The core objective of the initiative is to provide an opportunity for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to enter higher education institutions. This initiative is financed by the respective college that offers the free seat.

Hostel Facilities are provided for women. There are 5 hostels for women (Ph.D. hostel=1, PG hostel=4) and 5 hostels for men (Ph.D. hostel= 1, PG hostel= 4). The women's and men's hostels have an intake capacity of 1071 and 1068 students, respectively. In addition, there is also an international hostel with an intake capacity of 135 students/guests, a mixed hostel that is open for students, and faculty guests visiting the university.

A centralized dining facility for Rs. 10 million is established at ladies hostel premises with the grants received from RUSA (Phase 1). This has a modern

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kitchen with a common dining hall with a seating capacity of 500 students at a time, which will soon become functional.

The fund from central government was used to construct two hostels, Sekhizhar hostel for men and Chellammal hostel for women, with the capacity to house 184 students and 188 students, respectively. Although the funds were received for SC/ST welfare, the hostels are allotted for all students and not restricted to SC/ST students to avoid discrimination. However, students belonging to SC/ST categories benefit from a waiver for room rent/establishment charges that may be provided to them since the fund from the SC/ST welfare scheme was used to build the two hostels, which are not exclusively allotted to them.

Departmental Level Support. Some departments are arranging for internship placement for female students closer to their hometown/university and staying connected with the industry to ensure safety for female students.

Representation of Equity Groups. The act and statute of the university specify the representation of SC/ST but not gender as members of the Senate. No such representations of equity groups are specified for the syndicate. The initiatives at the institution cited above are operated at the university level by the Registrar's office. The circulars regarding these scholarships are sent to the university departments every year, and the university departments send the details of students who are eligible for these scholarships to the Registrar's office. The scholarships are then released to the students directly by the university. There is no committee exclusively constituted for the purpose of monitoring the disbursement of these scholarships.

Challenges in the Implementation of Equity Policies

Financial challenges are present in bringing in new initiatives for equity groups. For example, not all Ph.D. students are provided with fellowships, and only 2 fellowships are provided to each department. The amount of the fellowship for Ph.D. students is Rs.5000/-, which is approximately 1/5th of the fellowship provided at the national level. With limited funds, providing support for women and SC/ST students for local institutional-level scholarships/fellowships is a challenge. This poses constraints in bringing in new initiatives.

Benefits of the Initiatives

The benefits of the initiatives that are in place at the university include the retention of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in higher education. Since the funds available are limited, they are inadequate to attract more students from equity groups to the university.

Suggestions to Improve the Functioning of the Initiatives

The procedure for ensuring the smooth functioning of the initiatives by the State Government and the University is well streamlined and is functioning

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well. An exclusive allocation of financial budget to cater to the needs of equity groups, instituting committees in each department to address the needs of equity groups and to monitor the functioning of the initiatives at the department level, and regular meetings of these department committees at the university level to bring in new policies to support equity groups can bring about significant improvement in the system to benefit equity groups.

Assessment of Potential for Replication and Scaling Up

The initiatives at the university are "embedded" throughout the institution and integrated with the institutional plan. However, the initiative has not been replicated or scaled up, although there is potential for replication and/or scaling up. Insufficient funds are the main constraining factor in expanding the scope of existing initiatives or bringing in new initiatives.

Concluding Comments

Most initiatives available for equity groups at the university are those that are mandated by the central and state government. At the institutional level, over and above the initiatives of the central and state governments, the university offers free seats to students coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds, only for those students studying in university departments. The university has now extended this initiative to the affiliating colleges of the university, including government and self-financing colleges. Financial constraints are the main reason that hampers the ability of the University to bring in new initiatives.

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7.5 Equity Initiatives at Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Authors: Kamal Raj Devkota and Sumon Kamal Tuladhar[8]

Name of the Institution

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

weblink

http://www.tribhuvan-university.edu.np/

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Tribhuvan University documents and UGC documents/ UGC www.ugcnepal.edu.np

Type of initiatives

Scholarship, Freeship and Fellowship are equity initiative in Tribhuvan University

Introduction

Although higher education in Nepal has a short history compared to that of other South Asian countries, it has experienced a remarkable expansion in terms of both the number of institutions and student enrollment. In 1918, Nepal established its first higher education institute Tri-Chandra college. It was established by Chandra Shumsher, a Rana ruler, under the patronship of Indian universities[9]. The first university, Tribhuvan University (TU), was established in 1959 after the dawn of democracy in Nepal (Devkota, 2021). At present, the country has 11 universities, four health academies and 1,432 higher education institutions (147 constituent[10] campuses, 10.27%; 747 private campuses, 52.16%; and 538 community campuses, 37.56%) (UGC, 2018/19). This indicates a shift from a single university to multiple universities and from an urban-centric approach to a rural-oriented approach.

TU offers approximately 3500 courses under 300 programs for Bachelor, Master, M.Phil. and doctoral degrees (TU, 2019). TU has 61 constituent campuses and 1,080 public and private campuses affiliated with it. According to the Tribhuvan University Act 1993, TU aspires (a) to prepare capable human resources required for the overall development of Nepal; (b) to impart quality

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9 A university in Calcutta and another from Patna

10 Constituent campuses are managed directly by the concerned university and are the part and parcel of the university.

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higher education to the students; (c) to carry out research in multiple sectors; (d) to protect and develop national culture and tradition; and finally, (e) to involve faculty members and students in extensive, empirical and timely research and creation of knowledge of the fields of arts, science, technology and vocation (TU, 2019).

The gross enrollment ratio (GER) at the bachelor's degree level is 18.21 and that of the master's degree is 5.22%. A total of 52.9 percent of the total enrollment (466,828) comprises female students. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in higher education is 1.07 (UGC, 2019/20). However, students' participation in learning and researching at university campuses is very low for both sexes. Some obvious reasons are the lack of effective implementation of equity policies, political interference, extreme unionization, extensive brain drain of youth to the outside world, lack of proper facilities, and weak support systems for faculty and students from the side of universities and their constituent/affiliated campuses, which have reinforced social inequality in higher education (TU, 2019; Devkota, 2021).

Equity Policies in Higher Education

Nepal's 2015 Constitution ensures that every citizen shall have the right to access compulsory and free education, up to the secondary level, and ensures that "the physically impaired and citizens who are financially poor shall have the right to free higher education as provided for in law." (p. 18). Similarly, the Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 – 2023/24)[11] gives the direction for ensuring prosperity, economic equality, and social justice by putting an end to all kinds of discrimination, mentioning specifically gender equity and other social inclusion issues.

The Nepal government ensures all educational rights through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST). The MoEST has been continuously implementing "equitable access to quality education through a rights-based approach and promotion of a child-friendly environment in schools". In higher education, the policy is geared up to develop more infrastructure for regional expansion and bring the system on par with international standards. To ensure the quality of higher education and develop global standards in Nepal, an autonomous statutory body under the University Grants Commission Act-1993 was established. One of the objectives of the body is "to make higher education inclusive and accessible to disadvantaged and marginalized communities" (UGC, 2019/2020, p.1.).

Under this objective, some UGC policies underlining Higher Education Reform Projects (HERP -2015-20)[12] have articulated equity policies in

11 Government of Nepal: National Planning Commission. The Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 – 2023/24). Kathmandu

12 Higher Education Reforms Project (HERP-2015/20), the HERP was initiated by the Government of Nepal with financial and technical assistance of the World Bank. The major focus of the HERP is Nurturing *Excellence in Higher Education Program- 2021-2026 (NEHEP-2021/26).*

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higher education. They can be broadly categorized as Human Resource Recruitment Policy and Budgetary Support Policy as mentioned in the table below.

Table 1: Equity policies in higher education across the population groups

Selected Policies in Higher Education	Population groups[7] (equity categories)	Percentage of total population (Source: CBS, 2011; 2021)	Inclusion Policy Percentage (%)
Human Resource Recruitment Policy	Female	50.4	33%
	Indigenous/*Janajatis*	35.8	27%
	Madhesi	20.4	22%
	Dalit	13.6	9%
	People with Disability	1.94	5%
	From Remote area	79.99	4%
Budgetary Support Policy		targeting geographically remote regions,	
		targeting disadvantaged social groups,	
		targeting the economically disadvantaged groups,	
		targeting differently able groups, and	
		targeting girls and women,	
		targeting subject areas like science	

The UGC's overview of higher education financing mentions that ". . . *a total of twenty percent of the enrolled students must have the opportunity to receive a scholarship based on their financial status. Master's level programs are to be designed so as to recover 80% of the associated cost with a total of twenty percent of the enrolled students receiving need-based scholarship" (UGC, 2019/2020).*

In principle, equity policies are guided by the constitution of the state and education laws. Hardworking students, females, students from marginalized/ disadvantaged and geographically remote contexts, and students with disabilities are the main targeted groups. However, equitable access to higher education is still a continuing challenge for Nepal, despite all the concentrated efforts. While providing access to underprivileged individuals is challenging, the issues of retention and timely completion are more challenging. Poor, differently abled, ethnically underprivileged/disaster-affected people of remote and deprived regions still lack equitable access to higher education. Inequality in GER by province is still rigid, although it is increasingly improving in some provinces.

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For example, the GER of province 2 is 4.9% and that of Karnali is 6.9%. Only Bagmati Province has a GER above the national average (14.4%), which is above 25%. (UGC, April 2021.p. 11).

In this situation, equity initiatives are expected to promote the quality access and quality participation of disadvantaged and marginalized people, including gender (Gandhari, 2021; Claeys-Kulik, Jørgensen & Stöber, 2019; Clancy & Goastellec, 2007). Major equity initiatives under consideration in higher education nationwide in Nepal are scholarships, freeships including hostel facilities, and fellowships[13]. These are discussed with reference to policy terms and institutional practices below:

Scholarship and freeships and the case of TU

Nepal's Constitution 2015 states 'provision of free education with scholarships, from primary to higher education, shall be made by law for the *Dalit*[14] students' (40.2). Similarly, the Fifteenth Plan of the Government of Nepal (2020) states, 'facilities including scholarships will be provided for technical and vocational education to build the capacity of economically and socially backward groups' (p. 440).

Following these overall guidelines (see Appendix 1), TU has framed some equity policies and initiatives. *Jehendar* scholarship, freeships, hostel facilities, and fellowships are the major ones. *Jehendar* scholarship is provided to hardworking students, and they are often identified on the basis of their merits. The bachelor's and master's level students of the semester systems under faculties are provided with NRs 1500 per month. Those annual programs are provided with only NRs 1000 per month as a scholarship. However, the bachelor's and master's level students of the semester systems and annual programs of the institutes are provided with NRs. 2000 and NRs. 1000, respectively. J*ehendar* scholarship is provided to one male and one female student who scores highest in the respective program from each of the Central Departments and campuses (TU, 2014).

In the scholarship policy of the university, there is a provision of freeship[15], which is awarded to at least 10% of the total students enrolled. In the framework of freeship, for example, TU has a provision to award individual students an amount that equals the total tuition fees in the semester or annual programs in both faculties and institutes. Students who receive full scholarships are not allowed to apply for freeship.

Although TU developed the Guidelines for Scholarships, Awards and Medals, 2014 under the condition of its University Organization and Administration Rule 1993, practices varied across the campuses in the country. The Scholarship

13 Table An included in this document under section Benefits of Equity Initiatives provides some insights into fellowship recipients pertaining to the year 2019-2020.

14 Traditionally marginalized ethnic groups in Nepal

15 Special type of scholarship practice in which students are waived with the tuition fees that they need to pay on a monthly basis.

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Act 2021 of the Government of Nepal states the allocation of 45% of scholarship for inclusive quotas for the social groups that include economically and socially poor, women, disabled, *Janajatis, Dalits*, persons from backward and remote areas, *Madhesis*, Muslims, disappeared or martyrs' families and injured. Not all campuses have enough funds to carry out according to the guidelines. However, they make some attempts to address equity initiatives wherever possible.

For example, Gorkha Campus, the only constituent campus of Tribhuvan University in a hill district of Gorkha, has developed some equity criteria for distributing scholarships and freeships at the institutional level (Table 2). The criteria mention that 50 percent inclusive quotas will be fulfilled on the basis of merit (scores), geographical (*see map below for remoteness of the municipality*) and social backgrounds and student attendance. Based on these criteria, the campus has developed the following scoring guidelines (Table 2). To regulate scholarship programs, the campus has formed a Scholarship Selection Board. It follows TU policies and rules.

Table 2: Scoring Guidelines, Gorkha Campus, TU

	Scoring Guidelines	**Allocated Scores**
1	Students from the places outside Gorkha district; and from two remote rural municipalities of Gorkha – *Chum Numri* and *Dharche* in the map below	8
2	Rural municipalities less distant than the first two: *Ajirkot*, *Barpak-Sulikot*, *Aarughat* in the map below	6
3	Rural municipalities closer to the municipality where the campus is located at: *Shahidlakhan*, *Gandaki*, *Bhimsen*, *Siranchok* in the map below	4
4	*Palungtar* municipality (very close to the campus)	4
5	*Gorkha* municipality (where the campus is located)	2
Caste groups (*Jatjatis*)		
1	Marginalized/Dalits/Minorities	6
2	*Janajatis*	4
	Attendance (Maximum gets 6)	6

As mentioned above, there are a number of contextual variations particularly related to determining the distance between regions, the scholarship amount to be awarded, and student selection processes. The practice of this hill-based TU constituent campus differs from another Terai-based TU constituent campus

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that provides scholarships for students in general programs (BBS, BSC and BA) and technical programs (BIT, BSCCIT, and BBA). [16]

Map 1: Gorkha District Map Showing the Distance of the Municipalities

University Grant Commission (UGC) Nepal has put forward different scholarship directives: Dalits with disabilities, indigent, freed bonded laborers, children of Martyrs and conflict affected (disappeared and wounded) and Muslim girls for higher education (UGC, 2021). Under the 'Special Scholarships', provision has

16 BIT (Bachelor in Information and Technology); BSCCIT (Bachelor in Science, Computer, Information and Technology) and BBA (Bachelor in Business Administration) are the newly established programs under the Management faculty at TU.

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been made to *Dom, Badi, Chamar, and Mushar*[17] students to pursue Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) and Bachelor of Engineering (BE) and human resource development programs in technical education (UGC, 2019). Nevertheless, students must meet the minimum eligibility criteria for admission. Tuition and other educational institution-related fees are paid directly to the institution through the bank account. As specified in the guideline:

> "Rs. A 5,000/- monthly stipend will be paid to the students' account in two instalments per year. The institution-related fee will be Rs. 35,000/- at the medical colleges of the Kathmandu will also be paid to institution as decided by the Faculty Board. In case of the engineering field, a maximum amount of Rs.12,00,000 will be paid to the institution." (UGC, 2019/20, p.27)

Along with this Jehendar scholarship and freeship, TU has the provision of scholarships for blind students. TU-affiliated public and constituent campuses also have different donor-sponsored revolving funds (*akshya kosh*) to account for scholarship support to needy and hardworking students. For instance, the Gorkha campus mentioned above also has a few two to three donor-sponsored scholarships. Furthermore, the campus itself has made a scholarship provision for waiving fees for one male and one female student who score the highest in their level/program at the campus.

Tribhuvan University is also providing hostel facilities for needy students. Hostel facilities are supposed to be provided to needy and hardworking students and those from remote geographical regions. In principle, nearly 40 percent of hostel places are reserved for students from disadvantaged social groups, including economically poor, disabled persons, Dalits and persons from backward and remote districts. The other 60 percent have access on the basis of merit. The merit list is prepared on the basis of the scores secured by the students for their earlier university degrees and the remote districts they come from. However, these policies are sometimes refuted and ignored when the university and the affiliated campuses face some intense interventions from the major student political wings regarding the allocation of hostel seats for the students. Nevertheless, only a very few campuses have hostel facilities for students. On the other hand, many hostels are poorly managed and insufficiently lack facilities and a conducive learning environment.

Although TU has these different scholarships, constituent and community campuses enroll a large number of students. The scholarships available for the limited quotas as mentioned above are nowhere sufficient and reachable to the students of the lower quintiles economic index. Women from rural settings, backward and remote areas, and the poor have hardly received access to higher

17 Dom, Badi, Chamar, Mushar are a few of the most disadvantaged communities in Nepal.

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education and scholarship opportunities. Therefore, the number of scholarships needs to be increased, and all scholarships for higher education should be on a need-based basis, except some designed to attract very bright students (Joshi, 2018).

Fellowship policies

In line with the National Education Policy 2019, and as a subcomponent of the budgetary support to faculty members and fresh aspiring postgraduate students attending Master's. M.Phil. or Ph.D. from higher education institutions, are provided with research funding. According to the Fellowship Program, ". ... ... M.Phil. fellowship for 18 months, Ph.D. fellowships for three years and partial support for research or thesis preparation for master's M.Phil. and Ph.D. students. ... ...

A limited number of postdoctoral fellowships for up to 2 years are provided to qualified researcher to work in the UGC-funded research projects.*" (UGC. 2019/20, p. 21).*

Among numerous regular programs of the UGC, Fellowship is one of the programs to support faculty members and students directly in their academics and in which the equity policy is very well articulated that candidates from disadvantaged groups, such as women, *Dalit, Janajati, Madhesi,* Persons with Disabilities and persons working in remote districts, obtain extra marks during the evaluation of applications.

There is also some financial support for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) to prepare their thesis. In 2019/20, there were 12 PWDs who were able to obtain this support, and 3 of them were female.

Overall, scholarships, freeships, and hostel facilities are principally government equity policies that are carried out under institutional level equity initiatives with their own localized individual criteria.

Equity policies and initiatives in TU not only support students but also support the recruitment of faculty and nonteaching staff. TU has a Service Commission for the selection and recruitment of teaching faculties and staff. Following the Public Service Commission (PSC), the TU Service Commission has developed a policy of inclusive and open competition-based recruitment. Sixty percent of seats are to be filled through open competition, and the rest of the seats are allocated under the reserved quotas for the social groups that include women, J*anajatis, Dalits, Madhesis* and disadvantaged and marginalized[18] groups. In policy, such an initiative is seminal to addressing diversity in higher education (Fradella, 2011; Clark, 2011).

18 'Marginalized' and 'disadvantaged' means the social groups/communities that are made politically, economically and socially ousted, discriminated and oppressed for their low caste/ethnicity, gender, status, geographical remoteness, and deprived thereof in the access of services and opportunities in the society (Art, 306).

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Challenges in Implementation of Equity Policies at TU

It seems that there is no uniformity in implementing scholarship policies on TU campuses. For example, one campus has classified the whole service area as urban regions (municipalities) and remote regions (rural regions). However, it does not disaggregate applicants into underprivileged groups or privileged groups. In contrast, students are provided with scholarships based on their marks and geographical regions. Janakpur campus has scholarship provisions for both technical and nontechnical subjects (Humanities, BBS and BSC). It also invites applications, and all applicants are provided with an equal amount (Rs.700) per student per annum. Surkhet campus did not provide scholarships for the lack of budget in the past, but it has been initiated this year. It has now called for applications. It is the Central Department of Education, as well as a scholarship board, that decides who gets the scholarship.

The equity policy, particularly the scholarships, and the policy implementation at constituent campuses show that there are certain issues connected to scholarship distribution. Some are connected to administrative issues, and other issues are related to budget availability. From an administrative point of view, campuses are found to have faced a challenge when they find that the centrally framed policies are inappropriate to the local context. Therefore, locally informed policies should be institutionalized so that there is a minimum implementation gap.

Second, TU campuses are found to have a very limited budget for promoting equity initiatives such as scholarship distribution. The scholarship quota is very limited; therefore, the students who need scholarship support to continue their studies cannot be adjusted. This pushes them either to leave the study or to look for low-paying job opportunities instead of continuing study. As reported by the campus authorities of the sample campuses above, under challenging socioeconomic conditions, most students join different low-paid jobs in the local market and pay less attention to their study. This always raises two equity issues: 1) quality participation of underprivileged students in learning and 2) eventually pushing out underprivileged students out of higher education.

Third, the amount allocated for the student scholarship and freeship is nominal (approximately 13 to 16 USD for scholarship for semester programs and 9 USD for annual programs per month). This amount seems nowhere practical to the overall expenditure that a student has to spend on study. In most cases, the students who are awarded full scholarships receive the amount for the monthly tuition fees they need to pay for the campus. The amount allocated for student freeship is even lower. Therefore, students do not receive substantial support for study even if they are awarded both scholarships and freeships.

Regarding hostel facilities, only a very few campuses have hostels for students. However, these hostels have very limited quotas for students and have poor

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facilities. These hostels also lack a proper learning environment and facilities to motivate students to learn. For example, the central campus of Tribhuvan University has hostel facilities for both male and female students studying master's degrees at central departments. As observed, the hostels seriously lack the required facilities that include common rooms and halls for indoor games. Additionally, since there is political intervention from the student wings of the political parties, these hostels are also not properly managed.

Despite the fact that scholarships are directed for the PWDs, it is not clear how many are designated for this scholarship and who are getting this. Although HEMIS (Higher Education Management Information System) has progressively improved recently, it is still not geared toward equity indicators. Eventually, it is difficult to monitor the benefits of the equity policy and its implementation. At most, the GPI of student enrollment is available, but there are still no data on how many female staff are positioned in each level of institutional hierarchy. For example, in table 2, while data on the number of different categories of teachers in different universities are available across the number of professors, readers, lecturers, assistant lecturers, instructors and paper contracts, further disaggregation in terms of gender, status of abilities and ethnicity is not provided in the EMIS 2019/20 report. Therefore, the HEMIS is still not equity-aware for proper monitoring of the progress in the target set by the Nepal Constitution, The Fifteen Plan of the Nepal Government and SDG 4.

Benefits of Equity Initiatives

The existing geopolitical condition, sociocultural diversity, and economic condition of the country demand equity policies so that underprivileged students can also obtain equal opportunity to access higher education and contribute to nation building. Accordingly, the year 2019/20 report shows that 211 students received the fellowship in which the share of other ethnic groups, who are defined as underprivileged, is 21.8%, which is slightly more than the designated percentage in scholarship initiatives. Apparently, these data are from the recipients of the fellowship, not of the scholarship. Moreover, fellowship is administered from the central level. The only ways of informing the students are by posting information on the campus notice board or publishing in the yearbook of the campus. This raises another equity-related question of how many recipients from remote areas are aware of these fellowships and how many can actually access them. This is because the calls for scholarships and fellowships are normally published on the UGC and university websites, which may not be accessible to the mass of students who live in remote areas and are not connected with (good) internet service. Those who are in urban spaces and have good internet access can submit their application in time, while others who lack access lose the chance of applying

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for financial support. The table below presents the number of fellowship recipients for fiscal year 2019/2020.

Table 3. Fellowship Recipients 2019/2020

Fellowship	Grand Total of Recipients	Brahmin/Chhetri	Other Ethnic Groups					Total of Other Ethnic Groups	Share of other ethnic groups (%)
			Newar*	Janajati	Madhesi	Muslim	Dalit		
Research Scholarship	49	39	4	3	3	0	0	10	20.4
M. Phil	52	42	5	2	1	1	1	10	19.2
Ph.D.	12	8	1	1	2	0	0	4	33.3
Thesis Grants	211	165	30	12	2	1	1	46	21.8

Source: *UGC 2019/2020*
Note*: Since there are no equity-aware disaggregated data, the ethnic groups are derived from their last names, which show their ethnicity.*
**One last name (Joshi) is common to the Newar and Brahmin/Chhetri groups. Due to a lack of detailed information, the last name is counted as Newar. Thus, some of them can be from the Brahmin/Chhetri group.*

The table shows that at least a few ethnic groups other than Brahmin/Chhetri benefitted from the Fellowship initiative. As stated in an article by Joshi 2018, hill Brahmin-Chhetris and Newars are significantly overrepresented in enrollment in comparison to their population share of *Janajatis, Madeshis, Dalits* and Muslims (Joshi, 2018). Consequently, the fellowship recipients are small in number. This also illustrates that the policy administration is still weak in terms of information sharing and addressing equity issues.

Options for Improving the Functioning of the Initiatives and Scaling Up

The close review of UGC and TU equity policies shows a huge gap between policy statements and implementation. Equity initiatives, through scholarship provisions for the students and research grants for the teaching faculties, are clearly stated in the policy documents. However, these policies are centrally driven and less informed of local complexities. Campuses that have their own income sources have implemented equity initiatives through scholarships for students and small-scale research grants to teaching faculty members, especially early career faculty members.

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However, those campuses that have weak income sources and face financial problems have not been able to take such initiatives. Although UGC and TU policies state the provision of these initiatives, individual campuses are urged to manage their own budgets in this regard. The individual campuses receive limited budgets from the UGC and central offices, and they face a challenge to address these initiatives financially. Therefore, individual campuses should be supported with budgets and should also be oriented to follow alternative approaches to collect scholarship and freeship funds so that they can easily support students from socially and economically underprivileged groups.

Political interference is another serious challenge for undertaking proper equity initiatives in universities' constituent and community campuses. Favoritism and pressure from the student wings of national-regional political parties often create confusion in implementing equity initiatives. As a result, students who are in dire need of financial support for continuing their studies are pushed back, and those who are not in the merit list and inclusive quotas receive more benefits.

Student scholarship policy needs to be aligned with the Poverty Index of the government. University and campuses still do not have a system for assessing students' poverty level. If the university and campuses prioritize the government's poverty index, students from such socioeconomic categories get benefits and can gain access to higher education.

Finally, universities and campuses should tie up with the international/national government organizations that work in the field of education and equity. This may help them raise scholarship funds for the neediest students. The integrative approach of fund collection and scholarship/freeship distribution as per the inclusive quotas can mitigate the inequities apparent in higher education in Nepal.

Equity initiatives are embedded in institutional plans. Despite the budget shortage provided by the central office, TU has been collecting funds for supporting women, disabled and needy students. These good practices must be published and disseminated so that others can replicate them. At the same time, the government needs to scale up these initiatives, keeping in mind the remote communities where there is no possibility of raising funds from the local people.

However, these policy initiatives should be transformed into inclusive quality higher education. In this regard, the equity initiatives implemented thus far need to be upgraded. Scholarship quotas and amounts for meritorious poor students and disadvantaged social groups are nowhere sufficient. Where a large number of students come from poor economic and marginalized backgrounds, the quota needs to be increased, and in this regard, there should be collaborations among central, provincial and local governments. Equally, many higher education institutions have still not materialized scholarship policies and provided hostel facilities for students. The three-tier government needs to upgrade the physical

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infrastructures of the campuses and central departments so that students can obtain a conducive learning environment. In Nepal, party politics and its intervention at higher education institutions through their student wings not only impact the quality of education but also damage equity initiatives very seriously.

Concluding Comments

Signatory to SDG 4, Nepal is globally committed to making higher education accessible to every citizen, including PWD. Under the UGC guiding principle, Scholarships, Freeships and Fellowships are provided to meet UGC objective 4: *"to make higher education inclusive and accessible to disadvantaged and marginalized communities"*. Approximately 20% of underprivileged students are provided with scholarships, and 10% of the total students enrolled are entitled to the Freeship. These initiatives are implemented at the institutional level, and the method of identifying underprivileged students and the amount of scholarship vary among campuses. Many campuses target students on the basis of merit rather than need. In addition, these campuses have very limited budgets and quotas for student scholarships and freeships. Therefore, equity issues concerning gender, students from poor economic structures, and disadvantaged and marginalized groups/communities are still not addressed properly.

For example, students from the *Dom, Badi, Chamar, and Mushar* groups are entitled to obtain scholarships under the 'Special Scholarships' category to pursue MBBS and BE and human resource development programs in technical education, but students must meet the minimum eligibility criteria for admission. This may be a 'catch-22' situation for these underprivileged students. According to Joshi (2018), there is "stark inequity in access to higher education by income and social groups. In 2010/11, the share of the richest (fifth) quintile was higher than four poorer (lower) quintiles taken together [NLSS.2011]. From the perspective of attaining the targets set for the participation rate, significant efforts will be needed to reduce this disparity significantly (Joshi, 2018 p.18).

Equity policies in higher education are implemented by higher education institutions in a very subjective manner rather than following the UGC guidelines. One of the reasons why the equity policy guidelines are not objectively followed can be that the channel of communication from the central level to the institution is not very clear. The campus personnel have expressed their frustration that the budget provided by the UGC is not sufficient and that they have to mobilize additional resources. Very often, they fail to mobilize sufficient resources and are not able to provide scholarships.

UGC also provides Fellowships to faculty members and students and has very specific guidelines to encompass underprivileged groups. However, only a limited number of underprivileged students are brought under the purview of this initiative. Therefore, there is a need for UGC to provide additional funding.

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Another challenge is that since these schemes are administered from the central level, many eligible candidates from remote areas are not able to access these fellowships. To conclude, it can be said that higher education in Nepal has equity policies, but in practice, they look like 'window dressing'.

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Appendix 1: Scholarship Guidelines at TU

A. Student Enrollment Quota *Faculties: Management, Humanities, Education, Law and Science and Technology*		
Full-fee payment	60%	
Normal fee payment	30%	
Freeship	10%	
Institutes: Engineering, medicine, agriculture, forestry etc.		
	Freeship	Normal fees payment
Master level	15%	85%
Bachelor level	20%	80%
B. *Jehendar* scholarship (scholarship for hardworking students) *(Quatas: 1 male and 1 female from each Central Department and in each program in the case of the constituent and public campuses*		
	Semester system (Nepali Rupees per month)	Annual programs (Nepali Rupees per month)
I. Faculties		
Bachelor level	1500	1000
Master level	1500	1000
II. Institutes		
Bachelor	2000	1000
Master level	2000	1000
Freeship		
Merit-based Quotas	50% of the total applicants	Merit list is calculated on the basis of scores of the earlier degrees, SEE graduation from government-added public schools.
Reserved Quotas	50% Inclusive Quotas for equity	Inclusive Quota list is calculated on the basis of economic, social and regional backgrounds. It includes disable, *janajati,* Dalits, *Madhesis,* Women, Martyrs' family, and disadvantaged and remote areas.

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Other Scholarships	
Scholarship for the blind students	3 students per annum in each TU campus and Central Departments in recommendation of Nepal Blinds' Association. Each student receives Rs. 1500 per month.
Donor-supported scholarship	Scholarship to particular students from the interests of the revolving funds established in the campuses. TU executive council makes decision over the scholarships.

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Chapter 8. Sub-Saharan Africa Case Studies

8.1 Overview

Author: Nasima Badsha

Forty-eight countries constitute the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region, with an estimated total population of 1.18 billion in 2021. Approximately 40% of the region's population is aged 15 or younger, making Africa the continent with the youngest population in the world[1]. It is also one of the poorest regions of the world. In 2019, 35.1% of the population lived on less than US$ 2.15 a day[2]. In 2021, the GDP per capita was US$ 1,626, compared to a global average of US$ 11,320. The GDP annual percentage growth in 2021 was 4.1%, increasing from 2.2% in 2000. All evidence points to the need for substantial investment in human capacity development across SSA if the region is to "reach and sustain the level of economic performance it needs to generate an adequate volume of employment for expanding populations, to achieve various Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets, and to narrow the economic gap between SSA and other developing regions"[3].

As is the case with almost every measure, higher education in S-SA is very diverse, and significant country/sub-regional variation is evident in terms of the governance, size, shape, and performance of tertiary systems. Nigeria, for example, has the largest tertiary system, with 153 federal and state universities, both public and private[4]. In contrast, some countries, such as Chad and the Central African Republic, have only one or two main universities. The development of most higher education systems in SSA has been influenced and shaped by their countries' colonial legacies and continues to be evident in, among others, the language of instruction, qualifications, and governance frameworks.

The gross tertiary education enrollment ratio (participation rate) in 2020 for SSA was 10%, compared to the global average of 40%. Mauritius has the highest gross tertiary enrollment at 44%, followed by Botswana at 26% and South Africa at 24%. In stark contrast, Niger has a gross tertiary enrollment ratio of 4%, while South Sudan has one of lowest at 1% (2018)[5]. It is estimated that "across the continent, approximately 9 million students are enrolled in the

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1 Statista.com

2 Data.worldbank.org

3 World Bank, 2009, Accelerating Catch-Up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa DOI: 10.1596/978-0-8213-7738-3

4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Nigeria

5 https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR?end=2020&locations=ZG&start=1970&view=chart

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tertiary education sector, which is 3% of all student enrollments in the region and 4% of total tertiary education students enrolled globally"[6].

Sub-Saharan countries face multiple challenges as they endeavor to build more inclusive higher education systems better able to meet the social and economic development needs of their countries, not least of which is to address stark inequalities in student access and success patterns that continue to be evident in most systems.

The female participation rate for the region is 9%, compared to males at 11%. As before, there are significant country variations. For example, in Mauritius and South Africa, female students outnumber male students, with female participation rates of 53% and 30%, respectively, compared to male participation rates of 36% and 19%. However, women students have lower participation rates than males in most other countries in SSA. Gender inequality is further exacerbated in certain fields and levels of study, with women being particularly underrepresented in STEM and postgraduate studies.

As is the case in many regions of the global south, people living with disabilities are significantly underrepresented in tertiary institutions in most of SSA. As summarized by Woldegiorgis, "university enrolment and completion rates for students with disabilities are dismal", who points out that "in many African countries, being disabled halves the chance of attending school, and those who do start school are at increased risk of dropping out before completing primary education (UNESCO, 2016). Exclusion from primary education means that there is only a small pool of disabled students qualified to enter higher education"[7].

In addition to gender and disability inclusion, higher systems in the region are also challenged to address inequality in relation to the access of refugees, internally displaced persons and students from rural and other marginalized communities and groups.

The Case Studies

It must be stressed that the four selected case studies are not intended to be representative of vastly differing country contexts and geographical sub-regions. Given the diversity of the four case studies, comparative analysis is limited, and at best, some preliminary observations are offered across the four case studies:

- Partnerships. In all four cases, external partnerships play an important part in the implementation of the interventions. Key partners include (i) universities, both local as well as institutions from other countries in Africa and the global north. University networks contribute to knowledge

6 https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/764421611934520379-0090022021/original/OneAfricaTEandCovidupdated.pdf

7 Woldegiorgis, E.T., 2021 Re-Thinking Inclusive Higher Education for Students with Disabilities: A Proactive Approach Towards Epistemic Access in Ethiopia https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6371-7832

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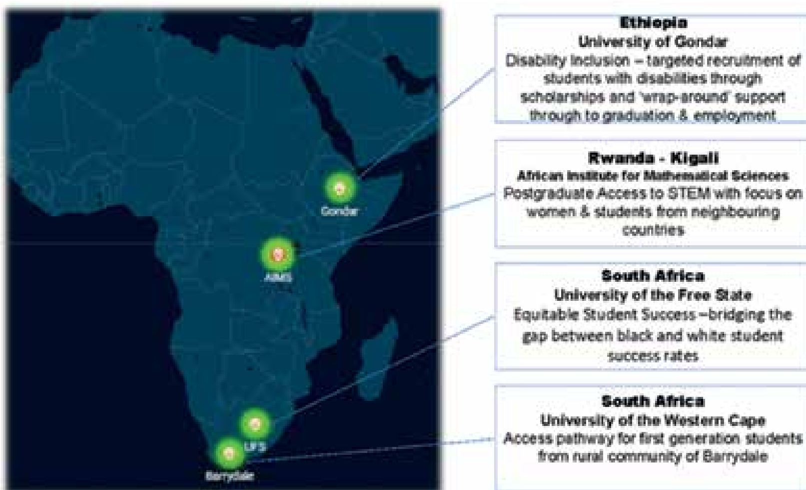
sharing as well as the provision of teaching and research support; and (ii) NGOs, both local and cross-border, offer capacity development support as well as bridges between communities and universities.

- Philanthropy. Foundations, mainly North American and European (but also with some involvement of local donors), are key to the funding of student scholarships and other program costs, especially at the University of Gondar and AIMS Rwanda. The strong reliance on donor funding for scholarships does, however, raise concerns about long-term sustainability. In addition to providing funding, foundations are taking on more pro-active 'partnership' roles, which include knowledge sharing, facilitating national communities of practice/networks, capacity building support and stimulating innovation.
- Policy Synergy
  In all four cases, alignment with national policy has been enabling. This is particularly evident in the two South African case studies, where the availability of earmarked government funding for student financial aid and academic support has been an important contributor to program success. In the case of AIMS-Rwanda and the University of Gondar, their governments' focus on the promotion of STEM and disability inclusion, respectively, has been enabling.



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8.2 Disability Inclusion: The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at the University of Gondar, Ethiopia

Author: Nasima Badsha

Main Contact:

Dr. Molalign Adugna, Co-Director of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at the University of Gondar (https://www.uog.edu.et), Ethiopia.

Project webpage: https://uogqueensmcf.com

Sources of Information

program reports, websites and personal communication

Type of Initiative

Promotion of Disability Inclusion

Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have drawn renewed attention to disability, which remains a key factor in the exclusion of large numbers of people from education and employment opportunities worldwide, but more so in the global south. It is estimated that fewer than 10% of children with disabilities in Africa attend school[8]. Given the exclusion of children and youth with disabilities from primary and secondary education in many parts of Africa, there is a relatively small pool of people with disabilities who are qualified to proceed to further or higher education. There is also a dearth of reliable and up-to-date data on students with disabilities in most higher education systems in sub-Saharan Africa.

Higher Education in Ethiopia & Disability Inclusion

Ethiopia's population in 2021 was 117 million. Although it is one of the fastest growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is characterized as a low-income country with a per capita gross annual income of $960. It aims to reach lower-middle-income status by 2025[9].

Higher Education in Ethiopia has undergone rapid expansion since the 1990s. The gross participation rate in tertiary education was 10,4% (7,8% for females and 13,0% for males) in 2018, increasing from 8,2% in 2012[10]. There are 50 public and 236 private universities in the country, with the majority of

8 Vergunst, R. & McKenzie, J. (2022) Introducing the Including Disability in Education Research Unit at the University of Cape Town, African Journal of Disability, Published online 2022 Jan 24. doi: 10.4102/ajod.v11i0.946

9 World Bank https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ethiopia/overview

10 UNESCO Institute for Statistics http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/et

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undergraduate and postgraduate enrollments in public universities. Current estimates are that there are approximately 450 000 students enrolled in public and private universities[11].

Ethiopia is signatory to various international declarations on the rights of people with disabilities and has numerous national policies and laws for the protection and advancement of disability rights. However, the country continues to face the challenge of translating these commitments into significant practice. Notwithstanding this, the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2020 notes positive developments:

> "In Ethiopia, inclusive schools are mainstream schools where learners with and without disabilities learn in the same classrooms. Teaching assistants, such as sign language interpreters, may be available. Schools are grouped into 7,532 clusters to facilitate resource sharing. Among these, 213 schools, or 2.8%, have established inclusive education resource centers"[12]

In relation to higher education, it is estimated that "even though the number of disabled students attending Ethiopian public higher education institutions had increased from 398 in 2009–2010 to more than 1,000 in 2015, the percentage ratio as compare to the general increase in access to higher education is continuously declining"[13].

This case study focuses on the partnership between the University of Gondar, which is located in the city of Gondar in northwestern Ethiopia, and the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program to promote access to and success in higher education for students with disabilities.

Overview of the Partners

University of Gondar[14]

The University has its origins in the Public Health College, which was established in 1954 and later became the Gondar College of Medical Sciences. In 2003, it became the University of Gondar and now offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Medicine and Health Sciences, Business and Economics, Natural and Computational Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture, Law, Technology and Education. The University has a long-standing commitment to embracing diversity and

11 Tessema, S (2022) www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/burgeoning-higher-education-in-ethiopia-beset-by-shortcomings/2482986

12 Sub-Saharan Africa fact sheet -2020 GEM Report, http://gem-report-2020.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SSA-Fact-Sheet.pdf

13 Woldegiorgis, E.T. (2021). Re-thinking Inclusive Higher Education for Students with Disabilities: A Proactive Approach Towards Epistemic Access in Ethiopia. In *Social, Educational, and Cultural Perspectives of Disabilities in the Global South* (p. 235-250). IGI Global.

14 The website of the University of Gondar (https://uog.edu.et/) was under maintenance at the time of this study.

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inclusion as core values and has incorporated disability as a cross-cutting issue in its strategic planning. The University has a comprehensive Community-Based Rehabilitation Program that provides "rehabilitation, education, and empowerment services in more than 14 districts"[15].

Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program was established in 2012 with the aim of contributing to more inclusive and equitable socio-economic change in Africa. Since its inception, the Program has provided scholarship support to nearly 40 000 talented young people, primarily in Africa, to pursue secondary or higher education. Through its support for collaborative networks of young people, higher education institutions, NGOs and employers, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program seeks "to create the conditions that will enable young people to attain inclusive and relevant education, transition smoothly into dignified and fulfilling work, and lead transformative lives"[16]. The target groups for scholarship support are women (70%), refugees and displaced persons (25%) and people with disabilities (10%), with Scholars being selected based on three criteria – academic merit, leadership potential and economic need.

Program Description

The partnership between the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program and the University of Gondar was established in 2016. Over a ten-year period, the intention is to recruit 450 talented young people (290 at the undergraduate level and 160 at the master's level) and to provide them with comprehensive support to successfully complete their studies and to transition to the world of work as transformative leaders in their communities and professions[17]. The students are recruited from within Ethiopia and from neighboring countries, including South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Djibouti. The goal is to allocate all the undergraduate scholarships to students with disabilities and to recruit 60% female students overall. The key fields of study include the health sciences, social sciences, law and education.

As reported by the Co-Director of the Scholars Program at Gondar, 228 scholars are currently enrolled in the Program, of whom 210 are persons with disabilities (comprising 155 blind, 12 deaf, 39 scholars with mobility impairment and 4 scholars with multiple disabilities) and 18 young women without disabilities but who are economically disadvantaged.

The Scholars Program is premised on providing comprehensive 'wrap-around' support to scholars in all phases of their university journey broadly

15 Personal communication, Dr M. Adugna, Co-Director of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at the University of Gondar

16 https://mastercardfdn.org/all/scholars/

17 https://mastercardfdn.org/collaborating-for-inclusive-education-in-ethiopia/

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characterized as 'Recruit, Educate, Prepare and Transition'. The following is a brief description of each of these phases within the Program at Gondar.

Access and Thrive

The University undertakes the recruitment and selection of students, unlike the standard placement processes that are managed by the Ministry of Education. The University collaborates with a range of stakeholders working in the field of disability (such as the Ethiopian National Association of Persons with Physical Disability), secondary schools (including special needs schools) and community organizations to advertise scholarships, identify potential applicants and assist with the screening of applicants. The selection process includes interviews and may include home visits to assess the circumstances of applicants, all of whom must be from low-income households. All scholars participate in an orientation process at the start of the first year of their studies, which introduces the Scholars to the University environment and the support structures available to them.

The Program seeks to provide Scholars with a supportive learning and living environment with 'reasonable accommodation' for disabilities, which includes the following:

- Sign language interpreters. Twelve deaf students were admitted to the University for the first time following the appointment of 2 sign language interpreters, with the prospect of an additional appointment in the near future. The formal language of instruction is English, but interpreters use both American and Amharic sign language;
- Assistive devices for mobility, visual and hearing impairments;
- Assistive technology and software, such as screen readers, braille readers, etc.; and
- Personal assistants as well as peer and academic support.

At the start of the Program, the University undertook comprehensive accessibility audits, which included physical, administrative and social accessibility components. The physical accessibility audit was, for example, followed by some modification to infrastructure to facilitate better mobility for disabled persons.

Scholars also have access to a range of academic and psycho-social support, including tutorials, supplementary English language courses, digital literacy training, mentoring and counseling services. The University has also invested in initiatives to better prepare and equip staff to meet the needs of young people with disabilities.

Prepare and Transition

An important objective of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is to prepare scholars to become transformative leaders. Within the Program at

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Gondar, this is facilitated through an annual summer camp "to train Scholars on leadership, community giveback and career development and expose them to role models and motivational speakers"[18]. In addition, there is a Scholars' Community that provides the Scholars "with a platform to share their experiences and support each other as well as advocate and be part of change within the Program, their university, and communities. Over 80% of Scholars with disabilities reported being actively part of the Community"[19]. Dr. Adugna, the Co-Director of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at Gondar, indicated that they aim to involve students in decision making, where possible. Scholars are also engaged in voluntary community service, which has, in turn, been found to assist in countering stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities.

Scholars are offered training and support to improve their chances of obtaining work or becoming self-employed. This includes the writing of CVs, honing of interview skills and access to online job platforms, one of which has been modified for easier access by visually impaired scholars. Training in entrepreneurship is also available. In addition, the Program supports graduates with a stipend for 6 months after graduation while they hunt for jobs. The Program collaborates with a range of local, regional and national stakeholders to assist graduates in securing work opportunities.

Institutional Capacity Development

An important aspect of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is to support the building and strengthening of institutional capacity to meet the holistic needs of future generations of students with disabilities. This is supported through various interventions, including the following:

(i) A specialized postgraduate training initiative is underway in partnership with Queen's University[20] in Ontario, Canada. Resources have been allocated for 44 doctoral scholarships in a range of disciplines but with a focus on disability inclusion and 16 scholarships for master's study in occupational therapy. The aim of this initiative is to build the professional capacity of the University of Gondar and the country more broadly to respond to the high-level training, research and policy development needs pertaining to disability inclusion.

The doctoral students are registered with Queen's University in Ontario, Canada and are expected to split their four-year academic program equally between Canada and Ethiopia. Dr. Adugna, the current Co-Director of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at Gondar, is the second graduate of the initiative. The first graduate has stayed in Canada for a postdoctoral fellowship, and 5 more students are expected to graduate shortly.

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18 Mastercard Foundation, Journey to Disability Inclusion: Lessons Learned from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at University of Gondar, Learning Brief, July 2021

19 Ibid

20 https://www.queensu.ca/

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The specialized training of occupational therapists is linked to the establishment at the University of Gondar of a Department of Occupational Therapy, the first of its kind in Ethiopia. To date, 4 Master's graduates have returned to Gondar and are teaching on a new B.Sc. degree in Occupational Therapy, supported by staff from Queen's University through a virtual platform. The new degree was launched with an initial intake of 16 students. The importance of this initiative is underscored by the fact that prior to the partnership, there were very few qualified Occupational Therapists in the country[21]. The University also offers a Community-Based Rehabilitation Certificate program.

The partnership with Queen's University also includes provision for 8 collaborative research projects, which are intended to inform disability policy and practice in Ethiopia.

(ii) A partnership with Arizona State University has been established to build capacity for e-learning. This includes a staff training component.

(iii) Capacity development support is provided by the international NGO Light for the World[22] through its office in Kampala, Uganda. Light for the World is a partner of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program in the area of disability inclusion and offers a range of services to Scholars Program partner universities, with a focus on catalyzing sustainable institutional change. This includes:

- the convening of quarterly sessions of an Inclusion Working Group that brings together all of the partner universities active in the area of disability. This provides participants with the opportunity for peer learning, covering a range of topics such as recruitment, psycho-social support and the sharing of good practice;
- an online platform, Cap-Able[23] was launched in December 2021 by the Mastercard Foundation and Light for the World, Uganda, as "a digital toolkit designed to equip administrators, lecturers, and management with the information, knowledge, and tools to create more inclusive learning institutions. The toolkit offers best practices for higher education institutions to improve enrollment and learning practices, create inclusive learning environments, and help young people effectively transition to the world of work. It is a one-stop-shop for educational material on disability inclusion in higher education"[24].
- the training of 'master trainers' who, in turn, cascade disability inclusion training to staff and students; and
- technical support, advice and networking[25].

21 Personal communication, Dr. Molalign Adugna

22 https://www.light-for-the-world.org/

23 https://cap-able.com/

24 https://mastercardfdn.org/inclusive-education-for-persons-with-disabilities/

25 Personal communication, Ms. Andera Delfyna, Learning & Innovation Expert, Light for the World, Kampala, Uganda

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The Mastercard Foundation is funding the 10-year program at Gondar, which includes the cost of scholarships, assistive devices, scholar support initiatives and core program staff.

Identification of linkages with national policies

As indicated in the Introduction, there are numerous official policies and laws in Ethiopia for the protection and advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities. Although there appear to be relatively few resources allocated for realizing the ambitions of the national policy frameworks, these nevertheless provide a supportive environment for the program at the University of Gondar.

Implementation Challenges

The program at the University of Gondar enjoys good support from the institutional leadership, who have been open to sharing their experiences with other universities. However, given the severe financial constraints that they face and in the context of competing priorities, it is proving to be difficult to extend the reach of the initiative to foster more inclusive spaces.

The 10-year program at Gondar is a partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. This is arguably a sufficiently long time to allow for the development of institutional capacity, policies and culture required to sustain the University's broad commitment to disability inclusion. However, the University is likely to face serious challenges in sustaining the levels of funding required for student scholarships and associated costs. The Co-Director of the Program has commented that even with current levels of scholarship support, Scholars are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their needs, especially given the effects of high levels of inflation in the country.

It should be noted that Gondar is located in the Amhara region, which is bordered in the north by the Tigray region, where there has been an ongoing civil war since the end of 2020. While the full impact of the civil strife on the University is unclear, it has impacted student recruitment from the affected regions. As reported by Abay *et al*, "the conflict played out in most parts of Tigray and has also spilled over into parts of the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions", with severe impact on people's access to food, healthcare and other basic services[26]. The conflict is also impacting Ethiopia's economy, and estimates for Ethiopia's economic growth were reduced to 2% for 2021, from 6% in 2020[27].

26 Abay,K., Berhane,G & Chamberlin.J 8 May 2022 https://theconversation.com/what-people-from-war-torn-tigray-told-us-about-the-state-of-their-lives-amid-the-war-180594

27 Bagouri, S. The Extensive Cost. How the war in Tigray is impacting Ethiopia's economy? Future for Advanced Research and Studies. 13 December 2021. https://futureuae.com/en/Mainpage/Item/6933/the-extensive-cost-how-the-war-in-tigray-is-impacting-ethiopias-economy#

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Program Outputs and Impact

The Program is now midway through its 10-year duration. As is the practice with all Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program partnerships, all aspects of the Program are monitored against agreed quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, which will inform the summative evaluation of the Program at the end of the grant period. However, pointers of success include the following:

- A formative evaluation was conducted in 2021 by Light for the World, which reported the following:
  "122 Scholars had been enrolled by the Scholars Program, of whom 111 Scholars with disabilities and 11 young women without disabilities. The majority of the Scholars with disabilities have visual impairment (69), 34 have physical impairment and 8 have hearing impairment; 58% of all Scholars enrolled in the Scholars Program are young women"[28].
  The key findings of the formative evaluation and the lessons learned from the experience at the University of Gondar have been published as a Learning Brief[29], which serves to inform ongoing implementation at Gondar but is also a source of advice for other universities embarking on similar journeys.
- Graduates and Employment: 49 scholars have graduated to date. Of these, 25 graduates have secured employment, including three who have been appointed as university lecturers, one in the Ministry of Justice and one as a physiotherapist with the Cheshire Services, an NGO that is involved in the physical rehabilitation of children and youth with disabilities. In addition, 15 of the graduates still seeking employment have been invited back to the University for further assistance with their job search. The Program office continues to network with potential private sector employers, with the view to building greater confidence in the quality of the University's graduates, especially those living with disabilities.
- Institutional Change: There has been progress in the adoption of policies and guidelines to support disability inclusion for students and staff. The presence and influence of a critical mass of students with disabilities has also contributed to an institutional culture that is more embracing of diversity. While the program staff work closely with key administrative departments and faculties, the formative evaluation has signaled the need to strengthen this alignment to more firmly embed disability inclusion policies and practices across the University.

28 Mastercard Foundation, Journey to Disability Inclusion: Lessons Learned from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at University of Gondar, Learning Brief, July 2021

29 Ibid

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Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

The Mastercard Foundation supports initiatives at some of its partner universities in Sub-Saharan Africa, such as the one at the United States International University Africa (USIU), a private university in Nairobi, Kenya. Moreover, Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program universities are supported to ensure that at least 10% of scholarships are awarded to young people with disabilities. The lessons learned at Gondar continue to be shared across the Mastercard Foundation networks and help to inform the implementation of disability inclusion initiatives in a range of different institutional and national contexts.

Adoption of the approach developed at Gondar would depend on the level of resourcing available, given the extent of scholarship and program running costs needed. In the case of the majority of low-income countries in the global south, full program implementation is unlikely without the significant injection of donor funding, including international development aid and philanthropy. Notwithstanding this, the lessons emerging from the program at Gondar and the other Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program partner universities should prove to be of value to any institution wishing to adopt policies and practices toward greater disability inclusion.

Concluding Comments

This Program's focus on disability inclusion is exceptional, especially in the context of a low-income country. It is an important initiative for three main reasons. First, it approaches disability inclusion in a holistic manner. It goes beyond issues of access and 'reasonable accommodation' of disability to pay due attention to the provision of 'wrap-around' academic and psycho-social support for students throughout their time at university; their development as leaders; and their transition into the world of work. Second, the case study highlights the critically important catalytic role that can be played by donors to drive institutional change, in particular, by earmarking scholarship support for people with disabilities and women, all from economically disadvantaged communities. Third, it points to the importance of partnerships in achieving Program goals, in this case between the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, the University of Gondar, Light for the World, Queen's University and local NGOs and employers.

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8.3 Improving Access to Postgraduate Education at the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS – Rwanda)

Author: Nasima Badsha

Website link of Higher Education Institution

https://aims.ac.rw/

Main Contact

Prof. Dr. Sam Yala, Centre President- AIMS Rwanda **(**Sam.yala@aims.ac.rw**)**

Sources of Information

websites, published reports & personal communication

Type of initiative

Promotion of access to postgraduate education in the mathematical sciences

Introduction

Continental and local higher landscape and context

AIMS was first established in 2003 in Cape Town, South Africa, and has since expanded into a pan-African network of centers of excellence in Rwanda, Senegal, Ghana, Cameroon and Tanzania. AIMS was set up in response to the critical shortage of mathematical skills and expertise in Africa. The vision of its founder, Professor Neil Turok, was to recruit highly talented students from across the continent to receive the best possible postgraduate education, with a focus on areas of importance to the development of Africa and taught by faculty from across the world[30]. The centers provide for postgraduate education and training in the mathematical sciences, research and public engagement in STEM, with emphasis on enhancing the participation of women in all three areas.

Rwanda, with an estimated population of just under 13 million in 2020, has a relatively small higher education system, with a gross enrollment of 7,1% and a total enrollment of 88,448 students (44,9% female) in 2020/21. The public higher education system accounts for 42% of the enrollments at the University of Rwanda and a number of polytechnics and nursing schools. Fifty-eight percent of students were enrolled in private universities and colleges. Enrollments in STEM account for 49% of the total enrollments (38,4% female), with the majority in the public sector. The total number of higher education graduates in STEM fields was 11,408 in 2019/20[31].

30 https://www.ted.com/talks/neil_turok_my_wish_find_the_next_einstein_in_africa?language=en

31 Ministry of Education, Republic of Rwanda, 2020/21 Education Statistical Yearbook, February 2022

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AIMS Rwanda

AIMS Rwanda was established in 2016 in the Rwandan capital, Kigali. The Institute is accredited by the Rwandan Higher Educational Council to deliver its own degrees up to the master's level. Currently, it offers (i) structured masters in mathematical sciences over a 10-month period of coursework and research; (ii) a cooperative masters program, which includes 6 to 8 months of additional work-based experience; and (iii) a climate and data science stream. In addition, AIMS Rwanda introduced a teacher training program in 2018 with the aim of contributing to the improvement of learning outcomes in mathematics and science for secondary school pupils[32].

Program Description

The core objective of AIMS is to contribute to the economic growth and development of Africa through the building of high-level human capacity in the mathematical and related sciences, with emphasis on fields that are particularly relevant to addressing the continent's challenges. In doing so, it particularly aims to increase the participation of women in STEM and to provide opportunities to students from countries where there is limited, if any, capacity for postgraduate education and training in STEM.

AIMS Rwanda has recruited students from 30 African countries over the years, including Sudan, Madagascar, Benin, DRC, Somalia, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo, with 30% from Rwanda. For the 2022/23 intake, 1,989 applications were received from students in 43 countries, with 25% of applications coming from women students. Sixty students have been provisionally accepted, of whom 40% are women[33]. The recruitment strategy particularly targets women applicants, for whom the age limit for eligibility is more flexibly applied than for male candidates. The recruitment road shows always include women alumni, given the importance of strong role models. To qualify for selection into master's programs, students must have completed a 4-year undergraduate degree in mathematics or any other science or engineering degree with a significant mathematical component and should have demonstrated leadership capacity and involvement in community service. There are no language requirements for admission. The medium of instruction is English, and English language support courses are offered, where required by students.

All students are provided with a full scholarship that covers tuition, accommodation, food and travel costs. This is particularly important, as access to funding is a key constraint to students wishing to pursue advanced studies in most African countries. All students live on campus in a safe environment, in close proximity to resident tutors and access to the core academic team. Safe on-campus living arrangements are particularly important to female students,

32 https://aims.ac.rw/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2021/03/AIMS-Rwanda-centre-fact-sheet.pdf

33 Personal communication

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many of whom will leave their home countries for the first time. The courses are taught by leading scientists from a wide range of international partner universities and from the other AIMS centers within Africa. International academic partners include universities in Canada, such as the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics; the UK, including Cambridge University; and institutions in Japan, France and Germany. This adds an important international dimension to the AIMS experience, which is premised on providing students with the best possible postgraduate education. The teaching and learning approaches are highly interactive, facilitated by students having 24-hour access to computer laboratories and other facilities.

AIMS students are required to undertake at least 20 hours of community service during the course of their studies to hone their leadership skills and demonstrate their commitment to community development.

In addition to the core master's programs, AIMS Rwanda works to strengthen the pipeline into STEM through its Teacher Training Program. In partnership with the College of Education of the University of Rwanda, AIMs support a wide range of in-service training and capacity building opportunities for teachers, as well as community engagement to promote STEM careers. The latter includes mentoring programs for girls in STEM and weekend/residential camps for girls. Through these initiatives, AIMS is actively involved in strengthening the pipeline of girls into the sciences.

As with all the other centers, AIMS Rwanda has an active research component. The center shares facilities with Quantum Leap Africa (QLA), which focuses on quantum science and hosts a Research Chair in Data Science. As stated on its website, "Research at AIMS Rwanda focuses on fields like climate modeling, plant-interactions, human disease modeling, computational immunology, quantum physics/science, applied mathematics, and Bayesian methodology. Research team members comprise postdoctoral fellows, visiting researchers, MSc, PhD students and interns". The center aims to attract female scientists into research by offering fellowships that are only open to women.

The AIMS Network is also invested in science engagement through its Next Einstein Forum (NEF), which is an initiative in partnership with the Robert Bosch Stiftung. As stated on its website, the "NEF is focused on convening Africa's innovators to highlight breakthrough discoveries and catalyze scientific collaboration for human development. Held every two years, the three-day forum will gather 500 leading scientists, policymakers, business leaders, journalists, civil society leaders, entrepreneurs, and scientists to highlight talent and advance global breakthroughs"[34]. The NEF has a number of associated projects in addition to the two-yearly forum, including the NEF Fellows, which is designed to recognize and promote the continent's young early career scientists and technologists. The Fellows Programme provides these emerging leaders, of whom at least 40 percent are women[35], with the opportunity to:

34 https://nexteinstein.org/next-einstein-forum/#

35 https://nef.org/nef-fellows-programme/

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(i) Advance their scientific careers. NEF Fellows present their work at the NEF Global Forum and have the opportunity to build and strengthen their networks on the Continent and beyond and to identify mentors; and

(ii) Inspire the next generation of African innovators. NEF Fellows are expected to participate in campaigns and events to encourage young people to pursue scientific careers[36].

AIMS Rwanda is part funded through an annual grant from the Rwandan government, which has been highly supportive of AIMS from the outset. Both AIMS Rwanda and the global AIMS Secretariat are located in Kigali. Additional funding is secured from a number of international donors and foundations, including the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC), DAAD, Humboldt Foundation, Mastercard Foundation, Carnegie Corporation, Google and Facebook. There is good alignment between the equity goals of AIMS, particularly in relation to providing access to quality postgraduate education in STEM to women and to students coming from countries that do not have university systems with the capacity to deliver advanced education and training in the natural sciences. AIMS is also able to provide access to students from conflict-ridden regions of the continent. The Mastercard Foundation, for example, which provides AIMS Rwanda with support for scholarships, 'wrap-around' student support and leadership development, stipulates a 50% target for women students. Such incentives are important in keeping gender equity at the forefront of initiatives such as AIMS.

Linkages with national policies

As articulated in the country's Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, "Rwanda has an ambition to leverage the transformative potential of Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) to position herself as a globally competitive knowledge based economy"[37]. A key element of its policy is to "establish a vibrant STI environment with capacity, enabling policies, and adequate funding capable of producing quality graduates, research, and modern technology products and services to cater for the needs of the productive sector and the society". This vision is well aligned with the objectives of AIMS. In addition to the support that AIMS already receives from the government, 6 hectares of land have been earmarked to construct the 'Kigali Innovation City' or hub, which is intended to co-locate AIMS and Carnegie Mellon University Africa, among others. However, funds have yet to be raised to commence with the building.

36 ibid

37 National Council for Science and Technology, Republic of Rwanda, Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, June 2020

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Implementation challenges

A number of challenges arise from the pan-African nature of AIMS and the registration of students from different higher education systems. For example, delays have been experienced in establishing the equivalence of qualifications obtained by students from Francophone countries. However, these difficulties have not been insurmountable, despite the relatively slow pace of the harmonization of higher education in Africa.

Despite support from the Rwandan government, AIMS continues to rely heavily on donor funding, which raises questions about long-term sustainability. This is an issue that impacts all of the AIMS centers, and discussions continue on developing strategies to diversify income streams. The ability to raise support for scholarships is central to sustaining the core work of AIMS and to delivering on its commitment to improving the participation of women in STEM.

Program outputs and impact

Since its establishment in 2016, AIMS Rwanda has graduated 348 students from 30 different African countries. Of these graduates, 38% were women. The program is able to select the brightest applicants who are provided with a quality teaching, learning and living environment, all of which contribute to very high pass rates. The network as a whole has produced over 2,200 alumni from 43 countries since 2003, and it is estimated that 70% of AIMS alumni remain on the continent.[38] The vast majority of graduates go on to pursue careers in research and the private and public sectors and in so doing contribute to the social and economic development of the countries and the Continent as a whole. The website provides impressive examples of alumni career destinations. The pan-African nature of AIMS also results in active alumni networks across the continent, with the potential for scientific and professional collaboration.

The outputs of the AIMS Rwanda Teacher Training Program are also positive with some key achievements, which include the following:

- 276,323 students directly reached through outreach programs;
- 4,527 teachers trained and engaged in school-based continuing professional development;
- A total of 417 school head teachers and 97 sector education inspectors were trained on a transformative approach for monitoring and evaluation;
- 2 241 teachers were trained (with certification) in ICT;
- 42 teachers were provided with scholarships to pursue further studies; and
- An estimated 470 000 students were indirectly reached through trained teachers[39].

38 https://aims.ac.rw/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2021/03/AIMS-Rwanda-centre-fact-sheet.pdf

39 Personal communication

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As with all AIMS initiatives, the participation of women is foregrounded in the Teacher Training Program. A good example of this is a partnership between the program and a number of local private sector companies and universities to raise funds for scholarships for teachers to further their studies. Of the 42 teachers supported through these scholarships, 60% of the recipients were women[40].

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

AIMS has grown over almost two decades from the original node in South Africa to a network of centers in five other African countries. This points to the potential for expansion to other countries, but this would depend on the level of 'buy in' and leadership from the university sector and government, as well as the availability of resources, especially the expansion of the current pool of donors to the AIMS network and/or the development of alternative funding models.

The model lends itself to adaptation in other regions, especially in fields where individual countries have limited capacity to offer high-quality postgraduate education and training and research outside of support from a network of partners.

Concluding Comments

AIMS provides an innovative approach to building high-level capacity in the mathematical and related sciences for the continent. Students receive world-class training on the continent, which improves the chances of graduates remaining in Africa. At the same time, through strong connections with a host of leading international universities, AIMS plays an important role in exposing talented young African women and men to global and regional networks.

40 ibid

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8.4 Promoting Access through the Creative Arts: University of the Western Cape and Youth from the Rural Community of Barrydale, South Africa

Author: Nasima Badsha

Net Vir Pret

https://netvirpret.co.za/

Handspring Trust

http://www.handspringpuppet.co.za/handspring-trust/ **and the**

University of the Western Cape (UWC)

https://www.uwc.ac.za/

Main Contacts

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Sources of Information

Annual reports of Net Vir Pret, institutional websites (Net Vir Pret, UWC, CHR and the Handspring Puppet Trust), published papers and personal communication.

Type of initiative

Promotion of access to higher education for students from underserved rural communities

Introduction

National and Local Context

Although national policy in South Africa highlights the promotion of equitable student access, no targets are set for the access of students from rural areas to higher education, and universities are not required to report on the numbers of students enrolled from rural areas. Rural communities in a number of provinces are well within the reach of campuses of universities and technical and vocational (TVET) colleges, but there are many communities where young people still do not aspire to university education. One such community was that of Barrydale, a small town located in the picturesque Klein Karoo region

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of the Western Cape, approximately 245 kilometers to the northeast of Cape Town.

Barrydale's geo-political makeup continues to reflect South Africa's apartheid past, and the town remains divided on racial lines, with the white town, "Barrydale", and the black township of "Smitsville". In 2018, the Gini coefficient for the district was 0,608[41]. The 2011 Census reported a population of 4,156, of whom the majority (83%) were designated as Coloured (83%) people. The town's main economic sectors are tourism and agriculture. There are high levels of unemployment, and alcohol and substance abuse continues to blight the people of Barrydale and the surrounding farm areas.

Net Vir Pret (meaning "just for fun" in Afrikaan) is a not-for-profit NGO that was established in 2006 to work with children in the Barrydale area "to empower them by giving them the childhood they deserve, allowing them to play, be creative and to learn what they are capable of achieving"[42]. Much of the early work of Net Vir Pret focused on after-school, weekend and holiday programs with a focus on the creative arts. However, the scope of work later expanded to include support classes for secondary school pupils preparing for their school leaving examinations at the end of 12 years of schooling. In 2011, Net Vir Pret, in collaboration with a number of NGOs (which work on promoting access to higher education through the provision of information, career guidance and bursary support), took the first steps to assist pupils in applying for university admission. For some of the young people, this even meant help with finding the money to pay for the university application fee (little more than USD 5). Ten pupils applied for university admission, and 4 were admitted in the 2012 academic year. The consensus among Net Vir Pret staff is that very few, if any, black school leavers from the area had progressed to higher education in earlier years. This case study focuses on how, through a series of sustained partnerships built around an annual puppetry parade (see details below), this pipeline of young people from Barrydale into university studies has been nurtured over the past decade. Although students have gone to a number of colleges and universities in the Western Cape, the main higher education partner is the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

UWC is a historically black university with an enrollment of more than 23 000 students in undergraduate and postgraduate programs across seven faculties. It has a strong historical commitment to the widening of access to students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds along with a focus on teaching and learning to promote student success through the provision of appropriate curricula pathways, learning resources and support systems. Its main campus is located in Bellville, a suburb of Cape Town.

41 https://www.wesgro.co.za/uploads/files/Wesgro-IQ_Overberg-District-Factsheet_2021.09.pdf

42 https://netvirpret.co.za/

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Program Description

Each year since 2010, the Handspring Trust, which was founded by the internationally renowned Handspring Puppet Company[43], Net Vir Pret, the Centre for Humanities Research[44] (CHR) at UWC and other partners work toward a theme-specific parade in Barrydale, which centers on puppetry performance. The parade takes place annually on 16 December, which is a public holiday, designated the Day of Reconciliation. The parade is preceded by many months of work with the children and youth exploring themes, which have broadly focused on notions of reconciliation and identity, cultural and ecological heritage and environmental conservation, through the making of the puppets and performance.

Photo: 2017 Parade[45]

While the initiative has a number of objectives, reflecting the particular interests of each of the partners, its essence, as described by Associate Professor Heidi Grunebaum, Director of the CHR, "is to provide young people with the space to imagine futures beyond the confines of their own environments and experiences". From the outset of the initiative, there was the hope, as expressed by Basil Jones, producer/co-director of the Handspring Puppet Company, to create a 'corridor of exchange' between Barrydale and the University of the Western Cape by "the initial guiding desire of developing mobility for young

43 The Handspring Puppet Company is based in Cape Town; its recent work includes the giant puppet, Little Amal, which represents a Syrian refugee walking across Europe from the Syria-Turkey border to the UK.

44 https://www.chrflagship.uwc.ac.za/

45 https://www.chrflagship.uwc.ac.za/renosterbos-barrydale-festival-2017/

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people who had never even considered the possibilities of venturing from Barrydale, to travel to Cape Town and attend University there. This task of mobilising and creating the potential for mobility both physically and mentally in the hopes and minds of the young people of Barrydale was a key instigator of the initial Partnerships"[46].

Through the programs of the partners, young people are offered a range of opportunities and experiences, including the following:

- Net Vir Pret facilitates a range of programmes to support senior secondary school pupils, including extra classes for pupils preparing for their grade 12 school leaving examinations; provision of information on study options at further education colleges and universities; career advice; and assistance with applications for college/university admission and, importantly, for student financial aid.
  - Through their involvement in the creative processes leading to the annual parade, the youth have the opportunity to work alongside students and academics from the CHR, interns and visiting academics from other local and international universities, as well as with highly skilled puppetry artists and other creative professionals. The students from UWC, many of whom are themselves first-generation university students, are important role models to the youth of Barrydale.
  - Youth have the opportunity to travel beyond the confines of Barrydale to participate in regional arts festivals, attend events in Cape Town, etc.

UWC plays an important role in the research and pedagogical processes that go into the making of the parade, which Dr. Aja Marneweck, a Senior Lecturer in the CHR who has served as the creative director of the parade since 2014, captures as follows:

> "This has been carried out through multiple exchanges between university researchers, artists and fellows from the CHR, as well as UWC at large. The exchanges have taken the form of theoretical as well as practical workshops on the annual parade themes, which have, for example, have included slavery in the Cape; continuing legacies and inheritances from apartheid; issues of nature conservation; heritage and the politics of water and water resources. Researchers from various fields at UWC, such as history, cultural studies, social sciences, anthropology, conservation and the natural sciences, have over the years contributed to supporting Net Vir Pret's research enquiries for the different productions. The CHR has also provided the support for field trips that the students, staff and interns of Net Vir Pret have undertaken with researchers and artists from UWC to further expand their first-hand

46 Aja Marneweck (2019): The Barrydale Giant Puppet Parade: mobilising creative ecologies in the Klein Karoo, South Africa, Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance

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> experience of the scientific and cultural depth of their themes. Staff members and interns from Net Vir Pret have also through the years participated in various academic conferences at the UWC and had the opportunity to engage with academics from international partner universities. Net Vir Pret continue to journey to Cape Town to exchange with CHR researchers and artists in residence, attending design and puppetry workshops, residencies and meetings. On top of theoretical research support, the CHR has also provided key artistic support in the form of skills transfer and sharing, production support, artistic and technical training, artistic collaboration. Importantly, the CHR has supported the development of young artists from vulnerable communities in Cape Town, most notably the Ukwanda Puppet and Design Company, who over the course of 5 years of artistic fellowship at the CHR, as well as internship with the Handspring Puppet Company, have been able to hone and grow their skills as a professional puppet company. Ukwanda have in turn contributed as a core artistic and pedagogical partner of Net Vir Pret in the making and processes of the parade"[47].

The initiative is ongoing and has an established presence in the Barrydale community. The participating NGOs are funded through a range of local and international donors. Over the years, Net Vir Pret has demonstrated its capacity to deliver a range of high-quality programs, and this has translated into ongoing support from a number of local donors. UWC supports the costs of the involvement of its staff and postgraduate students in the annual festival through its own funds and receives generous support for this area of its work from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Linkages with national policies

Until 2018, a major constraint to qualifying Barrydale students wishing to pursue university studies was the limited availability of student financial aid to cover tuition and living costs. However, following nation-wide student protests in 2015 and 2016 against rising tuition fees, the government revised the existing National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to make provision for all students whose annual family income is less than ZAR 350 000 (approximately USD 20 500) to receive bursaries to cover the full cost of their undergraduate studies. Unlike the original Scheme, there is no loan component, so eligible students are able to graduate without carrying debt burdens. Given the levels of poverty and unemployment in Barrydale, the vast majority of students from the area would now be eligible for NSFAS grants if they gain entry to a public university or college.

On admission to university, the students would qualify for places in student residences, which are usually on campus or in close proximity. Importantly, programs are in place to support their transition from schooling to higher education studies. UWC, in particular, has a long history of providing

47 Dr Aja Marneweck, personal communication

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epistemological access to students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and has comprehensive policies and interventions in place to support student learning, including the availability of year-long foundation programs for students who do not fully meet the admission requirements into the degree of their choice would be admitted into a foundation year.

Implementation Challenges

The relatively poor quality of school, alongside persisting poverty, means that the numbers of pupils graduating from high school with the requisite level of pass required for university entry are a small proportion of the grade 12 class, although this has improved over the years in large measure due to the scholar enrichment programs of Net Vir Pret. However, it is proving to be challenging to reconnect effectively with high school pupils following the extended periods of lockdown during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when face-to-face engagement was not possible. Net Vir Pret has also identified the need to extend their career guidance interventions to pupils well before they enter the final year of schooling so that they are better informed of further study options and processes for applying for college and university admission. Net Vir Pret is also planning to provide pupils with ICT training in their own computer laboratory.

Net Vir Pret also increasingly faces challenges in raising funds for the costs of the annual parade. There is a serious lack of funding for the arts more generally in the country, which poses a threat to the sustainability of the initiative in its current form.

Program Outcomes and Impact

It is estimated that since the inception of the initiative, approximately 60 students from Barrydale and the surrounding areas have accessed undergraduate studies at UWC and other higher education institutions. A landmark was reached in 2021 when Barrydale's first Master's student enrolled in the Arts and Humanities Faculty at UWC. Another graduate acted as a tutor during his honours degree studies at UWC and is now an Assistant Head of Department at the secondary school where he is teaching. A number of young people have returned to work in the area, including a graduate who is employed by the local municipality as an auditor and one who is an accountant with a prestigious vineyard.

Unfortunately, data is not currently available to systematically track the progress of students through their studies into employment. However, a university qualification is life changing for first-generation students and their families. The students and graduates are very important role models for the youth in Barrydale and testament of the possibility of building futures beyond their current realities for the community at large.

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The impact of the initiative on UWC is captured by the statement made by the Vice-Chancellor on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Barrydale Parade:

> "As a university leadership, we have been thoroughly mesmerised by what this important undertaking has produced over ten years, especially as our university inquisitively explored questions of the arts and their relationship to the making of post-apartheid freedom. *The Barrydale Annual Reconciliation Day Puppetry Parade* is an exemplary showpiece of that larger academic and artistic exploration. For more than a decade, faculty and post-graduate students in the arts have undertaken a process of learning to learn by participating in an annual event that draws together constituencies that cut across gender and generational divides in the rural town of Barrydale. By bringing together researchers, students, scholars and performance observers from around the world, the Barrydale festival challenges arts and culture practitioners and scholars to reach beyond the seemingly intractable social divides of the Little Karoo. Similarly, the Festival has productively challenged UWC's understanding of its educational mission to build a future that transcends the limits and constraints of racial, gender, generational and class divides inherited from apartheid[48]".

Potential for Replication and Scaling Up and Concluding Comments

This is a particularly special initiative, deeply rooted in a community and drawing on a number of key partners with shared vision and goals but who bring different expertise and experience to the table. The initiative is grounded in the Barrydale community, which has a strong sense of ownership, especially through the ongoing work of Net Vir Pret. Despite strong reliance on the part of the NGO partners on donor funding, the initiative has been sustained for over a decade.

The initiative responds to challenges within a very specific context; however, elements of the intervention would lend themselves to replication in the context of other marginalized communities. Uptake would require, among others, strong local buy-in and the potential to fully support the transition of students into university, especially access to financial aid.

48 https://www.chrflagship.uwc.ac.za/rectors-statement-for-barrydale/

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8.5 Case Study: Siyaphumelela Project to Promote Equitable Student Success at the University of the Free State, South Africa[49]

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https://www.ufs.ac.za/

Main Contact

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Sources of Information

University Annual Reports, University website, project reports, workshop presentations & published articles.

Type of initiative

Promotion of equitable student success

Introduction

National higher education landscape and context

The public higher education system in South Africa is made up of 26 universities, which include traditional universities, universities of technology and so-called comprehensive universities that offer both general formative and technical/ vocational qualifications. In 2022, the total student enrollment in the public university system was approximately 1,1 million, with the majority (almost 60%) being women students. The demographic profile of students enrolling at universities has radically transformed from the apartheid past. In 2019, 77% of the student body was African, 11,8% White, 5,8% Coloured and 4,3% Indian[50]. However, marked racial disparities are evident in graduate outcomes, with African and Coloured students underperforming compared to their White and Indian peers (i.e., fewer African and Coloured students graduating in general or graduating in minimum time). Given the poor schooling and socioeconomic conditions of the majority of African and Coloured students, there has been a concerted focus from the university sector, supported by government policy, to address the academic development needs of the majority of students to achieve more equitable outcomes.

49 "We succeed" (isiXhosa)

50 Population group categories as used by Statistics South Africa

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The University of the Free State (UFS)

The UFS is a multi-campus institution located in the geographical heart of South Africa in the Free State Province. It is one of two public universities located in the province. It was established in 1904 as the Grey University College and changed its name to the University of the Orange Free State in 1948, by which time it was deeply rooted in the apartheid ideology of Afrikaner Christian Nationalism. The University only admitted its first black student in 1978. By 1993, its language of instruction shifted from Afrikaans to parallel medium Afrikaans and English. With the demise of apartheid and the establishment of the first democratic government in 1994 came the impetus for the transformation of the University, now named the University of the Free State.

Over a relatively short period of time, it has shifted from being a predominantly white university to one where by 2021, 82% of students were black African, 12% White, 5% Coloured and 1% Indian, with 77% being first generation students. Almost two-thirds of students come from schools located in poorer communities[51]. Seventy percent of undergraduate students receive grants from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). This is a proxy for socio-economic disadvantage, as only students with annual family incomes below ZAR 350 000 (USD 20 500) are eligible for NSFAS grants.

The University offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in 7 faculties, including a medical school and agricultural sciences. In 2021, the total enrollment was 40,899, of whom 62% were women and 16% were postgraduates.

Program Objectives and Modalities

Rationale and core objectives for the Student Success program

The racial composition of the student body began to transform in the early 1990s to better reflect the demographic profile of the country over the following decades. However, success rates continued to be characterized by stark racial differences._In 2009, the success rate[52] for White students was 81%, while that of African students was 66% or 15% lower. The narrowing of the achievement gap, while achieving better success for all students, has been the key driver for the UFS's adoption of student success as a social justice imperative and strategic priority for the transformation of the University.

Program design and implementation modalities

The Division of Student Development and Success (SDS) was established in 2006 to drive the redesign of the teaching and learning environment. Its work

51 As determined by the official categorization of public schools into 5 quintiles for purposes of allocating financial resources

52 Success rate refers to the total number of courses passed by students in a specific academic year relative to course enrollments. It is measured by the number of successful Full-time Equivalent Enrollments (FTEs) divided by the number of registered FTEs

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was influenced by the international student engagement research community and led to the adaptation of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from Indiana University to develop the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE), which was piloted in 2007. The student voice, through SASSE, became central to informing subsequent institutional interventions.

The SDS grew to become the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), which foregrounded student engagement and success in its work across all faculties. Student success became the primary goal of the UFS's Strategic Plan 2018-2022, signaling a strong institutional commitment to meeting its targets in this area.

Central to informing the UFS's student success work has been the University's involvement in the Siyaphumelela Programme launched by the Kresge Foundation. The US-based Kresge Foundation has supported South African universities since 1989 in two areas: building capacity for institutional advancement and promoting equitable student success. The Kresge Foundation initially funded 5 South African universities, including the UFS, to promote the use of data analytics to improve student success in South Africa. Following the success of the first funding cycle, the Kresge Foundation is currently supporting a second cycle, with participation extended to 17 universities, constituting the Siyaphumelela Network. Two key goals of the Network are to "establish a more student-centred culture in South Africa's higher education system to improve student completion rates and reduce race and gender equity differences; and improve institutional capacity to collect and used student data to improve student success across the higher education system"[53].

Through its involvement in the Siyaphumelela Network, the UFS has expanded its student engagement research, increased data analytic capacity and impact, and used the Siyaphumelela platform to further develop a number of high-impact practices (HIPs) that support student learning. HIPs are described as "intentional, scaled initiatives aimed at making a significant difference in students' development and success"[54]. At the UFS, the HIPs include the following:

- **First-year seminar:** UFSS is a compulsory credit-bearing module for all first-year students, which supports them in the transition from high school to university, with a focus on developing academic and digital skills and graduate attributes. Students also learn about making the most of their undergraduate experience in preparation for the world of work by introducing them to entrepreneurship, career development, employability and developing graduate attributes. The module supports over 8,000 students annually to transition into university.

53 www.siyaphumelela.org.za

54 Personal communication: Professor Francois Strydom, the Senior Director of Teaching & Learning

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- **The Academic Student Tutorial Excellence Programme**: A_STEP employed up to 450 senior students that served 13,500 students in 2021. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, tutorials reached up to 18,300 students;
- **Academic advising:** Approximately 17,455 students participated in some form of academic advising in 2019. The Siyaphumelela platform has enabled the UFS academic advising team to lead a 7-institution collaborative grant to offer an accredited Academic Advising Professional Development Short Learning Programme as a service to the Siyaphumelela Network institutions. The UFS has also contributed to developing a Learner Case Management System to support the advising function and enable data analytics to support advising practices;
- **Academic Language and Literacy Development:** The academic literacy modules enroll up to 10,500 students annually, based on incoming first-year students' performance in nationally benchmarked tests. In 2021, over 6,000 students received individual consultation and digital writing support from the writing center.

Other key initiatives supported by the Siyaphumelela platform include using the student engagement work "to promote a data-driven student voice to inform institutional practices, and developing data analytics to support student success. Regarding the SASSE, the Siyaphumelela work has provided a platform for the UFS to promote the use of a data-driven student voice to inform institutional practices through administration of the SASSE, and the complementary instruments, the Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE) and Beginning University Survey of student Engagement (BUSSE) in up to 9 institutions that form part of the Siyaphumelela Network"[55]. The UFS has also invested in developing data analytics to support student success through predictive analytics, which enables the tracking and nudging of students toward support.

The Siyaphumelela projects also include an extensive process of identifying and analyzing high-risk modules in various faculties with a view to supporting staff to undertake course redesign or to develop other appropriate remedial interventions, informed, for example, by the findings of various student engagement survey instruments. The success rates of all selected modules are tracked on an ongoing basis to evaluate progress.

Program funding

The interventions are resourced through 3 main funding sources:

1. The general operating budget of the University[56], which forms the bulk of the resourcing;

55 ibid

56 The two main income streams of the University are the subsidy from the government and tuition fee income, supplemented by some third stream income.

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2. The University Capacity Development Grant, which is an earmarked stream of government funding designed to assist public universities to enhance their teaching & learning and research capacity; and
3. The Kresge Foundation. Since 2014, the Kresge Foundation has awarded the UFS a core grant of USD 800,000.

In addition to this core grant, the University benefits from its membership of the Siyaphumelela Network through access to local and international knowledge exchange networks, capacity building/training opportunities, etc. The program is largely reliant on the University's own operating budget, supplemented by earmarked government funding, which bodes well for sustainability in the long term.

Linkages with National Policies

The program is well aligned with national policy imperatives. As described in the introduction, all universities in South Africa face the challenge of improving retention and completion rates, especially for students from poor socio-economic backgrounds. The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training stresses the "relationship between equity of access and equity of outcomes"[57]. Government policy is underpinned by the allocation of earmarked funding to support academic development initiatives at universities. Earmarked grants for 'foundation provisioning' are focused on steering university spending toward interventions that would enhance the chance of success of at-risk students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and include provision for extended degree programs where the first year is spread over two years, the inclusion of developmental mathematics and academic literacy courses and tutorials, etc.)[58] Earmarked funding has also been extended to other areas supported by the Department of Higher Education and Training through its University Capacity Development Programme, which seeks to contribute to:

"a. Equitable access and high levels of success for all undergraduate and postgraduate students;
b. The creation of an academic pipeline that enables the recruitment and development of adequate numbers of new academics in ways that transform the academic workforce and that provides for quality research development and teaching development opportunities for academic staff along the full career trajectory from recruitment to retirement;
c. Provision of development opportunities for professional staff in universities, including management staff that lead key portfolios and professionals that manage specific portfolios; and

57 Department of Higher Education and Training (2013), White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, Pretoria.

58 Department of Higher Education and Training (2012), Foundation Provision in Departmentally approved programmes, Pretoria

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d. The development and/or renewal of academic programmes and curricula that are of strategic importance and are national priorities.[59]"

As indicated above, the UFS program receives earmarked development funding toward meeting its implementation costs.

Obstacles Encountered and Mitigation Measures during Implementation

Professor Francois Strydom, the Senior Director of Teaching & Learning, identified the key obstacle to implementation as the "lack of capacity to drive data analytics. While the Siyaphumelela funding has enabled capacity development within the institution, the need for data analytics is growing faster than the capacity can keep up with. In addition, as the need increases, so does the level of sophistication of skills needed to advance innovations in data analytics. Unfortunately, the higher education environment cannot compete with the private sector in terms of attracting people with advanced analytic skills".

He further commented that "the COVID-19 pandemic also brought on particular challenges for the UFS (as with most other institutions worldwide). Students faced significant difficulties with network access, a lack of devices and the cost of data, which urged the UFS to implement a low-tech approach to teaching and learning. While the crisis inspired innovations in data analytics to identify, track and nudge students who were not participating in their studies, the UFS and other Siyaphumelela institutions are investigating the balance between success, quality, and addressing inequalities among our student groups in the wake of the pandemic".

UFS has three campuses, two in Bloemfontein and one in QwaQwa, a rural sub-region in the Eastern Free State. The Qwaqwa campus has approximately 8200 students who mainly come from the surrounding economically poor communities. The infrastructure in most small rural towns in South Africa does not adequately meet the needs of university campuses. This places additional responsibilities on universities to make up infrastructure and other shortfalls. However, the national Department of Higher Education & Training has invested in the expansion of access to the South African National Research Network (which is a high-speed network dedicated to education, research and innovation internet traffic) to all university campuses so that rural campuses now have comparable access to ICTs as urban-based institutions. This is important to the implementation of the UFS's student success strategy on all of its campuses.

Program Outcomes and Impact

Especially given the central role of data analytics in framing the UFS's student success work, the University places a high priority on monitoring and evaluating

59 Department of Higher Education and Training (2020), Draft Ministerial Statement on the Implementation of the University Capacity Development Programme 2021-2023.

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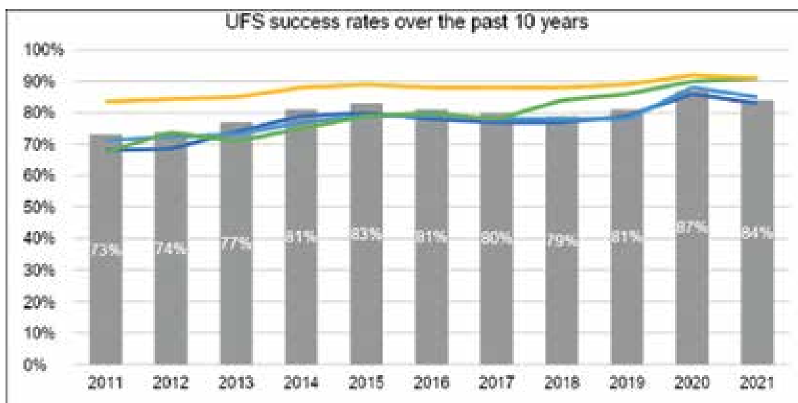
all aspects of program implementation with the view to improving outcomes. A wide range of indicators are used to monitor program implementation, including student participation in tutorials and other learning support interventions and how this impacts on performance, uptake of academic advising services, and attrition rates of first-year students. However, the key indicators of success focus on undergraduate success rates for all groups of students and the achievement gap between African and White students.

As illustrated in the table below, student success increased by 11% in the past ten years. In this period, the achievement gap between African and White students also declined from 16% in 2011 to 8% in 2021. While disruptions in the system, such as the #FeesMustFall protests in 2015-2016 and the COVID-19 pandemic, are reflected as slight decreases or increases in the success rates, the general direction of student success is positive.



The experience of the UFS student success initiatives (as refracted through the key performance indicators) highlights the point that educational outcomes are often uneven and impacted by factors not within the control of the program itself (such as the student protests and COVID-19 pandemic that both led to protracted closure of the institution). While programs need to analyze and understand the factors contributing to fluctuations in performance indicators, output trends are ideally assessed in the medium to long term.

The impact of the program is evident at a number of levels. For individual students, especially first-generation students from poor communities, a university qualification is potentially life changing for the individual and their families.

At an institutional level, the shift toward more equitable graduate outcomes is a testament to the University's stated commitment to student success as a social justice imperative. In turn, this has positively impacted the University's standing and reputation with the communities it serves, employers and other

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key stakeholders. The reduction in student attrition and 'drop-outs' contributes to greater efficiency and effectiveness and strengthens the pipeline of black students into postgraduate studies. Improvement in graduate output also contributes to improvement in the subsidy funding that the University receives from the government, which is based on both input and output parameters.

Potential for Replication and Scaling Up

All available evidence suggests that the Siyaphumelela initiatives are well embedded within the institution. The student success work has from the outset been driven by the senior leadership of the University and all of its faculties, with high-level professional and research leadership from the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Student success has been prioritized in successive strategic plans of the University, which has ensured alignment with budget allocations.

As discussed in section 2 above, the HIPs that form an integral part of the Siyaphumelela initiatives have been scaled up to reach entire target groups, including for example, all first-year undergraduates. Other interventions, such as the advising service, can be accessed by all students.

As an active member of the Siyaphumelela Network and through other higher education structures and communities of practice in the country, the UFS has invested heavily in sharing its experiences and research findings. In addition, it has made various of its platforms, such as the SASSE, available to other universities. In the case of the student engagement surveys, the UFS manages the process for sister universities, alongside the training of staff.

One of the explicit goals of the Siyaphumelela Network is to "*expand evidence-based student success efforts on a national scale, using a network approach that builds on existing strengths, shares capacity throughout the system, and serves institutions based on their current needs and abilities*". Within this framework, other universities in the network have also drawn on the UFS experience to inform their student success interventions as appropriate to their individual contexts, particularly in relation to the upscaling of interventions and academic advising.

The UFS's successful work has the potential to inform the approaches of universities in other countries, especially those that face the challenge of meeting the needs of the majority of their students coming from educationally and socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It is noteworthy that the UFS itself drew on the experiences of Georgia State University (GSU) in the USA to shape its own approaches, particularly in relation to academic advising. GSU, which is considerably better resourced than UFS, has been a pioneer in the use of data analytics to inform student success interventions, focused, in their case, on improving the outcomes for first generation students, students of colour and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. There is a growing body of evidence that points to the UFS's successful adaptation of the model to serve its particular needs and within its capacity constraints. However, any university wishing to pursue this path would require the infrastructure and

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human resource capacity to manage data management systems and platforms as well as a core staff of professionals with expertise in teaching and learning in higher education.

Concluding Comments

The UFS has embraced a radical transformation in the composition of its student body from one that was, until the late 1980s/early1990s, almost exclusively White and Afrikaans-speaking to a University that today serves a majority of black and first-generation students. The transformation has not been easy, especially in relation to the notoriously difficult challenges of shifting entrenched institutional culture(s), an aspect that is beyond the scope of this case study. However, an important part of the transformation process at UFS has been the centrality of its student success initiatives, where the adoption of shared goals and commitments by multiple stakeholders has contributed to breaking down silos. The University's participation in national and international knowledge exchange networks continues to play an important role in refining its approach to student success.

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Chapter 9.
Western Europe Case Studies

9.1 Overview

Author: Andrée Sursock

Current Trends in Western Europe

Several types of trends in Western Europe have increased diversity on campuses, and the awareness that issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) deserve greater attention. First, demographic trends have resulted in outreach to, and inclusion of, hitherto neglected student populations. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly attentive to new types of students as a response to several factors. The demographic decline in some countries is prompting HEIs to take initiatives to better promote what they can offer to new segments of the public. At the same time, arrivals of migrants from the Global South are putting pressure on many institutions to offer pathways for improving the social integration and mobility of these new student populations.

Second, the diversity within the campus population is a result of increased emphasis on the internationalization of higher education and research and on a stress on student and staff mobility. While the COVID pandemic and growing environmental concerns have put a break on physical mobility, higher education institutions are searching for ways to increase the internationalization of their campuses while limiting their carbon footprint.

Third, the greater emphasis on lifelong learning, professional development and the upskilling of the labor force has been driven by the growing economic importance of innovation and technology and the trend toward digitalization of many sectors of public life, including access to public administration. This has increased the demand for tech-sophisticated citizens, entrepreneurs, employers, and employees.

An additional factor of diversity is the aging of the population, which has led many higher education institutions to develop a lifelong learning offer specifically adapted to this mature segment of the population.

Until recently, gender and learners with special needs were the foci of attention in Western European higher education. However, changing campus populations have led institutions to expand their diversity agendas to new dimensions, such as economic, social and cultural diversity as well as sexual orientation. They aim to create a more holistic approach to promoting diversity by connecting its different dimensions.

Current challenges

Despite the fact that the equity, diversity, and inclusion agenda is recognized by higher education and governments alike, there are important challenges that

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need to be addressed to increase the chance of success. Some of these are intrinsic to higher education institutions; others are external constraints.

Foremost among the internal factors is the lack of financial and human resources to devote appropriate management resources to activities linked to inclusion and the need to raise awareness and knowledge within the university community of these issues through staff training. Teaching staff need to be taught inclusive learning and teaching methods; administrative staff need to learn how to manage diverse communities; and senior researchers need to be trained to run diverse research teams.

The external constraints have to do with the collection and use of data. Some national systems collect data on many characteristics of students and staff, but several Western European countries have legal restrictions on monitoring, for example, ethnicity or religion (which are often the markers of social exclusion). In addition, the requirements set by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which were adopted in 2016 by the European Union, have complexified the way in which personal data can be collected and retained.

Lessons learned from the four case studies

Four case studies that exemplify some of the trends mentioned above were selected. They include the integration of war and political refugees in Germany, preparation for entry into the labor market in Ireland, upskilling of the labor force and citizenry in Nordic countries and addressing racism in the curricula in Scottish universities. While each case study provided a wealth of details on how these issues have been approached, the following cross-cutting lessons at the institutional and system levels can be drawn from them.

At the institutional level, seed funding or project funding is not sufficient: sustainability is increased if attention is given to creating an institutional culture that embraces diversity and understands its benefits. Given the predominance of public higher education institutions in Western Europe, it is important that sustainability through core funding is seen as an essential success factor and that temporary funding cannot ensure the sustainability of an initiative.

At the system level, there is a need to address reform holistically: higher education cannot be seen in isolation as the silver bullet that will solve all problems. This means that all sectors should align with the higher education sector. It is equally important to align institutional initiatives with national policy and funding and that the national policy framework should aim at replicability and scalability by being sufficiently flexible to adapt to specific regional, local, and institutional contexts.

Furthermore, the four case studies show that a crucial success factor consists of bringing together the relevant actors be they the different educational levels (K-12 and higher education), policymakers, funders, employers, and groups representing the underrepresented, the disadvantaged or the vulnerable whether they are government agencies, NGOs, or business partners.

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9.2 Boosting Finnish engineering innovation competence and addressing the needs of unemployed adults and immigrants

Authors: Andrée Sursock & Katri Ventus

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution

The Finnish Institute of Technology (FITech) is a consortium that includes nine Finnish universities with technical faculties, Industries of Finland (Teknologiateollisuus) and the Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland TEK. The universities are Aalto University, Åbo Akademi, University of Eastern Finland, University of Jyväskylä, LUT University, University of Oulu, Tampere University, University of Turku, and University of Vaasa.

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Katri Ventus, COO & FITech ICT Project Manager, FITech Network University

Hanne Smidt. (n.d.) *Policy Paper. Boosting Digital Transformation through Lifelong Learning.* Nordic Initiatives. Association of Nordic Engineers.

Type of initiative

Boosting Finnish engineering innovation competence and addressing the needs of unemployed adults and immigrants.

Introduction

Finland's higher education system has been the focus of sustained attention over the years. The collapse of Nokia (which, with forestry, were the two pillars of the economy) led to a reassessment of Finland's economy and to a renewed emphasis on promoting innovation and diversifying the economic strengths of the country. The 21st century saw the mergers of a number of universities to improve the efficiency of higher education while continuing to ensure the geographical distribution of campuses and promote their innovative capacity. In parallel, the Finnish bureaucracy was changed in very profound ways, including in expanding digital access to public services. These changes led to the realization that the digital skills of adults and immigrants were essential for both the diversification of the economy and ensuring social and economic equity.

FITech Network University was founded in 2017 by seven Finnish universities of technology, the Technology Industries of Finland and the Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland (TEK). The University of Jyväskylä joined FITech in December 2019 and the University of Eastern Finland in March 2022. All Finnish universities that have the right to confer M.Sc. in technology degrees are members of the FITech consortium. The founding mission of FITech is to contribute to the development of the Finnish

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innovation capacity and to respond to the competence needs arising in the field of engineering. FITech does this through innovation communities focusing on specific initiatives.

FITech-Turku, the first FITech initiative, started in autumn 2017. There was a strong demand for M.Sc.-level engineering competence in the industrial companies in Southwestern Finland. The network responded to this by offering education (individual courses, minors, and a complete master's program) mainly to degree students, along with developing the collaboration between the industry and the universities. The funding for FITech-Turku is altogether 18 M€, and the initiative will be operational until the end of 2022.

In 2018, a discussion with 30 experts from various organizations, including four ministries (education, employment, social justice, and internal safety), on how to fund and support lifelong learning in Finland was facilitated by SITRA, an independent think tank that supports the development of sustainable well-being. A report was produced outlining the key challenges to promoting lifelong learning, including how to fund activities in this area.[1] The general orientation of this initiative was to create an ecosystem for lifelong learning in all sectors, but with a specific focus on the unemployed, immigrants and entrepreneurs.

The starting point of this activity was the recognition that competence requirements are changing rapidly in the workplace at the same time as the reform of the State administration creates its own competency challenges for civil servants as well as citizens. These changes require the continuous upskilling and reskilling of the population, addressing the growing digital skills gap within specific categories (such as the immigrant communities and the elderly), and providing social mobility through education opportunities. The change in the Universities Act at the beginning of 2019 made continuous learning a task for universities in Finland. A reform of continuous learning, prepared by a parliamentary group, was also launched in 2019 and will continue until spring 2023.[2]

In 2019, FITech operations expanded from degree education to continuous learning, as the network started two new initiatives, FITech ICT and FITech Energy Storage. The third continuous learning initiative, FITech 5G, started in early 2021. These initiatives offer individual university courses free of charge for adult learners, and the aim is to both upskill and reskill the Finnish workforce to meet the demands of the ICT and energy sectors. All these initiatives are funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture (FITech ICT 10 M€, FITech Energy Storage 0,7 M€, and FITech 5G 1 M€). Established ways of working and cooperating also enable the network to react quickly to new challenges. At the moment, FITech, together with industry partners, is planning a new continuous learning program regarding the hydrogen economy.

1 *Toward Lifelong Learning*. Sitra Studies 159, 2019. https://www.sitra.fi/app/uploads/2019/09/towards-lifelong-learning.pdf

2 https://okm.fi/en/continuous-learning-reform

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Relevant background information on case study higher education institution(s): academic focus, size, student demographics, etc.

The nine Finnish universities with technical faculties represent 120 000 students, Technology Industries of Finland (TIF) approximately 1600 companies that employ approximately 336,000 people in Finland, and the Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland (TEK) that represent 75 000 members.

Description of policy/programme/measures

Rationale for innovative equity initiative/policy/program/measures. What specific challenges did it aim to address (access, retention, financial, nonfinancial, several issues at the same time)?

The FITech ICT initiative aims to address the national shortage of professionals in the ICT sector in Finland both through upskilling and reskilling. Companies operating in the ICT field need more skilled professionals, but it is increasingly important to have more ICT-literate employees in other sectors because digital transformation concerns nearly all areas of society.

How was the initiative designed (actors and process)?

There was a significant need for skilled professionals in the ICT sector, and the Ministry of Education and Culture launched a funding call for higher education institutions to respond to the shortage of experts through quick-response measures. Members of the network already had good experiences from the FITech activities and decided to apply for funding.

The network agreed that traditional degree education cannot react quickly enough and that more cooperation with companies is needed. FITech prepared an application for the Ministry listing appx. 150 individual university-level ICT courses from the member universities. The courses included basic/Bachelor's level courses for professionals in all fields (e.g., change of job description or career change, better understanding of the business or processes) and advanced level courses for professionals in the ICT field looking to deepen and update their skills and knowledge. The universities agreed how they would organize the teaching and estimated how many students would take and pass the individual courses, which also served as the basis for how the universities would share the possible funding. The network decided that administration and student services would be taken care of jointly and that student recruitment would be planned and done together with working life organizations, including TEK and Technology Industries of Finland, and partner companies.

FITech applied for 10,9 million euros and received 10,1 million euros of funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The original project period was 2019-2021, but the project period was extended by two years in 2021 until the end of 2023.

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Core objectives of the initiative

- Increase the number of ICT professionals and the ICT competence level of the Finnish workforce in general. The aim is to offer 61,300 ECTS to at least 4,000 adult learners.
- Create new upskilling and reskilling opportunities by offering courses that had previously only been available for degree students
- Increase cooperation across higher education institutions by creating a joint course offering, student services and marketing for continuous learning

Implementation timeframe

FITech applied for funding from the Ministry of Education at the end of 2018 and started the initiative in early 2019. The first step was to gather a list of the first courses that would be opened to adult learners to develop the application process and a common platform that would serve as a gateway to all the available courses and to make a marketing plan. The first course offering was published in March 2019, with the first pilot course starting in April 2019. During the summer of 2019, the joint application process was finalized, the complete course offering was presented on the fitech.io website, and joint marketing activities were running at full speed.

Since then, the joint offering has been updated three times a year (spring, summer, and fall), and this will continue until the end of the project period. In addition to these three larger launches, individual courses can be flexibly added to the offering throughout the year. To date, over 600 ICT courses have been made available through FITech ICT.

Detailed presentation of the implementation modalities of equity promotion initiative (activities and main actors)

The steps taken to increase the number of ICT professionals and ICT competence level were as follows:

- Although this is a lifelong learning initiative, it opened up many of the bachelor's and master's level university courses to everyone. Prerequisites were removed to the extent possible, and the remaining prerequisites were listed as skills rather than other university courses that should be passed before the course in question.
- Create a platform as a one-stop shop that lists all courses available from the consortium. These are free of charge and target both degree students and lifelong learners. FITech offers beginner, intermediate and advanced courses in Finnish, Swedish and English to serve the whole workforce in Finland.

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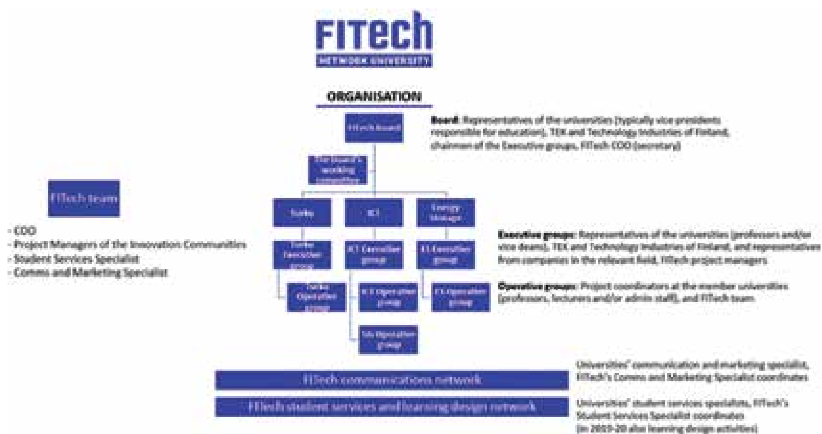
- Develop introductory-level courses that enable people with no technical or higher education background to get started on the subject before moving to more demanding courses.
- Target the whole working-age population in Finland: young and old, all genders, immigrants and Finns. The course offering has something for everybody regardless of their background, and it is open for all.
- Develop smaller, 1-3 ECTS courses (instead of 5-6 ECTS) that better meet the needs of working students. Offering online courses, possibility to self-paced studying and support during the studies (both from the teachers but also peer to peer). Offering courses that can be started flexibly throughout the year (not only at the beginning of the academic year or term).
- Develop pedagogical tools and offer support for teachers.
- Keep up with the digital needs of Finland by providing a range of courses that cover a broad variety of topics, from programming to data analytics to AI and machine learning. The topics are discussed with representatives from the industry in the executive group meetings approximately four times a year to ensure that the course offering is up to date.
- Feedback was collected from the students, and the statistics were checked regularly. This information is shared with the project's operation group, and action is taken quickly, as needed, to improve the student experience.
- Offering digital badges for adult learners as proof of their new skills (can be linked, for instance, to a CV or LinkedIn profile)

The initiative required a bespoke organization, which is presented in the figure below:



How was the initiative financed (external and internal funding)?

All of FITech's initiatives have been funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. FITech will continue to exist as a consortium. The network is

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currently planning continuous learning offerings regarding hydrogen and applying for funding for the project. There are also several current national-level development projects in lifelong learning in which FITech is taking part.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

Are there official policies/incentives in support of this type of initiative, or was it an original idea from the higher education institution itself? How have official policies facilitated or constrained the initiative?

The FITech ICT initiative came from the universities, organizations and companies involved with the FITech activities. The authorities were willing to support it financially. They were interested in addressing upskilling and reskilling, combating unemployment, and promoting cooperation across the higher education sector as well as between the industry and the universities.

All FITech universities have developed their own continuous learning activities during the project period. FITech and the ICT initiative have enabled universities to share best practices and to learn together and from each other. Many of the lessons learned have already been implemented at universities outside of FITech activities during the project period.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

What difficulties arose during implementation? How were there overcome?

While it was easy to attract those who were already motivated to move into the technological field (reskilling), it was more difficult to reach older graduates with technological degrees who needed upskilling. The network found that the best route is to (i) go through TEK, the employee union for staff with HE degrees, (ii) target the HR departments in companies and (iii) reach out through the universities' preexisting contacts and networks, including their alumni network.

Initially, potential learners dropped out at every phase of the study cycle (starting with registration), and a relatively small percentage of the learners who initiated the process in fact completed the courses. The high dropout rate was due to several reasons. Working professionals found the 5-ECTS courses too time consuming, notably if there was an examination at the end. The course requirements and description were not sufficiently clear for nondegree learners, especially regarding the course schedule and the difficulty level.

The consortium met these challenges by:

- Simplifying the registration process as much as possible to prevent any dropout due to user-unfriendly administrative processes.
- Offering smaller credit courses. One to three ECTS was found to be a good length.

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- Targeting the course descriptions and overall communication about the studies to the adult learners.
- Providing key information on prerequisites (e.g., the level of math or programming skills) required to succeed.
- Providing materials[3] and training sessions teaching online to the teachers.
- Explaining more clearly how much time a course requires, if it followed a certain schedule or could be studied at one's own pace, how to select a course with a suitable difficulty level, what are the learning outcomes, what kind of support can be expected during the studies and how the learners could interact with the teacher and the other learners during the course.

The initial high dropout rate also led to the introduction of open badges. While ECTS was the currency that was used to report to the ministry (and secure the funding), the network found that the number of ECTS was of little importance to the adult learner. The working student simply wanted access to the new research-based knowledge and/or to learn a new skill. Therefore, it was decided to try the open badges format that is very popular on LinkedIn. It seems to have worked well not only for the working students but also as a way of marketing FITech and the course offering.

Teachers found that new pedagogical practices were needed when degree students and adult learners were in the same classes. Learning specialists were hired to help in this area. Learning tips and information about studying techniques were also shared with the students.

Using a platform to cooperate and communicate lifelong learning offers to the target group is a key development, but it is a challenge to find the right format. A national platform for continuous learning is being planned as part of the Digivisio2030 initiative,[4] and FITech has been benchmarked as part of the development activities. Depending on the implementation schedule of the national platform and the future of the FITech activities, there may be a period during which adult learners will have to use the individual universities' channels to access information regarding the continuous learning offering.

Results of the innovative equity approach based on available information

FITech started as a STEM project but was expanded from degree education to adult education. For the degree students, FITech offered a wider selection of courses and minors than what they could have selected at their home university. As the FITech-Turku project period is ending, universities have made a number

3 see https://fitech.io/en/about-fitech/for-teachers/

4 https://digivisio2030.fi/en/frontpage/ The Digivisio 2030 project involves all Finnish higher education institutions to build the future of learning together. "The goal is a new era of learning where each of us can learn more easily and flexibly, thus accumulating the expertise needed in a constantly changing world."

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of bilateral and multilateral cross-institutional study agreements allowing degree students to include these studies in their degrees in the future.

Cooperation between higher education institutions has widened educational offerings and developed a focus on adult learning. Both courses and services have been developed for working learners. The teachers have designed new forms of interaction and support during the courses and alternative course evaluation methods instead of exams. For the services, the student administration systems currently in use have been designed for degree studies and do not fully support the needs of adult learners. Nevertheless, the processes have been streamlined as much as possible, and adult learners are offered joint support channels via FITech.

FITech enables professionals in working life to update their competences in ICT, 5G and energy engineering, and the participating universities offer approximately 200 courses that everyone can attend. The free offering targets professionals who want to deepen existing skills and develop new areas of expertise and can be attended both at the member universities around the country and (flexibly) online. Some of the introductory courses are also suitable for high school students and other younger audiences interested in, for example, programming. The universities have also created MOOCs that anyone can access without applying for a study right first.

Did the higher education institution(s) clearly define how the results of the initiative would be monitored and assessed when the initiative was designed and launched? What metrics/indicators were selected to evaluate the implementation (process, duration, resources), and the expected results?

In the funding decision, it is stated that the target for FITech ICT initiative is to provide ICT studies to at least 4,000 adult learners who will complete 61,300 ECTS. The universities have already agreed in the project application on how many ECTSs each of the universities participating in the initiative are responsible for. The initiative's budget has been divided across the universities in accordance with their ECTS targets, with part of the funding reserved for project coordination.

The FITech group monitors application and marketing statistics weekly and regularly follows the number of courses in the course offering as well as the number of ECTS credits completed by adult learners and degree students both at the project level and at the individual university level.

A survey on the impact of FITech studies is carried out once a year, whereas course feedback, including a score for the student experience, is collected twice a year.

Collaborations with various interest groups and the industry are monitored in the innovation community's executive group four times a year.

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What is the available evidence about the outputs, outcomes, and impact of the initiative?

At the end of June 2022, the number of individual course applications for the FITech ICT courses was 45 500. If all these courses had been completed, the number of ECTS credits would currently exceed 170 000, which is over twice the initiative's target of 61 300 ECTS. However, at the end of January 2022, the universities had reached only 46% of the initiative's ECTS target. The next update of the initiative's ECTS total will be available in mid-August 2022. The universities are sharing best practices and joining forces to invent new ways of minimizing dropout to meet the targets.

Regarding the number of adult learners, the universities have promised to organize ICT education for at least 4,000 adult learners. In mid-May 2022, the number of individual adult learners registered for FITech ICT courses was 8,434. In addition, over 9300 individuals have started studying at FITech MOOCs. Due to the different study administration systems in use, it is unfortunately not possible to tell how much overlap there is in these numbers. However, it is clear that the goal of 4000 adult learners has already been reached by this initiative. It has also become evident that a single adult learner will not study as many individual courses as originally expected.

The impact survey shows that out of the adult learners studying FITech ICT courses, over 90% are motivated for further education in the future, 87% learned completely new skills, 71% deepened or expanded the skills required in their current tasks, 64% now have a wider variety of job search options, 50% now have a more diverse job description in their current position, 43% were employed in a new position, 36% advanced to a more demanding position while continuing to be employed by the same employer, and 22% received a higher salary.

What lessons arise from these results?

The key success factors are as follows:

- Seed money given by the national authorities. This allowed the network to set up the offering and services as well as develop the offering to meet adult learners' needs.
- The capacity of the network to collect data on learners, analyze them and enhance provision on the basis of the available evidence.
- The capacity of the network to understand the need to provide access and respond to a variety of learners' needs.
- A close contact between the universities and the industry. This helps to secure employers' interest, and when learners have an agreement with their employer, their likelihood of passing increases significantly.
- The structure of FITech innovation communities enables a systematic dialog between universities, companies, and employers' and employees' organizations.

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- Possibility to reach the target groups for the courses via multiple channels: those of FITech, the member universities and other organizations as well as the companies participating in the FITech activities.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

Is the initiative "embedded" throughout the institution?

The courses offered via FITech are all based on degree studies and offered by the faculties or schools at the member universities. FITech courses and the course development done at FITech have also provided inspiration for other forms of continuous learning at universities. In addition, the study administration as well as communications and marketing at each of the member organizations have been involved in the activities.

Has the initiative been replicated or scaled up?

FITech ICT started at the same time as FITech Energy Storage, but as the funding and the student volumes were much higher, it has served as an example both for the Energy Storage initiative and the 5G initiative, which started two years later. FITech ICT in turn benefited largely from the FITech infrastructure created earlier by the Turku initiative.

Is there potential for replication and/or scaling up?

There is potential for replication provided the following seven recommendations are considered (Smidt, n.d., pp. 21-23):

1. All stakeholders, including social partners at transnational, national, regional, and local levels, have a shared responsibility. They should actively create and engage in strategic partnerships or networks that can support the development of lifelong learning offers in a public or private context.
2. Develop measures that ensure a faster transmission of research-based knowledge throughout society by offering short courses or microcredentials and opening access to courses that have been accessible only for full-time degree students.
3. Ensure that the offers build on the knowledge, skills, and competences that individuals have achieved through formal and nonformal education and throughout their working life.
4. Assure that continuing education offers can be very successful if the didactic and pedagogical format includes learning together or in communities of learners online, on-site or in a blended format.
5. Develop a joint online platform where courses can be made available to different types of learners.

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6. Evaluate and develop the current funding models for continuing education. Models that encourage and motivate both individuals and higher education institutions to engage should be introduced.
7. Capitalize on the knowledge from the existing initiatives and further advance multistakeholder cocreation. This could be accomplished through a dedicated network anchored on the political level.

What would be facilitating or constraining factors in the specific national/local context of the higher education institution(s) where the initiative took place?

Smidt captured the Nordic culture with respect to learning:

> "Learning together is a successful practice, which reaches back to the Nordic tradition of the folk high schools that brought young people with different backgrounds together to engage in learning to become citizens in the then developing democracies but also to get specific new knowledge on farming, support the co-operative movement and develop "Bildung". Learning together was considered important because it gave the individual a much better possibility to create a change with the new knowledge acquired because one becomes part of a network for change. The folk high school movement that quickly swept across all the Nordic countries can be seen as a key factor for the Nordics to have reached the status that they enjoy today." (Smidt, n.d., p. 20)

Could this initiative be successful in other countries/contexts?

Yes, provided the spirit of multistakeholder cooperation is strong or could be promoted.

Concluding Comments

What makes this initiative special?

- Multistakeholder cooperation, that is, cooperation across the university sector and with unions and companies.
- Collecting all Finnish/national university-level continuous learning offerings within the field of technology to one place and offering a single point of contact to all adult learners.
- Flexible learning offers, such as the combination of wider and shorter courses, open badges, online, blended and onsite courses, MOOCs, etc.
- The continuous evaluation of the experience and its enhancement.
- The learner-centered approach consists of adapting to demand.

What is the main takeaway?

It is essential to be proactive and ready to experiment with different types of learning offers and different modes of delivery. Multistakeholder cooperation leads to secure funding for at least the pilot phase.

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9.3 Integrating refugees into German higher education and the labor market

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https://www.h2.de/home.html

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Anne Lequy (rector until May 2022) and Ulrike Marquardt, project coordinator for the second project, "Career Starters".

A variety of documents produced by the University and the State of Saxony-Anhalt, including "Academic integration of refugees: the IpFaH pilot project at Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences": http://www.hochschullehre.org/?p=1322

Type of initiative

Integrating refugees into German higher education and the labor market

Introduction

National/local higher education landscape and context

This case study focuses on two consecutive initiatives seeking to integrate refugees from the Middle East (mostly from Syria) in Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences and in the German job market. While including refugees, the second initiative was extended to all international students, with or without a forced migration background.

In 2015, at the height of the Syrian war, a great number of Syrian refugees started to arrive in Europe. The then Chancellor Angela Merkel decided to open the German border to approximately one million of them. Many private citizens and public and private organizations mobilized to help, including universities.

DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service, responded to the unfolding humanitarian crisis with a funding program for the 2015-2019 period. The goal of this program was to integrate the refugees into the universities. The DAAD extended the original funding program of 2015-2019 to 2020-2022 for a second period; the goal of the program was also extended to the integration of international students with or without forced migration backgrounds into the German labor market.

An important aspect of the national context is the rapidly aging population in Germany. The German birth rate is in decline, and the arrival of a younger generation of refugees and international students was seen in a positive light

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by the German state and federal authorities. Graduating international students are valued for their skills. Germany is interested in keeping them and allows international (non-EU) graduates of German universities (Bachelor or Master holders) to remain in the country for 18 months after graduation to look for a job with a "job seeker visa". This visa is only relevant for non-EU students/citizens. EU students do not require a visa and have the same access to the German Labor Market as any German citizen.

Regionally, a relatively low number of foreigners live in the State of Saxony-Anhalt, and the state authorities are interested in keeping them in the region. Therefore, the refugees were not seen as a transient population but as future permanent residents of Germany.

Relevant background information on case study higher education institution(s): academic focus, size, student demographics, etc.

Founded in 1991, Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences focuses on professionally oriented studies that connect in-classroom learning with practical experience. As of 8 June 2022, there were 5130 students registered in the university and 130 academic staff. Approximately 8.4% of the students were international, of whom some were refugees. The precise number of refugee students is not known because universities are not legally allowed to identify students by their refugee status. It is possible, however, to calculate the exact percentage of Syrian students, of whom many are likely to be refugees: they represent 8.6% of all international students and 0.7% of all students. Furthermore, there are most likely also refugee students with other nationalities (e.g., from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq). Refugees are considered part of the international student population, and some of the activities that target them must extend to all international students to capture refugees.

Description of policy/program/measures

Rationale for innovative equity initiative/policy/program/measures. What specific challenges did it aim to address (access, retention, financial, nonfinancial, several issues at the same time)?

The arrival of masses of Syrian refugees constituted a crisis in Germany. It was urgent to provide Syrian students with educational opportunities and help them integrate into German society.

How was the initiative designed (actors and process)?

First project

The first project was designed in summer 2015 and started in autumn on the Magdeburg campus. The rector gave the impulse, the vice-president for international affairs and the head of the International Office developed the

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project. The initiative was entitled "Integration of political refugees with academic backgrounds or ambitions" (German acronym: IpFaH). Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences became one of the first universities in Germany to offer a sustainable concept for refugees with university entrance qualifications. Refugees interested in studying went through a multistage program: their qualifications were checked after individual interviews to check their suitability. If documents were incomplete, an assessment test was carried out. Prospective students were then offered a variety of integration tools, such as a buddy program, guest auditor status, psychosocial support, a summer school to prepare for their studies and a one-year intensive language course in preparation for their studies with the target level C1. They also received support for their later applications to other universities or to the employment market. The language courses were extended to the Stendal campus in 2017.

The integration concept was based on a broad regional and nationwide cooperation network. It became part of the overall internationalization strategy of the university. The implementation of the integration concept was evaluated internally.

Second project

The second project was designed by an International Office staff member who was part of the first project team. The DAAD funding program "Integra" gave the framework for the project, which provided funding for the following:

- one full position for a project coordinator (or two half-time positions) and for one student assistant on the condition that the project includes ways of promoting the volunteering of international students;
- workshops on career-related topics.

The design was then adapted to the specific situation at the university, ensuring that services and networks of the institution were included in the design (Career Center Services such as Career Fair and Company Partners, Alumni Network, Office for Regional Cooperation on the Stendal Campus, International Office networks such as the Buddy Program). In addition, the project involved networks and initiatives of Magdeburg and the region Saxony-Anhalt (such as Fachkraft im Fokus, program "Partner von Morgen").[5]

Core objectives of the initiative

First project: To promote the integration of student refugees in the university.
Second project: To integrate the refugees and other international students in the German job market.

5 https://expert-pm.de/partner-von-morgen and https://www.fachkraft-im-fokus.de/

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Implementation timeframe

First project: 2015-2019
Second project: 2020-2022

Detailed presentation of the implementation modalities of equity promotion initiative (activities and main actors)

First project
The university provided:

- Language courses in preparation for studying – "German as a Foreign Language" – target level C1 (12 months, Monday through Friday)
- Integration assistance: late summer school, buddy program, guest student program, among others
- Advice on all the steps a student will need to take to integrate the university (e.g., application, commencing studies, financing possibilities)
- Staff straining and a process to validate credentials/first degree without documentation
- Aptitude tests to place students in appropriate courses
- Questionnaires in three languages: Arabic, English and German
- Several guides, such as "Starting or continuing your studies in Germany"; counseling opportunities for refugees.

For this initiative, the university

- was awarded the Integration Prize of the State of Saxony-Anhalt (2015),
- was identified for its "inspiring practice" by the EU Commission (2015),
- was awarded the German Employers' Prize for Education 2016 from the Confederation of German Employers' Associations BDA in the category "Higher Education" (2016).

Second project

The university developed three types of activities to help refugees and international students integrate into the labor market:

1. Individual consultations were set up with each student to discuss available internships, part-time jobs, and voluntary activities as well as opportunities to work on a bachelor's or master's thesis in cooperation with companies and secure full-time jobs after graduation. These activities were seen as providing students with an opportunity to obtain a first professional experience, integrate into the city, master the language and better understand German culture. The individual consultation was an opportunity to answer any questions students

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may have, to encourage them to reflect on their expectations and to encourage them to participate in the workshops and job fairs offered by the university.

2. Workshops on career issues, such as "Finding a job in Germany, Understanding the German Job Market & German employers"; Application Seminar for Refugees and International Students"; "Get connected! Understanding Career Fairs in Germany"; "Get hired! Interviewing for Jobs in Germany". Workshops were available in English and German.
3. Networking event with employers, volunteer organizations, yearly company fairs.

How was the initiative financed (external and internal funding)?

First project: funding from the State of Saxony-Anhalt and from DAAD (to fund welcome program and student assistants to support the initiative).
Second project: DAAD, with funding from the Federal Ministry for Education and Research.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

Are there official policies/incentives in support of this type of initiative, or was it an original idea from the higher education institution itself? How have official policies facilitated or constrained the initiative?

The initiative was in response to an international and national crisis of the first order. The national and regional authorities had every interest in ensuring the integration of masses of refugees and settling them in Germany. The State authorities have developed services and documentation to encourage incoming international students and professionals. According to an official brochure, a quarter of the jobs and a third of training vacancies had not been filled recently.

The university also worked with a public agency whose mission is to provide volunteers to the local community.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

What difficulties arose during implementation? How were they overcome?

First project
The Federal State provided funds for refugees, which meant that this target group received support to which other international groups were not eligible. A qualitative study revealed that integration was only partly successful. This was due partially to the profile of refugees (the majority were isolated young males) and partially to a lack of fit between the university's educational goals and the refugees' goals and motivation as well as their lack of social integration

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in the university and in the local society. This was corrected after the first year with more emphasis placed on developing the refugees' sense of belonging and agency by extending existing university programs – such as the Buddy Program and the "Deutschlandstipendium" public-private scholarship program (by creating a "KombiStipendium" [6]) – to the refugees.

Second project

In the second project, the Syrian students were mixed with the international students. This presented the university with a new set of challenges:

- By then, many Syrian students had gone to German schools (three years) and had better mastery of German than the international students. Therefore, workshops were offered in both English and German.
- Reaching out to refugees was sometimes an administrative challenge. International students are registered with the international office. Refugees can fall between the cracks. Bildungsinländer (international students with German High School Diploma) are recognized as international students but do not have to register with the International Office and do not always use their services. Some refugees were very young when they arrived in Germany. They have gone to German schools and obtained their *Abitur* (high school leave diploma). Therefore, it was very difficult to identify who would need career services and who was thoroughly socialized into German culture.
- Non-EU international students have limited professional opportunities (for instance, in the number of internships they could take) as opposed to Syrian refugees, who have the same rights and privileges as German and EU students.
- Dealing with Syrian refugees required great cultural and psychological sensitivity since those students had suffered a major trauma and tended to not show their emotions or their lack of understanding of certain issues. The university had to rethink the intervention to adapt to the Syrian culture. Specifically, it proved important to establish a bond with each student before starting with the intervention itself. When evaluating each workshop, the university not only relied on the responses to the written questionnaire but also asked students during their individual consultation sessions.
- The COVID crisis led to the development of online teaching, which was more challenging for refugees than for international students. Refugees are much younger and are enrolled in Bachelor programs, while international students are older and enrolled in Master programs. The university provided extra funds to any students (regardless of their background)

6 https://www.h2.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Forschung-Transfer/deutschlandstipendium/swm.kombistipendium_flyer_aktuell.pdf

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during COVID to allow those in need to purchase tablets. Staff also spent time motivating students and lessening their frustration during the pandemic.

- Some students were afraid to actively participate in workshops because they were used to passive teaching/learning. Efforts were spent to make them active and to find a way to do that without pressure. The students tended to expect easy answers. The workshops gave them the necessary cultural background and went through the basics (such as how to write CV/cover letter). Staff also prepared them for the company fairs, helping them to develop appropriate expectations and making them reflect on their own cultural understanding of how to approach employers.
- The Career Center was responsible for the second project. It reports to the Prorector for knowledge transfer and research. This was an advantage in providing easy access to companies, but the geographical location of the office on the periphery of the campus meant that the international office was not close by, and students did not walk in easily. The Career Office made an extra effort to work closely with the International Office.

Results of the innovative equity approach based on available information

First project

The initiative was designed in a few weeks, in a context of urgent needs, due to the massive arrival of refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria in Summer 2015. Priority was given to helping the refugees and searching for external funding. The design of monitoring and assessment instruments occurred in a second stage. The overarching goal was formulated by the Federal Rectors' Conference on 24 September 2015, according to the concept presented by Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences. The aim was to enable 600 university-qualified refugees to study in three years (2015 to 2018) at three identified "language centers" (North, Central, South) in the state of Saxony-Anhalt. According to this overarching goal, the university should facilitate the registration of 15 participants in 2015, 35 in 2016 and 50 in 2017.

The International Office/Rectorate reported yearly to the Ministry of Higher Education of the State of Saxony-Anhalt (intermediate and final report on expenditure of funds). Occasional reports on specific aspects of the initiative were also sent to the State Parliament on demand.

Second project

The Career Center reports yearly to the DAAD. In addition to qualitative monitoring, the report includes the following quantitative monitoring data:

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- Number of conducted workshops and participant number
- Number of student consultations
- Number of placements for internships, work shadowing, trial days, discipline-specific jobs, nondiscipline-specific jobs, thesis topics or projects with industry partners, entry jobs, volunteering activities, job interviews, other (such as volunteering activities)

What is the available evidence about the outputs, outcomes, and impact of the initiative?

- A qualitative and quantitative study of the first project, based on following evaluation instruments: accompanying research project conducted by the Center for University Didactics and Applied University Research (located at the university), evaluation of courses on "German as a Foreign Language" (anonymous questionnaire), evaluation of the entire initiative (partly personal/anonymous questionnaires), classroom observations, regular language proficiency tests, semistructured interviews.
- Annual reports
- One Syrian student who participated in the first project received several awards and scholarships that support particularly talented students.[7]

First project (2015-2018)

As planned, the following course program of study-preparatory intensive language courses "German as a Foreign Language" was carried out at both locations (Magdeburg and Stendal):

- Basic course 2015/16: 30 participants
- Basic course 2016/17: 28 participants
- Basic course 2017/18: 42 participants
- Basic course 2018/19: 6 participants (only in Stendal)

Total: 106 participants in basic courses

- Advanced course 2016/17: 16
- Advanced course 2017/18: Number not available

Due to the difficult cooperation with the "Jobcenter" in Magdeburg, no further study-preparatory intensive language courses have been offered on campus in Magdeburg since the winter semester 2018/19. The courses offered were limited to the university campus in Stendal.

It is almost impossible to determine the percentage of refugees who have taken up studies after successfully completing the language course. There is

7 See https://www.h2.de/hochschule/aktuelles/single-news/single/otto-von-guericke-stipendium-fuer-hiba-mahmood.html

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no obligation for them or for their university to report. One can only try to reconstruct the overall picture based on limited information. For example, the university compiled a list of 15 students who successfully completed the first language course in the first project and took up studies in 2017.

Second project

Table 1: Impact of the program in relation to the integration of students in the job market

	Number of Placements of international students in the German Job Market between Sep 2020 and Jul 2022 (of which number of students from countries with refugee status) *
Internships	19 (of which 4 students from countries with refugee status)
Jobs/Side Jobs	8 (of which 0 students from countries with refugee status)
Industry based Thesis Topics and Projects	5 (of which 0 students from countries with refugee status)
Interviews	44 (of which 8 students from countries with refugee status)
Voluntary Commitment	3 (of which 1 student from countries with refugee status)

** The project focuses on vocational preparation for international students with and without a refugee background. Through workshops and consultations, placements are made that are only irregularly reported back to the Career Center (either by the students or by cooperation partners of the Career Center). A reporting obligation cannot be implemented for data protection reasons. Accordingly, the data are incomplete and reflect only a small percentage of placements.*

What lessons arise from these results?

The importance of developing a sense of belonging and the need for staff with intercultural sensitivity.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

Is the initiative "embedded" throughout the institution?

First project

Due to limited project funding, staff changed frequently, and none of the project staff was working at the university. However, the knowledge is still available in the institution (structures have been adjusted, culture has become more cosmopolitan). In spring/summer 2022, the International Office was able to draw on this knowledge for the rapid integration of refugees from Ukraine.

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Cooperation with the other universities in Saxony-Anhalt, which was intended as part of the three-year funding by the State Ministry (2016-2018), was not implemented. The reason for this is primarily found in the strong autonomy that the universities in Saxony-Anhalt enjoy. This means that they can set their own priorities within the target framework agreed upon by the ministry. Not every university management will have placed the academic integration of refugees as a top priority, especially if the university already has a high proportion of international students and is located outside the large cities of Magdeburg and Halle. In addition, universities of applied sciences currently have to coordinate a variety of externally funded projects, which means a great deal of administrative work and often explains that they do not feel able to take on a new project at short notice, even if the funding is secured through third-party funding.

Second project

The project works very closely with the following:

- The International Office and its Buddy Program, targeting international students.
- The English language study programs (Master of Water Engineering, Bachelor Sustainable Resources, Engineering and Management): Information sessions are held at the beginning of each semester for both programs, and the study timetables of both programs are considered in the planning phase of the career workshop dates.
- The GJU Project Office (Coordination Office of the German Jordanian University sending 15 to 25 exchange students to Magdeburg and Stendal each semester, of whom all must study and do an internship for one semester in Germany): Information session is held at the beginning of each semester for this student group.
- The Regional Office for Cooperation in Stendal.
- The Alumni Program.

Has the initiative been replicated or scaled up? Is there potential for replication and/or scaling up?

The universities that received DAAD funding created a network that meets four times a year to exchange experience.[8]

Sustainability is a challenge given that this is supported by external project funding, which results in staff turnover and loss of expertise at the end of the funding period. The university was both willing and able to provide its own funding to maintain the project. Even if the university did not have the financial resources to permanently create new staff positions, it would have been willing to continue funding the temporary staff. Nevertheless, if it had done so, the

8 For the list of funded universities, see https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/integra/

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university would have violated labor law, since temporary staff may not be hired to carry out permanent tasks, such as the counseling and support of refugees (outside of the testing of concepts). The university may not create a project from its own resources to establish temporary employment contracts. Budget funds may only be used for permanent tasks and permanent employment contracts. These legal hurdles led the university to part with project staff at the end of the externally funded project.

However, although the project could not be continued with the university's own funds, the initiative has had a sustainable impact on the university culture: the knowledge gained by the institution in the IpFaH pilot project has spread across the university, and the insights disseminated to the permanent staff of the university (see section below: *Is the initiative "embedded" throughout the institution?*

What would be facilitating or constraining factors in the specific national/local context of the higher education institution(s) where the initiative took place?

Facilitating factors: Very good network within the city, within the university and between the city and the university. The small size of both the city and the university contribute to good networking.

Constraining factors

First project

Only a minority of the participants were successfully qualified to study. The overarching goal defined by the Federal Rectors' Conference was not achieved completely. The following reasons explain this situation:

- Language course duration of 1 year for advancing from B1 to C1 is mostly too short (especially after an insufficiently qualifying integration course); entry level B1 is generally not sufficient (language gaps, lack of mastery of basic skills, entrenched errors, etc.
- No access to student status for the participants of the language course. The consequences are the limited use of the available benefits and consequently a limited engagement within the university. However, enrollment would have raised the serious question of securing living expenses. The job center in Magdeburg did not allow refugees to attend the advanced course after completing the basic course and considered that one year of language training is sufficient to prepare refugees for entry into the job market. Since the refugees in the language course are not students, they are not entitled to state support such as Bafög. They must register as unemployed and be available for placement by the job center. The staff at the job center in Stendal decided otherwise and made it possible for the

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refugees interested in studying to attend the advanced course after successfully completing the basic course.
- Partial lack of personal responsibility in the learning process (self-study, own learning spaces are necessary), insufficient use of the accompanying opportunities for language support.
- Centralized, inflexible examination modalities and requirements of the TestDaF (e.g., fixed dates, long processing time, delayed receipt of the results leading to increased pressure for timely applications to study).
- Challenge due to personal circumstances (e.g., health, family situation, time-consuming commutes, double burden due to part-time or full-time employment).

Second project: As important and necessary as it is, the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)[9] can complicate reaching out to the students because it limits the duration that the student information can be saved as well as whether students can be directly contacted without a first contact from the student side.

Could this initiative be successful in other countries/contexts?

Yes, and extension to other European countries has been facilitated by information exchange platforms established by the European Commission and the European University Association (EUA), among others.

Concluding Comments

What makes this initiative special?

It was timely, socially and politically important, and impactful for the individual students.

What is the main takeaway?

- It takes time to build trust with the students, understand their culture and consider their trauma.
- Successful academic integration is dependent on refugees' social integration in the university.
- Cultural change inside the institution to help the staff become more open to other cultures needs time and a sustained communication strategy.

9 https://gdpr-info.eu/

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9.4 Cooperative education for all undergraduate students at the University of Limerick, Ireland

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https://www.ul.ie and https://www.ul.ie/cecd/

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Dr Patrice Twomey, Director, Cooperative and Careers Division

Type of initiative (one line statement)

Cooperative education for all undergraduate students

Introduction

National/local higher education landscape and context. Relevant background information on case study higher education institution(s): academic focus, size, student demographics, etc.

The University of Limerick (UL) is one of 13 higher education institutions with degree awarding powers. Ireland has had a policy of equality, diversity, and inclusion for several decades now and has been quite successful in promoting access and attainment. The data on access for the overall UL student population are as follows: 7.4% students with registered disabilities; 3.6% mature students (aged 23+) and 7% from socially disadvantaged areas.

A National Institute of Higher Education was established in the City of Limerick (Ireland's third city) in 1972. It became the University of Limerick in 1989. Today, the student population totals 16 300, of whom 2 700 are international.

The first president introduced cooperative education (Coop), whereby the locus of learning shifted between the classroom and the workplace. The vision was an education based on the twin pillars of relevance and excellence, underpinned by a strong orientation toward Europe. Based on the Northeastern University (US) model, UL's Coop program started small, with the placement of 100 students. Today, it places ca. 2700 students a year across all disciplines. The program has continued to be central to UL's educational philosophy, student experience, and branding. Coop is consistently cited by students as one of their top reasons for choosing UL over other higher education institutions.

In the 1970s, the regional economic situation was challenging and characterized by a concentration of blue-collar manufacturing and a modest

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multinational base. Today, Limerick is the fastest-growing region in Ireland for foreign investment, outside of Dublin. A range of high-value sectoral clusters have flourished in the region, extending to pharmaceuticals, medical technologies, automotive, financial services, aviation and IT. Global companies with established operations in the region include ACI, AerCap, BD, Edward Life Sciences, Intel, Jaguar Land Rover, Johnson & Johnson, Northern Trust, Regeneron, and Stryker. Foreign direct investors are attracted by the rich pool of graduate and undergraduate talent in the region. In this context, UL and its Coop program are credited with supporting the development of the regional economy and enhancing its global attractiveness.

Description of policy/programme/measures

Rationale for innovative equity initiative/policy/program/measures. What specific challenges did it aim to address (access, retention, financial, nonfinancial, several issues at the same time)?

In line with UL's initial ethos, the aim of the cooperative education program is to promote the development of work-integrated learning opportunities for students in the region, providing them with a platform to develop their graduate capital. Specifically, this innovative program aims to address disadvantages (financial, social, disability) by removing barriers to professional networks and career pathways for all students – including those students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students with limited social capital, first generation HE students, and students with disabilities.

How was the initiative designed (actors and process)?

UL pioneered the concept of work-integrated learning in Ireland. Modeled on the Northeastern University Coop program, it was championed by the first president of UL. Coop is a formal, academically accredited, compulsory and integrated element of the academic program. Since the founding of UL, and reflecting international best practice, the Cooperative Education Division has had representation on the Academic Council, Management Council, faculty boards and the Academic Program Approval and Review Committee.

Core objectives of the initiative

Student employability is a cornerstone of UL's educational philosophy and a defining feature of the student experience. The Coop program responds to the requirements of the national economy and, as such, is a driver of what UL calls the "connected curriculum". Employability at UL is defined as being much more than employment and preparation for a future career. It is about supporting the development of students' future graduate capital, that is, the set of skills, knowledge, experience and understanding that makes UL graduates more likely to be resilient and successful in their future professional lives.

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Implementation timeframe

The Coop program has been continuously deployed throughout UL's 50-year history and is a core element of 56 degree programs, spanning all faculties.

Detailed presentation of the implementation modalities of equity promotion initiative: target population, activities carried out, main actors within the higher education institution/NGO and outside partners, resources

UL operates a centralized model of placement for both its co-op and school placement programs, whereby responsibility for securing placements lies with the University's Cooperative Education & Careers Division. The staffing includes the director, four co-op managers and seven placement officers. All students are assigned to a co-op manager, a placement officer and an academic adviser (a faculty member who is focused on the co-op). Each academic advisor has, on average, a group of four advisees, and students receive a visit from their advisor as a formal element of the co-op process.

Cooperative Education managers work directly with students in their specific disciplinary domain (Business, IT, Science & Engineering, Arts Humanities and Social Sciences). Coop managers have a strong business development role with employers, regionally, nationally and globally. They sit on the board of their relevant faculty and collaborate closely with faculty advisors on co-op-related matters. The global dimension of the Coop program is significant, with placements secured for over 320 students across 25 countries annually. For global placements, academic advisors visit students by geographical cluster.

Inclusivity is a hallmark of the program, which is delivered through a transparent, equitable and prescriptive process to all student groups. Inclusivity is also supported by employers. Students are eligible for the program, regardless of their discipline, vocational orientation of their program, academic performance, and disability. Some students, however, receive particular attention. For example, the Division has a specialist employability advisor who provides expert support for students with disabilities (e.g., work needs assessments), and students wishing to undertake global placements undergo a specialist preparatory program that includes resilience training. The program is supported by the delivery of a comprehensive schedule of in-person and online clinics, workshops, 1-1 consultations and screenings, as well as wide-ranging sectoral briefings, often codelivered with employers. International students find the 1-1 consultations particularly helpful.

Coop is, by design, disruptive, taking students out of their normal zones of interaction and inclusionary comfort. To support this stretching of the student experience from the classroom into the workplace, a very intensive preparatory program has been developed. The program encourages reflective, action-based learning, where lived experiences (positive and negative) are understood to be valid learning. The co-op managers work closely with employers to develop

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a shared understanding of work-integrated learning as a model of education rather than an exercise in early graduate talent identification and recruitment. Interestingly, evidence suggests that student learning and skills development during placement is higher during periods of economic downturn. A possible explanation may be that students and employer partners are more invested in the connection, a connection that may be more transient in more buoyant economic contexts.

The nature of the Division's support of students is firmly focused on the potential of employability to empower all students (rather than pastoral support per se). This is particularly salient for student groups where social, economic or disability-related exclusion may have formed part of their earlier experiences. Coop empowers students to develop and test their human capital (subject discipline knowledge and concepts, transferable skills), social capital (access to employer networks), psychological capital (development of resilience and adaptability) and their identity capital (development of their professional self-concept, identification of their values and motivations, clarification of their career objectives). The focus is, by design, very practical. To ensure equity of opportunity and inclusive provision, the Division collaborates very closely with UL support services as well as a range of expert external organizations.

There are over 7,000 employer contacts in the UL network. This frequently audited network expands to take account of new degree programs and labor market trends and is often driven by specific student requests/requirements (where practicable). In terms of timeline, students undertake a 6-8-month placement. Most students go on Coop during their third year of study: from January to August or June to January. As a formal element of their academic program, students receive credits for successful completion of Coop. There are normally three elements to the assessment of co-op placements, as follows:

- An interactive student visit form is completed by the employer/supervisor during the academic visit (on-site or online); it gives the employer's evaluation of the placement to date. The form has been redesigned to take into account the post-COVID world of work. The design of the form reinforces the eight domains of learning outcomes.
- The final employer evaluation is sent to the employer/supervisor toward the end of the placement to assess the student's performance over the entire duration of the placement.
- The Coop Report, written by all students, must follow a set structure and is graded on a pass/fail basis. In addition, all engineering students must keep a written record of their training in a logbook.

How was the initiative financed (external and internal funding)?

The funding comes from UL's core budget. The university adheres to a predominantly paid placement model while also encouraging students to

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engage with voluntary social enterprise placements. For students going on global placement, the Division manages the Erasmus Work Placement program, which provides financial support for students going on placements within EU/EFTA countries. Additional Erasmus funding is made available to students with disabilities as well as those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

Are there official policies/incentives in support of this type of initiative, or was it an original idea from the higher education institution itself? How have official policies facilitated or constrained the initiative?

The University of Limerick introduced the concept of cooperative education in Ireland. Many other HEIs have followed its lead. UL retains a national leadership position in work-integrated learning (WIL) and employability. Work-integrated learning in HE is now supported by national policy in Ireland. The Division has a proactive approach to its understanding of learning and is informed by global WIL policies, practices and trends. It collaborates closely with other leading WIL universities, and the director sits on the executive council of the World Association for Cooperative Education and Work Integrated Learning WACE.

The division maintains a special relationship with the national and regional development authorities to build talent capacity, to respond to labor market trends and to encourage FDI inward investment.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

What difficulties arose during implementation? How were they overcome?

At the time of implementation, the concept of work-integrated learning was very novel and somewhat cautiously received by more traditional Irish universities and some graduate employers. Employer caution was overcome by a strategy of sustained, close employer engagement across sectors including pharmachem, aerospace, equine, financial services, medtech, sport, arts, food, construction, automotive, IT, electronics, law, media, education, international development, and public service. With a population of 5 million, Ireland is a relatively small market, and the undergraduate placement market has come to be a contested and congested space for many "competing" HEIs. To remain ahead of the competition, the Division must be strategically aware and embed innovation as business-as-usual across all its activities. Crucially, this large-scale program must be robustly underpinned by operational excellence.

The Division has always driven a culture and orientation of inclusion. However, when the Coop program was first established, there were no concrete structures or processes to specifically support the employability development of

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particular student groups such as students with disabilities. Even the language of inclusion had yet to be developed. These were significant challenges. One of the strategies employed by the Division was to work with employers to promote the business case for diversity and inclusion. In 2020, the Division partnered with Northern Trust to establish the Mid-West Disability Forum. Attracting over 100 regional employers and national expert organizations, the forum focuses on enabling students' employability across recruitment and selection, on-boarding, management of disclosure, work needs assessments, reasonable accommodations and assistive technologies.

COVID-19 presented huge challenges in terms of labor market chaos and downward pressure on recruitment. However, it also acted as a catalyst for innovation and served to underscore the resilience of Coop, even amid a global crisis. A decision was made not to cancel the Coop program – on the basis that this would further disadvantage the general undergraduate population as well as particular student groups. The Division pivoted almost overnight to online provision, developing targeted interventions to help students prepare and deal with the challenges of hybrid, remote and onsite placements. New systems were developed, e.g., to support ongoing relationships with employers, to maintain evaluation oversight of the program and to ensure continuity of opportunity. COVID appears to have given rise to a surge of interest in global placements on the part of students, with UL extending its global geographic and sectoral presence.

Results of the innovative equity approach based on available information

Did the higher education institution(s) clearly define how the results of the initiative would be monitored and assessed when the initiative was designed and launched? What metrics/indicators were selected to evaluate the implementation (process, duration, resources), and the expected results?

Indicators include placement rates (overall and by student group), graduate employment rates, self-assessed student learning outcomes across eight competency domains, levels of sectoral coverage and geographical reach (nationally, globally), and employer assessment of student performance.

The division systematically gathers data on all the above indicators. Placement data are measured weekly, and the analyzed data are presented to the faculty board annually. All students self-assess their skills development pre- and post- their Coop placement. These data are collated, analyzed and presented at the program and faculty levels every year. A graduate outcomes survey is undertaken on an annual basis, generating over 3,100 individual responses. Data are analyzed by course, faculty, degree award, gender, salary, sector and geographical location. While equity groups do not receive any targeted attention apart from the personalized support that all students receive, data about the

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students with disability are analyzed to ensure that the possible employment challenges they face do not discriminate against them. The data are circulated to all faculties, departments, and divisions across the university. They are also made publicly available on the Division's website. Data from the employer evaluation process are analyzed and shared with the relevant deans. All data generated and presented by the Division are used to support accreditation and quality processes.

What is the available evidence about the outputs, outcomes, and impact of the initiative?

Over 97% of the university's graduates gain employment within six months of graduation or choose to continue with further studies. This percentage has been consistently higher than the national average for the university sector.

The *Graduate Outcomes Survey* of 2020 graduates shows the following results (https://www.ul.ie/cecd/graduateemployers/whyemploy):

- Seventy-five percent of the Class of 2020 went directly into employment.
- Seven percent of graduates are working globally.
- Seventeen percent of the class is engaged in further study or training.
- The results suggest that higher educational attainment is positively linked to higher employment rates, with 96% of UL PhD/Research graduates and 80% of Taught Masters graduates in employment.
- The sectoral spread of the Class of 2020 employment is of interest, viz., Human Health and Social Work (19%), followed by Professional, Scientific and Technical sector at 15%, Financial, Insurance and Real Estate (14%) and Industry (13%). At 11%, education remains a significant sector for graduate employment.

The co-op program aims to guarantee equality of opportunity. The long-term career development of students is not analyzed through this narrow lens since the program is but one factor that contributes to the students' professional trajectory. However, the disruption of experiential learning through the co-op promotes soft skills and the notion that lifelong learning is an important component of career development.

What lessons arise from these results?

Inclusivity on the scale of the Coop program is undoubtedly a challenge, particularly in a competitive external environment. However, UL's Coop program has proved reassuringly hardy during the COVID pandemic. Its commitment to inclusivity did not waver, and consistency of outcome was achieved for those students who may have been considered marginal, disadvantaged or particularly vulnerable in the COVID crisis. This was driven by a belief that students who struggle arguably stand to benefit most from the opportunity of Coop.

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Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

Is the initiative "embedded" throughout the institution? Has the initiative been replicated or scaled up? Is there potential for replication and/or scaling up?

Coop is embedded throughout UL. Students from 56 degree programs across all disciplines and faculties have access to this initiative as a formal, integrated component of their academic program. The program has expanded from 100 placements in its first year to 2700 placements, with 320 students undertaking their Coop placements globally.

What would be facilitating or constraining factors in the specific national/local context of the higher education institution(s) where the initiative took place?

Increasing competition within a relatively small external labor market is a very tangible constraint in undergraduate placement programs. Successful work-integrated learning programs such as Coop are dependent on external factors outside of the control of the university (e.g., external economic turbulence, changing labor market trends, recession and fluctuating employer demand). Downward pressure on higher education funding may have an impact on resourcing in what is an intensive, student- and employer-facing program. Stakeholder complacency (at the level of the student, employer or university) can also be a challenge.

In terms of primacy, the main facilitating factor of successful large-scale undergraduate placement programs, such as Coop, is a high level of overt and informed support/sponsorship from institutional leadership. Ongoing innovation is another key factor of success; it is a requirement for both remaining relevant and maintaining a leadership position in a constantly changing external environment.

Could this initiative be successful in other countries/contexts?

The model transfers to different global contexts, as evidenced by the UL global placement program, where students undertake Coop within a network of 25 countries across all five continents.

Concluding Comments

What makes this initiative special?

The multiaward-winning Cooperative Education program is one of the largest undergraduate placement programs in Europe. Under the program, placements are secured for 2700 students across all disciplines – regionally, nationally, and globally. Inclusivity is the guiding principle of the program, and this is

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underpinned by an institutional belief in employability as an instrument of empowerment and inclusion, particularly for students who enter HE from a position of potential disadvantage. Some 1,600 employer partners with the program in any one year and, for many of them, Coop represents the first point of contact with the University.

What is the main takeaway?

This is a program that manages to balance the deployment of a very large-scale placement program with a deep and embedded concern for inclusion and equity. It is a lean operation with modest staffing and supported by a high commitment to operational excellence. The program has been "stress-tested" by the pandemic, and its resilience has been well evidenced. This centralized model is an example of a one-stop shop for employer, student, and faculty stakeholders. Coop managers have the capacity to work as credible, informed, and cultural mediators across all disciplines and stakeholder groups. A network of over 7000 employer contacts is continuously expanding to respond to employer and student demand. Partnership is at the heart of the program's philosophy, and the Division views both employers and students as dynamic cocreators of the program. Finally, the undergraduate placement market in Ireland is relatively small. In this context, a global orientation and a commitment to innovation have ensured UL's continuing leadership in the domain of work-integrated learning.

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9.5 Decolonizing the Curriculum in Scotland

Authors: Andrée Sursock & Catriona Cunningham

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution or NGO working in higher education

A collaborative project was created in response to an open call from QAA Scotland to bring together institutions from across Scotland to explore decolonizing the curriculum. This project was led by Edinburgh Napier University (then University of Stirling). It also included St Andrews University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, The University of Edinburgh, Queen Margaret University, Abertay University and Sheffield Hallam University.

https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/about-enhancement-themes

https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/resilient-learning-communities/completed-projects/decolonising-the-curriculum-in-the-time-of-pandemic

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Professor Catriona Cunningham, Head of the Department for Learning & Teaching Enhancement, Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland, UK

https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/resilient-learning-communities/completed-projects/decolonising-the-curriculum-in-the-time-of-pandemic

Type of initiative

Decolonizing the curriculum across disciplines.

Introduction

National/local higher education landscape and context

The Scottish higher education system includes 19 institutions with degree-awarding powers. The current policy is to ensure that by 2030, 20% of students entering university come from Scotland's 20% most deprived backgrounds. Several initiatives (such as providing tuition-free education and financial support, notably for students with disabilities) are contributing toward this objective.

The initiative of decolonizing the curriculum is part of the effort to ensure student attainment. The initiative is a component of the "Enhancement Themes" of the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework. The Enhancement Themes are coordinated by QAA Scotland, which is part of the UK-wide Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

The Enhancement Themes are owned by the higher education Scottish sector and aim to enrich the learning experience of students studying in Scotland.

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The Scottish higher education sector identifies and agrees on a specific theme and works collaboratively to develop new ideas and models for innovation in learning and teaching.

Relevant background information on case study higher education institution(s): academic focus, size, student demographics, etc.

The Scottish higher education sector tends to be socially homogeneous, which can make the lived experience of students of color challenging. This theme was identified as being important, notably when COVID-19 was shown to have had a negative impact on students of color who were more at risk of suffering from financial hardship and limited access to digital resources. It also coincided with the aftermath of George Floyd's death in Minnesota as well as a growing need for Scotland to acknowledge the ways in which colonialism has shaped our higher education institutions.

This is also part of broader effort from universities in the United Kingdom to advance anti-racism and racial equity, given the growing awareness of the attainment gap for students of color, as demonstrated by a report published by the representative association of UK universities in 2019.[10]

Description of policy/programme/measures

Rationale for innovative equity initiative/policy/program/measures. What specific challenges did it aim to address (access, retention, financial, nonfinancial, several issues at the same time)?

The Theme is meant to increase access and retention by providing students with an environment in the classrooms that considers different social and political viewpoints and ethnic origins. It is also about acknowledging the way that colonialism has created institutional structures and shaped curricula. There is a need to question the assumptions about whose voices are (in)visible and how diverse perspectives can be brought in, regardless of the discipline.

How was the initiative designed (actors and process)?

The initiative was designed by two colleagues from Edinburgh Napier University in collaboration with eight higher education institutions, with the support and funding of QAA Scotland.

Core objectives of the initiative

The goal of this initiative was to ensure that the higher education environment in general and the classrooms in particular are sensitive to the social and political

10 https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-07/bame-student-attainment.pdf. For a full discussion, see also Felix, M. (2022), Anti-racism in UK Higher Education. *Centre For Global Higher Education Working Paper Series*, N° 83, June 2022. https://www.researchcghe.org/perch/resources/publications/working-paper-83-1.pdf

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experience of students of color and international students and that account is taken from multiple points of view on historical events and on built-in structural inequalities in present-day society.

Implementation timeframe

The initiative was launched in January 2021 and will end in July 2023.

Detailed presentation of the implementation modalities of equity promotion initiative: target population, activities carried out, main actors within the higher education institution/NGO and outside partners, resources

A working definition of decolonizing the curriculum was adopted:

> *For the purposes of this project, decolonisation of the curriculum is the process of analysing and interrogating how disciplines have been shaped by colonial history, and the impact of this on individuals and communities. The decolonising process seeks to challenge and dismantle the ways in which the academy operates to privilege the needs of some groups and marginalise those of others.*

The three main aims of the first project phase included the following:

- To create an interinstitutional network for decolonizing the curriculum with diverse representation from staff and students as well as critical friends
- To run three cross- and intradisciplinary online workshops involving all staff and students to facilitate discussion of what decolonization of the curriculum means in different disciplines and contexts
- To produce a concluding report on the work of the cluster, including evaluation of the work.

The activities included the following:

- Hiring five student interns to collect and curate anonymized stories of instances where students felt uncomfortable in classrooms and to audit programs to show biases.
- Developing case studies across disciplines and other types of resources
- Running events open to all to discuss the results of this work

The workshops have been instrumental in organically enlarging the initial cluster and disseminating resources across and within institutions.

How was the initiative financed (external and internal funding)?

The project has been funded by QAA Scotland. Individual members within the network have used the project as a catalyst for further work within their

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own institutions, some of which has led directly to newly funded posts. For example, at Abertay University, there is now a dedicated colleague charged with developing anti-racist work explicitly as part of a new EDI[11] role.

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

Are there official policies/incentives in support of this type of initiative, or was it an original idea from the higher education institution itself? How have official policies facilitated or constrained the initiative?

Issues of equality, diversity and inclusion have been high on the UK higher education agenda since at least the early 2000s. Initially, the issue was one of providing better access to students of color, notably in elite institutions.

More recently, the debate has moved to consider how the curriculum is shaped by the UK's past colonial history and how it continues to perpetuate structural inequalities. Furthermore, to address the attainment gap and gather useful institutional data about the experience of students of color, Advance HE led to the creation of a race equality charter[12]. Advance HE – the UK's national body for learning and teaching in higher education focused on enhancing higher education – has also designed a Curriculum Review Tool to audit how each curriculum supports access and inclusion.

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

What difficulties arose during implementation? How were they overcome?

The first year of the project focused on awareness-raising and encouraging colleagues to understand the urgency and need for this work. The three workshops each featured mini 'provocations' from colleagues across the sector who have important research and stories to share. Attendance at these (virtual) workshops was high, but the challenge, as ever with these initiatives, is that those colleagues were self-selecting. There is a need to bring those who cannot see or will not acknowledge the need to decolonize curricula. In the second year of the project, the amount and diversity of work now going on in different institutions in this area is noticeable. The interconnected nature of this project, based on trust and exchange within an interinstitutional network, is a good way of sharing effective practices as well as exploring the challenges of developing such initiatives, particularly in the face of any misunderstanding.

Thus far, there has been no resistance to this specific project, although as indicated above, colleagues do support one another with the challenge of trying to change deeply embedded institutional and sector-wide practices that make it difficult to decolonize the curriculum. There is also awareness that there is a

11 EDI refers to equality, diversity and inclusion.

12 https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter

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great deal of focus on the topic in the UK media as the woke culture debate rages on. Therefore, it is important to focus on individual teaching practices within the disciplines as a way of supporting individual colleagues wanting to make change in their own context. Starting with student perspectives and experiences is a powerful way to begin the conversation, as colleagues are often horrified to hear of the microaggressions and other challenges their students have faced, totally unbeknownst to them. These stories are the most powerful tool for change.

Results of the innovative equity approach based on available information

Did the higher education institution(s) clearly define how the results of the initiative would be monitored and assessed when the initiative was designed and launched? What metrics/indicators were selected to evaluate the implementation (process, duration, resources), and the expected results?

The project has produced one evaluation report thus far (link above) with metrics focused on engagement through events and materials as a way of gauging impact. This year's evaluation draws on the resources and materials produced to develop a deeper understanding of how to reach beyond the converted in different disciplinary and individual contexts. What is emerging in this work is the importance of student-staff partnership – the diverse voices of the students in both the evaluation and development of this work have been essential. A focus for the coming year will consist of an evaluation of the evolving views of students and academics.

The final stage of evaluation will take place in the third year, where the project will take a creative storyboarding technique inspired by the work of Liz Austen and Stella Devitt-Jones (2019)[13]

What is the available evidence about the outputs, outcomes, and impact of the initiative?

Since their introduction in 2003, the Enhancement Themes have explored areas of emerging interest and value to the higher education sector in Scotland and helped drive positive change. By participating in Enhancement Themes projects, educators benefit from collaboration with peers outside their own institutions, explore enhancement-driven research in diverse fields, and help shape best practices. Students can directly contribute to Enhancement Theme projects and steer the theme through representation at committees. Student-led projects within each theme allow students to select and explore areas of particular interest to them and help enhance the student learning experience in Scotland.

With respect to this particular theme, the main outcomes of this work include the following:

13 https://shura.shu.ac.uk/25964/1/guide-to-using-evidence.pdf

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- raising awareness of this issue;
- developing skills to approach the issue and address identified needs; and
- building a community of practice around the theme of decolonizing, which was formed primarily with colleagues in institutional learning and teaching roles rather than those affiliated with particular disciplines.

What lessons arise from these results?

Three key issues surfaced, which are linked to the ethnic profile of key staff in Scottish universities, who tend to be white:

- how to ensure buy-in from the university leadership and from a wider set of colleagues
- the specific role of those in academic development to further this agenda by identifying interested colleagues and ensuring that their work is amplified
- the importance of engaging with students

Most university principals in Scotland signed a declaration to tackle racism in 2020, indicating that there is strong support from the top.[14] Two academics led the project, and its implementation worked differently in each institution, depending on the context and the progress achieved in each of them. Staff volunteered to join the network – this was not a top-down initiative. The seniority of staff ranges from professor to lecturer, as well as academic development colleagues in strategic institutional roles. Disciplinary colleagues are involved, although usually with a learning and teaching (L&T) remit (e.g., Director of L&T in Psychology).

Students, particularly those with lived experience of racism, are very keen to share their stories and to support and help this work. For this specific project, the only students involved in the work were the student interns. However, the project – now incorporated as a project of the QAA Scotland's Anti-Racist Curriculum work – is going into its third year and will be reaching out to more students and more staff to capture their stories and experiences and create a digital artifact that will highlight the diversity and plurality of the Scottish university communities.

Assessment of potential for replication and scaling up

Is the initiative "embedded" throughout the institution? Has the initiative been replicated or scaled up? Is there potential for replication and/or scaling up?

The Enhancement Themes are supported by a committee structure that ensures their replication across the Scottish higher education sector and their embedding in each institution:

14 https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/scotlands-universities-stand-united-against-racism/

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- A Theme Leaders Group (TLG) determines, supports and evaluates the work undertaken and leads their respective institution in embedding it. The TLG meets four times every academic session.
- A Theme Leadership Team (TLT), a small group of academic and student leaders and QAA Scotland officers directs the work of the TLG. It meets six-eight times during the academic year.
- The Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC), on which sit a representative from every Scottish institution, four student members and observers directs the overall work. SCHEEC meets three times during the academic year.
- QAA Scotland supports theme activities, including funding, depending on the needs of each specific activity. A team of quality enhancement specialists is available as needed, and an annual conference showcases the work that has been done.

In many institutions, postgraduate certificates in learning and teaching in higher education are now embedding inclusion and the theme of decolonizing the curriculum. These PG certificates (which often have a slightly different focus in each institution) are the qualifications on which most universities enroll their new lecturers to help them develop pedagogical knowledge and their teaching practices and to familiarize them with institutional learning and teaching policies. There is a growing group of program leaders who are working to decolonize their curricula so that new staff are aware of the importance of developing anti-racist curricula and diversifying the perspectives they bring into their teaching materials and reading lists.

What would be facilitating or constraining factors in the specific national/local context of the higher education institution(s) where the initiative took place?

Above all, for Western academic colleagues who have no lived experience of the challenges facing so many colleagues and students of color, this work requires starting with oneself. The only place to start is by exploring and acknowledging one's own privilege, one's own racism (see Saad. L., 2020) and the multiple identities one inhabits. Although it is challenging, it is essential to initiate conversations within module and programme teams even if they may make some colleagues uncomfortable. This requires good facilitation skills as well as an understanding of why it is important. This is where student voices and experiences play a powerful and important role.

There is a clear role for academic developers and those in learning and teaching roles to start these conversations. Advance HE's *Anti-racist Curriculum Project Guide* is helpful.[15]

15 https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/anti-racist-curriculum-project/project-guide

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From an institutional perspective, according to Felix (2022, p. 4)[16],

> Despite positive progress and examples of good work, there is a long road to travel. Major issues include improving the representation of staff of colour in senior academic positions, increasing the representation of students of colour particularly at higher tariff universities and in reducing awarding gaps, accelerating the efforts to decolonise research, and fostering greater compassion and intercultural understanding within the culture of universities.

Could this initiative be successful in other countries/contexts?

The colonial history of each of our European countries is similar and yet different – the French approach to colonialism and its 'mission civilisatrice' (civilizing mission) differed from the British approach, and yet the reverberations continue to be felt across Europe and the world today. Similarly, in other Western contexts, such as the USA, Australia and New Zealand, there is an increasing move to confront the past and acknowledge responsibility for the damage inflicted on people of color and indigenous peoples. Although this movement began in South Africa[17], the context and educational systems are different.

Concluding Comments

What makes this initiative special?

The initiative relies on a tested methodology to develop, scale up, implement and embed Enhancement Themes in Scotland.

What is the main takeaway?

Success factors include:

- Identifying colleagues, including international colleagues, who are comfortable or willing to engage with the issue.
- Enabling academics to take ownership of the project. For instance, following one of the workshops, a reading group of academics from different institutions was formed to share good practices in relation to the theme.
- As a first step, focusing on the disciplines and on the language to use.
- Enlisting interested students and giving them responsibilities for some activities (research, running workshops).

16 Felix, M. (2022), Anti-racism in UK Higher Education. *Centre For Global Higher Education Working Paper Series*, N° 83, June 2022. https://www.researchcghe.org/perch/resources/publications/working-paper-83-1.pdf

17 Chantiluke, R., Kwoba, B., and Nkopo, A. (2018) Rhodes Must Fall: The Struggle to Decolonise the Racist Heart of the Empire. London: Zed Books Ltd.

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Chapter 10.
Synthesis: Innovative Initiatives to Improve Access and Success

Introduction

For several decades, Roma children have been systematically discriminated against and often segregated into special schools in many Eastern European countries. As a result, the pipeline of high school graduates qualified to enter higher education has been constrained. In Hungary, however, the creation of an NGO dedicated to the promotion of educational opportunities for Roma youths has been a game changer, helping hundreds of them to enter university and complete their studies successfully.

The University of Western Australia is a selective university in Perth, often perceived as out of reach for aspiring students from traditionally underrepresented groups. To improve the integration of incoming students, the university recently shifted from a deficit model to a more inclusive approach relying on comprehensive student support services. The new approach is aptly captured by the Student Support team's philosophy: "We are no longer the Rolls Royce for a few; we're the bus for the many."

African universities are usually not considered major players in the world of science. However, the renowned scientific journal Nature has just published the results of a path-breaking study conducted by the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) in Rwanda that lays out a new method to identify COVID-19 at low prevalence. AIMS has been successful in attracting female students to undertake postgraduate studies in mathematics.

These encouraging stories are but three examples of the many innovative initiatives taken by higher education institutions throughout the world to improve access and success for traditionally underserved groups. They illustrate the life-changing impact that these programs can have. In this context, the present chapter seeks to identify common patterns and success factors analyzed in the case studies undertaken for this book, with the purpose of drawing the most relevant lessons arising from these experiences and exploring the potential for sustainability, replicability, and scaling up of equity promotion initiatives launched at the institutional level.

Main Characteristics of the Case Studies

The twenty-nine cases analyzed in this book encompass 21 countries or territories in 7 regions of the world, as described in Table 1. The overwhelming majority of institutions featured in this book are public universities, ranging from elite universities in the capital city to more open access institutions in

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regional cities. The two outliers among the case studies are the Hungarian NGO dedicated to helping Roma students (Romaversitas) and the Kazakh public university that was scheduled to merge with a top private university. In the first case, the minority status of the Roma population in Hungarian society and the generally hostile attitude of the government explain why an NGO had to step in to offer positive solutions to increase opportunities to access higher education and be successful. In the second case, it is interesting to note that the equity initiative was implemented by a new management team at the public university (Satbayev University) that was "transplanted" from a neighboring, prestigious private university (British-Kazakh University).

Table 1 – Main Characteristics of Case Studies

Country	Type of Institution	Main Equity Target	Nature and purpose of Intervention
Argentina	Public university (National University of Cordoba)	Adult population	Community engagement through lifelong learning courses
Australia	Consortium of 8 public universities in the State of Queensland	First Nations, low socioeconomic status, residents of rural and remote locations	Collaborative outreach activities to widen participation
Australia	Public university (University of Western Australia)	First Nations, low socioeconomic status, residents of rural and remote locations, students with disabilities	Embedded equity strategy combining large-scale outreach, alternative admission pathways, financial aid, and dedicated support services to increase access and success at elite university
Australia	Public university (Swinburne University of Technology	First Nations	Dedicated Indigenous Student Services team to facilitate recruitment, progression, completion, and cultural safety
Brazil	Public university (UNICAMP)	Low-income and underrepresented ethnic groups	Affirmative action for access and dedicated support to improve retention
Canada	Public university (University of British Colombia)	Indigenous students	Affirmative action for access and dedicated support to improve retention in first year
Chile	Public university (University of Santiago)	Low-income students	Affirmative action for access and dedicated support to improve retention

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Country	Type of Institution	Main Equity Target	Nature and purpose of Intervention
China	Public university (Fudan University)	Low-income/rural area students	Integration of low-income students in culture of elite university to improve success chances
China	Public university (China University of Mining and Technology)	Low-income students	Interest-free student loans
Ethiopia	Public university (University of Gondar)	Students with disabilities	Comprehensive support to attract and nurture targeted students and prepare them for employment
Finland	Consortium of 9 public universities	Adult population	Reskilling and upskilling of adult works as lifelong learning action
Germany	Public university (Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences)	Refugees	Support for successful integration into university and transition to labor market
Hong Kong (China)	Public university (University of Hong Kong)	First generation students	Improving the probability of success through privately funded extracurricular learning opportunities
Hungary	NGO (Romaversitas)	Roma students	Academic services, role modeling, and financial support to improve access and success
Hungary	Public university (Budapest Business School)	First-year students	Mentoring program to facilitate the integration of new students
India	Public university (Indian Institute of Technology -Bombay)	First-year students and all students	Mentoring and academic support for first-year students. Gender awareness for all students
India	Public university (Jawaharlal Nehru University)	Traditionally underrepresented groups	Affirmative action and additional financial aid to improve access
India	Public university (Bharathiar University)	Traditionally underrepresented groups	Improving retention through additional financial aid for low-income students

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Country	Type of Institution	Main Equity Target	Nature and purpose of Intervention
Ireland	Public university (University of Limerick)	All undergraduate students	Cooperative education to facilitate labor market insertion
Kazakhstan	Public university with private-sector management (Satbayev University)	First-year students	Assessment of gaps in academic preparation and English language and compensatory courses
Malaysia	Public university (University Teknologi Malaysia)	Traditionally underrepresented groups	Increased access through endowment fund for financial aid
Mexico	Public university (Autonomous University of Chapingo)	Indigenous students	Affirmative action for access and dedicated support to improve retention
Nepal	Public university (Tribhuvan University)	Traditionally underrepresented groups	Financial aid to increase access and drive to improve diversity among academic and administrative staff
New Zealand	Public university (University of Auckland	Māori students	Whole-of-institution approach to indigenizing an elite university to become an institution of choice for Māori students and staff
Romania	Public university (Babeş-Bolyai University)	Students with disabilities	Dedicated office to support students with disabilities and fully integrate them into university life
Rwanda	Pan-African network of Centers of Excellence (African Institute for Mathematical Sciences)	Female students and students from countries with limited postgraduate education	Promotion of access of female students to postgraduate education in mathematics through financial and academic support
Scotland (UK)	Consortium of 8 Scottish public universities	All students	Decolonization of curriculum to increase student attainment
South Africa	Public university (University of the Free State	Historically underrepresented students (mainly Black)	Identification of at-risk students through data analytics and promotion of equitable student success through academic support and curriculum development

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Country	Type of Institution	Main Equity Target	Nature and purpose of Intervention
South Africa	Public university (University of the Western Cape)	Students from poor rural areas	Outreach through the creative arts (puppetry) to increase the pipeline of students from rural areas
South Korea	Public university (Seoul National University)	Students from other regions, especially rural areas	Admission quotas to promote regional balance
United States	Six public tribal colleges	Native American students	Holistic student support services to improve retention

In four other cases (Finland, Scotland, the State of Queensland in Australia, and the United States), the equity promotion initiatives were implemented by a consortium of colleges or universities rather than a single institution, showing how national or subnational equity promotion policies can nudge higher education institutions to join forces as they implement innovative programs for which public funding is available. It is also worth noting that the Rwanda case study reviews a scholarship program that has been implemented Africa-wide by all campuses that are part of the network of the African Institute of Mathematical Sciences (AIMS).

Table 2 shows the range of equity groups targeted by the institutions showcased in the book, revealing that some universities do not actually target any special group, others focus exclusively on one selected group, while the majority of universities have equity policies for several groups. Universities in Western Europe generally belong to the first group, reflecting the assumption that policies that are meant to bring everyone on board should be sufficient to address equity and inclusion concerns. This assumption is not always borne by facts. The reality is that young people from underprivileged groups—for example, members of marginal ethnic groups, children of migrant workers, and refugees—enjoy fewer opportunities and are often left behind as a result of direct and indirect social exclusion mechanisms and discriminatory practices (European Commission, 2022).

Compared to recent studies that looked at the definition of equity target groups across countries, this book's case studies point to three interesting developments in the range of groups that higher education institutions seek to serve (Salmi, 2019). First, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a growing number of universities—notably in South America—have come to look at stress and depression as a temporary disability state that deserves special attention from an equity viewpoint. Second, Indian universities use the "trailblazer" expression to qualify first-in-their-family students who do well during their higher education studies and then go back to their community as role models.

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Third, Australian universities consider students from families that do not use English as their main home language as an equity target group.

Table 2 – Equity Target Groups

Equity Target Group	Frequency
Indigenous/ethnic groups	10
Low-income groups	6
Traditionally underrepresented groups	5
Students from rural areas/remote locations	5
Students with disabilities	3
First-generation students	2
Adult population	2
First-year students	1
Women	1
Refugees	1
No targeting	1

What Drives Equity Initiative

The case studies have revealed a continuum from top-down to bottom-up processes that explain why institutional equity promotion initiatives were launched. The main developments documented in this book fall under the following categories:

- Activities mandated by government
- Initiatives promoted by government
- Initiatives launched by university leaders
- Initiatives coming from individual units within universities
- Initiatives promoted by external players.

All these models have their advantages and limitations and require a range of supportive measures to succeed.

The South Asia case studies illustrate how national and/or subnational governments can play a key role in promoting equity in higher education by mandating affirmative action and student aid interventions for designated target groups that all higher education institutions must implement. However, in the absence of sufficient financial resources from the national government, this approach may have only a limited impact, as observed in Nepal and some of

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the Indian institutions. Another potential limitation is that higher education institutions often go through the motion of implementing government policies in a compliance mode that is not always owned by institutional leadership teams or the entire university community. In contrast, in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the intervention of the state government has brought complementary resources to provide financial aid to needy students at Bharathiar University. Similarly, Jawaharlal Nehru University managed to mobilize additional resources internally to expand the student aid program mandated by the federal government.

While the Australian federal government and the national authorities of New Zealand do not impose equity promotion activities as legal obligations, they do influence their universities through a combination of national targets and financial incentives, as illustrated by the case studies in this book. The availability of substantial grants makes it easier for higher education institutions to design and implement their equity promotion initiatives, as was also observed in the Canadian province of British Colombia. The New Zealand government also requires each university to develop Learner Success Plans. The Irish government also has clear equity targets that can induce universities to be proactive, as the case of the University of Limerick shows. Scotland has another interesting way of promoting the equity agenda in the context of its quality enhancement program, which makes resources available to interested institutions on a voluntary basis. The book's Scotland case study exemplifies how this kind of program has led to innovative activities to decolonize the curriculum in several universities.

Many of the case studies in the book analyze initiatives that came primarily from the university leader or leadership team. This is especially true in Africa, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Latin America, all being regions where national governments are not always as active in promoting the equity agenda as in Australia and New Zealand.[1] For example, the initiative launched by Babes-Bolyai University on behalf of students with disabilities responded to a glaring gap in national higher education policy and legislation. In Brazil, many institutional affirmative action initiatives, including that of UNICAMP, were very influential in the formulation of a national policy and legislation, the national quota law for federal institutions, which has had an enormous impact on the country's higher education system.

In some cases, interestingly, innovative projects were the initiative of one person or one unit within the institutional structure who successfully convinced the leadership that it was worthwhile to be embraced by the university as a whole. One of the most emblematic examples in this respect comes from the University of Santiago in Chile (USACH), which launched what later became the PACE program. Initially, designed by a USACH professor, Francisco Gil,

1 In Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa stands out as having put equity at the heart of its higher education agenda since the end of apartheid.

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who dedicated his professional life to finding pioneering ways of supporting students from underprivileged families through outreach, remedial and affirmative action projects, the program became the trademark of USACH. In Romania, the initiative in support of students with disabilities started within the Department of Special Education at Babes-Bolyai University before becoming a program for the entire university. The same happened in Germany with the program for refugees and in Scotland with curriculum decolonization efforts.

Finally, a few of the case studies illustrate how financial support offered by foreign organizations can have a significant impact in triggering worthwhile equity promotion initiatives at the institutional level. The Mexico case study documents how the Ford Foundation's *Pathways to Higher Education* program encouraged and supported universities interested in starting equity projects on behalf of underrepresented indigenous communities. In Romania, the Office for Students with Disabilities benefited from the financial contribution of a Dutch NGO at the beginning of its existence. In Africa, the MasterCard Foundation's scholarship program has been instrumental in allowing promising young people, especially talented women, to enroll in high-quality local institutions as a valid alternative to studying in Europe or North America, where the brain drain risk is significantly higher.

Drivers of Success

The availability of external resources is crucial not only in triggering equity initiatives, as shown in the previous section but also as a driver of success because it translates into additional funding that higher education institutions can use to sustain or scale up their equity programs/projects/measures. In particular, experience from Australia, Canada, Ethiopia, Romania, and South Africa showed that expenditures in support of special needs students can be very high.

The case studies showed that the external resources come essentially in the form of earmarked public funding, as was the case in Finland and Queensland, for example, or in the form of grants from foreign donors (foundations or NGOs), as illustrated by the African and Romania examples mentioned above. Australia stands out as the nation in the world that has provided the most substantial funding over a long period of time to promote its equity agenda and targets.

Outreach programs are an essential component of any effort to improve access to higher education, even in open access systems such as the Argentinian one, as demonstrated by the University of Cordoba experience. Geographical distance is an obstacle that cannot be underestimated and that requires effective ways to engage with population groups living in remote areas. Similarly, in Hungary, reaching out to high school students throughout the country was a key element of the Romaversitas interventions to increase higher education

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opportunities for Roma students. Outreach efforts are also useful to build connections with future students early on.

Along the same line, retention is higher when there is a special focus on the students' experience during their first year of study at the university. The transition from high school to higher education is usually the most challenging phase for students, especially those who come from underprivileged backgrounds. Many of the case studies included strong, holistic support for at-risk students during their first university year. For instance, IIT Bombay designed and implemented special first-year interventions, and Budapest Business School put in place a mentoring program for first-year students. This was the case at UNICAMP as well, at the University of Santiago de Chile and the Autonomous University of Chapingo in Mexico. A comprehensive approach to student support was a crucial success factor for transitioning indigenous populations into higher education in Canada and the United States. Providing on-campus housing is also an important part of a positive learning and living environment for students from traditionally underrepresented groups.

Multistakeholder cooperation is another important driver of success, as revealed by the Canadian, Finnish, Irish and US experiences. The likelihood of achieving good results is higher when universities are not working alone but are implementing their equity promotion policies through alliances with external partners. This feature, which had been documented in the case of Colombia in a previous study sponsored by the Lumina Foundation, serves two purposes (Salmi, 2019). First, it helps universities find additional resources to implement their equity initiative. The Office for Students with Disabilities at Babeş-Bolyai University received support from a Dutch NGO at the beginning. Working with professional associations can increase the ownership of the initiative, as happened in Finland in the case of adult education. Involving the indigenous community closely was key to success in Canada and the USA.

Embedding an equity initiative that started in one corner of a higher education institution as a core activity for the entire institution goes a long way toward augmenting the chances of success and guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of the program. Some of the measures that help achieve this purpose include appointing a high-level dedicated equity promotion leader, putting in place a dedicated unit with high visibility throughout the institution, assigning substantial resources to implement the program, and offering adequate incentives. Involving faculty members and recognizing their contributions are equally important for the successful retention of students from traditionally underrepresented groups. Making it a shared responsibility between the dedicated support units and the academic staff helps to ensure that no qualified student is left behind. All these factors were clearly illustrated by cases as diverse as the affirmative action program at UNICAMP in Brazil, the cooperative education scheme at the University of Limerick in Ireland, or the activities in support of Indigenous students at Swinburne University of Technology in Australia, for example.

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Sometimes, starting small can be very useful as a pilot experience that can later be extended to the entire university or to a larger set of equity target students. For example, the Office for Students with Disabilities at Babeş-Bolyai University started its program by concentrating first on blind students. The success of that narrowly focused program allowed the institution to address, at a later stage, the needs of all students with disabilities who are enrolled at BBU.

Implementation Challenges and Mitigation Measures

Any new program or project initiated by a higher education institution is bound to encounter unexpected difficulties, as illustrated by the equity promotion case studies analyzed in this book. It is therefore important to take stock of these challenges and learn from the mitigation measures taken to inform the design of future initiatives.

When the equity promotion measure or project starts in a single university department under the impulsion of a committed academic or administrator or a small group of dedicated people, it can be challenging to obtain ownership from the entire university community. In several cases, expanding ownership was made possible by open-minded leaders who saw the potential benefits for the entire institution and gave their full support to the project initiators. Providing additional resources and communicating widely about the project are two complementary ways of getting traction and generating a positive reception throughout the institution.

Changes in leadership can bring setbacks to equity initiatives, as illustrated by the Kazakhstan case. In that respect, programs imposed from above are more vulnerable than those that originate from within a university and are well embedded into the institutional fabric.

Institutional autonomy is important to enable a culture of innovation. In the Kazakhstan case, again, lack of autonomy made it difficult to introduce modifications in the curriculum that could be perceived as challenging the status quo, even though they were thought necessary to help at-risk students.

Universities can have a hard time implementing their equity programs when there is a national mandate that is not sustained by sufficient public resources, as illustrated by the South Asian cases. Even when external resources are available to help finance equity interventions at the institutional level, universities sometimes face higher costs than expected, as illustrated by the experience of Western Australia University, which found that outreach activities to first-generation students living in remote areas were quite resource intensive.

Several case studies confirmed the importance of having a good institutional database to monitor progress and conducting regular surveys to assess the actual needs of students and the effectiveness of equity interventions. Being able to rely on quantitative and qualitative feedback information helps to identify bottlenecks and initiate corrective measures in a timely fashion. The student

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wellness surveys administered by the Indian universities analyzed in this book are good examples in that respect. Free State University in South Africa adjusted its equity promotion interventions based on the results of the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE), itself adapted from the US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) developed by Indiana University. Furthermore, being able to illustrate the success of an initiative and disseminate it widely, based on solid evidence, ensures that it is better supported by the academic and administrative staff, as the Canadian example demonstrates.

Australia and Brazil were the two countries with the most extensive data information systems at the national level to orient and monitor equity promotion policies, and within Australia, the State of Queensland has the longest time series with equity-relevant data.

Conversely, it is difficult if not impossible to measure the success of innovative approaches in the absence of a well-defined monitoring and evaluation system. In the case of the endowment fund at Malaysia Teknologi University, for example, the university leaders found it challenging to assess the impact of the program due to a lack of adequate data. Similarly, it proved hard to measure the results of the first-year interventions in support of disabled students at the Budapest Business School due to the lack of a well-thought out monitoring system that could identify students most at-risk of dropping out.

Universities in several Western European countries—France and Germany, for instance—face the additional challenge of not being allowed to collect all relevant sociological data about their student population because the constitutional provision against any form of discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin is widely interpreted as a strict injunction to assume that everyone is treated equally. This is why Magdeburg-Stendal University had to expand its path-breaking program for refugee students to all international students for fear of being accused of discrimination.

In addition, the General Data Protection Regulation adopted in 2016 by the European Union forces all institutions to eliminate any data about individuals after two years. This severely limits the ability of universities and researchers to conduct longitudinal studies.

Another noteworthy finding is linked to the measurement of success. Universities typically consider that their equity promotion programs achieve their goals when the targeted students complete their degree. However, some of the cases have shown that progress measured as successful graduation may not be sufficient because students from traditionally underrepresented groups often find difficulties entering the labor market that graduates from middle-class and upper-class families do not encounter. This is the case in countries where employers not only rely on objective indicators of competences but are also influenced in their recruitment decisions, consciously or unconsciously, by the social background and the social capital of job seekers. A few of the case studies confirm this finding. Data from Australia show the persistence

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of discriminatory behaviors among employers.[2] The German case study documented how the participating university found it necessary to provide extra support to refugee students ahead of the job search process by boosting their capacity to understand employers' expectations and to facilitate their integration into the labor market. Similarly, the Ethiopian case study of students with disabilities illustrated the need for an integrated approach that starts with outreach to increase participation, continues with adequate retention measures to ensure that incoming students graduate without difficulty, and culminates with interventions to ensure the successful integration of graduates into the labor market.

Prospects for Sustainability and Replicability

The case studies showed a great variety of outcomes in regard to the sustainability and replicability of equity promotion programs. The most sustainable initiatives are those that are clearly aligned with the vision, mission, and strategic plan of the university, that are fully embedded into the institutional culture, and that benefit from a stable funding source that can keep the program sustainable and even make it grow. Working in close partnership with multiple stakeholders, both within and outside the institution, is also a strong factor of sustainability.

In terms of replicability, several cases documented that other higher education institutions adopted the good practice pioneered by the universities analyzed in the book. This happened, for example, with the program for refugees implemented by the University of Magdeburg-Stendal, which became a model for all other German universities. Similarly, the cooperative education scheme initiated by the University of Limerick was taken up by several other Irish universities.

While it is not uncommon to see universities from the same country learning from each other or even emulating each other as evidence of the replicability potential of successful equity promotion initiatives, some of the case studies analyzed in this book had outstanding results that are not often seen in terms of replicability. A first example is the program initiated by the Roma NGO in Hungary (Romaversitas), which was adopted in several other European countries. Another noteworthy example is what happened in both Brazil and Chile, where the government took up the affirmative action projects launched by UNICAMP and the University of Santiago, respectively, and made them into a national program. In the Brazilian case, the federal government was inspired by the UNICAMP experience to pass a law stipulating quotas in all public universities to boost the participation of Afro-Brazilians in higher education. In Chile, the Ministry of Education scaled up the affirmative action that was the trademark of the University of Santiago and offered substantial government funding to other universities interested in implementing the same model. To date, 29 universities—both public and private—have joined the program.

2 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8475416/

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However, not all governments are aware of or willing to acknowledge good equity initiatives taken by individual higher education institutions. In India, for instance, Nehru University went further than the national mandate in designing and implementing their affirmation action program. However, recent changes in national policies with restrictive guidelines about entrance test requirements in the case of affirmative action have put Nehru University's programme in jeopardy.

Some of the examples in the book highlight the importance of attending to institutional culture to ensure a friendlier environment. As the Canadian example illustrates, managing such a complex change process requires stamina and perseverance as well as the support of the university leadership. If external funding is involved, it also requires working with external stakeholders to emphasize the long-term support that is needed. Thus far, the Scottish example of decolonizing the curriculum has managed to remain under the radar of politicians who would not agree with it, but examples from other countries (not included in this book) illustrate the fragility of these types of interventions if they enter the political crossfire.

A general finding arising from some of the case studies in this book is that national governments would be well advised to take the positive results of institutional-level equity innovations into consideration, either to encourage other universities to emulate these initiatives or at the very least to avoid undermining the success of these initiatives.

Conclusion

The case studies analyzed in this book have covered a wide range of situations in terms of national contexts, geographical locations, targeted equity groups, and types of interventions. This diversity provides a useful range of experiences to confirm findings from previous international studies undertaken by the Lumina Foundation and identifies new aspects that had not come up before.

Three success factors come out clearly from the results of the case studies. First, no single measure is uniquely sufficient to address the needs of traditionally underrepresented students. One of the contributing authors aptly used the term "string of pearls" to describe the combination of financial and nonmonetary interventions that are necessary to address the needs of equity target groups, and this combination varies depending on the context and the situation of each individual student. The University of Western Australia complemented its widening participation initiative (a *de facto* affirmative action approach) with changes in the curriculum to increase the sense of belonging of first-generation students. The two case studies targeting indigenous populations in North America stress the importance of holistically addressing all dimensions of the learning environment (academic, cultural, financial, social).

Second, abundant resources are essential to guarantee the long-term sustainability of equity initiatives and provide the opportunity to scale them

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up. National authorities should provide public funding to translate the official commitment in favor of equity and inclusion into concrete actions. At the institutional level, the diversification of funding sources can better protect universities from financial instability. The University of Western Australia, for example, was successful in leveraging corporate philanthropy.

Third, while many equity promotion initiatives may have been launched by a visionary and inspiring individual, their transformation into programs embedded in the core function of entire institutions has generally depended on the sustained efforts of teams working together and united around the conviction that students from underrepresented groups deserve equal opportunities and are capable of great academic achievements. Lessons from the Canadian and Swinburne University cases reveal the importance of working from a common vision, sharing an ethic of care for the students that the team is trying to support, and having stable teams over the years. Conversely, the Queensland case showed how staff turnover could become a significant challenge for the implementation and sustainability of the equity promotion program.

The replication of these key success factors has often been facilitated by the complementarity between national policies and institutional programs. Significant differences exist across countries, however, as illustrated by the case studies in this book. The relationship between the State and higher education institutions ranges from compulsory equity policies as in the case of India and New Zealand, strong government push in the form of grants (Australia, Finland) or quality enhancement incentives (Scotland) to situations of government indifference for lack of clear national equity policies (East and Central Asia, Eastern Europe), and an extreme scenario of outright hostility (Hungary).

In addition to these elements of convergence, it is worth emphasizing a significant new element that did not come out as strongly in prior studies, namely, the issue of difficult labor market insertion for graduates from traditionally underrepresented groups. Looking to the future, national and institutional equity promotion policies should not only include interventions that facilitate access to higher education and successful completion of studies for traditionally underrepresented groups but also offer adequate support to enhance the probability of effective integration into the labor market after graduation. The disability case study in Ethiopia is a great illustration of the careful sequencing that equity promotion programs should consider. Higher education institutions need to put in place fully integrated interventions that start with outreach to increase access, continue with retention to guarantee success, and terminate with adequate support for smooth entry into the labor market.

This observation echoes the results of a recent World Bank study of barriers to gender balance in the Tanzanian higher education system, which found that women who were successful in accessing university programs usually reserved for men, such as engineering, did face additional challenges in landing relevant jobs (World Bank, 2021). A 2023 survey of the labor market results of natural

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science graduates in South Africa similarly found discrimination against nonwhite students (James, 2023).

Another interesting element has appeared in the context of the retention policies documented in the book. While many institutions have focused on a combination of academic, psychological, and financial support measures to help at-risk students, case studies documenting efforts to attract more low-income/first-generation students to elite research universities have found that the issue of cultural belonging deserves more attention. Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds find it daunting to fit in an institution where they must interact with students from wealthy families who feel more naturally home at elite universities, as documented by a recent book on elite universities in the United States and the United Kingdom, …"universities at this level are often incredibly unwelcoming for those outside of the traditionally accepted social circle, and further ingrain race and class discrimination." (Bhopal and Myers, 2023).

Being thrown into a totally "foreign" institutional culture can be a source of frustration and lack of motivation and lead to academic failure. In fact, as observed in several case studies (Australia, Brazil, Hungary, and New Zealand, for example), self-selection away from elite universities happens often among first-generation students who have the academic level to enter these universities for this very reason. In some Indian universities, it is not uncommon for students to make fun of Dalit students who are admitted because of mandatory affirmative action policies: "why are you studying like a Brahman, you are just the sons-in-law of government". Creating favorable conditions to make all incoming students welcome, generate a strong feeling of belonging, and boost their sense of self-confidence is a crucial part of retention policies that is not taken into consideration often enough.

Additional work is needed to explore, in more depth, these two important aspects—labor market insertion and sense of belonging—to collect more evidence on effective ways to overcome these challenges and disseminate relevant lessons of experience.

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Annex - Case Study Template

Name and weblink of Higher Education Institution or NGO working in higher education

Main Contacts and Sources of Information

Type of initiative

Introduction

- National/local higher education landscape and context
- Relevant background information on case study higher education institution(s): academic focus, size, student demographics, etc.

Description of policy/programme/measures

- Rationale for innovative equity initiative/policy/program/measures. What specific challenges did it aim to address (access, retention, financial, nonfinancial, several issues at the same time)?
- How was the initiative designed (actors and process)?
- Core objectives of the initiative
- Implementation timeframe
- Detailed presentation of the implementation modalities of equity promotion initiative: target population, activities carried out, main actors within the higher education institution/NGO and outside partners, resources
- How was the initiative financed (external and internal funding)?

Identification of linkages with national/regional/local policies

- Are there official policies/incentives in support of this type of initiative, or was it an original idea from the higher education institution itself? How have official policies facilitated or constrained the initiative?

Obstacles encountered and mitigation measures during implementation

- What difficulties arose during implementation? How were there overcome?

Results of innovative equity approach based on available information
Did the higher education institution(s) clearly define how the results of the initiative would be monitored and assessed when the initiative was designed and

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launched? What metrics/indicators were selected to evaluate the implementation (process, duration, resources), and the expected results?

- What is the available evidence about the outputs, outcomes, and impact of the initiative?
- What lessons arise from these results?

Assessment of likely sustainability and potential for replication and scaling up

- Is the initiative "embedded" throughout the institution?
- Has the initiative been replicated or scaled up?
- Is there potential for replication and/or scaling up?
- What would be facilitating or constraining factors in the specific national/local context of the higher education institution(s) where the initiative took place?
- Could this initiative be successful in other countries/contexts?

Concluding Comments
What makes this initiative special?
What is the main takeaway?

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About the book

Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level: Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World, edited by Jamil Salmi, provides an invaluable exploration of innovative initiatives aimed at improving access and success in higher education. This seminal volume presents a collection of case studies from various regions, offering comprehensive insights into successful equity promotion interventions. By documenting both effective practices and the conditions under which equity initiatives were successful, this book serves as a valuable resource for institutions, policymakers, and practitioners striving to create inclusive learning environments and bridge the equity gap. Drawing on extensive research and expertise, the contributors to this volume have carefully examined equity promotion policies in different countries and contexts. The book encompasses case studies from East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, North America, Oceania, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Europe. Each chapter provides a detailed analysis of innovative policies and measures implemented at the institutional level, highlighting their impact, challenges faced, and potential for replication and scalability.

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