

FORUM

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

Discussing international education

EQUITY IN ACCESS

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“Lone parents’ higher education participation is impacted by intersections of family, welfare and student finance policy and landscapes.”

UNMASKING INEQUALITIES

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“As far as equal opportunities are concerned, the gender gap is far from being closed.”

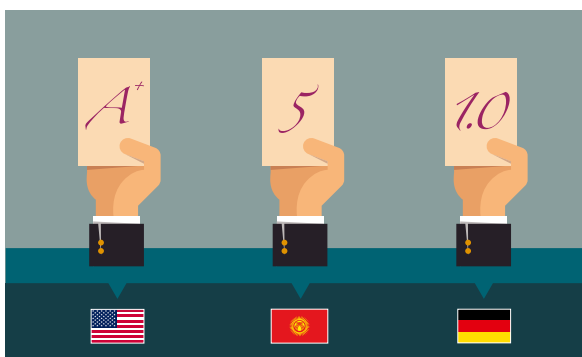
MIND THE GAP



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“There is a need for the student to be treated equitably, but so should the peer students at the host- and home institutions.”

EQUITY THROUGH RECOGNITION



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“Equities are so important that they have to become intertwined not only with domestic but also international education practice and policy agendas.”

PUTTING THE INTERNATIONAL IN EQUITY



EDITORIAL



Before ‘Erasmus+’ became the official name of the current family of EU-sponsored programmes for mobility and cooperation in education (as well as in training, youth, and sport), another name was seriously considered for this initiative: ‘Erasmus for All.’ In the end, this moniker failed to be adopted. However, the debate sparked by the notion of ‘universality’ (literal or figurative) in the context of the future of Europe’s flagship scheme for mobility and cooperation was an important one, and one worth extending to all aspects of internationalisation in higher education – where it remains unresolved.

Indeed, a bottom line question persists: Are all who wish to participate (and are qualified to do so) in the range of international education activities

that are designed to enrich the learning experiences for students, the teaching and research experiences for faculty, and the professional development experiences for staff, realistically able to do so? This issue of *Forum* takes on this important question from a variety of perspectives, aiming to shed light on where gaps in access to international education opportunities exist, why these limitations persist, and how we might achieve wider participation across the spectrum of profiles and abilities represented by our stakeholders.

The website oxforddictionaries.com defines ‘equity’ as “the quality of being fair and impartial.” What does this mean for the work done by EAIE members and their institutions? Stuart Billingham’s piece in this issue provides an important starting point for this discussion, in suggesting that we might consider “treating all students the same, but each student differently.” This approach may help us to effectively meet both collective and individual needs among our students (and all of our constituents, really), and to adequately attend to the crucial imperatives of equity, equality, and diversity, to which most of our institutions express keen affiliation.

Diversity is an important theme in this conversation. Whether our authors in this issue are concerned with physical ability, gender, family structure, or socioeconomic status (among other variables), it is clear that the contexts in which we work are increasingly diverse – or should be, if we are doing our best to engage a broad cross-section of participants from our surrounding social contexts. This is true at the institutional level, and more

broadly. Our interview in this issue with Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, highlights key perspectives of the European Commission on the question of enabling all students to access mobility opportunities, and the benefits of education more generally. Indeed, education seems certain to figure prominently in the Commission’s agenda for fostering growth and prosperity in Europe in the coming years, and organisations like the EAIE will have a key role to play in the discussions around these dynamics.

Working toward equity in access in international education may make us feel good, and it certainly makes for positive rhetoric. But there’s more to it than that. Crucially, expanding access to international education improves everyone’s learning experiences. It also deepens and widens the talent pool cultivating the skills, knowledge, and competencies that make for better citizens in our complex, multicultural societies. However, increasing levels of diversity in international education is a dangerous game if played simply by the numbers. Engaging difference and realising real personal and social change is a process that requires careful planning and ongoing support. Along with expanding equitable access to international education experiences, our expertise for serving a more diverse body of students, staff, and faculty, must also grow exponentially.

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PUTTING THE INTERNATIONAL IN EQUITY

The OECD predicts that by 2025 there will be over 250 million students in higher education across the world. If we are moving towards a more diversified yet more connected global higher education system, then who participates cannot be a question confined to national boundaries.

In the increasingly differentiated world of higher education, there are fewer and fewer factors which bind systems together. However, one which appears impervious to change is inequity in participation. What the available evidence shows is that regardless of size, politics or economics across the world, participation in higher education is differentiated by social background (OECD 2012, UNESCO 2012, European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2014, Usher & Meadow 2010).

the progression and success of their own population into higher education, equity tends to be seen predominantly through a domestic lens. The existence of international scholarship programmes, in particular those funded philanthropically such as the Mastercard programme, does bring equity and internationalisation together at points (www.mastercardfdn.org). However, they only skim the surface of the kind of engagement that both the international higher education and

At present the relationship between internationalisation and equity is tenuous

These inequities will become an increasingly critical social and political issue as the 21st century develops.

As we know, participation in higher education unlocks better economic and social outcomes at the individual and societal level (OECD 2013). While the rise of the much vaunted knowledge economy will not come at the expense of low-skilled work altogether, it seems inevitable that for a country to progress in the 21st century it will need to increase the numbers in the population educated to degree level. Equities are so important that they have to become intertwined not only with domestic but also international education practice and policy agendas. If we are moving to a more diversified – yet at the same time more connected – global higher education system, then who participates, how and at what level cannot be a question confined to national boundaries. At present, the relationship between internationalisation and equity is tenuous. Within higher education institutions the two things are almost universally the responsibility of different departments. Amongst policymakers concerned with

equity communities need to construct in the 21st century. The question of how to forge these bonds remains. In other words, how can we put the international in equity?

UNDERSTANDING INEQUALITIES

The first step would be to understand the inequalities that exist at present, and articulate why they matter. The evidence clearly shows that studying abroad is an experience, in richer nations at least, dominated by the more affluent (Brooks & Waters 2010, 2011). For both financial and cultural reasons, the 'global student experience' appears confined to the minority. This matters because the move to global labour markets and the nature of the challenges that we all face – which are more global in nature – are better tackled by students who are able to draw on a higher education experience that transcends boundaries.

The data illustrating such inequities in international participation, however, is not readily available. Data available on higher education participation by social background *per se* across the world is



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patchily collected, although efforts are underway to improve this – both from global research bodies such as UNESCO or OECD and individual projects. One partnership of the Global Access to Post-Secondary Education (GAPS) Initiative, Pearson PLC and the University of Newcastle, Australia is presently seeking to systematically identify how inequalities

able to access the more selective public university system in Malaysia (Crosling *et al* 2015). The Malaysian situation is unique, but so is the scenario in every country where equity is concerned. The point is that it is conceivable for new providers bringing different forms of higher education to have positive effects on equity.

The equity agenda itself needs to move from the national to the international stage

in higher education participation differ across the world through the largest global survey on inequities ever attempted (www.gaps-education.org). Such work needs to incorporate access to international as well as national higher education.

INCREASING DEMAND

Recognising the existing relationship between transnational education and higher education participation would be the second step. There are huge challenges to be faced if the demand for higher education, particularly in developing economies, is to be met in forthcoming decades. Institutions from these countries may not be able to meet this demand on their own. Examples exist of how providers from other countries can make positive contributions to equity in the host country. In Malaysia, it is the private higher education sector, which contains a range of non-Malaysian institutions, that has enabled students from the Bumiputera Malay population to enter higher education. The Bumiputera are the majority of the Malay population but are generally less economically powerful than the ethnic Chinese population, and are less

INTERNATIONAL EQUITY

Finally, the equity agenda itself needs to move from the national to the international stage. In keeping the policy focus domestic, those taking forward the delivery of access and equity activities are only loosely connected across borders. The nature of this work usually places equity practitioners (and also equity-focused institutions) close to the margins of their sector or higher education institutions. Equity still struggles to compete with research, learning and teaching or indeed internationalisation in the attentions of higher education institutions and their leaders. Given this struggle, and the commonalities across nations where inequalities in higher education participation are concerned, cross-national collaboration at the institutional, staff and student level is essential if the equity agenda is to move forward. In constructing their own international agenda, however, the equity community should forge links with and learn from their colleagues in the internationalisation community. They can also strengthen international higher education work by doing this.

Higher education participation is certain to expand over forthcoming decades. The OECD predicts that by 2025 there will be over 250 million students in higher education across the world – an increase of over 100 million since 2009 (OECD 2012). These students will come from different backgrounds to those who have traditionally entered higher education, and bring with them their own set of experiences and challenges. International educators will need to navigate this new landscape, and their equity colleagues can help them do this. We are entering a new age of global mass higher education. Internationalisation and access are twin forces driving these changes. They can do this better together than apart.

— GRAEME AThERTON

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WHAT'S YOUR INTERNATIONALISATION FOCUS FOR 2015?

EAIE President Laura Howard shares some expert insights into what she believes will be the main trends pushing the internationalisation agenda in 2015. www.eaie.org/blog/internationalisation-focus-2015



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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY: A MIRAGE OR A REALITY?

While there have been some interesting developments in MOOCs, it's safe to say that neither worst fears nor greatest expectations seem to have been realised. Why is that? www.eaie.org/blog/international-education-and-technology



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GLOBAL UNIVERSITY RANKINGS: 'THE WHO, THE WHAT AND THE WHY'

A university may rank differently depending on the list, but why is that? It comes down to three main things: the 'who', the 'what' and the 'why' of global university rankings. www.eaie.org/blog/global-university-rankings



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EAIE SPEAKS WITH EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER NAVRACSICS

Further to the piece published in *Forum*, the Commissioner spoke with the EAIE in a two-part interview about the need for education and training systems to equip young people with necessary skills for today's global economy. www.eaie.org/blog/interview-commissioner-navracsics-one



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WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION RESEARCH – IN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE?

Wondering what's hot in international education research? The International Education Research Network (IERN) conducted a comprehensive analysis of research recorded in the IDP Database. www.eaie.org/blog/international-education-research



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REVEALING THE STATE OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN EUROPE: THE EAIE BAROMETER RESULTS ARE OUT

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