ACCESS TO SUCCESS: FOSTERING TRUST AND EXCHANGE BETWEEN EUROPE AND AFRICA

PROJECT COMPENDIUM

EUA
European University Association

ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITES AFRICAINES
اتحاد الجامعات الافريقية

esu

VLIR UOS
Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad
University Development Cooperation

UNIVERSITETS- OG HØGSKOLERÅDET
The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions

EUROPEAN ACCESS NETWORK

With the support of the Erasmus Mundus programme of the European Commission

Education and Culture DG
ERASMUS MUNDUS

European University Association asbl
Avenue de l'Yser 24
1040 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32-2 230 55 44
Fax: +32-2 230 57 51

A free electronic version of this report is available through www.eua.be.

With the support of the Erasmus Mundus programme of the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

ISBN: 9789078997238

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The project

The Access to Success project (2008-2010), funded by the Erasmus Mundus programme of the European Union, aimed at raising awareness of access and retention issues in higher education in Africa and Europe, and at exploring how higher education institutions in both regions are coping with the changing demands of their specific socio-economic environments. By doing so, the project also intended to contribute to a wider discussion on effective inter-institutional cooperation between Europe and Africa, in particular with regards to student and staff mobility schemes, capacity building partnerships and government/donor support. The messages of the project have been captured in a final 'White Paper' that contains multi-actor recommendations for taking forward the Europe-Africa higher education cooperation agenda.

The project included:

- Parallel institutional surveys on access and retention in higher education conducted in 2009 across a sample of 16 African and 19 European countries. The surveys were supplemented with three student focus groups on the issue, one in Europe led by the European Students' Union and two in Africa led by the All-Africa Students' Union and the Erasmus Mundus Alumni Association.
- A first Europe-Africa rectors' dialogue in Addis Ababa, 17 November 2009 that examined issues of common interest amongst university leadership.
- Three dialogue intensive workshops involving university leadership and faculty, donors and government agencies, students and regional government bodies:
  - *Access and Retention: Comparing best practice between Europe and Africa* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 18-20 November, 2009): Sharing university good practices in confronting problems of access and retention in both Africa and Europe, based on the project survey results.
  - *Towards a coordinated vision of Europe-Africa Higher Education Partnerships: Supporting Institutional capacity building in Africa* (Oslo, Norway, 24-25 February 2010): this explored programmes that structure institutional cooperation and capacity building between Africa and Europe. The workshop also examined the theme of better donor coordination in research and higher education capacity building.
  - *Inter and intra regional academic mobility in Europe and Africa* (Accra, Ghana, 3-4 May 2010): the workshop examined intra-regional mobility (within Europe and within Africa) as a potential avenue for higher education integration and inter-regional mobility (between Africa and Europe), the realities of brain drain and drive for increased brain circulation.
  - *Final dissemination conference* (Brussels, Belgium, 28 September 2010) which presented the project outcomes in a White Paper to policy makers, cooperation agencies and the university community.

The project employed the following strategic and unique approach:

- It brought together policy makers, donor agencies and universities to address institutional development and to transcend the boundaries between research, education, development policies

and programmes. This provided a forum to discuss a wide range of existing initiatives in the field of African higher education and Africa-Europe higher education dialogue and cooperation.

- It focused on universities as actors in development cooperation, employing a holistic institutional perspective to the topics at hand. The project involved institutional leaders from both continents with overall responsibility for the development of their universities. This complements a commonly selected approach to development cooperation whereby collaboration and capacity building in certain fields, disciplines or sectors is targeted.
- The fact that the project was led by regional university associations (AAU and EUA) meant that it was able to take a broad "bi-regional institutional approach", orienting discussions toward the wider framework of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and the role that the higher education communities of both regions should play. This allowed for a macro-level strategic analysis, which identified the need for better communication and information-sharing on ongoing bilateral initiatives in order to improve their impact.
- Finally, the project embedded the topics of cooperation and development within a wider discussion on higher education modernisation. The ongoing European experience in regional higher education harmonisation through the Bologna Process served as a basis for considering closer pan-African regional cooperation.

This publication: The project compendium

This compendium is intended to showcase the various outputs of the Access to Success project in an integrated manner. It is complementary to the White Paper publication and survey results. Given the rich content generated through the project, it provides the following:

- Analysis of the survey results on institutional challenges with access and retention (European and African)
- Outcomes of the student focus groups and student opinion pieces on access and retention
- Outcomes from the three project workshops and the Europe-Africa rectors' dialogue
- Specific institutional case studies on selected themes
- Outcomes of the final policy conference and suggestions for taking the White Paper forward.

All content from this compendium can be downloaded on the Access to Success website: www.accesstosuccess-africa.eu.

Implementing partners:

The Access to Success project was implemented by a consortium consisting of:

- European University Association (EUA)
- Association of African Universities (AAU)
- Flemish Inter-University Council for Development Cooperation (VLIR-OUS)
- European Students' Union (ESU)
- Association of Norwegian Higher Education Institutions (UHR)
- European Access Network (EAN)

Project website: www.accesstosuccess-africa.eu

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING CONTEXTS AND CHALLENGES IN WHICH EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES ARE OPERATING: THE CASE OF ACCESS AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

Introduction to Chapter

The following chapter examines two inter-linked issues that pose a myriad of challenges to higher education institutions in both the developed and developing world: access to higher education and retention of students and staff. These issues have underpinned the Access to Success project, and have, in many ways, served as a starting point for reflection. In particular, these issues have been selected for further study because they are both regionally and nationally specific, yet globally relevant. Though higher education participation rates in Europe may be on average eight times that of most African countries (though there is disparity), the profile of students attending higher education is not necessarily representative of the diverse profile of citizens. Europe has learned to some extent, and continues to realise, that open access to public higher education does not ensure equal opportunity and that completion and student 'success' matter far more than enrolment rates.

Unlike in Europe, there is a blatant urgency in addressing this issue in Africa: classrooms are literally overflowing, and the percentage of teaching staff with doctoral degrees is minimal. While the problems of access and retention may seem more drastic, it has become clear that there is enormous creative potential in addressing such issues. With the exception of Francophone Africa, system structures often permit institutions to select students, and thus have a proactive role in composing their entering classes. While many African universities are scrambling for infrastructure and teaching staff to meet the rising enrolment demand, the debate around alternative delivery methods, ICT infrastructure, public private partnerships to ensure facilities such as dormitories, etc. has been taken up in a more dramatic and perhaps innovative way than in Europe.

Thus, in studying current institutional approaches to access and retention in both Africa and Europe, the Access to Success project assumes that mutual learning is of critical importance. It not only draws attention to some of the environmental constraints which face African universities, but it shows that European countries do not always have the answers, and that they too must examine if higher education is responding to society's present needs.

Most importantly, the topics of access and retention were a point of departure for examining the wider principle of partnership, and how universities in Africa and Europe can cooperate more efficiently and effectively. African universities need partnerships that are sensitive to their own needs, whether it be in ensuring gender balance, retaining researchers and teaching staff, or building institutional

capacity. European universities need partnerships that are sensitive to their own needs as well, which include incentivised researchers, diverse opportunities for student and staff mobility, and a more strategic internationalisation of teaching and learning.

This chapter presents the results of the first half of the Access to Success project, which essentially examined access and retention in Europe and Africa from various angles: through two regional surveys of higher education institutions on current pressures and strategies regarding access and retention, student focus groups in both regions probing the issue, and a first bi-regional workshop of university leaders on the topic.

Part A of the chapter examines 'European trends, disparities and challenges of access and retention in higher education'. This is further divided into:

- The analysis of the European survey, undertaken by the Access to Success project in 2009, on the state of play of access and retention policies in European universities. Though it only represents a limited sample size, common trends and challenges are identified as well as specific country cases examined.
- A literature review on ensuring retention in higher education: this is written from the perspective of a UK institution and provides insight into both theory and practice in student success. It touches on a range of issues from student services to student-centred learning, all of which can be considered as playing a role in institutional strategy in this regard. It reflects the current policy frameworks and vocabulary that has evolved in the UK around this topic, which is strikingly different from the discourse (or lack of discourse) in other European countries.
- Several case studies provided from European institutions. These range from an analysis of the institutions' approaches and strategies, to specific programmes designed to improve access and retention. The articles vary in nature and, clearly, different countries and institutions interpret the issues differently. The sample is not representative (UK and Nordic institutions dominate), however, more cases were presented and discussed in the workshop that took place in November 2009 (Part C).
- A contribution from the European Students' Union, discussing the student perspective on access and retention, on which they have been outspoken in the context of the Bologna Process and other policy circles.

Part B of the chapter examines the African dimension to access and retention. It includes

- The analysis of the parallel African institutional survey on access and retention trends and challenges. This survey, which was designed to be almost identical to the European survey, often elicited quite different responses.
- A contribution of the All-Africa Students Union, discussing common concerns in access and retention in Africa.
- A case study of Makerere University, Uganda, which has proved to be one of the most progressive universities in

Africa in terms of enabling access to and retention of women in higher education.

The range of institutional approaches in Africa in meeting the demands of rising enrolment could not be fully captured, however the survey results paint an overall picture of the identified problems and constraints. Though primary concern is clearly with *increasing participation*, the case of Makerere University demonstrates a particular institutional initiative to widen participation, and pro-actively recruit woman.

Of note in the contribution of the student organisations is the strong emphasis put on fees and the cost of higher education; the European students see the introduction of tuition fees in many traditionally public financed systems as a threat. The rise of the private university sector in Africa has been dramatic, and the African students also note with concern the introduction of higher fees at public institutions. The question of access and retention is undeniably linked to financial resources and the sensitivity of the students regarding this issue was a topic of debate between institutional leaders at the first workshop of the Access to Success project.

The third part of this chapter presents the outcome report of 'Workshop 1 - Access and retention: comparing best practice between Europe and Africa', 17-20 November 2009, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

This first workshop of the Access to Success project was designed both to draw from and upon the fact-finding phase of the project, in which surveys and focus groups were conducted. It summarises many of the issues raised in the surveys and presents the dialogue that ensued between European and African universities and the students that attended.

PART 2A: EUROPEAN TRENDS, DISPARITIES AND CHALLENGES WITH ACCESS AND RETENTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONAL SURVEY: ACCESS TO SUCCESS - THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE, WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND INTERNATIONALISATION

By Hanne Smidt, Senior Advisor, EUA

The demographic make-up of the European population is changing, as is the landscape of European higher education with the last 20 years or so of reforms, but does that mean that the student population is diversifying and the ability to access higher education is changing? The Finnish EU presidency in 2006 re-introduced a focus and a debate on lifelong learning and widening participation; two issues that, in the European context, are intrinsically linked, following the lines of the Bologna Process Communiqués from Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005) that re-iterated the importance of the 'social dimension' of European higher education as it was phrased. In response, the European University Association (EUA) has actively supported and promoted the lifelong learning agenda for universities, an agenda that asks universities to consider the diverse profiles and learning needs of students, and subsequently how to widen and increase access.

In 2008, EUA adopted the "European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning" (EUA 2008). The Charter sets out ten commitments for European universities and ten commitments for European governments. The charter was adopted at the EUA Autumn Conference 2008 "Inclusive and responsive universities – ensuring Europe's competitiveness in the knowledge society", a conference devoted to lifelong learning and widening participation. The Charter is a call for European universities and governments, together with the social partners and other stakeholders, to support proactively the lifelong learning agenda, and to assist Europe's universities in developing their specific role in this context. It places all types of higher education in the framework of lifelong learning in a 'cradle to grave' perspective. The Charter and the conference were followed-up by two projects: Access to Success that focused on widening participation in a comparative European and African context[1] and, most recently, in the SIRUS project "Shaping Inclusive and Responsive University Strategies" where 29 European universities discuss and draft strategies for lifelong learning and widening participation.

The present article is based on the preliminary results of these two projects, in particular on a survey within the Access to Success project that targets European universities, as well as several case studies of European HEIs carried out within the project. In addition, it takes into account the most recent Trends report "EUA Trends 2010: A decade of change in European Higher Education", and a literature review of recent articles and studies on different aspects of the social dimension with a focus on widening access

[1] The Access to Success project attempted to take an issue of global significance in higher education – access and retention- and trace trends and challenges in two different parts of the world: Africa and Europe. The intention was to stimulate a wider international dialogue on this issue, and identify ways in which African and European universities can cooperate in the future.

and participation. It will briefly outline how European higher education institutions (HEIs) regard their contribution in their national context to the widening access and participation agenda in a Europe on the threshold of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the responses to the widening participation agenda in different contexts in Europe.

The use of the terminology 'widening access and participation and the social dimension' is based on the definition used in the Bologna Process:

> "The social dimension of the envisaged European Higher Education Area aims at **Equality of opportunities in higher education**, in terms of: access, participation and successful completion of studies; studying and living conditions; guidance and counselling; financial support, and student participation in higher education governance. This implies also equal opportunities in mobility, when it comes to portability of financial support, removing barriers, and providing incentives."[2]

The article will briefly outline how European HEIs in their national context regard their contribution to the widening access and participation agenda in a Europe on the threshold of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and how the responses to the widening participation agenda vary in different contexts in Europe.

Methodology

The survey has been undertaken in the context of the Access to Success project, and has identified priorities and practices for improving the social dimension of the European higher education sector, with the assistance of the European national rectors' conferences and European HEIs with interest in widening participation policies. The European HEIs participating in the survey were asked to share their perception of national and institutional initiatives in a questionnaire designed to help to build further knowledge and understanding of European HEIs' responses to the widening participation agenda. The intent was to identify good practice as well as challenges to be shared across and between the continents, thus forming part of the basis of the EUA White Paper: Africa-Europe Higher Education Cooperation For Development: Meeting Regional and Global Challenges.

The participating HEIs were not only selected on the basis of their interest in widening participation either at the national level (non-traditional and/or underrepresented students) but also on a combination of an expressed interest in cooperation with Africa and a more general interest in the project. A general call was put out to national rectors' conferences to help identify a sample of institutions with diverse profiles and an underlying interest in international cooperation. The results thus reflect the reality at ground level of a very diverse sample of European higher education institutions. The survey has gathered information on both national and institutional policies and practices in the access and participation/retention of both traditional and non-traditional students and on how national strategies and policies support the institutional efforts. The project can be seen as a pilot project, the first of its kind directly to canvas European higher education institutions on how they respond to the challenges presented by a changing demography, globalisation and technological developments when it comes to attracting (and graduating) a diverse student population. It is also unique in that it then uses these results to stimulate an international dialogue on the issue, with HEIs in Africa.

[2] http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/actionlines/socialdimension.htm

The Access to Success questionnaire was answered by 43 HEIs and university colleges (89% were public institutions) from 19 European countries. Out of these, 37 were valid responses. It is a small sample and can only give a snapshot of the situation as it was at the beginning of 2009. Following this first survey stage, a number of institutions were asked to write short articles expanding on particularly interesting practices as they transpired from the answers to the questionnaires.

In connection with the analytical work on the Access to Success project and the most recent Trends publication, the author has made a first attempt to create an "Overview of national and institutional strategies for lifelong learning, widening participation and access to higher education" in a country-by-country overview, as it was in 2007[3]. The information was collected from a great number of official studies and from information collected in different EUA studies. The table is used in the context of this article to highlight the differences between having the legal framework in place and implementing the spirit of the legislation at the institutional level. Policies and discussions on access and participation issues are not new on the political agenda, and, as the survey shows, is not necessarily a question of lack of policies, but the need for a change in attitude as highlighted in one of the Finnish questionnaires:

> The "Majority of the issues addressed in this questionnaire are nationally legislated (for)…(but) the legislation is weakly enforced, anomalies are brushed under the carpet and (the) government does not allocate resources directly to the higher education institutions for this work."

The article will address the policies supporting the expansion of the European higher education sector, the challenges of creating a diverse student portfolio and the institutional obstacles to diversification.

Widening and increasing participation

Widening participation and lifelong learning have become intrinsically linked during the Bologna decade as shown in the "European universities' charter on lifelong learning" and in the Bologna Process Leuven/Louvain-la -Neuve Communiqué under the heading "lifelong learning":

> "Widening participation shall also be achieved through lifelong learning as an integral part of our education systems. Lifelong learning is subject to the principle of public responsibility. The accessibility, quality of provision and transparency of information shall be assured. Lifelong learning involves obtaining qualifications, extending knowledge and understanding, gaining new skills and competences or enriching personal growth. Lifelong learning implies that qualifications may be obtained through flexible learning paths, including part-time studies, as well as work-based routes."

Or, as phrased in the Charter:

> "Currently European societies are missing out on a huge pool of readily available human talent, and comparing higher education participation rates in Europe with those in other world regions makes disturbing reading and calls for action. Widening access to higher education is not about introducing less qualified students, but rather about supporting all learners with the potential to benefit both themselves and society through participating in higher education. This means reaching out to an increasingly broad range of learners with different motivations and interests: not only offering programmes for professional development adapted to a fast-changing labour market, but also

[3] See Appendix 2, pg.27

> catering for the growing demand for personal development opportunities through the cultural enrichment that universities offer. There is also an urgent need for debate on how lifelong learning provision that will be of benefit to individuals, employers and society as a whole can best, and most fairly, be funded."

The aims of providing learning throughout life to all potential learners cannot be reached if accessibility (intellectual and physical) is not targeted and the teaching and learning is not adapted to a diverse student portfolio. Trends 2010 indicates that the Bologna structures are largely in place and a change in the perception of the role of higher education as a key player in creating a Europe of Knowledge has slowly evolved over the past decade and paved the way for the introduction of more flexible learning paths. It should be pointed out that the largest changes to the degree structures have been for countries in continental Europe. Here, the traditional university degree was a "one-stop shop" with one long integrated programme, in principle preparing the student to become a potential researcher without any possibility of taking a break or stopping with a shorter degree. In other words, this type of education was not a particularly attractive nor financially viable option for the non-traditional or first-generation immigrant student.

With an average of 56% of the population participating in tertiary education in Europe (OECD, 2009) it is self-evident that offering long research degrees with no regard for employment preparation is no longer acceptable, desirable or competitive. This means that the bachelor degree needs to be established as a stand-alone degree that can either be a final degree or lead to a plethora of different master degrees, ranging from strong research based degrees to professionally oriented degrees. As technological development in society makes the development of new skills over time necessary for all parts of a population, the flexibility and possibility to learn throughout life has become increasingly important.

Conditions have been created over the past decade with the introduction of the Bologna Process and the modernisation agenda prompted by the EU's Lisbon Agenda to make it possible for European higher education institutions to provide education as and when necessary for a diverse student population. The introduction of a modular, credit-based system with clearly defined learning outcomes (ECTS) should, in theory, make it possible for students who, for personal or economic reasons, do not want to follow the traditional route in higher education to apply for recognition of prior learning (RPL), to collect credits and create their "own degrees" (with certain defined conditions of progression). In other words, the stage has been set for European universities to offer a plethora of degrees and courses in a lifelong learning perspective.

The majority of European universities are still struggling with creating systems that are attractive yet flexible, encouraging students to design individual degrees. One example of a transparent and flexible system built on student-centred learning can be found in Sweden, where in the 1970's Sweden introduced a higher education system that has successfully been able to be fairly accessible, flexible and transparent while maintaining high quality[4]. Lifelong learning[5] is a concept that is taken for granted by HEIs, employers and students, but it did not happen overnight and has not meant that the participation of the non-traditional student groups has changed radically in comparison to the rest of the Nordic countries.

[4] Swedish article in this Compendium

New or renewed European policies: expanding higher education by lifelong learning and internationalisation

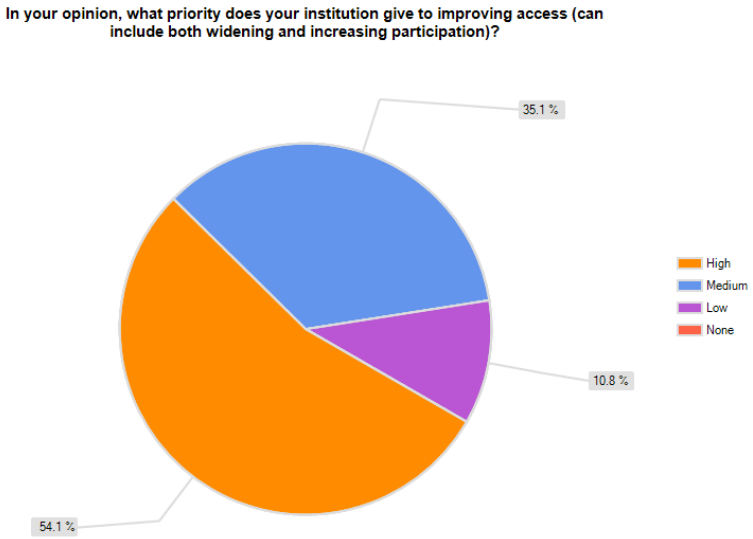
Over the past decade, both the introduction of the Bologna Process and greater institutional autonomy have created the conditions enabling European higher education institutions to adapt their educational provision more closely to the diverse needs of learners. There is, however, no indication in the Access to Success survey that a common European consensus has been created. While the agenda of increasing and widening participation has been formulated in a multitude of policy agendas, processes and communiqués, by the Bologna Process, the EU, OECD, and UNESCO, during the past decade, no common approach of how to respond to it can be identified, nor can a common understanding of the terminology used in this field be detected. On the other hand, it is also clear that an increasing number of European HEIs have begun to rise to the challenge of attracting and teaching a more diversified student body driven either by legislation or by social responsibility.

The past decade has seen a significant increase in participation rates across most European countries as highlighted by a recent OECD report that also notes the virtual doubling of graduation rates from 18% in 1995 to 36% in 2007 (OECD 2009). This expansion has taken place at the same time as the implementation of the Bologna reforms in Europe. It can be argued that the Bologna reforms will make it easier for students from both traditional and non-traditional backgrounds to reach the level of educational attainment to which they aspire by using flexible learning paths. The importance of both access to higher education and flexible learning paths throughout life becomes increasingly important, as European higher education starts catering to a growing and increasingly diverse student population in the future. The size of traditional student cohorts in certain parts of Europe will begin to shrink and economies, responding to globalisation pressures, will demand new skills from the European workforce. The latest Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué phrased the need for widening access:

> "Access into higher education should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies. This involves improving the learning environment, removing all barriers to study, and creating the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels." (paragraph 9)

The overall result of the survey carried out among European HEIs under the Access to Success project supports the political intentions in the Communiqué: there seems to be a growing consensus that access is an issue of rising importance: 54% of institutions give it high priority.

Table 1



The interpretation of the importance of access issues is – as are the Bologna reforms in general - very often based in the particular national context as other recent reports have highlighted. Higher education reforms and changes are always implemented in a national context. The findings of this survey support this observation: institutional responses have to be examined within a specific national legislative, financial and cultural context, and a great number of obstacles still need to be overcome.

Examples of new initiatives can be found in a number of countries, predominantly in Northern Europe, the UK (which has introduced the AimHigher programme[6]), and Ireland (which has introduced the HEAR programme[7]), and other countries with new initiatives such as Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, and Norway[8]. It has become increasingly important to share these initiatives across borders in Europe, and to generate concrete institutional good practice in addressing access and retention. However, one important point that has come out of both the Access to Success and the SIRUS projects is that there is no common understanding of the terminology for widening access and widening participation. The term is often very narrowly understood as the physical accessibility of the higher education institution premises for students with disabilities.

The call for widening participation and equal access is not new. It has come in successive waves after the Second World War. But as the recent Czech study "Who is more equal" (2009: 29) highlights, the call has been met with moderate success in the large majority of European countries irrespective of their very different political systems. Expansion of higher education was expected to go hand in hand with social equity.

[6] AimHigher is a national programme which aims to widen participation in higher education (HE) by raising HE awareness, aspirations and attainment among young people from under-represented groups in England 2008-2011.

[7] The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is an Irish university initiative targeting socially-disadvanteged students.

[8] See Appendix 2, pg.27

"The assumption was that the severe selection in admission to tertiary education in elite systems was to blame for the fact that, due to (a) number of economic, social and cultural reasons, children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds either did not apply at all, or they were less successful in stiff competition during the admission proceedings".

The study points out that already in the 1990s, it transpired that, despite the expansion of the higher education sector, there was only a limited decrease in inequality in access to longer higher education studies. Despite the growing number of students (both advantaged and disadvantaged) the level of inequality remains the same. This leads to speculation on the relationship of access to student selection systems, and also on the kind of education and teaching that is on offer once the students have been accepted. Alex Usher points out in his recent article: "Ten years back and ten years forward: Developments and trends in higher education in Europe region" (2009: 9) that there is no simple solution:

…"widening access is not simply a matter introducing re-distributive programs for financial or social capital. It is also a matter of changing the nature of higher education itself. (…) The old-school universities – the ones that are very traditionally used to train the new elites – do not provide a type of education which is universally desired by youth or universally desirable in the labour market. So there has been a move to create new forms of higher education at new types of institutions – education that is less theoretical, more practical and (in theory at least) more welcoming to non-traditional students. Thus universalization has to some extent driven institutional diversification over the years".

The need to adapt the teaching methods is clearly reflected in the survey where nearly 90% of the European HEIs identify innovative approaches to teaching and learning along with internationalisation as their policy focus.

The recent EUA study on Institutional Diversity in European Higher Education, (Reichert: 2009: 151) investigates the wide-ranging diversity factors that are presently driving European universities. It points to the need for new practices when it comes to providing education to a diverse student body and the changes in attitude to the importance of teaching when it comes to addressing different communities of learners. The study also underlines the fact that internal diversity challenges (one example is student diversity) are not always perceived as an asset:

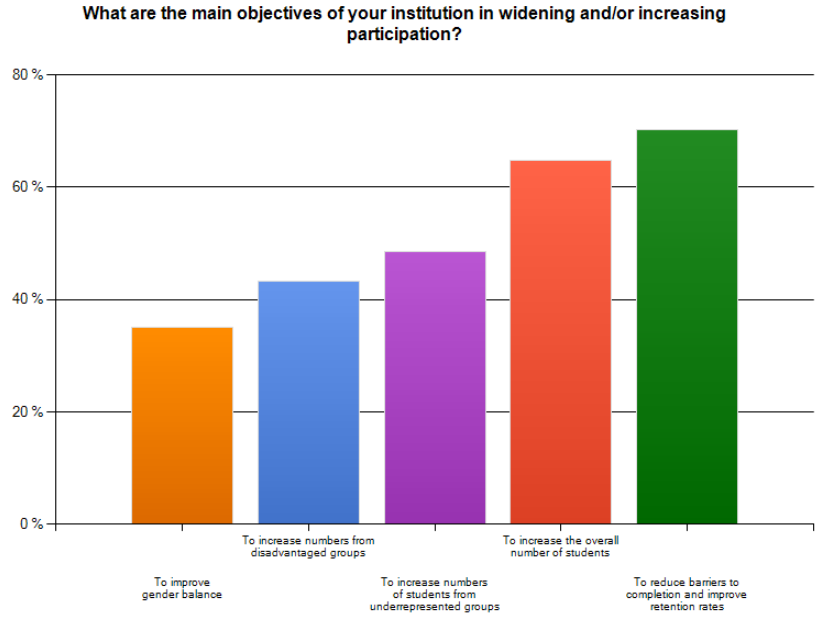
"but often perceived as a challenge for institutions. While most European institutions, with a few exceptions (most often in England), are relatively indifferent to the ethnic, social or religious diversity of their student bodies, attitudes to diversity of student qualifications are ambivalent."

Furthermore, in the midst of the tension between elite and mass education (Usher: 2009), institutions that expect to attract the most qualified or the most talented students from less educationally privileged backgrounds, need to provide special support services (particularly guidance and counselling), and in both cases, institutions want to be recognised for their excellent learning environment. There are, however, hardly any rewards or public recognition for institutions which have pursued excellence in teaching and supporting diverse student bodies. The survey looked at the provision of student services as well as the issue of retention; it will be further discussed in Part 3.

The Trends 2010 report, that reviews the past decade of the Bologna Process from the European higher institutions' perspective, has found no common conception of the importance of engaging in the support for non-traditional students across Europe. However, European HEIs are being asked to focus on the

benefits of attracting and retaining the best students, regardless of background or nationality, as part of their mission to support the development of society. In the Access to Success European survey, nearly half of the institutions in the sample consider it very important to increase the number of non-traditional students. This can be seen from the table on increasing and widening participation, where the overall retention and increase in general student numbers (maybe not surprisingly) takes precedence over non-traditional students.

Table 2



However, increasing and widening participation does not top the list of future institutional priorities. This sub-section of European HEIs expects internationalisation to be the main focus in the next decade, with 64% of the institutions[9] indicating this as the highest priority, and this trend is confirmed in the much larger Trends 2010 sample. The international agenda tends to overshadow the national agenda. Internationalisation seems to be more important for the identity of the institution than the social make-up of the student body. It has to be pointed out, however, that adding international students to the national student mix is also a way to diversify the student population and carries with it another set of educational challenges for the higher education institutions.

The focus on internationalisation follows the different European and national agendas for promoting the international competitiveness of European HEIs. An indication that European HEIs are addressing the need to diversify their funding (e.g. through the introduction of tuition fees or providing external services, continuing education or collaborative research to industry), and support mobility and recognition. One explanation could be that these universities are aware of the challenges of the changing European demography, and are looking to maintain student numbers either via international or non-traditional students, or that they are thriving “cosmopolitan” universities, that want to meet a variety of strategic objectives in order to enhance their reputation. As mentioned previously, however, there is

[9] See table 6

very little national or European level recognition for socially-responsive HEIs at this stage, whereas internationalisation (attracting international students and faculty) seems to be both a national and institutional priority. The retention of students and innovative approaches to teaching and learning came in second place on the priority list in the survey (behind internationalisation), both at 46%, and widening participation came only in fourth place at 32%.

A diversified student portfolio

European higher education in 2010 has to cater to an increasingly diversified student population; the traditional first-time young student, the international student, the returning student, the student who wants to up-grade and students from diverse backgrounds. The Access to Success survey indicates that there is a growing awareness of the importance of developing innovative teaching methodologies in order to deliver education effectively to an increasing number of diverse students.

The traditional student body made up of full-time young students is a thing of the past. A great number of different changes to the student population have taken place over the past decades. The traditional full-time student is rarely a full-time student, as was found in the European Students' Union's 'Bologna with Students Eyes 2009', but rather a part-time student working up to 20 hours a week in addition to studying. Furthermore, women now make up the largest group of students at the majority of European universities. This change has been so rapid that some countries view it as a feminisation of higher education, though as per table 7, changing attitudes take much longer.

International students are another rapidly growing group, that has started to make a significant contribution to the student body in some European countries. The last group are the students from a non-traditional background[10], and even if they are not yet a significant group, they are slowly increasing in numbers. In order for both the student and the university to be successful, it is essential not only to concentrate on accessibility, but also to implement follow-up policies for both retention and employability. As can be seen in table 3, the reduction of barriers for completion and retention is at the top of the priority list of European university agendas irrespective of their geographical and cultural situation.

Table 4 indicates that European universities are well-aware of the fact that they have not been successful in attracting and graduating students that reflect the diverse European population. The survey also indicates that while European higher education institutions are challenged to widen the social diversity of the student population, it can be a difficult task as legislation in many countries, for historic reasons, prohibits the university from obtaining data on the student's social background.

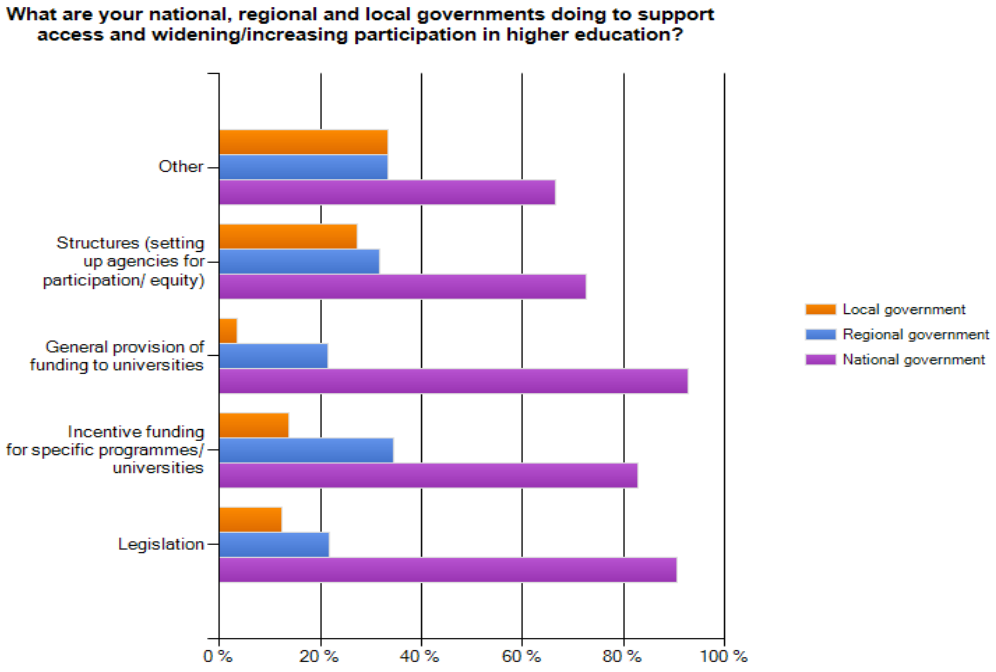
National support for widening participation and access

The European universities participating in the survey indicate that national governments have put measures in place both at national, regional and local level, but at the same time these are perceived as inadequate. Inadequate funding is perceived as a major obstacle to students' success and for HEIs to successfully support students. 69% of the responding universities indicate that lack of funding for students or for universities to support widening participation is considered as an obstacle.

[10] The non-traditional background covers a number of groups of students from the socially and economically disadvantaged to ethnic minorities and immigrants as well as first-generation and adult students.

Data from the Access to Success survey show that universities do not consider national legislation to be an obstacle for widening participation by European universities. The data collected on national and institutional policies in Table A[11] support the view that national strategies and policies for widening participation and lifelong learning are in place or are currently being introduced in the majority of EU countries.

Table 3



Why is it, then, that access and widening participation have not improved significantly despite the increase in student numbers in higher education (18% on average according to OECD in the past decade) and the high priority that access has had in both the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Agenda? Indeed, many countries have anti-discrimination policies in place that seem to have had little effect since the difficulties for the students in question appear to be so deep-rooted in societal structures that access is too restricted for them to be able to work their way through the education system successfully.

One possible explanation could be the restricted autonomy in addressing widening participation and access as highlighted in the EUA Trends V Report[12]. The report shows how difficult it can be for universities to actively support the widening participation agenda by attracting a diverse student body, if they do not have the institutional autonomy to do so. This finding is supported by the recent EUA Autonomy study[13] that concludes that only in very few countries do higher education institutions feel that they have true latitude to choose their own students. One recent example of problems caused by widening access has been in Austria, where free access is being practised and, as a result, students are

[11] See Appendix 2, pg.27

[12] Since 1999, EUA has been following the introduction of the Bologna Process from a higher education institutional point of view in the Trends reports.

[13] EUA, University Autonomy in Europe I, exploratory study (2009, forthcoming)

now on strike because the lecture halls have to cater for nearly double the number of students that they were designed for. HEIs have had no opportunity to select and support the students as they would have liked. Free access does not seem to solve the problem of widening participation.

Table A[14], indicates how diverse the rules for selection procedures are in Europe. Higher education institutions in continental Europe are rarely able to pro-actively select their students, because the admission systems do not allow this. One exception is students who are admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning; individual selection policies are generally in place for this group. Another exception is the international students, where the selection is commonly done at the institutional level, and not through a centralised national admission procedure.

Apart from this, most ministries of education have developed and set rules for student enrolment (in cooperation with higher education institutions) which increasingly promote anonymity and are thus inevitably less focused on the individual. Centralised admission systems in massified or universalised higher education systems are formally intended to ensure equal opportunities, but, as a result, HEIs may lose the opportunity to identify at an early stage those students who, for various reasons, might need encouragement and support.

The introduction of (fair) rules and regulations or free access are meant to ensure equal access irrespective of background, but in fact they have made it difficult or, in some countries, almost impossible for universities to be actively inclusive and responsive. This may be at the heart of widening participation. Widening access from an institutional perspective is certainly about access, accessibility and raising aspirations, but, if HEIs cannot select their student body proactively, the whole student success cycle: access, retention and graduation/employability is at risk.

This point is supported in the EUA study on diversity (Reichert: 2009: 130):

> *"The relative indifference to diversity of the student body, at least on average, which contrasts sharply with the highly visible and often charged "institutional diversity" debates and policies in the USA, reflects the limited leeway which institutions have in many parts of continental Europe in this respect. While other aspects of institutional autonomy have increased considerably in all of the continental countries visited, student selection is still the realm where government regulation plays a decisive role in the majority of continental European systems."*

Another possible explanation for the lack of success in increasing and widening participation is the role that the **primary and secondary education** system plays when it comes to preparing potential students. The transitions between the different levels of education are more challenging to navigate for the non-traditional students. A recent OECD study indicates that there is a correlation between inclusive primary and secondary school systems and widening participation at tertiary level. If the primary and secondary school systems are highly selective then it is virtually impossible for the non-traditional groups to be able to live up to even the best intention of free access – they will never reach the level of formal qualifications needed.

[14] See Appendix 2, pg.27

One of the Dutch universities surveyed highlighted this problem:

> *"The structure of (the) Dutch secondary school system causes major problems. Children at the age of 12 are sent to/advised for pre-university college or "lower" levels of secondary school. Several scientific publications have shown that ethnic minority schoolchildren are relatively (…) much more often excluded from pre-university college, and most of the time directed towards the "lowest" next level, which is a sort of vocational education (even if their test scores at 12 prove they are capable of pre-university college!). From that level there is hardly or no way up (leading to higher education...). This problem can only be solved by the government."*

The rapid massification and even universalisation of higher education over the last decade and centralised admission systems or free access in the majority of European countries has potentially caused students from a non-academic or non-traditional background to feel less encouraged and supported in taking a step outside their comfort zones. In the past, teachers and professors, the church and other local dignitaries made it their social responsibility to spot and support the aspirations of young talent. In today's society we tend to forego this responsibility for the sake of "fairness". The old system, of course, had severe drawbacks when it came to "democracy" and was rightly replaced by much more anonymous systems that are perceived as being fair. Centralised admission systems in a massified or universalised higher education system were intended to limit the dependency on human intervention and support in admission and selection procedures. However, in this process HEIs have lost their ability to identify at an early stage students who, for various reasons, might need encouragement and support in accessing education and during their studies. Selection systems that attempt "fairness" by looking only at measurable indicators tend to fail when it comes to enrolling non-traditional students, and anti-discrimination laws make it impossible or almost impossible for continental European institutions to identify non-traditional students from the outset and thus be able to support their introduction into higher education, their retention and even their passage into employment. In some countries the data protection act even prevents HEIs from identifying underrepresented groups (unless a student identifies her/himself) who might benefit from a targeted support system to ensure retention, graduation and employment, as can be seen e.g. in Denmark, Germany and France.

Thus, European HEIs have, in practice, limited chances to create a diversified student portfolio proactively, when it comes to gender, race and social background. And, even if they can, their work is not finished. With a strong student portfolio containing full-time students from diverse backgrounds, mature students, junior and senior students, part-time students and lifelong learners, HEIs need to build support systems that will retain them and make them readily employable whether as future researchers or in society at large. The Access to Success project identifies a number of good practices in the form of tracking systems and support programmes for the non-traditional student to enhance their retention and graduation rates.

The institutional experience

The data from this small study of 37 HEIs in 19 countries[15] can only give an indication of the challenges of the widening access and participation agenda. The data indicates, not surprisingly, that while gender issues have been addressed, there is still some way to go before the student population can be said to reflect society as a whole:

[15] Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, UK (Scotland + England + Wales)

Table 4

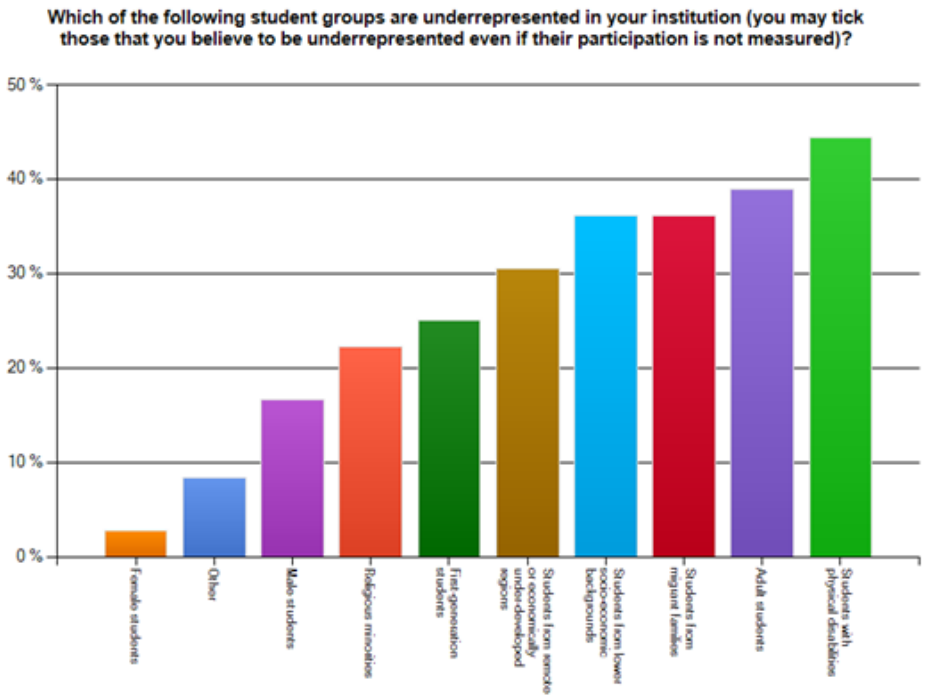


Table 4 gives an indication of the groups that European HEIs indicate have been particularly difficult to reach or where, to a certain extent, there has been little political will to make progress. Surprisingly, considering the European legislation for students with disabilities and the fact that 83% of European universities (Trends 2010), nearly 50% of the HEIs in this sample, consider that students with disabilities are underrepresented. Two groups stand out both in this survey and in the much larger Trends 2010 sample; students from ethnic minorities and refugees. There are a number of other groups including students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, first generation students and adult students, that have been targeted but still find it difficult not only to access but also to graduate. Gathering data on the make-up of the institutions' student population can be very difficult: the survey indicates that there are very diverging possibilities for collecting data in the different EU countries. In some countries it is not legally possible for historic reasons and often information can only be collected on a voluntary basis. Reflecting the difficulties that have been highlighted by the BFUG[16], the only data that all European HEIs can collect themselves are about age and gender. Only the UK institutions indicate that they can collect data on the individual student's background.

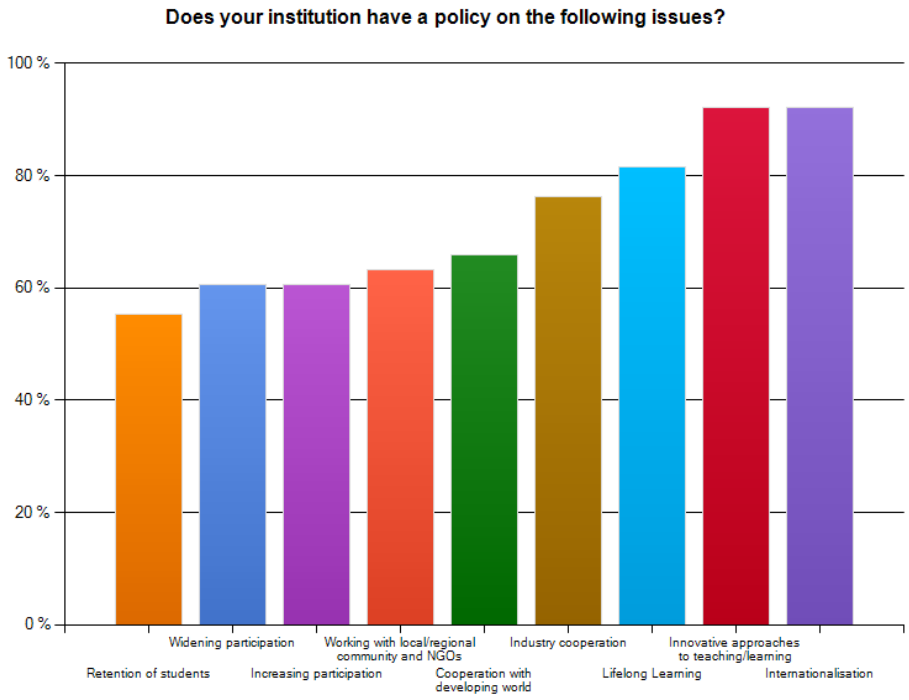
The data indicate that the universities feel committed to the widening participation agenda, but feel that they do not have enough time (81%) and that 84% consider that there are financial obstacles to address the issue.

[16] BFUG (Bologna Follow Up Group, established to support and monitor the progress of the implementation of the Bologna Process)

New institutional policies for widening participation: retention

As discussed, internationalisation has been identified in this survey and in Trends 2010 as the key policy area for the future, and the data collected within the Access to Success project show that 94% have a policy in place for internationalisation. It is closely followed by innovative approaches to teaching/learning (92%) and lifelong learning (86%) as opposed to other areas. Increasing participation and widening participation come much further down the list with 61% indicating that these two issues are considered as parts of the same policy, but also that European HEIs do not necessarily share the European level policy of closely interlinking lifelong learning and widening participation.

Table 5



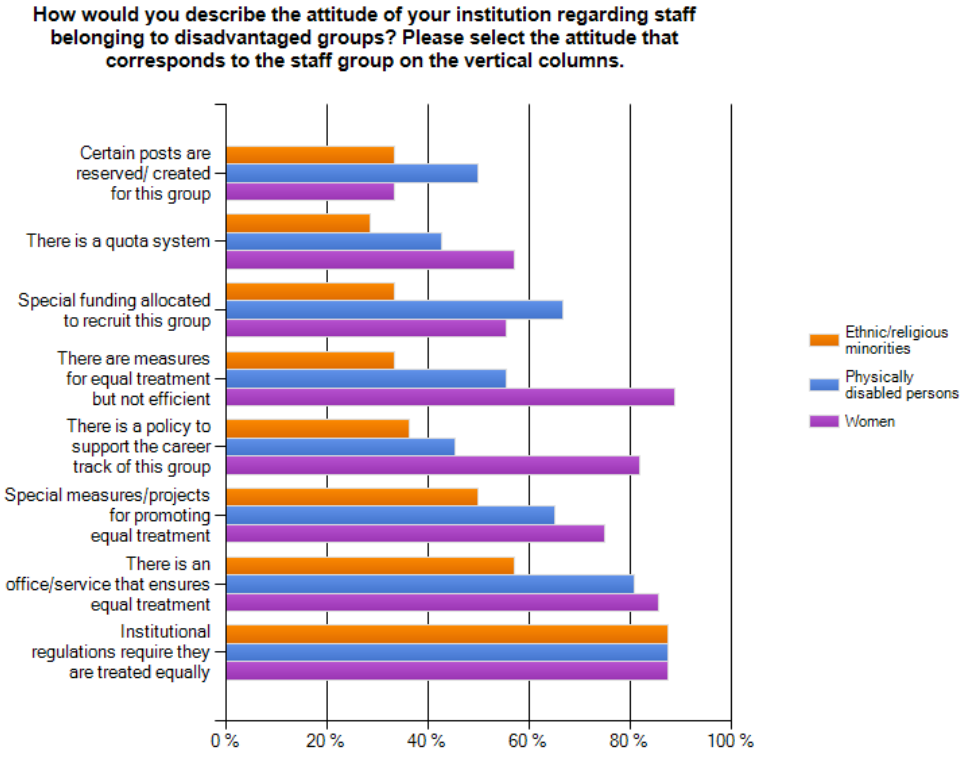
The emphasis on internationalisation, innovative approaches to teaching and learning, and lifelong learning indicate that the focus may be changing towards a diversified student population, but that the use and understanding of terminology may cause difficulties. The three top issues on this list can be seen as an institutional acknowledgement of the necessity to develop new teaching methods in order to support not only a diversified student population, but also a rapidly growing student population, as pointed out above. The survey found an inconsistency between the above table which indicates that 60% of the institutions have policies for widening participation in place and the recent reports on the social dimension of the Bologna Process that indicate that policies may be in place, but have so far not had the intended effect.

When asked about objectives directly related to increasing/widening participation, more than 70% of institutions indicate that their priority is to improve retention rates in general and remove possible

barriers for success, before increasing the overall numbers of students. Retention and retention rates are thus not only considered in relation to non-traditional students. The increased focus on retention rates in the Bologna decade relates to changes in funding of education that have moved towards output funding. Retention therefore has become increasingly essential, and European HEIs can no longer afford to support students who progress slowly through their studies; a clear example of this can be found in Denmark,where changes in government funding has encouraged the HEIs to closely track the progress of their students. The result of the survey also gave an indication of the traditional support system used for the retention of students. The focus is on cooperation with the student council, targeted academic support and student counselling, 96% of the HEIs in the sample use these, while the more Bologna-inspired student-centred learning initiatives (introducing responsive pedagogic strategies, implementing student-centred learning and a student conductive environment) score less highly.

Another obstacle was found when the survey addressed the attitude of staff. The table indicates how slow attitudes and practices change, with the responses to the questions on women as a clear indication. Regulations for equal treatment are in place at nearly 90% of the HEIs in the survey, but equally many indicate that the measures for equal treatment are not efficient for women. The responses indicate that there is a time-lag between creating policies and changes in attitude.

Table 6

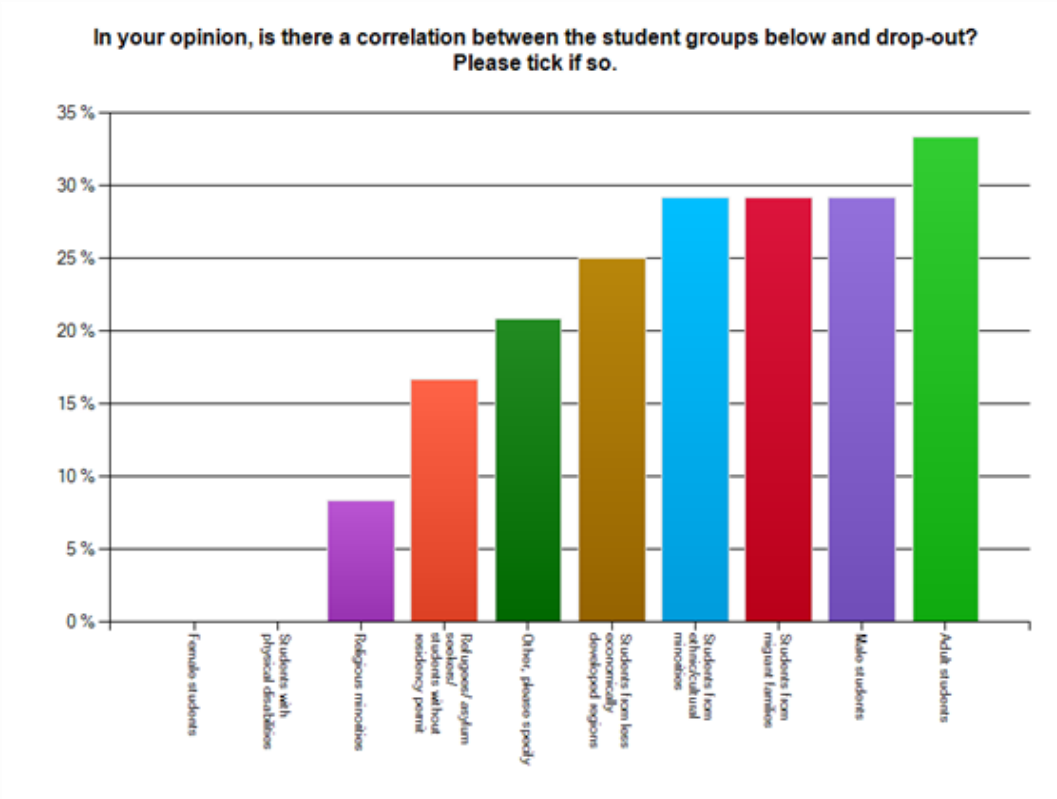


Changes in the way university education is funded could be identified as a third obstacle for HEIs to widen participation. Non-traditional students demand more “investment” initially to be successful, and thus a more focused policy. The survey identified a number of reasons for the difficulties HEIs are facing

in reflecting the social make-up of society in their student body. They are related to funding and support both for students and institutions, and to policies and attitudes.

This small survey of European HEIs suggests that one way to tackle a more diversified student body is to develop new approaches to teaching/learning, even if it scores lower than more traditional measures. Changes in the make-up of the student body (not least a more multi-cultural student body) has promoted new attitudes to changing teaching methods and practices. The changes have not only been prompted by students but also by technological developments and the introduction of the Bologna tools: the definition of learning outcomes and the relationship between learning outcomes and examination methods.

Table 7



The survey also tried to explore the relationship between student background and drop-out, and while it is not based on figures (as pointed out earlier, hard facts are only collected by the universities in a few countries), but rather on perceptions of the HEIs, it still points to a couple of interesting outcomes. The first is that there no longer seems to be a correlation between female gender and drop-out, but, according to the survey, there is one for male students as can be seen in the table 8. The second correlation is not surprising given all the reports published recently on the social dimension: there is still a high correlation between socially and economically disadvantaged students and a high drop-out rate. When it comes to institutional perception on why non-traditional students drop-out, financial problems is the single most recurring answer.

Conclusions

The European survey of the Access to Success project indicates that European higher education institutions are increasingly engaged in diversifying their student portfolio, including both international and non-traditional students, but also that there are a number of obstacles of a more fundamental kind to be overcome outside the realm of higher education institutions themselves. The first relates to the way the primary and secondary education systems support social inclusion. The second obstacle concerns the admission procedures and whether they promote social inclusion and the third is linked to current funding formulae and whether they encourage European higher education institutions to be inclusive and responsive. Potentially, there is a fourth obstacle concerning the attitude of staff.

European higher education institutions in general have the legal framework to address the widening participation agenda as has been called for in the "European universities' charter on lifelong learning", and the survey indicates many do, but that access in itself is not sufficient. European HEIs need to address retention and graduation for all the students in higher education. It is thus too early to claim that all potential European students, regardless of race, age and gender, have access to success. It can only be hoped that the Bologna reforms will facilitate the ability and the responsibility of European higher education institutions to be more inclusive and responsive.

A special thank you for contributions to the article goes to my colleagues at EUA: Elizabeth Colucci, Michael Gaebel, Michael Hörig and Andrée Sursock.

Appendix 1

Country-by-country overview of access to higher education, universities' possibilities to select their students, legislation and policies for widening participation, recognition of prior learning, and of national and institutional LLL strategies in 2007/2008

Adapted from material contained in:

- Trends 2010 National Rector Conferences' Questionnaire (**NRC**)
- Trends 2010 Institutional Questionnaire (**T2010**)
- Key Data on Higher Education in Europe, EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2009 Edition (**KD**),
- Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010" work programme "Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation" 2008 based on 2007 data (**JPR**),
- University Autonomy in Europe, EUA (2009) (**A**)
- Bologna Process Stocktaking report 2009 (**SR**)
- Access to success, EUA questionnaire 2009 (**AS**)

National Access/student selection systems as defined in Key data on higher education in Europe:

1. Limitation of places/selection of students at national/regional level for all or almost all fields of study (numerus clausus)
2. Limitation of places/selection of students at institutional level for all or almost all fields of study

3. Free Access = with regulations for prior qualifications: secondary school leaving certificate, entrance exam (?) to almost all fields
4. Free access combined with institutional input depending on field

EUA Autonomy Report:

1. Access, free access, numerus clausus
2. HEI set add. selection criteria = Basic requirements set by government (secondary school leaving certificate) + additional criteria defined by HEI
3. Special quotas = No quotas, state sets quotas, university sets quotas

Appendix 2

Table A - Country-by-country overview, as it was in 2007/2008

Country	*National Access/student selection system/determination of number of students = autonomy of institutions to select students*	*National /Institutional Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning as access* **Average: T2010 = 30%**	*National strategy/legislation for widening participation*	*National strategy for Lifelong Learning*	*HEI strategy for Lifelong Learning* **Average: T2010 = 39%**
Austria	NRC: Free Access A: Free access, No quotas for specific groups of students KD: Open access combined with complex regulations	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No, because of open access T2010 = 48% SR: Yellow	NRC: Open Access by law AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: No, problems with the relationship between institutional autonomy and LLL strategy	NRC: Yes T2010 = 16% of institutions have strategy
Belgium	A: Free Access, No quotas for specific groups of students T2010: Incentives for WP	JPR: Yes T2010 = 22% SR: Green	NRC: Legislation and activities T2010: Plan for WP	JPR: Yes T2010: Yes	NRC: Yes T2010 = 30% of institutions have strategy
Belgium	A: Free Access, No quotas for specific groups of students T2010: Incentives for WP	JPR: Yes T2010 = 86% SR: Green	NRC: Yes, strategy for WP T2010: Plan for WP AS: regional legislation + funding	NRC: Yes JPR: Yes	NRC: No info T2010 = 36% of institutions have strategy
Bulgaria	A: Student numbers decided by state, HEI set add. selection criteria, HEI sets quotas KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at institutional level	JPR: Developing strategy T2010 = 0% SR: Light green	NRC: No info	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No info	NRC: No info T2010 = 75% of institutions have strategy
Switzerland	A. Free Access, state set quota for specific groups	NRC: No national regulations, but institutional practices T2010 = 44 % SR: Yellow	NRC: No info	NRC: No	NRC: Yes T2010 = 19% of institutions have strategy
Cyprus	A: HEI negotiate student numbers with government, state set quotas for specific groups KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at national/regional level for all or almost all fields of study (numerus clausus)	JPR: Developing strategy T2010 = 0% SR: Red	No info	JPR: Yes	NRC: No info T2010 = 33% of institutions have strategy
Czech Republic	A: HEI can decide on number of fee-paying students, HEI set add. selection criteria KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at institutional level for all or almost all fields of study	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No T2010 = 10% SR: orange	NRC: Yes AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes	NRC: No T2010 = 67% of institutions have strategy
Germany	A: Limited open access, HEI negotiate student numbers with government, HEI sets quotas KD: Open access combined with complex regulations	JPR: No general validation system NRC: Yes, in ANKOM project T2010 = 40% SR: Light green	NRC: Yes AS: Reform of access regulations to HEIs, social dimension action plan + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: No – not for HEI and not for all	NRC: No T2010 = 12% of institutions have strategy
Denmark	A: HEIs can decide on student numbers, no quotas for specific groups of students, to some extent HEIs can set add. selection criteria, KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at institutional level	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes T2010 = 25% SR: Green	NRC: No T2010 site-visit: Yes AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes	NRC: Yes T2010 = 50% of institutions have strategy
Estonia	A: HEI can decide on student numbers, HEI set add. selection criteria No quotas for specific groups of students KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at institutional level for all or almost all fields of study	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No info T2010 = 40% SR: Light green	NRC: No info AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: No info	NRC: No info T2010 = 40% of institutions have strategy

Country	*National Access/student selection system/determination of number of students = autonomy of institutions to select students*	*National /Institutional Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning as access* **Average: T2010 = 30%**	*National strategy/legislation for widening participation*	*National strategy for Lifelong Learning*	*HEI strategy for Lifelong Learning* **Average: T2010 = 39%**
Greece	A: HEI negotiate student numbers with government, state set quotas for specific groups KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at national/regional level	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No, but planned discussions T2010 = 0% SR: Orange	NRC: Yes, but HEI don't want WP because of a great number of inactive students	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes	NRC: Yes T2010 = 36% of institutions have strategy
Spain	A: Free Access, university sets quotas in certain fields HEI sets quotas KD Limitation of places/selection of students at national/regional level for all or almost all fields of study (numerus clausus)	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No but planned for the non-university sector T2010 = 20% SR: Green	NRC: No policy AS: regional legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: No	NRC: Yes T2010 = 40% of institutions have strategy
Finland	A: HEI negotiate student numbers with government, university sets quotas, HEI set add. selection criteria, HEI sets quotas KD: Combination of limitation of places/selection of students at national and institutional level	JPR: Yes NRC: No, but planned. Recommendations made T2010 = 33% SR: Green	NRC: Yes WP concerns both incentives to attract younger students, immigrants and foreign students AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes	NRC: Yes T2010 = 58% of institutions have strategy
France	NRC: Free access for universities A: Free access, No quotas for specific groups of students KD: Open access combined with complex regulations	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes, part of the LLL agenda T2010 = 34% SR: Green	NRC: Yes, possibilities to improve financial conditions	JPR: Policy in place, but considered a strategy NRC: Yes	NRC: Yes T2010 = 60% of institutions have strategy
Croatia	A: University can decide on student numbers, HEI set add. selection criteria, HEI sets quotas	JPR: No validation system T2010 = 0% SR: Yellow	No info	JPR: Yes	No info
Hungary	A: HEI negotiate student numbers with government, HEI sets quotas KD: Government limitation of places/	JPR: No validation system, but one in progress NRC: Yes, formal, employment and life experiences T2010 = 10%	NRC: Yes, mentor programme and financial support system AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes	NRC: Yes T2010 = 35% of institutions have strategy
Ireland	A: HEI can decide on student numbers, university sets quotas, HEI set add. selection criteria KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at institutional level	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes T2010 = 85% SR: Green	NRC: Yes, 4 target groups: soc.-eco disadvantaged, students with disabilities, mature students, ethnic minorities	JPR: Updating the LLL strategy NRC: Yes, the strategy is being updated to make better use of the LLL tools	NRC: Yes, all HEIs involved in LLL T2010 = 60% of institutions have strategy
Iceland	A: Free Access, HEI negotiate student numbers with government, HEI set add. selection criteria, No quotas for specific groups of students KD: Free Access = with regulations for prior qualifications: secondary school leaving certificate, entrance exam (?) to almost all fields	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: Will be included in strategy T2010 = 67% SR: Green	NRC: Yes, linked to RPL	JPR: Policy in place, but considered a strategy NRC: Yes	NRC: Yes T2010 = 33% of institutions have strategy
Italy	A: Free Access, HEI sets quotas KD: Open access combined with complex regulations	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No T2010 = 3% SR: Light green	NRC: No	JPR: Policy in place, but considered a strategy NRC: No strategy	NRC: No T2010 = 43% of institutions have strategy

Country	*National Access/student selection system/determination of number of students = autonomy of institutions to select students*	*National /Institutional Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning as access* **Average: T2010 = 30%**	*National strategy/legislation for widening participation*	*National strategy for Lifelong Learning*	*HEI strategy for Lifelong Learning* **Average: T2010 = 39%**
Latvia	A: HEI can decide on number of fee-paying students, HEI sets quotas KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at institutional level for all or almost all fields of study	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: Will be included in strategy T2010 = 13% SR: Yellow	NRC: Yes, but it only marginally mentions higher education	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes, but it only marginally mentions higher education	NRC: Yes, HEI interested in developing LLL even without a policy T2010 = 38% of institutions have strategy
Lithuania	A: HEI can decide on number of fee-paying students, state set quotas for specific groups KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at institutional level for all or almost all fields of study	JRC: No validation system NRC: HEI have their own system T2010 = 39% SR: Orange	NRC: No	JPR: Yes NRC: In principle the strategy covers both	NRC: No T2010 = 61% of institutions have strategy
Luxembourg	A: HEI can decide on student numbers, university sets quotas, HEI set add. selection criteria KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at national/regional level for all or almost all fields of study (numerus clausus)	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: Yes T2010 = 0% SR: Green	NRC: No	JPR: Policy in place, but considered a strategy NRC: No strategy	NRC: No – too early T2010 = 0% of institutions have strategy
Malta	A: Free Access, no quotas for specific groups of students KD: Free Access = with regulations for prior qualifications: secondary school leaving certificate, entrance exam (?) to almost all fields	JPR: Validation system = The Malta Qualifications Council T2010 = 100 %	+ WP, WP for equity	JPR: Policy in place, but considered a strategy	No info
Netherlands	A: Free Access, No quotas for specific groups of students KD: Free Access to almost all fields of study	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes T2010 = 53% SR: Green	NRC: New incentives to attract/include disabled students and non-Western immigrants AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Policy in place, but considered a strategy NRC: Yes, but universities not really involved except for OU	NRC: No, except OU T2010 = 17% of institutions have strategy
Norway	A: Student number decided by state, HEI set add. selection criteria, state set quotas for specific groups KD: Cannot decide on number of students, state sets quotas	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes T2010 = 75% SR: Green	NRC: Student loans and grants gives possibilities for WP. New legislation for setting up agency for WP AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: White paper. Open University set up in 1998. LLL is defined as core activity in law of 2005.	NRC: HEIs in Norway supports the Open University (appoint board members) and many institutions have a lot of LLL activities. T2010 = 40% of institutions have strategy
Poland	A: HEI can decide on student numbers, no quotas for specific groups of students KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at institutional level	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No T2010 = 4 % SR: Yellow	NRC: Yes, creating HEIs in remote areas to bring education to non-urban areas and incentives to admit disabled students AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: Is expected to be developed in 2010	NRC: Yes, in 60% of university-level HEIs T2010 = 47% of institutions have strategy
Portugal	A: HEI can decide on number of fee-paying students, HEI set add. selection criteria, state sets quotas for specific groups KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at national/regional level for all or almost all fields of study (numerus clausus)	JPR: Yes NRC: No info T2010 = 80% SR: Green	NRC: No info AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Policy in place, but considered a strategy NRC: No info	NRC: No info T2010 = 40% of institutions have strategy

Country	*National Access/student selection system/determination of number of students = autonomy of institutions to select students*	*National /Institutional Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning as access* **Average: T2010 = 30%**	*National strategy/legislation for widening participation*	*National strategy for Lifelong Learning*	*HEI strategy for Lifelong Learning* **Average: T2010 = 39%**
Romania	A: HEI can decide on number of fee-paying students, HEI set add. selection criteria, state set quota for specific groups KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at institutional level for all or almost all fields of study	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No info T2010 = 3% SR: Green	NRC: No info	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No info	NRC: No info T2010 = 42% of institutions have strategy
Serbia	A: HEI can decide on number of fee-paying students, state set quota for specific groups	No info SR: Orange	No info	No info	No info
Russia	No info, HEI set add. selection criteria	No info T2010 = 25 % SR: Orange	No info	No info	No info T2010 = 63% of institutions have strategy
Sweden	A: HEI negotiate student numbers with government, HEI set add. selection criteria, no quotas for specific groups of students KD: Combination of limitation of places/selection of students at national and institutional level	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: Yes, is widely used by HEIs T2010 = 35% SR: Green	NRC: A policy, requiring each HEI to work and report on widening participation AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: The system is already an LLL system, no need for a strategy	NRC: Yes T2010 = 35% of institutions have strategy
Slovenia	A: HEI negotiate student numbers with government, university propose quotas, HEI set add. selection criteria KD: Combination of limitation of places/selection of students at national and institutional level	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: Yes T2010 = 0% SR: Green	NRC: NA AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Strategy NRC: Yes	NRC: Yes T2010 =25% of institutions have strategy
Slovakia	A: HEI negotiate student numbers with government, HEI set quotas, HEI set add. selection criteria	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: Developing strategy T2010 = 7% SR: Red	NRC: Included in LLL strategy AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes	NRC: Yes T2010 = 50% of institutions have strategy
Turkey	A: Student numbers decided on by state and selection done by state KD: Limitation of places/selection of students at national/regional level for all or almost all fields of study (numerus clausus)	JPR: No validation system NRC: No info T2010 = 18% SR: Red	NRC: No info	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: No info	NRC: No info T2010 = 44% of institutions have strategy
England, Wales and Northern Ireland	A: HEI negotiate student numbers with government, HEI set add. selection criteria, no quotas for specific groups of students KD: Overall numbers determined by government, but selection of students at institutional level	JPR: Developing strategy NRC: HEIs can set different criteria for recognition of prior learning to gain access T2010 = 75% SR: Green	NRC: Aim higher AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes	NRC: Yes, for most institutions T2010 = 64% of institutions have strategy
Scotland	No info	JPR: No info NRC: Yes, developed and published guidelines for RPL T2010 = 92% SR: Green	NRC: Yes, well developed and has been extended to soc.-eco- disadvantaged students Will include financial incentives AS: legislation + funding	JPR: Yes NRC: Yes	NRC: Yes LLL is a priority for all HEIs T2010 = 69% of institutions have strategy

References

Adelman, C., 2008, *Learning Accountability from Bologna: A higher education policy primer*. Issues brief, Ihep.

Aghion, P., Dewatripont, M., Hoxby, C., Mas-Colell, A., Sapir, A., 2008, *Higher Aspiration: An agenda reforming European universities*. (Breughel Blueprint Series).

Bartušek, A., Koucký, J., Kovařovic, J., 2009, *Who is more equal? Access to tertiary education in Europe.* (Education Policy Centre, Faculty of Education, Charles University, Prague).

Crosling, G., Heagney, M., Thomas, L., 2009, 'Improving student retention in higher education'. *Australian Universities' Review,* 51(2).

Deane, C., Pauwels, W., Rauhvargers, A., 2009, *Bologna Process Stocktaking report 2009*. **(SR).**

Ederer, P., Schuller, P., Willems, S., 2008, *University Systems Ranking: Citizens and Society in the Age of the Knowledge.* (Lisbon Council Policy Brief).

Engle, J.O'Brian, C., *Demography is not destiny*. Pell Institute.

EUA, 2009, *University Autonomy in Europe I, exploratory study*.

EUA, 2009, *Institutional Diversity in European Higher Education*.

EUCEN, 2007, *The Bologna Process and University lifelong learning: The state of play and future direction*. BeFlex Report.

European Commission, 2009, *Key Data on Higher Education in Europe*. (**KD**).

European Union, 2008, Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010" work programme "Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation." Based on 2007 data (**JPR**).

Eurostat, Eurostudent, 2009, *The Bologna Process in Higher Education in Europe, Key indicators on the social dimension and mobility.*

Higher Education Information System (HIS), 2008, *Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe,* Final report Eurostudent III 2005- 2008.

OECD, *Education at a glance 2009*.

OECD, 2008, *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society*.

Scott, Peter, 'Access in Higher Education in Europe and North America: Trends and Developments', paper presented at *UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in the Europe Region: Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness*, 21-24 May 2009, Bucharest, Romania.

UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education, *Communiqué: The New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research For Societal Change and Development*.

Usher Alex, 'Ten Years Back and Ten Years Forward: Developments and Trends in Higher Education in Europe Region', paper presented at *UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in the Europe Region: Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness*, 21-24 May 2009, Bucharest, Romania.

2.2. LITERATURE REVIEW: A RESEARCH-INFORMED APPROACH TO IMPROVING INSTITUTIONAL RETENTION

By Liz Thomas[17] with Rob Jones and Helen May

Introduction

In the UK there is a growing body of evidence relating to student retention and success in higher education.[18] In this brief paper we identify the factors contributing to early withdrawal and enhanced retention, and offer a reflective checklist to guide thinking about institutional strengths and areas for improvement.

Factors contributing to early withdrawal

Research exploring the reasons for student withdrawal tends to conclude that there is rarely a single reason why students leave. In most cases, the picture is complex, and students leave as a result of a combination of inter-related factors. The most comprehensive national survey of students withdrawing from university was conducted by Yorke in the mid-1990s (n = 2151) (Yorke et al 1997). It identified the five most significant reasons for student non-completion: incompatibility between the student and institution, lack of preparation for the higher education experience, lack of commitment to the course, financial hardship and poor academic progress. Yorke and Longden's more recent survey (2008) identified the following seven factors as contributing to early withdrawal: poor quality learning experience; not coping with academic demand; wrong choice of field of study; unhappy with location and environment; dissatisfied with institutional resourcing; problems with finance and employment; and problems with social integration. Davies and Elias (2002) obtained similar findings (with a sample of over 1 500 students). In their survey, the main factors for leaving were: a mistaken choice of course (24%), financial problems directly related to participating in higher education (18%), and personal problems (14%). More recently, the National Audit Office (NAO) (2007) identified seven types of reasons why students withdraw: personal reasons, lack of integration, dissatisfaction with course/institution, lack of preparedness, wrong choice of course, financial reasons and in order to pursue other opportunities.

In summary, the reasons for early withdrawal are:

a) Preparation for higher education

Some students are not adequately prepared for the transition into higher education, especially in academic terms (Quinn et al 2005; Van Stolk et al 2007).

[17] Edge Hill University, United Kingdom

[18] A full review of the literature is available at:
http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/wprs/WPRS_retention_synthesis

b) Institutional and course match

Students who leave higher education often find that the programme they have enrolled in does not meet their expectations or that they are simply on the wrong course (Quinn et al 2005, NAO 2007, Yorke and Longden 2008). In the UK, this problem can be exaggerated by students who enter courses and institutions through the clearing process (a service available for students without a university placement as a result of poor exam results, in order to find a suitable vacancy). There is body of US research about institutional match and integration – the extent to which the institution is perceived to meet the needs of the students and how far they feel part of the institution (e.g. Tinto 1993, Berger and Braxton 1998).

c) Academic experience

Students may lack basic skills, fail to adjust to the unfamiliar approaches to learning and teaching, struggle with aspects of the academic discipline, fail assessments and feel unable to ask staff or peers for help (e.g. Yorke and Longden 2008).

Students are most likely to leave in their year of entry (Yorke, et al 1997; Thomas, 2002; Quinn et al 2005, Yorke and Longden 2007) which highlights the importance of the first year experience. Particular issues are: induction, learning and teaching environments, pedagogy and assessment (c.f. Laing and Robinson, 2003, Thomas 2002, Rhodes and Nevill 2004).

d) Social integration

A further area of importance is that of social integration (Harvey and Drew 2006) – i.e. the extent to which students feel that they 'fit in', particularly in a social sense. Some research results tend to suggest that non-academic factors have more weight than academic factors in withdrawal decisions (e.g. Bers and Smith, 1991). Local students are often less engaged socially than peers living on a university campus (see Quinn et al 2005, Longden and Yorke 2008). Part-time students are also less able (and sometimes less inclined) to participate in social activities. Indeed, for many students from under-represented groups, the classroom provides the only opportunity for developing peer relations, and thus learning strategies ought to address this need.

e) Financial issues

There is research evidence about the impact of financial issues on early withdrawal, especially by students from lower socio-economic groups (Ozga & Sukhnandan, 1997; Yorke et al., 1997; Yorke, 1999; Dodgson & Bolam, 2002), but most studies, conclude that finance *per se* is not the main reason why students withdraw from HE.

f) Personal circumstances

Personal circumstances can include mental and physical health problems, caring for a relative, childcare, bereavement, etc. All studies show that, although these factors are relevant for some students, they are not as significant as is sometimes assumed.

Factors enhancing student retention and success

a) Pre-entry information and preparation

Pre-entry information and preparation for higher education includes the provision of information to inform choice and shape expectations about higher education, the institution and the course to improve retention (Yorke and Thomas 2003, Dodgson and Bolam 2002).

b) Induction and transition support

Induction is used to make the expectations and practices of higher education explicit to students (Action on Access 2003). Institutions are recognising the value of a "longer and thinner" induction experience that starts early and lasts longer than one week. According to Harvey and Drew (2006), induction is regarded as a significant part of the package to promote good student retention. But research implies a need to clarify the aims and purposes of induction, to separate out and provide the necessary information in a timely manner (rather than all at once).

The key issues to be communicated in induction are about:

i) course material
ii) learning support services
iii) general information about the university and the environs
iv) adaptation to university life
v) becoming an autonomous learner
vi) course and assessment requirements
vii) ways to develop the skills needed for academic work or for work-based learning.

c) Curriculum development

Curriculum development is at the heart of what institutions can do to improve student retention and success.

For many students, their academic interactions are the only way in which they interact with the institution, so that learning, teaching, assessment and course content become central to students' experience and their decision to stay or leave early.

In particular, research evidence points to the importance of:

i) Active learning and teaching strategies
ii) Formative assessment
iii) Relevant courses
iv) Integrated personal tutoring and study support
v) Flexible learning

i) Active learning and teaching strategies

Many efforts to improve student retention and success via learning, teaching and assessment approaches focus on promoting greater student engagement in the classroom. This is primarily being undertaken by moving from largely teacher-centred approaches towards student-centred learning practices. There is a consensus that interactive as opposed to didactic teaching improves academic success and promotes the inclusion of learners who might feel like outsiders (Bamber and Tett, 2001; Haggis and Pouget, 2002; Thomas, 2002; Parker *et al*, 2005). Student-centred learning conceives of students as playing a more active role in their learning processes, and drawing on their existing knowledge, previous experiences and personal interests to enhance engagement, course commitment and retention on the programme. De Corte (2000) (in the context of Belgian schooling) identified the following features of a "powerful learning environment". It should:

- include group discussions of both the content and the process of learning and studying
- provide authentic tasks and realistic problems that have personal meaning and future use
- initiate and support active and constructive learning processes (conceptual understanding) and
- enhance students' awareness of their own cognitive processes and their ability to control their motives and feelings (cognitive and volitional self-regulation).

Active learning is often associated with experiential, problem-based and project-based learning, and other forms of collaborative learning, and less reliance on the large lecture format. Boud and Feletti (1998, p2) identify the key features of a problem-based learning approach as:

- using stimulus material to help students discuss an important problem, question or issue
- presenting the problem as a simulation of professional practice or a real-life situation
- appropriately guiding students' critical thinking and providing limited resources to help them learn from defining and attempting to resolve a given problem
- having students work co-operatively as a group, exploring information in and out of class, with access to a tutor who knows the problem well and can facilitate the group's learning process
- getting students to identify their own learning needs and appropriate use of available resources
- reapplying this knowledge to the original problem and evaluating their learning processes.

Vincent Tinto has promoted the idea of learning communities as a way of facilitating student engagement – both academically and socially. For example, "by registering students for the same course or having all new students study the same topic, the entering students form their own self-supporting associations to give each other academic and social support " (Tinto, 2000, p28-9).

In Tinto's work, students found that learning communities had academic and social benefits that impacted positively on student achievement and persistence (Tinto 1998, Tinto 2000).

ii) Formative assessment

Many students struggle to make the transition from a fairly structured learning experience in schools and colleges to the largely autonomous approach required by study at the higher level. Pedagogical research,

especially with non-traditional students, reports that formative assessment can offer an integrated and structured approach to equipping all students with the information and skills they need to make a successful transition to higher education and to continue to succeed academically (see Yorke 2001). Formative feedback is integrated into the learning experience, and so does not detract from discipline-focused teaching, and it also reaches all students, not just those who have the knowledge and confidence to seek support. Furthermore feedback on formative assessment provides a vehicle for interaction between students and staff, thus helping to develop student familiarity and confidence to approach staff for additional clarification and guidance if necessary. Feedback information can also be used by staff to realign their teaching in response to learners' needs (see Russell 2008).

iii) Relevant courses

Some institutions are introducing new curriculum areas, which draw on and value a wide range of experiences and knowledge, for example black history, Islamic studies, etc. (Yorke and Thomas 2003). Others are reviewing the existing curriculum to identify assumptions and biases that favour traditional students' knowledge and perspectives at the expense of others (see examples of curriculum change presented in Crosling et al. 2008). Careers education can be integrated into the early stages of students' academic lives to enable them to understand better how the studying they are doing relates to their career aspirations. This can be coupled with greater awareness of employability skills, so that students can prosper in the labour market and overcome some of the biases they face there too (Blasko et al 2003).

iv) Personal tutoring and study support

Work on personal tutoring has drawn on institutional research and evaluation of practice (Thomas and Hixenbaugh 2006). These studies are remarkably consistent in finding that:

- tutoring enhances many students' learning experience and improves retention, progression and success
- traditional models of tutoring are no longer appropriate or fit for purpose
- new models of tutoring should be student-centred, integrated into the curriculum, connected to professional services and proactively engage students, especially as they make the transition into HE
- staff need to be involved in the development of new tutoring systems, and provided with guidance, training and support to enable them to fulfil their new roles, in a wider range of contexts and modes of delivery.

Other research on academic study support also identifies the value of integrated or semi-integrated approaches (see below).

v) Flexible learning

The NAO report (2007) finds that some institutions, and in particular those with higher numbers of non-traditional students, are being flexible in allowing students to choose learning options to fit their personal circumstances, for example through comprehensive modular systems. This approach is recommended by Quinn et al. (2005). Dodgson and Bolam (2002) found that ICT was widely used in the

six universities in the north east of England to improve the flexibility of learning opportunities and enhance student retention. They also note the importance of timetables that try to accommodate students' needs (e.g. blocking time in university and free time, making timetables available well in advance, etc.).

d) Social Engagement

Harvey and Drew (2006) found that, although social integration is thought to be crucial to student retention and success, it is given comparatively little attention within institutions – for example the forming of friendships and the impact of the locality and its social (non-university) facilities are not considered. In the US context, Tinto has established learning communities that study together and these have promoted social, as well as academic, integration. Thomas et al. (2002) found that student services can play a role in promoting social interaction by "helping students to locate each other (e.g. mature students, international students etc), by providing social spaces, by offering more flexible and affordable accommodation options and by compensating for the informal support usually provided by networks of friends". Yorke and Longden (2008) also note the importance of accommodation and living arrangements.

e) Student Support

Student support includes academic support, skills development, pastoral support, financial information, advice and support. Support may be delivered by dedicated, professional staff (e.g. student services), by academic staff (e.g. personal tutor), by peers (e.g. via mentoring schemes) or via the students' union. There are different models of providing both academic and pastoral support: separate, semi-integrated and integrated curriculum models (Warren 2002, Earwaker 1993). Integrated approaches are favoured, as research shows that many students who would benefit from academic and other support services are reluctant to put themselves forward (Dodgson and Bolam, 2002).

Personal tutoring is central to establishing a relationship between students and the institution, and providing a first point of contact (Dodgson and Bolam 2002, Yorke and Thomas 2003, Thomas and Hixenbaugh 2006).

f) Data and monitoring

Data and monitoring can take place at student, course, department or faculty level. At the student level this includes monitoring, and, crucially, acting on students' attendance as well as identifying students at risk. Institutional data can be reviewed to identify areas with unusually high rates of withdrawal or failure (non-voluntary withdrawal) (NAO 2007). The key issue at all levels however is acting on the data (QAA 2008 and 2006). They identify the following stages that institutions move through:

- **Stage 1** - little or no central provision of data; local sources using different definitions of concepts such as 'progression'; consequently little use is made of data beyond descriptive presentation in annual and periodic review reports.
- **Stage 2** - central systems for handling data and producing reports, but staff may not yet be fully confident in engaging with the data, or completely convinced of the reliability of centrally produced data; analysis consequently still fairly limited, and some local data sources may still be in use.

- **Stage 3** - tools and systems in existence so that staff can obtain the necessary data, and have the appropriate skills to analyse it in an informative manner; however, this facility remains to be fully exploited, generally because of lack of central strategic oversight.
- **Stage 4** - fully integrated management information systems producing data fit for purpose, the analysis of which informs institutional thinking and strategic decision-making at all levels.

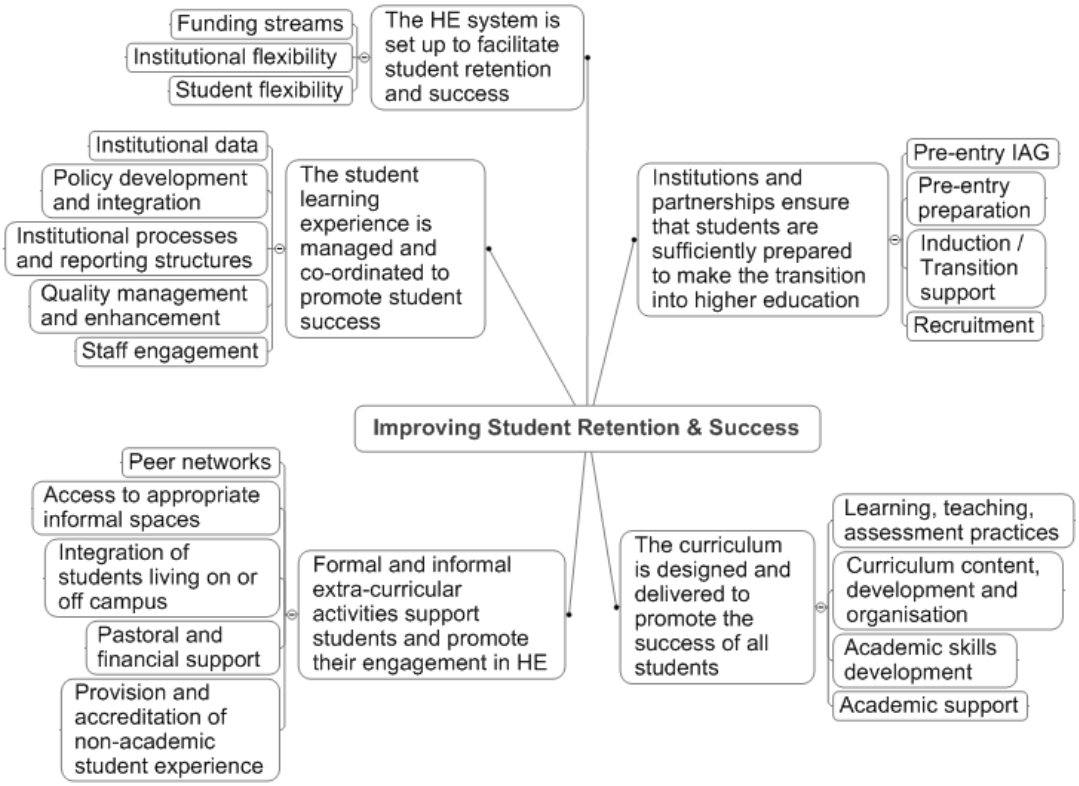
In order to improve the collection and effective use of data, the report recommends:

- a single central source of data in which all staff have confidence
- appropriate tools to enable the data to be interrogated in a manner that meets the needs of different groups within the institution and
- appropriate staff development to support effective use of the data and the analysis tools.

Improving institutional retention

Using a theory of change, and based on this analysis of the literature, we have identified the essential conditions to improve institutional retention, and used research to suggest ways in which these might be achieved. These are summarised visually below, and then presented as a reflective checklist to assist the institution in considering its strengths and possible areas for attention to improve student retention and success.

a) Essential conditions to improve institutional student retention and success



b) Reflective Checklist

1. Do we, as an institution – directly and through our partnerships - ensure that students are sufficiently prepared to make the transition into higher education (HE)?

Issues to review include:
1.1 Pre-entry information, advice and guidance (IAG)
1.2 Pre-entry preparation for HE level study
1.3 Induction and transition support
1.4 Recruitment and admissions processes (including clearing)

2. Is the curriculum designed and delivered to promote the success of all students?

Issues to review include:
2.1 Learning, teaching and assessment practices
2.2 Curriculum content, development and organisation
2.3 Academic skills development
2.4 Academic support

3. Do the formal and informal extra-curricula activities support students and promote the engagement of all students in the HE experience?

Areas to reflect on include:
3.1 Peer engagement, friendship, support and learning
3.2 Access to appropriate learning and social spaces
3.3 Integration of students living both on and off campus
3.4 Pastoral and financial support
3.5 Provision and accreditation of non-academic student experience to promote engagement

4. Is the student learning experience managed and co-ordinated to promote student success?

Issues to consider include:
4.1 Policy development and integration
4.2 Use of institutional data to identify and support students/modules/courses/departments /faculties
4.3 Institutional processes and reporting structures
4.4 Staff engagement
4.5 Student engagement
4.6 Evaluation

5. Is the HE system set up to facilitate student retention and success?

Issues to consider include:
5.1 Funding and performance review models support institutional flexibility and student choice
5.2 Institutions are able to respond flexibly to the needs of diverse students
5.3 Students have flexibility and choice, e.g. to move in and out of HE and between HE providers

References

Action on Access, 2003, *Student Success in Higher Education*. (Bradford, Action on Access).

Bamber, J and Tett, L., 2001, 'Ensuring integrative learning experiences for non-traditional students in higher education', *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 3(1), 2001, pp 8-16.

Berger, J.B. and Braxton, J.M., 1998, 'Revising Tinto's Interactionalist Theory of Student Departure Through Theory Elaboration: Examining the role of organisational attributes in the persistence process' in *Research in Higher Education*, 39(2), pp103-119.

Bers, T. H. and Smith, K. E., 1991, 'Persistence of community college students: The influence of student intent and academic and social integration', *Research in Higher Education*, 32, pp. 539–56.

Blasko, Z., et al., 2003, *Access to what: analysis of factors determining graduate employability*, Centre for Higher Education Research.

Boud, D and Feletti, G (eds.), *The Challenge of Problem-based Learning*. (Second edition. London: Kogan Page).

Crosling, G., Thomas, L. and Heagney, M., 2008, *Improving student retention in higher education: the role of teaching and learning.*(London: Routledge)

Davies, R. and Elias, P., 2003, Dropping Out: A Study of Early Leavers from Higher Education. (London: DfES).

De Corte, E., 2000, 'Marrying theory building and the improvement of school practice', *Learning and Instruction*, 10: 249-66.

Dodgson, R. and Bolam, H., 2002, *Student retention, support and widening participation in the north east of England*. (Sunderland: Universities for the North East).

Earwaker, J., 1992, Helping and supporting students. (Buckingham, Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press).

Haggis, T and Pouget, M., 2002, Trying to be Motivated: perspectives on learning from younger students accessing higher education, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 7(3), pp. 323-36.

Harvey, L., Drew, S. with Smith, M., 2006, *The first year experience: a literature review for the Higher Education Academy.* (York. HE Academy).

Laing, C. and Robinson, A., 2003, The Withdrawal of Non-traditional Students: developing an explanatory model, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 27(2).

NAO (National Audit Office), 2007, *Staying the course: the retention of students in higher education*. Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General. (London: The Stationary Office).

Ozga, J. and Sukhnandan, L., 1997, Undergraduate Non-completion in Higher Education in England. Report 2. (Bristol: HEFCE).

Parker, S., Naylor, P. and Warmington, P., 2005 forthcoming, Widening participation in higher education: What can we learn from the ideologies and practices of committed practitioners? *Journal of Access, Policy and Practice* 2(2).

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), 2008, *Outcomes from Institutional Audit Progression and Completion Statistics. Second series. Sharing good practice*. (Mansfield: QAA).

Quinn, J., Thomas, L., Slack, K., Casey, L., Thexton, W. and Noble, J., 2005, *From Life Crisis to Lifelong Learning*. *rethinking working class 'drop out' from higher education.* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

Rhodes, C. and Nevill, A., 2004, Academic and social integration in higher education: a survey of satisfaction and dissatisfaction within a first-year education studies cohort at a new university, Journal of Further and Higher Education, 28(2).

2.3. EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDIES

Introduction and summary

After considering the 41 surveys from higher education institutions across the European Higher Education Area, the Access to Success project sought to identify interesting case studies and practices that could be used to exemplify some of the national and institutional disparity on this topic. The extent to which HEIs develop and execute policies and strategies for improving access and retention depends considerably on national policy frameworks and incentives, societal composition and structure of the higher education system. This becomes strikingly clear in the following collection of articles, which span universities in the UK, Sweden, and Denmark. (Four articles from HEIs that completed the survey in Europe were included in this Compendium).

One should clarify that this sample is highly unrepresentative of the wider Europe, across which there is little consensus on terminology surrounding access and retention, what it entails, and to what extent governments, institutions and individuals are in fact responsible.

For example, the Compendium includes two articles from universities in the UK, a country that has a long-standing political framework for 'widening participation' (WP) and a widely accepted vocabulary on the subject. Particularly with the recent rise in student fees in the UK, government agencies have been created to monitor equal access and universities audited regarding their strategies.

Kingston University, which provides a case study**,** launched its Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA) in 2009. This identifies disadvantaged student target groups and seeks to improve the student experience through policies, strategies and initiatives based on reliable data. This case study describes innovative programmes, such as the Compact Scheme for students with no family history in higher education, and the steps the institution took to identify concrete means of measuring their improvements in access and retention.

Edge Hill University prioritises widening participation as one of the universities' six core aims, and implements it through what is called a 'lifecycle approach', based on the notion that widening participation has to be addressed throughout students' interaction with HE, not just prior to entry or at the point of admission. Outlining several different programmes, ranging from outreach, to progression/transition programmes, to collaborative provision of qualifications with industry partners, Edge Hill provides a holistic vision of the different strategic elements in improving access and retention. This article also gives the political context of the widening participation in the different regions of the UK and the funding modalities that have been put in place to support institutions.

From a different perspective, the article from **Uppsala University** in Sweden frames the access discussion in the Swedish context and couples the gradual and controversial reform of admissions policies in Sweden with widening participation. In order to avoid selective measures that would undermine Swedish welfare policies, widening participation in Sweden has meant integrating the so-called new groups of students on equal terms with traditional students. In Sweden, one can identify a case of multi-faceted system reform intended to increase university accessibility (upgrading non-university institutions in the 70s, and the establishment of regional HEIs). The new universities were intended to play a crucial role in reducing regional discrepancies in participation.

Once again the political framework is relevant, as Swedish universities are now required by law to produce local actions plans for student recruitment. The article presents the various measures that Uppsala University has taken and critiques their efficiency, from outreach visits, to peer counselling, to varied student services for

specific underrepresented groups. An important point is made regarding measuring the success of such initiatives in widening access and improving retention, which is extremely difficult.

An article from **Aarhus University**, Denmark, discusses retention and success of students though their coordinated educational counselling effort, that aims to ensure that students with specific educational difficulties can realise their potential to complete higher education. The university conducts extensive research for the development of new processes and methods within the practice of counselling and special needs education. The author also points to the Bologna Process reforms, and associates retention and student success directly with this process. No mention of the Bologna Process is made in the article from the UK, nor from other countries, which is interesting since the Bologna Process does have as one of its action lines promoting the 'social dimension' in higher education. This would suggest that this discourse around access and retention in Europe is still nationally rooted.

2.3.1. Access and retention at Kingston University, London, UK

By Steve May

This article outlines some of the innovative approaches to ensuring that a multi-faculty university meets its civic goal of closer engagement with the local community through implementing strategic objectives of widening participation and supporting the progression of non traditional groups through to graduation and employment.[19]

Institutional profile and mission

Kingston University is a broad-based higher education institution in South West London which makes a significant contribution to the local community and economy, not least as one of the largest employers in the area. It supports 22,000 students in seven faculties: Art and Design and Architecture; Arts and Social Sciences; Business and Law; Computing, Information Systems and Mathematics; Engineering; Health and Social Care Sciences; and Science. 53% of students are female, 41% mature (over 21 years on entry to the university), 78% full-time, 23% postgraduate, 17% overseas and 53% from non-white ethnic groups.

With one in 10 students coming from families with no previous involvement in university study, Kingston University has a high profile commitment to widen participation to traditionally underrepresented groups. Its mission includes:

> "to promote participation in higher education, which it regards as a democratic entitlement; to strive for excellence in learning, teaching and research; to realise the creative potential and fire the imagination of all its members; and to equip its students to make effective contributions to society and the economy". (Kingston University 2009)

Background

In its 2001 election manifesto (Labour Party 2001), the UK government committed to increase the numbers of students having experience of higher education (HE) in the UK to 50% of all aged 18 to 30 by 2010. While this is no longer government policy, it has instigated a number of studies and initiatives designed to widen participation in higher education including AimHigher, targeted at students below the age of 16; and the provision of additional funds for universities to attract and retain undergraduates.

The findings by the government-commissioned Leitch report (2006) that lower levels of participation in higher education of some groups in society has important implications for the wider society in terms of social justice and meeting the skills development necessary to remain competitive in a changing global economy confirmed the national importance of driving forward vocational training such as Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) and increasing the numbers of graduates. In addition, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has funded the support of STEM subjects (science, technology, mathematics and engineering) where there is a mismatch between supply and demand and that are of strategic importance to the nation (HEFCE 2006).

[19] This article was written in the autumn of 2009.

The AimHigher network was instigated from pre-existing bodies by HEFCE in 2004 to "deliver a coherent national outreach programme operating most intensively on the most disadvantaged areas" through raising aspirations and motivation of learners in schools, further education and the workplace and by raising attainment of potential HE students studying for academic and vocational qualifications. With the introduction of student fees, the Office For Fair Access (OFFA) was set up in 2005 as an independent, non-departmental public body which aims to promote and safeguard fair access to HE for underrepresented groups through the implementation of approved higher education institution access agreements which set out how they will safeguard and promote fair access - in particular for students from low income groups - through bursary and other financial support and outreach work.

However, following changes in the economic and political climate, the government has reduced the funding available to institutions for growth in student numbers to 10,000 places, while the increased demand from qualified school leavers is estimated to be 50,000. The government is also committed to a review of the current fee arrangements which is likely to result in a rise of the current £3225 cap for United Kingdom (UK) students.

Lifelong Learning Networks were set up by HEFCE in 2005 with the overall objective of improving the coherence, clarity and certainty of progression opportunities for vocational learners into and through higher education.

The National Audit Office report (2007) recognised the importance of retention of students at UK institutions. It concluded that, while comparing well with other countries, there was scope to improve retention rates, and that accurate monitoring and provision of appropriate student support was essential to maximise progression and performance. HEFCE recognises that students with low or non-traditional entry qualifications are likely to need additional support and it provides extra funding to HEIs based on the number of these entrants each year.

The future of HE over the next decade is likely to be shaped by the Higher Education Framework, scheduled to be published by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) later this year, and the outcome of the UK general election in 2010.

Institution policies and actions on access and retention

In 2009 Kingston University produced a Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA) that details its access and retention policies and strategies for implementation and ongoing evaluation. Its policies relating to access and retention can be characterised by the following six approaches:

1. Evaluating and researching cutting edge practice in international, national and regional partnerships that stimulates, informs and validates the University's strategy, including working closely with local authorities, schools and colleges.
2. Embedding the responsibility and actions taken to widen participation throughout all the University's teaching faculties and professional support departments including marketing, academic development, admissions, information services, student services and planning.
3. Ensuring that all those studying on Kingston University programmes receive a satisfying experience both inside and outside the classroom and are placed at the centre of the process by measures taken to widen participation and provide a supportive and inclusive curriculum.

4. Recognising and meeting the financial commitment required to widen participation by funding effective and efficient schemes.
5. Supporting the role played by collaborative partners whose delivery of Kingston University programmes is characterised by the participation of students underrepresented in higher education.
6. Effectively utilising institutional and external data in identifying the impact of measures to widen participation and validate approaches at all stages of the student lifecycle.

The University has agreed that the following cohorts will be the focus of the WPSA: Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups; vocational learners; lower socio-economic groups; disabled students; and special care leavers.

It seeks to improve the student experience through policies, strategies and initiatives based on reliable data and has committed itself to the production of an enhanced suite of student management information reports, designed to inform better both the operational and strategic decision-making processes within the institution.

This approach is also designed to ensure that the information, once reviewed and analysed, is presented for consideration to the relevant committees with the responsibility for making cross-institutional decisions and the authority to ensure that such decisions are followed through.

Most important measures undertaken in recent years

The table below gives a brief summary of some of the measures taken to improve access and retention, with references to publications giving further detail.

Measure	Brief description
University Retention project	In 2002 the university commissioned wide ranging research into issues related to student retention. (See May & Bousted 2004).
AimHigher	The London South AimHigher network was housed at Kingston University, thereby enabling closer links between the university and work done by AimHigher to increase access of underrepresented groups.
Progression Agreements	These are designed to enable successful completers of specific courses at partner institutions to be admitted onto programmes at the university. (See Hill, Fergy & Marks-Maran 2006). The university also operates seven Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) progression agreements with local colleges to publicise explicitly the requirements for students studying on vocational programmes.
Compact Scheme	As part of its Access Agreement the university provides additional financial and pastoral support to assist the progression in HE of students in local authority care and from non-traditional backgrounds studying at partner colleges who are able to provide evidence of potential to succeed in higher education. (See Woods, May & Hill 2008).
Use of Institutional data	Through detailed monitoring of student application to enrolment and progression through to graduation, this measure has enabled more effective targeting and evaluation of initiatives. (See May & Hill 2008).
Peer support	Evidence has shown that learning from peers can be extremely effective and is likely to improve retention and progression rates. Each faculty runs peer support scheme(s) designed to best enable students to learn from one another. (See Smith, May & Burke 2007).
Student support officers	Faculties have to provide staff to monitor the attendance of students and, where necessary, to contact them and refer them to appropriate support.
Academic Skills Centres	Each faculty provides the option to its students of additional support, particularly in English and Mathematics, to improve their attainment and hence retention and progression rates.
Faculty projects	The university Academic Development Centre (ADC) annually distributes monies to faculties to support initiatives aimed at improving the learning experience of all students. (See Webb & Hill 2003). It now utilises the HEFCE Teaching Enhancement and Student Success (TESS) funds - distributed to HEIs on the basis of their student profiles to help improve retention, teaching and learning and research informed teaching - for this purpose.

Lesson learnt and good practice

The developments of the university Compact Scheme and institutional data sets representative examples of good practice and lessons learned through experience.

The Compact Scheme

The scheme is aimed at students whom college staff believe have the ability to succeed but whose potential may not be reflected by their existing or predicted qualifications, and who meet one of the following eligibility criteria: in receipt of Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), the first in their family to go to university, under the care of their local authority, mature applicants who have no previous experience of higher education themselves (i.e. they have not completed a degree), or are in receipt of an Adult Learning Grant. The university faculties have agreed to consider Compact applicants with predicted qualification below the standard entry requirement for their chosen course. It is a requirement that all such applications are supported by a reference which provides evidence of the candidate's ability to succeed and reasons why their existing or predicted qualifications may not reflect their academic potential.

To steer them through the application process, Compact candidates are provided with a single point of contact to provide information, advice and guidance on all relevant issues including courses, fees, funding arrangements and accommodation. Each successful applicant receives a bursary on enrolling (£1000 for Care leavers and £300 for others) and the same amount each year that they progress to the next level of their course. They are invited to a pre-enrolment welcome event which aims to prepare them for their first few weeks at university, often a difficult transitional period, particularly for students who have no family tradition of higher education or support networks at home. Following enrolment, each student is contacted by the Compact Coordinator to identify any problems and remind them that a single point of contact exists for any queries they may have.

The evaluation after two years of the Kingston University Compact Scheme indicates that it is helping to engage students and increases the likelihood of their progressing to higher education by helping them through this crucial transition phase and giving them the security of a known single point of personal contact. In addition, it is clearly strengthening the links with the local community through increased liaison with colleges and schools and thereby helping to meet the civic mission of the University.

Feedback from one college, recently interviewed for a case study commissioned by HEFCE (2008), suggests that the Compact Scheme has increased motivation and engagement and focussed staff more closely on the HE application process and course entry requirements.

> "For us there is no down side, we only have to supply a reference and we have the opportunity of persuading more of our young people to apply to university."
> (HE Careers Adviser)

We expect to extend and refine the evaluation to include the gathering of details of predicted grades, conditions of offers, and actual grades for all Compact applicants who were made conditional offers. This, we anticipate, will help us to identify issues around the accuracy of predicted grades supplied by colleges, the appropriateness of offers made by the faculties and why some students do not confirm their place with Kingston University (e.g. if actual grades are much higher or lower than expected). We also plan to monitor the university course module results and the take-up of Academic Skills Centre

support. Previous evaluation (May, Hill, Webb and Allibone 2008) has indicated that this is an effective way of raising the retention and attainment of non-traditional students.

Institutional data suite

The development of a suite of datasets to monitor the progression of non-traditional students stemmed from a realisation that, while there was a recognised range of good practice across the institution, it was difficult to determine the variation in the real experience of students and the extent to which a positive approach to Widening Participation was truly embedded. The development started with the setting up of a working group made up of staff from the Widening Participation, Learning and Teaching, and Applicant Services units. The group decided to create datasets from the university-held admissions and enrolment data, to present it in easily readable tabular format which allows comparisons between groups of students and to encourage its use across the university. A second team, consisting of staff involved in data analysis from the Widening Participation Unit, Student Data and Systems Development Unit, Planning Department, and Marketing Section, was then set-up to undertake the technical development of new datasets. Having agreed the range of variables needed, the team developed four reference files: the first detailing all applications to the university; the second all enrolments; the third linked these to enable tracking from application to enrolment; and the fourth linked enrolment files over consecutive years to give the progression of students. The datasets can each be used as a means of identifying areas where the underlying data might inform particular WP initiatives and faculties are encouraged to request this. Figure 1 outlines the five datasets which were distributed to key staff within each faculty.

Figure 1 - Widening Participation data suite

Stage	Dataset	Description
1	Headline data	Key HEFCE Access, retention and employment performance indicators.
2	Access	Conversion rates at each stage from application to student enrolment (see May & Hill 2007).
3	Retention	The first year retention of students with traditional and non-traditional qualifications from year 1 to year 2 (see May & Hill 2007b).
4	Degree Class	Degree classification awarded by entry qualification bands used in the allocation of additional funding to support retention.
5	Employment	Type of employment or further study by entry qualification band and degree classification.

However, we have found that it is not enough to provide data in a user friendly form and to offer to mine it to produce bespoke datasets that help to answer specific questions (May & Hill 2008). Staff may be aware of a university mission to widen participation and a plan to engage with local providers, but faculty priorities mean that this does not necessarily hold sway. It was for this reason that we have promoted an exchange of views and a consensus from the bottom upwards through developing a Widening Participation action plan. In following this route Kingston University is complementing its approach of listening to the student voice in the development of policy and support systems such as the Supportive Learning Environment Initiative for Health Care Students (see Hodgson, May & Marks-Maran 2008). In particular, the bringing in of admissions and marketing staff, who already work with all faculties, together with the provision of an overview of the data, has increased awareness amongst staff of the interactions and contributions of all. For example, interest was raised by the illustration of linkages between the level, source and criteria for the funding of WP with students whose progression was tracked.

The dual approach of bringing staff together and providing accessible data through listening to their needs is resulting in the increased use of the datasets. From this we conclude that the underlying explanation for the success of this methodology at Kingston University stems from an understanding of the drivers for action for all involved in the delivery of education and with an interest in WP (from the strategic visions of the government, HEFCE and university Vice-Chancellor to the conflicting priorities experienced by marketing, admissions and teaching staff).

We are currently involved in further embedding access and retention work at Kingston University into the planning and administrative procedures of the university through the Academic Development Centre by considering:

- Annual monitoring outcomes and data on student performance (including WPSA priority groups) to identify courses/programmes or student groups for specific investigation or support.
- Annual monitoring outcomes to identify good practice to be rolled out across the faculty and/or the university.
- How the development of new programmes or the development of existing programmes could be supported by the ADC.
- How the faculty could be utilising TESS funds to implement an action plan.
- Communication of issues to be addressed to other departments (especially Student Services and Administration, Registry, Planning and Information Services).

References

Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2006, *Strategic Plan 2006-11*, HEFCE, Bristol.

Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2008, *Compact Schemes in Higher Education Institutions*, DUIS/HEFCE, (2008/32).

Hill M., Fergy S., & Marks-Maran D., 2006, Widening participation in nursing through progression agreements between a university and two further education colleges: a case study, *Journal of further and Higher Education*, 30(3), pp. 255-68.

Hodgson, D., May, S., & Marks-Maran, D., 2008, Promoting the Development of a Supportive Learning Environment through Action Research from the 'Middle Out'. *Educational Action Research,* 16(4), pp. 531-44.

Kingston University, 2009, *Kingston University Strategic Plan 2008/09 to 2012/13*.

Labour Party, 2001, *Ambitions for Britain: Labour's manifesto 2001*. (London: Labour Party).

Leitch, S., 2006, *Prosperity for All in the Global Economy: World class skill.* (London: Leitch Review of Skills).

May, S., & Bousted M., 2004, Investigation of student retention through an analysis of the first-year experience of students at Kingston University. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 6(2), 42-48.

May, S., & Hill, M., 2007, Using institutional data to monitor student progression into Higher Education. *Journal of Access Policy and Practice,* 5(1), pp. 57-74.

May, S., & Hill, M., 2007b, "Development and use of Faculty Profile data sets as a tool to support embedding institutional strategic objectives relating to fair access and progression of students at one Higher Education Institution". *Transformation, Progression and Hope: whatever happened to lifelong learning?* eds. M. Abramson, T. Acland, M. Hill, T. Hudson, P. Jones, R. Kop, A. Lines, D. Saunders, J. & C. Trotman, Forum for Access and Continuing Education, London, pp. 255-65.

May, S., & Hill, M., 2008, "Plan - Monitor - Evaluate: Datasets to measure the impact of Widening Participation interventions". *Social Justice and Lifelong Learning: Diversity, Globalisation, Transformation.* eds. T. Acland, G. Atherton, M. Hill, T. Hudson, P. Jones, D. Saunders, M. Mclinden & J. Storan, Forum for Access and Continuing Education, London, pp. 135-43.

May, S., Hill, M., Webb, M., & Allibone L., 2008, Using institutional data to throw light on the university experience of students from ethnic minorities, Paper presented at the conference: Exploring the hinterlands: Mapping and agenda for institutional research in the UK, Southampton Solent University - June 2008.

National Audit Office, 2007, *Staying the course: The retention of students in higher education*. (London: The Stationery Office).

Smith J., May S., & Burke L., 2007, Peer Assisted Learning: a case study into the value to student mentors and mentees. *Practice and Evidence of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 2(2), pp. 80-109.

Webb, M. & Hill, M., 2003, The Institution Gets its Act Together: Linking Learning and Teaching and Widening Participation Strategies to Improve Completion Rate, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 5(3), ISSN 1466 – 6529.

Woods, J., May, S. & Hill M., 2008, The Impact of Compact: One University's Experience, Paper presented at the conference: Challenging isolation: the role of lifelong learning, Forum for Access and Continuing Education Annual Conference, York St. John University, July 2008.

2.3.2. A whole-institution approach to widening access and promoting student success across the student lifecycle, Edge Hill University, United Kingdom

By Liz Thomas[20], Director of the Widening Participation Research Centre, Edge Hill University. The views expressed in this contribution reflect those of the author.

Acknowledgement: Much of the information about Edge Hill University's approach has been extracted from our Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (June 2009).[21]

Edge Hill University

Edge Hill University (EHU) in the North West of England has been delivering higher education for 125 years. Initially EHU provided teacher education for women, it received full degree awarding power in 2006 and research degree awarding power in 2008. The University has a wide portfolio, offering programmes in most subject and professional areas (with the exception of Medicine, Veterinary Science and Engineering), along with a growing portfolio of postgraduate and professional development programmes. The University currently has 23,622 registered students, of whom 7,748 are full-time, with the remaining 15,914 on a mix of part-time degree programmes and professional development programmes. The first year full-time degree population is 68% female, 98% from the UK and 89% from the North West of England.

The University has a very strong commitment to widening participation (WP), which is understood to mean widening access to HE *and* promoting student retention and success within HE and beyond. Widening Participation is one of the six core aims of the University's Strategic Plan 2008-2013[22]. The University is currently fourth in the league tables of English universities for recruitment from low participation neighbourhoods and twelfth for recruitment from State Schools. 72.5% of Edge Hill University students fall into one of more of the following Widening Participation performance indicators: Indices of Multiple Deprivation; Low Participation Neighbourhoods; NS-SEC Groups 4-7 or assessed family income of below £25,000 per annum.

The University adopts a lifecycle approach to WP (HEFCE 2001). This model emphasises the idea that widening participation has to be addressed throughout students' interaction with HE, not just prior to entry or at the point of admission. The model identifies the following key stages in the student lifecycle:

- **Aspiration raising**: Providing information and promoting awareness about higher education opportunities to potential students in schools, colleges, communities and workplaces.
- **Pre-entry activities**: Supporting students so they develop the confidence, skills and knowledge to apply to higher education (HE) and make the transition as effectively as possible.
- **Admissions**: Ensuring that the process of applying to, and being selected for, higher education is fair.
- **First term/semester**: The transition to higher education is often difficult for students, but especially for those with additional needs or with more limited family support. Induction

[20] liz.thomas@edgehill.ac.uk
[21] This article was written in the autumn of 2009.
[22] available at http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/about/vision/strategicplan

arrangements are central to achieving this transition successfully - providing information about academic expectations and cultures, institutional systems and welfare support, and facilitating the development of social networks, particularly for students who are not able to participate in traditional student activities. Effective transition can help to improve rates of initial retention and ongoing success.

- **Moving through the course**: Pedagogy, curriculum and assessment, finance and part-time employment, student services etc. may all enhance or inhibit student retention and success.
- **Progression**: This describes the student's move from higher education into employment and/or postgraduate study. There is evidence of discrimination in progression opportunities for students from underrepresented groups. So institutions can work to prepare for, and support the progression of, these graduates.

The lifecycle approach is supported by a whole-institution approach to widening participation. This is in contrast to some higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK which focus primarily on the pre-entry phases of the student lifecycle and who do not engage staff in WP from across the institution.

Widening participation in England

In an effort to overcome underrepresentation of significant parts of the population in higher education, the English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish funding bodies have sought to encourage HEIs to widen participation. Devolution has resulted in different policies in the four jurisdictions of the UK, but, in summary, there is an emphasis on partnership and collaboration between HEIs and other sectors (especially in England, Wales and Scotland) to extend aspirations and applications to higher education (HE), payments to HEIs to support the retention of students from underrepresented groups, and recognition of the need to improve vocational routes into and through HE. By contrast, variations in approach can be seen with regard to student finance, especially the introduction of deferred 'top-up' fees and maintenance grants (in England and more recently Wales), and the differential rates of funding to support widening participation activities.

In England, WP, combines wider access to HE and improved student success in HE. It is defined as:

> … helping more people from under-represented groups, particularly low socio-economic groups, to participate successfully in higher education. (DfES 2006).
>
> … raise aspirations and educational attainment among people from under-represented communities to prepare them for higher education, ensure success on their programme of study, improve their employment prospects and open possibilities for postgraduate study, and give them opportunities to return to learning throughout their lives[23].

Widening access seeks to address inequalities with regards to who gains entry to higher education. HEFCE has defined a number of target groups[24], who are underrepresented nationally in HE. Target groups include students from lower socio-economic groups (i.e. those whose parents are employed in semi-skilled and unskilled labour, or who are unemployed), and those who are disabled – this includes both physical and learning disabilities.

[23] HEFCE http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/
[24] http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07_12/

> …these learners are from lower socio-economic groups (groups 4-8 in the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification, NS-SEC), and those from disadvantaged backgrounds who live in areas of relative deprivation where participation in HE is low… we expect that few will have parents or carers who have themselves had experience of HE…it is appropriate that we should prioritise learners whose parents/carers do not have that experience[25].

It should perhaps be noted here that in the UK there is comparatively limited access to HE, and this is accompanied by comparatively high rates of retention.

Approximately 43% of the age participation index (API) – young people aged 18-21 – participate in HE and about 85% of these complete their programmes within three or four years. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) defines retention in two ways:

- **Completion rate**: the proportion of starters in a year who continue their studies until they obtain their qualification, with no more than one consecutive year out of higher education.
- **Continuation rate**: the proportion of an institution's intake which is enrolled in higher education in the year following their first entry to higher education.

This is a narrow definition of student retention, and offers little flexibility for students who wish to change subjects, courses or institutions, or who need to take more than one year out from their studies. This has been critiqued as it is particularly unsympathetic to the needs of students from WP target groups, such as working class students (Quinn et al 2005) who might want to engage with HE in different ways (e.g. over a longer period of time, or with an extended period away from study). Restricted access to HE, and institutional and personal penalties for non-completion, mean that the UK has comparatively high rates of retention and success, but that certain groups of students are disproportionately disadvantaged. Appendix 1 provides more detail about English policies to widen participation in HE.

Edge Hill approach to widening participation

EHU engages with WP throughout the student lifecycle. WP is linked directly to student recruitment, and there is recognition of the challenges this brings in relation to teaching, learning and assessment, and the cultural and social experiences of students and staff. WP activity therefore includes curriculum development in all three faculties, and a commitment to improving social and economic opportunities of local and regional communities. The University sees the inculcation of inclusive values as one of the overall outcomes of the educational experience.

This was originally articulated in the WP Framework which provides for:

i. Adoption of Widening Participation as a key theme in the Institutional Corporate Plan
ii. Embedding WP in all relevant Institutional policies, strategies, action plans and practices
iii. Utilisation of the Student Life Cycle Model as a framework within which issues relating to supporting the successful progression of students from compulsory education into Lifelong Learning can be addressed
iv. Employing Widening Participation as a catalyst for portfolio development referenced through Institutional and Faculty Academic Development Plans

[25] Further details are available from http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07_12/

v. The development of appropriate institutional targets

vi. Regular monitoring through the AMR process as an integral part of institutional Quality Management arrangements.

The full WP Framework has been superseded by the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (produced June 2009)[26].

The University has a solid infrastructure that supports and encourages widening participation initiatives, and organisational structures which reflect both the commitment to, and the ownership of, Widening Participation. In addition to a Widening Participation Service, headed by a senior manager (Director), each faculty has a nominated senior manager (Associate Dean) with responsibility for Widening Participation and these staff work together as a team with nominated staff from services and support areas to form the University's Widening Participation Group (a sub-committee of Equality, Opportunity and Student Success committee). There are three other related working groups covering Retention, Recruitment & Marketing and Fees, Bursaries & Scholarships for which the Director of Widening Participation is an ex-officio member.

The needs of students from widening participation target groups are firmly embedded within the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and within the operational plans of all services. This ranges from Estates and IT strategies where the issues of social space for students who continue to live in the family home are considered, through to the more obvious Learning and Student Support strategies for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties. Innovations within curriculum and programme development from each faculty (e.g. foundation degrees, collaborative partnerships with FE colleges and schools, workforce development programmes) fully support the widening participation agenda. Finally, the creation of a Widening Participation Research Centre in 2007-8 has given the university a focus for learning from, and reflecting on, practice and to highlight the excellent research that our staff undertake in the field of Widening Participation.

Specific examples of Edge Hill University's approach to widening participation throughout the student lifecycle

This section provides summary details of some areas of our WP activity.

a) Outreach

Our outreach work focuses on achievement-raising, at both pre- and post-16, to support increased progression, and much of this is done through a partnership approach[27]. For example, the Greater Merseyside AimHigher project (of which EHU is a strategic and delivery partner) has been a key contributor to the increase in HE participation from the most deprived quintile between 2002/03 and 2006/07. During this period participation from this group has increased by 7.9% in Greater Merseyside compared to the national average of 1.9%.

[26] Both are available from the Edge Hill University website.

[27] See http://www.actiononaccess.org/index.php?p=17_7 for information about AimHigher, a national programme of local partnerships to promote progression from school and college to HE

- We have developed a new range of pre-entry preparation for HE programmes to improve academic skills, critical thinking and the transition experience with the intention of improving student success. These are cross institutional developments.
- We have developed our own IAG provision which we believe is unique in approach, working not only with enquirers and applicants but in taking this service into the workplace. We are also developing a range of staff development provision for school teachers and IAG specialists, accredited by the university, and which can be used towards a range of postgraduate qualifications.
- The University is committed to working with some of the 'hardest to reach' communities including Children Looked After, those in pupil referral units, ex-offenders, local BME groups and those with disabilities or specific learning difficulties.

b) Access Provision

The University has four main approaches to assisting students without entry level qualifications to gain access to higher education:

- Fastrack which is a seven-week, full-time, intensive programme, resulting in an entry qualification to Edge Hill University.
- Fast Forward which is a blended learning variant of Fastrack, with a significant on-line component and taken over 30 weeks.
- For those applying for shortage subjects in initial teacher training we offer a 30-week, part-time, face to face 'Fast' route covering subject knowledge followed by the full-time Fastrack programme.
- We offer GCSE (level 2) equivalency tests and revision packages for those intending to apply for programmes of initial teacher training or for classroom assistants applying for Foundation Degrees.

The 'Fast' programmes are accredited by the Open College Network. They have successful completion and retention rates of over 95% for the full-time routes and 80% for the blended learning (compared to c50% for similar programmes nationally). The annual target across these programmes is 350 learners. The GCSE Equivalency programme is inspected regularly by OfSTED. The programmes currently support over 500 learners and have an 80% success rate.

c) Alternative sites of learning through collaborative provision

For some students travelling to the University campus presents a barrier to participation. Through a partnership approach the University is able to offer HE and support a wide range of learners in other sites of learning, such as local further education colleges and employers. One of the most innovative developments is the delivery of full-time foundation degrees over two years, with students attending college on one day per week only; the other elements being delivered and supported within the workplace. This enables students to continue working whilst achieving a Foundation Degree. Employers have been particularly supportive of this model with assignments linked directly to the student's experience in the workplace. Further, rigorous, but flexible and responsive validation processes have been developed for employers to gain academic credit for 'in-house' training programmes. Many of the

students studying with our collaborative partners are mature students whose circumstances determine that they cannot travel far to study, and/or cannot afford to leave employment.

d) Managing the student experience in HE

We believe that retaining students requires a holistic approach to the delivery of the whole student experience from recruitment through to award. New student induction is a key element of this approach but retention is more than a first week/first year issue. Crucially, we believe that developing a sense of belonging through life-cycle support and the establishment of learning communities with a strong cohort identity geared to the promotion of autonomous learning lies at the heart of a successful, motivated and self-confident student body. The Retention Strategy Working Group prepares an annual Progress Report and Action Plan which is approved by the Academic Board and sets the priorities for the coming 12 months. Actions are grouped in themed areas which emanate from the Strategy and are particularly geared to the at-risk characteristics of many of our students:

i. **Student Engagement**. Incorporates setting student expectations and collecting and responding to student feedback. Specific activities include the development of the Hi website for applicants and the GO portal for on-course students, support for training student course representatives and the implementation of regular student surveys at critical points.

ii. **Community**. Work in this area seeks to develop the reality of a cohesive academic and social community and includes significant additional resources to develop the Students' Union, the creation of more social spaces on campus, for activities geared to off-campus students, provision of new student residential accommodation, and support for cohort-based social activities. Plans for the development of a 'student village' are well advanced.

iii. **Academic**. This area concentrates on the accessibility of academic provision through reviewing the framework within which programmes are delivered, with the intention of ensuring that students are enabled to engage fully with the academic process. In particular, this has covered assessment strategies and the use of formative assessment, student workloads, study skills, recovering failure, tutor contact time and the academic regulations. The work of the Undergraduate Framework Group is critical to this area (see below).

iv. **Intervention**. Accepting that the reasons students discontinue with their studies are individual, providing intervention at the right time is a key aspect of our strategy. This is largely based on tracking mechanisms which pick up student non-attendance, non-submission or erratic performance. The University has developed sophisticated systems for progress review meetings which are triggered from the tracking systems and result in individualised learning agreements which set out student and staff responsibilities to enable continuation. The development and training of Personal Tutors is critical to the successful delivery of the intervention strategy.

v. **Course Organisation and Management**. This area concentrates on specific operational issues which affect the students' experience such as timetabling. The University has invested in a new timetabling system which will enable student access to personal timetables.

vi. **Data.** Configuring the student record system and associated reporting tools so that staff can more easily access data to assist in the management and analysis of student retention at programme, department, faculty and institutional level.

vii. **Sharing Experience**. The University commits significant resources to sharing experience through the work of the Retention Strategy Group, Conferences and research projects.

viii. **Bursaries**. Edge Hill is committed to the provision of direct support to students both as a means of stimulating recruitment from low participation neighbourhoods and underrepresented groups and as a means of encouraging retention through the recognition of excellence. Further details are available in our Access Agreement.

e) Learning and teaching

There is a centrally planned learning and teaching strategy, and complementary, corresponding planning takes place in the three faculties. Widening Participation is embedded throughout the Learning and Teaching Strategy. For example, the new Undergraduate Framework has been designed and validated to place stronger emphasis on the student experience, with due regard for working with the diversity of needs, the first year experience and success factors. This Framework provides a summary of the key principles the University expects to be addressed in programme design. Specific Foci are addressed by high order questions which programme developers and validation panels must address in full. These include: fully articulated plans to ensure a managed and supported process at each of the key transition points; appropriate mechanisms by which to assess AP(E)L and assist students in developing academic skills, e.g. CPD portfolios or the use of validated shell modules; evidence of support for students during their learning process, with a particular focus upon the first year experience and formative assessment as a condition of validation. In addition, each of the three Faculties develops its curricula to meet the needs of students from diverse groups.

f) Central services

Student Services & Careers provide a comprehensive range of centralised services at Edge Hill, encompassing direct support for students; contributions to the activities focused on enhancing the student experience; direct support for staff; strategic leadership for equality and diversity issues for students; as well as contributions to activities outside the scope of core support service provision and risk management.

Direct support for students includes: the Student Information Centre Information Desk; the provision of information on Childcare; general welfare and legal advice; Counselling and Supervisory Services for staff and students; Support for Disabled Students; Financial Advice, Guidance and Support; Accommodation and support for residential and non - residential students; Health Care; targeted support for Care Leavers; the provision of Careers Advice & Guidance; support for volunteering and Job Club provision; support for students at outreach centres.

Conclusions

The Edge Hill approach to widening access to higher education and promoting student retention and success is two-fold: it operates across the student lifecycle and involves the whole institution. This approach is underpinned by a strong strategic commitment to widening participation and the use of evidence and data to inform strategic and operational decision-making. This therefore reflects good practice identified in the available research evidence[28].

It is however still challenging to retain a diverse and dispersed student body, both at this institution and nationally. It is for this reason that the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) together

[28] See Jones 2008, http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/wprs/WPRS_retention_synthesis

with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation have provided £1 million funding to explore which interventions are effective at improving student retention and success, especially in relation to students from targeted WP groups[29].

Edge Hill University is continually striving to improve its student experience. One area which is currently under review, and which is likely to have a positive impact on student retention and success, is personal tutoring.

Appendix 1: Widening participation policies in England

Over the last ten years the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has introduced a number of measures.

- One of the earliest approaches was special initiative funding, which involved institutions bidding for comparatively small pots of money for short-term projects (usually a maximum of three years, and often much shorter periods). The bidding process, the short-term contracts and the lack of funding security made this an unpopular way of allocating resources for widening participation with HEIs.

- AimHigher has been the major vehicle for widening access to HE. AimHigher supports regional and area partnerships between HEIs, schools, colleges, employers and other agencies to promote interest in higher education, encourage applications and prepares potential entrants for study at the higher level. These partnerships are required to increase participation in each geographical area and to address low rates of participation by students from lower socio-economic groups, low participation neighbourhoods and by those with disabilities. The area partnerships have confirmed funding until July 2011, though the funding for regional partnerships ceased on 31 July 2008.

- Annual performance indicators were introduced in December 1999 (HEFCE 99/66) and are now available annually from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). These measure the extent to which each HEI meets its "institutional benchmark in relation to recruiting students from state schools, lower socio-economic groups (based on parental employment) and low participation neighbourhoods (or "postcode indicators"). Although the "institutional benchmarks" are intended to restrict comparisons to similar types of institutions only, the indicators are often used for purposes other than those for which they were intended and they have led to comparison between institutions – a practice which is discouraged by the funding council (on the grounds that comparisons may not take account of institutional specificity).

- Postcode indicators have been utilised to provide HEIs with additional premium funding to enable them to recruit students from under-support and outreach work. Increased fee income will be used to attract students from lower socio-economic groups and underrepresented groups and support their additional needs in higher education. The allocations are determined on the basis of students who complete their year of study. The formula funding for the widening participation allocation for both full-time and part-time students is split: approximately 20% for widening access and 80% for improving retention and student success.

[29] Further details of this programme are available at: http://www.actiononaccess.org/index.php?p=11_3

- HEFCE also makes a mainstream disability funding allocation to institutions reflecting the proportion of students in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance.

In 1999 HEIs were asked to prepare Initial Strategic Statements (99/33), and, building on this process, in 2001 they were asked to prepare a "Widening Participation Strategy and Action Plan" for the next three years (HEFCE 01/29). Although this is no longer a requirement, the funding council encourages institutions to continue to prepare a widening participation strategy.

- The Higher Education Act 2004 allows HEIs to charge students top-up fees of up to £3000 per year from 2006. Although this is seen by many as detrimental to the goal of widening participation, students no longer have to pay up-front tuition fees. In addition, institutions are required to have a bursary scheme in place to assist poorer students and to make every effort to ensure that applications are socially inclusive. The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) was established as part of the 2004 HE Act to work collaboratively with institutions to meet these conditions and ensure that the introduction of variable tuition fees has no detrimental effect on widening participation (OFFA, 2004/01). Institutions that decide to raise full-time undergraduate tuition fees above the standard level must submit an Access Agreement to OFFA setting out how they will safeguard and promote fair access – particularly for students from low income groups who aspire to HE – through bursary and other financial support. All HEIs in England charge top-up fees, and early evidence shows that outreach and bursary support differs markedly between institutions, largely dependent on their mission and market position.

- The government has targeted the promotion of fair access as a key priority area. In its higher education Widening Participation Strategy (DfES, 2003), the government outlined the action being proposed under four headings: attainment, aspiration, applications and admissions. As part of its proposals for admissions, the government argued for admissions to be on merit, achievements and potential, irrespective of class, background or school attended. The strategy also referred to the commissioning of research, led by Professor Steven Schwartz, to identify good practice in admissions. The Schwartz Report (2004) provides recommendations for fair and transparent admissions processes to promote equality. The report proposed five principles of a fair admissions system:

    1. It should be transparent
    2. It should enable institutions to select students who are able to complete the course as judged by their achievements and their potential
    3. It should strive to use assessment methods that are reliable and valid
    4. It should seek to minimise barriers for applicants and
    5. It should be professional in every respect and underpinned by appropriate structures and processes.

The government hope that all universities will adopt these principles and those wishing to charge a higher tuition fee will need to demonstrate to OFFA that they subscribe to them. Amongst others, OFFA is charged with a principal duty to promote fair access. The extent to which HEIs have adopted the five principles is the subject of a review of admissions being co-ordinated by the organisation Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA).

- The government is committed to improving the parity of vocational and academic qualifications. This will require improving vocational routes into and through HE. Lifelong Learning Networks were created as an outcome of the Joint Progression Strategy (2004) developed by HEFCE, the LSC, and DfES to advance vocational access and work-based learning and progression into and through HE. The networks are formed by groups of further and higher education institutions to offer improved/new progression routes for vocational learners and promote lifelong learning[30].

- Recent equality legislation requires HEIs to develop and implement equality schemes for race, disability and gender. The legislation dictates that HEIs must take a holistic approach: they must be proactive and make anticipatory adjustments to their policies and practices, rather than expect assimilation by students. It is necessary for HEIs to consider their culture and ethos and demonstrate that they are working towards the generation of a positive and proactive learning environment. This necessitates the leadership and commitment of senior managers. The equality legislation covers institutions and employers as well as all aspects of their delivery as service organisations.

- In England just over 10% of HE is delivered by Further Education colleges (FECs) –HE in FE. Around 160 FECs are directly funded by HEFCE, the remainder being indirectly funded through partnerships, franchises and consortium arrangements. HE in FE is a key element in delivering HE opportunities to those who may wish to study locally, who may progress to higher education via vocational and work-based routes, and who may have returned to learning through the familiar setting of an FE. The 2003 White Paper made it clear that the government sees FECs as being significant in delivering their HE widening participation objectives, mostly in terms of foundation degree provision. Foundation degrees were launched in September 2001. They were designed to be a new intermediate vocational HE qualification, developed in partnership between FE colleges, HE institutions and employers. Foundation Degrees are required to make provision for those achieving the two-year foundation degree to progress to a full honours degree[31].

Mostly recently English HEIs and FECs with at least 100 FTE HE students have been asked to prepare and submit a Widening Participation Strategic Assessment. These require institutions to present details of their strategic approach to widening participation (within their institutional context), demonstrating the institution's commitment to widening participation, setting out its aims and key objectives, setting appropriate targets and milestones for the future and identifying investment in widening participation. In addition, institutions should append their access agreement, high level admissions policy and other supporting information.

[30] www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/pubs/lifelong.doc
[31] See www.fdf.ac.uk and www.foundationdegrees.org.uk.

2.3.3. Every university should reflect the population – a political goal for widening participation in Sweden

By Einar Lauritzen and Martin Holmberg, Uppsala University, Sweden

The ideology and history of WP in Sweden

Widening participation in higher education has been a political goal for a very long time in Sweden. Policies were based on the following key elements:

- Liberal entrance requirements (only necessary qualifications should be required)
- Recognising informal learning and non-academic qualifications
- Equality of treatment (strict rules and centralised admission procedures)
- Increasing geographical accessibility (by setting up new regional universities)
- Expanding intake capacity to both pre-HE and HE
- Upgrading of non-university HE (vocation-oriented tertiary education)
- Giving adult students who have not benefited from earlier educational reforms a "second chance".

Several of these elements relating to admission and admission reforms have been an important and controversial part of higher education policy for several decades. It was used as a tool for breaking class privilege and to even out the prevailing differences in social recruitment to HE. Furthermore, entry regulations to HE have a major impact on education at lower levels and on adult education, where students' life chances and decisions on further studies are formed. So, the history of WP in Sweden follows the same line as the gradual reform of admission regulations and procedures.

During the last 40 years, at least six government commissions have dealt exclusively with such problems and frequent changes in admission rules have been decided at the political level. However, they were all within the same centralised model.

An important feature of Swedish higher education is its homogeneity, uniformity and centralisation. Accordingly, the Swedish policy for WP has been to integrate the so-called new groups of students on equal terms with traditional students. This is in accordance with the general principles of mainstreaming and avoidance of selective measures in Swedish welfare policies. Students suffering from disabilities are, in fact, the only ones receiving special treatment or extra funding in the Swedish HE system. In contrast, actions taken for remedial adult education outside the HE system have been more selective.

At the start, widened access for adult students was based on the notion that experience and knowledge issuing from working life and non-formal education were, in some respects, *equivalent* to formal schooling qualifications, although it was recognised that qualifications of adult students were *different* from those of young students. "Different but equal" was a main point of departure for the reforms of the 1960s and bridging measures were part of the reforms. But, when the emphasis shifted to more egalitarian motives, the demand for individual assessment of qualifications was dropped, as were compensatory measures like counselling, introductory courses etc. The financial student support scheme

was also gradually made more uniform for all students, regardless of parental income, family situation, children etc. With the last reform in 2001, aiming at a "more uniform and less complicated scheme", HE students were included in the general welfare system, grants were considered as pensionable income and students were directed to social security for child and housing allowances.

The possibility to work part time during study periods was somewhat enlarged but the limit for such additional income has remained.

When Sweden, in 1977, integrated all HE at the undergraduate level into one coordinated system of colleges and universities it was not only a continuation of the comprehensive school reforms of earlier decades but yet another step towards uniformity.

An important aim of the reform was to promote social equity by broadening access to HE, especially among underprivileged groups and regions, by upgrading non-university institutions, and by the establishment of regional HEIs. Higher education was expanded throughout the country in order to increase access and accessibility. The new universities were supposed to play a crucial role in reducing regional discrepancies in participation.

Insofar as they have contributed to general expansion they have been part of the achievements of WP, but otherwise opinions differ as to what extent they have really promoted equality of educational opportunity.

Ever since this reform the Swedish HE system applies a unique combination of restricted admission and mass higher education. There are restrictions on intake to most programmes and a large number of applicants are rejected at each round of admission. In legal terms the whole HE sector is subject to *numerus clausus* by intake or economic restrictions set by the government. General eligibility for higher education does not, like in many other European countries, give access to university training, just the right to participate in the competition for entry. Students who want to enter highly competitive programmes stay on in school (or adult education institutions) in order to maximise their grades, which lead to lottery and delayed entry for some students. The policy debate on admission is therefore more on selection among high achievers than on admission of students with non-formal qualifications.

Enrolment patterns

Social class

Class-related educational inequalities decreased in Sweden from 1930 to 1970 but remained fairly stable from the early 1970s up to the early 1990s despite several reforms aimed at equal access to higher education. The pattern of inequality was very much the same in Sweden as in other industrial nations, even if the degree of inequality was somewhat lower. The expansion of the HE sector in the 1990s and early 2000s has, finally, broadened recruitment in terms of social background. The proportion of new entrants from working class backgrounds has gone up from 18% in 1993/94 to 24% in 2003/04, whereas students from higher social classes have decreased their share from 33 to 28%. The distribution according to social class in the population at large has been stable in the meantime, which indicates a levelling of social inequalities in recruitment to higher education over that period. Still, the social background has a considerable impact on both students' choice of study and the educational outcome. The differences in students' social background are bigger between programmes than between institutions.

Additionally, there are no significant differences in success rates in Sweden between students from different social backgrounds, if you consider the differences in fields of study. Inequalities are rooted far back in the school system.

The social discrepancies stand out more clearly when choice of study is taken into account; middle class students more often study in highly competitive programmes leading to high status jobs whereas young people from lower social classes often enrol in shorter vocationally oriented programmes.

In some of the more prestigious programmes, where competition for entry is high, there has been only a marginal increase in working class participation or no increase at all.

Lifelong learning

Substantial numbers of older adults are participating in tertiary education beyond the usual study period in Sweden. This has been the case ever since the 1970s and, until recently Government policy has been to reinforce this development in different ways.

Gender

Gender inequality is primarily a disadvantage to male, not female, students – at least reflected in the overall figures. Female students make up more than 60% of the total enrolments in Sweden and female participation is going up year on year.

Ethnicity

The link between ethnic background and transfer to higher education is complex: the cultural differences are added to the general social dimension. In the academic year 2003/04 about 17% of those admitted to higher education (exchange students not included) had a foreign background, i.e. were born abroad or had parents born abroad. This is about the same share as in the population at large, which indicates that there are no big differences in the overall transfer rate to HE between people with Swedish background and those of foreign descent. Due to social and cultural factors there are, however, big differences between *nationalities*.

Disabilities

The number of students in need of special support due to disabilities has increased in recent years, in particular students with dyslexia. In the year 2004 a total amount of SEK 67 million was spent on support to students with disabilities and 3 500 students got help from sign interpreters. All HEIs are obliged to set aside 0.3 per cent of their basic funding for this kind of special support and this sum has increased fourfold in the last eight years.

Recent Government reforms and initiatives

The Government bill *An Open Higher Education System*, which was put forward in 2001, contains an outline of the Swedish policy for WP and is still valid, although the Government has shifted from left-wing to right-wing. The following is summary of the main part in this strategy:

Action plans for widening participation

Every HEI was obliged by law to work out a local plan of action for their student recruitment activities and to develop more consistent and valid indicators of progress in this area.

Bridging/preparatory courses and "college programmes"

An introductory year to higher education, successfully tried in science, has been introduced also in other subject areas. These preparatory courses are open to students lacking the formal qualifications to enter higher education studies and should be initiated primarily in areas where the number of qualified applicants is too low.

Accreditation of prior/experiential learning

The responsibility of HEIs to validate the applicant's prior learning to see if it matches the admission requirements has been improved –but not at the expense of the lowering of standards. However, up to now this opening up of new routes to higher education has had a rather marginal effect on student recruitment.

Alternative rules of selection

The admission rules have been made somewhat more flexible by the introduction of a "free quota", which means that HEIs can apply their own rules of selection to 33% of their intake capacity - a remarkable break with the principle of uniformity in admission. However, only a small number of students have been enrolled on the basis of alternative rules.

Widening participation measures at Uppsala University

Widening participation at Uppsala University is a highly complex issue. Groups that are strikingly underrepresented in some areas are well represented in others. The group of students from different ethnic backgrounds, taken as a whole, is on a par with society in general. In some areas of education, such as pharmacy, the group is seemingly overrepresented. Within this group, however, there is highly uneven representation between the different ethnic groups, implying that some ethnic groups are markedly underrepresented. Looking at gender, female students are generally overrepresented, but in some areas they are underrepresented.

At Uppsala University, the work for widening participation includes a wide range of measures, where only a minor part is aimed directly at the recruiting of students from underrepresented groups. From the very beginning of our work aiming at widening participation the overarching thought has been that it is necessary not only to recruit a larger proportion of students from underrepresented groups. It is just as important that, at their arrival at the university, measures are taken to make the new students feel welcome and fully included in their new environment. Furthermore, it can be assumed that many of the students are unaccustomed to studying, and that, to some, language may cause a problem. Hence, in order to reduce the early drop-out rate, during their first period at the university the new students also have to be offered adequate support.

Below we list and comment upon some of the main actions Uppsala University, through the years 2003-2009, has been taking. Finally a brief assessment of the widening participation measures and their achievements is given.

Recruiting measures

Student fairs and visiting work at upper secondary schools

Uppsala University participates in some 8 to 10 larger student fairs each year. In addition to this, on invitation a vast number of visits to upper secondary schools are carried out. In both activities, effort is put into engaging active university students from underrepresented groups. Study counsellors and programme coordinators suggest active students to engage in the activities. Student ambassadors involved in the diversity project ESMeralda, run by the student union, Uppsala University and Uppsala municipality, are especially invited and encouraged to participate as student representatives at the fairs and in the school visits.

In engaging students in this activity consideration is also given to their branch of education, so that, for instance, female students are engaged as representatives for areas where they are underrepresented, etc.

Invitation of upper secondary schools to visit Uppsala University

Every year secondary school students in the region around Uppsala are invited to visit Uppsala University. The visiting students chose from a range of information activities, at different parts of the university, covering different fields of education.

In the invitations to these events it is made sure that also schools with education not primarily designed for higher education preparation are included. Uppsala University covers the costs for buses from the schools to the different campus areas of the university to enable schools and individuals to participate freely.

The activity is clearly appreciated by the participating students. To what extent it actually contributes to widening participation, though, is not clear. One can easily imagine that, for instance, students from a non-academic background and from schools with low transition to higher education, will primarily visit activities related to exactly the kind of education that normally attract this group.

Visiting activities at schools with low transition to higher education

During the period 2006-2008, a project implying regular visits to one upper secondary school in Uppsala, singled out for its students' low transition to higher education, was launched. One of the university study- and career counsellors participated in information meetings for the school staff. Together with a student from the aforementioned diversity project, the study- and career counsellor also visited classes and groups of students, to give information about university studies and student life.

The visits were well received by the students. The study- and career counsellor involved in the project concluded that the participation of a student representative – a student ambassador – did indeed attract the interest of many of the school students. Hence, in a possible continuation of the project, more time and resources should be spent on the student ambassador's involvement.

This remark is interesting , as from the very beginning of our work for widening participation, it has been our conviction that probably the most efficient recruiting measure that can be taken, involves the

meeting of prospective students from underrepresented groups with active students with similar backgrounds, thus presenting role models for the targeted group.

Reception measures

Welcome calls

Just before the start of the semester, the newly admitted students get a call from active students from the same course that they are admitted to. The call from the active students offers the new students a first contact with Uppsala University, and gives the newcomer the chance to ask questions about the course and the university and also to discuss practical things such as how to arrange accommodation, where to find the library, where to find course texts at the best price, etc. Most of the newcomers are reached by the welcome callers, and the calls are highly appreciated.

Introduction of new students

Most departments have long had well-established activities for introducing new students. Together with the student union and the student health care, Uppsala University has produced a booklet with tips on how activities can be organised in order not to exclude or discriminate individual students. Activities must be adapted to students with different cultural and religious backgrounds with different customs and regulations, including food and drink. Activities should also be such that disabled students are not excluded.

Retention measures

Support services and information

At Uppsala University a range of supporting services are available for students. Some services are for students from certain departments or faculties only, while other are open to all students.

The Language Workshop is open to all students at Uppsala University who want help with their oral or written presentations.

The students can get free support in writing their essays and preparing presentations, whether in Swedish or in English. The language workshop is available for all students, but as students from families with no academic tradition, or with a different ethnic background, may often find academic writing hard to acquire, the Language Workshop is seen as an important support service for students from underrepresented groups.

It is important not only that there is support available, but also that the students are aware that it is there. To ensure that as many students as possible are informed of the support services offered, all course and programme information on the web and in print should include this information.

Relevance of programmes for labour market

Students with no academic tradition in their family seem to prefer full programmes to single subject courses. They also tend to apply to programmes with an obvious connection to the labour market. In academic fields where education traditionally has been offered in the form of single subject courses,

programmes have now been created. The programmes also include courses with a practical orientation towards working life. In some cases an internship is optional. Information about the programmes includes hints about what part of the labour market the education in question is aiming at.

What has been achieved, and what's in the future?

It is difficult, not to say impossible, to determine which of the measures taken have been an efficient means to widening participation. Expecting that any single activity should have such any measurable effect would be rather naïve. From statistics we can only establish that, in quantitative terms, not much has been achieved. But on the other hand, we cannot know what rates uneven representation might have reached if all these activities had not been carried out.

The mechanisms working against widening participation are well-rooted in society and affect children long before the university has any way of reaching them. Thus, the work for widening participation must be seen as long term, and neither any single activity nor the activities taken together, can be expected to yield any immediate result. Since the ratification of our first policy for widening participation 2003 however, what has definitely been achieved is – throughout the whole of the university organisation – an increase in awareness of the need for widening participation together with a consolidation of efforts. And this achievement in turn gives ground at least for a somewhat guarded optimism.

The above mentioned activities are well established and will be continued. In addition to this, the university policy for widening participation 2009-2012 states that a series of measures are to be taken, such as:

- Routines for assessment of real competence will be developed
- Departments are encouraged to develop standards for alternative selection, with a widening participation perspective
- Further strengthening of relevance and connection to the labour market throughout the programmes
- Further information about the wide range of support services available to students
- Further information about support services for disabled students
- Facilitating new students' adaption to the university and life as a university student
- Adapting teaching and examination methods to the diversity situation

Reference

Bridging the Gap: widening participation in Sweden and England. Report by Maria Johansson, Lillemor Kim, John Storan and Sverker Sörlin. Publisher: SISTER (Swedish Institute for Studies in Education and Research), 2005. ISBN 1-874210-29.2.

2.3.4. Diversity in student population: some key issues in the universities widening access and participation policy and practice

By Willy Aastrup, Centre Director, Counselling and Support Centre, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, Denmark

Introduction

The overall objective of this paper is to examine and discuss some key issues in the process of widening the access to educational opportunities for a diverse student population.

A widening access (increased diversity) to universities represents a major challenge. Firstly, we can observe a general political insistence on productivity (i.e. more candidates in shorter time). The second challenge is based on the commitment that candidates at all levels must also meet the general and specific academic requirements for quality prescribed in the Bologna Process framework for qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. Thirdly, there is also an equally strong political insistence that the diversity in higher education should reflect the diversity in the population. In the European Union context the diversity issue is primarily aimed at integration and inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream higher education and academic life.

How is it possible to meet these challenges: more candidates of higher quality and increased diversity; i.e. in our context here: equal opportunities for disabled students?

The foundation of my paper is based on the firm belief that unless we perform a fundamental critique of the concept of "diversity", we will not be able to meet the challenge. We cannot have it all. It is not possible to have a very broad concept of "diversity" and at the same time meet the demands for high quality education.

In my paper, I will present how this challenge is met at the University of Aarhus: promoting widening access and increased diversity in the student population but without renouncing the commitment to excellence in education.

In order to clarify the following arguments, I will open with a brief analysis of the concept of "diversity". Human beings are basically heterogeneous, and they differ from each other in numerous different ways. We do not ourselves choose our place of birth or the circumstances in which we are born. We begin our lives with different endowments; diverse natural environments and a great variety in opportunities due to cultural and social traditions. But in addition, and I want to emphasise this anthropological matter of fact, we also differ in personal characteristics e.g. talents, motivation, intellectual abilities, different preferences and inclinations, etc., etc.

The concept of diversity in the educational structure, and consequently the concept of special needs education, extends back to the time before and during the age of Enlightenment in Europe, where the intention was to create a school for all children. It is commonly known that children have very different prerequisites for learning, and the question of learning differentiation is continuously of central concern. This concern resulted, in the 19th century, in the establishment of special schools and special classes founded on special needs education. Special needs education was defined as special didactic principles and methods directed at different learning difficulties. In the 1960s and 70s, the fundamental ideas of

special needs education that emphasised the special aspect were replaced by principles of integration and normalisation which was later replaced by the concept of "accommodation."

In practice, it means that special needs education should be organised so as to allow the educational institution to accommodate if not all then most of the learners attending the institution of learning in question.

Hereby, it is revealed that the concepts employed within the traditional paradigm of special needs education cannot be employed within further and higher education which is fundamentally "unaccommodating". These parts of the educational system presume the fulfilment of specific admission requirements and later the fulfilments of requirements of the course specifications. The overall politically normative values and objectives expressed in "accommodation", "social dimension", "education for all" etc. must therefore be related to the individual's resources and potentialities. This, however, does not mean that the promotion of diversity and inclusion should not be emphasised. The task of special needs education is therefore to develop and explicate academic knowledge regarding processes of learning and to apply this knowledge in special needs educational practice. This practice should focus on the objectives and results of education as well as the organisation of institutions, educational methods, guidance, assistance, and technical aids in order to optimise the individual's learning.

The purpose of special needs educational assistance for students with special needs, who have been accepted at an institution of further and higher education, must be for the students to be able to complete the education similarly to other students. Special needs educational assistance should not be separated from the educational programme, from the related educational and working methods, from the objective of each programme as a whole, or from the intermediate objectives of the individual disciplines that the programmes are composed of. If the overall objective of completing the education is to be fulfilled, the different types of assistance must aim for the students to be able to acquire the relevant academic skills and methods. The students must be capable of relating to these methods critically, analytically, and comparatively. Furthermore, they should be able to document that they master the required knowledge and skills, for example in connection with exams and other forms of evaluation.

The learning environment and the Bologna Process

Education has always – since before the time of Socrates and Plato in Greece - been considered a general good, enriching the individual and consequently the society in which the individual lives. But nevertheless, if we look at the historical period represented in the history of the European universities, it is true that one pillar in the construction of higher education was and is a general understanding of education as a quality in its own right. But it is equally a matter of fact that another important pillar is the student's acquisition of competences which are relevant for the labour market. In other words, university education is important in terms of the student's preparation for work. As indicated, this has always been crucial to higher education – emphasised more in some faculties than in others – but in today's Knowledge Society employability is an important quality issue for all fields of higher education.

This brings us to the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process is first and foremost a systematic instrument for standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area. Many states all over the world have committed themselves to these standards and guidelines. Another point worth

emphasising is that the major stakeholders that the signing ministers refer to are the students and the employers. Employability is crucial - what employers see on the diploma is what they get.

And last but not least: what is important in the Bologna Process is not so much the content of the curriculum; much more essential is the individual's learning outcomes. This is very relevant to the labour market

According to the Bologna Process, academic learning can be described as a process of skill development (acquisition of competences) where the students, over time and at different levels, acquire certain elements of learning through a specifically designed developmental process:

> *Practical skills:* skills aimed specifically at the management of vocational skills.
>
> *Academic expertise:* Expertise within one discipline as well as interdisciplinary expertise related to the individual education or the individual academic subject.
>
> *Intellectual qualifications:* General theoretical, and methodic qualifications, communicative skills, and the ability to structure one's own learning beyond the individual education or the individual subject in question.

An important aspect of the descriptions of the learning objectives and the elements in the Bologna Process is the fact that the intention of the academic learning process is determined as something more than just the acquisition of knowledge. Accordingly, the elements of learning involved in a university education can be divided into three forms:

> *Knowledge and abilities*: general knowledge and abilities or knowledge and abilities specific to a certain discipline. Discipline here is to be interpreted as a knowledge field which is applied to arrange knowledge of a certain case or subject.
>
> *Qualifications:* Practical, intellectual and/or academic ability to employ knowledge in relation to handling problem areas in general within one or more disciplines.
>
> *Metaknowledge:* the ability to reflect on problem areas in general or within one or more areas of studies in order for the individual in question to become capable of questioning existing knowledge, developing new knowledge, and solving new problems.

The learning objectives for the two overall levels, or cycles as it is usually called, of the general educational structure – the so-called 3+2 model, which stands for 3 years for a bachelor programme and 2 years for master programme - are that the student should demonstrate these skills at a basic level for the bachelor's programme and at an extended and specialised level for the master's programme – the concept of progression through the educational levels.

Practice of diversity and special needs education at Aarhus University

As a result of this thinking, Aarhus University has been, for more than a decade, dedicated to embedding diversity through a co-ordinated educational and counselling effort. The intention is to secure an explicit academic orientation by means of adapting this effort to the individual student's academic difficulties as

well as the student's subject and educational level in order for him/her to meet the general and specific educational requirements for quality as stated in the Bologna Process.

We cannot, given the limited space available in this paper, give a detailed account of the special needs educational support.

The university's vision is summarised in the following statement:

> *All students at Aarhus University who meet the admission requirements must be secured access to an equal educational environment, which shall ensure students with specific educational difficulties the option of realising their potential to complete a higher education.*

It is important to note that students with specific educational difficulties are implicitly expected to live up to the general and specific requirements for quality of the degree programme. Aarhus University guarantees to the students and to the labour market that all graduates have achieved the necessary academic competences and that the exam results and other evaluations present a true picture of the level achieved.

The conceptual framework and the visions for the special needs educational effort are expressed through the overall strategy – as presented earlier - concerning students with specific educational difficulties. This strategy is founded on the primary goal of promoting integration and inclusion of students with specific educational difficulties at institutions of further and higher education through high quality educational assistance and counselling. This goal is to be achieved through the following strategies:

- The counselling and educational effort must be planned as a *co-ordinated* effort with clear, prioritised goals and directions.
- It must be based on the development of inter-disciplinary *knowledge regarding the specific educational difficulties* and those institutional, individual, social and cultural relations within which the difficulties must be understood.
- It must be *focused on results* by adapting the effort to the individual student's specific difficulties and to his or her academic subject and level. The aim is to compensate for the difficulties to the extent that the students can meet the general and specific academic requirements for quality.
- It must rest on research-based knowledge of the *relations between effort and effect* which is sensitive to specific and individual relations and subsequently can support the concrete practice.
- It must be structured around learning, development, and communication of *quality-assured methods* which are adequate according to the students' specific difficulties and needs.

These strategies call for a special educational assistance effort based on a research reflected counselling and educational practice. Hence, the practice must be linked to the production of knowledge which develops through the interaction of knowledge application and practical learning. This interaction involves a close connection between developmental projects and research. The relevant research must consequently comprise theoretical reflections on phenomena related to the actual counselling, educational practice and the personal experiences of the practitioner as well as the need for further knowledge and improvement of the practice. Furthermore, the research must be structured around the application of knowledge, the research principles, and the methods of data collection employed within the general practice. In other words, the efforts within counselling and education toward students with

specific educational difficulties must be linked to a research which is directed toward the development of application-oriented skills and perspectives.

This practice-oriented research is closely associated with the role of an active knowledge-based Centre which gathers, organises, and evaluates existing knowledge and information produced by others. Furthermore, it comprises the mapping of tendencies within the production of knowledge in order to meet the demands for systematic analysis. As regards the Counselling and Support Centre, these assignments include the development of new processes and methods within the practice of counselling and special needs education. According to the defined visions and strategies, these developmental projects should furthermore be shaped according to a goal which ensures a high quality for the practice and should be based on knowledge regarding successful practice. Consequently, the developmental assignments must be closely linked to the field of research. It is essential that they focus primarily on the improvement of the field in relation to the target group. In other words, the assignments must contribute to the advancement of integration and inclusion in the educational system and in society.

Conclusion

In my paper I have tried to examine some of the key issues to be considered prior to development of policies and strategies in the field of “widening access” and “diversity”. I have highlighted the little explored discrepancy between the widespread notions of diversity, education for all, social dimensions etc. and the standards expressed in the Bologna Process. It is my firm belief that if accommodation in the widest sense is not subjected to an (international) quality assurance process, the Bologna rocess will ultimately lose international recognition and consequently jeopardise first mobility and employability and then the common model for Higher Education.

References

Russell, M., 2008, Leveraging student engagement with assessments: Collecting intelligence to support teaching, student progress and retention in Crosling, G., Thomas, L. and Heagney, M. (eds.) *Improving student retention in higher education: the role of teaching and learning.* (London: Routledge).

Thomas, L., 2002, ‘Student retention in Higher Education: the role of institutional habitus’, Journal of Educational Policy, 17(4), pp. 423–32.

Thomas, L. and Hixenbaugh, P. (eds.), 2006, *Personal Tutoring in Higher Education*. (Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books).

Thomas, L., Quinn, J., Slack, K. and Casey, L., 2002, *Student Services: Effective Approaches to Retaining Students in Higher Education. Full Research Report*. (Stoke on Trent: Institute for Access Studies, Staffordshire University).

Tinto, V., 1993, *Leaving college: rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*, Second Edition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Tinto, V., 1998, Learning Communities and the Reconstruction of Remedial Education in Higher Education, *Replacing Remediation in Higher Education Conference*, Stamford University, Jan 26-27.

Tinto, V., 2000, Reconstructing the first year of college, in *Student Support Services Model Retention Strategies for Two-year Colleges*, Washington DC: Council for Opportunity in Education.

van Stolk, C., Tiessen, J., Clift, J. and Levitt, R., 2007, *Student retention in higher education courses. International comparison.* Report prepared for the National Audit Office. (Cambridge: RAND Corporation).

Warren, D., 2002, Curriculum Design in a Context of Widening Participation in Higher Education, Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 1(1), pp85-89.

Yorke, M., 1999, Leaving Early: undergraduate non-completion in higher education. (London: Falmer).

Yorke, M., 2001, Formative assessment and its relevance to retention, Higher Education Research and Development, 20(2), pp. 115-26.

Yorke, M. and Longden, B., 2007, *The first-year experience in higher education in the UK. Report on Phase 1 of a project funded by the Higher Education Academy*. York, The Higher Education Academy.

Yorke, M. and Longden, B., 2008, *The First Year Experience of Higher Education in the UK*. (York: Higher Education Academy).

Yorke, M. and Thomas, L., 2003, 'Improving the retention of students from lower socio-economic groups', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 25(1), pp. 63-75.

Yorke, M. with Bell, R., Dove, A., Haslam, L., Hughes Jones, H., Longden, B., O'Connell, C., Typuszak, R. and Ward, J., 1997, *Undergraduate non-completion in England, Report No. 1, in: Undergraduate Non-completion in Higher Education in England.* (Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England).

2.4. THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE: ACCESS, RETENTION AND DIVERSITY

2.4.1. The students' perspective on access, retention and diversity

By Inge Gielis, European Students' Union[32]

Promoting equal opportunities for all students is a main aim of the European Students' Union (ESU) and of student unions across Europe. It still remains high on the agenda, as equal opportunities are far from a reality.

The importance of the social dimension

Higher education serves many goals. To ESU, higher education should mainly serve as a means for social development and democratic empowerment, a means of accumulating and sharing knowledge and economic competitiveness, and as a means for personal growth and well-being. ESU promotes the democratisation of higher education, so that everyone will be able to access and succeed, regardless of their background. Education is a potential tool for people to break away from poverty and should promote social mobility. We also consider education to be the main instrument for emancipation. Instead of only focusing on excellence, higher education should focus on accessibility and retention rates.

Certain conditions are needed to meet these objectives. Education is a public good and a public responsibility and therefore should be publicly funded. The accessibility of higher education should not be affected by inequalities such as disabilities, distance, economic disadvantage, age or social and cultural background. ESU objects to all discrimination equally.

Unfortunately, the reality today is that higher education in Europe is not fulfilling these aims. Higher education is reproducing, and even reinforcing, existing inequalities in society. Education opportunities are linked to background. Education is reproducing a largely "monocultural" society, preserving the values of the dominant groups. This monoculture has systematically led to the exclusion of many in society. And instead of reducing poverty, attending higher education is sometimes creating poverty, as many students live in a difficult financial situation.

In the past, political promises were made to improve the situation. But, these promises have been violated in many countries. Education funding and financial support for students has become the biggest area of concern for our member unions. Across Europe, we see tuition fees being introduced or, where they exist already, increased. The fear of debt is preventing potential students from entering higher education, especially for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. There are constant calls for a marketisation of education to substitute for the lack of public funding for institutions. These moves are contradictory to the ministers' intentions.

[32] ESU – The European Students' Union - is the umbrella organisation of 47 national unions of students from 38 countries, and, through these members, represents over 11 million students. The aim of ESU is to articulate and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, the Bologna Follow-Up Group, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

Data and sources

At the European level, no real comparable data regarding the social dimension exists for all the Bologna countries and this makes the policy making extremely difficult. But for those countries that have data already available, like the countries involved in Eurostudent[33], it becomes clear that more efforts need to be undertaken to include and support underrepresented groups in higher education. ESU therefore calls for a major effort to close the data gap by collecting comparable data, not only on the social living conditions of students, but also on their background.

In order to get a better view of the situation in Europe, we surveyed our members. This was part of our recent Bologna With Student Eyes (BWSE) research. ESU published the fourth edition of Bologna With Student Eyes in April 2009. BWSE brings a reality check on the Bologna Process, based on the student unions' perspective of the national implementation of the reforms. The fourth edition has a large chapter on the social dimension, that will serve as input for this article.

The primary source of data is a detailed questionnaire. Respondents were 36 national unions of students from 33 countries. The report was written in March/April 2009 and reflects the information available at that specific point in time. BWSE 2009 focuses mostly on the perceptions of the national student unions. These perceptions are a sound testimony of the level of satisfaction and involvement of the unions[34].

The second source of input was a European student focus group that ESU organised in Stockholm on 15 October 2009, in cooperation with EUA.

Social dimension as a political priority

In the past, many political promises were made to make the social dimension a reality. Firstly, the right to education has been recognised in international treaties. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights identifies free access to education as a human right. In 1966, the United Nations, in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was signed, which states that "Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, […], in particular by the progressive introduction of free education" (article 13).

At the Unesco World Conference in Higher Education in 1998, the following was stated: "We participants are convinced that education is a fundamental pillar of human rights, democracy, sustainable development and peace, and shall therefore become accessible to all throughout life." At the World Conference on Higher Education in 2009, it was recognised that access, equity and quality as interlinking objectives are of primary importance, with an understanding that, 'the objective must be successful participation and completion, while at the same time assuring student welfare,' including '...appropriate financial and educational support to those from poor and marginalised communities.' The communiqué also clearly stresses the place of higher education as 'a public good and a strategic imperative', and adds that, 'higher education must be a matter of responsibility and economic support of all governments.'

In the Bologna Process too, the importance of the social dimension recurs time and again. Already in Prague in 2001, the ministers stated that they "reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna Process." By 2007, so six years later, the ministers

[33] The Eurostudent project collects comparable data on the social and economic conditions of student life in Europe. http://www.eurostudent.eu

[34] The full report can be found on our website (www.esu-online.org).

managed to define what was meant by this social dimension: “the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations.”

In the latest communiqué, under the header 'priorities for the decade to come', we read:

> 9. The student body within higher education should reflect the diversity of Europe’s populations. We therefore emphasise the social characteristics of higher education and aim to provide equal opportunities to quality education. Access into higher education should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies. This involves improving the learning environment, removing all barriers to study, and creating the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels. Each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade. Efforts to achieve equity in higher education should be complemented by actions in other parts of the educational system.

But these promises are not always reflected in national and institutional policies. According to BWSE, student unions from only 14 countries consider the social dimension to be a real priority for their government. Unions from 14 countries claim that the social dimension is not a priority for the government. The unions from 5 countries state that their government claims the social dimension is important but that they do not always see it in reality. The unions also link this to budgetary decisions. Most unions believe the government is not investing enough in higher education. Some fear budget cuts as a result of the crisis or a government change.

Even fewer student unions believe that the social dimension is a priority for all the higher education institutions in their country. Nine unions claim the social dimension is a priority in HEI's, 14 state the opposite and nine unions say the situation depends on the HEI: to some it is very important, to others it is not.

Obstacles to access, participation and completion

Most of our unions report that there is a clear lack of data on the social dimension. Therefore, it is difficult to identify underrepresented groups and problems of discrimination. However, based on scattered data and their everyday experience, the unions identified several problems regarding access and retention.

Student unions from 28 countries consider the participation of students from lower socio-economic background as very problematic. Many unions complain about financial barriers that keep potential students away from higher education. The reasons given are high fees, costs for accommodation and transport, etc. Among the problems reported are: student financing insufficient to cover all costs; sometimes these students are not encouraged in the same way to go to higher education; not all students can prepare equally for entrance exams because they have to work.

Students from less economically developed regions are also reported to have access problems. The obstacles reported are differences in the quality of teaching in secondary education, an absence of higher education institutions in the region, high costs when moving to the city, poor transport links, shortage of student housing in the city, etc. Many students have to work in order to get by. But this also creates problems. 25 unions believe that students with jobs face problems accessing higher education.

The reasons given are many: inflexible curricula, lack of evening lectures, absence of part-time programmes, higher fees for part-time students, losing the grant when earning too much, lack of time and energy to study, etc.

Another group that encounters problems are students with a disability. Even though many unions say that efforts have been made to increase the participation of these students, nevertheless, unions from 23 countries state that this group faces access problems. The obstacles reported are physical inaccessibility, lack of awareness from other students and teaching staff, lack of necessary provisions, etc.

National unions of students also see problems for students from ethnic-cultural minorities. Problems reported are language, cultural expectation, social norms, low self-esteem, lack of support, prior education that does not give access to higher education, etc. Similar problems are seen for migrant children: a lack of information, language, lack of social support, etc. Some unions also report problems for students from religious minorities. They state that it is often linked to ethnic minorities. A problem can be that their beliefs and practices are not taken into consideration, for example in terms of special dietary requirements or different religious holidays. A lot of unions say they have no knowledge on the issue, which points to a lack of awareness.

Student unions believe that refugees and students without residence permits come across many barriers. They often cannot get any student financing and do not have permission to work. They have problems getting earlier qualifications recognised. These students often have to pay higher tuition fees. When applying for a visa, they then have to prove their financial independence which is difficult without a grant, loan or work permit. The situation is better for recognised asylum seekers than for people who do not have the necessary documents.

In several countries, tuition fees for non-EU students were introduced or increased if they already existed. This is, for example, the case in many German states. And non-EU students are only allowed to work 80 days per year. In several countries, for example Norway, international students have their own organisations where they can address their problems.

Gender equality still remains an issue in higher education. Unions report obstacles both for male and/or female students. Underrepresentation in higher education is linked to higher dropouts in secondary education and gender stereotypes in study choice. Only two unions reported access problems for LGBT students[35,] but 15 unions claim to have no knowledge about this. This points to a possible lack of awareness. There is also almost no research available on the issue.

Older students can also encounter problems. Unions report that certain benefits students receive are only awarded up to a certain age. These can be loans and grants, higher fees, student discounts, etc. The age difference with peers is also mentioned. Many unions reported problems for students with children, such as lack of affordable childcare provision, lack of flexibility, etc. They sometimes get more student financing, but it is still often not enough to cover the extra cost for day-care.

A high drop-out ratio is a problem in many higher education systems. Student unions see many factors leading to drop-out: failing study orientation policies, low self-esteem, lack of integration in the academic community, lack of proper student counselling, etc. Many unions believe that financial problems lead to high drop-out rates. Students that have to work too much to afford their studies often

35 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual

cannot cope and drop out. In some countries, students have to pay extra when studying over a long period, or find they are prevented from continuing when not progressing fast enough. These problems do not only lead to drop-out, but they can also increase time to completion. Several unions reported that there is no data available on drop-out rates.

Economic conditions of student life

Fees and study costs

In our research we asked our unions about the financial aspect of studying. From the answers of our unions, we must conclude that students pay a lot. The majority of unions say they have to pay tuition fees (18 countries). Unions from 24 countries claim that students pay additional fees as well. These fees are charged to cover various costs: fees for materials, copy costs, health insurance, mandatory study trips, registration fees, administrative fees, student services fees, exam fees, entry fees, diploma expenditure, regional fees, union membership fees, etc. In many countries, students pay anything from several hundred to several thousand Euros in fees.

Students from 19 countries claim tuition fees have increased in the past few years, in many cases more than inflation. In the Netherlands the government will increase the students in the coming years: these will increase by 22 euro for the next ten years. In Slovenia, the fees have increased with the justification that HEIs need more funding, while in Italy they increased because of public budget cuts. In the UK (except Scotland) fees have increased with the justification that HEIs need more funding and that the benefits of higher education are such that individuals should contribute more to the cost of its provision.

Unions from only 11 countries claimed that study costs are monitored regularly, whereas 18 unions claimed that this does not happen at all. Unions from 28 countries believe that study costs have increased in recent years, while those from 20 countries claim that grants and loans are not calculated through a monitoring of study costs.

Student income

Most NUS answered that there are grants available in their country. However, the number of students that receive a grant differs significantly. Some countries have a universal grant system where the majority of students receive a grant. Other countries have very selective grants that are only awarded to a rather small number of students, usually based on merit or income.

In some countries the grants are awarded to students, whereas in more family-dependent systems, the grant is based on family income. In some countries the student's family is still entitled to some family benefits like child allowance.

Unfortunately, many unions are not satisfied with the grant system. They complain that not enough students receive a grant, the grant amount does not cover the costs and sometimes the grants do not reach the students that need it most. In Estonia for example, students have to pay tuition fees. The state offers a limited amount of state financed places (no fees). Other students do not get any form of student financing. The free places are not awarded based on the economic situation of the students, but on merit. This leads to a situation where the free places go to students with better economic backgrounds, and not to the students with the lowest income.

In most countries there are also loans available, mostly awarded by the government or banks, or by a combination of the two. The number of students taking out a loan differs among countries. The average

debt at graduation also differs quite a lot. In Denmark, the average debt is about 14 975 EUR. In Estonia, the maximum amount that a student can borrow until graduation is about 9 600 EUR which most students take out according to EUL. In Iceland, the average debt is about 18 639 EUR, however, because of the current currency problems this may be an underestimate. In Norway, students borrow on average 30 000 EUR and about 86% of students take out a loan. In Sweden, the average debt is about 10 000 EUR. In the UK, there is no data but it is estimated by the PUSH Guide and Barclays Bank that student debt will increase by 2010/11 to about 25 000 EUR. About 80% of the students eligible for a loan take one out.

Several student unions complain that grants and loans are not sufficient to cover all the costs of studying and living. As we mentioned before, student financing in most countries is not based on a calculation of costs which can explain why they are insufficient. The current budget cuts in Europe, as a result of the crisis, are making the situation even more difficult. In the Netherlands for example, it is not clear yet what the result of the budget cuts will be, but there are suggestions to freeze the student financing (so no inflation correction) and there are even people who suggest changing the current grant system into a loan system. The students are protesting against these proposals. The portability of loans and grants for mobile students still seems to be a problem in many countries. This is making a study experience abroad difficult or even impossible for many European students.

Student employment

According to our member unions, many students have to work to help pay for their studies. Either the loans and grants provided are not sufficient, or students prefer to get a job to avoid being faced with a huge debt at graduation (debt aversion). Also, the number of older students with a job re-entering higher education is growing. The average ranges from five hours to over 31 hours per week.

The current financial crisis is also hitting students hard. In some countries it means fewer students can find a job to help them finance their studies. This can lead to an increase in the average debt of students. Student unions also believe it is difficult to combine working and studying.

Students are unable to attend classes (which are sometimes obligatory), there are not enough special programmes and the general ones are often not flexible enough, they cannot prepare properly for (entrance) exams, and they also report that public authorities and institutions do not take a lot of measures to facilitate combining work and study.

It can also lead to problems with the state student financing. In Iceland for example, there is now more funding available for loans, but the loans are not high enough to cover all the costs, so students have to work to be able to pay all their bills. But students who work while studying are punished for working, as they cannot borrow the same amount as students who do not work. Student employment could be a way to gain experience that is beneficial for the student when entering the labour market after graduating. However, the majority of student unions (from 18 countries) reported that the paid work most students do is not related to their studies.

Student support services

Student unions were asked to rate the student services provided in their country on a scale of 1 to 4 (1= non-existent, 2= exists but with very little quality/access, 3= exists, with reasonable quality and access, 4= exists, in good quality and sufficient access). This are services targeted at students, like accommodation, food provision, health care, cultural and sports facilities, counselling, etc. These services increase student well-being and can help to keep the costs lower. On average, student unions are not

very satisfied with the provisions (general average is 2.58). They are the least satisfied with childcare provisions (2.09). The best scores are given to medical care and public transport (2.85 for both).

There are some structural problems according to unions. Not all services are provided in all regions or institutions and so not all students can benefit from the same (quality of) provisions. For example, in Belgium, Flanders, there is very little subsidised accommodation for students of university colleges (hogescholen) while there is a much bigger offer for university students. In Denmark, it is much more difficult to get affordable housing in Copenhagen or Aarhus. In Norway, the provisions are different depending on the institution you study at.

Discrimination

Discrimination still remains a problem in higher education in Europe. Discrimination is every legal or factual, direct or indirect differentiation and unequal conduct (giving privileges, excluding, imposing limitations) based on race, skin colour, social, national and ethnic background, descent, birth, language, class, religious or political beliefs, sex/gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status or any other basis when this is not relevant.

Most countries have some legislation that forbids discrimination. Many unions however complain that there are no clear procedures on how to fight discrimination in higher education institutions. In many countries, the legislation is very specific and it does not require HEIs to set up a clear procedure for complaints.

Representation by student unions

The vast majority of our members (30 unions) who took part in BWSE, state that the social dimension is a priority for their student union. They develop policy on the issue, they lobby for better conditions for students, they participate in projects, etc. For ESU, too, the topic is a priority. Currently we are running a project called 'Equity in higher education from a student perspective'. It is a two-year project in which we organised regional training where student unions could discuss the topic. We are also developing a handbook and an e-learning platform. In the recent past we have already published handbooks on equality and gender equality[36].

But when advocating for equality, we also have to make sure that everyone can participate equally in our student unions. Many unions run specific campaigns to get students from underrepresented groups included in the union. They also take active measures like making sure the buildings they have events at are accessible, they have contacts with specific student organisations (like organisations of international students or students from ethnic minorities), they develop a code of conduct banning all discrimination in the union, etc.

Notes from the European student focus group: student perspectives on access and retention in European HE

A European student focus group took place on 15 October 2009 in Stockholm, at the SFS office (national union of students from Sweden). The aim of the student focus group was to reflect on issues of access

[36] http://www.esib.org/index.php/Publications/official-publications

and retention in Europe and substantiate some of the evidence from the ESU surveys launched under the BWSE 2009 report.

Interestingly, financial barriers were cited extensively when an open question was posed on the biggest issues for student unions at the moment:

- In Iceland, students can get a student loan but it is not enough to cover costs. Students have to work to pay their bills. But students that work are punished, as they get a lower loan. The rental fees are too high and apartments for students are more expensive then the open market.
- In Finland, there is a reform of the student support system which includes an extra grant for students with children. Recently tuition fees for students from outside of the EU were introduced.
- In Germany, there are many systems – some have tuition fees and some not. If you come from a lower socio-economic background, the bachelor is easier to afford, and the master harder. If you are older than 30 you cannot get state funding. Non-EU students cannot get state funding either and can only work 80 days a year.
- In the Netherlands, it is not clear how much the government will cut from the budget for the education sector. The amount of money people get doesn't even cover rent and tuition fees are rising. Students with parents who have less money can get a grant, however there is the idea of freezing student loans, with no inflation correction. There is also a suggestion to change the grant into a loan. Students are against these ideas.
- In Estonia, student financing is a priority for the student union. 50% pay tuition fees. The others get a grant that only covers the tuition fee. Grants are not based on socio-economic background but on merit, which means that they go to students with a higher socio-economic background.
- In Malta, there is free state education for all, but the main problem is access to information on HE – this should be targeted at the grass roots level. There was an increase in tuition fees for international students from outside Europe,
- In Norway, students want to increase student financing from 10 to 11 months. The housing market is under pressure and prices are high. Student unions want students to have affordable accommodation, yet only one out of eight students get state funded affordable rent. There is a system of scholarships for students from developing countries (with a quota) which they don't have to pay back if they repatriate– if not, 2/3 of it becomes a loan. The problem is that sometimes they have to wait two to three months before they get the loan. International students that are not quota students have to prove they have enough money to get a visa.

A series of specific questions were also raised for the group. Of particular note was the following:

What kind of data can universities collect on what kind of social background students have? (disabled, dyslectic....). What about the privacy issue? And what do we think about quotas?

- Germany: every three years HIS collects data on social background, but not for the university. Also, there are no quotas for minorities, but there are projects to encourage women to apply for mathematics, engineering etc.
- Belgium-Flanders: No data on students from ethnic minorities. A registration system was set up for students with a disability and for ethnic minorities. This is being tested. There was a discussion on privacy issues and a solution was found. After the data is collected it's made

anonymous. The difficulty is to define ethnic minority? In the education council they came up with several parameters.

- Norway: Everybody registers online – if you have special needs you can register them there and get help with that specific issue.
- Estonia: in secondary school, a lot of boys drop out (90% of the drop outs are boys). There has been discussion on positive discrimination, but mostly for girls in higher education (60% female). The student union believes that positive discrimination makes sense. One can cite the fact that there is hardly anyone from the Russian minority in higher education.

What are student services?

Services for students that increase student well-being and make studying more affordable. There are different systems all over Europe. The student profile is changing – services need to be more diverse.

Conclusion: What do we want?

We can conclude that European higher education is far from achieving the goals that it set out to achieve regarding social inclusiveness. ESU is committed to a European Higher Education Area that promotes and delivers:

- High quality, student-centred education
- Social justice, participative equity and opportunities for mobility
- Democratic higher education institutions and societies, which create critical thinkers and active citizens and recognises that these are all equally relevant and interlinked goals. Democratic higher education institutions cannot exist without social justice and participative equity. Participative equity is a stimulating factor for high quality education because it is an enrichment for the educational environment. By letting the diverse student body participate in the higher education decision-making processes, a student-centred approach can be fostered. Therefore these goals are mutually reinforcing.

As such, the European Higher Education Area should:

- Embed a quality culture whilst enshrining academic freedom
- Reject the notion that higher education (HE) is a commodity or a tool for profit
- Work on the principle of co-operation, not competition
- Include students as co-creators and partners in the delivery and governance of the learning experience
- Recognise its own responsibility to society itself as a social good, and as such, be publicly funded.

The social dimension should not only be a priority in words, it should be high on the political agenda and active measures have to be taken. As students, we put forward the following demands:

- Establishing generous, accessible and parent-independent systems of grants that supports the student as a learner, meaning covering all costs of living and learning.

- Tuition fees should be abolished. Where they exist, measures should be taken to compensate for the burden of fees.
- Study costs should be monitored regularly.
- Student services should be subsidised sufficiently to provide student housing, transport discounts, healthy food provision, sport facilities, medical care, etc.
- Anti-discrimination legislation covering higher education must be set up so that all kinds of discrimination can be fought.

PART 2B: ACCESS, PARTICIPATION AND RETENTION IN AFRICA

2.5. ACCESS, PARTICIPATION AND RETENTION IN AFRICA: EVIDENCE FROM A SURVEY ON TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Written by Zaid Negash[37], Oyewole Olusola[38] and Elizabeth Colucci[39]

Abstract

This article is based on a survey of 32 universities in 16 countries in Africa regarding current problems and existing practice in dealing with access and retention of students and staff. Findings of the study show that there is high correlation between drop-out rates and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds as well as female students. We also found that widening participation did not receive as much attention as increasing participation. Conducted within the context of the Erasmus Mundus funded project, Access to Success: fostering trust and exchange between Europe and Africa (2008-2010)*, the survey also examines patterns of international cooperation indentified by African universities and suggests that higher education partnership between Europe and Africa may be an effective means to tackle some of the challenges facing African higher education (HE), including capacity development, expanding access and retaining students and staff.*

Introduction

The benefits of higher education to all-round human development cannot be overstated. Higher education can be considered as an important engine for overall socio-economic advancement. Most importantly, it has been a crucial instrument through which knowledge has been created and disseminated. It goes without saying that higher education plays a vital role for the economic and political advancement of nations. In an increasingly competitive world and knowledge based economy, tertiary education provides the required ingredients to enhance academic and technical competence as well as overall competitiveness at individual, regional, and international levels. The production and dissemination of knowledge have been the major preoccupations of higher educational institutions. The level of advancement witnessed by humanity today could not have been imagined without the contributions of higher education. In Africa in particular, where underdevelopment and poverty continue to remain rampant, higher education is expected to make immense contributions towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Higher education is understood as including "all types of studies, training, or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent State authorities" (UNESCO, 1998). The role of higher education becomes increasingly important in the current age where society has become progressively

[37] Mekelle University (Ethiopia), znegashz@yahoo.com
[38] Association of African Universities
[39] European University Association

information and knowledge based. Without a properly educated workforce, it would be difficult to integrate into, and get the benefits of, the globalised environment (Bollag, 2003). However, to enable the realisation of its potential benefits, higher education needs to be cultivated, nurtured and supported both in terms of creating a conductive policy environment and committing the right resources to deal with the complexities of issues such as access and massification, brain drain, staff and student retention, and infrastructure.

In an increasingly globalised world, it is only rational to think in terms of viewing tertiary education from an international perspective. Knowledge does not know boundaries and internationalisation of higher education has become more real than ever before. It is not only that what has been discovered in one part of the world needs to reach other parts as soon as possible, but that there is a need to facilitate knowledge creation in all parts of the world in view of its importance for local issues as well as its international ramifications. This amounts to minimising the technical divide that exists in the world today. However, in spite of the large-scale expansion of higher education worldwide, less developed countries in general and African countries in particular cannot keep pace with their developed counterparts. Thus, higher education needs global cooperation that can take different forms including bilateral and multilateral agreements among tertiary institutions, joint research, staff and student exchanges, international funding from development agents and donor organisations, and other similar arrangements.

While underlining the need for international solidarity and cooperation to promote higher education in an increasingly globalised setting, the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education underscored the need for providing special focus to promoting African higher education as an important tool for enhancing development in the continent (UNESCO, 2009). This is in recognition of the fact that, while the overall expansion of higher education witnessed in all parts of the world has been tremendous, much remains to be done in the developing world and particularly in Africa to promote higher education and reap its benefits. On the one hand, the expectations from higher education are wide-ranging, and on the other, the challenges are just as demanding.

The challenges confronting higher education range from ensuring access to dealing with democratisation of knowledge; from student and staff retention to dealing with financial bottlenecks; from increasing to widening participation (Crosling *et al.*, 2009); from ensuring quality of education (Materu, 2007) to enhancing employability of graduates; and from availability of appropriate national policies to promoting international collaboration. Higher educational institutions cannot be left to deal with these challenges alone. One can imagine that with growing emphasis accorded to African universities, the problem of severe neglect and underfunding of African higher education (Brock-Utne, 2003) is expected to change. However, this requires serious attention not only by African governments but also international organisations and development partners.

The longstanding view within the international development and donor community (e.g., the World Bank) that primary education generates a greater contribution towards economic growth and poverty reduction has resulted in the relative neglect and underfunding of higher education in Africa not only by the international community but also by African governments (Bloom *et al.*,2005; Brock-Utne, 2003; Bollag, 2003). Considering tertiary education as less important compared to primary and secondary schooling seems to have been motivated by economic (i.e., greater return to investment) and equity considerations. However, this view has been effectively challenged (e.g., Brock-Utne, 2003). Bloom *et al.*, (2005) in particular challenged this view and showed that higher education can help Africa raise its level of production higher than its current level of about 23% below its production frontier, such that by "increasing the stock of tertiary education by one year" Africa "could maximize the rate of technological

catch-up at a rate of 0.63 percentage points a year". Findings such as this must have contributed towards the recent improved attention that seems to have been accorded to higher education both internationally and nationally (UNESCO, 2009).

It was indicated earlier that higher education is vital for socio-economic development of nations. The implicit assumption in this statement is that we are talking about quality rather than sub-standard education. Studies indicate that quality education "has a remarkable impact on… economic growth" (Hanushek, 2005). Quality education produces quality graduates. This greatly contributes to the human capital base, which provides the necessary input for growth. The imperatives of ensuring and maintaining quality higher education in Africa need to be viewed in relation to the increasing competitiveness and internationalisation of education. Quality, therefore, has to be interpreted in relation to international measurements and standards. Moreover, higher education, and indeed education at any level, needs to tune itself to the level of dynamism that we see in the world today. Thus, education has to remain relevant to the needs and requirements of the times. With Africa, and particularly sub-Saharan Africa, striving for the attainment of MDGs, higher education has an added responsibility of working towards ensuring these goals.

African higher education has struggled recently to expand and ensure quality at the same time. The main factors that are believed to have contributed to the decline of quality in African higher education include, among others, overcrowded classes and higher per unit costs associated with expanding admissions; lack of qualified academic staff associated with brain drain and HIV/AIDS; lack of infrastructure and equipment as a result of financial shortfalls; and poor governance systems (Materu, 2007). There is a considerable amount of literature on brain drain from Africa to OECD countries, for example, and the ensuing ill effects (Ndulu, 2004). Having recognised the importance of higher education for overall advancement and poverty reduction in particular, instituting a system of quality assurance is increasingly becoming a priority in many African countries (Materu, 2007). Of course, quality improvement means higher costs.

Access and Participation

While underlining that 'Everyone has the right to education', Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights goes on to say that '… higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit'. Thus, whereas primary education 'shall be compulsory' to all, higher education is expected to disentangle itself from being viewed as a privilege of some sections of society to being equally accessible to every member of the society who has the capacity and who aspires to go the required length.

Access to higher education can be viewed as having two dimensions: increasing participation and widening participation. Increasing participation refers to numerical increment in terms of the number of persons within the higher education age bracket registered at tertiary institutions, irrespective of the composition of participants. It implies that tertiary education has to be designed in such a way that it becomes possible for ever larger numbers of individuals within the age group to enrol. However, it is possible that increased participation only benefits some sections of the society or that the majority of the beneficiaries come from the traditionally more represented sections. It is also possible that the number of individuals who have hitherto been underrepresented in higher education would increase, yet this is not implicit.

Wider participation, on the other hand, points to the breadth or expanse of the mix of participants in terms of the sections of society they represent. This implies that higher education has effectively to

reach the traditionally underrepresented and disadvantaged sections such as students from economically backward regions, students from poor households, female students, first generation students, students with physical or learning disabilities, students from migrant families, and students from socially discriminated casts.

Equal access to higher education would therefore ensure enrolment free from direct and indirect methods of discrimination on the basis of gender, social or economic backgrounds, race, religion, language, or physical disabilities (UNESCO, 1998). It would imply that higher education is equally accessible on the basis of merit, and thus knowledge is democratised. However, ensuring equal access even when a system is technically open to all who are qualified is not obvious. In view of the longstanding socio-economic and political discrimination that has existed for generations in most countries, short term policies and regulations alone cannot ensure access. In recognition of these impediments, innovative methods have been introduced and implemented (Altbach, et al., 2009, p. 42) to enable particularly underrepresented groups have better access to tertiary institutions. These have included affirmative action, quota, reservations, distance learning, and student financing schemes. The underlining assumption in designing these methods is that unequal access to higher education has been prevalent across nations and through history because of differences in age, gender, ethnicity, social status, disability, family background, and distance (e.g., Assie-Lumumba, 1994) and that extraordinary methods and efforts are required to minimise the gap and ultimately ensure equal access. It may be important to realise that however innovative and aggressive the measures might be, the challenges of ensuring equal access are not easily surmountable. Having indicated that 'parental income and education' play influential role for inequalities in higher education, Altbach et al., (2009, p.39) observed that "*Truly providing equal access to higher education means overcoming the social and economic inequalities within each nation and the corresponding disparities that result*." This implies that the job of ensuring equal access cannot be left entirely to higher education establishments or that it is more likely to be beyond the means and resources at their disposal. Mohamedbhai (2008) points to system and policy changes needed, including institutional differentiation, diversification of funding sources, increased autonomy for public institutions with regard to policy implementation and a redefinition of government's role in higher education.

Although much has been done to enhance participation over the last few decades, there exist wider disparities among regions in terms of the rate of enrolments. Not surprisingly, sub-Saharan Africa still remains well behind, although large scale expansion has been witnessed. With only 5% of the age group participating in tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa currently compared to 26% worldwide, one can easily see the amount of work that lies ahead to address the problem of access to post-secondary education (Altbach *et al.*, 2009, p. 38; Bloom *et al.*, 2005). Compared to the 1% enrolment rate in 1965, the current enrolment rate of 5% can be considered as a worthy improvement, particularly if we take into consideration that population size has more than doubled in many countries, but there is no doubt that sub-Saharan Africa is lagging behind other regions (Bloom *et al.*, 2005). To make the task even more daunting, the problem of limited access is compounded by factors like lack of infrastructure, financial constraints, oversized classes, lack of staff capacity in terms of number and qualification, and poor quality (e.g., Johnstone, 2004).

With demand anticipated to remain high, African higher education establishments are expected to promote increasing and widening participation. However, the capacity of these institutions in terms of physical infrastructure and manpower availability remains seriously constrained. Consequently, the issue of balance between large demand, coupled with large student admissions on the one hand, and limited infrastructure and manpower facilities on the other, pose a serious challenge to African tertiary institutions (Assie-Lumumba, 1994). In addition, policy-related problems including highly centralised

policy making (Bloom et al., 2005) coupled with institutional leadership inefficiencies limit the capacity of higher education institutions to address the challenges effectively.

Student and staff retention

Although access is an important component, it does not automatically guarantee success and completion of studies. Particularly in view of the innovative methods widely adopted to ensure equal access to underrepresented sections of the population, issues related to student success and retention in higher education become more and more imperative. A study conducted at Debub University in Ethiopia, for instance, shows that the larger proportion of student drop-out is made up of female students (Tesfaye, 2005). This signifies that not only are female students underrepresented numerically, but they are also at a higher risk of non-completion.

Student attrition, non-continuation or non-completion of studies, entails costs to the individual, family, society, and economy (Crosling *et al.*, 2009). At individual and family levels, losses can range from financial to disappointments and failed opportunities. At the societal and economy wide level, costs include potential human capital losses in terms of skills and knowledge.

A variety of factors (Crosling *et al.*, 2009) including poor preparation and commitment, mismatch of area of interest and field of placement, poor social integration, lack of appropriately developed instructional and assessment methods can be regarded as the causes of student drop-outs. On the reverse side, this implies that there are various personal and institutional inputs that can positively impact retention. Student related factors that can promote retention include proper preparation and motivation as well as commitment and diligence. The institutional factors point to inputs like information dissemination; designing an appropriate and relevant curriculum along with its suitable delivery methods; appropriate assessment techniques; and fruitful student support mechanisms. Although these factors are important (both student and institutional), it appears that the institution-related factors carry greater weight, not only in terms of directly influencing retention but also indirectly in enhancing the student-related factors.

One can, for instance, make a comparison between teacher-centred and student-centred learning. While in the teacher-centred learning, one-way communication from the instructor to the learner is practiced, in student-centred learning, students play an active role and they are put at the centre of the educational process (Dejene et al., 2007; Crosling et al., 2009). Student-centred education involves problem-based inquiry, hands-on experiential, interactive, and onsite experimental methods, which make it interesting for students to pursue studies for life. It entails designing interactive, flexible, and user-friendly methods of learning based on an understanding of the capabilities, aspirations and limitations of students. By enhancing academic success, student-centred learning ultimately promotes student retention.

Evidence suggests that there is a strong correlation between drop-out rate and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students from less economically developed regions, and female students, not only at the level of tertiary education but also below. James (2007), for instance, observes that "Worldwide, people from low socio-economic status are highly underrepresented in higher education, partly because school completion rates and school achievement levels are closely correlated with social class."

Introducing appropriate methods for maintaining a high degree of student retention is undoubtedly crucial, however, it needs to be complemented by parallel measures to ensure staff retention, as human

capital remains the most important resource of any organisation, and chiefly so in the case of higher institutions. Many higher education establishments in Africa have been struggling with retaining their staff for a variety of reasons. Low academic staff retention is mainly attributable to low salary and low benefit structures as well as other causes of dissatisfaction. In particular, insufficient pay and unfavourable working conditions have been the major reasons why many academic staff members of African universities decide to leave their institutions in search of better pay and working conditions elsewhere (Bollag, 2003). Abandoning one's institution can be regarded as direct and overt evidence of academic staff outflow, which amounts to brain drain if the outflow is towards other countries. Moreover, more latent and less identifiable evidence exists in the form of devoting less attention and time to regular duties while searching for complementary sources of income.

Much has been said of the fact that competent human capital is regarded as a necessary input without which the desirable level of competitiveness and progress cannot be attained. Unfortunately, Africa is losing increasing numbers of its capable academic staff to other countries. A study conducted in five universities of sub-Saharan Africa indicated that universities are losing sizable amounts of their human capital which significantly limits their capability to provide quality training to their students, with some fields affected more than others (Tettey, 2006). Generating additional competent human capital is one thing but retaining existing staff is, at least, of equal importance. Accordingly, staff retention must receive institutional and political attention.

Tuition fees and student loans

Given the current low rate of participation and the ever-expanding number of secondary school graduates, actual and potential demand for tertiary education is expected to increase, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Obviously, demand would be beyond the capacity of the existing public and private universities (there are little over 200 public universities in sub-Saharan Africa). Moreover, tertiary education is inherently expensive per student given the high costs associated with infrastructure, manpower, and equipment. However hard governments may try, the financial pressure is more likely to be beyond their budgetary means, considering the myriad of more pressing and competing demands for funds. The most likely and viable other sources of income that can be used to bridge the budgetary gap are contributions from students, private sector partnerships, and international development agencies. Although there are arguments in favour of public financing of higher education and resistance against cost sharing since higher education is seen as a right for all (e.g., see Johnstone, 2004; Brock-Utne, 2003, Barr, 2005), there appears to be a strong case for the fact that students have to bear, at least, part of the cost (Barr, 2005; Johnstone, 2004; Chapman and Ryan, 2003).

It has been clear for quite some time that universities worldwide, and particularly in Africa, are severely underfunded. If one cannot rely on public funds entirely, one needs to look for private financing (students, businesses, or other sources) so as to minimise reliance on the tax payer's money or to supplement public allocations. Accordingly, many African universities are now charging tuition fees, which can take different forms, to their students. However, in line with considerations of access and participation, care needs to be exercised in designing tuition fees that it do not disadvatage poorer students. Maintaining the balance might not be easy, and in practice it may harm disadvantaged students if appropriate measures are not taken to redress whatever ill effects the fees may have. The most usually quoted success story in introducing tuition fees aggressively in Africa is that of Makerere University of Uganda which is believed to have transformed the institution from a state of collapse to one of sound financial viability, although there are differences of opinion on whether its benefits were skewed towards the better off students (Johnstone, 2004; Brock-Utne, 2003). With more than 70% of

students paying tuition fees, the university has been able to raise substantial revenue and expand its admissions.

There are different types of cost-sharing practices applied in African universities (see Johnstone, 2004). In many cases, students are required to cover part of the tuition costs and most or all of the food and accommodation related expenses. The introduction of student loans has the advantage of making admission not too dependent on pre-payment of tuition fees and letting students share educational costs at the same time. In line with this, student loans are made with repayments expected only when students earn income following completion of their studies. The logic behind student loans is that students, after completion of their studies, are expected to secure earnings commensurate with their studies and, therefore, they need to make contributions to cover the costs incurred to enable them obtain these benefits. Loan collection is calculated as a percentage of earnings (in the form of graduate tax) along with income tax. This system is widely known as the income-contingent repayment arrangement. This student loan and repayment scheme enables the borrower to get access to studies, and it also protects the lender from the risk of unsecured loans. In practice, though, and for many reasons, loans extended to students may not be collected fully. A recent study by the Association of African Universities on massification in African higher education outlines several institutional strategies in dealing with increased enrolment and widening participation. Diversifying funding streams and in particular charging student fees, while ensuring the appropriate loans and scholarships to protect disadvantaged students, is one of the main recommendations of the study (Mohamedbhai, 2008).

The study

This study relates to the state of African higher education with particular focus on the following issues:

i. Access, retention and underrepresented student groups
ii. Policies and priorities of African higher education institutions in addressing access and retention of students and staff and
iii. Institutional partnerships between African and European universities towards promoting higher education and its wider socio-economic implications.

The study has been conducted within the framework of the EU funded project 'Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange between Europe and Africa (2008-2010)'. The project aimed to bring universities from Europe and Africa together in a bid to explore issues related to increasing and widening access, ensuring retention of students and staff as well as the role of bi-regional partnerships on overall higher education development. The purpose of the study was not only to map institutional and national good practices and identify case studies, but also to establish a better understanding of how institutions can use international cooperation to respond to the challenges in specific socio-economic contexts and environments.

Analysis is based on data collected online from 32 universities located in different regions of Africa. The aim of the survey was to explore the extent to which increasing participation, equity and access, student diversity, retention of students and degree completion, are being addressed by higher education institutions and national governments across a range of sub-Saharan African countries.

Description of data

Data for this study has been collected from 32 African universities located in 16 countries (see Appendix, Table A1, p. 105). These institutions were the respondents of an open call across the wider membership of the Association of African Universities. In terms of age, sample universities range from the oldest (Stellenbosch University of South Africa), established in 1918, to the youngest (Zambia's University of Lusaka), established in 2007. With most of the bigger African universities publicly owned, the sample reflects this quite closely. 25 of the 32 sample universities are under public ownership while almost all of the remaining are privately owned, most of which are not-for profit. One of the non-public universities in the sample is a distance education based institution and another operates as a virtual university. It may also be interesting to note that most of the universities in the sample charge tuition fees to their domestic students. Of the 30 universities who responded to issues related to tuition fees, 22 charge tuition fees to all their domestic students and five to some domestic students. This clearly confirms the fact that even public universities find it necessary, in view of government budget limitations to finance an ever increasing need for increasing participation, to supplement public funds with student fees.

Some 20 of the 25 public institutions in the sample responded to issues on staff and student statistics (see Appendix, Table A2). Excluding those who did not respond or did not provide sufficient response to student/staff statistics (i.e., University of Kinshasa – CDR, Hawassa University –Ethiopia, University of Fort Hare and University of Limpopo, both from South Africa, and University of Zimbabwe), the average number of students per institution is found to be 18,386 over all categories (including part time). The majority of these students, i.e., 86.6% or 319,618 of a total 367,721, is made up of bachelor degree students (82% full-time and 4.6% part-time), followed by 11.7% master's degree students (10.7% full-time and 1% part-time), and the remaining 1.4% are doctoral students. This shows that by far the largest number of students in African tertiary institutions are students working for their bachelor degrees. It also provides a good indication of the fact that the demand for master's degree programmes will increase over time.

Perhaps more interestingly, the student-to-staff (academic) ratio (SSR) of African public universities stands at 30 to 1 considering full-time academic staff only, and 23 to 1 when we consider all academic staff (including part timers). On the other hand, the student-to-administrative staff ratio is reckoned as 13.4 to 1, showing a large number of administrative staff per institution compared to academic staff. SSR is considered as an important indicator of quality and can, to a certain extent, reflect the resource commitments with higher ratios indicating availability of lower financial resources to staff recruitment. The SSR figure obtained for Africa in this survey is higher than the international standard and can for instance be 9 compared to a SSR of 20.8 to 1 of the UK in 2003/04 (AUT, 2005) and 20.5 to 1 of Australia in 2006 (Massaro, 2009). The drive to ensure access in light of massification of higher education in Africa may further push the SSR upwards if concomitant measures are not taken on staff recruitment and retention. It may also need to be indicated that SSR does not show the actual staff *qualification* levels, and the figures provided are an overall computation. The availability of large number of faculty with the highest qualifications is considered as an important input for quality education. In many African tertiary institutions, a very low proportion of teaching staff are PhD holders with the majority composed of first and second degree holders.

Access, retention, and underrepresented groups: survey results

As indicated earlier, access can be seen in relation to numeric increases and breadth of participation. When asked about the priority each institution accords to enhancing access, 25 of the 30 who responded to this question indicated that they provide 'high' priority to improving access. Of the remaining five

institutions, four indicated a 'medium' priority to enhancing access. One institution provides 'low' priority to improving access. Having seen the priority accorded to access, sample institutions were asked to indicate the objectives or direction they employ to widening and/or increasing participation. With 29 universities responding to this question, the results are summarised in the table below:

Table 1 - Institutional objectives in widening/increasing participation

Options	No. of institutions selecting option (N=29), multiple response allowed
Increasing overall student numbers	22
Increasing students from underrepresented groups	13
Increasing students from disadvantaged groups	19
Reducing barriers to completion and improve retention rates	20
Improve gender imbalance	21

One can learn from the table that, although not in a clear-cut form, institutions are more inclined towards increasing rather than widening access. This shows that while the majority of institutions give importance to access, they appear to be biased towards increasing participation and retaining registered students rather than broadening the mix of students, although the margin does not appear to be wide enough to warrant any definite conclusions as yet, and thus calls for further research. This inclination may spring from the belief that increasing participation implies widening as well, and that dealing with the immediate enrolment demands is considered as a top priority for the moment.

Underrepresented groups

Traditionally, higher education has been the preserve of some sections of society thus leading to the underrepresentation of some sections of the population. As outlined earlier, this trend still exists to a large extent in view of the difficulties involved and the time it requires to redress entirely such an imbalance. Hence, with many student groups still remaining underrepresented, higher education continues to be criticised as being elite-based rather than mass-based in spite of the recent improvements.

With 30 of the 32 universities responding to the question "Which of the following student groups are underrepresented in your institution?", the results are summarised in Table 2. It is quite evident from the summary provided in the table below that students with physical disabilities, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students from remote and economically underdeveloped regions, and female students are the most underrepresented groups of students in many African universities. Quite clearly, socio-economic status, disability, and gender appear to have been the major factors that have determined low representation in universities. The second group of underrepresented students seems to have been made up of students with learning disabilities, adult students, first generation students, students from ethnic minorities, and students associated with migration. Note also that there could be exceptions like 'The Seventh of April University (Libya)' where male students are rather underrepresented compared to female students mainly because male students drop-out in search of paid work.

Table 2 - Underrepresented student groups

Underrepresented student groups (options)	Number of universities who indicated that this group is underrepresented (N = 30), multiple response allowed
Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds	17
First generation students	5
Students from ethnic/cultural minority backgrounds	5
Students from migrant families	4
Students from remote or economically under-developed regions	17
Adult students	7
Female students	12
Male students	1
Refugees/asylum seekers	7
Religious minorities	2
Students with physical disabilities	19
Students with learning disabilities	7
Students affected by sickness or illness	8
Others	2

The survey also asked institutions to estimate the drop-out rates of the underrepresented student groups. Based on the response obtained from sample universities, the results are outlined in Table 8.

Table 3 - Estimated drop-out rate of underrepresented groups

Student groups	Average drop-out rate (%)	No of universities
All students	17.68	19
Bachelor students	20.55	15
Masters students	17.04	13
Doctorate students	10.69	7

The average drop-out rate of underrepresented student groups is computed at about 18%. With the majority of students falling within the category of 'Bachelor students', the drop-out rate of 21% associated with this group of students may have to be considered as the more representative one. It was earlier indicated, based on studies, that school and university drop-out rates of underrepresented groups are higher. Respondents in this particular study also attest to the fact that there exists a correlation between drop-out rates and some student groups. Judged from the number of respondents, there appears to be higher correlation between drop-outs and students of lower socio-economic backgrounds as well as female students. This is in line with what was indicated earlier where socio-economic status and gender were closely associated with underrepresentation in tertiary institutions.

Table 4 - Correlation between student groups and drop-out rates

Student groups	Number of institutions responding positively to existence of correlation (N=27)
Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds	20
Students from ethnic/cultural minorities	8
Students from migrant families	5
Students from less economically developed regions	14
Adult students	5
Female students	10
Refugees/asylum seekers	3
Religious minorities	1
Students with physical disabilities	3
Students with learning disabilities	8

The methods employed by institutions to determine who the underrepresented groups are vary from one to another with some using statistical evidence and others using less quantifiable methods like observations made by respondents on the different student groups in their respective institutions. Drop-out rates were also an estimation in many cases. Lack of statistical evidence on student enrolment in African universities is an important factor to consider in future research and subsequent policy responses.

Many factors are believed to have contributed to the lower participation rate of the student groups indicated above as underrepresented. These factors can be grouped into three categories: government related factors; institution related factors; and student/family related factors. Evidently, some or more of the factors under these categories must have contributed their share towards the low participation rate of underrepresented groups. Questions were posed to respondents on the extent of contribution of the factors under these categories to low level representation. Average weights attached to each factor are reckoned taking into account those institutions that identified the factor(s) as a contributor to low representation. Weights assigned to each factor range from 1 to 6 in ascending order in terms of the degree or strength of contribution of each factor to lower participation rate. Table 3 below provides a summary of the responses obtained from 30 of the 32 institutions who addressed this issue particularly in relation to governmental factors.

Table 5 - State-driven factors that contributed to low participation rate of underrepresented groups

Factors	Number of institutions (N=30, multiple response)	Average weight of factor
Lack of government policy and support for these groups	25	4.24
Lack of legislation in support of these groups	23	3.57
Inability on the part of the state to identify these groups	22	3.14
Lack of financial support for these groups	27	4.78
Lack of information on financial support for potential students	24	4.08
Lack of financial support and incentives for universities	26	4.85
Others	3	3.67

One can see from the table that lack of financial support by governments to universities and to the underrepresented groups constitute the major contributing factor towards the low level participation. This factor carries higher value both in terms of number of respondents and in terms of the average weight assigned to it. Next to this comes 'lack of policy support' and 'lack of information on financial support' followed by 'lack of legislation' and 'inability to identify these groups'. The result can also be considered as an indicator of the impression of respondents on the need to address these factors, in terms of their priority of influence, so as to minimise the level of underrepresentation of these groups.

The contribution of the factors related to higher education institutions are summarised in Table 4 in terms of number of respondents and the average weight computed for each factor in a manner similar to Table 3.

Table 6 - Factors on the part of higher education institutions that contribute to low participation

Factors	Number of institutions (N=30, multiple response)	Average weight of factor
Lack of institutional policies in support of these groups	25	4.52
Lack of effective support services in institutions	27	4.89
Lack of institutional financial support for these groups	29	5.24
Lack of outreach /promotion for these groups	24	4.33
Study programmes inadequate for the needs of these groups	24	3.46
Insufficient infrastructure	27	4.63
Lack of student housing	25	4.24
Lack of facilities for students with disabilities	24	5.08
Negative attitude of staff towards these groups	24	2.50
Lack of academic staff	25	3.28
Lack of administrative staff	22	2.55
Too few higher education institutions to meet demand	25	4.28
Institutions not physically accessible to those who live far	25	3.76

The major institution-related factors that seem to have had a higher contribution towards low participation are identified, using a combination of number of respondents and average weight, such as: (1) lack of institutional financial support to the underrepresented groups; (2) lack of effective support services in the institutions; (3) lack of facilities for students with disabilities; and (4) insufficient infrastructure. Other factors which appear to be lesser in terms of their intensity but nevertheless important in terms of their contributions are: (1) lack of institutional policies and support; (2) lack of promotion; (3) lack of student housing; and (4) too few academic institutions compared to demand. Factors like negative staff attitude and inadequate study programmes tuned to the needs of these groups are believed to be less important factors.

Table 7 - Student/family related factors and their contributions to low participation of underrepresented students

Factors	Number of institutions (N=31, multiple response)	Average weight of factor
Personal financial difficulties	31	5.71
Lack of motivation/low aspiration	26	3.69
No cultural/family history of higher education	26	3.65
Lack of parental guidance for potential students	27	4.41
Disease or health issues	26	2.73
Hard to access information on higher education	27	3.74
Physically too far away/cannot get to institution	27	3.15

Considering student and/or family associated factors contributing to underrepresentation, individual financial difficulties and lack of parental guidance appear to have greater share followed by difficulty in accessing information, low motivation/aspiration on the part of students, and lack of higher education history within the family. Minimising the impact of these factors requires conscious intervention on the part of policy makers and higher education institutions.

It would not be difficult to infer from the governmental, institutional, and student/family related factors discussed above that the factors negatively influencing participation are many and interrelated. Hence, addressing these factors from different angles and, preferably, in tandem would bring better results than focusing on a single factor.

In the preceding section, institutional factors that contribute towards low participation rate of some student groups have been demonstrated. The survey also addressed institutional responses for improving participation of underrepresented students. One can imagine that, in recognition of the need to widen access, many higher learning institutions will have devised various structural and administrative ways to deal with the challenge. Accordingly, asked if their respective institution has established a faculty/department/office to support access and participation (increasing and widening), 18 respondents (out of 27 who addressed the question) responded affirmatively while 9 of them replied negatively. And four of the nine institutions, who reacted negatively, have indicated their institution's intention to establish such an office. One can therefore understand that there are a good number of institutions currently without an office or department particularly involved in supporting access and participation.

The offices specifically established by tertiary institutions to support access and participation include, among others, 'Centre for Prospective Students' of Stellenbosch University, 'University Gender Office' of Hawassa University, 'Public Relations and Academic Linkages' of The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, 'Academic Committee and Student Affairs' of University of Zimbabwe, 'Centre for Learning and Teaching' of the National University of Lesotho, and 'Open and distance education unit' of Maseno university.

Different universities use different organisational arrangements to implement policies and programmes. In recognition of this, respondents were asked to indicate the units/offices assigned to implement the policies, if they have one. The results are summarised here below:

Table 8 - Centres used for institutional policy implementation

	Number of institutions					
	Done in research cells/institutions	Done via academic programmes	Done via special academic centres	Done via support and services offices	Done via task forces or working groups	One/ two staff in charge
Development cooperation (N=21)	11	14	6	6	3	8
Distance learning (N=18)	4	13	9	4	4	2
Increasing participation (N=21)	4	11	3	7	3	4
Industry cooperation (N=23)	13	13	7	7	7	2
Innovative approaches to teaching and learning (N=22)	10	15	7	7	7	1
Internationalisation (N=23)	6	7	6	10	4	7
Lifelong learning (N=17)	5	9	7	5	3	1
Retention of staff (N=17)	4	6	5	8	5	3
Retention of students (N=20)	3	9	6	6	7	2
Widening participation (N=20)	8	13	3	11	3	1
Working with local/ regional communities and NGOs (N=22)	14	7	9	8	6	4

This table shows that different centres/units are employed by universities to implement their various policies. Note that multiple answers have been allowed, signifying that more than one centre can be used to handle implementation of a certain policy. We also observe from the table that less institutionalised mechanisms such as implementing policies via 'task force' and/or 'one or two staff' have been employed by universities. Less institutionalised methods of implementation can show a low level of attention given to a certain policy, or that the organisational set up has not yet fully crystallised.

In terms of specific strategies adopted by institutions towards supporting access and participation, the responses obtained are summarised in Table 6 the containing number of institutions who replied positively to each of the strategies along with their respective average weights.

Table 9 - Institutional response to supporting access and participation (increasing and widening)

Institutional response	Number of institutions (N=28)	Average weight of factor
Adopting flexible admission policy	18	5.06
Recognition of prior learning	19	4.16
Offering flexible learning paths	17	4.41
Offering special programmes	17	4.76
Outreach to schools in deprived areas	17	3.94
Working with employers /industry	18	4.11
Working with NGOs and other organisations	14	4.14
Providing financial support to students	18	4.06
Offering visits to potential students	20	4.30
Offering information visits to students' parents	11	3.55
Adopting non-discrimination policy	20	5.45

Table 6 shows that 'adopting non-discrimination policy', 'adopting flexible admission policy', and 'offering special programmes' are some of the major strategies used to support access and retention by African tertiary institutions. Other strategies adopted by universities include 'visits to potential students', 'offering flexible learning paths', 'recognition of prior learning', 'provision of financial services to students' and others, as outlined in the table, to differing degrees. While adopting and implementing these strategies for ensuring wider access and enhancing retention, institutions will, undoubtedly, encounter difficulties, some of which are external and some, internal. The following table summarises these difficulties, as reported by respondents, most of which are internal to the institution.

Table 10 - Difficulties faced while adopting and implementing access and retention strategies

Difficulties	Number of universities (N=27)	Average weight
Lack of support from senior management	4	2.50
Lack of support from academic staff	12	2.83
Commitment from staff but lack of time/resources	21	5.05
Lack of knowledge and expertise	8	3.50
General resistance to change	16	3.81
Staff not properly trained to deliver	11	4.18
Lack of financial resources	25	5.24

Lack of financial resources and lack of time/resources by staff (in spite of their commitment) are the most important factors that pose difficulties when introducing and implementing access and retention strategies. Lack of finance has been the major hindrance, posing difficulties both on the part of students and institutions. Lack of time/resources of staff or their availability is another important factor that could delay or promote attainment of greater participation rates. In addition to these factors, resistance to change, and lack of proper training for staff are the other factors deserving important consideration. These difficulties (finance, lack of staff time/resources, lack of proper training, and general resistance to change) could be important areas where international collaboration and global support could come in so

as to effectively address the global objective of enhancing access and retention of students, particularly of those coming from underrepresented sections.

Institutional development through international cooperation

In addition to collecting information on access and retention of students and staff, this survey also questioned institutions on their international relationships and collaboration. This has been done to probe whether there may be a correlation between international partnership and institutional development, particularly with respect to facing access and retention problems.

Internationalisation of higher education can take different forms. These include undertaking joint research projects among universities belonging to different countries, staff and student exchange, sharing latest knowledge and technology, development of science, assistance and support, undertaking various scholarly works, short-term training and visits, implementing global initiatives like the attainment of the MDGs involving different partner institutions, and so on. In the context of Africa, internationalisation of education is an issue of strategic significance in developing global research and teaching cooperation and working towards enhanced competence and mutual gain. This collaboration can be fruitful if placed within the framework of policy that appreciates the importance and inevitability of internationalisation. Notwithstanding the fact that internationalisation and global cooperation is vast, this study particularly focuses on the relationship between African universities and Europe/European universities in view of their longstanding history of involvement.

A vast majority of the universities in the sample (25 out of the 30) have already established relationships with Europe and European universities in one form or another. In the meantime, African universities (including those who have already established relationships) have a growing interest in establishing and expanding collaboration with Europe and European universities. The following table summarises the type of relationship that exists between African and Europe/European universities.

Table 11 - Relationships between African universities and Europe/European universities

Type of relationship	Number of universities (N=25), multiple response allowed
Many students go to study in Europe	17
Engagement in development projects with European partners	21
Faculty undertake research in Europe	15
Faculty undertake teaching in Europe	7

As outlined in the table above, the most common type of relationship appears to be the one where African universities undertake development projects along with their European partners. This is followed by students of African universities going to Europe for their studies and then faculty members doing research in Europe. Although faculty members undertake teaching in Europe, it does not seem to be that common.

Some examples of the relationships include Erasmus Mundus supported projects, VLIR-IUC partnerships, EDULINK, IFS, Nuffic, Nufu, EU/ACP, NORAD, DELPHE, DFID, SIDA, and many bilateral and multilateral collaborations. Many European and African universities are part of these collaboration projects and staff and student exchange programmes. Universities in different European countries such as France,

Germany, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, and Norway participate in these collaborative ventures involving African universities.

Institutional policies and priorities

There has been a recent trend to frame internationalisation and global cooperation within the framework of institutional policies and priorities. These priorities provide the direction for collaborative work and mutual engagement not only between African and Europe/European universities but also universities located elsewhere and other global players. Developing institutional strategies for internationalisation is a fairly new concept, but has gained considerable ground in the past decade in North America, Europe, and increasingly Asia and Latin America. Africa, with its high reception of donor projects and programmes, has probably the 'most internationalised higher education system in the world', but due to many development constraints, it is the 'least internationally engaged' (Knight and Teferra, 2008). The priority areas for international cooperation for African universities are summarised in the following table based on the results of the survey.

Table 12 - Issues of institutional priority and availability of policies on the issues

Issues	Number of universities (N=32)	Average weight of issue	Number of universities confirming existence of institutional policies on the issues (N=27)
Environmental issues	29	4.66	NA
Development cooperation	30	5.03	18
Lifelong learning	28	4.79	13
Innovative approaches to teaching/learning	31	5.32	18
Industry cooperation	31	5.39	18
Working with local/regional communities and NGOs	31	4.94	18
Distance learning	28	4.11	12
Internationalisation	30	5.20	18
Widening participation	28	5.21	16
Increasing participation	28	4.96	17
Retention of students	31	4.97	15
Retention of staff	32	5.22	16

Almost all universities seem to have attached higher levels of priority to all items. These issues could, therefore, be used as areas for international collaboration with African universities directly and/or via developmental organisations interested in assisting African higher education and, thus, attaining developmental goals. With regard to availability of institutional policy on these issues, there are some issues where many African universities do not have a policy. For instance, more than half of the institutions do not seem to have a policy on distance education and lifelong learning. However, this does not mean that these areas are not their priorities. It might mean that they have not yet developed appropriate policies and implementation modalities to address these issues, but that they would like to in the future.

Conclusion

While there is no denying that access to higher education has increased, Africa, and in particular sub-Saharan Africa, is far behind the other parts of the world, and, given current trends, the gap does not seem set to narrow significantly any time soon. Moreover, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, female students, and students from remote and economically underdeveloped regions are underrepresented in African higher education. Though limited to a fairly small, yet geographically diverse sample of African higher education institutions, this study illustrates the importance of looking at the issue of access and retention in higher education scientifically, as it is a key challenge facing the development of a high quality, relevant, and socially responsive sector.

Findings of the study indicate that, by and large, the focus has been on increasing participation. Widening participation did not seem to have attracted the attention it deserves. The assumption appears to be that, once possibilities for increased participation are open, underrepresented groups will be able to grasp the opportunity. However, this may not necessarily hold true and appropriate mechanisms need to be designed to expand higher education to diverse and disadvantaged groups. This has been a lesson in other regions where massification has been prevalent in the past decades. Regarding underrepresented groups, respondents indicated that lack of resources (both in terms of government allocation and the institutions' access to other sources), rather than the will to attract them have impeded access. Furthermore, drop-out is most highly correlated with the students' lack of financial resources. However, the study also showed that there is a lack of accurate statistical information at the institutional level regarding disadvantaged student groups, student background and drop-out rates, which will be crucial for future research and intervention.

In addition to pointing to common institutional challenges in access and retention, the study also draws attention to the wide variety of existing international cooperation that universities have, and to the high priority for internationalisation. The study indicates that African universities have outlined their own areas of institutional priority. International partnerships will be more prolific if based on these areas and for mutual gain. The correlation between addressing overall institutional development challenges (such as access and retention) and strategic international partnership is an important field for further investigation and collaboration.

References

Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E., 2009, *Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution*, Center for International Higher Education, Lynch School of Education, Boston College, Massachusetts.

Assie-Lumumba, N., 1994, "Demand, Access, and Equity Issues in African Higher Education: Past Policies, Current Practices and Readiness for the 21st Century", A Paper Prepared for the Donors to Africa Education Working Group on Higher Education, Accessed in October 2009.

AUT, 2005, "The student-to-staff ratio in UK higher education", Accessed in October 2009.

Barr, N., 2005, "Financing Higher Education", *Finance and Development*, A Quarterly Publication of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 42(2), pp. 34-37.

Bolag, Burton, 2003, "Improving Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Things that Work", The World Bank, African Regional Human Development Working Paper Series 29713, Accessed in Oct. 2009.

Bloom, D., Canning, D., & Chan, K. , 2005, "Higher Education and Economic Development in Africa", The World Bank, Accessed in Oct. 2009.

Brock-Utne, B., 2003, Formulating Higher Education Policies in Africa: The Pressure from External Forces and the Neoliberal Agenda, *JHEA/RESA,* 1(1), pp. 24-56.

Chapman, B., & Ryan, C., 2003, "Higher Education Financing and Student Access: A Review of Literature", Accessed in Oct. 2009.

Crosling, G., Heagney, M., & Thomas, L., 2009, "Improving student retention in higher education: Improving Teaching and Learning", *Australian University Review*, 51(2), pp. 9-18.

Dereje A., K. Schippers, & Ramos, M. A., 2007, "Student Centered Teaching and Learning Experience from the External World", Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science, 2(2), pp. 113-41.

Hanushek, E. A., 2005, "Why Quality Matters in Education", *Finance and Development*, A Quarterly Publication of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 42(2), pp. 15-19.

James, R., 2007, "Social Equity in a mass, globalized higher education environment: the unresolved issues of widening access to university", Center for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne, Accessed in Oct. 2009.

Johnstone, D. B., 2004, "Higher Education Finance and Accessibility: Tuition Fees and Student Loans in Sub-Saharan Africa", *JHEA/RESA*, 2(2), pp. 11-36.

Massaro, V., 2009, "Australian Financial Review: Higher Education Conference", Accessed in Oct. 2009.

Materu, P., 2007, "Higher Education Quality Assurance in Sub-Saharan Africa: Status, Challenges, Opportunities, and Promising Practices, World Bank Working Paper no. 124.

Mohamebhai, G., 2008, "The Effects of Massification on Higher education in Africa". Association of African Universities.

Ndule, B. J., 2004, "Human Capital Flight: Stratification, diversification and the effects on Tertiary Education Institutions", World Health Organisation.

Teferra, D. & Knight, J., 2008, "Higher Education in Africa: The International Dimension'. Center for Higher Education, Boston College and Association of African Universities.

Tesfaye, S., 2005, "Higher Education Expansion and the Gender Question in Ethiopia: A case study of women in a public university", Proceedings of the Conference on the Future Direction of Higher Education in Ethiopia, pp. 63-86, Accessed in Oct. 2009.

Tettey, W. J., 2006, "Staff Retention in African Universities: Elements of a Sustainable Strategy", The World Bank, Accessed in Oct. 2009.

UNESCO, 1998, "World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action", World Conference on Higher Education, Accessed in Oct. 2009.

UNESC, 2009, "The New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research for Societal Change and Development", Communiqué (8 July 2009), 2009 World Conference on Higher Education, Accessed in Oct. 2009.

Appendix

Table A1

No.	Name of institution	Country	Year established	Ownership	Tuition fees apply to
1	University of Burundi	Burundi	1962	Public	International students only
2	University of Lubumbashi	CDR*	1956	Public	Domestic students
3	Catholic University of Bukavu	CDR	1989	Private non-profit	All domestic and international
4	University of Kinshasa	CDR	1954	Public	All domestic and international
5	National Educational University	CDR	1961	Public	All domestic and international
6	Hawassa University	Ethiopia	1960	Public	
7	University of Ghana, Legon	Ghana	1948	Public	Some domestic and international
8	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	Ghana	1952	Public	Some domestic and international
9	African Council for Distance Education	Kenya	2004	Private non-profit	
10	The Catholic University of Eastern Africa	Kenya	1984	Private non-profit	All domestic and international
11	Maseno University	Kenya	1990	Public	All domestic and international
12	The African Virtual University	Kenya/Senegal	1997	Other	All domestic and international
13	National University of Lesotho	Lesotho		Public	All domestic and International
14	The Seventh of April University	Libya	1983	Public	Some domestic and international
15	Islamic University of Niger	Niger	1974	Private non-profit	Domestic students
16	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike	Nigeria	1992	Public	International students
17	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State	Nigeria	1988	Public	All domestic and international
18	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Nigeria	Nigeria		Private non-profit	All domestic and international
19	Federal University of Technology, Minna	Nigeria	1983	Public	International students only
20	University of Port Harcourt	Nigeria	1977	Public	Some domestic and international
21	Osun State University	Nigeria		Public	All domestic and international
22	National University of Rwanda	Rwanda	1963	Public	All domestic and international
23	Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar	Senegal	1957	Public	All domestic and international
24	University of Sierra-Leone	Sierra-Leone	1827	Public	All domestic and international
25	University of Fort Hare	South Africa	1903	Public	All domestic and international
26	University of Johannesburg	South Africa	2005	Public	All domestic and international
27	Stellenbosch University	South Africa	1918	Public	All domestic and international
28	University of Limpopo	South Africa	2005	Public	All domestic and international
29	Makerere University	Uganda	1922	Public	Some domestic and international
30	University of Lusaka	Zambia	2007	Private for-profit	All domestic and international
31	National University of Science and Technology	Zimbabwe	1991	Public	All domestic and international
32	University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	1955	Public	All domestic and international

* CDR = Congo Democratic Republic

Table A2 - Number of academic and non-academic staff

S. No.	Name of institution	Country	Number of students					Number of staff			
			Bachelor		Masters			Academic			Non-academic
			Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	Doctoral	Total	Full time	Part time	
1	University of Burundi	Burundi	8500		140			519	319	270	600
2	University of Lubumbashi	CDR	12996		8150		238	804	223	68	513
3	Catholic University of Bukavu	CDR	1288		391			152	61	91	47
4	University of Kinshasa	CDR	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	National Educational University	CDR	8889	136	3681	116	1426	187	137	50	532
6	Hawassa University	Ethiopia	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1000	1000		
7	University of Ghana, Legon	Ghana	24104	2575	2071	187	134	1062	951	111	4053
8	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	Ghana	22155		2540			850	850		2326
9	African Council for Distance Education	Kenya	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3			2
10	The Catholic University of Eastern Africa	Kenya	5226		379		109	362			208
11	Maseno University	Kenya	7000		249	229	39	347	347	10	732
12	The African Virtual University	Kenya/ Senegal	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	10
13	National University of Lesotho	Lesotho	6782	1784	58		1	578	314	264	295
14	The Seventh of April University	Libya	37067		1314			1825	1168	657	2686
15	Islamic University of Niger	Niger	478	195	414	4		58	48	10	47
16	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike	Nigeria	4769	1726	595	17	237	300	233	67	921
17	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State	Nigeria	6000		1500	500	100	450	430	20	1200
18	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Nigeria	Nigeria	2100	500				209	159	50	168
19	Federal University of Technology, Minna	Nigeria	12150		540		160	541	541		822
20	University of Port Harcourt	Nigeria	17377	3245	365	495	205	1125	1125		3087
21	Osun State University, Nigeria	Nigeria	1728					175	150	25	238
22	National University of Rwanda	Rwanda	9482		466			541			434
23	Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar	Senegal	43059	3050	8210	1187	1216	2304	1169	1135	1200
24	University of Sierra-Leone	Sierra-Leone	6500	125	50	30	5	360	260	100	230

S. No.	Name of institution	Country	Number of students					Number of staff			
			Bachelor		Masters			Academic			
			Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	Doctoral	Total	Full time	Part time	Non-academic
25	University of Fort Hare	South Africa	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
26	University of Johannesburg	South Africa	22975		1578		444	1156			1360
27	Stellenbosch University	South Africa	16259		4379		828	1270	886	384	2267
28	University of Limpopo	South Africa	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
29	Makerere University	Uganda	30485	4116	3460		100	1280	1080	200	3500
30	University of Lusaka	Zambia	106	88		172		45	4	41	6
31	National University of Science and Technology	Zimbabwe	4544	40	123	728	12	258	235	23	377
32	University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	10000	200	1500	500	40	NA	NA	NA	NA

2.6. AFRICAN STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON ACCESS AND RETENTION: THE AASU PERSPECTIVE ON ACCESS, DIVERSITY AND RETENTION CHALLENGES IN AFRICA

By Oludare Ogunlana, Secretary General, All-African Students' Union

AASU is a continental representative organisation of democratic student unions founded in 1972 with 51 member unions from francophone and anglophone Africa. Affiliated to the International Union of Students (IUS). AASU has a Consultative Status with UNESCO; ECOSOC accredited with UNCCD and enjoys a cordial working relationship with the UN system. The activities of AASU are carried out within the framework of its constitution.These are, among othes: To develop working relation/co-operation with other sub-regional, regional and international youth and student organisations, governmental, inter and non-governmental organisations on issues of common concern and interest; i.e. Access to Education, Democracy, project on HIV\AIDS, ICT in Higher Education in Africa, Gender issues and Academic freedom.

Introduction

The right to education is guaranteed in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (Article 26). However, access to higher education is not without barriers in Africa. People from a disadvantaged social background, cultural minorities, the physically disabled, women and refugees are all facing various obstacles, leading to lower representation in higher education across the continent. One argument has been that the processes of globalisation and convergence of the educational system from a national welfare service to an international economy-driven market has become a major barrier hindering the principle of equity in access to higher education. The situation is almost the same all over Africa except for few countries like Libya, Egypt and, to some extent, South Africa. Many students feel that the ambition of most African governments is to commercialise higher education entirely. This perception is drawn from the fact that in most parts of West Africa, for example, private higher education institutions have been encouraged by governments as substitutes to public institutions. Students at the private institutions often pay no less than 5000 USD per session, though most families live below poverty lines, as suggested in UNDP statistics. The introduction of disproportionate tuition and other fees in the institutions of higher learning are a major threat to access and success, and students are weary of this both in the public and private sectors. Resource restrictions that have influenced fees have also caused closure of departments, and the introduction of market rates for students' accommodation, medical and recreational facilities among others.

The problems are many and varied: classrooms are inadequate, hostels are overcrowded with no facilities of comfort, with students (the future leadership of the continent) sometimes sleeping in classrooms, kitchens and any other available space as if destitute. Libraries lack books, laboratories and workshops are ill-equipped, academic and non-academic staff are in short supply and poorly remunerated with the burden of regular strikes and closures while qualified manpower is drained overseas.

The conclusions of this article draw from a list of questions that was put together by the consortium of the Erasmus Mundus project 'Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange between European and Africa', and circulated to national student unions in Africa. These questions were similar to the questions posed by the European Students' Union in Europe, a partner on the project with which the AASU has collaborated. The questionnaires were distributed to 54 member unions of our organisation, who were asked to conduct a survey among their member institutions of higher learning in their countries. A few countries, like Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, Benin, Chad, Ivory Coast, Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Kenya, sent

their reports. The analysis of the questions and case studies of some selected countries indicated that the problems of Access and Success of students in higher education are similar[40].

We noticed that the major problems students are facing are lack of resources. For instance, all students that completed the questionnaire agreed by filling "Yes" to lack of resources as the number one barrier to access to higher education in their respective countries. Most students are concerned about retention of students as number one priority to them as a result of poor government policies and the negative effect of global economic meltdown that may lead to mass drop-out in the next academic session.

Analysis as drawn from the questionnaires and country examples

According to the data collected from some institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Cameroon, Togo, Benin, Liberia, Serra Leone, Zimbabwe, Senegal and The Gambia over a wide range of issues such as access to higher education, statistics revealed that the problems are almost the same. There is no equity in terms of access to higher education as a result of social inequalities. People from a disadvantaged social background, cultural minorities, the physically disabled, women and refugees are facing various obstacles, leading to lower representation in higher education. However, we noticed that there have been a lot of positive developments in terms of cultural and religious barriers as opposed to some two decades ago.

The major barrier is lack of infrastructures in the existing universities to accommodate the ever-increasing number of applicants every year. A large percentage of prospective students attempt to enrol in universities but approximately 60% of this group are turned down due to inadequate or decayed infrastructure in the various institutions of higher learning. The growth rate in most of the African countries is very high though there are no expansion plans in places at universities to absorb the growth rate.

This is primarily true in West Africa, Central Africa and East Africa. South Africa and some countries in North Africa like Libya, Egypt, Morocco and Algeria are exceptions.

All over the world the funding for higher education is decreasing, affecting both the accessibility and the quality of higher education. The increasing costs of higher education give cause for concern as living standards have severely declined in Africa. This tendency leads towards an elitist higher education, only available to a small, privileged group in society. We believe that there is a direct correlation between access and funding. Therefore, we, the students, ask for a social security system that takes into account students' needs for housing, food, medical care, study material and transportation. In this way, financial barriers can be reduced. We also believe that the state has the main responsibility to ensure financial resources for education. Africa is one region which does not have a fair policy on student financial assistance. We also suggest better curricula reform in order to allow students to work and study at the same time.

Access in Nigeria: a case study

Nigeria, with a population of about 140 million, has 96 institutions of higher learning ranging from Universities to Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and other degree-awarding institutions. The spectrum of institutions of higher learning ranges from federal government-owned universities, state government-owned universities to numerous other privately owned universities. However, the federal universities

[40] We used Nigeria as a case study because the situations are similar except for South Africa and North Africa. We recently organised a conference in Ghana (17-21 September 2009) where all these issues were discussed. We had 6 countries in attendance representing the sub-regional blocks of Africa i.e West Africa, Southern Africa, East Africa, North Africa and Central Africa. The situations are all the same. We are able to elaborate more on Nigeria and Ghana because our office staff is able to travel from one university to another in Nigeria and Ghana to get information from primary source by talking directly to students and staff. We sent questionnaires to all our 54 member unions but only a few of them returned the questionnaire. We have thus had to rely on follow-up phone calls to get information before compiling this report.

outnumber the state-owned and private universities. In addition, federal, state and privately owned Polytechnics as well as Colleges of Education train middle level manpower with specialised skills which are useful in most organisations.

The concept of access to higher education has been described briefly in the questionnaires distributed. In the surveys conducted in the University of Ibadan, Polytechnics of Ibadan, University of Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, University of Ilorin, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Ogbomosho, University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Lagos State University, Federal University of Technology Akure, Federal Polytechnics Ede, Federal Polytechnics, Ilaro, Federal Polytechnics Offa, all within the south-west region of Nigeria, we noted the sharp downturn of student enrolment year on year. As far as the research is concerned, the outcome revealed that policies have not been crafted to address the needs of the underprivileged and other minorities in society, hence, this unfortunate trend.

About 75% of the respondents in the surveys conducted admitted that the inequitable access to higher education poses a great threat to the educational system in Nigeria. One specific trend observed during the research is the sex ratio. The statistics of male students in higher institutions in Nigeria overwhelmed that of the female counterparts. Virtually all the institutions involved in the survey have enrolment rates which are highly skewed in favour of males. Schools we visited have a larger number of male students than female students. Similarly, the population of male staff is more than the female staff both in academic and non-academic categories.

Though the three tiers of government in Nigeria, i.e. the federal, the state and the local, have been pushing institutions for equitable representation of gender in the education sector and other sectors, this has yet to be successful as there have not been any proactive policies and measures by the government to realise this lofty agenda.

Increasing Participation in Nigeria

Nigeria attempted to institute various programmes aimed at increasing participation. However, the concept of increasing participation varies from institution to institution across the country. Some universities have distance learning programmes incorporated into their system, some have other internally organised courses where diploma and certificates are awarded to students having completed prescribed examinations after a stipulated period of time and others have part-time courses embedded in their programmes. These include the establishment of a National Open Universities system across the country. There are various distant learning programmes where academic programmes are being run in different fields of study. The programmes have been successful in many cases. However, they are not without their shortcomings, as the costs of running any course in these institutions are exorbitant and there is a bottleneck in the process of securing admission into these institutions. Though intended to widen access, these programmes still seem exclusive to the rich people in the society. These programmes, as lofty as they were, have thus far failed to address the issue of increasing participation, or rather, widening participation, sufficiently in Nigeria.

A case study from the University of Ibadan indicated a high institutional priority on increasing participation, and the university is keenly embarking on that project. This is well understood through their distance learning programmes and some other affiliated courses. It is also instructive to note that postgraduate studies in the university have been widened with a higher number of enrolments in postgraduate studies than even in undergraduate studies. Statistics showed the percentage of the postgraduate students and undergraduate students as 70% and 30% respectively. In the past few years, the policy on admissions in the university has taken on a different dimension. Undergraduate admission has been reduced drastically by almost 50% in favour of postgraduate programmes. Thus this institution realises the importance of developing postgraduate education, which is lacking in many African countries. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, provides yet a different approach. The trend of admissions at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, seems to encourage increasing participation of more undergraduate students than

postgraduate. The difference between these two schools is in the number of the postgraduate students' admission, with one focusing on postgraduate expansion and one on undergraduate. Many institutions have their particular policies as regards increasing participation, thus it is important to look at the sector holistically, identifying good practice as well as bad practice in assessing how institutions address the access and increase in participation agenda differently. It is also important see whether, collectively, these diverse approaches are catering to societies' needs.

Widening Participation in Nigeria

As mentioned, broadening the participation of underrepresented or disadvantaged groups in Nigerian institutions is not at all entrenched in the policies of many institutions. Nonetheless, the survey conducted at the University of Ibadan revealed the existence of a special admissions policy for people from Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS) in Nigeria.

Under this arrangement, these categories of students from educationally less developed states in Nigeria will be given special consideration in their admission processes even if they failed to secure standard and acceptable requisite cut-off marks for their courses of choice. This provides opportunities for at least five such students to be admitted to each department in the institutions, to encourage them. As to how to identify the less educationally developed states, the school has developed criteria for this and has a special category of such states in their admissions lists. However, not every institution in Nigeria has this arrangement.

But beyond the Less-Developed State approach, there is no general consideration for those coming from low socio-economic backgrounds in terms of securing admission into higher education. Lack of financial support for this group from government and inadequate policies continues to be a problem. Consequent upon this, the university records an increase in drop-out rates on a yearly basis.

On a positive note, the research further revealed that the University of Ibadan and some other institutions such as Federal Colleges of Education (Special) have provisional policies for students with learning disabilities. The university has a department of Special Education, in the Faculty of Education, where physically challenged students and students with learning difficulties are given preference in term of admission security. Similar to the ELDS case, they are also given special consideration to encourage them to have access to education. However, inadequate or total lack of facilities for students with disabilities is a great limitation for the attainment of this policy. Suffice it to say that there is a lack of enough higher educational institutions to meet the demand of this group. Insufficient infrastructures for the group also play a significant role in the low participation.

Existing structures in most African universities does not augur well for students with physical disabilities. Lecture Halls and Halls of Residence were built without considering the physically challenged in the society. In 2007/2008, a student of the University of Ghana had to carry his colleague on his cycle to the lecture hall and back. African campuses are not organised in such a way that would allow students with physical disabilities to go to lecture rooms and back without going through a lot of stress. This in itself is discriminatory to students with physical disabilities.

Retention

We have come to realise that not only access, but the success of education is important in higher education. The ability of many students enrolled in higher education to undergo all necessary training successfully without interruption and barriers in terms of finance and other problem is key to our national development.

Every year in Africa about 30% of students who apply for admission into institutions of higher learning have access to it and about 5% or more of the students drop out, depending on the country in Africa. In fact, based on our research and information from the survey sample, the retention rate in Southern Africa is higher than central Africa, East Africa and West Africa.

A country like Chad with only one university has a low retention rate as a result of financial barriers and the political situation. Presently, there is a 10% greater retention rate in North Africa than in sub-Saharan Africa.

To be able to explain this issue clearly, it is important to draw a sharp contrast between public institutions and private institutions. Public institutions in Africa admit more than 70% of students who have access to higher education. They were initially wholly financed by the government, but 'cost-sharing' has been introduced in many instances, often the result of alternative financing models promoted by the World Bank and the IMF. Now, higher education is often partly financed by the Government and partly financed by parents/students. However, there is a worry that the cost burden is being constantly shifted further onto parents. This phenomenon has been one of the major reasons why students drop out in most African public universities. Apart from the introduction of exorbitant fees that parents could not afford, there are no measures in place by university management to enable parents and students to pay this fee conveniently by introducing monthly payments or provision of loans, grants or financial aids to finance their education. Most parents in Africa live below the poverty line and survive with less than $1 dollar per day and the salary of a professor in most African countries is less than $1 000 dollars per month. Of course, while we may agree that education is expensive, many parents just do not earn enough to enable them to pay for the tuition of their children. These are real issues that negatively affect the issue of "Success" in higher education in Africa. Most students that enrol are unable to complete their studies and in most cases some of them drop out by the second academic year of their programmes.

In 2008, the University of Ghana stipulated that every student must pay the cost of tuition in its entirety before they can register for the academic semester and most students could not afford to do this and as a result most of them either deferred their programmes or dropped out completely. The situation is the same in Nigeria, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Togo and Central Africa.

In an effort to get better education, most students opt for private universities which are very expensive. Our research shows that most students that enrolled in private universities could not complete their studies as a result of the high tuition and living costs. Some of them could find the money at the beginning of the programme but then to continue paying for a further three years becomes a problem, either because some of them lose their parents during the course of their programme, or their parents lose their jobs or business as a result of political instability, such as in Nigeria. The lack of job security in Nigeria was further compounded by the global economic meltdown that negatively impacted overseas remittances to receiving countries was a major force behind the sudden drop-out of many students from both private and public institutions of higher learning.

Political instability is another factor in the low retention rate in African institutions. Apart from the destruction and deterioration of infrastructures and lives these bring, conflicts are disruptive to studies, sometimes freezing whole generations of students and affecting academic calendars.

A typical example is the recent incident in Zimbabwe where the eruption of violence during the election saw the closure of institutions of higher learning and the dismantling of the students' organisation (ZINASU).

Further, the victimisation of student leaders who criticise their government has been of great concern. This phenomenon of political victimisation of radical student leaders and academic staff is rampant in Africa because of the lack of autonomy and academic freedom. For example, between 1998 and 2004 the Kenyan government banned more than 40 students from Kenyatta University on political charges. The

Cameroonian government has violated students' rights more than any country in the world. On many occasions, students are not only expelled from school but humiliated, imprisoned or assassinated. Zimbabwe recently disbarred the students' union followed by the arrest of the students' leader, who was kept in detention for more than a week. Most student union leaders are now in exile in Canada, United States and Europe.

Private education has also experienced retention issues. In some cases, private institutions have been established by Churches or by profit-making organisations. However, religion can be one of the major reasons why students in Africa drop out from such private institutions. Some religiously fanatical institutions capitalise on private ownership to propagate their philosophies to students. Some students who do not share in their beliefs are forced to leave school.

One other factor that leads to low retention in Africa is the exorbitant fees these private institutions are charging students. These fees range from $3,000 to $15,000 dollars per academic year and are being increased every year. This situation not only alienates a majority of African students but creates hardship on campuses. The fact of the matter is that private institutions of high learning in African are lucrative. Therefore, many private, rich individuals and business corporations have taken advantage of the situation to exploit students. Apart from the exorbitant tuition fees, students have to pay for board and lodging throughout the duration of the programme. All these have taken access and success of higher education away from ordinary people and society and have become the exclusive preserve of children of the few rich people in society.

Conclusion

In our opinion, there is a direct correlation between poverty and student retention all over Africa. The analysis of our research shows that many students drop out as a result of financial barriers. We have a higher number of students from lower economic backgrounds dropping out of higher education after gaining access. There is lack of equity in access and student retention in higher education based on the gap between the less disadvantaged and students with a good family background. The solution to these problems is in the hands of our education policy makers. They must create a conducive environment for students to have access to higher education and complete their programmes. Measures like the introduction of support schemes to enable students to pay for their tuition and education would be one solution. We still maintain our principal position that education must be free, but governments can adopt a similar system to the one in the United States where students have access to loans, financial aid and grants to finance their education.

2.7. INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDY: MAKERERE UNIVERSITY, UGANDA

2.7.1. Institutions of higher learning and the achievement of gender equality: a case study of Makerere University

By Lillian Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza (Ph.D), 1st Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) and Professor of Law, Makerere University

This paper discusses the role of higher education in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. My focus on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 is partly due to the widely acclaimed hypothesis that eliminating gender inequality and achieving women's empowerment are essential to the achievement of **all** the Millennium Development Goals and that progress is slowest on MDGs which depend most heavily on improving the status of women and girls.[41] It has also been argued that the education of women has a remarkable effect on a range of 'quality of life' indices and is a key factor in development."[42]

Using Makerere University as a case study, the paper posits that there is need for policies and structures which ensure gender mainstreaming for purposes of:

1. Increasing women's access to higher education (gender parity)
2. Increasing women's participation at higher levels of management and key decision making bodies within institutions of higher learning
3. Increasing women's representation in academia
4. Engendering university curricula and thus inclusion of women's perspectives and pedagogy – an issue of the relevancy of education and thus a quality assurance issue

I further argue that gender mainstreaming must be accompanied by the mentoring of women to empower them take to advantage of ensuing gender sensitive policies and opportunities.

Context

Why gender mainstreaming?

At the international level

In 1995, there was international recognition of the need to use gender mainstreaming as a tool to promote gender equity and equality. This was officially stated at the Beijing UN Women's Conference.

At National Level

In Uganda there is national awareness that gender mainstreaming is an important tool for national development. The government has made efforts to engender national policies/strategies and programmes. Both government and civil society support the role of gender mainstreaming in promoting gender equity and equality.

At Makerere University

It was realised that:

- The number of women in the high echelons of academia was dismally low
- There was a lack of women in top management positions

[41] UN "Millennium Development Goals Indicators Database" (2007)

[42] Brenda Gourley, 1997, Gender defenders of Africa at http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk (Accessed on 6/16/07).

- There was a lack of knowledge about gender and the effect of gender on career development
- There was lack of academic discourse on gender issues within the institutions of higher learning
- There was absence of gender responsive research

Strategies & policies to promote gender equity & equality at Makerere University

In 1991, Makerere moved towards the creation of academic structures and the Department of Women and Gender Studies was established. In 1998, the department held an awareness raising and sensitisation seminar for members of Makerere's top management (policy makers). One outcome of the seminar was the decision that a Gender Mainstreaming Committee be established.

In 2001/02 Makerere developed a Gender Strategic Plan and in 2001 the University incorporated the gender mainstreaming perspective into its Strategic Plan 2001/05.

In 2002, Makerere began the creation of Gender Mainstreaming Support Structures with the establishment of the Gender Mainstreaming Division (GMD) to coordinate gender mainstreaming activities in the University.

What Has Been Done by the GMD?

- Awareness raising of the need for gender mainstreaming
- Training women in leadership skills
- Research and documentation of the status of gender in the University
- Review policies and other documents to make them gender sensitive
- Introduction of new gender related policies such as the Sexual Harassment Policy
- Mainstreaming gender in the teaching and research curricula

Through the activities of the Division, gender mainstreaming was recognized as a priority area in the University Strategic Plan 2001-2007. The newly approved Strategic Plan 2009-2019 has maintained gender mainstreaming as a priority and refers to gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting issue.

Success stories: Status of the student body

In 1990, in a bid to increase enrolment of women into the university and to enable more women to enrol in what had traditionally been male dominated programmes, the 1.5 affirmative action points scheme was introduced. Under the scheme all female applicants for undergraduate programmes are automatically awarded a bonus of 1.5 points. We have seen a statistical increase of enrolment of female students from 25% in 1990 to 43% in 2003, 45% in 2007 and 46% in 2008. In January 2010, Uganda watched as Makerere had 13, 766 graduates, 50.4% of them women.

Gender terrain in the academia and administration

Despite the leaps made in gender parity in the student population, the presence of women in the high echelons of academia and management is still very low. To date, only six of the 63 full professors at Makerere are women and only 15 of the 99 Associate Professors are women.

Gender terrain in the academia and administration

Table 1: Status by Gender in Top Management: April 2010

	Male	Female	Total
Vice Chancellor	1	0	1
Deputy Vice Chancellors	1	1	2
University Librarian	0	1	1
University Secretary	1	0	1
University Bursar	1	0	1
Dean of Students	1	0	1
Director of Planning	1	0	1
Director of Human Resources	1	0	1
Academic Registrar	1	0	1
Total	**8**	**2**	**10**

Among the ten members of top management, only the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics) and University Librarian are women: a 20% female representation.

Table 2: Status by gender in the Academia: 12 August 2008

	Male	Female	Total Number	% of women
Professors	41	2	43	4.56
Assoc. Professors	73	14	87	16.09
Senior Lecturers	142	43	185	23.24
Lecturers	303	100	403	24.81
Assistant Lecturers	228	113	341	33.13
Teaching Assistants	158	77	235	32.76
Total	**945**	**359**	**1304**	**27.53**

Note: Presence of women in the high echelons still very low. Only 15.2% are at Associate Professor and Professor levels.

Table 3: Percentage of female academic staff in science-based disciplines, August 2008

	Male	Female	Total	% of Female
Professors	31	1	32	3.1
Associate Professors	52	8	60	13.3
Senior Lecturers	107	21	128	16.4
Lecturers	176	56	232	24.1
Assistant Lecturers	132	62	194	32.0
Teaching Assistant	113	56	169	33.1

Note: It must also be mentioned that the number of female academia in science-based disciplines is dismally low as indicated in Table 3 above

It is imperative that in its promotion of scholarship and training, the university applies affirmative action to help address gender imbalances. Makerere's strategic plan 2008/9-2018/9 directs that gender mainstreaming must be integrated into all university activities and functions – it is a cross-cutting issue. The indicators to be used in evaluating success will be:

- Percentage of women in academia and non-teaching positions increased to 40% by 2018
- Increased % of female academia with PhDs

- Establishment of a special fund for academic and administrative female staff for sabbaticals, exchange visits, attachment and training.

The call for an increase of women in top management and in the high echelons of academia is based on the assumption that women's participation at such levels would improve their opportunity to influence the policies and direction of the institution. This would hopefully translate into student and employee focused gender responsive policies.

I am also in agreement with Marnie Wilson et al. (2008) that, although gender parity is not synonymous with gender equity, "within a gender – balanced professoriate, there is increased likelihood both males and females will be involved in the establishment of practices intended to promote equity."[43] Further still, an increase of female academia would create more beneficial conditions for scholarly activity among female students." [44] The availability of female academia will also ensure mentoring of female students and may result in more women choosing careers in universities.

Gender parity in the professoriate is an issue of quality assurance, for, as noted by Marnie Wilson et al. (2008), "in a post-secondary environment that focuses on students as consumers, administrators must realize that their "customer" can best be served by a more diverse, gender balanced professoriate". [45] "Given the makeup of the current student population in universities, efforts to make university positions attractive to women is essential"[46] .

I agree with scholars such as Gourley (1997) that research on the codes and rituals that hold women back as well as informal hierarchies and norms of institutions that continue to thwart academic women must be conducted and this, (I argue),- by universities as the renowned knowledge hubs. It is thus crucial that research on good governance in general and gender issues in particular are made priority areas in the research agenda of universities.

The move towards mainstreaming gender in teaching and research is an example of developing curricula which serves societal needs and ensures that graduates are fit for the job market. This is an issue of relevancy and fitness for purpose and thus quality qssurance.

All disciplines have values. My call for mainstreaming gender into teaching and research is premised on the belief that higher education has the ability to induce change and progress in society. The role of curriculum as a transformation tool in terms of human rights and development cannot be ignored. Higher learning and research act as essential components of cultural change and have the potential to contribute to achieving gender justice through the curricula. Gender mainstreaming of the curriculum facilitates the pursuit of human rights through highlighting gender images and languages and providing examples of methodologies and approaches for curricula transformation. Research impacts policy and practice through uncovering discrimination against women and draws attention to women's special needs. It plays an advocacy role through provision of empirical evidence of the gendered nature of society. This would act as a catalyst for social change.

For as I said at the beginning, the importance of ensuring that higher education institutions are involved in the promotion of gender equality is that education empowers women. The value inherent in this is the assumption that eliminating gender inequality and achieving women's empowerment are essential to the achievement of **all** the Millennium Development Goals and that progress is slowest on MDGs which depend

[43] Is gender parity imminent in the Professoriate? Lessons from one Canadian University by Canadian Journal of Education 31, 1 (2008): 211-228.
[44] Ibid 4
[45] Ibid 4 page 223
[46] Ibid 224

most heavily on improving the status of women and girls.[47] It has also been argued that the education of women has a remarkable effect on a range of 'quality of life' indices and is a key factor in development."[48]

A call for mentoring of female students and young academics

For gender equality to be achieved, gender mainstreaming should be accompanied by mentoring of upcoming women by women who have been able to achieve success within the predominantly male dominated/patriarchal institutional culture of universities.

I argue, however, that the concept of mentoring cannot be taken at face value. I thus call for the feminisation of mentoring/feminist critique of mentoring. I also question whether mentoring as understood and presented today is not a western concept and thus call for the Africanisation of mentoring if it is to bear fruit in an African setting. This may necessitate research/re-visiting African traditional society so as to mainstream African values of "sisterhood" into the contemporary concept and practice of mentoring.

It is also important to recognise the need for skills training and capacity building for women role models if they are to play their role effectively. This necessitates the development of networks where, among other things, we learn how to mentor.

Preliminary Conclusions

What are some of the strategies required to mainstream gender in institutions of higher learning?

- Gender mainstreaming policy to promote gender equity and equality
- Gender mainstreamed budgeting policy
- Commitment from top management
- Creating of support structures
- Continuous gender awareness raising, lobbying & advocacy
- Gender training: giving people gender related skills
- Mentoring of young upcoming women
- Development of networks – women connecting with women

We note that no steps have been taken towards establishing and institutionalising mechanisms for mentoring upcoming women.

Mentoring of women in higher education: The feminisation and Africanisation of the concept

"While definitions vary, a mentor is generally someone already experienced in a role new to a mentee. The mentor guides, advises, and is supportive of the mentee."[49] A mentor is a wise and trusted guide, advisor, teacher or counsellor. We note that in Greek mythology, Mentor was a friend of Odysseus. When Odysseus left for the Trojan War he placed Mentor in charge of his son, Telemachus, and of his palace. Mentor was thus among other things, a tutor to Telemachus.

[47] UN "Millennium Development Goals Indicators Database" (2007)

[48] Brenda Gourley, (1997), Gender defenders of Africa at http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk Accessed on 6/16/07.

[49] Weisbord (1996:1) "Mentoring Women in Higher Education" at http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/bibliogs/mentor.html. Accessed on 5/3/2006

It is often said that many of the world's successful people have benefited from having a mentor. It is said that Aristotle mentored Alexander the Great. One can thus state that mentoring is a vehicle for leadership development.

The value of mentoring is that it can increase the participation of socially marginalised groups (in this case women) in leadership positions. It helps a less experienced person climb the ladder, to reach her full potential.

Mentoring and role models

As women in leadership positions, often described by many young women as role models, one of the questions for us is: What is the link between being a role-model and a mentor? The phrase "role model" has been used in reference to "a person who serves as a model in a particular behavioural or social role for another person to emulate"[50]. Others hopefully will follow the example. A woman professor can be seen as a role model for other women, on the strength of her furthering of the profile of women in academia. Alternatively, she could be seen as a role model for aspiring academics, regardless of their gender, on the strength of her academic achievements and/or dedication to her chosen discipline.[51]

A role model is a "person who serves as an example of the values, attitudes, and behaviors associated with a role. … Role models can be persons who distinguish themselves in such a way that others admire and want to emulate them. For example, a woman who becomes a successful brain surgeon or airline pilot can be described as a role model for other women."[52]

The act of picking a role model consists of first evaluating what one's values are (answering the question "what kind of things are important to me") then finding a person (usually a famous person) that exhibits a majority of those points and then emulating them. "Sometimes we learn by imitation. We look around for somebody who is doing what we want to do in a way that we admire or at least accept. And then we take that person as an example to follow. "[53]

It is because a role model is admired and considered worth emulating that we as women leaders should offer ourselves as mentors to women who are less experienced than we are in professional and employment spheres.

As women, many of us are the "first" female leaders in the management of the higher education sector. We have learnt to successfully function in a male dominated world. However, the number of women in the high echelons of society in general and in the higher education sector is still miserably low.

It is imperative that we find ways and techniques for recruiting and retaining women in administrative and academic positions in higher education. Mentoring is one such technique.

It is interesting that in several definitions of a "role-model" offered by different authors, women are a reference point. Thus, as stated in the Wikipedia free encyclopedia above, "A woman professor can be seen as a role model for other women, on the strength of her furthering of the profile of women in academia." [54] And in defining a role model, Answers.com also uses women as an illustration thus: "For example, a woman who becomes a successful brain surgeon or airline pilot can be described as a role model for other women"[55]

[50] A positive role model carries out a role demonstrating values, ways of thinking and acting, which are considered good in that role. Answers.com http://www.answers.com/topic/moral-example. Accessed on 12/06/06
[51] http://en.wilkipedia.org/wiki/Role-model. Accessed on 12/06/06
[52] Answers.com http://www.answers.com/topic/moral-example. Accessed on 12/06/06
[53] Answers.com http://www.answers.com/topic/moral-example.
[54] Ibid 11.
[55] Ibid 12

Reference to women as examples in the context of role models is not accidental. I presume it arises out of the fact that women are poorly represented in high echelons of society and there is a need to deliberately offer role models for upcoming women in a society whose structures are predominantly male dominated. There is value in mentoring women so as to help them successfully negotiate their way in predominantly male dominated structures.

But whereas there may be little doubt that we are role models, can we quickly but effectively turn into mentors? There is need to:

- Acquire the skills of mentoring. This is especially because many of us may not have been mentored.
- Create networks, where among other things we learn how to mentor.

Another problem is the scarcity of senior female mentors: can women be successfully mentored by male persons? What are the difficulties of cross-gender mentoring relationships?

The feminisation of mentoring

Several women have, with time, learnt how to function in a male world, but we must nevertheless acknowledge that women's experiences and perspectives are different from those of their male colleagues. There is a need to understand and take seriously the perspectives and experiences of women. We must therefore provide a feminist critique of the conceptualisation of mentoring. What should you consider when mentoring a woman rather than a man? This calls for re-visiting the accepted (in fact male) models.

To what extent is the "original" concept based on male models and have women leaders appropriately integrated gender concerns into the concept? Have we successfully provided new models for feminist oriented mentorship?

For example, according to Weisbord (1996:1) "Some studies have found differences from the traditional male model of mentoring when women are involved, suggesting that informality and friendship are more characteristic of successful mentoring of women"[56]

All these are questions we must answer if we are to succeed in using mentoring as a mechanism for ensuring women's visibility in the higher echelons of the university academia and top management.

The Africanisation of the concept

In addition to the feminisation of mentoring, I believe that there is need for an "African" critique of the concept of mentoring. The ensuing questions would be:

- To what extent is mentoring a universal as opposed to a cultural specific concept?
- Is the concept of mentoring as it is presented and understood today alien to the African culture?
- How can we ensure that we capture cultural specific concerns?

We may need to re-visit African traditional society so as to integrate/mainstream African values of sisterhood into the "modern" concept of mentoring.[57]

[56] Weisbord (1996) "Mentoring Women in Higher Education"

[57] Of course this is not only relevant to those of us from Africa but it can be applied mutatis mutandis by persons from societies other than those where the "modern" concept has come from.

Conclusion: Mentoring is a partnership

The mentoring relationship should ideally be a partnership; it is the recognition of reciprocal benefits that is most critical, not only for a successful mentor – mentee relationship but also for sustaining networks. We must however answer some questions:

- At what stage in one's career does one need a mentor?
- How do you become a mentor?
- How do you develop mentoring skills
- How does one select a mentor?
- Is there a clear distinction between friendship and mentoring?
- How do you ensure clarity of roles?
- What does the mentor expect in the relationship?
- What does the mentee expect?
- Should you have more than one mentor?
- Is a mentor-mentee relationship hierarchical?
- Is the hierarchical model a male mentoring model?
- What are the barriers to successful mentorship?

If mentoring is a partnership, then I call upon young women to look for mentors, and senior women to become mentors. It is only then that strategies to mainstream gender into university processes such as those adopted by Makerere will have full impact.

PART 2C: OUTCOMES REPORT: WORKSHOP ON 'ACCESS AND RETENTION: COMPARING BEST PRACTICE BETWEEN EUROPE AND AFRICA' 17-20 NOV. 2009, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Prepared by Mee Foong Lee, European Access Network, UK

The purpose of the workshop was to look at higher education development in Europe and Africa and in particular at the areas of access and retention and to identify common challenges and possible solutions.

This summary will start by giving a snapshot of higher education development in Europe and in Africa; then it will highlight the challenges each country is facing, and go on to list the solutions that have been proposed. It will finish with the concluding remarks of Mee Foong Lee, based on her observation of the discussions that took place, including that of the Rectors' Dialogue.

Higher Education Development

In Europe

The last ten years saw two major movements in Europe aimed at strengthening universities to achieve their three missions: research, teaching and service to society. These movements lead to the Bologna Reform process (1999) and the Lisbon Agenda (2000), which respond to the massification of higher education, low efficiency of higher education systems, an ageing population, the economic downturn, and global competitiveness, e.g. in the face of emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil. The latest Leuven Communiqué of the Bologna Process reaffirmed the social dimension in higher education, with its emphasis on equitable access and completion. The aim of lifelong learning under the Lisbon Agenda is to develop a knowledge-based society. When we talk about lifelong learning it does not mean that one remains as a student in an institution for life. Lifelong learning is rather to provide a 'second chance' to those who missed out. For example, if a student, for whatever reason, leaves secondary school, works for 10 years in a dead-end job and then decides to come back to education, he/she should be given the opportunity to do so; and lifelong learning would help facilitate that.

In Africa

Higher education in Africa generally speaking – although there are country and regional differences, e.g. East Africa, West Africa, South Africa and North Africa – has gone through three phases: in the 60s there were a small number of elitist universities; in the 70s and 80s there was expansion and consolidation as student numbers at primary and secondary schools grew; in the 90s the focus tilted to the provision of basic education as opposed to higher education, resulting in a neglect of structural development programmes. But things are changing and African higher education is now in a renewal and revitalisation phase. At the same time, it is also at a crossroads and facing tremendous challenges regarding resources, quality and relevance in the face of local and global development demands.

So, what are the challenges for Europe and Africa?

Challenges

The following are the challenges that have been identified during the course of the two-day discussion. They are listed here with no particular order of importance.

For Europe

- How to expand access while promoting excellence and how to value diversity as an asset and not a liability?
- How to provide education to more people and develop/maintain the ability to face global challenges?
- How to improve retention and completion rates?
- How to convince research universities to widen access and not see diversity as a threat?
- How to instil good governance and promote institutional autonomy?

For Africa

- How to cope with the rapid expansion in higher education?
- How to widen access when places are limited?
- How to balance access and excellence; teaching and research?
- How to relate study programmes to societal needs – here we are talking about the relevance of the curriculum
- How to increase retention and completion rates of students?
- How to introduce good governance into the institution?
- How to secure adequate funding? In Africa cost-sharing has been advocated.
- How to retain not just students but also university staff?
- How to introduce measures to achieve excellence as massification stretches resources and affects quality?
- How to achieve gender balance?

Solutions

The following solutions have been suggested and it is apparent that many of them are relevant to Europe as well as Africa.

Access

- It is important to reach down to the grassroots and out to the communities
- Universities should act as a catalyst to improve and connect with their communities
- Universities should help improve school attainment through early outreach activities
- Affirmative actions should be used to redress imbalance, be it gender or socio-economic
- Adopt flexible admissions policy to increase access, e.g. recognition of prior learning
- Provide flexible study programmes and alternative pathways
- Use open and distance learning methods
- Use ICT to reach a wider segment of society – but this might not work in Africa due to constant power cuts and slow connections
- Investment in higher education is the key to future success

Retention
It should be noted that for African universities the problem with retention is not just of students but also of their staff. The brain drain question has not been resolved.

- Move from teacher centred to student centred approach
- Provide flexible learning paths
- Flexibility of degree structure
- Innovative curriculum development – here we are talking about what we teach, and how we teach, as with the influence of new technology, the students of today are very different from those of 10, 20 years ago, and we can no longer teach them the same way
- Staff development to expose them to new methodologies in the student centred approach – this is often given low priority due to the lack of funds
- Improve the quality of the programme
- Provide a conducive learning environment
- Involve students in the whole education process – in Sweden this is entrenched in law but in Africa this might not be possible given its political context
- Provide a good student support system in guidance and counselling

Concluding remarks

1. In Europe, on policy issues, the national discourse does not seem to match institutional practice, and discussion on access is more on a country-national level rather than European level. It is therefore difficult to make comparisons, although there are similar problems.

2. In Africa, there appears to be a greater awareness and a sense of urgency in the need to widen access and participation. However, although efforts have been made, they are often hampered by the lack of funds, inadequate infrastructure and human resources.

3. There is a tension, or pull, between teaching and research, in Europe as well as in Africa. In Europe, widening participation often comes unstuck by the argument that if you concentrate on teaching, your research will suffer. This is not true. Excellent research needs to draw from a pool of high calibre undergraduates, so my argument is that improving the quality of teaching will provide high quality future research students/postgraduates.

4. In Europe, the issue is more on re-training and getting new groups into higher education due to the demographic change. In Africa, it is the high demand for higher education and access for disadvantaged groups, in particular, female, students from low socio-economic backgrounds or underdeveloped economic regions, and disabled students. This may explain why lifelong learning is not a top priority for Africa.

5. In Europe it has been shown that an open-for-all system with no selection, while increasing access, does not resolve the problem of retention. For instance, Austria has an open access policy for secondary school leavers but it also has a 40% drop-out rate. Evidence has shown that there is a strong 'selection and retention' connection. However, the debate on institutional autonomy has yet to be resolved if the selection issue is to be addressed. But autonomy could be a double-edged sword because institutions could exploit their autonomy and not widen access but rather sharpen their profile in a different direction.

6. We should stop playing the blame game and move away from the blame culture – the South blaming the North, the students blaming the institutions who then blame the government, the universities blaming the secondary schools, the secondary schools blaming the primary schools. For better or for worse, we are all in it together and we need to work in co-operation and in partnership to tackle the problems together. This can be achieved through academic capacity building between Europe and Africa; through raising school attainment, by partnership between university-secondary-primary schools using early intervention and outreach activities to identify young pupils with potential to succeed so they do not slip through the net. This can be done and has been done even by research intensive universities and the University of Glasgow is a good example.

7. We should adopt a holistic approach focusing on the student life cycle, from entry to retention to completion, and view education as a continuum, not truncated into primary, secondary and university with no links at all. Universities should be responsive to their students' needs, to widen access and to encourage diversity. It is not only right, fair, and just to do so, for economic reasons, it would be infinitely stupid not to, as students are our best investment, and if they fail, the money used will be a lost investment.

I would like to end this with a quote from G.K. Chesterton, who said, "Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another". As educators, we have a responsibility to ensure that this generational cycle is made possible for those who are disadvantaged who are currently underrepresented in higher education.

Post script

In circulating these conclusions for commentary amongst the participants of this event, the following additional points were deemed important for this summary:

1. When we talk about co-operation development between Europe and Africa, we should avoid using the word 'donor' - a better description of the relationship would be 'partnership'.
2. Rather than going into one or two-year short term projects, we should seek 'lifelong' partners (say, 10 years for an initial funding stage) to build sustainable development.
3. It is important that we ensure continuity and train the young ones to replace the old ones currently working in cooperation development in Africa, but the question is 'what incentives will make young students want to work in Africa?'
4. Students are important stakeholders in higher education dialogue. Bi-regionally, co-operation is equally important for student associations and representative bodies, e.g. between ESU and AASU, to gain broader political weight and share practice.
5. With regards to the student contribution at this workshop, students' unions generally see education as a public good that should be free for all at any cost. Universities are more pragmatic and would not rule out, in the case of African universities, a cost-sharing approach consisting of government grant, private funding, and student fees. Students identify the fees issue and financial support as critical to the access agenda in both continents. However, 'free' education does not inherently imply that access is more advanced.

PART 3: MEETING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES: EUROPE-AFRICA HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

3.1. INTRODUCTION TO WORKSHOP LOGIC AND THEMES

While Part 2 of this publication provided a deeper glance at some of the contextual challenges facing higher education institutions in Africa and Europe, namely providing greater and wider access and ensuring completion, Part 3 searches for solutions. One of the main assertions of the Access to Success project is that mutually beneficial Partnership can be a strategic vehicle for addressing the many challenges that both institutions in the South and in the North are facing today. The workshop series organised by the project probed this topic from various angles, collecting donor and agency perspectives and institutional perspectives. Partnership can be developed at the level of institutions as a means to build capacity and produce globally and locally relevant knowledge. It can also entail broader partnerships of actors in the higher education and development sectors, including university associations, development agencies and government bodies, supporting higher education exchange within political frameworks and targeted funding programmes.

Part 2 already presented the outcomes of the workshop *Access and Retention: Comparing best practice between Europe and Africa* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 18-20 November 2009). The rest of the workshop series will now be featured in this section. Workshops were dialogue intensive and involved university leadership and faculty, donors and government agencies, students and regional government bodies from both regions. They entailed plenary and break-out sessions and balanced European and African speakers and chairs. One will find considerable overlap of themes and conclusions, which was not only intended but instrumental in fully analysing and digesting the complexities of higher education in development cooperation.

Themes included the following:

- effective models of inter-institutional cooperation between Europe and Africa, in particular with regards to student and staff mobility schemes, capacity building partnerships and government/donor driven support
- coordination and collaboration between donors agencies
- the overlap between higher education and development agendas from both an institutional and a political perspective
- the role of partnership in mitigating academic brain drain
- S-S regional partnership and Africa higher education integration

This section will present outcomes reports from the following events:

- First Africa-Europe rectors' dialogue (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 17 November 2009), addressing common issues and cooperation priorities for university leadership;
- *Towards a coordinated vision of Europe-Africa Higher Education Partnerships: Supporting Institutional capacity building in Africa* (Oslo, Norway, 24-25 February 2010): This workshop explored programmes that structure institutional cooperation and capacity building between Europe and Africa. The workshop also examined the theme of better donor coordination in research and higher education capacity building.

- *Inter and intra regional academic mobility in Europe and Africa* (Accra, Ghana, 3-4 May 2010): the workshop examined intra-regional mobility (within Europe and within Africa) as a potential avenue for higher education integration and inter-regional mobility (between Europe and Africa), the realities of brain drain and drive for increased brain circulation.

The reports highlight the rich presentations and discussions of these events, which were utilised in formulating the project conclusion and White Paper described in Part 4. They can be taken separately, or read as a series.

3.2. FIRST DIALOGUE MEETING OF AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN RECTORS

Summary report from the first workshop of the Access to Success project, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 17 November 2009

The Association of African Universities (AAU) and the European University Association (EUA) organised their first dialogue meeting of African and European university leaders on 17 November 2009 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting lasted one half day and was attended by 24 rectors and vice-rectors from 18 countries, a representative from the Inter-University Council for East Africa and several observers that participated in the workshop following the dialogue meeting (a list of participants can be found in annex).

The dialogue meeting was followed by a visit to the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, where the participants were welcomed by State Minister for Higher Education Dr Adhane Haile. During a two-hour long discussion, participants were given the opportunity to learn more about higher education developments in Ethiopia.

On 18-20 November 2009, participants then took part in the workshop *Access and retention: Sharing best practice between Europe and Africa* Project, a visit to the African Union and an excursion to the Debre Zeit Campus of Addis Ababa University.

3.2.1. Summary

The dialogue meeting was opened by two overview presentations on higher education in Africa and Europe respectively. The presentation on Africa was developed by Prof. Olusola Oyewole, Association of African Universities. It outlined a number challenges that universities all over the continent encounter today:

- High internet costs
- Unreliable infrastructure
- Low number of researchers
- Low priority for research
- Massification, which challenges the quality of education
- The AIDS pandemic, affecting teachers, administrators, doctoral students
- Globalisation
- To address these challenges, Prof. Oyewole's presentation pointed to recent developments in intra-African cooperation and exchange:
    - Promotion for intra African mobility, which has magnified recently
    - Regional associations have grown in importance, such as SARUA in Southern Africa and IUCEA in East Africa; a similar approach for West Africa in under preparation
    - Concerns about the international rankings, which do not consider African universities. AAU is making efforts to establish an African higher education rating. The pilot is going to be launched this year.

Prof. Helena Nazaré, Vice-President of the European University Association, highlighted the many pressures that universities in Europe are exposed to, such as enhancing research excellence while being socially inclusive, and catering to local and national needs while competing at international level. Europe has responded to this through two European level reform processes, the EU Lisbon Agenda, with the goal to turn Europe into the most competitive knowledge economy and society, and the Bologna Process, aiming at modernising and

converging European higher education systems. While structural reforms have been completed at the national level in most countries, the real changes with regards to flexible learning paths and student centred learning are still in progress.

EUA, in cooperation with its members has an important role to play in the policy making process with European Ministers and other European partners. It also facilitates the development and dissemination of institutional best practices. Furthermore, EUA puts high emphasis on interregional dialogue as a means to explain the European reform developments to international partners, to keep abreast of developments in other parts of the world and to enhance cooperation and exchange of universities. In this regard, the present event and dialogue with the Association of African Universities is seen as an important opportunity. It offers the chance to address differences and demonstrate both the diversity and similarity within the regions of Africa and Europe .

3.2.2. Future priorities for Africa-Europe collaboration

The general introduction on African and European higher education developments was followed by four university presentations:

- Rein Raud, Rector, Tallinn University, Estonia
- Kaba Urgessa, President, Jimma University, Ethiopia
- Brian O'Connell, Rector, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
- Joan Viňas, Rector, Lleida University, Spain

The presented institutional case studies illustrated the national and regional environments in which these universities operate, and gave a very clear and lively picture of both the achievements and the challenges that institutions face, as well as their efforts to link to international partners.

The following summary aims at capturing the main points that were made in the presentations and the rich discussions which followed:

Funding and partnership: In some cases, scarceness of resources can be a catalyst for the development of innovative and creative local solutions and an incentive for cooperation and resource pooling. However such solutions require external funding provisions that allow universities sufficient scope for developing actions in line with their institutional mission. Funding must also respond to their local and national environments, and encourage the establishment of long-term partnerships with mutual benefits. The need was stressed to do away with regulations and red tape, which is often attached to grant support, which prescribe project goals and activities, hinder the inclusion of other partners, and finally undermine sustainability. Examples of organisations and initiatives which have understood these challenges and provide flexible funding and support opportunities have been mentioned (VLIR-UOS, SANORD). However, there was concern for how to sustain the current partnerships. Long-term partnerships have been highlighted as a mean to contribute to sustainable institutional development, to foster research and build research capacity, and to ensure the international outlook of the university and its constituencies (presentations from Jimma University and the University of the Western Cape, and several others). Multilateral cooperation has been emphasised as a mode to enhance resource efficiency, to avoid doubling efforts, and to create a certain dynamic which can develop and nurture new initiatives, and thus underpin the sustainability of outphasing projects. Investment in infrastructure and ICT are crucial to ensure that universities can participate in research and cooperation within the country, the region and internationally.

Universities contribution to development: The fact that universities' contribution to development cooperation is not sufficiently acknowledged and honoured has been highlighted. It has also been remarked that, unlike in other areas of university activity, there is no network for development cooperation intensive universities which could promote it and lobby governments. Universities in development cooperation should also be promoted as a mean to enhance research and research collaboration, as the case of the University of the Western Cape demonstrated. A good practice example has been delivered by the Lleida University which has a (development) cooperation and solidarity office in place.

Quality: The massification of higher education was discussed as a necessity from the point of view of

democratisation of society and provision of equal rights for all citizens, but also from an economic point of view. Universities in Africa and Europe are – at a different scale – challenged to increase and widen participation. This is as such not a problem, as there is proof that granting access to larger parts of the population can even have a positive impact on the quality of higher education in that it enhances its overall relevance (University of Glasgow, University of the Western Cape, Jimma University and many others). But given that the funding allocated to higher education has not increased accordingly through the recent decades, this is massive challenge for the quality of higher education. In particular in Africa, universities are confronted with the choice either to cater to a fraction of the able school graduates, or to put their research mission and the overall quality of teaching at risk. Inadequate infrastructure to deal with an increasing number of students was also highlighted.

Changing role of universities: A general need to revise curricula and to develop shorter and more skills oriented study courses which break from traditional classroom learning and offer applied learning have been stressed. Jimma University conducts community-based study programmes with community work built into the curricula. Tallinn University offers a student-centred approach, where students decide what they study. English tests are obligatory for all students and society links are part of the curriculum (visits to firms, state institutions). The case of the University Eduardo Mondiane, Mozambique has been mentioned, which introduced the Bologna degree cycles to ultimately improve employability. A general question was whether the traditional "universal" university model, as it is known today, can still function as a benchmark, given the changing demands towards higher education.

Contribution to social development: While universities cannot drive the national political, social and economic reconstruction of their countries, their contribution through HR development, LLL and in the provision of expertise in knowledge-based consultancy has been highlighted (Tallinn University, University of the Western Cape). The need for the university to provide an organisational framework for cooperation with industry and society (e.g. provision of consultancy) has been stressed in order to prevent abuse (Osun State University, Nigeria; K.U. Leuven, Belgium). The work with secondary education schools has been mentioned as a way to improve skills and competences of students entering HE.

Research: There was a discussion on whether universities should focus on their teaching or research missions, but general agreement was that the universities' teaching and research missions feed each other. The potential for cooperation on local problems through multidisciplinary graduation colleges/courses has been highlighted, as has the need to build research elements into the curricula (Jimma). With regards to the critical resources of research and teaching staff, collaboration on doctoral and Masters' education could be one of the priorities. Joint and sandwich programmes might be a good way to take this forward, in North-South or North-South-South, but also for the future in South-South cooperation.

Institutional strategies: The need to develop a strategic plan and to focus on feasible research goals and portfolios has been demonstrated by the University of the Western Cape and confirmed by other participants. The Institutional Evaluation Programme of EUA has been mentioned, which supports university leadership through a tailor made audit approach for assessing capacity for change.

Staff development and retention: Whatever universities do, well-trained and dedicated academic and administrative staff is a precondition for development. While European universities are challenged to ensure staff development and the recruitment of junior researchers and administrators, African universities require capacity building on all levels of management. Given the rapid expansion of higher education systems in some African countries, the urgent need of leadership training has been addressed, which could be provided in a North-South-South mode, by experienced African and European university leaders.

Intra-African dialogue, exchange and cooperation: The potential of intra-African dialogue, exchange and cooperation has been referred to as a way to enhance capacities and to contribute to political and social cohesion and understanding. The benefits of enhanced African academic and research cooperation have been a long-term

demand. While the Bologna Process is not necessarily a model for Africa, the European experience in HE reform and integration could be useful in further developing this process. This is another opportunity for North-South-South cooperation on the level of policy dialogue, but also with regards to the development of concrete measures and approaches.

Europe-Africa higher education and research dialogue and cooperation: The need was felt on both sides to lobby for enhanced dialogue, exchange and cooperation at the level of universities and university organisation of Europe and Africa in order to avoid that enhanced competitiveness and scarcer resources become an argument for decreasing the engagement of European universities in the global South. Beyond the human and political imperatives to continue to enhance relations, growing global interdependency is an important argument for this collaboration. All participants confirmed their interest in enhanced exchange and cooperation. Concretely, Lleida University, Tallinn University, and Glasgow University have offered hosting African students, and also to help in seeking financial support for this.

AAU and EUA will report back to their members on the Dialogue meeting and the outcomes, and discuss on this basis the potentials of further cooperation.

3.2.3. Annex - Participants' list

Last Name	First name	Position	Institution	Country
Akinrinade	Sola	Vice-Chancellor	Osun State University	Nigeria
Bauer	Hans	Local Senior Expert	VLIR-OUS	Ethiopia
Couto	Filipe	Rector	Universidad Eduardo Mondlane	Mozambique
de Aguilera	Miguel	Vice-Rector	Málaga University	Spain
Eshete	Anderias	President	Addis Ababa University	Ethiopia
Fragoso	Maggy	Vice-President	University of Cape Verde	Cape Verde
Franko	Mladen	Vice-President for Education	University of Nova Gorica	Slovenia
Gaebel	Michael	Head of Unit, Higher Education Policy Unit	EUA	Belgium
Gwamuhanya Birindwa	Joseph	Rector	Université Catholique de Bukavu	DR Congo
Hörig	Michael	Programme manager	European University Association	Belgium
Konkola	Riita	President	Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences	Finland
Lee	Mee Foong	Executive Secretary	European Access Network	United Kingdom
Mibey	Richard.K.	Vice Chancellor	Moi University	Kenya
Munck	Ronaldo	President's Office	Dublin City University	Ireland
Nazaré	Maria Helena	Rector	Aveiro University	Portugal
Nyagura	L.M.	Rector	University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Nyaigotti-Chacha	Chacha	Executive Secretary	Inter-University Council of East Africa	Uganda
O'Connell	Brian	Rector	University of Western Cape	South Africa
Oluwafemi Olaiya	Balogun	Vice-Chancellor	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria	Nigeria
Oyewole	Olusola	Coordinator, Mobilizing Regional Capacity Initiative	AAU	Ghana
Queiroz	João	Rector	University of Beira Interior - Covilhã	Portugal
Raud	Rein	Rector	Tallinn University	Estonia
Salling Olesen	Henning	Prorector	Roskilde University	Denmark
Simukanga	Stephen	Vice-Chancellor	University of Zambia	Zambia
Spurga	Saulius	Head of administration	Mykolas Romeris University	Lithuania
Suenkel	Hans	Rector	Graz University of Technology	Austria
Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza	Lillian	Acting Vice-Chancellor	Makerere University	Uganda
Torp	Tor Rynning	Senior Adviser	Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions	Norway
Tsegaye	Admasu	President	Hawassa University	Ethiopia
Tushune	Kora	Vice President	Jimma University	Ethiopia
Urgessa	Kaba	President	Jimma University	Ethiopia
Viñas Salas	Juan	Rector	Lleida University	Spain

3.3. TOWARDS A COORDINATED VISION OF EUROPE-AFRICA HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING IN AFRICA

Outcome report of the second workshop of the Access to Success project, Oslo, Norway, 24-26 February 2010

The second workshop, which took place on 25-26 February in Oslo, Norway, addressed Europe-Africa higher education partnerships and the policies and programmes that contribute to institutional capacity building. It gathered 90 participants from a wide pool of different actors (universities in Africa and Europe, national development cooperation agencies, governments, the European Union and African Union Commissions, private foundations and donor organisations) to examine how they can work towards common objectives and complementary practice in North-South university cooperation. Participants shared partnership experiences, existing capacity building programme models, and national and regional policies, all of which aim to valorise universities as significant drivers of socio-economic development. The bi-regional dimension of the event highlighted the current role of the European Union and African Union in higher education for development, both on policy and programme level, in particular with regards to the evolving EU-Africa Partnership.

3.3.1. Thematic highlights

The role of universities in development cooperation

The first day of the event contextualised the **role of higher education in driving development cooperation,** a concept that at one time was detrimentally dismissed by the World Bank, but has come back on the agenda in the past decade *(Damtew Teferra, International Network for Higher Education in Africa)*. While some major donor organisations still focus exclusively on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in framing the development cooperation programmes, most actors acknowledge that the MDGs cannot be achieved without empowering universities: Universities train the highly skilled workforce needed to foster local development and generate research required to redress issues such as health, environment and poverty reduction. Most European higher education programmes for development do not explicitly align to the MDGs (the British DelPHE and European Commission programmes being an exception) though this can be contingent upon their source of funding. It should be considered that what drives universities to cooperate may not be equated with the rationale of donors. What is important is that there are a range of creative and flexible approaches in university cooperation programmes, which develop with consideration of but not solely according to MDGs. This range should reflect the differing needs across African universities, but also across European universities who must be incentivised to undertake such collaboration *(Ad Boeren, Nuffic).*

Cooperation programmes for capacity building: European models

With regards to current programmes and practices that are to a large extent driven by European national agencies and governments, three principal models exist: Research capacity building, institutional development programmes, and capacity building in specific areas such as university management training, ICT and infrastructure, etc. Intervention can be at various levels: academic, organisational, or institutional. In some cases, cooperation programmes may be implemented through the conduit of individual academics, yet translated into a broader institution building vehicle. This is the case with the VLIR-UOS and the CUD, the development cooperation branches of the regional rectors' conferences in **Belgium**, who finance long-term partnerships that conflate the training of academics with transversal measures to build the university holistically, from infrastructure to staff capacity. **Denmark** focuses on long-term strategic research and provides competitive funding for African researchers to identify a Danish (or, if necessary, non-Danish) counterpart, thus prioritising the needs of the Southern research partner. For Danish-Africa partnerships, research should not simply comprise the production, but also the use of outputs. Thus the Danish backed 'Africa Commission' initiative would focus on contextually

apposite research and linking universities with the private sector and employment *(Dariann Riber, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs).* The **German** Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), who has a well-resourced and complementary portfolio of activities, funds a variety of programmes via different models and levels of intervention: individual scholarships, institutional strengthening through quality assurance training, post-graduate courses for professionals dedicated to development, mobility grants for Germans towards Africa, training for how to apply for research grants, and North-South-South 'excellency' research clusters in certain fields *(Anette Pieper de Avila, DAAD).*

At **regional level**, the **European Commission** supports Europe-Africa university cooperation as an element of the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership, articulated through several programmes run by different directorates (DGs): The DG Research supports the 'Science, Information, Society and Space' pillar of the strategy, which includes a series of projects proposed by the African Union, funded by a combination of sources (European development Fund, FP7 programme, and AU and EU Member State funds). The EuropeAid Cooperation Office of the European Commission, in conjunction with the ACP Secretariat, implements development cooperation programmes with Africa, and explicitly supports university partnership though the Edu-Link programme and the Erasmus Mundus programme (external cooperation window – multi-country partnerships for mobility) which highlight capacity building and regional integration in African higher education. The ACP Science and Technology programme promotes networking in applied research and instruments for research collaboration. The added value of such programmes lays in the fact that universities and other actors from several countries, both in Africa and Europe, are encouraged to enter into consortia, thus promoting regional cooperation *(Mary Kavanagh, DG Research, José Valente, EuropeAid Cooperation Office).* On the African regional level, plans for a Pan-African University with five thematic research poles delivered by satellite institutes in the five regions of Africa was presented by the **African Union,** which also suggested that stronger stakeholder mobilisation was needed to make the initiative successful and supported by African universities *(Thameur Chaimi, African Union Commission).*

Further cooperation models were explored through three break-out groups that addressed specifically **research cooperation, staff capacity building** and **universities as catalysts for change and local development.**

Research cooperation and staff capacity building

Both capacity to perform research and capacity to train and retain research and teaching staff in African universities are critical issues that can be addressed through strategic, long-term institutional partnerships. Training should be fit for purpose, whether training doctors, teachers or technical staff and universities should choose programmes and partners that address those needs. In order to attract and retain highly qualified staff, universities in the South need to cultivate professional academic environments and supportive research cultures. Partnerships schemes, such as the example given by Université Abomey Calavi, Benin and a consortium of Belgian francophone institutions, can help support infrastructure and technological development of the institution, enhancing its capacity to be an efficient long-term partner both equipped for research and teaching. Jimma University, Ethiopia, benefiting from the VLIR-IUC programme, is an example of a research partnership based upon a local environmental/community issue in Ethiopia that has generated positive spin offs for both the North and South institutions, such as research excellency, joint masters programmes, PhD sandwich training programmes and other cross-institutional benefits. The point was made that though training PhDs is a burning issue for staff and research capacity in Africa, most countries need many more PhDs to meet the demands of higher education massification than partnership programmes for doctoral training can produce. Thus there is no one size fits all approach and individual countries and institutions should assess the training needs of their societies and how to meet them.

Universities as catalysts for local development

Universities can play a central role in the development of a country through education, training and research. Partnerships programmes can and should be tailored to the strategic plans of universities to become local development engines.

However, it is not yet common practice that African universities have formulated such strategies. Moi University, Kenya, which benefits from a multitude of partnerships with Europe and the USA, provides some innovative examples of how a university can bring benefits to its local community. With a strategic plan that aligns to the Millennium Development Goals, its academic programmes are tailored to suit local market needs (it owns a textile factory to train local engineers, provides entrepreneurial training for young women and encourages engineering students to contribute to building university infrastructure). It has also set up satellite campuses to widen access and revive the local economy in the different communities. The point was made that Moi is not the only case of a university employing innovative approaches for local development and that more fora should exist for good practices to be shared and promoted.

Partnerships: guiding principles

Whether addressing research cooperation or institution building, participants agreed on certain principles, which were respected in different programmes and cooperation models in different ways:

- Programmes/initiatives should reflect the long-term strategic interest of the universities and should be approved by the institutional leadership.
- The need for management capacity should be acknowledged: resources are needed to train staff to manage cooperation projects and competitive funding. Some programmes address this.
- Partnership is difficult: one needs the right mix of partners to ensure complementarity and sustainable results. For example, it was suggested that combining resource rich but low capacity African countries with resource poor African countries and northern partners could be an efficacious approach *(Sibry Tapsoba of the African Development Bank (AfDB).*

Challenges in design, implementation and evaluation of programmes are considerable. These challenges were identified not only by the African universities present, but also by national agencies and by multilateral donors:

- Organisations and institutions in the South need to be consulted systematically. It is not sufficient to simply consult government.
- However, government priority setting is critical: The AfDB, for example, brings together ministers of finance, education and science in Africa to advocate investing in higher education, but ultimately each government decides where the money from the Bank will be allocated and higher education, a long-term strategic investment, is not often prioritised.
- Most programmes state they are 'need' driven. However, who defines 'needs'? In designing programmes, one must be clearer and more transparent about how this is done. Thus multi-level stakeholder consultation in Europe and Africa is critical. It was emphasised that initiatives such as the EU-Africa Partnership[58] and Pan African University should also consider universities and higher education organisations in the need identification and programming process, and not just as beneficiaries.
- The dilemmas faced by Northern partners should not be underestimated. Northern researchers are under considerable pressure to conduct fundamental research and to publish, and Northern universities are eager to enhance their international reputation. Currently, engagement in development cooperation is not regarded as a strategic priority in most universities.

3.3.2. Coordination between different development cooperation actors in higher education

The lack of coordination and fragmentation in development cooperation was an important issue raised by the participants of the workshop. As many programmes are linked to national priorities, coordination can become difficult. Generally, it was found that coordination and cooperation among the "people on the ground", e.g. those colleagues who work for different agencies in the same countries and institutions, should be encouraged

58 http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/development/african_caribbean_pacific_states/r12106_en.htm

and is relatively easy to establish. Furthermore, more can be done at national level to share university experiences and pool resources. The CUCS network in Italy is one attempt to bring Italian actors in university development cooperation together, to share practice, and avoid duplication of efforts *(Guido Zolezzi, Network on Universities for Development Cooperation, Italy).* An important issue that has to be entirely clear is what coordination means: Agencies made the point that they do not want anybody to coordinate them as such, but would rather look for innovative ways to share information and cooperate in a manner that does not stifle creativity and innovation in programme offer.

A variety of very practical ways in which actors in Europe and in Africa can better align themselves have been suggested *(Kristien Verbrugghen, VLIR-UOS, Ad Boeren, Nuffic, Narciso Matos, Foundation for Community development, Brian O'Connell, University of the Western Cape):*

- Embarking on joint projects: The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, a US initiative of four private foundations including the Carnegie Corporation of New York, was a ten year programme to pool development cooperation in Africa and avoid duplication of initiatives. Though The Partnership had some advantages, it was concluded that a more effective model going forward would be to continue to jointly launch specific initiatives (ICT and bandwidth projects were given as an example) where pooled funding was deemed advantageous, yet return to separate foundation programming, ensuring of course that programmes do not overlap significantly or compete *(Claudia Fritelli, Carnegie Corporation of New York).*
- Identification of priorities in countries where several donors are active. This might be an approach for East Africa, for example, where several European agencies have launched similar or complementary initiatives.
- Sector or thematic coordination: Addressing gender in higher education is one key component of all programmes, so sharing approaches on this issue could be envisaged.
- Identifying universities that benefit from multiple partnerships and promoting cost effectiveness (joint audits, reporting, etc). This could also palliate some of the administrative burden that the Southern universities take on.
- Joint evaluation and mapping exercises of certain regions would be desirable, as many donors do such exercises individually at present.
- Advocacy and transmitting political messages: agencies, institutions and other actors can set up a structure through which common political priorities can be advocated.
- Common portal for funding calls.
- Platforms for different networks to meet each other and a common network for consultation in programme design.

Finally, it is not simply about Northern partners coordinating their approaches, but about Southern institutions coordinating the various projects and partnerships in which they are involved. This is not a new concept, and the University of Dar Es Salaam was cited as an example of an institution that attempted to set up a strategy yet encountered difficulties in implementing and sustaining it *(Tolly Mbwette, Open University of Tanzania)*.

3.3.3. Recommendations

1. First and foremost, building stronger African universities is considered crucial for the development of the continent. This is widely accepted amongst universities and many development cooperation actors, yet must be advocated by governments ultimately, and emphasised in international development agendas.
2. University partnerships are a strategic means to contribute to the overall capacity development of African universities. They can also enable universities in the South to become economic drivers and agents of knowledge transfer. However partnership implies mutual benefits. Cooperation programmes must look at both the challenges and the benefits that universities in the North receive in partnering with Southern universities.

3. Development cooperation can be an important element of institutional internationalisation strategies. Universities in both regions should consider their role as development actors and as partners in receiving development support, and institutional leaders should strive to integrate this into an overall institutional internationalisation strategy.

4. More information and better communication regarding the rich variety of Europe-Africa cooperation activities in the field of higher education and research is needed. Some efforts are being made at the level of national agencies, but there are many actors that are critical to the overall university cooperation process: universities and national and regional university associations in both regions and multilateral donors and foundations. A broad dialogue platform and future initiatives should address all of these stakeholders.

5. Staff development measures and capacity building to manage international cooperation are possible areas in which development agencies and governments can launch joint programmes. These are generic needs of Southern institutions that underpin all forms of cooperation.

6. There is a need to work on an 'African dimension'[59] to higher education similar to what has emerged in Europe under the Bologna Process and other regional integration processes. This does not entail repeating Bologna in Africa, but rather developing an intra African approach to enable cooperation and exchange between universities and university associations. As regional government bodies are important in this process, the African Union Commission should engage more with African universities and university organisations in the development of policies and initiatives in higher education and research. The EU-Africa Partnership could become a framework to address the need for regional higher education integration in Africa, provided that the proactive commitment of European and African universities can be ensured.

7. As such, the role of regional and sub-regional university associations in fostering cooperation and in influencing the bi-regional political process is critical. Associations like EUA, AAU, SARUA, IUCEA and others should continue to work together and support national agencies, universities, and both the African Union and European Union Commissions in developing and coordinating initiatives and in information sharing.

[59] Emphasised by general rapporter, Pyushi Kotecha, Southern Africa regional University Association (SARUA)

3.4. EUROPE AND AFRICA: INTRA- AND INTER-REGIONAL ACADEMIC MOBILITY

Outcome report of the third workshop of the Access to Success project, Accra, Ghana, 3-4 May, 2010

The third workshop of the Access to Success project addressed academic mobility, which is extremely topical for universities around the world. It is both the foundation of many institutions' internationalisation strategies and a political means to opening up higher education systems globally, promoting flows of talent and attracting a highly qualified labour force. For Europe, it has been a central component of the Bologna Process, and student and staff mobility has been closely linked to the broader economic and social integration. Africa, which has also expressed ambitions to expand its regional higher education cooperation, is increasingly discussing means to generate mobility within the continent, which is extremely weak compared to the outflow of students to Europe and the USA.

This workshop therefore took a two-dimensional approach to the topic of mobility: intra-regional mobility (within Africa and within Europe) as a potential avenue for regional higher education integration, and inter-regional mobility between Europe and Africa – taking into consideration the realities of brain drain and the drive for increased brain circulation.

3.4.1. The why and how of intra-regional mobility: Rationales, incentives and realities

Providing an overview of the European mobility experience, **Monique Fouilhoux, Regional Coordinator Europe, Education International**, gave an introduction to the European Union's Erasmus programme, a mobility scheme that was launched in the 1980's and that enabled the mobility of approximately 2 million European students. This programme has become a brand for mobility within Europe, and was one of several precursors of the Bologna Process, which developed a European Higher Education Area over the past decade, defined by a convergence of degree systems and a common credit transfer system (ECTS). Enhancing mobility is a declared goal of both the European Union and the higher education ministers under the Bologna Process, and the importance of mobility for personal growth, quality of HE and research, employability, and the establishment of academic networks has been emphasised. However, while there are some indicators that mobility has been enhanced in Europe, overall, mobility achievements can still be further improved. Shortcomings in the understanding and implementation of both the Bologna tools (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, Diploma Supplement, etc) and the Lisbon Recognition Convention were suggested reasons, as well as the immigration policy of most European countries – only six countries have so far amended their immigration laws in response to the Bologna Process. The lack of financial support for mobility is also still a concern. Issues such as balanced mobility and brain drain within Europe have been identified but not yet resolved. Data on mobility in Europe are still fragmented and hardly allow for proper assessment beyond Erasmus mobility. One suggestion from the speaker was that improving mobility should be an institutional rather than an individual responsibility.

Juma Shabani, Director of UNESCO Bamako Cluster Office, delivered a snapshot of the present situation for intra-regional mobility in Africa. Overall, the HE sector across the continent is characterised by limited access, poor quality, insufficient relevance, but also lack of visibility and knowledge of existing African study opportunities. Political unrest was identified as the most powerful, though of course highly undesirable, mobility driver. There is a discourse regarding regional and sub-regional higher education integration but this has not translated into concrete, institutional action. For example, COMEDAF (Conference of Ministers for Education of the African Union) approved a Harmonisation Strategy for Higher Education in 2007, and the Arusha Convention brings forward the recognition issue at pan-African level. It is not yet entirely clear whether efforts made at sub-regional level such as with the License, Maitrise, Doctorat (LMD) reform in Francophone Africa, the SADC protocol on education, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, and the East African Community would contribute to Pan-African HE integration, or rather strengthen/create distinct sub-regional and nation state systems. The speaker pointed out that true integration must start with sub-regional HE networks and move up, as opposed to adopting a top-down approach only. This

perspective was debated amongst participants, some of whom felt that top-down and bottom-up approaches were needed in parallel.

At present, African intra-regional institutional partnerships and staff mobility are facilitated by the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), the Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), and the AAU through scholarships. A number of new initiatives have been launched to enhance both staff and student mobility, such as the NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) Network of Centres of Excellence in Science & Technology, the Pan African University (African Union), the ACP intra-regional programme (European Commission and ACP countries), and the Mwalimu Nyerere Scholarship Scheme (European Commission and African Union Commission). However, the coordination of funding schemes and the lack of transparency and accessibility of mobility opportunities have been highlighted as concerns regarding these programmes. Several African participants admitted they were not aware that such programmes existed and/or questioned their design and promotion. A European participant indicated that the road towards intra-regional mobility and eventually the European Higher Education Area has been a long one, with pre-cursors to even the Erasmus programme in the form of the European joint-study programmes. Discussions on mobility in Africa are new, as are many programmes, and there may be a long period of patience, trial and error and trust building.

The speaker concluded on a positive note, emphasising that HE now receives much better recognition by governments and donors than in the past, and that development in ICT infrastructure has increased opportunities. He questioned whether mobility in Africa should concentrate on the post-graduate level and Science and Technology, given that there are more pressing needs for Africa.

The **discussion** focused on the following issues:

- The Arusha convention has been revised, and some of the participants had contributed to this. However, it is unlikely that it will make an impact, as some countries still do not want to accept degrees from all other countries. Similarly, the hope that governments would support mobility, build instruments and remove visa problems was mentioned. A general debate on mobility and its virtues would have to be launched in Africa, in order to get beyond political jargon to realistic implementation.
- The NEPAD has been welcomed as a promising initiative. However, institutions and their constituencies are not aware of the opportunities. It would require information and promotion, and one concrete suggestion was to use the regional and national university associations.
- Bologna and the European case have been mentioned as a learning opportunity that could serve as an example in Africa.

3.4.2. Experiences, policies and challenges for institutional mobility: Institutional case studies

Lex Bouter, Rector of VU Amsterdam, presented the case of his university, which commits itself to both academic excellence and societal relevance. Cooperation with Africa has been developed and a main consideration has been to build partnerships and programmes which are driven by a common research interest. This is also one of the reasons why the university is not interested in North-South undergraduate mobility, which is regarded as expensive and difficult to organise, but rather focuses on PhD and MA mobility. As a concrete example, the Desmond Tutu programme, which organises Joint PhD and Sandwich Masters, was referred to. The goal of the institutions is to mainstream development cooperation and merge it into the international strategy of the university. Too often, development cooperation and internationalisation remain fragmented.

Wilson Wasike, Manager, Training Department, African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) presented the programme of his institution, which facilitates individual and institutional research capacity building on African economic issues in and across several South, East and West African countries and facilitates mobility of students between a network of institutions. Through a long-term strategy, a strong organisational structure and rigorous selection procedures, the AERC has

channelled several donor funding streams to facilitate partnerships, curriculum development and flexible grant schemes, complemented with QA and management enhancement measures. A clear challenge is still that the programme is not yet widely known enough among students.

The discussion raised the following issues:

- The long lead-time for academic relevance has been mentioned, as it would require the programmes of today to provide the education that is needed for the future.
- The need to spread information on such initiatives as the AERC has been stressed, and one suggestion has been that the Access to Success project or the AAU and EUA could gather such information on their websites or in a database.
- The importance of development cooperation has been mentioned, which seems often forgotten when the internationalisation portfolios of universities are described.
- Granting open access to educational resources was mentioned as a concrete and efficient means to enhance education, but also research. The VU explained its efforts to enable open access to scientific articles. EUA referred to its Open Access Working Group and the recommendations it came up with[60].

3.4.3. Structuring and valorising mobility: Break out groups discussion

Recognition and mobility

Olusola Oyewole, African Union Commission (AUC) reported on the state of play regarding the Arusha Convention. Its main purpose is to facilitate the mobility of students and professionals throughout the African continent. Launched in Arusha, Tanzania in 1981, the Convention has never been fully implemented due to lack of resources and the fact that only 20 states had signed it. In 2006 COMEDAF, AUC and UNESCO, supported by AAU launched a revision process, in order to improve it, but also to update it on issues that had not been on the horizon three decades ago, such as Open and Distance Learning and ICT. In addition, the purpose of the Convention has become much more explicit, in that it seeks to enhance interregional and international cooperation on recognition, QA and accreditation at national and regional levels. The process of recognition should include QA and accreditation of institutions and programmes. Countries will be encouraged to develop regional protocols for QA and harmonisation with agreed minimum standards. An aim in this regards is to enhance the introduction of academic three cycle systems of Bachelor, Masters, Doctorates (BMD/LMD) that has already been taken up in some African countries.

The already mentioned programmes of the Pan African University, the Nyerere Scholarship Scheme, a new AU programme for teacher mobility, a rating system of African universities and a compendium on research excellence in Africa done jointly with AAU, would complement and underpin the recognition convention. Generally, the AU would enhance stakeholder consultation and their active participation in the development of these initiatives and the African Union Info Day to be organised in autumn would be a clear step in this direction. AU has expectations for a more intensive cooperation with the AAU in this regards. Visa support arrangement would have to be agreed upon by the signatory countries. The costs for the Arusha Convention implementation would be shared among countries, subregional bodies, AUC, and UNESCO. The revision of the Arusha Convention was concluded in November 2009, and currently AUC and UNESCO are in the process of redrafting it in cooperation with the legal unit of UNESCO, to be completed by June 2010.

Andrejs Rauhvargers, Bologna Recognition Working Group/ Latvian Rectors' Conference outlined the development and results of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). He referred to the high expectations that the LRC raised a decade ago, as it was expected to be the remedy to all recognition problems and contribute significantly to the enhancement of mobility. Over the years, Europe had to realise that the LRC could only succeed when it is implemented in terms of procedures and underpinned by a network of national contact points and dedicated agencies (ENIC/NARIC - http://www.enic-naric.net/) and dealt with accordingly by institutions. QA

[60] http://www.eua.be/eua-work-and-policy-area/research-and-innovation/Open-Access.aspx

procedures, which came into existence in a parallel process, independent from recognition, have contributed to improving the situation, and there is some expectation that learning outcomes and national qualifications frameworks would further enhance it. However, it ultimately requires solid and efficient structures, continued effort, mutual trust and good will to make it happen.

An important step in the European process has been the introduction of the notion of 'substantial difference', which reversed the burden of proof from the recognition seeker to the recognizing agency. A particularity of the European Union is that for a number of regulated professions (medical doctor, dentist, nurse, midwife, veterinary surgeon, pharmacist, architect) recognition is done automatically, as it falls under a European Union directive, whereas all other academic disciplines are under the general system and subject to recognition decisions at national level.

The **discussion** focused in particular on clarifying what recognition actually means. The worry of many participants from Africa is clearly that once the Arusha Convention is signed and ratified, every diploma would have to be recognised, whereas the European practice demonstrates that this is not the case. The European case suggests that recognition procedures, if not applied diligently and with the clear will to recognise, run the danger to impede recognition rather than to enhance it. It also confirms that while national agencies for recognition have an important and responsible task to fulfil, the final decision on the individual case is of course with the employer or the university. This also responds to the concern about how a university can issue a degree on behalf of 53 African countries: the degree awarding power remains with the institutions.

Another key point was the role of governments, in particular the AU, and stakeholder in the process. AAU defined its potential role in the process of Arusha mainly at the level of consultation and information dissemination. For the European process, EUA clarified that it is supporting the development of the European Higher Education Area, and is participating in the policy discussions and decisions, in partnership with governments and other stakeholder representative bodies. But while it is invited to the annual conferences of the ENIC/NARIC and contributes to the policy discussions on recognition in Bologna Process and with the European Commission, it has no immediate role in recognition. Generally, participants felt that the AU should develop a transparent and clear stakeholder consultation process, and circulate information on initiatives and programmes widely.

Joint degrees and integrated mobility modules in curricula were suggested as an institutional method to enhance recognition. EUA confirmed that joint provision of courses and degrees are high on the agenda of the European universities, but given the high transaction costs, this might not be a model for mass mobility. With the introduction of the Bologna degree cycles, the trend seems to go towards vertical mobility (mobility between degrees) rather than horizontally (within degrees). However, with regards to the general promise of the recognition convention the option of mobility e.g. within an undergraduate degree, should be possible and with regards to growing inter-connectivity and general mobility options, it should not be given up too hastily.

Some participants were generally sceptical towards the feasibility of the Arusha Convention, in particular with regards to the governance and management of the process, but also regarding its scope and purpose. Does Africa really need at this stage an Arusha Convention, given that there is so little need for cross-border recognition? Would this not primarily benefit private for-profit institutions? The argument was brought up that study periods are not even recognised within the same university. While some participants saw the need to harmonise curricula throughout the African continent, others expressed their reservation, partly because they thought that standardisation would not be feasible, or not desirable. European participants explained that beyond the convergence of degree cycles, and some initiatives for the development of core curricula in certain disciplines, the general trend in Europe is rather to make curricula and degrees transparent through the development of learning outcomes.

A similar discussion developed around QA: European experience suggests not to overburden the recognition process with QA, but rather to develop it in well distinguished separate processes. The current vision of the AU foresees that each African country has to set up a national body for QA

and accreditation, complemented by regional protocols and an African Quality Assurance Network.
The point was made that in Europe the vision is to develop QA with clearly defined roles for agencies and institutions, which are outlined in the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for QA. The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA – www.enqa.eu) was established to bring together QA agencies. Agencies should operate independently from governments. Also a European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR - www.eqar.eu) was established by stakeholder organisations (mandated by the European governments) in 2008, with the purpose to list agencies that substantially comply with the ESG.

Virtual mobility: A new dimension for partnership?

David Ndegwah of Tangaza College, Kenya and Otto Kroesen of the TU Delft, the Netherlands held a joint presentation on the challenges of organising a virtual seminar on intercultural dialogue for African (Kenya, Ethiopia) and Dutch students through online collaboration. A number of obstacles had to be overcome in making this virtual seminar possible.

Technical challenges were poor connectivity to the worldwide web in Kenya and Ethiopia, lack of knowledge on blackboard learning environments and difficulties with the timing of the seminar, due to the time difference. There were also social challenges to tackle, as technology does not take place in a social vacuum. The different access to technology, easily led to frustrations, as uploading of pictures for the Dutch students was a simple act, whereas downloading them for viewing in Africa took a lot of effort.

The collaboration tried to overcome these challenges by better coordinating the input from the coordinators, in terms of lectures, info materials and field survey and by using an asynchronous mode of discussion.

The speakers concluded that virtual communication does not replace, but can enhance physical communication. However adequate ICT infrastructure is essential for this type of cooperation.

The learning goal of the virtual seminar was intercultural understanding: analytical vs. practical approach. Given the lack of cultural understanding from both sides and the challenges with the technology, an important part of the learning experience was met.

A question was raised why virtual mobility was even discussed, when bandwidth is still such a problem. The view from the working group was that a first vision is very important and that small things already can be done (using Skype in NL to call cell phones in Kenya, using e-mail is a possibility). One should be creative and work around problems. However, participants agreed that the topic is not so much about mobility, but more about curriculum development. There is a need for agreement on what a course should lead to and then you can offer the same course in different universities. With an online seminar, you can enhance collaboration, bring people together and reach a larger audience. There are certain intercultural aspects involved as well, but it still doesn't replace mobility.

The break-out group concluded that online collaboration between universities in Africa and Europe can be a useful addition to regular student and staff mobility, as it has the potential to reach a larger audience when integrated in the curricula. Also the use of open educational resources has great potential to internationalise university teaching and to spread knowledge more easily. However, in order to allow Africa to benefit from these technological possibilities, more investments in ICT infrastructure are crucial. Also, a stable electricity grid is a precondition for increasing the use of online collaboration methods.

Joint degrees and mobility – innovative curricula and other institutional benefits

Par Svensson of Lund University presented the experiences of his university with joint degrees and specifically with the Erasmus Mundus programme. Strategically, the Board of Lund University decided to focus on long-term collaboration and partnerships, 2/3 of which are research intensive. Erasmus Mundus has been a means to achieve this strategy, and it is felt that EM is a vehicle to turn individual academic cooperation into institutional collaboration. The benefits from the programme are manifold: it enhances income and competitiveness, is a tool for marketing, builds trust

with other institutions, opens doors to universities involved, brings in international teachers, enhances employability of students and establishes research contacts.

However the programme is not without challenges: there are problems with recognition of joint degrees, housing, admissions, examinations, administration support (Lund built up an information platform and a support service for teachers that come in), and an underlying need for support from university leadership. Sustainability is also a concern, as the European Commission will stop funding scholarships for programmes that have been established for several years.

Nan Warner,University of Cape Town presented a different approach to regional degree cooperation as a structure for mobility - the USHEPiA programme. The premise of this programme is that there is a need for partnership between African universities in order to capitalise on the wealth of African culture, experience and resources and as a means to unleash S-S research potential. USHEPiA consists of eight Southern and Eastern African universities that share a goal of human capacity building and research collaboration. Doctoral fellowships are awarded that are unique and flexible and respect an equal male-female ratio. All fellows have stayed on the continent and 96% have stayed with their home universities. The speaker concluded that African academic research networks can be a key way to address retention of staff in Africa. In the future, the programme would like to look at post doc opportunities, career tracks for graduates to continue research careers when they go home, and connecting with alumni.

After discussion, it was concluded that intra-regional mobility can and should be structured in a way that renders benefits for institutions and students. Joint degrees can be one avenue, Africa research exchange networks can be another modality. Erasmus Mundus (EM) is a European programme designed for European objectives (that African students and universities can benefit from) whereas USHEPiA is an African programme designed for African needs. EM is not a development programme at the core but perhaps one can learn from it as African universities explore collaboration models for regional mobility and institutional partnership. Joint degrees are a natural articulation of internationalisation in Europe and are worth exploring strategically, though one should consider the resource implications in managing them.

3.4.4. Generating regional mobility in Africa: Launching Nyerere and other schemes

The session presented major initiatives of the African Union and the European Union to enhance intra-African and Africa-Europe exchange and cooperation in HE.

Olusola Oyewole, Senior Education Expert, African Union Commission (AUC) reported on efforts to launch the Nyerere Programme to enhance intra-African HE mobility. One call has already been launched, but the selection procedures were lengthy, and only 19 scholarships were awarded in 2009, which focused on a few destinations in Africa. This experience has been taken into account when relaunching the programme this year with a focus on graduate level education. Funding for Nyerere will be provided under the EU-ACP mobility scheme, with a five year duration and 40 million EUR (of which 30 million go to Africa, and 10 million to the Caribbean and the Pacific). This will result in a provision of 6 million EUR p.a. for Africa. Additional funds have been provided to include North Africa and South Africa. Initially the programme will be implemented by the EC's EACEA agency together with AUC, and in Phase 2, AUC will take over entirely. Two calls will be launched, one for university consortia or networks bringing together partners from three African regions to provide a programme in more than one language. The speaker raised questions for the audience on whether the programme's objectives are achievable and if the vision of the programme can be met.

Deirdre Lennan, European Commission, presented the flagship programmes of the European Commission that currently support HE exchange and cooperation with Africa. Under the ACP programme, the EDULINK Programme is to foster capacity building and regional integration in the field of higher education through institutional networking and to support quality higher education systems which are relevant to the needs of the labour market, and consistent with ACP socio-economic development priorities. Under the EDULINK II, 20 million EUR are foreseen and the

next call is likely to be published in Autumn 2010 with deadline in early Spring 2011[61].

The Erasmus Mundus programme provides grants under three Actions: Action 1 for the establishment of partnerships with joint curricula provision scholarships for individual graduate students for African Masters and PhD to Europe; Action 2 for the exchange of African and European academics; and Action 3 for initiatives for accompanying measures (such as the present Access to Success project). Action 2 provides 6 million EUR for ACP countries, and 4.8 million EUR for South Africa[62].

The speaker referred also to the ongoing policy processes, the Africa-EU Partnership, launched in 2007. There is a clear move in the EC's development agenda from supporting basic education to a more comprehensive approach. This has also been confirmed in the revision of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.

The Access to Success project has been mentioned as a current important initiative, as well as the feasibility study to assess the prospects of launching a 'Tuning' like exercise in Africa. Tuning has been an initiative to enhance convergence in disciplinary curricula to improve learning and teaching, which has been employed in Europe and in some other parts of the world. First results are expected to be presented at a stakeholder conference which will take place back-to-back with the AU-EU Summit end of November 2010.

Discussions focused on the Nyerere programme and how it can be implemented in a transparent manner, accessible for all African universities and students. There was some concern regarding the suggestion that the best brains will be attracted to a few destinations, and its implications regarding the inequality of study conditions. The representative of the AU encouraged universities and countries to think about how to attract students. Regarding concerns that Africa once again would have to rely on foreign support, it was responded that indeed the EC money should challenge the African countries to consider more investment in HE. Whether there will be links between Nyerere scholarships and the Pan African University is still subject to discussion. There was also a discussion on whether there should be an age limit for scholarships: there was the opinion that in particular young people should benefit, whereas with regards to LLL and the often complex study paths it was argued that there should be no age limit.

Generally, stakeholders expressed their concern that these processes are launched and implemented in a top-down manner, without stakeholder consultation and involvement. It was mentioned that while in 2007 the AAU has been appointed to be AUC's HE implementing agency, the issues of Nyerere scholarships and the Pan-African University have not been the subject of full discussion between the two organisations. Other questions concerned the administration of the Nyerere programme and how AUC as a political body can ensure a fair selection of scholarship applicants, which should be strictly on academic grounds. AU and EC representatives confirmed that the Nyerere Programme will be transparent and well accessible to students. Participants confirmed that further information on the stakeholders' day in November would be very much welcomed.

3.4.5. Inter-regional academic mobility and professional brain drain

Abdeslam Marfouk, Université Catholique de Louvain/ Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium, provided an overview on brain drain from Africa to OECD countries. A key point in his argumentation was that while brain drain occurs in most countries of the world, it has the greatest magnitude in Sub-Saharan Africa, which for a population that is 13 times larger than that of France has only half as many medical doctors. In particular, in environments where highly skilled labour is scarce, any migration is a very sensitive issue. Highly skilled women deserve particular attention in this regard, as in some countries they tend to migrate twice as often as highly skilled men.

MeeFoong Lee, EAN and **Tor Rynning Torp, UHR**, both partners in the Access to Success project consortium, reported from the two previous project workshops on 'Access and Retention' and on 'Capacity building partnerships between Europe and Africa', highlighting how these two events linked to brain drain issues. The fact that brain drain from African countries involves the privileged few that

[61] http://www.acp-edulink.eu/

[62] http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/programme/about_erasmus_mundus_en.php

made it into university exacerbates the impact on social capital. In thinking on how to retain them, one would also have to consider how universities, but also donor programmes, can enhance careers and living conditions.

In the **discussion** some participants argued that brain drain is there to stay, particularly as conditions in the African labour markets and in universities are poor and unemployment is high. Clearly there is a mismatch between the labour market requirements and the skills of graduates. Intra-African brain drain was mentioned, for which statistics are lacking. From a university perspective, internal country brain drain is also a matter of concern as careers outside the university are often far more attractive. While from an African perspective this appears to be a waste of research potential, employment of research-trained graduates in various economic areas and sectors is highly encouraged in Europe.
The issue of return of investment through brain drain was raised as for some countries remittances are an important income source. However, the overall economic value of remittances is highly contested. More rewarding seems to be Diaspora concepts that have been developed by various countries that try to encourage scholars to keep in touch with their home universities, and contribute through teaching and research during short stays etc. A concrete suggestion that was aired was the creation of a database of African Diaspora scholars.

3.4.6. Fighting brain drain, driving brain circulation: Current modalities - Break out discussion

Participants split into two groups with two/three presenters per group and parallel discussions on current initiatives and programmes aimed at minimising brain drain and promoting brain circulation. Key questions were: How do the aims of different national government and agency programmes differ? To what extent are they sensitive to brain drain? What is good practice in either mitigating brain drain or encouraging brain circulation?

In the first session, presentation were made by **Almudena Caballos Villar, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID**) and **Heike Edelmann-Okinda, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)**. DAAD has a variety of programmes that contribute to building capacity of African universities, training African students, and mitigating brain drain: 'Competence centres' aimed at achieving MDGs, excellence centres for disciplinary research in Africa, postgraduate courses for African professionals (with high employment rate upon return), African Good Governance Networks, alumni programmes, salary support for returnees to start their own businesses upon return, and infrastructure support for returning researchers.

Spain has traditionally been Latin America focused in terms of university development cooperation but is looking towards Africa and generally towards greater diversification geographically. The AECID is using lessons from past experiences in mobility schemes, scholarships and institutional development support in other regions and would like to coordinate better with other development agents and share practices.

In the second session, **Abdoulaye Salifou from the Bureau of Central Africa of Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)** presented the various programmes and scholarships that AUF provides to combat brain drain. The programmes are aimed at building ICT capacity at universities and generaly building academic excellence and offer a variety of scholarships for mobility within Africa, PhD joint supervision, post doctoral work and distance learning/online training. **Richard Middleton** of the **Commonwealth Scholarship Commission**, presented the various scholarship opportunities for African Commonwealth residents to study in the UK, and highlighted that 88% of grantees are now based in their home country. He offered several propositions to reduce brain drain that the CSC has analysed: Distance learning and split site awards that allow students to stay in their home institution, developing strong institutional partnerships that allow the student/ staff to cultivate a relationship with their home university even if abroad, and involving home countries in the scholarship selection process for scholarships, so mutual interest in the student/staff is conveyed.

The following questions were raised and conclusions drawn from the sessions:

- Might these programmes benefit from collaboration/coordination? Spain considers

information sharing critical but joint programming may be difficult when it comes to national government priorities. Coordination and cooperation of both European agencies and of 'recipient' countries/institutions was addressed in the Access to Success Oslo workshop and many practical suggestions were provided

- Promotion and dissemination of information on different European programmes is critical. Information is fragmented and there is a vast array of potential programmes that students, researchers and institutions can benefit from. This can be addressed be agency cooperation both in Europe and through outposts in Africa (such as lecturers and information centers), alumni and university partners
- Promoting good practice in utilising the Diaspora and also alumni of such programmes was highlighted.

3.4.7. Inter-regional mobility and brain drain: Student input

Input was provided from a panel of three student representatives which met prior to the workshop to discuss mobility and brain drain. **Ivy de Souza, National Union of Ghana Students, Emma di Orio, European Students Union, and Karen Basiye, Erasmus Mundus Alumni**, presented their respective student organisation and addressed the following questions: Why do students, like the Erasmus Mundus alumni, go abroad? In what cases have they returned? Why have they not returned? How can the EM programme be more conscious of brain drain? How can the alumni contribute? What is the role of student unions in Africa in helping to fight brain drain? How can institutions work with them more effectively?

The students looked critically at mobility programmes in both Europe and now in Africa and posed several questions:

- If the programme entails a joint degree, will this be recognised?
- How can fair selection be ensured? Quality? Employability?
- Is the study destination safe?
- What is the added value of the mobility to the degree?
- What are the administrative obstacles in doing it?
- What are the student services at the host institution?

It was generally felt that though Erasmus Mundus has been successful in Europe, African students may be more reticent to move within Africa as internal African mobility is not highly regarded nor seen as beneficial. Mobility programmes such as Nyerere would need significant promotion. Alumni can be an important tool in this endeavour.

The discussion highlighted the need to promote existing mobility programmes in Africa and their successes. The needs and concerns of students must be considered and universities must have the appropriate resources to accommodate international students. Recognition is clearly a thread in the discussion, which is why long-term partnerships may be the best structures for student mobility as they can engage in a trust-building relationship between certain institutions.

In terms of brain drain, the students confessed that while many African students who go to Europe or the US feel connected to their home countries, they naturally want the best job and quality of life prospects. It is important to be honest about the interest of countries in the North to attract high-skilled labour and the needs of countries in the South to retain talent and to search for creative solutions at both institutional and governmental level to connect to the Diaspora.

3.4.8. Institutional perspectives on brain drain: Challenges and solutions

Barack Owuor, Maseno University, Kenya, presented different reasons why university staff decide to be mobile, for example in order to enhance the academic capacity and combat migration and HIV, one of the main factors impacting Kenya's universities today. Staff and student mobility have enormous academic, cultural and political benefits.

Intra-African mobility has existed for quite some time in East Africa, as before independence the

colleges of Dar Es Salam and Nairobi were connected to the University of Makerere. When upgraded to universities after independence, staff cooperation and student exchange with credit recognition continued. With the establishment of the East African Community, the three countries started to develop separate university systems. Though the efforts of the Interuniversity Council of the East African Community (IUCEA) to enhance exchanges continued, supported by the German DAAD, mobility did not reach its expected overall goals. The speaker stressed that enhancing mobility within East Africa could be a means to strengthen critical mass and build capacity within the region. This could then lead to addressing and reducing some of the brain drain issues.

Stephen Simukanga, University of Zambia (UNZA) presented the case of his university, which until 1982 was the only university in Zambia. Today, two more public and six private universities have been established, which brings up serious competition in terms of staff recruitment. Poor facilities and funding for research and teaching and low remuneration have been identified as motives for brain drain. These and other issues are addressed in the university's strategic plan, that aims at improving learning and teaching conditions for both students and teachers (they hope to attain a 1 to 10 teacher student ratio), provide attractive social benefit packages for staff and their families and offer extra income opportunities (consultancy).

Overall, the speaker concluded that for UNZA the concern is not with brain drain out of the country, but within the country as university staff are moving to private universities and other better paid jobs. While strategies to tackle this have been identified, a critical issue is of course time and resources to implement them. One good practice has been the efforts of the University of Zambia to connect to alumni living abroad and offer them opportunities to teach a few lectures or courses when they visit their country to see family.

Brian O'Connell, University of the Western Cape, brought forward the case of South Africa and his own university. Brain drain comes on top of the AIDS/HIV problem, which is a pertinent threat to the 10 fold human capital increase that SA has been able to realise during the past 30 years.

Today, the annual loss through brain drain of medical personnel is estimated 37 million USD, with 25% of SA medical graduates immigrating to the US alone, most of them from historically white universities. 16 years after the end of the apartheid, 11% of white population still account for 2/3 of the PhD graduates. And while SA has managed to develop pockets of research excellence, in international comparison, its overall scientific production remains low in percentage to population, and rather fragile, as its success in research depends on a small elite of scholars.

In this overall scenario, the speaker considered the options of University of the Western Cape (UWC), from looking at policy development (countries that benefit from brain drain remunerate providing countries; African countries build jointly an agenda to prevent brain drain) to institutional measures in developing strong partnerships and donor relations and building up competent programmes and sufficient staff support for students to succeed, in particular at graduate level. Factors for success are funding, functioning structures, and especially passion and commitment amongst the university community.

3.4.9. Remarks and recommendations

Crucial importance of mobility

Given the increasing demand for universities to produce globally relevant graduates, academic mobility has been identified as crucial for universities and their constituencies; the benefits of mobility for students, staff and researchers are manifold, and can also support the capacity development and international connectivity of African universities. Mobility should not directly imply brain drain. While mobility may open opportunities for brain drain, the overall assumption was that restricting mobility does not necessarily prevent it. While the following conclusions distinguish between intra- and inter-regional mobility, many of the observations and arguments are valid for both.

Mobility within the region

The European case was discussed with regards to its at least partial success in enhancing intra-regional mobility, mainly through the incentives and programmes provided by the European Union.

However, intra-European mobility is still insufficiently documented and can be suspected to lag behind expectations developed in the Bologna Process, as there are a range of obstacles (visas for non-EU Bologna country citizens, resident permits, pensions, recognition issues) and also internal brain-drain issues (from East to West) to deal with.

In Africa, intra-regional mobility is very limited, and the existing initiatives have low visibility. While enhancing mobility within Africa meets a lot of scepticism, participants agreed that there is growing political and academic awareness of the necessity to enhance it. Possible approaches and mobility initiatives could involve programmes for staff exchanges, sabbaticals, researcher and PhD mobility, and perhaps semester abroad in the case of undergraduates. European but also specific African experiences with mobility could be of use.

Systems' change and regional recognition conventions

It was clearly stated that Africa can and should not copy the Bologna Process, but rather take it as a learning opportunity. The African Union, with the support of regional level stakeholder organisations such as the AAU, was seen as the main institution to encourage the harmonisation of HE systems.

A critical element in bringing regional integration forward, and more specifically enhancing mobility, is recognition of degrees and study periods abroad. In the European case, the example of the Lisbon Recognition Convention illustrates that an agreement on paper cannot be a remedy for all recognition and mobility problems. For the Arusha Convention, a discussion should be started on its long-term implementation, promotion, and maintenance. This should also include the development of national structures that would be in charge of the follow-up and promotion of the Convention through institutional incentives and discussions on how it relates to stakeholders. AAU and national Rectors' Conferences can contribute to these discussions and play a role in promoting it and facilitating the information flow to universities. Quality assurance would have to be developed at institutional, national and regional level in parallel processes to aid recognition. But this should be done separately from the Arusha Convention, in order not to overburden it.

Brain drain from Africa to Europe

Brain drain is statistically undeniable (though many aren't aware of the statistics), although the relationship with academic mobility programmes still needs to be demonstrated. Some professions, for example in health services, are particularly affected, which has dire consequences for the sending country. Governments and institutions in Africa and Europe can take steps to staunch brain drain, and to minimise its causes:

- It seems that there is currently still a lack of awareness for brain drain and its impacts. For the individual academic the opportunity to study and work in a foreign country might be economically and professionally rewarding. Institutions may take a certain pride in the fact that their graduates succeed in international careers. Remittances from migrants may improve the purchasing power of families and contribute to the economy. Domestic shortage of work opportunities may even suggest that academic migration is desirable. Given these assumptions, there is clearly a need for collecting and publicising data both from Africa and within Africa and analysing more scientifically its effects
- Governments both in Africa and in Europe have a responsibility in developing concrete measures to mitigate brain drain. The example of Norwegian government, which doesn't hire nurses from emerging countries, was quoted. Another way, would be to consider how to remunerate countries for brain drain. But there was a general agreement that incentives and programmes which consider brain drain in a responsible manner might be more appropriate than regulation, which potentially limits the individual freedom of students and academics.
- Governments and universities can contribute to improving conditions for university personnel, through transparent human resources policies and regulations.
- The development of Diaspora structures, such as a ministry for Diaspora, can be a strategic and tangible way to confront the issues at country and regional level.

Institutions should be encouraged to create strategies for engaging the Diaspora and tracking graduates. At regional level, it was suggested to set-up an academic Diaspora database for Africa.

One development in internationalisation which can be constructed to fight brain drain is embedding mobility in collaborative frameworks: there seems to be a clear trend towards partnerships, joint degrees and mobility windows in Europe, which are perceived as a mean to improve recognition, to ensure quality and contribute to a better mobility balance. These approaches can be shared with African universities which are considering new approaches to institutional collaboration and mobility with the African region and subregions. Online collaboration tools were found as a mean to support interregional cooperation, provided that reliable ICT and other infrastructure exist. Granting open access to research publications is one of the concrete measures already practiced by universities to enhance research conditions at partner institutions. While this might not reverse the mobility flows, it can contribute to achieving a better balance.

Governments and donor initiatives are invited to support such initiatives through long-term, flexible (also regarding mobility duration), demand driven programmes that respond to the needs of universities

Fora for government-university community discussion have been suggested to align strategies and actions. African colleagues clearly desired more information on EU and AUC programmes for the academic community. A clear challenge to be addressed by universities, donors and governments is ensuring that these programmes and their implementation are mutually beneficial to all institutions concerned (in Europe and Africa).

Government – stakeholder relations

For many of the issues addressed, the relationship between governments and stakeholder organisations was identified as a critical issue: there is a crucial need for partnership and collaboration between governments in order to ensure that policies, strategies and programmes are embraced by the university community. This has been proven by various national examples and also at regional level, e.g. in the European Bologna Process. Any kind of regional reform process in Africa would have to consider the role of associations in liaising with regional governments and shaping stakeholder consultation. Student input is also crucial, and the feedback of the student organisations and the Erasmus Mundus Alumni brought forward critical questions for future cooperation, programming, and discussions on brain drain.

PART 4: CONCLUSION

4.1. SUMMARY OF THE ACCESS TO SUCCESS WHITE PAPER

The culmination of the Access to Success project, the White Paper, is an important statement by universities in development cooperation and is being tabled as a point of reference for the future engagement of various stakeholders in this agenda. It was a collaborative work of all project partners and project beneficiaries as well as an independent expert group, which was consulted regarding its content.

It consists of sections on:

- The contribution of higher education to development and the role of universities in Africa
- Africa-Europe university cooperation
- Strengthening intra-African cooperation in higher education and the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership
- The Way Ahead: an agenda for future action by actors responsible in both Africa and Europe

The final section outlines recommendations by actor: Governments, development cooperation agencies, university associations, universities, the EU Commission and AU Commission.

The White Paper's main conclusions are that:

a) Universities and university cooperation are vital for overall socio-economic development

b) Europe and Africa are facing common global challenges and need each other to ensure sustainable development.

c) All countries must have the higher education capacity to respond to the domestic and global challenges of the future.

d) Increased cooperation between universities in Africa and Europe can be seen as a way to support capacity building and development activities, as well as to enhance academic performance

e) These university partnerships must be mutually beneficial and sustainable and funding mechanisms must be found to enable this.

f) A stronger emphasis should be placed on developing research collaboration in its two-fold function - as a contribution to knowledge generation and exchange, and as a capacity-building measure to support institutional development.

g) Established partnership programmes have been identified as a reliable framework for the organisation of meaningful inter-university mobility, with clear benefits for individuals and institutions. The mobility of European students and staff to Africa has been identified as an under-explored possibility.

h) Beyond government intervention, universities in Africa and Europe should consider institutional strategies to limit brain drain.

i) More information and better communication regarding the rich variety of Africa-Europe higher education and research cooperation activities are needed to enable synergies, better coordination and exchange of best practice. The time is ripe for joint projects of different national agencies, identifying common priorities and designing joint evaluation procedures.

j) Intra-regional higher education mobility is an important element of the regional harmonisation agenda in Africa. Though there are some successful programmes for student and staff exchange between African institutions exist, their visibility and scope is too low.

k) The role of universities in advancing and shaping the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership should be made more explicit. They should not only be seen as beneficiaries, but should be consulted in the development of

new programmes, in order to ensure a proactive commitment to and awareness of the Partnership.

l) Universities link education and research through their activities, driving teaching and learning as well as the science and innovation agenda. This important fact should be recognised under the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and strengthened.

m) University associations have an important role to play in creating fora for the sharing of practice and in providing input to joint political agendas, such as the Africa-EU Partnership.

Considering the outcomes of the Access to Success project, the overall question remains how best to follow up the results and ensure impact. The following is a summary of the concrete recommendations and actions that are critical to taking forward higher education cooperation between Africa and Europe. While each recommendation appears linked to a specific type of actor, it is of course assumed that they would have to be taken up simultaneously, and in coordination.

1. Governments should

- Consider the importance of higher education for social and economic development: education has to be approached from a holistic perspective, emphasising the interrelation between different education levels and sectors.
- Support the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership as an important policy instrument and strengthen the role of higher education within it.
- Develop concrete measures to mitigate brain drain: incentives such as improvement of research infrastructure and employment conditions for individual scholars and students, mobility and cooperation programmes that reduce the risk of brain drain and approaches that enable an active contribution of the Diaspora to higher education, such as incentives for expatriated scholars.
- Collect and publicise data on higher education.

2. Universities in Africa and Europe should:

- Integrate development cooperation into the overall institutional internationalisation strategy.
- Consider innovative partnerships models as a means to strengthen both North-South and South-South collaboration.
- Develop institutional strategies to mitigate the risks and impacts of academic brain drain.

3. Development cooperation agencies should:

- Enhance coordination, collaboration and exchange with other agencies: development cooperation agencies should seek ways to ensure complementarities, share practice and ensure better visibility and understanding of programmes and initiatives beyond the national context. The time is ripe for joint, European level projects in development, supported by European Union and national funding sources.
- Explore specifically joint projects to build higher education staff capacity.
- Prioritise long-term university partnerships that are needs-based and flexible enough to accommodate and advance the diverse activities undertaken by universities. These activities may cross-cut research, education, development cooperation, and institutional development, which should be embraced by funding mechanisms.

4. Regional and national university associations should:

- Establish inter-regional dialogue between university associations and universities in order to contribute as active stakeholders to the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership.
- Enhance understanding and exchange in the area of graduate and specifically doctoral education: university associations are well placed to promote the development of joint masters and PhD programmes that is sensitive to brain drain .

- Support the internationalisation of universities and promote the integration of internationalisation and development cooperation strategies.

5. The European Union and African Union Commissions should:

- Include a framework for Africa-Europe higher education exchange and collaboration within the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: this would generate multiple benefits for the university community and society at large, and would also send a strong signal towards member states and donor organisations.
- Support regional higher education integration in Africa through bi-regional university cooperation.
- Establish a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform that would facilitate communication, sharing of practice, identification of synergies and promotion of initiatives.
- University exchange and cooperation should be based on mutual benefits; this includes the facilitation of two-way academic mobility and general cost coverage under partnership programmes which should be accounted for in European Union and African Union funding programmes.
- Support the development of national structures that would be in charge of follow-up and promotion of the Arusha Convention.

4.2. REFLECTIONS ON WHITE PAPER – ENHANCING EUROPE-AFRICA UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP: A CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Outcome report of the dissemination event for the Access to Success project, Brussels, Belgium, 28 September 2010

Objectives

This final dissemination event of the Access to Success project served a two-fold purpose: to present the project White Paper and its recommendations to a wider political and academic community and to discuss and critique the paper, identifying ways in which its recommendations can be taken up.

Beyond a more general discussion on the contribution of education to development and particularly the role of higher education was timely, given the upcoming Africa-EU Summit (November 2010), the discussion on the future of the Millennium Development Goals, and the various higher education initiatives launched in the framework of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership.

Structure

The event was divided into two major sessions: a closed morning session targeting past beneficiaries of the project workshops and surveys, and an open public session in the afternoon, targeting political leaders and the wider university community. The morning session was an occasion to speak amongst project peers, addressing critical points that the White Paper had raised and brainstorming project follow-up. The discussion was taken into the afternoon, when, after welcoming addresses of high level representatives from the European Commission, the Belgian Senate (the hosts), the Belgian Ministry for Development Cooperation and the presidents' of the EUA and AAU, a panel engaged a debate on the White Paper recommendations with the audience (approximately 140 people). This panel consisted of Olusola Oyewole (African Union Commission), Sigmond Grunmo (Rector of the University of Bergen), and Tolly Mbwette (Vice-Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania) and was moderated by Lesley Wilson (Secretary General of EUA) and Pascal Hoba (Head of Communications of AAU). The programme was closed with an enthusiatic word from the Director General of Education and Culture of the European Commission, Mr. Jan Truszczynski.

Morning stakeholder session

The morning session opened with a discussion on the White Paper, primed by two presentations. **Ronnie Munck , Irish-Africa Partnership and Dublin City University** extracted several points from the White Paper that were of direct significance to the Irish context, particularly regarding the partnership platform for research capacity development they have been building with all Irish universities. While this Irish initiative has been an interesting example of internal Irish partnership, Mr. Munck cited the difficulty in establishing cross-continental partnerships in Europe, and the importance of bringing the Irish efforts to the European level. In Africa, he observed a need for more effective southern coordination, and proposed a southern parallel 'hub' to help to coordinate the institutions in the South that benefit from their projects.

When asked what he learned from the Access to Success project, he referred again to the need to 'scale up' from the national level and broaden out to Europe: economies of scale can have a more marked effect in development cooperation, particularly with small countries such as Ireland. That said, he reiterated an important lesson from the Oslo workshop, that agencies or actors funding university collaboration with the south 'don't want to be coordinated' but rather need to look for practical ways of collaborating while maintaining their autonomy and creativity.

In terms of suggestions for the future, Mr. Munck proposed several concrete possibilities:

- The Irish universities found that they had seven different Memorandum of Understanding-MoUs (on seven different projects or disciplines) with the University of Makerere in Uganda. As a result, they have developed an all Ireland MoU. One proposition would be to develop a template at European level that could be promoted as a useful tool, and help universities in the

South and the North to coordinate better internally.

- He also suggested mapping the various modes of collaborative PhDs across Africa, so as to identify and promote practices.

Lillian Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza, Makerere University, then presented her commentary specifically on Section C of the White Paper: Recommendations for Africa-Europe University Cooperation. The White Paper talks about the importance of mutually beneficial partnership. However, the benefits for European universities in such partnerships are not explicit enough, and this is critical in convincing university leadership to invest in such partnerships. Dr. Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza then touched upon several areas in which collaboration is critical, areas mentioned by the White Paper but in need of further elaboration:

- Regarding doctoral education, issues of intellectual property and open access need a more explicit recommendation; and a framework to govern collaborative research would be highly useful.
- Regarding retention after training, it was suggested that mentoring programmes embedded in partnerships could be a productive way to encourage graduates to stay in their home institutions.
- Regarding mobility, one should think of creative ways to compensate the sending university if a graduate leaves (instead of restricting movement).
- In terms of low mobility within Africa, this is very much driven by a perception of low quality- African universities and there is a need to combat this stereotype with marketing and visibility measures.
- Quality assurance (QA), and sharing of practice in QA should be one of the focus areas in collaboration.
- Partnerships can also be used to deal with issues of equity and recruitment of ethnically marginalised groups.

After the initial presentations, a wide range of comments and constructive criticism came from the audience, grouped below according to theme.

The White Paper: a focus on management capacity building

A number of participants commented on the need to orient partnership programmes towards capacity building in HE management in Africa. Many of these points underpinned the White Paper or stretched it further:

- Building capacity to implement change is a critical point of the White Paper: the professionalisation of management of HE and research into HE are greatly needed.
- Partnerships should not simply be aligned to industry needs but should encourage community development. There is a need to train people to manage local resources better and generate knowledge around those local resources.
- Future funding programmes for mobility between the N and S should also consider management capacity building measures.
- There is a concern that science and technology are dominating the education development agenda whereas African universities need to prioritise institutional management.

White Paper: what is missing

It was commented that open and distance learning needs greater attention than given in the White Paper, given its potential transformative role in Africa. It is indispensible in meeting enrolment needs. It was also noted that the role of the private sector in creating wider access in Africa has been left out.

Taking it forward

Many participants look critically at the question of what comes next after the White Paper. One participant asked about the status of a 'White Paper' and where it is taken next, given that she had already seen many lofty statements launched in Africa before but which had remained without tangible follow-up. EUA responded by indicating that the recommendations were there to be taken up by the actors they address: universities, development agencies, governments, university

associations, and the African and European Union Commissions. EUA will use the White Paper for its own mandate and subsequent programming in the field of development cooperation, and has already taken on two bi-regional follow-up projects in the field of QA and doctoral education. EUA and AAU will continue to follow up on developments under the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, which relate to higher education and research, and expect to give concentrated feedback on future funding programmes and initiatives in higher education. What is more, both organisations will now take up this agenda with their membership and their governing bodies, and be able to provide a regional level platform for future discussions and partnership building.

Another participant commented that, though the White Paper expresses a lot of hope, there are also many concrete answers to be found within it; it is simply a matter of university leaders interpreting the document as a challenge to reinvent the logic of their institutions.

Ronnie Munck (Irish-Africa Partnership and Dublin City University) commented that, though the White Paper discussions produced a sort of a shopping list of issues to be tackled, each country or institution needs to prioritise: it is suggested that a SWOT analysis be undertaken to identify the most important needs and priorities and invest in very concrete initiatives that make a real difference.

Concrete suggestions for new initiatives

- 'Emerging' institutions need access to research cooperation opportunities as well. In the current scheme of the European programmes, nothing exists for existing research cooperation between European and African institutions. Such a programme at European level would help to grow research actors in the South.
- There are few N-N partnerships in research for development. The Irish and Danish have done this within their countries, but there is a need for mechanisms to support this more broadly across Europe.
- Developing Guidelines for Collaboration or a Code for Collaboration could be an interesting AAU/EUA project.
- There needs to be greater recognition for socially responsible/ethical partnerships. A European or African mechanism for this would be welcome as it may help Northern universities find further incentives to engage in development.

Break-out sessions

In the break-out session different speakers addressed the same two critical questions:

1. What are the lessons and opportunities for institutions and countries that are new to university development cooperation?
2. How can the relationship between development cooperation and university internationalisation strategies be better conceived?

Samuel Darkwah, Mendel University, Czech Republic, presented an interesting portrait of a Czech university that is on the road to deeper internationalisation. Of Ghanain origin, Samuel Darkwah was determined to generate more collaboration and student mobility between his institution and the developing world. This entailed travelling to Nigeria and Ghana to launch some initial partnerships in 2000, which faced their own set of challenges to get off the ground: internally, the university had language problems, specifically in expanding international programmes in English. Visa issues surrounding the exchange of students and staff have been taxing - different ministries need to coordinate better and the university has to be an advocate in this regard. Today, Mendel University has increased its number of partnerships dramatically and are soliciting more projects from the Czech ministry of foreign affairs (development programmes on rural development, water, etc with Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa as well as partnerships in Thailand). Samuel Darkwah is presently forming a consortium with some European universities which will entail exchange and joint research with Africa. To conclude, Samuel Darkwah stressed the need for activating partnerships as opposed to letting them rest dormant; Mendel University had an agreement with an institution in Nigeria for five years before it pushed to exchange a few students. Since then, the relationship has only grown.

Several comments were made in response: it was questioned why sign MoUs when an institution does not first have capacity to implement them. This includes infrastructure (to welcome students and staff) and people to drive the partnership.

The role of rectors' associations in supporting new universities in development cooperation was mentioned: these associations can potentially bring different ministries to the table to discuss the more macro-level problems impeding student exchange, starting with visa issues.

Josep Vilalta, Catalan Association of Public Universities, Spain. The public universities in Catalonia, Spain, are working together on internationalisation, which includes university cooperation for development. They focus on three topics: (1) Capacity building; (2) Research and innovation management; (3) establishing academic common platforms. The collaboration with African universities is relatively recent. Josep Vilalta presented ten lessons learned by his association, while engaging in these activities. They ranged from the need to establish more mid and long-term partnerships, to the question of cooperation at the European level and the need to demonstrate achievements better. As one participant confirmed, with results come resources. A representative from Sokoine University, Tanzania, issued a warning regarding long-term partnerships. It should be avoided that one party becomes dependent on another. Collaborators need to look for opportunities genuinely to work together.

Nan Warner, University of Cape Town, South Africa, made a short input statement on the compatibility of development cooperation and internationalisation from the perspective of her institution: UCT has a strategic paper on their development mission in the region, which is inherently linked to how they internationalise: it concentrates on research specialisations that are locally relevant, being 'Afropolitan' (offering a base of expertise in African issues), serving as a 'bridge' by developing the credibility of Southern partners in Africa to Northern hemisphere partners, and prioritising the recruitment of international post-grads from Africa.

In response, an important comment was made from the University of Maastricht, the Netherlands, reflecting a northern perspective on the topic: European universities tend to know what internationalisation should bring them, but lose sight of what they can bring to it (for example, what can Maastricht University bring to the world?) .

Kay Svensson, Uppsala University, Sweden. Uppsala University is committed to making the world a better place, as described in one of its board statements. This has a direct impact on the university's international engagement. Although the context is very competitive, cooperation remains a priority. This is also because good science requires a global context. The university is therefore looking for new models to become international, taking into account sustainability, while creating a global classroom. In the discussion that followed Kay Svensson's presentation, points were made on better communicating to the university leadership about university activities in development cooperation.

Looking forward

The final session of the stakeholder meeting provided an outlook on upcoming initiatives. EUA presented two new Erasmus Mundus-funded projects taking up specific themes of the White Paper: N-S-S doctoral education collaboration and Europe-Africa cooperation on quality assurance.

CODOC (Cooperation on Doctoral Education between Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe) will establish links between the EUA Council for Doctoral Education and doctoral education actors in emerging countries. It will run for two years, first surveying doctoral education trends in three regions and then taking up a workshop series on key issues. It will look particularly at the strategic interest in N-S doctoral education cooperation as well cross-cutting partnerships across Southern countries.

Europe-Africa Quality Connect, a project led by EUA and AAU will test the methodology of an EUA quality audit programme in Africa- the Institutional Evaluation Programme. It is a 'flexible tool for change' that prioritises the university self-evaluation, conducts a mission assessment process and provides constructive feedback from an international pool of experts. Five visits will be carried out to African universities in different regions and a dialogue series will analyse the results.

Participants were then asked to share ongoing or planned initiatives that support the Access to Success recommendations. The following initiatives were shared:

- The Vice-Chancellorss of the African Council for Distance Education will be convening at the Open University of Tanzania. A large focus has been put on QA in distance teaching and coordination between universities in distance teaching.
- The Commission Universitaire pour le Développement (CUD) reported that a meeting will be held in South Africa on social responsibility in graduate schools.
- Mozambique will be undergoing a self-evaluation on joint programmes, especially at PhD level. This has been sponsored by SIDA, the Swedish development agency.
- Both Nuffic (Netherlands organisation for international cooperation in higher education) and the VLIR-UOS have taken part in a first meeting of higher education agencies involved in funding the Africa partnership programme. This was intended to be a platform to share initiatives and seek synergies. Meetings will be systematic and the initiative will hopefully evolve into a larger joint project.
- The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Working Group on Higher Education will be sponsoring a large study on the African Higher Education Space - this will involve a team of African and European experts to provide concrete suggestions to take the space forward.
- A new platform for African private universities has been established.
- AAU announced the next COREVIP (African Rectors' Summit), a large bi-annual meeting of African Vice-Chancellors.
- The International Association of Universities (IAU) reiterated their present work on the issue of access and retention in Africa. A conference will take place in Nairobi next year on this topic. IAU is also releasing a case study focused report on doctoral education in Africa.
- University of the Western Cape, South Africa, announced that it has been awarded a chair in astrophysics - a major advancement for the research prestige of this institution and an opportunity to become an international research partner in this field.

The Dissemination event: Promoting the White Paper to an academic and policy focused audience

The public afternoon session opened with several speeches from high-level colleagues across the higher education and development sectors, both at national and European level: Marleen Temmerman, Belgian Senator, Professor at the University of Ghent and long-time contributor to the VLIR-UOS programmes, commented that:

> " Universities are complex and multifaceted institutions. University leaders in Europe and in Africa should embrace opportunities to consider the various international activities of their institutions holistically, and in a development perspective, and should use platforms such as the one created by this project to exchange practice and build networks".

Luis Riera, DG Development, European Commission reiterated the importance of higher education to the development agenda and stated that "It is increasingly clear that donor aid alone does not make it". Jean-Marc Rapp, President of EUA, presented the importance of the Access to Success project from the university perspective, emphasising that "It was important for us to demonstrate that, at a time when global competition in higher education is on the rise, the imperative is to promote Europe as an attractive and strategic partner, sensitive to the realities of brain drain".

After a presentation of the main White Paper recommendations by Lesley Wilson, Secretary General ofEUA and Dr Pascal Hoba of AAU, a **panel debate** ensued, taking up the following topics:

- The panellists view of the growing interface of the education, research, international relations and development agendas. Do current programmes and policies reflect this interface?

- How can the EU development agenda energise the university community? Is it sufficiently promoted to the university community? Can universities and university associations be more active partners in accomplishing this? How?
- How can universities be drivers of development? How can this be supported further by European Union and African Union policies and programmes?
- How can the university community as part of civil society play a more active role in the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership? Is this Partnership tangible, or more a political discourse?
- What concrete steps can be taken to improve the flow of information and overall relationship between development cooperation actors and higher education actors?

Sigmond Gronmo, Rector of the University of Bergen, Norway, attested to the dual challenge of universities: attracting partnerships from all over the world and engaging in global challenges. He proposed that the current bi-lateral partnerships between European countries and Africa could and should be developed to become multilateral.

Tolly Mbwette, Open University of Tanzania, suggested that a change in mindset was needed for global partnering and that the EU has a critical role to play. He noted that few European rectors were present at the dissemination event, which is indicative of where Africa partnership stands on the list of priorities. Regarding the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, this relationship needs to mature. While higher education may receive more and more attention, it tends to fall off the agenda at political level or be pushed out by competing and immediate interests.

Olusola Oyewole, African Union Commission, applauded the White Paper for taking up issues of access, retention and relevance of teaching when constructing partnerships. His main call for action was for African universities advertise themselves as partners and to market themselves as credible. This will be crucial both in generating greater inter-university cooperation within Africa and beyond. This point was highly supported across the audience and Tolly Mbwette made a call to African universities to use various international fora, such as the Access to Success project, to promote their strengths.

Discussion with the audience highlighted the following issues:

- More work needs to be done to *energise northern universities as development actors*. This can only be done by promoting common challenges. Prof Gronmo responded that an important factor in stimulating universities in the development agenda is funding. The problem is that funding in Europe is more and more about competition: it is difficult to prioritise sustainable development and global ethical interaction when competition for excellence drives funding.
- Comments were also made regarding the *new youth generation and the potential for Europe-Africa student exchange*. The University of Munich representative pointed to the increasing interest and willingness of young German students to take on global issues. He commented that we must harvest the energy of this generation by providing them with concrete opportunities to engage with Africa. Prof Gronmo supported this point by commenting that students must be brought into bi-regional dialogue and serve as ambassadors for partnerships.
- African universities need to *promote themselves*, but first they also need to be ready to tackle the problems and challenges facing them. If the leadership is prepared, then they can then turn to sources like the EU to fund partnerships and exchanges. Nan Warner of University of Cape Town mentioned three important words for universities in taking the Access to Success agenda forward: 'champion', 'facilitation' and 'process'. This implies that motivated leadership and personal is a first ingredient, support structures and opportunities a second, and acceptance that change is a process is the third.

Presentation from the dissemination event can be found at www.accesstosuccess-africa.eu.

PARTNERS

The Association of African Universities (AAU) is an international non-governmental organisation set up by the universities in Africa to promote cooperation among themselves and with the international academic community The AAU is a forum for consultation, exchange of information, and cooperation among universities in Africa. In addition to fostering contact and cooperation among universities and other institutions of higher education in Africa, the Association is charged with collecting, classifying, and disseminating information on higher education and research, particularly in Africa. It also promotes cooperation among African higher education institutions in curriculum development, post graduate training, research, quality assurance, and other matters of special policy or practical interest to African higher education. The Association endeavours to empower member universities to address developmental challenges and become an effective voice in national, regional and global institutions. As of July 2010, AAU has 225 members from 44 African countries. www.aau.org

The European University Association (EUA) represents and supports higher education institutions in 46 countries, providing them with a unique forum to cooperate and keep abreast of the latest trends in higher education and research policies. Members of the Association are European universities involved in teaching and research, national associations of rectors and other organisations active in higher education and research. EUA plays an essential role in shaping tomorrow's European higher education and research landscape thanks to its unique knowledge of the sector and the diversity of its members. The Association's mandate in the Bologna Process, contribution to EU research policy-making and relations with intergovernmental organisations, European institutions and international associations, ensure its capacity to debate issues which are crucial for universities in relation to higher education, research and innovation. www.eua.be

The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR) is a co-operative body for higher education institutions in Norway. Founded in 2000, following the merger of the Norwegian Council of Universities and the Norwegian Council of University Colleges, UHR aims to promote the development of Norway as a knowledge-based society of high international standard.UHR facilitates co-operation and co-ordination among Norwegian higher education institutions. Furthermore, UHR advocates shared positions on central issues concerning higher education and research policy towards the Norwegian government, parliament and the wider society.
http://www.uhr.no

The Flemish Interuniversity Council, Department for University Cooperation for Development (VLIR-UOS)funds and facilitates academic cooperation and exchange between higher education institutions in Flanders (Belgium) and those in developing countries, which aims at building capacity, knowledge and experience for a sustainable development. As part of the Flemish Interuniversity Council, VLIR-UOS is responsible for managing and making policy on the university development cooperation funds of Belgium's minister of Development Cooperation. www.vliruos.be

The European Access Network (EAN) is the only European-based independent not-for-profit organisation with a mission to widen access and participation in higher education for groups who are under-represented whether becuse of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, geographical location, or earlier educational disadvantage. Access, equity, diversity and inclusion are the four pillars of the EAN.
http://www.ean-edu.org/

The European Students' Union (ESU) is an umbrella organisation of 45 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 37 countries. The NUS are open to all students in their respective country regardless of political persuasion, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation or social standing Members are also student-run, autonomous, representative and operate according to democratic principles. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow-Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.
http://www.esu-online.org/