Gender, Lifelong Learning and Social Class (GLAS)

A report on Social Mobility and Widening Participation across the GLAS consortium

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1. Preamble

Originally the GLAS project proposed Social Mobility and Widening Participation as separate core themes. However, following much discussion between the consortium partners it was decided to merge the social mobility and widening participation core themes due to the obvious overlap of these agendas. While approaching them together it has been decided to rename the merged core theme, Social Mobility by Widening Participation. It considers social justice as the aim, and widening participation as the process by which this can be supported. It further advocates work-based learning and APL, themselves project core themes, as key strategies which underpin this new conflated theme.

This document is intended to be a brief comparative report of how social mobility and widening participation has been, and is being, addressed across the GLAS partner countries in recent years and currently in a time of serious fiscal constraints. It is informed by inputs from all partners made during the mobility of the same name in London, England on 17th - 18th May 2012, and should be read in conjunction with the other deliverables from this and other core themes. Each partner has attempted to focus in particular on issues related to gender and class as potential barriers to opportunity in higher education.

2. Introduction and recent history

GLAS partners are located in different countries and therefore have different social, economic and cultural contexts in which to position social mobility and widening participation. All GLAS partners, however, find themselves within a European (and worldwide) recession, which all representative governments have so far attempted to address through the implementation of austerity measures. These measures have had an effect on education budgets, which has altered, to greater and lesser extents, the HE landscape specific to each country. In an environment when all public spending is under close scrutiny, investment aimed at tackling issues of social inclusion will inevitably be required to demonstrate its purpose and value in order to receive continued support.

Despite differences in definition and target groups, all GLAS partner countries have identified social mobility as a requirement for a more cohesive society, and agree that social mobility is defined more accurately as intergenerational mobility\(^1\), which is the extent to which an individual's social status changes (either upward or downward) between generations. It can be measured in terms of income, education and occupation. However, there is a clear underpinning assumption, implicit in the GLAS project decision to combine the social mobility theme with widening participation, that enhanced access to higher education will be a key factor in achieving in intergenerational social mobility.

\(^1\) Blanden et al. 2005.
2.1 The UK context

We know that social mobility is greater in societies which are defined as more equal\(^2\). The UK is second only to US in terms of inequality\(^3\); therefore it is no surprise that social mobility is low in the UK, and has been falling for the past 30 years\(^4\), despite the overall expansion or massification of the higher education sector and the implementation of several key Labour government policies (who were in office from 1997-2010). In reality this means that income inequalities are increasing, alongside other effects which impact on society, e.g. in the UK life expectancy is 7 years more in the highest socio-economic status (SES) groups compared with the lowest; and health inequalities are increasing, especially amongst women. It has been shown that pay levels for women do not reflect women’s qualification levels, with women aged 40 earning on average 27% less than men, and the situation is particularly striking in London. This suggests that gender rather than educational attainment continues to have a disproportionate effect on social mobility. As a whole, the top jobs and professions have become less, not more representative of the society we live in, over time.

The UK context is different from other partner countries in the broad acceptance that we live in a class based society, we understand this as the “taken for granted understanding that individuals bring to their relationship with others and that relate to their sense of place in the world". Working class people\(^5\) have historically had less access to educational opportunities than their middle class counterparts despite the UK education system being meritocratic\(^6\). Clearly, the other GLAS project countries are stratified by class, however, they do not appear to make direct reference to it as much at the UK does.

There is a large body of evidence which suggests that in the UK, social class, as measured by household income, is still the main predictor of how long a person stays in the education system, at both compulsory and post-compulsory stages. This in turn has a direct consequence on educational achievement, qualifications, access to higher education, the professions, life chances and continued lifelong learning. Similarly, the relationship between family income and children’s higher education attainment has grown stronger over the years (Blanden et al, 2005). This suggests that the big expansion or massification in university participation in the last four decades, described below, has tended to benefit children from affluent families more.

Social mobility in the UK has been of interest to policy makers for several decades now. However, it is only recently, since 2010 and the change of government, which has brought fundamental changes to education budgets through ideology, that social mobility has been higher on the political agenda. However, there is a lack of consistency between the rhetoric and policy around educational equity\(^7\) and that of widening participation. This is perhaps a reflection of the unease within the Conservative-Liberal coalition government of the recognition that should social mobility for working

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\(^3\) However social mobility has stayed constant in the US in comparision.
\(^4\) Blanden and Machin (2007). Recent changes in intergenerational mobility in Britain. Sutton Trust
\(^5\) A definition of working class people in the UK are those employed in lower skilled and lower paid jobs (the manual occupations) and often holding lower qualification levels. As contrasted with the upper and middle classes who have greater economic resources, access to better education, access to more cultural opportunities and who make purchases based on lifestyle choice as opposed to necessity.
\(^6\) Is class more of an issue in the UK, than in partner’s countries? We don’t know for sure. The fact remains that class issues in the UK overarch (as well as potentially compound) other issues such gender, age and ethnicity.
\(^7\) The Browne review of 2011 supported a marketised HE system
class people increase, it is believed that this will increase the possibility of social mobility for upper and middle class people in the opposite direction\(^8\). It may also be that the coalition’s focus on social mobility matches their ideology in placing the emphasis on individualism, that is the individual’s capacity to improve their lot, as opposed to an ideology which would take a more holistic approach to addressing wider societal issues that compound certain individual’s lack of opportunity\(^9\).

Alan Milburn’s report\(^10\) of May 2012 is the first of three reports commissioned by the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, on social mobility. It suggests that the recruitment policies of major corporate employers may be responsible for maintaining the low rate of social mobility in the UK. The big employers were found to recruit from a socially exclusive band of just 19 of the 115 universities in the UK, thereby perpetuating that social exclusivity. That these institutions are not generally noted for their proactive approaches to widening participation further compounds the problem. Getting into universities outside of this exclusive group may not therefore be the passport to some kinds of social mobility that applicants may reasonably expect. At the time of writing the second of Milburn’s publications looking at the role which universities have in the social mobility agenda, has just been published\(^11\). It suggested that HEIs could be doing more to facilitate access by varying grade requirements and using contextual data along with recommending that government provides better financial support for learners to stay in education post-16. There is sincere cross party support for the intractable social mobility agenda, as evidenced by the interim report from an all-party parliamentary group\(^12\) which is building on the Millennium Cohort study\(^13\). The all-party group identified amongst the 7 key truths that the point of “greatest leverage” in terms of affecting an individual’s social mobility is at 0-3 years primarily in the home environment, and that pre-18 school attainment is key and therefore the quality of schools and teaching is crucial. They also conclude that HE participation and indeed completion requires a particular focus as the gap between rich and poor has widened in these terms over the last two decades. It is clear that in times of recession and in the face of major fee increases that retention of all students, but especially those recruited from non traditional backgrounds will be of key importance. As and when further policy on social mobility is developed it is to be hoped that there will be greater mention of lifelong learning with a focus on adult participation, as well as for young people. Over the years adult learners have been absent in both the high profile policy, and rhetoric, from government. This is not wise considering the current demographic downturn in the supply of 18-21 year olds and the fact that over 75% of the UK workforce of 2020 are already in employment.

\(^8\) Crawford et al. Social Mobility – A Literature Review, March 2011.
\(^9\) Burke and Hayton. Is widening participation still ethical?. Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning. Vol 13, Number 1, April 2011.
\(^10\) Fair Access to Professional Careers, a progress report by the independent reviewer on social mobility and child poverty. May 2012.
\(^12\) 7 Key Truths About Social Mobility - The Interim report of the all-party parliamentary group on social mobility, 1 May 2012.
\(^13\) A longitudinal study tracking the lives of 19,000 children born in the UK in 2000/1 http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/page.aspx?&sitesectionid=851&sitesectiontitle=Welcome+to+the+Millennium+CohortsStudy
The Schwartz Report\textsuperscript{14} in 2004 brought fair access to the prominence, and provides the background to the current interest specifically in social mobility in the UK. The Schwartz report came about when the then secretary of state for education Charles Clarke, asked for an independent review of the options which English institutions offering HE should consider in assessing the merits of applicants for their courses. The report proposed five principles one of which was about minimising barriers to an applicant that are irrelevant to satisfying admission requirements, and suggested the use of contextual data, i.e., the educational context of an applicant’s formal achievement. The report also suggested the creation of a central resource of expertise and advice on admissions issues, which lead to the creation of the independent body Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA)\textsuperscript{15}, and suggested that a further review be undertaken three years later\textsuperscript{16}. The publication of Schwartz coincided with the channelling of large amounts of Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funding support for initiatives like Partnerships for Progression (P4P), Aimhigher and Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs), which will be discussed below. Lifelong learning networks in particular directly used and referenced the Schwartz review as the context within which justification progression agreements were developed.

Widening participation (WP) in the UK is defined as “improving the representation of under-represented students in Higher Education at the national level”. Currently the definition of under-represented is those people from lower socio-economic status (SES) groups, people from low income backgrounds (currently defined as less than £42,600), some ethnic groups and subgroups, disabled people, and people who have been in care\textsuperscript{17}. However, there are many problems associated with defining widening participation, not least because most of the definitions are made by governmental or government funded agencies and tend to become fixed in terms of under-representation.

The fundamental principles of ‘WP’ policy have been implied in UK policy for several decades and were first evident in the Robbins report of 1963. Robbins set out a clear vision of the purpose of Higher Education in the UK, and effectively democratised the existing classical model of what a university is, by expanding and opening out the system to others in society, as well as the social elite. The report also coined the Robbins principle: “that university places should be available to all who are qualified for them by ability and attainment\textsuperscript{18}. Crosland in 1965 developed this “policy” further by suggesting the development of a binary system of polytechnics, delivering professional and vocationally relevant qualifications, alongside universities. Ultimately this was with the aim of supporting a greater diversity of learners by recognising that, at the time, women and some ethnic minorities were under-represented in higher level learning.

\textsuperscript{14} Fair Admissions to Higher Education: recommendations for good practice. Admission to higher education steering group. (September 2004).
\textsuperscript{15} http://www.spa.ac.uk/about-us/background.html [Retrieved 19/07/2012.
\textsuperscript{16} Fair Admissions to Higher Education: a review of the implementation of the Schwartz report principles three years on. (December 2008).
\textsuperscript{17} The WP definition is taken from the latest Access Agreements publication from the Office of Fair Access (OFFA), as is the definition for under-represented groups.
\textsuperscript{18} Citizenship was first referenced by Robbins, as being something which HE can affect. The GLAS project will examine Community and Civic Engagement in Year 2.
The Dearing report in 199719 paved the way for specific public policy on WP in Higher Education (HE) and resulted in HEFCE earmarking a portion of the public monies (from the teaching and learning grant) given to Higher Education institutions, for the sole purpose of helping HEIs develop a strategic approach to widening participation that relates to the “whole life cycle of the student in HE”20. These are funds which recognise the extra costs associated with teaching and learning when recruiting certain types of students, and includes those currently under-represented in HE. This is known as the WP allocation and came into effect in 1999, and has been in existence ever since21, although in the current raft of HE reforms and austerity measures reference has been made to the uncertainty of this funding stream in the future.

In 2009, the government made it a requirement that WP was embedded within the core business of universities or colleges, by instructing HEFCE to request Widening Participation Strategic Assessments (WPSAs). These high level strategic documents were an opportunity for institutions to demonstrate and take credit for the work they do in WP and show how it is embedded within institutional mission and policies. WPSAs themselves have a 3 year shelf life, but what is also required is an annual monitoring report and a detailed evaluation measuring the actual outcomes (both foreseen and unforeseen) of the work, as well as the number of activities undertaken. In addition to the WP allocation, HEFCE began funding explicit WP projects and initiatives, like the Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) and Aimhigher which will be described in the next section.

Finally, the Higher Education Act (2004) deserves mention as it led to the introduction of variable tuition fees in 2006/7. Higher level study would (in 2006/7) cost approx. £2,000-£3,000 per annum22, which necessitated the creation, by the Labour government, of the independent Office for Fair Access (OFFA)23. In a similar situation to today’s climate, created by some HEIs charging £9,000 per annum for 2012/3, the concern then was that the introduction of variable tuition fees would deter potential students from entering higher education, particularly those from lower SES groups. OFFA required institutions wishing to charge more than £1,200 per annum (in 2006/7) to write an “Access Agreement”, which detailed a variety of information and support strategies aimed at widening participation to non-traditional learners. In 2012/13 the requirements for an access agreement is set at fees in excess of £6,000 per annum. OFFA do this by approving and annually monitoring access agreements, which set out tuition fee levels and state the measures that they will put in place to ensure that their fees wouldn’t deter potential students. Access agreements are in the public domain (unlike WPSAs described above). A new head of OFFA has recently been appointed; Professor Les Ebdon has taken up this post in Sept 2012 and has suggested that he will use as much

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19 1997 also saw the publication of the Kennedy report, which looked at the effect which the process of “incorporation” and the increased marketisation had had on FE. It was to look at the nature of participation in FE and to explore ways of increasing entry rates, however, it reported that there was a need in FE to widen participation, not simply increase it, as marketisation had led to the exclusion of lower socio-economic group individuals. Replacing competition with collaboration and cooperation was suggested as well as stronger links with community (Jary and Jones, ref)


21 In 2012/13 HEFCE allocated £140.4 million for widening participation; in 2011/12 this was £142 million; in 2010/11 this was £144 million; in 2009/10 this was £143 million; in 2008/9 this was £364 million; and in 2007/08 this was £354 million.

22 This was an increase from £1,000 per annum which was the range in tuition fees from 1998-2004.

23 In addition an organisation called Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) was set up, as already mentioned, to continue the development of fair admissions, to disseminate examples of good practice and was similarly independent of government.
power as he has to ensure that HEIs take appropriate measures to widen participation. It remains to be seen what effect the new UK fee regime has on recruitment broken down by social class and gender. However, it is clear that the perception of the cost of higher education will continue to be a very important factor, possibly more important than the actual cost in the context of increasing access and widening participation. People from lower socio-economic groups are likely to consider the cost-benefit ratio of investment in HE in a different way to those from more comfortable backgrounds.

2.2 The Dutch context

A large part of the discussion about social mobility in the Netherlands is being conducted from the perspective of ethnicity. On January 1 2006, there were more than three million first and second generation immigrants in the Netherlands (CBS, 2006). In a country of almost 17 million people, this means that almost 20% of the population is an immigrant or native born from at least one foreign born parent. Immigrant groups in the Netherlands are commonly classified into four categories. The first category comprises immigrants who started to come to the Netherlands as ‘guest workers’ during the 1960s, mainly from Turkey and Morocco, but also from Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy. A second category of immigrants came from the former colonies of the Netherlands: Indonesia, Suriname and the Netherlands’ Antilles. The third category of immigrants is more recent and contains refugees, from countries such as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia. Many immigrants in the Netherlands belong to the fourth category, namely those of ‘other’ western origin. This heterogeneous category includes (the children of) immigrants from neighbouring countries – Germany, Belgium, the UK – but also from North America, Asia, the Pacific, and other regions. In recent times, the Netherlands has gained a large group of migrants from new EU countries, Poland in particular.

Another issue that concerns social mobility is the fact that the big cities in the Netherlands like many other European cities, but also cities like Toronto and New York City, are facing the stage of becoming more and more so called majority-minority cities (Maurice Crul). A city like Amsterdam has this profile with many minority groups and a native Dutch group that is also turning into a minority in terms of numbers. The ethnic diversity, however, is just one dimension and characteristic of a majority minority city. Another characteristic is the gap between the “haves” and “have nots”. Groups who belong to the “have nots” are often excluded from opportunities to fully participate in local metropolitan economies. Higher education is a ticket to a better future for the individual and his or her family and an opportunity for social and economic upward mobility. Metropolitan areas are able to flourish and grow if there is enough human capital with the necessary qualifications and skills, but often also the necessary cultural and social capital. The question is whether the

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24 Les Ebdon’s appointment was met with some highly inappropriate and personal reporting in the UK media. This is perhaps an example of the mis-representation of WP in the press and wider media, for political means, and therefore the mis-understanding of such terms amongst the general public. This issue will be addressed further in the staff training section.

25 Fran Ferrer from the European Access Network presented her work at the London mobility 17-18th May – slides can be found in Appendix A.
educational infrastructure is diversity proof and in fact able to capitalise on a large hidden potential of young men and women to enter higher education, but also the many men and women who have gained a lot of experience in the labour market but were never able to learn and acquire new skills, competencies and qualifications. Reaching out to new groups is an opportunity to fill the gaps and demands of the labour market and to invest in a labour market force for the near and long term future of these cities.

The labour market participation of non-western migrants is relatively low compared to their native Dutch counterparts with regard to both quantity and quality. The least educated migrants are twice as likely to be unemployed (16%) as the highly educated (9%). Minorities in the Netherlands apparently don’t bring the expected social and cultural capital that is needed on the job market. There is a strong correlation with social background. However, many highly educated migrants are often seen as both promising and disadvantaged. The perspective is the beckoning promise that higher education provides access to the privileges of the higher social strata. However, there is more to it than just a high level of education to access to these environments, or to turn the education into a suitable job quickly and successfully. The best opportunities have been given to those with parents who were already on their way up the ladder, if necessary halfway. Their cultural and social capital has played an important role at crucial moments, such as the transition from school to work.

The educational level of successive birth cohorts has risen almost without interruption. In both previous and subsequent cohorts the level of education will gradually increase.

However, for native Dutch men, a change is reflected in upward educational mobility: in recent cohorts there is less upward mobility and more downward mobility. The downward mobility of young men from a high achieving educational background has increased. Highly educated men don’t succeed as often anymore in passing on their “educational capital” to their sons. It seems that the now sizeable highly educated environment slowly disintegrates into a promising and less promising segment. The upward mobility of men from a secondary educational background remained virtually unchanged in successive cohorts, despite the overall growth of education participation. The upward mobility of men from the lower educational backgrounds initially increased, but there’s still a small group of men who remain unable to rise above the unskilled environment.

For women and girls there is hardly a sign of change to more downward mobility. Thanks to emancipation the great downward mobility from the higher education circles that characterized the pre-war generations of women has been significantly reduced. Simultaneously, the upward mobility of women from the primary and secondary education environment has greatly increased. In recent birth cohorts women have outdone men on all fronts: an increase from the lower educational backgrounds and less decrease from the higher educational backgrounds.

An interesting characteristic of Dutch (higher) educated females is that the Netherlands has the lowest share of full time working females. Dutch females choose to work part time rather than full time and therefore exclude themselves from career possibilities. Women apparently don’t have to work full time economically speaking and most of the women are often in a double earning relationship.

Women’s employment shows a strong correlation with their education level: the lower the education level, the lower their labour market participation and the fewer hours they work per
Whereas it can almost be taken for granted that women with a high education level will be in employment, this is definitely not the case for lower educated women, where the ratio of working/not working is precisely 50/50. Among lower educated women, Turkish Dutch and Moroccan Dutch women, in particular, are well known for their low labour participation rate (around 30% in 2007).

Equality and equity are important characteristics of the Dutch educational system. The policy aims at inclusion of all children. This becomes clear in the accessibility of education. Almost all children in the age range of 5-14 (99%) are participating in education. The OECD however concluded in 2007: *For those who have the right preparation, are the right age, and have the right kind of family situation, there are abundant opportunities within the tertiary education system of the Netherlands. But potential students from underserved groups who lack necessary language skills, educational preparation, or have no family members to support them, have more difficulty entering the system.*” Country Review of Dutch Tertiary Education (2007). It seems likely that this conclusion would be equally applicable to all partner countries.

The Dutch educational system can be characterized as highly stratified, with many different tracks at various levels of schooling. It is also strongly vocationally specific, with vocationally oriented tracks at lower secondary, upper secondary and tertiary level. An important choice of secondary school type is made after primary school at age twelve, although many schools offer one or two ‘bridge years’ that postpone this schooling decision. Still, the choice made has many implications for further options in the future educational career. Comparative European research of the TIES (The Integration of the European Second generation project) network shows that the Dutch early tracking system at age twelve is a barrier for equitable participation.

In principle, access to higher education in itself is not the main obstacle in the Netherlands. Higher education in the Netherlands is offered with two types of institutions: research universities and universities of applied sciences. Research universities include general universities, universities specialising in engineering and agriculture and the Open University, providing distance higher education. Universities of applied sciences include general institutions as well as institutions specializing in a specific field such as agriculture, fine and performing arts or teacher training. Whereas research universities are primarily responsible for offering research-oriented programmes, universities of applied sciences are primarily responsible for offering programmes of higher professional education, which prepare students for specific professions or competencies. These tend to be more practice oriented than programmes offered by research universities. There are about 41 universities of applied sciences and 13 research universities. The figure below shows the development of enrolment in higher education as a total and by type of higher education. This figure shows a growth from 50% to 60% of participation in ten years in the age-group 18-20 years old. The growth is mainly caused by the growth in enrolment in higher professional education. This type of higher education is also seen as an ‘emancipation route’ or upward mobility.
New data (CBS 2011) shows that the growth of participation in higher education in the last few years was caused by a more than average growth of female students and of non-western ethnic minority students. The number of non-western ethnic minority students had doubled in the 2007/08 academic year compared with 1995/96.

Lately the higher education system was subject to review for instance through the country review reports of the OECD. In 2010 a national committee (Commissie Veerman) appointed by the Government developed important strategic advice for the Government and higher education institutions. The main question was what the Netherlands could do to make higher education more sustainable for the future, given the ambition of the Dutch Government to belong to the top 5 most competitive (knowledge) economies in the world. The most important conclusion of the committee is that the current system is not future proof. Their advice is to invest in and focus on the quality and diversity of Dutch higher education. The premise is that the quality across the full spectrum of higher education and research should be raised.

Though higher education is set up well in the basics, the system has too many weaknesses to realize the high ambitions of the Netherlands. Some of the weaknesses, which have been mentioned by the committee, are:

- The Netherlands does not do well with regard to life-long learning. The capacity achieved is weak. Lifelong learning needs better policies.
- Participation in higher education is unbalanced. Students from socio-economically deprived backgrounds are under-represented, as well as migrant and older students.
- The basic quality of education is good. But there are still many weaknesses and the potential of talent is not fully realised. The way education is organized is not appealing to a lot of students. The dropout rate is high. In particular, the difference in study success between migrant and
native Dutch students is big. In addition the connection between vocational, secondary and higher education demands extra attention. Students also don’t feel challenged enough and there are not enough programmes for excellent students.

- The connection to the labour market is good except for science and technology graduates. The shortages in that sector are persistent. Professions are becoming less specific and graduates must be agile in the labour market. This creates a greater need for generic skills and broad educational programmes. From an employment perspective, the question is whether or not the education provided is too narrow in nature.

2.3 The Spanish context

In Spain, the social mobility and widening participation agenda has been affected by the last European higher education reforms. In the Bergen Communiqué (May, 2005), EU ministers enlarged their priorities for 2007 to include reinforcing the social dimension; in the London Ministerial meeting, held on 17 and 18 May 2007, ministers pledged to implement and report on national strategies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to evaluate their effectiveness; and finally, in the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial meeting, held on 28 and 29 April 2009, ministers agreed that each country should set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing the participation of under-represented social groups in higher education by the end of the next decade. So, somehow, Spanish social mobility and widening participation agenda is a product of the Bologna process.

In Spain, the purpose and scope of primary and secondary education has broadened from an original focus on elite development to a system of universal education. In parallel, the Catalan university has gone from being an elite institution to being a “democratized university” in which access becomes a right rather than a privilege. The (geographical) expansion of the higher education institutions has facilitated the access of people of lower socio-economic level. As primary and secondary school systems are very inclusive, widening participation at tertiary level has been relatively easy and people from the working-class have been able to achieve a graduate degree. Figure 1 shows that the majority of graduates have parents who, at the most, have a primary education (40.1%), while the rest are divided approximately equally between parents with a secondary education and those with a higher education.

The Catalan universities are heterogeneous with regard to the parental occupational status and level of education of graduates. Other data of Planas and Fachelli study demonstrate that centres that bring together more graduates with families with primary education are the University of Girona –UdG- (46%), Universitat Rovira i Virgili –URV- (44%) and the University of Lleida –UdL- (42%). In the University of Barcelona, parents with a primary education are slightly over-represented, in the Autonomous University of Barcelona there is a slight over-representation of parents with both a higher level of education and a high occupational status, and in the Pompeu Fabra University parents

\[^{26}\text{Inclusive strategies, such as the non-segregation of students by language established by the Autonomous Government of Catalonia, have increased the social mix of students within schools and could have had a positive impact on social mobility.}\]
with a high level of studies and occupational status are over-represented. This shows that the universities outside of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (UdG, URV and UdL) have played a key role in the social democratisation of the higher education system in Catalonia.

*Figure 1. Highest occupational level of the parents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents’ highest level of education</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Grouped into 3 categories</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both have a primary education or no studies at all</td>
<td>4,908</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>Up to primary education</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One has a secondary education</td>
<td>1,828</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>With a secondary education</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both have a secondary education</td>
<td>1,918</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One has a higher education</td>
<td>2,054</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>With a higher education</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both have a higher education</td>
<td>1,524</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12,232</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Planas and Fachelli (2010, p.26)

When looking at parents’ occupational status, the above results are duplicated. The universities with more students from families with a low occupational status are the University of Lleida, with 40.5% of all its graduates, the University of Girona (38.4%), and Rovira i Virgili University (36.4%). Students at universities established in Barcelona tend to be from families with a higher occupational status. It can be concluded that having a university degree provides children with tools to gain access to jobs on a higher level than those of their parents, thus impacting social mobility.

There are important differences according to gender. Out of the total number of male children of parents with jobs in management, 44% had a job on the same level, whereas for females it was 33%. This situation is compensated by a larger proportion of females in skilled jobs (50% as to 36% of males). More male children of the professionally qualified had jobs in management (37.5%) compared to females of parents on this same level (29.2%). There was a higher number (53.8%) of female children of skilled workers doing the same jobs as their parents, as compared to 41.5% for males. Figure 2 shows that rather than strictly social mobility, the Catalan university is acting as an agent for occupational mobility between generations.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that females currently account for 60% of all university graduates, there are still two challenges directly related to gender discrimination: the unequal distribution across subject27 areas (see Figure 2), and the transfer of outcomes into employment opportunities. The main discrimination, between the lower academic outcomes and professional employment of female graduate, is seen to be due to the labour market gender segregation in Spain. Having gained

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27 There was a higher female presence mainly in the Health Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities. There was a similar proportion of males and females in Economics and Law, with the percentage of females being slightly higher. Experimental Sciences had an average figure and in Engineering and Architecture there was a higher proportion of males.
equality in educational terms, in terms of access and the increase in the rates of female participation on the different levels of education, it is the labour market that appears to be the most important bastion where gender inequality persists (Planas & Fachelli, 2010).

Figure 2. University graduate population by field of study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>18,701</td>
<td>18,954</td>
<td>15,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Juridical Sciences</td>
<td>114,960</td>
<td>109,220</td>
<td>96,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Sciences</td>
<td>34,721</td>
<td>14,946</td>
<td>12,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>21,618 (1999-2000)</td>
<td>23,066</td>
<td>22,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical area</td>
<td>34,147</td>
<td>43,383</td>
<td>41,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>202,529</td>
<td>209,569</td>
<td>187,276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data on both genders

Women’s percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>68.04</td>
<td>66.77</td>
<td>66.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Juridical Sciences</td>
<td>65.20</td>
<td>66.69</td>
<td>68.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Sciences</td>
<td>66.48</td>
<td>60.16</td>
<td>65.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>75.10 (1999-2000)</td>
<td>75.17</td>
<td>78.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical area</td>
<td>27.12</td>
<td>28.69</td>
<td>29.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>59.26</td>
<td>59.30</td>
<td>60.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: González García (2008, p.51)

In the area of science and technology the reality is not so encouraging, since although one of the objectives of Lisbon 2000 was to achieve gender equality in this type of studies, this aim will be achieved neither in Catalonia nor in Spain (AQU, 2010).

Today, HEIs in Spain are trying to diversify student population from the traditional first-time to students from diverse background (i.e., international students, returning students, students who want to up-grade). In May 2012, Universitat Rovira i Virgili approved a new strategic plan to diversify its student population (mainly recognising prior experiential learning), increasing programmes flexibility through a modular structure and establishing personalized learning itineraries. This

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28 In Spain, women’s earnings are below men’s earnings for all levels of educational attainment and age groups (OECD, 2009)
30 Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (AQU) (2010, March), Gender and the labour market outcomes of the university population in Catalonia, Barcelona: AQU.
31 See initiatives section 3 of this report.
strategic plan (established under the Sirus project) represents a definitive commitment towards widening participation strategies. Provisions for students who prefer or need to study part-time, combining work and family responsibilities with study, are limited in Spanish tertiary education. So, this problem needs to be addressed.

The report The Autonomous Region of Catalonia: Self-Evaluation Report evaluates the role played by HEIs in social development and social mobility. This role is accomplished through a diverse range of actions.

1. The Catalan scholarship system (complementary to the state scholarship system) is formed by the scholarships, grants and loans. These scholarships and grants are to make tertiary education more equitable. In addition, most of the Catalan universities have their own grants and scholarships. Through some of them (“collaboration grants”) students can collaborate with various bodies of the university or external entities that have signed collaboration agreements with the university and, in exchange, they receive financial assistance. However, it is worth remarking that Spain, and in extension Catalonia, are at the tail-end of EU-countries in relation to scholarship resources. It is also necessary to emphasize the challenge that higher education institutions are going to face in the coming years: the rise of students from immigrant backgrounds who are now in secondary schools. However, this change will only take place in higher education if the Catalan and Spanish education systems overcome the problem of school failure, which is especially high among immigrant students.

2. The Catalan HEIs assume inclusion goes far beyond open access without economic restrictions. Therefore, HEIs also make an effort to guarantee that everyone can gain access in equal conditions. To realize this objective they develop active policies that facilitate the entry of groups with access difficulties of any kind. There are three existing levels on which Catalan HEIs develop an active role in the promotion of social inclusion.

   a. Through actions, programmes and policies which guarantee the access and inclusion of any potential student. Some examples of these types of actions and programmes are related to the access for people with reduced mobility, disabilities or special needs (such as programmes for the elimination of architectural barriers, Personal Orientation Service, or the UAB programme that facilitates the access to higher university studies for the non-EU immigrants).

   b. Through training offered by the HEIs to society as a whole, which is forever growing in intensity. One example is the university extension courses for the general population or specifically for older people that almost all Catalan universities offer (see Spanish case study related to this core theme)

   c. As active agents within society intervening in it through the study of reality and the development of policies or through putting concrete programmes and actions into

32 European University Association (http://www.eua.be)
place. It is worth highlighting the Social Inclusion Chair \(^{34}\) created in URV dedicated to analysing and developing policies for social cohesion and integration.

3. National initiatives to encourage social mobility and widening participation

All GLAS partner countries have pursued initiatives aimed at improving social mobility and facilitating the participation of under-represented groups in higher level learning. This section considers recent initiatives. It is worth reiterating that many of these initiatives were funded with money allocated prior to the global recession.

In the UK, in addition to the Widening Participation allocation described in the previously section, the last twenty years has seen a variety of initiatives which were designed in what was, with the benefit of hindsight, a “time of plenty” in terms of funding for widening participation.

**Aimhigher** – a national programme designed to raise the awareness, aspiration and attainment of young people through activities such as university taster sessions and summer schools began in 2004, developed from the Partnerships for Progression (P4P) projects. The achievements of Aimhigher were acknowledged by the new coalition government in 2010 \(^{35}\). However, ministers announced an end to the funding in 2010/11, instead putting an emphasis on embedding the learning and best practice from the previous years, whilst launching a series of new initiatives designed to have an impact earlier on in a learner’s school career: the £2.5 billion pupil premium and the £150 million National Scholarship Programme. There is evidence that Aimhigher raised aspirations among the low socio-economic groups. However, there are a variety of reasons why the lowest SES do not choose to apply to HE or do not get in, probably based on attainment but also dependent on opportunities or access afforded by social capital. So despite the desire they lack the opportunity \(^{36}\).

In 2010, there was concern within the HE sector that without an unbiased national scheme the danger would be that individual institution’s outreach efforts would become non-collaborative and in fact competitive as individual universities would be more focussed on recruitment, should the higher fees regime reduce the total number of applicants. Such fears were compounded because the ending of Aimhigher coincided with drastic cuts to Connexions, which was intended to be a personalised and student centred independent Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) service set up in 1999 to reduce social exclusion amongst young people \(^{37}\), and assist them in making informed career choices.

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\(^{34}\) Associate partner of the GLAS consortium.


\(^{36}\) Trends in young participation in higher education: core results for England. HEFCE Issues Paper January 2010/03.

*Lifelong Learning Networks or LLNs were set up specifically to bring greater clarity, coherence and certainty to vocational progression opportunities*. First mooted during a keynote by Sir Howard Newby in 2004 (now Vice Chancellor of the University of Liverpool and who was the CEO of HEFCE 2001-2006), and supported by evidence such as Little and Connor (2005)\(^{38}\), they were set up to provide the infrastructure changes within and between the FE and HE sectors which would enable the vocational learners who had had their aspirations raised by Aimhigher and other outreach initiatives to actually progress onto higher level study. Despite evidence of successes\(^{39}\)\(^{40}\)\(^{41}\), government funding ended in 2010/11. Of the 31 LLNs which were originally set up across England, five still exist in various forms, one of which is Linking London which is now funded via partner subscriptions. A fundamental difference between Aimhigher and LLNs was that the former was primarily focused on widening participation through stimulating demand for HE while LLNs were more focused on the supply side through progression agreements and curriculum development.

In addition the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), was a financial scheme for full time students and those taking unpaid work based learning aged between 16-19, which encouraged students to stay on after compulsory education. £560 million was spent on this since 2004. Several studies found it to be an important factor in the retention of certain types of learners, however, it was axed in 2010, and a more targeted £180 million bursary scheme directed at less wealthy persons is planned. Some critics are concerned that it will miss out a large proportion of individuals.

In The Netherlands there have been major policy developments in the past twenty years in higher education initiated by the department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. When it comes to specific policy, affirmative action has been part of the Dutch history and tradition in policy and practice. In primary and secondary education specific policy targeted at improving participation of ethnic minorities was part of major national strategies on integration policy. Only higher education did not have a specific policy since ethnic minority students were hardly present in higher education until the beginning of the nineties. Apart from that, developing specific policy like affirmative action was not really seen as ‘appropriate’ in the culture of higher education. The prevailing culture was one which held that merit only was the means to participate in higher education and not affirmative action programmes to create more opportunities to many who were under-represented. This is probably a universal sensitivity in many European countries. But since economies expected a decline in higher education graduates a search for talent among under-represented groups was a new strategy for national and local Governments.

In the previous years the government funded a lot of projects and organizations with the aim to improve the social mobility of specific target groups by widening participation initiatives. Below is a selection of initiatives, which were set up in the last two decades to increase the opportunities for specific groups.


\(^{41}\) Summative evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Network Programme. A report to HEFCE by SQW. November 2010.
ECHO, Expertise center for diversity policies, was one of the national initiatives founded in the nineties of the last century to enhance the social mobility of minority ethnic groups by creating opportunities for participation in higher education. The groups that were seen as ethnic minorities were in fact students from non-western countries – in particular students of Suriname, the Dutch Antilles, the Mediterranean countries like Turkey and Morocco and students who came as political refugees. In 2002 ECHO decided to develop its focus from ethnic minorities to a broader concept of diversity, responding to negative associations with the Dutch multicultural society and realizing the effect preconceived notions may have on the educational and professional careers of migrant students. With that ECHO evolved from fully funded by the government to an independent non-profit organization, changing its name from “National Center of Expertise on Ethnic Minorities” to “Expertise Center Diversity Policy”. However, ECHO has always maintained a strong collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and was therefore consulted for advice and project management in major policy developments in the area of improving participation and attainment of ethnic minority students. Diversity policy in primary and secondary education was always very much developed from a notion of deficiencies of youngsters. Their cultural background was not seen as a strength but as a problem. Low expectations of these children were reflected in their results in school. ECHO tries to break through this pattern and works with the concept of ‘high expectations and high levels of support’ (pedagogy of excellence, see section 4, curriculum below and appendix E). ECHO found some models of good practice from the US and presented them as sources of inspiration. These models were implemented in the projects ECHO was consulted on by the Government. Some of these good practices, visions on individual and institutional level were translated to the Dutch context.

The model that was chosen to work with institutions is a network or platform model. ECHO serves as a centre for advice, expertise and engagement. ECHO supports institutions, especially project leaders with knowledge and experience based on good practice from abroad, on quantitative analysis of their institutional data on access and performance and on qualitative analysis. ECHO is also a catalyst between the Government, universities and other stakeholders. An important element in ECHO’s strategy is the personal engagement with different change agents in institutions and transparency in communication. The platforms created by ECHO function as learning communities of professionals with similar aims and challenges. ECHO organizes conferences, study tours abroad to learn from good practices elsewhere and to widen people’s scope and connect professionals with colleagues abroad who have a similar assignment and societal context. In addition ECHO engages with the corporate industry, building bridges between highly educated youngsters with a non-western background and predominantly white corporate companies looking for diverse and innovative teams. One of the initiatives to achieve this is the ECHO Foundation. This is a fund in which businesses participate through grants and sponsorship. It focuses on the creation of opportunities for talent development and social activities in relation to education and the labour market. The main objective of the ECHO Foundation is to structurally enhance the breeding ground of excellent migrant talent. The funds generated allow the development and implementation of two initiatives: the ECHO Award (an annual national encouragement prize for non-western migrant students in the Netherlands and focuses on their successes by making them visible to society) and the ECHO Ambassador Network.

The ECHO Ambassador Network consists of non-western migrant students and professionals who have been nominated for the ECHO Award throughout the years since 2001. ECHO Ambassadors
carry out the legacy of the ECHO Foundation and represent the beauty and success of a diverse society. Therefore ECHO is able to create a community of socially involved youngsters, varying from the age of 17 to 32, who are able to connect and build bridges between different worlds: family, school, work and society. They differ culturally but have a common vision for the multicultural society of the Netherlands. By facilitating exchange of knowledge and experiences ECHO is able to build a diverse community of future leaders.

The G5 grant (see appendix C) was created after a structural gap in attainment rates of non-western ethnic minority students at universities in the urban cities encouraged the executive boards of the five largest urban universities of applied sciences in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, to discuss this reality with the Ministry of education culture and science and lobby for more funding to reduce the attainment gap. The ministry acknowledged the situation and in a new strategic plan in 2007, a new arrangement was announced for these urban institutions.

Other national initiatives in The Netherlands include:

- **Handicap and Study** - an organization that focuses on widening participation of students with disabilities. This organization is still funded by the government.

- **University Assistance Fund (UAF)** - this is an organization for students who came as political refugees to the Netherlands and can apply for grants and support. The UAF is funded by the government as well.

- **Mozaïk** - this programme was funded from 2004 to 2011 and was focused on giving grants and support to ethnic minority PhD students to accomplish their PhD programme. This programme was very well received by the research universities because it wasn’t so much seen as an act of affirmative action, since students were selected for their excellence.

- **The National Platform Science & Technology** - this platform has been commissioned by the government, education and business sectors to ensure sufficient availability of people who have a background in scientific or technical education. The Platform therefore targets schools, universities, businesses, ministries, municipalities, regions and sectors. The objective is to ensure that the future supply of knowledge workers will meet the future demand.

- **SBO (Sectorbestuur Onderwijsarbeidsmarkt)** - a center of expertise concerning educational staff. The purpose of SBO is to survey the situation in the Dutch education labour market and to help resolve discrepancies in the supply and demand of labour. One of the most pressing issues in Dutch education today is a potential staff shortage as the current generation of teachers and school managers are aging. Another issue is how to make the teaching profession more appealing. For the urban area it’s a given that school management and teaching staff are by far not a representation of the diversity of society, especially when it comes to the ethnic diversity of staff. Funding of SBO ended in 2011.

In Spain, the Tertiary education sector has grown due to three main factors:

42 See Case Study 1 for further information.
The geographical decentralisation of public universities. This has led to a significant increase in the number of public universities, from 30 in 1985 to 50 in 2012. Today, each autonomous community offers university education, but there is still a low level of students’ mobility (only 10% of students leave their region to move to another community).

- The expansion of the non-university tertiary sector (or upper-VET programmes);
- The expansion in the fee-paying private universities sector: the number of graduates from private universities rose from 4.9% in 1996-97 to 12.4% in 2006-07. The number of private universities grew from 4 in 1987 to 29 in 2012.

Central and regional government’s strategy to make tertiary education more equitable can be summarized as follow:

- Financial assistance for low-income students through the national scholarship system and complementary schemes administrated by regional governments and universities; however funds are limited and have been reduced due to budget constraints.
- A policy of low tuition fee levels in public universities and no fees in higher vocational education.
- Expansion of the supply of tertiary programmes, with the creation of tertiary education institutions in each autonomous community. This has improved the geographic accessibility to tertiary education.
- Active policies of positive discrimination targeted at populations such as mature and disabled students complemented by policies to generate awareness of equity issues in particular in the area of gender equality. In Spain, under-representation in tertiary education is mostly linked to socio-economic status, disability, gender (with targeted groups being either men or women depending on the field of studies), age (mature versus typical higher education students) and, geographical region (i.e. rural areas in Catalonia). In practice, the use of special admission procedures and targeted scholarships and grants are more widespread than measures such as outreach programmes, the provision of guidance and counselling services. HEIs take responsibility for the organisation, and implementation of

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43 Fees vary by region and field of study (i.e. laboratory based courses such as engineering are more expensive than non-laboratory courses). Some agents argue that as fees per student vary significantly across autonomous communities the equity challenge will remain.

44 A fee has been introduced in Catalonia beginning in the academic year 2012-13.

45 These policies are complemented with institutional guides for academic support. On July 2012, Universitat Rovira i Virgili has approved a new guide for academics dealing with students with disabilities (see: http://www.urv.cat/la_urv/3_organs_govern/secretaria_general/links_conseill_govern/acords_conseill_sessions/sessio54/12_guia_atencio_estud_discapacitat.pdf; in Catalan). URV has also adapted its infrastructure. At the same time, through the Internet (see http://www.urv.cat/atencio_discapacitat/index.html) in Catalan which provides all the information a student with a disability might need (such as university access, the accessibility layouts of the different campuses, the leisure centres adapted for use by the disabled in the province of Tarragona, as well as available grants and financial aid.

46 Spain recognizes 3 categories of mature students – older than 25, 40 and 45 years – with different possibilities of taking into account professional experience for HE access. “The proportion of university students aged 26 and older in short and long cycle programs increased from 20.7% in 1997-98 to 30.9% in 2007-08” (OECD, 2009, p.76).

47 For example, the Autonomous Government of Catalonia offers annual grants for college students living in the rural areas of High Pyrenees, Aran and Solsonès.
many of these measures is delegated. In general, it can be said that access into higher education is widened by fostering the potential of students from under-represented groups and by providing them with adequate conditions for the completion of their studies.

- A valuable development is the establishment of positive discrimination intended to improve the access to tertiary education of under-represented groups. Autonomous communities must reserve a certain amount of places on all courses leading to official university degrees for the following student groups:
  - Students over 25 years of age: 1% to 3% of the places on all courses to obtain official university qualifications.
  - Students who have completed a higher vocational education course: 7% to 30% of the places, depending on the degree course.
  - Students with an officially accredited disability rating of at least 33%: 3% of the available places.

- In recent years, there has been a significant wave of immigration (South Americans are the main immigrant group, followed by EU citizens and Africans). As access to tertiary education is largely determined by outcomes in preceding levels of education, it is important to indicate that Spain has comparatively low rates of completion of upper secondary education (80% against an OECD average of 87% in 2005). Much of the inequities found in tertiary systems are rooted in factors experienced earlier in life, and are usually traced back to preceding levels of education. Thus, widening participation in higher education must be accompanied by measures to reduce drop-out rates in primary \(^{48}\) and secondary education.

Spain has also been very active in developing initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of equal opportunities for men and women. The LOU\(^ {49}\) reform in 2007 establishes equal representation of men and women on the governing and representation bodies of both private and public universities. An additional clause of the reform provides for the creation of “equality units” at all universities to carry out functions related to the principle of equality between men and women. The reform also includes the right to receive non-sexist treatment and the right to non-discrimination for reasons of sex, race, religion or disability.

Inclusive strategies, such as the ones established by the Autonomous Government of Catalonia, have increased the social mix of students within schools and might have had a long term impact on social mobility. As the OECD (2010) stated these strategies mitigate educational socioeconomic inequalities and raise social mobility. For example, as Catalan is the vehicular language in education, once immigrant children start attending school they find themselves in a programme of language immersion. This linguistic policy does not segregate students by language and, in turn, gives these children a chance for a better future. The escola catalana (Catalan school) integrates the pupils by making Catalan and Catalan culture the language and culture of their education. It is therefore a process of integration, both socially and through the use of language.

\(^{48}\) An example, focused on an ethnic group, is the 2010-2012 Action Plan for the Development of the Roma Population to promote Roma men’s and women’s continuing education beyond 16, to forment the eradication of illiteracy.

\(^{49}\) Decree 4/2007, of 12 of April, on University system reform.
To deal with the gender imbalance within STEM subjects several initiatives have been developed (e.g. starting in 2008 the Catalan Government created a plan, EnginyCAT\textsuperscript{50}, to promote engineering studies, addressing special attention to the presence of women. This mentoring programme objective was to guide new students in their adaptation process, and that was based on giving motivational support to new students and giving orientation to new students to develop academic and training tasks. (Though, this mentoring programme directed at last year students was concluded in 2012 after four years of activity, as the objectives were considered to be achieved.)

4. Curriculum, strategies and interventions

In the UK, the Access to HE qualifications\textsuperscript{51} or Access courses were first developed in the 1970s, originally as a method of encouraging the participation of people from a wider variety of backgrounds onto teacher training courses. They are level 3 (pre-HE courses) offered in the main by further education colleges, and popular with mature women and those likely to live in areas of low HE participation\textsuperscript{52}. Therefore they can be thought of as attracting the non-traditional student into a qualification specifically designed for progression to level 4, or widening participation “embedded within curriculum”. Access courses are now available in a number of subject areas and are targeted at mature learners (minimum age 19) who lack the usual qualifications for entry into HE, in order to prepare them for higher level study.

In terms of actual WP initiatives as described earlier, it is generally accepted that in order to be successful, WP “interventions” such as aspiration raising activities, summer schools, etc. should not be done in isolation to students, but should sit as one part of many different interventions (i.e. within the student cycle) as shown in Appendix A. In 2008, Action on Access produced a similar framework, for use in and across Aimhigher partnerships called the Higher Education Progression Framework\textsuperscript{53}. However, in practice while WP activities may form part of a series of interventions for the student prior to their application to HE, they are not entirely embedded within institutional practice and behaviour, from the perspective of staff involved in activity and their roles within their institution (or students once they have progressed onto HE), and have therefore not yet become core practice. WP still has the cultural status of an “initiative” in many institutions and therefore remains on the edge or the periphery of institutional awareness.

Practice on the periphery marginalises effectiveness and often means that the infrastructure/cultural climate/ key personnel within HEIs do not actually have to fully intellectually engage with them. Staff working in these areas tend to be on short term contracts, which without job security can encourage staff churn, which means that knowledge, development capability and

\textsuperscript{50} See \url{http://www.gencat.cat/economia/ur/ambits/universitats/enginycat/index.html} for detailed information (in Catalan)

\textsuperscript{51} \url{http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/default.asp}

\textsuperscript{52} Access to Higher Education. Key Statistics 2012.

expertise can be lost. Initiatives tend to run for the period during which the money is available and end abruptly when the funding finishes. The funding itself is separate, since 2003 the strategic development fund has been created to support innovation and change in higher education\(^{54}\). However, it is rare to find any actual long term strategy for embedding and sustaining projects of this type within organisations and by organisations, despite the best efforts of the personnel involved.

The Linking London publication, “The Progression Story”, stated in reference to vocational progression in 2011\(^{55}\), that in order to embed and sustain good practice in activities that are seen as outside of core business, strategic commitment must go hand in hand with operational buy in. In the same way widening participation champions, in senior roles should be identified and empowered within institutions, so that WP commitment is not lip service but embedded in institutional strategies and workplans. It is essential that data is gathered and activity evaluated, reviewed and communicated to staff and senior managers, in order to secure and maintain interest and buy in, and to support strategic planning.

At the London mobility there was some discussion of a “pipeline” model which envisaged a metaphorical pipeline as a conduit devised to provide and ensure that WP students could be accessed and recruited. The pipeline flow was fundamentally one way from students (demand) to HEI (supply). However, from this a more holistic model for the institutional development of WP was proposed. The “ringmain” model (appendix B) shows how WP can be seen as a highly textured corporate strategy that sees a wide range of approaches providing many possible engagements with potential students who may in turn engage with the institution through a wide and varied curriculum offer. The model presupposes a constant flow around the ringmain, akin to an electrical current, that energises a constantly reviewed interaction between the institutional supply side and the learner demand side of the model. It further presupposes that curriculum innovation and flexibility including work based learning and the use or APL are, in themselves, major WP tools and should be recognised as such within a broader re-conceptualising of the definition of WP for the 21\(^{st}\) century.

In The Netherlands Improving academic success and attainment is an important priority in the policy of the Ministry of Education Culture and Science and higher education institutions. The performance of non-western ethnic minority students is a major issue for developing interventions. There is more awareness that interventions should not only be focused on ‘changing’ students but should also focus on changing institutions. ECHO took this as a starting point in developing strategies to improve attainment, which in fact were more aimed at improving an inclusive and effective learning environment. In this vision two theoretical concepts are important: ‘the pedagogy of excellence’ and the ‘pedagogy of narratives’ (see case studies and staff resource pack for more detailed information). Both concepts were inspired by existing practices of the Academic Advancement Programme (AAP) of UCLA.

In ECHO’s conceptual framework, four levels of interventions are taken into account to develop an institutional strategy to improve attainment by creating an effective learning environment: Organization & Management, Faculty & Teaching staff, Curriculum & Students. The idea is that working towards inclusion means all levels need interventions to enhance a stimulating and effective

\(^{54}\) [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/invest/funds/sdf/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/invest/funds/sdf/)

learning environment but are also related to each other. The levels of interventions that are not easy and are often delayed or not taken into account in the first place is the level of Curriculum and Faculty & Teaching staff. The experience in the Netherlands is that institutions put a lot of effort in the level of Organization and Management and Students. The first response of institutions is always to assume that they need to change the students. Developing new curriculum and course content development is often a costly process in terms of staff time and money. The intervention level of Faculty & Teaching staff is the most difficult and sensitive area to encounter. Working towards an inclusive climate is implicitly asking for a change of attitude from professionals. A change that is inspired and stimulated by the awareness that the diversity of the student population is not a temporary situation but the reality. Quantitative results showed that institutions that had a policy towards inclusion are more successful in improving retention and attainment.

In 2006, 21 institutions committed to developing interventions and programmes to improve access and retention of non-western ethnic minority students. For some institutions it was a continuation of practice. For some institutions it was a new journey without knowing the outcome. Much has been accomplished and even more important there is a great sense of awareness and potential for further development. The institutions in the urban areas committed themselves to a new process with the G5 Grant. All institutions encountered a number of dilemmas.

- **The dilemma of generic versus specific:** Specific policy and targeted aims often evoke resistance. But it appears that generic measures alone are ineffective. Institutions need a combination of both types of policies and practice to be able to serve and accommodate all students.

- **The dilemma of commitment and support:** Internal commitment and support is a key condition for successful change. The role and mandate that the project leader has within an organization will be more effective if important stakeholders in the organization support new developments. Often the interests of different stakeholders conflict. The commitment of the executive board is not sufficient but necessary for funding and long term strategy. It’s most effective when there is top down as well as a bottom up process happening at the same time.

- **The dilemma of the autonomy of the academic departments:** There is great autonomy of academic departments, especially at research universities in the Netherlands. Involving the faculty from the departments and the leadership of a department is often as important as having commitment of the executive board.

- **The dilemma of priority:** To what extent do institutions see diversity policy as a priority depends on how diversity is viewed within the organisation. The more rooted diversity is at multiple levels within institutions, interventions will be better embedded within mainstream processes, and the more successful institutions will become. In the case of limited funding it will be difficult to prioritize. How will the money be allocated among students, faculty and management?

- **The dilemma of continuity:** The continuity of the acquired knowledge and experience would ideally require another separate project period. Since continuation is most unlikely it is important to include the long term strategy in the design of the project, make sure that there will be commitment as well after a project is finished. Most of the projects should ideally be embedded in mainstream programmes and processes.
Most interventions were designed primarily to respond to a good academic preparation:

- Universities developed partnerships with secondary schools in their region. These are primarily multi-cultural secondary schools and regional training centres with a large critical mass of minority students. These are also often schools with young people whose parents have no tertiary education and therefore students have a different orientation process.
- Students were involved as role models to provide good information for potential students. To be better informed about the aims of different courses but also to inform students on the expectations of universities of new students. These interventions have helped many new students since potential students are already engaged with peers from their future university through these activities.
- The choice of study is one of the main defining elements for successful retention within the Dutch context. Many interventions before entering higher education focus on this aspect. In supporting students making the right choice it is important to take their personal reality at home, in their community, into account. Each student brings his or her own social and cultural capital. The context and combination of socio-economic background, educational background, personal environment, ethnic background, geographic origin in the Netherlands (urban or not) influences the development of this capital of young people and consequently the development of social identity of an individual.
- An important element in these projects was the aim of developing interventions to engage with parents since parents are important in the process of influencing students to make the right choice of study. Since many parents never went to college the preference to certain university courses was more or less influenced by images of certain professions in the home country. Status of professions seems to play an important role. In the past the Erasmus University organized many activities by inviting parents for information sessions in their own language which were organized by students from the same communities.
- The aim of involving parents in the intake process is also meant to engage and help them learn about the context students come from. In the course of the project, experiences abroad have shown that engaging with communities where students come from does matter, but not necessarily by engaging only with parents. Involving students as role models is another option.

In the Spanish context it is undeniable, taking into account the high unemployment rates, especially amongst young people, caused by the labour market imbalance and the high drop-out rates (from primary to secondary education) (see 2011 BBVA56 report), that public interventions must focus on widening participation in all spheres of education system, reducing school failure and drop out.

The failure school phenomenon in Spanish education system has not been indifferent to the immigration phenomenon (in a decade, the percentage of total population with foreign nationality raised from slightly more than 1% in 1996 to 12%); although from 2011 the migration rate has

inverted its positive trend. The work of Fernández-Macías et al. (2010) allows us to check how the inclusion of immigration population did affect the school failure and drop-out rates and how these rates are lower amongst female population (see figure below). The latter situation is partially explained by the higher opportunity cost of post-compulsory secondary education during the economic growth period. A lot of young people (mainly men) dropped out of school for a non-qualified but well paid job.

Figure. School failure and drop-out by sex and by inclusion or exclusion of foreign population

Source: Adapted from Fernández Macias et al. (2010, p. 320)

To fight the drop-out, the Spanish Government set up the Initial Professional Qualification Programme, with the objective of encouraging the permanence of certain population groups within the education system, aimed at students older than 15 without the Certificate in Compulsory Secondary Education (previous to Upper Secondary Education). But one year after approving changes in this programme, the Spanish government presented on 20th September 2012 a new

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58 The school failure rate refers to the people living in the Spanish territory that, once they have finished their studies, they have not obtained the minimum compulsory education; the drop-out rate to the people that have not finished Upper Secondary education; at the ages between 18 and 24, compared to the whole population with this age, with data by EPA.

59 Changed from 16 to 15 years old by Royal Decree 1146/2011, 29th July. This decree also establishes the possibility for students who finish Primary Education but do not the Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate to obtain from the centre an official certificate stating their education and the level attained in basic competences and an orientation report about their academic and professional options.
education reform that creates a Basic Vocational Training, with duration of two years, which will be compulsory and will replace the Initial Professional Qualification Programme. Other core issues of the reform are: state-wide assessment tests at the end of Primary, Compulsory and Upper Secondary Education, besides a test in 3rd year of Primary School for early detection of learning difficulties in students. The Compulsory and Upper Secondary Education tests will be compulsory to obtain these Certificates. The choice of Vocational Training or Upper Secondary Education is brought forward to 3rd year of Compulsory Secondary Education.

This will be the 13th reform of the education system in Spain. From 1980, 12 organic laws about education have been passed in Spain, including LGE in 1970 that regulated all the education system and was in force until the beginning of the eighties. Seven of them have ruled the compulsory education and five of them were made to reform it; four have ruled the University Studies and one, Vocational Training. At this stage it may be interesting to consider the possible connection between all these reforms and the failure of the system.

In Catalonia, and in a different course of action, the Catalan government established60, for the period 2007-201061, an additional financial improvement subject to the achievement of strategic objectives in three fields: research, teaching and management. Amongst the rates related to teaching it is worth noting the rate of academic performance of the graduate, master and doctorate students, which relates part of the financing of public universities to performance objectives. This public policy was transferred by the Catalan universities to the quinquennial teaching assessment62 systems of teaching staff, establishing the academic performance rate63 amongst the rates that assess the teaching activity. At the same time, the URV, for instance, includes in its strategic planning and in the programme-contract64 with the centres the performance rate as a rate related to the funds the centres receive from the URV budget. In this way, by the means of economic incentives, the commitment of the governing bodies, the centres and the staff is ensured. However, this policy still has critics both inside and outside the university system.

For academic year 2012-13, the Catalan Government has raised, up to an average of 37.5%, the fees of public universities. At the same time a new grant system has been set up, called Beques Equitat65 (Equity Grants), to ensure that nobody is prevented from going to the university due to economic reasons. A 25% of the new incomes obtained with the raise of the fees will be allocated to these grants, which will give reduction on the fees on the basis of the family incomes. This will only be available for the first registration, which means they are also related to academic performance. Other measures launched for this course include the possibility of paying by instalments or to obtain loans in favourable conditions.

60 Council Agreement of 10th October 2006 about the «Funding Plan for the improvement of public Catalan universities».
61 From 2011 on this system is in crisis, as the Catalan government has not fulfilled its funding commitment with universities and has drastically cut out the contribution year by year. Nonetheless, the concern about the academic performance is clearly seen in all levels.
62 This evaluation is linked with the variable salary of the teaching staff.
63 In URV this system was approved by the Governing Council on the 30th October 2007 -
64 A program-contract links the funding of the centre with the consecution of its objectives.
This last measure illustrates how the widening participation strategies in Spanish Higher Education are focused on policies based mainly in terms of economic measures, and a commitment to ensure that groups of people willing and determined to go to university are not prevented from doing so for economic reasons. An outreach approach or measures aimed at specific communities that do not normally reach Higher Education have not been widely explored yet.

5. Staff Training

There are similar approaches and gaps in specific training opportunities for staff engaged in social mobility and widening participation within the English and Dutch contexts.

In the UK, despite the increasing interest in government policy on widening participation over recent years, opportunities for staff working in this area to update and maintain knowledge and skills have been largely provided non-formally via publications and resources. This is very similar to the situation in The Netherlands. Informal learning opportunities have also been provided via staff events, conferences and workshops organised by Lifelong Learning Networks (in the UK), Aimhigher partnerships (UK), Action on Access, other bodies including the European Access Network and ECHO (the GLAS project partner) themselves.

ECHO’s main function (as described in the previous section) is to work directly with institutions in order to bring about cultural change, so this involves informal learning opportunities but also more formalised training opportunities through participation in in-house training events and study tours. One method used by ECHO in this role is the “platform model” which is described further in the Staff Resource Pack.

Linking London, as an ex-LLN working in the English system for the almost seven years has no knowledge of specific formal training or qualifications for practitioner staff working in the areas of widening participation or social mobility in the UK, despite being active for many years in the sector. This indicates a lack of specific and relevant provision; in addition, an internet search of “widening participation training opportunities” provides no results for private providers of training. Linking London has addressed this by producing Masters level modules on Admissions and the use of APEL, to facilitate access for a broader, more diverse student body. However, on a national basis the lack of recognised, professional, accredited training available to WP practitioners perhaps indicates the current level of importance placed on it at a strategic level in institutions and government.

In England, as more funding will be available within institutions for WP activity through the tripling of tuition fees (see next section), observers within the sector may notice from 2012/3, that more institutions commit more funds to developing staff in this way to aid the student experience, and therefore their market appeal. In order to provide that support, other education institutions or private providers might start to develop such training and development opportunities, if it cannot be provided in-house.

67 http://www.actiononaccess.org/resources/publications
68 http://www.actiononaccess.org/ - The national support, coordination for WP in the UK
Hudson and Pooley also note that most staff training for widening participation practitioners occurs informally at workshops and conferences, though some formal qualifications are offered by HEIs, which are theoretically accessible to WP practitioners.\(^{69}\) Their report funded by the Higher Education Academy\(^{70}\) in the UK, includes a comprehensive scoping of what provision was available in 2006. The report identified a need for further development and support of practitioners, a view which was supported by senior managers who took part in the study themselves. It also found that the majority of practitioners would like “their learning accredited in order to accumulate credit leading to a professional or academic qualification”.

Interestingly this study also demonstrated that despite over half of respondents (n=276) commenting that they felt integrated within their institution, a “very vocal” (in terms of the content of the open ended comments) 10% of respondents felt that their work was not recognised, integrated or valued by their institution. From their comments, the authors of the paper conclude that the people who work in WP roles come from very wide and diverse backgrounds and experiences, some from WP backgrounds themselves and thus feel very passionately about their roles. Some practitioners do not feel integrated or recognised by their institutions, which probably limits the training and development activities both offered and taken up by individuals.

Perhaps this is also an unintended consequence of the short-term nature of the contracts which many of WP practitioners find themselves working on due to the limited duration of funding available, in addition to the fact that staff may be seen as and themselves felt to be separate or different from other staff within the HEI, and therefore being outside of the main workings of the HEI. Anecdotally Linking London has witnessed the subsuming of previous Aimhigher/outreach staff into marketing and recruitment departments, collaborative partnerships offices or business development units within HEIs, if they weren’t already located there, as role and emphasis (and funding) has shifted.

There are, however, training and development opportunities for admission tutors within institutions, provided in house. Admission tutors are effectively the gatekeepers of HE and should, in theory, be the physical manifestation of the institutional WP policy. Brief details of some of these offerings can often be found on HEI websites, as they form part of their institutional WP strategy, academic staff manual\(^{71}\) and training and development offering.\(^{72}\) Training could be about raising awareness of WP issues\(^{73}\) or more focused on the student recruitment side.

Interestingly and worthy of comment is the role of Equality and Diversity, often situated within Human Resources Departments, and the apparent lack of cohesiveness of these personnel with WP departments. Whilst their roles and responsibilities are different there may be areas of overlap or a potential sharing of information which to our knowledge has not been imagined.\(^{74}\)

\(^{69}\) Hudson and Pooley. Support & Recognition for Widening Participation Practitioners, November 2006.

\(^{70}\) Independent body which supports HEIs to deliver excellence in teaching and learning strategies.

\(^{71}\) \url{http://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/part-4/widening-participation}

\(^{72}\) \url{http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/staff-development/courses/student-recruitment/sdcmi065}

\(^{73}\) Burke and McManus in the NALN Research Report “Art for a Few” captured the exclusion and misrecognition of students by Art and Design Admissions practices.

\(^{74}\) This issue was addressed in a recent briefing from Action on Access in relation to student access. Social Mobility through Higher Education: Aligning widening participation and equality. Topic Briefing - October 2011.
The efforts in Spanish higher education institutions related to widening participation have been focused on fighting the drop-out rates and improving the academic performance. The admission procedures, for example, are centralised and fixed by the Autonomous Governments, and Public Spanish universities do not have staff working as Admission Tutors. As noted above, outreach programmes are not widespread measures, and the provision of guidance and counselling services are focused on the students that are already enrolled in the universities. The Tutoring Action Plan (TAP)\(^{75}\), is regarded as a permanent support process that provides answers to the problems and needs of a student’s life at university, particularly at those moments when they have to take decisions. One of the objectives of this plan, set up at the URV since the Bologna process, is to help the students to finish their degrees. There have been internal training courses at the university for teaching staff who work as tutors within the TAP. The implementation guidelines state that these courses will have to focus in the following competences and knowledge:

- **Transversal**: team work, planning and coordination; capacity to establish human relationships; communication abilities; problem detection and solving and use of ICT’s.
- **Specific**: basic knowledge in orientation and mentoring; knowledge of university facts; knowledge of the curriculum and lifelong learning possibilities and career opportunities.

Widening participation and reducing the drop-out rate has always been an issue of university policy and, thus, direct responsibility (and not always delegated) of the governing bodies. For this reason, the training provided (except in actions such as TAP, with a higher participation of teaching staff) has been realized as conferences and expert workshops. One of the last meetings has been the Seminar about Integration Strategies for the first year university students, organised by the UNESCO Chair for University Management and Policy at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (18th October 2012)\(^{76}\).

The high drop-out in the Spanish university system (almost a third of registered students) takes place mainly in the first years. This conference has discussed good practices to integrate new students and to make the transition to university education easier. This conference illustrates the increasing interest and focus on fighting the drop-out rates.

Generally speaking, every intervention or staff training (as the TAP tutors receive) must start from the student’s profile analysis. In this sense, the Eurostudents\(^{77}\) database about the social dimension of European students is increasingly being taken into account by university managers, as a starting point to improve the university policies aimed at social mobility and widening participation. The data about the pre-university training of the students are especially relevant (i.e. upper-secondary education, student with previous university studies, etc.); as well as the data about socio-demographic characteristics (i.e. age, social class, gender, migrant, etc.) or about their dedication to studies (i.e. full time/part time) as another sign of the student’s economic/social situation. If these data are not taken into account, the effectiveness of any action, from Social Mobility and widening participation perspective, will be limited.


\(^{76}\) [http://www.catedraunesco.es/seminario-de-acogida](http://www.catedraunesco.es/seminario-de-acogida)

\(^{77}\) [http://www.eurostudent.eu/](http://www.eurostudent.eu/)
6. Funding

In February 2011, the Europaeum produced an updated report on the budgets of higher education programmes in European countries. It concludes that the economic downturn is having, especially in Southern European countries, a negative short-term impact upon public higher education programmes. From January 2012 to date, severe government spending cuts on education are taking place in Spain. The precise and direct effects on social mobility and widening participation are hard to assess at present, though Spain today is not the place for optimism.

The UK government spends considerably less, by proportion of GDP, than the OECD average on education. In addition, since the 2010 election in the UK, the coalition’s policy documents and rhetoric have resulted in HE funding reforms which have shifted the financial burden of Higher Education from the government to the individual (or their parents), which raises fundamental questions about the purpose of HE and the value and perception of higher education as a “public good”. This fundamental change in the shift of financial responsibility from public to private is likely, in light of the economic crisis in the rest of the EU, to be reflected in other EU countries.

Similarly in Spain this economic context has opened the debate on university’s outcomes. Government, institutional bodies, HEIs and unions are trying to give an answer to this question: In an era of decreasing resources, how efficiency must be measured? From a cost-based perspective, from a social perspective or both?

The main concerns within Spain are now trying to figure out: “How to fund public universities?” What proportion should come from the tax payer and the student, and what contribution should come from business or the private sector? The answer to these questions might affect equity and access in HE.

As the economic crisis has spread through Spain and their Autonomous Communities, social spending on education has been cut. The Spanish government insists that its education overhaul is not a cost-cutting exercise but an attempt to raise efficiency and quality. The minister of Education, Ignacio Wert, noted that despite its huge spending on university infrastructure, Spain does not have a single university among the world’s top 150, according to the Shanghai ranking of world universities. Instead, the university dropout rate in Spain is 30% - compared with the European average of 16% - which represents a lost investment in human capital worth €2.96 billion a year. But, is the Shanghai ranking the best way to measure if the Spanish tertiary education system is achieving its goals and missions?

As a result of the Browne review in England, HEI providers were informed that they can charge up to £9,000 per annum for courses. To most observers it was therefore not surprising that as of July 2011, the average fee set was £8,236. This happened at the same time as the UK found itself in the middle of two years of austerity measures, one of the results of which has been 80% cuts to the

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79 Education at a Glance, 2011. OECD Indicators.
81 Which was not what the government expected in terms of creating a market and therefore greater competition between HEIs.
teaching grant (the funding which comes direct from the government to HEIs), numerous staff redundancies and increasing job losses. Course provision has been downsized and consolidated. There have also been rumours of some HEIs in dire financial circumstances. In an effort to boost competition, the government has done two things, one it has removed the cap on student numbers in order to allow HEIs to accept more of the highest achieving students (i.e. those achieving AAB – ABB grades at A level, which are more likely to be those from higher SES groups and or those who have benefited from selective compulsory, fee based or non-fee based education). Secondly, it has made available a further 20,000 student places for those HEIs and FECs who charge £7,500 or less.

However, what makes the policy decisions particularly challenging for the area of education and for women and lower SES groups as a whole, is the fiscal deficit and the associated cuts which are having a significantly different and detrimental effect on specific groups in the population, in particular, mature women learners from lower socio economic classes. This may lead to lower participation or a redirection of participation on to different pathways, e.g. we may begin to see a net migration into health and social care pathways to allow access to NHS bursaries, as students make choices based on monetary concerns. In addition the popular access routes of mature women into HE via the Access to HE course described earlier, was to be itself subject to a loan system along with other FE qualifications. However, a recent announcement by the minister for Lifelong learning has revealed a plan to write off the debt from the Access course on completion of a degree course. This positive, welcome announcement needs to be widely and clearly explained, to avoid the effect of further deterring particular groups from participating in higher level learning.

The danger which people in the sector could foresee was that the WP agenda was something that was easy to do when explicit funding was available to do so and which stops when the funding is no longer present. Funding for national initiatives in this area in the UK has ended, as previously mentioned, and each individual institution is now responsible for its own actions. These concerns are compounded by the fact that, the initiatives described earlier in this report have been “project” in nature and therefore the funding available from government has been short-term, “over there” and not been embedded within the core business and day to day working of Higher Education institutions. In response to questioning about the removal of funding for independent national projects like LLNs and Aimhigher, the coalition state that £2.5 billion Pupil premium and £150 million National Scholarship Programme are now available. The former is to allow schools and colleges to purchase their own WP activities, however, there are concerns that as it is not ring fenced this will be used to plug holes in school and college budgets or to fund capital infra-structure projects, which were left in the red. The details of the later have drawn criticism as the money is to be used primarily for fee waivers as opposed to bursaries, which the National Union of Students suggests could be more beneficial to students from lower SES groups.

From 2012/13, the expectation from government is that between 15% - 30% of tuition fee revenue, for English HEIs courses charging the maximum £9,000 per annum is spent on WP activity, which will be evidenced through an Access agreement and approved through OFFA. In time it is expected that these Access agreements will link more strategically with the existing WPSAs, which are longer term strategic documents and identify how WP activity is being embedded within institutional policies.

82 John Hayes announcement 16th July 2012.
and practices. However, government appreciates that in many senses 2012/3 is a transitional year, during which profound change is taking place in the HE sector, therefore, instead of three-year strategic WPSAs, HEFCE is requiring WP strategic statements which cover the duration of a year only.

There are also a small number of bodies which can be considered to provide support for WP activities, e.g. the Buttle Trust, The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Edge, The Sutton Trust and Into University. In addition some HEIs who have close links with employers may pursue “Employer sponsored WP activity”, perhaps in the form of bursaries targeted to students from certain SES groups. It would also be helpful if part of this employer sponsorship was investment in HE work based learning for employees, in partnership with HEIs, particularly those who can offer innovative programmes to support this kind of WP.

In the Netherlands, several arrangements have been put into place to remove any financial obstacles to participation in Dutch education. These arrangements guarantee the financial accessibility of education at all levels. From the age of 18, students in secondary vocational education and higher education are entitled to student finance from the central Government, which is designed not only to cover the costs of tuition fees and textbooks, but also maintenance costs. Student finance consists of a basic grant that is the same for all students (regardless of parental income), a transport facility for all students (public transport pass) and a supplementary grant for students from lower income groups. Provided students obtain adequate study results, the basic grant and supplementary grant are turned into a gift; otherwise they must be repaid. In addition, students can borrow additional funding from the Government, which must be repaid after completion of their studies.

An important change in legislation that is affecting students in especially higher education is a fine for students who study longer than the nominal + 1 number of years to get a bachelor or a masters degree. If a student studies longer than the nominal + 1 year that stands for a certain study, for instance 4 years + 1 = 5 years for a bachelor degree at a university of applied science (HBO) or 3 years + 1 = 4 years for a bachelor degree at a research university (WO), the student has to pay a higher tuition fee.

The tuition fee is fixed by law and is approximately €1713 per year (2011-2012). Students who study longer than the nominal number + 1 year of study will have to pay an amount of € 3000 (increased with the annual amount for inflation). The fear of the political opposition is that these changes will negatively influence the accessibility of higher education in general and progression and transition to master studies in particular. The assumption is that the ambition of migrant, low income and first generation students to continue studying will be affected. The question is whether or not that will be true, and how this will influence access and the motivation to enter higher education. Migrant students especially prove to be intrinsically motivated to achieve as much as possible for reasons that are very much linked to their family (migrant) history or cultural background.

In Spain, the debate on student fees has been linked to cost of the service debate. On April 2012, the central government approved a new fee system stating that, at least, students’ fees have to cover up to 25% of the cost of the service and that repeat students (students who fail any courses) should pay

84 Approved July 2011 and effective for students in higher education in 2011-2012
extra\textsuperscript{85} fees, closer to the full cost of the service. Following this general rule, public or state universities will be allowed to raise fees by as much as 66\textsuperscript{86} for any subsequent course. This has recently affected Catalonia\textsuperscript{87}, where newly increased fees might have already negatively impacted in HE access in Catalonia and new entries have fallen down by 5\% (July 2012).

In analysing this negative result, it must be borne in mind that in Spain and Catalonia, unemployment is highly correlated with school enrolment; despite youth unemployment being lower in graduate students. Usually, an increase in youth unemployment increases school enrolments, due to the reduction in the cost of educational opportunities. However, an increase in the rate of global unemployment reduces the proportion of enrolments, to the extent that it transmits more pessimistic job prospects for the future. Today, some indicators show that traditional HE students are moving from HE to upper-vocational education because of the reverse move in the opportunity cost of having a graduate degree.

As a consequence of the changing value of HE placed on it by society (especially youngsters) and the government, the survival of the Spanish tertiary education system is also focusing on its usefulness from a labour market perspective. The employability of university graduates is considered a key indicator of the performance of the university, thus avoiding the interaction that is given between labour market and social structures, as gender, race, social class or disability. In the near future, the survival of both a graduate and a master’s degree will be evaluated through employability indicators. For that reason, HEIs are struggling to meet the needs of the labour market, and the new demands of it, and the skills needed. In this battle, will universities forget their social value as agents of social mobility and inclusion? More than ever, we must remember that, “Higher education is no longer a luxury: it is essential to national social and economic development.”\textsuperscript{88} This is probably the case across all EU member states.

The continuing dilemma for Spain is that the objective of raising universities fees is to reduce the nation’s debt and fiscal deficit rather than pursuing social objectives to increase participation and enhance social mobility. The consequence of fixing wrong objectives in public policy are now hard to evaluate as recession and financial crisis are worsening day by day.

### 7. Quality assurance

All GLAS partners, to some extent, have experience in their countries of the assumption that the adoption of a widening participation agenda by an HEI will in some way lower standards for the other learners and for the status of the institution. This inaccurate assumption is perhaps based on

\textsuperscript{85} Students who fail their courses will have to pay between 30 to 40 per cent of the total cost of their courses to repeat their first year, between 65 and 75 per cent for the second, while repeating an academic year for the third time will mean paying between 90 and 100 per cent.

\textsuperscript{86} This increase will affect 4 out of 10 new students in Catalonia; with average rise equal to 33.7\% 

\textsuperscript{87} The cost of accessing HE has increased due to: higher fees linked to household income; less grants and scholarship from the Government, the Autonomous Communities and the universities; grants linked to academic performance and not only to household income; some groups have lost their “privileges” – one-parent families, employees from HEIs.

the framing of the WP argument in deficit terms. This was discussed at length at the mobility in London. The feeling was that the terminology and the concept itself has historically been defined by middle class, successful learners who, in the main, are the graduates of a variously selective and in some senses elitist system. Major expansion in HE in the last 20 years has run in front of the aspects of the culture of the institutions which for some, has associated greater numbers with reduced standards. Again for some, WP moves this situation further into deficit.

In general the feeling is summed up by ECHO’s observation that certain stakeholders feel that “the enrolment of under-represented groups will affect the quality in a bad way because of the deficiencies they have to deal with”. There exists in all GLAS countries a serious debate, which is still at an early stage, about how to support and enable a diverse student population to succeed.

In terms of actual interventions, outreach and WP type activities which an HEI is involved in would be subject to the same quality measures as any other activity in which the HEI is represented in the wider world. Therefore, participant’s feedback in the activity would be one example of what would be gathered in order to inform future work. For larger national projects using tax payers’ money, formal independent evaluations have been conducted, as previously mentioned.

There is explicit debate in The Netherlands as to how well interventions and programmes are evaluated. Frans de Vijlder, lector at the University of Applied Sciences of Arnhem and Nijmegen (HAN), concluded in 2008 in a study that most educational organizations are not intelligent: they are not good in evaluating and gathering evidence about the effects of the interventions. This is the reason why so many innovations in Higher Education fail. A study of COST in 2010 shows similar results: the interventions to improve the connection between senior vocational education and higher education are not being evaluated; the knowledge capital is very poor. This is also the reason why so many interventions are not sustainable. See appendix C of this report for a case study into best practice of evaluation with the GS grant in The Netherlands.

However, high quality outreach activity should not stop at providing a route into HE for the potential learner. A thorough widening participation strategy delivered across the student lifecycle should ensure that the learner stays, or is retained, within the higher education institution and ultimately achieves at higher level study. Therefore the mark of successful widening participation is less about the absolute numbers of applications from under-represented learners but more about the successful completion of those learners’ studies and whether this in turn translates into realistic work opportunities and access to the professions. As the desire to attract students into individual HEIs increases, there is likely to be more emphasis on developing holistic structures to ensure that those learners who may be at risk of dropping out or failing, are supported appropriately. In this way we may begin to see greater emphasis on these measures put in quality assurance principles and practices, such as more textured approaches to monitoring progress and performance, which will be reflected in Access Agreements and WPSAs.

In Spain, while the economic situation has been good, the increase in university offer and the number of graduated students was considered a success of the democratization process of higher education. This model reached a high degree of equity in participation related to access opportunities, career and outcomes of working class. But when the economic crisis forces cuts in public spending on education, the first critical voices are heard against the massive university and in favour of reducing the number of universities and the academic offer. The fall in university
education quality has also been an issue discussed lately, with the argument that more people in the system has given access to less able students and has correspondingly increased the drop-out rate. So, in Spain it has not been categorically stated that minority groups are responsible of lower quality. If democratisation is the cause of lower quality the solution must, to some extent, include the conditioning of the grants to academic performance, raising the requirements of average grades and passed credits for the students that are already in the university system. These measures were already included in the last scholarship system reform by Popular Party in 2012.

8. Marketing, and promotion of widening participation versus recruitment

As mentioned in previous sections, there has been a blurring of the boundaries between aspiration raising work and recruitment, in the UK at least, as evidenced by the subsuming of some Widening Participation departments into marketing departments. However, if the continuing default model of HE marketing remains predicted on an assumption of a predominantly full time, on campus undergraduate intake it is unlikely that this will have much effect. Moving away from or expanding this model will present particular challenges however.

All GLAS partners acknowledge the challenges inherent in marketing and promoting lifelong learning opportunities to target groups. Most promotion activities are very general (information in university brochures, websites) and not specific. In some cases we have perhaps yet to find both the language and the marketing strategies to reach a new and wider group of people who currently do not participate. In a media savvy world the essential sense of audience needed to address these groups without seeming patronising and leading to greater disaffection is critical. Each student brings his or her own social and cultural capital and the influence of the personal environment is very important. Therefore to get in contact with potential learners it is important to have detailed, relevant knowledge about their backgrounds and to have access to their communities. Active engagement with these communities is necessary albeit challenging.

9. Conclusions

For social mobility and widening participation initiatives to succeed they must be supported by greater equity within the education system as a whole. They must take a cradle to grave approach if lifelong learning is to be learned into our consciousness. Giving young people equal opportunities to experience relevant and rewarding learning in safe environments at an early age, could encourage appropriate attainment and the desire to experience higher levels of learning, if so desired, at any point in their lives. Interventions by universities and colleges are therefore only one part of the solution, which should include a concerted approach from primary schools and secondary schools, alongside appropriate stimulation and encouragement within the home environment.

It must be remembered, however, that social mobility does not have to focus on access specifically through the doors of a University. There are alternative and flexible ways of individuals achieving
higher level learning and therefore access to qualifications and the professions. In the UK HEIs, which in the face of funding cuts may have reduced the amount of collaborative provision delivered with partner FECs, may in fact start to re-develop those links with FECs in order to deliver a collaborative widening participation strategy, by offering alternative higher level accredited provision within different contexts and communities. In addition there are some opportunities for apprentices to progress to level 4, with more being developed. HEIs could also seek to engage with more employers, potentially through trade unions, and develop structured work based learning, which could specifically target widening participation learners – i.e. those who would not otherwise have access or exposure to the possibility of higher level learning and the opportunities it creates.

In Spain, the conclusions from the I Congreso Nacional para el Impulso de la Empleabilidad de los Universitarios (National Congress to foster University graduates’ Employability) in Córdoba, Spain (October 16-18, 2012), go for the creation of the so-called “dual contracts”, which already exist in other European countries, to link the university student training with placement in a company. The increasing demand for WBL strategies in Spain, also at upper-VET level, may promote a wider acceptance of APEL as an alternative entry to higher education, especially when these recommendations come as conclusions from an expert’s forum. This would really demonstrate the potential of APL as a WP strategy that provides access and or alternative admission that would not otherwise be possible.

Widening participation to encourage diversity in the student cohort is not helpful if those students then fail or drop out of the system, therefore in the UK, The Netherlands and Spain the widening participation dialogue is including other elements of the student life cycle which are geared to supporting and retaining those learners, some of which may be at greater risk of drop out. Flexibility and the role of technology will be important here, in terms of offering provision which fits with shift patterns, particularly of lower SES group workers, and ensuring that support services and facilities are also provided flexibly, as this provision is still geared towards 18-19 year old students. Curriculum need to be relevant to both learners and employment, including those already in work and looking to progress through part time and work based study.

It should also be remembered that widening participation is a dynamic concept, in that the targets for activity and intervention are likely to change with time. Back in the 1960s in the UK, young women were under-represented, the situation have shifted somewhat and data suggests that young males from low SES communities are making fewer applications to HE than other groups.

Therefore this core theme addresses a complex issue that requires not only cross-party support but also cross-policy (and therefore ministerial department) recognition that there are other barriers to accessing appropriate learning, which sit outside of the confines of HE policy, e.g. pre-school experience, school quality and curriculum and poverty, since household income is related to access to HE. Any recommendations for policy which are made need to be cost effective, especially in this time of austerity. They also need to be sensitive to what might be a class based stubbornness or aversion to change. Therefore, there is a need for more research, in particular to investigate why the potential learners from the lowest SEC groups are still, despite activity, the most persistent statistic in terms of under-representation. This research and other explorations need to challenge

89 http://www.congresodeempleabilidaduniversitario.fundecor.es/
our underlying assumptions about the need or willingness of some to participate and therefore also must include the potential learner voice to examine the situation more truthfully and holistically.

In the Netherlands access to education in principle is not an issue. The policy aims at striving for inclusion of all children. Several arrangements have been put in place to remove any financial obstacles. Almost all children in the age of 5-14 (99%) are participating in education and almost 60% of the youngsters in the age-group 18-20 years enter higher education. The OECD, however, concluded in 2007 that potential students from underserved groups who lack necessary language skills, educational preparation, or have no family members to support them, have more difficulty entering the system. The Dutch educational system can be characterized as highly stratified, with many different tracks at various levels of schooling, the dropout rates in higher education are high especially for ethnic minority students and men, and the system does not do well with regards to lifelong learning. Committee Veerman concluded in 2010 that lifelong learning needs better policies. Interestingly there is a growing gender gap in school performance which will be more prominent in urban areas with large proportions of ethnic minority men. Despite poor opportunities for lifelong learning, an infrastructure for EVC-procedures (recognition of experience certificates – see APL core theme documentation) has been set up during the last decade and a project Management, Learning & Working has been started by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and Social Affairs. This infrastructure and the very strong vocational pillar in secondary and tertiary education can form a firm basis for the development of new lifelong learning opportunities.

Equality and equity are important characteristics of the Dutch educational system. In primary and secondary education a lot of affirmative action is being done to support children. This specific policy was not really seen as ‘appropriate’ to the culture of higher education. A culture in which merit only was the means to participate and not affirmative action programmes to create more opportunities to many who were under-represented. That is why ECHO embraces the Pedagogy of Excellence. The focus of this pedagogy is to create an inclusive learning environment based on high expectations (with regard to students, staff and management) and high levels of support. The pedagogy emphasizes talent development and excellence. The ideas this pedagogy is based on are very well received by the institutions of higher education. The development of an inclusive learning environment also asks for educational innovations, which motivate and inspire students and staff. Structural changes are needed on different levels: organization, student, curriculum and staff. For the implementation of lifelong learning opportunities all these levels of innovation have to be taken into account.

Each student brings his or her own social and cultural capital. It is known that the context and combination of the socio-economic background, the ethnic background and the personal environment of the student influences his or her formal and informal learning path. This implies the importance of a tailor-made and community-based approach: an active outreach policy, the creation of role models and engagement with community stakeholders. Cooperation with local government, local businesses and community support organizations (CSOs) is crucial. The role of the CSOs is not well recognised yet, but can play a very important role in connecting with potential learners in areas that the universities are not familiar with.

A lot of widening participation strategies are conducted without a long term vision or scope and without evaluating the effects or measuring the impact. Therefore, one of the recommendations of
the audit team of the G5-grant is the importance of monitoring and research. Evidence is required to support findings and outcomes as without proper evidence it is hard to convince the people who are critical of widening participation strategies. In most cases this criticism implies the idea that these strategies will attract students who are not qualified to participate in higher education. Another requirement for sustainability is ownership at all levels of the university. A lot of institutions face the dilemma of commitment and support. Commitment at all levels is also necessary to be able to conduct an inclusive strategy that enhances the opportunities for study success of all student groups. This is a strategy that encounters all the aspects of the learning environment: the organization, the students, the curriculum and the staff. Often organisations chose interventions to influence the students and the organisation. Interventions to change the curriculum and staff are costly and more difficult to conduct. This dilemma of priority is a potential risk with regard to the sustainable effects of the intended interventions.

Widening participation strategies in Spain have focused mainly in fighting the school failure and drop-out rates in stages previous to Higher Education. Once in Higher Education Institutions, the policies have been focused in a scholarship system aimed to ensure that students are not prevented from doing University studies due to economic reasons. Strategies in the Spanish University System have helped to diminish social inequality, and there is some evidence of this: 51% of students come from families that never reached higher education. Although the Spanish University has worked as a social ladder, the study “¿Universidad sin clases? Condiciones de vida de los estudiantes universitarios en España [Eurostudent IV]” (University without classes? Live conditions of university students in Spain) directed by Antonio Ariño y Ramón Llopis in 2011 and funded by the Ministry of Education, has also produced some disturbing data, because Spanish Universities continue to reproduce some social inequalities:

- Students with parents with a low education level are under-represented and students with parents that studied at the university are over-represented.
- The alternative ways to access Upper Secondary Education and University Entrance Exam are especially intensively used by students with parents without a university degree.
- Students from households with a lower education level (associated to working class) are mostly the ones that work full time besides studying, which has negative consequences in their academic performance, permanence and duration of studies.
- The opportunities for upward social mobility depend on the family household. There is evidence that the educational level of mothers is the most important factor in their child’s education career. Of all women between the ages of 40 and 59, 52.8% are classed as having a low education level. However, this group are the mothers of only the 35.5% of university students. On the other hand, 18.8% of women between 40 and 59 have higher education studies, and they represent 28.4% of university students’ mothers.

We cannot forget, as stated in Ariño and Lopez (2011) that the dedication to studies (full time or part time), previous working experience, amount and type of available economic resources, intensity in studying (higher or lower), transition to university (direct or delayed) are related to the economic and education capital of the family and that this capital, in the Spanish case, is affecting the lifelong

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90 Available in PDF at https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publiventa/detalle.action?cod=14909
learning strategies of the learners. The economic crisis has increased the opportunity cost of having no studies but is also making it harder to come back or to first access university for a lot of people, including new groups besides the ones that have been traditionally under-represented.

This leads to the conclusion that, beyond the direct interventions from HEIs and their partners, public policies related to austerity, employment creation and the maintenance of wages and families purchasing power do play an important role in widening participation in higher education. Widening participation in higher education is a complex and transversal issue.
10. Appendices

Appendix A

During the mobility about SM and WP Fran Ferrier, director of the European Access Network, presented an international study on higher education in urban areas. This study contains four case studies of Amsterdam, Chicago, Merseyside and Toronto. All these cities can be characterized as majority-minority cities. One of the results of this study made clear that gains in postsecondary educational participation can be achieved when it becomes the district-wide goal, when all stakeholders work together and Community Support Organizations (CSOs) play an important role (community-based approach). At this moment the role of CSOs are inadequately documented and recognized, but CSOs are a great resource and can provide much extra effort. They have the knowledge and can provide access to potential learners and their community.

The example of the ECHO ambassador Network shows how this network connects and builds bridges between different worlds: family, school, work and society. The ambassadors are role models and can connect and inspire employers, educators and potential learners.

PPT presentation available at [www.linklinglondon.ac.uk/europe](http://www.linklinglondon.ac.uk/europe)
Appendix B

Widening Participation (W.P.) for social mobility the ring main model for continuous, proactive flow between HE learning supply and demand. This model presupposes and advocates work based learning as an important part of an integrated strategy for W.P.
Appendix C

A good example of quality assurance is the G5-grant initiative. The ministry of Education chose three parties to play a role in the quality assurance: ECHO for the monitoring of the projects, the Inspection of Education to evaluate the performance agreements and a special audit-team of academics to audit the whole process. In 2011 the audit team wrote a report about the spending of the G5-grant with recommendations for the assurance of the quality of future initiatives:

- Research is very important. A lot of universities of applied sciences don’t perform well when it comes to research. It is important to apply interventions based on appropriate analysis, identify causes and problems and monitor the results of the interventions for adjustment or selection.
- Many universities of applied sciences do not use the resources specifically for non-western migrant students. This has to be accepted as a reality. Therefore the audit team considers focusing the funds more implicitly on non-western migrant students in the future.
- Generic policy seems the best strategic choice, but must be followed immediately by specific policy fitting the needs of groups. Tailor made education must be provided as much as possible.
- It is known that students who do not feel at home or feel discriminated against often face a study delay or drop out. Many universities of applied sciences do not know how non-western migrant students experience the current academic culture and whether or not they feel at home. Therefore it is recommended to research this and to train teachers how to deal with discriminatory behaviour. In addition it is important to include more staff members in higher education with a non-western migrant background.
- Based on the observations of the audit team it is recommended to focus on gaining stronger commitment to developing mentoring programs, peer coaches and outreach coaches.
- Ownership of the problem is still not completely embedded and should be present and properly regulated at all levels of the organization.
Appendix D– The Pedagogy of Excellence (The Netherlands)

**Enrolment**
- Outreach
- Support
- Academic Preparation
- Regional collaboration

**The Pedagogy of Excellence**

**Commitment & Inclusion**