

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN OPEN AND DIVERSIFIED SYSTEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Júlio Pedrosa de Jesus
Universidade de Aveiro (Portugal)
jpedrosa@dq.ua.pt

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN OPEN AND DIVERSIFIED SYSTEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Summary

1. Opening higher education
2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe
3. Diversity and Equal opportunities
4. Final Remarks

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN OPEN AND DIVERSIFIED SYSTEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Opening higher education

- A trend in Europe (started in USA in the 1960' !)
 - Timing gap in relation to USA
- Opening and widening the access
 - Driving forces: economic needs and demand for HE
 - Reactive policy strategy and planning

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1. Opening higher education

- Opening and widening the access (cont.)
 - Higher education systems and institutions not prepared to deal with the implications
 - Equal opportunities as an *'add on'* issue

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2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe

The past forty years

- Driving forces and processes
 - Responding to increasing demand and economic needs
 - *'Adding to universities'* process

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2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe

The past forty years

- Driving forces and processes
 - *Courses of higher education should be **available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wished to do so** (Robbins, 1963: 7-8, as referred in Neal, 1998: 20)*

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2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe

The past forty years

- Driving forces and processes
 - “The **importance** of higher education **to economy** had long been taken for granted, and was one of the assumptions of, for example, the Robbins Report (1963)” (Kogan and Hanney, Reforming Higher Education, 2000, p. 13)

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2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe

The past forty years

- Driving forces and processes

*“Important ideological similarity between the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s and those of the 1980s and 1990s ... Both based on the recognition that higher education is of **great socio-economic importance** ... ”*

(Bleiklie, Hostaker and Vabo, Policy and Practice in Higher Education. Reforming Norwegian Universities, 2000)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN OPEN AND DIVERSIFIED SYSTEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe

The past forty years

- Driving forces and processes
- “ ... Ottosen Commission (1966-9) regarded **higher education as a welfare benefit** and emphasized issues related to its distribution,
the Hernes Commission (1988) regarded higher education as a **necessary tool, and resource in the international economic competition**”.

(Bleiklie, Hostaker and Vabo, Policy and Practice in Higher Education. Reforming **Norwegian Universities**, 2000)

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2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe

The past forty years

- Driving forces and processes

In most countries (Braun et al, 1999) changes came as reactions to the demand for **more** higher education **places** and for higher level **training of the working** force

- Mass higher education
- Financement, efficiency, accountability, quality

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2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe The past forty years

- Effects of the changes from elite to mass higher education
 - Provision and Financing
 - Programs, Curricula, Teaching and Learning
 - Diversity

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2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe

The past forty years

- Effects of the changes from elite to mass higher education
 - systems based on ‘adding to the universities option’
 - o Inconsistencies
 - o insufficient or inadequate answers
 - o frustration to almost all concerned

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2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe

The past forty years

- The Master Plan adopted in California in the 1960's
 - resulted from a careful consideration of the requirements associated with an open access policy
 - has been recently evaluated and considered still as a valuable diversified and differentiated open system
 - Needs adjustments to respond to new social realities

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2. Developments of Higher Education in Europe

The present AGENDA

- Bologna, European Spaces of Higher Education and Research
- Governance, finances, quality/evaluation, accountability
- Low priority given to the equal opportunities issues

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3. Equal opportunities and diversity

- *What can we do to address the issue of inequality? How can we make equal opportunities policies and anti-racist initiatives work? (Neal, 1998: 117-125)*
- *...one aspect of 'looking forward' will be concerned with identifying and suggesting ways in which equal opportunities policies, their formulations and their implementation, can be genuine attempts to address issues of (in)equality and social justice*

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3. Equal opportunities and diversity

A framework for debating and promoting equal opportunities

- Information and research on equity (scarce)
- Need for research based knowledge about specific groups of citizens (economic disadvantaged, women, ethnic minorities, disabled) as entrants, as graduates and as professionals

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN OPEN AND DIVERSIFIED SYSTEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

3. Equal opportunities and diversity

A framework for debating and promoting equal opportunities

- The low priority given to equal opportunities issues in the changing pattern of HE in Europe (last forty years)

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3. Equal opportunities and diversity

Framework for promoting equal opportunities

- Europe is seen as *the last bastion in the world of fully (or almost fully) tax-supported higher education* (Johnstone, 2004)
- *the position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility* (Comm., Berlin, 2003:1)

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3. Equal opportunities and diversity

A framework for debating and promoting equal opportunities

- *consolidate and enrich the European citizenship (The Bologna Declaration, 1999:1)*
- *strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities both at national and European level reaffirming the position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility (Comm., Berlin, 2003:1).*

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3. Equal opportunities and diversity

A framework for promoting equal opportunities

- forward-looking visions, missions, goals, systems and institutions
- systems and institutions to promote citizenship and social as well as economic development
- open entrance and provision of higher education to new goals and diversified publics.

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3. Equal opportunities and diversity

Levels of responsibility

- Government/parliament
- Institutional governance
- Structures, units and programs or projects in institutions

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4. Final Remarks

Mass and open access with equity

Institutions have more and highly diversified candidates and students

Need for distinct teaching and learning approaches and environments

Need for changes in systems and institutions

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN OPEN AND DIVERSIFIED SYSTEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

4. Final Remarks

Equal opportunities and institutions responsibility

Institutions have to devise policies, strategies and actions such that there 'real students' make the best of their own abilities, skills and knowledge

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4. Final Remarks

Equal opportunities and governments' responsibility

Students' competences, skills, levels of knowledge and personal projects are conditioned by their previous schooling and by their cultural, social and economic backgrounds

- It is Governments' responsibility to promote policies to deal with those social issues and their relation with the equity in education, including higher education

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4. Final Remarks

Equal opportunities and higher education policies and systems

- Europe should study higher education systems, equity policies, actions and results across USA and Canada
 - The tendency has been to concentrate our attention only on the smallest part of such systems, the research universities

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4. Final Remarks

Equal opportunities and higher education policies and systems

- *Strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities both at national and European level* is a proclaimed central and important political goal
- the equal opportunities issues should be at the heart of an European Higher Education Agenda.**

