

# HIGHER EDUCATION FOR DIVERSITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY

## A democratic imperative



**Council of Europe  
Higher Education  
Series No. 22**



# **HIGHER EDUCATION FOR DIVERSITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY**

**A democratic imperative**

Sjur Bergan  
and Ira Harkavy (eds)

Council of Europe  
Higher Education  
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# Preface

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I am proud to present this new volume in the Council of Europe's Higher Education Series, focusing on the democratic mission of higher education.

Democracy and human rights rely on solid institutions and laws, but these cannot function in practice unless they are built on a culture of democracy. This is why the education programme of the Council of Europe is at the heart of our Organisation's efforts to build democratic culture, notably through the new Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights.

This volume collates important examples of how the Council of Europe puts into practice its commitment to the promotion of a culture of democracy through education. The first section presents our recommendations on the public responsibility for higher education and research, and on ensuring quality education, both of which are pertinent to the discussion of democracy, knowledge and inclusion versus post-truth politics. Inclusive and diverse campuses – presented in the second section – are a part of the work we have been doing with the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy for more than 15 years.

The third section focuses on the tools and policies developed at the Council of Europe over the past few years to further education for refugees and immigrants, with particular attention dedicated to the Recommendation on the recognition of refugees' qualifications under the Lisbon Recognition Convention; the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, a practical tool to assess and describe refugees' qualifications even when they cannot be adequately documented; and an innovative language toolkit for volunteers who work with adult refugees and immigrants. Finally, the work on the relationship between higher education institutions and the local communities of which they are a part is covered by the fourth section.

In our view, higher education is not just well placed to further diversity, social inclusion and community. Higher education has a moral duty to do so, and we need not look far to see why this is a more important part of the mission of higher education than ever before. No matter where you read this book, you will be able to find examples of the importance of education for democracy in your neighbourhood.

European societies are faced with challenges that higher education needs to play a key role in meeting, and it is part of higher education's democratic mission to respond to these societies' expectations in this respect.

It is, as the book so eloquently argues, a democratic imperative.

**Snežana Samardžić-Marković**  
*Director General for Democracy*  
*Council of Europe*



# Word from the editors

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*Sjur Bergan and Ira Harkavy*

**T**he Council of Europe, the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy and other partners have been working to further the democratic mission of higher education for more than 15 years. Yet, both editors feel that the role of higher education in developing the kind of societies in which we would like to live is not only as important as ever, but also more challenging – and challenged – than at any time over the past generation.

The past 30 years or so that constitute this generation have seen very significant changes in Europe, the United States and other parts of the world. A few days before we sat down to write these lines, the world marked the fact that the Berlin Wall has been history for exactly as long as it had existed as a dividing line between governments with very different conceptions of how societies should be organised and governed. The Berlin Wall was of course more than a dividing line between governments. It was a physical border that brutally divided people: families and friends as well as people who did not know each other but who nevertheless felt they shared a history and should share a destiny.

The optimism of the early 1990s has long since been replaced by a sense of pessimism. The walls that divide citizens are not all gone. One European capital – Nicosia – is still divided by a wall, and building one is a stated goal of the current US Administration. While neighbourhoods are in general not isolated by walls, some gated communities notwithstanding, there is in many countries less contact and daily interaction between people from different backgrounds and of different political views and beliefs than there was a generation ago. In both the United States and Europe, public debate seems to be increasingly polarised.

Walls are therefore not only physical but, perhaps even more importantly, mental. This has been even more evident in a new kind of wall that has been erected over the past few years: a wall to keep out and disparage facts. The old adage that “everybody is entitled to their own opinion but not to their own facts” is no longer considered self-evident in an age where terms like “post-truth” and “alternative facts” have become so well established that they are no longer seen as ironic and may not be used with quotation marks for much longer.

This presents a formidable challenge to higher education and research. Conclusions reached through serious research conducted in accordance with accepted research standards are questioned by attacking the agenda of the researchers. The role of higher education in advancing knowledge and developing critical thinking, as well as an understanding of research methods and a culture of democracy among its students, is being questioned and challenged.

This makes the democratic mission of higher education more important than ever, a belief that spurred the publication of this book as well as the organisation of the Global Forum held at LUMSA University in Rome in June 2017. The presentations at that Forum largely form the basis of the book.

The book is divided into three main parts. The first section – “Democracy, knowledge and inclusion versus post-truth politics – Reaffirming the principles of higher education” – makes a strong case for the continuing importance of higher education and research to modern society.

Stefania Giannini, who was recently the Italian Minister of Education and is currently a Senator, argues that to have open societies we need open research and open universities. This means that universities, while upholding the standards of research, must be receptive to the needs of society. Giannini also argues that successful research will be interdisciplinary, international and integrated.

Sjur Bergan considers how higher education should respond to the challenges of, among other things, populism and the closing of borders as well as of minds and attitudes to the Other, exemplified by the way in which we receive refugees. Higher education should help us distinguish between fact, fiction and opinion. It should also help us approach difficult issues with open minds and see different points of view, even views with which we may disagree strongly. Bergan maintains that the “post-truth”/“alternative facts” movement is deficient not only in facts but in reason and in compassion, whereas educators must inspire and guide, as well as teach students to reason and to value. We must not only train specialists but also educate intellectuals.

Ira Harkavy argues that colleges and universities are central institutions in modern societies, but that they are not sufficiently fulfilling their purpose of contributing to the advancement of knowledge for “the relief of man’s estate” (Francis Bacon). Drawing on the experience of the co-operation between the Council of Europe and the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy as well as his leading role in the Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF), Harkavy argues that both international co-operation and local engagement are essential. He suggests that universities build on John Dewey’s claim that democracy’s home is “the neighborly community” and function as anchor institutions that focus on helping to solve locally manifested universal problems, such as poverty and poor schooling. At the same time, Harkavy calls on democratic-minded colleagues to create and sustain a global movement.

Lynn Pasquerella points out that anti-intellectualism and the rejection of experts in the United States and much of Europe has been fuelled by a conviction among the white working poor that access to higher education, and status as an intellectual, is unattainable. Higher education is no longer seen as a guarantee of upward mobility and higher education is increasingly seen as a private commodity rather than a public good. Misinformation and incivility are on the rise, and leaders in higher education need to redouble their focus on world citizenship and redesign curricular content and structures to promote “a cosmopolitan education” (Martha Nussbaum).

Friedrich Bechina examines the contribution of religious and faith-based higher education to today's democratic societies. While his focus is on Catholic institutions, his considerations, in principle, encompass any religion. Bechina argues that religion and democratic societies can and should mutually enrich each other. Modern societies are composed of people coming from a broad variety of backgrounds and traditions. Religion may be a source of inspiration and motivation and may help to overcome reductionist views and attitudes in both politics and academia. The fundamental values of democratic societies draw on religious traditions; in turn, religions may be prevented from becoming closed, irrational, fundamentalist and prejudicial to peaceful co-existence in pluralistic communities through participation in open, public and critical discussion, such as that typically found in universities.

The second section focuses on higher education institutions and the need for inclusive and diverse campuses.

Based on his experience at James Madison University, Jonathan Alger argues that translating institutional commitments to access and diversity into genuinely inclusive campus environments requires an effort by the whole academic community, starting with its leadership. To be persuasive, institutional leaders need to understand how to adapt their arguments for diversity and inclusion to different audiences and contexts. Pathways of access and opportunity cannot be built and sustained by institutions of higher education acting alone; they must be developed in collaboration with schools at all levels and other societal partners to ensure long-term success. Alger also points to how the efforts of all members of the academic community may in different ways contribute to developing and maintaining genuinely inclusive institutions.

Johnnella E. Butler describes what she calls the diversity imperative in US higher education in the face of an exacerbation of racial, class, gender, religious and ability differences. These challenges have deep roots and go back to indentured service and slavery in colonial times. Butler describes the presidential election of 1968 as a watershed, with one of the national parties embracing what had largely been regional (Southern) political and social values. At the same time, the diversity imperative in democracy remains strong because the United States continues to transform into a diverse society, demographically and culturally. Higher education institutions must make efforts to support and encourage diversity, or, as the author describes it, build nests in the "windy places" of diversity.

Tony Gallagher draws on the experience in the United Kingdom to explore how campuses may be more diverse and inclusive. His chapter examines the overall empirical evidence and that for specific groups. The pattern is one of steadily rising participation rates overall as well as for all social groups previously under-represented in higher education. Massification has also meant that higher education institutions in the United Kingdom have become more engaged in society. This engagement has, however, focused on economic rather than on social and civic priorities and is more strongly embedded in policy frameworks. Thus, while UK universities have become diverse and inclusive, Gallagher argues that they have not yet become fully diverse and inclusive institutions, and that a more fundamental shift towards the social and civic mission will be necessary.

Andrew J. Deeks discusses academic freedom, institutional autonomy and the role of institutional leaders, who need to ensure that universities are safe and inclusive environments which promote diversity of thought and advancement of knowledge. Referring to the American Association of University Professors' 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, the author considers what may be reasonable restrictions on academic freedom, namely the need for accuracy, restraint and respect for the opinions of others. The need for accuracy in respecting the evidence base is discussed, and examples of scientific controversies are presented to demonstrate the need for that respect. Deeks also considers the role of university leadership in expressing views, either on behalf of the university or on a personal basis.

The third section considers opportunities to improve the inclusion of refugees and immigrants in higher education and the challenges involved. The wording here is important: whereas the focus in Europe is largely on refugees and to some extent immigrants, in the United States it is largely on immigrants, further accentuated by the current debate about the status of Dreamers: those who were brought to the United States as children and have grown up as Americans even if their legal status has not been clarified. The threat of expulsion has mobilised a large part of the US academic community.

Gabriella Agrusti addresses the complexity in cultural diversity that Europe faces with the increasing number of refugees since 2015, both between and within national contexts. Taking into consideration attitudes in society that range from outright rejection to an emphasis on integration, she describes and analyses the experience of several initiatives in higher education, including a project to develop online learning provision.

Brian Murphy describes how De Anza College, a large community college in California, offers opportunities to individuals and groups who would otherwise not have had access to higher education. These include students who are inadequately prepared for higher education, for example in mathematics or language, and include refugees as well as migrants. The United States has a rich history of open-access institutions for recent immigrants and refugees, and this role continues in spite of the US Government's recent anti-immigration rhetoric and policies. The stories of two students illustrate the importance of identifying and developing future potential rather than focusing solely on past achievements.

Paul C. Pribbenow reflects on what it means for a university founded by immigrants to walk alongside the immigrants of today, how an immigrant sensibility can shape the academic mission and community engagement today, and how we can extend the boundaries of a university to engage our immigrant neighbours in mutually beneficial ways. Pribbenow writes as President of Augsburg College, an institution that was set up by and for an immigrant community from northern Europe, but whose immediate neighbours are now largely immigrants with a very different background, from Mexico and Somalia.

Panagiota Dionysopoulou and Christos Michalakelis describe the Greek experience of internationalising higher education. Internationalisation has been spurred by the globalisation of the economy, as has the agenda of higher education reforms more broadly. Student mobility has also developed from a similar rationale and has

been further boosted by the Bologna Process. Through its “Study in Greece” initiative, Greece is seeking to attract greater numbers of foreign students. At the same time, Greece is among the European countries that have received a high number of refugees since 2015. Many refugees have a higher education background, and the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs has been eager to give these refugees an opportunity to develop their competences further. In co-operation with the Council of Europe, the ministry has therefore organised a summer school for refugee students and conducted a project to facilitate the recognition of qualifications even when these cannot be fully documented, through the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth section considers universities and their communities. This has long been an important issue in US higher education, where institutions are often conscious of being part of their local communities and where many of the most committed individuals from these institutions have joined forces in the AITF. In Europe, the role of higher education institutions has been less prominent on the policy agenda but many institutions do work with their local communities. The Council of Europe and the AITF are now seeking to launch more systematic work on this topic at European level.

Ahmed Bawa argues that the increasing legitimacy gap and growing distrust in higher education, its scholarship and its intellectuals may be at the heart of what is driving the serious and diverse challenges experienced by universities in many parts of the world. Building on the South African experience, he argues that the sustainability of higher education–community engagement depends on its integration into the core functions of the university and in particular into its knowledge project. Bawa also discusses the nature of the intellectual, physical, social and policy architecture that will ensure the emergence of long-term and sustained engagement.

Aleksa Bjeliš describes the position of universities in transitional countries from central, eastern and south-eastern Europe following the political disruptions at the end of the 20th century. These disruptions marked the collapse of regimes based on the communist doctrine and the launch of a new phase of European integration. Particular emphasis is given to the current missions of universities in these countries as well as to the role of the academic community and intellectuals in the development of democratic societies.

John H. Smith analyses the role of universities as “anchor institutions” from the perspective of European policy and practice. He places the building and strengthening of partnerships in regions and localities where higher education institutions operate within the context of the ever-increasing demands for European universities to perform multiple tasks in society. Smith considers challenges and obstacles and also analyses European policy, particularly Smart Specialisation Strategies within the European Union’s regional structural and cohesion funds.

Nancy Cantor and Peter Englot argue that diversity brings about an opportunity to grow our economies and the social health and well-being of our communities, while expanding knowledge and innovation by drawing on the collective intelligence of a

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1. See [www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications](http://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications), accessed 24 March 2018.

wider pool of talent. They recognise that diversity is perceived as a threat by people who fear displacement and/or cultural change. Against this backdrop, higher education has both a significant promise to fulfil and a strong responsibility to change this divisive landscape. Drawing on the experience of Newark, New Jersey, they demonstrate that higher education can be the lever for cultivating a broader talent pool and creating equitable growth in communities.

Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., Gavin Luter and Pascal Buggs explore how higher education can help the conversion of metropolitan cities into socially, economically, politically and culturally just urban centres. The concept of “neighbourly community” is central to their argument, in which they refer to inclusive cross-class neighbourhoods with strong institutions, where blacks, people of colour and low-income groups live in healthy, animated and prosperous enclaves, and where people earn a living wage and have access to a range of supportive services, including good schools, quality medical treatment and food security. In this context, higher education institutions need to develop their unique potential as a community resource: their staff and students, combined with libraries, academic departments, professional schools and extensive fiscal capacities, are unrivalled.

In the final chapter of this volume, Elene Jibladze, who was general rapporteur at the Global Forum, draws together the strands explored through this book and offers some thoughts for further action. She suggests that higher education institutions should create and co-create knowledge and build an understanding among the younger generation. This can be achieved through producing relevant research as an engaged university. She further suggests that higher education institutions themselves adhere to and practise the values of democracy and human rights, empathy and compassion, passion and dedication. Not least, Jibladze suggests that universities should abandon an elitist world view and move beyond their campuses to be embedded in the community and work with and for the community.

As editors, we hope the diverse chapters in this volume will inspire action as well as further discussion. We believe the university as an ivory tower is a myth. Had universities been ivory towers, they would not have survived for centuries. Like most myths, however, this particular myth may contain a grain of truth in that many institutions have traditionally hesitated to engage in the day-to-day development of society. We need higher education institutions that are willing and able to think in terms of principles and to take a longer-term perspective. But these institutions also need to do so while being committed to and engaged in broader society – locally, nationally and globally. These approaches are not contradictory. They are instead mutually supportive and reinforcing, resulting in more effective, creative and principled institutions. We hope this book will help policy makers and practitioners in higher education institutions and systems find inspiration and identify how this might be done in their own contexts.

Part I

# **Democracy, knowledge and inclusion versus post-truth politics – Reaffirming the principles of higher education**

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## Chapter 1

# Open science in open universities for an open society

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Stefania Giannini

**Note from the editors:** we are grateful to Senator Stefania Giannini for allowing us to reproduce her opening remarks to the Global Forum in this book.

First of all, let me thank the organisers very much for their invitation. It is a great pleasure to attend with you today this important Global Forum on higher education and its role in creating a better society.

It takes place at a very prestigious Italian university to which I am close and with which I have been familiar for many years, as a scholar, as a Rector and more recently and crucially as Italy's Minister for Education, Universities and Research for three years in the last Italian Government.

Then I also wish to thank my dear friend, Professor Francesco Bonini, the Rector of LUMSA, for hosting us so kindly and for his well-known interest in the needs, the challenges and the problems we are going to discuss today.

The main issue you put on the table today, dear friends, is quite relevant not only for this outstanding academic audience, but also for all European and international citizens.

Actually you are asking if, to what extent and eventually how, universities and the traditional system of knowledge, which has trained the European and Western establishment for more than 1000 years, can still contribute to the development of societies.

In my presentation I will try to demonstrate some good reasons to answer with three YESes:

- ▶ YES, universities remain the pillar of a science-based society, although many other institutions (spin-offs and technology giants, corporations, think tanks, the media) generate knowledge and they will do it more and more;
- ▶ YES, higher education remains the most effective tool for fostering sustainable economic growth, job creation and enhanced well-being, because of its first and main mission: to produce high-quality research;
- ▶ YES, we need to change the way universities work. Science and society need to strengthen their dialogue and face each other, because now more than ever science needs society and societies need science, an open science that can radically increase its impact by becoming more immediate and understandable for all.

This is the only way to overcome one of the most challenging paradoxes of post-modern society.

On the one hand, science (both blue-sky and applied) is producing more and more important results, making progress possible and available through innovation and technology. Huge progress has been made in such different and crucial sectors in the past 15 years, from medical science (for example digital surgery) to space exploration and physics. All of us can benefit from this progress in our daily life.

But on the other hand, the precious work of scientists, both senior professors and young researchers and, more broadly, experts, seems to be losing its reputation and authority outside laboratories and/or libraries. I would argue that there are two main historical processes which are at the same time challenging science and providing a fantastic opportunity to make its role even more important.

Firstly, a technology-driven revolution is changing how economic and social systems work and rendering obsolete the conceptual instruments we have used for the last two centuries to make sense of reality. Experts seem to be having a hard time understanding the nature of problems and, therefore, providing solutions. For instance, this has been evident for economists, who have repeatedly been unable to anticipate world crises.

Secondly, the internet and social networks have given everybody the possibility to express their opinions and this has challenged traditional media and universities who had something of a monopoly on opinion making. Cyber people in a cyber-world seem better able to navigate through massive amounts of information from a high number of sources and to form judgments without waiting for some holder of knowledge to tell them what to think.

Intellectual leaders seem increasingly unable to provide the solutions societies need; at the same time everybody can pretend to be an expert on Facebook. The two phenomena strengthen each other, creating a crisis of authority.

This is due to a technology (the internet) which is transforming our world by reducing by multiples of hundreds the costs of accessing, elaborating, storing and transmitting information, a development that most likely has only one precedent: when Gutenberg invented the printing press, making it possible to mass-produce books. Even more importantly, the internet is bridging not only digital divides (computers, iPhones, etc.) but also linking physical objects (from refrigerators to nano-particles) and living beings (animals and humans into whom sensors are being injected to monitor health conditions and heal bodies) to a global information system.

This merger of cognitive worlds that used to be separate creates a conceptual challenge that universities can only address by reorganising the way they generate knowledge.

In this context, new models of higher education and research are absolutely necessary.

“Open science” is the key factor and the inescapable precondition for facing the complexity of our world. Open science can radically increase the impact of scientific activities and results on society. The Web, in fact, has the potential to greatly improve not only access to scientific output (publications, data, software) by citizens,

civil society and industry, particularly small and medium-sized companies, but also the involvement of society in the scientific enterprise.

Science does need autonomy, but the dialogue between science and society is more and more important and that is what open science is all about.

In recent years, Italy has shown a strong commitment to open science by including the principle of access to publicly funded research into national law, and by introducing for the first time an open-access mandate – in line with the best practice of Horizon 2020<sup>2</sup> – in two recent national research calls. We must now go beyond that.

First of all, by making sure that the open-access mandate is included in all future research calls.

Secondly, by finally giving Italy a platform on which anyone – citizens, companies, associations, public administrators – at national and international level – can easily find the publicly funded research output produced by Italian researchers. We have already started such a project, Progetto Science & Technology Digital Library, and I hope they will proceed swiftly in that direction.

Europe is doing the same.

Open science is not simply one of the most preferred aims of Commissioner Carlos Moedas;<sup>3</sup> it represents the theoretical framework we need to ensure the benefits of open science for European citizens and companies. It is in the interest of European science, culture and competitiveness.

A mutual reliance that is based on openness and involvement should also inspire a new model of an open university system. I know, tradition is tradition. But a traditional higher education system is a value not a burden and it implies new responsibilities, new commitment and new duties. Once again, if, and only if, we are open to change.

University systems based on hierarchies and rigid curricula are outdated and unsuitable in these fast-changing and complex times.

Instead, university systems must be:

- ▶ interdisciplinary: 145 different disciplinary sectors are too many even for a very diverse country like Italy!;
- ▶ international: foreign students and visiting scholars and professors in Italian universities are much more numerous than 10 years ago, but current numbers are still not enough;
- ▶ integrated with the labour market and civil society, which now more than ever ask universities and research to find the right answers to the big challenges.

In other words, the more global issues such as migration, climate change, terrorism or ageing societies make the global village “smaller” and anxious – with some people seeing building walls as a solution – the more we need to be open: dramatically, absolutely open at all levels.

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2. Horizon 2020 is the current European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, see <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020>, accessed 25 March 2018.

3. The European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science 2014-19.

In a sense, the internet pushes us towards a post-specialisation era where knowledge brokers will be the ultimate generators of knowledge that people will appreciate. In Italian style, the humanist tradition will be in pole position to educate and develop the intellectual leaders of the future, but to get there we need to change.

This new framework should start from new and coherent policies. That is what I tried to do as Minister of Education, Universities and Research.

But policies must be included in a broader dimension, otherwise they are simply work instruments.

To be long-term and effective factors of permanent change, policies need politics in the background.

To that effect, the international community launched its action plan – the OECD Daejeon Declaration<sup>4</sup> – in the Republic of Korea in 2015, the main principles of which are:

- ▶ basic and applied research need adequate long-term funding, even in a context of budgetary constraint. Every advancement of knowledge starts from support for basic research. My efforts when I was in office were targeted at supporting basic research;
- ▶ education and training systems should nurture talent and supply the workforce with the broad range of skills required for generating and using innovation;
- ▶ a market-friendly, competitive environment is required for businesses to invest in education and research, and for entrepreneurship to flourish.

We integrated these principles into our political agenda, with:

- ▶ the National Plan for Research, paving the way to a better innovation ecosystem and selective funding of joint public-private initiatives (National Technological Clusters);
- ▶ research infrastructures, as they play an ever-growing role in aggregating worldwide resources and allow for many new and breakthrough research discoveries;
- ▶ some relevant international scientific co-operation initiatives, such as PRIMA, BLUEMED, ExoMars and so on.

This last development is, in some ways, the most challenging and promising. It is the domain of so-called science diplomacy, where developing and emerging countries should be encouraged to take part in processes and strengthen their innovation capacities. Science has no borders, but calls for dialogue. This is obvious.

Now more than ever, science can definitively contribute to the new geopolitical asset we need: a global, open world where democracy, peace and prosperity prevail everywhere for everybody.

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4. The Daejeon Declaration on Science, Technology and Innovation Policies for the Global and Digital Age, see [www.oecd.org/fr/sti/daejeon-declaration-2015.htm](http://www.oecd.org/fr/sti/daejeon-declaration-2015.htm), accessed 25 March 2018.

## Chapter 2

# Democracy, knowledge and inclusion versus post-truth politics – Reaffirming the principles of higher education

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*Sjur Bergan*

### INTRODUCTION

A book on higher education for diversity, social inclusion and community, with contributions from Europe and the United States as well as from other parts of the world, could hardly be published at a more appropriate time. Over the past few years developments in politics as well as broader societal developments have, to put it mildly, not been encouraging.

Let us talk straight among friends:<sup>5</sup> many Europeans are concerned about tendencies in the United States and about the policies as well as the rhetoric of the Trump Administration. So, we know, are many of our US friends. The concerns started well before the 2016 election and, since they are only partly connected to what we perceive as the excesses of the current US President, they are likely to continue beyond the end of his current term in January 2021. When the Governor of New Jersey was photographed enjoying the solitude of beaches that were closed to the public because of a standoff in the negotiations on that state's budget, the photos were carried by newspapers all over the world. The Governor became an object of ire as well as ridicule, and people were genuinely and legitimately upset. Whether they were also genuinely surprised is a quite different issue.

### THE CHALLENGE OF POPULISM

As Europeans, we are also concerned about many developments, many policies and much of the rhetoric in our own countries. Nationalism and populism are not

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5. "Just a little straight talk among friends" was President Gerald Ford's first speech as President of the United States after President Nixon's resignation in August 1974, see <http://bit.ly/2HqfpUL>, accessed 25 March 2018.

the speciality of any one country. The simplistic language that incites us to keep to ourselves and to keep foreigners out is, ironically, something of a global lingua franca. The Council of Europe's Secretary General has now identified populism as one of the challenges to which Europe must rise (Council of Europe 2017). Populism was the topic of the 2017 edition of the World Forum on Democracy.

I know very well that populism may have a less negative connotation to US than to European ears, and not only because Bernie Sanders attracted a large following running on a left populist platform in the 2016 Democratic primaries. Nevertheless, I believe that populism, as we see it surge in so many countries today, is a joint challenge. Populism is often of the right but sometimes of the left and may even have no discernible place on the traditional right/left divide. Populists claim to represent the whole people, and those who are against them are not "genuinely" of the people (Müller 2016). Taken to its extreme, this "logic" would imply that elections are unnecessary. If a populist party or movement is by definition the representative of the genuine people or nation, why waste resources on elections that would, if they reflected genuine public opinion, only confirm the point? And if the elections were to give a different result, they would by definition be distorted. This of course recalls other political ideologies that claimed to represent the "genuine" people by being the only true representative of the working class and its "objective interests" or to represent the "genuine people" in its connotations with the *Volks*.

This is perhaps an indication that the traditional left/right divide in politics may need to be nuanced. The economic policies that traditionally divide left and right may still be important but political positions and voting patterns are also decided by other factors that are less easy to fit into the traditional pattern. What are often referred to as "cultural issues" arouse strong feelings in large parts of the electorate, and finding a compromise or intermediary solution is less easy for such issues than for classical economic issues. A claim for a wage increase or a reduction of working hours can be negotiated and compromises found. A halfway solution is much more difficult to imagine for issues such as abortion, gay marriage or school prayer.

## ATTITUDES TO THE "OTHER"

Our attitudes to Europe, to the world, and to the Other are among these "cultural issues". Pope Francis, as we know, challenged all Catholic parishes to adopt a refugee family. I am ashamed to say that my own parish in a village on the periphery of Strasbourg was less than enthused by the idea. Many parishioners seemed to feel this would have been easier to do if it were not for the fact that the refugees were foreigners – and largely Middle Eastern and Muslim to boot. We just do not want others to come bother us in our daily lives. That is, alas, true even of the population of countries that only a couple of generations ago sent a large number of refugees abroad. 1956 and 1968 come to mind (Rankin 2017).

That said, the picture is not entirely bleak. Many parishes, associations and communities do mobilise to help refugees. Countries like Germany and Sweden have been generous in their welcome, in the face of opposition from populist parties like Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*) and the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*). In early September 2017, the European Court of Justice upheld

the European Commission's resettlement scheme when ruling on a legal challenge brought by Hungary and the Slovak Republic. Many European universities also assist refugees, as we saw during the Global Forum, where the Australian Catholic University and the Sant' Egidio Community gave participants an opportunity to meet with refugees. The European University Association provides an overview of measures through its web-based Refugees Welcome Map.<sup>6</sup>

The Council of Europe is working with national authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to assist with language education<sup>7</sup> and to facilitate the recognition of refugees' qualifications even when they cannot be adequately documented. A recommendation under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, adopted by the Convention Committee on 14 November 2017,<sup>8</sup> is supplemented by a project to develop a European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR).<sup>9</sup> The EQPR describes the qualifications that seasoned credentials evaluators consider it likely that refugees have, based on in-depth interviews, and does so in a format that makes it easy for other countries to use the assessment if refugees move on from the country that first hosted them. This saves resources for national authorities as well as time and frustration for refugees.

While providing recognition of refugees' qualifications may sound both technical and trivial, this is an important issue for individual refugees and for their host and home countries. The effects of long-term unemployment – which include demotivation and loss of acquired competences – are well known, and being a refugee is even more challenging. Refugees who are given the opportunity to use and develop their competences can find motivation in spite of their very difficult situation. They will maintain and further develop their competences, which is of advantage to their host countries, as it will be of great importance to rebuilding their home countries if and when they are able to return home. Refugees who are condemned to passivity, on the other hand, will eventually lose their competences, which need to be used to be maintained. They will be demotivated and frustrated, and the danger that some of them will turn to violent extremism is greatly increased. This is, of course, a danger to their host countries and also to their home countries, should they be able to return home.

Education may not solve every problem, but should help develop attitudes and allow us to see inconsistencies. It should also help us approach difficult issues with open minds and to see different points of view. Those of us who believe most European countries could and should do more to receive refugees need to understand why

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6. See [www.eua.be/activities-services/eua-campaigns/refugees-welcome-map](http://www.eua.be/activities-services/eua-campaigns/refugees-welcome-map), accessed 25 March 2018.

7. See [www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants), accessed 25 March 2018.

8. See Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention: European Treaties Series 165), available at [www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165](http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165), accessed 25 March 2018, and [www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/new-recommendation-on-recognition-of-qualifications-held-by-refugees](http://www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/new-recommendation-on-recognition-of-qualifications-held-by-refugees), accessed 25 March 2018.

9. See [www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications](http://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications), accessed 25 March 2018. See also the documentary video available at [www.coe.int/en/web/education/documentary-on-project-european-qualifications-passport-for-refugees](http://www.coe.int/en/web/education/documentary-on-project-european-qualifications-passport-for-refugees), accessed 25 March 2018.

many – too many – of our fellow citizens believe borders should be closed and those who are different from us should stay away.

Multi-perspectivity is a hallmark of the Council of Europe history education programme.<sup>10</sup> My history is not only mine – it is also yours. You may well have a different view of my history. My heroes may not be heroes to you. Think back to the Global Forum held at Queen's University Belfast in June 2014,<sup>11</sup> where participants had the opportunity to visit community centres that, with Queen's, work across societal divides. The people who work there are committed to dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts. They do not all have the same view on the conflict in Northern Ireland but they do their best to understand the motivation of those whose views differ significantly from their own.

Multi-perspectivity is difficult not only because it obliges us to understand the views of others and the reasons behind them (Bergan 2016). It is difficult not least because we must realise that understanding and accepting are not one and the same. To take an obvious example: if we do not understand what led to the Holocaust and other genocides, how can we hope to prevent similar crimes against humanity in the future? At the same time, it can never be legitimate to deny the Holocaust or accept genocide. If it were, how could we prevent similar crimes in the future?

The distinction between understanding and accepting is crucial but it is also difficult because it is so easy to confound the two – inadvertently or on purpose. The arguments are too complex to be conveyed in sound bites or tweets. It is easy for someone trying to explain the Holocaust to be accused of diminishing or even supporting it. Multi-perspectivity does not mean accepting all views as valid or legitimate but it does mean we need to try to understand the motivations behind views with which we disagree strongly or that we even find morally reprehensible. Multi-perspectivity also means that, in less extreme cases, we may be convinced by the arguments of others.

## “POST-TRUTH” AND “ALTERNATIVE FACTS”

This brings me to the issue of “post-truth” and “alternative facts”. These are oxymorons but now seem to have become part of everyday language. The fact that they are often associated with politics and the way we elect those who represent us is deeply troubling. It is also a challenge to higher education.

We seem less and less able to distinguish between fact and fiction, and between opinion and the facts on which our opinions should be based. What is worse, we seem less and less willing to do so.

The consequences are potentially dire, in the short as well as the long term. If we cannot identify what the facts, duly established through methodologically sound

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10. Recommendation Rec(2001)15 by the Committee of Ministers to member states on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe, available at [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805e2c31](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805e2c31), accessed 25 March 2018.

11. The programme and presentations delivered at the 2014 Global Forum are available at [www.qub.ac.uk/sites/HigherEducationforDemocraticInnovationConference](http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/HigherEducationforDemocraticInnovationConference), accessed 25 March 2018.



and peer-reviewed research, tell us about climate change from a perhaps understandable desire to continue acting as if nothing had happened, how can we try to make the Earth fit for our great-grandchildren?

Wishful thinking may have its attractions but has not generally been considered the winning argument in a debate. Presenting wishful thinking as “alternative facts” should not be either. Higher education must be in the frontline of putting facts back at the centre of the debate – not as an important element of debate but as the basis of it. The days may be gone when a news anchor could end by telling his audience “and that’s the way it is”.<sup>12</sup> The days should not be gone when higher education teachers and researchers engage in public debate to explain the facts and distinguish the conclusions that can reasonably be drawn from them from arguments that fly in the face of the established fact. A commitment to presenting facts and to improving our collective knowledge and understanding should also be seen as the best funding argument any public authority would ever need.

Higher education needs to take clear action when members of its community transgress. In some cases, bona fide researchers lend their names and reputation to distortions of research results for economic benefit, and not always in their main areas of competence (Oreskes and Conway 2010). In other cases, plagiarism and falsification of research results make big headlines – not least when prominent politicians claim qualifications they do not have or it turns out that substantial parts of their theses were copied from other works without due acknowledgement of the sources. Regardless of whether they make headlines or not, falsification, plagiarism and wilful distortion of research results are harmful and need to be sanctioned by the academic community.

The Council of Europe has launched a project to encourage transparency and combat corruption in education – Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED).<sup>13</sup> Even if the ETINED Platform addresses all levels and strands of education, the challenges are particularly severe in higher education, possibly in part because the stakes of earning a qualification are higher and in part because there are serious ethics issues also in research. Many higher education institutions have ethical guidelines for students and staff, and the International Association of Universities and the Magna Charta Observatory have issued guidelines for an institutional code of ethics (IAU/MCO 2012).<sup>14</sup>

## THE ROLE AND PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education needs to make it clear that “post-truth” is not a notion but a nonsense. If we accept the term, we accept there may be something beyond truth, something better than truth. There may be limits to how far higher education should engage in the nitty-gritty of politics – but there should be even clearer limits to its disengagement.

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12. This was CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite’s legendary sign-off.

13. See [www.coe.int/en/web/ethics-transparency-integrity-in-education](http://www.coe.int/en/web/ethics-transparency-integrity-in-education), accessed 25 March 2018.

14. See [https://iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/ethics\\_guidelines\\_finaldef\\_08.02.13.pdf](https://iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/ethics_guidelines_finaldef_08.02.13.pdf), accessed 25 March 2018.

Finding simple “answers” to complex questions or saying that facts do not matter as long as we know how we feel about a given issue goes against everything higher education stands for. Perhaps the current state of affairs indicates that higher education has not fulfilled all of its missions. As the Council of Europe defines them, these are:

- ▶ preparing for the labour market;
- ▶ preparing for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- ▶ personal development;
- ▶ the development of a broad and advanced knowledge base (Bergan 2005).<sup>15</sup>

We have not been good enough at demonstrating the value of diversity. We have not been good enough at demonstrating the value of inclusion. And we have not been successful enough at developing a commitment to communities and to public space, both within higher education institutions and in the graduates they educate. Our lack of success is not only theoretical – it is also that we have not been able to set good examples by doing what we teach.

In one attempt to help educators do just that, the Council of Europe has developed a Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.<sup>16</sup> It outlines what students should know, understand, and be able to do but also be willing to do and sometimes not to do. Twenty competences come together in four broad areas: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding. The first phase of this project ended in December 2017, and we now have a Reference Framework consisting of the model adopted by European Ministers of Education in Brussels in April 2016, descriptors for the 20 competences that have been tested with educators in 16 countries, and a first set of guidance documents. The second phase of the project, in 2018-19, will focus on supporting implementation in member states as well as on developing further guidance documents, including on higher education.

Needless to say, the project has been and remains challenging, and not only because of the tight time scale in which it has been developed. For the purposes of this chapter, two challenges seem to be of particular interest. The first has to do with the role of values as a competence for democracy. Some of those consulted for this project questioned the idea that values can and should be taught and assessed. The opposition to teaching values seems misplaced. After all, any education system has as one of its goals to teach and transmit the values of the society it serves, and many put these into the broader context of European and international values of democracy and human rights. An education system or institution that would not seek to transmit and educate for these values would seem to fail in an important part of its mission. The question of whether values could and should be assessed is perhaps more legitimate but our firm conclusion is that they should; at a superficial level, they are every day in classrooms across the world. Teachers who would not correct the behaviour of students who, for example, demonstrate lack of respect for fellow

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15. Council of Europe (2007), Recommendation Rec(2007)6 by the Committee of Ministers to member states on the public responsibility for higher education and research, available at [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805d5dae](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805d5dae), accessed 25 March 2018.

16. See [www.coe.int/en/web/education/competences-for-democratic-culture](http://www.coe.int/en/web/education/competences-for-democratic-culture), accessed 25 March 2018.

students with a physical or mental disability would not be doing their job. Formal assessment may be more challenging but can nevertheless be accomplished, possibly by using other assessment methods than a fail/pass or scaled grading system.

The second challenge concerned the concept of “critical thinking”. Questioning received wisdom and identifying alternative solutions is a hallmark of higher education; without it, research would not be possible. It is worth underlining that advancing research is very different from “post-truth” and “alternative facts”. New knowledge developed through research is peer reviewed and is put forward for critical assessment by the whole research community. This is not to say new research is uncontroversial or that the results of new research are always accepted by peers. There have even been periods in the history of higher education and research when university teachers were obliged to teach according to the established canon but published alternative views in their writings, based on their own research (De Ridder-Symoens 2006).

The challenge we faced in this project was, however, somewhat different. Some of those consulted perceived critical thinking solely as the ability to “tear down” or “find fault”. However, the ability to identify alternatives is an integral part of critical thinking. That may not necessarily make the concept more appealing to all, but it is important to underline that critical thinking is fundamentally constructive rather than destructive.

In the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, then, knowledge, understanding, action and ethical considerations come together. We need all of them if we are to be active citizens in democratic societies. Higher education institutions have an important role in developing these competences. Higher education is increasingly considered a valuable qualification for the labour market. Why would we then assume that higher education does not have a role to play in educating for democracy? We are educators, not just trainers.

It is easy enough to think of political leaders who show little inclination to consider issues of principle, to put human beings at the centre, and to give as much weight to long-term considerations as to short-term ones. We do not even need to step into the controversies of our own time to do so. Part of the 19th-century US debate about slavery and abolition centred on different views of the value and equal worth of human beings, where both defenders and many opponents of slavery held views of the relative worth of different races – to use the term current at the time – that are plainly unacceptable today.

However, even if a historical perspective is essential, we cannot and should not avoid the controversies of today. Two developments in different parts of the world since the Global Forum was held illustrate this. The United States as well as its friends in other parts of the world were profoundly shocked by the wilful killing by a white supremacist of a peaceful counter-demonstrator in Charlottesville, Virginia on 12 August 2017. The assault weapon was one often associated with Islamic terrorists: a car driven into a crowd. Equally shocking, however, was the reaction by President Trump, who at first sought to relativise the crime and then gave the impression of condemning it without conviction. The combination of the crime and the official reaction to it led to soul-searching that included a special issue of *Time* magazine entitled “Hate in America” (Time 2017). Jon Meacham (2017) puts the crime into

historical perspective by linking the current extreme right and “Alt-right” movements to the aftermath of the US Civil War, the growth of the Ku Klux Klan, Reconstruction, the States’ Rights movement, and the resistance to civil rights.

The second example is the plight of the Rohingyas, a minority group in Myanmar that the authorities as well as large parts of civil society consider foreign by ethnic origin as well as faith, but which has long roots in the country (Ibrahim 2016). Even if the Rohingyas have been in a precarious position since at least the 1970s, the persecution of this “double minority” – ethnic and religious – has increased considerably following the transition from a military to a tentatively democratic regime in March 2016. It reached a climax – or at least a preliminary climax in August/September 2017 – with somewhere between 70 000 and 145 000 people driven across the border to Bangladesh in less than a month, along with considerable loss of life. As in the case of Charlottesville, the world was shocked not only by the deeds but by the reaction to them – or lack thereof – by the highest political authorities. Burmese State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Laureate who became the public face of the resistance to Myanmar’s military regime and who was widely admired for her courage and commitment to non-violence, broke her silence only on 6 September to denounce the reports as “fake news” and an “iceberg of disinformation”.<sup>17</sup>

In both cases, then, public consternation was based both on the acts themselves and on the reaction to them by the highest political authorities of the countries directly concerned. Violence was condoned – or was perceived as being condoned – by political authorities. Neither of the leaders in question lived up to the public expectations placed in their high office. One broke with the longstanding and unequivocal condemnation of violent extremism – in this case racist extremism – by his predecessors in office, while the other broke with her hard-earned reputation as a defender of democracy and human rights.

By contrast, the Global Forum 2017 was held in Rome in part because this city, on the western bank of the Tiber,<sup>18</sup> is home to a leader who does stand up for principles, for the value of human beings, for those who are excluded and for the future of our planet. Pope Francis has many admirers, including among those who may not agree with him on every issue or who may not even share his faith. His gesture of giving an encyclical on our responsibility for a sustainable future – *Laudato si’* (Pope Francis 2015) – as a gift to a visiting head of state is both deeply symbolic and strongly encouraging. Among other things, the encyclical makes the case for giving long-term considerations of sustainability preference over short-term considerations of immediate economic gain.

## CONCLUSION

Rereading the title of this section of the book, I realise it could be taken to imply that democracy, knowledge and inclusion automatically and by themselves not

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17. See <https://lemde.fr/2Js8FGt>, accessed 25 March 2018.

18. The expression should not be read as taking a stand on the occasional disputes between the authorities on either side of the Tiber, that is the Italian Government and the Holy See.

only act in consort but overcome “post-truth” politics. That, of course, is not how it should be read and it would be straying from the truth to do so. We have no illusions that education at any level will automatically develop a culture of democracy in all graduates. Experience tells us otherwise, both at an everyday level and by recalling some high-profile examples. Goebbels, Stalin, Kim Jong-il and Abimael Guzmán all had a past as higher education students, and the founder of Sendero Luminoso<sup>19</sup> was even a professor of philosophy in Ayacucho.

By putting democracy, knowledge and inclusion in the same title we did, however, wish to imply that together they constitute the kind of higher education we need. Knowledge is essential, and we have both citizens and leaders who help us remember why. But knowledge without understanding is not second best; it can be downright harmful. This is perhaps even truer when knowledge and understanding are put to use. We may know and be able to do something that, with thorough understanding and a functioning moral compass, we refrain from doing. This is why the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture is not based on the most common definition of learning outcomes – what we know, understand and are able to do – but adds a fourth element: what we are willing to do. We must know, understand and act – and we must act to further democracy and inclusion.

The “post-truth”, “alternative facts” movement is deficient not only in facts but in reason and in compassion. As educators, we must inspire and guide, teach students to reason and to value. As educators, we should remember Ambrose Bierce’s definition of “education”, in his *Devil’s dictionary* (1983/1911: 105): “Education, n. That which reveals to the wise and hides from the foolish their lack of understanding.”

Higher education in Europe and the United States probably trains more highly competent specialists than ever before. I am less sure that we succeed in educating intellectuals: individuals who are able and willing to place their advanced specialised competence in a broader context, ask critical questions, and find the answers to those questions. That is an essential part of the mission of higher education, and lies at the heart of this book.

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19. The Shining Path, a Maoist-inspired terrorist organisation active in the highlands of Peru in the 1980s and early 1990s. Mario Vargas Llosa’s novel *Historia de Mayta* is partly inspired by Sendero Luminoso.

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## Chapter 3

# **“The fierce urgency of now” – Advancing inclusion and democracy through higher education–community engagement**

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*Ira Harkavy*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Martin Luther King, Jr. used the phrase “the fierce urgency of now” and called for immediate “vigorous and positive action” to end segregation and the unequal treatment of African Americans. Given the severe dysfunction of the American political system, as well as many political systems throughout the world, “vigorous and positive action” is also required at this time.<sup>20</sup> In particular, universities have an increased and increasing responsibility to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and improvement of the human condition, which includes contributing to creating and sustaining genuinely diverse, inclusive, democratic communities and societies.

Colleges and universities, as Derek Bok and others have emphasised, have become the central societal institutions of the modern world (Bok 1990: 3). The path to power and success for the vast majority of leaders in science, health care, business, law – indeed, in nearly every area of life – passes through colleges and universities. They have become the primary engines of growth for an increasingly knowledge-based global economy (Baker 2014: 1-19, 58-121). Colleges and universities have also come to play a key role in their local environments as anchor institutions (Dubb and Hodges 2012; AITF 2016). They possess enormous resources (especially human resources), develop and transmit new knowledge, educate for careers and advancement, function as centres of artistic and cultural creativity, and have a significant influence on the

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20. See King’s famous speech at the 1963 March on Washington and his 1958 speech to the National Biennial Convention of the American Jewish Congress, available at [www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihadream.htm](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihadream.htm) and [http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Vol4/14-May-1958\\_AddreddBiennialConv.pdf](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Vol4/14-May-1958_AddreddBiennialConv.pdf), both accessed 25 March 2018.

norms, values and practices of “pre-K-12” education.<sup>21</sup> They are catalysts and hubs for local and regional economies as employers, real estate developers, clients for area vendors, and incubators for business and technology. In cities that have experienced a decrease in capital investments and the departure of industrial jobs, institutions of higher learning often serve as critical sources of employment and stability. Over the past several decades in the United States, enlightened self-interest has prompted many colleges and universities to respond to external pressures from government, foundations and public opinion by partnering in local community economic development efforts to ameliorate such significant problems as poverty, crime, violence and physical deterioration (Benson et al. 2017: 68).

The centrality of higher education has never been clearer. Yet its promise is far from being realised. Jane Addams, the activist and feminist founder of Hull House settlement in Chicago’s poverty-stricken, immigrant 19th ward neighbourhood, identified a primary reason that colleges and universities in the United States have failed to do what they need to do. They have simply forgotten their true purpose:

As the college changed from teaching theology to teaching secular knowledge the test of its success should have shifted from the power to save men’s souls to the power to adjust them in healthful relations to nature and their fellow men. But the college failed to do this, and made the test of its success the mere collecting and disseminating of knowledge, elevating the means into an end and falling in love with its own achievement. (Addams 1985/1899: 90)

The collaboration between the Council of Europe and the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy (IC) is rooted in the Enlightenment idea powerfully expressed by Francis Bacon (Montagu 1884) at the turn of the 17th century that “knowledge is power” for “the relief of man’s estate” – for the progressive, continued betterment of the human condition.<sup>22</sup> For Bacon (and indeed Jane Addams) that is the true goal of knowledge. To realise that goal, Bacon also called for, among other things, a “closer connection and relationship between all the different universities of Europe” (Sargent 1999: 54). The need for collaboration among universities, of course, is no longer restricted to Europe.

## **TOWARDS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT: THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

Global collaboration for research, learning and engagement is necessary if we are to realise the progressive, humane vision of a better, more just and democratic world. The IC was founded in 1999 as a vehicle for promoting such collaboration, specifically with the Council of Europe, to advance the contribution of institutions of higher education to democratic development on campus and in local communities

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21. In other words, pre-kindergarten (a classroom-based preschool programme for children below the age of five in the United States) through secondary education.

22. Although Bacon actually wrote “knowledge itself is a power” in *Meditationes Sacrae* (1597), the famous statement “knowledge is power” captures Bacon’s meaning and is widely attributed to him. The phrase for “the relief of man’s estate” can be found in *The advancement of learning* (1605).



and wider society. The Council of Europe, established in 1949, defends democracy, human rights and the rule of law; develops continent-wide agreements to standardise member countries' social and legal practices; and promotes awareness of a European identity across cultures based on shared values. It is Europe's oldest existing intergovernmental organisation, with a total membership of 47 countries, including 21 countries from central and eastern Europe. Three other countries are party to the European Cultural Convention, which provides the framework for the Council's work in education policy and practice.<sup>23</sup>

The IC–Council of Europe collaboration undertakes cross-national research projects, joint meetings and the sharing of best practices as part of efforts to advance higher education's contribution to building democratic societies. The Netter Center houses the executive offices of the IC, and Associate Director Joann Weeks serves as its executive secretary. Membership of the IC is by country; each country is represented by a small delegation or a steering committee formed by the leaders of its higher education associations; these delegates and steering committee members constitute the IC. The author of this chapter chairs the US steering committee, which includes leaders from the American Council on Education, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Campus Compact, the Democracy Commitment, and NASPA (an organisation of student affairs professionals in higher education). Australia has joined through Engagement Australia, the United Kingdom is represented by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, Ireland has joined through Campus Engage, and South Africa is represented by Universities South Africa.<sup>24</sup>

Complementary developments in the United States and Europe laid a strong foundation for IC–Council collaboration, including the Council of Europe's Budapest Declaration for a Greater Europe Without Dividing Lines, adopted on the Organisation's 50th anniversary (May 1999), which designated the education system as the major societal means for democratic development. And in July 1999, 51 college and university presidents in the United States signed a Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education, sponsored by Campus Compact. Nearly 600 universities have now signed the declaration, which highlights the university's central role in citizenship education.<sup>25</sup>

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23. For the IC and the Council of Europe, see [www.internationalconsortium.org](http://www.internationalconsortium.org); for the Cultural Convention, see <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=018&CM=7&DF=&CL=ENG>, both accessed 25 March 2018.

24. For IC steering committee members, see: American Council on Education, [www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu); American Association of State Colleges and Universities, [www.aascu.org](http://www.aascu.org); Association of American Colleges and Universities, [www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org); Campus Compact, <https://compact.org>; The Democracy Commitment, <http://thedemocracycommitment.org>; NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education), [www.naspa.org](http://www.naspa.org); Engagement Australia, [www.engagementaustralia.org.au](http://www.engagementaustralia.org.au); National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, [www.publicengagement.ac.uk](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk); Campus Engage, [www.campusengage.ie](http://www.campusengage.ie); Universities South Africa, [www.usaf.ac.za](http://www.usaf.ac.za), all accessed 25 March 2018.

25. In March 2016, as part of its 30th anniversary celebrations, more than 350 presidents and chancellors signed the Compact's new Action Statement. The Action Statement advances the "public obligations" of higher education and "commits campuses to specific steps to deepen their engagement for the benefits of students, communities, and the broader public." Each campus will be developing a Campus Civic Action Plan as part of this effort. See <http://compact.org/actionstatement>, accessed 25 March 2018.

The IC–Council of Europe collaboration first launched the cross-national research project “Universities as Sites of Citizenship and Responsibility”. Beginning in 1999, a team of European and US researchers assessed the activities of institutions of higher education that supported democratic values and practices, and also helped to disseminate those activities. Working groups were established to develop the methodology and protocols for the research. The pilot study was completed by 14 European and 15 US universities, and the US component was funded by the National Science Foundation. The Council of Europe published the research findings in *The university as res publica: higher education governance, student participation and the university as a site of citizenship* (Bergan et al. 2004).

The collaboration has hosted five Global Forums, including the one held in June 2017 in Rome, which led to this volume on higher education for diversity, social inclusion and community. The Council of Europe has also published monographs on each of the four other conference themes: *Higher education and democratic culture: citizenship, human rights, and civic responsibility* (Harkavy and Huber 2008); *Higher education for modern societies: competences and values* (Bergan and Damian 2010); *Reimagining democratic societies: a new era of personal and social responsibility* (Bergan et al. 2013); and *Higher education for democratic innovation* (Bergan et al. 2016). Other partners joined in planning the conferences, among them the International Association of Universities, the European Wergeland Centre and the European Students’ Union. The University of Oslo, Queen’s University Belfast, and LUMSA-Rome and Australian Catholic University-Rome hosted the 2011, 2014 and 2017 Forums, respectively. But in spite of the significant growth and development of the IC–Council of Europe partnership, as well as the growth and development of other global networks dedicated to higher-education civic engagement, such as the Talloires Network and the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi), colleges and universities in general have failed to fulfil their intellectual and societal promise.<sup>26</sup>

## OBSTACLES TO REALISING THE PROMISE OF HIGHER EDUCATION<sup>27</sup>

What Benjamin Franklin termed a “[p]rejudice in favour of ancient customs and habitudes” (Best 1962: 173) continues to impede the transformation of colleges and universities into civic institutions committed to the advancement of learning and knowledge for “the relief of man’s estate”. And this is by no means the only obstacle, in my judgment. Commercialism and commodification, misplaced nostalgia for traditional, elitist, “ivory tower” liberal arts education, and intellectual and institutional fragmentation also get in the way of needed change.

Education for profit, not virtue; students as consumers, not producers of knowledge; academics as individual superstars, not members of a community of scholars – all of these developments reflect the commercialisation of higher education, which

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26. The Talloires Network has 368 institutional members representing 77 countries. The Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi) has 210 institutional members representing 78 countries.

27. The arguments presented in this section, as well as the section that follows, draw significantly from Benson et al. (2017).

contributes to an overemphasis on institutional competition for wealth and status, with a devastating impact on the values and ambitions of college students (Bok 2003). When institutions openly pursue commercialisation, their behaviour legitimises and reinforces the pursuit of economic self-interest by students and amplifies the widespread sense that they are in college exclusively to gain career-related skills and credentials. Student idealism and civic engagement are strongly diminished when students see their universities abandon academic values and scholarly pursuits to function as competitive, profit-making corporations. Commercialism and the development of the entrepreneurial university foster an environment in which higher education is seen as a private benefit, not a public good.<sup>28</sup>

Partly in response to galloping commercialism, some make a case for a return to traditional liberal arts education – an essentialist approach with roots in Plato’s anti-democratic, elitist theory of education (Mulholland 2015). What is needed instead is, to quote Carol Geary Schneider, “a new liberal art” involving “integrative learning – focused around big problems and new connections between the academy and society” (2005: 13). The concept of a new liberal art resonates with the great educator and philosopher John Dewey’s rejection of abstract contemplation and his call for an engaged, problem-solving approach to scholarship and learning. In *Reconstruction in philosophy* (1920), he wrote:

The social philosopher, dwelling in the region of his concepts, ‘solves’ problems by showing the relationship of ideas, instead of helping men solve problems in the concrete by supplying them hypotheses to be used and tested in projects of reform. (Boydston 1978: 189-90)

“Communities have problems, universities have departments”, stated a report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (CERI 1982: 127). Beyond being a criticism of universities, that statement neatly indicates another major reason why colleges and universities have not contributed as they should. Quite simply, their un-integrated, fragmented, internally conflictual structure and organisation impede understanding and the development of solutions to highly complex human and societal problems. Colleges and universities need to significantly decrease the fragmentation of disciplines, overspecialisation and division between and among the arts and sciences and the professions, since these departmental and disciplinary divisions have increased the isolation of higher education from society itself. Compounding this problem is what might be called the “disciplinary fallacy” afflicting universities in the United States and perhaps elsewhere – namely, the misconception that faculty members are duty-bound to serve only the scholastic interests and preoccupations of their disciplines and have neither the responsibility nor the capacity to help their universities keep their longstanding promise to prepare undergraduate students for lives of moral and civic responsibility.<sup>29</sup>

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28. Although definitions vary, the concept of the entrepreneurial university grew out of the commodification and commercialisation that higher education encourages, and the increased impact of the marketplace and the profitmaking motive on university operations and goals. See Slaughter and Leslie (1997) and Clark (1998). For a more recent discussion that highlights the lack of definitional agreement in Europe, where the concept seems to have gained particular currency, see OECD (2012).

29. Stanley Fish (2008) is arguably the most outspoken proponent of the “disciplinary fallacy”.

## REDUCING OBSTACLES TO CHANGING HIGHER EDUCATION AND REALISING DEWEY'S VISION OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is much more than politics or a political system. It is, as Dewey wrote in 1939, “a way of life”, one:

controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature. ... The democratic faith in human equality is belief that every human being, independent of the quantity or range of his personal endowment, has the right to equal opportunity with every other person for development of whatever gifts he has. (Dewey 1939: 229)

What might be done to help universities embrace that democratic vision actively as well as rhetorically? One strategy that has been increasingly developed in the United States involves creatively and intelligently adapting the work and resources of a wide variety of local institutions – universities, hospitals, faith-based organisations and more – to the particular needs and resources of local communities and regions. It assumes, however, that universities and colleges, which are simultaneously preeminent international, national and local institutions, potentially represent by far the most powerful partners, anchors<sup>30</sup> and creative catalysts for change and improvement in the quality of life in cities, regions and communities.

This strategy resonates with one of Dewey's most significant propositions: “Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community” (Boydston 1981a: 368). Democracy, he emphasised, has to be built on face-to-face interactions in which human beings work together co-operatively to solve the ongoing problems of life. I am adapting Dewey's brilliant, far-reaching proposition by claiming the following: today, democracy's home is the engaged neighbourly college or university and its local community partners.

Colleges and universities are place-based institutions deeply affected by their local environment and surroundings. The future of higher educational institutions and their communities are intertwined. As such, they have a strong economic stake in the health of their surrounding communities and – due to the scale and scope of their operations – the resources to make a genuine difference. Because they can make a difference in the lives of their neighbours, colleges and universities have a moral and ethical responsibility to contribute to the quality of life in their communities.

Over the past two decades, the academic benefits of community engagement have also been illustrated in practice and an intellectual case for engagement effectively made; namely, that by focusing on solving universal problems that are manifested in their local communities (such as poverty, poor schooling, inadequate health care),

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30. Since 2009, following a report to the Secretary of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (Harkavy 2009), the concept of the anchor institution has gained significant traction in the United States. The Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF), an organisation that developed following the release of that report, has grown to include over 800 individual members and has attracted interest in Europe, South Africa and Australia. The AITF defines anchor institutions as “enduring organizations that are rooted in their localities. It is difficult for them to leave their surroundings even in the midst of substantial capital flight. The challenge to a growing movement is to encourage these stable local assets to harness their resources in order to address critical issues such as education, economic opportunity, and health.” See [www.margainc.com/aitf](http://www.margainc.com/aitf), accessed 25 March 2018.

institutions of higher education will generate knowledge that is both nationally and globally significant and be better able to realise their primary mission of contributing to a healthy democratic society.

The history of colleges and universities in the United States strongly supports the claim that the democratic mission is, and should be, the primary mission for US higher education. The creation of the United States research university in the late 19th and early 20th centuries radically and irrevocably transformed higher education. Among other things, advancing democracy became the defining purpose of both public land-grant and private urban universities. Charles Anderson captures the “extraordinary recasting of historic predispositions” that occurred during the early decades of the American research university:

With deliberate defiance, those who created the American university (particularly the public university, though the commitment soon spread throughout the system) simply stood this [aristocratic] idea of reason on its head. Now it was assumed that the widespread exercise of self-conscious, critical reason was essential to *democracy*. The truly remarkable belief arose that this system of government would flourish best if citizens would generally adopt the habits of thought hitherto supposed appropriate mainly for scholars and scientists. We vastly expanded access to higher education. We presumed it a general good, like transport, or power, part of the infrastructure of the civilization. (emphasis in original) (Anderson 1993: 8)

The benefits of a local community focus for college and university civic engagement programmes have been increasingly shown to be manifold. Ongoing, continuous interaction is facilitated through work in an easily accessible location. Relationships of trust, so essential for effective partnerships and effective learning, are also built through day-to-day work on problems and issues of mutual concern. In addition, the local community provides a convenient setting in which service-learning courses, community-based research courses, and related courses in different disciplines can work together on a complex problem to produce substantive results. Work in a university’s local community, since it facilitates interaction across schools and disciplines, can also create interdisciplinary learning opportunities. Finally, the local community is a democratic real-world learning site in which community members and academics can pragmatically determine whether the work is making a real difference and whether both the neighbourhood and the institution are better off as a result of common efforts. Neighbourliness, as measured by ongoing genuine neighbourly assistance, might well be the primary indicator that a college or university is working for the public good.

In *How we think* (1910), Dewey emphasised that knowledge and learning are most effectively advanced when human beings work collaboratively to solve specific, important real-world problems in “a forked road situation, a situation that is ambiguous, that presents a dilemma, which poses alternatives” (Boydston 1981b: 122). Focusing on universal problems – for example, poverty, poor schooling and inadequate health care – that are manifested locally may well be the best way to apply Dewey’s proposition. A focus on local engagement has also been shown to be an extraordinarily promising strategy for realising an institutional mission and purpose.

## CONCLUSION

“Only connect!” The powerful, evocative epigraph to E. M. Forster’s *Howard’s End* (1911) captures the essence of my argument – namely, that the necessary transformation of higher education institutions is most likely to occur in the crucible of significant, serious, sustained engagement with local schools and their communities. Neither abstract, solipsistic, contemplative, ivory tower isolation nor market-oriented engagement will shed intellectual light on our most significant societal problems and produce positive democratic change. It will not get us where we need to go. To put it more positively: at this crucial and troubling time, democratically minded colleagues should, I believe, work to create and sustain a global movement to realise Bacon’s goal of advancing learning for “the relief of man’s estate” and to realise Dewey’s vision of an organic “Great Community” (Boydston 1981a: 324) composed of participatory, democratic, collaborative and interdependent societies.

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## Chapter 4

# Leading in higher education in a post-truth era

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Lynn Pasquerella

### THE CHALLENGE

In his book *The honor code: how moral revolutions happen*, Kwame Anthony Appiah begins with the question “What were they thinking?” when applied to our ancestors, knowing that a century from now our descendants will ask the same thing about us (2010: xvi). Appiah’s consideration of which past practices once regarded as morally acceptable will strike individuals in the future as the strangest prompted my own thinking. Contemplating likely candidates, I could not help but focus on the human capacity to tolerate extreme poverty, locally and globally, and to ignore the profound impact this phenomenon has on future generations. Indeed, I am convinced that the most significant threat facing higher education today is a growing economic segregation, and its inextricable link to racial segregation. It is a trend exacerbated by the prevailing rhetoric which calls into question the value of higher education, in general, and specifically liberal education.

At a time when job prospects for US college graduates remain uncertain and student loan burdens, especially among students at for-profit institutions, are burgeoning, there has been a decoupling of higher education from the American Dream. This perception was highlighted in a recent Kaiser Family Foundation and Cable News Network (CNN) poll conducted of “working-class whites”, defined as “white Americans without college degrees”, in which 51% said that their lives would be different if they had a four-year college degree. Standing in stark contrast to “working-class blacks” and “working-class Hispanics”, for whom the perceived correlation was much stronger (with 73% of African Americans and 74% of Hispanics maintaining that a four-year college degree would make their lives better), many white working-class Americans remain sceptical with respect to whether a college degree would enable them to achieve the hallmark of the American Dream – of doing better than one’s parents. This is the case despite research indicating that Americans with a four-year college degree outearn their peers by 98% (Hamel, Sugarman and Brodie 2016).

Scholars of the white working class offer compelling insights into the mindset of those who reject higher education, ostensibly against their own best interests. Sherry Linkon (2016) reminds us of the long-term benefits industrial work provided, such as allowing “workers to buy homes, send their children to college, develop work-based social networks, and enjoy stable family and community lives”. Comparing the toxic

effects of deindustrialisation to those of radioactive waste, she insists, “If we want to understand the half-life of deindustrialization, we should listen to the stories of those who still feel the loss of economic security but also of social networks and individual possibility” (ibid.). Likewise, Michelle Tokarczyk provides a lens for understanding the disillusionment with higher education as an essential component of the American Dream. For Tokarczyk, the cynicism can be traced back to the white working class’s “economic anxieties and political resentments, but also their cultural fears, including their concerns about the costs of elusive upward mobility” (2016) – a message reaffirmed by J. D. Vance in his bestselling memoir (2016).

## FRUSTRATED ASPIRATIONS

Thus, when we characterise working-class frustrations over income inequality as anti-intellectual without looking at the underlying concerns, we do so at our peril. Rising inequalities in wealth, income, and access to affordable college opportunities fuelled Donald Trump’s manipulation of emotions in campaigning to “make America great again”. To comprehend why his message resonates so deeply, we need only look at the fact that nearly half of Americans who once believed in the American Dream – defined as the belief that if you work hard, you will get ahead – are convinced that it no longer exists. Only by understanding the way Americans think and feel about their own economic security will we be able to comprehend the attack on universities (Sonius 2017).

The conviction that a college degree and status as an intellectual are unattainable is accompanied by the contention that admission to college is no longer regarded as a guarantee for upward mobility. In fact, the notion of higher education as a public good has been abandoned in favour of its being viewed as a private commodity, with colleges and universities being viewed as sites of exclusion (Graeber 2011). Positing employability as the lone metric for determining value precludes a consideration of the ways in which illumination of human consciousness through literature, philosophy, music and the arts allows us to flourish fully as human beings, enriching our experiences as individuals and as members of a community.

Further, the reduction of the American Dream to prosperity alone, disconnected from the values of democracy and freedom, has led white working-class voters to reject what they regard as leftist, intellectual Democratic politicians. The impact of the rise in anti-intellectualism and the dismissal of experts in the US as well as in the UK, as exemplified by the Brexit campaign, has been far-reaching. As Tony Gallagher and Jennifer Harrison note in their work on the relationship between the Protestant working-class community and Queen’s University in Ireland:

United Kingdom policy on higher education was influenced by a concern that public confidence in science and evidence-based policy has been eroded. A House of Lords report suggested that scandals around BSE (mad-cow disease) and genetically modified (GM) foods had led to a crisis of confidence in science, and so ameliorating measures were required. (Gallagher and Harrison 2016)

Understanding the psychological factors at play, Trump positioned himself as the quintessential self-made man, placing hard work and common sense above

intellectualism. After winning the Nevada caucus, he exclaimed, “I love the poorly educated! We’re the smartest people, we’re the most loyal people!” (Trump 2016). Despite his inherited wealth, his Ivy League education, and the policies he proposed that would hurt the poor, his supporters, for the most part, remain loyal. There has been much post-election speculation, and a number of fascinating studies have been published to help explain why people buy into the mythology surrounding President Trump – why individuals act against their best interests by holding false beliefs in the face of incontrovertible evidence.

Former political advisor to President Obama, David Simas, offers one account:

Until recently, religious institutions, academia, and media set out the parameters of acceptable discourse, and it ranged from the unthinkable to the radical to the acceptable to policy. The continuum has changed. Had Donald Trump said the things he said during the campaign eight years ago – about banning Muslims, about Mexicans, about the disabled, about women – his Republican opponents, faith leaders, academia would have denounced him and there would be no way around those voices. Now, through Facebook and Twitter, you can get around them. There is social permission for this kind of discourse. Plus, through the same social media, you can find people who agree with you, who validate these thoughts and opinions. This creates a whole new permission structure, a sense of social affirmation for what was once thought unthinkable. This is a foundational change. (Remnick 2016)

Obama himself speaks of the consequences of this permission structure:

An explanation of climate change from a Nobel Prize-winning physicist looks exactly the same on your Facebook page as the denial of climate change by somebody on the Koch brothers’ payroll. And the capacity to disseminate misinformation, wild conspiracy theories, to paint the opposition in wildly negative light without any rebuttal – that has accelerated in ways that much more sharply polarize the electorate and make it very difficult to have a common conversation. (ibid.)

President Obama’s reference to the sway of the billionaire industrialist Koch brothers, who fund conservative and libertarian causes at odds with scientific truths, illustrates the impossibility of moving forward to address urgent issues without agreed-upon fact. In such a world, the art of teaching and learning becomes that much more complicated. So how have we arrived at this point? In *The enigma of reason* (2017), Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber argue that reason is an evolved trait, often taking a back seat to our ability to co-operate with others, which is seen to be an even bigger advantage to survival as a species. Mercier and Sperber point out:

Living in small bands of hunter-gatherers, our ancestors were primarily concerned with their social standing, and with making sure that they weren’t the ones risking their lives on the hunt while others loafed around in the cave. There was little advantage in reasoning clearly, while much was to be gained from winning arguments. (Kolbert 2017)

Similarly, Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach suggest, “As a rule, strong feelings about issues do not emerge from deep understanding” (ibid.). There is, instead, confirmation bias, which becomes politically dangerous when people rely on the

baseless opinion of another and a third person agrees, leading to a greater tendency to ignore contradictory views. Their experiments showed that even when people disagreed vehemently with a variety of policy issues, individuals themselves had little insights into why they held certain views. According to Sloman and Fernbach, getting people to spend “less time pontificating and more trying to work through the implications of policy proposals” may help us “realize how clueless we are and moderate our views”, and this “may be the only form of thinking that will shatter the illusion of explanatory depth and change people’s attitudes” (ibid.).

## TOWARDS A HIGHER-EDUCATION RESPONSE

If people’s beliefs are based more on tribalism than reason, in addressing the misinformation and incivility resulting from the debilitating impact of rhetoric-for-hire, we need to redouble our focus on world citizenship and the interdependence of all human beings and communities as the foundation for education. In addition, members of the academic community must foster public intellectualism, ensuring that we are effective participants in and communicators of the events of our time.

Martha Nussbaum has offered a compelling defence of this type of cosmopolitan education for the future:

One of the greatest barriers to rational deliberation in politics is the unexamined feeling that one’s own current preferences and ways are neutral and natural. An education that takes national boundaries as morally salient too often reinforces this kind of irrationality, by lending to what is an accident of history a false air of moral weight and glory. (1994)

Nussbaum argues that placing a community of human beings above national boundaries will bring us closer to solving global problems that require international cooperation, but will necessitate the revision of curricula in support of the recognition of a shared future and the fostering of global dialogue grounded in the geography, ecology, traditions and values of others. It is one in which our deliberations are, first and foremost, “deliberations about human problems of people in particular concrete situations, not problems growing out of a national identity that is altogether unlike that of others” and in which students not only “recognize humanity wherever” it is encountered, but also “understand humanity in all its ‘strange’ guises” (ibid.). When every human being becomes part of our community of dialogue and concern, and our political deliberations are grounded in that common human bond, it becomes more difficult to be dismissive of the well-being of others.

These lessons are critical for our students. Yet, the humanistic practice of teaching and cosmopolitanism’s underlying message must extend beyond the academy. So, how can those of us in higher education facilitate conversations around the important matters of the day for others and spark interest in mediating pluralism through dialogue and civic understanding? This is not just a matter of making our research on critical social issues understandable and available to the broader public or practising the scholarship of engagement, though these in and of themselves could help address some of the public scepticism and negative perceptions of higher education as elitist and separated from the practical matters of everyday life.

Instead, institutions of higher education must transition away from the “expert” model of knowledge generation to publicly active scholarship which enacts democratic engagement designed to promote a more equitable society by partnering with kindergarten and preschool through upper secondary school, business, industry and citizens to take up some of the most pressing legal, ethical and social issues of the day. The model of publicly active scholarship breaks down barriers and establishes a bilateral relationship between research expertise and local epistemologies, public and private, scholar and citizen, which can serve to erode partisanship resulting from competing ideologies.

If we hope to bolster the reputation of higher education within democratic society and restore public trust in the promise of liberal education and inclusive excellence, we must have a visible impact on the communities in which we live – grappling with real-world problems alongside our neighbours, locally and around the globe. We must lead the way in working with others to create spaces for debate, and we must prove false Mark Twain’s assertion that “All schools, all colleges, have two great functions: to confer, and to conceal, valuable knowledge” (Collins 1996: 43).

Mark Kingwell notes that while those of us in the academy may eschew populism and its condemnation of life in the ivory tower, “we are losing when it comes to reason and critical intelligence and civility. We are losing when it comes to the basic justification of what we do. We are losing on defending universities as forces for good” (2017). He argues that it is despicable to enjoy the fruits of academic success and not feel a profound sense of obligation “to demonstrate why our efforts have wider value than just our personal satisfaction” (ibid.).

I could not agree more. If academics rely exclusively on the mechanics of arcane study to get out our message, failing to utilise the most vibrant vectors for helping citizens to cope with humanistic questions, scholarly pursuits as anything more than an ossified depository of ancient curiosity will die. Individuals will still thirst for humanistic guidance in seeking answers to their questions and compass points for their endeavours, but the academy as an institution will become nothing more than self-referential, as the frames of humanistic practice disappear forever. There are unprecedented opportunities with the emergence of new digital platforms to create what Mark Anthony Neal refers to as “fictive kin” that connect those in communities with those in the academy (2011). Now, more than ever, this is imperative in catalysing Appiah’s idea “that in the human community, as in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence: conversation in its older meaning, of living together, association” (2006: xix) and make this central to the liberal education we deliver in our strivings to educate for democracy within the context of a post-truth era.

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## Chapter 5

# The contribution of religious and faith-based higher education to today's democratic societies

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*Friedrich Bechina*

### INTRODUCTION

In his speech at the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the Bologna Process in Bergen on 19 May 2005, the then Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik remarked on the important role of academic institutions as well as religions in finding solutions for the major problems and challenges facing democratic societies in Europe today:

For many centuries, academic institutions have been a determining factor in the democratic, cultural and social development of Europe. And they still are today. Europe is facing challenges in relation to democratic participation, the deterioration of the public discourse and the transformation of multicultural tensions into societal strengths. In response to the last of these, I have called for inter-religious dialogue. During the past 10 years, religion has risen higher and higher up the international political agenda. ... People often express their desires, their goals and their anger in religious terms. But although religion seems to be part of the problem in many conflicts, we should take every opportunity to make it a part of the solution. ... Academic institutions are in a position to play a similar role. They are built on globally accepted values and are engaged in open dialogue based on mutual trust and the exchange of people, opinions and ideas. Universities have bridged gaps during periods of deep international division. As politicians, we continue to rely on the role universities play in promoting a culture of peace by fostering knowledge and understanding, combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia, and building strong international networks. (Bondevik 2005)

Similar thoughts have been expressed at a number of conferences of international organisations such as the Council of Europe or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or within the framework of the Bologna Process. Today many share a certain preoccupation with regard to more recent political developments in nearly every region of the world and have joined in the attempt to unite people in goodwill and use all potential resources in their pursuit of

a peaceful and just world, based on societies that distinguish themselves by respect for human rights, the rule of law and active democratic citizenship (Bergan 2011).

As the main thesis of this chapter, I therefore contend that religion can be a source and potential inspiration for the foundation and motivation of sustainable societies which are firmly built on the values mentioned above, but under the following conditions:

- ▶ firstly, a religion must be willing and able to express its own ideas and doctrines in a rational way as well as to discuss them openly among its own members, with non-believers and with those who profess other creeds and religious convictions;
- ▶ secondly, there must be discussion and assessment in a transparent and critical way of a fruitful correspondence between the religious message and “benefits” to the believing individual and the society in which this individual lives. I believe that this can best be done through higher education.

The first section of this chapter deals with the fact that higher education institutions have, from their very beginning, often been closely connected to religious organisations and faith communities and many – including a number of prestigious institutions – continue to be so today. The second section asks whether and how this relationship can continue in the present age, especially given that in a modern secular and democratic society expectations of state and Church with regard to the theologies of various religions are rather diverse. The third and last section considers whether all religions are equal in this endeavour or if there could be a more objective criterion to better discern among the different faith-based academic activities and their benefits and risks for society.

## THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF UNIVERSITIES RELATED TO RELIGION

There is no common agreement among historians about where and how the first university in the world was founded or developed (De Ridder-Symoens and Rüegg 2003/1992; Le Foulon and De Montrémy 2008). Yet at the same time one can observe that wherever such institutions came into being very frequently such developments happened in tandem with the religious beliefs and works of the churches or other religious communities. It is a fact that throughout the long history of universities across the globe, they have had a privileged relationship with religion, which must not at all be interpreted idealistically. Often, tensions have arisen between the academy and religious beliefs. But why has this been the case? Is it just for historical reasons, based on a strong connection and mutual interdependence between sacred and secular power in the past? If so, the connection could just be seen as a historical burden or an empty tradition in the fields of folklore, cultures and customs, which could change at any moment in line with more recent cultural attitudes and subjective preferences.

The historical development of universities in the Western hemisphere cannot be considered separate from the establishment of a somewhat institutionalised educational model in monastic communities and cathedrals. These “schools”, which even St. Benedict, father of Western monasticism, called his monasteries, provided for



the education of both (future) clergy and lay people – especially children from the poorer classes who had been entrusted to the monks and lived with them without formal incorporation as members of the community and without taking monastic vows. But a more professional education was not the most prominent reason for the activities of these centres of study and education. Their first and main goal was related to religion itself – to the systematic study and interpretation of sacred texts, their conservation as well as their transmission to others at the crossroads of developing societies but also in a certain sense separated “from this world”. In a famous speech to the political and cultural authorities of France, Pope Benedict XVI (2008) identified these activities as the main roots of European culture:

Amid the confusion of the times, in which nothing seemed permanent, they wanted to do the essential. [The monks] were searching for God. ... This was not an expedition into a trackless wilderness, a search leading them into total darkness. God himself had ... marked out a path which was theirs to find and to follow. This path was his word, which had been disclosed to men in the books of the sacred Scriptures. Thus, by inner necessity, the search for God demands a culture of the word ... love of the word, exploration of all its dimensions. Because in the biblical word God comes towards us and we towards him, we must learn to penetrate the secret of language, to understand it in its construction and in the manner of its expression. Thus it is through the search for God that the secular sciences take on their importance, sciences which show us the path towards language. Because the search for God required the culture of the word, it was appropriate that the monastery should have a library, pointing out pathways to the word. It was also appropriate to have a school, in which these pathways could be opened up. ... The monastery serves ... the formation and education of man – a formation whose ultimate aim is that man should learn how to serve God. But it also includes the formation of reason – education – through which man learns to perceive, in the midst of words, the Word itself.

Even if this quotation refers to the Western Christian monks of the Middle Ages, the phenomenon itself is neither necessarily or exclusively linked to the origin of Catholic or Christian universities nor to the medieval European experience. In the Arabic world, for example, the Koran was studied. In the Far Eastern regions of the world, sacred and para-religious texts from mystics such as Confucius or other Asian “classics” were at the heart of study and educational activities. As a matter of fact, one can observe that education and higher education are privileged expressions of the typical activities of many religions.

Besides the study of sacred texts and the training of leaders for the Church and society at large, a third purpose facilitated the birth and development of universities in a historical continuity with the earlier monasteries and cathedral-schools. This purpose was the provision of other services to people living around the early centres of learning, the growing cities and neighbourhoods around abbeys. By being attached to or located near these centres of learning, communities benefited from the abbeys’ competence in agriculture, trade, languages, etc., which developed as a result of the synthesis between human curiosity and the religious discipline of people engaged in a search for God and holiness.

It is beyond our scope to try to depict, even with broad strokes, the further history of universities in Europe and in other continents. But it can safely be said that at the

end of the medieval era the influence of religion on higher education in Europe and elsewhere did not diminish. On the contrary, with the development of modernity, which is itself linked, *inter alia* to the Reformation (Fazio 2016; De Ridder-Symoens and Rüegg 2003/1996), a new wave of religion-based universities were founded in Europe, as well as – later on – in the colonies of European powers (Hunt 2009). Typically, they followed rigorously the religious orientation of the rulers of the countries in question. Again, it was the production of knowledge and publications which – related to the new possibilities of printing and distributing written texts and books – offered instruments to deepen their own understandings and the beliefs of the different denominations as well as engage in the public philosophical and theological controversies of the time. The need to train the clergy, but also civil servants, remained – at least in Europe – strongly linked to the given confessions, and several other services provided by the universities to the public consolidated the confessions *ad intra* and *ad extra* and thus raised the general level of education in the respective countries.

To conclude this short and incomplete overview of historical university foundations related to religion, it may be added that more significantly, beginning with the 19th and 20th centuries (but still continuing in many places to this day), the enhanced missionary activities of different Christian churches brought new religion-related higher education institutions to newly explored and colonised territories.

Today, religion-related universities often serve as alternatives to mainstream public universities and in some countries also to private for-profit higher education institutions. A special expression of this kind of mission can be seen in the modest but important contribution of the Catholic University of Lublin (Poland), which remained the only active Catholic, and in a certain sense “free”, university in communist central and eastern Europe for a long time following the end of the Second World War. Also growing in popularity are religion-related higher education institutions that distinguish themselves by their alternative models of pedagogy or thematic and content approaches that focus on non-commercial and less utilitarian models of education and disciplines. Their specific expressions range from various forms of “service learning” to a kind of movement for more social societies and a sustainable environment in the wake of the two encyclical letters *Caritas in veritate* (Pope Benedict XVI 2009) and *Laudato si’* (Pope Francis 2015).

## THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION-RELATED HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY<sup>31</sup>

It is clear that a significant number of universities not only originated in a tradition of faith, but continue this relationship or, at least, some outward sign of their founding religious traditions or customs, even if many would today identify as “secular”. Their names often refer to saints, ecclesiastical personalities or the contents of religious doctrine. Take the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, DePaul University and Loyola University in Chicago, St. John’s College in Annapolis and Santa Fe, the Sorbonne in Paris (which considers the French theologian and priest Robert de Sorbon its founder)

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31. The argument has been more profoundly developed in Bechina (2008, 2017) and Krieger (2017).

and Trinity College Dublin. Religious content and symbols show up also in university flags, coats of arms, seals and mottos. The flag of Princeton University displays an open book, easily identified as the Old and New Testaments, and includes in its coat of arms the Latin motto: *"Dei sub numen viget"* ("Under the protection of God she flourishes"). Even if many of these universities have ended their direct affiliation with religion it can be argued that religious rituals, customs, arts and culture continue to form the minds, learning and attitudes of their students and staff.

So what, then, are the specific challenges of universities in the context of religion today? The idea that religion would be just an expression of a not-yet-enlightened past or limited to private lives and opinions has been proven erroneous by more recent history, and it appears that the more religion is suppressed or neglected in the public sphere, the more it emerges in an uncontrolled way, particularly in contexts and situations that are neither expected nor wished for. Therefore, European politician leaders, such as former Norwegian Prime Minister Bondevik, have called for more religious competence which – throughout history – has most prominently been nurtured and transmitted by universities.

In this context, the German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat), the leading science policy advisory body in Germany, has come to the following conclusion:

Even in western societies, religious orientations and loyalties remain an essential source of collective values and rules of individual lifestyle. Therefore, modern, constitutional democracies have a vital interest in utilising religious orientations of their citizens towards the stability and development of the community. Moral sensitivities, for which religions have developed differentiated forms of expression with deep cultural roots, meet with acceptance even in places where the society sees itself as secular and are included in the general process of social communication. (Wissenschaftsrat 2010: 54)

The Wissenschaftsrat obviously draws this argumentation from the German constitutional lawyer Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde (1976), who stated that the modern secularised state lives on presumptions which it cannot grant itself, and pleaded for a constructive relationship between the democratic state and religion which can serve as an important resource for the motivation and legitimation of the "liberal" key values of a modern democracy. Others have developed this idea, both from a personally agnostic point of view, like Marcello Pera (Pera and Ratzinger 2005, Pera 2008) in Italy and Jürgen Habermas (2001) in Germany, or explicitly based on personal faith, like the former leader of the UK Liberal Democrats Tim Farron (2017). As a prominent Catholic voice, Pope Benedict XVI argued in favour of a constructive role of religion within today's secular societies, which he himself – based on his own career and experience – sees as a major task of universities:

The exclusion of religion from the public square – and, at the other extreme, religious fundamentalism – hinders an encounter between persons and their collaboration for the progress of humanity. Public life is sapped of its motivation and politics takes on a domineering and aggressive character. Human rights risk being ignored either because they are robbed of their transcendent foundation or because personal freedom is not acknowledged. Secularism and fundamentalism exclude the possibility of fruitful dialogue and effective cooperation between

reason and religious faith. Reason always stands in need of being purified by faith: this also holds true for political reason, which must not consider itself omnipotent. For its part, religion always needs to be purified by reason in order to show its authentically human face. Any breach in this dialogue comes only at an enormous price to human development. (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, n. 56)

There are two main reasons for the present need for a rational dialogue with, within and about religion. Firstly, religion itself has resources to consider the values of modern societies. Secondly, there are advantages in exposing religion to public space and discussion, as this helps to keep it transparent and prevent it from becoming subversive, pathological and a potential threat to the cohesion of today's liberal and pluralist societies. Real dialogue is only possible under condition of a clear identity on each side and a solid balance between partners who have to respect the autonomy of the other within its own affairs and competences. As the appropriate and privileged place for this dialogue seems to be the world of higher education, the state has a genuine interest and responsibility to promote and facilitate a positive connection between religion and higher education, while at the same time respecting and guaranteeing both religious and academic freedom.

Immediately, the question may arise about what this "positive connection" could concretely mean and how a democratic secular state – without transgressing its religious neutrality – can promote or facilitate it.<sup>32</sup> Without developing the argument in detail, I will try to simplify a complex situation by offering some reflections on Catholic higher education. This includes all such formal and institutional activities carried out by the Church or by its own institutions and members (including lay, religious and clergy), or those directly inspired by the Church and its teachings. Within this context, important distinctions between "Catholic" higher education in a general sense and Catholic "ecclesiastical" education must be introduced.

Catholic higher education institutions are typically part of their respective national systems of higher education (Bergan 2011: 105-35) and thus subject to the pertinent higher education legislation of their relevant jurisdictions. As any other private or public institution of that kind, they are, also according to the Church's general regulations, "academic communities representing various branches of human knowledge which, in a rigorous and critical fashion, assist in the protection and advancement of human dignity and of a cultural heritage through research, teaching and various services offered to the local, national and international communities." Their Catholic identity is expressed, insofar as all their activities should be carried out "with Catholic ideals, principles and attitudes aiming at fuller development of the human person, and the fulfilment of the teaching function of the Church". They are "linked with the Church either by a formal, constitutive and statutory bond or by reason of an institutional commitment". At the same time, they "possess that institutional autonomy necessary to perform their functions effectively. They also guarantee their members academic freedom, so long as the rights of the individual person and of the community are preserved within the confines of the truth and the common good." Students should not only be well educated scientifically or professionally but also benefit from special

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32. The general question of a fruitful but also differentiated relationship between state and Church is developed in detail by Rhonheimer 2012.

centres which give spiritual and other assistance to youth (Pope John Paul II – CIC 1983, cc. 807-14; Pope John Paul II – EC 1990, Part I, Nr. 12-13 and Part II gen Norms art. 2).

According to 2005 data, the total number of Catholic higher education institutions globally is 1 210 (Congregatio de Institutione Catholica – INDEX 2005: 393). Yet considering other forthcoming studies (particularly by the Congregation for Catholic Education and Boston College), and the fact that there is a wide range of legal constructions under which universities with a “Catholic inspiration” can operate, we could realistically calculate a larger number of between 1 500 and 2 000 institutions worldwide today. Their typical contribution in the context of the described relationship between the secular state and religion is an integral education which embraces also the sphere of religion and thus creates related skills, competences and attitudes. In most cases, states and national higher education systems would recognise them as private (in some cases even as public) institutions, sometimes also directly or indirectly supported by public funding.

A special role within this endeavour is played by the theological chairs or faculties of the Catholic universities. These faculties, but also similar institutions within other public or private universities, or independent faculties of theology, are also often financed and recognised within the national higher education systems. All these institutions together form a second and more specific category of Catholic higher education, which is more important to the Church and its mission. Within the legislation of the Church this category is that of ecclesiastical universities, faculties and specialised institutes. It is important to add that it is exactly these institutions which constitute the reason why the Holy See is, and can be, part of international initiatives concerned with (national) higher education systems, such as (most prominently) the Bologna Process in Europe, and why the Holy See can be an equal partner and member within the present and future recognition conventions under the auspices of UNESCO or the Council of Europe. Subject to international law, the Holy See is considered, and thus recognised, as the “competent authority” of its higher education system, enjoying the capacity to award academic degrees exclusively under its own authority, but in many countries also with a double affiliation of the institution – both to the national as well the global ecclesiastical award system.

Ecclesiastical higher education institutions, according to the Church’s regulations, have to be “canonically erected or approved by the Apostolic See, they foster and teach sacred doctrine and the sciences connected therewith, and ... have the right to confer academic degrees by the authority of the Holy See”. The most frequent fields of study are theology, philosophy, scripture and canon law complemented by other more specialised subject areas, ranging from psychology, communications and child protection to Islamic studies, intercultural dialogue, classical letters, sacred music or archaeology, offering also pontifical academic degrees, be they more academic or professional. The purpose of ecclesiastical faculties are (Pope John Paul II – CIC 1983, cc. 815-21; Pope John Paul II – Sap.chr 1979, Proemium III and art. 2-3):

to cultivate and promote through scientific research their own disciplines, and especially to deepen knowledge of Christian revelation and of matters connected with it, to enunciate systematically the truths contained therein, to consider in the light of revelation the most recent progress of the sciences, and to present them to the people of the present day in a manner adapted to various cultures.

That includes bringing “more plainly into view the heritage of Christian wisdom handed down” throughout history and to foster dialogue with other Christian denominations and non-Christian religions. These institutions also:

train the students to a level of high qualification in their own disciplines, according to Catholic doctrine, to prepare them properly to face their tasks, and to promote the continuing permanent education of the ministers of the Church; and ... collaborate intensely, in accordance with their own nature and in close communion with the Hierarchy, with the local and the universal Church. (CIC 1983, cc. 815-21, Article 3, n.2)

This is meant to serve the whole work of evangelisation as well as the common good of societies.

Like all other Catholic higher education institutions and within a similar legal and theological context (sometimes also protected by national law), ecclesiastical faculties possess institutional autonomy and academic freedom, and at the same time have – for reasons of transparency and honesty with regard to their own profile and mission – to ensure fidelity to the Church and its traditions and doctrines (Bechina 2013; Bechina and Bergan 2013; Grocholewski et al. 2013). According to the statistics of the Congregation for Catholic Education (2012) the number of ecclesiastical higher education institutions is 289, to which another 503 affiliated institutions may be added, which under the supervision of recognised faculties organise programmes of studies that lead to the awarding of academic degrees (most frequently limited to the first cycle) of the sponsoring institution.

Even if these institutions make up the higher education system of the Holy See they are with very few exceptions not located within the Vatican City and normally have also developed at least some institutional, legal or economic relationship to the national higher education systems in which they are geographically present. The quality and intensity of such a relationship range from being a fully fledged state faculty or being generally recognised or even financed by the state, to situations in which they are neglected but tolerated as entities which fulfil their own mission without further relevance to the public. It is natural that in these relations tensions may occur rather frequently. But they are often also fruitful and demonstrate the benefit of working together for a constructive triangular relationship between state, Church and university insofar as each of them may challenge the other to think outside of the box and thus to widen horizons and help to develop solutions to the more complex problems today's societies face (Bechina 2017; Krieger 2017). Based on an in-depth analysis of the Wissenschaftsrat and its Recommendations on the advancement of theologies and sciences concerned with religions at German universities (Wissenschaftsrat 2010), the different expectations of state, Church and (public) universities with regard to academic theology shall be briefly summarised.

## The perspective of state and society

Ecclesiastical higher education can be a trustworthy, transparent and “quality-assured” instrument<sup>33</sup> which helps societies better exploit important religious resources for

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33. On the topic of ecclesiastical higher education and quality assurance see Bechina (2012, 2013) and Congregation for Catholic Education (2012); with regard to the general context see Weber and Dolgova-Dreyer (2007).

motivation and legitimization of the “liberal” key values of a modern democracy. Suppressing, neglecting or, as the Wissenschaftsrat says:

Secluding the theologies in independent, ecclesiastical institutions can encourage the isolation of the respective religious community from society. This is why state and society have an interest in integrating the theologies in the state-run university system as well. The integration of the theologies ensures that believers articulate their factually lived creeds in the knowledge that they can also be regarded, from the outside, as historically contingent. It confronts the religious community with the challenge to continually reinterpret their beliefs under evolving conditions and horizons of knowledge. This can be best achieved under the regulated conditions of scientific and scholarly communication and production of knowledge at the universities. In the same way, state and society will forestall the tendencies of religious attitudes to become one-sided and fundamentalist. (ibid.: 54)

## The perspective of the churches and theology

Obviously the Catholic Church and other denominations and faiths have a vital interest that all their (public) activities be legitimate, recognised and (as far as they are beneficial for society) publicly supported or funded. This holds even truer with regard to ecclesiastical academic studies, which by their nature and mission have to interact with other universities and national higher education systems. Additionally:

the Church's interest is to integrate religious orientations and associated moral perceptions in the general, social communication process guided by science and scholarship. The universities provide a location for the theologies to translate these basic orientations into a language that is accessible, and not only to their own religious community. (ibid.)

## The university perspective

The Wissenschaftsrat also considers the university in this respect:

As organisational centres of science and scholarship, universities are increasingly faced with all the ethical conflicts resulting from the dynamics of the research process and its applications in society .... In the system of higher education and research itself there arise normative issues, whose constructive treatment can benefit from cooperative contributions from the theologies with their long-established forms of ethical consideration. Also, theologies reflect the limits of a purely scientifically informed self-interpretation of the cognitive human being, especially by maintaining an awareness of the contingency of human action, and provide a place for inquiry into the conditions for the success or failure of human existence. Theologies at universities thus advance the critical reflexivity of the scientific view of the world and offer possible interpretations for human existence. (ibid.: 55)

## CRITERIA FOR DISCERNMENT OF THE VALUE OF RELIGION-RELATED HIGHER EDUCATION FOR TODAY'S SOCIETIES

Accountability and quality assurance have over the last two decades become an ever more important issue within the political discussion around higher education, with an explicit focus on the relationship between public responsibility and universities (Weber and Bergan 2005). In this context, the decisive criteria for assessing quality and accountability are fitness for purpose as well as fitness of purpose of the respective higher education institutions, and related to this, the question of how effectively resources are used with regard to the benefits produced by these activities for the integral well-being of the human person, and the common good.

Consequently, the last major consideration for this chapter is to try to identify more specific criteria for the quality and accountability of religion-related higher education in the context of today's secular societies, as well as for better discernment in view of faith-based academic institutions and activities. It is obvious that such discernment could become a rather delicate enterprise for various reasons. As previously noted, the state, the Church and universities must respect each other's autonomy and remain within their own competences and limits. The modern secular state is – by its own definition – religiously neutral and not directly competent in philosophical questions about the ultimate truth or questions of conscience of its citizens. Religions must not enter directly into democratic political processes and public universities, in principle, have to abstain from taking the side of a particular political party or religion. On the other hand, it would be an improper restriction of their own mission if universities were not allowed to publicly and rationally criticise political developments in a country, based on a fair and reasonable dialogue and a value-based discussion. The Church has an obligation to raise its voice if and when questions of fundamental moral values or the respect for any human person, in whatever state of life, is threatened in political or academic discussions. And finally, a state could not fulfil its duties without caring for the assurance of legality, constitutionality and the fundamental rights of all its citizens within both higher education institutions and religious communities. All institutions composed of human beings are in permanent need of reform and “purification”. That is true for all three entities: state, university<sup>34</sup> and the Church – and they can help each other in this endeavour as they have done throughout history within a constructive relationship of complementarity or even sometimes in the midst of (in the end fruitful) tensions and conflicts.

The first set of criteria for the quality and accountability of religion-related higher education is the same as that applied to any public or private university, and all three parties included in the respective processes (state, university and Church) will benefit if these criteria are correctly applied and not undermined. Therefore, a balance is needed between general norms and legitimate exceptions with regard to religions

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34. Bergan (2011: 153-6) notes in another context that universities themselves have not always exclusively played a positive role in the well-being of every single person and the common good. Race theories and other expressions of inhumanity, too, had their origins and initial ideas in the context of academia and too often universities or single members of the academic community did not resist the temptation of (personal) privileges and benefits that in the end compelled them to compromise their own and the most fundamental academic values.



and their theologies. Certain forms of additional requirements for teachers of theology, related to the coherence of their teaching within a set of defined doctrines, can be justified as long as this is fully transparent and linked to defined and agreed criteria. After all, some kinds of “dogma” and predefined doctrines are also usual in other fields of study. A professor who wants to teach constitutional law at a German university would have to know not just any constitution but the German Constitution in particular, and in delivering lessons he may ask critical questions about single legal formulations and the legislative history of the German Constitution. But he can never arbitrarily change its articles and present them as “real”. Similarly, a professor of architecture in Italy would most likely get into trouble if he advised his students to construct a building in such a way that it would collapse during an earthquake, based on a “personal conviction” that the lower cost of reconstruction would justify the more complete destruction of the previous building.

According to another general criterion for higher education institutions, theology and other ecclesiastical studies have to place themselves within the national higher education framework. In turn, these frameworks must be designed in a way which does not exclude religion-related disciplines and studies from the broader academic context, simply because of their religious affiliation. Closely linked to the general higher education system is any legitimate provision for maintaining and enhancing the quality of the whole system, of the institutions as well as their programmes. This includes academic standards, the necessary preparation of professors, general access criteria for students, features of programmes related to commonly defined academic degrees, etc. Theology departments and their respective activities must also be subject to general law which – in most cases today – would also include the protection of fundamental academic values like institutional autonomy and academic freedom. But all these more general criteria are not specific enough to constitute solid grounds for discernment. The criteria needed cannot just be formal or general; at the same time they have to respect competence and non-competence.

States and their policies are typically competent for peace, the sustainability of private and public life, general economic welfare, questions of justice, the protection of vulnerable people, the fundamental freedoms and human rights of its citizens, the legal framework, respect for the rule of law by all persons living in the country, and the basic rules and values of democracy and freedom of expression and tolerance. With regard to this (not exhaustive) list of criteria, state authorities are competent and also obliged to assess all institutions and their activities within the country. But this can lead to a dilemma. Universities are not immune per se to ideology, regardless of their religious, political or philosophical background. A literal interpretation of the gospel by some fundamentalist religious groups has led in the US to a broad discussion on creationism. In some countries one can still find professors who would defend the superiority of their own race or nationality. And it is not easy to accept that certain legislations include articles about what professors at universities may or may not teach in their history classes.<sup>35</sup> In this context, some would argue that the state should not enter into academic discussions within universities or into religious

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35. This situation becomes even more complicated if the same historical “fact” is illegal to mention in one country, but legally forbidden to deny in another country.

questions. But what about situations in which academic or religious “freedom” would abuse the fundamental rights of others? Academic and religious activities can serve but also harm democratic societies, and immediately the question arises about what the criteria should be for these issues, and who would be competent to assess ground realities. An answer could be that it is in the interest of both universities and religion to transparently assess themselves against commonly agreed criteria. A possible way forward in view of such criteria was articulated by Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate* in a slightly different context but – I am convinced – one that is also applicable to religions and their academic activities (2009, n. 55):

Religious freedom does not mean religious indifferentism, nor does it imply that all religions are equal. Discernment is needed regarding the contribution of cultures and religions, especially on the part of those who wield political power, if the social community is to be built up in a spirit of respect for the common good. Such discernment has to be based on the criterion of charity and truth. Since the development of persons and peoples is at stake, this discernment will have to take account of the need for emancipation and inclusivity, in the context of a truly universal human community. “The whole man and all men” is also the criterion for evaluating cultures and religions.

According to Pope Benedict XVI (ibid.: n. 55-7) the key criteria are truth and charity/love which have to prove themselves effective in view of the integral development and well-being of every human person without exclusion or discrimination as well as the common good. The “value” of a religion with regard to today’s democratic societies can be assessed according to its rationality and relationality. This relates to the logical coherence and stringency of its doctrine and eventually related moral imperatives as well as the capacity of a given religion to promote peace and brotherhood among people. Accordingly, religions which “do not fully embrace the principle of love and truth” hamper authentic and integral human development. Religious cultures in the world today must be seen and assessed as good quality if they “oblige men and women to live in communion and not rather cut them off from one other in a search for individual well-being, limited to the gratification of psychological desires”, as “instead of bringing people together, [this would] alienate them from one another and distance them from reality” with the effect of separation and disengagement. The common good cannot be authentically served if certain religious expressions “ossify society in rigid social groupings, in magical beliefs that fail to respect the dignity of the person, and in attitudes of subjugation to occult powers” (ibid.: n. 55, and 2005).

“Truth” per se and as a philosophical concept does not fall under the immediate competences of the state. But universities have always been understood as privileged places and safe spaces for an unimpeded pursuit of truth. This cannot be fully realised at the level of just a single teacher, a single discipline or even a single university. It needs dialogue, if I may say so, within the unlimited world of universities and the entire and integral “idea” of the university, which does not exclude any form of truth, including religious and revealed truths. Universities should fully respect their own rules and values within a search for truth which is not ideologically biased nor narrowed down to a defined area of scientific, mathematical reasoning, and also not to just one cultural and philosophical approach. The 19th-century Oxford scholar and later Cardinal John Henry Newman, in a widely known quotation, comments

on why and how a university can facilitate also the discernment of the truth and the value of religious activities:

A University ... is the place ... in which the intellect may safely range and speculate, sure to find its equal in some antagonist activity, and its judge in the tribunal of truth. It is the place where inquiry is pushed forward, and discoveries verified and perfected, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge. ... It is a seat of wisdom, a light of the world, a minister of the faith, an Alma Mater of the rising generation. (Newman 2001/1872: 16)

It seems somehow more difficult to objectively “assess” charity, love and their impact on the integral development of a human person and on the common good. There is, as far as I know, to date no quality assurance agency specialised in the assessment of “intellectual love” within universities, or religious doctrines or disciplines of study. But there are visible developments which provide hope in this direction. Many universities today are strongly engaged in programmes of “service learning”, civic or community engagement, the protection of the environment, and the (also practical and concrete) support for disadvantaged and vulnerable persons and groups. All this can be seen as an expression or the fruit of love. A substantial number of such programmes and initiatives have some religious roots and motivations and the two major encyclicals of the most recent popes, *Caritas in veritate* (Pope Benedict XVI 2009) and *Laudato si'* (Pope Francis 2015) effectively advocate for service to integral development and the common good as well as for a caring and sustainable way of dealing with the creation and stewardship of natural resources not only for the present but for future generations as well. Truth and love as criteria also ultimately correspond to the core values of universities themselves; the latter must therefore have a vital interest in allowing and supporting all these initiatives in a fair and transparent way, even if – as a matter of fact – there will always remain some “twilight zones” with regard to religion which cannot be fully grasped by reason alone.

Therefore, an open discussion of these issues is needed, especially at universities, and the various religions should find a place for an academic dialogue and debate, based on reason, arguments and factual evidence, which includes also their own justification and accountability in view of their doctrine and their service for the well-being of the individual person as well as for the common good, and their engagement in favour of promoting truth and charity. Any open discussion needs trust in the inner function of the forum where it takes place, and universities themselves have a strong interest in and tendency towards more deeply approaching and searching for the truth, and in not ignoring the common and religious sense of students who would not continue for long to enrol in programmes of questionable academic quality which would be disadvantageous for them in the way they are designed, delivered and accredited.

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## Part II

# Inclusive and diverse campuses

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## Chapter 6

# Access to success – Making campuses both diverse and inclusive

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*Jonathan R. Alger*

### INTRODUCTION

Many institutions of higher education in democratic societies across the world now express a commitment to diversity, access and inclusion for students from a wide variety of backgrounds on their campuses – and particularly for students from groups that have historically been under-represented in higher education in their respective countries. More and more, these commitments are reflected in institutional mission and vision statements and strategic plans.

These goals are laudable, but why do they matter ultimately, and how can institutions convince their many different stakeholder groups that such goals are worth pursuing? What are the roles that institutional leaders, faculty and students can (and indeed must) play in order for these efforts to be successful?

True inclusion goes beyond admissions. A truly inclusive institution seeks to create a climate in which students of all backgrounds can participate actively and thrive. The transition from access and diversity to true inclusion is thus much more than a mere numbers game. It requires a sustained and multifaceted approach that cannot succeed without the active involvement of institutional and organisational collaborators as well as administrators, faculty and students. Moving from a focus on access and diversity to a deeper institutional commitment to inclusion requires that an institution first grapple with its own history and context, and identify and work with the constituent groups both on and off campus that help to shape the institution and its student body. There is no one right set of answers or pathway that a college or university must follow in this journey, but there are valuable lessons that can be gleaned from the experiences of institutions worldwide that have embraced these challenges in recent years.

### THE RHETORIC AND RATIONALES OF DIVERSITY

First and foremost, institutional leaders need to be clear about how one defines diversity and inclusion. In the United States, for example, categories such as race, ethnicity and gender (and more recently immigration status) often receive the most attention due to histories of explicit discrimination and exclusion, but many other

attributes also contribute to the social identities of students in the 21st century. The particular categories of special focus will vary by country and by region based on historical and social factors. In Europe, for example, similar concerns are expressed in somewhat different terms. Europeans might mostly refer to ethnic origin rather than race, and the European discussion would also include consideration of migrant and religious background. In Latin America, the indigenous population faces specific challenges in many countries, often combined with socio-economic issues as the most salient factor.

Given this multifaceted definition of diversity, courts in the United States, for example, have insisted that a factor such as race be combined with many other diversity-related factors that are considered in putting together an environment in which students learn from and with each other.<sup>36</sup> The list of factors that might be considered is wide-ranging and continually growing, but can include such characteristics as socio-economic status, special skills and talents, academic and career interests, geographic backgrounds, family and cultural backgrounds, unusual life experiences, disabilities, military veteran status (that is someone who has completed military service), age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, leadership experience, community or public service, etc. These attributes reflect a mix of nature and nurture, but all of them can make an impact on how an individual views the world.

How do colleges and universities avoid charges of “social engineering” (a charge that tends to have negative connotations in the United States) when they argue for the importance of such diversity and inclusion? The same rationales will not persuade all of the many different constituencies that have a stake in higher education, as these constituencies represent viewpoints that can cover the entire range of the political spectrum, from very liberal to very conservative. For this reason, institutional leaders need to be intellectually nimble and astute in understanding and articulating the arguments and messages that will be most effective with different audiences and contexts.

The starting point should always be the education mission itself. The US Supreme Court has held repeatedly that diversity is a compelling interest in higher education because of its educational benefits for all students.<sup>37</sup> In other words, diversity and educational excellence go hand in hand – they are not competing concepts. The education argument for diversity has been backed up by research that demonstrates the impact of diversity on learning both in and outside the classroom, as well as on teamwork effectiveness and life experiences after higher education.<sup>38</sup>

This appeal to fundamental educational values may resonate with people and organisations that have some understanding of pedagogy, but it is met with scepticism by many people outside the academy who perceive it to be a mere smokescreen for favouring certain groups over others in admissions. The education mission argument

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36. See for example *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003).

37. See for example *Grutter v. Bollinger*; *Fisher v. University of Texas*, 133 S. Ct. 2411, 570 U.S. (2013).

38. A significant body of research on the educational benefits of diversity was compiled and made publicly available on the University of Michigan Admissions Lawsuits website, <https://diversity.umich.edu/admissions/research>, accessed 27 March 2018.

is also premised on a broader notion of merit that moves beyond two-dimensional portrayals of students on an individualised basis (that is as composites solely of secondary school grades and standardised test scores) to a more holistic view that takes into account all of the attributes and experiences students bring to the table in higher education. This broader, holistic view in admissions reflects a recognition that individuals do not experience higher education on college campuses in a vacuum: instead, they constitute an active part of a learning community in which everyone has something to contribute to the learning environment, and everyone also has a lot to learn.

Likewise, moral and social justice arguments may garner the support of people who are convinced that higher education has an important role to play in helping a society overcome a history of discrimination and exclusion with regard to particular groups. When making such appeals, institutional leaders must be especially aware of whether and to what extent such arguments have been recognised by courts of law.<sup>39</sup> Institutions faced with litigation or other forms of legal challenges must of course frame their arguments in legal terms within those contexts, which are often narrower than the broader debates in society about morality and social justice. This narrower legal framework that may apply to access and diversity efforts cannot and should not negate the importance of moral and social justice arguments. Instead, it should help leaders to develop justifications and arguments that are appropriate in different settings.

In this era of globalisation, higher education leaders also have other public good arguments available to them that can be persuasive to organisations and individuals who might otherwise be doubtful of their motives. For example, strong economic arguments can be made that diversity is essential in higher education in order to maximise the development of the potential of the human capital of a diverse society, which is perhaps the single most important strategic resource for any nation in this Information Age.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, corporations and other employers that conduct business globally have acknowledged that they need employees who have the experience and flexibility to work on diverse teams with individuals who bring a wide variety of backgrounds and skill sets to the workplace.<sup>41</sup>

Now that higher education is often an essential credential and gateway to leadership opportunities in many different fields of endeavour (including business, government, law, medicine and the army) it can also be argued that organisations and institutions need diverse leaders who reflect their own constituents and who can understand and build trust with those whom they lead. As the US Supreme Court has held within the context of admissions to law school:

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39. In the US, for example, the Supreme Court has held that an individual institution cannot use its own institutional admissions policies to remedy societal discrimination. (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265 (1978), pp. 307-10).

40. Brief of Fortune-100 and other leading American businesses as amici curiae in support of respondents, *Fisher v. Univ. of Texas at Austin et al.*, No. 14-981, Supreme Court of the U.S. (2015).

41. In the *LEAP Presidents' Trust Employer-Educator Compact* (2013) (national survey of major employers in the US), for example, 67% of employers said they want colleges and universities to "place more emphasis" on "teamwork skills in diverse groups".

In order to cultivate a set of leaders with legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry, it is necessary that the path to leadership be visibly open to talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity. All members of our heterogeneous society must have confidence in the openness and integrity of the educational institutions that provide this training.<sup>42</sup>

Such leaders are more than just role models, they are also individuals who can relate to people both in and outside their organisations in nuanced ways.

Finally, as global migration and demographic patterns continue to shift, nation states that are increasingly diverse in all sorts of ways must come to grips with the need for diversity in higher education as a matter of national security. Societies that become segregated in extreme ways along racial, ethnic, religious or socio-economic grounds are often inherently unstable. Tensions inevitably arise when particular groups feel that their voices and interests are categorically excluded within the society in which they live. As a significant gateway to opportunity and advancement, higher education can either reduce or reinforce such tensions.

These public good arguments reflect the balancing act between an emphasis on an individual's achievements and rights, on the one hand, and the collective needs of institutions and societies on the other. People living together in a society are dependent upon one another in all sorts of ways for survival and prosperity, whether they realise it or not. Thriving communities and countries must constantly pay attention to both individual and societal interests.

Democracies have struggled with this balancing act for centuries. Institutions of higher education are in many ways a microcosm of the societies in which they are located, and are therefore also barometers of the civic health of those societies. These institutions can provide access and opportunity for individuals of all backgrounds (including minority groups of all kinds that have historically been under-represented among economic and political elites), or they can exacerbate inequality by reinforcing differences in access and opportunity. This role goes to the heart of the public good mission of higher education.

College and university leaders must know how and when to raise these overlapping arguments and rationales for diversity and access in higher education. These justifications only go so far, however. Students need more than mere access to higher education to achieve their hopes and dreams. The next, and perhaps even steeper, hill to climb is to ensure opportunities for success in higher education as measured by meaningful participation, retention and graduation across the full range of disciplines and academic programmes. This kind of success is more elusive. It requires efforts that transcend traditional institutional boundaries and that reflect the active participation of other institutional partners beyond campus, as well as faculty and students on campus.

## **BUILDING PATHWAYS OF ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY**

The pathway to higher education in many countries is framed by longstanding national and institutional histories and systems that have bred and reinforced

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42. *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003).

inequality in many ways, and starts long before students apply for admission at the end of secondary school. Thus, no single admissions criterion or approach by itself in higher education – no matter how creative – will be able to make a significant dent with regard to deep-seated structural inequities in society.<sup>43</sup> Institutions at all levels must play their part in addressing these inequalities, but what is often overlooked is the ways in which educational institutions and other types of organisations can work together across traditional institutional lines to build pathways of access and opportunity. This kind of interaction requires intentional partnerships and collaborations, and it has the capacity to make profound long-term differences in the life chances of individuals of all backgrounds.

In many societies, students are placed into pre-college or pre-vocational tracks or pathways at an early age. Once students are placed into a particular pathway, they may find that it is relatively inflexible if they change their mind about their future educational and career goals. The underlying assumption of these pathway systems is that higher education is not for everybody – and that societies need to steer large segments of the population into vocational education to prepare for practical jobs that help sustain the economy. It is certainly true that individuals are needed in every society for occupations that do not necessarily require higher education, although it is also true that individuals need to be equipped to be lifelong learners in a fast-changing world in which the jobs they might hold in the future have not yet been invented.

Moreover, societies are missing out on maximising human capital development if they place students into specific, rigid pathways too quickly in ways that close doors to higher education for students who might actually benefit and thrive in that environment if given the opportunity to do so. For purposes of both efficiency and maximisation of opportunity, programme requirements and education systems should make it possible for students to change pathways while repeating as little work as possible. In an era of lifelong learning and rapid changes in career options, degree systems and qualification frameworks must make it possible to change orientations at different stages – for example, between more academic and more professionally oriented study programmes, without students having to go back to square one.

Many different models already exist that demonstrate how institutions of higher education can partner with their elementary and secondary school counterparts, as well as with other partners such as corporations and foundations, to create pipelines of opportunity that allow students (especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds) to identify and unlock their full educational potential. While there is no one approach or solution that will meet the needs of all higher education institutions or societies, there are different forms and levels of programmes that can make an impact in combination with one another.

Some collaborations are relatively low-cost and short-term in nature, such as summer camps on college campuses that expose elementary and secondary school students

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43. See for example Lewis (2004), describing the history of racial discrimination and inequality in the United States that has had a continuing impact on equal opportunity in higher education.

to different fields of study and to higher education more generally.<sup>44</sup> Other forms of outreach involve taking the message of higher education into the schools and neighbourhoods where disadvantaged students learn and live. For example, James Madison University has developed a programme called Professors in Residence in which professors from the university spend time in middle and high schools with large populations of disadvantaged students, and can counsel these students directly about the ways in which they can prepare themselves academically for higher education while there is still time to select pre-college courses of study.<sup>45</sup> Such programmes use the personal touch of inspiration to light a spark in young persons in order to give them hope and a potential roadmap for the future. By meeting students where they currently are, these types of programmes also provide young people with immediate access to role models and mentors who might otherwise be missing in their immediate families and communities.

Of course, there are many obstacles facing students from disadvantaged backgrounds who might benefit from higher education, especially for students whose own parents did not attend college and who do not have immediate family members who encourage them to consider this possibility. Thus, some institutions have undertaken more ambitious, longer-term partnerships that recognise these barriers and seek to address them through sustained personal interaction and encouragement.

At James Madison University's Valley Scholars Program, we are collaborating with seven local public school districts to identify students from disadvantaged backgrounds who have academic potential and who would be first-generation college students.<sup>46</sup> Students who meet these criteria are interviewed in a competitive process at the end of seventh grade. When they are selected, the students are told that if they take a college-preparatory curriculum and maintain their grades at a certain level, they will be guaranteed admission and a full-tuition scholarship at the university. Corporations, foundations and individuals have seen the value of this kind of undertaking and have provided financial support.

But the promise does not stop there. The Valley Scholars are provided with university students as mentors who meet with them in their own school buildings on a weekly basis. The Valley Scholars are also brought to the university campus on a regular basis, in cohorts (so that they are constantly reminded that they are not alone in this endeavour), for activities that expose them to different academic programmes, majors and career options.

Assessment and accountability are built into the programme every step of the way to ensure that students stay on track. This kind of partnership is resource-intensive with regard to both labour and finances, but it can also transform lives and the trajectory of entire families and communities for generations to come. The programme at James Madison University was modelled largely after a similar programme at Rutgers

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44. See for example Cyber City (a hands-on laboratory-based computer programme at James Madison University) and the Furious Flower Poetry Center Children's Creativity Camp (a poetry camp at James Madison University).

45. Professors in Residence Program (PIR), available at [www.jmu.edu/diversity/programs-and-events/pir.shtml](http://www.jmu.edu/diversity/programs-and-events/pir.shtml), accessed 27 March 2018.

46. Valley Scholars Program, available at [www.jmu.edu/valleyscholars](http://www.jmu.edu/valleyscholars), accessed 27 March 2018.

University,<sup>47</sup> although the institutions and contexts vary markedly (James Madison and the surrounding school districts are in a rural area in western Virginia; Rutgers and its surrounding school districts are in densely populated urban areas in New Jersey).

There are of course many other examples of successful partnerships that transcend traditional institutional boundaries.<sup>48</sup> The point is simply that higher education institutions that are committed to diversity and inclusion can overcome societal inertia by joining forces with other types of institutions to expand the pathway to higher education. Institutional leaders can and should learn from evolving best practices and models on this front. Moreover, many of these ideas could potentially be scalable with greater participation and resources.

As part of their efforts to increase access on the front end, institutions of higher education can also be deliberate in examining and revising admissions criteria that may have a disparate impact on particular groups. For example, research has demonstrated that standardised test scores in the United States correlate significantly with family wealth, which has led many institutions to move to a test-optional approach to admissions.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, a preference for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or other honours courses and programmes may disadvantage students from communities with limited financial resources. Alumni preferences have also been cited as an admissions criterion that serves as a barrier in favour of upper- and middle-class families (Kahlenberg 1997).

The key point for institutions and their leaders to keep in mind is that there are many innovative ways to intervene and collaborate to address existing structural inequalities of opportunity. Many of these efforts do not require governmental intervention, but rely instead on creativity, co-operation, will and persistence on behalf of the institutions and their leaders.

## INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CLIMATES: LEADERSHIP AND POLICIES

Even as institutions are increasingly successful in strengthening access and diversity on the front end, there is much more work to be done to build environments that foster genuine inclusion on campus. Institutions can start by clearly articulating values of access, diversity and inclusion in their mission and vision statements and strategic plans. For example, James Madison University specifies “Access, Inclusion and Diversity” as one of the core qualities in its strategic plan, noting that “[w]e promote access, inclusion, and diversity for all students, faculty, staff, constituents

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47. Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, *Future Scholars*, available at [www.futurescholars.rutgers.edu](http://www.futurescholars.rutgers.edu), accessed 27 March 2018.

48. See for example the Posse Foundation, Inc., available at [www.possefoundation.org](http://www.possefoundation.org), accessed 27 March 2018 (a cohort-based model for students transitioning from particular urban areas into higher education).

49. See for example *Freshman Application Requirements* (announcing that “[e]ffective for the freshman class entering in the fall of 2018, [James Madison University] will not require the SAT/ACT to be part of [a prospective student’s] application file”). See [www.jmu.edu/admissions/apply/freshman.shtml](http://www.jmu.edu/admissions/apply/freshman.shtml), accessed 6 April 2018.

and programs, believing that these qualities are foundational components of an outstanding education in keeping with our mission.”<sup>50</sup>

These types of statements send an important symbolic message in and of themselves, but they are made much more meaningful if they are backed up with explicit goals and initiatives. For this reason, at James Madison University this core quality is supported by a series of university-wide goals and major initiatives.<sup>51</sup> These goals and initiatives are reviewed and updated annually to ensure accountability in the strategic plan.

Institutional leaders can and should use their bully pulpits to talk about how access, diversity and inclusion undergird and augment the core educational mission and thus contribute to educational excellence. This message needs to be repeated and refreshed for many different audiences and in many different contexts.

Celebrations and recognitions of diversity efforts, initiatives and champions on campus provide regular occasions on which to reiterate this point, given that the population at any given college or university is constantly in flux. Visits and presentations from outside speakers on campus who share experiences and insights related to diversity, access and inclusion also provide opportunities for institutional leaders to remind their communities of the continuing relevance and importance of these issues in the higher education setting. At James Madison University, we hold an annual series of events over a period of a week in celebration of the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>52</sup> These annual commemorations are planned jointly by students, faculty and staff members, and include prominent outside speakers who provide a sense of historical perspective for the ongoing work of diversity and inclusion in and beyond higher education.

The rhetoric matters, but it will quickly be dismissed as hollow, ineffective or insincere if it is not accompanied by action on multiple fronts. Student body diversity is inextricably linked with faculty and staff diversity, as well as with overall campus climate. For this reason, student outreach and admissions initiatives are reinforced by employment and workplace policies and procedures aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion – including hiring, tenure and promotion policies.

Human nature being what it is, faculty and staff members in higher education are likely to pursue policies and definitions of merit in hiring, tenure and promotion that tend to replicate themselves because after all, people will often assume that merit looks like what they see in the mirror. For this reason, deliberate efforts that serve to remind individual and group decision makers of the limitations of their own perspectives, and that help them to think beyond their own immediate experiences and comfort zones, are especially important to help overcome institutional inertia. As with admissions and outreach, promising practices abound that can be used as models. For example, Professor Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner, a nationally recognised expert in the United States on faculty diversity, has written extensively about how to develop new approaches that “interrupt the usual” in faculty hiring (Turner 2002).

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50. *JMU's Strategic Plan 2014-20*, available at [www.jmu.edu/jmuplans/jmu-strategic-plan/index.shtml](http://www.jmu.edu/jmuplans/jmu-strategic-plan/index.shtml), accessed 6 April 2018.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Martin Luther King Jr. Week Celebration Schedule*, available at [www.jmu.edu/news/2017/01/12-mvsted-shaw-preview.shtml](http://www.jmu.edu/news/2017/01/12-mvsted-shaw-preview.shtml), accessed 27 March 2018.



In an era in which some critics of higher education cite institutional autonomy and academic freedom as smokescreens for a lack of accountability, institutions can and must also pay more attention to regular, periodic assessment of their programmes and policies in employment as well as in student outreach and admissions. Regular assessment provides opportunities for conversation and feedback and commands the attention of leaders at all levels of an organisation, and is thus one of the most powerful tools in the higher education toolbox when it comes to diversity and inclusion. Rigorous review and analysis of diversity-related initiatives also model the kind of evidence-based reasoning that lies at the heart of the mission and role of higher education. This kind of deliberate feedback loop is what every institution needs for continuous improvement.

## INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CLIMATES: ROLE OF FACULTY

Given that professors are on the front lines in higher education through their daily interactions with students, they are essential partners in the work of fostering truly inclusive environments. Many institutions have incorporated issues of diversity and inclusion into their curricula, but often there are separate majors, minors or courses in which professors are for the most part “preaching to the choir” of students who are already predisposed to care about these topics deeply. While these programmes can serve a valuable purpose, institutions can also seek ways to incorporate issues of diversity and inclusion across the curriculum more systematically, and to embed such issues within courses beyond those that might be considered “the usual suspects”. Faculty and academic units have primary responsibility for the curriculum and thus have significant power and influence in shaping this central component of the higher education experience.

Institutions of higher education of course cannot assume that all professors enter academia with specific expertise in issues related to diversity, access and inclusion. Professors understandably will focus first and foremost on the central tenets and nuances of their own academic disciplines as traditionally taught, and thus may resist calls to incorporate these other issues into their syllabi. For this reason, institutions are well advised to have centralised services that can provide support for faculty members who may be willing to build these issues into their teaching, but who do not have the time or expertise to do so on their own. At James Madison University, these types of services are provided by the Center for Faculty Innovation, which offers a variety of workshops and resources for faculty members.<sup>53</sup> Many institutions have similar units, and even smaller colleges and universities can create mechanisms whereby faculty members with such expertise are encouraged and supported in sharing their thoughts and insights with other faculty members.

## INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CLIMATES: ROLE OF STUDENTS

Any comprehensive effort to promote diversity, access and inclusion on campus must also acknowledge and harness the energy and participation of the students

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53. *Center for Faculty Innovation*, available at [www.jmu.edu/cfi](http://www.jmu.edu/cfi), accessed 27 March 2018.

themselves. Even if diversity-related efforts are well intentioned, they are likely to be doomed to fail in the long run if they are perceived by students to be completely top-down.

For this reason, higher education institutions must empower students and student organisations to play leadership roles in facilitating dialogue across differences. James Madison University has a program called D.E.E.P. Impact in which students are trained to facilitate discussions on these sorts of topics, and to ensure that individuals with different points of view are allowed to speak freely and be heard in a safe setting.<sup>54</sup> Students are often more likely to listen to their own peers on such topics than trust the wisdom imparted by administrators and professors, who come from different generations and who have different lived experiences.

Campus organisations in which students participate can provide outlets for students to celebrate and share their social identities, while also providing them with a sense of “home” in the midst of environments where they may feel under-represented, or even isolated or invisible. One permutation of this model is represented by organisations where professors, staff members and students can come together to share experiences, plan activities and events, and invite others on campus to hear from them. The Madison Hispanic Caucus is one such organisation on our own campus which has done a wonderful job of developing these sorts of intergenerational connections across all kinds of boundaries.<sup>55</sup>

Special attention must also be paid to first-generation students of all persuasions, who face particular day-to-day challenges in terms of social capital and adjustment to higher education that are often overlooked by peers from other backgrounds. A campus that seeks to be genuinely inclusive must identify and seek to overcome such barriers by creating programmes and support networks for first-generation students, such as the Centennial Scholars Program at James Madison University.<sup>56</sup> In addition to financial aid, and academic and social support programmes for such students that bring them together in a cohort setting, our campus has also started an annual reception to which all first-generation faculty and staff members as well as students are invited. This reception is used as a vehicle to foster intergenerational mentoring relationships that might not otherwise develop, since it is not always easy to identify other individuals on campus who are first-generation college students or graduates.

## CONCLUSION

The journey from access and diversity to genuine inclusion is a long road featuring not only unexpected twists and turns, but also plenty of potholes and steep hills to climb. It is not for the faint of heart. Institutions and leaders who want to make this journey cannot do so alone; they need plenty of allies with whom to share ideas and reflections, and who can provide support and rejuvenation when energy levels

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54. D.E.E.P. Impact, available at [www.jmu.edu/deepimpact](http://www.jmu.edu/deepimpact), accessed 27 March 2018.

55. Madison Hispanic Caucus, available at [www.jmu.edu/mhc](http://www.jmu.edu/mhc), accessed 27 March 2018.

56. Centennial Scholars Program, available at [www.jmu.edu/centhscholars](http://www.jmu.edu/centhscholars), accessed 27 March 2018.

inevitably sag over time. The journey must be approached as a marathon rather than a sprint, and as one in which small victories along the way are acknowledged and celebrated so as to provide continuing momentum and optimism for the long road ahead. This journey represents one of the most important challenges facing higher education in democratic societies in the 21st century, and its outcomes may very well determine whether and to what extent those societies themselves survive and prosper in the future.

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## Chapter 7

# Building nests in another windy place – The diversity imperative in higher education in the United States

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Johnnella E. Butler

### THE CRISIS CONTEXT OF DIVERSITY IN THE USA

The concept of democracy has an inherent imperative for diversity, social inclusion and community. However, the United States and its higher education sector are in the midst of a crisis of diversity and democracy due to the exacerbation of racial, class, gender, religious and ability differences that have been present since the founding of this democratic experiment.

Professor Gloria Wekker, in her 2002 inaugural address for her appointment as Chair of Gender and Ethnicity at Utrecht University, invoked an image from “Portrait” by the distinguished late poet Audre Lorde to connote the difficulty of integrating gender and ethnicity perspectives into the Dutch higher education curriculum: “I must always be/building nests/in a windy place/...” (Wekker 2002: 2). That image fits well the places of diversity in US higher education – tenuous places that challenge a status quo not unlike what Wekker describes, where “Many *human beings* also find themselves building nests in windy places: blacks, migrants and refugees in Dutch society; and in the academy everyone who is not white and not male” (ibid.).

More recently, inspired by James Baldwin, Jesmyn Ward’s edited volume, *The fire this time: a new generation speaks about race*, gives space to members of the current generation “to dissent, to call to account, to witness, to reckon” (Ward 2016: 8) with these nests in the windy place of the United States. She writes that during:

a year in which black person after black person died and no one was held accountable, I picked up *The fire next time*, and I read: “You can only be destroyed by believing that you really are what the white world calls a nigger. I tell you this because I love you, and please don’t you ever forget it.” It was as if I sat on my porch steps with a wise father, a kind present uncle, who said this to me. Told me I was worthy of love. Told me I was worth something in the world. Told me I was a human being. (ibid.: 7)

Ward's contributors are trying "to be," that is, to exist with agency in the contemporary reality of police shooting unarmed black men, women and children with impunity. Their efforts take place in a culture that claims to be "post-racial" while white supremacists march shouting "Blood and Soil," "We will not be replaced" and "Jews will not replace us!"; where a young white man posing as friend and fellow worshipper shoots to death nine black church members at Bible study; that tolerates monuments to Confederate soldiers, traitors who fought for secession to maintain slavery, beloved though they may be by their politico-cultural descendants. Ward's contributors explore legacies, reckon with contemporary challenges to rights and life, and finally ask what to tell children and how to guide them through this dangerous morass. Clint Smith's poem "Queries of unrest" meditates on the threatening uncertainties:

Maybe the poem is a cry for help.  
Maybe I come from a place where people  
are always afraid of dying.  
Maybe that's just what I tell myself  
so I don't feel alone in this body.  
Maybe there's a place where everyone is both  
in love with and running from their own skin.  
Maybe that place is here.  
(ibid.: 100)

Embracing diversity as an inherent imperative for US democracy is challenged more than ever because our democracy is fundamentally threatened, as is generally known and lamented throughout the world. The crisis of diversity and democracy, nonetheless, did not begin with the election of President Trump. Undoubtedly, it has grown with his campaign and election that moved towards nationalism and a corporate-driven economy. The continuous failure to grapple with the obvious and detrimental responses to our diversity reproduces racial, gender, sexual identity, class and disability inequality and religious prejudice throughout US institutions, processes of governance, economic development and daily activities and interactions. Moreover, the diverse effects of the lack of shared and connected historical narratives fuels deep-seated fears of the "Other", and encourages an arrogant white privilege rekindling colourism while easily morphing into white supremacy. Such is the unstable, frightening, windy atmosphere in which diversity initiatives in the US seek to thrive.

## HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE CRISIS

The indentured servitude of whites and blacks, and shortly afterwards, the defeat of Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 – an alliance of poor whites, poor blacks and landless freemen against the landed gentry – resulted in black enslavement, with poor and lower-class whites encouraged to align themselves with the white supremacy of the ruling class (Takaki 2008/1993: 63-8). Racial inequality's firm footing in slavery and white supremacy was rooted in the US Constitution, and paralleled and provided social and legal models for the removal of Native Americans, as well as for gender and other inequalities. Its legacies serve as the lynchpin for the accumulation of wealth and resources, supporting class divisions between blacks and whites and white privilege that sustains current manifestations of inequality and inequity.

The US presidential election of 1968 proved to be a watershed in establishing what often appear to be permanent barriers to inequality. Republican Richard Nixon's defeat of Democrat Hubert Humphrey began the consolidation of Republican Party rule in the South in opposition to the Democratic Party's evolving embrace of civil rights, which emerged from the activism of the black-led Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964. Through what he identified as his Southern Strategy, Nixon appropriated the American Independent Party's and segregationist George Wallace's presidential platform, thereby bringing Southern political and social values into the Republican Party at a time when the Democratic Party was being pushed away from its Southern stronghold on strident racism.<sup>57</sup>

In his 1974 book, *The Americanization of Dixie: the Southernization of America*,<sup>58</sup> the late John Egerton provides a journalistic, contemporaneous examination of this infusion of Southern segregationist values into the illusory, homogenising melting pot ideal. Egerton identified trends that resulted from the worst in both Northern and Southern values, while "the best languishes and withers." They are unfortunately recognisable today:

the dominant trends are unmistakable: deep divisions along race and class lines, an obsession with growth and acquisition and consumption, a headlong rush to the cities and the suburbs, diminution and waste of natural resources; institutional malfunctioning, abuse of political and economic power, increasing depersonalization, and a steady erosion of the sense of place, of community, of belonging. (Egerton 1974: xx)

Egerton identified the result as simultaneous, ongoing, conflictual processes of homogenisation and alienation that incorporate these trends. Expanding upon his conceptualisation, I see today's US crisis of diversity emanating from a continuum that places the population between opposite poles of homogeneity. Expanding upon Egerton's conceptualisation, I see this crisis emanating from the historical continuum that places the population between opposite poles of white privilege and belonging at one end, and alienation and Otherness at the other.

The current threat to US democracy therefore began with the 1968 presidential campaign that precipitated the attack on and unravelling of the gains of the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement, all striving towards equality and against American exceptionalism. Significantly during the same time period, the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York initiated the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights movement.<sup>59</sup> Today, the threat has become

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57. An indicator of the strength of the values in the Southern Strategy that Nixon appropriated is George Wallace's second run against Nixon in 1972. Wallace swept the Florida primary and appeared to be running well "in Northern industrial states with his calculated racist appeal to white blue-collar workers" (Chafe 2007: 399). Wallace had to withdraw from the campaign after suffering an attempted assassination that paralysed him for life.

58. "Dixie" was a popular name for the territory of the Confederate States of America in the 19th century.

59. Martin Duberman in *Stonewall* provides historical context and personal narratives to the events on June 28, 1969, when police raided the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, New York City. That raid sparked a series of riots that "mark the birth of the modern gay and lesbian political movement, that moment in time when gays and lesbians recognized all at once their mistreatment and their solidarity. As such, 'Stonewall' has become an empowering symbol of global proportions" (Duberman 1994: 10).

palpable as the Southern Strategy, now in the form of dog whistles, or coded appeals to racism, bigotry and homophobia, permeates US politics. Insidious calls for a false homogeneity reinforce a post-racial illusion. Most representative are the currently ubiquitous AncestryDNA TV advertisements (AncestryDNA Testimonials 2017) that equate DNA percentages with culture and ethnicity. In one ad, a woman, who previously saw herself as Hispanic, discovers mostly equal percentages from numerous places, prompting her to identify herself as “Other”. In another, an African American embraces her “Nigerian culture” since her DNA identifies her as predominantly 26% Nigerian. The windy places of diversity can distort or obscure the political and economic effects of identity, subversively individuating US American identity, if not evacuating it.

## ESTABLISHING NESTS IN WINDY PLACES

During 1968 and 1969 at San Francisco State University and the University of California (UC), Berkeley, a coalition of students of colour with some white allies formed the Third World Liberation Front to protest against racism, the Eurocentric curricula and co-curricula,<sup>60</sup> and the exclusion of communities of people of colour from university life. A confrontational five-month strike at San Francisco State College (Witson n.d.) and a concurrent strike at UC Berkeley that included a hunger strike, student arrests and faculty protests, resulted in the establishment of Black Studies and Ethnic Studies departments at San Francisco State College and the Ethnic Studies Department at UC Berkeley, encompassing African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicano Studies and Native American Studies. In 1999, according to its Department of Ethnic Studies website:

in response to drastic budget cuts and loss of faculty members, students organized another series of rallies, sit-ins, and hunger strikes. This activism resulted in additional faculty positions, the creation of a Multicultural Community Center, and the establishment of the Center for Race and Gender. (Department of Ethnic Studies, UC Berkeley 2014)

In subsequent years, often supported by student protests in the wake of the San Francisco State and UC Berkeley student activism, the fields of Africana Studies,<sup>61</sup> Women’s and Gender Studies, Ethnic Studies, Queer Studies and Cultural Studies have grown on campuses across the country in scope and depth, embracing and influencing national, transnational and intersectional approaches to scholarship. New histories of women and ethnic groups (white and of colour); inclusive literary anthologies and anthologies of people of colour; and two landmark multicultural histories – Howard Zinn’s *A people’s history of America* (1999/1980) and Ronald Takaki’s *A different mirror: a multicultural history of America* (1993) – were published. Social science moved from a race relations lens to studying the social structures of race, gender and class. Intersectionality, the analysis of the effects of intersecting identities and

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60. In US undergraduate education, the co-curriculum denotes activity outside of and complementary to academic curricula, taking place under the auspices of “student affairs” offices rather than “academic affairs” offices.

61. Africana Studies is another title for African Diaspora Studies.



oppressions, has gained currency since legal and women's studies scholar Kimberlee Crenshaw coined the term to analyse the intersection of race and gender in black women's experiences (Crenshaw 1989). Community colleges have expanded their embrace of first-generation students, as have four-year colleges. Student success initiatives have appeared, albeit unevenly, throughout higher education to address the cultural, social and academic differences and deficits that all students reflect in greater to lesser degrees due to uneven and unequal kindergarten through upper secondary education systems.

These are all significant achievements. However, they are subject to a deep ambivalence, and at times hostility, reflecting the homogeneity to Otherness continuum and encouraging simultaneously pessimism and optimism, fear and hope. The varying effects of shared governance and administration, decreased federal and state support of public higher education, political attacks on tenure and academic freedom, and the dominance of melting-pot approaches in scholarship and in our national historical narrative rather than intersectional, pluralistic, comparative approaches and understandings, all exacerbate this atmosphere.

Campus unrest across the United States reflects the national anxieties stemming from the apparent inability to reckon productively with the inclusion of people of colour, women, the disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) individuals and communities, the poor and immigrants in a democracy not originally fashioned with them as participants. Although reshaped considerably since the American Revolution of 1776, democracy continues to be threatened by the divisive politics that maintain inequity and inequality combined with the Southern Strategy that has now re-emerged. To recall the metaphor, the nests of diversity are established amidst hurricane winds, winds that die down and recur with varying degrees of force.

## EXPERIENCING WINDY PLACES OF DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A few glimpses into contemporary experiences in the windy places of diversity in US higher education reveal how diversity in higher education struggles to keep in step with the rapid demographic and cultural changes in the nation.

### Stagnant student and faculty diversity numbers

In August 2017, *The New York Times* published its detailed study of the enrolment of white, Asian, Hispanic, black and multiracial students in 100 institutions from 1980 to 2015. Drawing on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, the study analyses data from all Ivy League<sup>62</sup> and University of California campuses; top liberal arts colleges; other top private universities; and public flagship universities. The

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62. The Ivy League consists of eight universities known for their ivy-covered brick walls and distinguished by their academic and social status. Including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Dartmouth, Cornell, Brown and the University of Pennsylvania, all were established either before or shortly after the founding of the United States.

study reveals that while 15% are of college-age, black students comprise only 6% of first-year students at elite schools, a statistic barely changed since 1980. Of the 22% college-age Hispanic Americans, 13% are first-year students at elite schools, but the gap has widened since 1980 given the increase in the Hispanic student population (Ashkenas, Park and Pearce 2017).

There is no space here for a detailed discussion of this study, but across the board there is a significant increase in Asian enrolment, a decline in white enrolment, an increase in Hispanic enrolment, a steady low enrolment of black students, and generally, no statistically significant data for Native Americans. In the category of “other top universities” that includes 14 institutions on par with the Ivy League, Asian student numbers rose from 3% in 1980 to 30% in 2015. Public flagship universities generally draw students from the state or region, and many reflect the college-age population of black students. However, in each of the southern states of Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia and South Carolina, black students make up 33% of the college-age population but less than 15% of first-year enrolment. For Native American students of college age, first-year enrolment in 2015 is 19% at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, 4% at the University of New Mexico, and 1% at the University of Maine. The number of black students at the University of California campuses has declined significantly since the 1998 ban on affirmative action with black student enrolment ranging from 1% to 4% of the college-age population, and Hispanics, whose college-age population is close to 50%, make up almost 25% of the first-year population. The title of the article referenced succinctly conveys the state of the measure of student demographic diversity: “Even with affirmative action, blacks and hispanics are more underrepresented at top colleges than 35 years ago” (ibid.).

As for faculty, the National Center for Education Statistics (2017) reports that:

In the fall 2015, of the 1.6 million faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions, 52 percent were full time and 48 percent were part time. Faculty include professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, lecturers, assisting professors, adjunct professors, and interim professors.

In the fall 2015, of all full-time faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions, 42 percent were White males, 35 percent were White females, 6 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander males, 4 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander females, 3 percent each were Black females and Black males, and 2 percent each were Hispanic males and Hispanic females. Making up 1 percent or less each were full-time faculty who were of two or more races and American Indian/Alaska Native. Among full-time professors, 56 percent were White males, 27 percent were White females, 7 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander males, and 2 percent each were Asian/Pacific Islander females, Black males, Hispanic males, and Black females. The following groups each made up 1 percent or less of the total number of full-time professors: Hispanic females, individuals of two or more races and American Indian/Alaska Native individuals.

According to a TIAA Institute study (Finkelstein, Conley and Schuster 2016), these statistics have not changed much over the past 20 years, with faculty diversity increasing only slightly. Most under-represented faculty are in insecure non-tenure track positions. Number of white women have increased significantly in both tenured

and adjunct ranks. Since we have not experienced either a critical mass of students or faculty of colour, significant change remains stymied.<sup>63</sup>

## Confusion of positionality in a diverse context

An article in *The Atlantic*, “What role do Asian Americans have in campus protests?” (Cheng 2015) sheds light on the complexity of identity in student politics. The response of Kinohi Nishikawa, a Princeton African American Studies professor, to Asian American student reluctance to participate in black student protests succinctly states the problem:

it is an unfortunate burden to live up to the model-minority myth that was set up to prop up inequalities in America. .... [that is] impossible to meet... [and is] premised on the continued exploitation of other minorities ... We remain silent and prop up a fundamentally unequal system at our own peril. At the expense of our continued minoritization. It is in our self interest to speak out – we belong and they belong too. (ibid.: paras. 14, 15)

In the same article, Yale sophomore in the Ethnicity, Race, and Migration programme, Yuni Chang, comments on the dilemma from a student point of view:

It’s really disappointing when I come to a forum [where students discuss racial equality] and I only see three or four Asian Americans in a space filled with hundreds of other people ... As an Asian person, a person of color, you are privileged by the ways in which black students are treated on campus. ... It’s hard to come to terms with your community benefitting from black students being seen as problem students ... In other words, it’s hard to realize that you can be both an oppressor and an oppressed person. (ibid.: paras. 10, 11, 16)

Variations on this confusion about place on the continuum from resisting and/or participating in white privilege and belonging to anti-black racism and Otherness are experienced by students, faculty and administrators as well, on the basis of class, gender and sexual identity, race and ability. Historical narratives that would explain and illuminate relationships are either unknown or disconnected.

## “Presumed incompetent” and/or subject to “written/unwritten” rules

Two recent volumes, *Presumed incompetent: the intersections of race and class for women in academia* (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012) and *Written/unwritten, diversity and the hidden truths of tenure* (Matthew 2016a), provide case studies, memoirs and analyses of the experiences of men and women of colour and LGBTQ faculty in academia. Contributors detail how white faculty approach them with stereotypical micro-aggressions, questioning their belonging and attacking their scholarship and pedagogy. They discuss the effects of the expectations for them to do what Matthew calls the “invisible labor” of diversity (Matthew 2016b). That is, faculty of colour are

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63. For a succinct yet detailed review of this study see Flaherty (2016a), which also notes that a book expanding on the study is forthcoming from The Johns Hopkins Press.

expected to represent the varying views of ethnic groups; contribute to and often lead diversity committees; explain white and students of colour to one another; teach content that challenges student assumptions about race and gender — all without recognition in evaluation processes of the complexity of these tasks and their possible negative ramifications. Both volumes explore the “byzantine patterns of race, gender, and class hierarchy that confound popular narratives about meritocracy” as Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. (2012) put it in their introduction, and the ways that “faculty at institutions of higher education are immersed in the daunting inequities and painful struggles taking place throughout an increasingly multicultural America” (ibid.: 2). Their work echoes among others the question the late novelist John A. Williams posed in his essay, “Through the glass looking”:

I’ve often wondered why a college or university will hire a minority teacher, send her or him before a class to educate white kids, and otherwise treat him or her with contempt. Is the academy saying that the teacher is good enough for the kids but not for adults? How crazy is it to trust that teacher with the future yet debase her or him in the present? (2000: 43)

## **Struggles in faculty governance and in expertise to prepare courses, curriculum and develop requirements**

The impending crisis of diversity in higher education became apparent in the late 1970s when most white faculty and students resisted or ignored the unanticipated cultural change. Thus, foundations and the federal government during the 1980s and 1990s provided campuses funds to address the problem of an underprepared, unknowledgeable faculty. This short-lived approach inspired activity on campuses that is being reinstituted today. Examples are climate surveys to inform approaches to addressing campus diversity; faculty and staff initiatives for curriculum change and student success support respectively; and diversity institutes that generate scholarship on various aspects of diversity.

Curriculum change, reflective of the diversity of historical and contemporary realities, often runs into conflict with vocal groups of white faculty blaming campus unrest on coddling students who demand diversity. Others, just as vehemently, object that intersectional and comparative scholarship and intersectional history are politics and not scholarship. Hamilton College, for example, has instituted a new diversity requirement. Beginning in 2017-18, “every concentration shall have a requirement that will help students gain an understanding of structural and institutional hierarchies based on one or more of the social categories of race, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexuality, age and abilities/disabilities” (Flaherty 2016b: para. 14). Despite overwhelming faculty endorsement of this approach, an alumni statement claimed “The requirement would improperly impose esoteric ideological values on the student body and fail to live up to the college’s commitment to freedom of inquiry.” Another objection viewed the language of the proposal as “standard leftist rhetoric used by faculty activists to indict American colleges and other institutions for falling short of the progressive utopia” (ibid.: para. 16).

In “When a theory goes viral”, Bartlett (2017) reports that intersectionality, an approach that is grounded in contextual, relational thinking, is condemned as identity politics,

and “kaleidoscopically balkanizing”. Whatever challenges the dominant narratives in most disciplines, whether it is inclusion, comparative or intersectional study, it is often met with similar scepticism or contempt by vocal faculty.

## CONCLUSION

Despite its challenges, the diversity imperative in democracy remains strong simply because the United States continues to change into a diverse society demographically and culturally. We must, however, take seriously student protests for inclusion as well as resistance to change. As a nation, we are going through an identity crisis, made palpable by the current Trump Administration. Is health care a right? Can there be reconciliation of the class divisions between lower-class whites and people of colour? Will police brutality and murders of black and brown people end? Can K-12<sup>64</sup> education prepare all students for college-level reading, writing, math and critical thinking regardless of their plans for their future education? Will the legal system uphold policies and laws that protect our diverse population and ensure equity? Moreover, while much too complicated to discuss here, it is important to note that the Trump Administration plans to eliminate or at the least minimise civil rights efforts across governmental agencies (Eilperin, Brown and Fears 2017), and most recently, has provided a list of forbidden words to the Center for Disease Control: “vulnerable”, “entitlement”, “diversity”, “transgender”, “fetus”, “evidence-based” and “science-based” (Sun and Eilperin 2017).<sup>65</sup> The role of the higher education community in ensuring a quality education for all as a requisite for a sound and evolving democracy is therefore vexed at this point in time. Many politicians’ simplistic but powerful dog whistles to the public reinforce fear and division. Dissent, resistance, complacency and academic complexity threaten to impede the ranks of higher education. Thus, the cultural, social and economic challenges that diversity presents may well become distorted and ostracised from mainstream and even higher education conversation.

Some high-profile universities are removing vestiges of racist presidents and donors, and recognising their institutions’ financial connections to slavery, while some southern cities and states are removing statues of Confederate leaders. But these become empty gestures if we fail to recognise that student protests are more than calls for political correctness. To paraphrase Daryl Smith, we should approach diversity in higher education with the comprehensive approaches and urgency and thoroughness with which we are approaching technology – as central to education (Smith 2009: viii). It remains to be seen whether higher education, being confronted palpably now with

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64. In the United States, “K-12” (Kindergarten to 12th grade) is used to describe pre-compulsory and compulsory education.

65. Since the 1960s, the federal government has expanded its efforts to ensure social justice, including among other things fair housing, fair employment, access to quality education, environmental health, safety and justice, and entitlements that taxpayers pay for such as Social Security (a minimal retirement income), Medicare (health care benefits for the retired and elderly), and Medicaid (health care benefits for the disabled and the poor). The Center for Disease Control (CDC), as described in the cited article, “has a budget of about \$7 billion and more than 12,000 employees working across the nation and around the globe on everything from food and water safety, to heart disease and cancer, to infectious disease, outbreak prevention. Much of the CDC’s work has strong bipartisan support”. Under the Trump Administration, all of this is under attack.

the crisis of diversity and democracy, will exhaustively and persistently address the lack of shared history, embrace the diversity imperative and all its implications, and thus reduce significantly the winds threatening to shatter the vulnerable nests that are vital to United States democracy.

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## Chapter 8

# Can we make our campuses more diverse and inclusive? Lessons from the United Kingdom

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*Tony Gallagher*

### INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the United Kingdom expanded rapidly in the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st century. One consequence of the expansion, or massification, of higher education was that universities became more diverse, in terms of both their students and staff. A variety of factors contributed to the expansion, including policy change in education generally, changing assumptions and mores about human capability, and new perspectives on the skills needs of society and the supply side of the economy. This chapter will explore some of the features of this expansion of higher education in the UK and consider some of the specific contributory factors. The chapter will show that universities in the UK have become more inclusive and diverse, but it will challenge the notion that they have become fully inclusive institutions and offer some suggestions on how a further shift towards this goal might be achieved.

The chapter is organised in two parts. In the first part we look at empirical data on the participation patterns in higher education in the UK, looking specifically at the overall levels of participation, the rates for women, people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, people with disabilities and those from minority ethnic communities. In addition we look at empirical data on patterns of employment in UK higher education by gender. The overall pattern is one of steadily rising participation rates overall, and for all social groups previously under-represented in higher education. In the second part we consider some of the reasons why this has happened, focusing on the impact of rising participation rates themselves, and the evolving role of universities in periods of political and social change. The chapter will argue that, as they have massified, universities in the UK have taken on a more engaged role in society. This new engaged role has focused more on economic priorities, as opposed to social and civic priorities, and is more strongly embedded in policy frameworks. Thus, while UK universities have become diverse and inclusive, the chapter will argue that they have not yet become fully diverse and inclusive institutions, and

that a more fundamental shift in role towards the social and civic mission will be necessary. The chapter concludes by pointing to examples which demonstrate the feasibility of that goal.

### PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the early years of the 20th century very few people went to university in the UK, as can be seen in Table 8.1, which shows the number of graduates over the century and beyond. In 1920 there were 4 357 first degree graduates and 703 higher degree graduates.<sup>66</sup> From this small base the number had doubled just before the Second World War. It almost doubled again in the period immediately after the war, but the two main periods of expansion in the 20th century were in the 1970s and the 1990s. After the Second World War the British Government made secondary education freely available to all, but mediated entry to different types of schools on the basis of an academic selection test. By the 1960s, the evidence to justify the assumptions about intelligence embedded in this selective arrangement had become somewhat threadbare: the increasingly predominant view was intelligence was malleable, rather than fixed, and could not be predicted at an early age. In order to take advantage of the wider talent within society most of the UK shifted towards a system of all-ability comprehensive schools within which opportunity would be more widely available. This change in attitude was mirrored by a group commissioned by the government to look at the provision of higher education, which recommended a rapid expansion of the university sector (Robbins Report 1963).

**Table 8.1 – Number of university graduates with first or higher degrees in the UK, 1920-2011**

Year	First degree graduates	Higher degree graduates
1920	4 357	703
1930	9 129	1 323
1938	9 311	1 480
1950	17 337	2 410
1960	22 426	3 273
1970	51 189	12 901
1980	68 150	18 925
1990	77 163	31 324
2000	243 246	86 535
2005	278 680	125 085
2010	330 720	182 610
2011	350 800	194 270

Source: Bolton 2012

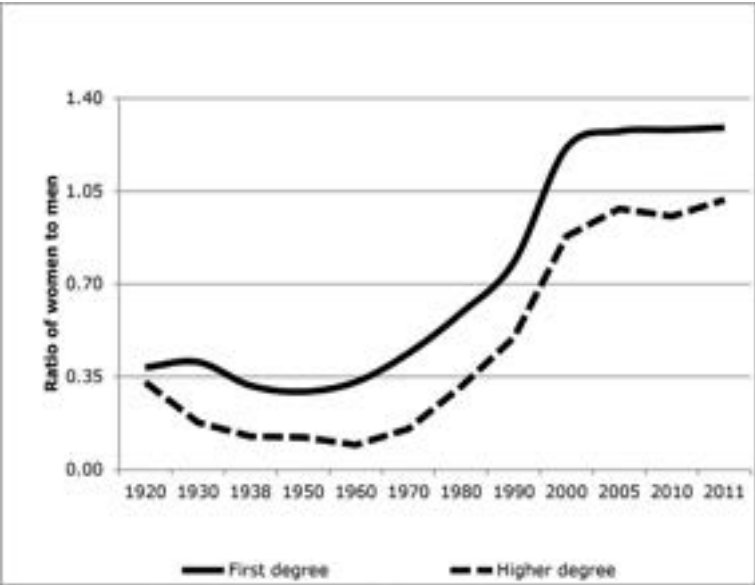
<sup>66</sup> First degrees are undergraduate programmes, while higher degrees refer to postgraduate programmes.

The second period of expansion in the 1990s was also occasioned by a change in government policy and was numerically more significant, but involved changes in institutional arrangements. The expansion of universities in the 1960s had been accompanied by the creation of a new type of tertiary college, the polytechnics, which provided degree programmes mainly in applied science and technology. Unlike traditional universities they did not have independent degree-awarding powers, but rather had to get their programmes validated by a national body. In the 1990s the British Government decided to convert polytechnics into universities, with their own charters and autonomous governance, and the power to validate and award their own degrees. A later shift in policy under which the teaching income of the universities came to be largely drawn from tuition fees, rather than government grant, also led to the removal of limits on the number of students universities could recruit.

### GENDER AND HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

In the first half of the 20th century almost three quarters of first degree graduates, and almost 90% of higher degree graduates, were men, a pattern which remained intact until 1960, as can be seen in Figure 8.1. This figure also shows that the pattern started to change during the expansion of the 1970s, but parity for women was only achieved, for first degree graduates, by 1990 and, for higher degree graduates, by 2005. For first degree graduates the growth in graduation rate for women only levelled out from 2000 onwards, at which point a majority of graduates were women.

Figure 8.1 – Ratio of women to men among university graduates, 1920-2011



Source: calculated from data in Bolton 2012

The most recent data on graduation rates provide a more detailed picture. Table 8.2 confirms that a higher proportion of first degree graduates in the UK are women and that the rate of growth in this pattern has stabilised. Table 8.2 also shows that

women are now graduating at a higher rate than men in taught postgraduate courses and that this rate is still rising, whereas men are graduating at a higher rate than women with postgraduate research degrees. For reference purposes data on the total number of graduates for 2015-16 are provided in Table 8.3.

**Table 8.2 – Percentage of graduates from UK universities by gender and degree level, 2011/12 to 2015/16**

		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
First degree	Women	57	57	57	57	57
	Men	43	43	43	43	43
	All	100	100	100	100	100
Postgraduate taught	Women	55	58	58	58	59
	Men	45	42	42	42	41
	All	100	100	100	100	100
Postgraduate research	Women	46	46	47	47	46
	Men	54	54	53	53	54
	All	100	100	100	100	100

Source: calculated from HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) data<sup>67</sup>

**Table 8.3 – Number of graduates from UK universities by gender and degree, 2015/16**

	Women	Men	All
Postgraduate research	12 645	14 720	27 365
Postgraduate taught	137 575	97 165	234 740
First degree	228 645	171 100	399 745
Total	425 020	317 570	742 590

Source: HESA

## GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Since the pattern of improvement in the participation of women in higher education has been so strong, we decided to test whether this had extended into patterns of employment in higher education. Table 8.4 presents the base data. It shows that a little over 400 000 staff were employed in UK universities, just over half of whom worked in academic support and other roles, and the rest as academics. Men were more likely to work full time, while women were much more likely to work part time. Women were also much more likely to be found in academic support and other roles, especially among those on part-time contracts. Finally, while there were more men than women in full-time academic roles, the reverse was the case for part-time academic roles.

<sup>67</sup>. Statistical first release, Table 10: HE qualifications obtained by sex, level of qualification obtained, mode of study and domicile 2011/12 to 2015/16, available at [www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk), accessed 4 April 2018.

**Table 8.4 – Number of staff working in UK universities by gender, job category and work mode, 2014/15<sup>68</sup>**

Full-time	Women	Men	All
Academic staff	53 120	79 745	132 865
Academic support & other roles	76 095	63 285	139 385
Total staff	129 215	143 030	272 250
Part-time	Women	Men	All
Academic staff	36 105	29 365	65 470
Academic support & other roles	52 705	13 410	66 115
Total staff	88 810	42 775	131 585
All modes	Women	Men	All
Academic staff	89 225	109 110	198 335
Academic support & other roles	128 805	76 695	205 500
Total staff	218 030	185 805	403 835

Source: HESA<sup>69</sup>

The pattern for staff working in academic support and other roles is broken down further into specific occupational categories in Table 8.5. This table shows that women predominate in administrative and clerical occupations, and in sales and customer service occupations; men predominate in skilled trades occupations and as process, plant and machine operatives. Thereafter the most striking feature of Table 8.5 is that women predominate in all but one of the part-time occupational areas, often to a very high degree.

**Table 8.5 – Academic support and other staff in UK universities by occupational category and gender (%),<sup>70</sup> 2014/15**

	Full-time			Part-time		
	Women	Men	All	Women	Men	All
Managers, directors and senior officials	49	51	100	80	19	100
Professional occupations	51	49	100	80	20	100
Associate professional and technical occupations	47	53	100	75	25	100

68. All figures have been rounded to multiples of 5.  
69. Statistical first release SFR225, Table 1 – All staff (excluding non-academic atypical) at UK HE providers by academic contract marker, activity standard occupational classification, mode of employment and sex 2012/13 to 2014/15, available at [www.hesa.ac.uk/news/21-01-2016/sfr225-staff](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/21-01-2016/sfr225-staff), accessed 4 April 2018.  
70. All sums do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding errors.

	Full-time			Part-time		
	Women	Men	All	Women	Men	All
<b>Administrative and clerical occupations</b>	78	22	100	88	12	100
<b>Skilled trades occupations</b>	14	86	100	58	42	99
<b>Caring, leisure and other service occupations</b>	44	55	100	68	32	100
<b>Sales and customer service occupations</b>	62	38	100	78	22	100
<b>Process, plant and machine operatives</b>	13	86	100	35	65	100
<b>Elementary occupations</b>	26	74	100	74	26	100
<b>Total academic support and other roles staff</b>	55	45	100	80	20	100

Source: HESA

## SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

The Dearing Report (1997) considered some of the consequences of the rapid expansion of higher education and, in particular, the mechanisms for funding universities. The report published data on the participation levels of different socio-economic groups in higher education since this was of relevance to any consideration of a shift towards the introduction of tuition fees. Table 8.6 shows the pattern of participation by socio-economic group (SEG) using the Age Participation Index (API), which is essentially the proportion of entrants among 18-year-olds. The table shows a rising participation rate for all groups and that the rate for SEG I had reached almost four in five by 1995-96.

The Dearing Report also published historical data on participation rates by socio-economic background: Figure 8.2 shows the ratio of participation rates for the lower socio-economic groups (SEGs III manual, IV and V) against the higher socio-economic groups (SEGs I, II and III non-manual) from 1940 to 1995. It shows that the comparative participation rate for the lower socio-economic group fell in the period immediately after the Second World War, but rose steadily from 1960.

Given the limitations of data on social background, largely as a consequence of missing data, current practice in the UK is to use alternative measures to analyse the effect of social background on higher education participation. Table 8.7 shows three of the measures currently in use: the proportion of students gaining entry to higher education mediated by their entitlement to free school meals (FSM); the proportion of students gaining entry to higher education mediated by their area of residence, using the most and least disadvantaged areas by quintile; and the proportion of students gaining entry to the most selective universities mediated by their area of residence, using the most and least disadvantaged areas by quintile.

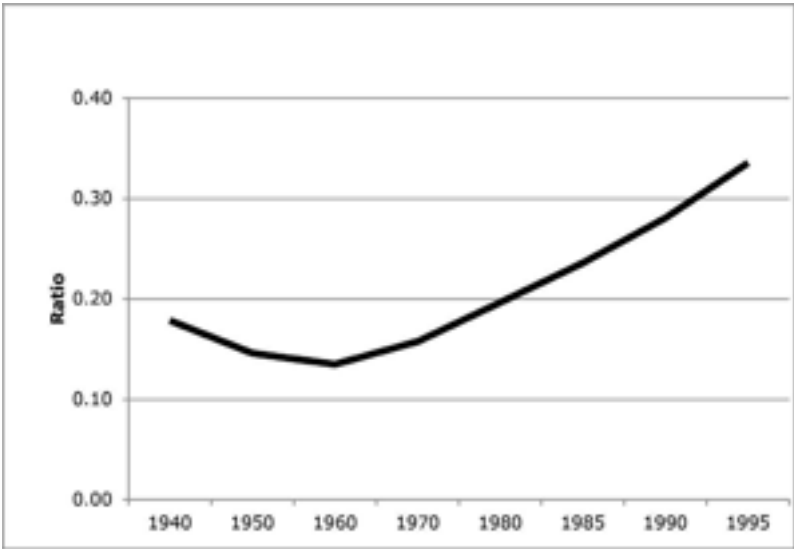
The table shows that the entry level of students from more disadvantaged backgrounds is lower, in comparison to those from more advantaged backgrounds, whichever measure of background is used. It also shows that the entry level has risen across the period.

**Table 8.6 – Age Participation Index (%) by academic year and socio-economic group (SEG), Great Britain and Scotland, 1992/93 to 1995/96**

	SEG I	SEG II	SEG III non-manual	SEG III manual	SEG IV	SEG V	All
1991/92	55	36	22	11	12	6	23
1992/93	71	39	27	15	14	9	28
1993/94	73	42	29	17	16	11	30
1994/95	78	45	31	18	17	11	32
1995/96	79	45	31	18	17	12	32

Source: Dearing Report (1997)

**Figure 8.2 – Ratio of Age Participation Index for lower socio-economic groups against higher socio-economic groups, 1940-95**



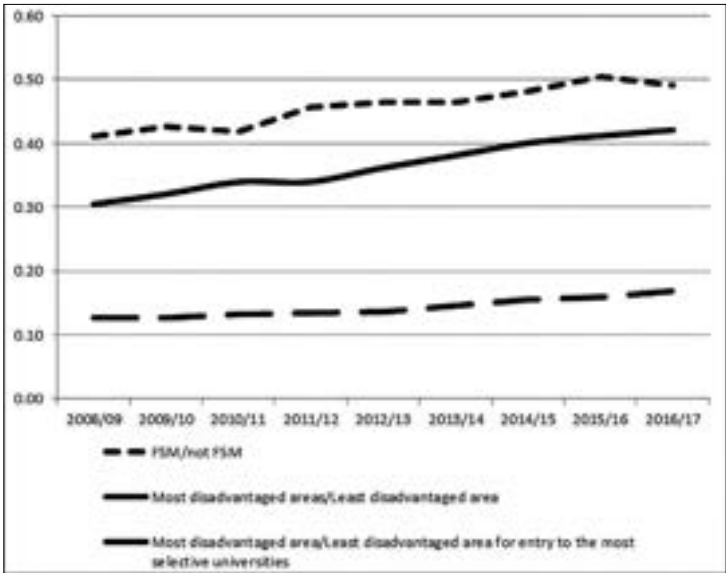
Source: calculated from data in the Dearing Report (1997),  
The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, London: HMSO  
(Report 6: Widening participation into higher education for students from  
lower socio-economic groups and students with disabilities)

**Table 8.7 – Entry rates (%) for students from state school to higher education by free school meal status (FSM), area status and entry to the most selective universities**

	2008 /09	2009 /10	2010 /11	2011 /12	2012 /13	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17
FSM	10.8	11.6	11.5	13.0	12.7	13.6	14.7	15.9	16.1
Not FSM	26.3	27.2	27.4	28.4	27.3	29.3	30.5	31.5	32.8
Most disadvantaged area quintile	12.9	13.6	14.2	15.1	15.1	16.4	17.8	18.5	19.5
Least disadvantaged area quintile	42.3	42.4	41.8	44.4	41.7	43.0	44.4	44.9	46.3
Most disadvantaged area quintile: entry to most selective universities	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.9	3.2	3.3	3.6
Least disadvantaged area quintile: entry to most selective universities	19.6	18.8	18.2	17.9	19.0	19.8	20.5	20.7	21.3

Source: Department for Education (2017)

**Figure 8.3 – Ratio of entry rates to higher education for students from disadvantaged and advantaged backgrounds**

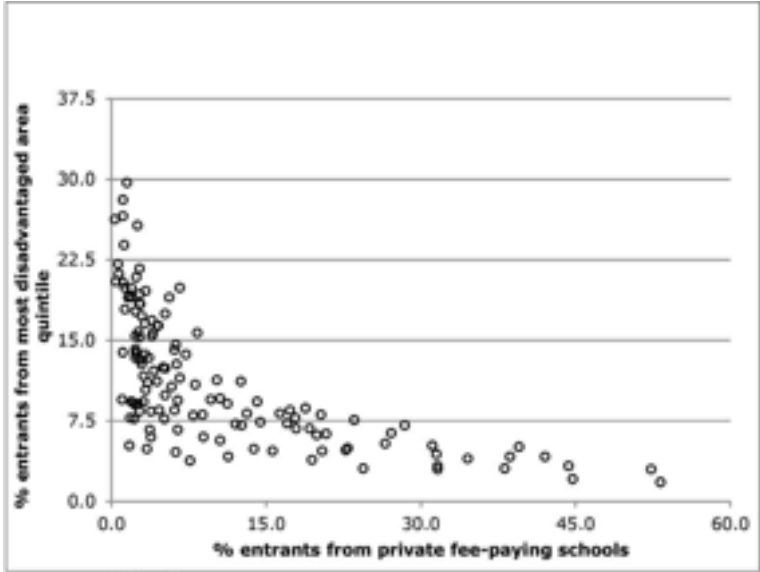


Source: calculated from data in Department for Education (2017)



Figure 8.3 confirms the rising entry levels and further shows that the rate at which students from disadvantaged backgrounds are gaining entry to higher education is improving, in comparison with those from more advantaged backgrounds. It also shows that students from disadvantaged backgrounds find it particularly difficult to achieve entry to the most selective universities. Part of the reason for that might be found in the pattern in Figure 8.4 which provides a scattergram of the proportion of entrants to full-time first degree programmes in England who attended private fee-paying schools against the proportion of entrants from the most disadvantaged area quintile. Figure 8.4 shows a negative correlation between these two variables such that most of the students from the most disadvantaged areas enter universities where the proportion of entrants from fee-paying schools is relatively low. Contrariwise, the scattergram also shows that universities which take a high proportion of their entrants from private fee-paying schools tend not to take many students from the most disadvantaged areas.

**Figure 8.4 – Full-time first degree entrants in England: percentage from private schools v. percentage from the most disadvantaged areas**



Source: calculated from HESA<sup>71</sup>

## DISABILITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

Overall a little under 7% of students at UK universities were defined as disabled on the basis that they were in receipt of the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA), although this varies across universities: the 25th percentile is 3.5% and the 75 percentile is 8.2%. Table 8.8 shows that the pattern varies across different subject areas within universities. The

71. UKPIs 2015-16 Widening-participation data, Table T1a – Participation of under-represented groups in higher education: UK domiciled young full-time first degree entrants 2015/16, available at [www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk), accessed 4 April 2018.

data show a slight tendency for the participation rates for people with disabilities to be a little higher in subjects with lower entry levels. More generally, Table 8.8 suggests the participation rates are higher generally in subjects in the arts and humanities, or social sciences, in comparison with the physical or health and life sciences.

**Table 8.8 – Percentage of university students entitled to the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) by subject area**

Subject area	% in receipt of the DSA
Business & administrative studies	4.7
Mathematical sciences	4.8
Law	5.0
Languages	5.3
Engineering & technology	5.8
Medicine & dentistry and veterinary science	6.2
Computer sciences	6.6
Mass communications & documentation	6.7
Biological sciences	6.8
Physical sciences	6.8
Subjects allied to medicine	7.1
Architecture, building & planning	7.2
Historical & philosophical studies	7.2
Social studies	7.3
Education	7.3
Combined subjects	8.4
Agriculture & related subjects	10.4
Creative arts & design	11.4
All subjects	6.9

Source: HESA<sup>72</sup>

## ETHNICITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

Table 8.9 shows the data on the number of entrants to full-time first degree programmes in universities in England<sup>73</sup> from 2003/03 to 2015/16, disaggregated by ethnicity. The table shows an increasing level of participation by white and black and minority ethnic (BME) students. Figure 8.5 shows the ratio of BME entrants to white entrants and shows a higher rate of increase for BME entrants over the period. On the other hand, Table 8.10 shows the non-continuation rates for full-time first degree students by ethnicity and shows that the drop-out rate is higher than whites for students by ethnicity from each ethnic group, except Chinese students.

72. Widening participation indicators, 2017, Table SD1 – Percentage of UK domiciled full-time first degree student students in receipt of Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA) by subject and entry qualifications 2015/16, accessed at [www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk), accessed 4 April 2018.

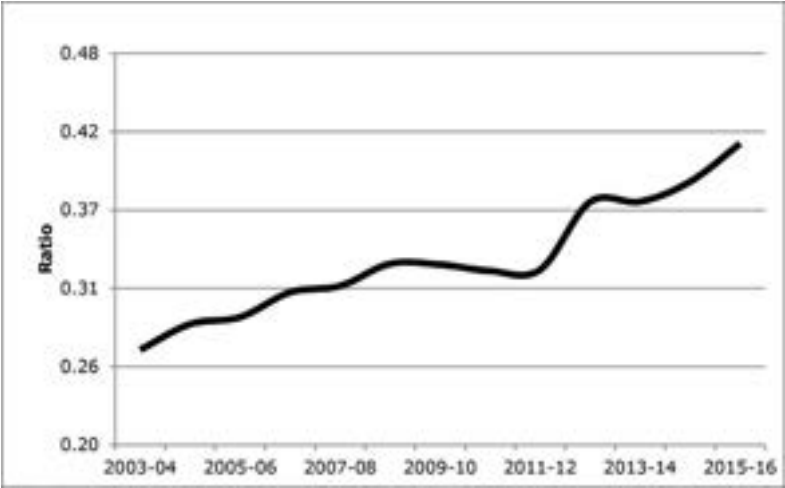
73. Based on data from the Higher Education Funding Council (later published by HESA); these apply to England rather than the UK.

**Table 8.9 – Number of entrants to full-time first degree programmes by ethnicity**

Year	White ethnic groups	Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups
2003/04	195 460	52 160
2004/05	196 565	55 995
2005/06	209 265	60 640
2006/07	196 995	60 515
2007/08	205 675	64 105
2008/09	219 020	71 670
2009/10	227 965	74 465
2010/11	229 940	74 085
2011/12	247 305	79 905
2012-13	213 210	79 040
2013-14	232 675	86 285
2014-15	237 725	91 505
2015-16	242 580	99 850

Source: Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), [www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/HEinEngland/students/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/HEinEngland/students/), accessed 4 April 2018. The data in the table were derived from the figure on this link which can be identified by hovering the pointer over each datapoint.

**Figure 8.5 – Ratio of BME entrants to white entrants**



Source: Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), available at [www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/HEinEngland/students/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/HEinEngland/students/), last accessed 9 December 2017. The data in the table were derived from the figure on this link which can be identified by hovering the pointer over each datapoint.

**Table 8.10 – Non-continuation rates for full-time first degree students by ethnicity**

Year	Black	Mixed/Other	Asian	White	Chinese
2008/09	11.5	9.2	8.5	6.9	6.2
2009/10	12.8	9.7	8.9	7.6	5.5
2010/11	11.1	8.6	8.2	6.6	5.4
2011/12	9.4	8.0	6.7	6.2	5.1
2012/13	11.0	8.6	6.6	6.4	4.6
2013/14	10.7	8.7	7.0	6.6	4.2
2014/15	10.3	8.8	7.2	6.9	4.0

Source: Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), available at [www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/HEinEngland/students/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/HEinEngland/students/), accessed 4 April 2018. The data in the table were derived from the figure on this link which can be identified by hovering the pointer over each datapoint.

**HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION**

The brief examination of the data considered show clearly that, as higher education has expanded in the UK over time, the participation of women, people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, people with disabilities and people from minority ethnic communities has also increased. In many cases the rate of increase has been higher than the “mainstream” comparator. That said, it is only in the case of women that this pattern of change has been consolidated to the extent that the older pattern has been reversed. That said, the improved levels of participation of women in higher education has not yet been matched by their position as employees in higher education: women are more likely than men to be employed in academic support and other roles in UK universities, and are more likely to work part time than full time. Furthermore, in regard to the support roles, women are predominantly found in administrative and clerical occupations.

Although there has been an improvement in participation rates over time, young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are still less likely to gain entry to university in the UK in comparison with their affluent peers, and find it particularly difficult to gain entry to the most selective universities. There is also some evidence that social background mediates the specific universities that students attend in that the institutions with a high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to have a low proportion of students who attended private fee-paying schools, and the reverse is also true. Students with disabilities are differentially distributed across subject areas, and appear more likely to be found in the arts, humanities and social science subjects, although I am not aware of any research which might explain why this is so. Students from minority ethnic communities have increased their level of higher education participation, but are also generally more likely than white (and Chinese) students to drop out of their course.

All this suggests that universities in the UK have undoubtedly become more inclusive and diverse, but it is hard to say they have become fully inclusive and diverse institutions. The reasons for the advances that have been made already are reasonably well known. They include measures to improve the pipeline of students from schools,

whether this was through the restructuring of systems which depended on academic selection and the assumption that only a limited proportion of young people were capable of engaging with academic subjects (Gallagher 2015), or the removal of gender stereotyping about occupational ambition and appropriate curriculum choice (Gallagher, McEwen and Knipe 1997). Another key factor lay in the development of models of inclusive education which sought to identify arbitrary barriers to the participation of particular groups of students and sought to remove these barriers (Ainscow 2016). Within universities one of the mechanisms used to overcome the legacy of discrimination was affirmative action measures to promote special access for under-represented groups (Bowen and Bok 2000), though it was learned that it was not enough to get minorities into universities: new practices also had to be put in place to address retention issues (Najor-Durack, Dumbrique and Mox 2001).

## **TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

Many of these measures emerged from a wider interest in equity policy as participation in higher education increased generally. More recently, they have been encompassed within the wider range of approaches used by engaged universities as they seek to build more constructive relationships with a more diverse range of communities. Goddard and Vallance (2013) outlined a number of approaches within this vein, including widening access programmes; community-based teaching programmes; the use of a variety of outreach measures, including the encouragement of staff and student volunteering; and the growth of applied research programmes that are based in and engaged with local communities. At the same time these social programmes usually sat alongside deeper and broader programmes with the more specific aim of using universities as part of an economic agenda for – usually urban – regeneration (*ibid.*). Goddard and Vallance contrasted the level of strategic commitment and investment in economic and regeneration activities with the much looser support for social programmes and offered four main reasons why this was so. First, the social programmes were not as wide-ranging or strong as those developed to support economic development. Second, the social programmes were often ad hoc and based on short-term funding streams. Third, it was often believed to be more difficult to embed the social programmes in the mainstream academic activities of the university, which added to their sense of peripherality. Finally, the social priorities and programmes were less well recognised, or supported, by government, in contrast to the strategic significance often attached to the economic and regeneration priorities. If these are accepted as givens then the social programmes of engaged universities might be accepted as inevitably peripheral.

An extensive review carried out for Newcastle University in England (PVC Engagement 2009) reminds us, however, that the role and purpose of universities has changed over time, as have the relationships between universities and their communities. Taking this idea forward the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) in the UK has focused on the evolving use of knowledge by universities as a marker of mission change (Wilson, Manners and Duncan 2014). Traditionally, knowledge was produced by and for the university, a practice which produced the popular image of the cloistered university, removed from the immediacies and concerns of day-to-day life. Later, there was recognition that some external communities could

make valuable use of some of the knowledge produced within universities and the era of knowledge partnership developed, often associated with university–business engagement for the commercialisation of knowledge. Later still, this evolved towards knowledge partnership, in which external communities were seen to hold some knowledge that was of value to the university, and partnerships provided a way of sharing these “knowledges” for the benefit of everyone. The next step in this evolving pattern involves knowledge co-creation, in which communities are not simply the recipient or the source of useful knowledge, but rather are full partners in collaborative work. Co-creation implies full collaborative engagement at every stage of the knowledge production process.

That this model of collaboration can be achieved is evident from the consequences of the “impact” agenda in UK higher education research. This originally arose as a consequence of government interest in measuring the value of public investment in higher education research, but it has provided a space where new methodologies for engaged research, involving collaboration and co-creation, have started to flourish (Brewer 2013). It can be seen also in the work of the Netter Center at the University of Pennsylvania where a model of community-based teaching has contributed significantly to a new collaborative relationship between the university and the city of Philadelphia, and focused attention on the role of higher education in promoting democratic culture and civic values (Benson et al. 2017).

If we step back and consider the wider strategic imperatives of policy on higher education since the middle of the last century, the first period reflected a post-war consensus that the state should actively engage in society to promote defined social goals, including the establishment of social safety nets through welfare, health and education systems to allow all to join, to some degree, in the benefits of economic growth. This consensus was demolished in the 1970s after the oil crisis discredited the idea of the interventionist state, to be replaced by an emerging neoliberal view that growth was best achieved through market competition and individual freedom, and that some measure of inequality was an acceptable price to pay. Following the global economic crash of the 2000s we are witnessing what appears to be the collapse of the neoliberal hegemony, with the rise of populist politics of the left and right, the casual dismissal of experts and expertise, and the rise of emotionally focused political discourse, aided by the echo-chamber of social media, which clusters like-minded people. This is a period in which some of the core tenets of democracy are under attack and the false gods of populism offer increasingly outlandish promises. This is also a time in which universities might take on a more engaged role in which their social, civic and democratic purpose moves from the periphery to the centre of their concerns. This could mark a Gramscian shift in which, as Benson et al. (ibid.) have argued, universities become one of the core anchor institutions of a democratic society. If universities can place civic and democratic commitments at the heart of their mission then the type of measures which currently sit at the periphery might become central to the purpose of higher education. Undoubtedly this would push forward the level of inclusion and diversity they achieve, but more importantly, it would provide a real opportunity for them to become fully inclusive and diverse institutions.

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## Chapter 9

# Academic freedom, freedom of expression and the role of university leadership

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*Andrew J. Deeks*

### INTRODUCTION

Leaders of universities often face calls from academics and students to express a “university view” on current issues of national or international concern. These same academics and students expect a university view to coincide with their own, which is often liberal,<sup>74</sup> tending towards the political left. These individuals often assume that the vast majority of members of the university community have views that coincide with their own (liberal) views. Failure of university leadership to speak out strongly is then gauged by them as weakness, or perhaps compliance with a government that holds the purse strings of the university. Conversely, sometimes university leadership is pressured by government to express a view on political issues which they see as aligned with issues of national integrity and security, but which may not align with the views of some members of the university community.

Student protests have been a feature of universities since the 1960s, together with poster campaigns on national and international issues, but are these legitimate forms of freedom of expression? Other practices that were not uncommon in Western universities in the 1960s, such as casual sexual encounters between faculty members and students, are no longer considered acceptable. So are protest marches and posters forms of expression that are still acceptable in a modern university environment?

In this chapter I will argue that while university leaders must protect academic freedom and freedom of expression, these freedoms come with the responsibility to express views in a collegiate way which permits and indeed encourages the expression of alternative views and academic debate founded on the principles of respect, openness, diversity and inclusion. Further, I will argue that for university leadership to yield to either internal or external pressure to express an institutional view on a political or social issue would be contrary to the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression, and would indeed be detrimental to the ambition of a university to provide a world-class environment of research, scholarship and learning.

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74. The term “liberal” here refers to classical and social liberalism, but not to economic liberalism.

## ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The concept of academic freedom is longstanding. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in their Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure (1940) produced what is perhaps the most generally accepted description capturing the limitations of academic freedom, stating that controversial views should not be introduced into the learning environment unless they are relevant to the subject matter under consideration, and when speaking or writing as a citizen “they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution”. This same need for accuracy, restraint and respect for the opinions of others also applies to interactions with students and other academics.

There is a widespread misunderstanding among academics that academic freedom entitles an academic to express any view they have on any topic with total freedom. For example, some academics perceive policies on dignity and respect within a university as limiting their academic freedom. In fact, such policies are designed to regulate the way opinions are expressed, and in particular the need for restraint and respect, and consequently comply with AAUP principles.

At the other extreme, in recent times the US has seen an increasing trend for academics to be requested “not to offend students’ sensibilities by introducing material that challenges their values and beliefs”, and for academics to provide “trigger warnings” allowing students to avoid classes or materials which may be traumatic to them (AAUP 2014). There is, as might be expected, quite vocal opposition by many academics (and indeed wider society) to such approaches, as traditionally many academics have seen part of their role as being to move students out of their comfort zone in order that they can understand and appreciate different perspectives and different points of view. The concept of safe spaces in universities, where members of a marginalised community can express views without danger of dissent, has also met similar criticism (for example Shulevitz 2015).

## ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EVIDENCE

One of the values of academic freedom lies in the understanding that conventional wisdom at any point in time is not necessarily the “truth” and that if individuals who express alternative views are victimised and excluded, the progress of society will be slowed, if not halted altogether. There are many examples of this, and here I will present just three.

For much of recorded history the Earth was considered to be the centre of the universe. The theory of heliocentrism, namely that all the planets in our solar system orbit the sun, was advanced by Copernicus (1543) shortly before his death in that same year. Galileo made a series of observations with his new and improved telescope which supported this theory, but this put him at variance with the majority of the scientific community of the time and with the Catholic Church, and after publishing a major work on the subject (Galilei 1632), he was tried by the Inquisition, forced to recant, and placed under house arrest for the rest of his life (Drake 1970). Nevertheless,

evidence and support for the theory grew, and Newton's great work on the principles of mechanics (Newton 1687) provided the mathematical underpinning which effectively ended the controversy in scientific circles, although the debate continued in religious circles for considerably longer.

In 1879, Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola and his daughter María discovered prehistoric rock paintings in the Altamira Cave in Spain, and he published their findings the next year (de Sautuola 1880). However, the combination of the quality of the paintings and the claimed age was at variance with contemporary understanding of the development of human capabilities, and the findings were rejected by the mainstream academic community, with Sanz de Sautuola even being accused of forgery. In 1902, after a number of other examples of similar prehistoric cave paintings had been discovered, the legitimacy of Sanz de Sautuola's discovery and analysis was finally accepted (albeit 14 years after his death), and a famous retraction was published by one of his severest critics (Cartailhac 1902).

A more recent example is that of Barry Marshall. In 1981, Marshall and Robin Warren noted a correlation between the presence of a previously unidentified spiral bacteria and gastritis (Nobel Media AB 2014). In 1982, they managed to culture the bacteria, now known as *Helicobacter pylori*, and developed a hypothesis that this bacteria led to chronic gastritis and gastric ulcers, conditions that at the time were believed to be caused by lifestyle factors such as stress. They also hypothesised that the conditions could be relieved through the use of antibiotics. Marshall and Warren had great difficulty in getting their work accepted for publication, as the weight of scientific opinion was strongly against them. Finally, in frustration, Barry Marshall drank a petri dish of the bacteria, developed a severe case of gastritis, and then showed that the condition was cured through a course of antibiotic treatment. The outcomes of this study were reported in 1985 (Marshall et al. 1985). Despite this evidence, it took almost another decade for this work to be fully accepted by the medical profession and for antibiotics to become a widespread (and successful) treatment for gastritis and gastric ulcers. In 2005, Marshall and Warren were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for the discovery.

Note that in each of these cases, despite initial scepticism and victimisation of the individuals expressing an unconventional view, in the end the weight of evidence won the day. In recent times others have used examples such as these to support the teaching of alternative views which are not supported by the weight of evidence, and which may even be contradicted by the weight of available evidence. Examples are the campaigns for the teaching of creationism or intelligent design in public schools in various US states which have taken place over the years and continuing opposition to the teaching of evolution in those schools (Webb 2015), and the Holocaust denial movement (Zimmerman 2000).

Consequently, if a university is to provide an environment in which knowledge and understanding can be advanced, both on a world scale and in the lives of individual students, the need for rational debate, critical thinking and the centrality of objective evidence must always be emphasised. Received wisdom should be both respected and questioned. For an experienced academic, many student questions and challenges are naïve, but these should be met with appropriate respect and understanding.

However, this does not mean that naïve views should be considered to be on the same level as informed views supported by available evidence. Views which can be countered by evidence should be countered, and every attempt should be made to change a view which is at variance with the weight of evidence.

Academic freedom should not be seen as a licence to argue for viewpoints which are contrary to available evidence, or which require “fantastic” explanations of that evidence. A common characteristic of advances in knowledge is that compared with existing theories they better explain available evidence. Belief that the Earth is flat persevered long after all available evidence supported the alternative theory that the Earth was spherical, and a Flat Earth Society exists to this day.<sup>75</sup> Belief in the effectiveness of homeopathic medicine perseveres to this day, despite the fact that all credible scientific evidence suggests that any effectiveness lies in the placebo effect. However, the theory that the Earth is flat and the idea that homeopathic medicine has similar effectiveness to modern medicine are generally not taught at reputable universities.

Consequently, world-class universities should expect that their academics confine themselves to discussing existing theories and to proposing new theories or ideas that provide better explanations for existing evidence, and should maintain the view that academic freedom does not give licence to resurrect or present theories that are clearly poorer explanations of available evidence, except as historical or social context. In endeavouring to advance a theory, a researcher should attempt to gather further evidence in support of that theory, and if the evidence does not support the theory, then they should modify the theory appropriately.

This approach provides us with a solid basis for determining the limits of academic freedom and freedom of expression with respect to the STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). The medical sciences are in a similar position with respect to evidence, although the underlying theories are often less developed.

## ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND VALUES

However, such a distinction is more difficult to make in the areas of the arts, humanities and social sciences, as these subjects have a much smaller evidence base, and scholarship often consists of the articulation of alternative views constructed on the basis of observations, values and opinions, rather than on underlying theories and evidence. Consequently the validity of alternative points of view is much harder to quantify, particularly with respect to social issues where values play an important role.

One fundamental underlying value judgment relating to social sciences and politics is the relative importance of the needs and wants of the individual in comparison to the importance of the needs and wants of society more broadly. From an economic perspective the political right sees the needs and wants of individuals as paramount, and could be characterised by the statement “from each according to how much he/she wants to contribute, to each according to how much they contribute” whereas

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75. See <https://theflatearthsociety.org/home>, accessed 28 March 2018.

the left sees the wants and needs of society as paramount, characterised as “from each according to her/his abilities, to each according to their needs”. The left sees an imperative to support the less fortunate in society, the right sees an imperative to ensure that everyone is able to reach their own potential and to benefit personally from their contributions to society. The evidence of history is that each approach has advantages and disadvantages, and that both are problematic in extreme form. However, in moderate forms there is no clear evidence of one approach being better than the other in terms of the overall well-being of society, and different individuals have different views as to which is better.

Nevertheless, many colleagues in the social sciences and humanities spend their careers arguing their views with as much if not greater fervour than colleagues in the STEM subjects, often without realising that the reason they cannot prevail in the same way that colleagues in those subjects can is that often the “best” approach depends on how one values various aspects of the well-being and success of individuals and society.

In such subjects, discussions need to value alternative viewpoints to a far greater extent than in the STEM subjects, and to use these different viewpoints to understand the variety of different value judgments that are being brought to bear on any given discussion. While a university is a place in which truth is sought, value judgments are not truth, and while a university provides a place to explore those different value judgments, making such judgments is not a role for the leadership of the university. Each individual within the university will have their own set of values, and these will vary considerably.

This raises a potential conundrum, however. Many universities have an articulated set of values to which the university community is expected to conform, and these values are often agreed on as a community. For example, the values of University College Dublin (UCD) are excellence, creativity, integrity, collegiality, engagement and diversity. To what extent does the expression of university values potentially cut across academic freedom?

To resolve this conundrum requires identifying political values that are concerned with the distribution of power, labour and wealth within a society, and values that are politically neutral, such as those stated in the preceding paragraph. However, even nominally neutral values may have political aspects. For example, “collegiality” could be defined as being willing to put the interests of the group at least at the same level as the interests of the individual. However, as understood in the university context, “collegiality” is applicable to behaviour within the university community, and should not be seen to represent a university view with wider implications as to how societal issues should be addressed.

Another value in the UCD set which has the potential to be seen to cut across academic freedom is diversity. However, most arguments against embracing diversity in all its forms are religious or nationalistic rather than academic. All academic disciplines can and should tolerate different points of view or schools of thought, providing that those views are evidence-based, and academic endeavour is often an attempt to advance the influence of one school over another. However, the precepts and beliefs of one religion as compared to another are of such a form that they can

never be proved or disproved. Generally, if one accepts the beliefs of one religion, these beliefs exclude the possibility of the beliefs of the other religion being true, and so diversity of belief is an antithesis to most religions. Consequently, although many faith-based universities still exist, a good portion of these function in the same manner as secular universities, which represent the majority of universities in the world. While some universities offer interfaith studies, these studies generally compare and contrast religious beliefs and practices, without endeavouring to prove or disprove the validity of one faith over another.

Racial and ethnic diversity are now commonplace in world-class universities, and evidence and experience overwhelmingly show that people of every race and ethnic group can succeed at university level, given appropriate preparation. Inequality in terms of opportunity to prepare for university studies and an academic career is, of course, an entirely different matter. From an academic point of view, valuing diversity in the university community should not be controversial.

However, equality as a value is more difficult to embrace in an academic community without further refinement. Often there is a tension between “equality of opportunity” and “equality of outcome”. While most people in a university community will embrace the concept “equality of opportunity”, in many cases achievement of “equality of outcome” requires violation of “equality of opportunity”. For example, a university could relatively easily match its student cohort profile to that of the general population in terms of standard measures of diversity, including gender, race, sexual orientation, religion and ethnic group, simply by defining a quota for entry of each group. This would obtain equality in terms of one particular outcome – the diversity of the student cohort. It would not provide equality of opportunity, because the entry scores or levels required for different groups would be different, and so given, for example, a male and female student with identical entry scores, one might be admitted and the other might not. The same approach could be taken to examinations, with different pass marks applied to different groups. This would lead to equality of outcomes in terms of the proportions of graduates, but not in terms of equality of opportunity for the students.

A similar approach could be taken to ensure that the profile of the faculty members matched that of the general community at each academic grade. However, this would not guarantee equality of opportunity for promotion in the sense that at an identical level of performance one individual might be promoted and another might not. Consequently “equality” is a difficult value for a university community to embrace, in contrast to a value like diversity.

Accepting that the values of a university should be politically neutral if they are to be acceptable to the bulk of the university community, and having embraced diversity as a value, a logical extension is that a university should permit a diversity of political views or values, as these views are one form of diversity.

The question as to whether diversity of core values (for example integrity, collegiality, diversity) should be permitted then becomes of interest. The heart of any community is a shared set of expectations in terms of the behaviour of members and the community. An individual who does not conform to these expectations will normally be excluded from the community or punished in some other way. The

values of a university encapsulate expectations of behaviour within the university community, and should align with the mission of the university. Consequently a university should be entitled to expect that members of the university community align their behaviour with its core values.

So in this case, could a university community decide to have a value which prescribed a particular political perspective or the embracing of a particular religion? Indeed there are universities that do just this. Some universities that have been set up with a religious foundation insist on compliance with their religion, or at least the values of that religion, while in some single party states there is a requirement for the universities to embrace the political views of that single party. For many subjects, particularly STEM and the health sciences, such an approach may have little impact on the quality of research and scholarship, unless the institution takes a fundamentalist approach. However, in subject areas dealing with political, social and cultural issues, such an approach can prevent high-quality scholarship, as certain paths of enquiry and thought are restricted. The level of impact on the research or teaching of any particular subject depends on the level to which the teachings of the religion are allowed to dictate the academic approach taken.

At this point I conclude that a world-class university should embrace values which are conducive to excellence in education and research, and which align with the expectations of the significant majority of academic colleagues, while embracing diversity in terms of political and religious views.

I also conclude that colleagues' political or religious views should only be expressed when relevant to the academic context, and expressed in a collegiate and respectful way that allows (respectful) challenge and expression of alternative views. In a teaching environment such colleagues should also acknowledge the existence of alternative views to their own.

## **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND STUDENTS**

What then should a university's expectations be of students with relation to freedom of expression and debate? Just as a student cannot be expected to exhibit all the expected graduate outcomes at the beginning of a programme, we should be expecting to develop in them a respect for diversity of opinion, and an understanding that sometimes there is no right or wrong answer, but a range of answers, and choosing between these answers depends on values. We also must teach them how to engage respectfully in mature discussion about difficult issues, and to use appropriate communication channels to convey their opinions to the right audience.

A difficult issue confronting universities is the tendency of student societies to invite individuals with extreme views to give talks on campus. Sometimes university leadership refuses such events due to the danger to public safety and/or university property, or finds other reasons to "disinvite" controversial speakers. Inevitably the students or individuals concerned criticise the university leadership for impinging on freedom of expression or academic freedom.

One solution to this conundrum is for a university to adopt a policy that speakers on campus must be appropriately knowledgeable in the area they are to speak about,

either through educational background or through working experience, and have a history of speaking in a way which conforms with the university's expectations of academics and students, namely embracing accuracy, showing restraint and respecting the opinion of others. For example, talks by ambassadors, ministers and other elected representatives about matters relevant to their portfolios should be acceptable and indeed encouraged, as should talks by industry leaders on their industry experience. All of these talks fall into the category of "sharing experience", which is helpful to the students' education.

However, talks by people seeking to convert students to a particular point of view should not be acceptable, as such talks do not show respect for the opinion of others. Many European universities do not allow political rallies on their campuses, and religious rallies/conventions/crusades are similarly unacceptable. The issue is much more fraught in the US, where freedom of assembly and freedom of speech rights are taken to limit the control a university can exercise in these matters, even over individuals who are not members of the university community.

Universities should encourage discussion of issues under current consideration by the government of the time, particularly those likely to be put to referendum, but should endeavour to ensure that both sides of the argument are given equal opportunity to speak in an atmosphere of respect where each side listens to and respects the view of the other side.

Matters put to referendum are often controversial, and may be based on values which are not political values. The marriage equality referendum in Ireland is one recent example, and a controversial referendum on abortion was held in May 2018. In both of these examples, rallies of students chanting slogans and posters pasted with slogans are disrespectful and alienating of students with a different point of view. While discussion of the merits of each case and the consequences, advantages and disadvantages of each possible outcome is reasonable within a university environment, such discussion should involve points of view from both sides and should endeavour to tease out the points of agreement and the points of contention, while respecting differences of opinion.

Student politics (in the sense of student-union leadership elections and the election of student representatives to governing bodies) should be encouraged, again provided that an atmosphere of respect is preserved.

## PROTESTS AND MARCHES

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, protests and marches have been part of the student experience since the 1960s, although their popularity has waxed and waned in different places and at different times. Some of these marches have been directed at university leadership over local issues, but more commonly they concern bigger national or international issues. These issues are often political, and the marchers take a side in the political debate. Banners with slogans are usually carried, and the marchers may also chant slogans. The marches are often preceded by the posting of posters around campus carrying political slogans.



The issue with such marches is that they make students with alternative views feel excluded, unwanted and less able to express their own views. These students may also feel unsafe.

Some argue that protests and marches are part of our political systems, and university marches are a way for students to enter into this aspect of democracy. However, it is important that students understand what message they are sending and to whom, in order for their political activities to have the effect they desire. Marches should be appropriately targeted and should be a last resort to engage those who have the power to make changes, undertaken only when all other attempts to resolve matters have failed. Marches and protests demonstrate to decision makers the depth of feeling a particular issue has aroused in the community.

Consequently the only marches which are reasonable on a university campus are those that relate to issues directly under the control of university management, such as student experience issues. Marches about national issues should be held outside national parliament buildings, and the location for marches about international issues should be thought through carefully. Protests at the European Union headquarters in Brussels or the United Nations in New York may be warranted if those are the appropriate decision-making bodies.

## QUESTIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

While the left/right or society/individual tension is a key unresolved and unresolvable political question, another political question is the size of the state (in the sense of the layers of government and the size of the independent state). There are advantages to being a big country, just as there are advantages to being a small country, as well as disadvantages for each. To try to take advantage of both big government and small government, multilevel government is often employed. Examples include many European countries entering a coalition (the EU) to obtain more of the advantages of big government, especially for small countries. The United Kingdom has seen devolution of government to regional assemblies (Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales) to obtain more of the advantages of smaller government. The USSR was a less democratic but highly effective (in some ways) approach to achieving the advantages of big government, but in its collapse also an example of the risks of big central government. The effective Irish independence movement and the creation of the Republic of Ireland was a move by the Irish towards the advantages of smaller government.

Questions of independence continue to be relevant to many regions, including Catalonia and Hong Kong. Scotland is a particular case in point, given the closeness of the recent independence referendum and the subsequent decision of the UK to leave the EU (and in the so-called Brexit referendum the UK was itself seeking more of the advantages of smaller government).

History has shown that independence is often won by a civil war or war of independence when the region seeking independence is adjacent to the country of which it is a part (and even sometimes when it is distant, as was the case for the USA), and more commonly by mutual agreement for regions further away (as in the case of Australia).

So what should be the role of universities in debates around independence? While it is often argued by the government of a united country that independence of a region is against the constitution and hence illegal (for example Catalonia, Hong Kong), in fact constitutions can be changed at the will of the people/government. Consequently the illegality of independence is not a sound reason not to discuss it. If there were compelling reasons for independence accepted on both sides, then the constitution could be changed. However, arguments for independence are often emotional rather than rational, as the Scottish independence campaign showed.

Consequently, issues of independence or coalition (for example entering or exiting the EU) should be matters of respectful and informed discussion in universities. To prohibit such discussion is both ill-advised and an assault on academic freedom and freedom of speech. Nevertheless, discussion of such matters should endeavour to look at the advantages and disadvantages of both possibilities and be conducted in an atmosphere of restraint and respect for alternative opinions. The posting of slogans and participation in rallies is not consistent with the reasoned discussion expected in universities.

## UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

Having considered the behaviour of academics and students, and the need for respectful and inclusive discussion around political and religious issues, I now consider the role of university leadership. Clearly one role of university leadership is to ensure that discussion on the university campus is inclusive, restrained and respectful, and that students and academics holding minority viewpoints are not victimised, bullied or discriminated against in any way.

The question of whether university leadership should take a particular point of view on political, social or religious issues is a difficult one. Where issues are questions of science and the evidence is overwhelming, university leadership has a clear obligation to make its view known. Where the scientific evidence is less clear and there are differing views among the relevant faculty members, the university also has an obligation to state this.

However, where the issues are political, unless they directly concern the university sector (for example in terms of funding or policy, including visa policies which may impact on the ability of universities to enrol an appropriately diverse student cohort or to recruit the best faculty members), then there will almost certainly be a variety of views within the university community. The expression of a university view on a political issue has the effect of disenfranchising any members of the university community who hold different views, discouraging them from expressing their views and alienating them from “the university”. Even if a university president is clear she or he is expressing a personal point of view rather than a university viewpoint, the power differential between the president and particularly junior faculty members will discourage the expression of alternative views.

A university president should think carefully about the potential impact of any statement they make before that statement is issued. This consideration should have two aspects. One aspect is what chance there is that the statement will be effective. For

example, I was asked to write to President Trump about his travel plans and to the Hungarian Prime Minister about the amendment of his country's higher education act, which threatened the future of the Central European University. Despite UCD being the biggest university on the island of Ireland, I doubt that any letter I sent to these individuals would have had any impact at all. The second aspect is the impact on those members of the university community who may have a different view. These members may feel alienated from the institution, and may be reluctant to state views contrary to that of university leadership.

However, where political debate involves the university or the university sector, members of the university community will generally expect the president to speak out on behalf of the university, endeavouring to get the best possible deal for the institution. If there are true political issues where there may be a variety of views in the university on the correct outcome (for example, how much of the burden of university funding should be borne by the student and how much by the state), then the president should make it clear she/he is providing a personal view of the best solution.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, freedom of expression and academic freedom require that no topic should be out of bounds for discussion at university, including ideas which to be implemented would require changing the constitution of a country or countries (for example independence). Ruling topics out of bounds for discussion at a university is both unenforceable and in fact generally a good way to ensure that such topics are discussed.

However, a university should be a place of restrained, respectful and informed discussion, where all points of view are considered carefully. Unless directed at university authorities with respect to a matter under the control of those authorities, and even then only after all other avenues of protest are exhausted, then protests or marches are unhelpful and are disrespectful of members of the university community holding differing views.

All campus debate should take place in an atmosphere of respect, where proponents of different views are given the opportunity to present these views. In such presentations they should refer to the evidence base wherever possible, acknowledge alternative points of view, and present coherent and rational arguments supporting their case or view. Personal attacks have no place in such debates.

Academics should conduct their classes in the same way. If they are addressing controversial topics and/or topics on which they have controversial views, they should acknowledge alternative views and ensure that students with different perspectives do not feel belittled or threatened, but that their views are a valuable contribution to the discussion.

Finally, university presidents should only comment on issues where there is a clear scientific view, scientific issues where there is a split view in the university (in which case both/all views should be expressed), or on issues directly affecting the university and/or the university sector. A university president is wise to refrain from commenting

on other political issues, but if she/he feels compelled to do so, should ensure that it is clear that the views expressed are personal views, not university views. And finally, a university president should exhibit the same restraint, accuracy and respect for difference of opinion expected of all members of the university community.

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## Part III

# **Refugees and immigrants in higher education – Opportunities and challenges**

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## Chapter 10

# Refugees in European higher education – Complex pathways in diversity

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*Gabriella Agrusti*

### INTRODUCTION

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “by the end of 2016, 65.6 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations”<sup>76</sup> all over the world. Of these, 22.5 million were refugees, that is, people fleeing conflict or persecution, whereas 10 million were stateless people, that is, deprived of any nationality.

The general notion of “refugee” is not always clear, as it is often confused with that of migration for economic purposes. This is particularly true in countries serving as the first ports of call for refugees in Europe, such as Italy, where the phenomenon of fugitives escaping across the Mediterranean Sea is almost a daily news feature. This confusion creates attitudes of rejection, not only in Italy but also in many other European countries. An effective reversal of positions is instead proposed by the Danish novelist Janne Teller in the opening of her “passport book”:

What if Great Britain were at war. Where would you go? If the bombs had torn most of London, most of Britain, to ruins? If the house that you and your family live in had holes in the walls, all the windows broken, the roof rent off?. (2016: 3)

Here the reader suddenly becomes an asylum seeker, with an unexpected change of perspective. This short story, produced in a little book in the format of a passport, was adapted to fit the cultural and historical context of each European country in which it was published.

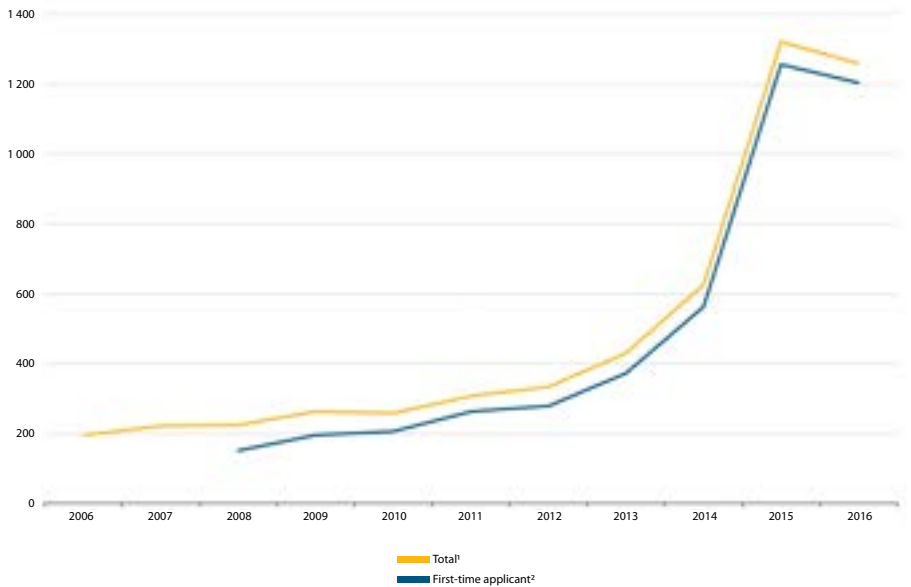
However, this transposition of self-beliefs and attitudes towards refugees is not frequent in narratives dealing with the massive phenomenon of migration that Europe has been facing in recent years. The media often shows different and conflicting views to tell the stories of men, women and children escaping from war and prosecution in growing numbers – a number that has been higher in the past few years than over

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76. See [www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html](http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html), accessed 25 June 2018.

the past few decades, with over 1 million first-time asylum applications submitted between 2015 and 2016 (Figure 10.1).

**Figure 10.1 – Asylum applications (non-EU) in EU-28 member states, 2006-16 (in thousands)**



1. 2006 and 2006: EU-27 and extra-EU-27.  
2. 2006 and 2007: not available.

Source: Eurostat, March 2017

Despite the variety of efforts in host countries to deal with issues linked to reception and integration, results are far from satisfactory, particularly when it comes to the provision of education opportunities at secondary and tertiary levels. The UNHCR summarises this debacle with a worrying set of decreasing percentages: only 50% of refugee children have access to primary school, 22% of refugee adolescents receive a secondary education and just 1% of youth refugees gain access to higher education.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, education provision for refugees is generally of low quality, with a teacher-student ratio of 1:70, and girls are at a particular disadvantage in accessing training (Dryden-Peterson 2011).

This chapter offers a general overview of the major issues connected to education provision for refugees, presenting the initiatives launched in Europe at different levels. Furthermore, it will illustrate the theoretical premises and the main results of the European research project Advenus, Developing On-line Training Resources for Adult Refugees,<sup>78</sup> carried out with young adult refugees in Italy, Norway, Portugal and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” in 2016-17, as it offers operative insights arising from direct experiences in the field.

77. See [www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cda.html](http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cda.html), accessed 29 March 2018.  
78. See [www.advenus.net](http://www.advenus.net), accessed 29 March 2018.



## CONTRASTING NARRATIVES

At the beginning of 2016, policy-related research analysis developed by the International Monetary Fund stated unequivocally: “The dislocation of large parts of the population in Syria and other conflict zones is, first and foremost, a humanitarian catastrophe with important ramifications across many countries in the Middle East, Europe, and beyond” (Aiyar et al. 2016: 4). Further, in the same report, the effects of migration are considered in detail, together with its economic implications in the short term, namely a modest increase in GDP growth and expansion of labour supply, emphasising how the long-term impact will depend entirely on the possibility of integrating refugees in the labour market, particularly low-skilled workers. This is why active labour market policies targeting refugees, together with the reduction of restrictions on their geographical mobility and an improved system for recognising skills and qualifications, could be key to successful integration.

However, figures can be strongly questioned, and indeed they are, as they represent the most effective part of the narrative about migration and the movement of people. So the perception that there are over a million asylum seekers can produce counterproductive effects such as the restoration of internal border controls among EU countries and the limiting of freedom of movement in the Schengen Area, despite the 2016 figure being slightly lower than it was in 2015 and representing less than 0.3% of the 511.8 million inhabitants of the EU-28.

“Those who are too sensitive are asked not to read further”, says a recent Italian newspaper article (Verga 2017), emphasising that Italy will spend 4.6 billion euros on migrants and refugees in 2017. This is of course fuel to a fire that could burn all the efforts made to build co-existence and mutual understanding. And this kind of interpretation is the reason why, to the layperson, refugees still have to “explain” their conditions, their perilous journeys and the fact that they are not dangerous individuals, but actually human beings in extreme danger.

Nevertheless, consistent examples of good disposition towards these “Others” can be found. Recently released data from the 2016 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) – a study on civic and citizenship education for 13-year-old students in 24 countries promoted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement – are instructive. For European countries participating in the study they show a wide, positive acceptance of immigrant children accessing education (93%), with a lower but still large consensus on the opportunity for them to continue speaking their own language (68%). Furthermore, it has to be noted that on average, no strong difference was recorded in most of the participating European countries from the previous ICCS cycle, 2009, even if there is some variation across countries (Losito et al. 2017).

In order to envisage the possible role of universities in this complex and conflicting framework, it can be useful to remember briefly their origins, examining how their natural tendencies towards an international outlook can represent added value for multiculturalism and the development of effective educational proposals.

## AT THE ROOTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

It is widely recognised that the first appearance of universities in Europe as higher education institutions was in the 11th century, and that they were located in Bologna and Paris. Contrary to a straightforward and simplistic interpretation, however, the notion of *universitas*, the Latin word for “university”, was not directly linked to an ambition to teach the whole range of human knowledge, as from the very beginning universities were markedly specialised. For instance, Bologna University was focused on law and Salerno on medicine. The idea of the “universality” of higher education refers in fact to the corporations, namely organised groups of people. In the beginning these were, to be precise, student corporations. Later, they became also an abbreviation for *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, literally a “community of masters and scholars”. It is worth remembering that only a century later “nations” of students appeared in formal documents, as students organised themselves in groups that varied in age, cultural level, and of course place of origin. This kind of organisation, largely based on geographical origins, was made not only for cultural or identity reasons, but also mainly because students needed some kind of social security and protection, as they were often exploited by local landlords who overcharged them if they were foreigners (Bowen 1975).

The idea behind the university was that of offering knowledge to a varied group of students who needed to be hosted in a foreign community. The counterpart to the student groups was the “faculty”, which originally meant strength, the capacity to do something and act for change. These two elements, descending directly from the origins of universities, are deeply inspiring when considering the new challenges Europe faces with respect to the capacity of the higher education system to include foreign students escaping from war and persecution.

Thus, universities were born before nation states in Europe, and from the very beginning they were places where diversity was a tangible value. In this framework, past and present, they embody the best context for discussing possible conceptualisations of citizenships and promoting actual equity in opportunities to learn, and, therefore, social sustainability (Lenette 2016).

## HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES: EUROPEAN INITIATIVES

Many initiatives are flourishing in European countries with a view to helping refugees meet basic needs and easing their social integration. We will try to briefly present some of them here that, at different levels, are related to higher education.

### Online Linguistic Support for Refugees

Online Linguistic Support (OLS) for Refugees<sup>79</sup> offers online language courses in 18 languages to higher education students, vocational education and training learners, and young refugees in the Erasmus+ programme. Established with the support of the European Commission, this service was extended to benefit around

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79. See <https://erasmusplusols.eu/ols4refugees>, accessed 29 March 2018.

100 000 refugees over three years, on a voluntary basis and free of charge. As any distance learning activity, the OLS can be used at any time from a computer, tablet or smartphone with an internet connection, and provides a variety of self-learning materials and actual live tutoring support.

### **inHERE<sup>80</sup>**

This Erasmus+ project, Higher Education Supporting Refugees in Europe, aims to collect and analyse good practices of higher education approaches and initiatives in a wide range of urgent situations, focusing on refugees and displaced students, in order to facilitate the identification of successful patterns of integration, communication and institutional support within and outside the university. At the same time, inHERE intends to provide relevant orientation and training for university staff through a set of formal recommendations to higher education institutions and policy makers on the effective strategies for integration of refugees in the European Higher Education Area.

### **Science4Refugees<sup>81</sup>**

This initiative, born within the EURAXESS framework, provides refugees having research qualifications with internships, part-time and full-time jobs, in order to facilitate their access to the European research community. The portal also offers an opportunity for networking with possible research partners within Europe.

### **Refugees Welcome Map<sup>82</sup>**

Organised by the European University Association, this campaign aims to map, showcase and document the commitment of higher education institutions in supporting refugees.

Other projects, still in progress, focus more on the academic aspects of the social inclusion of refugees.

### **RESCUE – Refugees Education Support in MENA Countries<sup>83</sup>**

Carried out by a group of universities in the Mediterranean area, RESCUE aims to set up a permanent observatory on refugee crises in relation to higher education and provide refugees with useful instruments for integration and social inclusion. The innovative aspect is in promoting a co-ordination system among all actors involved in the region in order to avoid fragmentation and duplication or the application of national approaches.

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80. See [www.inhereproject.eu/homepage](http://www.inhereproject.eu/homepage), accessed 29 March 2018.

81. See <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/science4refugees>, accessed 29 March 2018.

82. See <http://refugeeswelcomemap.eua.be/Editor/Visualizer/Index/34>, accessed 29 March 2018.

83. See [www.rescuerefugees.eu](http://www.rescuerefugees.eu), accessed 29 March 2018.

## **S.U.C.RE – Supporting University Community pathways for REFugees-migrants<sup>84</sup>**

The Sucre project aims to investigate the response of universities to the academic needs of immigrant/refugee students and will provide a repository of best practices, based on the development of training modules for volunteers. It proposes to analyse how higher education can work with local communities to facilitate tertiary pathways for refugee students and scholars.

## **MOONLITE – Learning, support and certification without frontiers<sup>85</sup>**

Based on the idea that massive open online courses (MOOCs) can positively influence the integration process (Jansen and Konings 2017) as they allow refugees to follow a personalised learning path, particularly with regard to learning pace, this project supports broader use of distance education to facilitate access to higher education institutions. MOONLITE proposes MOOCs to support and supplement face-to-face language courses, as they are the most requested by refugees, as well as a set of possible scenarios towards formal recognition of MOOCs at higher education level.

Useful practices include primarily, but not exclusively, the possibility to find accommodation, support basic needs, nominate a contact person, and so on. Along these lines, it would be possible to mention several other initiatives in Europe that differ in their aims and mode of implementation, but all these initiatives rely heavily on the use of the internet for communication, with laptops rather than smartphones. The pervasive use of technology is proposed as an implicit and always useful and adequate innovation. However, the quantity and quality of this innovation, with respect to learning achievements, remains to be proven. In fact, more than 25 million people enrolled in a MOOC from 2012 to 2015, nearly 40% of them from developing countries, but retention or completion rates are not so encouraging and seem to reflect discrimination against specific groups (Kizilcec et al. 2015), such as learners from less developed countries. Low levels of education and an unbalanced or asymmetrical relationship between the education provider and the learner can jeopardise learning achievements in terms of working memory and performance impairment, resulting in low self-efficacy levels.

Several investigations have been conducted to verify possible social identity threats (fear of being less capable because of one's group) during courses, but more research is needed to understand which elements in a course promote or prevent learning and more specifically, what happens during the e-learning experience with weaker groups of learners, such as those who lack basic e-skills (Damiani and Agrusti 2015). In short, more research is needed on how to evaluate the adequacy of an e-learning course for refugees. In order to better appreciate the impact of these initiatives, it is then crucial to identify the major obstacles to an effective e-learning experience. What follows is a presentation of a European project on these themes, carried out within universities and by universities to envisage possible constraints and strengths in the use of technology with the specific target group of refugees and asylum seekers.

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84. See <http://sucre.auth.gr>, accessed 29 March 2018.

85. See <https://moonliteproject.eu>, accessed 29 March 2018.

## THE ADVENUS PROJECT

Funded by the European Commission, Advenus – Developing On-line Training Resources for Adult Refugees – is aimed at improving and extending the offer of high-quality, culturally sensitive, open-access e-learning resources to adult refugees aged 18-40 years and their trainers and teachers in EU countries (Agrusti and Dobson 2017). The innovation lay in adapting existing resources to the actual needs of refugees, and for this reason the Advenus project was a follow-up to the project Supporting Lifelong Learning with Inquiry-based Education (LIBE),<sup>86</sup> which focused on developing transversal skills in young low achievers aged 16-24 in Europe. The international project consortium was led by Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, and included LUMSA University (Italy), the University of Porto (Portugal) and the Community Development Institute (CDI, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”).

In order to adapt available learning resources to the needs of refugees, a needs analysis was initially carried out with educators, teachers and cultural mediators in the different countries where the trials would take place (Damiani and Agrusti 2017). The constraints of the project implementation soon became clear:

- ▶ two-tier cultural diversity (firstly, between the four countries participating in the project, secondly, within each country, according to the different nationalities and cultural backgrounds of refugees);
- ▶ language barriers (most refugees knew little or nothing of the language of the host country);
- ▶ digital barriers, usually paired with a language barrier and a low level of education.

Technology was not the exclusive focus of the evaluation for Advenus courses. If the main idea is that of involving refugees in a learning path, useful for their employability and aimed at improving their life in the host country, one important measure of success is their willingness to repeat the experience, using similar courses or different opportunities available online for self-improvement.

The five Advenus courses offered had diverse themes, ranging from employability (how to write a CV) to basic numeracy skills (private economy and dealing with money), to e-skills (using the internet to find a job and to learn) or daily life-oriented topics, linked to cultural background (food, lifestyle habits). Of course these themes were not neutral and needed to be considered from a totally different perspective in order to be useful for the target group.<sup>87</sup>

For instance, in the learning unit on CVs, aimed at improving reading comprehension skills and writing organisational skills linked to the preparation of CVs, lessons were structured as follows:

- ▶ job titles:
  - what is the name of the job the (imaginary) person does?;
  - the names of tools needed for a given job;
  - to whom do these tools belong?;

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86. See <http://bit.ly/2HXuhgO>, accessed 29 March 2018.

87. Advenus courses are available at <http://edu.advenus.net>, accessed 29 March 2018.

- ▶ the CV:
  - what should you write in a CV?;
- ▶ let's have a look at a CV:
  - which information goes where?;
  - include missing information in a CV;
  - the cover letter;
  - find the correct order;
- ▶ job advertisements:
  - who is this job ad looking for?;
  - modifying your CV in relation to a job ad;
  - matching the skills to the right job.

In the learning unit on using the internet to find a job and to learn, aimed at developing key information processing skills in technologically rich environments, the lessons included:

- ▶ let's start up the (search) engine!:
  - search engines and the browser;
  - find the address;
  - search and you will find;
- ▶ when words matter:
  - let's read a job ad (with help of online dictionaries);
  - what does this word mean?;
  - send a CV by e-mail;
- ▶ free online courses:
  - learn for free.

The common structure of the courses included a short motivational video, a set of four or more “lessons” related to the broader topic of the course, followed by one or more activities (quizzes, true/false statements, ordering items, matching). The activities related to the e-skills included the need to navigate the internet (to use a search engine or to look up the meaning of a word in an online dictionary). Figure 10.2 illustrates an example of an activity proposed at the beginning of the lesson on CVs.

**Figure 10.2 – Example of activity proposed in the Advenus courses for lexicon**



Source: Advenus 2017

Promoting linguistic skills in the host country language was probably the main priority in the framework of Advenus learning outcomes, and the idea was that of building a new lexicon on pre-existing knowledge, in topics and concept areas not entirely new to the learners (i.e. based on daily experience and immediately useful lexical encyclopaedias).

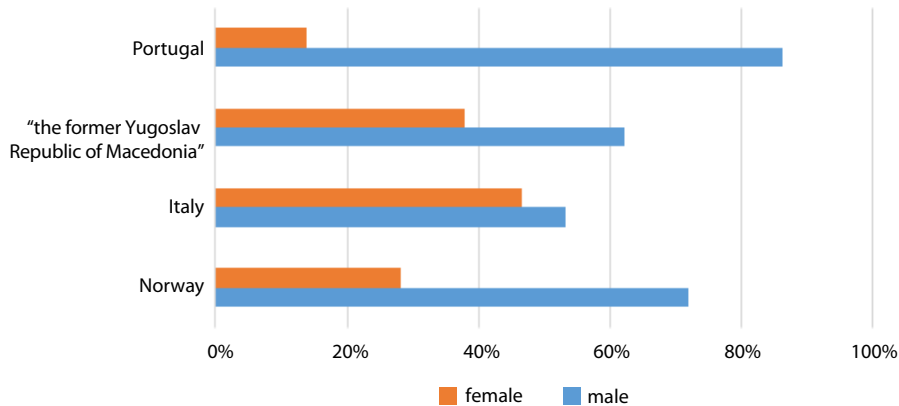
After several rounds of progressive revision, based on the feedback received during initial focus groups with experts and cultural mediators, courses were validated on a voluntary non-probabilistic sample of 267 refugees and asylum seekers in Norway, Italy, Portugal and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Given the specific setting and target group, together with the more common learning analytical data deriving from e-learning platform use and observation in a blended learning setting, the Advenus team introduced the “small-talk interview” that, in contrast to a more structured interview, allowed interviewers to collect information during a casual conversation between the teacher and the learner on different variables. Small talk proved to be a good informal way to enrich observation and learning analytics outcomes (Agrusti and Dobson 2017).

### Insights from an experience in the field

It is commonly believed that refugees are an unidentified group of people with marked recurrent features. The first and most important result from the Advenus trials, carried out in both transit and first-asylum countries (Dryden-Peterson 2016), such as Italy and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, and destination countries such as Norway and Portugal, refers instead to the high variation in refugees’ background features. As has already been mentioned, the Advenus project considered a convenient non-probabilistic sample. However, the information provided can be useful, as it is directly related to e-learning activity trials, and offers a unique perspective on them.

Participants were predominantly males, even if variably distributed in the four countries (Figure 10.3). The average age differed between countries: above 30 in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (32) and Portugal (31), and below 30 in Norway (28) and Italy (26).

**Figure 10.3 – Participant gender (N=267)**

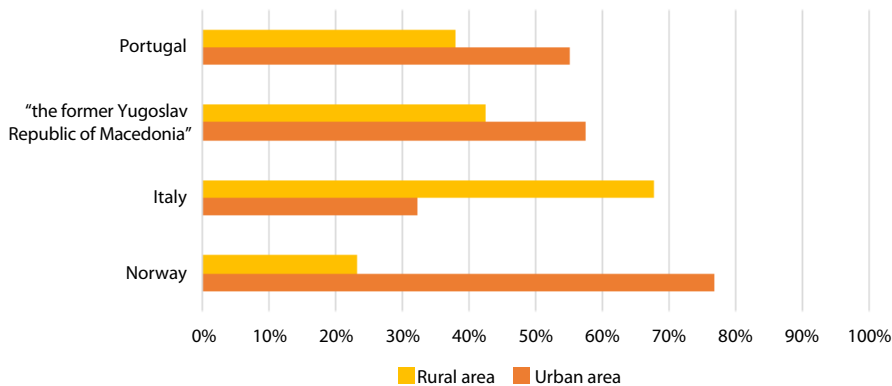


Source: Advenus 2017

The number of nationalities hosted ranged from 17 in Portugal, 16 in Italy, 13 in Norway, to just 4 in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. A predominance of Syrian and Afghan refugees at a general level confirmed data on world migration flows,<sup>88</sup> but nationalities were distributed variably across hosting countries. For example in Italy the majority of refugees come from Nigeria, contrasting with “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, which has a majority of Syrians. Together with nationality, the languages spoken also varied widely, both in relation to mother tongues and the knowledge of the language of the host country.

Information on education levels and experiences of formal schooling was also crucial to adapt courses to the needs of learners. However, it was difficult to obtain comparable data across countries. It is worth mentioning that in Italy there was a predominance of illiterate refugees compared to the other hosting countries. This of course had a considerable impact on the perception of the courses and on test results. Differences in urban and rural origin were also marked – Italy, for example, had more rural refugees while Norway hosted more urban refugees (Figure 10.4).

**Figure 10.4 – Urban/rural background (N=267)**



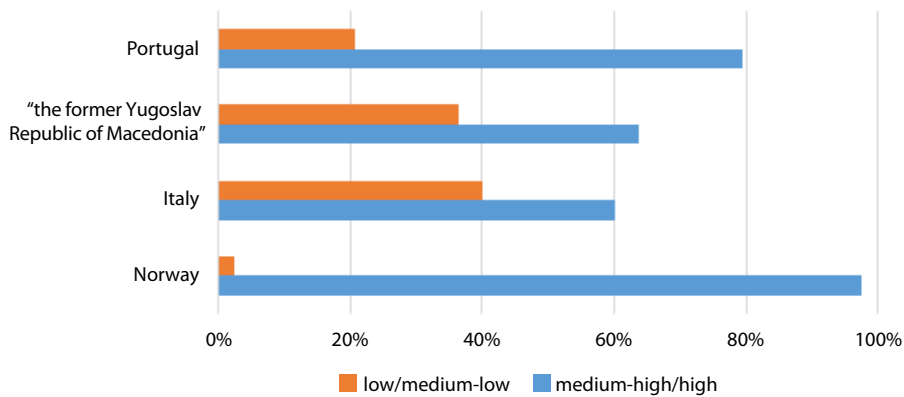
Source: Advenus 2017

One of the most evident issues was linked to e-skills, in terms of the variation in participants’ familiarity with technology (Figure 10.5). Social desirability, namely reticence in expressing actual opinions and beliefs in order to be better valued and considered, was high in the learners’ initial self-assessment, and this is why the answers presented here cannot be considered a fully reliable measure of the participants’ actual skill levels. However, the information collected through the small-talk interviews were integrated with observations during the trials sessions. Those from remote rural areas (predominant, for example, in Italy) scored lower even with simple operations, even if interest and motivation to learn were generally high.

88. See <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview>, accessed 29 March 2018.



**Figure 10.5 – Familiarity with technology (N=267)**



Source: Advenus 2017

This, but also a lack of knowledge of the language of the host country, were the main reasons for requests for supporting interventions to students during trials. The use of automated internet translator software was helpful in most cases in Portugal, but not in Italy, where the purpose of some of the activities was not entirely clear to participants. Consequently, one should also consider that a complete “distance learning solution” will have to be discarded for future initiatives, as support interventions were unavoidable in specific countries.

Other than this, on a conceptual level, the trials can contribute to meeting the actual levels and needs of the learners through the knowledge gained about their main characteristics (country of origin, hosting country, education/qualifications, e-skills level, motivation and interests). Without entering here into the details of the results of the trials, it is worth mentioning that at a general level participants demonstrated curiosity towards the activities proposed, and willingness to repeat the experience after the trials on their own. A lot of attention was devoted also to new words, particularly those linked to the employment sector, showing encouraging results in this direction.

The topics selected were appreciated and motivating for their immediate relevance in understanding the hosting community. The opportunity to involve and motivate learners, beyond the activities proposed in an e-learning environment, was an effective model to pursue (Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner 2007). The key to involvement was the possibility of modulating learning paths according to learners’ needs, levels and above all, preferences and interests, without losing the support of an educator. Even if in a blended and highly structured educational project, as Advenus was, the first and primary step is to start from the learners’ interests. What then follows is the possibility, through learning, to “make and remake” the idea each learner has of him/herself, taking responsibility for the knowledge and skills achieved and still to be achieved (Freire 2004).

## A LONG WAY FORWARD: THE REGAP PROJECT

Following on from Advenus, ReGap – Reducing the Educational Gap for migrants and refugees in EU countries with highly relevant e-learning resources offering strong social belonging – was funded by the Erasmus+ programme.<sup>89</sup> This project has the same objective of fostering equity and inclusion by addressing cultural differences faced by refugee adult learners. Given the intertwined and complex diversity that any educational intervention has to face in this field, further culturally sensitive resources will be developed to offer a tailored proposal that can fulfil learners' needs and facilitate their resettlement and well-being.

Even if the main idea is that of assisting adult refugees in the EU who face significant challenges in adapting to their new countries, the predominant perspective should be that of the learner, in order to pursue effective inclusion in a multicultural perspective. In a constructivist approach, the e-learning resources created for this target group could represent a starting point for further work with cultural mediators and educators.

## CONCLUSION

Future developments, based on old ideas, should start by providing, first of all, safe living conditions for refugees, courses in the language of the host country and, in some contexts, literacy and digital literacy courses. These three pillars can constitute the basis for any further learning, for forming Freire's "consciousness" (ibid.), and for achieving positive integration at any level, including in higher education.

Probably, coming back to the origins of universities, they should be thought of as places built on the concept of a common *humanitas* that allows us to find collective territories of dialogue and sharing, even in extreme diversity. Universities are communities made by students and for students; thus, tackling differences and creating a common culture represents an opportunity of growth for all.

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## Chapter 11

# Refugees, immigrants and migrants in higher education – The perspective of an open-access institution

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Brian Murphy

*Sabina came to De Anza College as a refugee from Bosnia, via Sweden, a survivor of Bosnia's brutal civil war. She spoke five languages, studied philosophy and politics, and applied to transfer to Yale University — using as her application essay a comic graphic novel of her migration. "Do you think they will understand it?" she asked. In the last panel of the comic her grandmother asks, "What's a Yale?"*

### CONTEXT MATTERS

The policy issues and practical actions of higher education regarding refugees and immigrants vary enormously across the globe. The differences between countries with relatively few refugees or immigrants and those with very large immigrant communities (or histories of immigration) are significant, and the lessons learned in any one context have to be tempered by an appreciation of those differences. That said, there might be lessons to be learned from those of us for whom serving immigrant communities has long defined our work.<sup>90</sup>

In the United States, there is a rich history of open-access institutions serving recent immigrants and refugees, despite the country's recent anti-immigration rhetoric and policies. These institutions have developed organisational, cultural and policy frameworks that challenge the dominant themes and practices of both American and European universities, and whose "model" would demand a significant reorientation of institutions wishing to serve recent arrivals in anything other than marginal ways.

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90. By 2016, immigrants and their US-born children numbered 84.3 million, or 27% of the total US population. More critically, the non-European origin population of the United States – immigrant, indigenous or originally stolen through slavery – is now projected to become the majority population in the United States by 2042. In some states that transition has already occurred. California is an example: there is now no one ethnic majority there. At the same time, 52% of school-age children in California are Latino, and the most rapidly growing shares of the Californian population are Latino and Asian (of multiple origins).

The two dominant models of educational service to refugees and immigrants in the United States are the adult schools, usually managed through the K-12<sup>91</sup> or primary education systems, and community colleges. These two sets of public institutions are joined by a vast network of community-based non-profit (or non-governmental) organisations whose work is critical to the integration and inclusion of immigrant and refugee communities.

This chapter will explore only the American community colleges, as they are themselves modelled on universities, and serve as the most direct conduit to university (which the adult schools do not). Further, it will explore this community college work from the ground up, so to speak, from the perspective of a public two-year community college in California.

There are over 1 400 two-year community colleges in the United States, enrolling almost 13 000 000 undergraduate students. That is roughly half of all undergraduate enrolment in the country, all of it concentrated in the first two years of baccalaureate (first degree) instruction, or career and vocational programmes of various durations. In addition, and critically, these colleges offer an enormous range of pre-college-level instruction for those who arrive at our doors lacking college or university-level mathematics or language skills.

This latter element is critical for any understanding of how our institutions engage immigrant or refugee students, most of whom do not arrive with college-ready skills. These students are not alone, however, as a majority of native-born community college students in the United States are also unprepared for college-level instruction.

De Anza College is a public two-year community college in Cupertino, California, serving the greater San Jose and Silicon Valley communities.<sup>92</sup> We offer 66 Associate Degree (two-year) programmes, also eligible for transfer to university, and 85 Certificate programmes in a wide variety of career and technical areas. The college is regularly ranked among the best three or four community colleges in California and is first in its transfer of students to the University of California.

Our enrolment of 21 500 students is among the most diverse of any college in the United States, and mirrors the emerging majority demographics of California.<sup>93</sup> Over 70% of our students are the ethnic and racial “minorities” who now constitute the majority of California residents: Latino (mostly of Mexican origin); Chinese American; Vietnamese American; Filipino American; Korean American; Indo-American and African American. They join a wide diversity of “white” students who are themselves diverse with regard to ethnic and linguistic background.

While precise numbers are hard to get, over half our students are from immigrant families, and many are the first in their families to attend college. Students apply to and are accepted to the school whatever their background. The law in California

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91. Kindergarten through secondary school.

92. See [www.deanza.edu](http://www.deanza.edu), accessed 29 March 2018.

93. De Anza College is one of 114 public community colleges in California. The aggregate enrolment of the California community colleges is over 2.4 million students, representing over 18% of community college enrolment in the United States.

says that any student “capable of benefiting from instruction” is welcome, and while we do have required levels of basic English language competence, we do not turn students away for reason of their lack of college preparation.

The result is that roughly 85% of our students lack college-level mathematics or English compositional skills when they come to us. They are immigrant, working class, poor, often from the least funded secondary schools and the most marginalised communities. Or, they are very recent arrivals in the country with little “domestic” education background.

How we work with these students provides a model for how higher education might engage refugee and immigrant students, or all students from poor and marginalised backgrounds.

## INVERT THE PARADIGM

If 85% of our students come to us lacking college-level skills, 72% of them come with fluency in at least two languages. They are smart, resourceful, adept at navigating through the indignities of American racism, the paucity of public services, and the inequalities that surround – but do not define – their lives.

The dominant education paradigm sees these students through the lens of their deficits (the so-called “deficit model”), and the dominant approach to them is one of “service” and aid. Seemingly benign in itself, this orientation fails to engage our students with their skills and competences, and misses an active pedagogy which can accelerate their way through their educational pathways.

The deficit model mirrors the dominant culture of status in American higher education, a culture familiar to our European colleagues. Status in American higher education is defined by the perceived quality of the students an institution rejects. Yale, Harvard and Stanford are thus ranked higher than others in this model because of their “selectivity”, or the number of prospective students with excellent grades and test scores who are rejected. In this scheme, the community colleges have the lowest status because we accept the top 100%.

But accepting everyone is a hollow promise unless we are prepared to offer the courses, and develop the pedagogy, that offers a real chance for low-income students, including immigrants and refugees without traditional “qualifications”, to bring themselves through the curriculum into college-level courses and transfer to university.

And developing those programmes and processes itself takes a fundamental reorientation of college faculty members and staff away from many of the presumptions of our own education – particularly graduate education that prepares us for command over a discipline but may do nothing to prepare us for engaging first-generation students. The skills and capacities of these students may not have been among those celebrated in our own education.

Any institution which wishes to serve communities of newcomers to a country, be they refugees or immigrants, will face this fundamental question of culture and commitment: do we define ourselves through the lens of education status, where we yearn to teach the already privileged, or do we seek the challenge of teaching

and engaging students on a much longer path through their marginalisation and into their own agency and success?

There are four dimensions of this commitment worth mentioning, with the caveat that the organisational details, budget strategies and administrative structures are each worth elaboration beyond the scope of this chapter.

## Community collaborations

If “access” means or implies the passive willingness to accept those who make their way to us, it is meaningless. Recent immigrants – and low-income students in general – have limited knowledge about the educational system and are the least informed about what going to college or university entails. We cannot serve immigrant or refugee communities without a close and effective relationship with community-based organisations that work with and in those communities.

The college must see itself as one among many organisations – both public and non-governmental – serving low-income and immigrant communities. At De Anza College, we have collaborative working agreements with our region’s network of public secondary schools (and adult schools), whose enrolment is disproportionately low-income and immigrant, and with a broader network of non-profit and community-based institutions serving our local communities. We define “access” as engagement and recruitment with these communities, seeking to bring “college” to the students before we bring the students to the college.

What does this mean in practice? We work on site in 50 local schools, offering skills assessment and placement services, enrolment and financial aid information and registration, workshops on disability services, and other student support systems. We bring secondary level students to our campus for workshops on political and social activism; we bring our already enrolled students to the secondary schools to talk with their peers about college. We offer “outreach training” to dozens of our own students, and they become the college’s front line of recruitment.

Our goal is to demystify college, and intentionally blur the boundaries that separate the college from its sister institutions. As a practical matter, over 1 000 students are assessed and enrolled in college courses for the next term before they even leave their secondary schools. In some cases, we offer college courses on the secondary school sites, and students are “dual enrolled” in both secondary and college institutions.

Beyond the local schools, we work with community-based non-profits whose focus is on immigrant communities. When De Anza College helped relocate a contingent of refugees from Sudan (the so-called “lost boys of Sudan”, whom we found to be anything but lost), we worked with Catholic charities and local service clubs (like Rotary) to find housing and employment opportunities. While the college does not itself offer housing, we can work with agencies that facilitate housing. Similarly, we work with refugee relocation agencies, immigrant rights groups, and social service agencies in an effort to bring men and women into the college.

In addition, we have longstanding relationships with local non-profit literacy agencies that offer basic English instruction below the levels of English we might offer.



Our own English-as-a-second-language programme then works with these same students once they have matriculated into the college. Our faculty members assess the language levels of all incoming students to ensure proper placement in appropriate language courses. This is a significant commitment of time and resources to get the placements right.

Once students are enrolled, we continue to foster community-based collaborations and provide our own services where we can. Our student government leadership proposed a fee increase for all students to cover the costs of local bus and transit services for low-income students – and passed the initiative with a plurality of 89%. Now students ride local transit for free. We have a food pantry on campus providing free food for students who need it, and students enrolled in our automotive technology programme run food drives for the local non-profit community services centre (indeed, half of all the food donated to the local centre comes from the efforts of De Anza automotive technology students).

And when emergencies affect our students and their families, we bring community resources to campus. When Donald Trump was elected and fear swept across communities with large numbers of undocumented persons, we brought non-profit legal services to campus to provide counselling and legal consultation. When a hurricane devastated Puerto Rico, we developed collaborative working arrangements with local Latino non-profits so that our students, faculty members and staff could contribute to the island's recovery.

In this and other ways we make “access” an active process of engagement, and going to college (and through us to university) a greater possibility for low-income and immigrant students. Further, we are communicating something about our identity: we are not distant, remote, hard to reach or get into. If we are a “community” college, we have to make that matter in the actual community.

## Curricular diversity

American community colleges serve multiple ends, and our curriculum reflects this multiplicity of goals. On the one hand, we offer trade and technical education leading to certification in various trades. At De Anza College, this means entire programmes structured with reference to industry standards – in nursing, medical laboratory technology, accounting, computer-assisted design and manufacturing, as examples. On the other hand, the college offers the standard lower division (for example first two years) of undergraduate baccalaureate education suitable for transfer to the University of California, the California State University, or private and out-of-state universities.<sup>94</sup>

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94. California's Master Plan for Higher Education was drafted and enacted in 1960, and directs the three public systems of post-secondary education (the 9 campuses of the University of California, 23 campuses of the California State University, and 114 campuses of the California community colleges). The Master Plan joins together two entirely different systems of access to higher education: among the most restrictive and selective to any public research university in the country (the top 12% of secondary school graduates are eligible for entry to the University of California), and the most open and non-selective (the community colleges). The California State University system admits the top third of high school graduates. Both senior systems are mandated to accept community college transfer students, and the transfer curricula of the three systems are closely aligned.

This array of courses and programmes is anchored in a further curricular commitment to “basic skills” education – namely, courses and programmes in English and mathematics specifically designed to reach students who do not have college or university-level skills in those areas.

The provision of basic skills education is central to our capacity to engage immigrant and low-income students, as well as refugees. Of course, it is true that some immigrant or refugee students come fully prepared, and our assessment and placement instruments serve to identify their “qualifications” regardless of what is on their transcript (or, if they have a transcript). But our outreach to low-income, immigrant or refugee students is built on the expectation that the majority of students will require these developmental or basic skills courses, and that providing these courses is a core mission of the college.

This curricular commitment is not without controversy, and there are states in the United States (Florida, most recently) where the state will not pay for pre-collegiate courses on college or university campuses. But in California and most other states with large numbers of immigrant students (Florida aside), it is understood that the provision of these programmes and courses underpins our efforts to integrate and engage first-generation students. Without them we would shut out the majority of students.

There are three elements of this three-part curricular structure (basic skills, baccalaureate and career/technical) that demand attention when thinking through our ability to engage immigrant, refugee or any low-income students: faculty development, integrative governance structures and university alignment.

First, we understand that most recent graduate students preparing to teach at the college or university level have little experience teaching pre-collegiate courses. (Indeed, most of them have little experience teaching at any level). Nothing in their graduate education prepares them to accept or embrace a curriculum that includes pre-collegiate courses. More broadly, very little in their graduate training has exposed them to the rich diversity of experience, age, language, religion and culture our students bring into the classroom.

This means we hire faculty members through a process that emphasises their teaching capacity and looks for those who demonstrate an intellectual commitment to basic skills, and to learning from the students and their complexity. Many faculty members we hire come to us with some part-time experience at our college or other community colleges. But we offer formal and informal training to all faculty members, and fully fund a “staff development” programme that trains teachers to teach basic skills courses that are both challenging and substantive, and capable of drawing on the rich experiences of the students themselves.

Inside this work is a critical cultural and intellectual agenda: to see this teaching as intellectually valuable, worthy of the finest minds coming out of graduate school even if their graduate programmes never once told them it was worth their time to teach at a community college. As a practical matter faculty members teach across the entire range of courses, and many find their inspiration in the passage of their students from “pre-collegiate” to collegiate. Many of our faculty members have

sophisticated research interests in their fields who nonetheless find interest and purpose in teaching pre-collegiate courses.<sup>95</sup>

Second, a robust commitment to pre-collegiate education requires that all faculty members and staff have equal standing in the institution, regardless of which element of our curriculum engages them, and that organisational structures are integrated to the degree possible. This means that shared governance structures which empower the faculty (the Academic Senate, etc.) do not favour those who teach baccalaureate courses and programmes over those involved in either basic skills or career/technical (or vocational) programmes. It also means that all basic skills programmes in English and mathematics are lodged in the departments of English and mathematics, not isolated in some developmental sidecar.

Third, we operate happily in the understanding that our undergraduate course system – at the baccalaureate level required for transfer to university – is an entirely colonised artefact of the university curriculum. Every single course offered at De Anza College that is eligible for transfer credit to the University of California has been entirely vetted through the university; our discipline faculty members have worked collaboratively with university colleagues to ensure that the course materials, standards and outcomes are equivalent to what is offered at the university.

This means that we can assure students that their passage through the college will have assured outcomes if they do the work. This assurance is enormously important for low-income students, and they are reassured to know that community-college transfer students in California outperform their counterparts once they have actually transferred. Under California's Master Plan for Higher Education, one third of all upper division (third and fourth year) course seats at the two state university systems are reserved for community-college transfer students.

Under this scheme, one third of all graduates of what is arguably the finest research university in the United States – the University of California – are transfer students from community colleges, and fully half of the graduates of the California State University's 23 campuses are community college graduates. This latter number reflects the national reality: one half of all graduates of the nation's comprehensive universities (for example those that are not Research I universities)<sup>96</sup> are community-college transfer students.

The implications of this for the United States as a country are enormous: there are over 1 400 colleges across the country where a refugee or immigrant student has a shot at getting to university. This pathway stands as a unique social democratic commitment, a structure providing class mobility. In California, where first-year access

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95. One of our finest mathematics faculty, with two doctorates and summer postings at the Max Planck Institute, says that he loves teaching algebra and basic mathematics because it brings him into the "living world of men and women whose struggles humble me".

96. "Research I" universities are defined as those universities granting doctorates in all fields and having research as one of their primary functions. They are differentiated from "comprehensive universities", whose reach is often regional and who often do not offer the full array of doctoral programmes. These distinctions are fuzzy, and much disputed – especially by those universities who feel they are research institutions even if not afforded the title.

to the University of California is as restricted as any great university in the world, it means that students have a second chance to get in.

## Pedagogy and cultural humility

If the undergraduate curriculum of the community college is classically organised under the rubrics of the universities, this does not mean that our pedagogy mirrors that of the universities. Any education seeking to engage first-generation students, immigrant or refugee or poor, has to confront the inadequacies of the classic lecture format that has dominated universities for decades.

This is, of course, also recognised widely in both small liberal arts colleges and universities themselves, where there is wide experimentation in course design, student engagement, and so-called “high impact” pedagogies like hands-on research and community-based service-learning. But in the open-access community colleges there is a deeper need to move away from the “stand and deliver” modalities of teaching and learning.

Quite beyond the usual criticisms of lecturing, an “engaged pedagogy” in our colleges emerges from another question: how can we develop pedagogies which depend on the particular skills and capacities of our students and reinforce their sense of efficacy and power?

This means, of course, having a faculty deeply interested in the “cultural capital” of our students, trying to better understand the intellectual gifts associated with linguistic code-switching between languages as an ordinary part of their lives, or engaging them in projects where their existing social and familial skills matter.

We then develop pedagogies that emphasise teamwork, mutual responsibility, collaboration across cultural differences, and a constant reflection on the pedagogical process itself. Our courses often bring students into an active conversation about their own learning, and share with them the theoretical premises with which we operate. One of our first-year programmes is titled “decolonising your education”, and explicitly focuses on the learning process itself, as well as a review of the quite different material conditions that marked our students’ previous education.

In one pedagogical project, De Anza’s LEAD<sup>97</sup> (Latina/o Empowerment At De Anza), all courses are structured around small work teams called “*familia*” (or family). Each *familia* has a community or campus project, and each *familia* member takes responsibility for the other members of the *familia*. If someone misses class, others are checking in that same day; if someone needs help of some kind they solve the problem; if a fellow student is struggling, others work collaboratively to find resources for him or her.

What are the common themes in these pedagogies? They are active, engaged, community-focused, reflective, self-conscious. We understand that our low-income students, or our immigrant and refugee students, have had considerable life experience, that they know how to solve complex social problems (like navigating immigration itself), and that they have intellectual skills no one ever identified for or with them. The college’s

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97. See [www.deanza.edu/lead](http://www.deanza.edu/lead), accessed 29 March 2018.

current vice president, herself once a first-generation student speaking Spanish, vividly remembers the first time a college instructor used the term “code-switch”, and she suddenly saw her own life through a new lens of this special competence.

At the same time we are trying to build pedagogies through our students’ strengths, we need to recognise the limits of our knowledge or understanding. We used to use the term “cultural competence” for what we wanted from teachers: the ability to see and appreciate difference, know something about the lived experience of students, understand how theoretical meanings can have radically different personal resonance (try talking about “democracy” with students from 12 different non-democratic countries). We now look for “cultural humility”, or the willingness to accept students where they are and yet acknowledge how little we really know.

## Students as active civic persons

Finally, and most importantly, our work demonstrates the capacity of students when they are not seen as victims, but rather as agents in their own lives, communities and education. We know that many of our students have been victimised by the long and violent passages that brought them to the country, by poverty and the indignities of racism and ethnic hatred, by the lack of adequate public and private support. But if we see our task as engaging them, giving them voice (or, more properly, providing the tools for their voices to be heard), and insisting on their own agency, we do more than treat them with respect. We provide the space and freedom for them to become actors in the wider world, and see their education as part of a larger struggle.

This has profound implications for the education of immigrant, refugee or low-income students (or, indeed and obviously, all students of any background). The key inversion is to stop thinking of “serving” first-generation students and rather “engage” them, or facilitate the emergence of their unique voice and narrative. At De Anza, this means we aim to facilitate their capacity to act on their own behalf, and become part of the broader mix of students of all backgrounds aiming to work collaboratively across great differences.

What does this mean, as a practical matter? It means investing college resources and staff in programmes that work with our community partners. It means dozens of courses with community internships or work experience. It means workshops on financial literacy, not just financial aid checks; it means advocacy training for disabled students, not just “accommodation” plans.

More pointedly, it means developing the state’s first certificate programme of courses in “social change leadership”, offering courses in community organising, developing a public policy programme that educates students to analyse current policy debates and learn the mechanisms of approaching (or confronting) power. It means having a robust student government with its own free elections and an independent budget of US\$1.5 million. It means supporting students when they build their own Occupy<sup>98</sup> tent city in the middle of the campus and offer their own seminars.

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98. “Occupy” derives from the Occupy Wall Street movement, and was used by student groups who put up their own encampments (tents, overnight vigils, teach-ins) to put a public face on their positions regarding public policy or political issues.

Supporting students as agents of civic life means supporting the widest variety of artistic and creative expression, often designing curricular and campus programmes wedding music and art and global studies. It often creates conflict, and thus compels the study of managing conflict.<sup>99</sup> It sometimes means that students make demands on the college administration that we cannot meet, or think are mistaken, in which case it means public dialogue and transparency about who makes what decisions.

This approach to the development of students as civic actors explicitly declares that we see the purpose of an education to be more than vocational capacity – however essential that is for low-income (or all) students. We believe that low-income, immigrant and refugee students all have narratives of power and integrity, and that the college's role in serving those narratives is to bring them into the world as full-throated actors.

This approach to developing civic agency stands up against the dominant vocational narrative in the United States: working-class, immigrant and refugee students are supposed to enrol in our community colleges uniquely to get work and be productive parts of the labour force. No one at De Anza College misunderstands the imperative for students to be employable, or the satisfaction our students gain from having the skills to earn a decent wage. At the same time, we see the pride and power of students participating in the larger world, and learning the skills that will help them be better neighbours, union members or leaders, or political and community organisers.

## CONCLUSION: FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTRE

There are several recurring themes in this quick overview of how an open-access institution of higher education can better engage immigrant and refugee students. The first is that the institution must review its practices and structures in light of the needs and experiences of first-generation students. This is considerably harder than it sounds, so deep is our belief that the students must adapt to us in order to prove their worth. If low-income, refugee or immigrant students are failing, what can we do differently to better ensure they will succeed?

Second, the college must be an active and engaged participant in low-income communities (or refugee and immigrant communities and the agencies serving them). Third, the college has to reflect on its own definitions of experience and value, asking if what is traditionally most valued (for example secondary school achievement, test scores, national exams) has the least relevance for supporting the talents and capacities of students who come with few traditional (or documented) qualifications.

Choosing to serve low-income, first-generation, immigrant or refugee students demands, in brief, an upending of much of the culture of higher education. It does not require lower standards, or any lesser appreciation of intellectual and cultural achievement of the highest order; quite the contrary, it demands that we see

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99. When Muslim students protested a piece of student art that included a portrait of Muhammad (along with Jesus, Buddha and Ganesh), it turned into a three-day conversation about the role of representational art in religion – all of it out on the main school plaza where the art had been drawn, and all of it facilitated by students themselves.

multiple routes to this achievement, and an appreciation of the considerable skills and capacities our students already bring to the college.

When one of our undocumented students, once homeless, tells me he just got into five of the country's finest universities and wants to study art history, I remember how raw and scared he first appeared. But he already spoke Spanish and Yucatec Maya before his long journey ever brought him to us, and quickly learned English; why would we be surprised by his capacity to learn French and German and love the history of art? When the leadership of the college's undocumented immigrant student organisation<sup>100</sup> decides to go public with video clips on the college website, taking the risk of exposure in order to encourage others to come to college, we are not going to censor it out of our own fear.

Finally, we have to accept that there is a political dimension to our work, that we are not neutral in the culture wars. Our approach to the education of community college students stands in direct conflict with the politics of white supremacy and populist nationalism. It stands against the narrow tribalism that sees the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States as a threat.

Our students prove every single day that they can meet each other over enormous differences of experience and history, language and culture, and create a community. When we do the annual polling of our students, they tell us that the ability to work collaboratively across difference was among the most powerful results of their education. These are among the outcomes we seek in the "curriculum inside the curriculum", the substantive values and capacities we honour. Of course, it helps that our students graduate, they get work, they transfer in the highest numbers to universities, they succeed according to all the usual metrics.

Two things are true, we believe. First, we, and they, would not have been so successful if we had not engaged them as actors in their own lives. Second, engaging them has changed us, and for the better.

*Mohammed had just heard the commencement speech given by the United States Secretary of Education, in which he had applauded the graduates as the "diverse work-force of the future". When asked what he thought, Mohammed shrugged, "I didn't need heartfelt stories about immigrants; I know them." And then he smiled, "You do know, I hope, that I read the Sufi poets in the original Persian; I'd want someone to celebrate that."*

*Sabina got into Yale.*

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100. See [www.deanza.edu/students/undoc-students.html](http://www.deanza.edu/students/undoc-students.html), accessed 29 March 2018.





## Chapter 12

# Hospitality is not enough – Reflections on universities and the immigrant experience

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*Paul C. Pribbenow*

### INTRODUCTION

Founded by Norwegian immigrants nearly 150 years ago, Augsburg University today is located in a thriving urban neighbourhood, surrounded by immigrants of a new generation: Somalis, Ethiopians, Mexicans – those who have come to the United States seeking a better life for themselves and their families, as our ancestors did decades ago. What does it mean for a university founded by immigrants to walk alongside the immigrants of today? How does an immigrant sensibility shape our academic mission and community engagement today? How do we extend the boundaries of our university to engage our immigrant neighbours in mutually beneficial ways? These are questions at the heart of our identity as a university in the 21st century. Perhaps our answers to these questions will help others who share our commitment to hospitality and justice.

### VOCATION AND LOCATION: AUGSBURG AS URBAN SETTLEMENT

The urban settlement house tradition was founded by Oxford-educated young people in the late 19th century at Toynbee Hall in London's East End. Settlement houses sought to model how taking up residence in the midst of urban neighbourhoods, engaging neighbours in exploring how best to respond to the realities of their lives, and then working together to make the neighbourhood safer, cleaner and more just, could help solve urban problems and ultimately shape public policy.<sup>101</sup>

In the United States, the settlement house tradition took root in New York and then Chicago, where Jane Addams and her colleagues founded Hull House in 1889 and sought to transform a burgeoning immigrant neighbourhood. Their work at Hull House – including educational programmes, community centres, libraries, music schools and theatres, sanitation efforts, working against child labour practices, and

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<sup>101</sup>. See [www.toynbeehall.org.uk/our-history](http://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/our-history), accessed 30 March 2018.

honouring cultural heritages – covered the wide range of efforts pursued in response to the needs of neighbours and the neighbourhood (Addams 1910).

Though the settlement house tradition thrived well into the mid-20th century, it gradually faded as government-sponsored social welfare programmes took up the work originally done at the local level by the settlement houses.

At the same time, the tenets of the settlement tradition took shape in other forms in the late 20th and early 21st century – including in leadership thinking about higher education. As Ira Harkavy and John Puckett argue, the idea of applied sociology that the early settlement house leaders articulated and practised offers a moral and pragmatic framework for colleges and universities to “function as perennial, deeply rooted settlements, providing illuminating space for their communities as they conduct their mission of producing and transmitting knowledge to advance human welfare and to develop theories that have broad utility and application” (1994: 51).

For Augsburg, the concept of the urban settlement offers a framework for interpreting the identity and character of the university as it has unfolded over almost 150 years (Pribbenow 2014). In particular, Augsburg as urban settlement is grounded in four distinctions:

- ▶ our core identity as an institution shaped by the Lutheran Christian faith with its focus on service to the neighbour as a central feature of our vocations (or callings) in the world. In fact, our institutional vocation is stated in summary as: “We believe we are called to serve our neighbour”, illustrating the inextricable links between faith, education and service to and with our neighbours;
- ▶ our academic mission as an institution dedicated to the liberal arts as the most efficacious education for life in the world. Our grounding in the liberal arts demands a holistic understanding of human experience, challenging us in curricular, co-curricular and community engagement efforts to seek ever broader and deeper perspectives. Our immigrant neighbours are therefore viewed as members of our teaching and learning community: fellow learners and teachers as we engage with life together, on campus and in our neighbourhood;
- ▶ our distinctive location for almost 150 years in an immigrant neighbourhood where we have settled alongside neighbours, living as stewards of place and environment. We believe in hospitality and justice for all of creation and we practise hospitality and justice in myriad ways alongside neighbours whose life experiences are often very different from ours;
- ▶ our commitment to public work, which means that hospitality is not enough and that we bear responsibility not only to serve our neighbours, but also to stand shoulder to shoulder with them to fight against the systemic injustices that make hospitality necessary. As the American Lutheran theologian Carter Lindberg has written, “[T]o be sure, the biblical mandate to feed the poor is non-controversial. What is controversial is why people are poor and hungry” (2016: 18).

In this way, then, the concept of Augsburg as urban settlement in the 21st century links our institutional vocation with our location in service both to our academic mission and to our immigrant neighbours. Vocation and location are bound together. Place matters. Education matters. Faith matters. Our immigrant neighbours matter.

## HOW AUGSBURG ENGAGES ITS IMMIGRANT NEIGHBOURS

The variety of immigrant communities surrounding Augsburg's campus calls us to consider what is mutually beneficial in our work together with these diverse neighbours. This means that one size does not fit all in our engagement strategies, as each community potentially has distinctive needs and aspirations. For the sake of briefly illustrating how we have engaged specific immigrant communities, I offer two case studies of our efforts with Somali immigrants, and with Mexican immigrants, many of whom make up a substantial portion of our undocumented students today.

### Somali community engagement

The influx of Somali immigrants and refugees to Minnesota can be traced to the early 1990s, when they fled from their war-torn homeland to eventually reach cities like Minneapolis, where the resettlement programmes primarily led by Lutheran and Roman Catholic agencies were well established. In particular, the Cedar-Riverside neighbourhood of Minneapolis – in which Augsburg is located – became home to thousands of Somalis. In fact, the greater metropolitan area of Minneapolis and Saint Paul is home to the largest community of Somalis outside of Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia (see CNN 2017).

As the Somali community has grown and established itself in the Cedar-Riverside neighbourhood over the past 25 years, Augsburg has partnered with its immigrant neighbours in a variety of ways. Especially in recent years, as the generation of Somali-Americans born in the United States matures, the needs and aspirations of the community have evolved and have challenged us to find deeper and more authentic ways to engage each other.

One of the key strategies undertaken was the creation in 2008 of the Cedar-Riverside Partnership, an anchor institution initiative that brought together the major institutions with a stake in the neighbourhood – the University of Minnesota, University of Minnesota Health (UM Health, formerly Fairview Hospital), Sherman Associates (owner of a major housing development in the neighbourhood), and the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, along with Augsburg – with representatives of various neighbourhood organisations such as the West Bank Business Association, Brian Coyle Community Center and the Riverside Plaza Tenant Association. Together, the members of the partnership have pursued projects that address the mutual needs of our neighbours. Among the work undertaken was a focus on community safety that brought together the various police and security forces in the neighbourhood to co-ordinate their coverage of the community, leading to a significant drop in crime. The partnership also focused on the needs of youth, on neighbourhood infrastructure such as roads and streetscapes, and on workforce development.

Another group of strategies pursued with our Somali-American neighbours is a focus on the educational needs of young people in the community. A tutoring programme for middle and high school students (ages 11-18) is staffed by volunteers from Augsburg and the University of Minnesota. Augsburg's Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme paired a consulting group of graduate students with young Somali girls to create a business plan for a thrift clothing store known as Sisterhood Boutique, now

a thriving business located in neighbourhood premises donated by UM Health. In addition, the Minnesota Urban Debate League, a programme of Augsburg University that sponsors debate programmes in area high schools and middle schools, organises a special Somali Debate Initiative that coaches Somali-American youth in the skills of debate, preparing them for success in post-secondary schools.

Finally, based on the experience of our own Norwegian immigrant forefathers and mothers, who created institutions to serve their communities in America – institutions such as Augsburg and Fairview Hospital to name just two – we have worked alongside our Somali-American neighbours to help them create their own institutions. A leadership training programme is aimed at equipping emerging leaders in the neighbourhood with the skills to build and lead organisations – skills such as grant-writing, finance, public relations, government affairs, and so on, practical skills that put these emerging organisations on a level playing field with other non-governmental organisations and businesses. Another institution-building initiative is the East African Student Teacher (EAST) programme at Augsburg, seeking to educate East African teachers for elementary, middle and high schools in Minnesota, so that the growing number of East African students will be exposed to teachers who look like them and share their experiences. In this way, the teaching staff of schools in Minnesota and beyond will reflect the growing diversity of their student bodies, a key component of building institutions that meet the needs of their communities.

## Support for undocumented students

The second case study of Augsburg's work with immigrant communities engages a more recent influx of immigrants from Mexico, many of whom who have come to the United States without documentation. In this community, our focus has been on the children of these immigrants – the group of undocumented young people who were brought to the United States by their parents and have grown up in cities like Minneapolis. Our work with these so-called "Dreamers" – the label that describes the aspirations of these young people – has been very different from our efforts with Somali immigrants and refugees. With Dreamers, our focus expanded from hospitality and community engagement to equity, as we have joined with higher education institutions across the United States to embrace our responsibility to educate all students of ability and to thereby secure the economic and civic prosperity of our region and country.

Our work on behalf of our Mexican-American neighbours begins with an institutional commitment to equity. Augsburg's governing board approved an institutional non-discrimination policy in 2010 that explicitly states:

Augsburg ... does not discriminate on the basis of race, colour, religious belief, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, familial status, genetic information, status with regard to public assistance, or citizenship.<sup>102</sup>

With this commitment made, Augsburg has then pursued its work with undocumented students in two focused ways.

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102. See <http://bit.ly/2JtpNMc>, accessed 30 March 2018.

First, the university has made access to higher education a priority for undocumented students, with both financial and academic support. In the early part of the 21st century, Augsburg was able to support a handful of undocumented students by combining institutional financial aid with charitable gifts from churches and other organisations in the community. There was no state or federal government support available for undocumented students, which made access to higher education very difficult for these students and their families. In 2013, the Minnesota legislature passed the Minnesota Dream Act, which made undocumented students eligible for state financial aid and in-state tuition rates for public universities. The Dream Act has dramatically increased access to higher education for undocumented students in Minnesota, providing up to US\$5 000 in state aid to supplement institutional aid and family support, along with gifts from churches and other charitable organisations. For Augsburg, this has meant an increase in the number of undocumented students served from a handful to nearly 100. Similar increases have occurred at other colleges and universities in the state of Minnesota.

In addition to financial aid, Augsburg also has provided significant academic and personal support to undocumented students with a dedicated staff position serving Latino students along with robust academic support programmes for these first-generation college students, empowering them to develop self-advocacy skills so as to persist in school and graduate. We also have partnered with local attorneys, who provide pro bono legal services to students and their families who may be threatened with deportation. Finally, we have found a helpful partner in the Mexican consular office in Minnesota, which is committed to the academic success of these young people (who are still Mexican citizens) and has provided additional financial aid to help create even more access to institutions like Augsburg.

A second way in which Augsburg supports its undocumented students is through its public advocacy for changes in policy at the state and federal level that would provide a pathway to citizenship for these students. Efforts at the federal level to pass a “Dream Act” date back to the early 2000s and have been thwarted at every turn by partisan disputes. In 2011, the Obama Administration issued new policies that allowed certain undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children to apply for two-year work permits. The following year, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programme was put in place through executive order (though not through legislative action), providing temporary relief from deportation for eligible young adults. As mentioned above, the Minnesota Dream Act, passed in 2013, created access to state financial aid and in-state tuition rates for eligible undocumented students. Each of these various policies meant that more undocumented students (including those from Mexico as well as other nations) could have access to higher education in the United States and also could take advantage of study away, research and the co-curricular opportunities so central to their educational experiences and success.

The progress we have witnessed in these policies to support undocumented students has been seriously challenged since the 2016 US presidential elections, following which the new administration has threatened undocumented students with deportation and has suspended the DACA programme. But we continue to stand with our undocumented and DACA students, doing all we can to keep them safe and focused

on their academic success, even as we recognise the fear and anxiety that the current political climate has created for them. And we have not stopped fighting.

## AUGSBURG'S CALL TO SERVE OUR NEIGHBOURS

Our resolve to support all of our students in their educational aspirations is illustrated by the following text, which I sent in my role as Augsburg University President to our entire community just before the beginning of the 2017/18 academic year:

Events in our country and around the world during the past several months have reminded us that the spectre of fear and prejudice and bigotry are very much present in our common lives. Whether it is violence in the name of white supremacy, rhetoric demonizing immigrants and refugees, policies discriminating against those of various sexual and gender identities, or the general rancor and polarization in our political discourse – all of this illustrates the need for citizens to come together with courage and resolve to fight back, to stand with love against hate and prejudice, to seek opportunities for genuine conversation and common purpose.

The Augsburg community is by no means immune from the dynamics of this volatile social situation. At the same time, however, dedicated and principled work over the past decade by faculty, staff and students has positioned Augsburg to be a model for how a community can navigate the throes of shifting demographics, progressive social mores and the polarizing fear and anxiety that characterize our public lives. In fact, it is precisely because of Augsburg's faith, academic and civic traditions that we are poised to show a way forward in the 21st century.

And now is the time for us to lead. As inspiration for the work we must pursue as a community, I have returned to the wise words of Martin Luther King, Jr., who, in his 1963 speech at the March on Washington, said "[W]e are confronted with the fierce urgency of now".<sup>103</sup> Now is the time for urgent reflection and action.

King's words a year later in his speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize were prescient:

"our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change. The large house in which we live demands that we transform the world-wide neighborhood into a world-wide brotherhood [*sic*]. Together we must learn to live as (siblings) or together we will be forced to perish as fools."<sup>104</sup>

In particular, I am struck by Dr. King's insistence that "we are challenged to work all over the world with unshakeable determination to wipe out the last vestiges of racism".<sup>105</sup> Here, fifty years later, we must return to this very challenge, to what King called the need to celebrate our "world house,"<sup>106</sup> comprising black

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103. "I have a Dream," see [www.crmvet.org/info/mowmlk.htm](http://www.crmvet.org/info/mowmlk.htm), accessed 30 March 2018.

104. "Martin Luther King, Jr. – Acceptance Speech", Nobelprize.org. Nobel Media AB 2014 Web, see [www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-acceptance.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-acceptance.html), accessed 30 March 2018.

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid.

and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Hindu – to which we might add, liberal and conservative, urban and rural, straight and gay and more.

The Augsburg community is a microcosm of “the world house.” It is our rare and compelling call to live as a people united by ecumenical loyalties, called to illustrate for all to see how love for one another, what Dr. King called “the supreme unifying principle” claimed by all great world religions, might be the path forward in a world torn to its very core by the forces of hatred, prejudice and violence. The time is now.

Our identity as an urban settlement in the 21st century means that our commitment to our immigrant neighbours is at the heart of our mission to educate students of all backgrounds and identities to be “informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers and responsible leaders.”<sup>107</sup> We are called to accompany and settle alongside our neighbours. We are called to educate students who are skilled and reflective and committed to serving our neighbours. We are called to understand that hospitality is not enough and that the work of justice for all is essential to the future of our democracy.

## UNIVERSITIES AND THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE: LESSONS LEARNED

Though the focus of this chapter has been on the experiences of one university in a specific context and location, there are lessons in our case studies that may help inform the work of colleges and universities that share our commitment to engaging immigrant refugee neighbours.

The first lesson is that place matters. The commitment to serve our neighbours is linked to particular geographies and those who occupy particular locations. Augsburg clearly has been affected by its proximity to the immigrant communities that surround its campus. Any commitment to engage with immigrants will need to be grounded in a firm sense of the institution’s whereabouts and the specific cultures, networks and values that comprise its location. As mentioned above, vocation and location are inextricably linked.

A second lesson derives from the settlement house tradition and focuses on the need for mutuality in all engagements with immigrant and/or refugee communities. Too often, colleges and universities see their role as primarily aimed at “fixing” problems, or applying expert knowledge to resolve community issues. Responsible relationships with immigrant communities require a suspension of traditional academic hubris and a humility that is open to learning from and with each other. Augsburg has learned, for example, that our work with immigrants often requires a different pace in meetings and other engagements. We have also learned that our majority perspective cannot fully understand the fear and anxiety faced by those whose lives

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107. Augsburg University, *Mission Statement*, see [www.augsburg.edu/about/mission](http://www.augsburg.edu/about/mission), accessed 30 March 2018.

have been disrupted through immigration. Building trust requires an empathy and commitment to mutuality that takes time and effort.

Finally, authentic engagement with immigrants means that colleges and universities must expand their understanding of the academic mission. Our traditional values about excellence and rigour; our organisational structures related to power-sharing; and our sense of how teaching and learning occur – all of these are challenged by the immigrant experience. We meet immigrants in our neighbourhood who teach our students and all of us important lessons about life in the world. Are not these immigrants also members of our faculty? We meet students from these immigrant communities who do not learn in the same way we do. Are we open to expanding our understanding of what excellent scholarship and learning look like? We invite our immigrant neighbours to come to our campus and share our resources. Are we open to how they will challenge our usual bureaucratic norms?

These simple lessons – place matters, mutuality is key, and academic missions must be expanded – inform our efforts at Augsburg and offer a framework for understanding how colleges and universities around the world might explore their own relationships and engagement with immigrant and refugee experiences in the 21st century.

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## Chapter 13

# Higher education in Greece – Steps towards internationalisation

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*Panagiota Dionysopoulou and Christos Michalakelis*

### EDUCATION POLICY AND STUDENT MOBILITY

The increasing globalisation of the economy is among the factors creating pressure on higher education systems in many countries. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2008), many of its member countries have recently experienced rapid growth in tertiary education. Tertiary education policy has, therefore, become more important than ever on the national agenda. Higher education is also recognised as a major driver of economic competitiveness in a knowledge-driven global economy. Reforms aimed at encouraging institutions to be more responsive to the needs of society and the economy are currently being undertaken in tertiary education systems.

Higher education contributes to social and economic development through four major missions (ibid.):

- ▶ the formation of human capital (primarily through teaching);
- ▶ the building of knowledge bases (primarily through research and knowledge development);
- ▶ the dissemination and use of knowledge (primarily through interactions with knowledge users);
- ▶ the maintenance of knowledge (intergenerational storage and transmission of knowledge).

Moreover, according to the Council of Europe in a 2007 Recommendation,<sup>108</sup> higher education and research policies should address the multiple concomitant purposes of higher education, defined as:

- ▶ preparation for sustainable employment;
- ▶ preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- ▶ personal development;
- ▶ the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

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108. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the public responsibility for higher education and research, available at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/news/pub\\_res\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/news/pub_res_en.pdf), accessed 4 April 2018.

It is clearly of great importance that countries raise employment skills to a higher level, sustain a globally competitive research base and improve knowledge dissemination for the benefit of society. The trends which have emerged in many countries include the expansion of higher education systems, the diversification of the system through the emergence of new types of institutions, the substantial increase of female participation, new funding arrangements and the expansion of global networking, mobility and collaboration, including cross-border higher education (OECD 2008). Indeed, tertiary education is becoming more international through a number of means, such as distance education, international education-related internships and training experiences, cross-border delivery of academic programmes and offshore satellite campuses (OECD 2016).

In this context of networking, mobility and collaboration, higher education is investing in networking among institutions, scholars and students as well as industry. Improvement of teaching and research and revenue generation for the economy and higher education, together with the provision of assistance for developing and emerging countries to build capacity, are among the purposes served by international tertiary education mobility. Therefore, enrolment in study programmes abroad is of growing interest among students. It allows them to increase their knowledge of other societies and languages, gain cultural and personal experience, and improve their employability in the globalised sectors of the labour market.

Apart from the educational value associated with student mobility and the internationalisation of higher education studies, substantial revenue can be earned by expanding education for international students, along with other economic, political and social capital. It is evident that countries have benefited from this trend to different degrees, while at the same time improving the quality of their universities. Some of these countries attach great importance to higher education as a service that generates a significant source of income, while international students also have a positive economic impact on the host country regardless of whether they are charged tuition fees (European Commission 2013). Mobility is a significant facilitator of formal and non-formal education and hence the development of soft skills considered highly important for the global community (such as creativity, analytical thinking, multitasking, communication skills, time management and leadership, intercultural skills) and the new needs of the labour market.

The Bologna Process was launched in 1999 with the goal of supporting mobility and the internationalisation of education and training in Europe and beyond and led to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) being established in 2010. The EHEA is the result of the political will exhibited by 48 countries to implement reforms in higher education on the basis of common key values – such as academic freedom, autonomy for institutions, independent student unions, and free movement of students and staff.<sup>109</sup> The EHEA aims to foster the international competitiveness of European higher education in the globalised world economy and knowledge society and to strengthen effective linkages among higher education systems. In this context, the European Commission operates the project Study in Europe for students from around the world. Almost all European countries are part of the EHEA, although they have their own higher education systems, which are presented in corresponding sections of the Study in Europe portal.<sup>110</sup>

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109. See [www.ehea.info](http://www.ehea.info), accessed 30 March 2018.

110. See [http://ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe_en), accessed 30 March 2018.

# INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN GREECE

Greece is one of the original signatories of the Bologna Declaration founding the EHEA. Some 40 higher education institutions operate in Greece: 22 universities, 14 technological education institutes and 4 higher education ecclesiastical academies, whose function is determined by the Greek Constitution and the laws of the country. Internationalisation is one of the three criteria for allocating additional funding to the higher education institutions, the other two being the quality of studies and excellence in research. Mobility is an integral part of the mission of higher education institutions.

The Directorate General for Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, in co-operation with national foundations and agencies, implements a number of projects related to higher-education internationalisation and modernisation, such as the project Greece Exploring Advanced Recognition in higher education (GEAR)<sup>111</sup> and Modernisation of Higher Education in Greece (MOHE).<sup>112</sup> GEAR aims to track and encourage simplification of the recognition processes of modules, while MOHE aims to conduct research on the current state of implementation and promotion of EHEA principles in Greece. The most important findings of these projects, combined with existing experience, are summarised in the analysis in Table 13.1, and Figure 13.1 illustrates the inbound movement of international students.

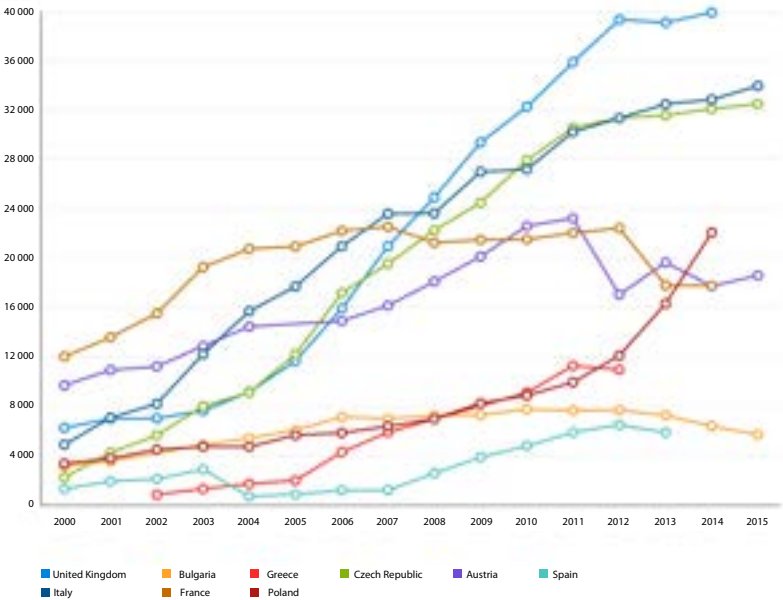
**Table 13.1 – SWOT analysis of the implementation of EHEA principles in Greece**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ The Greek institutional framework lies within EHEA principles and commitments.</li><li>▶ Internationalisation and mobility are highly valued by the Greek state and the academic community.</li><li>▶ Independent national agencies responsible for mobility, foreign degree recognition and quality assurance in higher education are operational; all comply with EHEA standards.</li><li>▶ Constant level, although slightly decreasing number, of inbound international students. The decrease is mainly due to lack of information and publicity.</li><li>▶ Improvement of the official websites of national agencies offering detailed information both in Greek and English.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Underfunding, understaffing and deterioration of infrastructure.</li><li>▶ Recognition of degrees is a very complex, time-consuming and costly procedure.</li><li>▶ Little or no information is available from official sources regarding study in Greece, internationalisation policies of Greek higher education institutions and associated benefits (such as the absence of tuition fees for Bachelor-level programmes).</li><li>▶ Undergraduate and most postgraduate programmes are taught in Greek.</li></ul>

111. See <https://gear.minedu.gov.gr/en/home>, accessed 30 March 2018.  
112. See Modernisation of Higher Education in Greece, at <http://mohe.minedu.gov.gr>, accessed 30 March 2018.

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Education can act as an engine for growth.</li> <li>▶ Advantage of the geographical position of Greece.</li> <li>▶ Utilisation of new technologies improves effectiveness and reduces costs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Economic crisis and recession.</li> <li>▶ Refugee crisis.</li> </ul>

**Figure 13.1 – Inbound movement of international students by country (2000-15)**

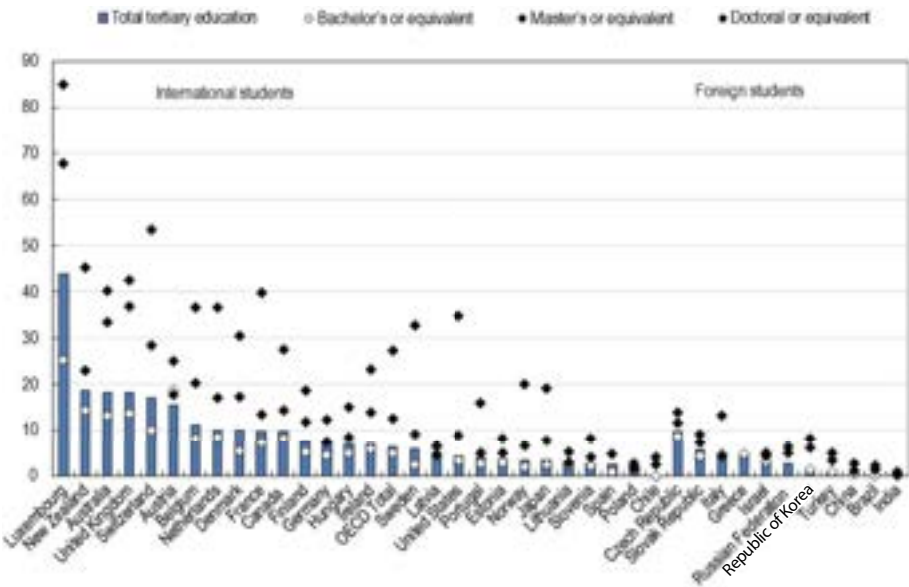


Source: UNESCO

As shown in Figure 13.1, the numbers of inbound international students to Greece grew until 2011, levelling out or diminishing thereafter. No data are available for Greece post-2012 but feedback from institutions indicates that these numbers have decreased further, partly as a result of the economic recession and partly from the lack of incentives offered to potential international students. Countries that used to be popular destinations for students such as France and Austria show similar findings, but countries such as the Czech Republic and Poland recorded an impressive increase in the number of inbound students. The same increase was recorded for traditionally popular destinations like Italy. This is a result of the policies adopted towards internationalisation of studies and the corresponding investments made.

Figure 13.2 illustrates the volume of international or foreign student enrolments as a percentage of total tertiary education, in OECD countries. Unfortunately, Greece is placed at the bottom in this ranking, revealing its low level of internationalisation of tertiary studies.

Figure 13.2 – Student mobility in tertiary education in 2013



Source: OECD 2016

The above findings suggest that action should be taken to support the mobility and internationalisation of tertiary education in Greece. The following sections describe some of the action being taken.

## THE “STUDY IN GREECE” INITIATIVE

The findings presented in the previous sections led the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>113</sup> and the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs<sup>114</sup> to develop a web portal which provides information for all potential international students as well as existing students regarding higher education in Greece. This need was made more urgent by the fact that all EU countries except Greece participate with analytical information in the Study in Europe project. As a consequence, the Directorate General of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, in collaboration with a team of Greek academic staff and tertiary level students, launched the initiative “Study in Greece”. A corresponding web portal was developed.<sup>115</sup> A typical screenshot of the portal’s main page is shown in Figure 13.3.

113. See [www.mfa.gr](http://www.mfa.gr), accessed 30 March 2018.

114. See [www.minedu.gov.gr](http://www.minedu.gov.gr), accessed 30 March 2018.

115. See [www.studyingreece.edu.gr](http://www.studyingreece.edu.gr), accessed 30 March 2018.

Figure 13.3 – Study in Greece portal



Source: [www.studyinggreece.edu.gr](http://www.studyinggreece.edu.gr)

The Study in Greece portal is the official Greek web portal regarding the provision of information on higher education in Greece and enjoys the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. Both ministries host a link to Study in Greece on the home pages of their websites, and all Greek embassies link to the portal as well.

Study in Greece was launched online in January 2015 and provides continuously updated information for:

- ▶ students who wish to or already study in Greece for a higher education degree;
- ▶ students who participate in exchange programmes such as Erasmus+;
- ▶ refugees, immigrants and those who need international assistance to better integrate into the Greek education system;
- ▶ any other students or potential students.

The analysis of the requirements for the development of the portal involved interviews with international students who already live in Greece, as well as online questionnaires with potential students. The international students described the difficulties they faced during all stages of applying, registering and settling in Greece, including the total lack of information on higher education in Greece. They pointed to the fact that the Greek embassies in their countries have little or no information, nor did the website of the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. Moreover, crucial information was not available to international students that would increase the competitive advantage of Greece. For example, there are no fees for undergraduate studies, university books are distributed for free to eligible students, and there are opportunities for free accommodation on university campuses.

The Study in Greece initiative quickly gained popularity among potential and current international students, as demonstrated by the statistics on visits to the portal and related social networks (Figure 13.4).

Figure 13.4 – Popularity of the Study in Greece portal

Period	Sessions	Users	Page views	New sessions (%)
December 2016	7334	5643	20227	76.94%
February 2017	12670	9882	34616	78.00%
April 2017	18624	14343	50771	77.01%

Study in Greece has an extensive presence across social networks and has prompted a large number of queries from many different countries, which demonstrates the need for and the importance of this initiative.

REFUGEES AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Apart from the action taken to boost the internationalisation of higher education in Greece, a number of initiatives and actions have been launched to assist refugees and foster their integration into higher education structures.

Refugee portal

The Study in Greece portal links to a specific portal for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece and the rest of Europe. It aims to provide information and services for refugees, focusing mainly on education and educational news. Figure 13.5 reproduces the welcome page of the Refugee portal.

Figure 13.5 – Welcome page of the Refugee portal



Source: <http://refugees.studyinggreece.edu.gr>



The portal hosts information for agencies and foundations providing education, distribution of products, shelter, legal and medical aid, as well as news and free lessons in the Greek language. The initiative has social media presence, including on Facebook.

## Beyond the refugee crisis – Studying in Europe

Beyond the refugee crisis – Studying in Europe<sup>116</sup> is a summer academy (Figure 13.6) organised by the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs in co-operation with the Council of Europe and with the participation of the School of Philosophy of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

**Figure 13.6 – Summer academy participants**



The aim of the programme was to introduce young refugees to university education programmes and admission requirements in Greece and other EU countries. The summer academy was held between 18 and 28 August 2016 and 29 students participated, two thirds of whom were refugees and the rest their Greek peers studying at Greek universities. The school was hosted at the facilities of the International Olympic Academy in Olympia.

The programme included seminars on European civilisation, language lessons (Greek and English) and workshops on human rights and the democratic status of citizens, as well as presentations and discussions regarding the academic offerings of European universities. The programme also featured athletic and cultural activities, as well as a daily field trip.

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116. See <http://bit.ly/2HZxQkb>, accessed 30 March 2018.



## Council of Europe pilot project

The Council of Europe proposed conducting a pilot project in collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs and with the participation of Norway, Italy, the UK and Greece, and received the immediate support of the Greek authorities.<sup>117</sup> It aims to pilot the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, which has been prepared by the national information centres for the recognition of qualifications (members of the European Network of Information Centres/National Academic Recognition Information Centres) of Greece, Italy, Norway and the UK.

The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees is a document providing an assessment of higher education qualifications based on available documentation and a structured interview. It also presents information on the applicant's work experience and language proficiency. The document provides reliable information for integration, progression towards employment and admission to further studies. It is a specially developed assessment scheme for refugees, specifically those who cannot fully document their qualifications. The qualifications are assessed through an evaluation process including interviews with qualified credential evaluators.

After meetings held on 3 and 4 November 2016 at the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs it was decided, within the framework of the pilot project, to test this methodology with 50 refugees who had either completed or enrolled in higher education without completion in their country. The pilot phase was completed in September 2017. During three sessions held in March, June and September 2017 (each lasting for 5 working days), over 100 applications were received and a total of 92 participants were interviewed. Out of 92 interviewed, 72 passports were issued while 20 applicants were either not able to substantiate their qualifications or were not eligible for the document. The pilot phase will be evaluated and the results will be presented by the Council of Europe to the other member states and depending on their interest, a long-term programme will follow. A second phase of the project has now been launched for 2018-20.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

As a result of initiatives taken by the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs in co-operation with agencies and foundations, decisive steps are being taken towards the modernisation and internationalisation of higher education, with special emphasis on social inclusion. Since improvement of higher education is an ongoing project, which is a high priority for Greece, more achievements are likely to come, moving tertiary education in Greece towards convergence with other European countries.

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117. See [www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications](http://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications), accessed 30 March 2018. A presentation video is available at [www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/launch-of-documentary-on-the-project-european-qualifications-passport-for-refugees-](http://www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/launch-of-documentary-on-the-project-european-qualifications-passport-for-refugees-), accessed 30 March 2018.

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Part IV

## **Universities and their communities**

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## Chapter 14

# Reimagining the social purpose of universities through engagement

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Ahmed Bawa

### SOME FRAMING THOUGHTS

Bill Readings, in his posthumously published *The university in ruins*, probes the conditions that are causing the structural changes that we see in universities around the world and asks what this means for their future (Readings 1996). He asserts that universities sourced their social purpose and integrity from the idea of the nation state through their role as custodians and reproducers of national culture. With globalisation and the growing integration of knowledge in production processes, he asks whether the university is in a deathly spiral. His main concern is that “the contemporary university is busily transforming itself from an ideological arm of the state into a bureaucratically organized and relatively autonomous consumer-oriented corporation” (ibid.: 11).

Times have changed. Nation states are in decline; we have moved from elite higher education systems to massified ones; universities are behaving as corporations; and the onset of the fourth industrial revolution and the continuing unfolding of the knowledge economy all apply pressure on the traditional 20th-century university. Readings urges recognition of the university as a “ruined institution, while thinking what it means to dwell in those ruins without recourse to romantic nostalgia” (ibid.: 169). He makes an appeal for a new community of scholars and thinkers in the re-imagination of the university away from its techno-bureaucratic and corporatist, market-led condition.

At a more mundane level perhaps, around the world universities are experiencing new fundamental pressures whether they be severe funding cuts, the erosion of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, and deep attacks on what is perceived as elitism. In a recent issue of *World University News*, Wilhem Krull describes the social pressures being brought to bear on universities in Europe in the face of growing populism, xenophobia, nationalism and the erosion of democracy in several national contexts. He goes on to say:

Despite the wide variety of different higher education and research systems in Europe as well as the quite diversified and often multi-faceted institutional structures in each country, we can observe negative, even hostile attitudes against cosmopolitan elites, research-based expertise and evidence-based policy-making in many and this affects universities. (Krull 2017)

This is extremely serious in the sense that these negative attitudes are directed at the core of universities, at their knowledge projects.

In the face of this growing phenomenon, two circumstances stand out. Firstly, this is happening at a time when universities have never been more productive in terms of their traditional products and outputs. Secondly, these institutions of higher learning are essentially left to fend for themselves. There is very rarely a broad-based social defence of them. Krull suggests it is necessary for scholars, scientists and the universities to regain the trust of their publics. He warns, though, that this is not easy:

Instead of primarily speaking to the public, it will be essential for scientists and scholars to first of all listen to the people in front of them, to take their concerns seriously, to pay attention to the social pressures they are exposed to, and to bear in mind that to overcome emotional differences may in the beginning matter just as much or even more so than the coherence and consistency of the respective arguments. (ibid.)

He essentially calls for universities to be more engaged with their communities and publics. The question that remains is – how best is this to be done?

The South African university system is experiencing its most serious crisis since 1994, when democracy was ushered in after a historic struggle for human rights and social justice. While universities – both black and white – were part of the apartheid infrastructure and fully complicit in the construction of apartheid's political, social and economic architecture, they were also powerful engines for the galvanising of young and talented minds in the creation of anti-apartheid and postcolonial imaginations of hope and humanity. Universities were sites of great contestation. It was not unusual to see students grappling with the ideas of Marx, Fanon, Gandhi, Nkrumah and Freire – and also of South African scholars Harold Wolpe, Moses Kotane, Govan Mbeki and others. The interesting detail is that almost all of the learning about these big ideas of change and transformation happened outside the formal classroom in constructed sites of engagement, in partnerships between university-based progressive, left-wing scholars and students with trade unions and community-based organisations. These became dynamic interfaces between the universities and the organisations of mass-based mobilisation to redefine and reconstruct the idea of humanity in apartheid South Africa. They became the source of great innovation and mobilisation.

Now, that system is in the midst of new waves of complex, exciting, devastating student uprisings. They represent powerful forces of engagement throwing both the universities and the national state into chaos. The two key issues raised by the students are deceptively simple in construction: free higher education and quality, decolonised education. South Africa's universities have long been underpinned by a strong social mobility agenda. But as chronic underfunding by the national state through its subsidies to higher education took hold, tuition fees began to gallop at levels beyond inflation and we began to see the gradual erosion of an unspoken social contract, with higher education pricing itself way beyond the reach of most South African families. While the state responded by introducing a loan system to address the issue of tuition fee affordability, not enough was invested.

The demand for decolonised education is interesting. It is about the knowledge project of South African universities. Clichéd though it may be, the students ask: are the 26 public universities in South Africa really South African universities and how would we know? Another way of posing this question is to ask to what extent the intellectual, living, cultural and spiritual milieu of the majority of South Africans find representation in the intellectual and technological bodies of these institutions; that is, to what extent are they South African universities?

Except for sporadic and scattered support for the student campaigns from individual scholars, this ongoing student campaign pits itself against the state on the one hand and against the universities on the other. There is much rereading of Fanon and Biko and a vibrant resurgence of Black Consciousness thinking. The majority of South Africans find it is important to listen to what students are saying, students who have grown up in the post-apartheid era, who see the imagination of the 1994 democratic transition as constraining if not antithetical to the creation of a society that is more humane, more equal, more engaged in the life of its citizens. The universities are seen by these students as part of the socio-political architecture of the post-1994 democratic dispensation, which in turn is seen to be responsible for designing and presiding over increasing inequality and grinding poverty.

How is one to interpret the demands of the students? For most South Africans, it is a happy moment to see their children attend university because of their role in social mobility, but simultaneously they experience alienation from these institutions of higher learning. The demands of students may be interpreted as a cry for the institutions to develop a social justice agenda that, on the one hand, links them much more closely to the enveloping challenges of a developing society and, on the other hand, allows millions of South Africans to see themselves represented in the knowledge enterprises of the universities (Bawa 2015).

What one sees, therefore, over the last 10 to 20 years is that universities both globally and nationally have been facing a crisis of purpose, identity and confidence. The discourse on institutional change has been driven primarily by their alignment with economic globalisation and the evolution of the knowledge economy. This was certainly the advice to African universities from the World Bank (Salmi 2002). Is there a way out of this? Or is Readings' declaration of "The University in Ruins" an unavoidable outcome? Is the idea of (re)developing a social justice agenda for our universities a new, compelling social purpose that addresses the philosophical concerns of Readings? And would it provide a framework for Krull's more pragmatic concerns of engaging the public? Would such a development address the deep unhappiness of South African student activists who want their universities to transcend the reproduction of existing elites and begin to address not only the historical social injustice of the apartheid regime but also that of the new regime?

## **CHALLENGES WHICH ARE SIMULTANEOUSLY INTENSELY LOCAL AND INTENSELY GLOBAL**

The world faces unprecedented global challenges such as the unmitigated ravages of rising human consumption and their impact on the climate: forewarnings of an unsustainable Earth-humanity nexus that is likely to leave hundreds of millions of

people in near future generations scrambling for declining levels of food, water and energy security. The devastation of infectious and lifestyle diseases and unacceptably high maternal mortality rates in several parts of the world are of deep concern. The ease with which the “Other” is created and the subsequent rise of political violence is something that we see the world over as populism and tyranny galvanise political and social identity as a source of power. The continuous growth in xenophobic tendencies is everywhere pertinent, even in societies that have a rich history of diversity and social integration and cohesion. Concomitantly, we witness massive global migrations that place young and old in semi-permanent limbo. Perhaps most important, violent poverty is the general condition in many parts of the world, increasingly accompanied by growing inequality.

In addition, we observe a growing erosion of democracy as elites establish and re-establish their hegemony over the economy, often accompanied by a slide towards anti-intellectualism and the violence that flows from the degradation of ethical society. The democratic project is rapidly being threatened by its failure to address the standout challenge of improving the quality of life of all. The enormous upwelling of social cohesion and human empathy that was a product of the South African struggle for democracy is rapidly being dissipated, so much so that the government has now instituted a newfangled social cohesion advocacy programme. While these social challenges are all prevalent in South Africa, it is not difficult to see that these issues belong to many societies. They are simultaneously intensely local and intensely global.

## REVISITING THE SOCIAL PURPOSE OF UNIVERSITIES AS KNOWLEDGE-INTENSIVE INSTITUTIONS

Universities cannot solve these problems by themselves. But as social institutions they cannot possibly sit on the sidelines either. They are created by society to play particular sets of roles. They are the primary producers of high-level human capacity that is key to the functioning of complex societies. They are driven in and by democracies to produce graduates who are critically engaged in the processes of political and social life. They contribute to the constant renewal of humanity’s imaginations of its past, present and future. Thus they help to shape new generations of public intellectuals both inside and outside the academy, and are expected to help us understand how we might enhance ethical society.

In many societies, universities are seen to be the key institutions for social mobility. All of this is done through their enveloping agenda of producing, applying and disseminating knowledge. Primarily, they are the key engines of knowledge dissemination, since the production and application of knowledge happens also in other kinds of institutions. It would appear then that as social institutions of a special kind, universities could bring the processes and power of knowledge to these huge challenges facing societies around the world. This means bringing their enormous human capacity, the ethos of the world of academia, their physical presence, their infrastructural resources and perhaps most importantly, the talent, energy and passion of generations of students to bear on these serious socio-political challenges. Universities have the potential to be hugely influential; they could be the anchors around which societies begin to solve some of their most pressing problems.



Because of the knowledge-intensive nature of universities and hence their direct connection with the global knowledge enterprise, the shape of the relationships between universities and their local and national publics is influenced also by their role as globally connected institutions. They are institutional bridges that span multiple borders that drive the creation of global scholars who constantly see their work as having global dimensions. They act as pathways for the flow of knowledge, of scholars and of students; they are ideally placed to make the connections between the intensely local and global. Increasingly, as transactional bridges across nations they provide the basis for community members involved in university–community engagements to meet colleagues in other parts of the world. Arjun Appadurai (2001, 2011) talks about the emergence of international networks of activists for sustainable housing from India and across the world. Universities can be real bridges between the local and global, bringing the wealth of knowledge and experiences produced in local collaborations of engagement into global partnerships and thereby addressing, among other matters, the idea of international solidarity.

Even so, universities around the world face challenges of legitimacy. They are often described as elite, as being unresponsive to societal challenges or as being focused on the needs of political and economic elites. Declining governmental subsidies are increasingly the norm. Universities are constantly under pressure from employers for the perception that they provide education unsuited to the needs of the labour market. Moreover, local communities often find them to be alienating.

John Dewey's invocation of the school as a social centre is tied precisely to the idea that it was a social space that had to be occupied for social transformation, spaces within which society and education shaped each other (Benson et al. 2017). This is mirrored in more recent times by similar analyses of the role of universities in society. In Clark Kerr's reflections on the University of California in the 1960s he acknowledges its connection with its many communities: "Knowledge is now central to society. It is wanted, even demanded, by more people and more institutions than ever before. The university as producer, wholesaler and retailer of knowledge cannot escape service" (1963: 86). Bok (1982) explores the potential role of the research university in society as a multifaceted one, and is sensitive to the privilege of these powerful institutions in the midst of communities under stress.

## THINKING ABOUT UNIVERSITY–COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND THEIR SUSTAINABILITY

Readings' fear that the social purpose of universities has been eroded has to be addressed by understanding the extent to which the local and global conditions within which universities exist have changed. To provide a basis for the rest of this chapter, it is helpful to return to an idea that rests at the heart of a more radical approach to the engagement of universities with society, as eloquently captured by Benson et al. (2017: 69):

The higher education democratic, civic and community engagement movement emphasises that collaboration inside and outside the academy is necessary for producing knowledge that solves real-world problems and results in positive changes in the human condition.

What this means is that if universities are to address large societal problems then collaborative engagement has to be integrated into their core functions rather than as an add-on or a perception of something good that universities may do. This collaboration rests at the very heart of the mandate of universities as social institutions, as sites of production of knowledge, its application and its dissemination. The installation of such an enterprise into the knowledge project of institutions in turn ensures that engagement is integrated into their research and innovation, their teaching and learning (Bawa 2014).

This integration of engagement is fundamental to its sustainability. To examine the relevance of this, a South African example is instructive. During the years of apartheid some of the universities allowed safe, experimental, political and intellectual spaces for engagement between scholars and communities, but had little resolve to fund them in any serious, sustainable fashion even though they had such a large influence on the nature of the universities. In 1994, when change came and donor funding dried up, the projects folded. There was little, if any, institutional defence of them. In 1995, the University of KwaZulu-Natal had 87 such units, centres and programmes and these gradually folded as funding for them dissipated. These projects were dependent on external, soft funding from local and global foundations and international development agencies. This dependence on “soft” funding has been exacerbated. Using language related to universities’ three pillars of core activities – research, teaching and engagement – the South African Higher Education Act of 1997 implores universities to participate in community engagement. In this formulation, engagement is gently eschewed by the teaching and research mandates and forced into specially constructed units. Durban University of Technology adopted what may be a more valuable conceptualisation of engagement as one of the threads in the DNA of the institution and thus requiring its representation in all aspects of the university (Bawa 2015).

It seems important therefore that universities deliberately shape themselves to address the creation of intellectual, social and physical meshes between themselves and the struggles and aspirations of their communities. Before exploring this further let us attempt to delineate the kinds of influences of engagement that we can consider. Engagement is multidirectional and multidimensional in its design and its impact. It is multidirectional in the sense that its design usually influences both community and university partners (and other partners), though in different ways. And more importantly, it influences the future evolution of the university–community nexus. In the same vein, interaction is multidimensional in the sense that there will be many interfaces of connection or intersection such as research, teaching, capacity building, technology transfer, creating theory–praxis nexuses, co-designing social mobility enterprises and designing programmes that build critical thinking and scepticism and so on.

It is important to understand the implications of this. Both universities and communities are shaped by (and shaping) these interactions, even though there is a very significant set of power relations that define them. The only way to address these power relations is to establish a structural architecture for these engagements through careful consideration, through the development of a common understanding of the epistemology that underpins engagement, and through the construction of an institutional policy. This will also help with achieving sustainability of engagement. We shall return to these later.

## THE KNOWLEDGE PROJECT AS A BINDING IMPERATIVE

The development of a new social purpose for universities has to be linked with its central functions; as has been seen, this is about the production, application and dissemination of knowledge through the processes of research, innovation, teaching and learning. Readings' deep concern was that the role of university in addressing the construction, maintenance and development of the nation state, primarily through its work on what may be thought of as national culture, was being scratched out of the formal knowledge project. One way of building a new social purpose is to ensure that Kerr's idea of the "multiversity" intersects in multiple ways with a social justice agenda which is conducted, among others, through an engagement paradigm.

As far back as 1994, in a very substantial study of the way in which university–industry partnerships were evolving in Europe, Gibbons et al. (1994) described the way in which knowledge and innovation were being produced in what they called "Mode 2" knowledge production, as opposed to "Mode 1" knowledge, of which Newtonian physics could be seen as an exemplary model. Interesting new elements emerged in their study. For instance:

- ▶ the projects worked on are at the outset defined in the context of an applications imperative, rather than from an academic perspective;
- ▶ immediately, this implies that the project is described and defined by a team of academic and industry players – a clear indication that the definition of the problem is best constructed by a combination of different kinds of expertise;
- ▶ the teams are transient in nature, depending on the nature of the problem at hand;
- ▶ the teams are necessarily interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary, giving credence to the view that the real world is not kind enough to divide itself into academic disciplines;
- ▶ interestingly, most of these projects are conducted in the field rather than in university-based "laboratories";
- ▶ the outputs of these projects are of multiple kinds: presentations on the factory floor and conferences, reports, journal papers, patents, etc.

It is very likely that the work of Gibbons et al. is in need of fresh review and development. The explosion in technological advances in the past quarter of a century, the evolution of the world of work, major advances in the production, storage and analysis of big data, etc. all contribute to significant changes in the processes and methodologies of research and innovation.

Even so, it would not be hard to map modified versions of these characteristics of Mode 2 knowledge production onto university–community partnership projects and in fact Gibbons did extend this work to engagement (Gibbons 2000). As mentioned above, engagement is very often multidimensional in the sense that one set of interactions may well engage more than just one knowledge-intensive modality, simultaneously involving research, innovation, teaching, learning and extension to product-related outcomes. If we overlay this with multidirectional flows of knowledge interactions, the map of activities can be quite complex.

Returning once again to the South African context, one is particularly aware of the co-existence of knowledge systems within which people navigate for the construction of meanings. The social construction of scientific knowledge, for instance, is complex and challenging. Adam Ashforth (2002) describes this in his studies on the way in which some people in the township of Soweto in Johannesburg construct understandings of the transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in ways that are completely contrary to scientific understanding. This has taken place in the face of extraordinary advertising campaigns to educate the public. HIV/AIDS is clearly still a pandemic ravaging South Africa. The failure of social policy initiatives is assured in, for instance, the design of preventive measures without a thorough understanding of these alternative ways of knowing. Taking into account the complete hegemony of the “Western” scientific knowledge system in South Africa’s universities, it is clear that specific spaces need to be designed, where these co-existing knowledge systems may engage and interact with each other. This is not particular to South Africa. Suzanne Newcombe describes the way in which in India, Ayurvedic ways of understanding the human body and disease is so fundamentally different from what we might refer to as allopathic medicine. People slide from one system to the other depending on the circumstances. Addressing the interaction between these knowledge systems is a social justice issue (Newcombe 2017).

There are other kinds of knowing. A project to determine the ways in which the process of fermentation in the preparation of food evolved in a peri-urban community outside Durban has been described in a previous publication (Bawa 2015); this kind of engagement leads to an unearthing and codifying of systems of knowing that are deeply embedded in the histories and experiences of communities and individual community members (*ibid.*). Again, this opens the way for the slow erosion of the legitimacy deficit. It is in essence addressing the social justice agenda by helping to reshape the relationship between different ways of knowing, reinforcing the idea that universities ought to create the spaces for their interaction with each other.

The observation by the women involved in this study (and their families and community) that their practices in food preparation were somehow of interest to university-based scholars, seeing their ideas and practices as being responsible for the design of laboratory-based research, and the fact that those practices were codified and advanced onto the terrain of global knowledge, can only act to create better/stronger understandings between the community and the university. More importantly, before such actual research engagements began, an infrastructure for an ongoing connection between the university and the community was constructed involving local schools, the local government structure and the local clinic. There was a clear understanding that a suite of different forms of engagement would emerge: a multidimensional suite.

## **BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A VIGOROUS DEMOCRACY**

Before moving on, let us hark back to some of the public goods that universities are expected to deliver. Complex, well-functioning democracies require the renewal of the intellectual cohorts of general society, individuals and collectives that are active

citizens with social agency. They must do this through building critical thinking and critical awareness in order to introduce their graduates to systemic thinking in the context of the super-complexity of modern social and physical environments. They have to develop the skills of problem solving and be able to work in diverse teams. They must have sufficient background in philosophical discourse to engage in ethical reasoning and ethical development. This is a role they must play with their students but also with people in their immediate multiple communities. Engagement provides an exciting theory–praxis nexus where these skills may be honed in an ethos of service and where policy and implementation gather traction.

In a recent op-ed in *The New York Times*, Bret Stephens reports on a speech delivered to an audience in China by the University of Chicago's President, Robert J. Zimmer, in which he states that his university's impressive tally of 90 Nobel Prize winners follows from an academic culture that holds fast to "discourse, argument and lack of deference" (Stephens 2017). The foundation for this approach was established very much at the creation of the University of Chicago but was revitalised in a 2015 faculty report commissioned by Zimmer on freedom of expression (Stone et al. 2015). At a time when we sense an acceleration globally of powerful (and frightening) strands of anti-intellectualism and irrationality, it is important that universities and their internal communities continue to be bastions of free expression, discourse and debate that continue to drive the unfettered production of knowledge and the development of new generations of fearless intellectuals.

Universities, however, also have a role to play in extending the capacity of communities to be bastions of free expression, discourse and debate, in order to strengthen the capacity of societies to mediate the onslaught of "fake news", anti-intellectualism and the retreat from rationality that undermine democracy. The lack of deference that Zimmer desires for the University of Chicago, its students and its scholars must also pertain to broader society. The most reliable safeguard of democracy is the development of organic intellectuals, and this has to be seen as one of the outcomes of the theory–praxis nexuses of engagement.

## **AN EVOLVING ENGAGEMENT TERRAIN: THE EXAMPLE OF CITIZEN SCIENCE**

The university–community engagement movement in the United Kingdom has its roots in discourses on science and society and on the evolution of citizen science. The opportunities for the creation of these nexuses referred to above is growing and we are fast approaching the point where we may begin to see signs of the democratisation of knowledge production. University-based scholars and community-based activists might indeed begin to work together to jointly shape research activities aimed at some of the most difficult challenges facing the communities or to engage in (even esoteric) research activities about the local and/or global context. The generation of passion and enjoyment in science and humanities activities among young people is of vital importance not only to their own development but also to the capacity of their communities to engage in policy debates of all kinds. Shiv Visvanathan (1997) describes the devastating impact of top-down development programmes and projects on communities in India. It is of paramount importance

to build the capacity of communities to participate in developmental policy debates. The politics of engagement are also the politics of citizen science and need to be constantly evaluated and explored so that the principles of collegiality, mutuality and collaborative engagement are rigorously maintained.

On first reading John Steinbeck's *The log from the Sea of Cortez* (1958), one cannot help but be enthralled by the possibilities of the democratisation of scientific practice and the multiple ways in which the social construction of scientific knowledge can play itself out. Steinbeck narrates a voyage of discovery with his marine biologist friend, Ed Ricketts, to the Gulf of California (also known as the Sea of Cortez), during which they collect specimens and develop an understanding of the macro-scale biome and ecosystem of the intertidal zone of the Gulf. This collaboration of Steinbeck with Ricketts played itself out in several of Steinbeck's subsequent novels. Mary Ellen Hannibal's *Citizen scientist* captures through her personal explorations the passion, excitement and emotion in the complexity and beauty of scientific discovery. In describing a meeting arranged by the California Academy of Sciences on citizen science and the establishment of two large biodiversity research programmes, she feels a sense of belonging:

We've been here before, in a different way. In opening its arms to the scientific participation of regular people, the institution is returning to its roots. The academy was founded entirely by amateurs. And the contributions of amateurs working at the academy have been fundamental to the working out of one of arguably the most pivotal scientific breakthroughs of all time, the theory of evolution by natural selection. (Hannibal 2016: 197)

A South African example of such a project has been the compilation of the biome of Ukulinga, the experimental farm of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, by university-based biologists with 100 Grade 11 students from 3 local high schools.<sup>118</sup> The students were introduced to a number of instruments and techniques and to the ideas of the scientific method.

## ARCHITECTURES: STRUCTURES AND POLICIES

If we accept that engagement ought to be seen as being at the core of a university since it contributes at the heart of the knowledge project, it also has to be seen as a powerful mechanism for institutional transformation. Just as universities are specifically designed for research and teaching/learning, they must be designed for engagement with multiple dynamic interfaces where the intersections of humanity, its poetry, its technologies and nature are reimagined by multiple partners on an ongoing basis. The need for porous boundaries that are physical, intellectual and sociological in nature is vital for the university as a social institution to be home to different modes of research and teaching/learning and to permit a free, unhindered flow of people, ideas, methodologies and technologies through which multiple ways of knowing may interact with each other. At Durban University of Technology,

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118. The author is personally familiar with this example.

every research centre was expected to establish a dynamic interface, a platform for continued, continuous engagements.

The question has to be answered: if we accept that the university needs to develop new and exciting relationships with its communities – both internal and external – what are the implications for the conceptual and physical architecture of the 21st-century university? The recent exploration of universities as anchor institutions deserves serious consideration as a framework for a range of experiments around the world to facilitate higher education–community partnerships in a variety of contexts. The conference site of the Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF) meeting in New York in October 2017 describes anchor institutions as:

enduring organizations that are rooted in their localities. It is difficult for them to leave their surroundings even in the midst of substantial capital flight. The challenge to a growing movement is to encourage these stable local assets to harness their resources in order to address critical issues such as education, economic opportunity, and health. It is difficult to imagine fragile local economies and widening social disparities changing without leveraging stable institutions, especially amidst a decline in government resources. These dynamics have given rise to the concept “anchors” as agents of community and economic development. (AITF 2017)

Each context will produce its own brand of anchor institutions in the sense that the movement draws on local institutions which are a permanent feature to that context. The idea is that the place of engagement becomes the base for long-term, permanent partnerships.

The AITF (ibid.) defines the core values of anchor institutions as having a firm commitment to at least:

- ▶ collaboration and partnership;
- ▶ equity and social justice;
- ▶ democracy and democratic practice;
- ▶ commitment to place and community.

This is a powerful set of core values around which to imagine the construction of porous boundaries, dynamic interfaces, policy instruments and programmes of activities. One may imagine that the nurturing of inclusiveness in the face of diversity and difference would also be a core value, a way to ensure that diverse ways of knowing are embraced. Each context, however, with its unique signatures, will produce its own constructions of engagement. This may make it difficult to imagine the emergence of a theoretical framework for these institutions as a way of contributing to the re-imagination of the 21st-century university, though work in this direction is already being done (see, for example Ehlenz 2017).

## SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In some form or another, universities around the world are facing a difficult moment as social institutions. To a large extent this mirrors the major challenges unfolding on the global stage and the nature of the response of universities to them. Among

these challenges, three stand out. The first is the impact of human consumption on what was referred to above as the Earth–human nexus, with its devastating implications if global warming is not reversed. The second is the stubbornness of deep and grinding poverty in the context of obscenely growing inequality. The third is the degradation of democracies in many parts of the world. If Readings (1996) was looking for a social purpose for universities then these (and others) provide the basis for a re-imagination. The key issue is that none of these challenges can be addressed simply within the walls of institutions. These are social challenges, and solutions can only be developed in the context of collaboration between Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge production processes, through basic fundamental research and intensive engagement with social partners (Gibbons et al. 1994).

This kind of engagement, if managed in terms of the learned lessons of so many collaborative partnerships globally, is fundamental not only as a way to address the solutions to these challenges, but also to address the issues raised by Krull (2017). The only way that social institutions such as universities can withstand the assault on them in challenging political and economic circumstances is by the emergence of broad-based public support for them. The key challenge here is to ensure that individuals and communities see these as “their” institutions, as their key means of addressing the challenges they face, as places where they find themselves represented.

The construction of a social justice agenda as a motif for the research and teaching/learning activities of universities addresses the critical question being raised by the students at South African universities. Following the logic of Visvanathan (1997), there is an ever-present danger that top-down approaches may have the most devastating impact on precisely the people and communities who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of such activities. Democratic, collaborative engagement in any social justice agenda is critical to mitigate against the risks of the social engineering so often at the centre of development policies. As universities open their doors to students from local communities, the emergence of demands such as this one will emerge naturally.

Over the history of engagement, much has been written about sustainable approaches to democratic, collaborative initiatives, numerous conferences have been held and many practices have evolved. Constructing the architecture for engagement is probably the key challenge facing universities. The gradual but definite emergence of signs of the increasing democratisation of the knowledge enterprise will be accelerated if facilitating intellectual, physical, social and policy architectures are created. Interfaces to turn the university inside out will enhance and strengthen not just the communities which surround the universities but also the universities as knowledge-intensive institutions.

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## Chapter 15

# Universities and their communities in disruptive times

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Aleksa Bjeliš

### INTRODUCTION

In periods of political, economic and social stability universities' activities are usually well harmonised with the strategic projections and stated priorities of political powers. Whatever the profile of a political system, two things are expected of universities. The first is to provide highly qualified professionals, in other words, to ensure the steady regeneration of the key actors of social and economic development. The second is to enable scientific and technological progress, based on creative human work. Universities are responsible for the establishment and protection of the environment necessary for such creativity. The responsibility of states, in turn, is to support universities in that mission by ensuring stable social, financial and logistical conditions. The issues at stake are thus university autonomy on the one hand, political credibility on the other, and the accountability of both states and universities. In this respect the Humboldtian tradition is as relevant today as two centuries ago.

A third mission exists: the social engagement of universities. Depending on the historical and national context, this includes a broad spectrum of possible tasks. The first, which can hardly be avoided, is related to the role of universities in the strengthening and further development of democratic societies. This mission was conceived more than 200 years ago, along with the birth of the first modern democracies, enshrined by two solemn declarations that have remained fundamental to the constitutional legislations of the United States<sup>119</sup> and France.<sup>120</sup> Particularly important in this context are the multitude of ways in which universities prepare their students for active and responsible citizenship. This is a considerably demanding subject under permanent scrutiny. On the one hand, universities must act as organic parts of their societies in responding to constant societal challenges. On the other hand, universities very often, in their engagements, refer to the most fundamental academic, ethical and pedagogical values, rooted in medieval, even ancient, times.

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119. *United States Declaration of Independence* of 1776, see [www.ushistory.org/declaration/document](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document), accessed 30 March 2018.

120. *La Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen)* of 1789, see <http://bit.ly/DecDHetCit>, accessed 30 March 2018.

To contribute to the development of democracies is not only to inform and teach about them, but also to participate in them, and what is more, to deal and live with their specific dilemmas and challenges. They differ not only from continent to continent, but also from country to country, particularly across the European region. Traditions and methods of outreach and disseminating activities practised by contemporary universities are also diverse. This is certainly the case with universities on opposite shores of the Atlantic, as demonstrated in detail in two previous monographs in the Council of Europe Higher Education Series (Bergan, Harkavy and van't Land 2013; Bergan, Gallagher and Harkavy 2015).

These issues are complex enough in the circumstances of “constructive” and stable political and social conditions. Naturally, it is even more difficult to analyse and interpret the position of universities in disruptive times marked by dramatic transitions and highly unstable and unpredictable political and social processes. The history of such turbulence is long, instructive, and has been covered by numerous testimonies and treatises. Still, whether it is global or local, each new case of disruption adds something new to this rich history. The most recent case in this respect is the transitional period in post-communist European states, particularly in my native country, Croatia, over the past three decades. The present contribution is based on my personal engagements and observations, and as such has no professional or analytical pretensions.

## HISTORY BEFORE OUR TIME

The history of European universities stretches back a millennium, with a few milestones to mark their transformation. It seems useful for the present purpose to keep in mind the impact of these significant events on contemporary universities, particularly those experiencing modern disruptions.

The most significant stage in this regard was ignited by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era that followed it. This historical period saw a rupture with traditional universities, which were rooted in early medieval times and characterised by the co-existence of cognition with transcendence and divine monarchism. The new generation of institutions were increasingly based on free critical thinking and enlightenment,<sup>121</sup> and were not only driven by novel pragmatic purposes based on the demands and needs of newly established civil societies, but were also subject to new tools of state control in the formulation and realisation of such purposes.

This transition was followed by a lengthy period,<sup>122</sup> of more than 100 years, of steady transformation of universities into national institutions. Here the term “national” has

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121. For more detail about the history of French higher education, particularly about the establishment and the role today of *grandes écoles*, see Tronchet (2015).

122. A large proportion of these universities were founded during the 16th and 17th centuries either as Protestant universities or Jesuit academies following the schism in Western Christianity at the beginning of the 16th century. Although in sharp confrontation with each other, regarding higher education both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation led to an enlargement of study contents aiming to meet actual civic needs, and a greater openness to students from all social classes as well as ethnic and religious groups. See Clark (2006).

political or cultural significance according to the respective developments of the French or German concepts of modern universities. This transformation – accompanied by the ongoing tendency of universities to preserve their traditional values – was highly influenced by Kant's famous treatise of 1798, followed by Wilhelm von Humboldt's formulation of a programmatic platform for modern universities. Declaring the unity of research and teaching, the protection of academic freedom, and the vital role of faculties covering the (liberal) arts and sciences, it was a base for the establishment of modern Prussian (German) universities (Bahti 1987).

Together with inputs from British universities, these formulations in many aspects have guided the development of global higher education until now. Particularly remarkable in this period was the implantation of these concepts in the development of the university landscape in the United States, enriched by the pioneering role played by these universities in the creation of a new, enthusiastic and prosperous state. This mission is even now much more present in North America than in Europe. While American universities are often active as initiators, practical social actors and anchors in their local communities, European universities are primarily observers, interpreters and distant, objective arbiters.

Given the intense processes of global harmonisation involving practically all large higher education systems, including those from other continents, it would be natural to expect the further harmonisation of traditional and more modern active practices, as well as many other university practices, to continue in a constructive way. The rational arguments for such optimistic projections can be connected to the rapid progress which has characterised the development of modern universities in recent decades. The trends, measured most often by the exponential rise of the most relevant indicators such as the number of students and the intensity of research activities with successful outcomes enabling tremendous technological and cultural achievements, have indeed been impressive.

The tenet of permanent progress towards a better future may be well founded. It has been, and is now, persuasive enough to generations who continue to contribute to it in their daily work and creative efforts. However, history has also taught us that the flow of time is not always towards a better future, but may also lead to disappointing throwbacks. Most instructive in this respect is the European 20th century – with two disastrous world wars and two totalitarian ideological and political projects that were initiated amidst the ruins of the first war, led up to the cataclysmic second war, and resulted in the sharp geopolitical rupture of Europe until the end of the century (Kershaw 2015). Among the many dangers inherited from these times, that of equalising these two totalitarianisms, very often present in post-modern reminiscences and political confrontations, mostly in transitional post-communist countries, is avoided here. The concept of historical time and its flow, for instance, has substantially different meanings in the national-socialist ideology and in the Marxist philosophy which is the fundament of communist ideology (Camus 1951).

The former starts with a time reversal to the myth of racial superiority as the basis for a project to revitalise modern society. In Europe, it attracted not only frustrated masses but also some leading brilliant thinkers of the time, as the famous rector's inauguration address illustrates (Heidegger 1983/1933). That episode warns us

that a new force, clearly and directly expressing anti-intellectual and anti-academic attitudes and intentions to eliminate essential university values, can in a brief time succeed in getting support even from the most prestigious academic circles. Once this goal has been achieved, the rest is a matter of routine, and the path towards further accommodation and moulding of the academy in accordance with the ideological, propagandist and political needs of new lords and their regimes is open and free of any significant resistance. Academic freedoms based on an inspiring and constructive time arrow are then replaced by a time mastered by others, and by the readiness of erstwhile free and critical thinkers now willing to ignore the unpleasant, even horrifying, products of this mastery.

The time arrow in communism, on the contrary, follows the most rigidly imposed waypoints, based on a basic ideological definition that points towards the ultimate asymptote of the perfect society, free of all imaginable conflict. By this dictum, inscribed in all known communist revolutionary programmes and post-revolutionary practices, the value of that goal justifies all methods, tools, sacrifices and brutalities towards all sorts of enemies that appear to be necessary for its achievement. Charged with charm and threat at the same time, such programmes perhaps had even more success than those of national socialism in attracting academic minds and recruiting them for concrete activities in the initial stages of their realisations.

Although usually of minor intensity within universities, such romantic enthusiasm was, when incorporated into the revolutionary mainstreams, accepted by rational university majorities as a leading driver in new circumstances. Initial spontaneity evolved rapidly into rigid rules which situated universities among the most important institutions responsible for permanent progress, particularly regarding scientific, technical and economic issues. The stabilisation of new powers and regimes stabilised also the new position of universities. This was a rather sharp disruption which resulted in a strange combination of creativity and submissive obedience to rulers.

Within universities that as institutions, voluntarily or not, had to accept this role, the diversity of individual cases and destinies remained wide, intriguing and unsuited to any simple classification. Here one comes across the innumerable outcomes of the confrontation of academic traditions and new philosophically grounded constraints.

The most frequent conflict, at least in the field of natural sciences and technology, was the combination of efforts to engage with global competition, and a cautious opposition towards regimes. As a rule, the latter managed to exploit such efforts as one of the most powerful tools in their promotion of permanent, continual progress, and even superiority, with respect to the adversary of capitalism.

More challenging for the regimes were critical thinkers and scholars, mostly in the humanities and arts, with their disturbing texts and actions. Regimes either pretended to ignore them, if they were considered weak and benign, or reacted harshly when this was not the case. Reactions ranged from expulsions from the university and other forms of persecution, to expulsions from the country, not to mention brutal punishment including physical liquidation in the most radical and cruel regimes and times (Solzhenitsyn 1973; Štajner 1971).

The history of all communist totalitarian states is marked by such dissidents. Some received wide global attention and appreciation, acquiring distinguished places in the history of intellectual dignity and bravery. Particularly significant were those who began as ardent revolutionaries, even as the leaders of revolutions and post-revolutionary regimes. Those who continued by personal critical analysis to cognitive and philosophical conversions (Leonhard 1955; Djilas 1957) often acquired the public qualification of “traitor” to the revolution, the people and the party.

Today, following the collapse of such regimes, with immense piles of systematically produced, official, pro-regime writings having fallen into oblivion, it is these dissident contributions that remain as practically the only relevant and usable literature from this period. Such writings by dissidents who were also highly qualified and respected scholars in the human sciences (Bewes and Hall 2011) remain essential for a theoretical understanding of the challenges and dilemmas of modern societies, including the most developed. Quite paradoxically, those within universities who did not follow the dogma of mechanical, progressive time, and remained faithful to independent and critical reasoning, contributed to the development of true academic and human values in tough times. Others who opted for this dogma were historically discarded even before the final collapse of communist regimes.

## THE HISTORY OF OUR AGE – A TIME OF TRANSITION

For about one half of the European continent the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989 marked the end of a long, oppressive and lethargic totalitarian period. This was also the beginning of the transition from the “people’s democracies” to the re-establishment of genuine democratic life, competitive economies and exposure to the global free market. Macro-politically, this process started with the rapid, but still peaceful, disappearance of political and military alliances, and with the dissolution of federal political structures like the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. The breakdown of federal Yugoslavia, the only state based on the communist doctrine which remained outside the rigid Eastern Bloc, was much more dramatic. It ended with a series of tragic conflicts which added to the inglorious war history of Europe’s 20th century.

In fact, the unification of Germany in 1990 was the only case of constructive political enlargement in this initial transitional stage. The next steps in enlargement were the accession of 11 transitional countries from central and south-eastern Europe into the European Union, realised in three stages from 2004 to 2013, together with the award of candidate status, today still in the negotiation phase, for some others.

The political will and corresponding active integrative policy of the EU initiated a long and demanding process of reducing the considerable disparities between two systems previously in conflict, accumulated over half a century of European division. The long-term aim is the gradual recovery of the majority of transitional countries and synchronisation of their political and economic systems with those already present in the “old” EU. This journey, however, remains uncertain and faces many obstacles.

The most significant warning indicators in this sense, shared by practically all transitional countries, are their lagging behind economic and technological global trends on the one hand, and the deficiencies and fragilities of their democratic practices on the other. These two issues are strongly correlated, or rather the former has a

considerable impact on the latter. These issues had very direct implications for the functioning of universities and other higher educational and research institutions in transitional countries, and will be explored in more detail in the next two sections.

## ECONOMIC CRISES AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The first stage of transition from the planned production of goods and services to the capitalist free market economy revealed the full vulnerability of socialist economies. Many factories were closed, sometimes by sacrificing their production, facilities and other accumulated values through obscure transactions that delivered them into the hands of predators, in the manner of the early, wild capitalism of the 19th century. This provoked a chain of negative consequences. The primary victims were the employees of these enterprises. Most were forced to go into retirement, while substantial numbers with high levels of professional skills fled their countries in search of jobs. On wider national scales, the decline of domestic industrial production was substituted by the massive import of cheaper goods from foreign suppliers. Further, economic survival was often tied to the export of raw materials and human resources as well as to public investment in the service sectors, often at the price of contracting debts with foreign banks.

These structural changes had several immediate and enduring consequences on national higher education and research. At first, the radical decrease of job offers hit the younger generations. Since the welfare systems were not able to support them appropriately, many jobless teenagers continued their education at higher level. Very soon, albeit for distinct reasons, some transition countries came to have the highest percentages of youth in tertiary education, comparable with that of highly developed countries. But if in the latter these high participation rates were the consequence of real societal and technological needs, in transitional countries it was mainly a substitute for unemployment, and a way to postpone employment for a few years.

With the shattering of industrial and agricultural production, the demands of job markets also shifted from the less available engineering and technological profiles towards job positions demanding managerial, administrative and various soft skill profiles. Students' interests followed this shift, and the universities were soon confronted with corresponding imbalances in numbers of attendees in their study programmes.

Simultaneously, universities came under more pressure to increase efficiency and concentrate primarily on studies considered to have visible and immediate utility. The newly formulated criteria of efficiency and the new political preferences on which funding policies were based,<sup>123</sup> in practice, always went with the marginalisation of less profitable studies oriented towards cultural aspects and critical thinking. Broadly, such studies are not, or are barely, sustainable, and therefore depend on the support and goodwill of the rest of the university. Also, they are expected to adapt to new concepts and priorities reflecting national interests and needs. Views

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123. This trend has global significance, as demonstrated by Martha Nussbaum (2010).



on the latter, as a rule, vary only slightly among the political parties likely to be in a position to govern.

These challenges can lead to a significant number of threats for internal university coherence. They can be handled only with an elevated level of responsibility on the part of leaders and all others in charge. Otherwise, one cannot exclude new “conflicts between faculties” but at a more prosaic and inferior level<sup>124</sup> than that elaborated in Kant’s celebrated treatise (1792/1798).

The measure of efficiency in the above sense is primarily employability. In countries with high unemployment rates, reduced productive capacities, and intensified investments in public infrastructure followed by rapid increase of total external debt, the job market reacts with a relative increase of employability in various service branches, as well as in the public, mainly administrative, sector. In such circumstances, the most threatened are those humanistic professions that are limited to national disciplines and topics, and to native languages. Without opportunities for appropriate positions abroad, newcomers with such qualifications must often resort to inappropriate jobs, not related to their expertise, and less demanding regarding levels of competence.

In contrast, job-seekers with qualifications in the natural sciences, engineering and technology, particularly those with biomedical expertise, although comparably well treated at home, have much better opportunities abroad. They are thus primarily oriented towards countries with considerably higher living standards and attractive conditions for further professional advancement and promotions. One is confronted with the “brain drain” syndrome, one of the most painful recent transitional phenomena. Previously, it was hindered by closed frontiers and the imposed immobility of citizens under rigid regimes, though it was already nascent in others that were more liberal, and intensified dramatically in transitional conditions. A further aspect of this phenomenon is the decline of research and development activities, to which we turn now.

## ECONOMIC CRISES AND RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

For the communist bloc, research and development (R&D) was a representative field of competition with the Western capitalist system. Research was considered a symbol of success of the communist project: scientists were recognised as an integral part of the working class, in fact as its social and cultural upgrade, or enrichment, in some sense proclaiming a bright and ultimately conflict-free future. Besides these ideological motivations, there were other more pragmatic reasons. Although separated from international competition, socialist industries still needed technological inputs. Sometimes these needs were very sophisticated, for instance in the nuclear, arms

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124. An example of such undesirable trends can be recognised in the statement by the dean of a faculty of human and social sciences from one transitional country: “Nothing in the World will happen if all our physicists disappear. If all our experts in Indology, German studies, and Slavic studies disappear, the World would have a quake in these disciplines”. This provoked an avalanche of reactions, from the wise to less wise, and appeared to be an announcement of further worrying intra-university disturbances and a weakening of academic coherence in the years to come. One gets the impression that Kant’s history is to be repeated as a farce.

and space programme in the Soviet Union, and in analogous branches on smaller scales in other communist countries.

For many individuals, particularly for those with superior talents, the only way to reach their potential was to participate in such grandiose ideological and technological programmes. In fact, it was only with their contributions that these programmes had objective chances of success. The interests of both sides were thus the driving motivations for such, mostly tacit, alliances of the regime and academia, or to be more precise the more accommodating part of academia, often termed the “honest intelligentsia” in official propaganda.

Most of these motivations became irrelevant in the transitional disruptions. National R&D systems, as well as their funding, to a great extent lost their purpose. Still, in the absence of novel approaches in national R&D policies, they continued to exist, but with provisional and drastically reduced public funding, and no other support. This led to the rapid deterioration of working conditions, particularly due to obsolete equipment and intolerably poor employee remuneration, although many staff had reputations as globally recognised scientists. The degradation of R&D systems was further compounded by the almost total absence of funding from the non-governmental business sector. The reason was that the new post-transitional enterprises initiated by foreign investments were mostly based on imported technologies. Therefore, they had no direct interest in contributing to the development of existing or new national technological projects. In such conditions a considerable number of the best, most renowned scientists left these countries and continued their careers abroad. Inhibiting work conditions, as well as the search for attractive doctoral and postdoctoral topics and supervisors, also caused many young scientists at the beginning of their careers to leave.

This brain drain is not only financially and existentially motivated, but is also linked to additional aspects which illustrate the position of transitional countries within the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. Strategic concepts launched by the Bologna Declaration<sup>125</sup> covering higher education, and the series of Framework Programmes, including Horizon 2020,<sup>126</sup> aimed to increase European competitiveness in R&D. The latter goal can be achieved only by increasing the competitiveness of researchers in all involved countries. To this end they should work in well-balanced and comparable conditions. Indeed, among the corresponding measures of the European Commission those aiming to harmonise the whole European continent, or at least the EU, by reducing existing disparities were highly prioritised in all projections and decisions.

The most crucial and decisive in this respect was the demand that by 2020 all EU countries allocate at least 3% of their national Gross Domestic Product to R&D. This seems to be a realistic and achievable aim for the 15 “old” members, since this

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125. For documents and activities related to the European Higher Education Area and the Bologna Process see [www.ehea.info](http://www.ehea.info), accessed 30 March 2018.

126. For the Framework Programmes see <http://bit.ly/2KgQMf2>, accessed 30 March 2018. For the strategic programme Horizon 2020 see <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020>, accessed 30 March 2018.

percentage is projected for 13 among them, and is already today above 2%, the only exceptions being Italy and Greece, with respective projections for 2020 of 1.53% and 0.67%. The situation of the 13 “young” members is just the opposite: only Slovenia and Estonia declared a goal of 3%, while for 11 other countries the official projections are 2% or below. The projections for transitional countries that are not members of the EU are as a rule even more modest (UNESCO 2015). Such projections indicate that, contrary to strategic goals, the gap between “old” and “transitional” Europe will inevitably continue to increase, which is a very worrying sign, particularly considering that the numbers of inhabitants in each part are comparable.<sup>127</sup>

In this sense, the frequent expectations in transitional countries (expressed mainly by political authorities, often as a vindication for their restrictive policy towards the R&D sector) that this gap can be compensated by increasing the number of grants from competitive European funds is plainly groundless and illusory. Even for the most successful and competitive countries these sources are quite symbolic, but important, since they stimulate the increase of quality of entire national systems. More than 95% of the funding in these countries comes from domestic sources, public or private. So the impressive examples of applicants from less developed countries obtaining respectable European grants that cover the majority of their research expenses, are – despite intensive media promotion and heavy political praise – only exceptions that affirm the rule.

Thus, the success of countries in the European competitive programmes goes together with strategic, permanent and efficient national funding. In fact, in the absence of a national R&D strategy and of its steady realisation, internal problems and weaknesses pop up as soon as participation in European programmes begins. There is solid evidence that disappointments outnumber successes in this sense. For example, in the period 2007-16, of 7 563 grants from the European Research Council in three categories (Advanced grants, Consolidator grants and Starting grants), 15 “old” EU countries obtained 6 396 projects (84.57%), the remaining 13 EU countries and all other transitional countries obtained 148 projects (1.96%), and other eligible countries (Israel, Switzerland, Norway, Turkey, etc.) obtained 1 019 projects (13.47%) (Papazoglou 2017). The funding of technological projects shows similar patterns.<sup>128</sup>

A glance at the numerous evaluations and rankings of world universities – whatever the reliability of the broad spectrum of criteria used – confirms these warning indications. Only about a dozen leading universities from transitional Europe rank within the 500 best universities in the world, and within the 200 best European universities. By comparison, the United Kingdom and Germany are represented in these lists with about 40 universities, the Netherlands with about 20, and Austria with about 10. When compared to the number of inhabitants in these regions, the

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127. Among ex-Warsaw-Pact and ex-Yugoslav states there are 11 members of the EU and about a dozen others, mostly members of the Council of Europe (except for the former Soviet republics in Central Asia), with a total population of about 350 million. The population of the countries belonging to “old Europe” (17 members of the EU plus Norway, Iceland and Switzerland) is about 420 million.

128. For instance, in the projects within the programme Future and Emerging Technologies (see <http://bit.ly/2KhreOT>, accessed 30 March 2018), the respective financial proportions have been, in millions of euros: 357.3 (90.8%), 13.2 (3.4%) and 22.9 (5.8%).

figures show that there are 1-2 million inhabitants in developed Europe, and about 30 million inhabitants in transitional Europe, per world-class university.

These ratios are evidently comparable to the ratios of data related to the funding and quality of output in R&D in these two parts of Europe. Even more worrying is the fact that, despite all the strategic goals, concrete attempts and stimulating measures of the EU and other relevant institutions, this gap is becoming wider as time passes. This could generate economic and political crises and seriously harm the political stability and harmonious development of Europe as a whole.

## THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND INTELLECTUALS IN TRANSITIONAL TIMES

Crises are usually preceded, and followed, by social stress and tensions. In such situations the third mission of universities, related to their social engagements, becomes even more perceptible and delicate than in more stable times. After the disruptions of 30 years ago societies in transitional countries passed through deep, sometimes dramatic, changes. Universities shared this experience and experienced the consequences, some of which have already been described here and elsewhere (Bjeliš 2015).

Post-transitional phases in these societies have as a rule been marked by stressfully and persistently facing the traumatic past of totalitarian regimes and even the earlier periods of the two world wars in the first half of the 20th century. Nevertheless, these periods are today often reminisced about as a kind of “better” history. Frequently explored in the ideological colours of actual political rivalries, these interpretations open up a lot of controversies even within the historiographies produced by historians. Confronted with media confusion that is replacing scientific, non-partisan objectivity, many of those who would like to have reliable insights into recent history and understand its influences find themselves in the position of using their own family memories as sources, constructing their own homemade historical frameworks.

Together with such uncertainties, post-transitional societies usually face the disappointments and frustrations that succeeded the initial enthusiasms and hopes of the transition. Such a post-disruptive state of bewilderment is common and discourages many in their attempts to find the energy and motivation for new initiatives and responses to actual, sometimes acute, social problems. Instead, it motivates revivals of social and ideological tensions which sometimes resemble those from the times between the two world wars. Attempts to revive, and reconstruct, history and tradition co-exist with the need to confront the problems globally present in all modern societies. In fact, they are unavoidably mixed. On the one hand, this inflames previously suppressed tendencies towards autarchic radicalisms.<sup>129</sup> On the other, this confronts intellectual and academic elites with an urgent demand for responses based on objective scientific achievements and professional insights.

We come again to the third university mission, and the responsibility of members of academic communities towards the societies in which they live and act. Prior

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129. The recent frequently used term is “sovereignism”.

to individual engagements, however, we must ask whether universities enable and encourage engagement as a permanent and highly desirable activity, in full harmony with their traditional values, including autonomy and academic integrity, as underlined in the Magna Charta Universitatum (MCO 1988). As already stated, universities themselves experienced a transition from a previously controlled and protected position in totalitarian systems to a current formally autonomous status with a low degree of accountability on both academic and political sides.

On the academic side, this is manifested mostly in a lack of motivation and readiness on the part of universities to undergo painful structural reforms and changes that would help them approach global and European standards of autonomy. These profound reforms are, however, indispensable, particularly for old and large flagship national universities, which are most burdened by the legacy of their past. Without them, these universities will not be able to improve their already-mentioned modest global competitiveness, or to generate a new impetus for necessary changes within their national environments. The absence of structural changes will also endanger basic university values. Even more, due to the intrusion of existing general attitudes in society, it will increase the vulnerability of universities to internal malpractices, including by university leaders.

What prevails in public perceptions is indifference and underestimation of the societal importance of universities. This is more a negation than an affirmation of university values and missions, as well as of their endeavours in general. In such circumstances university values can be revived and defended only from the inside, by fresh and creative individual inputs, and with the permanent support of all parts of the academic community. The personal integrity of its members is thus a prerequisite for a strong, coherent and self-confident university, ready to act constructively in achieving its social mission.

Personal integrity as an expression of intellectual self-respect is a unique, but not the easiest, choice among possible alternatives. Easier, and certainly more frequent, in transitional and post-transitional times, are passivity and non-engagement through numerous means: intentional reduction of freedom in thinking and action; hiding one's personality within that of the impersonal crowd; widening the notion of intellectual freedom to irrelevant scales and issues; making engagements devoid of any substance and transparency; and, finally, the freedom to do nothing. It is easy to recognise here the legacy of ways used to survive in totalitarian circumstances. Back then, academic freedoms were forcibly, or by way of voluntary submission, substituted by a freedom to be passive, not present, not involved, and a readiness to react to any – even constructive – pressure or demands as part of the sometimes very sophisticated ways of minimal response.

Recovery from such inherited unsteadiness, phobia and escapism, and establishing the milestones of intellectual integrity and self-confidence, may be a very slow process, demanding patience and persistence. It is of the utmost importance to hasten it by changing attitudes, particularly among new generations not burdened by the shadows of the past, common to both transitional societies and to their universities. In this sense the urgent strengthening of both democratic awareness and academic

integrity in their students are two inseparable commitments, which support the third mission of universities in post-transitional times.

To sum up, responsible democracy and academic creativity are both prominent among societal expectations, again, actualised by the great global challenges of our time. They renew the basic willingness to achieve social justice, to ensure the rights of honest, diligent people to be free from exploitation, to encourage belief in a truly equitable and rightful society and state, etc. Many times in history such attempts have been conceived and initiated by critical thinkers, and as many times negated by the totalitarian intrusions that mutilated their ideas (Traverso 2016). Still, they always return to the surface, sometimes in the most unexpected ways and times. Examples abound, and transitional societies will not be the last to experience this phenomenon.

## PERSPECTIVES

The transformation within universities in transitional societies was not as rapid as the dramatic changes in other sectors, particularly the economy, politics and public life in general. Still, as already argued, at least equally dramatic were the changes regarding the position of universities and their relationship with political authorities and other key stakeholders. This is not surprising, since the previous political systems enabled the survival of universities, even the fulfilment of their roles and purposes in accordance with the interests of political rulers and communist parties as the backbones of regimes. However, they abandoned their essential autonomy and the academic freedom of their members. Universities therefore must revive these values to attain full public trust, and to contribute at the same time to the revival of key principles crucial for the further development of their democratic societies.

With these basic demands accomplished, universities can come to be seen as recognisable pillars present, as in other modern societies, in all relevant and crucial developmental elements of their countries. Let us highlight four such dominant elements, and emphasise for each of them desirable perspectives directly linked to the constructive societal activities of well-organised universities, as well as worst-case scenarios where such universities do not exist. There is no need to remind ourselves that actual countries and their universities are usually situated between these two extremes.

### Economic elements

Universities are responsible for furthering the development of stable job markets. They are obliged to ensure a balanced proportion of professionals covering all the economic, public and cultural needs of modern society, as well as adequate employability at all educational levels. Universities are equally responsible for the scientific and technological development of the country and its economy.

Failure of these basic university missions would result in devastated economies unable to recover from disruptions. Due to technological stagnation, national economies would orient themselves exclusively towards the service sector as the key source

of Gross National Product. This would cause excessive economic emigration and brain drain, which could seriously endanger the demographic stability of the whole of society.

## Political elements

By educating and forming new generations of future citizens, universities have a key role in the strengthening of democratic culture, and the development of young democracies as a basis of the political stability of transitional countries, and of the whole transitional part of Europe.

Lacking such permanent inputs, one can expect the persistence of political habits inherited from previous historical phases, not just from the totalitarian “people’s democracies”, but also from the troubled times between the two world wars. As actual experiences show, they are usually disguised, in the form of new rules, public expressions and modes of behaviour.<sup>130</sup>

## Social elements

Through their activities, particularly through public interventions based on professional competences, the members of an academic community can contribute considerably to the consolidation and strengthening of social cohesion, which is at stake in transitional societies today. Suffice to mention the role of intercultural dialogue across a series of issues that have generated social tensions in practically all democratic societies in recent years. An honest approach to the problems of modern civilisation is always the most convincing response to the current disdain for scientific arguments and expertise, increasingly present in public discourse, particularly among decision makers, including those in the highest political positions (see for example Reilly 2017).

Without these contemporary efforts towards enlightenment on the part of scientists, scholars and experts in general, recovery of the social democratic framework will be considerably slowed down, and will in fact encourage a further deepening of historical controversies and ideological divisions. This will be accompanied by a low level of readiness to listen to others without prejudice and the reinforcement of various corrupting elements, already present in transitional societies.

## Intellectual elements

Universities are called on to upgrade permanently the personal competences of their students and alumni in confronting rapidly changing professional demands, and to encourage their self-confidence and the ethical integrity necessary for active

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130. The recently recognised post-truth era in which alternative facts are becoming notoriously present in the political and public life of developed democracies (Higgins 2016) resembles in many respects such disguised political habits. This is probably a rare case in which the experiences of transitional universities could be useful to universities from the United States and western European countries.

and fruitful participation in resolving problems that they come across in their professional and social lives.

In the absence of such care, societies which are working to recover their coherence and readiness to confront contemporary civilisational challenges will hardly be able to complete this process. They will be overwhelmed by attempts to reinforce the moods of unquestionable exclusivity, accompanied as a rule by collective paranoia and xenophobic syndromes.

## CONCLUSION

One could say that, following the political disruptions at the end of the 20th century, the countries involved found themselves on the open, rough sea of a complex globalised world which had been mostly closed to them before. The same is valid for the societies and for the leading universities in these countries. Almost 30 years later they are still searching for safe and stimulating harbours which would enable their further development and prosperous future. Seemingly the pursuit is still under way, and it is too early to drop anchor. In this pursuit societies are not divisible from universities. Solutions should be common for both. With them, a new anchoring could start, in the best tradition of anchor universities and the societies which they serve and with which they develop.

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## Chapter 16

# Universities and their communities – Role as anchor institutions: European policy perspectives

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*John H. Smith*

### INTRODUCTION

Europe's universities today find themselves in an increasingly complex and demanding environment requiring considerable adaptability and flexibility on their part. The main characteristics of this environment are the demands of the new knowledge economy and major 21st-century challenges such as globalisation, rapidly accelerating technological development and demographic change, which require new skills and training as well as innovative thinking and approaches in research, management and governance in both public and private domains. Because of their unique role in combining education and training, research and innovation in an integrated mission – and striving for excellence in doing so – the role of universities is fundamental to the successful development of knowledge economies that are able to meet such global challenges.

In European policy language addressing how to tackle these challenges, certain buzzwords have gained prominence in recent years – the most prominent of which has been “smart”. We need “smart growth”, “smart cities”, etc., wherein “smart” is mainly described in terms of investment in technological innovation, with much less emphasis on the need also for social innovation. However, enhanced investment in educational programmes for citizens in the form of both initial training to enter the workforce and civil society, and retraining in a lifelong learning context to meet the requirements of rapidly changing skills requirements in the knowledge economy, will be essential to meet these future challenges. In fact, the core need will be for “Smart People for Smart Growth” which was the phrase chosen by the European University Association (EUA) to make the case for such further “human capital” investment in education, research and innovation. It was emphasised that:

the task of universities was to create new knowledge and to educate people to be creative in their personal development, in their economic activity at the workplace and as citizens of a civil society. Innovation is, at its roots, all about people and their ability to reach their full potential in skill development and resourcefulness, and fostering the right conditions to achieve and maintain it. (EUA 2011: 1)

## GLOBAL AND LOCAL

While many global challenges require global approaches, many more will necessitate regional and local responses based upon appropriately placed professional and research expertise, skills and capacities. Universities not only provide new knowledge and skills through their graduates but also play a key role in building partnerships with a full range of actors in their regional and local context (enterprises, government authorities, community and civil society groups, schools and colleges, etc.). Such partnerships have to be nurtured and are often based on carefully built trust relationships between individual academics (as teachers and/or researchers) and these social actors. The challenge for universities is to underpin such individual initiatives with university leadership-level strategic support and team-building (bringing colleagues together from across disciplines and engaging students in regional and local challenges through project-based components of their studies). A key element of such strategies is identifying defined fields and foci of partnerships (of shared importance between the university and partners) for medium- to long-term commitment and investment. Policy support measures that only provide short-term money with many strings attached (which is often the case) are unlikely to foster such lasting partnerships.

Policy measures aimed at fostering and consolidating university engagement and partnerships with their regions and localities, and economic and social actors, should not adopt one-size-fits-all approaches but recognise that diversity is strength. The diversity of the economic, social and cultural development of Europe's regions is reflected in its universities and needs to be tapped and further developed. Many universities have already developed a strong regional and local focus on partnerships and collaboration with regional governmental support. It remains true also that many universities have a national rather than regional character, with strong international outreach in research and student exchange, etc. This national character has a tendency to be present in European countries with a centralised system of higher education financing rather than in those countries with a more federated system. The key policy priority is that investment should respect this diversity as an asset and play to its respective strengths. In doing so, the establishment of a parity of esteem for the diversity of the respective missions of universities and their achievements in relation to research, teaching and community service should be fostered.

## "TRIPLE A"

A "triple A" set of underpinning principles should be present for universities to serve effectively as anchor institutions in democratic societies – the retaining of Academic freedom, Autonomy and Accountability. These principles are essential for universities to be able to define their missions as key actors in the development of successful knowledge economies and civil societies. Importantly, there is a need to preserve the range of academic disciplines – particularly those seen as less relevant today. New knowledge can emerge in any discipline, and through interdisciplinary collaboration, as "game changers" in the economy and society. These three principles need to be carefully balanced in the 21st century where European universities assume increasingly public and private profiles with income streams from both sources.

However, universities cannot develop effective missions as “anchor institutions” in a context of under-investment and over-regulation. Increased autonomy and less regulation, but with a strong focus on accountability, should be guiding concerns.

International collaboration and global outreach are not incompatible with universities working as anchor institutions in their communities, given the reality of our entry into a new global era of international education and research because of shifting demographics and economic growth and the expanding numbers of universities and students elsewhere in the world. These factors are facilitating a borderless knowledge base requiring more strategic co-operation – more open and not only bilateral – in areas of strength and partnerships for capacity building and exchange. The “connectivity” of young people – today’s students and tomorrow’s – in our increasingly digital societies are also influencing change in universities, affecting how teaching and research and related collaboration are undertaken.

Considerable barriers remain, inhibiting universities from working with regional and local partners. In economic terminology, these barriers can be seen from both supply-side and demand-side perspectives. On the supply side, universities’ prime missions are focused on teaching and research, driven and measured by academic output. Also, universities operate in national academic systems that do not mainly target or respond to regional and local needs. On the demand side, there tends to be a lack of capacity and willingness of external public and private actors in the region and locality to seek to tap knowledge and expertise within universities that can contribute to regional socio-economic development. Leadership initiatives are needed, therefore, from within and across universities and external partners, as essential requirements to reach mutual understanding of both needs and benefits.

## EUROPEAN POLICY AND GOOD UNIVERSITY PRACTICE

Linking European policy initiatives with university good practices in tackling these barriers can offer a way forward. In recent years, the EU’s Smart Specialisation Strategy policy framework has offered the opportunity to both initiate and build upon such good practices. This strategy enables EU structural and cohesion funds to be used to support innovative projects in research and training that are conceived by regional and national authorities in close co-operation with regional actors such as universities and enterprises (European Commission 2012). Smart specialisation is a strategic approach to socio-economic development through targeted support of EU structural fund investments to such project initiatives in the EU budgetary period 2014-20.

Recently, the EUA conducted studies to boost recognition of the role of universities as a key partner in taking forward successful Smart Specialisation Strategies in partnership with other actors across the European region. These studies demonstrate that the EU regional policy debate framework had a tendency to adopt a conventional approach, viewing the university’s role in regional development as focused mainly on technology transfer activities. But universities can clearly contribute to regional needs and goals in many other different ways. While recognising that universities can contribute through their research and innovation projects in creating enterprises and business development, it is emphasised also that their contribution to human capital development through new skills training and curricula development, and

their enhancement of social equality through regeneration and cultural development, is of equal value.

Specifically, the EUA examined universities' potential contribution to regional socio-economic development through case studies of good practices in 11 EU member countries (EUA 2014). The University of Eastern Finland, for instance, established the VERA Centre for Russian and Border Studies, which has engaged in interdisciplinary collaboration within the university and other organisations in the region to build networks focusing on improved communication and understanding. At the University of Graz, Austria, EU structural funds have been used to employ cultural heritage as a catalysing force in the socio-economic transition of old industrial regions. Other universities such as the University of Tartu, Estonia, and the University of Coventry, UK, have used EU structural funds to invest in education programmes focusing on skills development and lifelong learning (including new curricula and teaching modules, retraining of teaching staff at the universities, and "e-education" courses and study aids).

The "success factors" governing these good practices depend on establishing working dialogues, subsequent trust-building and the alignment of university and regional strategies in selected priority fields. Enhanced dialogue and communication between universities and regional and local actors is crucial, and hence policy initiatives such as the Smart Specialisation Strategy that encourage such dialogue are valuable. The rationalisation of curricula portfolios and the research capabilities of universities to better match regional needs and priorities is the approach adopted. This is achieved through new and innovative linkages between universities and regional actors such as mutual learning workshops, internships with public and private sector partners, innovation fairs and open days.

## POSSIBLE OBSTACLES

Of course, there are obstacles and inhibiting factors within both universities and external partners' environments that challenge collaborative efforts. Competition or lack of alignment between national and regional political and policy objectives can make dialogue between universities and regional authorities difficult. The governance structures, autonomy and capabilities of a university need to offer the freedom to pursue regional and community goals, and importantly, be given the necessary financial, managerial and administrative means to do so. Universities also face conflicting demands as they simultaneously need to be competitive in their teaching and research excellence (as shown by the increasing emphasis on national and international ranking tables), and engage more in contributing to regional socio-economic development – a challenge for academic communities! To improve the potential for the latter, there is a clear need for recognition and more incentives and merits for academic careers relating to regional and community priorities.

Also, European policy initiatives such as Smart Specialisation Strategies require the strengthening of university managerial, financial and administrative capacities, given substantial contract tendering requirements, reporting and auditing, etc. Often the "indirect costs" assumed by universities in these managerial tasks are not adequately covered, unless in the future the normal "flat rate" payments are replaced by full-cost

accounting (which also requires further investment by the university in such financial management expertise). In reality, there is a high administrative cost burden in using EU structural funds to achieve the benefits of strengthened collaboration between universities and regional and local partners. Local governments also have a tendency to predefine areas of priority for co-operation for themselves using external experts and consultancies rather than first considering local university expertise. And, finally, EU cohesion funds, from which the Smart Specialisation Strategy funds derive, are often too broadly spread, with insufficient focus on strategic priorities that reflect limited political mandate periods, and hence address the short-term rather than long-term needs of regions and communities.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The degree to which universities in Europe will be able to continue developing closer relations with their regions and communities remains uncertain. It can be argued that such future activities and foci in higher education institutions will relate to how universities are able to respond to the three major trends of globalisation, demographic change and accelerating technological change. A recent foresight study (European Commission 2015) envisaged two scenarios – negative and positive – as a response to these three major global trends.

In the negative scenario, Europe proves unable to tackle these trends effectively and hence becomes their victim – with unemployment, social exclusion and social discontent intensifying. Politically, Europe fragments into a coalition of rich and poor regions with minimal co-ordination. Public funds are weakened, and universities depend heavily on private funding for teaching and research. A few major recognised universities dominate: many weaker, regional universities have closed or merged.

The positive scenario envisages clusters of well-funded universities which are thriving in Europe's important and globally competitive cities in strong partnerships with regional institutions. Education is in heavy demand and takes innovative forms and approaches to offer new skills, new jobs and new capacities to cope with rapid change and new perspectives for leading fulfilled lives. Continual education has been enhanced substantially to respond to a workforce where self-employment has become a major element, with re-skilling needs as a constant requirement. These demands have, in turn, led to new efficiencies through course modules shared within university clusters, online and artificial-intelligence-based teaching, and greater specialisation within higher education institutions.

## CONCLUSION

Three principles are foreseen to be necessary as the basis for policy development for the positive scenario outlined above. The knowledge future should offer "openness" with universities facilitating management of shared knowledge resources for local to international collaboration. Flexibility and experimentation should be encouraged to build stronger local and regional knowledge systems, promoting inter-university co-operation and encouraging partnerships both public and private to develop new types of education and training. "European-level co-operation" should continue to

link EU competition and cohesion policy to address research, education and training towards socio-economic development and to tackle unemployment through re-skilling, etc. European co-operation will be essential because jobs will move around much faster than people, and countries and regions will have to deal with unemployment situations which may be temporary or may become a structural feature of society.

Clearly, the future knowledge economy of 2050 developed in the positive scenario assumes the realisation of the requirement of greater investment in the “public goods” of education and research. It is envisaged that the private sector will do more, but this too depends on public goods – an educated population, skilled workforce, scientific breakthroughs, etc. Universities and other higher education institutions will continue to bear the brunt of retraining people to re-enter employment, create new enterprises, and importantly, contribute to civil society as citizens. However, the greatest challenge will reside in preventing (medium- to long-term) unemployment from leading to discontent and social disintegration – which is seen as a dominant feature in a future negative scenario. Publicly funded education, including higher education, may need to expand massively towards lifelong learning for social integration – rather than purely for re-skilling the workforce.

In summary, universities and governments have their respective parts to play in achieving globally competitive and locally engaged European universities. University interaction with political and social actors at the regional, national and European levels should be strengthened by the universities themselves and the national and European collective bodies that represent them. Universities have not always been effective at promoting what they are already doing in their education and research activities that address real problems at national, regional and local levels. But there are many good practices from across Europe’s universities which are leading the way that should be brought to the attention of policy makers and political leaders. Professor John Goddard of the University of Newcastle, UK has pioneered work on the importance of the “civic university”, which has some similarities to the term “anchor institutions” adopted in the US, emphasising the democratic relationship with local community partners as a core component of the university mission. He describes this civic university mission as follows:

The engaged civic university ... is one which provides opportunities for the society of which it forms part. It engages as a whole with its surroundings, not piecemeal; it partners with other universities and colleges; and is managed in a way that ensures it participates fully in the region of which it forms part. While it operates on a global scale, it realises that its location helps to form its identity and provide opportunities for it to grow and help others, including individual learners, business and public institutions, to do so too. (Goddard et al. 2016: 5)

At the government policy level, European and national and regional policies need to go hand in hand. At the European level, the present tendency of “silos” of competition and cohesion policies need to be bridged, with the latter becoming more open to university engagement (Horizon 2020 and future Research Framework programmes need to work together with Regional Structural Funds and the new European Strategic Investment Fund). At all levels policy incentives are needed to create new, and to strengthen existing, partnerships between universities and other actors (public and private) because they will be instrumental in helping universities



to cope with the fast-paced developments in their regional environments. Many politicians involved in these policy debates have become aware of these needs and are supportive of measures aimed to achieve them. As Maria da Graça Carvalho, Member of the European Parliament, puts it (EUA 2014: 8): “Universities and higher education institutions have a central role to play in furthering Smart Specialisation Strategies and, in the process, building bridges between Horizon 2020 and the Structural funds in both directions”.

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## Chapter 17

# Higher education's promise and responsibility

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*Nancy Cantor and Peter Englot*

### THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

If ever there was an era that made evident the democratic imperative of higher education institutions to foster diversity, social inclusion and community, it is right now. We used to have a narrative about the world that seemed to work. Despite our enduring human capacity to do horrible things to each other and our history of actually doing them, we could see, as Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice”.<sup>131</sup> Today, however, that trajectory is in question as country after country around the world appears to be in the throes of moral combat. Current conflicts across the globe – whether owing to a resurgence of supremacist ideology in the United States, “Brexit” in the UK, strains on local economies across Europe as they accommodate migrants displaced by war, or the re-emergence of longstanding intergroup animus in Asia, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East – may be interpreted on one level as reflecting place-based challenges. Many, however, can be characterised as underlying confrontations between, on the one hand, people who think there is an imperative (for justice and prosperity) to continue expanding the boundaries of social, economic and political inclusion and, on the other, those who feel deeply threatened and displaced by such expansion and therefore also feel an imperative, but in this case to halt or even reverse it.

Too often, these confrontations have erupted in violence, as we saw in August 2017 on the campus of the University of Virginia in the US, where neo-Nazis and other racist groups were responsible (Jackman 2017). Such events are horrifying in themselves, but equally, if not more, disturbing is what underlies them: the unfettered pride with which such racist groups publicly proclaim their hateful ideologies, perceiving signals legitimating their beliefs to be coming in one form or another from “alternative” media or even elected officials (Badger 2017). This has created a crisis of public discourse in which prejudice has (re)gained standing as merely an alternate, equally valid worldview on par with those that are evidence-based. American journalists, for example, have been finding that even their well-researched and fully documented work exposing false narratives is dismissed by a critical mass of the general public

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131. Address at the conclusion of the Selma to Montgomery march, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle, available at <https://stanford.io/2JtrXeM>, accessed 2 April 2018.

as biased, with the traditional press consistently attacked as “fake news” not only by the “Alt-right” media, but by the President of the United States himself (Kristof 2017; Rutenberg 2017).

In this context, some – too many – perceive the explosive demographic diversity in the US documented by Brookings Institution demographer William Frey as a threat, evident in “negative attitudes among many older whites toward immigration, new minority growth, and big government programs that cater to the real economic and educational needs of America’s younger, more diverse population” (2015: 6). This is just one facet of a resurgent racist narrative tinged with religious nationalism, given contemporary colour by the equation of Islam with extremism, and immigration more generally with the loss of an “American” (white Christian) identity. It surfaces in the signs unfurled at the University of Virginia, the rhetoric of the travel ban placed on those from “majority Muslim countries”, and the wrenching anxiety of undocumented students, as part of a new (but all-too-familiar) psychology of threat that promotes exclusionary insularity, gripping the American imagination.

The dramatic demographic shift we are experiencing could also be considered a threat in quite a different way: our urban social infrastructure, having been built from a blueprint for segregation, is utterly unprepared to cultivate diverse communities and diverse talent, if not openly hostile to the notion. Thus, even if we can muster the collective will to try to make good on the American promise of “unalienable rights” including “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (Continental Congress 1776), we are presently ill-equipped to do so.

Cities like Newark, New Jersey (where we live and work) are effectively the eye of the storm that pits the opportunity and threat of diversity against each other. Ours is a city whose story arc traces that of the United States itself; indeed, our city’s founding predates that of the country by 110 years. Newark’s story is one of opportunities offered and seized but never fully available to all, as it followed a trajectory from agrarian colony to industrial powerhouse to becoming another node in an increasingly complex global network of communities seeking to grasp and leverage their value proposition – a network whose interconnectedness is nowhere more evident than in Newark’s unceasing and shifting tides of immigration. Newark has a remarkably diverse and persistent talent pool defined by those waves of migration and immigration, yet it has struggled with the promise of equitable prosperity and growth, even as it continues to host many Fortune 500 companies, a robust transportation infrastructure (with a global airport and rail and port system), a vibrant cultural hub, and a growing technology and innovation sector. Consequently, in Newark we can see vividly the pervasive, cumulative effects of centuries of *de facto* discrimination in the US, reflecting our human proclivity to assemble social hierarchies, and the *de jure* discrimination that so often ensconces such injustice in law – all, ironically, in a nation whose founding documents profess that “all men [sic] are created equal” (ibid.).

Today Newark is a place with an urban population that is more than three quarters African American and Hispanic, while its suburbs are largely white; where residents hold only 18% of jobs in the city, of which 60% are held by whites; where the 30% poverty rate is twice the US average and 42% of children live below the poverty line; where more than 4 000 youth are disconnected from the education-employment

network; where violent crime rates are among the nation's highest yet concentrated on just 20% of the streets and in only some residential neighbourhoods; where the childhood asthma rate is three times the average for the state of New Jersey as a whole; and where just 18.1% of residents have an associate degree or higher in a state where some 43.5% do, ranking New Jersey among those states in the US with the highest educational attainment rates (Baer and Haygood 2017; US Census Bureau 2015).

This profile of “two Americas” as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., dubbed the disparities that characterise so many of America's cities, took shape by design through local, state and national public policy – especially housing and economic development policy – that amount to what Paul Jargowsky has called an “architecture of segregation” that has intensified the concentration of poverty along racial lines (Jargowsky 2015; Rothstein 2017). And for all of these cities, the challenge and the opportunity remains the same too, and that is to leverage the talent of their own very diverse populations – generations ready for access to educational and economic prosperity – as they also grow new economies, re-invest in downtowns, build cultural centres and attract knowledge hubs. The challenge of America's cities, those like Newark, New Jersey, that dot the landscape of this country, is one of equitable growth, to reverse the all-too-durable legacy of injustice, as Charles Tilly (1998) reminds us.

## HIGHER EDUCATION AND A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE

Higher education in the US is also swept up in this crisis of confidence about equitable growth for some and fears of displacement for others. For example, a recent poll by the Pew Research Center showed that while a large and increasing majority of Americans who associate themselves with the Democratic Party believe colleges and universities are having a positive impact on the US, more than half of Republicans now believe that colleges and universities are actually having a negative impact: 58%, compared to 37% in 2015 (Pew Research Center 2017). The fact that such an abrupt downturn is coincident with the 2016 presidential campaign and ongoing rhetoric strongly suggests a direct connection.

But even prior to the 2016 election cycle, concerns among the American public about higher education had already been increasing for some time owing to a range of issues including: increasing costs, declining public investment, questions about the job readiness of graduates, fiscal accountability, academe's traditional insularity from everyday concerns, and mounting evidence of higher education's role in systemically perpetuating white racial privilege and socio-economic class divides across generations, even as we enter an era of exploding demographic diversity (Carnevale and Strohl 2013; Johnson and Distasi 2013). The current political climate has exacerbated this, intensifying what was already a “perfect storm” of challenges facing American higher education.

At the eye of this storm is the very fact that too many Americans are not finding a way to prosper and reap the rewards of higher education, thus threatening the very legitimacy of our institutions as the entry point to success and democratic empowerment. The elementary and secondary schools that children attend are still largely determined by the neighbourhood in which they live. For example, Gary

Orfield and his colleagues have demonstrated persistent segregation by race and class in US public schools, more than 60 years after the US Supreme Court ruled that separate schools were not equal (Orfield 2017). And the sequelae of segregated and low-performing schools follow students all through their educational pathways. In the most recent report of the National Student Clearinghouse (2016), large disparities in college completion by both race and class emerged, such that for high school graduates from the class of 2009, 45% of the students attending higher-income high schools had attained a college degree within six years as compared to 24% of students from lower-income schools. Filtering the same graduation data by minority status of a school produced similarly discouraging disparities, with 48% of students from low-minority high schools obtaining college degrees within six years of graduation as compared to 28% from high-minority schools. The disparities in completion rates of urban (36%) versus suburban (45%) and rural (42%) students are a clear wake-up call, though no one in this country should be proud of any of these post-secondary attainments, as the Lumina Foundation repeatedly reminds us (2016). The pernicious effects of such unequal opportunity persist into higher education across the US: bachelor's degree attainment rates for African Americans and Hispanics are at 19.5% and 14.3%, respectively, about half of the 33.2% for whites (US Census Bureau 2015). Compounding the impact of racial divides in educational opportunity is that employment, increasingly, is dependent upon college attendance; a 2016 study by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce documented that of the 11.6 million net new jobs created in the US since the Great Recession that began in 2008, only 80 000 (0.07%) went to people who had only a high school diploma or less (Carnevale, Jayasundera and Gulish 2016). The escalating importance of educational attainment to prosperity in a knowledge economy, side by side with durable inequalities in access to education and the perception of loss of jobs for those without a college education, combines to fuel the heat and intergroup divisiveness in our midst.

## OUR COMPELLING INTEREST IN DIVERSITY

The philosopher John Dewey (1916) described a situation much like the one we face today, suggesting that it posed a “fatal” threat to democracy:

Obviously a society to which stratification into separate classes would be fatal, must see to it that intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equable and easy terms. A society marked off into classes need be specially attentive only to the education of its ruling elements. A society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of a change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability. Otherwise, they will be overwhelmed by the changes in which they are caught and whose significance or connections they do not perceive. The result will be a confusion in which a few will appropriate to themselves the results of the blind and externally directed activities of others. (101-2)

Articulated more than a century ago, Dewey's scenario is positively haunting today in light of the increasing economic inequality we see globally – worse in the US than almost anywhere else in the industrialised world, as documented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2014).

An essential – one might even say, existential – question facing democracies around the world, then, is: how can our educational systems assure the “full participation” of people from all backgrounds (Sturm 2006)? And in an era in which higher education is looked at sceptically but increasingly required for individual and collective prosperity, we must not only consider how to assure “equable” access, but make sure that the path to and through higher education is “visibly open” to all, a priority explicitly established in US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor’s majority opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger*,<sup>132</sup> which upheld the use of affirmative action by American colleges and universities and remains the law of the land in the US. In doing so, it re-affirmed that “obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body” constitutes a “compelling interest” for the nation. But a decade and a half later, we remain challenged to move beyond the matter of defining the strict, legal threshold for actions a university can take to achieve diversity and instead come to see the diversity of our nation and world as an opportunity to be embraced rather than a threat to be defended against. This is the impetus behind the essays in *Our compelling interests: the value of diversity for democracy and a prosperous society* (Lewis and Cantor 2017), which take that more affirmative view of diversity, so to speak, focusing on the individual and collective benefits that can be reaped in a diverse democracy when people of all backgrounds see clearly the stake we all have in assuring that all have equal opportunity to pursue those benefits. It also undergirds the work of the scholar of complex systems Scott Page (2018), who documents what he calls the “diversity bonus” by marshalling compelling empirical evidence showing that when given complex problems to solve, diverse groups produce results that are better and more innovative than the results of homogeneous groups, and they make more accurate predictions. From this perspective, diversity is clearly not only not a threat, but an exceptional opportunity, and one can see that our incredibly diverse metropolitan areas, where opportunity currently is constrained for so many, are actually communities brimming with talent to be cultivated.

## HIGHER EDUCATION’S PROMISE AND RESPONSIBILITY

In this context, then, of both the opportunity that diversity brings to grow our economies and the social health and well-being of our communities, while expanding knowledge and innovation by drawing on the collective intelligence of a wider pool of talent, and the threat that so many feel of being displaced by that very diversity, higher education has both a significant promise to fulfil and a strong responsibility to change the divisive landscape. Specifically, higher education can be the lever for cultivating a broader talent pool and creating equitable growth in communities – thus its promise – if we step up to our responsibility and work together in our communities to defuse the divisive pitting of groups against each other and to forge a more nuanced unity around the promise of growing opportunities for all, replacing ideologies of hierarchy and exclusion with those of full participation and inclusion. In turn, it seems that this mix of promise and responsibility revolves around three commitments to: cultivate talent more expansively; create more democratic and

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132. *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003).

inclusive civic and social dialogue; and partner with broad communities of experts (with and without pedigree) to equitably grow health and prosperity more widely.

In the domain of higher education, achieving this turn of perspective in itself, however, must be accompanied by clear-eyed self-examination of the depth and breadth of the challenges before us in transforming higher education. To start, we must reckon with higher education's own *de facto* and *de jure* forms of discrimination that are already contributing to our credibility gap with our publics, as well as inhibiting our creativity and ability to innovate.

For example, we must grapple with the debilitating dependency that we in higher education have developed on outmoded understandings of "merit", evident, for example, in the way we cling to formulaic overemphasis on numerical proxies for talent such as standardised test scores and secondary school grades in determining whom we will admit to our institutions (Cantor, Englot and Higgins 2013). And we do this despite evidence showing how much talent we routinely leave behind in relying on such proxies. For example, validity studies by the College Board, which is responsible for the composition and administration of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) that is used by most US colleges and universities as a primary means of determining admissibility, show that even combining SAT scores and secondary school grade point average gives one only about a 60% chance of predicting how a student will perform in the first year of college, and those chances decrease for African Americans and US Hispanics, groups already under-represented among college students compared to their percentage representation in the US population as a whole (Kobrin et al. 2008; Mattern et al. 2008). Clearly, we are already leaving too much talent behind in our communities, talent that none of us can afford to leave behind any longer as we experience the diversity explosion. If we are to meet the pervasive challenge to enrol higher percentages of students of all backgrounds in higher education – particularly students from groups with lower enrolment rates today – we must find different ways to identify talent. We need to transform first and foremost our mindset from one of exclusivity to one of inclusivity, moving from an understanding of our role as winnowing talent to one of cultivating it. It sounds simple, but exclusivity is deeply ingrained in our practices, reflecting our complicity in what Lani Guinier has called the "tyranny of the meritocracy" (2015).

As James Baldwin wrote: "the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do" (1985: 410). Our history in higher education is one of putting up barriers to see who is worthy of admission to our domain, devising barriers to keep people out. We set cut-offs on standardised test scores and on secondary school grades, keeping out those falling below, as if these proxies were etched on stone tablets handed to us from on high – and as discussed above, we continue to do this in the face of evidence of the grave limitations of such practices. And students from marginalised groups who do gain admission and enrol often find that their experiences, historical and cultural, are absent from the curriculum.

In the spirit of adopting a more inclusive mindset to admissions, it is a good sign that in the US there is a movement among a small but growing number of institutions to make submitting standardised test scores optional, but this move alone



does nothing to send a message to the many students making their way through primary and secondary education who perceive higher education to be completely out of reach. What is needed is what is known in fields such as community health as “upstreaming”, that is, identifying determinants that constrain people from opportunity and committing to do something about them.

There are models developing in some regions in the US in which higher education institutions are collaborating with secondary, perhaps even primary, schools and partners in the government, non-profit, and/or private sector to work together to identify determinants of enrolment in higher education and create interventions to try to improve enrolment rates. The University-Assisted Community Schools model pioneered by the University of Pennsylvania’s Netter Center in Philadelphia is one of the longest-standing examples of a comprehensive K-12/higher education partnership that moves the resources of the university into the community’s schools to collaborate on interventions at a pre-college age. Similarly, the Higher Education Compact of Greater Cleveland in Ohio, Say Yes to Education in New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and North Carolina, and StriveTogether, a broad network started in the region of Cincinnati, Ohio and Northern Kentucky, are examples of cross-sector collaborative interventions, articulating shared commitments across higher education institutions and local school systems to identify and remove barriers that inhibit college attendance.<sup>133</sup>

Similar motives underlie the Newark City of Learning Collaborative (NCLC),<sup>134</sup> which engages the full primary school-through-college continuum with the corporate, government and non-profit sectors. This broad coalition of more than 60 organisations is committed to increasing the post-secondary attainment rate of residents of Newark from its current 18% to 25% by 2025. Rutgers-Newark’s Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies serves as the backbone organisation for the NCLC, convening study groups to identify obstacles and interventions, evaluate programmes, and collect data to assess progress in city-wide high school graduation, college access, retention and degree completion. It arranges for local community-based organisations and higher education institutions from Newark to staff “college knowledge” centres, college fairs and workshops throughout the city, working with families and students on completing financial aid forms, preparing for college entrance exams and completing college applications. The NCLC and Newark public schools work closely, including sharing a staff liaison, providing monthly professional development sessions for high school counsellors throughout the district, and articulating

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133. A University-Assisted Community School is a primary and/or secondary school that works in partnership with a university to improve the academic, human and material resources brought to bear on educating the school’s children. The University of Pennsylvania’s Netter Center for Community Partnerships is among the pioneers in forging these kinds of relationships (see <http://bit.ly/2l4iUS8>, accessed 30 March 2018). A sufficiently large number of universities in the US are collaborating with schools in this way to have provided the impetus for the development of the University-Assisted Community Schools Network, dedicated to advancing thought and practice in this domain, see <http://bit.ly/2l02XMF>. Also see the Democratizing Knowledge Project (<http://democratizingknowledge.syr.edu>), the Higher Education Compact of Greater Cleveland (<http://highereducationcompact.org>), Say Yes to Education (<http://sayyestoeducation.org>), and StriveTogether ([www.strivetogether.org](http://www.strivetogether.org)), all accessed 2 April 2018.

134. See [www.nclc2025.org](http://www.nclc2025.org), accessed 30 March 2018.

educational pathways for Newark students across the divides from high school to two-year and four-year higher education institutions. The NCLC also works closely with the City of Newark, serving since 2015 more than 1 000 students in the City's Summer Youth Employment Program with college-readiness workshops. It also works with local corporate partners in the Newark College Freshman Institute, which provides students who are about to go to college with internships and a social capital network for career development advice.

Higher education institutions in the US that are committed to becoming truly inclusive must also be mindful of the fact that large numbers of young people are not connected to the education system. In fact, the Social Science Research Council estimates this number to be approximately 4.9 million, for those aged 16-24 (Burd-Sharps and Lewis 2017). Organisations such as the Opportunity Youth Network have adopted a perspective on these young people that focuses on their potential – or “opportunity” – rather than seeing them as a problem, forging partnerships with funders and corporations of all sizes, federal, state and local government officials, non-profits and formerly disconnected youth in cities across the US to work together to reduce the number of currently disconnected youth by one million over five years. In Newark, where there are an estimated 4 000 or more such young people, the NCLC collaborates with our local Opportunity Youth Network, creating cohorts in support of college and career planning and development, collaborating on a “City of Coding” model to teach coding skills in the Opportunity Youth Network’s alternative school setting, and engaging these talented young people in employment opportunities in collaboration with the City of Newark.

## ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

Higher education, then, faces dual challenges – to forge collaborative relationships across sectors focused on tackling the most pressing challenges in our communities and to find new ways to identify and cultivate the diverse talent already residing in our communities. In turn, these challenges constitute the core of what it means for higher education institutions to recognise and embrace their roles as anchor institutions. The Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF), an organisation of 800 members dedicated to exploring what it means to be such an institution, defines them as “enduring organizations that are rooted in their localities”.<sup>135</sup> They are place-based organisations that persist in communities over generations, serving as social glue, economic engines, or both (Cantor, Englot and Higgins 2013).

Often among the largest employers and buyers in their communities, anchor institutions can have an outsized impact on local prosperity both by the choices they make in whom to hire and where to procure goods and services, and by the collaborative networks they form regionally to encourage other anchors to drive prosperity locally. Among the AITF’s members, many institutions are represented that take this impact and their ability to catalyse other cross-sector anchors very seriously. Across the nation, they are revisiting and reforming

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135. See [www.margainc.com/aitf/](http://www.margainc.com/aitf/), accessed 11 April 2018.

protocols to increase local hiring and spending, much as Rutgers-Newark is doing in partnership with the City of Newark and 17 other large anchor institutions across sectors under the aegis of the “Hire. Buy. Live. Newark” programme, built around public commitments by each anchor to achieve specific numerical goals for hiring more Newark residents and buying more goods and services in Newark. Appropriately, higher education can also engage its scholars in analysing avenues for growth locally in workforce training, in business development, and in supply chain production and procurement, a vital element in the Newark programme for equitable growth.

In addition to serving directly as an economic engine for equitable growth, higher education can utilise its intellectual and human capital to address the broader well-being of our communities, but this often entails reforming the practices by which we identify and gather expertise to bring to the table for collective problem solving. Who is there and what their backgrounds are really matter, although this very notion is counter-cultural for many in higher education, which has evolved around a conception of knowledge as something best created without regard to the backgrounds of the people creating it. Yet we know that diverse groups are better at problem solving than homogeneous ones. So, we have to be attentive to who is at the table and figure out ways to bring diverse perspectives to it.

## DIVERSIFYING OUR COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

Despite the best of intentions – which are often articulated in our mission statements proclaiming our commitment to serve the public good – universities remain stubbornly insular, clinging to a self-concept that constitutes what political philosopher Harry Boyte (2009) has labelled a “cult of the expert”, in which expertise is only imbued by possession of the degrees that higher education institutions grant, devaluing the perspectives of professionals, public servants and everyday citizens regardless of the depth and breadth of their experience in analysing and addressing challenges on the ground every day. We must recognise that the challenges facing our increasingly diverse and relentlessly urbanising world are too large and too complex for any single institution or sector to address. It will take all of us working together, forming what we might think of as cross-sector “communities of experts”, to leverage our collective assets to address these challenges.

Unfortunately, higher education is not always well positioned to reap the bonus of these diverse and thus collectively intelligent teams. For too long we have insularly defined our metrics of scholarly productivity and simultaneously ignored the value that publicly engaged scholars and citizens of all backgrounds bring to our work. With a dearth of models for how to cultivate diverse scholarly talent and diverse voices, we need experimentation with new models. An example of one such effort is the 2017 Democratizing Knowledge (DK) Project, consisting of a group of interdisciplinary scholar-activists and community activist partners who came together in 2009 to think about how to make knowledge production more open, inclusive and democratic. In successive summer institutes, groups of advanced doctoral students, pre-tenure faculty members, and scholar-activists

from the humanities and social sciences have gathered with community partners to explore new spaces for dialogue that breathe fresh air into our often narrowed disciplinary windows on the world.

For example, Annie Isabel Fukushima, an assistant professor at the University of Utah, was a DK scholar from the summer 2017 institute. She works in collaboration with a transnational feminist collective co-ordinating a series of public arts and education projects across the Republic of Korea, Colombia and the Philippines. They engage immigrants' rights groups and scholars in each location to understand and tackle the many hurdles faced by migrants and refugees worldwide. As Fukushima faces the global landscape, her fellow DK scholar Rachel Jackson, from the University of Oklahoma and a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, examines the rhetorical legacies of indigenous communities across Oklahoma. For instance, she engages Kiowa elders in leading discussions on traditional arts, oral traditions, ceremonial dances and language, to decentre from more typically Western humanities content. As cross-talk develops among DK scholars, each pursuing a project but also making community across the cohort, there has been a shared reflection on ways in which the normative language, evaluation and reward systems of the academy need to stretch to imagine a more just academy, as one scholar wrote in assessing the experience.

## CREATING "THIRD SPACES" OF COLLABORATION

As we seek to engage expertise from outside the academy and forge the communities of experts it takes to gain the kind of deep understanding needed to effect change, there are important ramifications for where exactly this engagement occurs. While those of us within universities often conduct scholarly inquiry in real estate we control – on our campuses, whether in laboratories, institutes or other spaces designed to facilitate the exchange of ideas among academics – such environments may actually inhibit building trust among collaborators who come from many walks of life, including professionals and community members with and without academic pedigree. Yet we very clearly need to engage people from groups who may reasonably feel that academic researchers have disserved them in the past, doing things to rather than with them and without regard to the long-term impact on them. Fostering trust and facilitating collaboration among teams including people who feel they have been victims rather than beneficiaries of university research sometimes will require that we engage not in university spaces, but in what we can think of as "third spaces" of collaboration, where established and unequal relationships of power and expertise can be shifted to acknowledge what each person engaged in the interaction brings to the table (Cantor, Englot and Higgins 2013). Third spaces can create authentic and safe venues for weaving an intersectional fabric.

The arts and cultural disciplines can provide excellent contexts for this kind of university–community collaboration, giving us opportunities to cultivate a very inclusive set of voices, authentic and organically grown in our communities, contributing to a whole that is well positioned to innovate, as well as change minds about what merit is and what excellence looks like. In such groups, we can dare to ask the impertinent

questions that might otherwise remain unstated, in part because of who is and who is not at the academy's table and in part because we all fear being shut down pre-emptively by seeming to have strayed into the political realm. To be simplistic, "art" can be acceptable when almost everything else is vulnerable to the suspicion of pushing a particular agenda of a particular group or ideology. We need more places for more voices and more people to be acceptable, plain and simple, and we need democratising third spaces that take some of the power and privilege of dominant groups or individuals off the table.

There are many precedents globally of third spaces where community artists and citizens have joined in common ground with academics. This is at the heart of many of the "creative place-making" efforts around the US, perhaps most notably developed in the remarkable work of artist, urban planner and innovator Theaster Gates on the South Side of Chicago.<sup>136</sup>

Similarly, in Newark, we have collaborated in creating a 50 000-square foot university–community third space that we call Express Newark, in a newly renovated historic downtown building, in which community and university arts organisations, small and large, reside. On any given day, one can find Newark public school students participating in programmes broadening the pathways to college, or residents coming to a community print club or to a widely used photo studio built on the legacy of renowned Harlem Renaissance photographer James Van Der Zee, who began his career as an apprentice in this building. Express Newark is a centre for as fervent, contested and honest arts-making as possible and has enabled many of our colleagues from both the university and the community who feel especially vulnerable and targeted as a function of their social identity to collectively and safely express their voices, experiences, concerns and aspirations. For example, the digital story-telling platform, Newest Americans, hosted at Express Newark, enabled several of our Muslim women students to give voice to and put a face on the many women locally and globally who make the decision to wear the hijab, explaining their own decisions to do so in very personal terms in a video titled "Hijabi world" that has been viewed more than two million times through *The New York Times* "Lens" page (Newest Americans 2016). Even more importantly it has effected change, empowering our students to feel a sense of shared belongingness and power in our community; the video's wild popularity signals much broader impact.

## PLACE-BASED, BUT NOT PAROCHIAL

Therein lies a pivotal element of understanding the role of universities as anchor institutions: the scholarly work being done collaboratively among communities of experts that include professionals and community members is necessarily place-based, but it is by no means parochial. Mindful of longstanding and now increasingly amplified concerns about what difference academic scholarship makes in the world, universities embracing their role as anchor institutions are effectively embracing the perspective of psychologist Kurt Lewin, who was

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136. Rebuild Foundation, Projects, available at <https://rebuild-foundation.org/sites>, accessed 2 April 2018.

among the progenitors of the “action research” tradition and famously said “If you truly want to understand something, try to change it” (van Vliet 2017). Implicit in this statement is the need to accept that effecting change hinges on deep knowledge of many complex and interacting factors *in situ*, on the ground, so to speak, in real places, where real people live and real environmental conditions obtain – natural, social and physical. Also implicit is that what we learn through place-based engagement locally is relevant not just locally, as we see so clearly in community-engaged science that has global resonance.

However, gaining community trust to engage in place-based scientific work can be especially difficult, at least in the US, owing to the sordid history of universities in abusing local residents. Perhaps most infamously, the US Public Health Service, a division of today’s US Department of Health and Human Services, began a research project in 1932 through Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, today’s Tuskegee University, titled the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male (CDC 2017). In this study involving hundreds of local African American men, some with syphilis and some without, researchers never informed the men that it was not their intention to actually treat those with the disease; rather, the researchers simply studied the disease’s effects on these unsuspecting men, treating them as if they were laboratory animals, not offering treatments even when highly effective ones became available in the 1940s. Originally designed to go on for just six months, the study actually continued for 40 years and was not halted until an Associated Press investigative report in 1972.

Widespread knowledge of such unconscionable abuses continues to inform scepticism about the motives of US universities in seeking to engage their communities, especially in the sciences. It certainly was on people’s minds in Newark, where a majority of residents are African American, as Rutgers University-Newark neuroscientist Mark Gluck began forming relationships locally to advance research on the high incidence of Alzheimer’s disease among African Americans. This phenomenon has been well documented in epidemiological studies, but little is known about the relative importance and interactions among the different risk factors affecting African Americans. Crucial to the research in Newark has been engaging local ministers and retired health professionals in efforts to both study the factors affecting the high incidence of Alzheimer’s and design and test the effectiveness of behavioural interventions aiming to reduce the disease’s incidence. In addition to monitoring the health of adults aged 55 and older, this research – guided by a community advisory board including ministers, retired nurses and neighbourhood residents, as well as a medical advisory board including experts from across the US – includes activities to provide cardiorespiratory and cognitive benefits through aerobic exercise, balance training and sensory-motor skill learning. Also crucial to this work is that these activities, as well as educational programming including cooking classes, are offered on site in the facilities of 15 local churches that are partners in the research, where all members of the church communities are invited to take part, not just those participating in the medical study. All of these facets increase engagement and bring the localised knowledge of professionals and community residents to bear on the work. They also serve as a fertile arena for cultivating the next generation of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) talent from within the communities with whom we work and live.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY AT HOME AND BEYOND

That virtuous cycle of better science, better scientists and better society, as Ira Harkavy and his colleagues (Harkavy, Cantor and Burnett 2014) show in this kind of community-engaged work, brings us back to both the promise of higher education amidst the exploding diversity of our communities around the globe, and the responsibility to forge inclusive communities of experts – in the students we train, the faculty members whose scholarship we reward, and the partners with whom we dialogue to jointly create a more equitable future. There is no substitute for building those relationships face to face and person to person. It is in doing so that we acquire the new lenses we need to see through the “otherness” of others, to bridge divides real and imagined, and to make common cause. We have an active, progressive role to play in turning the tide of bigotry, in reversing the perception of diversity as a threat, and lifting up the opportunity that awaits us all if we can cultivate and embrace a broader talent pool, overcome our fears of each other, and build prosperity together.

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## Chapter 18

# A possible world and the right to the university – Reflections on higher education in the United States

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Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., Gavin Luter and Pascal Buggs

### INTRODUCTION

Ira Harkavy called for a reimagining of the university in his foreword to *Creating a new kind of university: institutionalizing community–university engagement* (Harkavy 2006). He wanted to institutionalise community–university engagement by placing it at the centre of university life and culture. This clarion call was aimed at realising John Dewey’s dream of using higher education to drive the transformation of the United States into a social, racial, economic, political and culturally just society (Benson, Harkavy and Puckett 2007; Taylor, Jr. and McGlynn 2008).

This laudable goal is interwoven with the conversion of metropolitan cities into socially, economically, politically and culturally just urban centres, anchored by neighbourly communities (Benson, Harkavy and Puckett 2007; Fainstein 2010; Soja 2010; Harvey 2009). By “neighbourly community”, we are referring to inclusive cross-class neighbourhoods with strong institutions, where blacks, people of colour and low-income groups live in healthy, animated and prosperous enclaves, and where people earn a living wage and have access to a range of supportive services, including good schools, quality medical treatment and food security (Taylor 2009: 71–110). Thus, a requirement for building the just metropolis is to transform underdeveloped neighbourhoods into neighbourly communities, along with solving the poverty problem.

This is where the research university comes in. The university, with its army of faculty members, staff and students, combined with its libraries, academic departments, professional schools and extensive fiscal capacities, is an unrivalled community resource. No other social institution is equipped with the prowess needed to spur radical transformation of underdeveloped neighbourhoods and the cities in which they are embedded (Taylor 1995). However, convincing research universities to play this role will not be easy. The reason is that research universities are part of the urban growth coalition, along with local government, bankers, financiers, land developers, speculators and others that built the post-war neoliberal metropolis (Mollenkopf and Castells 1991; Feagin and Parker 1990; Hackworth 2007). Their campus expansion,

growth and development agendas, then, are linked to the interests of other advocates of the neoliberal growth coalition.

The task facing progressives is to get the research university to break away from this coalition and link its destiny to low-income blacks, people of colour and working-class whites. This is the only way to realise Dewey's dream. This chapter explores the university's resistance to becoming a progressive institutional change agent, along with the obstacles that must be overcome to transmute research universities into such a force.

## **THE PROBLEM: URBAN CHANGE, THE UNIVERSITY AND UNDERDEVELOPED NEIGHBOURHOODS**

The university is a conservative institution (Diner 2017; Winling 2017). In the post-Second World War era, it joined an urban growth coalition that aimed to build a new metropolis (metro-city) consisting of a central city and suburbs. The coalition was composed of local government, urban planners, financiers, bankers, realtors, developers, builders, speculators and others with an interest in urban growth and land development. Their intent was to design, plan and build a metro-city that: (1) accommodated the neoliberal economy; (2) met their collective needs and interests; and (3) positioned the metropolis to meet global challenges in the Cold War era (Feagin and Parker 2002). In this model, urban leaders, epitomised by the New York power broker Robert Moses, believed that colleges and universities, museums, art galleries, and hospitals and medical schools should be the cultural and economic engine driving the new central city's development. A modern city that would function as the hub of the urban metropolis (Caro 1974). The neoliberal city, then, would be a "university" imbued with a distinctive urban culture and way of life (Hackworth 2007; Ballon and Jackson 2007). It would be animated by a workforce that urban planner Richard Florida would much later call the "creative class" (Florida 2011).

The growth coalition emerged in a period of dramatic urban change. Between 1940 and 1970, more than five million blacks migrated to urban centres, while millions more whites left city centres for the suburbs (US Census Department 1940-80; Hobbs and Stoops 2002). Concurrently, the economy shifted from industry to finance, services, real estate, tourism and high technology. This shift to a neoliberal economy combined with the G.I. Bill to fuel a dramatic increase of enrolment in higher education. Between 1940 and 1970, higher education enrolment leapt from around 1.5 to more than 8.5 million students (Snyder 1993).

This urban change process conjured up a dilemma for urban colleges and universities (Hechinger 1961). Explosive enrolment created the need for them to expand greatly their facilities, but they were landlocked in space dominated by growing, underdeveloped and mostly black neighbourhoods. Urban leaders referred to these expanding black communities as blighted space, characterised by dilapidated and deteriorating physical structures that threatened the university's future (Buder 1965). In 1957, University of Chicago Chancellor, Lawrence A. Kimpton, formed and led a coalition of top urban universities, including Harvard, Columbia, the University of Pennsylvania, Yale and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to confront

this dilemma by enabling universities to use urban renewal as a development tool (Currian 1957).

This effort led to a nationwide study of neighbourhoods surrounding universities. In 1957, the Association of American Universities (AAU) announced that it would fund the research. The AAU appointed a committee to oversee the study, which included the Presidents of Columbia, Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania. The study aimed to address three problems: (1) the lack of room for expansion; (2) the threat posed by slums and crime to students and faculty; and (3) the high costs of addressing these issues. Then, in 1959, the American Council on Education appointed a Special Committee on Urban Renewal to set up an office to assist individual universities in urban renewal projects. As a result of vigorous lobbying, higher education persuaded government to add Section 112 to the 1949 Housing Act, which made special federal aid available for “urban renewal areas involving colleges and universities” (Diner 2017: 66).

An examination of higher education’s definition of urban renewal provides insight into its vision for underdeveloped black neighbourhoods. In 1964, Kenneth H. Ashworth, defined urban renewal as:

public planning, the acquisition and assembly of properties, the relocation of families and businesses, and the clearance of slum properties by the public agency carrying out the program, so as to permit the resale of the land to public and private properties for redevelopment according to an officially adopted plan for the project. (Ashworth 1964: 95)

What type of plan did universities have for the underdeveloped neighbourhoods surrounding them? These communities were mixed-income places dominated by low-income groups, many of whom lived in poverty. They were challenged with deteriorating housing, inadequate schools, decaying infrastructure and unemployment, and declining participation in the labour force, along with myriad social problems, including crime, violence and family instability. Instead of solving the urgent problems facing these underdeveloped neighbourhoods, higher education aimed to use urban renewal as a tool to either obliterate them or to fundamentally change their social nature and character. They intended to turn them into racially “integrated”, class-segregated, middle-class neighbourhoods compatible with university life and culture; places recast in the image of knowledge, information and the creative classes, including white students, faculty and staff. Middle-income blacks were welcomed, but not their low-income brethren. That is, except for small numbers of the “deserving poor” (Diner 2017; Katz 1986).

To achieve this goal, the University of Chicago in Hyde Park demolished hundreds of housing units and built new middle-class homes, while diverting low-income blacks to other parts of the city. Their 1959 Hyde Park urban renewal plan called for the acquisition and demolition of 630 buildings and 5 941 housing units. New York City, in partnership with Columbia University, used similar tactics in Harlem (Diner 2017). Columbia University acquired more than 45 apartments in Morningside Heights and in neighbouring Harlem, where they also obtained the right to build a gymnasium in Morningside Park (Goldstein 2017; O’Kane 1964). In the 1960s and early 1970s, their activities provided a prototype of how universities should

engage the neighbourhoods surrounding them. Higher education's intent was clear. Redeveloping their host community meant slum clearance and building class-segregated, "integrated" neighbourhoods well-matched with university life and culture. Higher education made no attempt to revitalise underdeveloped neighbourhoods for the actually existing black populations. This urban change process started in the early 1950s. By the end of the decade, urban universities acted with impunity in their quest to eradicate and/or redevelop slums in the university's image.

## The interruption

By 1964, the federal Housing and Home Finance Agency reported that 154 urban renewal projects involving 120 colleges and universities and 75 hospitals had received Section 112 funds<sup>137</sup> (Diner 2017). Anchored by this success, higher education and their hospital partners were about to intensify their expansionist and urban renewal activities (Ashworth 1964). It was then that the pent-up anger of black Harlem exploded. Violence broke out on 18 July 1964 during a demonstration protesting the killing of a 15-year-old boy by a white policeman. In a flash, urban America changed, interrupting higher education's activities in their host communities (Kihss 1964).

The Harlem rebellion spread quickly to Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, Rochester, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Jersey City and Paterson, New Jersey (*The New York Times* 1964). These events ignited the era of the long, hot summers of violent urban rebellions in the United States. Between 1964 and 1968, hundreds of outbreaks occurred in cities across the US. The Black Power Movement began to supplant the civil rights movement as the engine driving the freedom struggles of African Americans. Concurrently, between 1950 and 1970, many of the white students flocking to higher education were radicalised by the civil rights struggles and the anti-Vietnam War-movement.

The United States was entering a new age of radicalism. In spring 1965, angry black parents launched a protracted struggle against Columbia University's effort to build a gymnasium in Morningside Park. Harlem abutted the park, and it was a safe place for neighbourhood children to play (Taylor 2017). Residents objected to Columbia's use of the site and intended to stop them. Three years later, in 1968, black students and a coalition of white student groups at Columbia joined the parents' struggle, demanding that the university stop its expansionist activities (Kifer 1968).

Here, the larger point is the Black Power Movement engulfed colleges and universities. Black students led the charge. They fought to change higher education and its relationship to the larger African American community. They organised protests on about 200 college campuses across the United States in 1968 and 1969 and into the early 1970s. Their militant activities, along with the anti-Vietnam-War movement, activated white students and catalysed an age of rebellion that reformed and profoundly transformed university life and culture (Biondi 2012: 1). Collectively, these activities interrupted the university's expansionist aims, complicated its role in

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137. "Section 112 funds" refer to Section 112 of the Housing Act, corresponding to funding that the US Congress set aside specifically for universities to engage in urban renewal projects.

metro-city building processes, compelled administrators to rethink urban renewal and sparked the rise of the civic engagement movement.

## The civic engagement movement

The university is a conservative institution, but it has a progressive side. From the late 1960s onwards, enlightened faculty members, staff and students sought to strengthen and reinforce higher education's progressive side. The urban crisis persisted. As the nascent neoliberal economy continued its relentless transmutation from industry to service, finance, insurance, high technology, real estate and tourism, joblessness, poverty and low wages worsened. On campus, as progressive forces gained strength, they reached out to underdeveloped neighbourhoods, building positive relationships with host communities, as well as those struggling neighbourhoods located in other parts of the metropolis.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a confluence of several factors produced material conditions for the civic engagement movement to emerge. In the 1980s, the national government increasingly shifted many fiscal responsibilities to local government. The shift occurred as higher-income groups and manufacturing firms were leaving city centres. The resulting urban financial stress brought universities, medical schools and hospitals to the foreground as new engines of economic development. This combined with the end of the Cold War and the increased strength of progressive forces on campus to give rise to the civic engagement movement. This movement, however, unlike the earlier campus rebellion and campus reform movement, was academically based and led by radical faculty and staff members, many of whom had participated in the earlier campus movement and/or radical struggles of the 1960s and 1970s.

In that moment, Derek Bok (1982, 1990), Ernest Boyer (Boyer 1990; Boyer and Hechinger 1981), and John Gardner (Nash 1973; Taylor and Luter 2013) made powerful cases for the university to become engaged in the development of cities, and in 1994, the creation of the Office of University Partnerships by Henry Cisneros, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, connected the federal government to the growing movement (Cisneros 1995). A year later, in 1995, Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. argued that the research university could play a significant role in the redevelopment of underdeveloped neighbourhoods (Taylor 1995), and Barry Checkoway (1991, 1997) also argued that research universities should be reinvented for civic engagement.

The university-based civic engagement movement exploded between 1990 and 2017. Many universities pursued a dual strategy. They engaged with underdeveloped communities adjacent to the university as well as those located in more distant sites. They pioneered the use of service-learning programmes, where students worked with residents on urgent problems; built university-assisted community schools; forged health, housing and economic development strategies; and launched programmes designed to holistically regenerate underdeveloped areas (Benson et al. 2017). Ira Harkavy and the Penn Group called upon higher education to abandon their selfishness and embrace "enlightened self-interest" (Benson, Harkavy and Puckett 2007: 104). Within this context, many college presidents supported the movement; on some campuses, the entire university, including schools, departments

and centres, became involved in civic engagement. In some cases, higher education even used its spending and hiring practices to positively impact underdeveloped neighbourhoods. Critically, most faculty members, staff and students working in neighbourhoods followed the doctrine of maximum feasible participation among residents in the project. Universities developed action research and community participatory research models to involve neighbourhood residents in studies of their own communities.

Civic engagement became an accepted practice on most college campuses in the United States. Today, thousands of faculty members, staff, students and administrators are involved in hundreds of projects and initiatives nationwide. Their practical activities and research have improved lives, mitigated harmful conditions in underdeveloped neighbourhoods, influenced research and inspired thousands, if not millions of students and residents. Without a doubt, the university civic engagement movement has made a difference. Yet, at the same time, from the perspective of Dewey's dream, "everything has changed, and everything has remained the same".<sup>138</sup>

The movement mitigated harmful conditions in some communities, but it did not solve the core problems facing blacks, Latinx<sup>139</sup> and immigrants of colour related to unemployment, poverty, low incomes, education, housing, health care, food security and underdeveloped neighbourhoods. Nor did the movement change fundamentally systemic structural racism and social class inequality. Instead, the movement mostly attacked symptomatic reflections of oppression and hardship, but not their root causes. Consequently, despite the heroic efforts of the civic engagement movement, the poverty and low-income problem persisted, along with the underdevelopment of black and Latinx neighbourhoods (Hodges and Dubb 2012).

Even more troubling, in the United States, many city centres are currently being recreated as "univercities", characterised by new forms of race and class stratification. In these evolving univercities, city builders (politicians, developers, speculators, financiers, architects, planners, builders) are claiming the most desirable physical, social and public spaces (downtowns, waterfronts, etc.) for the knowledge, information, technology and creative classes (which we call the "latte class") and refashioning urban culture so that it matches their wants, desires and cultural interests (Zukin 2009). Concurrently, the city builders are pushing blacks, Latinx and coloured immigrants to the core's perimeters, where they are resettled in the newest renditions of underdeveloped neighbourhoods, or situated in older, deteriorating inner suburbs and in other undesirable urban places. The same old urban problems persist, but they are repackaged in a new, updated format (Newman and Wyly 2006).

In reality, the research university has not been reinvented for civic engagement. It is a member of the urban growth coalition which is building the unjust neoliberal city. Fifty years have passed since students demanded that Columbia stop its expansionist activities in Harlem; about 30 years since the launch of the civic engagement movement; 20 years since Checkoway called for reinventing the research university; and 11 years since Harkavy argued for the creation of a new kind of university. We

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138. Some attribute this saying to Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher.

139. The term "Latinx" is a gender-neutral form in lieu of Latino or Latina.



have still not institutionalised community–university engagement, and we certainly have not created a new kind of university. The big question is, why?

## The “incomplete” engaged university and building the just metropolis

Education is the most strategic institution in society’s superstructure (Taylor, Luter and Uzochukwu 2018: 2; Benson et al. 2017: 1).<sup>140</sup> While Dewey mostly wrote about K-12 schools, William Rainey Harper, influenced by Dewey, saw that higher education was the most important institution. It has the capacity to catalyse radical transformation of the United States by: (1) producing knowledge for learning and social change; (2) raising political consciousness; and (3) utilising its fiscal and human resources for research, teaching and the launching of projects, programmes and activities to solve core problems and bring about structural change in neighbourhoods and metro-cities throughout the nation. However, before it can achieve this possible world, the university must be reinvented for civic engagement – it must become a progressive institutional change agent.

To realise this goal in practice, enlightened forces must do three things. The first is to imagine another possible world – a place other than the actually existing world in which we live. To transcend disappointment and frustration and avoid deception and co-optation, we must create alternative visions and dreams of the “better” world we seek to build. The task is to imagine another possible world that enables us to see beyond our immediate condition and ordeals – a place purged of racism, sexism, oppression, exploitation and hatred (Kelley 2002). A vision of this possible world also functions as a reference point and guide to the development of projects, programmes and activities based on alternative models and systems. Within this framework, enlightened forces must embrace the credo “people have a right to the university”. The urban growth coalition does not have a “natural” or “political” right to the university. They are not the guardians of society. The people have a legitimate right to demand and fight for a university that produces knowledge for learning and social change and that spawns a societal culture supportive of such radical social change. They have a right to demand that universities use their fiscal and human resources to create this other possible world (Purcell 2013; Lefebvre 2003/1970).

The second task is to recognise that the university is a duality, consisting of a conservative and progressive side. It is thus an active participant in the urban growth coalition, and an engaged university fighting for systemic structural social change. In this dialectical scenario, the conservative side dominates the contradiction, shaping university life and connecting it to the urban growth coalition. So, in the real world, the university is a conservative institution, with no authentic passion for “enlightened self-interest”. Yet, at the same time, the university’s progressive side embraces this enlightened self-interest and supports fundamental change in society. The university, then, is a dyad with two warring souls, forever conflicted.

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140. We locate the university in the societal superstructure, while Harkavy and the Penn Group situate it in the base.

The third task is to transform the university into an institutional agent of progressive social change. To achieve this goal, enlightened forces must separate the university from its allegiance to the urban growth coalition, while simultaneously making progressivism the dominant force shaping university life and culture. This process of building the “engaged university” will be a long, protracted struggle, with many twists and turns. And, most important, it is a struggle that will never end during the age of global neoliberalism. Even during periods when progressive forces dominate university life, the threat of conservative restoration will persist. So, throughout the capitalist era, the engaged university will be an “incomplete” university. This reality must be understood fully by enlightened forces (Taylor, Luter and Uzochukwu 2018).

## Reinventing the university for civic engagement

One key to building the engaged university is to prioritise the production of knowledge for social change. Then, use this knowledge as a guide to teaching and developing and implementing projects, programmes and activities to bring about social change. Too often, university-based civic engagement is driven by liberal “do-goodism”, and/or projects which are not informed by progressive theoretical, conceptual and interpretive frames. These types of activities might ameliorate suffering and mitigate harmful neighbourhood effects, but they will not eradicate the cause of these symptoms. As long as these causes persist, they will produce “suffering” and “harmful” neighbourhood effects regardless of the efforts of practitioners and community activists. Moreover, these problems will become increasingly complex and difficult to solve with the passage of time.

Our goal, then, should not be to “ameliorate” and “mitigate” issues, but to “eradicate” their root causes. On this point, Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton laid out the framework for producing the type of knowledge that can bring about systemic structural change in the United States:

We start with the assumption that in order to get the right answers, one must pose the right questions. In order to find effective solutions, one must formulate the problem correctly. One must start from premises rooted in truth and reality rather than myth. (Ture and Hamilton 1967: xvi)

The larger point is that the core problems facing blacks, Latinx and immigrants of colour require a sophisticated body of knowledge to solve and guide practical activities. The production of this knowledge in partnership with “marginalised” communities, combined with its transference to projects, programmes and activities, lies at the core of the engaged university model.

Currently, the university is dominated by conservative forces.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, much of the knowledge presently produced by the university will provide only a portion of the insight needed to guide practical activities and transform society. Thus, without such a progressive knowledge base for change, we will not be able to solve the core

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141. Our definition of conservatism also includes “liberals”. We place ideology on a continuum running from right-wing conservative to the radical left. In this modelling, the conservatives and liberals are on one side, while the progressives and radical left are on the other.

problems, such as poverty, low incomes and underdeveloped neighbourhoods. An examination of the poverty issue will demonstrate the importance of producing such a knowledge base.

## The poverty issue

Poverty is a serious problem that disproportionately affects blacks and Latinx. In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a “war on poverty”. He likened it to a curable and preventable disease that resulted from behavioural issues and education and skills deficits. The President believed the economy was producing enough jobs to provide employment for anyone wanting to work. So, the system was fine. Thus, he concluded: fix the people, you fix the problem. This simple theme became the war on poverty credo. The US lost this war. Today, more than 50 years later, about 27% of blacks and Latinx live below the “official” poverty line, and most have incomes too low to improve their standard of living. Our argument is that the poverty problem cannot be solved without an accurate portrayal of US poverty.

The war on poverty, then, failed because it was based on false assumptions, undergirded by the myth of a poverty/non-poverty dyad where people could move from poverty to middle-income status – a concept based on the American ideal of individual mobility and upward social mobility. The importance of the “mobility” concept must be viewed against the backdrop of the US as a commodity-based society, where income is the prime driver of a person’s living standard and quality of life. The quality of education, housing, health care, food, entertainment, social security and neighbourhood conditions are determined by how much a person earns. The poverty concept refers to the minimum living standard a person can afford as compared to the rest of society. So, the concern is “poor” people are forced to live in neighbourhoods that produce undesirable outcomes and that dramatically reduce life chances.

Many social ills are thus traced back to poverty. A problem is that the concept blurs the relationship between poverty and low income. We argue that poverty is an extremely low income, which should be classified in the low-income category, rather than a “stand-alone” concept. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) stratifies low incomes along a continuum with three sectors – extremely low, very low and low. Income levels vary in each sector by family size and income figures are adjusted based on the standard of living found in particular cities and regions. Thus, extremely-low income limits in Nashville, Tennessee, New York City and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania are very different. In Philadelphia, for example, for a two-person family, the limit for extremely low income is US\$20 000, very low is US\$33 300, and low is US\$53 250. In this scenario, a two-person family living below the poverty line would fall into the extremely-low income cohort.

This framework exposes the fallacy of the poverty/non-poverty paradigm. A family moving out of poverty and the extremely-low income cohort will enter the very-low income category. A few families might even make the leap from poverty to low income, but virtually no one will jump from poverty to the middle-income category (US Housing and Urban Development 2017). Of course, if a person moves from the extremely low to very low category, their quality of life will probably improve, but

not their living standard. The reason is housing and neighbourhoods are commodities. Persons in the extremely-low or very-low income cohorts are likely to live in the same type of neighbourhood as low-income groups.

One big reason these shifts in income will not change the living standard of people in poverty is that “real wages” lag behind a living wage, which is defined as a wage that allows a person to maintain an acceptable standard of living. To gain insight into this issue, we randomly selected four census tracts in Philadelphia that were 80% or more African American, with three of the four being over 90% black. The tracts had an average household size of three persons.<sup>142</sup> According to the Living Wage Index, a Philadelphia single-parent household consisting of one adult and two children would need an income of about US\$61 000 to make ends meet. In these four census tracts, the median household income was only US\$31 000, well below the living wage needs of this single-parent family. Significantly, most of the households spent more than 30% of their incomes on housing. Residents who earned less than US\$30 000 a year spent as much as 50% of their income on housing. These extreme housing-burdened households (50% or more of their income on housing) will have trouble acquiring adequate food, clothing, medical care and transportation and covering other essential expenses. The larger point is that small increases in income, while desirable, will not lead to meaningful changes in the living standard of most low-income groups.

Another problem with the poverty concept is that it assumes that most jobs pay a living wage and that a sufficient number of jobs exists to employ anyone desirous of working. Most jobs in the US neoliberal economy are low-income positions that do not pay a living wage.<sup>143</sup> In the United States, the labour market is becoming increasingly bifurcated as low- and high-income jobs grow, while middle-income positions are reduced. This trend line will continue into the foreseeable future. For example, in December 2016, there were about 95 million workers counted as not in the labour force, a historic high.<sup>144</sup> This jump in the number of workers outside the labour force occurred as the US economy added 178 000 jobs and the headline unemployment rate dropped sharply (Cox 2016).

We have provided this detailed analysis of poverty and incomes to illustrate the importance of producing a “progressive” knowledge base that can be used to solve problems and guide the struggle to transform society. Developing this type of knowledge must be an intentional act. The black sociologist Kenneth B. Clark discussed the importance of “interpretation” in the construction of knowledge for social change. He stressed the importance of moving beyond facts to understand truth. To obtain the truth, he said, one must interpret the facts. In applying this theory to Harlem, Clark (1965) said:

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142. In the US, “census tracts” are geographic areas that the federal government uses to collect population data. The census tract is an area roughly equivalent to a neighbourhood established by the Census Bureau for analysing populations. They generally encompass a population between 2 500 and 8 000 people. The Census Bureau describes them as “relatively permanent”, but they do change over time (US Census Department).

143. See <http://livingwage.mit.edu>, accessed 2 April 2018.

144. See [www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat35.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat35.htm), accessed 2 April 2018.

Truth is more complex, multifaceted and value-determined than is the usual fact. Fact is empirical while truth is interpretive. Fact is, in itself, unrelated to value; it merely is. Truth, as the understanding – in the fullest sense – of fact, is related to value and, for that reason, more fully human. (xxiv)

## WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Reinventing the university for civic engagement requires prioritising the production of knowledge for social change, and then using this “knowledge” to develop projects, programmes and activities that attack the systems and structures of racism, oppression and social class inequality. To make this happen, college presidents should establish university-wide, interdisciplinary civic engagement centres, which interlock research and practice (Landefeld and Seskin 1982). The aim is to institutionalise the theory–praxis nexus, so the process of learning from practice and using this knowledge to enrich both theory and practice is normalised. The intent is to conceptualise radical social change as a “project”, which requires ongoing experimentation to succeed. This process dynamic necessitates the use of practice to test theories and concepts, and then utilising the lessons learned to inform the development of new research agendas and to upgrade practical activities. For this to happen, researchers and practitioners must work together in common institutional settings that facilitate interaction, co-operation and collaboration.

This approach requires the capacity to transfer “knowledge” from the laboratory, books, articles, technical reports and white papers to public policies, legislature, neighbourhood development plans, comprehensive city plans, health improvement strategies and food planning, as well as the formulation of alternative economic development strategies, the development of new types of jobs, and other programmes, projects and activities designed to bring about real-world change (Inkpen and Tsang 2005). For example, there should be ongoing research on the poverty and low-income problem, the transformation of underdeveloped neighbourhoods, and the development of social democratic economic models. Working alongside these teams would be scholars seeking to turn the insight produced by the researchers into local and national policies aimed at: (1) changing what it means to have low incomes; (2) reimagining the neoliberal political economy; and (3) fighting for full employment at a living wage. These same teams could design legislative initiatives, and engage in cultural programmes and activities designed to build a social infrastructure that supports the radical change process. Most important, these research activities would be specifically designed to produce forms of practice that frontally assault the structures and systems of racism, oppression and social class inequality.

The development of this type of knowledge base requires the utilisation of varied quantitative and qualitative methodologies, applied and theoretical research, action research, and community participatory research models, as well as laboratory and archival research. In this approach, some scholars will work on individual projects, while others will engage in collaborative research. On some occasions, scholars will work alone on theoretical issues, while in other cases they will blend practical work with their research activities. The aim is to “free” scholars to work on the issues that interest them, while building trust and inter-connective linkages among all knowledge

producers. While we have stressed the work of campus-based research models, we are also supportive of those community-based participatory research models where knowledge is co-produced with residents. The argument is that knowledge production should be a broad, imaginative, collaborative and highly innovative enterprise, which has a central hub on the university campus.

Lastly, community building must be a vital part of the engaged university model. It should be based on deep partnerships that benefit and serve the community as well as universities. These interactive partnerships should be based on the “people’s right to the university” and the reimagined engaged university model. Such a partnership is what makes possible the building of deep interactive linkages between the university and the “marginalised” community (Hartley 2016: 252).

## CONCLUSION

The “possible world” concept challenges enlightened forces to imagine an alternative to the actually existing world in which we live, and to imagine the role that universities, particularly research universities, can play in its creation. We must look beyond our immediate ordeals to translate our aspirations and intentions into visions of the better world we aspire to create. To guard against disappointment, bewilderment and co-optation, we need the vision to see an alternative possible world, embedded in the uncreated future (Kelley 2002). This vision of another possible world will help us define the pathway from our actually existing reality to that alternative world. In this regard, the task should not be to simply lessen misery, hardship and unfairness, but to eliminate them. We must not only be anti-racist and anti-sexist, we must also imagine an alternative possible world where these twin evils do not exist.

This means that programmes, projects and activities must be designed to create that possible world now. For example, if we believe that people have a right to live in good housing situated in vibrant neighbourhoods, then we should fight to build those communities now. This requires confronting these realities by changing legal housing-quality requirements and demanding that high-quality, affordable housing be built for the poor and other low-income groups. If it is not possible to eliminate poverty and low incomes, then we must change what it means to be poor and have low incomes. Thus, by imagining an alternative possible world, we can more readily construct a pathway between this actually existing world and the utopia we intend to build.

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Part V

## **Towards the future**

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## Chapter 19

# Attending to the critical juncture in the higher education space

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*Elene Jibladze*

### INTRODUCTION

A “crisis in education” occurs when the traditional task of the education system to mediate between the past and the future becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, writes Hannah Arendt (1961). In a post-Second World War world, Arendt questioned whether education could act as an anchor for the future: what was the purpose of education once it was incapable of providing a framework for the future? Decades later, our modern world is again facing a situation where past experiences, choices and the principles that were the basis of those very choices did not produce desirable results. In fact, past choices and actions have led us to the modern world of post-truth, Brexit and the refugee crises. We have come to a critical juncture in history where the direction of a new social order is to be determined. Hence, Arendt’s question remains pertinent – what is the purpose of education in this critical moment?

This question guided participants in the Global Higher Education Forum held at LUMSA University in Rome from 15 to 16 June 2017. Reimagining and redefining the purpose of higher education was the core aim of the Forum. Invoking the “fierce urgency of now” of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ira Harkavy pointed to the importance of taking immediate measures to oppose narratives of post-truth and alternative facts, nationalism and populism.

Participants were invited to deliberate on an often forgotten mission of higher education – democratisation – and critically engage with the concepts of diversity and social inclusion, imagining how universities can contribute to creating and sustaining genuinely diverse, inclusive, democratic communities around them and throughout their societies. In order to do these things, Sjur Bergan emphasised that maintaining academic freedom and university autonomy is crucial. Three themes were to guide the Forum: higher education is a public responsibility; higher education is essential to democracy as it promotes multi-perspectivity and ensures sustainability of liberty; and the university of the new era is an engaged university. Overall, the debates at the Forum can be summarised in five distinct thematic blocs, which are discussed below.

## RAISING BIG QUESTIONS

Higher education leaders, educationalists, representatives of public authorities and the non-governmental sector from the United States, Europe and other parts of the world raised four big questions. The first concerned the urgent need for change and how to introduce it. The second concerned having an open discussion regarding the university's role in improving the conditions of migrants and how to improve the human condition in the modern world. The third concerned revisiting seemingly established views on what matters. Finally, the fourth contested understandings of diversity and inclusion and invited participants to redefine these concepts.

### The role of the university

The neoliberal narrative of economic advancement through the free market and competition that has been guiding university policy and practice for the past decades was contested and many participants suggested that this was a reductionist view of higher education's role in society that trivialised the university's core missions of knowledge creation and unbiased research and teaching. Furthermore, participants discussed the challenges of the relevance of the university in modern societies and concluded that for universities to remain relevant and topical they need to engage in the societal battles against populism and nationalism. Universities need to become hubs for critical thinking and act as role models within their communities, promoting and embracing diversity in society. Universities need to recreate spaces that counter political apathy and promote political change to advance democracy. But most importantly, universities ought to become purposeful agents for developing inclusive identities, that is, educate for life and not only for successful employment.

### Points of concern

While discussing the role of higher education institutions in building a new social order, participants emphasised that university representatives need to be aware of certain concerns, including elitism. While it has long been proclaimed that higher education provides access to students of all backgrounds, nationalities and abilities, in reality it tends to perpetuate inequalities. Another concern that participants shared was growing distrust towards universities across wider society. Anti-intellectualism has become fashionable. Many have questioned the legitimacy and validity of academic teaching and research and have questioned the value of scholarly expertise. Finally, universities need to be careful not to become self-referential. Instead, they need to critically appraise whether they are capable of contributing to the building of a new kind of society.

### Tensions

During the one and a half days of work at the Forum a few points of tension also were identified. On the one hand, universities consider themselves agents capable of change. On the other, they were seen as lacking self-criticism towards their own work, as well as failing to evaluate their capacity to succeed. System-level and

university-level indicators of success are different and market-driven higher education systems offer performance indicators that give little importance to the social dimension of the university. Broadly, this echoes the problem of having engaged universities acknowledged as capable entities within the higher education space. Moreover, in their everyday work, academics sometimes have to make choices between their professional and personal values and those of the institution, since these values do not necessarily complement each other. This difference can make maintaining professional and personal integrity a challenge.

## Reimagined purposes of higher education

Throughout the course of the Forum, the purpose of higher education was revised and redefined. Participant understanding of the purpose of higher education in the modern world echoed what was so succinctly articulated by Pope Francis (2015) when he explained that “there are three languages: the language of the head, the language of the heart, and the language of the hands” and that education must embrace all three languages. The imperative of the positivist approach to knowledge acquisition was questioned and the mission of the university to teach for democracy and for life was advanced.

## FROM BIG QUESTIONS TO ACTION

### How to bring about change

Recent events have led to the understanding that neoliberal democracy has reached its limits and is facing major challenges. We are experiencing a critical juncture – a situation of uncertainty in which decisions taken by important actors are crucial to the selection of one path of development among other possible paths (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Mahoney 2000). Defining events, such as the most recent election results in the United States, the unexpected outcome of the United Kingdom referendum on “Brexit”, and the refugee crisis in Europe in 2015-16 have raised alarm in different social and political circles, involving policy makers, social activists, religious leaders and ordinary citizens. Vice-Rector for Research and International Relations at LUMSA University, Consuelo Corradi, conceded: “We did not see this coming”. All of these outcomes, it was established, are indicators that democracy as an ideology has been hollowed out and that public trust in democratic institutions has plummeted. With an understanding of an urgent need for immediate action, educators from both sides of the Atlantic (as well as from other parts of the world) came together at the Forum to discuss, deliberate and reimagine the role of higher education in this changing global political and socio-economic landscape.

In this context, one of the big questions that Forum participants engaged with was how to bring about the desired change on the basis of a shared understanding that higher education institutions bear responsibility for identifying a “new path”. Two points were highlighted in this regard. First, while the urgency and importance of change were obvious, it was not to be treated as an end in itself but as the means to achieving an end goal of improving democratic culture in our societies and the human condition. Secondly, as Tony Gallagher of Queens’s University Belfast put it,

the societal debate that will try to establish a new social order is ongoing. We, in higher education institutions, need to be part of this debate, otherwise the future will be crafted without us. Put differently, at this critical juncture universities have to become one of those important actors actively engaged in deciding which path of development will be chosen for society.

The question of bringing about change was directly linked to the need to question the place of higher education within the public policy realm. Participants criticised the neoliberal approach to higher education that viewed it as a private commodity and highlighted the importance of bringing higher education back into the realm of a public good that emphasises public responsibility. In his presentation, Gallagher provocatively invited attendees to think beyond this binary distinction and contemplate a third possibility – public good, private good or something else?

## How to improve the human condition?

For the past few years we have been witnessing increasing discrimination, violation of human rights and an overall worsening of the human condition around the globe. The refugee crisis in Europe in 2015-16 raised concerns among policy makers and educational leaders that society at large in Europe resisted and was to a certain extent hostile towards the refugees, as well as toward migrants more broadly. More importantly, tolerance and human compassion were hardly practised in those decisive moments when refugees asked for a helping hand.

The university's mission to educate for life means that the institution's core responsibility is to contribute to improving the human condition. Here, the importance of teaching the humanities was emphasised, as it is assumed that these disciplines nourish a kinder, empathetic self. It was a shared sentiment among the attendees that the idea of educating for life needed to be brought back to the core of higher education. However, it was also suggested that the topic needs a new outlook to engage students in thinking processes and hence nourish interdependence, including knowledge co-creation rather than just knowledge transmission.

Since higher education has been engulfed by the neoliberal understanding of the purpose of education and the consequent shift towards marketisation, a simplified understanding of higher education's aim as being limited to employability has developed. Forum participants therefore engaged in new ways of defining what actually matters in higher education, taking into account the changing socio-economic, political and cultural landscape.

## What matters?

As mentioned above, the dominant neoliberal discourse that has penetrated higher education has pushed it towards marketisation and commodification. Marketisation has long been identified as a dominant theme that has significantly altered higher education systems (Douglass, King and Feller 2009; Neave 2012). Participants at the Forum criticised this state of affairs and pointed to the ills of current education systems that have been caught up in the marketisation frenzy. They pointed out that marketisation sets out a radically different understanding of higher education than as



a public good with a public responsibility. Transposing market logic to higher education transmits the conviction that the development of the state stems from individuals who are educated to be “constantly reinventing entrepreneurs” (Lynch 2006: 3). Accordingly, the primary aim of the university is to provide the kind of education that fits the economic advancement of a particular society/state. Changes in the aim of the university transform its role in the state architecture from a (national) public good to a tradable commodity (ibid.; King, Marginson and Naidoo 2011, Neave 2004).

Many Forum participants challenged marketisation, arguing that market logic is detrimental to higher education quality. Lynch (2006) voices a concern that academic education that is subordinated to economic goals trivialises education that has no market value. It also shifts the emphasis to efficiency and subordinates social equality. In turn, the emphasis on measures of efficiency, productivity and excellence and the institutionalisation of an audit culture in higher education are good for self-display, but lead higher education institutions to emphasise image at the expense of substance (Ball 2012; Neave 1998, 2009).

In such cases, universities are no longer centres of learning, but adopt traits of corporate organisations that compete for resources and try to attract customers. At the Forum, participants saw this view as reductionist and maintained that a holistic view of higher education needs to be brought back to the public realm in order to assist society in problem solving and in contributing to the engineering of new realities. As previously mentioned, lack of diversity and the prevalence of exclusionist attitudes have been ascribed to, among other things, the underestimated role of the humanities in higher education. As many participants pointed out at the Forum, the dimension of an individual as a socially responsible actor has been missing from the university curriculum. Commodification of education has compromised an important mission of the university: educating for democracy.

As Ahmed Bawa pointed out, it is important to critically assess what matters and what the ultimate goals of education are now. It is not employability that is a top concern, but lack of tolerance, empathy and the ease with which we construct the “Other” in our societies. Hence the question that needs to be addressed is how the university can respond readily to what matters in society now.

It was also highlighted that in this time of paradigm shift, universities ought to be attentive to external changes. As has happened in the past, some of the positive changes in attitudes towards diversity and inclusion were introduced not by universities but by a wider, external policy-making logic and were then picked up by the universities. Opportunities will be presented to them now as well.

It was noted that the issues of diversity, tolerance and inclusion had been very insufficiently reflected in the everyday work of the university. Even now, when deficiency in tolerance and a push towards exclusivity are very evident, the universities are slow to comprehend that these societal issues need purposeful interventions. The suggested launching point was to engage in critical reflection of what diversity and inclusion are and in what way universities can engage with these.

## What is diversity and what is inclusion?

Forum participants unanimously agreed that universities have to promote diversity and practise it on and off campus. However, the understanding of diversity as inclusion of the “Other” in the dominant narrative (whether it is off or on campus) was considered to be a false solution to the acute problem of American as well as European societies, where many seem to see homogeneity as desirable, if not as imperative. This problem became tangible during the refugee crisis in 2015-16, for example when Hungary built a fence on its border, and Donald Trump stated during his presidential announcement speech that he would build a wall at the US-Mexican border (Trump 2015). Issues of this magnitude, participants felt, should be tackled at the core and can only be addressed by “interrupting the usual” (Alger 2018). As Brian Murphy, President of De Anza College, proposed, we should not engage with the current narrative that proposes to understand diversity through the lenses of inclusion. Instead, we must change this narrative and construct a new one, which communicates “togetherness” and does not divide “them” and “us”. As many participants urged at the Forum, the only way to achieve this type of diversity is through active listening and mutual learning. Then, universities could act as role models, as promoters of diversity in society. Universities that are embedded in their localities reflect the socio-cultural landscape of their localities, and work with and for them.

## ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY

Throughout the discussions, higher education leaders emphasised the role of the university as a social actor. Universities were viewed as spaces that resist populism and nationalism and provide constructive, humane alternatives. This will happen as long as universities act as hubs for critical thinking, publicly promote and practise active education, create space for debate and engage with “unpopular” themes, and not only deliberate, but also act upon their convictions. This can only be accomplished if the university promotes and embraces diversity in society and becomes a role model in practising it in its everyday work.

As Ronald Crutcher, President of University of Richmond, Virginia, asserted, it is essential to democracy to educate people and, thus, ensure sustainability of liberty. In other words, universities, by educating for democracy, promote positive political change and therefore advance democracy. The issue of diversity brings forth the issues of tolerance, empathy, solidarity and in a broader sense, the need to develop holistic, inclusive identities. Overall, the idea of educating for life and not for private gain was highlighted throughout the conference.

## CONCERNS

While discussing the future of higher education, Forum participants shared some concerns that need to be addressed and that originate both within and outside of universities. Here, criticism towards higher education institutions as elitist organisations that are detached from their societies and particularly, their immediate contexts (be it the community they are situated in, or the municipality they belong to), were voiced and embraced. Educational leaders shared the concern that higher

education institutions have become inward-looking, self-referential actors. They have become detached from everyday social problems, lack reflexivity and promote a university-centric model of knowledge development.

Universities have to challenge the ways in which they operate and engage in learning to ensure democratic processes. It is apparent that they need to challenge themselves in redefining social justice, inclusion and diversity in the first place and examine whether these democratic principles are adhered to within the university. In essence, while often espousing democratic culture, universities remain elitist and hinder diversity. Perhaps the major challenge that persists in higher education systems across the globe is that while student numbers have risen significantly, only a fraction of youth has access to higher education, which is quite homogenous. Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and minorities are under-represented in universities: few access universities and even fewer graduate.

Another concern voiced is that the value of knowledge and scholarly expertise has been trivialised. In the era of “fake news” and “post-truth”, the fundamental values of education have been compromised. The value of research as a base for problem solving and decision making has also been compromised, and distrust towards the very notion of expertise has been growing. In other words, two primary missions of higher education – creating knowledge (through unbiased research) and transmitting knowledge (through teaching) – have been questioned and compromised, leading to the swift demise of university authority. The rapid advancement of information technology that has made educational content openly available has also posed a challenge to the university as the ultimate knowledge hub. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) and various online learning platforms such as Coursera, Khan Academy or Udemy are alternative channels for acquiring knowledge in the modern era.

## TENSIONS

Bearing the above in mind, it is worth highlighting that some points of internal tension were also identified. The primary issue that the university as an institution faces is lack of self-criticism. While deliberating on social problems, universities are likely to consider themselves to be the ultimate agents of change but fail to realise that they are frequently self-referential institutions that are irrelevant, or even detrimental, to their immediate environment. As participants highlighted, it is important that the university never becomes comfortable with the narrative that it creates about itself: the narrative of a change agent acknowledged by the rest of society. At one of the first plenary sessions it was suggested that universities have to understand that they are not intrinsically worthy of being supported, listened to or depended upon. On the contrary, universities have to demonstrate daily that their work is worth attending to and supporting. University leaders raised a concern that lack of self-awareness might lead to further detachment of the universities from their context and, eventually, make them obsolete.

Another point of tension that participants identified regards the differences between indicators of success at higher education and university levels. Currently, the institutional prestige of universities is built mainly around research and the employment rates of graduates. This tension is, again, linked with the consequences of marketisation of

higher education. For instance, performance-based measurements and an emphasis on ranking have become widely used system-level success indicators in Europe, the United States and beyond. As Teixeira and Dill (2011) assert, the attractiveness of marketisation stems from the belief that markets are not only adequate but reliable steering mechanisms to minimise growing discontent with what is perceived as the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of higher education institutions. Jongbloed (2003) adds that emphasising competition and introducing performance-related reward schemes is intended to increase the awareness of institutions as well as students of the consequences of their financial decisions. However, the efforts and achievements of those higher education institutions that are actively engaged in community development, involved in day-to-day problem-solving activities of their communities, and practising diversity, are not captured in system-level indicators.

Put differently, higher education institutions that have specific missions to develop a specific community in the country in one way or the other – are not able to build prestige as the work that universities do to fulfil their social mission is not generally acknowledged as relevant in current educational systems. University rankings measure teaching and research capacity, industry contributions and the international outlook of the universities.

Finally, educationalists in their everyday work have to maintain integrity in their personal and professional values and institutional values, which are not always in harmony. This is a challenge that has to be faced at a personal level.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS – THE PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In conclusion, higher education at this time of massive turbulence across the world was identified as having three pillars. First, higher education institutions should create and, as was suggested by Tony Gallagher in his presentation, co-create knowledge and build an understanding among the younger generation. This can be achieved through producing relevant research as an engaged university. In doing so, the importance of reaching out to the community and being there to “listen” to the ills of society was emphasised. Higher education institutions should develop understanding through teaching and learning. Building multi-perspectivity obliges them to engage with a diverse student body and learn from students rather than offering them a grand narrative of their own.

Secondly, higher education institutions should adhere to and practise the values of democracy and human rights, empathy and compassion, passion and dedication. Universities ought to develop a counter-narrative to the dominant neoliberal logic of economic advancement and bring forward aims of education other than that of ensuring employability.

Thirdly, universities have to abandon an elitist world view and move beyond their campuses. In order to truly contribute to social advancement, universities need to be embedded in the community, to work with and for the community. Universities are in fact embedded in their localities. During the day and a half of the conference, many successful examples of universities engaging with their immediate environment

were provided that proved that they were practising diversity and demonstrating compassion and empathy. It was emphasised that these cases could serve as a basis for formulating ideas and approaches to help universities across the world develop and implement steps to advance greater diversity and inclusion. Moreover, these approaches need to be institutionalised to ensure democratic culture and sustainable improvement of the human condition.

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Over the past decade or so, our societies have been facing increasing difficulties in reconciling acceptance of diversity and social inclusion with the need for community. The search for simple solutions to complex problems, the fact that “fake news” and “alternative facts” are no longer seen as nonsensical expressions, our responses to migration and the “refugee crisis”, and the growth of populism in many parts of Europe present challenges to our societies, and not least to education.

Authors from Europe, North America and South Africa outline how higher education could respond to these challenges. The first section makes a strong case for the continuing importance of higher education and research to modern society. The second focuses on higher education institutions and the need for inclusive and diverse campuses. The third section considers opportunities to improve the inclusion of refugees and immigrants in higher education. Whereas the focus in Europe is mostly on refugees, in the United States it is largely on immigrants, further accentuated by the debate on the Dreamers.

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