

Achieving Equity in Tertiary Education

Pointers for policy development

TACKLE EQUITY ISSUES

- Assess where equity problems arise through systematic collection of data
- Use an empirical performance indicator system to monitor access, participation, retention and success of groups identified as disadvantaged for the equity framework
- Address inequality of access to tertiary education by intervening at early educational levels

SMOOTH TRANSITIONS FROM SCHOOL TO TERTIARY EDUCATION

- Set up a network of career guidance services at the school level with sufficient and well-trained staff
- Promote exchanges between schools and tertiary education institutions (TEIs) whereby school children are mentored by tertiary students
- Expand tracks from vocational upper secondary education to tertiary education
- Ensure that school children are not tracked away from tertiary education paths at an early age
- Lower barriers between the vocational and academic tracks within secondary school
- Ensure that the number and type of study places in tertiary education accommodate diverse demand
- Ensure that secondary curricula and assessment provide a good basis for successful tertiary study

TAKE CULTURAL DIVERSITY INTO ACCOUNT

- Adapt tertiary programmes to cater for both school leavers and adults seeking to upgrade their qualifications
- Encourage the development of TEIs with diverse cultural foundations (e.g. indigenous TEIs)
- Encourage policy of opening up culturally diversified TEIs to all citizens, regardless of cultural background
- Enhance the partnerships between cultural minorities (and the TEIs run by them) and mainstream TEIs
- Establish learning centres with remote links to TEIs and regional campuses of urban-based TEIs

OPEN UP ENTRANCE PROCEDURES TO TERTIARY EDUCATION

- Give TEIs more autonomy over student admissions and encourage them to base admissions on a wide variety of entrance criteria
- Encourage targeted recruitment programmes or the provision of quotas for members of specific under-represented groups
- Consider granting eligibility through the accreditation of prior learning and work experience
- Consider granting eligibility through the possibility of passing an examination to test the individual's aptitude for tertiary study
- Improve information for students about programmes and transfer possibilities
- Develop a system of course credits valid across the tertiary education system

PROVIDE EXTRA SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS

- Consider special incentives for TEIs to attract less represented groups and to develop initiatives to support students from these groups in their studies progression
- Extend tutoring services for students with academic difficulties

ENCOURAGE INSTITUTIONS TO BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF ADULT LEARNERS

- Provide information and access courses to prepare older people for a return to study and consider introducing alternative entrance requirements
- Facilitate enrolment on a part-time basis
- Expand access to include individuals of all ages in student support systems

SUSTAIN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE GENDER PARITY IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

- In those countries where gender parity has not been achieved at under-graduate level, steps to promote female participation should include career counselling and information at the school level, along with efforts to develop family-friendly policies and shifts in cultural norms about the roles of women
- Encourage girls to pursue the sciences and boys to pursue the more “caring” professions and studies

GRANT SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- Develop support strategies in TEIs that avoid any form of stigmatisation
- Collect data on disabled students in order to improve provision
- Consider developing distance learning opportunities

FURTHER READING

These general pointers for policy development are drawn from the Thematic Review of Tertiary Education, which covered tertiary education policies in 24 countries. The findings of this review are presented in *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society*, published in September 2008. Background reports prepared by 21 countries, *Reviews of Tertiary Education* in 14 countries and other documents of the review are also available on the OECD website www.oecd.org/edu/tertiary/review.