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Charting Equity: Drawing the Global Higher Education Access Map

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA



Project partners

National Education Opportunities Network (NEON)

NEON is a professional organisation for widening access to HE in England. Professional development, collaboration spaces, knowledge production and advocacy. 80 organisations as members including 60 HEIs. Funded by member subscription.

www.educationopportunities.co.uk

Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education (CEEHE) at the University of Newcastle, Australia

CEEHE undertakes interdisciplinary, international and collaborative research designed to create the highest standards in equity practice locally, nationally and globally. It regards participation in higher education of the highest quality as one of the most powerful ways for a nation to ensure social equity, cultural cohesion and respect for difference, economic stability and democratic participation.

www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/centre/ceehe/about-us

Pearson Open Ideas

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Background

- National and Global HE league tables were becoming increasingly important
- Most didn't include access data and many included variables, such as entry tariffs, which can militate against WP
- GA (then on behalf of GAPS) approached GW (at UON) with a proposed project to inform national, supra-national and institutional policies on data
- English data were good but quality of data elsewhere was variable and in some cases unknown
- Initial proposal was to explore the feasibility of creating a 'Global Equity Index'
- GAPS conference in Montreal gave encouragement to the project and funding was secured from Pearson and UON.

N.B. Scottish Commission on Access Recommendation 13: The Commissioner for Fair Access, should engage with those compiling key university rankings to ensure greater priority is given to socioeconomic diversity within the rankings and to ensure that institutions who take the actions necessary to achieve fair access are not penalised (March 2016)

What questions did we want to answer?

- Is inequality in access to HE a global phenomenon?
- What data are available to answer this question?
- Can those data be used to compare access in different countries?
- How might data inform collective action on access?

Methodology

- Survey of data policies in 50 countries
- Analysis of secondary data sets from

OECD

Eurostudent

SEDLAC

World Bank

- Case studies of South Africa, UK, USA, Colombia, Australia, India

Variables looked at

- Socio-economic background
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Religion
- Indigenous groups
- Rural backgrounds
- Older or mature learners
- People with refugee status
- People who speak a particular language
- Other groups under-represented in HE

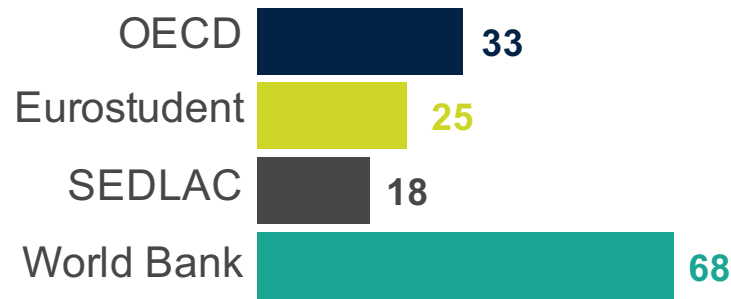
Five key messages from the study

- Data suggest inequalities in access to HE are pervasive
- The available data have important limitations
- Comparisons across countries are important but difficult
- Access means more than entry and participation
- Political will and resourcing shape data collection

Inequalities in access are pervasive

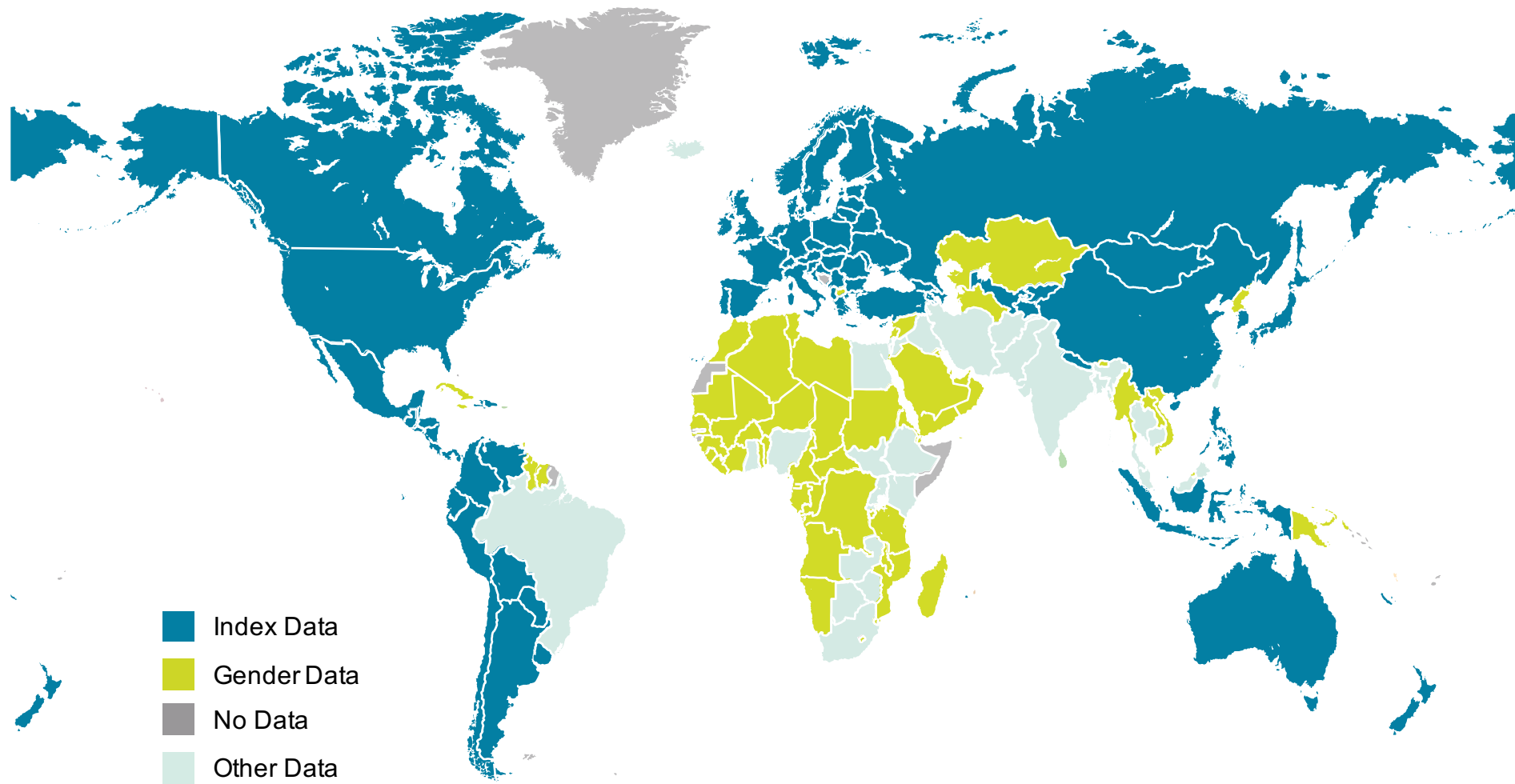
Project devised a provisional 'global equity index' with limited variables:

- 80 separate countries
- Socio-economic background from 4 different data sets



- Combined with gender
 - UNESCO Gender Parity Index

Availability of data varies



The data have important limitations

Table 1: Number of survey countries where data are collected nationally and/or regionally on participation by:

Gender	47
Socio-economic background	36
Learners from rural backgrounds	33
Older or mature learners	33
People with refugee status	32
Disability	31
Ethnicity	29
People who speak a particular language	20
Indigenous groups	16
Religion	14
Other groups under-represented in HE	14

Limitations in the data available



Income levels, particularly for people in rural areas without salaried jobs, are difficult to calculate. Since the 1994 genocide it has been against government practice to divide Rwandans into ethnic classifications, so there is no data available on that.



Rwanda

Inequalities are difficult to compare

Challenges:

- Socio economic proxies differ across data sets
- Collection differences within data sets
- Access is 'locally defined'
- Significant technical and ethical issues.

Access means more than participation 1



Access to HE is not enough. Because you have access to HE in many instances of very, very low quality. Saying we're reaching 50% in higher education doesn't mean anything if the quality isn't any good. There's something like a bit more than 30% of people who are finishing HE in Colombia. But of very low quality for most of them so it doesn't mean anything.



Colombia

Access means more than participation 2



I do wonder about the value of driving through the university system a whole bunch of people who graduate with pass average degrees, when the average student ... is completing with credit or distinction average degrees. Undoubtedly, the people with pass average bachelor degrees are likely to be better off than they would have been without it, but we haven't really done anything to shift disadvantage. We've just kind of entrenched a graduate inequity.



Resourcing and political will 1



The Indian HE system is very vast, with roughly 700 universities that can confer degrees and about 35,000 affiliated colleges, so collecting data is a mammoth task here. When we look at the private institutions who are a large part of the 35,000 colleges only a minority actually complete the annual return which is part of the All India HE Survey



India

Resourcing and political will 2



Data are collected – but not analysed or used, and that is the problem. ...access/equity have not been on the HE reform agenda in Croatia until now – the issue was long considered a "non-issue" altogether, or was considered a second-rate issue compared to "pressing" issues such as funding, quality assurance, etc.



Croatia

A 'Global Equity Data Charter' 1

Governments should:

- Make publicly available all the data they currently collect
- Integrate HE data with national and regional social censuses
- Make providing information on the social background of their intake a statutory requirement of the licence to operate for providers from the public and private sectors.

A ‘Global Equity Data Charter’ 2

Governments should:

- Set SMART targets for increasing the entry of those from at least four different measures of social background
- Form an arm’s-length body from government to collect and analyse data on higher education participation
- Produce an annual report on higher education participation by social background, and the progress being made in this area.

Global Equity Data Charter 3

Supra-national organisations should:

- Form a global equity data working group
- Use and develop tools like our Global Access Data Map and a possible Global Equity Index to track and publicise progress
- Support the formation of a global centre for higher education access and equity data collection/analysis.

Global Equity Data Charter 4

HE providers should:

- Put in place strategies to collect information on their intake - and its progression and outcomes - by social background
- Establish governance structures that ensure these data are monitored and acted upon on a systematic basis
- Work with governments and external agencies to make sure data on access, participation, success and progression are included in HE ranking systems.

Where to next?

- Extend analysis to new modes of provision, including online learning, and to postgraduate enrolments
- Conduct further research on data on progression and success, and on institutional approaches to access work globally
- Collaborate with OECD and UN/UNESCO – the latter in relation to new Global Goals
- Work with rankings providers on access measures
- Work with policymakers on the Data Charter

**For a copy of the report or to explore opportunities
to collaborate contact us at:**

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FULL REPORT: <https://www.pearson.com/about-pearson/what-we-do/innovation/charting-equity.html>

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