IIEP-UNESCO research on Flexible learning pathways in higher education: international perspective

National Webinar on Flexible learning pathways in Finnish higher education

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National policies for flexible learning pathways

• Chile, Finland, India, Jamaica, Morocco, Malaysia, South Africa and the UK
• Shaped by global and local trends: massification, diversification, globalisation
• Balancing human resource development and equity objectives
• Equity groups in focus: cross-cutting categories are income, age, disability, gender, geography and ethnicity
Flexibility in access

• Preparatory programmes:
  • Preparatory courses between upper secondary level and HEIs (Finland, Chile, Jamaica, South Africa, the UK)

• Alternative admissions:
  • Open studies provided by open universities in Finland, India, Malaysia, UK, Morocco
  • More flexible general admissions in Chile, South, Africa, India, Finland

• Transfers:
  • National transfers: Finland, Jamaica, Malaysia, South Africa
  • Internal transfers through inter- and intra-institutional agreements (Finland, India, Chile, South Africa, Morocco)
Flexibility in access: Recognition of Prior Learning

- Two types:
  - National system for RPL: Malaysia, the UK, South Africa
  - Institution-led RPL: Finland, Chile, Jamaica

- Often practiced by vocational institutions for recognition of labour competences

- Difficulty linking TVET and HEIs’ qualifications for RPL

- Not a mainstream route in most of the studied countries

- Typically supported by NQF
Flexibility during studies: mode of delivery and curriculum

• Open and distance learning (ODL) and MOOCs (Finland, India, Malaysia, the UK, Morocco)

• Part-time, distance, evening, blended learning provisions in all case study countries

• Flexibility in curriculum varies across institutions
Flexiblility towards graduation

• Practices for flexibility towards graduation and transition to the labour market vary across countries

• Provision in studies to enhance employability (Finland, the UK, Morocco, Jamaica)

• Continuous education programmes exist separately for working adults for upskilling, updating qualifications, re-skilling in Finland, Malaysia, Chile, Morocco

• Student guidance services support flexibility towards graduation
Governance and autonomy for implementing FLPs

- Governance framework matters for FLPs!
- Balancing regulation and autonomy to enhance implementation of FLPs
- Implementation of FLPs is similar across HEIs in regulated HE systems (South Africa, Morocco, Malaysia)
- Implementation of FLPs varies across HEIs in decentralised HE systems (Chile, the UK)
- In Finland while HEIs have a high level of autonomy, key policy directions are set by HE bodies and implementation of FLPs is comparable across HEIs
Funding for implementing FLPs

• Government funding mechanisms strongly support FLPs (Finland, India, Malaysia, South Africa)

• Student support can enable access and retention of equity groups in FLPs (Finland, Chile, Jamaica)
Quality assurance and NQFs for implementing FLPs

• QA with focus on the implementation of FLPs (Finland; India, the UK)
• Guidelines for implementation of RPL and ODL (India, Malaysia, South Africa, Finland)
• But QA can sometimes be an obstacle to FLPs
• NQFs are important for facilitating understanding and comparability of qualifications
Enablers and barriers for implementing FLPs

• Shared vision and policy orientation on FLPs, including equity groups
• FLPs as a holistic policy that emphasises flexibility in access, during studies and towards graduation
• Balance between regulation and autonomy in implementation of FLPs
• Incentives and support for HEIs to implement FLPs
• Monitoring and evaluation focused on the implementation of FLPs
Thank you again for the attention!