



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



International Institute
for Educational Planning

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

National Webinar on
Flexible learning pathways in Finnish higher education

October 30, 2020

Dr. Michaela Martin and Uliana Furiv

Programme Specialist and
Research Project Officer,
IIEP-UNESCO

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



Flexibility 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!