

Abstracts

Eva Cendon, Mpine Makoe, Irina Haury: Higher Education in a Global Perspective: Inclusive, Sustainable, and Future-Proof?

This overview article attempts to take a future-oriented approach to higher education from a global perspective, informed by both research findings and policy-driven perspectives. After first spotlighting developments promoted and driven by supra-national organisations such as the United Nations, the article explores higher education research through three thematic strands – globalisation, inclusion and sustainability. By analysing and assessing the current state of research from a global perspective, the authors aim to present not only achievements, but also existing gaps and unfulfilled promises. The discussion centres around outlining common challenges and issues, as well as an outlook for an alternative, future-oriented, and even disruptive route for higher education from a global South perspective.

Keywords: globalisation, inclusion, sustainability, future

Diana Alférez-Rosales, Eric Alberto Emiliano-Gómez, Rosalba Badillo-Vega: Open Science and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Bibliometric Study in Mexico

This paper analyses the relationship between Open Science (OS) practices and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), on the assumption that OS practices may contribute to their achievement. A bibliometric study examines research publications in OS and traditional science at a public university in Mexico, focusing on gender, academic discipline, and publication volume. Publications from 2021, based on 745 affiliated researchers, were analysed using Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) indexes. Findings suggest researchers use OS and traditional publishing practices almost equally, with OS practices gaining importance. Researchers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as well as medical sciences show the highest Open Access (OA) publishing rates, while the percentage of male researchers publishing in open access exceeds that of female researchers. Regarding the SDGs, the highest number of OA publications were linked to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), a pattern consistently observed in both WoS and Scopus. In conclusion, this study provides a first descriptive insight into the adoption of OS practices in a Mexican public university and highlights their potential role in promoting equity in scientific production and contributing to the dissemination of research linked to the SDGs.

Keywords: open science, sustainable development goals, academic disciplines, gender, bibliometric study

Fady Guirgis, Milena Jostmeier, Swantje Notzon, Tobias Breuckmann, Rebecca Froese, Daria-Maria Gerke, Iulia-Maria Stroila, Lea Wilkens: Different Eyes on Sustainability: Stakeholder Perspectives in German Higher Education Under the Whole Institution Approach

This article examines how sustainability is perceived, prioritized, and enacted across status groups and institutional profiles in three higher education institutions (HEIs) in Münster, Germany, using survey data from 1,035 participants and drawing on the Whole Institution Approach (WIA). Results indicate that societal transformation and community engagement are prioritized, while curriculum integration is less developed, highlighting the need to strengthen curricular sustainability integration. Perceptions and priorities vary significantly across HEIs and groups, underlining that achieving a holistic WIA requires considering all perspectives. The findings further show that members of HEIs are more engaged in sustainability activities in their private or community contexts outside the university than within it. Student participation is lowest compared to other status groups, reflecting structural and cultural barriers and emphasizing the importance of enabling students as active agents of change. Inclusive participation, systemic support, innovation, and external collaboration are crucial for HEIs to act as effective sustainability drivers.

Keywords: whole institution approach, sustainability in higher education, institutional differences, status group perspectives

Caroline Trautwein, Roxana Bettinger, Julian Rebien, Anna Maria Pampel, Michael Hast: Distance Learning as the Higher Education Format of the Future? The Importance of the Study Entrance Phase

Worldwide, the popularity of distance learning is growing, making digitally delivered teaching and learning formats increasingly important, not only for today but also in the future. These formats' flexibility and accessibility particularly appeal to non-traditional students. However, academic success among distance learners tends to be lower and dropout rates are higher compared to on-campus students. The transition into distance learning represents a critical phase for successful learning. The article addresses the question of why the study entrance is central to a future higher education that breaks down educational barriers and promotes the academic success of distance learners. Based on a scoping review – conducted by searching five databases (ERIC, PubMed, Google Scholar, PsycINFO, Scopus) and ultimately including 60 sources – this article explores the opportunities and challenges for successful learning during the study entrance phase and provides recommendations for teaching.

Keywords: distance education, study entry phase, study success, non-traditional students

Lisa Steiner, Cordelia Menz, Sylvia Mandl: Multifactorial Discrimination and Student Mental Health: Implications for More Inclusive Higher Education

Higher education institutions should offer their students a safe, inclusive space that protects their mental health. Addressing this requires a holistic approach fostering a culture of belonging and psychological safety within academic communities. This research explores the association of multifactorial discrimination with student mental health and the potential of social integration to mitigate this effect in order to identify possible levers for higher education institutions. Logistic regression analysis indicates that discrimination is a significant predictor of mental health problems with social integration moderating this relationship. Additionally, an ANOVA reveals that students who experience discrimination rate psychological counselling services less positively than those without such experiences. This highlights the need to strengthen social integration of students at higher education institutions and psychological counselling especially for those facing discrimination.

Keywords: student mental health, discrimination, social integration, inclusivity, psychological counselling

Stephina Modiegi Ntsoane: Rethinking Higher Education Policies for Inclusivity through a Decolonial Lens: A Historical and Future-Oriented Analysis of South African Education

South Africa's higher education system remains shaped by colonial and apartheid legacies that embedded systemic inequalities in access, curriculum, and governance. Despite decades of reform, these historical injustices continue to marginalise African knowledge systems and lived experiences. This conceptual paper uses a decolonial lens to critically examine how Euro-North-American epistemologies have dominated education policy formulation, often at the expense of local perspectives rooted in African values. The analysis foregrounds Ubuntu as an alternative framework for rethinking inclusivity, emphasising interconnectedness, collective dignity, and social justice. By tracing the evolution of education policy from missionary schooling in the 1800s through apartheid's Bantu Education to contemporary reforms, the paper highlights how inclusivity has often been narrowly framed. It argues for an expanded understanding of inclusivity that moves beyond access to encompass epistemic and cultural representation. The paper concludes by proposing a transformative policy approach grounded in decolonial thought and Ubuntu ethics, envisioning higher education as a space that actively dismantles structural inequalities and empowers all communities through co-creation and shared knowledge.

Keywords: decolonial lens, ubuntu, inclusivity policies, higher education, systemic inequalities, euro-north-american centric, epistemic justice

**Romeela Mohee, Mpine Makoe, Buhlebenkosi Tshili, Ourvashee Roopchun:
Building Resilience Strategies Towards the Futures of Higher Education Sector in Mauritius**

The shifting global landscape has spurred the higher education sector in Mauritius to reassess its trajectory to meet the evolving needs of society. To guide this transformation, the Mauritian government embarked on a futures of education roadmap, towards reshaping the futures of higher education in Mauritius. Since this was a national initiative, the strategic foresight was used to formulate strategic goals that will guide the futures of higher education in Mauritius. The foresight approach began with environmental scanning through a SWOT analysis to better understand the Higher Education landscape. In a second step, insights were drawn through a series of consultative workshops with education stakeholders who were asked to visualise the Mauritian Higher Education Landscape in 2040. The data derived from these workshops was analysed through content analysis. Through this analysis, four main themes emerged as most relevant: technology enhanced, economically responsive, personalised learning and nationally and globally relevant. These key findings provided a platform for conceptualising and developing resilience strategies towards the futures of higher education in Mauritius.

Keywords: technology enhanced higher education, economically responsive higher education, personalised learning, nationally and globally relevant higher education, resilient strategies

Mathilde Niehaus, Kathrin Staufenbiel: Professional Offboarding Processes for Sustainable and Future-Oriented Universities

Professional offboarding processes offer great potential facing the shortage of skilled professionals through demographic changes, lack of resources and fast changes in the current work era. A precise and appreciative approach regarding administration, knowledge management and the professional accompaniment throughout the separation process leads to better and more sustainable solutions to fill or bridge personnel gaps. While companies have increasingly recognized this potential, professional offboarding processes are not yet treated as a strategic solution by the human resource management of colleges and universities. Possible reasons for this are described. We present how colleges may increase sustainability in their human resource management through professional offboarding processes. As examples we focus on offboarding due to fixed-term contracts and on offboarding due to retirement, a topic of urging relevance, especially in Germany and other similarly aging (European) countries

Keywords: offboarding, shortage of skilled professionals, governance