WP5.1.1.3 – A common framework for identifying best practices for inclusion applicable in diverse European universities

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1. WP5.1: DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR INCLUSION OF DISADVANTAGED STUDENT COMMUNITIES

1.1. Aim (project proposal tasks)

A constitutive part of the project "European Universities Transforming to an Open, Inclusive Academy for 2050" (EUTOPIA), is the workpackage 5 (WP5), entitled *Promoting Inclusion and Equal societies*.

One of the aims of WP5 is to identify key disadvantaged student communities in each of the EUTOPIA universities. This will lead to a common yet contextualised EUTOPIA approach to identifying disadvantaged students on a Europe-wide basis. We shall conduct a comparative analysis of (i) legal frameworks, (ii) definitions and methods applied by universities, (iii) data concerning disadvantaged groups available at the various universities, with the aim of producing principles and practices for educational formats that facilitate inclusion as well as policy measures and tools for inclusion of targeted students and staff.

1.2. Process (methodology of the output)

1.2.1. INCLUSION AS A CRITERION AND AIM

A vision of the future University, aiming to completely minimize or even eliminate effects and experiences of disadvantage, is one that is committed to establish and maintain the university culture and processes as truly inclusive for all members. There is evidence that a lot can be gained if efforts are then focused on revitalizing institutional structures, as well as critically rethink and develop the institutional culture and learning environment (e.g. Naylor, Misfud 2019; Tierney, 2000; Smit, 2012)

In the sub-workpackage 5.1.1. the preliminary work on best practices has been completed to offer a vision of a best practices common framework, which will be supplemented and further developed via outputs in sub-work package 5.1.2. (report on areas of best practice, and a virtual platform for sharing best practices) and 5.1.3. (toolkit, roadmap, impact report and policy-measures).

The work process for developing "A common framework for identifying best practices for inclusion applicable in diverse European Universities" has involved deliberating on a series of relevant questions, using different methods (online written brainstorming sessions, online meetings). The questions that were crucial in this process are:

- **Student's evaluations and reporting as our central source of data**: should all students be surveyed via their course-evaluations or should students who use particular services or have particular statues be asked to report on their experiences?
- **Criteria for best practices**: how can/should best practices be defined? What are the different criteria for identifying the best practices?
- **Assessing the best practices**: what criteria enable us to evaluate the practices? In what intervals should they be assessed and with what methodologies (i.e. visual ethnography)?

- **Internationalization of best practices**: what enables transferability of best practices?

1.2.2.DATA ON STAFF IDENTIFIED BEST PRACTICES

Next, to understand the current practices and know-how, two project partners (CY and UPF) developed a survey for staff at the six Eutopia partner Universities to date (UL, GU, CY, UPF, VB, UW), to collect data on current best practices.

The staff was surveyed for what they identify as best practices on two levels: inside the curricula (in the actual implementation of the courses) and on a broader level, encompassing wider University activities, services and infrastructure.

The survey results helped us in creating the design of the framework for identifying best practices, as it provided information on what is understood as best practices by the members of the partner Universities.

1.2.3.DEVELOPMENT OF THE FINAL DESIGN

This document (framework) is built on data from six EUTOPIA universities (UL, GU, CY, UPF, VB, UW). As informed by the results of the analysis for the previous 5.1.1. output (framework for identifying disadvantaged communities), actions and practices are one of the 4 main pillars that help us identify, monitor, address disadvantage and foster and monitor inclusion (the other three pillars are legislation, processes and university bodies). A common framework for identifying best practices for inclusion applicable in diverse European Universities is tightly linked to the document on the framework for identifying disadvantaged communities and should be read together.

Work in the WP5 consists of producing a series of outputs, that all complement each other and are interlinked. For example, in the next months, frameworks, road maps and reports will be produced, built on co-creation, and these will present best practices and other elements relevant to the goals and aims of this WP5 and the future universities. Therefore, also "a common framework for identifying best practices for inclusion applicable in diverse European Universities" , i.e. this present document, should be read as a work in progress (which will also be updated and modified during the duration of the EUTOPIA 2050 project) and as only one document among others, produced by WP5, that is about inclusion in EUTOPIA partner universities and higher education in general.

This first version of the framework will be used in delivery of the next outputs and then revisited and finalized at the end of the process of collecting, analysing, implementing and testing best practices in the EUTOPIA Alliance.

2. A common framework for identifying best practices for inclusion applicable in diverse European Universities

CRITERIA FOR DEFINING BEST PRACTICES

INNOVATIVE : is innovative and provides proof of improvement.

INCLUSIVE: the process and / or effects of the practice and not excluding, but are geared toward inclusion.

TESTED: the effects of the practice have to be documented / evaluated / observed and / or must be congruent with current theoretical insights (in gender theory, disability ethics etc.).

HOW, WHERE AND WHO

How can best practices be collected, what methods do we use?

Primarily, mixed methods can be used, and we can base our data in surveys, focus-groups, case-studies, ethnographic methods (visual ethnography, observation), co-production methods.

Where do we look for best practices, who are the resources?

Practices that happen both in the context of the courses (actual implementation, resources, curricula, teaching methods, special conditions etc.) and at the level of University agendas, culture and life (extra-curricular activities, services, programs and groups, incentives and opportunities, infrastructure, recruitment, intra-institutional cooperation etc.).

Who evaluates best practices?

Depending on the practice areas, there are a number of groups / individuals who can provide data. The central focus is on students (both general students, and specific students with special statuses), while also staff (teaching staff, research staff, administrative staff) as well as expert groups (outside the University) and peer groups (outside the University) can contribute.

3. Literature

Smit, R. (2012). Towards a clearer understanding of student disadvantage in higher education: Problematising deficit thinking. Higher Education Research & Development, 31(3), 369–380. doi:10.1080/07294360.2011.634383

Tierney, W. G. (2000). Power, identity, and the dilemma of college student departure. In

J. M. Braxton (Ed.), Reworking the Student Departure Puzzle, 213–234. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

3. Literature