



*Development of Inclusive and Participatory Learning in
Organisations through Multicultural Ambassadors –
DIPLOMA, nr.2021-1-RO01-KA220-HED-000027615*

Research Report

Section 1: Policy and Practice in National Contexts



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¹ NERUPI is partnership of over 60 UK HE and FE organisations working together to create a new approach to Evaluation of Widening Participation activity

Introduction

The Erasmus+ Diploma project is a collaborative project with partners from Romania, France, Turkey and the UK. The project aims are to support the development of inclusive practices in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by identifying and sharing effective practice in training and working with university student employees and volunteers. Undergraduate and post-graduate students are often used by HEIs to support widening participation in Higher Education (HE), particularly in countries such as the UK, America and Australia. Various titles are used for student employees and volunteers who undertake a range of activities for their institutions; student ambassador is used as an umbrella term to describe university students in these varying roles (Gartland, 2015).

This report provides an overview of policy and practice aiming to promote inclusion and widen participation in HE for diverse and underrepresented groups. The report is based on findings from desk research including academic literature, national statistics, HEI websites and information from expert groups. Identifying socio-economic status (SES), ethnicity, gender and special education needs and disability (SEND) as some of the key social markers determining access and participation in HE, the report presents current policy in each national context, and current practices in promoting inclusive HE access, participation, and success of currently underrepresented groups. Examples of strategies employed by HEIs, schools and third sector organisations in each country in supporting inclusion in HE are presented in the report. The report also provides an overview of how university student ambassadors are used by HEIs in each country to support inclusive practices. Through providing information about policy and practice in each country, the report aims to inform the development of training and activity with student ambassadors appropriate to national contexts, with the ambition to promote ambassadors' active engagement in developing approaches that more effectively support students from underrepresented groups.

Patterns of underrepresentation in HE

Romania

In Romania, only 25% of the population aged between 25 and 34 holds a tertiary education degree. Although the proportion has improved over time, it is significantly below the EU average of 40.5% and the EU-level target of 45% by 2030. As outlined in the Educated Romania report, Romania aims to increase tertiary attainment in the age group 30-34 to 40% by 2030. In 2020, the value of this indicator was 26.4%, significantly below the EU average of 41%. Achieving such an increase is likely to require sustained efforts to overcome the main drivers of low participation in higher education and an insufficient number of graduates. For example, participation rates are affected by persistently high rates of early school leaving, the low passing rate at the baccalaureate exam (less than half of the age-specific cohort is successful in this exam (UEFISCDI, 2020a), as well as by the low participation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Participation rates have somewhat increased in recent years.

In the 2019/2020 academic year 37.4% of Romanians aged between 19 and 23 were pursuing a bachelor's programme (EC, 2021). The national report on Higher Education elaborated yearly by the Ministry of Education states that in the academic year 2020/2021, in the higher education system in Romania they have 560, 187 thousand people registered, of which 87.8% within the institutions of state higher education, up from the previous year. Three quarters of students were pursuing undergraduate programs, respectively 73.5% of state higher education students and 82.6% of higher education students.

Regional variation: There is also a visible gap between the regions. This level indicator is 40% higher in the Bucharest-Ilfov region (51.7%) compared to the most advanced development regions (Northwest region and Central region, 26.5%), and three times higher compared to the least advanced region (South Muntenia, 15.8%). The situation has worsened over the last decade road sign. In Romania, the rate of young people aged between 16 and 29 is at risk poverty, and social exclusion has increased over the last decade (from 23% in 2010 to 26.1% in 2018) (Curaj et al., 2020). If we take into account the high school graduated by students, we can see that students who have graduated from a high school in rural areas have benefited in a significantly higher proportion of social scholarship compared to students who have graduated from a high school in urban areas ((2, N=36475)=15.95 $p < 0.001$). The data shows that 6% of the students who graduated from high schools in urban areas benefited from social scholarships and 94% did not benefit, and 8.9% of the students who graduated from high schools in rural areas benefited from social scholarships and implicitly, 91.1% did not receive such scholarships.

Socio- economic status: According to calculations made by the World Bank based on the household budget survey (2011), one can see that, in 2009, 3.8% of youth aged 25-29 from the 20% (quintile) the poorest young people, have graduated one cycle of higher education, while 52.4% of the top 20% (quintile) most affluent young people have graduated (CNFIS, 2016).

Students with disabilities: In the last university years, at national level, the percentage of students with disabilities has not been higher than 0.07% of the total number of students, according to data collected as part of the university classification process. According to National Institute of Statistics, at the beginning of the academic year 2011-2012 there were 333 disabled students (out of 539.852 students) of which 309 in public universities and 24 in private universities (CNFIS, 2016).

Roma students: Regarding the participation of Roma students in higher education, according to the Government decisions from 2010, 2011 and 2012, the number of state financed places reserved for Roma is reserved on a special status.

Immigrant students: The EUROSTUDENT report analyses the status of immigrant students using parents' place of birth as a proxy. Data indicates that 2.4% of students are first- or second-generation immigrants, mostly first generation. On the other hand, of the total of foreign students, the majority comes from the Republic of Moldova (59%). Even though at the international level such data is a revealing indicator in terms of equity, at the national level data on this topic is not collected by the NIS (CNFIS, 2016).

France

In 2021-2022, 1,634,200 French students are enrolled in universities (excluding other member institutions or components of experimental institutions). These data is stable compared to previous year.

Gender: More than half (54%) of young women have a higher education degree, compared to 43% of young men. However, they are very much in the minority in scientific fields of study. Three years after graduating from higher education, their stable employment rate is lower than that of men and their employment conditions are less favourable. The women are in the majority in bachelor's and master's programs, while they remain in the minority in doctoral programs (48.6%, +0.4 points). Moreover, Jaoul-Grammare (2020) analysed different national reforms between 1998 and 2013 and she concluded that gender inequalities have not changed for most higher education courses, remaining in favour of boys.

Socio-economic status: In 2017-18, 34% of French students enrolled in higher education are from social categories as management positions and higher intellectual professions. Only 12% of university students are from the working-class families.

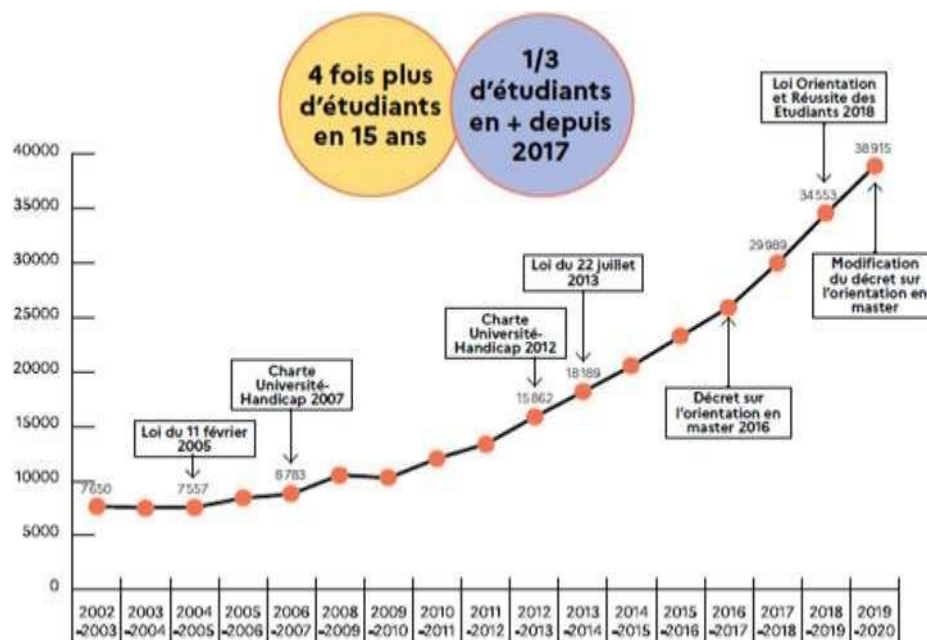


The social background of French students changes very little from one year to the next. In 2020-2021, more than 34.2% of students have parents who are executives or have a higher intellectual profession, compared to approximately 11.4% of children of working class and 17.1% of employees. The children of working-class workers are underrepresented in most fields of study, except in the sections de techniciens supérieurs (STS) (22.9%) and in the écoles paramédicales et sociales (18.7%). The children of executives and higher intellectual professions represent nearly 33% of the student body. They are overrepresented in health disciplines (48.3%) and less present in "multi-law, economics", "languages" and "administration, economics and social sciences" (AES), to the benefit of the children of employees and social class workers. Long-term studies at university are more common among the children of executives: their share rises from 28.9% in the bachelor's program to 39.8% in the doctorate program, compared to 12.0% and 5.6% respectively for the children of social class workers (3).

To conclude, the educational level of parents continues to have a significant impact on their children. Also, the international studies highlight that dropping out is a problem that

particularly affects students from lower socio-economic and disadvantaged backgrounds (OCDE, 2015). Other studies show that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face several psychological (e.g., low sense of adequacy, low perception of one's ability to succeed) and social difficulties (e.g., difficulties in orientation, low sense of belonging) (Jury et al., 2017).

Disabled/ students: According to national survey realised in 2019, there are 1.7% of students with disabilities. The main disabilities or disorders are language and speech disorders (24%), motor disorder (14%), psychological disorders (14%). There are 4 many times students in 15 years thanks to different Plan and Laws. For example, the law 2005-102 of February 11, 2005 states that “any disabled person is entitled to the solidarity of the entire national community, which guarantees, by virtue of this obligation, access to the fundamental rights recognized to all citizens as well as the full exercise of their citizenship”.



Turkey

In Turkey in the 2021-2022 academic year, there were 207 HEIs, 8,296,959 students, 184,702 faculty members. In the 2020-2021 academic year, 1,167,119 people graduated from HEIs. In the 2021-2022 academic year, 3,250,101 students were on foundation degree, 4,579,047 on undergraduate courses, 358,271 on master's degree programmes and 109,540 on doctoral programmes (CoHE).

Socioeconomic background: Gezer and İlhan (2018) found that socioeconomic factors were the most important factors causing inequality of opportunity in education. Moreover, Bülbül (2021) determined that students' socioeconomic background influenced their quality of life before enrolling to university, preparation for the higher education

institutions examination in Turkey and higher education decisions. Conversely, Kandemir, Benli, and Uslu (2020) conducted research at Kastamonu University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and determined that students with low socioeconomic background were more successful than those with middle and high socioeconomic background.

Students with special educational needs and disabilities: In 2021-2022, the total number of students with disabilities in HE was 55,667 (Male: 36,524, Female:19,143) (CoHE). Tekin (2019) found that students with visual, hearing and orthopaedic impairments faced issues concerning the physical and architectural structure of constructions, academicians and students who do not have disabilities, transportation and accommodations.

International students: In 2021-22 the total number of international students in Turkish HEIs was 224,048 (142,998 male and 81,050 female) (CoHE). Yıldırım, Özkan, and Büyükyılmaz's (2016) study of international students enrolled at Karabük University in Turkey found that most international students had four or more siblings, lived in private dormitories, were self-funded and could speak Turkish. Ertürk, Filizöz and Erdirençelebi (2017), determined that many participants encountered difficulties in talking in Turkish and experience cultural differences. Kurtça (2020) found that although international students could communicate with Turkish students and lecturers, they could not properly understand some lessons. Moreover, some students experience accommodation and transportation problems. Akkuş and Akkuş (2020) found that students' sense of belonging to university had an indirect effect with mediation of socialization on their academic success. Sağır and Aydın (2020) found that the sense of belonging amongst Syrian students with their own groups was important and that they often used social media for maintaining this sense of belonging.

Students regarded communication problems as the main issue they faced. Harunogulları, Süzülmüş and Polat (2019) found students encountered problems in learning Turkish, exposed to many psychological problems because of the war, faced financial problems and worked part-time. Çorlu (2021) determined that while Syrian students experienced problems including marginalization, exclusion, and lack of psycho-social support, they were willing to participate in society and live together. Similarly, Şahin and Kaya (2021) identified problems arising from war, immigration and other conditions, economic problems, language, exclusion and discrimination to a certain extent, accommodation, transportation, limited club membership and low participation in off-campus socialization processes, future anxiety in terms of employment, low book reading rate, factors such as insufficient household conditions, and cultural ghettoization. On the other hand, friendship relations between the Syrian and Turkish students were positive. Satisfaction with academic and administrative staff is at a certain level. Şanlıurfa turns into a center of attraction to a certain extent in terms of education. Studying at Harran University is a joy for more than half of Syrian students.

The results of the research show that a certain level of integration has been reached, but there are still aspects that are lagging and need to be strengthened.

Gender and sexual diversity: in 2021-22 50.3% of the students enrolled in HEIs were male and 49.7% were female, while 48.2% of foundation degree students were male, 51.8% female. At postgraduate level 51.3% of the students at the doctoral level were male, 48.7%

were female (CoHE). Kaya (2013) compared the Turkish education system with 27 European Union countries based on gender inequality. It was determined that the gender parity index at the higher education level of Turkey was smallest among the 28 selected countries, and such consequence could stem from the transition from elementary to secondary school. In another study, Korkut Owen and Mutlu (2016) discovered that gender differences exist on enrolment in STEM areas. Additionally, while male students tend to choose computer sciences and engineering, female students tend to study life science, mathematics and statistics. However, Sezgin, Sart and Dalyancı (2018) analysed the data for university enrolment rates in Turkey in 2017 with respect to the type of university (private/public) and the level of education (collage/undergraduate/master/PhD) and found that the gender inequality was considerably declined, but it was still below the desired level.

England

The English HE system could be described as a universal system that is ‘open’ to all. An estimated overall 53% of 17–30-year-olds had initially entered HE in England in 2019/20 (Gov.UK, 2022). Yet, despite the relative success in widening access to HE, statistics show that many groups continue to be under-represented in HEIs in England.

Socioeconomic Status: Studies continue to demonstrate that students from higher socioeconomic / affluent background are more likely to attend universities compared to their poorer counterparts (Sanderson and Spacey, 2021; Rose and Mallinson, 2020; Younger, Gascoine, Menzies and Torgerson, 2019). Recent government statistics reveal that ‘young people who were not eligible for a for free school meals (FSM) at age 15 were 70 per cent more likely to enter higher education by age 19 than those who were’ (OfS, 2022a, p. 2) (FSM is frequently used a proxy for socio-economic class). Statistical data show that students from well-off socioeconomic background ‘were around four and half times more likely to progress to high tariff HE than the most disadvantaged pupils in 2020/21’ (The U.K. Gov, 2022a). Conversely, graduates from less privileged backgrounds are less likely to progress to postgraduate study than their more affluent peers (Wakeling and Mateos-Gonzalez, 2021). Regional variation across the UK in opportunities including access to HE and progression to graduate level jobs has also been highlighted (OfS, 2021b). More privileged families in England tend to send their children to private, fee-paying schools outside of the state school system; in a summary report outlining their key findings for university access in England in 2010, The Sutton Trust reported that:

Independent [private] school pupils are over 22 times more likely to enter a highly selective university than state school children entitled to Free School Meals [...] 55 times more likely than FSM pupils to gain a place at Oxford or Cambridge [and] 6 times as likely to attend a highly selective university as the majority of children in state schools not entitled to Free School Meal (2010, p2).

Gender: Citing the then Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, Atherton and Mazhari (2019, p.9) reported that white British working-class ‘boys are the least likely of any large ethnic group to go to University’. The latest statistic shows that in 2020/21, 50.6 per cent of

female students entered HE by age 19 compared to 38.4 per cent of males while 12.7 per cent of female students gain admission into high tariff HE by age 19 in 2020/21 compared to 10.1 per cent of male students (The U.K. Gov. 2022a). Additionally, white women from a middle-class background are the most likely to obtain good degrees, whereas working-class men from ethnic minority backgrounds are the least likely to obtain good degrees (Atherton and Mazhari, 2019). However, women remain significantly underrepresented in core STEM subjects (physical sciences, mathematical sciences, computer sciences and Engineering and technology) constituting only 26% graduates (24,705 in total) in 2019 (STEM women, 2022).

Ethnicity: Regarding access to HE, the latest data from the U.K. Government (2022a) shows that of all the ethnic groups, white pupils were the least likely to progress to HE by age 19 at 39.7%, compared to 48.1% for Mixed, 62.1% for Black, 65.7% for Asian and 81.0% for Chinese pupils. However, in her analysis large scale national attainment quantitative data set Crawford (2019) suggests that white boys continue to enjoy achievement advantages over numerous minoritised groups; especially their peers of Black Caribbean ethnic origin' (p. 423). In relation to attainment, studies have found that Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) graduates are 13 per cent less likely to be awarded a high degree classification (Williams et al., 2019). Compared to their white counterparts, black graduates are also less likely to be in employment or postgraduate programmes a year after graduating (OfS, 2021; Cramer, 2021; Jankowski, 2022; The U.K. Gov. 2022b). Of all the ethnic group however, Gypsy Roma and Traveller of Irish heritage pupils are the least likely to progress to HE (OfS 2021a).

Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND): Latest government data shows that in September 2020/21 only 8.7 per cent of pupils with SEND progressed to HE by the age of 19 compared to 48.6 per cent of pupils with no SEND. Likewise, just 1.1 per cent of pupils with SEND progressed to high tariff HEIs in 2020/21 compared to pupils with no SEND at 12.8 per cent (The U.K. Gov. 2022a)

Looked After Children: Only 13 per cent of pupils who were looked after continuously for 12 months or more on 31st March 2017 progressed to HE by age 19 by 2020/21 compared to 45% of all other pupils (The U.K. Gov. 2022a). Research has also shown that pupils who have spent time in local authority care as children 'often take longer to complete their degrees [...] and more likely to withdraw and change to part-time study' (OfS, 2021, p. 95*English higher education 2021 – The Office for Students annual review).

National Policy and Funding

Romania

According to the Education Law, direct financial support consists of scholarships or study loans for students. The national legislation states that a study loan system is to be established for certain categories of students: "Students coming from low-income families benefit from a bank loans system for their studies, guaranteed by the state, under the conditions

of the law, through the Agency for Study Credits and Scholarships (ACBS). Loans may cover tuition taxes and the cost of living for the duration of the studies.” At the moment, this system is not functional. Furthermore, according to the law, graduates that will practise their profession for a minimum of 5 years in rural areas will be exempted from paying back 75% of the loan, that part being taken over by the state, with a maximum threshold of 5000 RON (around 1200 Euro). In this context, the document will only detail the types of scholarships that have equity as an objective and the methodologies used for their disbursement. According to the law „Students benefit from merit or performance scholarships, for stimulating excellence, as well as social scholarships, for the financial support of students with low incomes (Romanian Education Law, 2011).

At a national level on policy level the National Strategy for Tertiary Education 2015 – 2020 was developed. The Strategy intends to focus efforts so that Romania joins, by 2030, the European states with competitive higher education institutions, being structured on 3 pillars (UEFISCDI, 2016):

- (1) Improving participation in tertiary education
- (2) Flexible, relevant and high-quality programmes
- (3) Strategic commitment to the economic sector.

In 2019, the Strategy aims, among others, to develop the institutional strategies to draw underrepresented groups to tertiary education, to provide financial incentives to ensure that people from underrepresented groups are drawn to and kept in tertiary education and to encourage higher education institutions to strike a balance between the genders with regard to the number of students in each field of studies (EC, 2020). Such an example is the introduction of **social scholarships**. The relationship between social scholarship and academic performance is significant in the first year of study, those who received a social scholarship having significantly less difficulties (repetition, abandonment, expulsion) than those who did not benefit from the scholarship. In the first year of study, there is a significant association between receiving a social scholarship and performance ($\chi^2(2, N = 39183) = 395.4, p < 0.001$). Among the students who received a social scholarship, 70.9% managed to promote all courses as opposed to 50.5% of those without a scholarship.

The services available to all students regardless of the type of university they attend (state or private) are, according to the Education Law (Romanian Education Law, 2011):

1. **Free medical and psychological assistance** in medical and psychological university cabinets or in state clinics and hospitals. According to the data gathered by ARACIS in 2008, from a total number of 46 universities, 35 had a medical cabinet while 11 didn't.
2. During the school year students benefit from a **reduced fee (by minimum 50%) for local public transportation** or national transportation- auto, railway and naval.
3. Students benefit from fees **reduced by 75% for access to museums, concerts, theatre, opera, movies or other cultural and sports** events organised by public institutions, within the limits of approved budgets.

4. The **release of study certificates or documents attesting that one is a student** (including the schooling situation/grade situation, graduate diplomas, engineering, MA and PhD Diplomas and diploma supplements, receipts, student licences and ID cards, including for library access).
5. The State gives subsidies for **dorms and canteens** that partially cover the living costs, the difference being paid for through taxes by students. The dorm places are distributed to students that do not live in the city where they study based on criteria approved by university senates. **In most universities social cases are given priority.**

France

The French strategy sets national goals (113 for the next 10 years) based on 5 strategic axes (building a learning society and supporting the economy; increasing internationalization; stimulating social mobility and social inclusion; designing 21st century higher education; and meeting the aspirations of young people). The 2017 Student Plan mentions the following (overlapping) policy goals: improve guidance and support for academic advising in secondary education such as high schools (e.g., appoint academic advisors; integrate academic advising 114 weeks into programs; integrate academic advising projects; stimulate dialogue between school and university rectors); create a more equitable and transparent admissions and selection process.

However, in France, the state has entrusted schools and universities with integrating power. Even if the policy of democratization of the whole of higher education has been in place for several years, access to education, more particularly in the prestigious universities, remains always unequal in favour students from wealthy families (Duru-Bellat, Farges, van Zanten, 2018). A young person from the upper class in France is three times more likely to access higher education than a young person from a low-income family (Fack and Huillery, 2021). To combat these inequalities, the French government has implemented various strategies. We are discussing the two main and striking ones: financial support for vulnerable students and the recruitment policy favouring students from lower classes.

Regarding financial support, scholarships based on social criteria, housing aid, social and family allowances as well as tax deductions are granted to vulnerable students and their families. The CROUS (Centre Régional des Œuvres Universitaires et Scolaires) deals with financial aid mainly related to access to suitable accommodation and checks the accessibility of university restaurants. The SUMPPS (University Service for Preventive Medicine and Health Promotion) pays for certain treatments for students in vulnerable situations. As for students with disabilities, the CDAPH (Commission for the Rights and Autonomy of Persons with Disabilities) determines the necessary aid or support (writing, management of daily life, etc.) for the students concerned. Other private organizations of a social nature, in particular the Secours Populaire, Resto du Coeur or of a religious nature such as the Secours Catholique and CARITAS provide material support (food, clothing, etc.) to poor students.

As for the recruitment policy, the university access system in France is open. Each young person can freely choose his sector and his path. However, even if young people from

under-represented groups can enter higher education, inequalities appear in their previous educational trajectory (Vermandele et al., 2010). Poor students tend to choose the short and professional course while those from the upper class follow long studies. The studies of Duru-Bellat & Kieffer (2008) shows that the choice of elite courses in French higher education remains conditioned by the father's diploma and the type of baccalaureate obtained. Family background and previous career are therefore decisive in the choice of the most prestigious socially and professionally university courses. To help under-represented groups to integrate these schools called "grandes écoles" which are expensive, certain practices, in particular the policy of "segregative democratization" have been put in place and have allowed the opening of elite courses to students from priority education (van Zanten 2010; Dutercq and Masy, 2018; Pavie, Olympio and Hache, 2021). In general, the policy of "segregative democratization" or "positive segregation" consists of favouring ethnic or other minorities, perceived as different, disadvantaged and on the margins of the majority community. With this implementation of "segregative democratization" in education, students from lower classes but deemed deserving or with high potential (Rochex, 2010) were able to access prestigious schools as well as courses of excellence in teaching, superior in France from the 2000s.

However, these various aids and recruitment policies are largely insufficient for these students. To live socially and meet the necessary academic needs, the complement of other sources of income is necessary. Hence the involvement of poor students in salaried activities, in particular "small jobs" which are not necessarily compatible with the pursuit of their studies (Derouet, 2005; Gérard Aschieri, 2013). This handicaps them, however, because some students work day and night and are so tired that they find themselves unable to follow their studies properly and meet the expectations and requirements of the university. The recruitment policy at the university does not respond either to the question of inequality which also arises at the level of the content of education and the programs offered. Derouet (2005, p.5-6) emphasizes that the organization and the curricula were designed and built for the bourgeoisie. They manage to integrate most middle-class children but are not suitable for those of higher origin. Indeed, after the training followed "*the working classes are not able to take over and build a model that corresponds to their interests*". Ultimately, these students know limits not only at the economic level often leading them to massive failure at the university, but also at the level of the study content which does not prepare them properly to face the job market.

Turkey

Article 42 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (1982) includes the provision that "no one can be deprived of the right to education and training". This provision is in accordance with the universally accepted approach and includes the right of everyone to equal education, girl-boy, sick-strong, without distinction, and can respond to the fact that educational activities and policies that will be needed in the country reach solutions consistent with the relevant article of the constitution. However, it is seen that the policies and practices mentioned at the higher education level are mostly carried out for disabled

individuals in our country. In other words, it can be said that inclusive practices in the higher education system appear with more visible practices to ensure the access of people with disabilities in society. The reason that should be emphasized in the emergence of this situation is the structure and organization of the Turkish National Education System. In this context, to be mentioned briefly, it consists of 12 years of compulsory education, including primary school (4), secondary school (4), high school (4), and then associate degree (2), undergraduate (4) and postgraduate education stages. Educational activities in our country are carried out in a centralized structure by the Ministry of National Education, and when the 12th grade comes, students are placed in universities depending on their preferences, with the Higher Education Entrance Examination (YKS), which is also held centrally. The positive reflection of this application is that higher education is open and accessible to all genders, religions, ethnicities, and social classes (provided that they get enough points from the exam). For this reason, there is no need for inclusive practices in which an autonomous application form chosen by the students who will continue their higher education, which is also carried out in different countries such as the USA, France, and England, is adopted and implemented in our country.

Previously, tuition fee was collected from students studying at public universities. With a change in 2012, this situation was changed to include primary education and open education students. Thus, university education has become completely free for students who study within the normal period. In addition, every student who wishes is given a student loan to pay back 4 years after graduation, and some students are given non-refundable education scholarships. The process of granting scholarships, loans and cash aid is guaranteed by a law (YÖK, 2004). The priorities regarding who will be awarded the scholarship are determined as follows (KYGM, 2022): being a child of a martyr or veteran, having a disability of more than 40%, completing high school education by sheltering in an orphanage, being an amateur national athlete, having his mother and father passed away. As can be seen, with this application, it is aimed to facilitate access of disadvantaged groups to higher education. In addition, the state opens student dormitories to meet the accommodation needs of higher education students and provides food services at very low fees.

With a law (YÖK, 2004), some regulations have been brought to institutions for stairs, disabled ramps, and elevators. It has been stated that if there are stairs in the garden and building entrance of the building where the institutions are located, access opportunities such as ramps, vertical disabled lifts or similar security measures have been taken for physically disabled individuals, and the slope of the disabled ramps should be at most 8%. At least one of the WCs, sinks and bathrooms on the floors where the disabled students are accommodated should be arranged in a way that is suitable for the use of disabled individuals.

Within the scope of the Anti-Terrorism Law, the spouses, and children of those who lost their lives while fighting terrorism, registered in higher education institutions in Turkey, were allowed to receive education in the status of special students in the 2018-2019 academic year. In this context, the state pays the contribution fees of those who are enrolled in state higher education institutions and who are within the education period of the program, who

want to continue in another higher education institution. The “Project of Supporting the Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System”, which started in 2016 and lasted for 2 years, was initiated by the European Union Delegation to Turkey and the Ministry of National Education in order to support the initiatives for Syrians under temporary protection to access education in Turkey and to integrate them into the Turkish education system. As the outputs of the project, it is aimed to remove the access barrier for Syrian children, to strengthen the capacity of educational institutions and personnel, and to increase the education quality of Syrian children (PICTES, 2016). In our country, foreign students can study at universities with the exams called YÖS, which are held to continue higher education. In these exams, there are questions to measure basic reading comprehension language skills and basic skills in the field of numeracy. Another application that can be evaluated in the context of the principle of inclusiveness is the measures and practices taken to ensure that the prisoners who are imprisoned for various crimes continue their higher education by guaranteeing the right to education of the prisoners, who have all human rights except the rights they lose because of the deprivation of liberty. This situation is carried out with the circular numbered 46/1 prepared by the General Directorate of Prisons. Prisoners have the right to participate in the student selection exam opened by the Student Selection and Placement Center and the Ministry of National Education, the foreign language exam, the exams required to work in state institutions, the exams for continuing their graduate education and to continue their education.

England

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England are publicly funded (Research England, 2020). Until recently, HEI spending was disbursed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for teaching and research. In March 2018, HEFCE was closed, and public funding moved to two bodies: the Office for Students (OfS) which is responsible for disbursing funding for teaching, and Research England which is responsible for disbursing funding for Research. The OfS is not part of central government, but an independent public regulatory body that reports to Parliament through the Department for Education (OfS, 2022a).

Funding for students to attend HE is available via publicly supported student loans from the Student Loans Company for tuitions fees and maintenance. Loans are paid back with interest by students earning above a threshold level (currently set at £21,000 per year) (U.K., Gov., 2022f). Full-time students qualifying for courses can take out a loan to cover their tuition fees (Hubble and Bolton, 2018). Master’s and PhD loans are intended to contribute towards the tuition fees and living costs of studying a master’s programme at a UK university (Wakeling and Mateos-Gonzalez, 2021). Maintenance loans for undergraduate courses are based on family income. Citing the OECD (2017), Hubble and Bolton (2018, p.

3) noted the increase in university tuition fees ‘in England from 2012 were likely to be the highest for public or state-dependent private institutions in the developed world’ with a major implication of this being an ‘increase student debt (about £57,000 for a three-year degree -

according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies) for students from the poorest backgrounds (Hubble and Bolton, 2018, p.).

Irrespective of their socio-economic background, every student that has gained admission into an HEI in England is entitled to apply to the Student Loans Company for a tuition fees loan. However, only students from low socio-economic background are eligible for full maintenance loans. The amount students get varies and is based on their family income (Bolton, 2021). Students with SEND can also get the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) to help cover their study costs. Undergraduate and postgraduate students with a SEND can get up to £25,000 a year for support (U.K. Gov. 2022c). There are also various financial supports to encourage students studying for Level 3 qualifications to progress to HEIs. These include Advanced Learner Loans (U.K. Gov. 2022d) to support the costs of courses at colleges or training providers, and an Advanced Learner Loan Bursary which offers targeted support for additional costs (such as childcare, accommodation and travel) for students with SEND (U.K. Gov. 2022e). Students studying for a Level 3 qualification aged between 19-23 may also be eligible for non-repayable Adult Education Budget grant (The Skills network, 2022).

Universities and colleges in England have been formally accountable for widening access and to some extent, student success for over twenty years; this accountability was formalized with the establishment of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) in 2004. OFFA was closed in 2018 with responsibility for fair access placed under the auspices of the OfS. Under the Equality Act (2010) the OfS is legally obliged to give due regard to equality issues when making policy decisions regarding HEIs (OfS, 2018). As the regulator for HE in England, a key part of the role OfS is to ensure that 'all students, from all backgrounds, are able to progress into employment, further study, and fulfilling lives' (OfS, 2020a, p. 1). HEIs planning to charge high level tuition fees are required to have an Access and Participation plan approved by OfS, which sets out the HEI's commitment to reducing 'the gaps between the most and least represented groups in relation to access, student success and progression into employment or further study' (OfS, 2021b, p.5). The Access and Participation Plan also serves as the first condition of registration with the OfS, an essential prerequisite for providers to access public funding (OfS, 2020b). The OfS also funds Uni Connect (formally the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) which supports collaboration between HE and FE institutions, schools, and other local partners across the country to deliver targeted and coherent outreach activity (NCOP, 2019).

All approved HE providers charging higher level tuition fees to qualifying persons on qualifying courses in England are legally obliged (under Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and the Equality Act 2010) to ensure access and participation for students from all backgrounds. To ensure that an approved HEI provider is complying to OfS' access and participation requirements, the OfS have set two key conditions: to have in force an access and participation plan approved by the OfS and to take reasonable steps to comply with the provision of the plan; and to publish an access and participation statement and update this statement on an annual basis (OfS, 2018). The OfS sets out priorities for HEI access and participation activities. In early 2022 the OfS set out priorities including that universities and

colleges should ‘partner with schools and other local organisations to raise the attainment of young people’ (OfS, 2022d, p.1), HEIs were instructed to refocus their access and participation plans to demonstrate how they plan to address these priorities.

As well as traditional degree routes, UK HEIs offer other programmes as part of strategies to widen HE participation. Foundation year programmes are offered by several HEIs in England; these programmes serve as a bridge or alternative route to undergraduate programmes for students from underrepresented groups (Boliver et al., 2017). The current UK government is also keen to promote technical qualifications and have overseen the growth of degree apprenticeships in the UK. Numbers of degree apprenticeship programmes have almost doubled since 2018/19 (U.K., Gov., 2022h). In 2019/2020 there were 66,730 higher apprenticeships at either Bachelors (Level 6) or Masters (Level 7) degree level (Higginbotham, 2021).

Higher Education Institution (HEI) strategies

Romania

A recent survey (UEFISCDI, 2020) shows that in the 2018/2019 academic year, 10% of students at the public universities surveyed were receiving social scholarships. These scholarships are seen as having a positive impact on reducing the rate of drop-out and improving graduation rates in nominal time. However, scholarships seem not to motivate more students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access higher education. Nevertheless, a slightly increasing interest was noted for the dedicated places for graduates from upper secondary schools located in rural areas.

Guidance and counselling activities are regulated by Order of the Education Minister 3235/10.02.2005 on the organisation of first-degree studies, which requires the establishment of Counselling and career guidance centres (CCGC) within universities. In Romania there is a framework methodology for the organisation and functioning of counselling and career guidance centres in the higher education system approved by Order no. 650 of 19 November 2014. CCGC's career counselling and guidance activity is aimed at:

- students of the higher education institution in which they operate, regardless of the study program they attend or the form of education, including students coming to study through mobility programs
- pupils in the high school termination years, through partnerships concluded with units of pre-university education
- graduates of their own or of other universities.

CCGC has the fundamental objective of providing new employment opportunities for young people in the education system through career counselling and guidance activities aimed at:

- guiding and counselling pupils / students so that they can plan and manage their own educational path optimally

- reducing university dropout due to career or career orientation reasons as well as personal reasons or adaptation to the university environment
- facilitating the relationship between students and the labour market so that they know the real needs and challenges of the labour market
- increasing the employability of students in the graduated fields of study.

CCGC must be composed of psychologists certified in the specialty Educational psychology, school and vocational counselling, along with career counsellors, sociologists and teachers. The minimum accepted ratio is at least 1 career counsellor / psychologist / 2,000 enrolled students.

CCGC's activity involves working with students at different educational stages:

- They have responsibility for informing, guidance and counselling of pupils in the final years of high school / students by offering the following services: educational and vocational counselling, counselling and psychological evaluation. career counselling. developing materials for information, guidance and counselling.
- Actions also relate to increasing the insertion of students and graduates into the labour market by offering services such as: employment portfolio training sessions, job interview simulation/ organisation of company presentations/ training sessions for the development of students' transversal competences/ to carry out periodic studies and analysis on drop-out of university, integration of graduates into the labour market, the impact of counselling and vocational guidance services, as well as proposing measures to improve them/ developing and applying specific tools to monitor labour market insertion/ participation in activities organised by graduates.
- They provide information and counselling of pupils on the educational and occupational routes available in the university curriculum of the transferable credit system at university level, in accordance with the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education and the National Qualifications Framework, through specific means such as presentation sessions type open door days, educational fairs, thematic visits, etc.
- They also provide information and counselling of students on the educational and occupational routes of the higher education institutions, for higher education cycles.

The ROSE Project concerning the HE: Under the Non-Competitive Grant Scheme of the project ROSE, grants given are to faculties from the selected public universities taking into account the number of students at risk, as well as the dropout rate after the first year of studies or the fields of bachelor's degree programmes. The beneficiaries of this scheme are university students at risk enrolled in their first year of a Bachelor programme, mainly those with a high dropout risk (Moarcas, 2020). Several 201 non-competitive grants are under implementation, where 15,999 students benefited, in their first two years, from remedial activities, counselling and personal development programmes, etc. The competitive grant scheme for universities Support for university students was launched in 2019. The objectives and activities of the Scheme are similar to those of the Scheme of Non-Competitive Grants.

France

French universities deploy different strategies and actions to support under-represented students. In particular, we can mention training programmes for student associations enabling them to contribute to the development of an inclusive student life, actions and training to raise the awareness of the university community to take disability into account, strategies facilitating accessibility to cultural activities and places (subscriptions taking into account student income), strategies supporting access to free health care for the poor and support adapted to the needs of the student during internships or professional integration thanks to the guidance services present in several French universities. We would like to insist in this text on two main strategies: Tutoring as a means of support in learning and university integration as well as ‘work-study’ (*alternance*) as a support method for their professional integration.

Tutoring programmes: Regarding tutoring, it is an educational procedure that makes it possible to meet the specific cognitive, socio-affective, motivational and metacognitive needs of a learner or group of learners (Papaïoannou, Tsioli and Vihou, 2015). It was around the 1990s that France introduced the tutoring policy in higher education (Annot, 2012). Today, tutoring is developing in French universities thanks to teaching or institutional policies promoting student engagement. Indeed, several French universities promote student engagement both in solidarity actions (school support, support for marginalized people), as well as in cultural actions (cultural event project) and militant actions (to defend a cause). This is why there are partnership agreements between associations, companies and universities to facilitate this student engagement.

Some associations, in particular ZUPdeCO, particularly support tutoring in universities to better support low-income students towards success in their studies thanks to the intervention of their fellow volunteers. The objective of this type of tutoring is to avoid failure, the dropout of students mainly from disadvantaged classes as well as inequalities at universities. The free tutoring as well as its realization between peers constitute a royal road and par excellence of its success. Indeed, student tutors better understand the problems, difficulties, needs and concerns of their peers in vulnerable situations. Given that they go through almost the same situations and that they are called upon to carry out the same academic projects as part of their studies and that they often have discussions and personal exchanges, the student tutors are well placed to provide answers, even solutions that can contribute to the self-esteem and success of tutored students. In addition, the bond that is created between tutoring students promotes their professional integration. Fredy-Planchot (2007) and Papaïoannou, Tsioli and Vihou (2015) specify at this level that the place of tutoring is recognized both in integration and in the transfer of knowledge in the world of work.

Work–Study programmes: As for ‘work-study basis’ (*alternance*), it is a method of university training that is very widespread in France. With this method, students make a break for a given period with the university. It is a system in which there are successive periods of practical training based on the exercise of professional activities within a structure (association, company) as well as periods of training at the university. For some authors such

as (Causse, 2021), 'work-study basis' would be considered "as a remedy for certain dysfunctions, whether unemployment or school failure", because the host structure makes the student discover values work and skills related to time management, creativity, etc.

Regarding under-represented students at university, it should be noted that it was towards the end of the 1980s that work-study contracts became possible in professionalizing higher education in France, to solve the problem of students in difficulty. (Fourdrignier, 2007). 'Work-study basis' is for these vulnerable students a working method which allows them to be in contact with real life and which facilitates their integration into the professional environment and to give meaning to learning, because it is based on the scenario and the realization of experiments within the structures (association, company). In other words, as students from working-class families "*were victims of the exclusion that resulted from the great confinement of the school and the formalization of knowledge at school*" (Derouet, 2005), the openness 'work-study basis' would be for them a response to this exclusion.

However, despite this initial purpose of 'work-study basis' allowing poor and vulnerable students to familiarize themselves with the world of work, certain researchers, in particular Derouet (2005), alert us to the fact that these new forms of training, mainly work-study and development exponential unpaid internships, could be a form of method used to exploit these vulnerable young students. Often the work carried out by these young students, and which brings profits to the company is not paid up to the quality and quantity of production. At this level, the question arises: would these new forms of training be university programs favourable to young people from working-class families who have suffered exclusion at school, or do they consist in reinforcing their vulnerability? The work of Pinto (2014) specifies that the work-study program is an asset for students, in particular those from disadvantaged families, but it also limits certain activities of student life, in particular leisure.

Turkey

Higher education institutions that implement both formal and open and distance learning should implement practices such as institutional support and one-on-one guidance in student development, especially for students in the risk group, to maintain inclusiveness. Inclusion emphasizes a process that not only offers higher education opportunities, but also guides the solution of the problems experienced in the evaluation of that opportunity and motivates the student not only to enrol but also to graduate.

Programmes supporting Students with disabilities Also, in this context, the Higher Education Institution (YÖK), to which our universities are affiliated, has tended to set some standards by bringing up encouraging studies on the regulation of physical spaces, the accessibility of educational programs and accessibility in socio-cultural activities in order to make our higher education institutions accessible for all our students under the headings of "Accessible Access and Barrier-Free Education". Currently, according to YÖKSİS 2020 data, 51,647 students with disabilities are in higher education. 27,782 of these students are at associate degree, 23,581 are at undergraduate level, 236 are at master's level and 48 are at doctorate level. 89% of students are in open education programs. Our disabled and visually

impaired students have relatively higher access to higher education than other groups (<https://www.yok.gov.tr>).



***Translation of the Chart**

Yükseköğretimde engelli öğrenciler: Students with disabilities in higher education

Engelli Öğrenci Dağılımı: Distribution of Disabled Students

Önlisans:	Associate degree
Lisans:	Bachelor's degree
Yükseklisans:	Master's degree
Doktora:	Doctorate
Toplam:	Total
Kadın:	Woman
Erkek:	Male
Açıköğretim:	Open Education
Örgün:	Formal
İkinci Öğretim:	Secondary education
Uzaktan Öğretim	Distance learning
Görme engelliler:	Visually impaired
İşitme Engelliler:	Deaf people
Fiziksel Engelliler:	Physically Disabled
Dil ve Konuşma Bozuklukları:	Language and Speech Disorders
Dikkat Eksikliği (Hiperaktivite):	Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity)
Psikolojik Rahatsızlıklar:	Psychological Disorders
Zihinsel Engelliler	Mentally Disabled
Öğrenme Güçlüğü:	Learning Disability
Kronik Sağlık Sorunları:	Chronic Health Problems
Asperger ya da Yüksek Fonksiyonlu Otistik Bireyler	Asperger's or High Functioning Autistic Individuals
Geçici Yetersizliği Olanlar	Those with Temporary Disability
Diğer:	Other

One of the encouraging practices of YÖK is barrier-free university awards. In line with the criteria determined within the scope of the Barrier-Free University Awards, the first of which was given in 2018, universities have increased their tendency to make improvements in their physical areas. In this context, while there were 318 applications from 41 universities in 2018, when the awarding started, this number increased to 841 from 116 universities in 2020. Practices such as giving "Accessibility in Education" and "Accessibility in Socio-Cultural Activities" to higher education institutions in 3 categories, "Accessibility in Socio-Cultural Activities", "Accessible University Flags" and "Accessible Program Medal" to the relevant programs of universities that make them accessible to different groups of people with disabilities.

Various facilitating applications such as readers and markers are applied to students with disabilities, both in university exams and in the undergraduate education process, if they request it. For these students, they have the right to publish the exam guide audibly, to help the reader, to be exempt from questions containing visual data such as figures, graphics, tables, pictures, to enlarge the size of the question booklets in line with their demands, to take exams in single exam environments separately from their peers. Students who have difficulty in fulfilling the requirements of any course due to their disability, with the approval of the university, reasonable arrangements are made to ensure that the student takes that course. However, if the student cannot fulfil the requirements of the course, she/he can take another course that is equivalent to that course, if any. By allocating quota for students with disabilities in the special talent exam of the universities, the access of the disabled individuals to the programs that accept students with the special talent exam has been facilitated. 10% of the quota for students with special abilities is reserved for students with disabilities.

As an example of exemplary practices in our country, Anadolu University provides services to the college, which includes undergraduate and associate degree programs for Hearing Impaired Individuals. Turkish Sign Language Interpretation Thesis/Non-Thesis Master's Programs and Doctorate Programs were opened for the first time in higher education. Especially during the Covid 19 global epidemic, the Distance Education Roadmap was determined, and practices were carried out to ensure that the programs are accessible according to the disability group, to take opportunities and measures according to the disability in online exams, to take care not to disconnect the students with higher education, and to contact the families and students of the disabled students at regular intervals.

In order to encourage, facilitate and internalize the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) reforms, within the scope of the Erasmus+ KA3 Program, the European Commission's call for projects with reference number EACEA/28/2016 for Member States and Candidate Countries in 2016, to which only the higher education authority of the relevant country can apply. The application of the Council of Higher Education was accepted with a high evaluation score and was found worthy of support. This project, titled "IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF EHEA REFORMS IN TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM" (short name: "TURQUAS"), started in 2016 and was completed at the beginning of 2020. Within the scope of the project, it is aimed to increase the inclusiveness of the higher education system to include disadvantaged groups

(disabled, immigrant children, etc.), to provide Inclusive Barrier-Free Campus Design Training for Disabled University Students and Inclusive Barrier-Free Campus Design Training for Disabled University Students.

Programmes supporting international students and refugees: Especially after Syrians immigrated to Turkey, there has been growing interest in conducting research focusing on Syrian university students' experiences and their integration into Turkish higher education. Harunogulları, Süzülmüş and Polat (2019) study with Syrian Students at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University found that to improve their satisfaction with university life, sociocultural activities should be organised for local students and Syrian students, and social adaptation projects should be developed and supported by local administrations, universities and non-governmental organisations.

To address some of the linguistic barriers faced by Syrian students, the TÖMER (Center for Learning Turkish Language) was established. Şahin and Çelik (2020) interviewed with 14 Syrian undergraduate students studying at different faculties and universities in Ankara. They determined that participants who were not successful in Turkish during the TÖMER (Center for Learning Turkish Language) faced many challenges in their university and social life. Syrian students had difficulties in establishing effective communication with academic and administrative staff during the university application, registration, and at the courses, exams, and after class activities. Attitudes with prejudices towards Syrian students by local students, academic and administrative staff had an adverse effect on Syrian students' academic performance and adaptation process.

England

Universities in England that charge either the basic or higher tuition fees are legally obliged to have an Access and Participation plan that is approved by the OfS. Consequently, there is a plethora of widening participation strategies used by universities. In the most selective universities efforts focus mainly on recruitment of students from under-represented groups, whereas universities with higher proportions of under-represented groups focus on retention and success. Below are some of the current WP schemes used by HEIs in England:

Contextual Admissions: Contextual admissions strategies are designed to ensure that HEIs in England take the socio-economic status of prospective students into consideration when considering their applications (Boliver et al., 2017). Contextual admissions strategies are generally linked to HE outreach programmes. For example, Newcastle University has a PARTNERS scheme targeting prospective students from contextually disadvantaged backgrounds locally and nationally. Successful completion of the PARTNERS post-A-level summer school leads to a reduced offer of up to two grades below standard entry requirements. The PARTNERS scheme is part of a larger widening participation strategy that begins at primary school level, although it is possible to join the PARTNERS scheme without having previously participated at other curriculum stages (as summarised in Boliver et al., 2017, p. 17). Studies have found that 'once admitted contextual admission students are thereafter 'mainstreamed' and tracked in the usual way. No targeted additional support is

provided other than that available for other students. Students admitted through one of the university's outreach/access schemes do, however, have access to targeted support post-admission' (Boliver, et. al., 2017, p. 15).

HEIs Access and Outreach intervention. HEIs undertake a range of activities which are set out in their Access and Participation Plans. These include activities aiming to raise attainment, raise aspirations and develop pre-entry students' knowledge of HE, and support the development of soft skills. An increased focus on raising the academic attainment of school students in outreach activity has led to increases in HEIs introducing tutoring programmes, with this now constituting 40% of all UK HEI outreach activity (NERUPI convention, 2022). Tutoring programmes focus on improving school students' subject knowledge in order to improve their exam performance.

Summer schools are currently a less frequently used form of outreach intervention amongst HEIs in England; with the OfS (2018) reporting that only 41 HEIs (35 per cent) and only one FE college provide summer schools. Summer schools offer prospective WP students the opportunity to experience university style teaching and learning, explore campus facilities and meet current students and their prospective lecturers. Summer school provide opportunities for underrepresented students who are often the first in the family to go to university to experience the university environment. Taken together, these activities help normalises the HE environment (Harrison et. al., 2018). For example, the University of Suffolk (UoS) has a UniCamp which is a Summer school Access programme offering university experience to Year 12 students. Students are expected to stay on-campus (for 4 nights and 5 days) in halls of residence for the duration of the programme, during which they are given opportunity to explore the campus, participate in a variety taster session for different subject areas and attend various information, advice and guidance (IAG) sessions. These include sessions providing information advice and guidance on student finance. Interestingly, in research evaluating access and participation outreach interventions for the under 16s, Harrison et. al., (2018, p. 18) note that about 'two-thirds of pre-1992 HEIs, those with a high average tariff and those with a high access spend provided summer schools, which was over double that of post-1992 HEIs, lower-tariff and lower-spending HEIs'..

Access and outreach intervention can involves HEIs collaborating with national and local bodies as well as charitable organisations to work with students from underrepresented groups. The OfS funded Uni Connect programme promotes collaborations between universities, colleges and schools in areas where participation is lower than expected, The foci of activity is driven by the OfS key priorities: targeting outreach to local areas to support well informed decision making; supporting strategic activity and engagement to address local outreach gaps; improving academic attainment and progress of school pupils to support their progression to HE; offering an efficient and low burden route for schools and colleges to engage with HE outreach and attainment raising activity (OfS, 2022e).

Careers support: Though the scheme varies widely across the sector, the majority of FE and HEIs provide their students support with careers education, information advice and guidance (CEIAG) and support with progression into employment. Typically, students are provided with career services such as CV writing services, and interview preparations. For

example, the University of Portsmouth developed a scheme to mitigate against some of the impact of Covid-19 on students' employment. The university of Portsmouth introduced a phone campaign, calling all final year students to offer advice and support into further study and work. Additionally, a twice-monthly 'opportunities bulletin', highlighting job vacancies is also sent to current (final year students) and recent graduates and university staff. The bulletin also provides information about the state of the labour market, dispelling common myths about graduate employment (as summarised in OfS, 2020a, p. 3).

Most HEIs also provide career support via guaranteed work experience placements with partner employers. HEIs also develop mentoring networks between students, alumni and careers advisors and Enterprise programmes targeted at underrepresented students to support entrepreneurship, freelancing, self-employment and start-ups etc. Most HEIs also embed employability into the teaching curriculum, and as part of curriculum reviews. HE outreach and UniConnect also support schools and colleges with careers provision aligning activities to the Gatsby benchmarks

Apprenticeships and Foundation degree programmes: there is an increasing awareness that traditional three-year degree programmes are not accessible to many underrepresented students such as carers and students with disability. In response, universities are now providing flexible and short programmes such as Foundation Degrees that provide access to HE for contextually disadvantaged students. For example, University of Leeds provide the Extended Degree scheme – 'a foundation year programme targeted contextually disadvantaged students'. Similarly, University of Oxford; specifically, Lady Margaret Hall (LMH) also provides a foundation year for young people from low socio-economic background (Boliver, et. al., 2017, p. 31-32). Degree Apprenticeships offer an alternative route for students work alongside studying for their degrees. Employers and HEIs collaborate in offering apprenticeship routes and students taking this route are not liable for tuition fees.

Scholarship / Bursary: financial support is another approach used by HEIs as a strategy to widen participation for underrepresented groups.). For example, Newcastle University has designed a financial support package that 'consists of non-repayable cash bursaries payable to students with a household income of £35,000 or less (£2,000 award for each year of study where household income is at or below £25,000: £1,000 award for each year of study where household income falls between £25,001 and £35,000)' (University of Newcastle, 2020, p. 17). The University of Sheffield has developed various scholarship schemes to increase access to postgraduate study by individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged background (Wakeling and Mateos-González, 2021, p. 23). Kent University have a financial support scheme for students from local partner schools and colleges. Eligible local students can apply for the *stipend scholarship* to study at Kent University. They receive a scholarship of £1000 per academic year and the support of a mentor (a member of Outreach & Widening Participation staff) and are asked to complete 200 hours of outreach ambassador work over their three year degree (250 for students studying on a 4 year programme). The scheme is intended to help with retention and success of the student ambassadors and promote access for the students that they work with on outreach activities.

School Sponsorship: some universities and colleges across England are sponsoring local schools to increase access and participation in HEIs for pupils from disadvantaged background. For example, University of Exeter and Exeter College have sponsored the Exeter Maths School while the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts has incorporated a primary school and a sixth form college into its LIPA Learning Group' (OfS, 2022a, p. 6).

Schools and other organisations supporting HE access and progression for underrepresented students

Romania

In Romanian schools, especially high schools, the councillor is responsible for the process of `vocational` counselling. This process aims at: (Government Decision no. 536/2011)

- Self-knowledge - identifying and understanding personal characteristics relevant to career guidance (knowing interests, skills, values, personality traits and shaping vocational profile)
- Exploring the world of occupations - accumulating information about occupations (characteristics of occupations and their dynamics on the labour market)
- Exploring career alternatives - making career decisions (identifying, exploring and evaluating alternatives, resulting in: choosing a job, choosing an educational path)
- Career planning - implementing decisions (setting short- and medium-term career goals and objectives, developing and implementing an action plan) and, over time, re-evaluating them

UNICEF Romania, SAVE THE CHILDREN Romania provides Social, financial and educational supportprograms for vulnerable children (roma, low socioeconomic background, disabilities).

ANOSR (National Alliance of Student Organisations in Romania): promote the interests of Romanian students in terms of education, social, economic and cultural activities. They also facilitate partnerships and the exchange of resources between student organisations.

France

Some institutions, NGOs, or community groups are trying to improve the success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds once they are enrolled in higher education by providing additional resources. These include for example the tutors' support first-generation students and the offer of additional generation students and offering extra classes and tutoring sessions, as well as intensive language courses for students with immigrant backgrounds (OCDE, 2015)

Several organizations act to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities on a daily basis:

- the CDAPH (Commission des Droits et de l'Autonomie des Personnes Handicapées) determines the necessary aids or support (writing, daily life management, etc.);
- the FEDEEH (Fédération Etudiante pour une Dynamique Etudes Emploi Handicap) intervenes for training and professional insertion (associative network, awareness campaigns, fundraising for scholarships);
- the CNED (Centre National d'Enseignement à Distance) offers complete courses or prepares students for the entrance exams to the grandes écoles;
- the CROUS (Centre Régional des Oeuvres Universitaires et Scolaires) helps students obtain adapted housing and also verifies the accessibility of university restaurants;
- the SUMPPS (Service Universitaire de Médecine Préventive et de Promotion de la Santé) provides certain types of care for students with disabilities.

Private social organizations such as Secours Populaire or religious organizations such as the Catholic Relief Services (Secours catholique) can support poor students. These students can benefit from food, clothing, etc. Other structures such as CARITAS for example grant scholarships to disadvantaged students. These students can also access cheaper housing through non-profit associations or through state aid via the Centre Régional des Oeuvres Universitaires et Scolaires (CROUS).

Other actions to support all students (disadvantageous or not): Within the **students' network (BDE)**: One of the objectives of several BDEs in France is to initiate the **peer tutoring system**. This is a system where students, according to a certain number of criteria, help each other in their university studies (e.g. those who are ahead in their studies help the newcomers). There are also **mentoring practices**, where pairs support and encourage each other, both in learning and in personal and social life. To give meaning to university learning and facilitate access to knowledge for young people from working-class families who are often excluded from university because of a lack of financial resources, other university programs have also been designed by the universities. These include work-study programs and the development of internships during university education.

England

There is a vast network of charitable and third sector organisations in England that support student progression. This includes subject associations that provide subject specific support for schools and students; the council for subject Associations currently lists 30 member associations (CfSA). There are many organisations that are exclusively focused on supporting the academic attainment and HE progression of underrepresented groups, some of which are listed below.

Uni Connect Partnerships: OfS funded Uni Connect programme supports partnerships between HEIs and other educational providers and stakeholders (e.g., other HEI and FE institutions, schools and charity organisations). Presently, Uni Connect brings together twenty-nine partnerships of universities, colleges and other local partners to provide activities, advice and information on the benefits and realities of going to university or college (OfS, 2022b). These consortia, such as the Network for East Anglian Collaborative

Outreach (NEACO) - [About neaco - Neaco \(takeyourplace.ac.uk\)](#)), Aimhigher, North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP) ([North East Raising Aspiration Partnership - NERAP](#)) and Aspire HE ([Home - Aspire \(aspiretohe.co.uk\)](#)), aim to develop local strategies that effectively target underrepresented students. While collaboration between schools, colleges and HEIs is encouraged by such strategies, there are a number of challenges.

Educational institutions compete for students in a marketized system which can work against collaboration. Additionally, accessing data held by schools on young people's attainment or attendance records is highly problematic due to data protection which makes tracking young peoples' progress challenging (Harrison et al., 2018, p. 22).

Access to Higher Education courses: These courses support attainment at Level 3 and are provided by Further Education colleges (catering from post 16 and adult students). The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) licenses awarding bodies for these Access to HE courses; awarding bodies (such as Aimqualifica and assessment group, Cambridge access validating agency and OCN London) develop, approve and monitor Access to HE courses.

Resources: The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) supports teachers in schools through the provision of evidence-based resources that have been found to be effective in improving teaching and learning. The primary aim of the EEF is to improve the educational attainment of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils. (Education Endowment Foundation | EEF accessed 10/09/22)

Charities:

- AbilityNet is a charitable organisation with a network of over 300 community-based volunteers, this charity organisation provides free online resources to help individuals with any disability, of any age, to use all kinds of digital technology.
- The Brilliant Club - The Brilliant Club is an access charity that mobilises the PhD community to support disadvantaged students that are less likely to access and succeed at the most competitive universities. Working with schools and universities such as King's College London (KCL), the Brilliant Club Scholars Programme places PhD tutors in state schools whereby they can teach their subject area to small groups of students aged eight to 18, over seven tutorials. (KCL, [kings-college-london-access-and-participation-plan-2020-25.pdf \(kcl.ac.uk\)](#); OfS, Insight, 2022a).
- INTOUniversity
- AMOS Bursary: This charity organisation focuses specifically on supporting academically able young black British men and women of African and Caribbean heritage from schools and colleges in London in realising their ambition ([The Amos Bursary](#) accessed 9/09/2022).

Existing practices using student ambassadors

Romania

Universities employing students is not a common practice in Romania. Usually, at national level, universities benefit from volunteers through cooperation with student organisations. Student ambassador programmes are not institutionalized as such, but can be part of caravans in high schools (in terms of inclusion, there are some caravans with cover rural areas as well) such as Mentor project (<https://mentor.unibuc.ro/despre/>). This is a project of the University of Bucharest that aims to contribute to increasing the access to higher education of pupils and students from disadvantaged backgrounds and vulnerable communities, as well as to the development of a human and material infrastructure relevant for this purpose. Another project is the Mentori (<https://sts.ubbcluj.ro/mentori/>) developed by the Babes Bolyai University. The program is aimed at first year students, and starts from the desire to build a community of students in the true sense of the word: people who understand each other, respect each other, support each other, who are there for each other, both well and good. when things don't go the way, they hoped.

France

« Ambassadeur Avenir et Réussite » is a national program for the students in order to participate in different events: subject tasters, campus visitors, « open gates' day », participation in salons, etc. A protocol of agreement to deploy 5,000 student ambassador missions within 3 years in universities and higher education institutions. The student ambassador is a civic service mission; this status is open to young people up to the age of 25, and even up to the age of 30 for young people with disabilities, who wish to commit themselves to education for all. This commitment is compatible with the pursuit of studies in higher education and constitutes a gap year, reinforced by the bill on the orientation and success of students. The civic service contract signed between the host institution and the young volunteer provides for a collaboration of 6 to 10 months for a minimum of 24 hours per week with a compensation of €580.55 net, including €107.583 paid by the host structure. The volunteer benefits from personalized support by a tutor from the training establishment and participates in civic and citizenship training (Ministry of Education, 2019).

There is not much scientific work on the practices using student ambassadors. Often, each university decides its own strategy to employ and form the student ambassadors. For example, The University of Cergy Pontoise proposes the courses called “UE LIBRE” where the students create and manage different projects. One of the projects could be “students ambassadors” which consists of two parts: the first one, a "tutoring" component where the student will work on how to best support a group of learners and their learning process. And the second part is A "knowledge of the panorama of higher education" section to discover the various training courses, possibilities and organizations of higher education. The student will also be trained to communicate on these elements in different contexts (Fairs, Salons, amphitheatre...) with different audiences (parents, high school students...).

At the end of the course, the student will be able to develop the following transversal skills:

- Lead and facilitate a group
- Work with collective intelligence
- Use active teaching methods
- Communicate, present and introduce oneself
- Move a group towards an objective
- Create a link between different actors

Another example is a programme Ailes (Accompanying the integration of high school students in higher education) of a PIA 3 (Programme d'investissements d'avenir) project involving 3 universities (University of Lorraine, University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne and University of technology of Troyes) and two Rectorates (Nancy-Metz and Reims). It aims to facilitate entry into higher education by “combating all forms of self-censorship and is based on a systemic approach, co-construction and innovation (living lab approach)”. The ambassadors are students who meet high school students, and they can intervene either in person or remotely in different ways: ambassador-student meetings, ‘speed dating’ between high school students and ambassadors, presentation of the of the university by an ambassador accompanied by a guidance officer, presence at your forums, etc.

Turkey

As in Romania, Universities employing students is not a common practice in Turkey. However, an example of students working to support improvements in the quality of education content or methods is the “Quality Ambassadors” project, which was implemented within the Faculty of Open Education. With this project, it is aimed to increase the quality of the learning materials presented in the Open Education Faculty learning management system by considering the opinions and evaluations of the students about the learning materials produced in the Open Education System (Bozkurt, Büyük, Kılınç, & Özdamar, 2017).

England

Student ambassadorship is one of the most common WP schemes utilised by universities across the UK. Student ambassadors are often employed by universities to help deliver their WP events both on and off sites. The student ambassadors’ jobs are wide ranging and include campus based and school-based activities. Activities on campus typically include subject taster days, open days, campus tours, residential summer schools, assistance in organisation and admin of events, subject attainment raising and IAG. Small group, one to one and online tutoring and revision activities were also quite common. Activities in schools include student life talks, Careers and HE fairs, subject specific activity days /sessions), small group and one to one tutoring, attending parents evenings and classroom support. Activities target a range of age groups with Levels 2 and 3 (Year groups 10,11,12 and 13) most often targeted though activity also happens with Level 1 students. A well as schools Further

Education colleges, parent and community groups are also targeted (Zivtins, Gartland and Hayton, 2020).

Student ambassadors also act as mentors (this is often a separate student mentoring role). Student mentors can be students from underrepresented groups themselves, who mentor secondary pupils from underrepresented groups on a one-to-one basis. Their role also includes offering ‘guidance in relation to future career goals, support to develop skills such as confidence and relevant job/study experience or help create a “sense of fit between participants and the university” (Crockford et al., 2017, p.63 in Sanderson and Spacey, 2021, p.4). Student ambassadors/ mentors also mentor first year undergraduate students to support progression and attainment.

For example, Newcastle University currently use their students ambassadors and mentors to deliver their outreach activities and WP events. Their student ambassadors also provide tutorials in schools, as well as acting as role models post-graduation. Each year, the university employs Graduate Ambassadors whose main role is to engage with their target schools and colleges to inspire and inform WP prospective students about HE. King’s College London (KCL) provides an undergraduate student mentoring programme which matches first year students with experienced second, third or fourth-year students to help and support them throughout the academic year. KCL also runs an Undergraduate Ambassador Scheme (UAS) whereby Maths and Physics undergraduate students at KCL teach their subjects to local secondary school students. KCL Buddy Scheme, which is organised by their Student Union, is designed to support incoming WP students in forming friendships and finding relevant communities within the university by matching them with experienced undergraduates. KCL students partaking in both the UAS, and The Buddy scheme are not employed but rather do so on a voluntary basis.

Organisation of ambassador schemes: student ambassadors in the UK are normally managed by access and widening participation staff who are most often located in recruitment teams in HEIs (Zivtins et al.,2020). This means that they are often distanced from academic staff within academic faculties/ departments (Gartland, 2014, 2015, 2020).

Recruitment of ambassadors: Ambassadors are predominantly recruited from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, with small numbers also recruited from foundation and access courses Ambassadors are mostly recruited via general advertising campaigns, student fairs, university career services and information sessions during given in academic departments. Recruitment of ambassadors usually involves them making a written application and having an interview. Assessment centres are also quite commonly used in recruiting ambassadors. Common criteria for selection of ambassadors include communication skills, presentation skills, understanding the aims of WP programmes, reliability and organisational skills. Being from an underrepresented socio-economic group is a criterion sometimes given. Some HEIs are recruiting LGBTQ+ students to act as ambassadors (though this is not a group linked to the OfS Key Performance measures).

Communication skills is seen to be the most important criteria for appointment (Zivtins et al, 2020). 1.

Training of ambassadors: mandatory training for ambassadors commonly focuses on safeguarding, effective presentation techniques, shadowing experienced ambassadors, behaviour management, knowledge of campus and understanding widening participation. Limited training time is allocated to graduate careers, mentoring techniques, training in subject knowledge, inclusive learning and teaching, and effective questioning. Training is usually provided by outreach staff and experienced ambassadors. Student support staff and careers teams also provide training in some institutions. Academic staff have very limited involvement in training ambassadors. (Zivtins et al, 2020).

Notably there is a gap between the focus of ambassador training in UK HEIs and the activities ambassadors undertake. While much of ambassador activity is subject focused, supporting learning and teaching and careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG), training in pedagogy and in providing CEIAG is absent or limited (Zivtins et al, 2020).²

Discussion

The report highlights groups currently underrepresented in HE and attempts in policy and practice across partner countries and HEIs to widen participation and support inclusion. Similarities exist across countries, with a range of bodies, including government, HEIs, schools and third sector organisations and charities, working to promote the access, participation and success of groups currently underrepresented in HE. Findings outlined in this report have a number of implications for the training of student ambassadors if they are to work effectively to promote the HE access, progression and success of currently underrepresented groups.

With a particular focus on access, the report highlights the need for student ambassadors across countries to work effectively with pre-access students who come from lower SES backgrounds and different regional and geographic locations; students with SENDs; and to develop effective approaches that challenge gendered patterns of participation. There is also a need to promote the inclusion of students from different ethnic minority groups; recent immigrants and refugees, such as Syrian and Ukrainian students; and those from marginalised groups such as Roma, who all face challenges to access and participation. Effective student ambassador training should enable ambassadors to engage and understand the particular needs and challenges facing these groups in different national and local locations and contexts.

The extent to which student ambassadors are used by HEIs varies, with more extensive ambassador activity in HEIs in England compared to other countries. The report notes core existing ambassador training in English HEIs, for example in Safeguarding and Child Protection, which can be similarly developed by partner universities for their particular setting and needs. Gaps in the existing training offer in English HEIs are also noted. Gaps

² Findings from research on UK Widening Participation and Student Ambassadors are detailed in Section 2: Findings from the International Literature

often exist in training that supports student ambassadors in developing effective pedagogical approaches and subject specific activity with pre-access students, and in enabling them to provide valuable subject related careers education, information, advice and guidance. The Erasmus+ Diploma project aims to start to address these gaps by working with ambassadors and other stakeholders, including academics, to co-construct general relevant pedagogical approaches (for example in presentation skills, and effective questioning) as well as pedagogies specifically relevant to four broad subject areas: STEM, Health, Humanities and Social Sciences, Arts. Ambassadors will work collaboratively with academics and other stakeholders to research and develop locally relevant subject specific activities for pre-access students and identify and develop relevant training for ambassadors.

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Research Report

Section 2: Findings from the International Literature



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With thanks to NERUPI¹ for providing access to expert practitioners in the field of widening access and providing a reference group to inform this research.

¹ NERUPI is partnership of over 60 UK HE and FE organisations working together to create a new approach to Evaluation of Widening Participation activity

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Section 2: Findings from the International Literature

This report outlines findings from two state of the art reviews of international literature. The first was an umbrella review synthesizing information from systematic reviews of Widening Participation (WP) strategies, and the second was a review of research focused on student ambassadors' outreach practices and their impacts. The findings outlined in this report aim to inform the development of training to effectively support student ambassadors reach increased numbers of diverse and underrepresented students, and to ensure student ambassadors benefit from their work and effectively engage and connect with fellow student ambassadors and stakeholders. Titles for student employees and volunteers include peer mentors, science/ engineering ambassadors and role models and can vary according to the specific work students do. Student ambassador has been used as an umbrella term to describe student employees with these varying roles (Gartland, 2015).

I. Widening Participation Strategies

Introduction

This section of the report outlines the key findings of the state-of-the-art review which was undertaken to identify common strategies used internationally to widen participation in higher education (HE). Following the steps of a systematic review methodology, the review synthesized information about widening participation (WP) strategies from 28 review papers covering a ten-year period (from 2012 to 2022). A summary outlining the WP strategies considered in review papers is presented under four headings according to identified themes: Outreach Interventions; Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG); Financial Support; and Pedagogical and Curricular Interventions.

Widening participation in HE became an important policy priority in the 1990s internationally and was driven by governments' ambitions to promote high level skills to support economic growth (Gartland and Hayton, 2020). Supporting equitable access to HE for students from traditionally under-represented groups has been central to this agenda (Salmi and D'Addio, 2020). Internationally, people from low-income families, women, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural minorities, and people with disabilities were recognized as being from groups underrepresented in HE (Salmi and D'Addio, 2020).

WP strategies focus on the whole student life cycle from pre-entry to progression and successful completion of HE programmes (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). Pre-entry strategies are often concerned with supporting students in gaining *access* to HE and include interventions aimed to support attainment, raise aspirations and awareness of HE, and

increase applications and enrolments. WP also includes strategies, activities and interventions which aim to enhance HE student retention and success. *Retention* in HE is also referred to as *persistence, preventing withdrawal* and *student success* or *participants' likelihood of continuing or withdrawing from study* (Gale et al., 2013; Torgerson et al., 2014). *Success* is often related to *attainment* - the extent to which students are enabled to fulfil their potential (Torgerson et al., 2014). This might be considered success in completing a module, passing an assessment, or progressing to the next stage, or graduation; success is sometimes discussed in terms of achieving a high grade on their degree programme (e.g. 2.1- or first-class) (Torgerson et al., 2014). *Progression* is a broader term that often refers to successful transitions within a programme of study and afterwards into employment or further study (Torgerson et al., 2014). Targeted approaches can have the objective of supporting under- represented students to continue their studies at a higher level (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013).

Despite WP efforts, gaps in participation of under-represented groups persist (Salmi and D'Addio, 2020). While some effective strategies have been identified, the literature outlines several challenges and issues associated with WP activities; particularly highlighting the limitations in the evidence base on the effectiveness of strategies. The state-of-the-art review, on which this report is based, builds on the work of other reviews to identify common practices used to increase participation in HE for underrepresented groups and to highlight approaches that demonstrate positive outcomes.

Review findings

Outreach interventions

A range of pre-access strategies identified in the review focus can be grouped together under the broad title of outreach interventions. Programmes of outreach activities including a number of strategies were also sometimes referred to as black box interventions (Younger et al., 2019). Outreach interventions target students of different groups and ages during the educational stages prior to university and include many different combinations of activities. Most studies identified outreach activities as pre-access interventions aiming to familiarise students with HE environment, 'raise aspirations' or awareness of HE, increase the number of applications or enrolments, and raise attainment. Most interventions targeted students from underrepresented groups, the majority targeting post 16 students. A wide range of outreach strategies were identified. The most common strategies included campus visits, taster sessions and summer schools. Former or current undergraduate university students working as 'role models' or student ambassadors were widely used across interventions because of their perceived similarity to pre-entry students. Ambassadors play a key or lead role in most outreach activity. Common outreach strategies found across reviews are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Common outreach strategies

Common outreach strategies
Academic instruction/tutoring
Curriculum developments (e.g., activities embedded in school curriculum)
Taster days/Conferences/Workshops/Masterclasses
Open days or evenings
Counselling
IAG /Career development/ career workshops
Information on financial support
Guidance through HE application process
Mentoring/ peer mentoring
Study skills assistance
Summer schools/Weekend programmes/Residential visits
Campus visits/ campus tours
Enrichment activities
Ambassador programmes/ Role models
Collaborative partnerships (community groups, universities, schools)

The studies identified a range of positive impacts of outreach interventions on students' outcomes. In the UK, campus visits, subject taster sessions, master classes, mentoring, role models and summer schools were broadly associated with positive outcomes such as increased aspirations, awareness and confidence and more informed decision making about choice of university (Doyle and Griffin, 2012). Outreach activities were also found to have positive impact on Level 2 (e.g. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)) performance and on the development of social skills and confidence (Cotton, Kneale and Nash, 2013). In some studies, direct experiences of being on campus were highly valued by students (Cotton, Kneale and Nash, 2013). Intensive and sustained approaches, targeting individuals were found to be more likely to achieve positive outcomes (Doyle and Griffin, 2012). As well as impacting positively on motivation, awareness, confidence and aspirations of participants from underrepresented groups, outreach activities were also found to have impacted on participants' motivation and rates of enrolment (Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020). Inspirational talks from current students were identified as having potential to encourage students to apply to more universities, particularly to more selective ones (Austen et al. (no date)). Robinson and Salvestrini (2020) note that a mix of outreach activities such as residential experiences, subject taster events, online study, skills modules and mentoring, was effective in supporting underrepresented groups in applying for research intensive universities. Experience of working in industry, alongside independent learning, mentoring activities, and advice on career/university choices were also found to be effective (Austen et al.). Rose and Mallinson (2020) in their review of UK outreach programmes, note the benefits of summer school attendance for students from underrepresented groups. Summer schools were found to narrow the gap in HE applications, with students more likely to apply

to university generally and to apply to more selective universities and to be particularly beneficial for students from poorer backgrounds. Similar findings were found in Israel (Rose and Mallinson, 2020). Summer school attendance has also been associated with increased confidence and higher Level 2 (GCSE) grades (Cotton, Kneale and Nash, 2013).

In the Australian context, sustained mentoring was shown to effectively familiarise students with university. Mentoring or peer mentoring was identified as an important aspect of outreach initiatives, having a positive effect on participants' intentions to access university (Bennett et al., 2015). Other effective approaches related to new curricula and teaching methods in school classrooms. These outreach strategies were found to have had a range of positive outcomes, including an increase in: students considering a future in science; students' intentions to attend university; girls' interests in careers in IT; students' understanding of pathways; and students' confidence as well as raised aspirations (Bennett et al., 2015). In the US, outreach activity such as summer schools were reported as having a positive impact on enrolment in HE (Webb, Wyness and Cotton, 2017). Strategies including academic support and test-taking practice alongside university familiarisation, careers/subject choice advice and financial advice, led to an increase in rates of enrolment in some studies (although this was not a consistent finding) (Younger et al, 2019). Herbaut and Geven (2020) note significant improvements in HE enrolment when students were offered personalised counselling activities, or a simplification of application tasks, especially when counsellors actively reached out to targeted students to ensure their participation. Positive results were reported in the development of confidence and academic skills when innovative approaches were used in outreach activity such as student-based action research and experiential learning (Webb, Wyness and Cotton, 2017). Herbaut and Geven (2019) note that interventions only providing additional information about HE/ careers or intensive academic tutoring do not efficiently raise HE outcomes for underrepresented students.

Much of the research evidence focuses on activities with students in late secondary school or high school, yet authors identify the benefits of earlier interventions. Naylor et al. (2013) note the importance of initiatives targeting students prior to their seeking access to HE. Such initiatives aim to increase the proportion of students who are eligible to apply to university. They found that outreach with schools (primary and early secondary), families and communities formed the core of such initiatives with programmes aiming to raise aspirations as well as increase academic achievement. Extra-curricular learning and support programmes have been used with the aim to increase academic achievement, support social engagement with peers through mentoring, and develop individual academic skills. The review found some theoretical basis for the effectiveness of these activities, yet, as the activities are highly context dependent the authors suggest they are most effectively considered on a case-by-case basis (Naylor et al, 2013).

Research strongly points to the value of collaboration and partnership working. Hill and Hatt (2013) highlight the benefits of strong partnerships and how close working relationships developed through WP partnerships can support the inclusion of widening access activities in school curricula. Similarly, Bennett et al. (2015) identify collaborative partnerships with universities, community groups and other stakeholders as key features

underpinning effective outreach strategies, ensuring a better understanding of the needs of communities and facilitating a tailored approach. Baars, Mulcahy and Bernardes (2016) identify issues particularly related to white working-class boys' underrepresentation in HE.

The authors point to the need for a 'whole system approach' involving parents and teachers in outreach activities to support white working-class boys' entry and outcomes. As parental attitudes are often influential in pupils' decision making, parents are an important target audience for WP activities (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). There is a strong argument for parents and carers to be given accessible information about HE options, especially when they have no HE experience themselves. Parent social evenings in local areas, parental information zones at open days and opportunities for parents to speak with staff and university students were found to effectively provide opportunities to allow universities to inform parents and promote the value of HE. Working with teaching staff in local schools was also found to be a valuable approach (Baars, Mulcahy and Bernardes, 2016).

Widely recognized in studies was that more intensive and sustained approaches, targeted to particular individuals, appear to get the best results (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013; Webb, Wyness and Cotton, 2017; Hume, Styrnol and Gongadze, 2021). However, effective targeting can be challenging and intensive programmes running with small groups of students is cost intensive, limiting the scope of interventions. A concern among some researchers was to ensure outreach interventions were carried out using a holistic approach, targeting the whole population of students and so effectively reaching more underrepresented groups (Doyle and Griffin, 2012; Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013; Webb, Wyness and Cotton, 2017). However, such approaches do not distinguish between advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Austen et al. (no date); Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020).

Findings highlight the need for outreach activities to start early in young people's education and to support all the transition stages of a students' life cycle (Harrison, 2018). Given that students build knowledge and confidence on prior experiences progressively, accumulating social and cultural capital and gradually identifying and elaborating desirable future possible selves as HE students is most effective. According to Office for Students (OfS) in the UK (in Harrison, 2018), interventions targeting 16–19-year-olds are mainly effective in influencing the choice of subject and institution rather than widening participation as the effects of disadvantage are already manifest by the time students reach Level 2. The main aim of outreach, targeting young people under 16 years, is to increase their expectations, attainment and familiarisation with HE. This period is seen as an opportunity to increase knowledge about HE and to raise expectations for it, with targeted groups constructed as having less access to information due to their family and school contexts and less likely to consider HE than their peers.

The review also identified several issues with outreach activity. Sanderson and Spacey (2021) highlight the difficulties that evaluators face in terms of unpicking which elements of multi-intervention (black box) outreach are more effective. Issues are also identified with approaches to targeting; in the UK, outreach initiatives were often found to lack consistent impact on underrepresented groups (Doyle and Griffin, 2012; Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020). Issues with the use of student ambassadors were also identified. Student

ambassadors were frequently not well trained and not effectively matched with students in schools. Little is known about formal and informal roles of student ambassadors, their ways of working and benefits to student ambassadors themselves in terms of skills and future employability (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). Transferability from one context to another is another issue with outreach activities. Because activities are highly complex and contextualised, shaped by policy context of each country and institution, the activities are difficult to generalise. Outreach strategies need to be carefully adapted to meet the requirements of each country, region, and institution.

Information, Advice, and Guidance Interventions

Evidence suggests that school aged students, especially those from underrepresented groups, are often unaware of the options available to them post compulsory schooling (Gore et al., 2017). Authors of the review studies widely held the view that IAG is a vital feature of WP (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013; Sanderson and Spacey (2021). IAG is often embedded in outreach activities, mostly as part of strategies to promote access. Yet, Sanders and Higham (2013) note very little research specifically addresses HE-related IAG and identify a lack of clarity over the role of IAG within WP programmes. Common WP IAG strategies include summer schools, taster days and HE visits, groupwork, mentoring, presentations to school students, and a range of online and text message support. Student ambassadors or student role models are ubiquitous in HE led IAG activity. Common IAG strategies identified across studies are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Common IAG strategies

Common IAG Strategies
Student ambassadors/ role models
Groupwork
Presentations
Mentoring
Visits to HE providers/ Taster days/ Summer schools Tailored / Individual IAG
Access to informed counsellors
Text messaging
Online support/ email support

While IAG about HE opportunities is often embedded in outreach interventions, a range of discrete guidance activities are also often employed, sometimes in a specific attempt to address information gaps for students from underrepresented groups. Activities include support with course choice and choice of HEI, and targeted advice for students from low SES backgrounds. Evaluations, such as of the UK OFS-funded outreach programme Uni Connect, have demonstrated that these approaches can improve learners’ knowledge of HE,

accommodation options, associated costs, and the potential of enhanced employment prospects (Austen et al.no date). IAG has been linked to improved success rates in applications (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). In the US one study indicated that online support was successful in engaging students with IAG to help them make informed choices about their college applications. The study also highlighted the value of school counsellors in providing early and continuous exposure to information about HE (Austen et al.no date).

Carefully framed and well-timed light-touch ‘nudges’ such as text messaging to prompt students to carry out tasks and reduce inertia during the summer before commencing higher education studies has also been found to be effective (Austen et al.no date). Post-16 IAG concerning future pathways and the HE admissions process interventions were generally found to be most effective when timely and relevant (Rose and Mallinson, 2020) and tailored to students’ needs (Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020). Information simply provided in booklets or on websites were found to have limited effect on enrolment, particularly for students from lower socioeconomic groups (Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020).

Pre-entry interventions have been widely used in the UK as a strategy to improve student engagement and retention (Cotton, Keale and Nash, 2013). Successful programmes include Summer Schools where pre-entry students work with undergraduates and teaching staff, and schemes where tutors and first year student advisors support pre-entry students offering timely advice on academic issues, careers and personal pathways (Cotton, Keale and Nash, 2013). However, the quality of IAG provided was found to be variable, with poor quality IAG discouraging students from applying and encouraging some students to make unrealistic applications (Cotton, Keale and Nash, 2013).

Review studies indicate that IAG interventions for under-represented groups are more successful when they are applied early, are personalised, relevant, integrated into outreach and other support, and address priority information needs (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). High quality IAG was found to be a strong facilitator of effective transition between different key stages. High quality IAG that ensures a smooth transition for students from school to post-16 learning is seen as key to a young person subsequently entering HE. It is evident that IAG can make a difference to levels of confidence and aspirations and could therefore be viewed as an on-going process, and one that needs to start from an early age to maximise impact (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). Review findings indicate that IAG interventions are particularly important for BAME students and students from lower socio- economic groups. Sanderson and Spacey (2021) note that IAG is of most benefit when it starts early in secondary schools, is targeted to young people who are not considering going to university. Also, sustained interventions are more likely to be impactful. It has also been noted that students from deprived backgrounds make decisions based mostly on informal sources of information (Sanderson and Spacey, 2021).

In their review of best practice in WP, Moore, Sanders and Higham, (2013, p.iv) conclude that the most successful IAG programmes fulfil the following criteria: start in year seven or earlier and intensify during periods of transition; provide personalised information; address priority information needs such as HE finances, HE applications, entry requirements

and employment opportunities; and provide ‘hot’ informal information, which is best transmitted through social interactions, rather than more formal ‘cold’ information.

The impact of IAG has been found to increase when combined with other interventions providing access to less formal knowledge such as interactions with current students from similar backgrounds (Kaehne et al., 2014). Indeed, IAG is often delivered by student ambassadors or ‘role models’; these students can have a direct impact on the aspirations, skills, attitudes, and knowledge of under-represented groups. Young people have been found to value the experiences that they bring; research also highlights the importance of role models for disabled young people (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). Robinson and Salvestrini (2020) identified IAG interventions involving undergraduate students to have a significant effect on the likelihood of school students successfully applying to selective universities. Undergraduate students visited schools and informed pre-entry students of the true costs and benefits of going to university. Similar findings were identified in Germany where the application and enrolment rates increased due to in-class presentations in schools on the benefits, costs and possible funding of HE.

In their review focused on white working-class boys, Baars, Mulcahy and Bernardes (2016) found that boys engage well with IAG about HE via mentors who have themselves participated in HE and can provide information alongside practical support with applications. Delivering IAG through mentors was found to be a successful method of ensuring young people are well informed and to help break down stereotypes and misconceptions about HE. Mentoring was found to be more effective if a long-term approach was taken and where pupils have the same mentor before and after entry to university. This continuity improved the success of the mentoring relationship and the quality of support provided (Baars, Mulcahy and Bernardes; 2016). When well informed, findings indicate that student ambassadors and mentors can mitigate the lack of social and cultural capital in low SES families who often do not have access to other sources of information and support (Austen et al. (no date)). However, studies suggest that IAG is often delivered by providers with little knowledge and experience of HE and of under-represented groups (Cotton, Kneale and Nash, 2013; Gore, et al., 2017). Concern has also been raised about the role of HE students as IAG providers, particularly around their impartiality and the limits of their own knowledge and experience (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013).

Financial IAG

Financial interventions identified in the review studies include financial aid designed to encourage and support students from underrepresented groups to enrol and to support their retention in HE. The detail of financial incentives is not specifically relevant to the aims of this report. However, given that outreach programmes often offer IAG on financial issues and application processes, information on financial interventions and application processes is significant. The effectiveness of financial aid was found to increase when combined with other kinds of support interventions such as financial training and guidance and advice on applications (Austen et al., no date; Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). Indeed, several issues were identified in the reviews relating to the complexity and opacity of financial schemes. This complexity acts as a barrier, especially for students from low-income families,

preventing them from making well informed choices. Studies identified a wide variety in the value and eligibility criteria for financial support across HE providers making the application process confusing to students and their families (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013; Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020; Austen et al.). Uncertainties about financial support was found to result in low application rates for financial aid (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013; Webb, Wyness and Cotton, 2017). Low level of applications for financial aid also leads to low enrolment rates (Austen et al., no date; Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). In the light of the issues identified, it seems vital that eligibility criteria for financial aid is made clearer and more transparent so that it is easy for students and their families to understand. Accurate and timely financial information raises awareness which in turn increases the rates of enrolment among under-represented groups (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013; Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020).

Curricular and Pedagogical Interventions

Curricular and pedagogical interventions are used as pre-entry interventions to: help students transition to HE from school; during the first year in HE; and through transition and progression during HE. A range of curricular and pedagogical strategies were identified in reviews that were seen to enhance the experiences and likelihood of the access, progression, and success of underrepresented students. Common strategies included the development of inclusive approaches, the integration of experiential and student-centred learning, flexible and online delivery, and peer interaction and mentoring. Some of the common strategies are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Common curricular and pedagogical interventions

Common curricular and pedagogical interventions
Inclusive curriculum (content, pedagogy, assessment, and feedback)
Experiential learning/ active learning/ project and inquiry-based learning
Peer mentoring/ coaching/ tutoring
Group work and informal peer learning,
Flexible delivery
E-learning/ Blended learning
Foundation courses/ Bridging programmes
Preparatory courses/ Access programmes

In relation to students' retention and success, a finding that stands out in the reviews is the benefits of inclusive HE curricular and pedagogies. The research literature indicates that there is often a perception of cultural insensitivity, lack of cultural awareness and respect in HE environments which act as major barriers to the retention of underrepresented groups (Gore et al., 2017). This lack of inclusivity can lead to feelings of low self-esteem, lack of

confidence, and self-doubt amongst underrepresented students (Gore et al., 2017). Sensitivity to the complexities of diversity and a student-centred approach appear to be central to inclusive pedagogy (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013)

Active and collaborative learning, and knowledgeable, enthusiastic lecturers have been found to be significant in supporting student retention and attainment in their first year at university (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). Cotton, Kneale and Nash (2013: 19) identify several curricula and pedagogical strategies that support the retention and success of underrepresented groups: ‘relevant curricula that build on students’ ‘life experiences, interests and aspirations’; ‘using inclusive language and relevant examples’; ‘student-centred active learning’; ‘integration of study skills and the use of relevant, formative feedback in a timely and constructive way’; ‘effective classroom strategies for teaching and learning’. They cite Tinto (2012: 1) in identifying the need to include ‘clear expectations, appropriate and timely support, feedback on assessment, and engaging pedagogies, and enhancing teaching skills’.

Practice-based research elements in the curricula of programmes were also found to be popular with students. Similarly, Bennett et al. (2015) highlight the importance of inclusive pedagogies which are based on curricula that consider students’ prior learning and experiences and use dialogical methods to connect students to ‘powerful forms of knowledge’ (2015: 54). Pino and Mortari (2014) note the value of pedagogical approaches that consider learners’ differences, the use of interactive teaching styles, practice, and hands-on and student-centred strategies (Pino and Mortari, 2014).

A range of other inclusive approaches were highlighted in the reviews. Significant potential to increase the rate of retention and graduation was found in an approach based on students’ strengths (Banks and Dohy, 2019). A strengths-based approach starts from assessing students’ strengths and creating learning opportunities to build on these strengths rather than focusing on remediation of their weaknesses. The approach increases the level of communication which in turn leads to increased self-efficacy (Banks and Dohy, 2019). A universal design for learning, directed towards the diversity among student needs while simultaneously accommodating students with diverse learning needs, including students with disabilities, was found to prevent many obstacles to the inclusion of dyslexic students (Pino and Mortari, 2014). Flexible delivery was found to enable individuals from diverse backgrounds to access nurse education and ease transition (Heaslip et al., 2017). Kaehne et al. (2014) found that web-based learning development and a peer-support blog allowed students to blend campus activities with online learning. Lambert (2020) found that many successful online programmes (MOOCs) use approaches like in successful outreach by collaborating with schools, community partners or even with widening participation experts. Bridging programmes that include opportunities for students to work together in supportive communities were also found beneficial to students; these opportunities increase their level of belonging and academic attainment (Bennett et al., 2015).

Research continually highlights the critical role that ‘friendship and peer support’ play in students’ decisions to persist in HE (Cotton, Kneale and Nash, 2013; Hume, Styrnol and Gongadze, 2021). Peer learning and peer mentoring have been found to improve students’

transition experiences (Cotton, Kneale and Nash, 2013). Collaboration with peers have also been found to increase the retention rates among first generation' entrants, non-traditional students or those from disadvantaged groups. These groups of students may feel like outsiders and feel a sense of stigma or shame due to being a student from a low SES background (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013; Cotton, Kneale and Nash, 2013; Sanderson and Spacey, 2021). Interventions based on collaborative learning are considered valuable in fostering a sense of belonging amongst these student groups. Research indicates that it is important for students to have opportunities to learn together and form supportive communities which increase their level of belonging and academic attainment (Bennett et al., 2015).

Interventions based on active collaborative learning combined with trained peer mentors allow the development of learning communities, considered key to persistence for all students (Austen et al. (no date). Moore, Sanders and Higham (2013) point to robust evidence of the value of peer mentoring in providing support for new students during transition to HE in both the academic and social spheres (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013). They highlight the multiple benefits of peer mentoring in developing students' skills and sense of belonging and in reducing the rate of attrition. However, they note that peer mentoring is not a standalone activity, but rather a part of a 'nexus of changes, interventions and activities that collectively nurture a sense that HE is 'for the likes of me'' (Moore, Sanders and Higham, 2013, p. 58) According to Banks and Dohy (2019, p. 122) using student support groups that were 'both homogeneous and heterogenous', cooperative study groups and mentoring programmes alongside an interactive culturally relevant curriculum are effective strategies in increasing retention and graduation rates amongst students of colour in the US HEIs.

Implications for the practice and training of student ambassadors

Developing effective strategies to support WP for underrepresented and diverse groups is evidently complex and challenging and much is beyond the remit of the Erasmus + project. However, it is clear from research evidence that university student ambassadors play a significant role in WP approaches at all stages in the student lifecycle (pre-entry, retention and progression). The review has several implications for how student ambassadors can be effectively used in WP. In terms of outreach activity, it is evident from reviews that WP outreach interventions are most effective if they are sustained and collaborative in approach. Research highlights that much outreach takes place with post 16 students which can effectively steer their HE choices, but outreach with much younger age groups is required to actually increase rates of HE progression amongst underrepresented students. Evidence of the benefits of specific strategies is limited, but on campus activities, particularly summer schools, are widely viewed to be effective. However, these campus-based activities are high cost and limit the numbers of young people who can be targeted. Holistic approaches involving whole classes of students in school are seen to have the potential to reach more underrepresented students but do not so effectively target specific groups. Student ambassadors play a key role in outreach activity and are widely seen to be a valuable

resource. Student ambassadors mentoring younger students has also been found to be effective in supporting access to HE. However, the remit of student ambassadors' roles lacks clarity and there are concerns that ambassadors lack sufficient training and knowledge, and that they are not carefully matched to enable them to act as role models for underrepresented groups.

Similarly to outreach activity, IAG was found to be most effective when activity is sustained and long term, starting with students in late primary or early secondary school. A recommendation from reviews was that IAG activity should particularly focus on transition points to motivate and support students in making informed subject choices. IAG was found to be effective when integrated into WP outreach activities (such as summer schools and taster sessions). Findings also indicated that IAG needs to be timely, and students and their parents should be given specific guidance about available financial aid for HE and how to apply for this. Student ambassadors are seen as vital in the provision of IAG as they can effectively support younger students from underrepresented groups in accessing information and support, and in acquiring relevant social and cultural capital for HE. However, student ambassadors need training to ensure that they can provide valuable and impartial IAG, rather than only relying on their own experiences.

Clearly, student ambassadors have a vital role to play in supporting HE transition, progression and retention. When working alongside inclusive learning and teaching approaches and culturally relevant curricula, ambassadors have been found to provide effective support by mentoring students from underrepresented groups through transition (with sustained mentoring being viewed most effective). Active and experiential learning activities that enable students to work in groups, supports collaborative learning.

Ambassadors can facilitate the development of collaborative learning communities which develop a sense of belonging and support academic attainment, notably amongst first year HE students. HEIs working collaboratively with schools to develop new curricula and teaching approaches in school classrooms has been found to be impactful (for example in increasing girls' interests in careers in IT). Ambassadors can usefully contribute to curriculum development and learning and teaching activity in schools.

II. Student Ambassadors' Contribution to Outreach Programmes

This report outlines the key findings of a state-of-the-art review focused on the role of student ambassadors in promoting social inclusion in higher education for underrepresented groups. Following the steps of a systematic review methodology, the review gathered evidence on the work of student ambassadors in outreach activity from research papers covering 20 years (from 2002 to 2022). The findings are presented under themes identified in the research: attributes of student ambassadors; features of effective student ambassador training; purposes, pedagogies, and learning contexts; impact of programmes on participants.

Universities have a long history of mentoring activities designed to support their student bodies. During the 21st century these schemes have been expanded internationally to increase participation in HE in a bid to develop skilled personnel to support local economies (Gartland, 2020). As previously discussed, these student employees and volunteers have a wide range of roles in HEIs to support HE participation, including in marketing, outreach with younger students, and activities such as mentoring to support undergraduate student progression.

In outreach activity, student ambassadors are widely considered role models to school students given their similarity in age, background, gender or interests, and they are a ubiquitous part of HE outreach programmes (Gartland, 2015). They are often recruited from underrepresented groups themselves and are considered an important bridge between students from underrepresented groups and universities (Gannon, Tracey & Ullman, 2018). Student ambassadors from underrepresented groups are seen as able to understand the challenges regarding HE students from similar backgrounds face (Sanders, Brett, Paul and Scott, 2021). Existing research on the outreach work of students ambassadors is limited in scope (Gartland, 2015; Moison et al, 2020; Gannon, Tracey and Ullman, 2018). By synthesising existing evidence on the practices and impacts of ambassadors' work, this study aims to draw together outreach pedagogy and practice, features of training that have been found to be effective, and to consider the impact student ambassador outreach practices have on pre-entry students as well as benefits for ambassadors themselves.

Attributes of Student Ambassadors

One key theme discussed in the literature focused on attributes of student ambassadors deemed to be significant to their success in working with younger students. These attributes included knowledge and skills required for student ambassadors' initial recruitment to the role; their motivations; and their similarity to underrepresented school students in terms of gender, race, socio-economic group and geographical location pre-entry. Student ambassadors' enthusiasm for their subject and subject knowledge are widely considered significant. A number of studies identify strong subject knowledge as being part

of selection criteria for student ambassadors (Corradini, 2012; Thole et al., 2013; Nickson and Henriksen, 2014; Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace, 2017; Bonny, 2018; Moison et al., 2020). Passion and enthusiasm for their subject area was also considered in ambassador selection (Corradini, 2012; Thole et al., 2013; Bonny, 2018). Similarly, Taylor, McLean and Weston (2019) report on a programme in Australia using high school peer ambassadors with strong STEM knowledge to help raise attainment in science and maths in school. Gartland's (2012, 2013, 2015) exploration of outreach work in STEM subjects at two London HEIs identifies student ambassadors' subject knowledge and expertise as important to ambassador's relationships with younger students, enabling them to challenge younger students' misconceptions about progression routes and STEM subject disciplines. Thole et al., (2013) indicate that enrolment in the training programme was competitive; the programme selected mostly female ambassadors from third- and fourth-year engineering students, with strong academic results and a passion for engineering.

Studies highlight the importance of a range of aspects of student ambassadors' identities to their relationships with school students. . Corradini (2012), selected student ambassadors from English HEIs from diverse geographical areas; all attended state schools and were therefore familiar with the environment in which underrepresented groups learn. In Green's (2018) Australian study ambassadors' equity background and content knowledge were selection criteria. Taylor, McLean, and Weston's, (2019) Australian programme used high school peer ambassadors from low SES families to help raise attainment in science and math. Nickson and Henriksen (2014) describe how student ambassadors included more females than males and were of different ethnicity and both rural and urban settings (though all came from middle class backgrounds). In Gartland's UK study (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) ambassadors were predominantly first generation in their family to progress to HE, had lived in the same disadvantaged geographical area as the pre-entry students they worked with and had at times even attended the same schools as school students. Gartland (2014,2015) highlights the importance of intersecting identities with gender being particularly significant (Gartland, 2014). Shared interests in subject disciplines, and student ambassadors and younger students coming from the same school or geographical area and able to share similar life experiences, also powerfully supported developing relationships (Gartland, 2014). In Gannon, Tracey and Ullman's study (2018) in the Western Sydney University, Australia more than half of the students were first in their families to attend university; many from low socio-economic backgrounds and with a range of different countries of birth included (with a quarter reporting that they speak a language other than English at home).

These attributes of ambassadors were considered key to reaching younger students from under-represented groups. Other attributes noted as important included the attitude and motivation of ambassadors, their interest and experience in schools, their desire to work with younger students and their communication and leadership skills. The desire to make a difference in younger students' life was discussed by ambassadors who contributed to Ylonen's (2012) study of their experiences in the UK. Nickson and Henriksen (2014) consider that attributes required of ambassadors include leadership skills, communication skills and 'a desire to serve' (p.10). Willingness to work with school students was noted as a requirement of ambassadors in Gannon, Tracey and Ullman's (2018) Australian study.

Corradini (2012), observes the need for student ambassadors to have a desire to share their passion for languages with school students. Prior experience of working with young people and a knowledge of Indigenous culture, community priorities as well as experience of coaching and teaching were selection criteria for the Science Ambassador Programme for Northern Indigenous community schools in Canada (Bonny, 2018). Thole, et al. (2013) describe how student ambassadors are required to enrol on a public speaking class as a part of their engineering programme before becoming an ambassador. Baker and Sela (2018) note that during recruitment, ambassadors are required to demonstrate their communication skills and ability to adapt and communicate with a range of audiences in different ways.

Features of effective student ambassador training

Four important features of effective student ambassador training programmes were noted in studies: partnerships; experiences that develop knowledge, skills and efficacy; creating a sense of belonging through shared enterprise; and resources and support. Training was discussed both in terms of building ambassadors' capacities and skills in working with younger students and in terms of developing their own skills for employability.

Thole et al., (2013) report on the development of an Engineering Programme in the USA that brought together student ambassadors from three HEIs in biannual workshops focusing on communication skills (particularly around presentations) and leadership skills. This training was later extended to other HEIs and led to the establishment of a national network of engineering ambassador programmes providing ambassadors with a forum to share and discuss practice. Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace (2017) describe the development of cross secondary school collaborations with ambassadors working with language teachers to support younger students in learning languages. The Space Public Outreach Team programme in the US brought together partnerships including HEIs, research institutions, and schools, alongside the network of ambassadors for astronomy and space science (Williamson et al., 2014). Programmes highlight the benefits of collaborative working between HEIs and schools (Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace; 2017; Corradini, 2012). Gartland (2016; 2020) in an exploration of student ambassador programmes in the US, found that partnerships between HEIs and other key stakeholders contributed to the formation of aims and organisation of outreach. She highlights the value of collaborations between schools and universities, and points to the added value of the involvement of academics with relevant subject expertise in planning and developing outreach activity, a feature that is often missing from UK HE outreach activity.

Training where ambassadors learn vicariously through observations of experienced ambassadors and through actively practising activities before running them with school students were widely held to be successful. There was also considerable focus on training that develops ambassadors' presentation skills. Baker and Sela (2018) describe how training focused on presentation skills for different audiences, including breathing, body language and posture, pitch and volume. Williamson et al (2014) describe how engineering ambassador

training involved initial learning from observing experienced ambassadors giving presentations followed by new ambassadors practising and giving presentations themselves.. Ambassadors received immediate feedback and were able to reflect and improve. Ambassadors then went on to research and develop and give their own presentation, ensuring their competence before they visited schools (Williamson et al., 2014).

Another US engineering outreach programme (Garner et al., 2018) involved student ambassadors in three-days of training with the aim to develop presentation skills. The focus of the training was on real world applications, knowledge, links to the school curriculum, and on principles of storytelling and other communication skills. Ambassadors worked on presentations with support from senior ambassadors and time was again given to practicing delivery of the presentations. Similarly, in other examples of training, ambassadors observed more experienced ambassadors, and then practised introductory talks, undertook hands on activities they would be working on with school students, and practised how to answer younger students' questions (Anagnos et al., 2014). Halim et al (2020) in their exploratory study of a three-day STEM camp in Malaysia describe how ambassadors were involved in performing the same activities younger students would be doing to ensure they had the relevant experience and skills needed to provide effective support.

Gartland (2015) identified a range of approaches to training ambassadors in her exploration of US programmes. Training linked to the different purposes and learning contexts of ambassador activities. Training to work in museums or other public spaces focused on developing public speaking skills, engaging audiences and effectively promoting science knowledge. Training for outreach programmes targeting younger students to promote HE access included activities such as: planning a summer school session for younger students in science subjects; planning an engineering activity with a focus on facilitating active learning; training for leading activities during summer schools/workshops; training in peer- to-peer mentoring. There was also in-depth training for ambassadors working in schools that focused on school curricula, classroom management, learning processes and differentiation. One HEI provided training for ambassadors in leadership with a focus on leadership theory; other programmes provided detailed information about the schools ambassadors would be working in. Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace's (2017) Australian study highlights the benefits of ambassadors receiving training in the schools where they will be placed. The ambassadors were trained in two workshops, one at the university focusing on expectations relating to working in schools; the other in placement schools held by language teachers who introduced the school, timetabling and modes of communication between ambassadors and schools.

Some of the programmes, considered in the literature, paid attention to developing a community of ambassadors, creating a sense of belonging and creating opportunities for developing relationships. Students' sense of belonging in HE is widely recognised as being important to retention. Baker and Sela (2018) describe how undertaking training activity together, enables ambassadors to form a valuable network. Anagnos et al., (2014) note strategies employed to create a sense of community amongst student ambassadors. Ambassadors were drawn from a range of subject disciplines and were not previously known to each other, so team building to promote collaborations, team bonding and leadership

development were all aspects of training. Once trained, ambassadors were also placed in action groups to work together on activities. Willimason et al., (2014) also focus on the importance of belonging. They identify opportunities to take optional credit courses that enabled student ambassadors to meet regularly. They also discuss other activities such as movie nights and camping trips that were held for ambassadors. Garner et al., (2018) note a range of collaborative learning activities in workshops for engineering students from different HEIs. The activities were supported by senior student ambassadors. These activities created opportunities for mentoring and networking that provided students with a sense of community. Gartland (2016; 2020) highlights the Engineering Student Ambassador conferences for ambassadors from different HEIs as being valuable opportunities for ambassadors to meet each other and share best practices.

Research indicates the vital importance of sufficiently resourcing ambassador programmes and ensuring ambassadors receive effective and proactive support. Anagnos et al., (2014) point to the important role of mentors in guiding student ambassador activities, the management of activities, programme planning, problem solving and evaluation. They also observe the need for programme organisers to have time for communication with ambassadors. Williamson et al., (2014) again note the important role of mentor figures: graduate students managed the programme, designed presentations and coordinated ambassadors' visits to schools and other organisations. Managers were also involved in coordinating logistics of ambassador visits. Gartland (2016; 2020) highlights the structured support for ambassadors offered by teams of experienced ambassadors in some US outreach programmes. Support from senior ambassadors was also found in Garner's (2018) study. In other programmes, ambassadors received support from school teachers (Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace, 2017; Bonny, 2018). This support was seen as important in providing ambassadors with vital contextual information about schools. Bonny (2018) notes the need for ambassadors to understand the socioeconomic, political and cultural capacities of schools and the need to challenge stereotypes ambassadors may have about indigenous communities. Baker and Sela (2018) discuss the importance of extended training in giving presentations and training in CV writing and interview skills, to increase ambassadors' employability.

Purposes, Pedagogies, and Learning Contexts

Studies indicate that outreach activity often has multiple aims in terms of younger students' learning; several programmes also focused on benefits to student ambassadors themselves. Some outreach activity attempts to achieve a range of aims with short term and limited engagement with young people. Other activity is more intense or long term, often with smaller numbers of targeted students. Research indicates the value of carefully interrogating the purposes of outreach programmes, content of programmes, pedagogies and learning contexts to understand how best to achieve programme aims.

The value of student ambassadors' giving talks and leading informal conversations about their own stories (including interest in subject areas, progression routes and

experiences of HE) was quite widely acknowledged. This approach was often used when the aim of outreach was to promote HEIs or subject areas. Sanders et al., (2018) found that inspirational talks given by student ambassadors from selective HEIs in the UK encouraged school students to apply to a wider range of HEIs and to more selective institutions. Notably, the likelihood of school students applying to selective HEIs was based on how similar they felt they were to student ambassadors. Sanders et al., (2021) describe how an outreach programme based on free conversation between school students and ambassadors enabled ambassadors to share their own experiences and knowledge and guide younger students' careers options. In Australia, Green (2018) identified ambassadors' personal narratives in the pedagogies they used with younger students.

Two studies, one in the UK and another one in Australia, focused on language learning outreach programmes. The broad aims of these programmes were to promote awareness and higher-level study of languages (Corradini, 2012; Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace, 2017). Student ambassadors worked in secondary school classrooms over several language lessons, facilitating learning and providing younger students with opportunities to practice their language skills. Ambassadors worked with younger students in school classrooms, and were positioned as facilitators (in support roles)). Younger students noted that ambassadors being in present contributed to a more relaxed and informal atmosphere in the classroom (Corradini, 2012; Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace, 2017).

Several studies focused on STEM outreach activity. Clear foci for much of this activity were: increasing knowledge and understanding of STEM subject areas and careers, particularly engineering; challenging young people's assumptions about engineers; and raising motivation and attainment in STEM subjects to encourage students to progress in these fields. Several US based engineering outreach programmes (Thole, et al., 2013; Haas, et al., 2013; and Talbot et al., 2013; Garner et al., 2018) involved student ambassadors in giving presentations to younger students in school classrooms. The focus of these presentations was often key messages about engineering with links made to science and engineering concepts in the school curriculum. Some programmes also involved visits to university campuses and more informal discussions between ambassadors and school students where ambassadors answered questions about engineering topics and university life (Haas et al., 2013). A focus on presentations was also found in the Space Public Outreach Team (SPOT) programme in the US described by Williamson et al., (2014). In this programme student ambassadors gave astronomy and space-science-themed interactive presentations to primary and secondary schools and organisations. Again, content complemented the school science curriculum. There was an emphasis on interactivity in these presentations with younger student encouraged to express their own ideas, get involved in design and participate in quizzes. This interactivity was noted in the feedback from teachers who suggested that more hands-on activities linked to the curriculum would improve the sessions further.

Gartland (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2020) in her studies of ambassador STEM outreach in the UK and US, notes that the formal and informal attributes of learning are significant to the relationships that ambassadors and younger students can forge. Findings indicated that where student ambassadors are positioned in school classrooms in didactic

teaching roles, such as in revision sessions for Maths exams, relationships between younger students and ambassadors are less successful. Ambassadors were not familiar enough with the school maths pedagogies in this context to effectively support students' learning in Maths revision sessions; this was even found to have a negative impact on young people's self-efficacy in maths. The formal attributes of the purposes, content and context created social distance and precluded informal discussions between ambassadors and students where valuable information can be shared. However, when outreach activities had more informal attributes with less rigidly predetermined content, structure and with less closely prescribed purposes, ambassadors developed positive and valued relationships with younger students. When ambassadors worked collaboratively with younger students on practical activities, for example during summer schools and in practical workshops using their maths and science knowledge to explore real world problems, ambassadors were viewed as like siblings and friends and were identified as role models by younger students. In these contexts, ambassadors were able to discuss careers plans, progression routes, HE and subject areas and effectively support younger students' developing interests in STEM, encouraging positive orientations to engineering amongst girls (Gartland, 2013, 2014, 2015).

Hands on and interactive pedagogies in outreach activity were widely identified as valuable in studies. Halim et al., (2020) explored an integrated STEM camp programme with student ambassadors helping younger students to acquire knowledge and skills in STEM. Ambassadors worked collaboratively with younger students facilitating their learning in a scientific inquiry. The authors noted that, in these informal contexts, the gap between younger students and ambassadors disappeared. Ambassadors helped younger students solve problems, scaffolded their learning by giving them information, ideas and tips to complete the project. These interactions resulted in an increase in younger students' interest in science as ambassadors were able to make scientific information more accessible and understandable. In these contexts, ambassadors formed close relationships with younger students who again were described as referring to ambassadors using familial terms. Green (2018) also notes the value of ambassador facilitated hands on workshops and embedded career information in outreach activity. Anthony (2019) in her thesis on universities' outreach to raise student attainment in schools found that many attainment raising activities were led by ambassadors, and the content was often prescribed by the school curriculum. The study argues that ambassadors are more likely raise students' attainment in more informal contexts where they can develop positive relations with students.

Gartland (2016, 2020) highlights the vital importance of careful consideration of pedagogy in student ambassador outreach activity and identified a sharper focus on pedagogy in outreach activity in the US than in the UK. This was partly attributed to more input from HE subject specialists and educationalists with an interest in pedagogy. Careful consideration to developing active and experiential learning activities relevant to subject disciplines in STEM were found across US programmes. Other foci found in US outreach work included IAG activities to provide underrepresented younger students with relevant social and cultural capital to support HE progression, team working skills, communication skills and building resilience. Halim et al., (2020) similarly identify the importance of pedagogy in their consideration of a STEM outreach programme. They consider ways in which ambassadors

can best support younger students' knowledge enhancement. This includes by ambassadors facilitating practical activities; drawing on their subject knowledge to provide explanations and challenge misconceptions; supporting problem solving by working alongside younger students and helping them to correct mistakes; and using effective questioning and answering to support high level systems thinking. The authors suggest that these attributes could be enhanced in professional development for both ambassadors and teachers to ensure they have the skills to support student centred approaches more effectively in STEM.

Impact of the programmes on participants

Impacts for younger students

Research papers included in the study highlight a range of benefits to younger students from outreach activity with student ambassadors. Benefits include increases in younger students' seeing themselves as potential HE students as well as increases in their sense of belonging in the HE environment. Younger students are also found to develop relevant and useful academic skills and knowledge of subject disciplines and improved attitudes and motivation towards subject areas. Additionally, activity is found to increase HE applications and enrolment. A further benefit identified is an increased understanding of relevant careers.

In their studies of student ambassador outreach activity to support younger students learning languages, Corradini (2012) and Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace (2017) note an increase in positive views of studying languages at university following ambassador interventions. Sanders et al (2018) highlight how younger students learn about opportunities at university in sport, different societies and social activities. Williamson et al., (2014) highlight how younger students learn about college life. Gartland (2012,2013, 2015, 2020) notes that ambassadors enable younger students to find out about university life and can envision themselves as future university students. This was particularly noted when ambassadors were positioned in STEM outreach activities with more informal attributes, such as when they were undertaking practical and experiential learning activities alongside younger students. In such contexts, ambassadors were able to develop comfortable, familiar relationships with younger students. Donnelly (2018) in an analysis of the impact of university led outreach programmes in the UK, highlight how ambassadors' day to day interactions with younger students makes the expected behaviours of university students explicit to younger students and builds their 'tacit knowledge' of what characterises appropriate behaviour (p.10)

Student ambassadors' interactions with younger students were also credited with supporting younger students' acquisition of subject specific academic knowledge and skills. Corradini (2012) and Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace (2017) describe how ambassadors support improvements in speaking, pronunciation and grammar as well as confidence in communicating in the target language. Sanders et al., (2021) again highlight improved

understanding amongst younger students after working with ambassadors. Halim et al., (2020) similarly highlight how ambassadors supported learning of new concepts, knowledge and understanding in STEM. They suggest that outcomes could be improved if ambassadors were better trained to support younger students' thinking. Gartland (2014, 2015, 2020) however, notes the importance of how ambassadors are positioned in different learning contexts. Findings indicate that if ambassadors are positioned as teachers, they are unlikely to be able to fulfil this teaching role effectively and can negatively impact on younger students' self-efficacy and confidence. This more formal positioning can also create social distance between ambassadors and younger students and undermine the sorts of positive relationships that encourage younger students to identify closely with ambassadors.

Another benefit for younger students identified in the literature is learning about specific subject disciplines. Corradini (2012) and Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace (2017) discuss how students learn about options for further study of languages. Gartland (2012,2013, 2015, 2020) notes that ambassadors interactions with school pupils can promote knowledge of and positive orientation to studying and careers in engineering and medicine. Similarly, Thole et al., (2013), Haas et al., (2013) and Talbot et al., (2013) describe how student ambassadors' presentations in schools can inform younger students about the role of engineering in society and change perceptions about engineering. Williamson et al., (2014) note teachers' views that ambassadors promote excitement and interest in science, and knowledge of career pathways in STEM. Bonny (2018) notes a positive correlation between ambassadors' visits to schools and younger students' attitudes towards STEM learning and careers, and reports teachers' views that younger students' confidence and engagement with STEM learning increased during and after ambassador placements in schools. Sanders et al., (2021) found that following working with student ambassadors studying medicine, younger students had greater insight into the role of a doctor and could make informed decisions about following a career in medicine. Ambassadors were also found to be effective in recruitment activity and in encouraging applications and enrolment to specific institutions. Thole et al (2013) and Sanders et al., (2021) suggest that ambassadors' outreach activity promoted increased HE enrolments amongst students from underrepresented groups. Sanders et al., (2018) similarly found a significant increase amongst younger students applying to and accepting places at selective universities. The authors found that talks from ambassadors about their own experiences at selective universities were highly effective in motivating younger students.

Impacts for Student Ambassadors

Studies noted a range of benefits for student ambassadors themselves from their outreach activity with younger students. Benefits include increased communication skills, leadership skills and a range of other transferable skills relating to future employability. Improvements in subject specific skills, academic engagement and attainment, and the development of interests and skills relating to specific career were also noted. Additionally, working as an ambassador was found to lead to an increased sense of belonging within the academic community and an increased awareness of issues effecting different

underrepresented groups. Studies noted that benefits for student ambassadors were associated with the extent of training they receive; type of outreach activity they are involved with; and length of engagement with activities (Anagnos et al., 2014; Gartland, 2016).

Improvements in student ambassadors' communication skills were widely discussed (Ylonen, 2012; Fleming and Grace, 2016; Williamson et al., 2014; Anagnos, et al., 2014; Thole et al., 2013; Talbot et al., 2013; Gartland, 2016; Fleming and Grace, 2016; Baker and Sela, 2018; Garner et al., 2018; Green, 2018). Developments in presentation and public speaking skills were particularly noted (Haas, et al. 2013; Talbot et al. 2013; Anagnos, et al., 2014; Gartland, 2016; Baker and Sela, 2018; Green, 2018). In their discussion of student ambassadors' learning about how to give presentations, Thole et al. (2013) and Talbot et al. (2013) point to improvements in confidence, ability to create engaging content, awareness of different audiences, and how to make content memorable. Garner et al. (2018) note the valuable contribution of networking with other institutions in supporting student ambassadors in developing presentations skills. Baker and Sela (2018) similarly point to improvements in giving presentations and discuss improvements in student ambassadors' general ability to communicate with different people. Green (2018) notes improvements in student ambassadors' ability to communicate complex concepts and Williamson et al. (2014) also note developments in conversation skills.

The development of leadership skills through working as a student ambassador were similarly widely highlighted (Corradini, 2012; Ylonen, 2012; Thole et al., 2013; Talbot et al., 2013; Fleming and Grace, 2016). Haas et al. (2013) and Talbot et al. (2013) suggest that development of these skills are supported by ambassadors taking on leadership positions in their work with other student ambassadors, and in project management roles (e.g., by coordinating visits and offering peer development workshops). Anagnos et al. (2014) highlight improvements in leadership skills including management, conflict resolution and flexibility. Studies also highlight a range of wider skills acquired that promote employability amongst ambassadors. Improvements in teamworking skills (Gartland, 2016; Green, 2018); time management and organizational skills (Gartland, 2016; Fleming and Grace, 2016; Gannon, Tracey and Ullman, 2018) are noted as well as adaptability and interpersonal skills (Baker and Sela, 2018; Green, 2018)

Alongside this broad range of skills supporting student ambassadors' future employability, authors also noted improvements in students' academic skills, motivation and performance. Supporting younger students in developing academic knowledge and skills, various studies noted improvements in student ambassadors' own skills. Corradini (2012) and Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace (2017) observe that working with younger students in school language classes led to improvements in student ambassadors' own language skills, including pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Haas et al. (2013) and Talbot et al. (2013) note positive impacts on student ambassadors' coursework grades in engineering due to their improved presentation skills. Williamson et al. (2014) point to student ambassadors having a better understanding of subject matter. Studies also widely identified increases in student ambassadors' levels of confidence as contributing to their academic success (Fleming and

Grace, 2016; Gannon, Tracey and Ullman, 2018; Green, 2018) as well as ability to plan and manage time more effectively (Gannon, Tracey and Ullman, 2018).

Studies noted student ambassadors' developing an increased sense of belonging in HEIs through developing positive relationships with peers and academics. This promoted both confidence and persistence in their own studies (Anagnos et al., 2014; Nickson and Henriksen, 2014; Williamson, 2014; Gartland, 2016; Gannon, Tracey and Ullman, 2018; Green, 2018). Gartland (2016) describes how working as a student ambassador was seen to reinforce student ambassadors' own subject interest and raise their profile within HEIs. Anagnos et al., (2014) highlight how working as an ambassador encourages students to participate in engineering clubs and network with members of their faculty. Studies also note working as an ambassador promotes greater enjoyment of student life and contributes to students' motivation in their own studies (Baker and Sela, 2018; Green, 2018). Furthermore, working as an ambassadors was found to contribute to students progressing onto postgraduate study and internships due to their increased motivation, opportunities to network with existing postgraduate students and staff, and increased engagement with their subject area (Anagnos et al., 2014; Gartland, 2016; Garner et al., 2018).

Unsurprisingly, studies found that ambassadors working in schools provided them with insight into careers in teaching (Corradini, 2012; Bissoonauth-Bedford and Stace, 2017; Williamson et al., 2014; Baker and Sela, 2018; Gannon, Tracey and Ullman, 2018). Studies focusing on engineering outreach activity observed student ambassadors' increased awareness of careers and opportunities in engineering and how outreach activity helped ambassadors to develop career focus, find internship placements and even full-time employment (Haas et al., 2013; Talbot et al., 2013). A further benefit to student ambassadors from their outreach work with younger students from underrepresented groups was their increased understanding of different cultures (Corradini, 2012; Nickson and Henriksen, 2014; Bonny, 2018). Studies highlighted how ambassadors were increasingly motivated by and committed to making a difference to the lives of the younger students they worked with (Fleming and Grace, 2016; Gartland, 2016; Green, 2018).

Implications for practice and training of student ambassadors

Research papers highlight a wide range of intended purposes for outreach activity. These purposes include raising aspirations; raising attainment; promoting interest in subject areas and challenging stereotypes; promoting progression to HE; and encouraging HE applications and enrolments. In the literature, student ambassadors are widely held to be aspirational role models. As discussed previously, given the often-multifaceted nature of outreach programmes and their often-wide ranging ambitions, it is not easy to point to cause and effect in what works. While ambassadors are held to be role models for younger students this is not an automatic process and there are many factors that contribute to whether student ambassadors are viewed as role models by younger students). However, research does

indicate several features and activities that are seen to be significant to the impact of student ambassador outreach programmes.

The identity of student ambassadors and their intersecting identities (such as gender, socio-economic status, ethnic identity, cultural background and regional identities) with the younger students they work with, is widely seen to be important. Also, the subject expertise of ambassadors and their enthusiasm and commitment to their studies is significant to working relationships. Ambassadors' and younger students' shared subject interests was found to positively impact on their working relationships. Alongside subject expertise, research highlights the value placed on student ambassadors' communication skills, a quality often required in recruitment of ambassadors.

In line with findings from the umbrella review of WP activity, partnerships were identified in studies as powerfully influencing the success of programmes. Partnerships were widely held to support ambassador training. Partnerships between HEIs led to the creation of a national network of student ambassadors, providing powerful platforms for them to share and build their expertise. Collaborations between schools and HEIs provided opportunities for activities to be developed collaboratively, for expertise in subject areas and pedagogies to be shared, and for purposes of activity to be clearly delineated. Such partnerships also enabled ambassadors to gain an understanding of the school contexts they would be working in.

Training models where experienced ambassadors support the training and development of ambassadors new to the role were widely valued. Strategies identified included observations of experienced ambassadors by new ambassadors, as well as new ambassadors working with experienced ambassadors in actively practising activities to be run in schools. Some ambassador training particularly focused on developing presentation skills and again included working with experienced ambassadors and practising presentations. Other foci in training included ambassadors undertaking activities that the younger students would be doing to ensure they were fully familiar with the content, and in how to answer younger students' questions. There were also examples of more in-depth training for ambassadors working in schools, training about school contexts and training in leadership. The value of creating a sense of belonging amongst student ambassadors through shared enterprise was widely identified in the literature. The sense of belonging was created by providing opportunities for ambassadors to undertake training together; credit bearing courses that enabled ambassadors to meet regularly; and organising ambassadors into groups with set activities and targets. Other valuable strategies identified were ambassador conferences, providing ambassadors from different HEIs with opportunities to meet and discuss practice. Research also indicated the importance of resourcing ambassador programmes sufficiently and ensuring they are effectively supported, for example through practical support from experienced ambassadors and regular communication with programme organisers. There were also suggestions that ambassadors should receive training to support their own progression into employment (for example with CV writing and interview skills).

As previously noted, outreach activity often has multiple aims and varies in terms of length and depth in engagement with younger students. Research indicates the value of

considering the purposes of outreach activity, content of programmes, pedagogies employed and learning contexts. Short term activity, such as ambassadors giving presentations in schools and having conversations with groups of younger students about subject disciplines and progression routes, where ambassadors can draw on their own experiences, were seen to support engagement with subjects and even promote students' application to HE courses. Longer term engagement where student ambassadors work in school classrooms supporting the learning of younger students was found to contribute to engagement as well as improvements in subject knowledge. Interactive pedagogies, particularly in STEM outreach activity, were widely held to support close working relationships between younger students and promote knowledge, engagement and interest. The need for ambassador training to enable them to effectively question younger students in hands on activity to promote deeper understanding was also raised. Embedding career information in outreach hands on and IAG activities were also valuable approaches identified in the literature.

Several benefits to younger students were identified in research papers. Some studies highlighted how ambassadors working in schools, sometimes for extended periods, promoted acquisition of relevant subject specific academic knowledge and skills, such as improvements in speaking, pronunciation and grammar amongst secondary school students learning modern foreign languages in British and Australian classrooms. Studies also highlighted how ambassadors promoted positive views of subject disciplines and knowledge of progression routes and careers. Activities also supported younger students in developing knowledge and understanding of what is expected of them in HE, enabling them to see themselves as belonging in an HE environment and envisage themselves as HE students. For younger students at the point of being able apply to HE, ambassador outreach activities such as presentations from ambassadors sharing their own experiences, increased applications and enrolment to courses and institutions that younger students may have considered inaccessible to them.

Mirroring many of the benefits to younger students, benefits were also identified for student ambassadors from engaging in outreach activities. Most widely noted were increased communication skills with several studies focusing on the development of presentation skills amongst ambassadors trained to give presentations in schools. Leadership skills and a range of other transferable skills relating to future employability, such as organisational skills and teamworking were also identified. Ambassadors were found to gain academically too, in terms of skills, knowledge, levels of engagement and attainment. Also noted in research was the sense of belonging to HE those ambassadors gained from being part of ambassador programmes, well known to be important to the retention and achievement of underrepresented groups. Ambassadors were also found to build progression routes to specific career paths through engagement as well as developing a sense of civic responsibility and understanding of underrepresented groups of students. Benefits for student ambassadors were associated with the extent of training received, type of outreach activities they are involved and length of engagement with outreach programmes.

Recommendations for ambassador training

Review findings suggest that student ambassador outreach activity is most effective if planned for specific national and local contexts and when specific local needs and issues are taken into consideration. Working in collaboration with stakeholder groups such as schools, charities and other HEIs has been found to be effective in developing impactful outreach activity. Outreach work also needs to be carefully targeted and has been found to be more effective if it is not a one-off event but takes a longer-term approach that gradually builds younger students' repertoire of possible future selves, self-efficacy in subject disciplines, and knowledge of progression routes and careers. The selection of student ambassadors is considered important with subject knowledge and matching aspects of younger students' identities being significant to ensuring ambassadors can build positive relationships with younger students and are viewed as role models. Training student ambassadors is widely considered important both to ensure the quality of outreach activity and to effectively support ambassadors themselves.

Groups of student ambassadors from broad disciplinary clusters (STEM, Health, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Art) and from groups underrepresented in each partner HEI, will be selected/ recruited to participate in the Erasmus+ Diploma project. In light of this research, a staged approach is suggested to developing appropriate and fit for purpose training for student ambassadors. The first stage involves identifying beneficial collaborations such as with schools, other HEIs and charities. The second stage is to clearly identify purpose(s) of intended outreach activities. For example, this may include increasing knowledge of HE amongst younger students; to encourage post sixteen students to choose particular subject disciplines; or to provide IAG about subject disciplines and related careers to promote motivation and progression. Stage three involves carefully identifying the age group targeted (it may be helpful to focus on transition points) and underrepresented groups targeted. The fourth stage involves deciding on the location and setting of activities. For example, if the ambition is to have an extensive and inclusive reach, working with entire year groups in schools may be the most suitable approach. Alternatively, campus (HEI) activity may be chosen for more targeted activity with underrepresented groups. The final stage is to identify the training needs for ambassadors to ensure that they are equipped to work in the specific learning contexts identified.

Table 4. Example of developing a plan for outreach activity and ambassador training

Partnership	Purposes (outcomes for YS)	Target group	Outreach activity	Location/ length of engagement	Student ambassador training needs
University of Suffolk	Find out about real world applications for curriculum knowledge	Whole year groups at Level 1	Curriculum linked experiential learning activity	School classroom	Relevant school curriculum learning
Teachers from 3 local secondary schools	Find out about jobs that use STEM subjects	Local schools (high numbers of students from lower	Teacher led Student ambassadors working alongside younger students	A series of 3 workshops over 1 term	Knowledge of schools (organisation, practices and students) Undertaking outreach activity themselves so they

	Build self-efficacy in STEM subject areas Find out about being an HE student	socio economic groups; students with SEND; and students with EAL; Roma students)	facilitating learning		understand younger students' experience Questioning skills so that they can effectively facilitate younger student learning/ problem solving
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