

**The University of Bath
International Centre for Higher Education Management
Seminar Series**

**What is Fair Access to Higher Education:
Perspectives from Brazil, Kenya and the UK**

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4 West Room 1.1 University of Bath

Abstract

Equity of access to higher education is a major concern of governments and institutions around the world, but there is significant disagreement over what should constitute a fair system. This paper assesses diverse conceptualisations of equity, and the ways they embody themselves in the policies of three countries: UK, Brazil and Kenya. While showing significant disparities of income level and enrolment ratio, all three have made concerted efforts to expand higher education access, accompanied by increasing stratification in terms of the quality and prestige of institutions and experiences available. Analysis of policy options and outcomes leads to a proposal of three principles for understanding equity of access: availability, accessibility and horizontality. The third of these principles addresses the little acknowledged safeguard that disadvantaged students are not confined to lower quality institutions, while at the same time allowing for diversity of ethos and disciplinary focus.

Biography

Tristan McCowan is Reader in Education and International Development at the Institute of Education, University of London. His research focuses on the areas of access to higher education, pedagogy and curriculum in higher education, citizenship education and human rights, and covers a broad range of contexts, particularly in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. He is the author of *Rethinking Citizenship Education* (Continuum, 2009) and *Education as a Human Right* (Bloomsbury, 2013). for exogenous policy reasons (e.g. fiscal reduction, state control, ordering of contents). But, if capitalist markets are clearly unachievable, a more authentic modernisation agenda is needed