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Working Paper

Social Inclusion: The Higher Education Sector in Chile and in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

The Higher Education (HE) systems of Chile and the UK are compared in terms of the 'massification' (Altbach, 1989) and the relevance and adequacy of the private-public provision mix. Dissimilar, each country has tried to build social inclusion into HE outreach at the same time as allowing participation of the private sector. Also included in the research are a) the role of social capital as a positive contribution for the social and economic development; b) the current state of social inequality in access to HE; and c) an in-depth analysis of the implications of both state and private roles over social inclusion in HE. Outreach programmes from each country, the Propedeutico in Chile and Aimhigher in the UK, are also analysed for lessons learned.

Keywords: Social Inclusion; privatization; disadvantaged; higher education

JEL Codes: I21, I23, I24, I25

1. Introduction

The role of universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) concerning questions of social inclusion is an issue that has been high on public policy agendas since 1945. Over recent decades, however, neoliberal⁷ downsizing of the state and consequently, its mitigating role in addressing social inequality has increased the introduction of market-based processes in many countries' higher education (HE) sectors. To the extent that social inclusion remains a priority, many national governments act on the assumption that the market is the best medium to arrive at the decided degree of social inclusion in a given economy.

Sporadic use of the kinds of processes now termed privatization have been important historical features of educational policy across the Global North and the Global South (Ball, 2012; Hussain and Hammett, 2015; Marginson, 2013; Olssen and Peters, 2005), but since the era of structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s, there has been a marked increase in intensity and coverage. In the Global South, the inability of many states (for a variety of reasons) to fund the required demand for HE caused them to seek mechanisms to finance explosive increases of enrolment in higher education. To meet this increased demand (as well as more ideologically-driven market-opening objectives) access to higher education has been deregulated, allowing the entry of private providers alongside the traditional state-financed universities. At the same time, many state institutions of higher education have increasingly had to self-finance a large proportion of their budgets⁸ due to the increasing use of market-opening mechanisms such as voucher schemes (demand subsidies) rather than the previously dominant baseline direct contribution scheme to universities (Jongbloed, 2004: 105). Also, in state universities, the surge in corruption (focused and extended) as a result of clientelist practices has weakened the role of state institutions in higher education, allowing pressure groups not aligned with the goals of public policy to take control of these institutions. Under the pretext of university autonomy and amid a lack of transparency in the administration of public resources, possible misconduct in

⁷ For the purposes of this paper, we define neoliberalism as per Laitsch (2013: 18): "Neoliberalism emphasizes individual commercial liberty and private ownership of property, and the production of goods and services for profit, as well as the efficiency of market competition and the role of individual choice in determining economic outcomes. Neoliberals believe that the state should be reduced in strength and size and focused on protecting and creating competitive markets. Through the division of labor, economic efficiency is increased, resulting in greater productivity and profit."

⁸ See for instance Torres and Schugurensky (2002).

this area leads to lessening the social muscle of state and in some way to strengthen the private provision of higher education.

In substantially privatized HE sectors like that of Chile, students from low-income sectors of society, already labouring under a series of additional burdens, are further disadvantaged in accessing higher education (HE). Their economic condition is one issue, but also there is the formal academic background of students from vulnerable socio-economic upbringings and their schooling environment – even where students from poorer backgrounds are the best in their courses in secondary school, they tend to perform poorly in standardized national tests, a requirement to access the majority of universities in Chile. They are also more prone to a range of problems, mental health issues, drug addiction, alcoholism and generalized depression (Schnettler et al., 2015). The social conduits of approach to higher education in Chile themselves constitute a formidable barrier, before the issue of HE charges becomes a consideration; if the entrance is achieved, however, costs constitute a second substantial barrier.

In the case of the UK, the increase in the fees charged by universities has created de facto quasi-private entities, despite the provision of a national loan scheme which is deferred against future earnings plus the existence of partial scholarships. Fee rises have been the result of a conscious down-sizing of the state HE budget plus removal of caps on fees, which has tended in the medium term to reinforce a university profile where the richest quintiles are over-represented compared to the poorest quintile. By 2013, although participation rates by students in disadvantaged areas had increased 30% between 2004/2005 and 2009/2010, students from the most advantaged areas were still three times more likely to go to university; UK universities have become less socially representative over time (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (SMCPC), 2013).

This paper explores the cases of Chile and the UK, considering social inclusion through two outreach programmes that exemplify how this is currently being addressed in each country. For the HE sector to be able to play the wider social role ascribed to it and for society to benefit from the ablest minds across the socio-economic strata, universities in these countries have a common task of facilitating the graduation of students from across different socioeconomic strata, and yet they occupy distinct ecological niches in specific national socio-political environments. The analysis sets about connecting debates over social inclusion in HE sectors in Northern and Southern contexts and how the debate is being operationalized as a mechanism for social equity, in tandem with an exploration of existing neoliberalisations of HE in different but related settings.

This setting is used to discuss alternative social inclusion mechanisms around which the debate on HE is forming, represented by the UNESCO-recognized Propedéutico programme first developed at the Universidad de Santiago de Chile and the Aimhigher programme in the UK.

2. The Current State of Social Inequality in Access to HE across North and South

Non-economic barriers before the entrance and during university attendance are (the authors assert) at least as important as the more immediate socioeconomic barriers affecting the short duration of the university course. These range from deficits of training in primary and secondary education, the relative disadvantages of school types and location and socio-spatialized inequality of preparation. They constitute specific gaps in the social capital of students and their families and the implications of this for student motivation, family support systems and resilience, following Bourdieu:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (1986).

Educational social capital can be highly productive (Coleman, 1988), but social capital is not a homogenous whole - different forms of social capital apply to different situations. The social capital required to access higher education successfully and overcome subsequent hurdles is of a kind that particularly rewards forms of middle-class social capital (Hatt et al., 2008; Reay, 2001). The positive contribution of HE to the social and economic development of countries and the development of citizenship through human capital hinges on a contradiction underpinned by the role of social capital. Contrary to the argument that access to and completion of an HE course is positive for all, if the social systemic structures guiding HE ensure wealthier quintiles enjoy higher participation rates over the poorest quintile, in the long run, the HE sector contributes to increased socio-economic inequality. Guzmán-Valenzuela (2015), indicates that 'public' conceptualization is different in countries with neoliberal and privatization policies, for example, the USA and the UK, as well as Chile:

The university falls short of what is ideally defined as 'public.' Universities, often in receipt of large public funds, sometimes act against the public good; they are not even neutral on occasions but even pernicious. They strengthen neoliberal practices and societal stratification and/or act in their own interests (Guzmán-Valenzuela, 2015: 10).

In an environment of high fees and falling state contributions, growing marketization of educational services suggests increasing challenges for equity in HE at precisely the same time that the ICT revolution (See Jorgenson and Vu, 2016) makes greater demands on resources and staffing.

Another issue relevant to both social and human capital is the relevance of qualifications chosen by students from different backgrounds (matching job market needs to specific academic/professional degrees, for instance). Disadvantaged students also face adverse selection phenomena after graduating; such students tend to go to universities of relatively low quality, finish their undergraduate degree with lower qualifications, and face problems being hired in the job market. The higher-functioning, nebulous forms of social capital that enable students from wealthier backgrounds to locate higher-end jobs is lacking.

Global participation rates in tertiary education have increased steadily since 2000 (Altbach et al., 2009), but progress has been uneven across regions, genders, ethnicities and above all, socio-economic deciles. Altbach et al. in their report for UNESCO reported a global increase in tertiary students in 2007 of 53% over 2000 (2009: vi) but of only 2% in the SSA (Sub-Sahel African) countries. HE enrolment in Latin America furthermore was only half that of high-income countries, primarily because of the high costs involved relative to GDP per capita. The 2007 report also indicated that information for evaluating the types of inequality in higher education is scarce for the majority of countries (Santiago et al., 2008); as Clancy and Goastellec (2007: 138) report in their study *Exploring Access and Equity in Higher Education: Policy and Performance in a Comparative Perspective* (2007):

If it is true that there is good comparative data available concerning the elimination of quantitative inequalities in the access of women to higher education, as well as the expanse of inter-generational inequalities, we are still badly-informed about inequalities by social groups, ethnic groups and disability.

Focusing on socio-economic inequalities, OECD shows, for example, that individuals in the Global North whose parents attended HEIs are over-represented in current HE populations (Figure 1). These results are also in line with those obtained by Koucký et al. (2008).

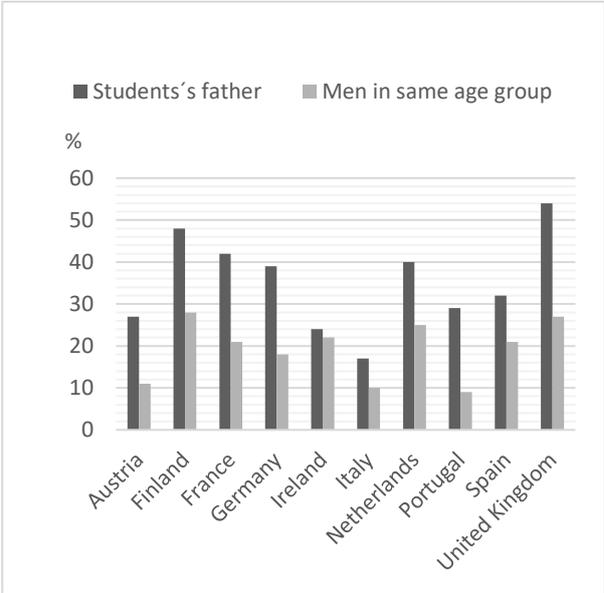
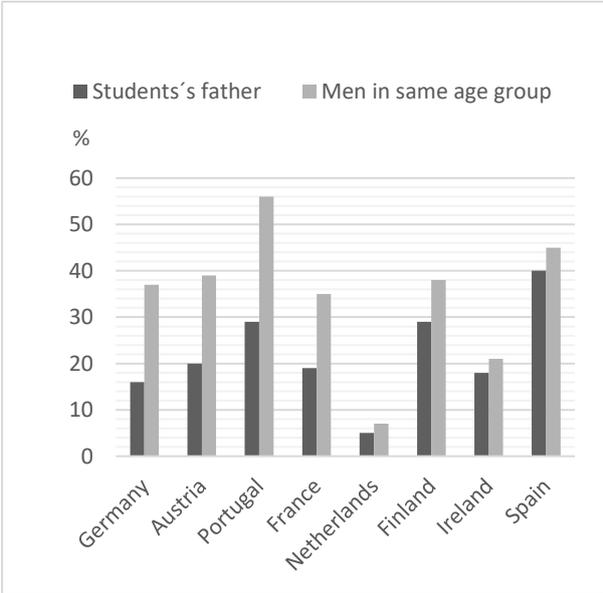
Figure 1. Participation in Higher Education According to Parental Profession

Occupational Status of Students' Father

Educational Status of Students' Father

Proportion of higher education students' fathers compared with the proportion of men of corresponding age (40-to-60-year-olds) from a blue-collar background, in %

Proportion of students' fathers with higher education compared with the proportion of men of corresponding age group as students' fathers (40-to-60-year-olds) with higher education, in %

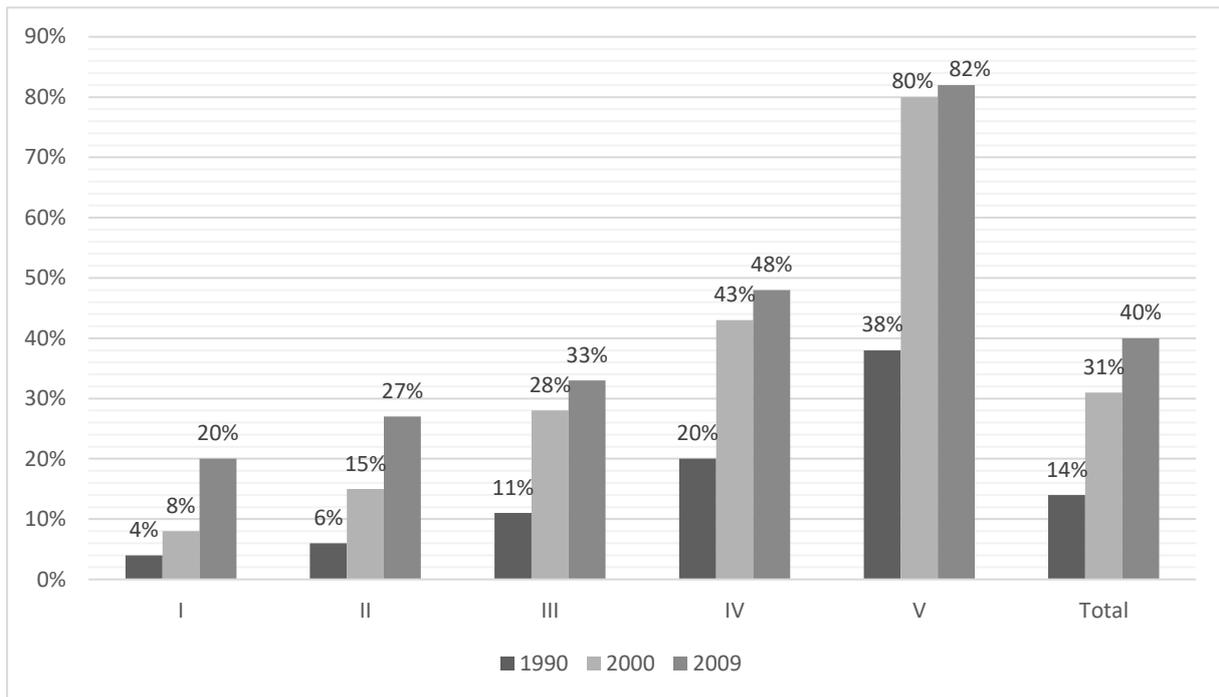


Note: Adapted from "Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2007", by OECD, 2007, pp. 116, Paris: OECD Publishing.

Note: Adapted from "Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2007", by OECD, 2007, pp. 119, Paris: OECD Publishing.

Specifically, in the case of Chile, Gil and Del Canto (2012) present data on participation rates in tertiary education by economic quintiles (Figure 2). The Chilean results are in harmony with what happens in the countries of the 'North'. Accordingly, the diagnostics show that in Chile there exists inequality in accessing higher education such that access relates far more to the socio-economic criteria of the parents (social capital of the families) than any meritocratic considerations of individuals.

Figure 2. Participation in Higher Education by quintiles



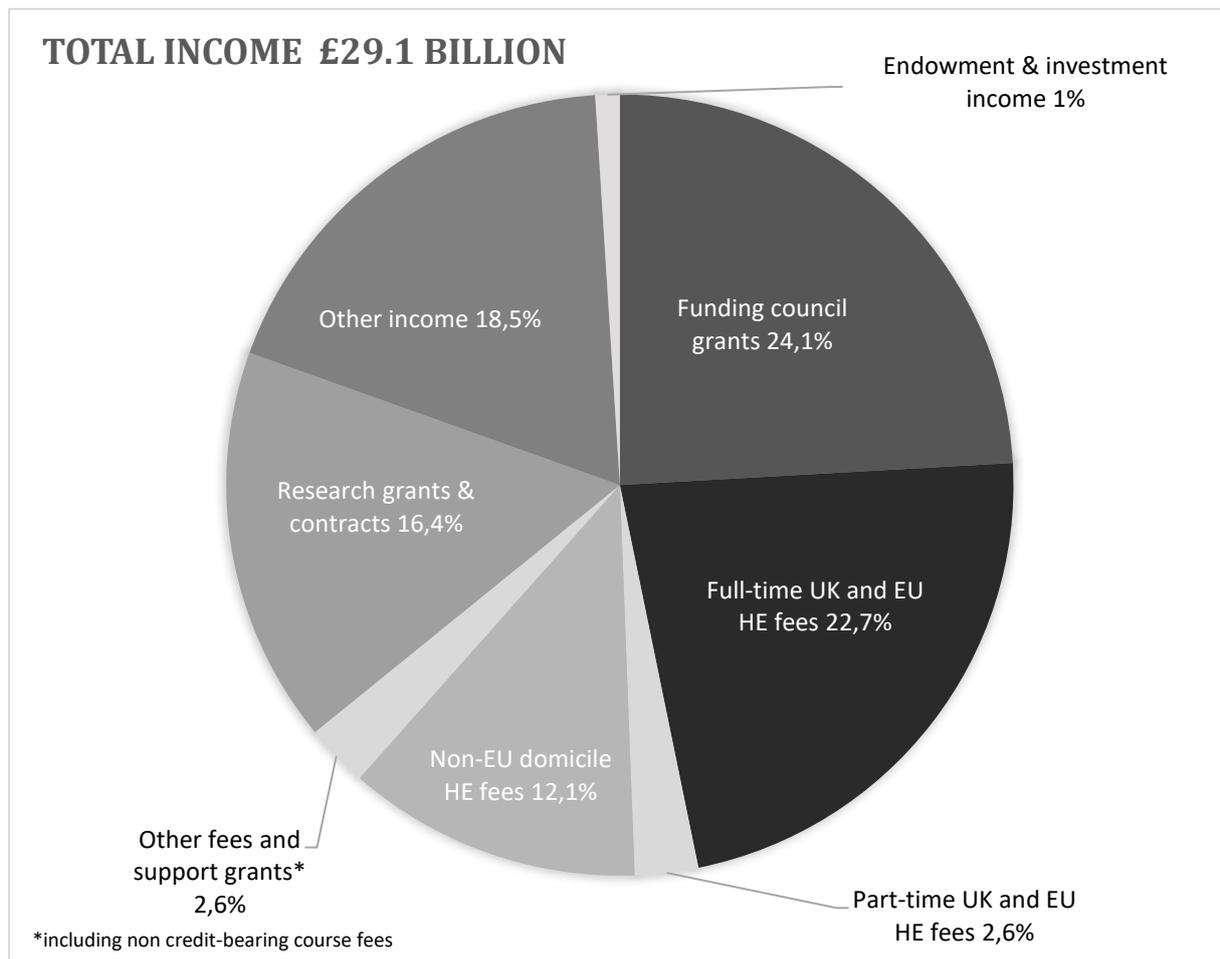
Note: Retrieved from "The Case of the Propedéutico Program of Universidad de Santiago de Chile (USACH)", by Gil, F. and Del Canto, C., 2012, *Revista de Investigación Educativa Latinoamericana*, 49(2), pp. 68.

3. State and Private Roles in HE and their Implications for Social Inclusion

Despite the strategic shift in the roles played by the state and the market within the HE sector (Kaiser et al. (eds), 2014; Palfreyman and Tapper, 2014; Altbach, 2015), the fact is that whatever the sources of university income, both national and international markets in HE are highly artificial, created and maintained by the national priorities of states. A central feature of this marketization is the move from a systemic logic with fees financed by the State to market-based financing (Corvalan & Garica-Huidobro, p. 5, 2015). This move has taken place within the context of a more generalized downsizing of the State conceived by localized forms of educational neoliberalism and implemented over the following decades globally, in different forms in different places (Peck and Tickell, 2002).

In Chile, for example, the state's reduction of its role in the financing of HE means that self-financing by Chilean universities has risen to 74% of income (Zapata et al., 2011). Irrespective of trends towards diversification in sources of income in the UK, however, as of 2012 the HE sector remained heavily dependent on the state (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Income of UK Higher Education Institutions, 2012-13



Note: Adapted from “Higher Education in Facts and Figures. Higher Education: a core strategic asset to the UK”, by Universities UK, 2014, pp. 16, London: Universities UK Publications.

The assumption underlying these shifts both in Chile and in the UK has been and remains that the State is an inefficient provider of education; moreover, international institutions have been pushing countries to move from a state-centric logic of higher education provision to a logic of private provision acting in conjunction with state agencies. This approach was embraced enthusiastically in Chile, where the private sector had long played an important role. In the UK however the culture of state-assisted education as of right was far stronger⁹. Also, this approach stems from the fact that the UK society expects stronger governance (clear rules, accountability) from public

⁹ See Radice (2013) for an overview of the transformation and resistances in the UK.

universities, which ultimately boils down to the issue of efficient use of public funds.

The systematic shrinkage of budgets to state universities, a minimization of their social role as stabilizers of social systems, along with deregulation and almost complete freedom for private universities (Guzmán-Valenzuela, 2015) were among the factors behind the decline of the state universities, during the period of military rule in Chile. For much of the twentieth century, however, even under the *Estado Docente* ('Teacher State' - Delannoy, 2000) the most privileged groups of society, in any case, enjoyed preferential access to state-created higher education and benefited most from its free provision. During this period the Chilean system did not allow for "affirmative action" in terms of facilitating university entrance for the poorest (Bernasconi and Rojas, 2004); state control of HE, therefore, allowed the solidification of a large professional middle layer in the public domain. The state-centric model, then, did not radiate to the lower-income sectors any more effectively than the current privatized model.

The private HE introduced in law by the military regime in the 1980s expanded the market for education services further into other socio-demographic groups than had state provision, reaching into lower-middle income groups that the previous system had been unable to penetrate. Provision of HE through universities, professional institutes and technical training centres increased markedly under the dictatorship in a context of accelerating deregulation (Brunner, 1993). HE over-supply produced a range of different problems, however; low-quality degrees, inaccurate and scant certification of programs, high student indebtedness and of their families, among others, and an information asymmetry faced by new students and their families when choosing an educational institution to make tuition fees and payments consistent with the quality of the degree.

From unbridled liberalism, however, the system has been moving back toward greater state regulation. This involves strengthening the processes of accreditation of universities and programmes such as 'University Accreditation' and 'Accreditation of programmes' (a necessary and compulsory control of state agencies), with a group of important private universities (under pressure to comply with transparency rules). This allows to achieve a high degree of quality and being competitive even with a majority of state institutions in HE. Furthermore, these latter institutions, in some cases, under the pretext of being state institutions (and controlled by interest groups), failed to properly implement the necessary measures to support strong academic and organizational performance. This is compounded by weak budget execution,

stemming from poor governance linked to excess autonomy and insufficient oversight by the corresponding regulatory bodies (such as Superintendency of Higher Education and the Comptroller and Auditor General).

While privatization of higher education continues to create problems and challenges for the state university system, on the positive side it has forced a readjustment of policies of integration into the market, as well as innovation in research policies and complex issues such as the renewal of teachers' skills.

Researchers and governments globally continue to assert that higher education has a high social value in terms of evaluating benefits to and costs for both society and the individual (Santiago et al., 2008). This implies that for Chile and the UK, there have to be explicit public policies in terms of the message to and the resources allocated in government budgets for the poorest students, constructed around a clear understanding of which 'public' it is that they are speaking to (Guzmán-Valenzuela, 2015). This ideation of public, moreover, has to be developed around some understanding of social justice and the needs of students from a variety of disadvantaged backgrounds.

In both Chile and the UK, students from the poorest quintiles in secondary education are aware that HE is too expensive for them to finance on their own or even with the help of their families. *Ex ante* they have only a vague illusion of what it means to be a university student, due among other reasons to the scarce social capital of their families and/or the absence in that family of anyone with a similar experience. In addition, enculturated forms of 'learned helplessness' can lead students in secondary education to resent academic performance if it cannot be transmitted into equality of opportunities through the process of HE (Maani y Kalb, 2007: 37). Overcoming this socio-cultural inequality is a vital preliminary step to bridging psychological and resources gaps.

As one way of addressing this, universities play an important role in social inclusion across different scales (See Basit and Tomlinson, 2012). At the local level most universities engage in activities with their local communities of a variety of different types - aside from the effects of education amongst the general population, therefore, the academic community is an actor within the socio-economic and geographical space it inhabits (Santiago et al., 2008: 169). At regional, national and international level universities endeavour to enhance the social environment through research activities directed towards enhancing the quality of life of the rest of the community, directly and indirectly – universities thereby reach above and beyond their host communities on a transnational socio-spatial basis. This kind of multi-scalar social responsibility

speaks to what the limits of that social responsibility should be and who should bear the financial burden, particularly where the socially optimal production of varied educational 'goods' is not profitable to individual universities, and may in some cases not be measurable.

More resources are required to fund programmes that are unprofitable from the perspective of the private market but have a great social impact (Teachers' Training Programmes, for example). HE institutions also need to recognize that the market is not a symbolic two-dimensional construct, but consists of a diversity of cultural, social and economic collectives functioning through an even greater complex of connectivities, themselves forming different 'publics'. HE institutions have a heterogeneous student base in terms of economic and ethnic origin, and it is necessary to train more professionals connected with the reality of the country – in other words, universities have a responsibility towards social cohesion (Santiago et al., 2008: 171) that may not translate into profitability.

4. Analysis of the Responses of the Universities in the United Kingdom and Chilean Contexts

4.1. The Case of Chile: Propedeutico Programme in the Higher Education

The two decades after the end of the Pinochet regime saw an increase in participation in the HE sector (a notional 40% of the population) at the same time as a systematic reduction in state funding – from \$171 million in 1981 to \$115 million in 1988 (Schieffelbein, 1996). Measured by graduation rates, this expansion continues to be relatively inefficient in Chile; the general level of graduation in Chilean universities was an average of 46.3% between 1998 and 2002; only 8.6% of graduates carried out their studies to completion and obtained their degrees inside the theoretical five-year duration of Chilean academic programs (OECD, 2009).

Concerning income per capita, moreover, Chilean HE is amongst the most expensive in the world and therefore despite apparently enhanced access, poorer households still have practically no access to HE in Chile – students from such households that do study take longer to graduate and end up in severe indebtedness for frequently below-standard degrees (Cloke, Castaneda and Brown, 2012).

The student social movements of 2011 (see Salinas and Fraser, 2012; Fleet, 2011) brought the expense and quality of the educational system forwards, in addition to funding and social inclusion – quality, access and finance constitute the ‘choice trilemma’ affecting Chilean students and their families. The accreditation process of institutions in HE, for instance, releases access to indirect funding (scholarships/grants and banking credit backed by state guarantee), referred to as a “subsidy to demand” (Cox, 2003) – the funding attached to mere accreditation of a course puts pressure on financially-pressed institutions to develop more of them. At the same time that it is supposed that students are well-informed clients, with the knowledge to select the correct course and HE institution (state or private institution).

As a result of the efforts of various actors and institutions and the insistence of the student movement, Chile carried out an important change in the admission processes of its universities in 2013. Before the student actions of 2011 the weaknesses of the HE system had been obvious, but in 2013 the Consejo de Rectores de las Universidades Chilenas (Board of Presidents of Chilean Universities, or CRUCH) agreed to include the ranking of students’ grades in high school in assessing students for admission (Gil and del Canto, 2012). The Chilean government supported the change as an acknowledgement that the previous system was effectively creating a human form of ‘dead capital’¹⁰ and that the HE system needed to be modified to encourage more vulnerable students into the higher education system.

In 2007, however, long before the recent changes discussed by the Chilean government and universities, the Foundation New Hope, Better Future was developed by Universidad de Santiago, for priority schools defined by the Ministry of Education of Chile in partnership with UNESCO-OREALC. It constitutes another view of equity in the system in which four tiers are considered (Gil and Del Canto, 2012): Access, Retention, Achievements and Results. The Foundation Program has as its philosophy that the relative position (ranking) in the class (in term of marks) is a good forecast about potential for academic performance at University and under this initiative, universities in Chile have been expanding the UNESCO-sponsored Propedeutico program.

The USACH-UNESCO (Propedeutico¹¹) Foundation Program provides an alternate channel to ensure college admission for low-income students, graduated from low-performing high schools in the top 5% of their class rank. This alternate channel foresees two stages.

¹⁰ See De Soto (2001) for and explanation of this term.

¹¹ From Propaedeutic, courses which “serve as a preliminary instruction or as an introduction to further study” (OED).

The first consists of five months of preparatory courses provided during the last semester of high school to students whose cumulative GPA from 9th to 11th grade have placed them in the top 10% of their class rank.

The Foundation project is carried out for 3-4 months, in the last year of a secondary school on Saturdays, in the facilities of Bachillerato Program at USACH and taught jointly with professors of the Fundación Equitas. Every Saturday, preparatory classes teach three subjects: Maths, Language, and Personal Development; students with lower marks in the first year of secondary school are also offered an Enhancement Workshop, to improve the dropout rate and increase students' potential for future academic success.

One hundred per cent attendance is required in the weekend classes run by the Propedeutico, as evidence that the student has the required commitment to sustain a university course.

In the second stage, students who comply with the above requirements and who completed high school within the top 5% of their class are guaranteed admission and a full-tuition scholarship to study the two-year Bachillerato program (Bachelor's Program in General Studies) at USACH (Gil and Del Canto, 2012).

The Chilean educational system has therefore developed since the days of laissez-faire privatization – many Chilean universities now have programmes like that of USACH, called PAIEPs (Programa de Acceso, Inclusion y Permanencia). However, the more vulnerable sectors continue to have low retention rates in university, and such students frequently see their graduation process delayed, affecting their entrance to the labour market (OECD & World Bank, 2009). After university, moreover, disadvantaged students still tend to have less information about employment markets with which to inform their vocational decisions, creating new demands on the HE system.

The Propedeutico programme encountered substantial difficulties at the beginning, and the first year of the programme was a 'total disaster' (Koljatic & Silva, 2012: 1430); the problems have necessitated continuous change and adaptation in the teaching methods undertaken. There continues to be a substantial difference between the performances of students coming in through the traditional entrance portal and those on the Propedeutico; however, the retention rate for Propedeutico students by the second year was, at 61%, not far short of the national student average of 68% (Ugarte, 2010, cited in Koljatic & Silva, 2012).

Such a retention rate, a significant achievement in itself, is more impressive because of the substantial difference in social indicators between ‘normal’ students and the Propedeutico test group. The differences speak directly to the ideas on social capital and non-financial barriers to higher education access outlined in the analysis above (Table 1). Of particular note was the following findings: none of students had a sibling in higher education, most parents were in blue-collar employment or unemployed, and 83% of families for the programme group reported a family income of under \$500 monthly – the OECD Better Life Index (2015) reports the average household net adjusted disposable income per capita for Chile as \$25,908 annually or \$2,159 monthly.

Table 1. Selected Demographic Variables of the Sample

	Regular Admission %	Test-Blind Admission %	Stand. Diff. %
Sex (females)	56	52	.07
Sibling in higher education ^a	45	0	.46
Mother education ^a (elementary education only)	8	33	-.35
Father education ^a (elementary education only)	5	24	-.32
Mother occupation ^a (unemployed/blue collar worker)	46	85	-.38
Father education ^a (unemployed/blue collar worker)	12	50	-.45
Family income ^a (under US\$500)	41	83	-.41

Note: Standardized differences are calculated as the mean of the regular admission group minus the mean of the test-blind admission group divided by the total standard deviation.

^aBased on self-report.

Note: Retrieved from “Opening a side-gate: engaging the excluded in Chilean higher education through test-blind admission”, by Koljatic, M, and Silva, M., 2012, *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(10), pp. 1433.

4.2. The Case of the United Kingdom: Aim Higher Programme in the Higher Education

There has been a significant expansion in student numbers in the Post-War period in the UK through successive transformations of HE – since the late 1990s alone participation amongst young people has increased from 30% to 38%, an increase of 26% (HEFCE, 2013: 2). During that period, the mainstream

vision has been of HE as a crucial component in the mechanics of progressive transformation:

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, going to university has become the norm – almost ‘a third stage in compulsory education’ (base on Department for Education and Skills of the Government of the United Kingdom in 2003) – for young people from middle-class backgrounds, whereas this path still remains unusual for those from manual backgrounds (Hatt et al., 2008: 131).

During this same period, the marketization of HE has also increased steadily, and researchers have outlined concerns over apparent conflicts between ideas of a market meritocracy and concerns over social justice (McCaig and Bowers-Brown, 2008).

In the aftermath of the ICT revolution, in particular, a variety of different UK reports on the HE sector (Dearing Report, 1997; DTI, 1998) articulated universities as ‘central engines’ in building the new knowledge-driven economy. In the newer market mechanisms of the HE sector, the broader role ascribed to HE is still seen through a number of different optics – in purely economic terms, or through a more conceptual view of the HE in promoting new ideas, reflectivity and broader social change. Nevertheless, the mechanism of change has steadily re-focused on the benefits accruing to individuals through access to HE, in terms of improved employment opportunities, earnings and other aspects.

As a corollary to this, the UK HE sector has experienced increasing cuts in funding per student, the concentration of research funding in fewer universities and pressure to develop research programmes to sell to the private sector, plus the increasing deployment of professional managerialist ‘oversight’ and increasing insecurity and ‘flexibility’ of working practices for teaching, administrative and ancillary staff (Kandiko, 2010). Since 2010 the HE sector has seen an 80% reduction of state funding of HE; the downgrading of arts, humanities, social sciences.

Throughout these changes in the HE sector, the numbers of students from disadvantaged areas have continued to grow, but the proportion of such students amongst the whole student body was smaller in 2013 than it had been ten years ago. Some of the suggested reasons for this have echoes in the Chilean experience and speak again to the little-researched area of non-financial barriers to HE access in the UK. They include lower aspirations; system application, access and subject choice issues; perceptual, social inferiority

issues and more generally how to showcase their academic ability and potential in formal settings (SMCPC, 2013: 5-7).

UK universities up and down the scale responded to the SMCPC report of 2013 by affirming their commitment and promising more extensive outreach into UK communities, particularly through sponsoring the new Academies; some universities (e.g. John Moore, Liverpool) indicated their intentions to start outreach programmes in schools at Year 9. On the other hand, the 2010 UK Coalition government had already closed the Aimhigher outreach programme that had been in operation since 2004, to the disapproval of schools and universities across the UK. Aimhigher was a programme 'designed to raise the awareness, aspirations and attainment of young people through activities such as university taster sessions and summer schools'¹² the funding for which had been gradually diminishing.

The Aim higher programme was an amalgamation of two predecessor programs dating from 2001 and 2003, respectively; it targeted 13-19 year-olds but also other disadvantaged groups (McCaig et al., 2008: 2):

Young people from neighbourhoods with lower than average HE participation; people from lower socio-economic groups; people living in deprived geographical areas, including deprived rural and coastal areas; people whose family have no previous experience of HE; young people in care (looked after young people), minority ethnic groups or subgroups that are under-represented in HE generally or in certain types of institution or subject, other groups currently under-represented in certain subject areas or institutions (for example, women in engineering), people with disabilities (base on Higher Education Funding Council for England in 2006).

Aimhigher was focused far more precisely and at more disparate social groups than the Propedeutico, therefore, reflecting both the stage of advanced 'massification' (Altbach et al., 2009) of UK HE and the relative stages of advancement of the Secondary and HE sector in both countries.

Aimhigher also worked at both the local and regional level, rather than on individual schools like the Chilean Propedeutico, but the logistical issues between the two countries are very different. In 2002, for instance, the UK population was just less than 60 million people (Grundy and Jamieson, 2002)

¹² See "Aimhigher brought down by coalition axe" by Rebecca Attwood in the Times Higher Education website, accessed 25/2/16 at <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/aimhigher-brought-down-by-coalition-axe/414416.article?storycode=414416>

and the number of 18-24 year-olds was 7,247,000 – this would have constituted slightly less than half of the entire population of Chile at the time, which according to the 2002 Census was 15,116,435¹³. Government spending on Aimhigher was substantial, approximately £500 million between 2001-2008 (McCaig et al., 2008: 2). However, the kinds of activities that Aimhigher funded were necessarily more diffuse and less concretely measurable than the activities of the Chilean universities, whose efforts can be measured directly by numbers of students entered, retained and graduating.

By the time that the new Coalition government terminated Aimhigher in 2010 there were more than 40 Aimhigher partnerships nationally, the activities of which were ‘delivered primarily to young people located in deprived and low-participation areas, with a focus on students who are first in the family to enter higher education and from lower socio-economic groups (Chilosi et al., 2010: 2).’ The partnerships covered a wide range of activities requiring more or less participation, including careers fairs, HE evenings, campus tours and visits and HE taster days.

Across the UK HE institutions found Aimhigher useful as a promoter of recruitment and the activities it promoted fitted with their commitments and ethos. Although teachers surveyed displayed a very positive opinion of the programme (Hatt et al., 2008), they were less sure that the activities directly translated into increased access for the targeted groups. Amongst HE institutions surveyed there was a distinct difference between pre-1992 research universities and post-1992 ones and between HE institutions and Further Education (FE) ones, with post-1992 FEIs being more positive about the impact of Aimhigher translating into increased student numbers (McCaig et al., 2008) – the most substantial impact was in vocational courses, which the newer universities specialize in.

Later studies were more positive – Chilosi et al. (2010) use regression analysis to suggest (with caution) that participation in an Aimhigher programme through an Aimhigher partnership was associated with better GCSE¹⁴ results and a higher probability of HE application. Other authors caution that in the period since the introduction of tuition fees, the traditionally greater difficulties associated with retaining disadvantaged students through a degree to graduation were already being exacerbated by increases in tuition fees to a greater degree than their non-disadvantaged cohorts (Pennell and West, 2005).

¹³ Base on National Institute of Statistics of The Government of Chile (2003).

¹⁴ General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

More widely, other authors claim that the empirical evidence that Aimhigher helped widen access for disadvantaged groups is debatable at least (Doyle and Griffin, 2012: 78, author's brackets):

It cannot provide a consistent body of evidence (...) which shows target pupils progressing into higher education as a direct result of its interventions, largely because of competing or parallel schemes and the fact that specific targets and ways of measuring impact were not built in sufficiently from the start.

However, Doyle and Griffin (2012) suggest the outcome of the Aimhigher cannot be questioned. For example, they indicate that, based on Moore and Dunworth (2011) results, the 2009-2010 academic year had a total of 54,544 events, 2,226,580 individual contacts, and 4,850 national roadshows for 70,000 learners.

5. Conclusion

Higher Education (HE) is widely accepted as a major element in the 'development' trajectory of a country. In Modernization Theory for both Global North and South, since 1945 HE has been associated as a key to technological development and industrial upgrading, sophisticated financial services and latterly keeping up with the ICT revolution. The association of HE with social justice arguments over its role in expanding opportunity and the development of human capital have been subsumed by the discourse of privatization, as has the medium and instrumentation through which social goods are expected to be achieved. Envisaging HE through a narrowly utilitarian optic focused on the private sector renders invisible the symbolic importance of affordable access. At the same time, general public/state provision has been shown to enable advantaged students more and to have an erratic record of widening access.

In the UK, greater access to HE has become an accepted part of educational possibility over some fifty years. Initiatives towards greater social inclusion in HE continue to inform public policy in both the UK and Chile, but they start from different socio-cultural locations on the access spectrum. The processes guiding massification in both countries have furthermore taken different courses. Chile moved from substantial public provision of education to substantial growth in the private provision, and neither of these two options by themselves has proven satisfactory. The UK achieved mass participation in HE through substantial state support which raised it to a position where it will be equal 6th with Japan in the world by 2020 in its share of 25-34 year-olds with a

tertiary degree¹⁵; as more obvious barriers to broader access have been surmounted; however, more intricate ones present themselves.

If the more privileged sections of society can take more significant advantage of either state or private sector HE provision, then focusing on the constructs of the private and public sector are unhelpful, if not archaic. Financial assistance remains a crucial component in achieving higher and more targeted access to HE, but it has to be appropriate financial help for a specific public or segment thereof, adequately targeted and carefully researched.

At whatever stage of development the HE sector in a country is, it remains the job of the state to identify and research the components of the disengaged and marginalized. Indeed, ultimately contestation of HE is effectively a struggle over how a society sees itself and what it is to become, in which all citizens (with or without access) have the right to participate.

¹⁵ See “One third of young people with a tertiary degree from China by 2020?” June 6th, 2012, Higher Education Development Association, accessed 3/3/16 at <http://uv-net.uio.no/wpmu/hedda/tag/chinese-he/>

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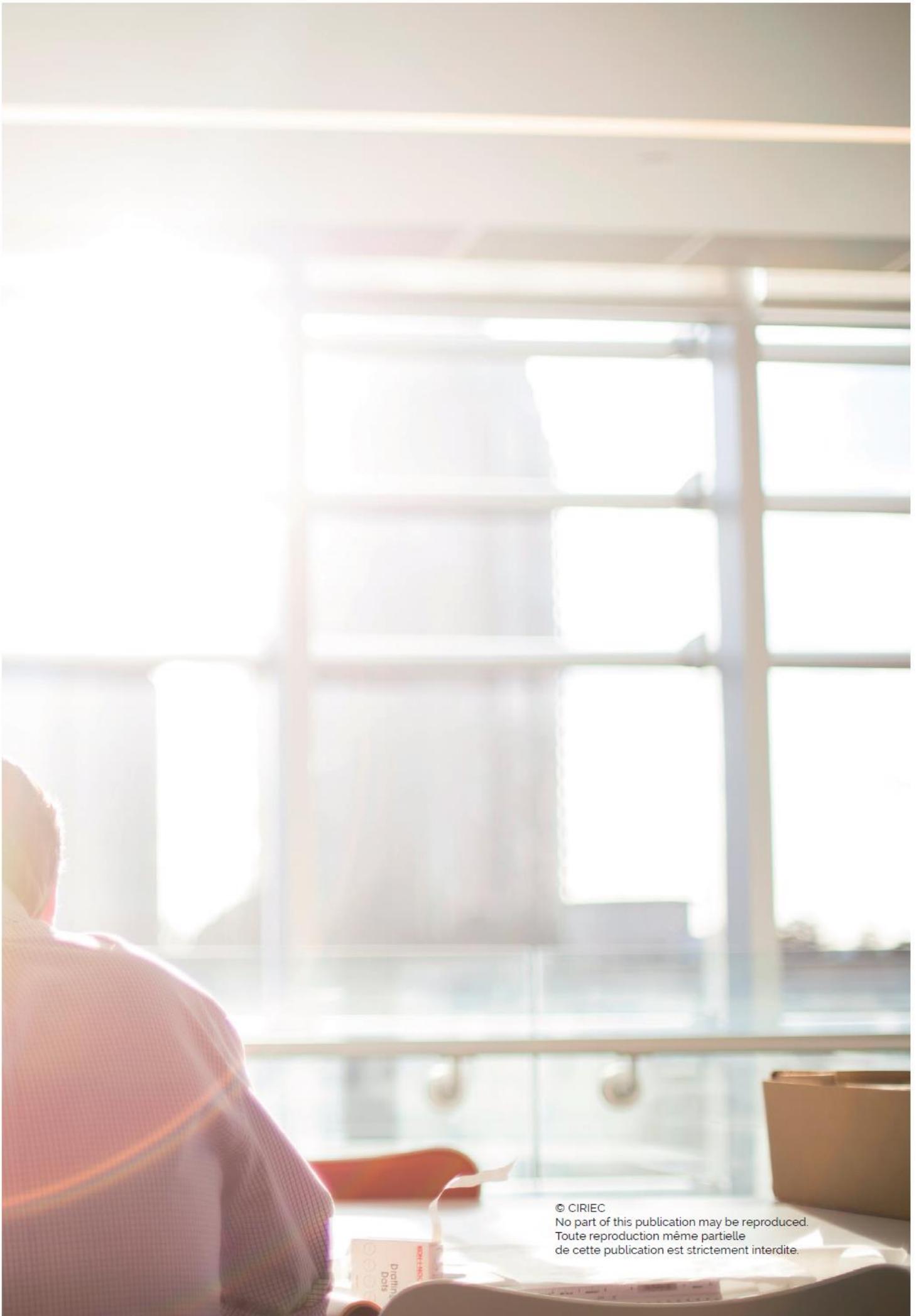
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