



# **How and why accessibility to higher education is contextualized?**

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# **Aim of the research**

to reveal how and why accessibility to higher education is contextualized.

# Structure of the presentation

- 1) The fundamental concepts and theories which are basis of this work will be revealed.
- 2) The essence of the DARE project and its results will be introduced
- 3) The results of the DARE project will be discussed

# 1.Theoretical and methodological framework

*Accessibility* in general, and *accessibility to HE*, specifically, is analysed based on three levels:

- a) policy dominant at the international level;
- b) policy, which based on an analyzed perspective, the specific country has acquired;
- c) policy implementation in a specific higher education institution, while acting in a region of a unique sociocultural context and known for a unique culture and experience.

# 1. Theoretical and methodological framework

## **Accessibility to HE: conceptual attitudes and policies representing the international level**

- Attention to disadvantaged groups (particularly – for people with disabilities, minorities, refugees, women) from UN: UNESCO, EU (EC: Bologna), OECD
- Accessibility to HE: as admission, retention, inclusion

# Theoretical framework

- Bronfenbrenner's ecological and bioecological theories
- Argyris' action science theories
- Alexander's theory of Pedagogy of difference

## Theoretical framework:

### Bronfenbrenner's ecological (1979) and bioecological (2005) HD theories

- ***Ecological theory of human development*** states that human development is the result of the interaction between a human being and his/her surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The environments which are closest to a human being, so called proximal settings, have the biggest impact.
- **Bioecological theory of human development** explains how the human development occurs emphasizing the interaction between the individual and the context as well as distinguishing between the three factors: a person, the time of the impact of an environment, the processes of the closest environment (proximal processes).

## Theoretical framework:

### Action Science theories (Argyris, 1995)

- ***Espoused theory*** – the understanding of action based on explicit knowledge;
- ***Theory - in – use*** - in the process of the implementation of action the individual's espoused theory is transformed into theory – in- use; the changes are not known explicitly for individual because they are based on tacit knowledge. The individual may to learn some differences if he/she reflects.

# Theoretical framework:

## Pedagogy of difference (Alexander, 2007, 2015)

- The task of liberal democracy is to promote a *modus vivendi* to negotiate among a rich diversity of incommensurable cultures; it is not capacity, that occurs from nature, it is capability that needs to be learned;
- Self acceptance is possible only when committing oneself to the *other* through the understanding of the *other*;
- this can be achieved through education which is grounded on differences and a goal to match them through critical thinking development as a means to making and assessing intelligent choices while students with different cultural, social, economic background learn together.

# Methodological framework

- Case study strategy grounded on the qualitative research (Yin, 2013).
- The case of the DARE project „Developing programs for Access of Disadvantaged groups of People and Regions to Higher Education“ (EU ERASMUS plus program’s subprogram KA2 Capacity Building in Higher Education ) which initiated changes in the Israeli and Georgian higher education institutions is analysed.
- The case unit - the changes initiated by the DARE project while making the access of disadvantaged groups to HE larger in a specific higher education institution (university, college).
- The changes are analyzed based on the reports of institutions. A total of 8 institutions are analyzed and summarized into the groups of two countries (Israel and Georgia) each having 4 institutions. The Intermediate report of the Project coordinator to the ERASMUSplus office also has been analysed.

## 2. DARE project

- aims at providing inclusive education to higher education institutions in the partner countries to increase access to higher education for potential and existing students for vulnerable situation, be they women, ethnic minorities or persons with disabilities;
- focuses at increasing institutional capacities and transferring best practices to ensure equal treatment and equal access to all students.

# Barriers and challenges as commonalities for both countries (Israel and Georgia)

- lack of awareness in society for access to HE for the target groups, particularly – of administrative and academic staff in HE);
- lack of knowledge (particularly – of language necessary for studies) or graduation the secondary education to enter the HE;
- low esteem and psychological barriers of the young people for integration;
- lack of teachers' competence to teach the target groups, particularly, people with disabilities and minorities;
- lack of the infrastructure for the people of disabilities;
- lack of teaching/learning equipment.

# **Barriers and challenges: *The differences***

- can be noticed in every mentioned above characteristics, because each of them has various content expressions

# The created conditions to increase access to HE in the higher education institutions by DARE project

Country	HE Institution - DARE project partner	Conditions for people with disabilities			Conditions for women		Conditions for minorities	
		Learning disabilities	Mental and Physical disabilities	PD	All	PD	All	PD
IL	A	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	B				+	+		
	C	+	+	+				
	D	+	+	+				
GE	E		+	+			+	+
	F	+	+	+			+	+
	G	+					+	
	H		+		+		+	

**Where:** PD – planned tools and actions, directly impacting self-esteem of the individuals from for target groups and/or awareness of the administrative or academic staff

# Conclusions

- The accessibility of underprivileged groups to HE education means not only acceptance into HE and staying there, but also social inclusion.
- The legal agreements accepted on an international level are the sufficient base for the legal accessibility to HE to form grounds in specific countries. However, the laws accepted by various countries are quite different: it depends on the context of the country, which is impacted by various factors.
- Accessibility problems, although depending on economic factors, but the latter, according to Bronfenbrenner, is one of the environments that impacts a person and indirectly. The direct impact is made by microenvironments (family, friends, school/HE institutions) as well as their interactions. Thus, accessibility problem solving especially depends on human resources.

# Conclusions

- The implementation of the accepted laws and other documents is impacted by various factors. The longer the decision making human chain, the more chances that the initial idea will change more until it is implemented in practice.
- Extremely important is keeping the human's understanding of the implementation process as his/her explicit knowledge. It may be achieved by reflecting constantly on the implementation actions: consciously transforming *theories-in-use* into *espoused theories* (Argyris, 1985).

# Conclusions

- The experience of the DARE project has evidenced that the human factors are especially important: the readiness of the HE institutions to solve the accessibility to HE problems, faculty and student competences and their development, the development of the self-esteem of the individuals from target groups. Systemic efforts are needed for all of this.
- The affordance of society and its members, according to the viewpoint of the target groups, is perhaps the most important and most difficult problem to solve. An effective ontological foundation should be chosen for this solution. It may certainly be Pedagogy of difference (Alexander, 2015).