



Enhancing student mobility
across educational boundaries
through recognition

Recognition Culture in Higher Education. International Perspectives on Lifelong Learning and Student Mobility

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Higher education and lifelong learning: remaining more rhetoric than reality?

(Extract from Keynote address)

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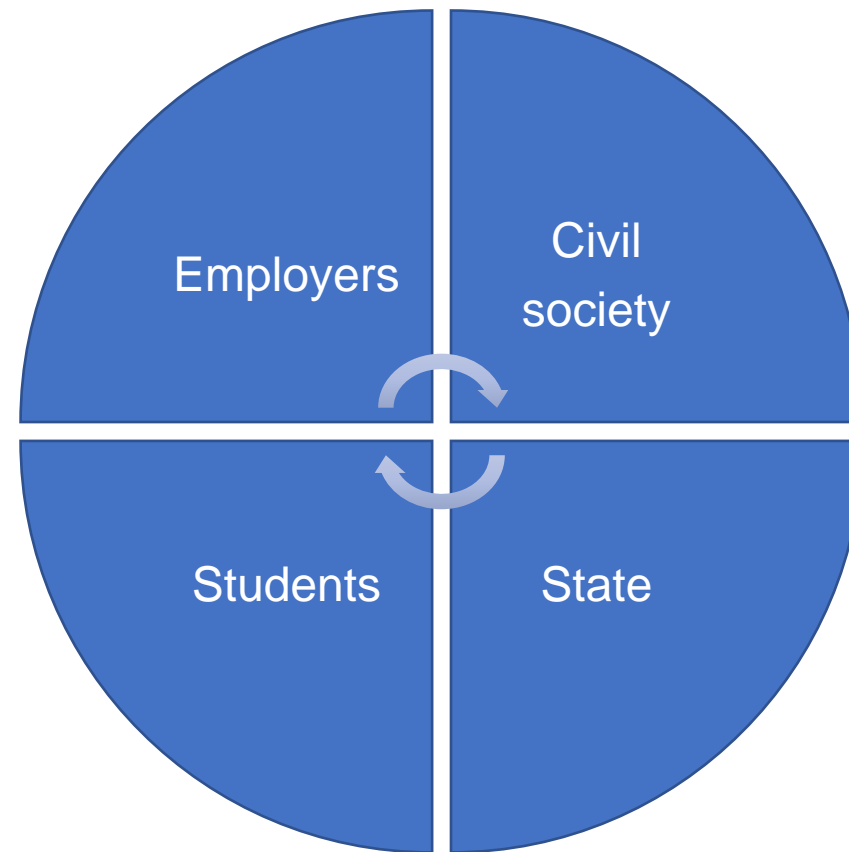
Dublin City University, Ireland

Overview of presentation

1. What is the role of higher education in contemporary society? (What is higher education **for**?)
2. New visions for lifelong learning: addressing intergenerational inequalities.
3. Shift focus from 'problems' to opportunities for higher education. Lessons for HE from adult education?

PART I: WHAT IS HIGHER EDUCATION FOR?

'Stakeholder' demands on institutions of higher education



PLUS: the interests of faculty/academics, support staff etc.

→ competing contemporary narratives

- Public vs private good
- Elite reproduction vs transformative education
- Increasing participation vs quality and standards
- Isomorphism vs increasing diversity of mission

In relation to lifelong learning, important to bear in mind that higher education is just one player in a wider **landscape** of post-school, lifelong learning opportunities, including, for example:

- work based learning,
- non-formal learning,
- colleges of different kinds,
- well established adult education providers: eg DVV (German Adult Education Association, *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband*); the WEA (the Workers Education Association, UK); and Community Education (Ireland).

We used to be (relatively) clear about the role of universities...

...and to an extent we continue to recognize models that were influenced by 19th century visions.

Two classic articulations are those espoused by Wilhelm von Humboldt and Charles Henry Newman.

At the risk of considerable oversimplification, Humboldt's memorandum of 1810 *On the Spirit and Organizational Framework of Intellectual Institutions* emphasized the role of universities in research and the creation of new knowledge as well as the close connection between and (graduate) education, providing an influential model far beyond Germany.

In contrast, in the middle of that century, Newman's *Idea of a University* emphasized what, in contemporary terms, would be called scholarship and the teaching functions of universities.

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835)



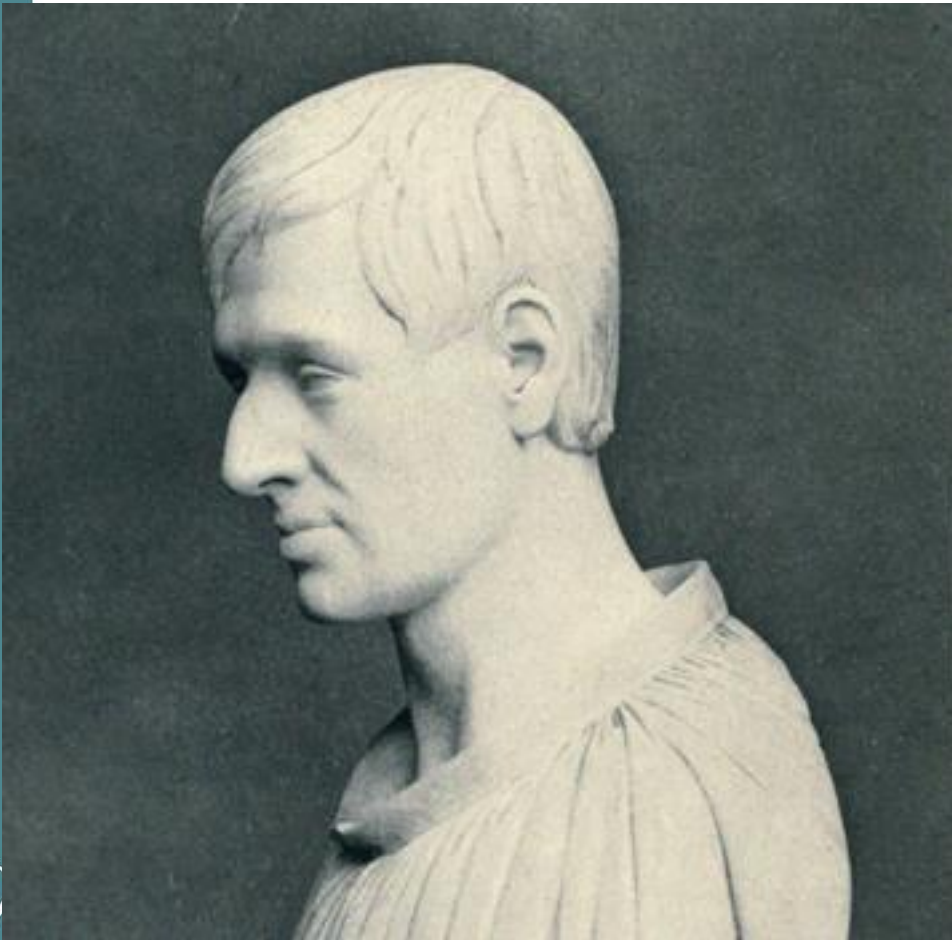
There are undeniably certain kinds of knowledge that must be of a general nature and, more importantly, a certain cultivation of the mind and character that nobody can afford to be without... If this basis is laid through schooling, vocational skills are easily acquired later on, and a person is always free to move from one occupation to another, as so often happens in life.

[But, universities have a very different function to schools...]

The university teacher is therefore no longer a teacher and the **student no longer someone merely engaged in the learning process but a person who undertakes his [sic] own research**, while the professor directs his research and supports him in it

(GS, XIII, p. 261. Emphasis added).

John Henry Newman (Cardinal) (1801-1890)



The view taken of a University... is the following. That it is a place of teaching universal knowledge. This implies that the object is... the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than its advancement.

If its object were [solely] scientific and philosophical discovery, I do not see why a University should have students...

Preface to *The Idea of a University* (1873 edn)

Beyond these 'ideal-types', in some countries was/is another tradition, located at the interface between universities and their wider communities, reflecting a **social purpose/engagement mission**.

This is reflected, for example, in Ireland and the UK, for long has been reflected through the work of adult education/ 'extra-mural' departments.

Distinctive attributes which adult learners can bring to higher education...

...in liberal adult education, no tutor is likely to last out of session- and no class is likely to stay the course with him [sic] - if he is under the misapprehension that the role of the class is passive.

What is different about the adult student is the experience which he brings to the relationship.

This experience modifies, sometimes subtly and sometimes more radically, the entire educational process: it influences teaching methods, the selection and maturation of tutors, the syllabus: it may even disclose weak places or vacancies in received academic disciplines and lead on to the elaboration of new areas of study.



I've been driven all my life by the conviction that everyone has the right to knowledge, but that knowledge is not just information. ..

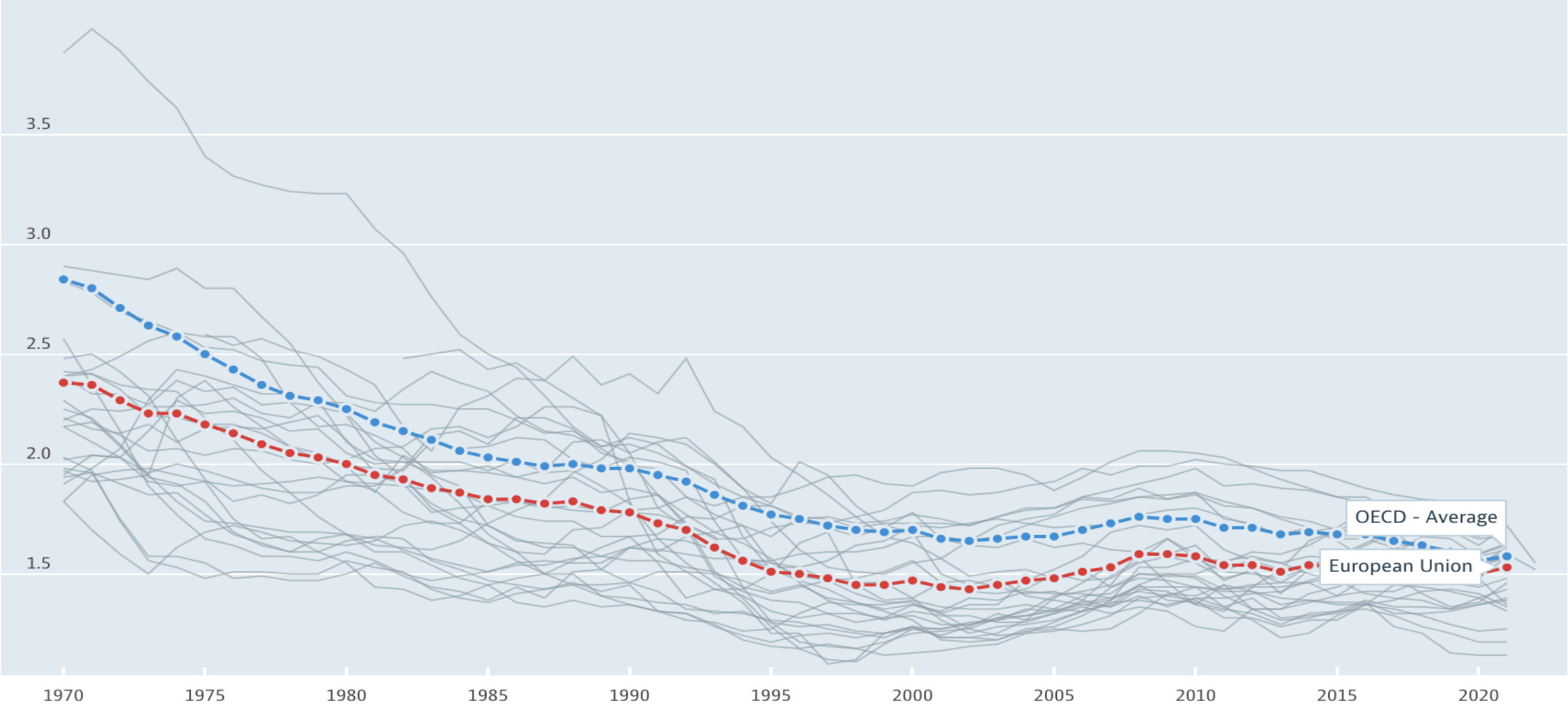
For us in universities it includes analysis, interpretation and critical appraisal, as well as the release of creativity.

*Lalage Bown, Professor of Adult and Continuing Education,
Glasgow University, 1982-1992. (Address to the graduates)*

- We need to **question orthodoxies** ‘education is about constant enquiry’.
- **Empowerment** at both the individual and the collective level.
- An **international** perspective: beyond the rich countries of the world.
- And, a whole new approach to helping develop skills of ‘**critical appraisal**’ of new communications media.

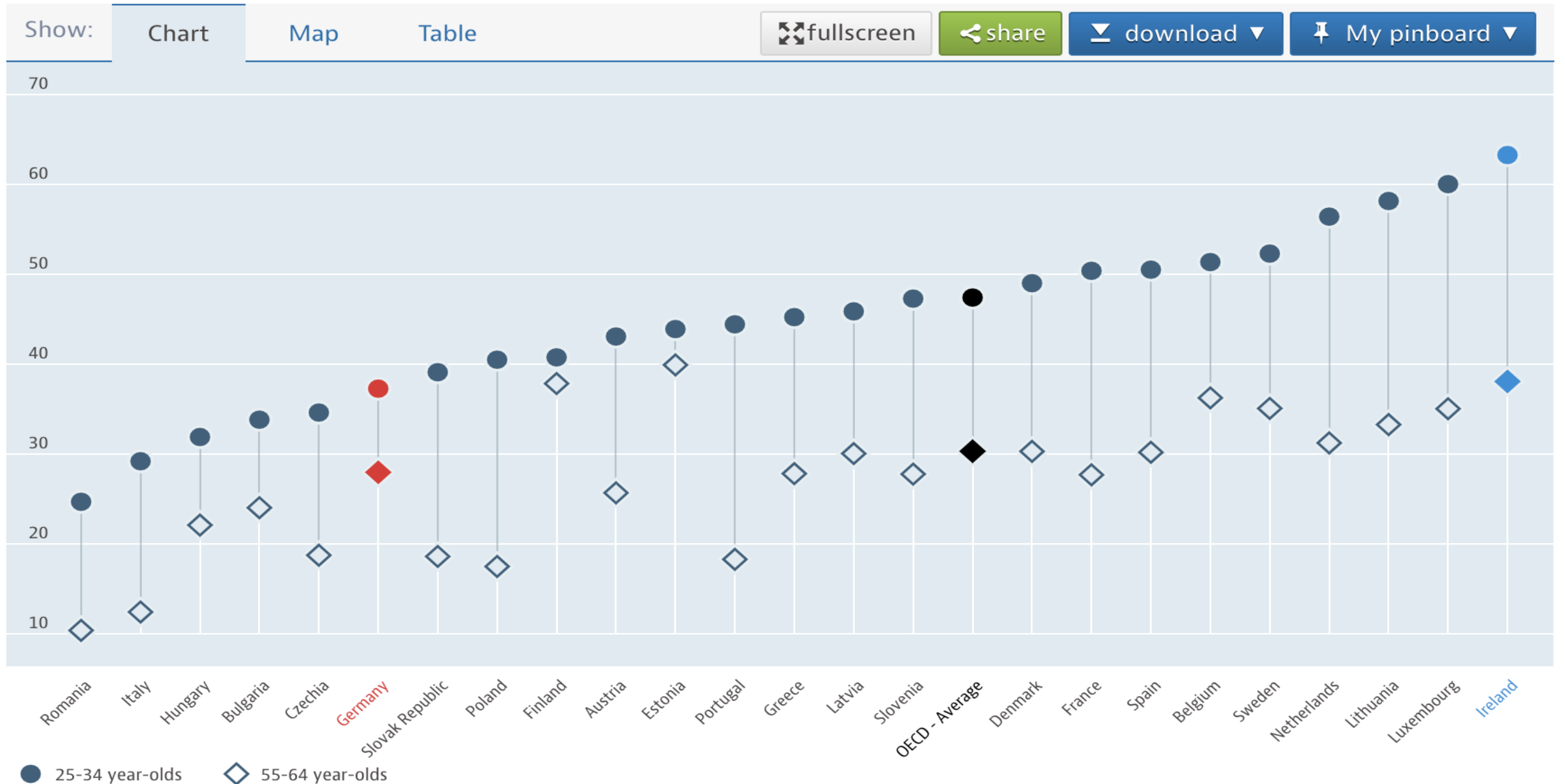
PART II: So... a new vision for lifelong learning in higher education through social engagement

Example: dramatic socio-demographic changes: including, ageing populations: has higher education a role in helping to address intergenerational educational inequalities?



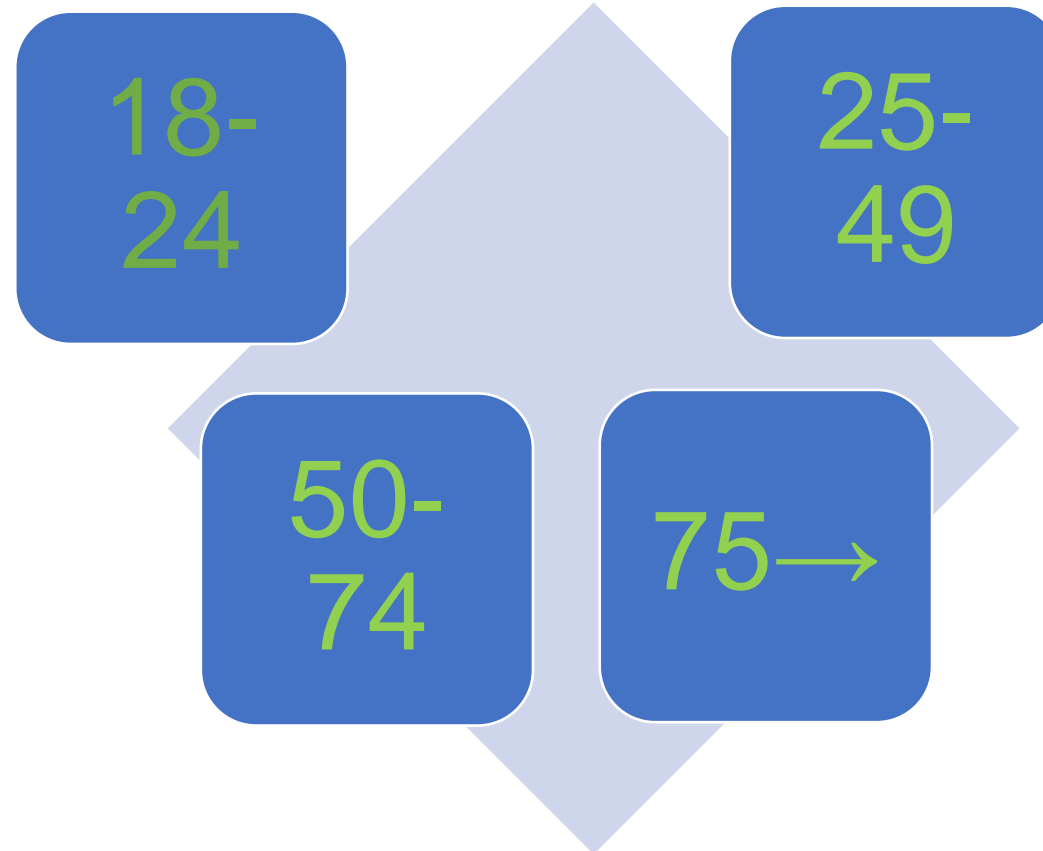
Population with tertiary education 25-34 year-olds / 55-64 year-olds, % in same age group, 2022 or latest available

Source: Education at a glance: Educational attainment and labour-force status



Additionally: important for higher education to recognise, and respond to, dramatic changes taking place in lifecourse patterns ...

Emerging new lifecourse patterns- ages and stages



Yet, still in 2023

- A large majority – 83% – of first-time entrants into tertiary education in all OECD countries are **aged under 25**.
- The average age of first-time entrants into tertiary education is 22 years.
- There are wide differences across countries in how common it is to enter tertiary education for the first-time later in life. Only 4% of first-time entrants in Belgium, and just 1% in Japan, are 25 or older. In contrast, more than 30% of first-time entrants in Colombia, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey are 25 years or older.
- This illustrates the fundamental differences in pathways into tertiary education that exist across countries, and the varying roles that tertiary education can play in lifelong learning.

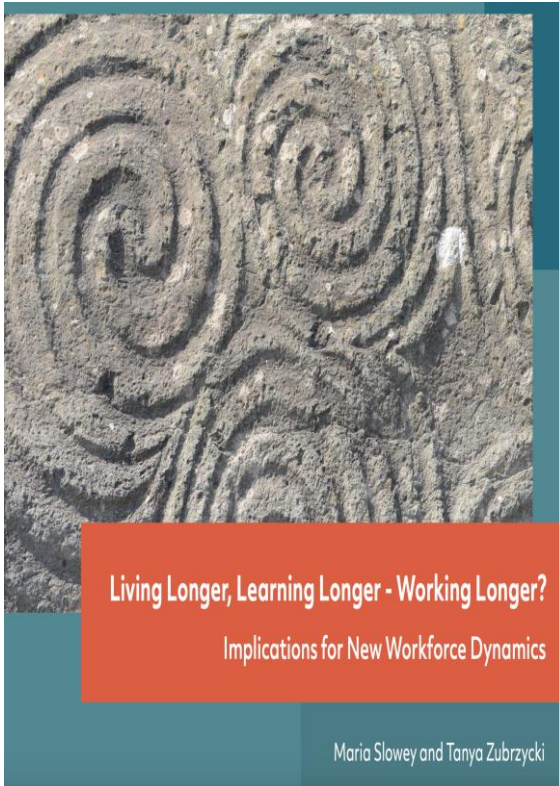
So, can higher education (continue) to ignore:

- Changing lifecourse patterns.
- The enrichment which the experience and motivation which adult learners bring... to the benefit of all (other students and faculty).
- The need to address higher level 'skill gaps'.
- Policy concerns about health budgets, rise in so-called 'Old Age Dependency' ratios, and resulting pressure on public finances.

Yet... much public policy debate tends to focus on 'problems' rather than opportunities.

How might this narrative be changed?

PART III: Shift focus from problems to solutions (what lessons might higher education draw from the workplace and from adult education?)



Potential benefits older workers can bring to the workplace

- Experience.
- Helping address skills' gaps.
- Mentoring younger colleagues.
- Some studies show customer satisfaction higher with older workers.
- Some evidence pointing to benefits of multi-generational teams.

Aspirational good practice examples in higher education...

Age Friendly University Global Network (AFU)


Strategic response: universities across all global regions committed to 10 principles

<https://www.afugn.org/about-1>

UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (2023) initiative on lifelong learning in higher education

<https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/articles/university-leaders-commit-transforming-higher-education-institutions-lifelong-learning-agents>

What lessons might adult education have for contemporary higher education?

- **Partnership working**, including with external agencies, such as: adult education providers, further education colleges, municipalities, public bodies, NGOs (eg trade unions, community organisations) and employers.
- **Pro-active approach**: in identifying needs.
- **Responsive to considering innovative possibilities..**
- **Educational guidance**
- **Valuing experience and prior learning** (including APL/RPL/APEL).
- **Flexible programmes** – at all levels: Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate.
- **Dynamic ‘top down’**  **‘bottom up’ university approaches to lifelong learning opportunities.**

Concluding few words about the meaning of higher education...
...and a warning...

...we live at a time when the language and rhetoric of the speculative market have become embedded in the educational culture and have brought some university practices down a precarious road.

...intellectuals [are] challenged to recover the moral purpose of original thought and emancipatory scholarship; a time when we must seek to recapture the human and unifying capacity of scholarship.

President of Ireland, MD Higgins,

Speech at the European Universities Association (EUA) Annual Conference
National University of Ireland, Galway, 7th April 2016

Yes, universities have been around for many centuries... but, that doesn't necessarily mean they always will...

“Every so often nation-states and societies discover that they can live without the institutions they have inherited. When institutions stand for nothing more, nothing deeper or more collective, no greater public good, than the aggregation of the self-interest of a select part of the people –

like the monasteries in China and England, that captured, held and accumulated vast social resources but came to exist only for themselves and those who used them –

it is then that institutions are vulnerable. After all, self-interest can be channelled in a thousand other ways. There is nothing sacred about one way of doing it. The institutions disappear and their functions are picked up elsewhere...”

Thank you

Vielen Dank

Go raibh maith agat

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