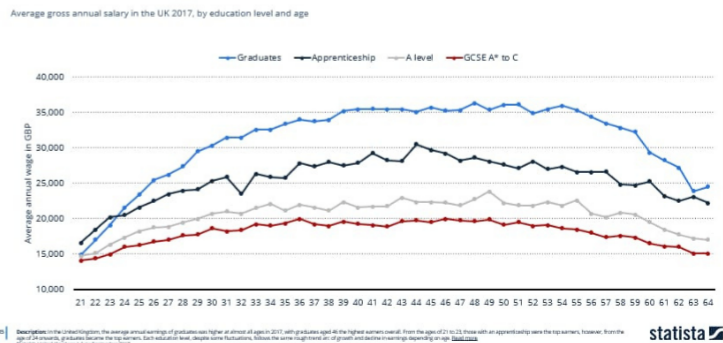# MORE EQUITABLE POST-16 EDUCATION

THE SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE

What is the challenge all about?

The Scottish Attainment challenge focuses on improving access to education for different groups of students and achieving equity for those that do not form the typical student body. Such groups can include, disabled students, students from an ethinic minority, students from economically deprived areas, etc. It essentially focuses on closing the 'attainment gap' which refers to a difference in performance in various levels of education for students in "developed" vs "deprived" areas in Scotland.
While this is mostly aimed at children/young people, it can be extended to tertiary levels of education that continue to be challenging and include a much broader community of students, including mature or international students.

Average gross annual salary in the United Kingdom in 2017, by highest level of qualification and age (in GBP)

Average gross annual salary in the UK 2017, by education level and age

Graduates — Apprenticeship — A level — GCSE A* to C

statista

"We should care......because there is a direct link between qualifications and the gross annual income. Education thus seems to provide a way of improving quality of life and it is important everyone is able to access this oppurtunity equally."

Did you know...

- Over **a half** of disabled students reported feeling concerned about their employement prospects as a result of the pandemic

- Over **a third** of disabled students found adapting to remote learning difficult

- **80%** of all disabled students reported that covid-19 had a negative impact on their mental health!!

Why should we care?

1) Almost **60%** of the UK population (aged 15-64) do not have a tertiary level education.

2) Even for people who do make it past the tertiary level, **15%** of disabled graduating students drop out of an internship/apprenticeship program due to unmet needs.

3) The unemployment rate in Scotland has been **the lowest in 2022 (3.2%)**, also when the enrolment rate in higher education has been the highest. It is thus important to increase the involvement of people in higher education, which would come as a result of improving their experience in education by having the necessary support system in place.

4) **2/3 of children in poverty belong to the working class**. Tertiary education thus provides an important chance to increase the quality of life.

5) But if the demands of inclusion and diversity are not met it results in less incentive for those people to engage in tertiary education. Young care-leavers for example receive some of the poorest employment and educational oppurtunities.

"What about other groups of students that are not surveyed?"

Data Gaps

A major group of people surveyed includes disabled people, however, despite thorough research, it was realized that the report suffered from certain data gaps such as data on mature students or international students which are not documented nearly enough despite forming a unique student body with their own challenges. Additionally, although data was collected for the United Kingdom, there was not enough data for Scotland in particular. This is one area where application of improvement measures might falter. The lack of sufficient data paints a slightly inaccurate picture of the educational environment there and makes generalizing as well as implementation of the action plan ineffcient.

sparqs group 2

Eda Inal, Yixian Li, Hallelujah Kebede, Solomon Ayehu, Mishita Khurana, Hengyao Tian, Barza Afzal

Who is involved?

Groups

- **Disabled students**
- **Academic staff e.g professors and teachers**
- **Politicians**
- **Minority ethnic students**
- **Low-income students**
- **Commuter students**

Organizations

Higher Education Institutions

Directly responsible for integrating new policies
Support for students with accessibility issues

Governments and affiliates

Can directly implement and enforce new and existing education policies
Can also oppose change and prioritise a certain group due to budget restraints

sparqs
student partnerships in quality scotland

Offering support to students by improving their learning experience by offering course training to reps, student officers, etc
Providing training materials
Improve accessibility of learning to students

BEMIS
Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and Cultural Minority Communities

NGOs e.g. BEMIS & Saheliya

Support inclusion and integration of the under-represented and disadvantaged communities
Providing a voice, and ensuring that issues are raised with the relevant bodies
Focused on mental health

WP organisations e.g. LEAPS, SCAPP, Advance HE

Facilitates the development of a stronger WP community
By advising under-represented students in high schools
Increase progression to higher education

How can sparqs help?

At a glance

Raise awareness on the diversity of disabilities

Campus navigation for disabled students

Career advice for disabled students

Dealing with COVID-19 impact on mental health

AS THERE IS A WIDE RANGE OF DISABILITIES, SPARQS COULD EDUCATE ACADEMIC STAFF AND TAILOR THEIR SUPPORT ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC NEEDS OF STUDENTS

COLLABORATE WITH SUPPORT GROUPS WITH FOCUS ON DISABLED STUDENTS AND MENTAL HEALTH, TO MAKE SURE THAT THOSE GROUPS HAVE A VOICE AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR EDUCATION

MAKING SURE THAT EACH FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENT ARE AWARE OF THE DIFFERENT SUPPORT FRAMEWORK THAT ARE AVAILABLE, PERSONAL TUTOR ROLE SHOULD ALSO BE A DEDICATED ROLE, AS SOME DON'T TAKE THEIR JOBS SERIOUSLY AS IS MANDATORY

Lesson 1

For those who are already in higher education, it is important to create sessions for focus & support groups to come together and propose ideas to the higher education institution on what they can improve

STRENGTH

- POLITICAL COMMITMENTS; SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE IS CLOSING THE GAP

- STUDENTS AND INSTITUTIONS DRIVE THE EFFORT; E.G. DSC

- VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS CAN MAKE LEARNING MORE ACCESSIBLE TO DISABLED STUDENTS (SEE 1 & 2)

- CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS FOR QUALITY AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND E.G. SPARQS (SEE 3)

- CAREER SUPPORT SERVICES; SCOTLAND'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

WEAKNESS

- AUTOMATED CAPTIONING IN ONLINE LEARNING; INCONSISTENT OF POOR QUALITY FOR DISABLED STUDENTS
- MORE RESOURCES REQUIRED TO EDIT TRANSCRIPTS AND PROVIDE IT ON TIME (SEE 1)
ONLINE LEARNING INACCESSIBLE FOR STUDENTS OF LOW-INCOME BACKGROUNDS (SEE 2)
- INDUSTRIAL ACTIONS; DISINTERESTED ACADEMIC STAFF AND TEACHERS
- DECREASED EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION AND INCREASING DEBT OF STUDENT LOANS

SWOT

OPPORTUNITIES

- ADVANCE IN TECHNOLOGY; ACCURATE AUTOMATED CAPTIONING FOR VIRTUAL CLASS
- GLOBAL COMMITMENT TOWARDS THE SDGS
- VARIOUS CSOS WORKING ON EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND
- CARBON NEUTRAL HOMES AND GREEN SOURCES OF ENERGY (SEE 3)

THREATS

- ECONOMIC CRISIS, AND A RISING LEVEL OF INFLATION
- INCREASING NUMBER OF LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN IN THE UK
- CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL DISASTERS
- EXTERNAL INFLUENCES, E.G. RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAT AND FUEL COST

IMPACT
what changes do we want to see?

For students

We intend to provide students with a sense of involvement and influence in their learning process, by the solutions we provide, which is in alignment with sparqs' mission

For post–16 education organisations

We intend for Institutions to have an up -to date picture of the student perception of their support services. We also want to make sure solutions are accepted by the groups they set out to support

This would lead to a mutual understanding of the problems that students are facing and the effectivness of the support systems in place by both students and institutions.

Should help students be more likely to feel heard and engage with the feedback mechanisms.

Higher education institutions can depend on their data to make descisions and provide solutions that have a higher level of uptake