



Oxford Review of Education >

Volume 39, 2013 - [Issue 2](#)

2,374 Views

28 CrossRef citations to date

10

Altmetric

Articles


# Participation and equity in higher education: are we going back to the future?

Linda Leach

Pages 267-286 | Published online: 22 Apr 2013

Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2013.791618>

Sample our  
Education  
Journals



>> **Sign in here** to start your access  
to the latest two volumes for 14 days

Full Article

Figures & data

References

Citations

Metrics

Reprints & Permissions

Read this article

Share

## Abstract

This article provides an overview of policy developments related to participation and equity in higher education in New Zealand, England and Australia from the 1960s to 2011. It explores these developments in four sections. First, it sets the scene by tracing the shift from elite universities to massification. Second, it summarises key participation and equity policy developments between the 1960s and 2008 in the three countries to set the context for the post-global financial crisis developments. It then traces the different policy responses to the financial crisis, identifying Australia's pathway as different from those taken in New Zealand and England. Fourth, it explores the success of these policies, identifies a change in the equity discourse and considers some strategic institutional responses to the changing policies in each country and the likely effects of those. It argues that the austerity approaches taken by New Zealand and England are likely to take them back to a future of selective, elite universities but

that Australia may continue its counter-cyclical policies to support equity objectives— unless there is a change of Government and/or pressures from rapidly increasing enrolments produce policy change.

Keywords:

equity higher education access widening participation policy

## Acknowledgement

Thanks to Nick Zepke for his comments on early versions of this article and to the reviewers for their feedback.

## Notes

1. 'Higher education' is used differently across countries. In this article it is used to refer primarily to universities, though some policy developments may include, for example, further education in England or the whole tertiary (post-school) sector in New Zealand.
2. The Treaty of Waitangi was signed by Māori and the British Crown in 1840. It is the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand.
3. The indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.
4. People living in Aotearoa New Zealand who were born in or trace their ethnic heritage to Pacific Island nations.
5. Pasifika is the term now used to refer to people from Pacific Island nations.

## Related research

People also read

Recommended articles

Cited by  
28

Three dimensions of equity of access to higher education >

---

Tristan McCowan

Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education

Published online: 2 Jul 2015

---

[Equity, status and freedom: a note on higher education >](#)

---

Simon Marginson

Cambridge Journal of Education

Published online: 21 Mar 2011

---

[Achieving Equity in Higher Education: The Unfinished Agenda >](#)

---

Alexander W. Astin et al.

Journal of College and Character

Published online: 15 May 2015

[View more](#)

## Information for

[Authors](#)

[R&D professionals](#)

[Editors](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Societies](#)

## Opportunities

[Reprints and e-prints](#)

[Advertising solutions](#)

[Accelerated publication](#)

[Corporate access solutions](#)

## Open access

[Overview](#)

[Open journals](#)

[Open Select](#)

[Dove Medical Press](#)

[F1000Research](#)

## Help and information

[Help and contact](#)

[Newsroom](#)

[All journals](#)

[Books](#)

## Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email



Sign me up



Copyright © 2026 Informa UK Limited [Privacy policy](#)

[Cookies](#) [Terms & conditions](#) [Accessibility](#)

Registered in England & Wales No. 01072954  
5 Howick Place | London | SW1P 1WG



**Taylor & Francis**  
by informa