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## **The impact of Covid-19 on social inequalities in ISM**

Joana Almeida<sup>1</sup>, Ewa Krzaklewska<sup>2</sup>, Nicolai Netz<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Warwick, United Kingdom. <sup>2</sup>Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland. <sup>3</sup>German Centre for Research on Higher Education and Science Studies, Hannover, Germany

### **Research Domains**

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

### **Abstract**

This presentation sheds light on social inequalities in student access to and experiences (SAE) of ISM during the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, we offer an overview of scientific knowledge of social inequalities in ISM, published since the Covid-19 outbreak became a worldwide health emergency in January 2020. Using the methodology of a scoping review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), we analyse 66 empirical studies (provisory number) against three categories of analysis: objects of study and/or variables of interest, level of analysis, and study abroad phase. These categories form a conceptual matrix that disentangles the social inequality dimensions most affected by the pandemic, including contextual factors impacting international students' experience and well-being. In this way, we intend to scope the meaning of social inequalities for ISM in times of crisis, whilst replying to the call for generating systematic interdisciplinary knowledge in this research domain (e.g., Almeida, 2020; Lipura & Collins, 2020).

### **Full paper**

This paper sheds light on social inequalities in student access to and experiences (SAE) of ISM during the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end,

we offer an overview of scientific knowledge of social inequalities in this research domain, published since the Covid-19 outbreak was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organisation (in January 2020).

Using the methodology of a scoping review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), we identified relevant empirical studies via hand and electronic searches, the latter of which conducted across the following four multi-disciplinary social science databases: Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, and JSTOR. Our search also included discipline-specific and open-access databases, namely: ERIC (Education) and Google Scholar (open-access).

Sixty-six empirical papers (provisory number) met our inclusion criteria so far, based on tittle and abstract screening. Only empirical papers were, however, screened for inclusion given our focus on evidence-based scientific information about the impact of COVID 19 on social inequalities in the context of ISM. All papers that met our inclusion criteria will be here discussed against three major categories of analysis: (a) objects of study and/or variables of interest, (b) level of analysis, and (c) study abroad phase.

Different types of ISM will be considered, regardless of the specific academic purpose of the stay abroad, including: to earn academic credits (credit-seeking) or a whole degree abroad (degree-seeking), to obtain a joint degree (joint degree programmes) or a double degree abroad (double/multiple degrees), to conduct fieldwork (fieldwork) or to improve language learning as part of the requirements of foreign language degrees (residence abroad). In all situations there is the physical movement of students across national boundaries to study in a higher education institution located in a country other than students' countries of origin or prior education (Almeida, 2020). While these student mobility types are also possible in virtual form, in this review we will only address physical ISM, thus excluding studies focusing on full virtual mobility.

All student mobility types, and underlying social inequality issues, will be discussed against the three aforementioned categories of analysis. These categories form a 2\*2 conceptual matrix that disentangles the social inequality dimensions of educational mobility that were most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Using this

conceptual matrix as our guiding framework, we will map out the scientific literature published from January 2020 to June 2022 that addresses the impact of the pandemic on social inequalities in ISM. We do so, by identifying the range of variables of interest and/or objects of study, situated at the intersection of the different levels (micro, meso, macro) and phases of studying abroad (Pre-departure and Arrival, In-country, and Outcomes), i.e., the categories of analysis (a), (b), and (c), respectively.

It is sought, in this way, to address the following two research objectives: (1) to scope the meaning of social inequalities in the specialised literature, previously centring on issues of access; and, (2) to generate systematic interdisciplinary knowledge in this research domain, a pressing need highlighted by an increasing number of scholars (e.g., Almeida, 2020; Findlay, 2011; Lipura & Collins, 2020; ENIS Memorandum of Understanding, 2021).

Preliminary results show that the Covid-19 pandemic brought to light more complex contextual factors affecting international students' experience and well-being. Based on the sampled pool of 66 empirical studies, our conceptual matrix identifies new dimensions of ISM where inequalities, disadvantage and precarity manifest, which are not necessarily confined to issues of access. Furthermore, the matrix reinforces the need to develop an agreed-upon terminology on social inequalities in the face of the multifarious concepts used and the degree of overlap across existing studies.

## References

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