



Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del
sistema Universitario e della Ricerca

National Agency for the Evaluation of
Universities and Research Institutes

Member
of
ENQA
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Inequality in higher education and the the role of ANVUR

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The relevance of outcomes of higher education

One of the main objectives of higher education is to provide its graduates with the skills needed to succeed in the labour market. This mission is especially important in the context of today's innovation-driven, skills-based, globalised economies. It also corresponds to one of the main expectations of students (they will be able to get a good job).

As the labour market evolves, along with the teaching of technical, professional and discipline-specific knowledge and skills, higher education systems seek to develop in students a broad category of transversal skills that enable people to adapt to changing demands or move easily from one job or role to another during their careers.

Since higher education graduates still have trouble transitioning to the labour market, or finding jobs that correspond to their academic training and qualifications, we question the relevance and quality of the skills being produced in higher education.

Good labour market outcomes for higher education graduates support overall wellbeing; ensure value for public investments; provide private returns to individuals who invest in their education; and build the supply of skills needed for economic success.

Technological change has contributed to a rise in income inequality

If the demand shifts are not offset by equal shifts in the composition of labour supply by a rise in tertiary education attainment (supply of high-skilled workers), technological progress can reduce the income of medium-skilled workers relative to that of both the high- and low-skilled ones.

More education seems to narrow the distribution of income in most Countries (analysis by OECD).

The Italian *South vs Center-North* issue

In 2019, almost half of graduates (45.6%) obtained their degree in the same province in which they obtained their upper secondary school diploma.

The choice to study "close to home" could be explained by the need for disadvantage families to contain education costs.

Migrations of students happen when there is the possibility to afford the costs and this movement have a very clear direction, from the South to the Center-North part of the Country.

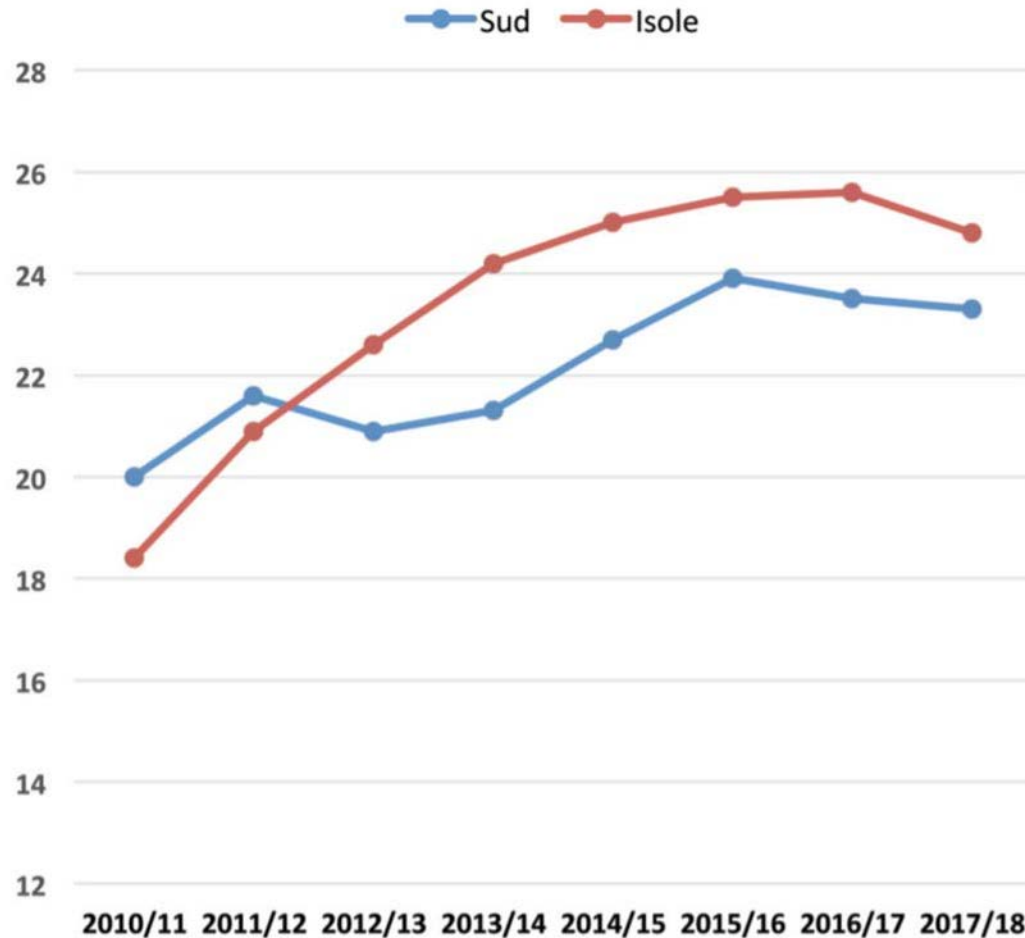
Differences are clear also in the attitude between graduates from the Center-North and those from the South: in the search for work, graduates from Southern Italy take into consideration a wider range of possibilities in terms of geographical distribution and type of contract.

This probably reflects the difficulties suffered by the southern labor market, which leads graduates from these areas to seek work with a less selective attitude (resulting in higher possibilities of mismatch).

The employment gap between the South and Center-North is widening: in the last decade it has increased from 19.6% to 21.6%.

The *migrations* of students

Percentage of freshman students (18 and 19 years old) from the South (red) and Islands (blue) that enrolls in a University of the Center-North, per academic year.



The high school type and the polarized access to higher education

The overall number of high school graduates in the last ten years has increased considerably, from the 67.9% in 2009 to the 76.5% in 2019 (+8.6). In the same time window, graduates with a technical degree fell from the 26.8% to the 18.9% of the total high school graduates.

If we look at the trend in the tertiary education access rate, there is an evident decline among students with a technical high school degree (*see table in the next slide*).

Moreover, the high school outcome is a significant indicator of the “speed” in university studies: compared to those who obtain the highest marks in high school, those who obtain the lowest (60 out of 100) take 32.5% more time to obtain the same degree.

The lack of the level 5 of The European Qualifications Framework (high school=4 and Bachelors'=6) is not helping the Italian tertiary education system to fill the professional gap, leaving behind an important part of potential young and motivated workers that came from technical high schools.

These students and their families are not interested in long and complex university study programmes.

The high school type and the polarized access to higher education

Percentage of freshman students (18 and 19 years old) enrolled in a University, per type of high school diploma, per academic year.

Tipo di diploma	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<i>Licei</i>	71,5	69,4	68,3	67,5	69,3	68,5	67,1	66,9
<i>Tecnici</i>	24,3	22,7	22,3	22,4	23,1	23,2	25,6	26,0
<i>Professionali</i>	10,6	9,1	8,3	8,1	8,2	8,7	9,6	10,0
Totale	45,6	43,9	43,0	42,1	42,7	43,4	44,2	43,6

The equalising role of Higher Education

Higher education is an opportunity for people from traditionally disadvantaged groups (ethnic minorities, migrants, and people of lower socio-economic status).

Helping disadvantaged individuals access higher education enable greater social mobility for ensuing generations.

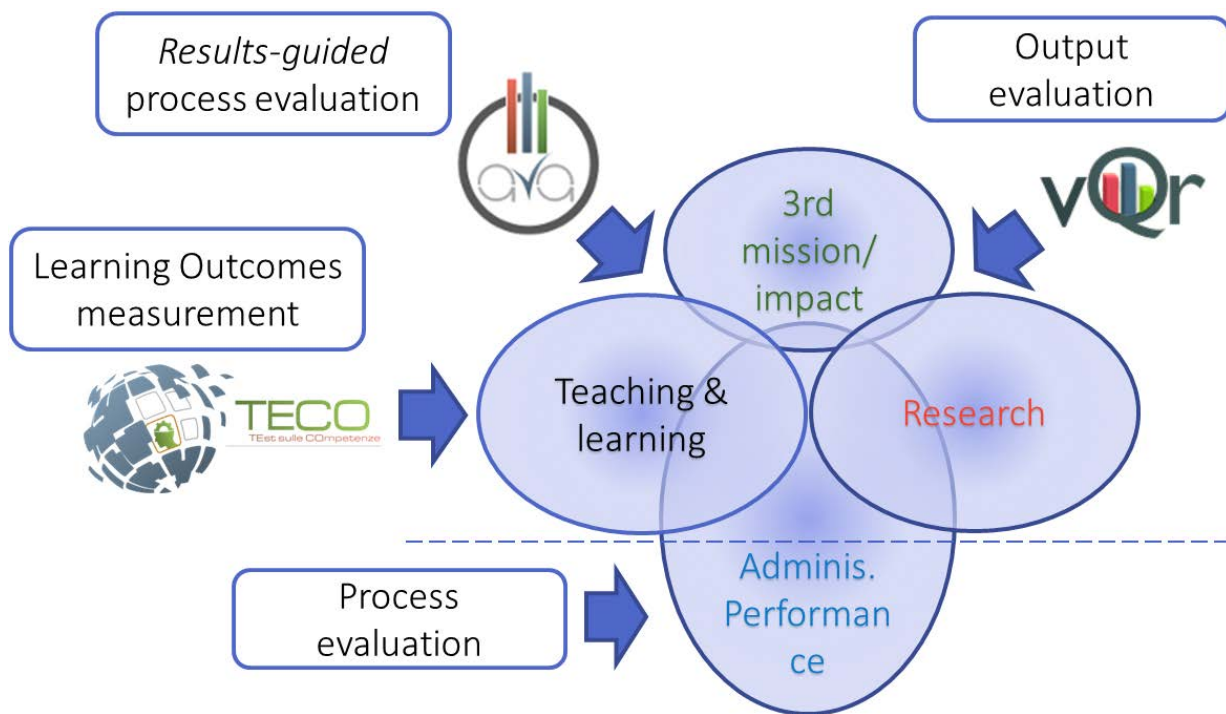
A more equitable distribution of educational opportunities also contributes to a more equitable distribution of labour income.

Higher education systems, if not carefully **designed and monitored**, can simply maintain – or even potentially enhance – inequality. This can happen where “academic merit” is the primary factor determining student access to education, but where **the criteria that assess merit are themselves partly tied to socio-economic factors** (such as the extra preparation opportunities to which students from better-off families may have greater access).

The role of the national evaluation Agency

The National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR) is an Italian independent public body which **oversees the national higher education system** and has the **primary objective to enhance its overall quality**.

The Agency's evaluations span the full range of activities of the Universities: teaching & learning, research, third mission activities, administrative performance.



Source: ANVUR

The aim of the assessment/evaluation/monitoring

The many evaluation procedures carried out by ANVUR has been developed to achieve, among others, also this three main objectives:

- **Assurance** for students and society as a whole, that the Italian higher education institutions meet an adequate level of quality;
- the responsible and reliable “use of autonomy” by higher education institution. In particular the **accountability** in the use of public resources and the behaviors related to training and research activities;
- Giving **support** for the improvement of the quality of higher education Institutions activities (teaching, research, third mission).

The COVID-19 pandemic opens opportunities

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a strong impact on the higher education sector as a whole. Some examples:

- The sudden need of a broad use of the online teaching.
- A reversal of the tendency to move towards the Center-North: one out of five students is returning to the universities of the South, enrolling in the city (or region) of origin (cheaper and safer). This is enhanced by the incentives put in place by those universities.

The pandemic showed some weaknesses but also opened many innovation opportunities. Agencies like ANVUR can play an important role in offering guidance and support on matters such as the transfer to online teaching, alternative assessment methods and maintaining academic standards and student support services

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Thank you!

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