









# Transparent Design Approaches to Enable Equitable Student Gains and Success in Higher Education: A Scoping Review

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## ABSTRACT

As student populations in higher education become increasingly diverse, the need for equitable and inclusive teaching approaches has never been more urgent. Transparent design, which involves clearly articulating learning objectives, tasks, and evaluation criteria, has gained recognition for its potential to support student engagement, achievement, and confidence. Framed within the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, this scoping review examines how transparent design is implemented in higher education and how it influences student outcomes across a variety of institutional and national contexts. A systematic search of peer-reviewed literature published between 2014 and 2024 yielded 2,377 articles, 22 of which met the inclusion criteria through the PRISMA process. Thematic analysis of the selected studies highlights how transparent practices improve self-directed learning, improve the experiences of historically underserved students, and contribute to inclusive digital and in-person learning environments. Although the evidence underscores the value of transparency in promoting equitable access and strengthening student-staff collaboration, it also identifies challenges such as inconsistent implementation, insufficient faculty training, and ethical concerns regarding digital engagement. This review contributes to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning by mapping current evidence on transparent design, identifying implementation challenges, and offering actionable insights into how such approaches can transform teaching practices to support broader and more inclusive student success in higher education. Although not the central focus of the review, the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) framework is suggested as a practical and context-sensitive methodology for embedding transparency into teaching and learning designs, thereby enhancing institutional relevance and pedagogical impact.

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## INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of equitable and inclusive learning experiences has increased interest in transparent teaching methods within higher education (HE). Transparent design in education encompasses pedagogical strategies that clarify the purposes, tasks, and criteria for academic work, thus fostering a learning environment that supports all students, particularly those from historically underserved

backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> Research indicates that clear guidelines and transparent assignments as a way of transparent instructions enhance student engagement, academic confidence, and performance, particularly among first-generation students and those who may lack familiarity with academic norms, and this is not spoon-feeding.<sup>2</sup> This approach addresses significant challenges in higher education, where student success frequently correlate with socioeconomic and racial backgrounds.<sup>3</sup>

With the increased integration of digital and online learning platforms, the importance of transparent teaching practices has become even more pronounced. Online education has broadened access to HE but has also exposed inequities in academic outcomes, especially for students from underrepresented groups.<sup>4</sup> Transparent design in online learning can alleviate some of these challenges by providing structured support that clarifies expectations and enhances student self-efficacy.

The choice to delimit this scoping review to publications between 2014 and 2024 is intentionally designed to capture contemporary scholarship and evolving practices of transparent design within higher education globally. Following initial exposure to Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT)—a comprehensive yet simplified framework largely rooted in scholarship from the Global North—it became evident that there remains limited awareness and application of TILT, particularly within contexts of the Global South, such as South Africa. Moreover, the simplified presentation of TILT, while accessible, has led to challenges for scholars and practitioners seeking deeper theoretical foundations and scholarly justifications for its implementation.

Therefore, the primary rationale for this paper is to comprehensively explore recent scholarly discourse on transparency in higher education in diverse global contexts, including but not limited to TILT. By focusing explicitly on the past decade, the review aims to highlight recent developments, innovative applications, and emergent insights into transparent design, facilitating a richer understanding of how these insights could support and enhance curriculum projects. This targeted exploration aims to motivate the broader, deeper and more informed adoption of TILT principles and practices in different curricula, particularly in regions where such approaches remain relatively underutilised.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of transparency in HE has been widely recognised as a significant factor in improving student success, particularly among underserved populations. Transparent design in education encompasses the clear and accessible communication of course objectives, assignment requirements, and evaluation criteria, thus fostering an equitable learning environment. This literature explores key dimensions of transparency in education, including its influence on student equity, relevance in digital learning contexts, impact on self-regulation, and how transparency contributes to innovative teaching practices.

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- <sup>1</sup> M.A. Winkelmes, Bernacki, M., Butler, J., Zochowski, M., Golanics, J., & Weavil, K. H., “A Teaching Intervention That Increases Underserved College Students' Success.” *Peer Review* 18, no.1-2 (2016): 31-37; T.O. Howard et al., Winkelmes, M., & Shegog, M. “Transparency Teaching in the Virtual Classroom: Assessing the Opportunities and Challenges of Integrating Transparency Teaching Methods with Online Learning.” *Journal of Political Science Education* 16, no.2 (2020): 198-211; Winkelmes, M.A., et al. A teaching intervention that increases underserved college students' success. *Peer Review*, 18(1/2), Winter/Spring. (2015/2016); Winkelmes, M.A. Benefits (some unexpected) of transparently designed assignments. *National Teaching and Learning Forum*, 24(4), 4-7. (2015, May).
- <sup>2</sup> Winkelmes et al., “A Teaching Intervention”; K. Ball C. Evans, A. Hughes, X. Zhu & N. Winstone, “Transparency Isn’t Spoon-Feeding: How a Transformative Approach to the Use of Explicit Assessment Criteria Can Support Student Self-Regulation.” *Frontiers in Education* 3, no.69 (2018).
- <sup>3</sup> Winkelmes, M.A., et al. A teaching intervention that increases underserved college students' success. *Peer Review*, 18(1/2), Winter/Spring. (2015/2016); Gianoutsos, D., & Winkelmes, M.A. (2016, Spring). Navigating with transparency: Enhancing underserved student success through transparent learning and teaching in the classroom and beyond. *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Association of Developmental Educators*. (2016, Spring); Calkins, C. & Winkelmes, M.A. A Teaching Method that Boosts UNLV Student Retention. *UNLV Best Teaching Practices Expo*. 3. (2018).
- <sup>4</sup> Winkelmes et al., “Benefits (Some Unexpected) of Transparently Designed Assignments.”

## Transparent Teaching and Student Equity

Transparent teaching practices are grounded in inclusive pedagogy, aimed at mitigating systemic inequities that may disadvantage certain student groups upon entering HE.<sup>5</sup> By establishing clear expectations and providing structured guidance, transparency in teaching fosters equitable access to academic success. For first-generation and minority students, who often lack familiarity with the implicit norms of HE, transparent instruction can significantly reduce barriers to learning.<sup>6</sup> Winkelmes et al. contend that through reciprocal communication among teachers and students, the explicit articulation of assignment goals, working process, resources and success criteria not only enhances student engagement but also contributes to a greater sense of belonging, metacognition about learning and academic persistence—outcomes that are particularly beneficial for marginalised students.<sup>7</sup>

The impact of transparent design on student equity encompasses institutional practices that prioritise student involvement in defining and assessing educational standards. Tinapay et al. underscore the significance of student-centred quality assurance, which empowers students to actively shape the educational process, fostering trust and accountability.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the "Students as Partners" (SaP) framework, proposed by Cook-Sather et al. and advocated in the paper by Mercer-Mapstone et al. emphasises collaborative learning and assessment, positioning students as co-creators of their educational experiences.<sup>9</sup> This model aligns with the objectives of transparency and enhances reciprocity and shared responsibility, thereby contributing to an inclusive and supportive academic environment.

## The Need for Transparency in Digital Learning Context

The increasing shift towards online education, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has created new contexts in which transparent teaching practices are essential. Although online education has expanded access to higher education, research indicates that underserved students may encounter additional challenges in digital environments due to limited resources and support.<sup>10</sup> In this context, transparent design emerges as a critical tool to ensure that all students can navigate online courses effectively, irrespective of their prior academic preparation or technological access.

A systematic review by Zawacki-Richter et al.<sup>11</sup> highlights the potential of adaptive learning technologies to enhance transparency in digital learning. These technologies can provide personalised feedback and support that align with transparent design principles, allowing students to engage more deeply with the course material and attain a clearer understanding of expectations. Winkelmes et al. further underscore the importance of clear, explicit assessment criteria, which assist students in avoiding "criteria compliance" and encourage meaningful engagement with learning content.<sup>12</sup> University educators can cultivate a more inclusive online learning environment that accommodates diverse student needs by fostering a structured, transparent approach within digital platforms.

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<sup>5</sup> F. Hénard, & D. Roseveare. *Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education: Policies and Practices*. An IMHE Guide for Higher Education Institutions (Paris: OECD, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Howard, T. O., M. Winkelmes & M. Shegog. "Transparency Teaching in the Virtual Classroom: Assessing the Opportunities and Challenges of Integrating Transparency Teaching Methods with Online Learning." *Journal of Political Science Education* 16, no.2 (2020): 198-211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15512169.2018.1550420>.

<sup>7</sup> Winkelmes et al., "A Teaching Intervention That Increases Underserved College Students' Success."

<sup>8</sup> Ariel O Tinapay et al., "Student-Centered Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Promoting Trust and Transparency through Collaborative Approaches," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications* 6, no. 9 (2024): 79–84.

<sup>9</sup> C. Bovill et al., "Addressing Potential Challenges in Co-Creating Learning and Teaching: Overcoming Resistance, Navigating Institutional Norms and Ensuring Inclusivity in Student-Staff Partnerships," *Higher Education* 71, no. 2 (February 14, 2016): 195–208, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9896-4>; Mercer-Mapstone, L., Dvorakova, S. L., Matthews, K. E., Abbot, S., Cheng, B., Felten, P., Knorr, K., Marquis, E., Shammass, R., & Swaim, K." A Systematic Literature Review of Students as Partners in Higher Education". *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 1(1), 15–37 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v1i1.3119>.

<sup>10</sup> Dorothy J Howell, "Disparity in Higher Education and the Need for Equitable Teaching Paradigms and Strategies," in *Integrating Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT): An Effective Tool for Providing Equitable Opportunity in Higher Education* (IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2022), 1–24.

<sup>11</sup> Olaf Zawacki-Richter et al., "Systematic Review of Research on Artificial Intelligence Applications in Higher Education – Where Are the Educators?," *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 16, no. 1 (December 28, 2019): 39, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0171-0>.

<sup>12</sup> Winkelmes et al., "A Teaching Intervention That Increases Underserved College Students' Success."

## Transparent Design and Student Self-Regulation

A notable aspect of transparent teaching is its role in cultivating students' self-regulation skills, which are essential for academic success, especially in autonomous learning environments. Transparent design supports self-regulation by clarifying expectations, enabling students to independently monitor their progress and take ownership of their learning journey.<sup>13</sup> This is particularly relevant in online learning, where students must often rely on their initiative and time-management skills to succeed. This is theorised practically through self-directed learning, encouraging students to concentrate on aspects of their studies in out-of-class learning activities.

In addition, Patterson et al. highlighted how transparent assessment methods can reinforce the relationship between effort and academic outcomes, enabling students to make informed decisions about their learning strategies.<sup>14</sup> By promoting reflective thinking and self-assessment, transparent assignments encourage the development of non-academic attributes that contribute to long-term academic and professional success. This approach not only enhances immediate academic performance but also equips students with lifelong learning skills that are increasingly valuable in today's digital landscape.

## Transparency as a Driver of Innovation in Teaching Practices

Integrating transparency into teaching practices reflects a broader trend towards innovation in HE, particularly as institutions adopt flexible, student-centred learning models. Aithal and Maiya discuss how transparency aligns with global trends in educational innovation, which prioritise adaptive, competency-based approaches that cater to individual learning needs.<sup>15</sup> In competency-based education, where skill mastery is prioritised over rote memorisation, transparency plays a crucial role by providing students with clear objectives and pathways to achieve them.

Howard et al. further illustrate that transparent teaching practices can reduce attrition rates among underserved student populations by clarifying course expectations and academic requirements.<sup>16</sup> This is particularly pertinent in online courses, where students frequently encounter limited access to direct instructor support. Consequently, transparent design plays a crucial role in enhancing student retention and bridging the digital divide, thereby ensuring that all students, irrespective of their socioeconomic backgrounds, have access to structured guidance and resources.<sup>17</sup>

## Challenges and Future Directions

Despite the numerous advantages of transparent design, its implementation within HE poses significant challenges. For instance, integrating transparency into digital learning platforms frequently requires the utilisation of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning. Although these tools present opportunities for real-time feedback and adaptive learning pathways, they simultaneously invoke concerns about data privacy and the potential for excessive automation dependence.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the adoption of transparent teaching methods has a greater systemic impact with coordinated implementation, while individual faculty or student-facing staff functioning independently can still have possible effects on student success. Faculty must be equipped with the requisite technical

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<sup>13</sup> Winkelmes et al., "A Teaching Intervention That Increases Underserved College Students' Success."

<sup>14</sup> Fiona Patterson et al., "How Effective Are Selection Methods in Medical Education? A Systematic Review," *Medical Education* 50, no. 1 (January 2016): 36–60, <https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.12817>.

<sup>15</sup> P Sreeramana Aithal and Adithya Kumar Maiya, "Innovations in Higher Education Industry—Shaping the Future," *International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT, and Education (IJCSBE)* 7, no. 4 (2023): 283–311.

<sup>16</sup> Tiffiany O Howard, Mary-Ann Winkelmes, and Marya Shegog, "Transparency Teaching in the Virtual Classroom: Assessing the Opportunities and Challenges of Integrating Transparency Teaching Methods with Online Learning," *Journal of Political Science Education* 16, no. 2 (2020): 198–211.

<sup>17</sup> Howard, et al., "Transparency Teaching in the Virtual Classroom: Assessing the Opportunities and Challenges of Integrating Transparency Teaching Methods with Online Learning."

<sup>18</sup> Zawacki-Richter et al., "Systematic Review of Research on Artificial Intelligence Applications in Higher Education – Where Are the Educators?"

skills for digital transparency and possess an understanding of inclusive pedagogies that cater to diverse learners.<sup>19</sup>

Looking ahead, research on transparent design should investigate the integration of digital tools with inclusive teaching practices to optimise student outcomes. As higher education institutions (HEIs) increasingly adopt online and hybrid learning models, the principles of transparent design will be essential in guaranteeing that all students, irrespective of their background, can benefit from a structured and supportive learning environment. Future studies should examine best practices for implementing transparent design in various educational settings and the long-term effects of transparency on student engagement, retention, and success.

## METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this scoping review is to map the existing literature on transparent conduct in learning, teaching, and assessment in HE. It seeks to identify key concepts, types of evidence and gaps in the research to draw meaningful conclusions about the state of inclusive teaching practices on a global scale and to support transformations in HE access and teaching methods. Pham et al. suggest that a scoping review is particularly useful when the topic is complex or has not been comprehensively studied before.<sup>20</sup> This review presents an opportunity to advance scholarship on transparency within HE learning and teaching. Through a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) project, five HE practitioners—one academic developer and four academic staff from three faculties—embarked on a systematic literature search, assisted by a librarian. The following phases were used in this research approach: books, book chapters, and specially edited journal issues were excluded from this scoping review to maintain a focused analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles explicitly addressing transparent design approaches in higher education contexts, except for the edited book titled: "Transparent Design in Higher Education and Leadership".

### Phase 1: Identify the research question/objective

Although widely recognised in health disciplines, this study applied the PICO framework (Population, Intervention, Comparison or Control, and Outcome) to formulate a clear and searchable research question.<sup>21</sup> This framework facilitates the development of focused inquiries, enabling the collection of meaningful insights on the subject of study.<sup>22</sup> Using the PICO framework, the following elements were identified:

- **Population:** Strategic partners, including lecturers, curriculum support staff, middle-level and senior managers in HEIs, involved in developing and teaching students. This also includes students and other relevant partners.
- **Intervention:** The foundational principles, methodologies, and outcomes of the transparent design approach to HE teaching.
- **Comparison/Control:** Not applicable to this scoping review study.
- **Outcome:** Identifying practices that foster student gains and contribute to success both within and beyond HEIs.

Guided by the PICO framework, the research question for this scoping review study is: *What are the foundational principles, methodologies, and outcomes associated with transparent design approaches for student gains and success in HE?*

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<sup>19</sup> Tiffany O Howard, Mary-Ann Winkelmes, and Marya Shegog, "Transparency Teaching in the Virtual Classroom: Assessing the Opportunities and Challenges of Integrating Transparency Teaching Methods with Online Learning," *Journal of Political Science Education* 16, no. 2 (2020): 198–211.

<sup>20</sup> Mai T Pham et al., "A Scoping Review of Scoping Reviews: Advancing the Approach and Enhancing the Consistency," *Research Synthesis Methods* 5, no. 4 (2014): 371–85.

<sup>21</sup> Connie Schardt et al., "Utilization of the PICO Framework to Improve Searching PubMed for Clinical Questions," *BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making* 7, no. 1 (December 15, 2007): 16, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6947-7-16>.

<sup>22</sup> Ellen Fineout-Overholt and Linda Johnston, "Teaching EBP: Asking Searchable, Answerable Clinical Questions," *Worldviews on Evidence-Based Nursing* 2, no. 3 (September 15, 2005): 157–60, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6787.2005.00032.x>.

## **Phase 2: Identify the relevant studies**

In the context of this review, the study selected only peer-reviewed publications written in English and published between 2014 and 2024 from various databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Sabinet, Academia, Wiley, and ResearchGate, during the period from September 4 to November 28, 2023. Additionally, an extensive search was conducted on OVID Medline, which includes PubMed, renowned globally for its prestigious indexing. These databases host top-tier journals from various publishers, thus gaining international acclaim. The authors sought relevant articles using specific keywords such as transparent learning, transparent teaching, transparent assessment, equitable student gains, student success, HE, educational equity, learning outcomes, student engagement, academic achievement, and diversity and inclusion in education.

Books, book chapters, and specially edited journal issues were excluded from this scoping review to maintain a focused analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles explicitly addressing transparent design approaches in higher education contexts, except for the edited book titled: "Transparent Design in Higher Education and Leadership".

## **Phase 3: Screening process**

Following the initial investigation, 2,377 publications published in the last decade were identified, primarily sourced from North-West University (NWU) databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, IEEE Xplore, the ACM repository, Europa World of Learning, Sabinet, Academia, Wiley, and ResearchGate. The inclusion criteria stipulated that the publications should be in the English language spoken and written by the authors of this paper, as no translation funds were available, and must be peer-reviewed. The exclusion criteria ruled out studies in basic education (primary and secondary schools) and non-peer-reviewed publications. After applying the specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, along with a quality assessment, a refined selection of twenty-two (n=22) distinct peer-reviewed publications, representing both international and South African perspectives, was ultimately chosen for inclusion in this scoping review, as illustrated in the flow diagram in Figure 1.

## **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The results are effectively showcased through graphical representations in the form of figures and tables, providing clear and concise data that enhance the understanding of the comprehensive nature of the existing literature on the subject matter. Specific measures and considerations were systematically undertaken and outlined as follows: verification of author(s) and publication year to ensure temporal relevance; title selection reflecting thematic relevance; research methodology detailing study population, identified themes or categories from incorporated studies, and the identity of the peer-reviewed journal or publisher.

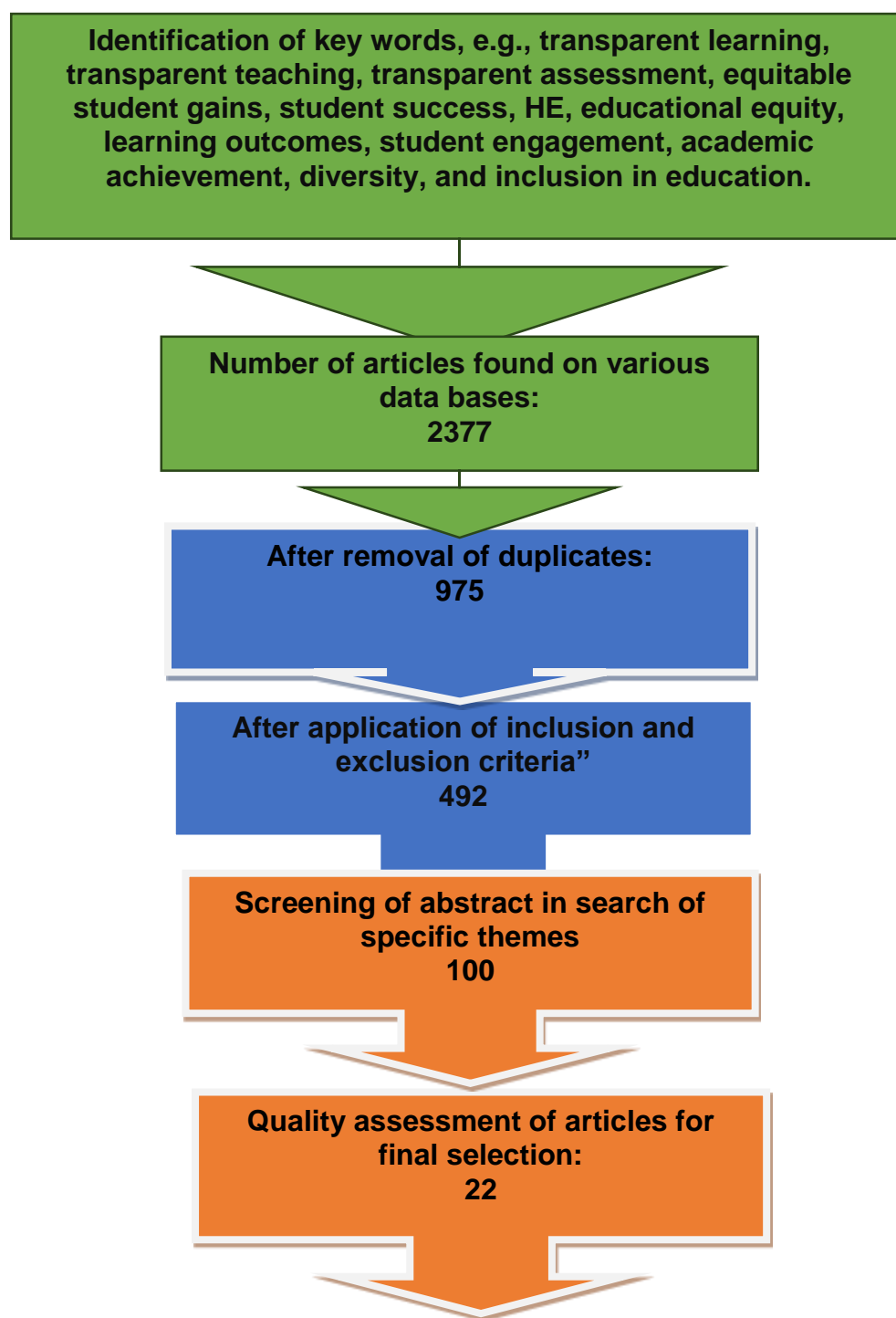


Figure 1. Scoping review flow diagram  
(Source: Adapted from PRISMA statement 2020 for systematic review).<sup>23</sup>

The flow diagram in Figure 1 indicates a concise road map of the investigation process and all the steps that were taken. A more detailed step is presented in Table 1.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew J Page et al., "Mapping of Reporting Guidance for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Generated a Comprehensive Item Bank for Future Reporting Guidelines," *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 118 (2020): 60–68.

**Table 1: A tabulation of included studies after all exclusion procedures**

No	Author(s) & year of publication	Titles of article	Research approach	Identified theme	Journal name/publisher
1	Tsai, Y. S., Perrotta, C. & Gašević, D. (2020)	Empowering learners with personalised learning approaches? Agency, equity and transparency in the context of learning analytics.	Focus group interviews	Managing the diverse needs of higher education student populations	Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education
2	Juvonen, J., Lessard, L. M., Rastogi, R., Schacter, H. L. & Smith, D. S. (2019)	Promoting social inclusion in educational settings: Challenges and opportunities.	Systematic review	Managing the diverse needs of higher education student populations	Educational Psychologist
3	O'Meara, K., Lennartz, C. J., Kuvaeva, A., Jaeger, A. & Misra, J. (2019)	Department conditions and practices associated with faculty workload satisfaction and perceptions of equity.	quantitative cross-sectional survey design	Equity and collaboration in higher education practices	The Journal of Higher Education
4	Brower, A.M., Humphreys, D., Karoff, R. & Kallio, S. (2017)	Designing quality into direct-assessment competency-based education.	AAC&U quality framework and its associated design principles	Advancing equity and access in higher education	The Journal of Competency-Based Education
5	Black, R. D., Weinberg, L. A. & Brodwin, M. G. (2015)	Universal design for learning and instruction: Perspectives of students with disabilities in higher education.	Qualitative approach	Bridging disparities for equitable learning	Exceptionality Education International
6	Ferguson, B. T., McKenzie, J., Dalton, E. M. & Lyner-Cleophas, M. (2019)	Inclusion, universal design and universal design for learning in higher education: South Africa and the United States	Systematic literature review	Bridging disparities for equitable learning	African Journal of Disability
7	Mercer-Mapstone, L. & Bovill, C. (2020)	Equity and diversity in institutional approaches to student-staff partnership schemes in higher education.	Mixed method (an online questionnaire and a reflective narrative)	Managing the diverse needs of higher education student populations	Studies in Higher Education
8	Fornauf, B. S. & Erickson, J. D. (2020)	Toward an inclusive pedagogy through universal design for learning in higher education	Review of literature	Bridging disparities for equitable learning	Journal of Postsecondary

					Education and Disability
9	Czerniewicz, L., Agherdien, N., Badenhorst, J., Belluigi, D., Chambers, T., Chili, M. & Wissing, G. (2020)	A wake-up call: Equity, inequality and Covid-19 emergency remote teaching and learning	collaborative reflection, qualitative analysis, and theoretical frameworks	Equity and collaboration in higher education practices	Post Digital Science and Education
10	Heagney, M., & Benson, R. (2017)	How mature-age students succeed in higher education: Implications for institutional support.	Qualitative case study	Advancing equity and access in quality education	Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management
11	Guangul, F. M., Suhail, A. H., Khalit, M. I. & Khidhir, B. A. (2020)	Challenges of remote assessment in higher education in the context of COVID-19: A case study of Middle East College.	Quantitative study	Equity and collaboration in higher education practices	Educational assessment, Evaluation and Accountability
12	Alles, M., Seidel, T. & Gröschner, A. (2018)	Toward better goal clarity in instruction: How focus on content, social exchange and active learning supports teachers in improving dialogic teaching practices.	Experimental design through quantitative analysis	Equity and collaboration in higher education practices	International Education Studies
13	Cook-Sather, A. (2018)	Listening to equity-seeking perspectives: How students' experiences of pedagogical partnership can inform wider discussions of student success.	Qualitative grounded theory Grounded theory	Advancing equity and access in quality education	Higher Education Research and Development
14	Khoshtaria, T., Datuashvili, D. & Matin, A. (2020)	The impact of brand equity dimensions on university reputation: an empirical study of Georgian higher education.	Qualitative & quantitative research approach	Advancing equity and access in quality education	Journal of Marketing for Higher Education
15	Stone, C., Freeman, E., Dymont, J. E., Muir, T. & Milthorpe, N. (2019)	Equal or equitable: The role of flexibility within online education.	Qualitative study	Advancing equity and access in quality education	Australian and International Journal of Rural Education

16	Motala, S. & Menon, K. (2020)	In search of the new normal': Reflections on teaching and learning during Covid-19 in a South African university.	Qualitative study (via institutional theories)	Advancing equity and access in quality education	Southern African Review of Education with Education with Production
17	Sotiriadou, P., Logan, D., Daly, A. & Guest, R. (2020)	The role of authentic assessment to preserve academic integrity and promote skill development and employability.	Quantitative survey	Promotion of authenticity and academic integrity	Studies in Higher Education
18	Gallant, B. T. (2017)	Academic integrity as a teaching & learning issue: From theory to practice.	Qualitative analysis of existing literature	Promotion of authenticity and academic integrity	Theory Into Practice
19	Morris, E. J. (2018)	Academic integrity matters: five considerations for addressing contract cheating.	Qualitative analysis	Promotion of authenticity and academic integrity	International Journal for Educational Integrity
20	O'Callaghan, F. V., Neumann, D. L., Jones, L. & Creed, P. A. (2017)	The use of lecture recordings in higher education: A review of institutional, student, and lecturer issues.	Systematic literature review	Managing the diverse needs of higher education student populations	Education and Information Technologies
21	Theobald, E.J., Hill, M.J., Tran, E., Agrawal, S., Arroyo, E.N., Behling, S. & Freeman, S. (2020)	Active learning narrows achievement gaps for underrepresented students in undergraduate science, technology, engineering, and math.	Quantitative (statistical analysis)	Bridging disparities for equitable learning	Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences
22	Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., Felten, P., Millard, L. & Moore-Cherry, N. (2016)	Addressing potential challenges in co-creating learning and teaching: Overcoming resistance, navigating institutional norms and ensuring inclusivity in student-staff partnerships.	Qualitative analysis	Equity and collaboration in higher education practices	Higher Education

**Table 2: Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the scoping review**

Themes	Sub-themes
Managing the diverse needs of HE student populations	Learner empowerment and equity Group dynamics and social inclusion Student-Staff engaged partnership Technology as pedagogy for students gains Equitable engagement practices
Equity and collaboration in HE practices	Goal clarity in teaching practices Student-staff partnered collaboration Equitable choices
Advancing equity and access to quality education	Equity and access for a diverse student population Competency-based education Quality education
Bridging Disparities for Equitable Learning	Teaching frameworks (i.e., UDI, UDL) Active learning Achievement gaps Inclusivity practices
Promotion of Authenticity and Academic Integrity	Supportive and reactive approaches to academic integrity Authentic assessment and professional preparedness

### Managing the diverse needs of HE student population

In an article on empowering learners with personalised learning approaches, Tsai et al. argue that learner empowerment should not automatically be assumed to have occurred as part of the adoption of learning analytics.<sup>24</sup> Instead, the interwoven power relationships in a complex educational system and the interactions between humans and machines must be considered when presenting learning analytics as an equitable process to enhance student agency and educational equity. By doing so, equity is demonstrated by acknowledging that education is by no means one-size-fits-all, and students at different learning stages require varying levels of support. However, targeted support arguably risks labelling certain groups of students while seemingly disadvantaging others by redirecting resources away from them.

Juvonen et al. contend that university teachers and school administrators must understand group dynamics to foster inclusion.<sup>25</sup> They highlight how institutional practices exacerbate divisions and stereotypes, proposing proactive measures to improve social inclusion. Ideally, universities should embrace diversity, implement collaborative learning, and provide opportunities for positive interactions. However, the incorporation of such practices can face challenges, especially in segregated settings or under rigid mandates. In such cases, intervention programmes targeting school culture may be necessary to foster inclusivity. This approach requires a multifaceted strategy that addresses student attitudes, teacher practices, and administrative policies, indicating that diversity alone does not guarantee social inclusion. Juvonen et al. and Mercer-Mapstone and Bovill address the issue of social inclusion in education.<sup>26</sup> Juvonen et al. highlight the importance of understanding group dynamics and implementing proactive practices to foster social inclusion in schools. Mercer-Mapstone and Bovill advocate for student-staff partnerships as a method to promote inclusive engagement in HE. Both studies emphasise

<sup>24</sup> Ernest Mpindo and Constance Mphojane, “Human Rights Education: Exploring the Safety of Teachers in South African Secondary Public Schools,” *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 5, no. 3 (March 8, 2024): 247–56, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2024538> Tsai, Yi-Shan, Carlo Perrotta, and Dragan Gašević. 2019. “Empowering Learners with Personalised Learning Approaches? Agency, Equity and Transparency in the Context of Learning Analytics.” *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 45, no. 4 (2019): 554–67, doi:10.1080/02602938.2019.1676396.

<sup>25</sup> Jaana Juvonen et al., “Promoting Social Inclusion in Educational Settings: Challenges and Opportunities,” *Educational Psychologist* 54, no. 4 (2019): 250–70.

<sup>26</sup> Juvonen et al., “Promoting Social Inclusion in Educational Settings: Challenges and Opportunities”; Lucy Mercer-Mapstone et al., “A Systematic Literature Review of Students as Partners in Higher Education,” *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2017.

the need to address systemic barriers and promote positive interactions among students from diverse backgrounds.<sup>27</sup>

Mercer-Mapstone and Bovill agree that as student demographics in HE diversify rapidly, teaching and learning strategies must adapt to ensure equitable engagement.<sup>28</sup> Student-staff partnership, which acknowledges the varied experiences of both parties, emerges as a method for fostering inclusive engagement. Despite evidence showcasing the benefits of such partnerships, current practices often consist of limited, small-scale initiatives that hinder widespread equitable involvement. In the same study by Mercer-Mapstone and Bovill, which examined partnership approaches in 11 UK universities, the findings underscore the importance of broadening conceptions of partnership for equitable access.<sup>29</sup> Practitioners in HE advocate for scaling up partnerships to mitigate systemic inequities. However, our research highlights both the advantages and limitations of institutional partnership schemes, emphasising the necessity of equitable engagement practices.

According to O'Callaghan et al., the prevalence of web-based lecture technologies is growing in HE, with one common approach being the recording of on-campus lectures for online access by students.<sup>30</sup> These recordings, known as lecture capture, video podcasts, or Lectoria, were examined through a literature review considering student, lecturer, and institutional perspectives. Although institutions are under pressure to adopt such technologies, student feedback is largely positive; however, lecturers express concerns about attendance and restrictions on lecture style. Overall, the benefits of lecture recordings outweigh the drawbacks; however, further research is warranted to optimise their efficacy in diverse educational settings. Tsai et al. emphasise the importance of considering power dynamics and interactions between humans and machines in the adoption of learning analytics to enhance student agency and educational equity.<sup>31</sup> This correlates with the discussion by Mercer-Mapstone and Bovill regarding the need for adaptable teaching and learning strategies to ensure equitable engagement as student demographics diversify in HE.<sup>32</sup> Both studies underscore the need to recognise individual differences and provide tailored support to promote equity.

O'Callaghan et al. discuss the increasing prevalence of web-based lecture technologies in HE and the positive feedback from students regarding lecture recordings.<sup>33</sup> The findings of Tsai et al. concerning the adoption of learning analytics to enhance student agency echo the emphasis on technology's potential benefits in education.<sup>34</sup> However, lecturers raise concerns about attendance and instructional constraints. Similarly, Mercer-Mapstone and Bovill highlight the importance of scaling up partnership approaches to mitigate systemic inequities in HE.<sup>35</sup> Tsai et al. also discuss the necessity of addressing power dynamics and individual differences to promote equity in the adoption of learning analytics.<sup>36</sup> Both studies underscore the critical role of equitable engagement practices in addressing disparities and fostering inclusive educational environments.

Overall, the studies emphasise the interconnectedness of key factors—learner empowerment, social inclusion, technology integration, and equitable engagement practices—in advancing educational equity and enriching student experiences.

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<sup>27</sup> Mercer-Mapstone et al., "A Systematic Literature Review of Students as Partners in Higher Education."

<sup>28</sup> Mercer-Mapstone et al., "A Systematic Literature Review of Students as Partners in Higher Education."

<sup>29</sup> Mercer-Mapstone et al., "A Systematic Literature Review of Students as Partners in Higher Education."

<sup>30</sup> Frances V O'Callaghan et al., "The Use of Lecture Recordings in Higher Education: A Review of Institutional, Student, and Lecturer Issues," *Education and Information Technologies* 22, no. 1 (2017): 399–415.

<sup>31</sup> Yi-Shan Tsai, Carlo Perrotta, and Dragan Gašević, "Empowering Learners with Personalised Learning Approaches? Agency, Equity and Transparency in the Context of Learning Analytics," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 45, no. 4 (2019): 554–67, doi:10.1080/02602938.2019.1676396.

<sup>32</sup> Tsai, Perrotta, and Gašević, "Empowering Learners with Personalised Learning Approaches? Agency, Equity and Transparency in the Context of Learning Analytics."

<sup>33</sup> O'Callaghan et al., "The Use of Lecture Recordings in Higher Education: A Review of Institutional, Student, and Lecturer Issues."

<sup>34</sup> Tsai, Perrotta, and Gašević, "Empowering Learners with Personalised Learning Approaches? Agency, Equity and Transparency in the Context of Learning Analytics."

<sup>35</sup> Mercer-Mapstone et al., "A Systematic Literature Review of Students as Partners in Higher Education."

<sup>36</sup> Tsai, Perrotta, and Gašević, "Empowering Learners with Personalised Learning Approaches? Agency, Equity and Transparency in the Context of Learning Analytics."

## Equity and Collaboration in HE Practices

In their study on transparent design principles in HE, O'Meara et al. present a nuanced view of equitable workload practices within departments.<sup>37</sup> While some respondents noted elements of fairness, such as clear workload differentiation and transparent information, significant gaps remained. Fewer than one-third reported revised rules to alleviate committee workload, indicating areas for improvement. However, the majority indicated that workload decisions were data-informed, with defined benchmarks for campus service contributions, reflecting organisational progress. Despite this, only a third expressed a strong commitment to workload fairness and concerns persisted about faculty readiness to address issues such as shirking responsibilities or engaging in equity discussions based on data.

Czerniewicz et al., in their collaborative paper reflecting on experiences during the onset of COVID-19 lockdown measures, present insights and analyses from a diverse group of HE scholars representing 15 of South Africa's 26 public universities.<sup>38</sup> Through a narrative framework that prioritises personal perspectives, it offers insights into the pandemic's impact, specifically addressing the question: How does the abrupt shift to Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning (ERTL) amid COVID-19 affect equity considerations in HE? Drawing on Therborn's work, the reflections explore various forms of inequality exposed in HE while also highlighting the emergence of networks of care in response to systemic shortcomings during the pandemic's onset, as informed by Tronto's theories.

Guangul et al. contend that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on HE, particularly on teaching and assessment methods.<sup>39</sup> Remote assessment, in particular, has presented significant challenges due to insufficient preparation and the inherent complexities of implementation. Their study explores these challenges using a college in the Middle East as a case study. Through questionnaires and data analysis involving 50 faculty members, the research explores general remote assessment challenges, emphasising issues of academic integrity. It identifies obstacles such as infrastructure limitations, alignment with learning objectives, and student engagement. Strategies such as tailoring questions for individual students and incorporating online presentations are suggested to address academic dishonesty while proposing diversified assessment methods for enhanced integrity verification.

According to Alles et al., goal clarity is essential for effective classroom discourse and teaching.<sup>40</sup> Historically, educators have faced challenges in instilling clear objectives within their dialogues. This study investigates teacher practices within a video-based intervention. The comparative analysis indicates that the use of video dialogue cycles with instructors leads to improved goal clarity. An in-depth examination during these cycles reveals a sustained emphasis on goal clarity within teacher professional development (TPD). This underscores how effective TPD components can redefine and enhance teaching methods. Furthermore, Bovill et al. address the increasing trend of student partnerships in HE, exploring their roles in co-creating learning and teaching alongside staff.<sup>41</sup> The study delineates the complexities of this partnership, drawing on examples from European and North American institutions to highlight challenges such as resistance, institutional structures, and inclusivity. It proposes reframing these challenges as opportunities for collaboration, emphasising transparency and the necessity of shifting mindsets to realise the potential benefits of staff-student co-creation in education.

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<sup>37</sup> KerryAnn O'Meara et al., "Department Conditions and Practices Associated with Faculty Workload Satisfaction and Perceptions of Equity," *The Journal of Higher Education* 90, no. 5 (2019): 744–72.

<sup>38</sup> Laura Czerniewicz and Cheryl Brown, "The Habitus of Digital 'Strangers' in Higher Education," *British Journal of Educational Technology* 44, no. 1 (2013): 44–53.

<sup>39</sup> Dodi Sukmayadi, "Empowering STEM Education: Navigating Challenges and Embracing Innovations," *International Journal of Research in STEM Education* 5, no. 2 (November 12, 2023): 104–12, <https://doi.org/10.33830/ijrse.v5i2.1630>.

<sup>40</sup> Martina Alles, Tina Seidel, and Alexander Gröschner, "Toward Better Goal Clarity in Instruction: How Focus on Content, Social Exchange and Active Learning Supports Teachers in Improving Dialogic Teaching Practices.," *International Education Studies* 11, no. 1 (2018): 11–24.

<sup>41</sup> Bovill et al., "Addressing Potential Challenges in Co-Creating Learning and Teaching: Overcoming Resistance, Navigating Institutional Norms and Ensuring Inclusivity in Student–Staff Partnerships."

In the provided abstract, a correlation is evident between the study on transparent design principles in HE and the examination of remote assessment challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>42</sup> Both studies highlight the importance of equity considerations in HE practices. O'Meara et al. emphasise the need for equitable workload practices within departments, whereas Guangul et al. discuss the obstacles encountered in maintaining academic integrity during remote assessments.<sup>43</sup> Although focusing on different contexts, both studies underscore the critical importance of addressing fairness and transparency in HE.

Moreover, there is a relationship between the examination of goal clarity in classroom discourse and the exploration of student-staff partnerships in HE.<sup>44</sup> When students are permitted to co-create knowledge transmission, it may provide greater goal clarity in learning and teaching. This challenges the teacher-centred approach to promoting effective teaching and learning in HE.

### **Advancing Equity and Access in Quality Education**

Brower et al., in their study, argue for the potential of direct-assessment CBE (Competency-Based Education) to address challenges in American HE.<sup>45</sup> They advocate for the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) LEAP initiative (Liberal Education and America's Promise) as a model for quality, providing a research-based framework for reform.

The study suggests that General Education Maps and Markers (GEMs) design principles can guide HE, including CBE, toward achieving desired learning outcomes and fostering optimal learning environments. These principles are interconnected, shaping an aspirational vision for education, particularly in the context of direct-assessment CBE. The enthusiasm for CBE provides an opportunity to embed quality into programmes as leaders remove barriers to learning. It underscores the need for a mindset shift towards prioritising student learning over faculty teaching, which is essential for students to thrive in today's world. CBE's focus on competencies and real-world application is crucial for the success of HE programmes. Winkelmes et al. highlight a shared concern with the AAC&U, emphasising the pressing need to ensure fair opportunities for college students to thrive.<sup>46</sup> Their study underscores the importance of addressing disparities in educational experiences nationwide and suggests implications for faculty in supporting institutions to rectify these inequalities.

Heagney and Benson explore the issues of equity and accessibility within HE, with a particular emphasis on mature-age students from diverse backgrounds.<sup>47</sup> The study highlights that participants identified with equity categories established by the Australian government, indicating the existence of systemic barriers they face. This thematic focus underscores the need for universities to address these challenges and ensure equitable access to support services, thus improving educational outcomes for mature students.

Cook-Sather further contends that recent discussions within HE have intensified, focusing not only on diversifying student enrolment but also on improving their academic performance.<sup>48</sup> Particularly significant are the perspectives of students from traditionally marginalised backgrounds. This study

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<sup>42</sup> O'Meara et al., "Department Conditions and Practices Associated with Faculty Workload Satisfaction and Perceptions of Equity"; Fiseha M Guangul et al., "Challenges of Remote Assessment in Higher Education in the Context of COVID-19: A Case Study of Middle East College," *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* 32, no. 4 (2020): 519–35.

<sup>43</sup> O'Meara et al., "Department Conditions and Practices Associated with Faculty Workload Satisfaction and Perceptions of Equity"; Guangul et al., "Challenges of Remote Assessment in Higher Education in the Context of COVID-19: A Case Study of Middle East College."

<sup>44</sup> Bovill et al. (2016)

<sup>45</sup> Aaron M Brower et al., "Designing Quality into Direct-assessment Competency-based Education," *The Journal of Competency-Based Education* 2, no. 2 (2017): e01043.

<sup>46</sup> Alhashem and Alfaiakawi, "Technology-Enhanced Learning through Virtual Laboratories in Chemistry Education."; Winkelmes et al., "A Teaching Intervention That Increases Underserved College Students' Success."

<sup>47</sup> Margaret Heagney and Robyn Benson, "How Mature-Age Students Succeed in Higher Education: Implications for Institutional Support," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 39, no. 3 (May 4, 2017): 216–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2017.1300986>.

<sup>48</sup> Bovill et al., "Addressing Potential Challenges in Co-Creating Learning and Teaching: Overcoming Resistance, Navigating Institutional Norms and Ensuring Inclusivity in Student–Staff Partnerships."

examines the insights of undergraduates from equity-seeking groups—such as racial minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and first-generation students—who participated in a collaborative pedagogical programme with faculty at two colleges in the United States. Through rigorous analysis, it was found that participation in such initiatives fosters emotional connections with faculty and peers, while also enhancing academic engagement and students' self-perception as active contributors to their own and others' educational experiences. These findings build on existing theories of student success, emphasising the need for inclusive support structures within and beyond formal educational partnerships.

Moreover, Khoshtaria et al. explore how brand equity dimensions affect the overall university reputation in Georgian HE.<sup>49</sup> Intense competition requires universities to engage in marketing; however, their efforts often falter due to a lack of understanding of their unique services. The research aims to clarify consumer-based brand equity for universities and assess its impact on reputation. Using an exploratory approach, the study investigates the dimensions of brand equity using qualitative and quantitative methods, referencing prior scales. The results reveal two types of dimensions and highlight key elements for effective university branding.

Stone et al. outlined the association between online study and flexibility, which appeals to students seeking to balance their studies with other responsibilities.<sup>50</sup> This flexibility is especially crucial for regional and rural students, as it helps overcome accessibility challenges. However, the application of policies designed for on-campus settings to online education can diminish this flexibility, thus impacting equity. By examining the experiences of regional education students, the paper reveals how equal treatment may compromise flexibility, leading to an unfair student experience. This underscores the need for tailored approaches to ensure equitable online education. Online learning is commonly linked with flexibility, attracting students who aim to balance their studies with other commitments. This flexibility is of significant importance for those in rural areas, as it addresses accessibility challenges. However, adopting on-campus policies in online education can jeopardise this flexibility and impact equity. This study delves into the experiences of rural education students who choose online study due to its flexibility. Their encounters illustrate that equal treatment may hinder flexibility, resulting in an unfair student experience. This highlights the necessity for tailored approaches in online education.

Furthermore, Motala and Menon assert that beginning on March 15, 2020, South African tertiary institutions adapted to COVID-19 lockdowns while maintaining instructional activities.<sup>51</sup> The University of Johannesburg (UJ) fully transitioned to online learning, prompting urgent reviews and staff training. This passage uses qualitative methods to explore pandemic responses through institutional theory and social justice frameworks. It scrutinises UJ's response, discussing challenges to its vision of accessible excellence and equity. Finally, it anticipates the 'new normal' for South African tertiary education post-pandemic, emphasising the importance of preparation for a transformed future.

Brower et al. and Cook-Sather both advocate for reforms in HE aimed at addressing challenges and enhancing student learning outcomes.<sup>52</sup> Brower et al. emphasise the potential of direct-assessment CBE and argue for prioritising student learning over faculty teaching, whereas Cook-Sather focuses on improving academic achievements, particularly for marginalised student groups.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Tornike Khoshtaria, Davit Datuashvili, and Arian Matin, "The Impact of Brand Equity Dimensions on University Reputation: An Empirical Study of Georgian Higher Education," *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 30, no. 2 (2020): 239–55.

<sup>50</sup> Stone, Cathy, Elizabeth Freeman, Janet E. Dymont, Tracey Muir, and Naomi Milthorpe. "Equal or Equitable?: The Role of Flexibility within Online Education." *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, vol. 29, no. 2, Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia, 2019, pp. 26–40, <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.639619709196818>.

<sup>51</sup> Shireen Motala and Kirti Menon, "In Search of the 'new Normal': Reflections on Teaching and Learning during Covid-19 in a South African University," *Southern African Review of Education with Education with Production* 26, no. 1 (2020): 80–99.

<sup>52</sup> Brower et al., "Designing Quality into Direct-assessment Competency-based Education"; Alison Cook-Sather, "Listening to Equity-Seeking Perspectives: How Students' Experiences of Pedagogical Partnership Can Inform Wider Discussions of Student Success," *Higher Education Research & Development* 37, no. 5 (2018): 923–36.

<sup>53</sup> Brower et al., "Designing Quality into Direct-assessment Competency-based Education."

Cook-Sather and Stone et al. highlight the significance of inclusive support structures for student success, particularly for marginalised groups.<sup>54</sup> This perspective aligns with Stone et al.'s exploration of equity issues in online education. Both studies underscore the need for tailored approaches to ensure equitable access and opportunities for all students.

Brower et al. concentrate on enhancing educational outcomes through direct-assessment CBE, while Heagney and Benson discuss issues of equity and access for mature-age students.<sup>55</sup> While Brower et al. stress quality reforms and the prioritisation of student learning, Heagney and Benson draw attention to systemic barriers and the critical importance of addressing these obstacles to improve outcomes for mature-age students.

Overall, these studies collectively address various aspects of equity, access, and quality in HE, illustrating the interconnectedness of these factors and the need for comprehensive approaches to promote inclusive and effective learning environments.

### **Bridging Disparities for Equitable Learning**

Black, Weinberg, and Brodwin used the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) to evaluate the perspectives of university students with disabilities on effective teaching methods.<sup>56</sup> The findings revealed significant learning barriers for students with disabilities; however, both disabled and non-disabled students expressed a range of learning preferences, recognising the effectiveness of UDL and UDI principles in enhancing the learning experience. Notably, the majority of older students with disabilities were undergraduates, reflecting trends identified in existing literature. With half of disabled students reporting multiple disabilities, university educators face additional challenges that require adaptable instruction. The implementation of UDL and UDI principles holds the promise of fostering a more inclusive learning environment by addressing inadequate accommodations.

Ferguson et al examine the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream education alongside their non-disabled peers, a favoured approach in both the USA and South Africa, as evidenced by various policies and legislation worldwide.<sup>57</sup> Implementation varies due to historical disparities, such as apartheid's legacy in South Africa, and differences in federal guidance. Challenges persist, including discrimination and access issues, despite longstanding laws like the Rehabilitation Act. While South Africa's inclusive education policies evolved later, both countries grappled with equity. US institutions leverage robust online systems with accessibility features, while South Africa faces challenges in accommodating these types of students. Embracing UDI and UDL aids in creating inclusive environments, as seen in examples from HE institutions in both countries, indicating a growing commitment to equitable education for all learners. Fornauf and Erickson argue that over the past two decades, UDL has gained prominence in K-12 and HE settings, prompting university teachers to rethink traditional teaching methods.<sup>58</sup> However, UDL research in HE is somewhat limited due to conflicting definitions and objectives. This paper aims to examine the literature on UDL in postsecondary contexts, exploring how faculty and researchers interpret and apply UDL principles. Findings indicate ongoing uncertainty regarding UDL's role as an intervention or framework, impacting its potential to enhance inclusive teaching practices and challenge norms in higher education. Suggestions for future research directions are provided.

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<sup>54</sup> Bovill et al., "Addressing Potential Challenges in Co-Creating Learning and Teaching: Overcoming Resistance, Navigating Institutional Norms and Ensuring Inclusivity in Student-Staff Partnerships"; Stone, Cathy, et al. "Equal or Equitable?: The Role of Flexibility within Online Education."

<sup>55</sup> Brower et al., "Designing Quality into Direct-assessment Competency-based Education"; Heagney and Benson, "How Mature-Age Students Succeed in Higher Education: Implications for Institutional Support."

<sup>56</sup> Robert D Black, Lois A Weinberg, and Martin G Brodwin, "Universal Design for Learning and Instruction: Perspectives of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education," *Exceptionality Education International* 25, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>57</sup> Everett Ferguson, Michael P. McHugh, and Frederick W. Norris, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis, 1998).

<sup>58</sup> Beth S Fornauf and Joy Dangora Erickson, "Toward an Inclusive Pedagogy through Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education: A Review of the Literature.," *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* 33, no. 2 (2020): 183-99.

Theobald et al. investigate the manner in which achievement gaps in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) majors contribute to income inequality and diminished workplace diversity, particularly impacting underrepresented students.<sup>59</sup> By contrasting traditional lecturing with active learning methodologies, the researchers discovered that active learning significantly narrowed achievement gaps, particularly benefiting underrepresented groups. This finding indicates that the widespread adoption of active learning practices could reduce these gaps and promote equity in higher education, potentially fostering more diverse STEM communities and alleviating income disparities.

Studies on this theme strongly indicate the need to implement Universal Design principles to promote inclusive education. UDL and UDI enhance learning experiences for both disabled and non-disabled students, contributing to the development of more inclusive learning environments. Ferguson et al. discuss the correlation between the implementation of inclusive education policies and equity in educational outcomes.<sup>60</sup> They note that while both the USA and South Africa have policies that support the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream education, challenges persist in achieving equitable access due to historical disparities and variations in policy implementation.

It can be argued that there exists a discernible relationship between learning barriers and inclusive education. The studies indicate a significant correlation between the prevalent learning barriers encountered by students with disabilities and the promotion of inclusive educational practices. As principles of Universal Design are implemented to address these barriers, educational environments become increasingly inclusive, resulting in diminished obstacles for all students, irrespective of their abilities. Theobald et al. illustrate a distinct connection between traditional lecturing methodologies and equity in educational outcomes, particularly within STEM disciplines.<sup>61</sup> They find that conventional lecturing exacerbates achievement gaps, particularly for underrepresented or marginalised students. In contrast, active learning methodologies serve to narrow these gaps, suggesting that traditional pedagogical approaches may contribute to inequalities in HE.

Expanding on this theme, Theobald et al. highlight a strong connection between active learning methodologies and equity in STEM education.<sup>62</sup> Their findings demonstrate that active learning reduces achievement gaps, particularly benefiting underrepresented groups and thereby advancing equity in HE. Similarly, Fornauf and Erickson examine the relationship between research on UDL and the advancement of inclusive teaching approaches.<sup>63</sup> They argue that, although research on UDL in HE remains limited, continued exploration is crucial for understanding how to effectively implement UDL principles to foster inclusivity in educational environments.

Overall, these studies collectively emphasise the significance of implementing inclusive practices, such as Universal Design and active learning methodologies, to address barriers to learning and promote equity in HE. They also highlight the need for further research to enhance the understanding and effective implementation of these practices.

### **Promotion of Authenticity and Academic Integrity**

This theme provides a discussion of the different perspectives on academic integrity within educational institutions. To analyse their correlation and inverse relationship, the researchers examine how each perspective relates to the others, as well as where they might conflict or complement one another, using insights from various studies.

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<sup>59</sup> Elli J Theobald et al., "Active Learning Narrows Achievement Gaps for Underrepresented Students in Undergraduate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117, no. 12 (2020): 6476–83.

<sup>60</sup> Ferguson, McHugh, and Norris, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*.

<sup>61</sup> Theobald et al., "Active Learning Narrows Achievement Gaps for Underrepresented Students in Undergraduate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math."

<sup>62</sup> Theobald et al., "Active Learning Narrows Achievement Gaps for Underrepresented Students in Undergraduate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math."

<sup>63</sup> Fornauf and Erickson, "Toward an Inclusive Pedagogy through Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education: A Review of the Literature."

According to Sotiriadou et al., educational institutions should prioritise genuine assessments and academic integrity to maintain high standards and enhance students' employability skills.<sup>64</sup> Their findings indicate that assessments designed to mirror real-world situations deter misconduct and facilitate students' professional growth and job prospects. This underscores the significance of authentic assessments and academic integrity in preparing students for the professional world. The research suggests that by integrating real-world scenarios into assessments, academic misconduct can be reduced while simultaneously enhancing students' skills and employability.

Gallant proposes a new approach to academic integrity that focuses on improving student learning rather than solely preventing cheating.<sup>65</sup> This approach involves creating a supportive environment, improving instruction, and reducing institutional barriers. Gallant further suggests using cheating instances as teachable moments and advocates empirical research to implement practical methods to foster a learning-focused classroom environment.<sup>66</sup> Gallant's approach shifts the focus from punitive measures to proactive strategies aimed at fostering a culture of integrity. By emphasising learning and support, this approach addresses the root causes of academic misconduct and makes integrity the norm within academia.

In relation to the promotion of authenticity and academic integrity, a study by Morris investigates contract cheating in HE, observing that while media attention often exaggerates its prevalence, recent studies indicate that only a small fraction of students engage in such behaviour.<sup>67</sup> Morris therefore advocates institutional responses to reinforce the values and practices of academic integrity, highlighting key areas for HEIs to consider, such as strategy, policy review, student understanding, assessment practices, and staff development.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Morris presents a balanced perspective on contract cheating, recognising its existence while cautioning against overstating its prevalence.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, the focus shifts towards the development of comprehensive institutional strategies to effectively promote academic integrity, which includes educating students, revising policies, and providing support for staff.

From the preceding discussion, it becomes evident that a relationship exists between the viewpoints of Sotiriadou et al. and Bertram Gallant, as both emphasise the importance of promoting academic honesty and integrity through supportive measures and authentic assessments.<sup>70</sup> Gallant prioritises the enhancement of student learning and views instances of cheating as educational opportunities, which aligns with the objective of Sotiriadou et al. of cultivating a culture of integrity.<sup>71</sup> While both Sotiriadou et al. and Gallant advocate for proactive strategies to uphold academic integrity, Morris's<sup>72</sup> perspective on contract cheating introduces a potential contradiction.<sup>73</sup> Morris suggests that media portrayal may exaggerate the prevalence of cheating, which could undermine efforts to combat academic misconduct.<sup>74</sup> Consequently, Morris perceives institutional responses to contract cheating as more reactive compared to the proactive approaches proposed by Sotiriadou et al. and Gallant.<sup>75</sup> In

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<sup>64</sup> Popi Sotiriadou et al., "The Role of Authentic Assessment to Preserve Academic Integrity and Promote Skill Development and Employability," *Studies in Higher Education* 45, no. 11 (2020): 2132–48.

<sup>65</sup> Tricia Bertram Gallant, "Academic Integrity as a Teaching & Learning Issue: From Theory to Practice," *Theory Into Practice* 56, no. 2 (2017): 88–94.

<sup>66</sup> Tricia Bertram Gallant, "Academic Integrity as a Teaching & Learning Issue: From Theory to Practice," *Theory Into Practice* 56, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 88–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2017.1308173>.

<sup>67</sup> Morris Rosenberg, "1979 Conceiving the Self," *New York: Basic*, 1956.

<sup>68</sup> C. Lorraine LeBlanc, *Spiritual Paths & Crossroads* (Morrisville, North Carolina: Lulu Publishing, 2018).

<sup>69</sup> T Craig Isaacs, *Revelations & Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual from Psychological Experiences* (Morris Publishing, 2009).

<sup>70</sup> Sotiriadou et al., "The Role of Authentic Assessment to Preserve Academic Integrity and Promote Skill Development and Employability"; Bertram Gallant, "Academic Integrity as a Teaching & Learning Issue: From Theory to Practice."

<sup>71</sup> Bertram Gallant, "Academic Integrity as a Teaching & Learning Issue: From Theory to Practice"; Sotiriadou et al., "The Role of Authentic Assessment to Preserve Academic Integrity and Promote Skill Development and Employability."

<sup>72</sup> Morris (2018)

<sup>73</sup> Sotiriadou et al., "The Role of Authentic Assessment to Preserve Academic Integrity and Promote Skill Development and Employability"; Isaacs, *Revelations & Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual from Psychological Experiences*.

<sup>74</sup> Isaacs, *Revelations & Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual from Psychological Experiences*.

<sup>75</sup> Isaacs, *Revelations & Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual from Psychological Experiences*; Sotiriadou et al., "The Role of Authentic Assessment to Preserve Academic Integrity and Promote Skill Development and Employability"; Bertram Gallant, "Academic Integrity as a Teaching & Learning Issue: From Theory to Practice."

conclusion, although correlations exist among the presented perspectives, nuances and potential conflicts underscore the complex nature of addressing academic integrity in educational settings. Nonetheless, each perspective contributes to the broader discourse on fostering honesty and integrity among students.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

This review highlights a range of implications for HEIs seeking to implement transparent design principles to address diverse student needs, promote equity, and ensure academic integrity.

First, recognising the complex dynamics within educational systems, transparent design necessitates flexible approaches to support students at various learning stages. Tsai, Perrotta, and Gašević emphasise that while learning analytics and technology can empower students, university teachers must remain cognisant of the power dynamics and differential impacts on various student groups.<sup>76</sup> This suggests that institutions should adopt a nuanced approach, providing targeted support without inadvertently creating labels or reinforcing biases among student populations. For instance, personalised learning pathways could be implemented with sensitivity to individual differences, balancing tailored support with the need for equitable resources across student demographics.

Additionally, the growing diversity in student populations calls for inclusive practices such as student-staff partnerships, which Mercer-Mapstone and Bovill advocate as a method to foster inclusive engagement.<sup>77</sup> However, as these partnerships are often limited in scale, institutions must develop more extensive frameworks to facilitate equitable involvement across the student body. Initiatives that encourage collaboration and address group dynamics, as highlighted by Juvonen et al. can enhance social inclusion and reduce divisions within academic settings.<sup>78</sup> This approach aligns with transparency principles, ensuring that all students are actively engaged and their contributions recognised within the academic community.

The transition to online and hybrid learning has also underscored the need for clear, accessible communication of course expectations and evaluation criteria. As digital education becomes increasingly prevalent, institutions must ensure that web-based lecture technologies and other online tools are leveraged to support transparency. O’Callaghan et al. found that while students generally prefer lecture recordings, there are concerns about their impact on attendance and instructional quality.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the design of online courses should integrate both synchronous and asynchronous elements, supported by transparent guidelines, to maintain engagement without sacrificing flexibility.

Moreover, equitable workload practices, as discussed by O’Meara et al. are essential for faculty satisfaction and effective teaching.<sup>80</sup> Transparent and data-informed workload policies can enhance organisational progress; however, attention must be paid to promoting a fair distribution of responsibilities. Addressing these considerations in institutional policy can foster an academic culture that values equity, reduces burnout, and supports teaching practices aligned with transparent design.

UDL principles provide a comprehensive framework for minimising learning barriers, particularly for students with disabilities. Black, Weinberg, and Brodwin and Ferguson et al. emphasise that, when effectively integrated, UDL principles can foster inclusive environments that benefit all students by tailoring instruction to diverse needs.<sup>81</sup> Institutions should consider the incorporation of UDL and UDI to systematically address these barriers, particularly within STEM fields, where

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<sup>76</sup>Tsai, Perrotta, and Gašević, “Empowering Learners with Personalised Learning Approaches?” .

<sup>77</sup> Mercer-Mapstone et al., “A Systematic Literature Review of Students as Partners in Higher Education.”

<sup>78</sup> Juvonen et al., “Promoting Social Inclusion in Educational Settings: Challenges and Opportunities.”

<sup>79</sup> O’Callaghan et al., “The Use of Lecture Recordings in Higher Education: A Review of Institutional, Student, and Lecturer Issues.”

<sup>80</sup> O’Meara et al., “Department Conditions and Practices Associated with Faculty Workload Satisfaction and Perceptions of Equity.”

<sup>81</sup> Black, Weinberg, and Brodwin, “Universal Design for Learning and Instruction: Perspectives of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education”; Ferguson, McHugh, and Norris, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* .

traditional pedagogical approaches may exacerbate achievement gaps. Theobald et al. propose that active learning methods are effective in narrowing these gaps and promoting equity in education.<sup>82</sup>

On a final note, promoting academic integrity through authentic assessments, as discussed by Sotiriadou et al. is essential for developing students' professional skills and ethical awareness.<sup>83</sup> Gallant and Morris advocate for proactive approaches to academic integrity, suggesting that institutions should foster a supportive learning environment rather than relying solely on punitive measures.<sup>84</sup> By integrating real-world scenarios and transparent assessment criteria, HE can deter academic misconduct and emphasise the importance of integrity and authenticity in both professional and personal development.

## CONCLUSION

This scoping review aimed to elucidate the foundational efforts documented in the literature on the impact of transparent design approaches on student outcomes and institutional success. This review identified the transformative potential of transparent design principles to advance equitable student achievement and uphold academic integrity across diverse HE contexts. By incorporating clear and accessible instructional practices, institutions can establish supportive learning environments that respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Transparent design promotes equity not only by clarifying academic expectations but also by facilitating student agency, collaboration, and accountability.

The implications of this review show the need for transparency to be customised to the specific context of each institution, particularly when implemented within digital learning environments through seminars and workshops of the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) framework in Higher Education.<sup>85</sup> Digital platforms should prioritise transparency in communicating course expectations and guidelines to aid students navigate online education, a practice that has become increasingly critical in the aftermath of COVID-19. Moreover, partnerships between students and faculty, rooted in inclusive and equitable engagement practices, can cultivate a sense of belonging and shared purpose within the academic community.

As institutions consider future directions, further research is necessary to explore best practices for implementing transparent design across diverse academic disciplines and student demographics through Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research. This review indicates that the integration of transparent design principles with frameworks such as UDL, TILT and active learning has the potential to enhance educational equity. Institutions should persist in innovating within these domains, cultivating academic environments that provide all students, irrespective of background or ability, with the requisite support for success.

By adopting a transparent design and emphasising inclusivity, HE can play a pivotal role in fostering a more just and equitable society. Transparent design principles not only facilitate student achievement but also equip graduates with the ethical foundation and critical thinking skills essential for navigating complex and dynamic professional environments following their HE experience.

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<sup>82</sup> Theobald et al., "Active Learning Narrows Achievement Gaps for Underrepresented Students in Undergraduate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math."

<sup>83</sup> Sotiriadou et al., "The Role of Authentic Assessment to Preserve Academic Integrity and Promote Skill Development and Employability."

<sup>84</sup> Bertram Gallant, "Academic Integrity as a Teaching & Learning Issue: From Theory to Practice"; D.A. Fenyi and R. Morrison, "Concord Errors in Postgraduate Theses in Ghana: A Descriptive Analysis," *Journal of Language and Linguistics in Society (JLLS)* 3, no. 1 (2023): 20–30.

<sup>85</sup> Examples, resources, and tools for institutions seeking to implement transparent design practices are available at <https://www.tilthighered.com/resources>.

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