University of Antwerp in times of growing diversity

A study on the trajectories of ‘vulnerable students’ at the University of Antwerp

Dries Lens
Dr. François Levrau
Edith Piqueray
David De Coninck

Prof. Dr. Noel Clycq
Prof. Dr. Christiane Timmerman
Proportion citizens of foreign origine by age , 2013. (Source: Lokale Inburgerings- en Integratiemonitor)
Context University of Antwerp

Antwerp has *unique* demographic characteristics compared to the Flanders /Belgium and other university cities (excl. Brussels).

Antwerp is in the *frontline* of what will happen with Flanders/Belgium in the near future.
‘Vulnerable students’

- **Non-Belgian origin:**
  - two year secondary education in Belgium
  - residence in Belgium
  - one parent or two grandparents who had a non-Western European nationality by birth

- **Other language at home:**
  - non-Belgian mother tongue

- **Low educated mother:**
  - maximum lower secondary education

- **Study allowance:**
  - from the Flemish government or University of Antwerp
### Evolutie van het aantal generatiestudenten per kansengroep

(Bron: SisA, UAntwerpen, 2014)

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<td>528</td>
<td>515</td>
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<td>474</td>
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<td>Percentage</td>
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<td>23,9%</td>
<td>23,6%</td>
<td>23,7%</td>
<td>21,9%</td>
<td>22,5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student with low educated mother</td>
<td>226</td>
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<td>207</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>161</td>
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<td>10,8%</td>
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<td>8,6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student with non – Belgian mother tongue</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>193</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<td>8,7%</td>
<td>8,5%</td>
<td>8,6%</td>
<td>7,9%</td>
<td>9,3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student with migration background</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>291</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9,1%</td>
<td>11,0%</td>
<td>9,1%</td>
<td>10,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total students</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2.210</td>
<td>2.185</td>
<td>2.067</td>
<td>2.169</td>
<td>3.030</td>
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</table>
Achievement at the University of Antwerp

Achievement 'vulnerable groups' 2013-2014
(Bron: SisA, UAntwerpen, 2014)
Achievement at University of Antwerp

- using the **UA administrative data base** (SisA):

- after **controlling for**:
  - faculty, gender, age, secondary school

- achievement of **‘vulnerable groups’**
  - => **significant lower** compared to the other students
Achievement at University of Antwerp

- A survey measuring demographic, attitudinal, social factors related to study success

- Important differences between ‘vulnerable’ students and the others
Achievement at University of Antwerp

- ‘Vulnerable groups’ are more confronted with:
  - school retardation
  - push by parents
  - first of the family to study
  - environment has doubts about student’s capacities
  - student has doubts about own capacities
  - disappointment about studies
  - lack of social integration
  - negative study attitude
  - negative interaction with university staff

⇒ these scales correlate negatively with achievement
⇒ factors that can be remediated by policy interventions!
Wellbeing at University of Antwerp

- In-depth – interviews with students with a migration background (18 students)
  - Students with (or close to) an UA-degree
  - Students who failed obtaining an UA-degree

- Challenges
  - Silent poverty
  - Too small critical mass
  - Struggle for recognition
Struggle for recognition

- **Token position**
  - Intruder/Imposter-effect
  - Underdog
  - Stereotype-threat
  - Acting-white
  - No bridging social capital, but segregation
  - UAntwerp = High cost social environment

=> Unexpected by University of Antwerp

⇒ *Sense of belonging of all students?*
⇒ *Reflects negative on achievement*
Action program University of Antwerp

• invest already in ‘academic confidence’, ‘social and academic integration’, ‘study attitude’ ‘interaction with university staff’
  ▪ study guidance for (vulnerable) students
  ▪ university wide course on worldview – religious perspectives
  ▪ (Syrian) refugees integration program
    ▪ Language
    ▪ Facilitating recognition of foreign degrees
What to do more?

- Consequent **monitoring** of ‘vulnerable groups’ using the University of Antwerp’s **administrative data base** (SisA)
  - Using the **same definitions of ‘vulnerable groups’ in Belgium – EU** to make comparisons possible
- Institutionalise **the survey** because of its added value to the administrative data (**attitudes, social integration**)
Creating more ‘sense of belonging’

- **Evidence based interventions** (in collaboration with other universities)
  - Improving interactions (in collaboration with student organization) with all stakeholders: students, staff, communities, secondary schools (outreach)
  - Smaller student groups
  - Actions improving ‘belonging at the university’
  - Improving the course on worldviews and religious perspectives
    - Intercultural awareness
    - Citizenship in a divers society