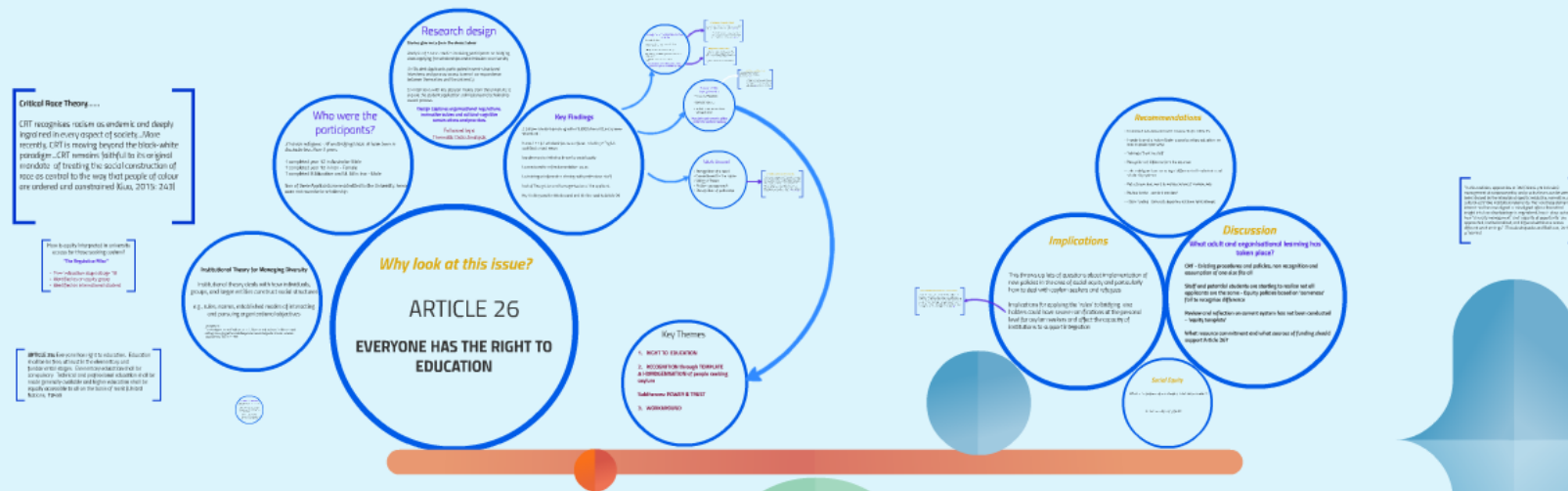


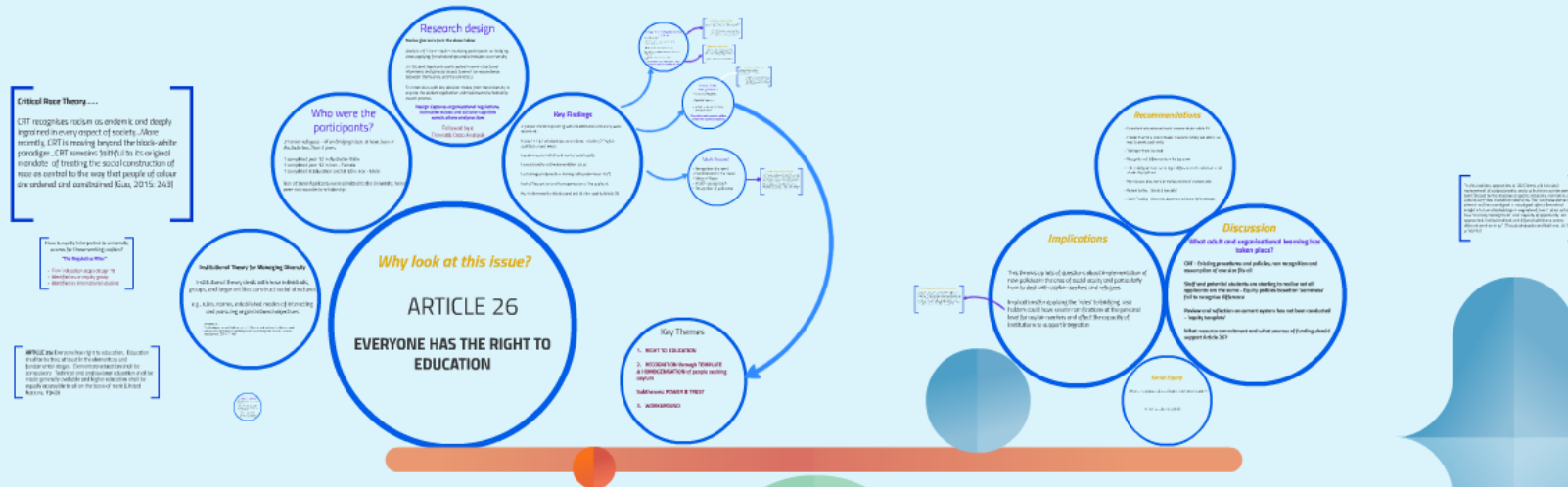
Embracing Social Inclusion? The asylum seeker experience of applying for admission to tertiary education in Australia



Presented by
Professor Sue Webb, Assoc Prof Jane Wilkinson & Karen Dunwoodie
Faculty of Education Monash University

Research conducted by:
Karen Dunwoodie - Monash University
Sue Webb - Monash University
Jane Wilkinson - Monash University

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Why look at this issue?

ARTICLE 26

**EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO
EDUCATION**

ARTICLE 26: Everyone has right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit (United Nations, 1948)

Institutional Theory for Managing Diversity

Institutional theory deals with how individuals, groups, and larger entities construct social structures

e.g., rules, norms, established modes of interacting and pursuing organizational objectives

REFERENCE:

Theodorakopoulos and Budhwar (2015). Diversity and inclusion in different work settings: Emerging patterns challenges and research agenda. *Human Resource Management*, 5(2), 177-197

The 3 pillars of Institutional Theory

1. The Regulatory Pillar relates to rules, laws and conveyances of power

2. The Normative Pillar refers to systems of values and norms, which imply expectations of social obligations, roles, professionalism, duty and moral responsibility.

3. The Cultural-Cognitive element is regarded as the key feature of new institutionalism, emphasising creation of shared constructions of social reality

How is equity interpreted in university access for those seeking asylum?

"The Regulative Pillar"

- 'Free' education stops at age 18
- Identified as an equity group
- Identified as international student

Critical Race Theory.....

CRT recognises racism as endemic and deeply ingrained in every aspect of society...More recently, CRT is moving beyond the black-white paradigm...CRT remains faithful to its original mandate of treating the social construction of race as central to the way that people of colour are ordered and constrained (Guo, 2015: 243)

Research design

Stories give voice from the views below

Analysis of 3 Case-studies involving participants on bridging visas applying for scholarships and admission to university

3 x Student Applicants participated in semi-structured interviews and gave us access to email correspondence between themselves and the university

5 x interviews with key decision makers from the university to explore the student application, admissions and scholarship award process.

**Design Captures organisational regulations,
normative values and cultural-cognitive
constructions and practices**

Followed by a
Thematic Data Analysis

2 full fee scholarships
advertised :

In total 11 full scholar
qualification pathways

Who were the participants?

3 Iranian refugees - All on Bridging Visas & have been in Australia less than 3 years

1 completed year 12 in Australia- Male

1 completed year 12 in Iran - Female

1 completed B.Education and M. Ed in Iran - Male

Non of these Applicants were admitted to the University, hence were not awarded a scholarship

explore the student award process.

Design Capt
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Key Findings

2 full fee scholarships along with a \$3000 Annual Bursary were advertised :

In total 11 full scholarships were offered including 7 English qualification pathways

Top down policy initiative driven by social equity

No consideration of implementation issues

No training or information sharing with professional staff

Lack of Recognition and homogenisation of the applicant

Key Finding was the Workaround and the link back to Article 26

Recognition of the Right to Education 'Article 26'

Actions taken by staff

Commitment of professional staff and academic departments to the 'cause'

Willingness to learn more and maybe change

'Manipulation and reassessing resources - where is the 'wiggle room'?

Student Applicants are told "they can but they can't"

**Tension between regulations, norms, values
and cultural-cognitive constructions of equity**

Commitment of Professional Staff

"I've been exposed to people, like my sister semi-adopted a Sudanese boy, and then we've had to help get all of his family out here, and raise funds, and we've done all sorts of crazy things, so I guess I'm coming from having had a lot of conversations with this family, and you know, my sister's worked in with different immigrant groups, so I guess I learnt a lot from her; that's how I've got it" - [Social Equity Manager](#)

"we had a number of discussions with the vice chancellor about how scholarships should be targeted within the university, and at that meeting it was raised, you know, how we're supporting international students with equity issues. And the big one that – you know, and there's a lot of – because you can't – you know, there's a lot of international students with different backgrounds and it's very hard to award equity for international students, but we identified at that time that there were – asylum seekers in need." [Social Equity Manager](#)

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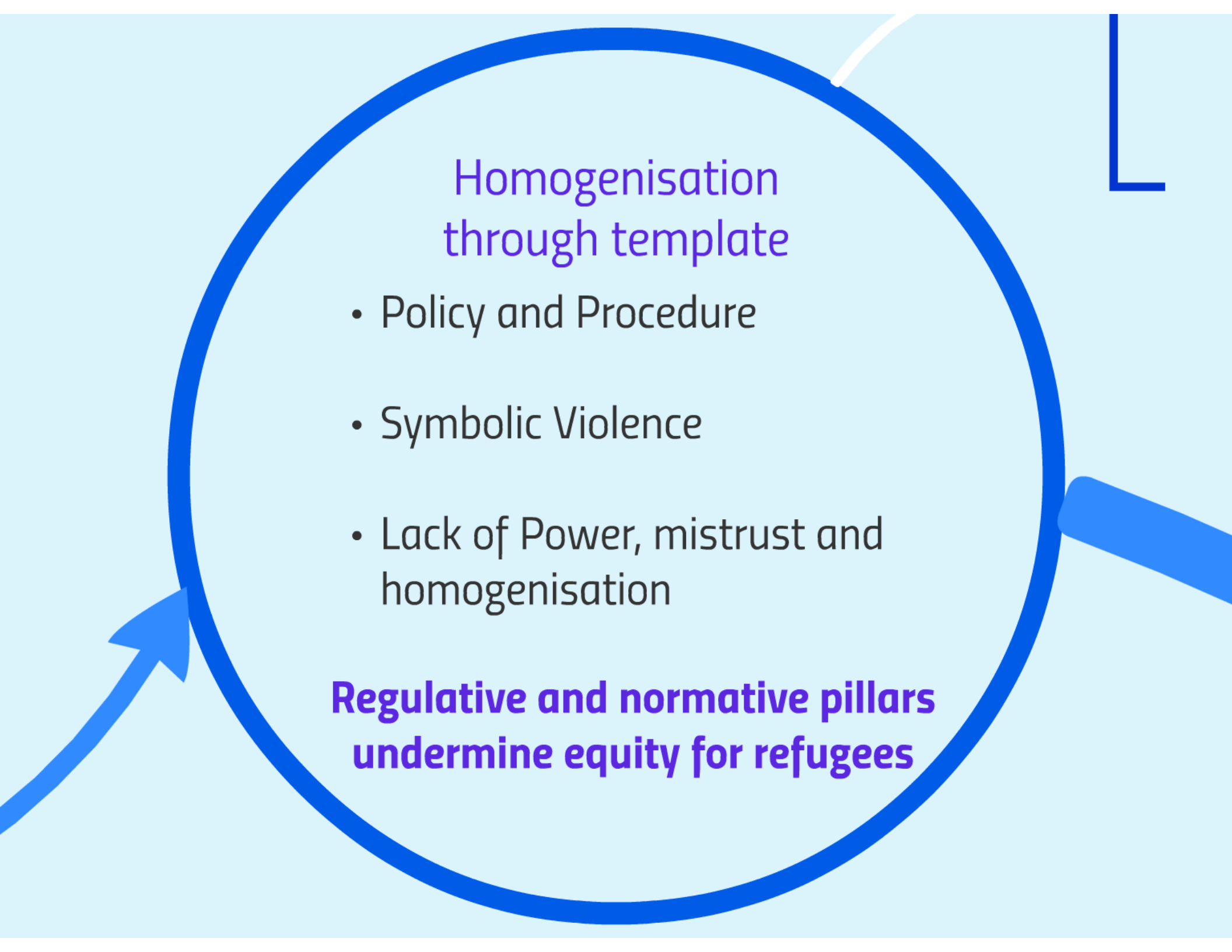
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question them.....
troubles, I don't k
should not be so
you to be in debt
we praise god is
things I think can

".... they are t
Elliot

Being told we can but we can't

"So I'm not going to, I mean something like, I'm not going to complain about or I'm not going to question them..... Because we are guest in this country and sometimes we think that we impose some troubles, I don't know, some costs, some extra things for this country, and we should not, I mean we should not be something like, I don't know, what's it called in accounting? Creditor, every time we say you to be in debt to us, nobody is in debt to us, the only thing that, you know right now we have, and we praise god is that we are safe and sound here, so this is the first and important thing. The other things I think can be, or would solved I mean gradually in the long term." Robby

".... they are torturing students by telling them you're allowed but you can't!"
Elliot



Homogenisation through template

- Policy and Procedure
- Symbolic Violence
- Lack of Power, mistrust and homogenisation

**Regulative and normative pillars
undermine equity for refugees**

Symbolic Violence & Recognition as Template

"I had to answer that question and every time I have to explain to them I came by boat and I couldn't bring my documents and this is what I have and I explained this several times to them to each of them when I went to the University student services" Lucy

"It might sound bad, I – well I felt like the University didn't really – they weren't really welcoming asylum seekers. And the experience that I had, I wish someone really knew about my specific situation at least. The amount of times I went to University and I tried to get at least for someone give me a good answer, a reasonable answer. And the whole experience was like I tried and I got rejected, and I felt really unwanted from the University. ' Elliot

Key Themes

1. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

**2. RECOGNITION through TEMPLATE
& HOMOGENISATION of people seeking
asylum**

Subthemes: POWER & TRUST

3. WORKAROUND



Work Around

- Recognition of a need
- Commitment to the cause
- 'Wriggle' Room
- Bottom up approach
- Recognition of pathways

The Workaround from the bottom up

"I didn't want to say no to the students – I think it's a really worthy cause. I spent a considerable amount of my time in a really critical period but I think it's such a worthy cause and if we are really looking at supporting students then this is the way we need to do it. It's very difficult when you read the ... student statements that they provide as part of their applications to stay – you're more worthy than this student and so I didn't want to take that approach. I wanted to see let's try and support as many students as possible and when we first looked at the applications and we saw the students' stories and then we saw their marks coming through that's when we started thinking of English language pathways" *Head of scholarships*

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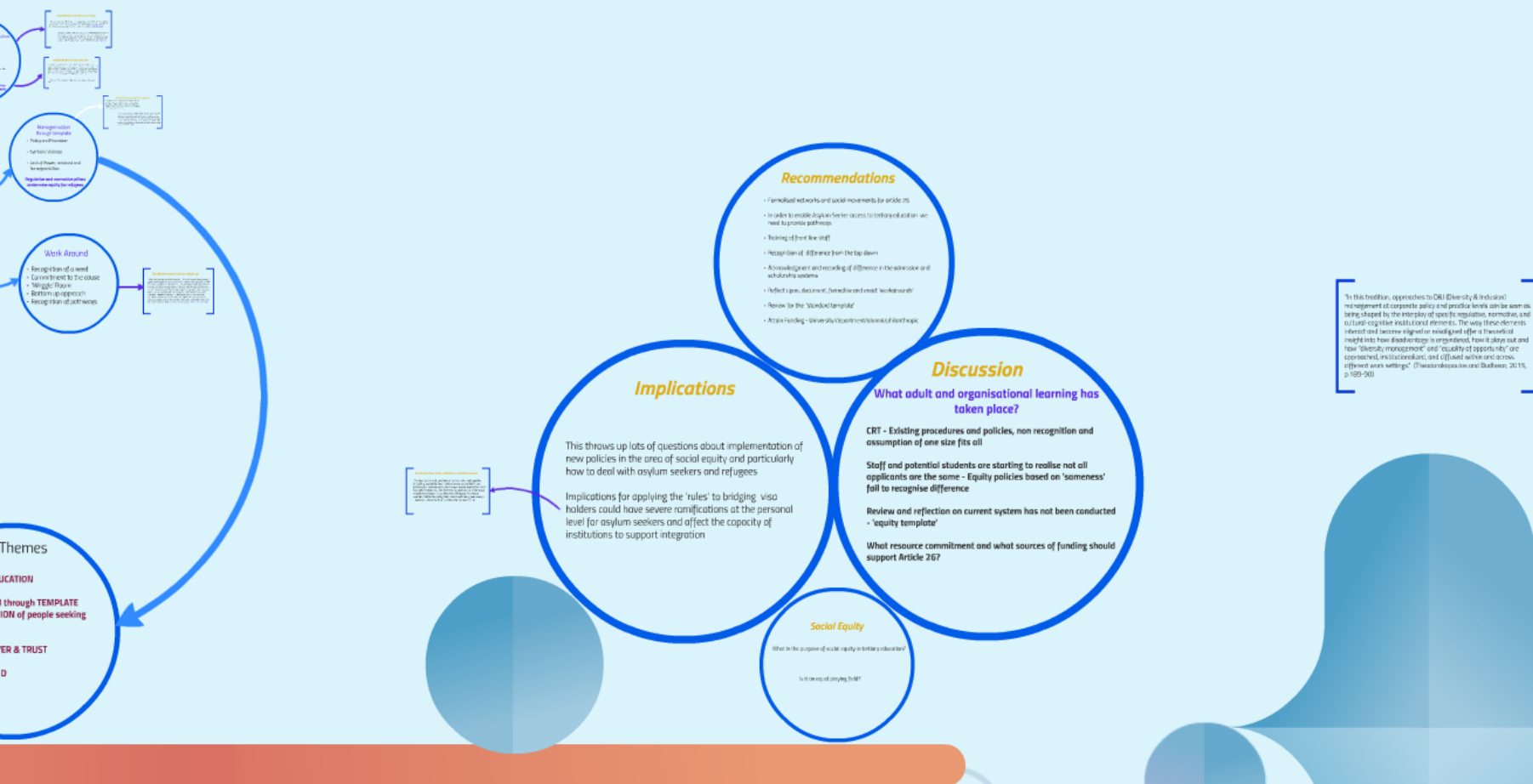
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Social Equity

What is the purpose of social equity in tertiary education?

Is it an equal playing field?

ht, formalise and enact 'workarounds'

ard template'

rsity/department/alumni/philanthropic

Discussion

What adult and organisational learning has taken place?

CRT - Existing procedures and policies, non recognition and assumption of one size fits all

Staff and potential students are starting to realise not all applicants are the same - Equity policies based on 'sameness' fail to recognise difference

Review and reflection on current system has not been conducted - 'equity template'

What resource commitment and what sources of funding should support Article 26?

cial Equity

f social equity in tertiary education?

"In this tradition, approaches to D&I (Diversity & Inclusion) management at corporate policy and practice levels can be seen as being shaped by the interplay of specific regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive institutional elements. The way these elements interact and become aligned or misaligned offer a theoretical insight into how disadvantage is engendered, how it plays out and how "diversity management" and "equality of opportunity" are approached, institutionalized, and diffused within and across different work settings." (Theodorakopoulos and Budhwar, 2015, p.189-90)

Implications

This throws up lots of questions about implementation of new policies in the area of social equity and particularly how to deal with asylum seekers and refugees

Implications for applying the 'rules' to bridging visa holders could have severe ramifications at the personal level for asylum seekers and affect the capacity of institutions to support integration

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The Ramifications at the individual and institutional level

"I've been to University, and every time I really felt really positive. But getting rejected by them it already made me feel like I'm not good enough. And around my life I've been always feeling that. So it was really hard for me. And then I had to again try, try harder to get myself enrolled again. I was like what will happen, I'm already rejected. And like the feeling that I wasn't really being good enough ... was like – broke me down - really broke me down." Elliot

Recommendations

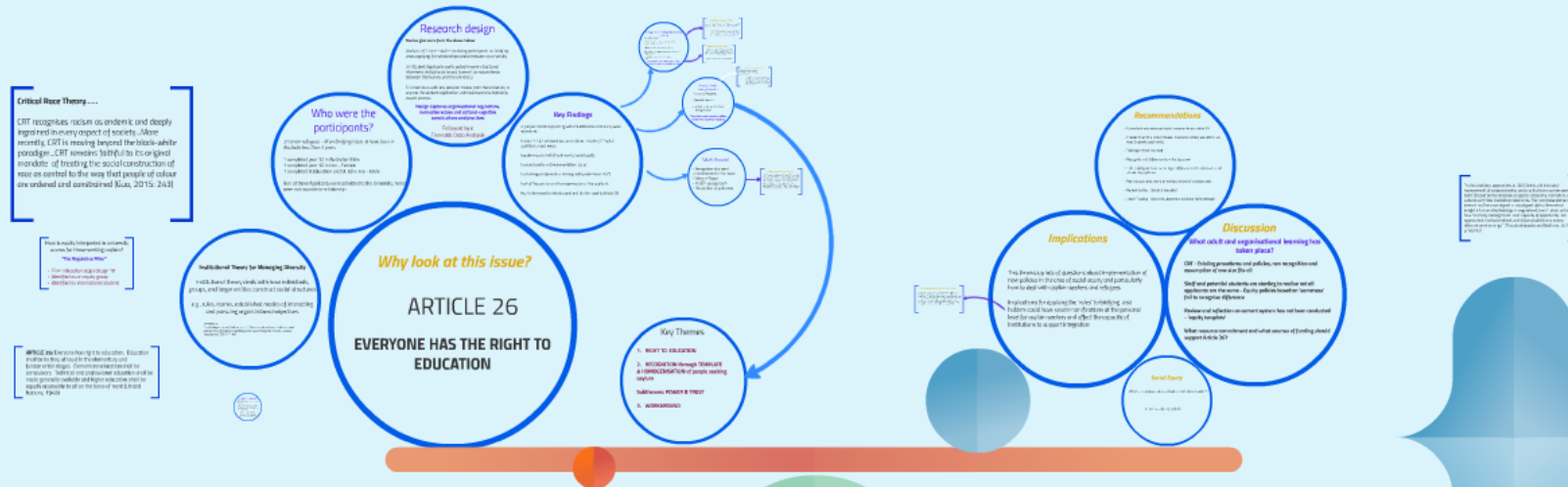
- Formalised networks and social movements for article 26
- In order to enable Asylum Seeker access to tertiary education we need to provide pathways
- Training of front line staff
- Recognition of difference from the top down
- Acknowledgment and recording of difference in the admission and scholarship systems
- Reflect upon, document, formalise and enact 'workarounds'
- Review for the 'standard template'
- Attain Funding - University/department/alumni/philanthropic

Discuss

lications

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