Access21: Empowering Students

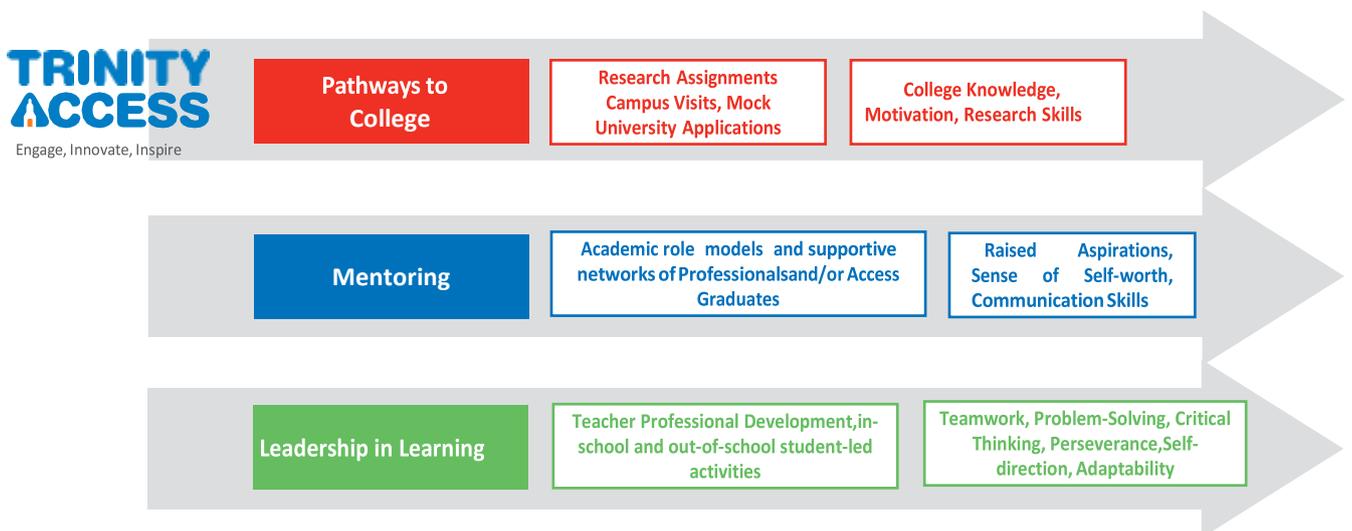# Output 10:
Access21 Programme: Impact Report

Contents

❖ Introduction to Output

❖ Measured Impact of Project on Stakeholder Groups

- Part I: Teachers and Schools Directly Involved in Access21 Project

- Part II: Students

- Part III: Other Stakeholders in Education

- Additional Impact, Dissemination and Sustainability of the Access21 Project

❖ Summary of Findings

❖ Introduction to Output

This project was built around designing and delivering professional development workshops for participating teachers in each of the three core practices of TA21, as well as developing innovative resources to be used by other educational institutions. The broader aim of the project, however, was to empower a wider range of students in groups of lower 'socioeconomic status' (SES), in participating institutions and beyond, to achieve their full educational and personal potential. The inclusion of multiple layers of stakeholders and the dissemination of the results among them and beyond, were therefore particularly important. We measured evidence of the results, in each of the three core practices, among three groups:

1. The participating teachers & the schools – the primary target group;
2. The students/school of the participating teachers – the secondary target group; and
3. Other educators and students from low SES backgrounds.

A reminder of the Core Practices of Access21

❖ Measured Impact of Project on Stakeholder Groups

- ### Part I: Teachers and Schools Directly Involved in Access21 Project

The Teachers

Beginning with the primary target group (the participating teachers), this group were empowered to create an Access21 programme in their schools, thereby increasing their understanding of, and developing their confidence in, implementing the three core practices. The original aim had been to implement a full programme incorporating all three core practices; but due to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic exactly halfway through the project, and the resulting disruption to the normal running of the participating schools, it was decided that each of the three partner schools would focus on one of the core practices each for the duration of the project. Within each school, six teachers collaborated to pilot an idea, with a selected group of students, and to develop exemplar activities and resources based on these. The impact on these 18 teachers has been very positive; as described by themselves, via an end-of-project survey, they gained greater insight into the teaching profession by working with experienced teachers from other international schools. They had the chance to learn about new ways of teaching, methodologies and strategies to use when designing activities or projects. In terms of working with innovative teaching and learning methods, they reported considering their role less as a didactic educator, but more as a facilitator and a guide for students, while learning about new digital tools and trends. The teachers also reported greater ability to work in groups, even internationally, and confidence in their communication skills.

In terms of practical impact, through some of the activities demonstrated by the TCD as lead partners, the participating teachers gained valuable practical experience in project management and the creation of classroom resources such as videos. They also reported a greater interest in professional development, and determination to pursue their own learning and continue their own lifelong education. For example, as a result of participation in the Access21 project, Silvia Velez, one of the teachers in the Barcelona school, intends to be the first international registrant on the TCD postgraduate certificate course in 21st Century Teaching and Learning.

One teacher, who is in a management role said "As a school leader this project has created a space for me to discover and explore best practices in empowering young people to make informed decisions about their pathways after second level education." In terms of strengthening the profiles of the teaching profession, the teachers involved described their experience with the project as having improved their outlook on teaching and student-teacher relationships, as well as providing them with fresh tools and perspectives.

Teachers reported that the impact of Access21 has been enriching for their schools, with positive impacts on the whole school community. They described the project as having given them "a breath of fresh air", giving them the courage to start new initiatives, and making them realise that even a small school can think big and try new things.

Participating organisations
On the theme of the participating schools, the project's outcomes have reached audiences beyond the small groups of teachers directly involved. Firstly, within the project partnership, the primary audience was the other teachers within the school. We initially asked all teachers in the three schools to give a presentation to their staff about the project. The staff were also included in filling out our baseline questionnaire, which provided basic information about the core practices before asking the teachers questions about their understanding of them and attitude towards them. Our project partners reported that these early activities generated interest from across their school communities. These teachers, while not directly a part of the project, were involved in developing some of the core practice pilot ideas: for example, in IRB, several teachers acted as guides when the Leadership in Learning initiative, Libertas, was being set up. Teachers outside the project were brought into the mentoring pilot in ICVR, and have reported positive results from their involvement. In Mercy Inchicore, the STEM Passport pilot brought several of the science and maths teachers on board. Students in all three schools have become more aware of the 21st Century skills focus employed by their teachers during the project, and the schools have all reported a positive impact of the project upon the entire school community. Therefore, joining the project has benefitted the schools in terms of the development of collaboration among staff members, and gave them the opportunity to self evaluate, reflect on existing practices and think outside the box. One teacher said that "This project created communities of practice, not only amongst the teachers in our school, but also in a broader sense with our European partners. Student leadership and 21st century learning were brought to the forefront of decisions being made about the direction of our school, both in the short term and strategically. It has contributed to a much-needed shift in culture and a renewed energy in our school." Through multiplier events and other dissemination practices, the project has reached beyond the initial six teachers in each school and branched out to become a training opportunity for all the staff.

- ## Part II: Students

The students in the three project schools were the next 'target' group, with the project focusing on their learning, skill development and future aspirations. Teachers we surveyed reported that students benefited from the Access21 project both directly, i.e. those involved in pilot initiatives in either Pathways to College, Mentoring or Leadership in Learning; and indirectly, via the improvement in their teachers confidence and willingness to bring

innovative, student-led practices into their classrooms, such as allowing students to collaborate on group projects.

Overall across the three schools, teachers reported that students were enthusiastic about taking part in the core practice pilot projects, and displayed high levels of engagement. They also improved their self-efficacy and ability to manage themselves, which are skills required by the Junior Cycle, and have learnt how to organize themselves and fulfil their goals by learning from their mistakes.

The main student-focused priorities of this project were to improve social inclusion and supporting schools to tackle early school leaving and disadvantage. The outcomes of the project demonstrate progress toward these priorities in various ways. Teachers reported that students who took part in the Access21 project are more engaged in their own educational journeys, and more motivated to collaborate with both other students and with the teaching staff, which promotes inclusion of the students as part of a community. In Mercy Inchicore in particular, the students who took part in the STEM Passport began to see themselves as being capable of a career in STEM or in choosing college courses that they previously thought were too difficult for them. The Libertas group from IRB were empowered to change their own circumstances by coming together to discuss important issues and to feel that they could make a difference. All of these impacts can help students to overcome social disadvantages that they face. Moreover, teachers described the project as having begun an important conversation about consciously addressing the problem of early school leaving, and developing more inclusive processes for the retention and thriving of students who have become disengaged from their education.

- ## Part III: Other Stakeholders in Education

The results of the project have reached a wide audience within Ireland, both locally in TCD and across schools in Dublin and the rest of the country. This has been mainly through the distribution of the project outputs, and the dissemination of contextualised presentations of the projects activities and results via a large teacher event (the main multiplier event hosted by Trinity Access). The outputs are now available via the Access21 project website (output 8), which has been shared as a link - access21-project.scss.tcd.ie - with relevant audiences of educators via Twitter, as well as a mailing list of over 100 teachers who are in the Irish network of Trinity Access schools. Additionally, the website and thus the project outputs have been shared with the current cohort of Irish teachers registered for the Postgraduate Certificate in 21st Century Teaching and Learning professional development course, as well as the alumni - altogether a group of over 500 educators.

In terms of the outputs, positive feedback was received from all corners, particularly about the effectiveness of output 6, the Access21 coursebook, which since its launch at an access conference in Oxford College in 2019 has been widely used as a practitioner's guide to setting up Access21 (the core practices) from scratch in a school. Points mentioned were the user-

friendly language and infographics, sample activities that teachers could borrow, and the tips and advice on what to do and what not to do. Lorena, a participating teacher from Italy, said that: "This coursebook provides clear instructions on how to set up a Trinity Access Core Practice project in your own school. Although it is packed with useful information, I found it extremely easy to use. Finding what you are looking for is quite straightforward... Which is key when you are in a hurry (as we teachers may sometimes be...).". Prior to completion of the project, the Access21 coursebook (output 6) was developed in 2019 and shared via printed copies at a Trinity Access/Access21 conference in Oxford University, at which about 100 teachers from across Europe were in attendance. Since then, From 2019, it has also been made available as an online resource, and shared with our entire Trinity Access network (80 schools and approximately 400 teachers).

Output 7, the core practice introductory videos, have also been shared with our entire schools network in Ireland, and will also be shared on all Trinity Access Twitter and other social media accounts, as an inspirational vehicle to showcase the 'why' of the core practices to new schools and educators. About the videos, Lorena in Italy shared with us that: "What I really loved about the Trinity Access Core Practices videos is that not only are they highly informative, but they also make all key stakeholders' voices heard. It was so interesting to see Pathways to College, Mentoring and Leadership in Learning projects through the eyes of both teachers and students involved. An inspiration!". Output 8, the programme evaluation tool, has also had a huge impact on the three project partner schools, and also the 80 Trinity Access network schools, in terms of providing a mechanism for them to examine and reflect on their current practices, and plan and create new activities and interventions to improve their students' outcomes. This output consists of student and teacher questionnaires which are administered to schools each year, to monitor their progress towards their own individual goals. These are also available via the Access21 website, to be adapted for the context of any school across Europe that wishes to adopt the core practices and self-evaluate. Now that the project has concluded, the impact report will also be available to interested stakeholders via the project website. We are also delighted to have added three case studies, from each of our partner schools, to the Access21 coursebook, as an in-depth look at how a Pathways to College, Mentoring or Leadership in Learning pilot programme can be set up in any school.

❖ **Additional Impact, Dissemination and Sustainability of the Access21 Project**

The dissemination of the project results mainly took place through the Multiplier Events. ICVR held one in Italy and IRB held one in Spain, both in November 2021. They presented the aims and objectives of the project to an audience of 20+ educators from local organisations, including education colleagues, officials from the Town Council, social workers and university professors. They shared the outputs to date, and explained how they could be used in any educational institution. Additionally, the TCD team held a final project showcase event on

12th November 2021, with an audience of 140 Irish teachers. The event was divided into two
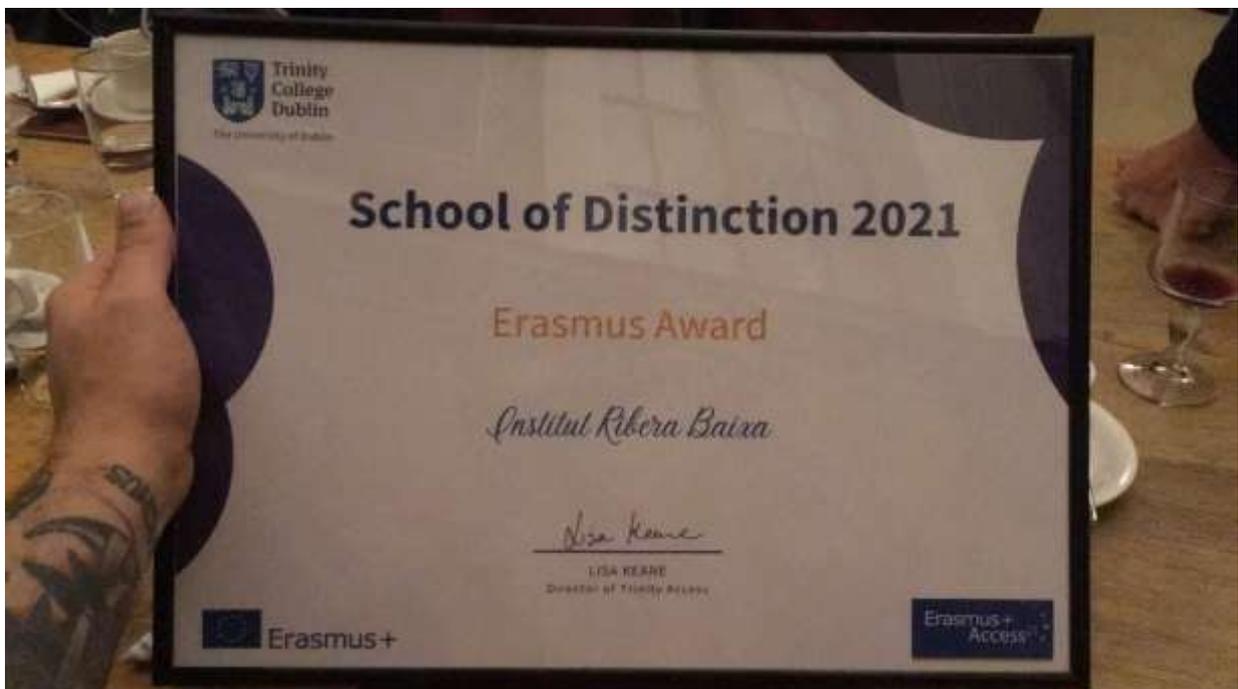

Italian Access21 Teachers at the Schools of Distinction Awards, November 2021, Trinity College Dublin (Project Showcase)

parts: a schools sharing and planning workshop, at which the Mercy, IRB and ICVR partners shared their experiences of the project and promoted the usefulness of the outputs to the audience; and a dinner and awards ceremony for the Schools of Distinction presentations. These awards take place annually and invite schools in Ireland to fill in a planning document (also part of output 8), which has sections dedicated to Pathways to College, Mentoring and Leadership in Learning, and to enter their efforts into the awards. Last year, for the first time, two international schools participated in these awards: our Italian and Spanish Access21 partners. Following their participation in Access 21, they completed the application document and received an award for their school, alongside 60 Irish schools. Receiving this award is a huge honour for their schools and they have displayed their certificates proudly and prominently within their school buildings. For Trinity Access also, this dissemination of a previously regional event outwards into other European countries has been very satisfying

and meaningful. The impact of what we are doing has reached beyond our local context and is making a real difference there.

Dissemination of the project activities was also carried out through Twitter: TCD set up an account whose handle is @Access21Europe; Spain's one is @Access21S, Italy's is @Access21Italy, and Mercy Inchicore School kept their own, very active existing Twitter account, @MercyInchicore. The total number of followers of these accounts is 1543, and they were used throughout the project to share information about our meetings, workshops and activities.

We are also ensuring the project's results will remain available and encourage teachers and schools to use them, beyond the lifespan of this project. We will continue to maintain the licence on our website going forward, so that the outputs will continue to be available. Moreover, due to the crossover between this project and the wider Trinity Access core practices programme, the outputs are all of interest to our large network of schools, and as such will be available on the Trinity Access website as well. We will continue to engage in national and international discussions about the value of incorporating Pathways to College, Mentoring and Leadership in Learning into schools, and thus will promote the outputs going forward as a set of valuable resources to assist with that process.

Access21 Teachers from Spain were presented with their Schools of Distinction Awards, November 2021.

Trinity College Dublin (Project Showcase)

Each of the partners is committed to maintaining the student initiatives that they piloted during this project, and to branch out from there in other directions. For example, IRB in Spain focused on Leadership in Learning practice, which has resulted in improved confidence and skills development in their students, but they are very keen to now focus on Pathways to College, in order to improve their progression rate to higher and further education. In the project outputs, including the Core Practice videos, the Access21 coursebook, there are many examples of activities that are working in schools and that can be adapted to suit the context and needs of a particular organisation. The partners are maintaining their cross-European collaboration in the form of regular online teachmeets, which provide time and space for them to plan their next steps and to consult with each other about what is working and how to troubleshoot when issues arise. Moreover, we have encouraged them all to re-apply for the Schools of Distinction in May 2022, thus continuing their culture of self-evaluation and striving for excellence in the core practices. A resource that we in Trinity Access are continuing to provide is ongoing support for these schools in achieving their aims, including online application 'clinics' and 'staffroom chats', which are weekly online discussions about the core practices, open to any teacher in our network. These provisions are core to Trinity Access's mission, and as such will be funded outside of the Erasmus project, ensuring their longevity. We will also continue to promote the resources produced by the project, with all teachers who engage with Trinity Access, and with future Erasmus Plus projects that we are involved in, having full access to them.

❖ Summary of Findings

The implementation of this project has had a significant impact upon all intended stakeholders, in particular the teachers in the three participating schools, and also their students and colleagues.

The results outlined in this report have a reach beyond Trinity-linked schools, and beyond the three schools who were involved in the Access21 project, to any school who wants to adopt the three Core Practices. These findings provide the 'Why' for any other school or teacher in Europe who wants to get involved, as do our project videos showcasing teachers who use the practices regularly, and our website and impact report. They can find out 'How' via our other main project output, the Access21 coursebook, which provides a practical guide to getting started with the Core Practices, and how to roll them out across all age groups in a school. Recommendations we would make from the data gathered and presented here is:

- That each project school continues to build up their Access21 programme within the school; to involve more educator colleagues in their Access21 community of practice.
- That each project school regularly assesses their progress in Access21 via the student and teacher evaluation tools (Output 9) and applies for the Trinity Access Schools of Distinction programme each year.