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Learning about Inclusive Practices in Higher Education – The Horizon of Asian Approaches

Sanger, C. S. & Gleason, N. W. (2020). Diversity and Inclusion in Global Higher Education – Lessons from Across Asia. Springer, Singapore.

Considering diversity and inclusion in higher education of the 21st century is getting more attention (FODOR & HORVÁTH, 2021). Institutional development and intervention are essential for enhancing Inclusive Excellence at universities (HURTADO, ET AL., 2012; VARGA, 2015). The thought provoking and recent collection of studies titled *Diversity and Inclusion in Global Higher Education – Lessons from Across Asia* introduces practices and approaches situated in Asia.

The book consists of four parts (Part I Pedagogy for Inclusion; Part II Liberal Arts Curricula in Asia Through the Diversity and Inclusion Lens; Part III Supporting Historically Marginalized Populations; Part IV Leadership for Inclusion) that systematically reflect on various aspects of inclusion in the Asian Higher Educational context. In the introductory chapter, the editor highlights that Asia as a continent is so diverse in nature that the focus of the collection is limited to North-East-, South-East-, and South Asia. The authors of the eleven chapters focus on different phenomena and best practices in numerous countries.

The main concepts of diversity and inclusion in the collection and Asian Higher Education contexts are defined in Chapter 1. Diversity in the Asian context, parallel to the global tendencies, have become more transparent and therefore institutional inclusive strategies are applied in Asian tertiary education. Inclusive approaches are further accelerated by international partnerships as well as international and intra-national mobility. In Asia, diversity does not only appear in an ethnical sense, but more importantly other diversity constructing factors are given emphasis such as religion, socio-economic status, age, and gender. This approach is in accordance with the analysis of Varga and her colleagues (2020), highlighting that creating an inclusive environment begins with determining those non-traditional and/or underrepresented student groups who are at risk of facing exclusion. The first theoretical chapter lays down the theoretical framework of the collection that gives a basis for analyzing diversity and inclusion in the four thematic parts of the book.

The first part of the study collection contains four chapters that concern *Pedagogy for Inclusion*. This section of the book is recommended for educators who would like to transform their pedagogical practices to fulfill the aims of inclusion.

For meeting the needs of diverse learner groups two pedagogical approaches are introduced in Chapter 2, which include Inclusive Pedagogy and Universal Design. The applica-

tion of these approaches is sufficient for enhancing academic excellence (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2015) and inclusive excellence (Baumann et al., 2005). The application of these approaches is sufficient for enhancing academic excellence. The author gives insight to the effectiveness of inclusive pedagogy in fulfilling students' needs and recommends several practices to apply in the higher education setting. Universal Design is an approach that concentrates on making education equally accessible for students and giving equitable opportunities (Burgstahler, 2015). Importantly, Universal Design does not only refer to designing physical spaces to be equally accessible (Burgstahler, 2017b), but also equity of instruction (Burgstahler, 2017a). Sanger, in Chapter 2. shares several ideas about designing teaching materials and assessment in an equitable approach. The author elaborates their best practices in the context of their university. Those interested in the chapter can learn best practices of inclusive teaching methodology, such as ways of assessment, teaching guidance, teaching techniques, teaching formats, and feedback.

In Chapter 3, Ragupathi and Lee introduce a consistent form of grading and assessment, including the role and effects of applying rubrics in higher education. Rubrics, as formal and detailed assessment tools, aim to give guidance and exact expectations to students while giving constructive feedback in the end of the teaching-learning process. The authors discuss this assessment tool, its usage, and its positive effects on student achievement.

Chapter 4 elaborates on adult learners, the first explicit target group of inclusion in the collection. The term *adult* does not refer to an age group; on the contrary, the notion concentrates on the status of students such as their marital status, having children, the extent of their responsibilities (e.g.: working full-time while participating in a university program or living separate from parents). These factors determine their belonging to this category of *adult*. Yan Yin and Wei Ying discuss their empirical data based on research carried out with this group of students who are the focus of inclusive interventions. A lesson to learn for decision makers and educators is to extend their target groups for adult learners in higher education, for their needs are much different compared to their fellow students.

The last section in Part I approaches inclusivity from a pragmatic angle. In Chapter 5 Shelen calls attention to innovative pedagogies that are beneficial to students in preparing for the needs of the job market. The study concerns the changes initiated by the 4th industrial revolution and 21st century skills (Voogt & Roblin, 2010; Jacobson & Lundeberg, 2016) after finishing university. The chapter offers various teaching techniques (e.g., Team Based Learning, Teaching Thinking Skills, Flipped Instruction Model) that can make educators' practice more efficient. A central issue in the study is the Confucian heritage and culture that is not only relevant in the Asian context but can be adopted by educators who work with students of Confucian religion in their higher education contexts.

The second part of the collection concentrates on curriculum and service development. In Chapter 6, Bailyn discusses approaches to diversity in Liberal Arts curriculum, emphasizing that development is a constant and ongoing process. In Chapter 7, the authors describe a service-learning model for enhancing inclusion of underprivileged students. In the Asian context, inclusion of students who are first-generation intellectuals from low social-economic status (SES) families is increasing. Equitable interventions that compensate for disadvantages faced by low SES students (Sweeney, 2013; Claeys-Kulik et al., 2019) has been a major focus internationally, and these interventions also mean financial (Enlge & Tinto, 2008; Bettinger & Evans, 2019; Horváth, 2021) and technological support (May & Bridger, 2010). The authors highlight the role of services in scaffolding the upward mobility of students, which corresponds with international trends (Burgstahler, 2017c). In Chapter 8, Singh elaborates the theory and practice of a Centre for Writing and Communication that was established as an extracurricular opportunity for students. Chapters in Part II give

examples for building strategic plans for establishing inclusive interventions and services in various contexts. This part of the book favors those stakeholders and decisionmakers who would like to immerse themselves in the practice of building strategies for students' inclusive excellence (Milem et al., 2005).

Part III, titled *Supporting Historically Marginalized Populations*, concerns two focus groups of inclusion: the LGBTQ community and women. Being part of a sexual minority has been described as a constructing element of diversity (Sweeney, 2013, Harris & Lee, 2013), and students from the LGBTQ community are undergoing discrimination and being treated negatively in several contexts (Magnus & Lundin, 2015). In Chapter 9, Eng and Yan classify Asian universities – also cultural contexts – based on their attitudes to the community. They describe three types of institutions, including Affirming, Ambivalent and Hostile Universities. The authors offer various strategies for creating inclusive environment for the target groups (e.g. appropriate language use and terminology, curriculum development, visibility and representation). Secondly, the third part of the book in Chapter 10 provides insight on the tendencies of representation of women in Asian higher education. Interventions and institutional development are needed for complete inclusion of women, because they still have limitations for accessing universities as well as unequal experience and outcomes in their training. The authors call attention to the need for institutional changes to create an equitable tertiary education system for women.

In Chapter 11, Gleason advocates for strategic leadership in developing inclusive higher education institutions. Engagement of decisionmakers can shape universities to inclusive teaching-learning environments, in which students' needs are fulfilled in accordance with pragmatic factors. Strategically speaking, the chapter discusses that inclusive pedagogical approaches are adequate for teaching students according to the expectations of the job market related to 21st century skills and objectives grounded in the 4th industrial revolution. For institutional sustainability, the inclusion of historically underrepresented students is an egalitarian, ethical, and strategic necessity.

The collection resonates with the international tendencies and approaches in applying inclusion for developing students and creating a safe and equitable environment. The book consists of several lessons to learn about inclusivity in Asia, and readers interested in the region can get an overview about interventions on the continent. The developments discussed are in accordance with international practices and approaches, strengthening ongoing processes and widening perspectives of decision makers and those who are involved in constructing inclusive interventions. In Hungary, research and institutional strategic development began at the University of Pécs in 2015 (Arató & Varga, 2015). Involving decision makers is an essential factor, as the last chapter suggested. After laying down the theoretical framework, an organization was established that was in charge of coordinating the dissemination of inclusive practices at the university (Varga & Horváth, 2021). Creating an organization is a source of transparency and can result in more focus-oriented and effective interventions. An assessment of inclusive programs was carried out involving program leaders (Varga et al., 2019). As the importance of revealing the underrepresented and/or non-traditional groups of students at the university, research also focused on students belonging to target groups of inclusion (Varga et al., 2020; Vitéz, 2021b; Varga et al., 2021). Finally, a collection of studies was published (Vitéz, 2021a), discussing the institution development and best practices of inclusion at the university.

This book is useful to assist with strategic development and widen perspectives of those committed to inclusion. It is recommended to be read by individuals interested in the Asian context of higher education and its inclusive practices. The book is useful for university educators and researchers because it consists of advice and strategies for decision makers in enhancing inclusive excellence in tertiary education.

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