

ZSOFIA J. TOSZEGI

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity in Contemporary Higher Education: Connecting the Global and Local Contexts

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*"Our ability to reach unity in diversity will  
be the beauty and the test of our civilization."*  
(Mahatma Gandhi)

*"The purpose of university education is to  
build a more just and equitable society"*  
(Dafna Schwartz)

This premier reference source was published as one of the volumes in the Advances in Higher Education and Professional Development (AHEPD) Book Series. The 334-page volume is divided into three sections: 1. Learning in Diverse Higher Educational Settings; 2. Teaching in Diverse Higher Educational Settings; and 3. Learning in Diverse Higher Educational Settings. Following the edition notice, the AHEDP mission statement, and other titles published by the IGI series, the reader can find a short, then a detailed Table of Contents, followed by a Preface, 16 chapters, a compilation of references, short biographies about the contributors, and the Index. In terms of geographical scope, most of the contributors are from universities within the United States, but several chapters were written by researchers from South African universities and a scholar from the University of South Australia. However, the editor gives voice to numerous participants of the Diversity-Equity-Inclusivity (hereinafter DEI) discourse across gender, race, academic, and administrative levels in higher education (hereinafter HE). Where it is relevant, I will note the connections between the chapters and our current research at the Inclusive Excellent Research Group at the University of Pecs (UP-IERG) and the local DEI context in Hungarian HE.

## Conceptualizing Equity Pedagogies and Policies

The editor, Rhonda Jeffries, an associate professor of curriculum studies in the Department of Instruction and Teacher Education, a faculty fellow with the Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of South Carolina, and the author of *Performance Traditions with African American teachers*. In the *Preface* to the volume, she stated that her objective for compiling the 16 chapters was to highlight cases presenting inequality, marginalization, and disparities in higher education. She referred to some of the theoretical groundwork

that outlined the role of universities to be *anchor institutions* that address societal problems with a mission to build a more democratic, just, and equitable society by effectively incorporating methods that acknowledge diversity in its many forms (HURTADO et al., 2012).

Prior research has acknowledged the importance of HE in providing spaces for inclusion to diverse groups of individuals based on *age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, class, race, and religion*; however, many universities still struggle to effectively utilize theoretical findings in their practice (SMITH, 2020). To incorporate theory successfully, it is crucial that HE leaders establish policies that address current trends at their institution and consider such policies to be fluid and evolving. This means that leadership should be fully committed to continuously improving these policies by supporting ongoing data collection and examination of best practices. HE stakeholders need to move beyond “knowing about diversity” to “employing diverse perspectives in decision-making spaces” to disrupt prevalent inequalities in higher education opportunities (BERILA, 2015; JEFFRIES, 2019: XIV). In the Hungarian context, a recent study discussed preferential treatment given to marginalized groups and the impact of this higher education policy on macro-statistical data from the University of Pecs, Hungary (VARGA et al., 2021). In a previous volume of research titled *Inclusive University*, Varga presented a system-based model of inclusiveness, and the editors also emphasized the cyclical nature of a constantly evolving system, and the optimal operating conditions of an inclusive HE environment (ARATO & VARGA, 2015). While *Inclusive University* was a volume divided into theory, practice, and strategy parts, reviewing a variety of models of inclusion, and systematically building its recommendations on the phases of *Input* (criteria of equal opportunity), *Process* (examining the operating conditions of a system that is aiming for Inclusive Excellence), and *Output* (yielding efficient indicators that apply to all participants). The chapters of the reviewed book examine the cyclical nature of *theory, practice, and policy* in harmony with the way we learn, teach and lead in the field of DEL, and it applies Giddens’ structuration theory (1986) toward inclusive goals, shifting the focus from inclusive models to examining inequalities, presenting equity pedagogies and agent actions that needs to be backed up by the concept of equity policies and their monitoring. All chapters in this volume draw on emergent literature addressing the role of social justice in higher education.

The first section of the book, *Learning in Diverse Educational Settings*, which explored a variety of issues that impact student learning in HE. Chapter 1 is titled *Inclusivity in the Archives: Expanding Undergraduate Pedagogies for Diversity and Inclusion*, which was inspired by the authors’ realization during archival research at the University of Santa Clara, USA that the *hidden curriculum* has imposed its stigma on archival research, given the limited collections of archives and the attitudes of staff. The authors’ unique approach highlighted the importance of inclusivity in the archives as well, and emphasized that “*archival activism*” can also be a “*tool of resistance*” that seeks to remedy inequity (in the archives) by raising awareness of the fact that *with each diverse entry we validate the story-telling narratives that give cohesion to individuals and groups* (LUECK et al., 2019, p. 12). If different identities and experiences were not represented in archives, we would risk communicating the worthlessness of certain identities, which might lead to a sense of marginalization and exclusion for some students. The authors are calling for diversified and ethical archival practices that will help constitute a sense of community and foster solidarity across difference.

In Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, the authors discussed course delivery methods that might enhance participation from diverse student cohorts. In Chapter 2, titled *Tackling Diversity and Promoting Inclusivity: A Flipped Classroom Model to Enhance the First Year University Experience*, the author addressed cultural diversity within Australian tertiary student cohorts and referred to a wide range of innovative learning and teaching methods, such as the flipped classroom model that has become dominant among blended learning pedagogy

(MCCARTHY, 2019). The author explored whether the flipped classroom encouraged more meaningful interaction with peers and staff from different cultural, disciplinary, and social backgrounds. An investigative case study involved 388 first year students and associated academic staff between 2015 and 2017 at the University of South Australia to establish the benefits and limitations of tutorial techniques and to illustrate that the flipped classroom model provides more learning benefits to students and greater engagement. In particular, the study explored how the flipped classroom provided a clearer understanding of technical content and more meaningful peer-to-peer and peer-to-staff interactions for international students. Chapter 3, *Reaching Diverse Learners by Offering Different Course Delivery Methods*, raised awareness of different learning styles and their connection to reaching diverse learners. Participants in the study included 113 males and 195 females who were enrolled in a business principles & marketing course for non-business majors at the University of South Carolina. All students completed an online questionnaire with demographic questions and the Grasha-Reichmann student learning style scale (GRSLSS). Findings provided a better understanding of why students select certain course delivery methods and why universities and colleges should create more technologically enhanced and distributed learning courses (HAYNES, 2019).

Chapter 4, *The Influence of Social and Cultural Capital on Student Persistence*, provided an overview of mixed-methods research examining the influence of social or cultural capital on student persistence. Several research volumes have been published in Hungary about attrition and persistence in higher education and an entire volume of the Hungarian Educational Research Journal (HERJ) was also devoted to this topic in the same year this chapter came out (PUSZTAI & SZIGETI, 2018; PUSZTAI et al., 2019). In the reviewed chapter, interviews from participants covered four main factors: family, faculty/professors, self-motivation, and finances. The author concluded that social capital was more positively related to school success as a factor of persistence than cultural capital (BANKS, 2019). Chapter 5, titled *Education, Community and Social Engagement: Re-Imagining Graduate Education*, challenged the traditional grad school experience and envisioned a more active engagement with social justice and communities to engage leaders and inspire change through service learning. Scholarly personal narratives (SPN) and the principles of Global Transformative Education Forum (TEF) were some of the best practices the author discussed when education targeted meaningful outcomes that stretched beyond campus walls as a Practice of Community (JENKINS, 2019).

The next section of the book was titled *Teaching in Diverse Higher Educational Settings*, which examined the cultural implications of teaching in higher education. Chapter 6 and Chapter 9 called attention to the importance of faculty members to acknowledge and value the different perspectives students bring to college courses. The authors in Chapter 6, *Teaching Through Culture: The Case for Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in American Higher Education Institutions* discussed various scenarios and the role of CRT in educator preparation programs. They made the argument that the faculty has not become so diverse as rapidly as the student population has, so educators must become aware of their biases and deficit mentality to promote equitable distribution of knowledge an ethnically diverse HE classroom (MCALISTER-SHIELDS et al., 2019; BRATEN & HALL, 2020). In the context of the University of Pecs, the study about the *Wlislöcki Henrik Roma Student Society (WHSZ)* in this volume and students joining the *Let's Teach for Hungary Mentor Program*, as well as the *Bridge of Opportunities* engaging with civic organizations are best practices of CRT (BICZO, 2021; GODO, 2021; VARGA et al., 2020). Chapter 9 echoes the message that needs to reach white North American middle-class female teachers working with diverse students and educators preparing to work with a wide variety of ethnicities, religions, socioeconomic statuses, family structures and sexualities. Such educators must listen to the stories and

authentic experiences shared by immigrant and minority families to be able to recognize their own biases and to empower, support and learn with them (HAMEL & GLOVER, 2019).

Chapter 7, *Toward a Liberatory Praxis for Emerging Black Faculty*, offers Black junior faculty members a liberatory pedagogical practice that supports the advancement of justice issues in their classroom, acknowledging their unique experiences and challenges related to their bodies and representations in the classrooms (TAYLOR & BEATTY, 2019). Minority scholars from other regions might also find this article thought-provoking and empowering as it explores embodied texts and related concepts that will enhance their pedagogical effectiveness in a role of a “*translator*”.

Chapter 8 addresses a timely issue in contemporary higher education – the importance of faculty members to be culturally competent about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues. Decades of research have documented unwelcoming climates for LGBTQ and the socio-political structures of education systems that implicitly or explicitly endorse heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia, and cissexism to marginalize individuals with non-normative gender (VACCARO et al., 2019). The authors emphasize that without effective trainings that develop LGBTQ competence, faculty will remain passive bystanders of LGBTQ oppression and continue to engage in exclusionary practice and discriminatory policies. The relevance of this topic to our local context is quite timely, as the University of Pecs has recently developed its very first Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in 2021 with a joint effort by the Ombudsman, the Inclusive Excellence Research Group (IERG), human resources specialists and lawyers from the university. However, in the current political climate, international scholars are skeptical about making headway in delivering gender justice in academia through mandating GEP action as prerequisite for EU Funding Services. The feminized workforce at the bottom of the academic hierarchy with “glass ceilings”, “glass cliffs”, “sticky floors”, and the prevalent “LGBTQ bias” likely remain to be hidden from view (CLAVERO & GALLIGAN, 2021, p. 1116). The barriers to institutional change will be problematic to overcome without *agent action* propelled by a full commitment to the Gender Equality Regime, because institutional change requires legitimate and sustainable gender studies research, frequent and gender-disaggregated data monitoring and a multi-faceted policy covering non-binary constructs in line with EU anti-discrimination law.

In Chapter 10, *Here to Stay: An Overview of the Non-Tenure Track Faculty and Their Rise to New Faculty Majority*, Hayes (2019) examines the employment practices of U.S. colleges and universities and the trend towards hiring non-tenure track and contingent faculty. This study reveals that many faculty purposefully select contingent positions to not compromise high quality teaching, which challenges the prevailing belief that such faculty positions are less desirable due to wage, stability, and benefit differences. Chapter 11 also examines inclusion and belongingness of faculty, but from the perspective of faculty at Historic Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and notes that research on campus climate, diversity, and inclusion has focused mainly on Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). Results from this study reported no racial tensions between Black and non-Black students, without significant differences in perception of belongingness and inclusion at HBCUs (HIATT et al., 2019). However, the experience of faculty members shows a slightly different picture, which challenges previous studies on campus climate (NGWAINMBI, 2006; RANKIN & REASON, 2005). Black faculty members expressed minimal worries for exclusionary practices, isolation, racism, and lack of support, while these issues may pose a threat to minorities (females, Whites, non-Christians, foreign-born, and LGBTQ). The authors emphasize HBCUs role in standing for and leading discussions on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The third and last section is called *Learning in Diverse Educational Settings*, which opens with Chapter 12 and South African scholars who contribute to the scholarship of DEI by raising awareness about the pedagogical issues concerning the support of students with

disabilities in their higher education context through a systematic literature review. The study is divided into five sections: 1. Analysis of the policy imperatives and how they inform practice; 2. The social model of disability and how it shapes educational provisions (the reason why impact assessment is crucial); 3. Recognizing barriers to access and support (issues of intersectionality); 4. Re-culturation and reorientation of higher education and ways to increase the participation of students with disabilities; and 5. Conclusions that emphasizes two vital points: students with disabilities are NOT a homogeneous group, even when they have the same impairment; and structural access is easier to facilitate than curricular access, though the latter is the one that determines the quality of academic experiences (NTOBELA & MAHLANGU, 2019). The barriers students experience are individual in nature but the absence of an integrated strategy along with insufficiently managed institutional special education requirements automatically exclude students with disabilities from meaningfully participating in HE. This chapter also informs our work at UP-IERG when analyzing affirmative action built into the Hungarian higher education policy and examine admissions and health examination practices of the University of Pecs' in light of international best practices to see what institution-wide strategy and support could aid the work of our Support Services (ELMER et al., 2021; TOSZEGI, 2022).

Chapter 13, *Second to None: Contingent Women of Color Faculty in the Classroom*, is connected to the concepts discussed in Chapter 10; however, it focuses on intersectional identities (gender and race) and the experience of discrimination in academia with the purpose to disrupt the narrative for women of color in full-time non-tenure-track roles. It combines Critical Race Feminism and the structuration theory to show how the intersections of identity and position (contingent vs. tenure-track) impact faculty life and teaching, offering suggestions for HE institutional policy and practice (BOSS et al., 2019).

Chapter 14, *Campus Climate and the Theory of Gender Performativity: Implications for Research and Policy*, outlines the Theory of Gender Performativity and examines its research and policy implications in light of campus climate. The authors argue that research on gender identity is also a form of *power-knowledge* and implies that measurement tools and recruitment methods utilized by HE research may also be biased and reinforce particular ontological assumptions about gender (MCNAY, 2013). Higher education should embrace experimental theoretical approaches that will help educators question and expand what they currently think about gender, and it will shape the way they participate in learning and in the lives of students:

*"Perhaps being a gender cannot be reduced to a single concept of category; instead, perhaps the ontology of gender is a creative process, a project that is always being performed and is always open to experimentation and reinterpretation"* (ZIMMERMAN & HERRIDGE, 2019, p. 234).

In Chapter 15, *Invisible Injustice: Higher Education Boards and Issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity*, the author provides an overview of the remarkable changes that took place in South Africa since the collapse of apartheid in the early 1990s, presenting a unique case study of higher education transformation. Shifting from dictatorial control, leaders of universities adopted a corporate style that disrupted the systems of oppression and addressed social justice and the complex dilemmas of equity, access, race, ethnicity, and gender. Through legislation, white papers, and grounded literature the author analyzes the transformation process and gives a clear idea for stakeholders of HE as a change agent, focusing on how to gain legitimacy with a vision in which social justice prevails, and how to plan and implement policies with sustainable strategy goals. The author refers to an in-depth case study of two institutions that revealed the following key elements of cooperative governance: Critical Self-Reflection, Negotiated Transformation, Active Forums,

Role Differentiation, Expanded Leadership Core, Trust, Directive Leadership with Consultation, and Constructive/Critical Leadership Between the Chairperson of Council and the Vice-Chancellor. The greatest challenge for HE according to the author is for “strategic plans, expert human resource capacity, skills and appropriate values to be effectively held together by the leaders to ensure progress and success” (JAPPIE, 2019, p. 257).

Chapter 16, titled *Invisible Injustice: Higher Education Boards and Issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity*, appears in the section on leadership and presents a comprehensive literature review on research related to governance, with a particular focus on Higher Education Boards’ power and control and the necessity to look at issues of diversity and equity within governance (RALL et al., 2019). These dilemmas are also relevant in Hungary where most higher education institutions have shifted their model of governance to be supervised by a Foundation Board of Trustees for universities to become more competitive drivers in their local economies. However, the growing number of foreign students also require progress in DEI strategies, commitment to the EU-GER, and a more diverse faculty attracted by competitive wages during the internationalization process.

The editor claims that it is increasingly important for educators in higher education to understand the powerful impact of policies and future college educated HE leaders must have a working knowledge of Giddens’ structuration theory (TURNER, 1986) which suggests that society should be understood as a duality of human agency and structure, the latter being perceived as impermanent. As we grow in knowledge about the experiences of marginalized student groups:

*“The cycle of agency and structure is a roadmap to action and meaning construction that continually guides our research for a more socially just experience”* (JEFFRIES, 2019: XIV).

The materials in this book are recommended for all readers (educators, faculty members, and administrators) who intend to conceptualize equity pedagogies and policies for diverse student groups in higher education. They are useful for K-12 administrators, guidance professionals, career counselors, department chairs, and educational leaders who design curricula that foster college readiness for students. Furthermore, this book would also aid current faculty and staff leaders who intend to teach undergraduate and graduate courses that are designed for an increasingly diverse population. Additionally, studies in this book are endorsed by current and future HE administrators who oversee policies of equitable admissions and matriculation processes. All the stakeholders in education are encouraged to participate in this fight for HE to become more inclusive and equitable across cultures and school systems.

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