

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and the Internationalisation of Higher Education

Sijia Chen

University of Edinburgh Holyrood Road, Edinburgh, EH8 8AQ

Introduction

Education institutions have emphasised the concept of equity, diversity, and inclusion to cope with the newly emerged problems in its internationalisation process. This essay will start with the background information and a literature review of previous research in EDI. The following section consists of the possible and probable approaches to better deal with EDI issues in higher education.

Background Information

Internationalisation in higher education is typically defined as a process that integrates an international dimension into the teaching, research, and service function of higher education^[1]. This process is appreciated for developing deliberative pedagogies, the growth in cross-border and cross-section communications, the generation of immigrants, and the rise in cooperation between various cultures. However, criticism emerges simultaneously since it also addresses cross-cultural challenges and conflicts^[2]. EDI, though it lacks a clear definition in the academic field, always contains some essential elements, including race, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, and disability, with additional considerations of religion, education, and family/marital status^[3]. Considering their outstanding function in minimising the objective effects of implicit bias and preventing social and academic isolation, it deserves an in-depth insight.

Literature Review

Wherever internationalisation occurs, it can be catalogued into three main models: commercial-driven models, cultural-integration models, and curriculum-driven models^[4]. Consequently, this section will discuss previous relevant literature from three aspects, the commercial, the cultural, and the curriculum aspect.

The first is the financial perspectives. At the very beginning, educators and scholars claimed that it could offer every individual a chance to join in higher education regardless of their backgrounds. However, as Kao (2021) found, the real-world outcomes do not stay consistent with them. Students from financial-challenged families can have limited opportunity to participate in this process^[5]. Altbach and Wit made a more detailed statement. All institutions express their ambition to build a world-class university; however, the term ‘world-class’ implies rank order and attendant inequalities. Opportunities are virtually non-existent in the poorest regions where the expansions of higher education have arguably made an enormous difference^[6].

The curriculum part received both appreciation and criticism. Puledda found that the diversity in the curriculum has been threatened. Formal schooling gradually substitutes traditional education because students’ account joined in the mass education system increasing to more than 90% since 2003^[7]. George came up with a similar conclusion and pointed out the causality of the situation that such transition generally indicates the progression in adopting new cultural, social, and cognitive challenges^[8]. ‘Hidden curriculum’ is another case in point. Ample evidence shows that in almost every discipline area, from academic reading to disciplinary knowledge, it is substantive in acknowledging the difficulties international students face in their transition into successful tertiary education environments^[9].

EDI in culture is the most prominent part as the enrolled international students and teaching staff have built a multi-cultural community. Most universities prioritise maintaining diverse international teams of faculty and provide them with an inclusive atmosphere so that they can settle and work in the community as it is a critical component in the achievement of academic performance and educational mission^[10]. With the atmosphere of equity, inclusivity, tolerance, and empowerment, those well-educated talents can feel free to seek their fortune to work for a better life.

Possible solutions

This section will focus on the different actors to analyse possible solutions to these existing and potential problems. Neither of the stakeholders, faculty team, and students can enhance EDI in internationalisation in higher education more effective without the others.

First of all, policymakers and other stakeholders can regulate and adjust the promotion of EDI in two aspects, the affirmation of diversity and the creation of an inclusive atmosphere. As actors who influence this process from a macro level, they ought to have a solid international focus. The affirmation of social diversity and human diversity includes the promotion in both the appreciation of

human differences and students' belief for their bright future, especially about life circumstances and opportunities that directly or indirectly impact their lives and the lives of their family members, community and country^[11]. In addition, a more significant political consciousness is forced to be allocated to the equal status of people from different groups, especially the minority ethnic groups. Offering students and faculty from diverse ethnic group and age group the same amount of service and right is the foundation of achieving EDI from the policy level^[12].

Faculty teams are the main actors in knowledge re-production and production process. Treating students equally can construct effective bridges between the knowledge providers and receivers. Knowledge of other social and cultural groups is fundamental. More tolerance and patience are consumed during the process. The most frequent scene of the practice of these issues is the workshop, where a welcoming atmosphere should be created to relieve anxiety from tutors and students. Another responsibility is to tackle bullying. International students are overseas and from the minority groups in the local community, making them the most likely victim of bullying^[13]. Success in anti-bullying is vital to strengthen students' sense of belonging and the faculty's sense of achievement.

Students are suggested to establish stable, friendly connections with classmates from other social backgrounds and understand other cultures' values. Individualism and competition are two of the norms which stop students from being included in the community. To undo the isolation, time and courage should be allocated to learn about each other, care about each other, and find ways to communicate with each other^[14]. Another thing is to rethink how to approach conversations and invite people into the conversation rather than increase their defensiveness. It requires students to see the world in new ways to understand others better. Instead of coming up with the right thing to say, developing active listening and critical questioning skills may bring more benefits.

Conclusion

Equity, diversity and inclusion go alongside the internationalisation in higher education. Better practice in EDI can help with the improvement in the status of the university in the global market, the recruitment of talented intellectual and the enrolment of well-educated students. This essay has critically reviewed the comparative literature and developed some pragmatic suggestions for enhancing EDI in higher education institutions. However, as it is still a young topic, huge gaps are waiting to be filled. Future research can be done in the inclusion of diverse minority ethnic groups in the university, the equity in transnational education and the EDI in cross-border higher education alliance.

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