

CONTEXTS FOR DIVERSITY AND
GENDER IDENTITIES IN HIGHER
EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL
PERSPECTIVES ON EQUITY AND
INCLUSION

INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING

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INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING
AND LEARNING VOLUME 12

**CONTEXTS FOR DIVERSITY AND
GENDER IDENTITIES IN HIGHER
EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL
PERSPECTIVES ON EQUITY AND
INCLUSION**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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FOREWORD

This book highlights a very necessary discussion we must have about what regards diversity, equality, equity, and inclusion in higher education. It is a very interesting reflection, namely for those who work in higher education settings, not only teachers and students but also higher education staff and most necessary rectory teams at universities and also national policies guidelines from government.

The authors show how sexual orientation and gender diversity as well as those non-conforming, non-heteronormative groups establish a more coherent understanding of the current movement, and consequent reforms for cultivating and promoting a more diverse and equitable environment in higher education.

One of the most interesting arguments they present is to understand how central to diversity, equality, equity, and inclusion in higher education is the effort to widen participation in higher education and also the concept of inclusive leadership, which is quite innovative in these settings of higher education. I quite agree with them when they say that exclusion in participation and achievement may include inadequate learning supports and that it is important for educators to recognize that people are defined by many characteristics as well as different needs, interests, and goals:

As such, it is important that we create learning environments that are welcoming, accepting, and provide an inclusive and non-prejudicial space where people can fully engage in the life of the university without shame or hiding some aspect that defines them as a person.

This is the meaning of equity according to the dictionary: “Equality. Righteousness in the way of acting = IMPARTIALITY. Recognition of the rights of each other. Straight and natural justice.” Not always possible, but we will get there.

The increasing growth of right extreme groups in Europe, namely Germany and France, the UK exit from European Union (Brexit) the segregationist policies and boundary delimitation of frontiers in the USA are all signs that educators and higher education settings must do the reverse of this worrying expansion. This chapter puts forward this discussion presenting several arguments from different authors all over the world: Brazil, Israel, Jamaica, Nepal, Portugal, Puerto Rico, South Africa, Tanzania, England, and the USA.

Human behavior is changing into so many different forms. Happiness is an idiosyncratic concept and therefore the higher education system must work toward a change of mindset and this volume suggests that educational leaders should take that into consideration when deciding to create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

UNESCO adopted the World Declaration on Education for All in which it adopted the following vision for education around the world: universalizing access to education for all children, youth, and adults (UNESCO, 2009). We should all follow that.

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SERIES EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING

The purpose of this series is to publish current research and scholarship on innovative teaching and learning practices in higher education. The series is developed around the premise that teaching and learning is more effective when instructors and students are actively and meaningfully engaged in the teaching–learning process.

The main objectives of this series are to:

- (1) present how innovative teaching and learning practices are being used in higher education institutions around the world across a wide variety of disciplines and countries;
- (2) present the latest models, theories, concepts, paradigms, and frameworks that educators should consider when adopting, implementing, assessing, and evaluating innovative teaching and learning practices; and
- (3) consider the implications of theory and practice on policy, strategy, and leadership.

This series will appeal to anyone in higher education who is involved in the teaching and learning process from any discipline, institutional type, or nationality. The volumes in this series will focus on a variety of authentic case studies and other empirical research that illustrates how educators from around the world are using innovative approaches to create more effective and meaningful learning environments.

Innovation teaching and learning is any approach, strategy, method, practice or means that have been shown to improve, enhance, or transform the teaching–learning environment. Innovation involves doing things differently or in a novel way in order to improve outcomes. In short, innovation is positive change. With respect to teaching and learning, innovation is the implementation of new or improved educational practices that result in improved educational and learning outcomes. This innovation can be any positive change related to teaching, curriculum, assessment, technology, or other tools, programs, policies, or processes that lead to improved educational and learning outcomes. Innovation can occur in institutional development, program development, professional development, or learning development.

The volumes in this series will not only highlight the benefits and theoretical frameworks of such innovations through authentic case studies and other empirical research but also look at the challenges and contexts associated with

implementing and assessing innovative teaching and learning practices. The volumes represent all disciplines from a wide range of national, cultural, and organizational contexts. The volumes in this series will explore a wide variety of teaching and learning topics such as active learning, integrative learning, transformative learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, meaningful learning, blended learning, creative learning, experiential learning, lifelong and life-wide learning, global learning, learning assessment and analytics, student research, faculty and student learning communities, as well as other topics.

This series brings together distinguished scholars and educational practitioners from around the world to disseminate the latest knowledge on innovative teaching and learning scholarship and practices. The authors offer a range of disciplinary perspectives from different cultural contexts. This series provides a unique and valuable resource for instructors, administrators, and anyone interested in improving and transforming teaching and learning.

Patrick Blessinger
Series Editor, Founder, Executive Director, and Chief Research Scientist,
International HETL Association

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO CONTEXTS FOR DIVERSITY AND GENDER IDENTITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Patrick Blessinger, Jaimie Hoffman and
Mandla Makhanya

ABSTRACT

The chapters in this book focus on how higher education can cultivate and promote a more inclusive and equitable environment in higher education, especially with regard to gender diversity as well as those non-conforming, non-heteronormative groups. The chapters in this volume cover the broad picture/context of diversity in various countries as well as a specific focus on gender. The chapters discuss the factors relating to inclusion and equity, what is driving campuses to be more inclusive, and practical steps and case studies that higher education institutions can implement to create more inclusive and equitable learning environments. Finally, this volume discusses the need for inclusive leadership which involves building institutional capacity for inclusion and creating the right conditions under which inclusion and equity can grow and thrive and crafting policies and practices whose end result is to create a culture of inclusion.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a more coherent understanding of the current movement, and consequent reforms, for cultivating and promoting a more diverse and equitable environment in higher education. In other words, what do such terms as inclusion and diversity mean within the context of higher education, and what factors are driving those reforms? These topics are important because the call for more equitable and inclusive educational environments is one of the main factors driving change in higher education today around the world. The focus on diversity, equality, equity, and inclusion has been driven by changing demographics (which has been fueled by such factors as internal and external migration and the rapid growth of urban areas) as well as wide-scale social movements driven by calls for greater equality and equity (which has been fueled by political, social, and economic disparities). The net result of these outcomes is a greater focus on the democratization of higher education and a greater focus on treating education at all levels as a human right (Blessinger & Anchan, 2015; Smith, 2014; OECD, 2008, 2009; UNESCO, 2009, 2016, 2017).

Central to diversity, equality, equity, and inclusion in higher education is the effort to widen participation in higher education, which is a necessary first step toward greater inclusion and equity. While widening access to higher education is not a sufficient condition to achieve equity and inclusion in higher education, it is nonetheless a necessary condition. Widening participation efforts have the common goal to improve access opportunities for all segments of society, especially those that have, historically, encountered major barriers to access, such as women, ethnic and racial minorities, students with disabilities, and students from poor economic backgrounds. Widening participation has been driven by increased global demand for higher education, which itself has been precipitated by legal reforms and human rights declarations in higher education as well as by calls to address social and economic inequities (Blessinger, 2016; Burke, 2012).

Thus, one of the main goals of equity and inclusion programs in higher education is to mitigate practices that tend to exclude people from higher education (e.g., along race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class, and ability lines). The main aim of such equity and inclusion programs is therefore to make access to higher education more fair and equitable. Equity and inclusion can be viewed in terms of *access* (i.e., entry to education), *participation* (i.e., educational engagement and attainment), and *achievement* (i.e., educational quality and outcomes). In other words, merely gaining entry into higher education does not guarantee that one is able to fully participate in higher education, and participation, in turn, does not guarantee that one is receiving a high-quality education that leads to increased employment opportunities, increased personal agency, increased social mobility, and increased quality of life. Within this multifaceted context, educational equity and inclusion initiatives strive to improve all three areas.

Since this chapter starts from the premise that inclusion is necessary to improving access, participation, and achievement, it is therefore worthwhile to first examine the different ways that exclusion takes places. Although the

discourse around exclusion is often confined to access issues, exclusion also occurs within the areas of participation and achievement. This implies that higher education institutions must therefore carefully examine every aspect of their educational process in order to increase equity and inclusion. For example, exclusion in participation and achievement may include inadequate learning supports (e.g., remedial or tutoring services may not be available to those requiring extra learning support or learning accommodations), inadequate living conditions (e.g., the need for proper housing, security, and food), limited modes of delivery of learning (e.g., students unable to participate fully in learning due to restrictive course time–place conditions or only one way that courses are delivered), lack of meaningful learning experiences (e.g., programs, courses, and learning processes that do not meet the learning needs of all students), lack of positive social and personal experiences (e.g., negative experiences such as violence, prejudice, discrimination, and exploitation), or limited opportunities for professional development and community involvement (e.g., learning is limited to textbook learning, no contact with professionals or organizations in one’s field of study, no contact with faculty outside the classroom, and no learning acquired through community involvement).

It is important therefore to see the varied and complex ways in which exclusion limits the ways education is provided. As a result, educational development still remains a huge work in process. Awareness of the problem is of course a necessary first step. Once awareness occurs, then commitments must be made to address the problems through research and analysis to identify the gaps and hurdles that may be preventing institutions from creating a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. This may require a change in mind-set which acknowledges the problem and a concomitant allocation of resources and policy changes.

Finally, it inevitably requires leadership with a vision of a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. In addition, the terms equity and inclusion are multi-faceted and cannot be confined or easily understood by simple dictionary definitions. It is therefore important that any discussion or analysis of equity and inclusion begins with a clear and coherent definition and explanation of terms.

Defining Equity and Inclusion

The terms equity and inclusion have several layers of meaning. An understanding of equity and inclusion can be viewed from a macro view (i.e., from a political, economic, and sociocultural view) and a meso view (i.e., from an institutional view) and a micro view (i.e., from a group or individual view). Given the complexity of these terms, it is perhaps best to start from a broad view in order to better understand the educational landscape relative to equity and inclusion. Broadly defined, inclusion means the practice of including all people without subject to arbitrary or unnecessary barriers, and it is contrasted with practices that tend to exclude or otherwise privilege one segment of society over another, which may be rooted in exclusionary attitudes, practices, and traditions.

With respect to education, and higher education in particular, inclusion entails a right to access higher learning opportunities and to participate fully in the learning process. At a human rights level, UNESCO (2009) defines inclusion as:

...a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. (p. 8).

UNESCO (2017) also notes that inequities in the quality and effectiveness of educational outcomes also amount to an unequal development of education. It is this broad definition that has guided the development and analysis of this volume and this chapter.

Using this broad definition, this chapter views access to higher education as a fairness and justice and human rights issue. As such, the concept of fairness (in relation to educational access, participation, and achievement) involves both equality and equity, both of which are important for achieving inclusion. Although both principles complement each other, each concept frames the idea of fairness differently. Whereas equality is centered on the fairness principle that every person should receive *uniform treatment* (i.e., everyone is entitled to be treated uniformly under the law without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, etc.), equity is centered on *just treatment* within the educational process (i.e., everyone is entitled to be treated fairly as a matter of social justice). So, whereas equality is concerned with giving everyone equal opportunity to access and participate in education at all levels, equity is concerned with ensuring equitable educational participation and achievement by meeting the varied needs of all students. Thus, institutions have a social responsibility to help ensure equal opportunity and equitable outcomes for all.

At a macro level, one way to help achieve this equality of opportunity is through a highly diversified educational system that includes many different institutional types and programs (e.g., research universities, liberal arts colleges, open universities, non-profit universities, faith-based universities, private institutions, community colleges, trade/technical colleges, as well as open educational resources, continuing education programs, etc.) and that allow anyone in society to take advantage of higher learning opportunities. Thus, educational institutions not only have a legal responsibility to ensure equality of access opportunity but also have a moral and social responsibility to put in place just policies and practices that help achieve more equitable educational experiences and outcomes. Apart from the legal, social, and moral reasons for creating an equal and equitable learning environment, it is also important to universities for economic reasons (e.g., student recruitment, retention, and graduation). It stands to reason that, all else being equal, students who have their learning and social needs and interests being met are more likely (than those who don't have their needs and interests being met) to persist and graduate.

Since all students are different, equity creates a more inclusive learning environment by allowing students to receive educational experiences (e.g., academic support, disability accommodations, social programs, financial aid, and

employment assistance) that are appropriate and suitable to their needs and interests. By making the learning environment more fair and effective, institutions are better able to improve student's well-being and achievement as well. This is especially important in democratic societies where equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion form the cornerstones of a just society. Since educational institutions operate within the larger framework of society, it is important that colleges and universities of all types adopt inclusive principles. Furthermore, in a world increasingly globalized and interconnected, it is important for colleges and universities to modernize their teaching, learning, and curricula to reflect that reality (Gutman, 2003; Smith, 2009; Stefani & Blessinger, 2017).

Defining Sex, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

With regard to diversity and gender identities, it is important to first define three key terms: sex, gender, and sexual orientation. The terms sex, gender, and sexual orientation are interrelated but have different meanings. Another term, sexuality, is a broad umbrella term that encompasses the sum total of our sexual identity which includes sex, gender, and sexual orientation, as well as other physical, social, and psychological factors related to our sexual identity and the varied and complex ways people express themselves sexually. UNESCO (2016) provides a good list of commonly accepted definitions of these terms which are expanded upon in the following paragraphs.

Broadly speaking, the sex identity of a person is biologically defined and determined whereas the gender of a person is socially and personally defined. As such, one's sex identity is largely based on one's physical sex attributes at birth such as the type of genitalia and reproductive organs as well as sex chromosomes. The categories that are used to refer to one's sex are typically male, female, or intersex. Intersex, for instance, is a category that refers to a person who is born with sexual organs that do not align with the usual descriptions of male or female. Intersex is a complex issue depending on how narrowly or broadly one defines the term intersex. There is a range of sex anatomy variations that can be included in the term intersex. As such, intersex is not only defined by visible sex anatomy variations (i.e., anatomy that varies from the usual definition of male and female) but may also include sex chromosome variations. There are many medical conditions that one could be born with that could define one as intersex. In addition, intersex anatomy may not reveal itself until puberty and some people may live with intersex anatomy their entire lives without knowing it. Thus, defining one's sex is not altogether a clear-cut matter and may entail degrees of ambiguity along the sex spectrum (Blackless et al., 2000; "What is Intersex?", n.d.).

Gender, on the other hand, is one's internal sense of personal identity. One's gender identity may or may not align with one's sex. Gender identity is one's internal awareness of oneself as man, woman, both, or neither, whereas gender expression is how one expresses one's gender through one's dress, mannerisms, language, etc. The terms that are used to refer to one's gender include man or masculine, woman or feminine, cisgender, agender, bigender, trans/transgender, and gender fluid, among others. Transgender is an umbrella term that refers to

people whose gender identity does not align with their birth sex. Transgender people are individuals who are born with male or female anatomy but having feelings that don't align with their anatomy. Trans-man, for instance, refers to an individual whose gender identity is a man but who was assigned (declared) as female at birth. A trans-woman, for instance, refers to an individual whose gender identity is a woman but who was assigned (declared) as male at birth. Transitioning is the process of accepting and adopting the social and personal identity that aligns with one's self-identified gender identity. A subset of transgender is transsexual – individuals whose gender does not align with their assigned sex and who seek medical assistance (i.e., hormones and/or surgery) to align their body to their gender identity. Gender fluid refers to people whose gender identity is flexible or may change over time (“What's the difference...”, n.d.).

One's sexual orientation is one's physical or romantic attraction to others. One may also have a lack or absence of sexual attraction to others (asexual). Sexual orientation is distinct from sexual behavior in that sexual orientation is an enduring and stable pattern of sexual attraction toward another. Terms used to describe one's sexual orientation include straight, lesbian, gay, and bisexual, among others. As with sex identity, one's sexual orientation identity is different than one's gender identity.

These three forms of sexual identity and expression (sex, gender, sexual orientation) may overlap and influence each other in complex and different ways. In other words, our individual identity is, by definition, a combination of intersecting and overlapping identities that converge and interact in complex ways. In addition, our individual identity is defined not only by our sexual identity, but also defined and influenced by other factors such as our race, ethnicity, national origin, socio-economic status, abilities/disabilities, beliefs, socialization, educational attainment, etc. Further complicating this analysis is the idea that one may, simultaneously, belong to both privileged groups and non-privileged groups at the same time.

Presumably some people, whether they may be students, faculty, administrators, or staff, come to higher education with limited prior interaction with people whose characteristics are different than their own, especially in terms of gender and sexual orientation. When they do encounter people whose identity does not conform to the usual sex or gender binary identities, or who do not conform to the dominant heteronormative identity, feelings of unease and anxiety may arise. Likewise, for the person who is non-conforming (e.g., intersex, transgender, or non-straight), feelings of anxiety may arise when using public restrooms or feelings of anxiety may arise in the classroom, especially if placed, for instance, in a project group with people who may have had no prior experience with intersex, transgender, or non-straight people. This is why it is important for instructors to create a welcoming and safe space for all students and to be an inclusive role model in both words and example.

Given this reality, it is important for educators to recognize that people are defined by many characteristics as well as different needs, interests, goals, etc. As such, it is important that we create learning environments that are welcoming, accepting, and provide an inclusive and non-prejudicial space where people can

fully engage in the life of the university without shame or hiding some aspect that defines them as a person. Harbin (2016) provides some practical suggestions and gender affirming practices for creating a more inclusive campus and classroom, such as calling students by their requested names and respecting students' privacy and gender identity and maintaining a classroom environment that is respectful, friendly, and welcoming toward all people.

These different forms of identity and expression have wide-ranging impact in how we treat people, how we refer to and address people (e.g., the pronouns we use), how locker rooms, restrooms, dorm rooms, and similar facilities are designed (e.g., male and female restrooms vs unisex and gender neutral bathrooms) and how sex or gender designations should be designated on personal identification forms. In addition, these personal identification designations may impact certain clubs and campus activities that group people based on certain sexual identity characteristics, including groups that have historically been oriented around binary sex designations (male vs female). As such, these issues have legal, ethical, social, and other implications (Johnson & Subasic, 2011; Perdue, 2016). Finally, these identifying characteristics may also intersect with other ways in which people identify themselves politically, economically, and socially (i.e., the groups that one identifies and associates with). In sum, there are myriad and overlapping ways in which people identify themselves, thus making the study of identity a complex investigation.

Inclusive Leadership in Higher Education

Although it is important for universities to embrace inclusion as a core institutional value, it must be more than simply aspirational and more than pleasant sounding platitudes just to appease people. Values and vision must be put into real action. Values and vision must be operationalized to create a meaningful impact on people's lives. Diversity in and of itself will not automatically lead to a more inclusive learning environment but diversity is a start. Ultimately, what is most needed is inclusive leadership (Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). Inclusive leadership involves building institutional capacity for inclusion and equity. It means creating the right conditions under which inclusion and equity can grow and thrive. Institutional capacity building not only involves creating inclusion as part of the institutional vision and mission and core values but it also involves crafting policies and programs and structures that serve those goals and whose ultimate end result is to create a culture of inclusion.

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

In "Access and permanence conditions for students with special educational needs in Brazilian higher education," by Ana Lúcia Manrique and Geraldo Eustáquio Moreira, the authors discuss how higher education in Brazil, prior to the 1980s, excluded students with special education needs. This was mainly the result of this group of citizens not having access to basic education and a lack of equal access

laws. The authors explain that it was not until 2003 when the Brazilian government enacted inclusive education laws and policies. The purpose of these laws and policies was to transform the entire educational system into a more inclusive environment. In Brazil, as of 2015, there are over 750,000 special education students in basic education and 38,000 in higher education. The authors note that the purpose of this chapter is to discuss public policies for access and inclusion in higher education related to students with specific special education needs (e.g., blindness, deafness, hearing, visual, physical, and others).

In “Looking on the bright side: Pathways, initiative and programs to widen Arab high school graduates’ participation in Israeli higher education” by Khalid Arar and Kussai Haj-Yehia, the authors examine higher education access and inclusion policies for the Arab minority in Israel. The chapter has three aims: (1) discuss the recommendations of government-nominated committees, (2) describe the impact of those recommendations in higher education, and (3) examine the impact of those recommendations, and the resulting policies, by relating to improving access to higher education. The authors use a phenomenological methodology to analyze these policies and their impact on access to higher education by Arab high school graduates in Israel.

In “Perspectives on access, equity and quality in Jamaica’s community colleges,” by Dawn Smith-Henry, the author describes the development of the community college system in Jamaica. The author describes how Jamaica’s community college system was initially viewed with skepticism by the traditional higher education institutions but by focusing on their mission, they have been able to gain the respect of those traditional higher education institutions. Jamaica’s community colleges initially only offered associate degrees but now also offers bachelor degrees and a variety of continuing education programs. The author notes that Jamaica’s community college system now enrolls the third largest number of tertiary students in the higher education system. The author concludes by discussing the hurdles (e.g., inadequate funding, limited program resources, male under-participation, student preparation, and low completion rates) that challenge their open access policy.

In “Disparity in higher education: A case for Nepal,” by Jayakrishna Upadhyay, Suresh Tiwari, and Dhruva Ghimire, the authors discuss access and quality disparities in Nepal’s higher education system with respect to gender, economic, and geographic dimensions. The authors examine both the supply and demand sides of higher education access and those factors that influence access to higher education such as government budgeting and scholarships. The authors demonstrate that Nepal has increased enrollment in higher education. However, the authors note that the quality of higher education in Nepal is still poor with respect to teaching and learning. In spite of the improvements in access, the authors note that most of the benefits of attending higher education accrue to students from wealthy families and students from certain geographic regions. The authors conclude that the government budget for higher education is not adequate for students from poor backgrounds. Although Nepal has closed the gender gap at the bachelor’s level, a gender gap persists at the master’s level and in the labor market.

In “The internationalization of Portuguese higher education institutions – The reasons, the strategies and the challenges,” by Carla Guerreiro and Teresa Barros, the authors interviewed a group of higher education leaders in Portugal to understand the drivers, strategies, and challenges associated with the internationalization of higher education in Portugal. The authors discuss economic, academic, and cultural drivers affecting internationalization. The economic factors are impacted by funding issues. Portuguese higher education institutions have adopted strategies that are tailored within the context of Portuguese culture and institutional factors. The main challenges are related to economic and cultural factors. In spite of these challenges, the internationalization of higher education in Portugal remains a reality that higher education leaders must adapt to.

In “English education policy trends in Puerto Rico and the implications of the language of instruction in Puerto Rican universities,” by Juan G. Rosado, the author discusses the social and cultural gaps that exist when foreign students attend a Puerto Rican university. The author examines the influence of the Spanish vernacular in the language of instruction used throughout grade school and in higher education. The author discusses the use of English as a language of instruction in Puerto Rico and its influence on how Puerto Ricans communicate. The author interviewed three students to understand the effects that the language of instruction had on their educational experience.

In “Access to and widening participation in South African higher education,” by Victor Pitsoe and Moeketsi Letseka, the authors discuss how South Africa remains a largely an unequal society with respect to race, class, gender, and economic status, despite the gains made as a result of post-apartheid reforms. The authors examine the potential of open distance learning to empower the marginalized parts of South Africa by giving them access to higher education services. The authors explore the challenges associated with widening participation within the historical context of South Africa. The authors argue that providing access to higher education does not guarantee epistemological access but open distance learning does have the potential to enable marginalized citizens to access knowledge previously unavailable to them.

In “Financial barriers affecting students from poor families’ accessibility to higher education in Tanzania,” by Mpoki Mwaikokesya, the author discusses how higher education has been one of the main factors driving economic and social development in many nations. In developing countries, for instance, higher education is considered a means for economic and social mobility. In spite of the potential of higher education to drive social mobility, higher education has faced challenges and obstacles such as widening access to include previously marginalized members of society. The author discusses changes that have occurred in higher education because of widening participation movement such as privatization and cost sharing. The author examines these and other trends in Tanzanian higher education policy and their implication for higher in the future.

In “The teaching excellence framework: Quality, equality, and student engagement in English higher education,” by Jill LeBihan, Christina Hughes, and Carol A. Taylor, the authors examine the teaching excellence framework in England, the

purpose of which is to differentiate between higher education institutions based on teaching quality. The authors discuss the reservations about the ability of the teaching excellence framework to adequately factor in diverse student learning experiences. The authors raise the concern about how students are involved in the process and how much attention is given to their diversity. The authors use a critical policy ethnography approach to analyze and make sense of higher education and government policy documents in order to understand the large-scale transformations taking place in higher education in England. The authors use specific search terms together with text-mining tools to search for relevant text data related to the topic. This approach allowed the authors to understand the perspective of students and how diversity is being addressed in the context of the teaching excellence framework.

In “Spotlight on six marginalized populations in American higher education,” by Jaimie Hoffman and Sarah Toutant, the authors discuss how higher education in the United States has become more diverse and highlight the barriers and challenges faced by students from six marginalized groups: African American/Black students, students with disabilities, Hispanic/Latinx students, LGBT students, undocumented students, and student veterans. The authors discuss how, in the United States, historically marginalized groups have not had equal access to higher education. The authors discuss how gaps in access and achievement continue to persist. The authors contend that these groups are least likely to succeed in higher education because they continue to face barriers as they navigate the educational experience.

In “Motivation behind male students’ decision to participate in a study program abroad: A study conducted in the United States” by Dianne Timm, Rachel Lindhart, Kurt Olausen, and Aaron Walk, the authors discuss how most institutions of higher education around the world provide students with opportunities to engage in study abroad experiences for short-term or long-term educational opportunities. The authors contend that a gender imbalance exists for those seeking study abroad experiences. The authors explain how more women than men are interested in studying outside the United States and more men than women are interested in studying abroad in the United States. The authors utilized a qualitative study where men who studied abroad outside the United States and men who were international students studying in the United States. The authors analyzed the motivations of these men with the goal of better understanding what attracts men to these experiences. The authors hope that this improved understanding will lead to better study abroad programming efforts.

In “Advancing and retaining underrepresented faculty in STEM: A program for value-driven career success,” by Valerie Gray Hardcastle, Stacie Furst-Holloway, and Rachel Kallen, the authors discuss how, in spite of major investments to attract women into STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, there remains a high number of women who leave these fields while in higher education. The authors note that this is especially true of women of color. The authors discuss research that affirms that efforts to recruit and hire more women faculty into these fields have not yielded significant results. The authors discuss how programs for career development and mentoring into these fields

tend to promote rigid conformity to performance expectations. In light of these findings, the authors explain how their institution used person–environment fit theory together with research data to create a faculty development program to improve the hiring and advancement of these faculty while also creating a more inclusive and supportive work environment for faculty.

In “We’re not in high school anymore: Understanding the academic transitional challenges experienced by US men of color in college,” by Diane Cardenas Elliott and Meghan W. Brenneman, the authors discuss how the underrepresentation of men of color in higher education in the United States, as well as the disparities in their educational attainment, is an area of concern for policy-makers and educators. The authors note that the aim of the chapter is to explore why men of color are less likely to earn a college degree. The authors discuss the findings from a longitudinal study that examined the early college transition obstacles experienced by men of color. This study looked at how men of color adapted to college with respect to campus climate and college readiness. The results of the study suggest that participants’ transition experiences lead them to doubt their sense of belonging and achievement as a student.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned previously, and as these chapter demonstrate, creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment implies that positive changes be made. To that end, this volume suggests that educational leaders think about the following questions when deciding to create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

1. What is the institution’s core values and vision for a more inclusive educational process and learning environment?
2. What policy changes could be enacted to help create a more inclusive learning environment?
3. Who are the different stakeholders involved in the learning process and what are their roles?
4. What existing policies, programs, and practices might be inhibiting a more inclusive learning environment?
5. What changes can be made to eliminate or mitigate possible exclusionary practices?
6. What are the most important next steps to take to improve the participation and achievement of all students?
7. What constraints, gaps, or other obstacles exist that may inhibit the institution from achieving a more inclusive learning environment?

UNESCO (2009) adopted the World Declaration on Education for All in which it adopted the following vision for education around the world: universalizing access to education for all children, youth, and adults. A key factor in bringing that vision to reality is the promotion of equity and

inclusion at all levels of education. In addition, according to the [U.S. Department of Education \(2016\)](#):

Institutions are encouraged to develop and facilitate programming to increase the cultural competency of leadership, faculty, staff, and students. Institutions are also encouraged to perform an assessment of their campus climate related to diversity in order to identify areas for improvement. (p. 3).

These are but a few very practical ways that institutions of higher education can begin creating a more inclusive learning environment.

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