

# UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018 CREATING INCLUSIVE POSTGRADUATE CULTURES AND COMMUNITIES

Notes on Postgraduate Student Perspectives of Diversity & Inclusivity

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In 2017 the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent's 20<sup>th</sup> session recommended that state parties "ensure that PAD gain access to quality education that puts them on an equal footing with others in the labour market". Diversity and inclusivity are key concepts to address race inequality in higher education policy development. With this in mind, the central research question of my doctoral study asks, how inclusive of people of African descent in Europe is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

In the 2011 UK census, people of African descent represented less than 6% of the total population. Notably, student populations increasingly mirror the diversity of ethnic minorities in the UK, e.g. 15% of UWE Bristol students are BME in a city whose BME population is approximately 16% of the total. (Jabbar and Mirza, 2017) in Race, Ethnicity and Education reports a 100% increase in international students from an ethnically diverse background studying between 1997 and 2013 in the U.K. Nonetheless in 2015 only 4% of domicile Black academic staff were professors in contrast to an average of 13% for other ethnicities; only .4% of domicile professors and 2.1% of non-domicile professors were Black.

(Jabbar and Mirza, 2017) also reports UK higher education business schools benefitted from approximately £2 billion annually, by providing the most popular university programmes to 40% of the international students here. Nonetheless organisational cultures which reproduce social boundaries between different ethnicities can further contribute to structural inequality. For example, non-performativity of discourses of diversity fails to acknowledge where Afri-phobia and other forms of systemic racism contribute to differences in participation and outcomes of different ethnicities. This contributes to under-performance in achieving targets for staff profiles which match those of students in culturally diverse universities. For example, < 1% of 52 185 eligible staff submissions to the Research Excellence Framework were from Black researchers in 2014. **Cultural branching** which focuses on building bridges between ethnically diverse students pre-existing knowledge and what they are expected to learn, is therefore argued as an approach to lecture management.

The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** aspires to target investment in tertiary and vocational education as well as primary and secondary education, for a more global and holistic approach which fills gaps in existing educational frameworks. For example implementation of **Target 4.3** aims to ensure equal access for all to affordable quality tertiary education by 2030; **Target 4.7** aspires to integrate into education programs, knowledge and skills necessary for sustainable development.

Inclusive, transparent and fair policy development should therefore promote equality and diversity in education with fully disaggregated equality data used for analysis and monitoring, as recommended by the Race Equality Charter Mark and Athena Swan. Inclusivity should enable both staff and students from ethnic minorities to thrive; e.g. equality objectives of UWE's Single Equality Scheme Inclusivity 2020, aim for equality of outcomes for all nine protected characteristics in both student and staff perceptions. This is best monitored for policy interventions, based on fully disaggregated equality data.

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