

From Diversity to Inclusion

Strategies for an Inclusive Curriculum
and Learning Environment

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
SYMPOSIUM 2020
LEIDEN UNIVERSITY



**Universiteit
Leiden**
The Netherlands

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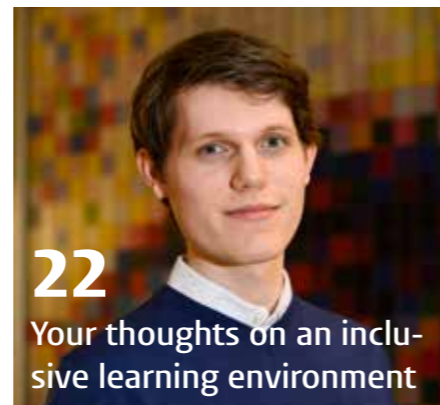
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Dear reader,

Diversity is no longer a term that needs much explanation. Our student body and teaching staff are becoming visibly more diverse in background, and it is self-evident that the students and staff members of our university should reflect the diversity of our society. But what does it take to be not only diverse, but also inclusive? In this magazine, which is based on the Diversity & Inclusion Symposium of 2020, we invite you to explore what each of us can do to contribute to an inclusive learning environment.

If diversity is about the presence of a diverse body of students, staff, ideas and perspectives, inclusion shifts our focus from the individual and specific groups to the institution

and the learning and working environment. An inclusive university is a space where everyone – regardless of background – feels at home, a space that everyone feels part of. It is a university where everyone can develop their talents.

As the contributions to this magazine show, teaching and the curriculum are important elements of an inclusive learning environment, as these are the context within which our ideas take shape. An inclusive approach, that actively engages with a diversity of perspectives can enrich our research and teaching, and is a self-evident aspect of excellence in research and teaching. And there are many things we can do outside of the classroom too to promote an

inclusive approach, be it by becoming conscious of our own biases, recognising boundaries in approaching others, creating alliances across different racial and ethnic groups, and ensuring that a disability does not become a barrier to being an active participant in our learning and working environment.

Inclusive education will become a central element of our diversity and inclusion policy in the coming years. I invite you to join in and engage with the question of how our teaching can be both excellent as well as inclusive.

Professor Hester Bijl
Vice-Rector Magnificus
Leiden University

COLOPHON

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DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY AND THE CURRICULUM

‘Good teaching means being able to reach and inspire all students’

Aya Ezawa, Diversity Officer of Leiden University, and Paul Wouters, Dean of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, shared their thoughts on an inclusive learning environment.

Why is an inclusive learning environment important?

PW: ‘The main reason for an inclusive learning environment is to challenge structural inequalities of resources and power. We are no longer living in a world in which white West-European and American powers are in charge. This will result in the end of colonial legacies, and requires fundamental changes in our curricula.’

AE: ‘It’s very simple: We are an educational institution and we are supposed to reflect the diverse society that we serve. We have to become more diverse and inclusive to fulfil our mission as an educational institution. Good teaching means being able to reach and inspire all students.’

How can we achieve this?

PW: ‘Since 2011 our faculty has a POPcorner, an office that offers support to first-generation students. Nadia Mansouri, the coordinator of the POPcorner, played an important role in the creation of the POPcorner. A university has all kinds of implicit rules and routines, and you can feel excluded if you are not familiar with that. I am a first-generation student myself and experienced how difficult that can be. This is just one of the many initiatives to foster diversity and inclusion. We have a long way to go, but we are making progress.’

AE: ‘It’s not a job for a single person. Luckily, I work with an amazing team at the Diversity Office, and many people within the university – both staff and students – are involved in various D&I related projects. My role as Diversity Officer is to offer tools, skills and knowledge to inspire and empower people to contribute to an inclusive learning environment.’

Whose responsibility is it to make an inclusive learning environment a reality?

AE: ‘It is an institutional commitment. I am very happy that Hester Bijl is here today as the Vice Rector Magnificus, to show that this is what the University stands for.’

PW: ‘We actively have to connect with communities that are not yet represented in the University. We have to make sure that everyone who’s interested in studying in Leiden feels welcome. There is a role here for student associations, whereas study associations could help with suggestions for a more diverse curriculum.’

DIVERSITY OFFICE

Do you have ideas or questions about diversity and inclusivity at Leiden University? Contact the Diversity Office at diversiteit@leidenuniv.nl. Stay up to date with latest developments by signing up for [the D&I newsletter](#)

The Diversity Office team: Eline Pollaert, Aya Ezawa and Gianelle Vacca.



**MEET THE MODERATOR:
PRAVINI BABOERAM**

‘We need to change institutional power structures’



‘For me, an inclusive learning environment is about social justice. It’s about making sure that everyone is able to participate and contribute. There are so many people who have something to offer, who don’t always get the opportunity. If we create an environment in which everyone can flourish, we will all benefit.’

‘I work as a programme manager at ECHO, an expertise centre for diversity policy. My job is to develop products and programmes that translate the theory of diversity and inclusion into practice. For instance, we developed the online mentoring platform ‘Meet Your Mentor’ in collaboration with VU Amsterdam. We strongly believe in the community aspect of fostering diversity. Mentors can support students in their professional development and vice versa, students can engage mentors in learning how to become more inclusive in their professional context.’

‘Over the past few years, the subject of diversity and inclusion has been put on the agenda. We are now talking about issues that weren’t talked about before, such as white privilege, micro-aggression and institutional racism. The next step is to change institutional power structures. If we want to tackle the root of the problem, we need to talk about colonial legacies, and how they have shaped the institutions, the curricula and knowledge production.’

KAMNA PATEL:

‘There’s a difference between inclusion and change’

If you want to talk about inclusion, you have to raise the subject of race, says Kamna Patel, Vice-Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at University College London (UCL). She delivered a keynote speech at the Diversity & Inclusion Symposium; we spoke to her beforehand.

Why is it important to include race in the debates on inclusion?

‘Because it is paramount to understanding inequality in our universities and to seeing who is excluded. Inequality can take many forms. At my own institution, our data has shown that there are stark differences in people’s chances of being offered a job and promoted, based on their ‘race’ and gender.’

What would be your first recommendation to a university that says it wants to be more inclusive?

‘To give an honest and full account of itself. There is a story many of us tell about universities and our roles within them. The prevailing story is that universities are meritocracies and you have reached a certain position on merit alone.’

You said in a previous interview that we should see diversity as a structural issue. How so?

‘There’s a difference between more diversity and structural change. You can achieve diversity by appointing more people from minority groups, but this doesn’t necessarily change the underlying structures of inequality and could mean that you hire different-looking people who still end up being at a disadvantage.’

What if a white male professor happens to be reading? Should he do things differently?

‘I can’t tell people what to do, nor can I prescribe solutions. I would ask instead: Is this white male professor open to the argument he has benefited from structures of inequality? Is he open to seeing, and can he see, his power and privileges? And if he can, what does he think he can do to concede power to others?’

KEYNOTE SPEECH BY FRANK TUITT

How to achieve inclusive excellence in higher education institutions

How can higher education institutions make excellence inclusive? In his keynote speech, Frank Tuitt, Associate Professor of Higher Education at the Morgridge College of Education (University of Denver), presented a new approach to education that integrates diversity and inclusion as critical components of academic excellence.

Despite an increasing awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion, social and educational inequities in higher education institutions continue to persist. To ensure equity in higher education institutions, they must strive for 'inclusive excellence', says Tuitt. Inclusive excellence is a process that includes excellence in teaching and learning, student development, institutional functioning, community engagement and workforce development. In his approach, inclusivity and excellence reinforce each other: 'You have to be excellent and you have to be inclusive to be excellent.'

Decolonise academic spaces

Tuitt stressed the importance of diversity in student population and staff. 'As a student I learned early on that if I didn't show up in class, my professor would notice because I was one of only three Black male students in this class.' However, Tuitt also makes clear that a quantitative approach to diversity is not a guarantee for equal opportunity. 'Inclusive excellence requires a fundamental transforma-

tion of the entire institution, in which we need to uncover hidden legacies of colonialism.'

This can be done by including texts by non-white and non-Western authors in the curricula, and with a different approach to teaching. 'Teaching is not about downloading your knowledge into the brains of your students,' said Tuitt. 'Instead, work with your students and learn from their experiences to co-construct knowledge.'

'You have to be excellent to be inclusive and you have to be inclusive to be excellent'

Worldwide protests

Tuitt is disappointed with institutions with regard to fostering diversity and inclusion. But he continues to be inspired by the students he meets. He mentioned campus protests around the globe. 'Brazil, South Africa, the UK, the US, France, Italy, Hong Kong, Nigeria, Canada: students the world over are no longer accepting daily encounters of micro-aggressions and not-so-subtle acts of discrimination. They are demanding that institutions of higher education decolonise the learning environment. They are saying: 'It is not good enough. We have to do better.'

You can read a previous interview with Frank Tuitt [here](#)



Theatre workshop: How do you see yourself and each other?

Practising inclusivity requires courage and patience. Being confronted with our own unintended exclusion mechanisms can be embarrassing and painful, according to trainer and actor Michiel Zeegers ('I'm a white Negro – Oh! Did I just use that word?').

In Zeegers' theatre workshop 'Minimising and Addressing Implicit Bias in the Workplace and the Classroom', participants worked on developing essential skills for the academic community. These include becoming more aware of our own implicit bias, learning to listen without prejudice, learning to create a safe environment, empowering others and daring to take a stand.

Raising awareness

At the start of the workshop, the participants were asked to walk around the classroom. They were then asked to stop, shake hands with somebody, introduce themselves, and say: 'I'm glad you're here.'

Next, Zeegers made various statements, such as: 'A better society starts with me'; 'I have been discriminated against'; 'I don't speak Dutch'; and

'I'm so in love right now'. If you agreed with the statement, you crossed the room while the other participants watched.

Changing your behaviour

Zeegers and two colleagues performed a role play about two brothers and a sister who had just lost their mother. The brothers ended up in a fight. 'How can they change their behaviour and improve their relationship?' Zeegers asked.

The participants discussed this in small groups. 'Sit down, shut up and listen,' someone suggested. 'Explain how you feel and what you need,' said another. 'When you point a finger at someone, there are three fingers pointing back at you,' another participant remarked. The actors then played their role again. This time, they followed the participants' advice, resulting in a much more pleasant encounter.



‘Hands-on advice to help others’

Workshop: ‘Boundaries, Communication & Consen’

The ‘Boundaries, Communication & Consent’ workshop by *Stichting Our Bodies Our Voice* focused on consent in any kind of social interaction. ‘We did various exercises for developing communication skills, and recognising and respecting our own boundaries and those of others,’ said Linde Helfrich, an International Relations and Latin America Studies student at Leiden University and student-member (assessor) of the Faculty Board. ‘We separated into two groups to discuss these topics, and afterwards we shared our experiences.’

The workshop participants also got some hands-on advice on how to deal with someone’s

story about sexual harassment, said Helfrich. ‘How to be an active listener, without judging someone or telling them what to do. For instance, use the words they use. Validate their feelings, say things like ‘It’s okay to cry’ or ‘It’s okay to feel like that’. Ask what they need. And, most importantly, be there for someone. It’s okay to say you don’t know what to say, just show them that you are there.’

If you are interested in a workshop with Our Bodies Our Voices or have questions about it, please contact the Diversity Office: diversiteit@leidenuniv.nl



‘Foster mutual understanding’

Workshop: ‘Inclusivity Pathway Training’

The ‘Inclusivity Pathway Training’ workshop by Aminata Cairo focused on helping people to address diversity-related situations. ‘It was a very physically oriented workshop,’ said Lenore Todd, Student Life Officer and Assistant Professor at Leiden University College. ‘I really appreciated that. In universities, we are used to talking about thoughts. But in the workshop, we were challenged to actively experience what happens in a conflict situation.’ You can get a lot of cues from body language, explained Todd. ‘For instance, we had to tell a happy memory in three snapshots, and a sad memory in three snapshots.’

You instantly experience how the body language changes, as well as the energy in the room.’

The workshop discussed how you can approach conflicts in the classroom. ‘There are a lot of things you can do to cool things down in a conflict, without taking a side,’ said Todd. ‘For instance, acknowledge the emotions of both parties, and talk through why people think and feel in a particular way. To foster mutual understanding, you have to actively try to understand why people are different from you. It’s one thing to say you are open-minded, but how do you do that, what does that look like, how does it feel?’

‘We should start measuring diversity’

Workshop: ‘Moving from Theory to Practice: Inclusive Excellence and its Implications for Institutional Transformation’

In this workshop, led by Frank Tuitt (University of Denver), the participants explored ways in which institutional policies, practices and procedures impact inclusive excellence. ‘Frank Tuitt spoke about inclusive excellence in his keynote speech,’ said Benson van der Bij, a Social and Organisational Psychology MSc student at Leiden University. ‘In his workshop we dived deeper into this concept and we discussed strategies to get there.’

The participants had to come up with things the University – or any institution – should start doing, continue doing, and stop doing to foster inclusive excellence. ‘It was helpful to discuss concrete steps that can be made towards inclusivity and equity,’ said Van der Bij. ‘I was in the ‘continue’ group. We agreed that we should continue with events such as the Inclusion and Diversity Symposium. One of the remarks of the ‘stop’ group was that the Board of Leiden University should become more diverse. And the ‘start’ group suggested we should start measuring diversity and inclusion to make sure we are making progress.’



‘Create awareness of everyday racism’

Workshop: ‘Building Anti-Racist Alliances and Networks of Solidarity’

What types of racism does society often consider acceptable and what do you think yourself? The issue of everyday racism was discussed in the workshop ‘Building Anti-Racist Alliances and Networks of Solidarity’ by Kamna Patel (University College London). ‘People tend to think that casual racist jokes and stereotypes aren’t really a problem,’ said participant Naomi Stuijbergen, a Film and Literary Studies student at Leiden University.

The need for more diversity at universities was also discussed. ‘It starts with how children are treated in primary school,’ Stuijbergen added. Another topic of discussion was how the majority can serve as an ally to the minority. ‘If you can easily find a job elsewhere, why not give up your position to a woman or a person of colour?’ Stuijbergen believes workshops like these should become part of standard university curricula. ‘Education helps people become more aware and less ignorant.’

‘Accessibility is more than taking away (physical) obstacles’

Workshop: ‘Towards unlimited learning and working with a disability’

The ‘Towards unlimited learning and working with a disability’ workshop was the first event organised by the newly-founded Access and Support Platform (ASP). Four speakers discussed what it means to have an inclusive curriculum in the context of disability. They invited the participants to think about whether students with a disability belong at university, why we think of accommodations as ‘special needs’ and how we can go from equality to equity and beyond.

‘As an international student it’s frustrating to receive English invitations to disability related meetings organised by Leiden University, which turn out to be Dutch spoken only,’ one of the participants said during the discussion. This

statement touches upon an important insight. Accessibility is more than taking away (physical) obstacles, it is first and foremost a mindset. Another participant stressed the importance of talking about internalised ableism: ‘At times you may feel like you are the only person with a disability at the university. It makes you think you don’t belong here, that’s a lonely feeling.’ The workshop demonstrated there is ample room for improvement and ASP is here to facilitate the discussion.

[Read more about the launch of the Access and Support Platform on page 20-21.](#)



HIGHLIGHTS

Diversity Symposium 22 January 2020



Two Van Bergen Prize winners

Bringing Dutch and international students together

Diversity and inclusion is also about celebrating successes. This year, not one, but two initiatives were awarded the annual Van Bergen Prize. The interactive ‘OpenUP!’ symposium invites students to share how they deal with stress and anxiety. ‘Leiden City Safari’ will give incoming Dutch and international students a fun city tour to get to know the city of Leiden – and each other.

‘We hope to break the taboo around mental health issues’

OpenUP!

‘Life can be overwhelming for students. Stress has become part of students’ academic life, irrespective of country, nationality, or culture,’ says Ignacia Levy Barros, BSc Political Science study adviser. She and other study advisers and coordinators from Leiden University Campus The Hague have noticed an increase in students struggling with stress and anxiety. With the OpenUP! symposium, they aim to not only break the silence, but to encourage students to support each other and empower them to take ownership of their feelings and mental state.

The event will include the screening of *Stress to Impress*, a short film that focuses on study-related stress, choice overload, dealing with disappointments, and the influence of social media. The film’s creator, Sanne Kooiman (24), will discuss these topics with the audience, and students will share their experiences during an ‘open mic session’. ‘We hope to break the taboo around mental health issues by discussing this in a safe setting,’ says Levy Barros. The event will be held on 27 February at Leiden University Campus The Hague. More information can be found on this [website](#).

Leiden City Safari

The other winning project, Leiden City Safari, is organised by the LUMC International Student Committee (LisCo). Leiden City Safari is a city tour that aims to introduce international students to the city of Leiden as well as to fellow Dutch students. ‘With 200 students – half of them Dutch, half international – we will explore the city in a fun and interactive way,’ says Naomi Vos, a third-year Biomedical Sciences student and president of LisCo. The students will visit places such as the City Hall, the Academy Building, the Burcht and museums in small groups.

While walking from location to location – each group starting at a different point – the students will be given a list of challenges. These include, for instance, taking photographs with someone working at the street market, or making a video of someone doing a handstand in front of the windmill. ‘We believe that creative challenges such as these will promote bonding between the students,’ says Vos. The event will take place in September. For more information and updates, check the [LisCo Facebook](#) page.



‘Our focus is to promote an accessible, safe and supportive environment’

Launch of the Access & Support Platform

Disability experts from the Leiden University community

The symposium saw the launch of a new network: the Access & Support Platform for Leiden University students and staff with a disability. Coordinator Lucia Langerak spoke about the aims of the network and her personal experiences.

‘**B**eing in a wheelchair, I encounter many obstacles,’ said Langerak. Her wheelchair is a visible result of her condition, but she also suffers from symptom symptoms such as extreme fatigue and pain. Nonetheless, she received her BA and MA in Egyptology with honours and is now using her organisational skills as coordinator of the Access & Support Platform. ‘To gauge the nature of a person’s disability or the full range of their capabilities you must get to know them, hence the founding of the Access & Support Platform.’

Disability matters

The platform aims to help students and staff with any kind of disability realise their potential and make disability matters more visible at Leiden University. ‘Our focus is to promote an accessible, safe and supportive environment for people with a disability,’ said Langerak. Current projects of the platform include creating a guide to disability terminology and organising a symposium on improving physical accessibility.

‘I had a good experience studying at Leiden University, and it’s one that I want others to have as well,’ said Langerak. ‘There is always room for improvement. Leiden University cannot call itself inclusive when there are still university buildings I cannot physically access. My hope is that the Access & Support Platform will facilitate the equal treatment and full inclusion of all people with a disability.’

Contact and share your experiences (confidentially) with the Access & Support Platform through asp@leidenuniv.nl

FENESTRA DISABILITY CENTRE

Studying with a disability may require additional time and effort. Find out what support is available at Leiden University and consider what might be helpful in your particular situation.

If you have any questions or need advice you are welcome to contact Fenestra Disability Centre, Leiden University’s information centre for students with a disability. Fenestra’s experienced and professional staff are there to help you successfully complete your studies at Leiden University.

YOUR THOUGHTS ON AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

What does inclusivity mean to you? And what can Leiden University do to foster a more inclusive and diverse academic environment? Participants of the Diversity Symposium 2020 share their thoughts.



‘A Western perspective is still dominant’

‘A lot of texts in our syllabus are written by white authors, and from a Western perspective. Teachers sometimes joke about it: ‘Here is another text by a white man.’ Apparently, they are aware that this is problematic, but they haven’t yet made the step towards a truly diverse and inclusive curriculum.’

Josefiën Coopman, MA student in Asian Studies, Leiden University



‘Decolonise the curriculum’

‘The most important thing to do to create an inclusive learning environment is to decolonise the curriculum. To achieve that, we must include more texts from scholars from non-Western regions in the syllabuses and hire more teachers with non-Western backgrounds. I think we are still in the early stages of change, but it is encouraging to see that so many people joined the symposium today. It shows that a lot of people are aware of the importance of diversity and inclusion.’

Ali Sahin, MA student in Journalism & New Media, Leiden University and chairperson of Space to Talk About Race



‘Broaden your horizons’

‘We still have a lot of work to do to make universities more diverse. For example, in our lectures we could include studies from different cultures, instead of just discussing the usual Western perspectives. I agree with Kamna Patel that we should more explicitly mention what we want to achieve. Like Frank Tuitt said, inclusiveness and excellence can go hand in hand.’

Joery Matthys, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs, Leiden University, The Hague Campus



‘Talk to each other’

‘Universities should encourage and support initiatives that bring different types of people together so they can talk to and get to know each other; not as statistics or stereotypes, but as real people. People often make a lot of quick assumptions – because they see I’m in a wheelchair, for example. Don’t be afraid to ask questions.’

Dustin Hsiao, writing tutor and former coordinator of the Diversity Policy Feedback Group, Leiden University



‘Speak your truth’

‘For me, an inclusive learning environment means that everybody feels at home and is able to speak their truth in an authentic and kind way. I think it is important to be aware of the way you speak. The way you speak to others reflects on yourself. Words can define new realities. They have the power to define someone’s future: if you choose to limit others with your words, you are limiting the potential they have. Whereas when you speak kindly, you set others free.’

Gilberto Morishaw, MSc student in Public Administration, Leiden University



‘Let’s work together’

‘I think different educational institutions should collaborate on diversity and inclusion, instead of everyone reinventing the wheel themselves. When I came to Amsterdam as an international student in 1998, the topic wasn’t being discussed. We’ve started talking about it at our academy because we want to attract students from more diverse backgrounds. The first step is being aware of our prejudices.’

Aparajita Dutta, Head of International Affairs at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague