

303 Inclusive Global Educators for the 21st Century: from challenges to advantages

Natalia Timus¹, Zakaria Babutsidze²

¹Université Côte d'Azur, Nice, France. ²SKEMA Business School, Valbonne, France

Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Academic debate highlights the need to develop inclusive teaching practice and faculty professional development to accompany the implementation of inclusive higher education policies. This study addresses this need by investigating the factors that determine the degree of implementation of inclusive pedagogy through a comparative US-EU study. The research is based on the analysis of original data from an international survey, conducted within the framework of a Fulbright-Schuman research in 2022. The study reveals that overall US faculty have reported a higher level of inclusive teaching practice than their European counterparts. No other individual characteristic, classroom specifics, faculty international profile or institutional profile matters in explaining the utilization of inclusive pedagogy. Further cross-regional comparison shows that in the European Union professional development training is a particularly effective lever to promote inclusive teaching, while in the USA it is formal institutional level discussions that promote the implementation of inclusive pedagogy more effectively.

Full paper

In the post-COVID19 era, inclusive teaching represents a key issue facing higher education research, policy, and practice. Academic debate highlights the need to develop inclusive teaching practice and faculty professional development to accompany the implementation of inclusive higher education policies to ensure successful student learning (Addy et al., 2021; Carballo et al., 2019; Landorf et al., 2018). Considering new global developments, inclusive pedagogical approaches have the potential to shape the future of internationalisation of higher education by addressing the challenges linked to COVID19 pandemic, financial or geopolitical crises, as well as contribute to the implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Europe 2030 Strategy.

Inclusive education, understood as equal access and opportunities, has become a guiding principle of higher education agendas in the United States and the European Union in recent years. However, the practical implementation of this principle requires inclusive teaching and, more broadly, inclusive pedagogy – understood as the beliefs and knowledge underlying inclusive teaching practices (Florian & Kershner, 2009).

There is an increasing scholarly interest in exploring the relationship between inclusive pedagogy and global learning in the changing context of the Internationalisation of higher education (Mittelmeier & Yang, 2022; de Wit & Altbach, 2021). Current global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-racist movements, displacement crises and climate change provide strong impetus for inclusive teaching approaches to prepare competent graduates that can learn, live, and thrive among diversity and address global problems collaboratively. Scholars tend to agree that inclusive pedagogy is key for leveraging the benefits of diversity within the classroom and society and ensuring the success of global learning for all (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017; Landorf et al., 2018).

This study addresses the above-mentioned needs by exploring the question of what factors determine the degree of implementation of inclusive pedagogy. The analysis applies a comparative approach, investigating higher education policies and practices from the United States and the European Union. The research is based on the analysis of an original data from an international survey, conducted within the framework of a Fulbright-Schuman research project in 2022. The survey was designed based on mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative).

The significance of this research is twofold. Firstly, the topic of inclusive teaching represents a salient subject for higher education policy, practice and research in both the EU and the US. Also, inclusive pedagogy addresses key needs and challenges of contemporary international education, such as growing student diversity and non-traditional

learners (e.g., working students, life-long learners), multicultural education, and international students and refugees (Clifford, 2011; Unangst & Crea, 2020). Moreover, understanding how to design policy and practice for achieving scalable implementation inclusive higher education is vital for embracing the post-COVID opportunities for internationalising higher education through innovative approaches, such as collaborative online international learning, addressing the inequitable and pernicious consequences of previous internationalisation strategies within higher education (Leask, 2020). This would allow, therefore, to move forward the academic and policy discussion from challenges to advantages of inclusive education, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the United Nations.

The study reveals that overall US faculty have reported a higher level of inclusive teaching practice than their European counterparts. No other individual characteristic, classroom specifics, faculty international profile or institutional profile matters in explaining the utilization of inclusive pedagogy. Also, we evaluate four levers that institutions employ to promote the implementation of inclusive pedagogy. Out of these we see that incentives and online resources do not affect the implementation of inclusive pedagogy significantly, while formal discussion and professional development are effective. Further cross-regional comparison shows that in Europe professional development is a particularly effective lever to promote inclusive pedagogy, while in the US it is formal discussions that promote inclusive pedagogy more effectively.

Further cross-regional comparison shows that in the European Union professional development training is a particularly effective lever to promote inclusive teaching, while in the United States it is formal institutional level discussions that promote the implementation of inclusive pedagogy more effectively.

Therefore, we argue that higher education institutions must invest in increasing faculty understanding and practical implementation of inclusive teaching. Institutional level policies must be accompanied by practical actions promoting faculty development training as well as various discussions on values, beliefs and practice of inclusive teaching to achieve its scalable implementation. This will contribute to tackling new developments in international education, such as ensuring inclusive and equitable education for an increasingly diverse student body and preparing students for engaging in social justice and positive global change, in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

References

- Addy, T. M., Reeves, P. M., Dube, D., Mitchell, K. A., Reeves, P. M., & Mitchell, K. A. (2021). What really matters for instructors implementing equitable and inclusive teaching approaches. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, 40(1). <https://doi.org/10.3998/tia.182>
- Blasco, M. (2015). Making the tacit explicit: Rethinking culturally inclusive pedagogy in international student academic adaptation, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 23(1), 85-106, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2014.922120>
- Carballo, R., Cotán, A., and Spinola-Elias, Y. (2019). An inclusive pedagogy in Arts and Humanities university classrooms: What faculty members do. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 20(1), 21–41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022219884281>
- Claeys-Kulik, A.-L., Ekman Jørgensen Th., Stöber H. (2019). Diversity, equity and inclusion in European higher education institutions. Results from the INVITED project. EUA, Brussels. https://www.eua.eu/downloads/publications/web_diversity%20equity%20and%20inclusion%20in%20european%20higher%20education%20institutions.pdf
- Deardorff, D., and Arasaratnam-Smith, L. (Eds.). (2017). *Intercultural Competence in Higher Education: International Approaches, Assessment and Application* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315529257>
- De Wit, H. and Altbach, P.G. (2021) Internationalization in higher education: global trends and recommendations for its future, *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 5(1): 28-46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322969.2020.1820898>
- Green, W. (2019). Engaging “Students as Partners” in Global Learning: Some Possibilities and Provocations. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 23(1), 10–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315318814266>
- Landorf, H., Doscher, S., and Hardrick, J. (2018). *Making global learning universal: Promoting inclusion and success for all students*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Mittelmeier, J. and Yang, Y. (2022) The role of internationalisation in 40 years of higher education research: Major themes from higher education Research & Development (1982–2020), *Higher Education Research & Development*,

41(1), 75-91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.2002272>

Timuş, N., Bartlett, M., Bartlett, J., Ehrlich, S. and Babutsidze, Z. (2023) Fostering inclusive higher education through universal design for learning and inclusive pedagogy – EU and US faculty perceptions, *Higher Education Research & Development* (accepted)

Unangst, L., and Crea, T. M. (2020). Higher education for refugees: A need for intersectional research. *Comparative Education Review*, 64(2), 228-248. <https://doi.org/10.1086/708190>

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 | Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>.