

1.1. Practices of inclusion in formal and non-formal education contexts

SP - (18606) - “DO WE BELONG HERE?”—EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF INCLUSION OF MULTILINGUAL INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Short Abstract

Cultural diversity is one of the defining features of present-day higher education worldwide, particularly, but not only, within the student population. Despite the increased and celebrated multicultural visibility, not all students receive equal or adequate support in the socio-academic domain, which includes experiences within and outside the classroom related to pedagogy, socialisation, and integration, among other aspects. This is the case specially for international students—a group which has expanded exponentially over the last decade in light of global mobility and internationalisation efforts. In Canada, many institutions of higher education have committed to the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). This collective move symbolises an effort to identify and confront systemic issues of marginalisation and exclusion of minoritised groups in contexts of higher education (Oropeza et al., 2010; Turner et al., 2008). However, international students are not always considered an equity-seeking group, despite the structural barriers that have not only continued to affect international students' achievement of success and satisfaction, but also contributed to their marginalisation within the academic community (Glass & Gesing, 2021). As a result, international students' experiences of EDI remain underexplored and are typically examined from a perspective of internationalisation. The purpose of this presentation is to investigate the experiences of five multilingual international students from the broader perspective of EDI at a Canadian university through a case study design. To accomplish this, four in-depth interviews were conducted with each student over a period of four months to help better understand the students' experiences at a large, research-oriented Canadian university. The findings demonstrate that, in spite of the university's long-standing commitment to aspects of EDI, international students felt excluded and othered in the host academic community. Their experiences pointed to a lack of intercultural awareness and sensitivity on the part of the superficially multicultural community, a lack of institution-led initiatives to include the students in the community through socialisation with peers, particularly local students, and the limited internationalisation of the curriculum. This presentation is concluded with a call for universities to recognise international students as a marginalised group in their EDI efforts and, potentially, address structural issues that internationalisation frameworks have neglected (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016) and that have also intensified as a consequence of the current health crises around the world.

References

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