The gap between rhetoric and reality: An audit of postgraduate curricula for evidence of equality, diversity and inclusion

Introduction

Presentation of the topic:

Our chapter concerns the extent to which the topics of equality, diversity and inclusion are covered in the curricula of UK business schools. These topics are attracting a great deal of interest from higher education policy and professional bodies such as Advance HE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) and the Chartered Association of Business Schools, and yet, despite this high-profile interest, there is increasing evidence that these topics are often not covered in business school curricula, or only in the relatively 'soft' topics such as human resource management and business ethics.

In an influential study carried out in 2018, Perriton and Elliott found that: 'only 15% of programmes explicitly mentioned diversity in their publicly accessible module descriptions, an even smaller percentage of UG (8.5%) and PGT (6.7%) programmes included core diversity modules, and only a *single module* in the 2,735 programmes audited made mention of disability issues' (Perriton and Elliott 2018: online, emphasis in the original). In a more recent article Perriton, Elliott and Humbert (2021) probed their data set specifically for references to gender, concluding that '62 institutions of the 112 reviewed did not mention gender as a management issue to potential students in respect of their undergraduate business and management degrees' (P.64).

Perriton et al's (2021) empirical work was carried out in 2018; since then, the public profile of EDI has grown significantly. In the UK, for example, specialist initiatives have been developed by Advance HE and the Chartered Association of Business Schools. However, there is little evidence to suggest that these initiatives have led to changes in curriculum design. The British Academy of Management/ CABS work on a 'shared vision of a business and management knowledge ecosystem' includes important references to 'ethical engagement' and 'participation' but these are very general and lack the important specificity of EDI curricula.

One small case study, carried out in 2021 by a London-based university business school, surveyed module leaders about the extent to which they covered equality, diversity and sustainability in their curricula. The response rate was 18%. (private correspondence between the authors and the researcher). Of those who did respond, data indicated that modules aimed primarily to raise students' awareness while fewer modules share actual solutions or tools to address equality, diversity, inclusion and sustainability challenges. We cannot draw conclusions about the 82% who did not respond, but such a poor response rate is certainly concerning and might be indicative of a lack of engagement.

There is more research on higher education institutions (HEIs) as employers and how they manage their EDI responsibilities, and there is, increasingly, a focus on inclusive learning practices; how to ensure that students from minority and marginalised groups are enabled to access and succeed in higher education. While these topics are, of course, important, they do not specifically address our concern with curriculum design and development. Interestingly, Perriton et al do comment that:

> *the timestamp of our data collection may well prove to be high- (or low-, depending on your perspective) water level of marketized marketing of business and management degrees to prospective home and international students before the impact of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic on UK university finances and any knock-on effects on the positioning of degrees and the conscious highlighting of gender and other persistent issues in the workplace. (Perriton et al 2021: 61)*

Perriton et al's comment suggests a fear that EDI issues are falling down the agenda, and that, concerning as their findings were, the current picture might be even less rosy. We therefore, decided to investigate the university we work in to determine for ourselves what the gap between rhetoric and reality was for us now. Our context is that of a post 1992 university with a very diverse population of both students and staff. Equality, diversity and inclusion have become strategic priorities in the last few years, with the establishment of special interest groups and committees to implement them. Therefore, we hoped to find much more engagement with EDI in the curriculum.

In this chapter we discuss the findings from an internal audit we designed of our postgraduate curricula, identifying if, where and to what extent, the topics of equality, diversity and inclusion inform the curriculum, content, and assessments of our courses and modules. We chose our postgraduate curricula partly because we were about to embark on a curriculum review and the audit would provide a useful benchmark as well as serving as a pilot of the methodology which could later be used to audit the undergraduate curricula as well. We were curious as to what the outcomes would be and to determine to what extent we have progressed in embedding EDI in the curriculum, compared to the studies we mentioned above.

Does this matter? Why is this topic important for us and our pedagogic practice?

For us, this topic is important because our work is premised by a belief that a more equitable and just society cannot be achieved if people working within organisations are not able to identify, and challenge, the ways in which systematic patterns of discrimination are replicated and reinforced within their day-to-day working environments (Schwabenland and Kofinas 2023; Schwabenland, Kofinas, Romanova, Tsay and Zahara 2021). This should be cultivated early on, even before people enter the world of work. Universities play an important role in sensitising people to this agenda and for this reason we hold that equality, diversity and inclusion are relevant for all staff and students; their relevance is not determined by the subjects being taught, or the professional skills being developed. Therefore, the absence of these topics in significant numbers of courses and modules, is of great concern.

However, our review of existing literature demonstrates that there is very little available on developing EDI informed curricula. There is work on universities as employers (for example, Ahmad's 2012 contribution is widely recognised) and this is a major focus of the British Academy of Management (BAM) 2022 report on equality, diversity, inclusion and respect in UK business and management schools. There is also research into the 'widening participation' policy initiatives (Burke 2020). Fuentes, Zelaya and Madsen's (2021) work is one of the very few we have been able to find that does detail a set of prescriptions, however their focus is on psychology rather than business, and does not evaluate the effectiveness of

their recommendations. Also, they are based in the US where there are different dynamics at play in curriculum development. Keshtiban, Gatto and Callahan (2023) developed a project (this *was* UK-based) involving their students in 'evaluating course materials and activities through a JEDI [*justice*, equality, diversity and inclusion] lens' (P. 344). Over two semesters, students made notes after each session of one of their modules and their comments were fed back to faculty and other students. These finding included the identification of 'existing gaps in knowledge and student engagement with diversity topics such as hidden/invisible disabilities and unintentional tokenism'. However, this project was *extracurricular* and they concluded that 'resultant changes in curriculum were less tangible' (Keshtiban et al 2023: 346).

It is also important to look at where, and how EDI topics are being addressed, particularly whether they are core or optional. Høgdal, Rasche, Schoeneborn and Scotti's (2021) Danish case study of a PRME initiative (Principles of Responsible Management Education) supports the conclusion that if certain topics are only touched on more superficially than others this gives the students the impression that the subject isn't really important. And if a topic isn't included in the assessment requirements, students may not spend much time on it. However, Killick (2016) comments that 'the very existence of cognitive and behavioural assessments which reward equitable group working, the incorporation of multiple points of view, accessible communication and so forth [skills which are of great importance in managing EDI issues in the workplace] sends powerful messages concerning our own valuing, our own willingness to engage with diverse perspectives and alternative ways of being' (P. 23).

Why is this topic important for the practice of inclusive learning and teaching in business schools?

Since 2018 the rhetoric around the promotion of EDI in UK-based universities has been heightened and there has been renewed emphasis on the EDI agenda, with the expectation by government and national bodies that EDI will be embedded within the curriculum. In our university likewise, as mentioned above, there is a university-wide committee to support the EDI agenda at all levels of the organisation and that has led to a concerted emphasis on the development of an inclusive curriculum framework.

We see the connections between inclusive learning and EDI in the curricula as resting on three propositions. The first is that students themselves are likely to come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. And yet, in a survey carried out across our university 10% of responding students said that 'issues of race are not included in academic discussions' and 6% said that 'course tutors and lecturers are not confident or competent in facilitating these discussions' (internal report). While these percentages may seem quite low, given the numbers of staff and students across the university, they are not insignificant. McKendry and McKenna (2020) write that 'trans students were very unlikely to see themselves, trans experiences and history reflected in their studies' (p.104) Similar points are made by Hughes (2020) in relation to neurodiverse students and Speirs (2020) regarding students from working class backgrounds. These students are being presented with a picture of a world in which they do not exist, a world in which, as is so often suggested, the ideal manager is white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied and young (see, for example, Fletcher, Dashpur and Albert 2023; Bierema 2016). McKendry and Mckenna (2020), Hughes (2020) and Speirs (2020) all suggest that these experiences of exclusion and invisibility are likely to increase students' disengagement. Potentially they might result in their achieving less than their potential and even dropping out.

The second connection between inclusive learning and an EDI informed curricula is that students need to develop the skills of creating and participating in inclusive environments and take these skills with them into the workplace. Of course, if teachers are using such skills themselves students will benefit because the cultures in their classrooms will be more inclusive. However, unless these skills are explicitly named and practiced, so that students can understand what they are learning and why they are learning these skills, their knowledge is likely to be only tacit. It is, therefore, much less likely that they will be able to apply then in practice.

Thirdly, employability. Some of these skills are highly desired by employers: Forbes (2022) specifically include diversity, equality and inclusion in their top 15 most valuable skills while the Linked In survey (2023) includes areas related to EDI such as communication and teamworking. The World Economic Forum includes 'social and cultural awareness' among the core skills that are vital for the 21st century (UCAS nd: 2). The UK based Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (the professional body that oversees professional standards in human resource management) lists 'working inclusively' as one of the core behaviours that all HRM professionals should demonstrate.

Assuming that there is general agreement these topics are important and relevant for students of business and management, how can we explain their absence from the curricula, and what can be done to address it? Later in this chapter we will make some specific suggestions. More generally, Keshtiban et al (2023) suggest that the neo-liberalising dynamics at play in HEIs may be influencing academics to focus on quantifiable and measurable goals that create 'happy' customers; a 'pedagogy of entertainment, or passification, [which] conspires against stretching students outside their comfort zone to achieve deeper learning' (P.340). They are quite pessimistic about the (im)possibility of change initiatives aimed at social justice outcomes being managed within the neoliberal university.

Research methods

Five years after the original report by Perriton and Elliot (2018) we embarked on an internal audit of all the postgraduate modules within the University of Bedfordshire Business School to ask two fundamental research questions: (1) How does the business school in our university fare in terms of embedding EDI in the curriculum and (2) what progress have we made when compared with the original results of the Perriton and Elliot (2018) report? In order to conduct the audit, we received a small, internal educational research award which enabled us to employ a research assistant who audited each of the postgraduate modules within the Business School.

What methods did we use to collect the empirical material underpinning this chapter?

We started by adapted an internally developed inclusive curriculum mapping framework as the main foundation of our audit; the framework was closely aligned to the well-established Kingston University Inclusive Curriculum Framework (https://www.kingston.ac.uk). The Kingston Framework is widely used across the UK and is focussed on three principles: creating an accessible curriculum to students, enabling students to 'see themselves' in the curriculum, and equipping students with the 'skills needed to positively contribute to and work in a global and diverse world'. For each of the principles the Kingston Framework

provides multiple prompts (critical questions) in order to stimulate to the reader thoughts about inclusivity across all aspects of learning and teaching. The internal framework for our institution comprises nine themes which provide the prompts for consideration:

1. Course/Module Design
2. Curriculum Content
3. Curriculum Resources
4. Subject-related considerations
5. Teaching & Learning
6. Learning Support
7. Assessment Delivery
8. Assessment Opportunity
9. Feedback

The audit was carried out in spring 2023. We have focussed our audit only on explicit material comprising module documentation (as did Perriton and Elliott), module announcements, all presentation material as well as case studies and all assessment-related documentation.

We began by determining the total population of modules we would be analysing: 141 modules were listed as comprising the University of Bedfordshire Business School's postgraduate provision. We excluded from the audit three types of modules:

1. Dissertation-type modules because they typically do not have content, and the direction of the research is determined by the student rather than a very particular curriculum (i.e. they choose what they do their project on).
2. Modules that were delivered to transnational partner sites as the curriculum of those modules is determined by the partner rather than the university.
3. Legacy modules that were "forgotten" in the system but were not actively delivered anymore.

After reviewing this list we excluded 82 modules from the population targeted for analysis. That left us with 59 modules which we categorized into four academic groupings:

1st Grouping: Accounting, Finance and Economics
2nd Grouping: General Business, HRM and Strategy
3rd Grouping: Technology, project management, Supply Chain
4th Grouping: Tourism, Marketing, Events, Aviation

We created these groupings in order to identify any emerging themes. The first grouping included all of the finance and accounting modules. The second grouping included modules where people management and relationships are important to a greater or lesser degree. The third group comprised of technology modules, but those in which people management is also critical. The final grouping included topics where we would expect to see issues such as representation to be important.

The totals per grouping can be viewed in the table below:

Type of Modules	**Total number of modules per type**

Legacy modules/ Partner provision modules	55
1st Grouping: Accounting, Finance and Economics	10
2nd Grouping: General Business, HRM and Strategy	23
3rd Grouping: Technology, Project Management, Supply Chain	11
4th Grouping: Tourism, Marketing, Events, Aviation	15
Dissertation/Project modules	27
Grand total of modules in University of Bedfordshire	**141**

Table 1: Typology of modules within the business school

The population of modules was categorised alongside four different clusters as follows:

Modules per grouping	**Total number of modules per Type (%)**
1st Grouping: Accounting, Finance and Economics	10 (17%)
2nd Grouping: General Business, HRM and Strategy	23 (39%)
3rd Grouping: Technology, project management, Supply Chain	11 (19%)
4th Grouping: Tourism, Marketing, Events, Aviation	15 (25%)
Total of modules in University of Bedfordshire	**59 (100%)**

Table 2: Modules per Grouping

It is interesting to note that the University's PG provision covers all major disciplines of business and provides a well-balanced portfolio of modules that we felt reflects a typical business school's postgraduate provision. Each postgraduate has a mix of modules that may cut across these module groupings as part of their degree.

How was the empirical material analysed?

Access to the virtual space for each of these modules was granted to the research assistant who reviewed each module. The research assistant audited the module specifications, all the lecture material including powerpoint presentations, case studies, videos and other material, all module communications (that includes module announcements and unit handbooks), and the assessment-related documentation. The research assistant's task was to review the presence or absence of equality, diversity and inclusion, and if present, the extent to which they are considered in each module. He audited each of the three concepts in isolation by identifying each instance where one of these concepts is used by an academic in any of these materials. When any of the three concepts was explicitly mentioned within the material that was seen as a positive instance in the audit. When it was uncertain, and very much relied on the beholder's perspective it was categorised as a limited presence of that particular concept while if there was no mention of a particular concept then it was seen as an absence of that particular concept in the curriculum. The research assistant continuously checked with the lead investigators regarding the coding of these instances and examples were reviewed by all authors to ensure that the coding was accurate..

The table below provides three examples of recorded data (three modules and the summary audit):

PG Module Name	*Does the module embed EDI in the module communications? (1)*	*Does the module embed EDI in the content of material? (2)*	*Does the module embed EDI in the Assessment briefs and documentation? (3)*	*Equality/ Equity is covered (4)*	*Diversity is covered (5)*	*Inclusivity is mentioned (6)*	*Notes*
Bank Management	**NO**	**NO**	**NO**	**NO**	**NO**	**No**	
Financial Reporting & Analysis	**NO**	**Limited (But these are optional items)**	**NO**	**Limited**	**Limited**	**Limited**	*EDI is alluded to in case studies/ additional reading/ company report.*
Future of Work & Management	**YES**	**YES**	**YES (Assignment 2: gender representation)**	**YES (Remote team: week 6)**	**YES (Diverse working: week 4)**	**YES (Inclusive talent: week 3)**	*EDI mentioned in syllabus handbook; EDI included in reading; EDI included in sessions 3, 4, 5, 6, which include case studies*

Table 3: EDI content in 3 modules – three examples of module auditing

The first module has no material related to EDI in any of the materials i.e. module announcements or unit handbook), content, or assessment. Thus it is seen as a module that has no EDI content. The second module has some potential content on EDI that could be accessed via case studies and some of the additional reading. But it is limited, and it does not appear to be the focus. Thus the EDI content is very limited and the students have to focus to make these connections. The third module is an example of a module where EDI is embedded throughout: from the communications (in the handbook) to the reading and even in the assessment.

What questions did we seek to address in the data analysis?

As shown above we used six descriptive questions to interrogate the data present in the virtual space of each module:

1. Does the module embed EDI in the module materials?
2. Does the module embed in the content of bibliography, lecture slides, case studies and any other material present in the virtual space?
3. Does the module embed EDI in the assessment documentation?
4. How many instances of equality mentioned across all material available within the virtual space of the module?
5. How many instances of diversity mentioned across all material available within the virtual space of the module
6. How many instances of inclusivity mentioned across all material available within the virtual space of the module

Then an assessment for each question was made with three possible answers: (1) Yes; (2) Limited Evidence: (3) No Evidence. A judgement was made which of the three answers was appropriate for each question and for each module as shown in Table 3.

The section below will investigate in turn the findings for each question.

Analysis

Key findings from our research/pedagogic intervention, with regard to fostering inclusivity in learning and teaching in business schools

For the first level of analysis, we mapped the results for each question against the four academic groupings resulting to the following tabular representations.

Table 4 illustrates how EDI is embedded within the module materials by academic sub-discipline/grouping

Overall, the majority of modules, (61%), do not have EDI embedded in the module communications with the 1st Grouping having all 10 modules having no evidence of EDI in their module communications. The 2nd grouping which is general business, and also the 4th grouping which focusses around a range of disciplines such as marketing, aviation, and tourism are the ones that have most explicit mentions of EDI in the module communications (43% and 47% respectively).

Groupings	**Evidence of EDI in the module materials (%)**	**Some evidence of EDI in the module materials (%)**	**No evidence of EDI in the module materials (%)**	**Total**
1st Grouping: Accounting, Finance and Economics			10 (100%)	10
2nd Grouping: General Business, HRM and Strategy	10 (43%)	3 (13%)	10 (43%)	23
3rd Grouping: Technology, project management, Supply Chain	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	9 (82%)	11
4th Grouping: Tourism, Marketing, Events, Aviation	7 (47%)	1 (7%)	7 (47%)	15
Total of UoB modules	18 (31%)	5 (8%)	36 (61%)	**59**

Table 4: Evidence of EDI in the communications and delivery material

Table 5 provides an answer with regards to the second question: Does the module embed in the content of bibliography, lecture slides, case studies and any other material present in the virtual space?

Overall the majority of modules (58%) do not have EDI embedded in the content of the module with the 1st Grouping having all 10 modules exhibiting none of the three concepts embedded in the content of the module. The 2nd grouping, which is general business, and also the 4th grouping which focusses around a range of disciplines such as marketing, aviation, and tourism are the ones that have most explicit mentions of EDI in the content used for teaching in the module (43% and 47% respectively).

Groupings	**Evidence of EDI in the Bibliography, Content and Lecture Slides (%)**	**Some evidence of EDI in the Bibliography, Content and Lecture Slides (%)**	**No evidence of EDI in the Bibliography, Content and Lecture Slides (%)**	**Total**
1st Grouping: Accounting, Finance and Economics			10 (100%)	10
2nd Grouping: General Business, HRM and Strategy	10 (43%)	2 (9%)	11 (48%)	23
3rd Grouping: Technology, project management, Supply Chain	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	8 (73%)	11
4th Grouping: Tourism, Marketing, Events, Aviation	7 (47%)	3 (20%)	5 (33%)	15
Total of UoB moduless	**19** (32%)	**6** (10%)	**34** (58%)	**59**

Table 5: Evidence of EDI in the bibliography, content and lecture slides

Table 6 illustrates how EDI is embedded within the assessment documentation.

Overall the majority of modules (81%) do not have EDI explicitly embedded in the assessment documentation with the 1st Grouping having no evidence of EDI embedded in assessments, not even in a limited way! The 2nd grouping which is general business is the only grouping that has evidence of EDI embedded explicitly in the assessment while only 15% of the modules across all groupings have indicated limited engagement with any of the three concepts.

Groupings	**Evidence of EDI in the Assessments (%)**	**Some evidence of EDI in the Assessments (%)**	**No evidence of EDI in the Assessments (%)**	**Total**
1st Grouping: Accounting,			10 (100%)	10

Finance and Economics				
2nd Grouping: General Business, HRM and Strategy	2 (9%)	7 (30%)	14 (61%)	23
3rd Grouping: Technology, project management, Supply Chain			11 (100%)	11
4th Grouping: Tourism, Marketing, Events, Aviation		2 (13%)	13 (87%)	15
Total of UoB modules	**2** (3%)	**9** (15%)	**48** (81%)	**59**

Table 6: Evidence of EDI in the assessment

Of the two modules that did explicitly include one of the EDI concepts in their assessment the first module had allocated a gender representation assignment while the second module had a case study in which the students had to evaluate aspects of talent resourcing in the workplace, with equality, diversity, and inclusivity being amongst the elements under consideration. These two modules are the only ones that scored yes in all six questions of the audit.

There are a couple of interesting insights from the findings surrounding the first three questions. Firstly, it appears that modules within the accounting, finance, and economics academic disciplines did not include EDI in any of the material whether it is assessments, module communications or learning and teaching content. Secondly, the grouping with the highest instances of EDI engagement across all three audit questions is the grouping which encompasses HRM, general business, and the strategy sub-disciplines. HRM and general business would be more clearly aligned to the EDI agenda. However, it was a particular surprise to the authors that the 3rd grouping around technology and operations has shown minimal engagement with EDI across all three questions.

The third insight is that all EDI concepts are particularly absent in documentation and material surrounding assessments, far more so than in documentation surrounding module materials, or in learning and teaching content. As previously noted, this is of concern because it signals to the students that these topics may be less important than those which are being assessed.

Table 7 illustrates the instances in which equality mentioned across all material available within the virtual space of the module?

Overall the majority of modules (61%) do not have any mention (explicit or limited) of the concept of equality across the material of the module, not even in a limited way! Once again the 2nd and the 4th grouping are the ones where there is mention of the concept with 39% and 47% respectively.

Groupings	**Incorporation of Equality within the curriculum (%)**	**Some evidence of incorporation of**	**No evidence of incorporation of**	**Total**

		equality within the curriculum (%)	equality within the curriculum (%)	
1st Grouping: Accounting, Finance and Economics			10 (100%)	10
2nd Grouping: General Business, HRM and Strategy	9 (39%)	3 (13%)	11 (48%)	23
3rd Grouping: Technology, project management, Supply Chain	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	8 (73%)	11
4th Grouping: Tourism, Marketing, Events, Aviation	7 (47%)	1 (7%)	7 (47%)	15
Total of UoB modules	**18** (31%)	**5** (8%)	**36** (61%)	**59**

Table 7: Instances of equality present in the material of the modules

Table 8 illustrates the instances of diversity mentioned across all material available within the virtual space of the module?

Overall the majority of modules (58%) do not have any mention (explicit or limited) of the concept of diversity across the material of the module, not even in a limited way! Once again the 2nd and the 4th grouping are the ones where there is mention of the concept with 43% and 47% respectively.

Groupings	**Incorporation of Diversity within the curriculum (%)**	**Some evidence of incorporation of Diversity within the curriculum (%)**	**No evidence of incorporation of diversity within the curriculum (%)**	**Total**
1st Grouping: Accounting, Finance and Economics			10 (100%)	10
2nd Grouping: General Business, HRM and Strategy	10 (43%)	3 (13%)	10 (43%)	23
3rd Grouping: Technology, project management, Supply Chain	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	7 (64%)	11
4th Grouping: Tourism, Marketing, Events, Aviation	7 (47%)	1 (7%)	7 (47%)	15
Total of UoB modules	19 (32%)	6 (10%)	34 (58%)	**59**

Table 8: Instances of Diversity present in the materials of the modules

Table 9 illustrates how many instances of inclusivity are mentioned across all material available within the virtual space of the module?

Overall, the majority of modules (63%) do not have any mention (explicit or limited) of the concept of inclusivity across the material of the module, not even in a limited way! Once again, the 2nd and the 4th grouping are the ones where there is mention of the concept with 43% and 40% respectively.

Groupings	**Incorporation of Inclusivity within the curriculum (%)**	**Some evidence of incorporation of Inclusivity within the curriculum (%)**	**No evidence of incorporation of inclusivity within the curriculum (%)**	**Total**
1st Grouping: Accounting, Finance and Economics			10 (100%)	10
2nd Grouping: General Business, HRM and Strategy	10 (43%)	2 (9%)	11 (48%)	23
3rd Grouping: Technology, project management, Supply Chain	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	8 (73%)	11
4th Grouping: Tourism, Marketing, Events, Aviation	6 (40%)	1 (7%)	8 (53%)	15
Total of UoB modules	18 (31%)	4 (7%)	37 (63%)	**59**

Table 9: Instances of diversity present in the material of the modules

One thing to note is that the results of tables 4, 6 & 7-9 are similar, indicating that each of the three EDI topics was tackled to a similar degree. The only outcome that followed a different pattern was the one that examined assessments. This uniformity of results seems to indicate that once a module engaged with EDI it engaged with all three concepts and quite holistically across all explicit and tangible aspects of the curriculum *except* assessment.

What was surprising and original about the findings?

Overall, while there was no specific module that was focussing on EDI there were far more modules in this audit that had EDI concepts, ideas and frameworks embedded in their curriculum compared to the original Perriton and Elliott (2018) report. This demonstrates some progress with regards to the embedding of EDI in the curriculum. However, in each of the statements more than 50% of the modules had no engagement with EDI. Thus, while we can see improvement in our university vis-à-vis the external benchmark there is still an alarming level of non-engagement with EDI.

When looking at the data in more detail, Table 5, regarding assessment, appears to be an outlier with only 2 modules explicitly engaging EDI in their assessments, and with only a further 9 modules presenting assessment tasks which would allow for some limited engagement in EDI since one of a number of possible topics could be EDI-related **if** the student chose to interpret the assessment that way. Considering how central assessment is in the Higher Education model

of education it was a bit surprising to see that it is the one area with nearly no engagement with EDI. Even in the area of accounting, finance and economics assessment asks are not purely mathematical – they ask for judgements, critical thinking and contextual understanding.

According to a number of frameworks of Higher Education learning it is assessment that drives learning and is often what motivates students to engage with the learning material (Broadbent, Pandero and Boud, 2018; Iannone and Simpson, 2016; Taras and Davies, 2013; Trotter, 2006). It could be argued that if a particular concept is not part of the assessment it is a signal that the academics teaching the module do not regard it as essential. The very limited inclusion of EDI in assessment appears to indicate that in fact the academics in our university did not consider it a topic worthy of assessing. Alternatively, it may suggest that they do not know how to include it – further investigation would be necessary in order to respond effectively.

An alarming result of our audit was also the fact that engagement with EDI seems to be very discipline-specific with general business/HRM modules as well as modules in Tourism/Aviation/Marketing engaging highly with the EDI agenda while modules in accounting/finance/economics chose not to. Technology-related areas also seem to be rather disinterested to engage in EDI which implies that different disciplines have a different perspective with regards to the relevance of an inclusive curriculum (in terms of explicit curriculum) to their pedagogy.

We believe our findings shed some light into the results of the original Perriton and Elliot (2018) report and expand on its findings. Even this relatively small-scale audit set made us aware of the complexities involved in integrating EDI issues throughout the curriculum. The fact that academics did not include EDI in the assessment indicates that there is hesitancy in engaging with EDI in a meaningful way and it may be possible that it is seen as risky to have it as part of the assessment. Thus, academics may prefer to avoid engaging with EDI altogether, as evidenced by the Perriton and Elliot (2018) research.

Implications for inclusive learning and teaching in business schools

What have we learned from our research/pedagogic intervention, especially for fostering inclusivity in learning and teaching is concerned?

The findings of the audit provide indicative evidence of the problems and also of possible solutions. The most obvious finding was that there is still a way to go to realize the aspiration of including aspects of EDI in all business and management curricula. We found the strongest presence of EDI in topics such as human resource management and general management, which is probably unsurprising as tutors in these subject areas are likely to have significant familiarity with these topics. The fact that not a single module among the accounting, finance and economics modules, and only a limited number of modules in technology-related subjects had content related to EDI was depressing, but it seems to corroborate the argument that it can be a challenge in certain disciplines to engage with the EDI discourse. Furthermore, when only 3% of the postgraduate modules require students to demonstrate some understanding of EDI issues in their assessments, we worry that this is conveying a message that these topics are only of marginal importance. Alternatively, they are so challenging to tackle that academics avoid engaging with them altogether.

We need to stress that our audit was not designed to collect evidence about the practices of inclusivity in teaching and learning, and so we cannot draw any conclusions about these. However, as we commented above, if students are not being taught about the skills of

fostering inclusivity, even if they are benefiting from them within the classroom, they are not likely to be able to apply them in the workplace.

What are some of the implications for practice? The results of the audit suggest that many people teaching business and management curricula do not perceive EDI topics to be of relevance. Anecdotally, from discussions with colleagues about our study we have heard comments that support this conclusion. This raises some interesting challenges with regard to the strategy of 'mainstreaming' EDI rather than delivering these topics through specialist modules. Academics who have developed specialist expertise in EDI tend to be able to see how these topics are threaded through the discourses and practices of all aspects of business and management, but we should not assume that they are equally visible to everyone. If a mainstreaming approach is adopted, then there needs to be a prior stage of engagement, involving discussions with people with a greater expertise in EDI, who can facilitate colleagues to identify linkages and areas of mutual importance. As Kestiban et al (2023) note, social justice work needs to start with consciousness raising. The first step needs to be the recognition of the problem.

Secondly, we suggest that this work needs to be very specific. Broad generalities about the business case for diversity and the like are not likely to be helpful in empowering colleagues with little detailed understanding of the topics, to engage with them meaningfully in ways that will help students to gain greater understanding of the ways in which the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are manifested and challenged from within different organisational roles and functions.

Finally, there needs to be strategic institutional commitment to the inclusion of EDI within the curriculum, as is promoted by the *Whole Provider Approach* (Thomas, 2021) of Office for Students (a UK governmental body) recognising that 'the interplay of culture and structure should enable people to be sufficiently well informed and have the capacity and commitment to implement inclusive practices' and that change needs to be driven from all levels of the organisation (Thomas 2021: 2). That commitment needs to be coupled with compassion and an understanding of the very real levels of fear and anxiety these topics provoke.

The institutional commitment also needs to include an acknowledgement that many of the topics that an EDI based curriculum might cover, are increasingly controversial and there are likely to be academic staff whose opinions on issues such as gender, religion, the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people may be in conflict with the aims of the university's EDI policies. The institution needs to consider how to address these challenges and how to support staff in navigating this controversial terrain.

The institution needs to retain the clear focus on transformative change; Yarrow and Johnston's (2022) critical analysis of the Athena Swan initiative (criticisms also supported by the BAM EDI 2021report) on improving gender inequalities in HE demonstrates the dangers of such initiatives being co-opted into a reputational agenda; what they term as 'institutional peacocking', where the value of the work done is seen in terms of the reputation advantage it brings over that of social justice.

In what ways has our own pedagogic practice changed as a result?

Two of the authors of this chapter are primarily involved in pedagogic practice in an advisory or managerial role (the third author is a PhD student who worked on the audit as a research assistant). Therefore, our own professional development needs to be understood within that context. The audit provided us with a benchmark of how we are doing at a moment in time. And while the results are far from satisfactory, they have made it possible to develop much more precise, targeted interventions, recognising that different issues may need to be addressed within different subject groups. For example, we have developed a workshop on strategies to manage conversations about contentious issues in the classroom, recognising that this is a significant issue for some staff.

We have already seen that discussions and presentations around these findings are leading to a greater level of awareness and some important changes being made, particularly with regard to assessments. There have been to workshops run for all staff on developing more inclusive approaches to assessment and, while this is not the main focus of our research (as making the assessment process more inclusive is not the same thing as including assignments that test understanding and application of EDI concepts and skills) this nonetheless makes an important contribution to the overall aims of EDI.

What advice, with regard to developing a more inclusive approach to learning and teaching in business schools, would we give to others, based on our research/pedagogic intervention?

Whether the emphasis is on developing a more inclusive approach to teaching and learning, or more specifically – as in our audit- on the inclusion of EDI topics in the curricula, establishing a benchmark is clearly useful in planning how best to intervene. A desk-based audit provides an important overview 'snapshot' of what kinds of issues need to be addressed and where.. An audit of inclusive assessments, for example, could be useful in highlighting where the tasks and rubrics used are sensitive to the needs of different students, so the audit approach could be very usefully extended here. However, the dynamics of interactions in the classroom cannot be captured using these methods. In the context of our audit, we recognise that some teachers may be drawing on EDI topics to illustrate or develop topics beyond the teaching slides. For example, one colleague, who teaching accounting and finance, told us about using a decolonising lens to discuss how notions of value are culturally created and sustained.

We have suggested that there are several potential explanations for the underrepresentation of EDI topics within the curricula and that addressing them requires a range of interventions. But we would caution against a 'name and shame' approach. The high levels of anxiety that EDI topics can evoke would only be made worse by so doing. We have been careful in presenting our work and in discussing it internally, to ensure that individuals and, generally, individual modules, are not easily identifiable, and we have been careful to describe the issues raised in systemic terms.

How does your chapter contribute to knowledge about inclusivity in learning and teaching?

Our audit design is a simple tool for establishing a benchmark position from which to develop targeted discussions and interventions, recognising that different approaches will be needed in different circumstances if EDI is to be effectively integrated across the curriculum. To the best of our knowledge this evidence base is significantly lacking, resulting in much of the discussions around EDI remaining at the level of generality and rhetoric. Nevertheless, we are left with some questions about the feasibility of mainstreaming EDI throughout the

curriculum. We don't doubt that it would be possible to do so; as teachers and researcher with considerable experience of working with EDI issues, we can see the relevance of these concepts, regardless of the specific course the students are taking. However, teaching EDI requires not only that critical awareness but also a skilled ability to engage in complex and contentious issues which raise moral and ethical dilemmas for many colleagues. Many specialist textbooks, across the business and management curriculum, make little or no reference to EDI; many colleagues will have had little exposure to, or support in developing the skills they will need. Given the competing demands for time and resources, without strong, and effective institutional support, EDI may slip off the agenda.

Although our focus is on curriculum content rather than inclusivity in teaching and learning, our contribution lies in the nexus between these two issues. The processes of facilitating inclusivity, which underpin both, need to be taught if students are to apply them in their won practice. We suggest that practices of inclusivity are necessary but not sufficient for students studying business and management. There may be other fields of endeavour where the practices of teaching are more distinct from the content of the curricula but in the case of EDI, these are intertwined. Our audit has served to highlight some of the areas where we are falling short and provided us with a base for drawing some useful inferences about what some of the causes and solutions might be.

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