

Seminar

Diversity, Inclusion & Internationalisation: Comparative Perspectives

Tuesday, 19 March 2019

9:30am – 6:30pm

Jindal Global Educational & Professional Academy,
NTH Complex, Qutub Institutional Area, New Delhi

Concept Note

The exceptional universities across the world have strategically invested in building organisational practices and cultures that enable diversification of their composition. They have actively sought to bring about a satisfactory balance in the demographic compositions of student, teacher and staff profiles that more or less reflect the composition of the societies they serve and in an increasingly globalising world, the composition of contemporary work places. The imperative of diversity and inclusion has emerged not simply as a cultural and political aspiration but has also been widely recognised as an important source of creativity and innovation in professional, political and social life. Leading institutions across the world have held a strong appreciation of the dominant trends in the globalisation process — fast paced changes in the domain of technology, increased cross-national flows of economic and human resources, and the dramatic rise of multi-national work places — and the implications of these developments for higher education institutions. Such institutions have invested deeply in preparing their students to participate fully in global economic and cultural spaces.

What does it mean to educate young persons in our time? What does the intensification of globalisation mean in terms of our institutional and pedagogical processes? How do we model ourselves on best university practices that foster a culture of excellence that prepares our students for not only career opportunities in increasingly global work places, but also to actively participate in democratic processes? If a university aspires to remain relevant in the changing socio-economic scenario, it should be responsive to contemporary needs in economy and society. This means that our graduates should be equipped intellectually and in spirit to participate in complex and uncertain economic and organisational contexts. Acknowledging this imperative leads us to see that skilful coping in global work environments places a premium on cultivation of respect for differences, a capacity to encounter novelty, and a disposition to embrace complexity, in addition to the development of analytical skills and love of knowledge that were emphasised in the past. Further, if experience of difference, novelty and otherness is a commonplace occurrence in social and economic life, our educational process serve

their communities best if they find ways to replicate these experience in the educational process at the university. The university acquires a new and transformative meaning in this context. It is no more exclusively an institution that transfers past knowledge to newer generations of students as the custodian of traditional knowledge, but a place where students acquire a particular form of experience that prepares them to face life in novelty and uncertainty. The realisation of the latter goal means building an institution that provides a holistic experience, both inside and outside the classroom.

We are witnessing growing institutionalisation of diversity and inclusion practices in business and economic organisations. It is not uncommon for many global business organisations to have chief diversity officers whose sole purpose is to actively seek out opportunities to increase the index of inclusion, fair representation and diversification. These developments will have consequential implications for how educational institutions function and what institutional and pedagogical processes get privileged.

Some of the questions that these global institutional developments raise for Indian higher education are: What does diversity and inclusion mean in the context of educational institutions? How do these impact on teaching and learning practices? What is the relationship between institutionalised diversity in the university and the potential work places our graduates are likely to participate in? How does diversity enhance creativity and ethical orientations in student and working lives? How will these impact students' abilities to actively participate in democratic processes in the societies they are located in, and creatively contribute to the betterment of those societies? What are the novel ways of imagining and enriching diversity processes beyond the usual categories of demography, geography and race? What types of institutional practices may have the potential to increase participation of women, individuals from excluded and marginalised groups and non-citizens in Indian educational institutions?

Through four focused sessions, this one-day seminar on *Diversity, Inclusion & Internationalisation: Comparative Perspectives* brings together academics, scholars and higher education practitioners to discuss how India's universities are addressing challenges related to diversity, inclusion and internationalisation, and how our universities can better prepare students for the 21st century world.