'Diversity' 'Widening Participation' and 'Inclusion' in Higher Education: An International study.

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Prologue:

There is a danger of diversity becoming a corporate buzzword.[…] Rightly or wrongly you get fed up of hearing it. I don't think it's bad for anyone to strive for diversity for whatever reason, diversity in my opinion is a good thing – but maybe companies are only striving for it because it makes them look good and it's in danger of becoming just another word they can add to their website. (UK student citation)

Abstract:

This article emphasises the complex and critical realities of 'Diversity' and 'Widening Participation' (WP); policy, discourse and practice in higher education, as 'understood' and experienced by undergraduate students of education. Building upon previous work which engaged with questions of hegemony in education, this paper develops the argument that 'under-represented' voices need to take centre

stage- and that HEIs critically consider why and how they positon 'under-represented' student groups (Gibson, 2006; 2015). Drawing on an international study involving 373 undergraduate students of 'Education' and 8 academics in six universities; one in Cyprus, one in New Zealand, two in the UK and two in the USA, this paper tells a story of tension, division and exclusion for students who have, through WP discourse, been defined as 'non-traditional' and thus positioned by their University as 'diverse'. It argues that, at an international level, the HE sector needs to be more responsive and proactive in engaging with their key stakeholders, their students. Our study, which made use of questionnaire and focus groups (FG), suggests this is particularly the case when it comes to critical aspects of the student experience, specifically institutional labelling and student exclusion from university discussions on what is and what is not 'inclusive education practice'.

Introduction:

'Diversity' is used in this paper when referring to 'non-traditional' higher education students or those who are under-represented in terms of disability, ethnicity, age, disability, gender, LGBTQ, 'first generation' and socio-economic status. (HEFCE and OFFA, 2014). These intersections are used in University bureaucracy, polices and monitoring systems, when referring to 'non-traditional' students. This common practice of positioning under-represented groups of students as 'diverse' or 'non-traditional' in HEIs creates a problematic binary. It was this problematic binary we wished to investigate, hence why we made use of the term 'diversity' when referring to this aspect of institutionally created student identity, we did so whilst retaining a critical awareness that this position has been externally applied to students by their

HEI. The work of Ahmed (2012), Burke (2012), Kimura (2014) and Gibson (2015) critique this binary highlighting the problems of university policies and practices which pathologize 'difference', creating negative faculty views and expectations, contributing to unconscious bias thus furthering the 'under-represented' 'non-traditional' student's experience of exclusion.

We develop the debate surrounding international policies of WP or its equivalent. Such policies were active components of all the universities involved in the study. The paper specifically addresses the critical work of Quinn (2012), Gale and Hodge (2014), and Watson (2013) where the rationale of WP is critiqued in light of research which suggests it has not resulted in 'under-represented' student transformation but student frustration and significant dropout rates. Furthermore, it links the social justice 'imaginary' of WP to the binary of 'traditional and non-traditional' or 'diverse and non-diverse', exploring how this binary serves to re-create and pathologize difference thus confirming the contemporary pretence of 'inclusive' and/or 'socially just' higher education.

Divisions within the HE sector in relation to 'inclusion', what it is and what it is not, have been extensively addressed in the literature, (Allan, 2003; Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse, 2007; Sebba and Sachdev, 1997). This paper draws on critical aspects of such work, specifically on student experience and the linked debate regarding WP's rationale, core purpose and impact. Our study's findings move thinking forward in this field by arguing for relational pedagogic form, a medium where educators and their students in partnership may uncover and challenge institutionalised hegemony, ingrained forms of exclusion and consider how institutionalised language e.g. using terms such as 'non-traditional' or 'diverse' when referring to under-represented student groups adds to their exclusion.

The ubiquitous matter of 'Widening Participation':

Contemporary international higher education policy emphasises more equitable access for underrepresented student groups (European Commission, 2011; NESET, 2011; Allen, Storan and Thomas, 2005, BIS, 2011). The impact of WP can be seen with the international growth of further education or equivalent colleges (FHEs), increased numbers of 'under-represented' students and the recent increase in awarding university status to HE colleges (BIS, 2011; Moore, Sanders and Higham 2013; Million+ and NIS 2013). Over the past twenty years WP, or its equivalent, has become a dominant discourse within the politics and education policy of the countries involved in this study, with national directives, statutory policy, government bodies and funding mechanisms(national and institutional) to support and establish 'fair access'.

In relation to the UK one might consider the Equality Act (2010), Disability Student Allowance, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty commission or the Higher Education Funding Council for England. In New Zealand, whilst the term 'widening participation' is seldom used, the intention to increase participation in tertiary education by minority student groups is evident in Government policy. The Tertiary Education Strategy (2014-19), aims to reduce disparities for Maori and Pasifika peoples. In 2014, enrolments in bachelors and higher qualifications comprised 27 percent of Māori students compared to 20 percent in 2004 (Ministry of Education, 2015). Cyprus refers to 'special criteria' as opposed to 'widening participation' yet the emphasis is similar in its aim to increase numbers of underrepresented students attending university. With regards the USA 'diversity' is a term used regularly in as

are practices of 'widening participation'; "There continues to be a strong verbalized bi-partisan commitment to reducing the measured gaps by race/ethnicity, income and disability status as manifest in the passage of No Child Left Behind…." (Cahalan, 2013, p. 67). In the USA, non-repayable federal grants and expanding integral college support services, are examples of their HE sector's provision for underrepresented student groups.

Whilst WP initiatives have shown some positive impact e.g. increasing numbers of marginalised social groups (HEFCE and OFFA, 2014), academic work and independent reports (Quinn, 2012) suggest it has failed to deliver, with certain marginalised groups continuing to be underrepresented (Lanelli, 2011; Thomas, 2012). As noted in the UK's Social Mobility and Child Poverty commission report (2013, p.5), *Those in the most advantaged areas are still three times as likely to participate in HE as those in the most disadvantaged areas […] There has been no improvement in participation at the most selective universities among the least advantaged young people since the 1990s […]* From a wider European perspective, an independent report discovered 6 factors causing student ''drop out'; socio-cultural, structural, policy, institutional, personal and learning (Quinn, 2012). All factors were seen as interrelated and whilst WP policy was not seen as the source of the problem the matter of massification as the major informant to evolving WP practices was. Clarifying this, Quinn states (2012, p71); *Widening participation is when those accessing and succeeding in HE are fully representative of the diversity of the population and when there is equality of outcome across these groups. Massification can occur without the changes in the system that would actually widen participation and can also lead to a stratified system.* In the USA, Cahalan reflecting

on the impact of WP asserts (2013, p.74) *Large gains have been made, but large gaps by income remain and are getting larger as are income inequality levels within the U.S.* Thus, whilst numbers have increased significantly they are not fully representative at either uptake or output sources. One might argue this is due to the discourse of 'normalcy' operating throughout the HE sector, creating a binary, i.e. the 'normal' or 'traditional' as opposed to the 'diverse' or 'non-traditional' student. This results in systemic, culturally created separate groups where the latter carries the stigma of 'other', is forced to fit into established forms of teaching and learning with additional provision added for their 'effective' integration.

Most WP policies and practices come from institutional sources- committees and departments where 'other' does not reside. Devoid of relational connections with the groups of students they supposedly represent, their policies fail to deliver in meaningful ways beyond recreating the same problem in their 'solutions' (Ahmed 2012). This is reflected in recent studies suggesting engagement with WP and working with traditionally excluded groups' results in deficit models of provision promoting negative perceptions and stigma, (Welikala and Watkins, 2008). For example, Madriaga (2011, p.901) argues, *Normalcy heralds a nondisabled person without 'defects', or impairments, as the ideal norm...this sense of normalcy reproduces thinking that non-traditional students are non-white, working class and/or disabled.* This reproduction of 'normalcy' and 'non-traditional' associative thinking creates a culture where HE institutions continue to marginalise and suppress those who seek equality, access and academic success. This culture exists within institutionalised education systems with ways of being and doing that connect to traditional values. That which is 'other', is either successfully integrated or fails (Slee,

2008; Madriaga et al., 2011). This study builds on this work through research findings which show how institutionalised cultures and non-relational practices result in further student marginalisation.

Our study's sample population shared stories which highlighted institutionalised cultures of 'normal' and a dominant discourse which, in overt and nuanced ways, created subjects - students, academics and administrators - who struggled to critically engage with 'Other'. In particular, questions were asked during the focus groups about where 'Other' has originated and why, alongside stories which highlighted how, through institutionalised processes, 'other' is created and re-created and either successfully integrated within our institution's established practices or further excluded and failed as a 'no-fit' entity.

Understanding what was meant by the reference 'diversity' in the context of university practice and institutional positioning of 'non-traditional' students was a central question in the study. We found it represented and initiated positive and negative experiences and responses from our students. There was never a simplistic answer or positive/negative opinion that all agreed with when discussing the university's use of the label. This term was perceived as problematic, mis-understood and mis-represented in practices which aspired to be about social justice, (Ahmed, 2012; Kimura, 2014). Questions were asked by our focus group members such as; can 'diversity' be connected to one or many facets of self; is it something located in terms of geography - time and place-, or is it solely to do with minority cultural difference; is it a subjective definition or externally imposed definition; does it have a history or histories?

Ahmed (2012), critiquing changes in popular language in particular from the use of 'equal opportunities' to 'diversity', draws on sources which problematize and locate the changes as a part of the rise of corporate neo-liberalism. She states, (2012, p. 53), *[…] diversity has a commercial value and can be used as a way not only of marketing the university but of making the university into a marketplace.* The study's methodology is explained below followed by the study's findings.

Research methodology:

Ethics approval (reference number 13/14-004) was granted at the Principal Investigator's (PI) university in the UK and subsequently approved by the other HEIs taking part. The methodology was participatory in aim and began with a secure online questionnaire sent to all undergraduate education students registered in the six universities. The questionnaire enabled access to a potential sample population of students from each university for FG membership. As noted above, 'Diversity' is used in this paper when referring to 'non-traditional' students or those who are under-represented in terms of disability, ethnicity, age, disability, gender, LGBTQ, 'first generation' and socio-economic status (HEFCE and OFFA, 2014). The initial online questionnaire contained 25 questions, 6 of which were used to give an indication of the respondent's 'diversity' as linked to the aforementioned intersections.

Given the international nature of this study, language did pose a problem, specifically when we discussed 'ethnic minority' and references to use in the questionnaire. We agreed on a final list but also noted how this may not cover the entire sample

population. Thus each HEI academic link included a reference to their sample population, asking students to add 'other' if they wished to.

From the initial 373 questionnaire responses, 174 perceived themselves as representing a 'diverse' population in their university, 54 indicated they would like to be involved in focus groups, however, of these 5 did not give contact details. 49 were invited to become focus group members and provided with further details of the project including a copy of the approved ethics protocol, research questions to explore in the first FG and FG meeting plans, 25 confirmed their involvement resulting in four of the six universities, UK, Cyprus, NZ and USA recruiting for the FG stage. The study had a total FG population of 25 students and 6 academic researchers, each university ran a total of 4 focus group meetings over the period February to August 2014.

Table one sets out figures regarding response rate to questionnaire and subsequent take up numbers for focus groups:

University Location	Questionnaire responses (response rate where known)	'Diverse' students (proportion of total responses)	FG participants
Cyprus	90 (16%)	20 (22%)	5
New Zealand	28	17 (61%)	7
United Kingdom A	55 (20%)	34 (62%)	0
United Kingdom B	78	42 (54%)	8
USA A	22	18 (82%)	0
USA B	100 (25%)	43 (43%)	5
Total	373	174 (47%)	25

Table One: Table of responses, number of diverse students and number of FG participants per institution.

The first FG aimed to meet and greet, discuss project ethics and respond to a series of questions which had been sent in advance:

- What is a 'diverse' student?

- What is a 'non-diverse' student?

- In what ways to you see yourself as a diverse student? As a non-diverse student?

- What positive and negative learning experiences have you had since being at university?   Were these related to your understanding of diversity?

- Have you ever experienced exclusion/ discrimination whilst studying here?

- What relationships or links in the university act as crucial support or encouragement for you in university life and how?

Table Two: Questions to consider before the first focus group

FG1 was recorded and stored on a secure online website facility. Each focus group member was subsequently invited to listen to their group's recorded conversation and through support, offered by their academic facilitators, carry out individual thematic evaluations. These evaluations were then shared at FG2 and a summary of key findings and themes discussed. FG3 entailed further discussion on the themes and reflection on some key academic papers regarding diversity, inclusion and exclusion in HE which sparked conversations around possible new practices which may better facilitate effective inclusive measures. FG4 was a final collection of data and time to consider how the work could move forward and be disseminated. Whilst

a coding frame was not developed, we revisited our questions and analyzed our data in each FG's native language. This enabled us to be closer to the data and quotes were translated at the end of the process. All the academics coordinating the process shared data during the research and between FGs. A second paper addressing the research methodology and our uses of participatory research method is to be published elsewhere; this second paper complements the work of this paper.

Findings of study:

Student responses were suggestive of their struggles with 'inclusion' and experiences of oppression whilst a developing narrative emerged of the need for the relational, i.e. meaningful and positive relationships within and across the university where engagement could take place with students if success was to become a secure aspect of their academic knowledge development and eventual graduate status. Key findings, the dominant and communal themes which were agreed within and across focus groups, are presented here and categorised as follows:

- The binary of diverse and non-diverse

- University assemblage and bureaucracy

- Relationships

These three themes present insights with student narrative as drawn from FG conversations. All citations are anonymous and country of origin is noted. The themes, along with this paper, have been reviewed and where deemed necessary edited by our FG members reflecting our participatory methodology. Arguably this provides our findings with a further layer of analysis to ensure rigour in the claims made and reflects the work's assertion that 'student centred' practice should be

valued and carried out at many levels within the academy, including within academic research practices. Our data analysis did not use traditional coding practices and the findings do not aim to make broad claims but highlight what was discussed and agreed by our FG members as being of significance.

The binary of diverse and non-diverse: A label and its categories

David (2007) presents an engaging and comprehensive overview on the discourse of 'diversity in HE'; its origins, complexities, emergence as a 'dominant' reference in the connected discourse of WP and alludes to the negative impact its 'binary' - 'diverse' and 'non-diverse' has upon the student experience. One may perceive in this divided dual construct the existence of 'cultures of difference', that is the diverse culture pitted against the non-diverse culture- for example the disabled and non-disabled or the white and the ethnic minority (Slee and Cook 1999; Gibson, 2015). Cultures of difference, when not acknowledged or suppressed, add further to covert practices of institutionalised segregation and stigma (Gibson, 2015; Carrington, 1999). Focus group conversations suggested a range of student views and experiences of the term 'diversity'. Whilst most saw it as a reference regarding various minority statuses, they also saw it as a political label and for some a negative label:

'Diversity affects everything, many systems and theories use it throughout education and work environments to public institutions and organisations, they continue to use a 'one-size-fits-all'. (NZ)

> *We are all different. There is no person who is 'normal'. The 'normal' person does not really exist. (Cyprus)*
>
> *I guess with my diversity, I don't see that people need to necessarily know it, because it doesn't make me who I am. Like, that doesn't define me […] like stereotypes. (USA)*
>
> *I think diversity creates stereotypes- it's still labelling and not celebrating it or letting it just be. (UK)*

Others commented that whilst it was a familiar concept in their university, practices for social justice had some way to go: "*I do find this project interesting because even though this school takes pride in the diversity of its students, they don't always act that way.*" (USA)

The impact of an institutionalised approach to labelling, defining and grouping students on a binary of diverse or non-diverse was shared as challenging by many, with some arguing it only served to create stereotypes and others challenging the need for it:

> *I don't really think that there is such a thing as a non-diverse student (USA)*
>
> *I don't think I've really had any negative experience about my age until coming to Uni (UK)*

When considering the ways in which Universities request student disclosures on equal opportunity forms, or equivalent, this was seen as a challenging process which in itself resulted in experiences of discrimination:

> *When you register with the Uni you go through the equal opportunities form and sexuality is not listed on there… some Unis include sexual orientation. I think the option should be there as it seems to be saying that isn't important. (UK)*
>
> *I find that really strange because on one of the forms you can actually tick a box saying I'm a care-leaver, I've been a child in care. So why should I have to tell people I've been a child in care but not disclose sexuality? (UK)*

Some students found being labelled 'diverse' by external sources dis-empowering and not helpful. Some FG members drew on their specific 'diversity', highlighting how this had only become a 'significant' aspect their 'self' upon attending university:

> *About labelling someone as an other…it sort of feels okay if you yourself give yourself some kind of label or some point of difference but as soon as someone else does it to you it really doesn't feel good. (NZ)*
>
> *Well I've always thought of myself as normal until coming to university because I am 'mature student', 'solo parent' and I've had 'dyslexia'. So until starting university I was just, this is what I was, now I've been labelled and categorised and I've got 'special needs' office chasing me every second day. Until I started university I never thought of myself as a diverse person or had myself categorised as something. (NZ)*

This aspect of externally applied definitions of self as 'diverse' and the subsequent institutional provision it sparked, was articulated by many as problematic, disempowering and not beneficial to their student experience or academic progression.

Students disclosed difficulties with tutors who didn't understand and didn't seem to want to understand how they could better support their learning needs:

> *'I have an illness which forced me to stop my studies for a semester. Ever since, I have to follow the courses in a different order and I don't have a steady group of classmates. I feel that I don't belong in the class because of my illness. (Cyprus)*
>
> *I usually don't tell the teachers that I am entitled to 20% extra time in the exams. They should know. I'm embarrassed to go ask for extra time .. once, a teacher asked me for proof. I usually try to think how the exam will be, and if I think that I will need extra time, I might go talk to the teacher.' (Cyprus)*

Students talked about peer support and how that occurred as part of their 'normal engagement' with fellow students as opposed to an institutionalized defined form of provision: *My friends always support me. When we divide the workload for an assignment, they always consider my disability. (Cyprus)*

FG members had various views on the label 'diversity', its definition, usages and the argument regarding the need for it. Some noted its location as external to them, within policy initiatives or directives or an office filing cabinet. For some using the term 'diversity' to describe who they were resulted in their personally held self-definitions and identities being forcibly simplified and their sense of 'self' being mis-represented, redefined by institutionally directed practice, whilst others felt academics and other staff didn't necessarily want to engage with 'diversity' when considering their teaching practices.

The authors are aware of the potential effects on the study of using the term 'diversity' directly with our sample population. Whilst this may have impacted upon

student responses there are lessons from the study which can be applied to discourses about diversity and WP in higher education.

University assemblage and bureaucracy

For many FG members there were concerns regarding ineffective university bureaucracy, especially when trying to disclose their particular situation and/or needs, or to access support. This resulted in a feeling of disconnect, of 'unbelonging' and anger. This can be related to disconnect between departments when stories have to be told again and again. It can also reflect different levels of power and authority, especially when the people the students meet on a day to day basis are not those who have the power to make changes:

> *Student counselling and doctors and Disability Assist seem really disconnected. You're going through one and then the other and the other, you have to gather all the evidence for all of them and pass it on to your personal tutor. If you talk to one, why can't they pass it on? (UK)*
>
> *Sometimes the people I go to with forms and stuff aren't the ones higher up and they can't do anything about it, so it's harder to get to the top of the chain so it's like what do I do? (UK)*

This can result in a sense of lacking belonging:

> *Basically, we need to feel that we belong in this university, […], communication should be easier. I should not send ten emails and go to the Students' Welfare Department ten times in order to be assisted.* (Cyprus)

> *I don't feel connected to the Uni… it's like there is no flow to things… this dept does this and that dept does that … there needs to be more connectivity* (UK)
>
> *Anger and frustration, personally for me, and I've picked up from a few others…but not sure who to be angry and frustrated at, whether it should be the lecturer, the university, the world* (UK)

Many were not aware of the resources available. Lack of knowledge and University promoted information was a concern for some; *I think not all students are informed about the existence of support services provided by the university. Perhaps we should be informed earlier* (Cyprus)

This issue of disjointed forms of communication was a recurring theme across the focus groups and this, it seemed, added further exclusion to already labelled and excluded students.

Relationships

The issue of relationships emerged as a third dominant theme in the work. The researchers and students looked at instances in the focus group conversations where relationships were mentioned and grouped this theme under two headings, relationships causing exclusion and relationships enabling inclusion. These can be found in table three.

Exclusion	Inclusion
No dialogue/joint problem solving for issues	Support, understanding, time from academic staff

No knowledge of students	Advocacy by member of staff
Perceived lack of care	Respect what learners need
Perceived 'gap' between students and lecturers	Voice, having view heard
	Sharing and hearing stories
Institutions/management continue to use a 'one-size fits all' approach	Sense of community
Disconnect between departments/management	Building opportunities for all to take part in events
Lack of transparency	Relationship with one key member of staff

Table three: Relationship practices causing exclusion and inclusion

Where students feel silenced, less important, unknown and un-listened to, they feel excluded:

I always felt that academic staff were very understanding towards my personal circumstances and this contributed to my success as a student. UK

Many lecturers do not even know our names. Rapport is very low which effects the likelihood of students seeking help. UK

Most of them don't really care about the needs or help some of their students may need. Cyprus

Relationships, however, go beyond that of a lecturer/student relationship – exclusion can be caused by institutional/managerial processes. Also discussed is the tendency of students to form groups which can exclude:

> *The university continues to use a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to management, teaching/instruction and flexibility, in interpersonal relations and resources, demands and structuring of both instruction and time. Assumptions are made and perpetuated on such a basis* NZ
>
> *I struggled a lot in first couple of years- I wasn't in the friendship circle of the group I joined, I didn't really have a say. The best way I learn is in group work, discussing things not just reading but because of being in that group meant I didn't learn anything* UK

Gillies (2013) reflects on the impact loneliness and emotions can have upon diverse students at university. Writing in relation to 'adjustment' matters and effective ways of supporting this, Gillies suggests the need for appropriate training and counselling programmes. Yet we can see above that this resource is experiencing a stretch beyond sustainability with some students subsequently falling through the gaps. Where and/or how can they be picked up?

Applying a critical lens to the emotional or affective domain of the contemporary student learning experience, Hey and Leathwood (2009,) make interesting connections to the 'imaginary of WP for social justice' debate. They discuss indications that current graduates need to 'be in tune' with their emotional selves and discuss how this driver has found a place within discourses of 'graduate attributes and skills', 'inclusion'; and 'WP'. They assert, (Hey and Leathwood 2009, p.104):

Shifts into an affective register (support/inclusiveness) promise equity but it is the affordances and constraints of these policies as they are translated that matters.

Who is the specific addressee of these practices and with what effects? It is the production of positions and who is encouraged to inhabit them which demands analytical attention.

Negative emotions, as alluded to in our FG students' stories, were expressed as being reactionary in form, reactionary to the assemblage of the institution, the ways in which it created positions and aligns them to established views of 'diverse' or 'non-diverse'. Negative emotions were not perceived as something they had brought to their studies, more that university apparatus had created the need for labels and tags which for some resulted in negative experiences and stigma.

Our FGs shared where they had experienced anger and frustration, the impact of being 'othered' by bureaucracy and fellow students. They raised rich questions which arguably need to be heard and engaged with and by the University, i.e. what do I do with my emotional/affective self? Where can I locate my experiences and stories? How can they be channelled to highlight where the established culture re-creates my exclusion in 'acceptable' ways? Some of our members suggested practices in response to these questions, practices that brought various stakeholders together to hear stories and suggestions of how to support students in crisis when counselling services were stretched:

There could be a course to help us get to know each other. By coming closer, by doing various activities together, by learning different things, you will accept other students. Cyprus

> *I had a particularly difficult year and then my personal tutor was able to take that to counselling but there was a long waiting list and my personal tutor stayed in contact with me and that's really important I think … just to have that personal contact* UK

One is at various times an 'other' to another, whether that be through cultural background, social class, education, knowledge or as part of institutionalised labels and discourse; *When I first looked at the questionnaire, I kind of thought originally like everyone is diverse, like in their own specific way and like it can be visible, it can invisible, but, I think everybody is diverse in their own way.* (USA)

What became clear were the negative undertones and impact institutionalised pre-determined modes of 'other' had- they were in essence non-debateable references which stirred and furthered negativity in our students' affective domains. If this study were to be repeated the fact that it is highly likely to raise emotive issues should be outlined in the information given to participants when gaining consent. Whilst that was addressed in this study, a support network should be considered beyond a reliance on universities' already stretched counselling services.

Summary:

Returning to our original research questions, it seems institutionalised uses of the term 'diversity' or 'non-traditional' when referring to certain students is in need of a critical reappraisal. Whilst institutions require some form of bureaucracy to define and process students and a policy to guide them in matters of statutory law, it seems current practices are not empowering for the students they aim to assist. With regards positive and negative learning experiences it became clear that effective

communication across key sources in the university was seen as essential and yet was something many in the focus groups did not experience. The need to be known by their lecturers was deemed important, as was being known by their peer group, both in ways that enabled the sharing of experiences, learning expectations and needs without negative responses. Our study's findings may move thinking forward by arguing for relational pedagogic form, a medium where educators and their students in partnership may uncover and challenge institutionalised hegemony, ingrained forms of exclusion and consider how institutionalised language e.g. using terms such as 'non-traditional' or 'diverse' when referring to under-represented student groups adds to their exclusion.

Although this study was small in scale, in terms of participant numbers and courses samples were derived from, there are lessons that can be applied to discourses about diversity and WP in the higher education context. In this study those students who were positioned by their university as 'diverse' did not experience that as positive in its doing or positive in its outcome. The views shared by participating students suggest the WP for social justice agenda is for many an imaginary one, created by 'just' policies which stand without challenge because of the language used, yet they create and re-create 'other' and experiences of being 'othered'. Emotions ran high in this study; this perhaps was to be expected given the nature of its focus and the subsequent focus group conversations it inspired.

The work adds to the field by highlighting a need for student input, their stories of learning and non-learning to be shared, to show ways in which established culture

and bureaucracy apparatus creates and re-creates stigma and exclusion. Much of this appears to happen in hidden ways, behind the imaginary 'social justice' curtain of 'WP' policy. WP it seems is about massification, countries striving for profit and economic dominance in an incessantly changing global economy- creating more graduates, more workers of and for the future.

This study further adds to the field in its linking ineffective procedures and practices to the students' affective domain. That is, students experiencing negative emotions due to the frustration, isolation and exclusion caused by university systems and procedures as opposed to experiencing 'positive transformation'. Therefore within the field of 'diverse' student experience and socially just higher education policy and practice, the relational and affective student domain needs more critical consideration. These domains should inform one another in student centred ways, not policy or bureaucracy driven ways. The practicalities of this connect to previous work (Gibson, 2015) where links were made to Ahmed's engagement with Husserl and the view that the beginnings of new approaches, thinking and attitudes in any given field are theoretical and thus initially unpractical. This paper has not endeavoured to deliver a step by step practical guide on how to address the complexities and arguably traumas the University and its relevant stakeholders have experienced since the 'WP' initiative, it does however add knowledge through the stories shared by our students, our key stakeholders and their analyses suggesting new thinking, approaches and critical attitudes are essential.

Conclusion:

Universities are complex, always changing institutions. Whilst one might argue there will never be, nor should ever be, a utopian one size fits all design, there must be a recognised space for dialogue about the university's aims and objectives, where discussion and debate about the need for and possibilities of how to push against established cultures reinforcing insiders and outsiders, a binary of 'what does' and 'what does not fit' can take place. Quinn argues (2013, p.3):

It is not WP per se that causes drop-out. The problem is rather a lack of attention to the needs of a more diverse student population and a lack of a student-centred approach.

FG members discussed and shared ideas for a more inclusive University, where the need to label and define can be challenged, university structures are more fluid and the reality of our various selves can be accepted and explored. This study also adds to the debate that inclusive thinkers and practitioners must re assert their positions as advocates for social justice and openly state their task as a political one (Allan, 2010; Gibson 2012, 2015). The need to confront and challenge traditional ideologies and established norms is made clear in Giroux (2003), whilst at the same time the increasingly difficult nature of that task is acknowledged. Working together through international dialogue and bringing our students into the centre of what we do, working with them as co-creators of new knowledge, may be one practical activity which goes some way in form, outcome and impact to create true forms of HE for social justice. What this work suggests is that HE needs a new critical attitude towards and assessment of established apparatus and its 'WP for social justice' discourse.

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