

Chapter 5

Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Through Virtual Exchange

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ABSTRACT

The triad of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) continues to occupy the conversations in educational spheres across the world. The discourse on inclusion and social justice is shifting from decoloniality, racial bigotry, negative ethnicities to that of fostering global understanding while de-perpetuating the narratives of victims versus perpetrators. These disparities were carried over into the years after independence and have influenced the socio-economic fabric of African societies to date. While there is some credence to this, given that the colonists adopted a system of divide-and-rule to maintain control over their colonies, several years after independence, it is time to liberate thought patterns from these mental traps. While previous conversations dwelt on historical injustices of transatlantic slavery, racial oppression and colonialism, modern debates should focus on how to make our workplaces and society in general more inclusive, equitable amidst the diversities of cultures that exist in the world today.

INTRODUCTION

As the world progresses towards realizing UN Sustainable Goal number 10 on reduced inequalities, a lot still needs to be done to actualize this aspiration. The discourses on inclusion and social justice are shifting from decoloniality, racial bigotry, and negative

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ethnicities to fostering global understanding while de-perpetuating the narratives of victims versus perpetrators. The triad concepts of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) continue to occupy the conversations in educational spheres worldwide. Africa is not behind in these conversations. Every government is committed to pushing for a more equitable and fair society. The Africa Agenda 2063 defines the continent's strategic framework to deliver on its inclusive and sustainable development goal. Africa has chosen to rewrite its story, pursuing the goals and targets outlined in Agenda 2063 (Aborisade & Adedayo, 2018). The Agenda 2063 for Development seeks to eradicate poverty through sustainable development. Many of the inequalities in Africa stem from the underlying and prevalent poverty. Poverty reduces access to vital services and provisions. It makes the poor and vulnerable more marginalized while the gap between the poor and the rich keeps expanding. One way poverty and socio-economic inequalities can be addressed is by embracing the concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The African continent continues to witness various forms of inequality in access to resources, educational opportunities, and gender parity. Women and youth are disproportionately disadvantaged when it comes to social equality. In many sectors of the social life, male dominance is the order of the day. Although countries have enacted policies to address gender inequality, this has not been significantly achieved. In Kenya, for instance, the 1/3rd gender rule is still not realized (Berry et al., 2021). Women and youth are underrepresented in the political, social, and economic spheres. The efforts to address these disparities are met with resistance from the patriarchal social order (Berry et al., 2021). Access to services such as financing and health services has disadvantaged many women in Kenya (Kabia et al., 2018). The poor of the population continue to suffer from unequal access to these essential services (Kabia et al., 2018). Due to these considerations, this chapter aims to shed light on the issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion from these perspectives. The African continent has not achieved significant milestones in mainstreaming these concepts, particularly in matters of governance and politics. The politics of exclusion and entrenched corrupt practices have exacerbated a very unequal society, with the gap between the rich and the poor widening significantly. The concepts of EDI are, therefore, essential for a continent that is keen on bridging the socioeconomic disparities that prevail among the member states.

This Chapter will seek to shed some light on these issues as applied to educational contexts and practiced within the space of Virtual Exchange and Collaborative Online International Learning. The chapter begins by discussing the concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion through the lens of an African educator. This discussion aims at providing the African perspective, which differs in several ways from the Western understanding. The neo-colonial experiences that many African countries are experiencing currently against the background of a World that is disproportionately developed affords unique potentialities when addressing the issues of EDI. The

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