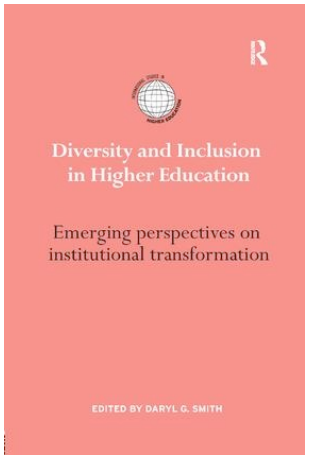


Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: Emerging perspectives on institutional transformation

Smith, Daryl G.
Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017

Book Review

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Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education is a well-timed book. Not only are institutions of higher education tasked with preparing students for a globalized and increasingly technically-driven future, many are still reeling from the recession of 2008. According to Smith, these factors push much needed institutional-wide transformation regarding diversity and inclusion from a centralized position to the margins of universities' priorities. While use of the term diversity in the general study of higher education organizations means "variety in institutional types" (3), in Smith's volume diversity, infers more. It "refers to historic and contemporary issues of how institutions reflect people from diverse backgrounds and how institutional transformation is occurring with respect to diversity and inclusion for all identities that have emerged as salient in given political, social, and historical contexts" (3).

Set in three parts, Smith begins with a section on the significance of context and then directs readers to five fascinating case studies looking at the status of institutional transformation and diversity in South Africa, the UK, the United States, Brazil, and among indigenous institutions in the United States and New Zealand. Last, the editor explores the similar themes, as well as identifies significant differences, which cross-cut the various studies and looks ahead at possible future implications of policy and research regarding diversity and inclusion on institutions of higher education.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating, albeit complex, aspects of studying human diversity is not just the great variety of salient identities (race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, religion, abilities, etc.) but also the "increasing awareness that any given individual has *multiple* identities and that those identities *intersect* one another" (11). And the significance of one salient identity may differ given the national context. Smith observes that "while race has been

central (though different) in both the United States and South Africa" there are places in Africa where "tribal affiliation, language, or religion" may be the more salient social identity among group members (10-11). Institutions are in no way divorced from the complexities and nuances of identity. Smith aptly notes that "institutions reflect the cultures, norms, values, and practices" of the people in the institution, "the historical and social circumstances in which institutions are developed," and they "reflect the stratification and values of the larger society" (13). This also means that institutions easily replicate the dominant systems of social stratification and inequality if they are not careful. However, if they are intentional and committed to connecting diversity with the core values of their institution, they can "act as catalysts for change" (13).

Jansen's chapter on the complexity of institutional transformation in South Africa addresses the many boundaries still blocking Black students' access to previously White universities, despite the end of apartheid. Jansen recommends seven fundamentals of deep transformation on a racially divided campus and walks readers through the treacherous terrain of the difficulties which South African institutions have faced. As the first Black Vice-Chancellor of the Free State, he has witnessed radical changes on South African campuses and provides some valuable insights for dealing with deep-seated suspicion between White students from conservative Afrikaans homes and Black students from political African homes. Both parties feel victimized and, while many of the students did not live through apartheid, Black students often "*feel* the legacies of those apartheid troubles in their personal circumstances" and many White students feel the need to protect the Afrikaans language and see the university as an "ancestral home" (38-39). The challenge for leaders like Jansen is balancing reform and reconciliation.

Eggins' chapter on institutional transformation in the UK addresses a half-century long upheaval in which the diversity of institution type played a significant role in the quest for diversity in higher education. Polytechnic schools developed in the 1960s and created a binary system of education. In 1992 "almost all polytechnics, together with a number of higher education institutions" were made into universities, to create a more unified educational system (47). Eggins maps out various "theoretical approaches to institutional diversity that address diversity and mission vertically and horizontally" (47). One of the most compelling aspects of this chapter is the author's review of the effects of equality legislation on institutions of higher education in the UK.

Moses's chapter on the challenge of diversity for leadership in the United States offers readers clear and powerful suggestions on how institutions must reframe the case for diversity. She also enumerates five ways US institutions are linking their institutional goals to the value of

diversity and provides readers with ways to think about diversity as it relates to other institutional core values. This chapter is pragmatically focused and makes an excellent resource for those in leadership positions within higher education, especially those challenged by "the institutional inertia that often pushes back against this kind of difficult cultural and institutional change" (69).

Another poignant example of the varied and unique contexts in which institutions of higher education find themselves is illumined by Neves' chapter on diversity in higher education within Brazil. As in the UK, equality legislation plays a significant role in Brazil's embrace of diversity. Since the 1930's, Brazil has been plagued by "the myth of racial democracy" which attempted to mask the overt racism (104). It took a new Brazilian Federal Constitution in 1988 which "defines racism as a crime" to legally recognize the work of social movements (especially among Blacks and feminists in the country) towards diversity and inclusion in Brazil (104-5). Although the Constitution "ensures free schooling at public institutions" only about one-tenth of Brazil's higher education institutions are public (106). A highly competitive selection process which requires written exams (vestibular) means a majority of those admitted into the free schools hail from the best high schools and from the higher socio-economic classes (107). Neves expounds on the many programs implemented to help bridge the inequality gap, including access to "pre-university entrance exam cram courses" for African descendants and indigenous peoples, scholarships for low-income students, and support for projects that "produce knowledge on ethnic-racial themes" (109).

Parker and Johnston look to indigenous institutions for insights into how universities can meet standards of academic excellence while honoring the culture and traditions of diverse populations. As they so aptly note, "education is not a neutral or objective concept" (129). Institutions of higher education are not value-free zones. They reflect the "societal norms established by the dominant group" (129). Often, merely by "carrying out their academic mission as usual" these institutions end up "perpetuating the very inequality and marginalization that higher education institutions seek to overcome" (130). In the US, tribal colleges and universities "must combine western and tribal paradigms for the success of their students" (133). In New Zealand, indigenous institutions (known as wananga) are theoretically and practically informed by "Maori knowledge, pedagogy, and philosophy" (136). Indigenous institutions take intentional steps to create environments which support their students and community members as well as prepare their students to engage in world markets often dominated by western cultural values. Institutions of higher education around the world could learn a great deal from their example.

As disparate and unique as the institutions of higher education (HEIs) in these case studies

are, Smith does an excellent job highlighting themes that cut across all of them. For each, historical and national context matters and even if race matters in all contexts, race matters differently in different contexts. The intersectionality of identities is complex. HEIs are reacting to expanding globalization, increasingly rapid changes in technology, fiscal austerity measures, and the political mood swings prevalent in public policy debate. There is hope, however. If HEIs are challenged in many of the same ways, perhaps they can learn from one another as well.

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