

increase inclusion in higher education: tips and tools for teachers

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1. Introduction

Diversity is a reality and a necessity here at the University of Lausanne. Teachers, students, and staff constitute an eclectic mix of people from different backgrounds, experiences, cultures, personalities, and so on. This diversity constitutes an incredible advantage and a considerable obstacle, at the same time.

Diversity can be the best possible growing ground for innovation and creativity. However, due to our inherent preference for similarity, interaction in diverse groups does not come naturally or automatically to us. In order to reap the benefits from working in diverse groups, we need a minimum of awareness about how to interact with, and get to know, people who are different from us. This is important for teachers to know, as well as for students.

This document is thought to help teachers create inclusive classrooms where diversity can thrive. More specifically, the document is thought to be a basic toolbox for teachers, offering some practical exercises and ideas for how to introduce an inclusive thinking in ones classroom. It could be a first step in the development of a more inclusive and diversified course program. This toolbox was developed with the collaboration of teachers at the University of Lausanne. In two conferences and four workshops, a work group discussed diversity, what it means in our local context, and how to improve the feeling of inclusion in our classrooms.

We tested and discussed the exercises that we present in this document.

The following section offers an overview of diversity in general, of diversity in higher education in particular, and the rationale for the concept of inclusion. Then, we suggest a series of practical tools and exercises with the purpose to increase the feeling of inclusion in both small and large groups. The next section offers some ideas about individualized teaching and evaluations. The last section concludes and gives some ideas on how to take this thinking further in your teaching, including references for further reading on the topic of diversity in higher education.

Résumé en français

La diversité constitue aujourd'hui une réalité et une nécessité à l'Université de Lausanne. Les enseignants, les étudiants et les équipes de recherche forment un ensemble diversifié de personnes aux formations, aux expériences, aux cultures, ou aux personnalités parfois très différentes. Cette diversité constitue à la fois une grande richesse et un grand défi.

La diversité peut constituer un terrain extrêmement fertile pour l'innovation et la créativité. Cependant, à cause de notre tendance naturelle à nous rapprocher de ce qui nous est familier, l'interaction au sein de groupes diversifiés ne

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se fait pas toujours naturellement et automatiquement. Afin de tirer les bénéfices d'un environnement diversifié, nous avons besoin d'apprendre à aller à la rencontre des personnes différentes de nous pour interagir avec elles. Ceci est important autant pour les enseignants que pour les étudiants.

Ce document est conçu pour soutenir les enseignants dans le développement d'un enseignement valorisant le sentiment d'inclusion et la diversité. Plus précisément, ce document est conçu comme une boîte à outils pour les enseignants, en proposant des exercices pratiques et des idées pour introduire et développer un sentiment d'inclusion dans leurs classes. Cela peut constituer une première étape dans le développement de programmes de formation respectant davantage la diversité.

La première partie de ce document propose une vue d'ensemble de ce que recouvre la notion de diversité en général et dans l'enseignement supérieur en particulier, en mettant en évidence l'intérêt du concept d'inclusion. Dans la seconde partie, nous proposons une série d'exercices et d'outils pratiques dont l'objectif est de développer le sentiment d'inclusion des étudiants autant dans les petites classes que dans les grands groupes. Nous suggérons également quelques pistes pour individualiser dans une certaine mesure l'enseignement et l'évaluation des apprentissages. En conclusion, la troisième partie identifie les éléments les plus importants à retenir pour intégrer ces idées et outils dans un enseignement et propose en outre une série de références complémentaires à propos de la diversité et de l'inclusion dans l'enseignement supérieur.

2. Diversity in higher education: A rationale for inclusion in the classroom

"Diversity is the mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values and beliefs as assets to the groups and organizations with which they interact" (Shore, 2013).

Diversity is a reality that has become an integral part of our everyday lives. Diversity refers to a hoard of different characteristics that helps us sort people into in-groups and out-groups; what makes me similar or different from other people? The typical diversity categories that come to mind are the "in-born", and mainly visible, ones. For example, gender, ethnic or cultural background, age, and so on. These are referred to as the primary dimensions of diversity. The secondary diversity dimensions are differences that we acquire throughout our lives, for example, language, family status, education, communication style, political and religious affiliation, and so on (Shore, 2013).

Diversity is increasing in the world and groups of all types become more and more diverse. However, according to research, we inherently and automatically prefer similar others (Byrne, 1971; Riordan, 2000; Lemyre & Smith, 1985). We identify with people who resemble us, we are attracted to people who look and sound like us, and, when we have a choice, we favor similar others. There are also different statuses associated with different social categories, and, depending on these, high status group members will

exert influence over low status group members; which renders interaction in diverse groups even more complicated. Despite the seemingly apparent difficulties with heterogeneous groups, diverse groups are rather the norm than the exception in the modern world, and we need to learn how to interact and communicate within heterogeneous groups. Some theoretical assumptions state that the different perspectives of diverse groups can lead to positive outcomes and that diverse group members will bring a multitude of knowledge and information to the group; which can lead to enhanced knowledge and a larger creativity (e.g., Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007). It seems that diverse groups have the potential to work together successfully, provided that we are able to create a climate that embraces diversity.

What are the implications of diversity in higher education? The wealth of diversity at the University of Lausanne does not only come from the mix of women and men on campus. More and more students and faculty members are foreigners, from a different culture, from different socio-economic backgrounds, or have studied or worked abroad before joining UNIL. Yet other members are parents or double academic career couples. Others live with a handicap. Each person brings a unique experience to the university and to society.

Diversity in higher education has the potential to contribute to innovation and creativity. Studies show that a diverse faculty enhances teaching and act as role models to students with similar background and characteristics (Herring, 2009; Chang et al., 2003; ACE and AAUP, 2000). Other studies show that interacting in diverse classrooms help student's cognitive development, intellectual stimulation, motivation, and satisfaction with their overall university experience (Astin, 1993a; Astin, 1993b; Gurin et al., 2002; Gurin, 1999). Also, working in diverse groups during their years at the university makes it easier for students to integrate diverse work groups later in their lives.

Diversity, despite the benefits, presents considerable challenges: "Increasing diversity can lead to less cohesiveness, less effective communication, increased anxiety, and greater discomfort for many members of a community" (Fine & Handelsman, 2010, p. 3). Therefore, in order to make diversity "work" in the classroom, we need to be aware of the difficulties associated with differences between students as well as between students and teacher/s. As a teacher, there is a range of activities to choose from in order to prepare for diversity and create inclusion in the classroom. Research suggests that we should avoid focusing on differences but rather focus on creating inclusive groups where diversity (uniqueness), as well as the sense of being member of an in-group (belongingness), can thrive (Brewer, 1991, Shore et al, 2011). Inclusion promotes learning and creativity. More, inclusion increases engagement and the sense of engagement increases "performance". "Inclusive classrooms are classrooms in which instructors and students work together to create and sustain an environment in which everyone feels safe, supported, and encouraged to express her or his views and concerns" (Saunders & Kardia, 2013).

In a project report about teaching and diversity, Jörg Dietz and Daniel Wäger suggest four main teaching principles to help

create inclusion in the classroom: (1) help students to get to know each other, (2) invite participation, (3) give students sufficient opportunity to interact with one another, (4) offer variation and options in order to engage students (Dietz & Wäger, 2012).

First, getting to know each other in the classroom helps the "decategorization" process. That is, the more we know about an individual the more we tend to disconfirm category stereotypes (i.e., judge the person according to group characteristics) (Shore, 2013). This will help change the perception of the outgroup as a homogeneous mass and the "assumption that within category similarity is greater than cross category" (Shore, 2013, slide 18).

Second and third, offering students the possibility to participate during class shows that the teacher is open to let students take part in the creation of common knowledge (Dietz & Wäger, 2012). Needless to say, participation will also help students and teacher to get to know each other and experiment communication in that particular group. Participation should be encouraged but not forced. It is important to give students the opportunity to participate in different ways (discussions in small groups or dyads might be preferred by some students). Class participation usually gets easier with time and will also depend on the preparation of course content by the teacher. The teacher also needs to allow sufficient time for discussions and exchange whenever possible.

Finally, the pedagogical methodology should allow for a certain level of flexibility and diversity in order to take into account students differences in terms of learning styles and/ or preferences, personality, and prior knowledge (Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997; Dietz & Wäger, 2012; Saunders & Kardia, 2013). Ideally, each student should get the chance to learn in situations that are the most advantageous to him or her (Perrenoud, 1992). It is, however, impossible to please every student in the classroom, all the time. However, offering variation increases the chances for most students to be in their ideal learning situation some of the times (individualization, cf: Feyfant, 2008). Offering variation also shows the students that you, the teacher, are committed to your teaching, which potentially increases their commitment to learning (Feyfant, 2008).

Moreover, evaluations of students should also offer some variation. For example, if the only evaluation of a course is a 2-hour final exam, many students are penalized for not testing well under pressure. Some flexibility in evaluations gives the chance to a bigger number of students to show proof of learning (Boucenna, 2011). The differences in evaluation could either be in the type of evaluation (e.g., exam, individual written assignment, group assignment, oral presentation, etc.) or in the way work is evaluated (e.g., by teacher, by peers, auto-evaluation, etc.) (Boucenna, 2011).

This document is thought to assist teachers in creating inclusive classrooms by providing some practical ideas on how to deal with diversity. In the following sections you will find some easy exercises, discussion starters, and ideas that can help improve students' feelings of inclusion in the classroom. The last section concludes this document and offers some resources for further reading in this topic.

3. Tools

3.1 Icebreaker activities

In this section, we will describe a few activities that can be helpful to get to know each other in the classroom (i.e., ice-breakers). It is important that the teacher and students get to know each other and understand a minimum of each other's backgrounds in order to foster inclusion in the classroom already before groups are formed. The following activities are easy to do and most of them could be done with small as well as large groups. In the next section we will give some ideas for diversity discussion starters. However, some of the icebreaker activities can also be great diversity discussion starters.

Activity 1: A house for diversity

Time: 10 minutes

- 1. Ask participants to team up in pairs with one paper and one pen.
- 2. Participants are asked to hold the pen together and draw a house without speaking.
- 3. End the exercise with a discussion: Why is this exercise difficult? We might have different representations of what a house looks like. Who took the lead? Did you take turns leading? This might depend on the importance each participant gives to the exercise but also, perhaps cultural background.

Activity 2: In-group/out-group

Time: 15 minutes

- 1. Everybody stands up in front of the room (tables removed).
- 2. The participants are asked to group up according to different characteristics suggested by the animator. For example:
 - 1. (a) all Swiss participants stand together and (b) all non-Swiss participants stand together,
 - 2. (a) all Europeans stand together and (b) all non-Europeans stand together,
 - 3. (a) participants who have lived in more than 2 countries stand together and (b) participants who have lived in 2 countries,
 - 4. (a) people who speak more than 4 languages stand together, and (b) people who speak 4 languages, (c) people who speak 3 languages, (d) people who speak 2 languages. 5. Etc.
- 3. Discuss how we might be in the same group as somebody we thought was different than ourselves. Discuss how we are sometimes in the in-group and sometimes in the outgroup.
- 4. NOTE: this exercise can be done sitting down with the raise of hands in a large group.

"In one of my 2nd-3nd year class (80 students), I start the year by distributing a questionnaire about them and their family. It is an open questionnaire aimed at making them aware of the subjectivity of the category we use to depict ourselves (for example, I ask about ethnicity and race, and at least one fourth of the students refuse to answer).

Then, we have a discussion about these categories. And later in the semester, I come back with the questionnaire analyzed and we discuss what indications they provide about the student body, the logics at play behind access to higher education but also the structure of the Swiss higher education system." Gaële Goastellec, Professor at the Faculty of SSP, Unil.

Activity 3: Things in common

Time: 10-15 minutes
1. Groups of 3-4 people.

- 2. Ask participants to find 7-10 things that they have in common (personality traits, interests, activities, etc.)
- 3.NOTE: not body parts, clothes, job title or being a student
- 4. Discuss how we all have things in common.

Activity 4: The curse of knowledge

Time: 5 minutes

- 1. One person goes outside with the teacher to get the instruction to tap a well-known song on the table in front of the group (e.g., Brother John, Happy Birthday, etc.).
- 2. The tapper is asked to predict how many people will guess correctly (%, write on a piece of paper) before tapping the song.
- 3. The group members write down their prediction of guessing the correct song ("I think there is a ___% chance that I correctly guess the song").
- 4. The tapper taps the song and the group guesses the song.
- 5. Tappers usually believe that there is about 50% chance that the group will guess correctly, but usually only about 2.5% guess correctly.
- 6. This activity points out how better-informed people have a difficult time understanding the perspective of lesser-informed people and might be a good activity in a group where students have diverse levels of prior knowledge.

Activity 5: People Bingo

Time: 15-20 minutes

- 1. Distribute a bingo sheet where each square contains a statement (see below for ideas for the statements). A big group can be broken into smaller groups.
- 2.Tell participants to get up and circulate for about 5-10 minutes to find someone who matches the statement. When they find a person who matches one of the statements they just write the name of the person in the corresponding square.
- 3. Once they have filled the bingo sheet they shout out "Bingo".
- 4.NOTE: you should not put your own name on the sheet. You should avoid using the same person more than once.
- BINGO CARD IDEAS: (a) if you know the participants, make a list of different aspects of them to use for the card, (b) if you DO NOT know the participants make a list of more "general" statements (e.g., prefers tea instead of coffee, has been to Iceland, has two cats, bikes to work, plays a musical instrument, etc.) (c) the statements could also possibly have a link to the course topic.

3.2 Discussion starters

Of course, discussion starters are most of the time linked to the topic of the course. However, sometimes, and in some classes, it can be relevant to take a collective step back and reflect on the climate of inclusion in the classroom and the different needs of each participant. Therefore, below are a few exercises that can help participants think about their personal learning styles and needs, how these are accommodated in the particular class (or not), and what can be done to improve conditions of learning. These discussion

starters can also be of help to make students understand their responsibilities in the learning process, both their own and for others.

"In the work for a new Bachelor program, Paula organized a welcome camp: "During this camp the students were brought to discuss about the situations that they would like to avoid during their training. For example, an abusive teacher or irresponsible students. The exercise consisted in playing, «acting» the roles of «bad»/»good» students and «bad»/»good» teachers and to analyse the situations generated by their interaction. This was an excellent way to include students in the development of a pedagogical contract of their bachelor." Paula Gonzalez-Rubio, Pedagogical advisor at Lemanic Doctoral School of Neurosciences, Unil.

Activity 1: Learning styles

Time: 25-30 minutes (10-15 min for questionnaire+15 min discussion)

- 1. Distribute a learning style inventory, assessing different types of learning styles. (The following is easy to use and provides a scoring key as well as short explanations about the different learning styles: http://www.odessa.edu/dept/govt/dille/brian/courses/1100orientation/learningstyleinventory_survey.pdf)
- 2. After filling out the inventory, discuss different learning styles.

For example:

- Which type of exercises and assignments students prefer, in what type of situations they learn best.
- Discuss that not everybody is the same in terms of learning styles and preferences, and how this can be challenging for teachers.
- The discussion can help the teacher adapt and diversify teaching material to accommodate the group in the best possible way (e.g., perhaps increase the use of visual material and graphics in slides, offer different types of assignments, suggest different methods of class participation, etc.).
- 3.NOTE: the teacher can never accommodate all the students, all the time. The more the teaching is diversified/individualized the harder the evaluation becomes.
- 4.NOTE: The scientific validity of different learning styles, and the use of learning styles inventories have been criticized (the one referred to here is no exception). The suggestion here is to use learning styles as a discussion starter to talk about differences.

Activity 2: Inclusion/exclusion

Time: 30-45 minutes

- 1. Ask participants to write about (a) a time when they felt particularly included/engaged/appreciated in the learning process during class and (b) a time when they felt excluded/alienated from the learning process.
- 2. Depending on group size, make small groups, and ask participants to share their stories and think about the differences and similarities between their respective stories.
- 3. Return to the big group and ask a few people to share with everybody.

- 4. Suggestion for questions to discuss:
- What are some of the similarities between the stories where people felt particularly included?
- Are there consistencies in the situations where people felt excluded?
- What can be done to improve inclusion? What can be learned from the stories?
- 5. Other emerging topics:
- The range of differences in groups.
- The teacher's role in the classroom (the influence of topics discussed, exercises, and evaluation for student's feeling of inclusion and engagement).
- Increasing self-awareness.

Activity 3: The Stroop test

Time: 30-35 minutes

- 1. Groups of 3-4 people.
- 2.Each group gets a deck of cards* (placed face down on the table). One group member is responsible for flipping the cards up. When the instructor tells the groups to start, the card-flipper turns over the cards, one after the other. The first exercise is to read the word on each card (all group members read aloud at the same time). Once the group has gone through all the cards one assigned person jumps up and shouts, "DONE".
- 3. Repeat step 2 a few times to let different groups win and to let the groups get faster.
- 4. The next exercise is similar, but this time the group reads the name of the color of the word on the card. As fast as they can, in order to win over the other teams.
- 5. Discussion: Why is the exercise suddenly more difficult?
- Speed of processing theory: We process words faster than colors. Discuss the Stroop effect: the interference in reaction time in a task.
- Selective attention theory: naming the color demands more of our attention than reading the word itself.
- Discuss how stereotypes about people function in a similar way: we evaluate/judge other people faster based on visual cues.
- Ask students to give examples or try to think of times when this happened to them.
- Talk about the importance to suspend judgment to avoid stereotyping.
- *STROOP CARDS: Make cards with the words of different colors in different colors. For example, write BLUE in the ink color pink. Make approximately 10 cards and print as many as you have groups in your class (PowerPoint is an easy tool for this. Print two or four slides on each page for smaller cards).

3.3 Diversity in teaching and assessment methods

In this section, you will find some ideas about diversity in teaching methods and assessment. As mentioned above, students have different preferences, learning strategies, and representations of their role as students, expectations, and so on. Ideally, students should have the possibility to contribute in the ways they prefer (at least sometimes). The diversity among the students may also be related to their background (e.g., students from different programs attending the same

course), their learning needs (e.g., skills in the teaching language, or in learning methods), their levels of interest regarding the topics of the course (e.g., statistics in Humanities, or Social Sciences in engineering), habits in the way they participate in the courses (e.g., if they previously attended courses in foreign countries where teaching and learning cultures are different), and so on. Aylwin (1992, p. 30) defines "differentiated or individualized pedagogy" as a way to implement learning conditions that maximize, for each student, the opportunities to achieve the learning objectives by taking into account their individual background, learning pace, and preferences. Boucenna (2011) distinguishes between several ways to "differentiate" teaching and assessment methods. We adapt this approach to university teaching by identifying four main options for how to take student diversity into account; differentiate; the type of interaction (e.g., group forming and roles), the type of activity/assignment (e.g., individual or group projects, exercises, field work, etc.), the type of content (e.g., regarding the students needs), and the type of learning assessment methods (e.g., peer assessment, self-assessment, etc.). Below we describe and exemplify each of these four types of differentiation that can be mixed.

1. Type of interaction (relational & roles)

To vary the types of interactions between the students supports the idea that they should change their roles (expert/novice) throughout a course and work with different people for different purposes through different activities. A course can begin with a diagnostic assessment to find the differences between the students: knowledge, skills, interest, etc. This can help to design different types of groups and interaction.

- 1. Group work: groups can be useful in many situations and we can distinguish between different types of groups:
- Students with different knowledge work together in order to get to the same level of knowledge.
- Students with similar interests work together.
- Students who do not know each other or have complementary skills work together.
- 2. Different roles: students can take on different roles:
- Helper: help others who have not yet understood a specific question or exercise (see flipped classrooms).
- Dyads: teams of two students work together to find solutions.
- Expert: an expert student explains/teaches others about specific questions or topic.

2. Type of activity/assignment

The type of learning activities or assignments can also be differentiated. The goal is to propose different activities regarding the students' learning needs or interests. The learning outcomes may concern content-related knowledge or methodological skills such as group work, project management, problem solving, and so on.

- 1. Type of activity
- Individual research activity/exam/assignment
- Applied exercises/Experimenting (lab)/in-class assignments
- Problem-based learning
- Quiz
- Role play
- 2. Teaching aide
- Reading
- Audio/video
- Images/photos
- 3. Working methods
- Methodology sheets
- Glossary
- Individual activity planning

3. Type of content

By varying the content teachers aim at providing students with specific/individualized knowledge contents related to their needs.

- 1. Individualized or group working plan: after a diagnostic assessment, a plan can be adapted for every (group of) student. They receive specific exercises or assignments aiming at supporting them in the understanding of specific knowledge or skills.
- 2. Different knowledge contents regarding:
- Students interests
- Students program
- Questions they ask
- Issues they have with content

4. Type of assessment

Assessment takes time for teachers on and is often stressful for students. Formative assessments throughout a course are important to help students prepare for final exams. Different methods can be proposed in order to vary the form of feedback about the way students are achieving the learning outcomes.

1. Methods

- Self-assessment by providing rubrics to the students. Rubrics are composed by a list of assessment criteria and two or more performance levels for each criterion. The students assess to what extent they fulfill each criterion after having finished an assignment.
- Peer-assessment is an activity where students provide feed-back to each other with a common rubric.
- Assessment by the teacher or an expert
- Co-assessment (discussion with the teacher after self-assessment)
- 2. Tools
- Portfolio
- Personal logbook
- Grading sheet or rubric
- Personal methodology sheets for different topics/exercises
- Question & answer sessions and "finding-the-error" type sessions.

4. Things to remember

Why does inclusion matter?

"What counts in the classroom is not what the teacher teaches; it's what the learner learns" (Kohn, 2006). Therefore, it is important that every student in the class gets the same opportunities for learning. However, diversity might be problematic for teaching and learning and this is why it is useful to be conscious about differences and take them into account in the planning and teaching of a course. Creating an inclusive classroom is supposed to help us achieve teaching goals and ensure that learner learns. The opposite of inclusion: exclusion, might cause distress and lower self-esteem for students concerned, and, of course, create an obstacle in the learning process. Inclusion helps create an environment where students feel safe to learn.

At what moment are inclusive efforts especially important?

Inclusive efforts are many times very useful before groups are even formed. That is why some of the exercises in this document are icebreaker exercises, intended to help students and teacher/s get to know each other in the very beginning of a course. These types of exercises are also quite easy (and fun) to use. As soon as groups are formed "ingroup" "outgroup" dynamics might be activated and create barriers that might be hard to take down.

This document can help teachers take a first step towards a more inclusive classroom. For teachers who wish to learn more about inclusion and how to integrate this way of thinking across the course program, below are some resources and readings to help.

5. Resources for further reading

- The following will provide you with a very short overview of the essential components of an inclusive classroom. Creating inclusive college classrooms, University of Michigan, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching: http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p3_1#to-prail
- A summary in bullet points about inclusive classrooms: characteristics of inclusive classrooms, inclusive syllabus, incorporate diversity into teaching, ground rules: http://www.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/educational_benefits_of_inclusion.pdf
- A summary about hidden/unconscious bias: a primer.
 Teachers will benefit from learning more about their own biases and stereotypes: http://www.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/hidden_unconscious_bias._a_primer.pdf
- Also, test your implicit attitudes at Harvard Project Implicit (requires a basic registration): https://implicit. harvard.edu/implicit/
- A website with many ideas for teaching diversity and further references:

http://www.uww.edu/learn/diversity/dozensuggestions.php

 A short brochure, which summarizes recent research findings around diversity in higher education: Fine, E., & Handelsman, J. (2010). Benefits and challenges

- of diversity in academic settings. Brochure prepared for the Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute (WI-SELI), University of Wisconsin-Madison. Can be downloaded from the following website: http://ucd-advance.ucdavis.edu/post/benefits-and-challenges-diversity-academic-settings
- Interesting book about differences, which demonstrates the benefits and costs of diversity in social contexts. Scott Page is a professor at Michigan University: Page, S. The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Society, Princeton University Press (2007). Content and excerpts from the book can be found on the following website: http://vserver1.cscs.lsa.umich.edu/~spage/thedifference_content.html

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