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Title: 'Dare to be aware': tailoring diversity workshops for international students in higher education

Abstract
Classrooms, workplaces and communities are becoming increasingly diverse, and as such learning to effectively interact with dissimilar individuals while understanding, valuing and embracing differences is quite essential for members of such organizations.
In comparison with other tertiary educational institutions in Austria, Lauder Business School's (LBS) most striking feature is the high degree of diversity within its student body.
Our concept of diversity encompasses personality dimensions, life circumstances and organizational framework. Hence, LBS puts individuals and their multiple-changeable and unchangeable-identity features and group belongings center-stage.
Recruiting students from more than 40 different countries as well as an international faculty, we at LBS are permanently confronted with diversity-related challenges in teaching routines and management procedures. As we wish to raise the awareness towards such diversity while creating a learning environment in which students of all backgrounds can thrive, we have conceptualized content tailored diversity workshops.
The challenges and activities of such workshops aim at developing student's critical thinking skills; creating a level of 'comfort, confidence, and belonging'; encouraging them to actively engage with other members of this learning environment across the boundaries of difference; assisting them in creating self-awareness and intercultural competence; promoting equal opportunities, which is not about treating everyone the same, but ensuring that everyone has the same chances and rights throughout all daily aspects and activities.
By stimulating their attitude and behaviors while protecting the bottom line, and valuing their own personal identity, values and cultural background, participants (students, administrative and academic staff) face various challenges and activities such as: Thinking ‘outside the box’; Belonging to a group; Reflective thinking; Prioritizing; First impressions; Respect and its meaning at an introductory level, Trash your Ego, Self assessment; Circle the circle; and many more.
The process of conceptualizing tailored diversity workshops content was made possible through data generated from an exploratory study as well as an analysis of best-practice examples of comparable institutions.
The exploratory study as such (focus groups and qualitative evaluation forms) was carried out among LBS students, in order to uncover their diversity experiences on three levels: a. their studies at LBS (the microcosm), b. the urban space of Vienna (the mesocosm), and c. in interacting with Austrian authorities (the macrocosm), followed by in-depth interviews with selected members of the faculty, academic and executive administration staff in which they report on their experiences on LBS's intercultural campus and on how they perceive challenges typically faced by students.
These workshops do not merely address diversity-related conflicts but also proffer a participatory platform to devise solutions.
Embracing the uniqueness of each individual is for the process of learning to become more authentic, and as such it deserves greater attention.

Higher education institutions, which permanently confront diversity-related challenges in teaching routines and management procedures, may apply the use of such a tool (diversity workshop) by implementing it into its study curricula.

Moreover, it can be added that one of the author’s master students is currently implementing these workshops with RBI (Raiffeisen Bank International AG), thus expanding them to the needs of professionals in the internationally operating banking business. In pursuit of creating inclusive excellence, higher education institutions may apply the diversity workshop tool for their own purposes and can ‘outsource’ them to companies.