IDEA-NET

Capacity Building Tool: IDEA Modules

Peer-learning activities & other resources about Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA)

For teachers, staff, professionals and others in higher education institutions

Co-funded by the European Union

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Colophon

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IDEA-NET Partners: Erasmus University Rotterdam, University of Ljubljana, University of Zadar, University of Belgrade, University College Dublin, Knowledge Innovation Centre (KIC), ECHO Centre for Diversity Policy.

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Contents

Foreword

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This document was written within the scope of the EU-funded IDEA-net project, under Work Package 4, led by ECHO Center for Diversity Policy.

The IDEA-net project stands for "Expanding the network of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) practitioners in higher education through institutional capacity building". The project is funded by the European Union (EU) and it builds on partners' existing stakeholder network, good practices, and extensive research in the field of IDEA as well as the social dimension of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The consortium is composed of the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR), as the coordinators of the project, University College Dublin (Ireland), University of Belgrade (Serbia), University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), University of Zadar (Croatia), ECHO Center for Diversity Policy (The Netherlands) and KIC Knowledge Innovation Centre (Malta).

Abstract: This Capacity Building Tool is a practical resource for professional, faculty and management staff in higher education who wish to develop and advance diversity, inclusion, equity and access in their institution. The tool offers educational material, resources and ideas for peer-learning activities that can foster knowledge, skills and awareness conducive to fostering an inclusive climate at higher education institutions.

Introduction

Introduction

The Capacity Building Tool is a practical resource for faculty, staff, and leaders in higher education who want to advance inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) within their institutions.

It offers a curated set of modules featuring peer-learning activities, frameworks, and complementary resources designed to strengthen competencies, awareness, and critical engagement for sustainable institutional change.

Whether you're an educator, support staff member, policy advisor, or senior leader, the tool equips you to lead and support meaningful change—through workshops, dialogues, or strategic planning.

At its core is the understanding that true IDEA capacity cannot simply be imported or replicated from other institutions. While learning from other institutions is valuable, lasting transformation depends on inclusive dialogue, critical reflection, and shared learning within your own institutional context. Peer collaboration across departments and disciplines is essential for building the trust, insight, and skills needed to embed IDEA into everyday culture and practice.

This tool was developed by ECHO, Expertise Centre for Diversity Policy, as part of the IDEA-NET project. The contents were piloted during in-person capacity building sessions at the University of Ljubljana, University of Belgrade, and University of Zadar, in 2024–2025, in collaboration with Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Use this tool to reflect, connect, and activate change: towards a higher education sector that is truly inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible.

Modules

Modules

The modules in this tool are designed to support dialogue, reflection, and capacity-building around Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) in higher education settings. The information, activities and resources in the modules can be used in workshops, team meetings, professional development sessions, or informal learning settings– wherever there is a desire to build shared understanding and momentum for change.

This document contains the following modules:

Module 1: IDEA Concepts & Frameworks
Module 2: Creating safe, brave and accountable spaces
Module 3: Recognizing microaggressions & being an active bystander
Module 4: Inclusive Curriculum & Pedagogy
Module 5: Next steps for IDEA at your institution

Each activity in the modules is flexible: you can adapt it to suit your audience, timing, and institutional context. Most are designed to be facilitated by one or more people with some familiarity with IDEA topics, but many can also be co-led or used as self-guided discussion starters. You may even use some of the activities by yourself without a group, as individual reflection tools.

The activities encourage peer exchange and internal dialogue, grounded in participants' lived realities and institutional environments. The goal is not to "train" others in a fixed model, but to open space for mutual learning, critical questioning, and co-creation of inclusive practices that work in your context.

Before you use any of the activities in the modules, we recommend:

- Reviewing the complementary information and materials in the model before using its activities.
- Thinking about how the activities fit your intended goals and the broader capacity-building process at your institution.
- Establishing discussion guidelines to safeguard an inclusive, brave and respectful space where participants feel encouraged to share openly and engage critically.
- Feel free to adapt activities, combine them or build a sequence over time. The most important thing is to engage with authenticity, listen actively, and stay open to where the conversation may lead.

Module 1: IDEA Concepts and Frameworks

An introduction to key concepts and frameworks related inclusion, diversity, equity and access

Learning Outcomes

Understanding common and different interpretations of core concepts related to IDEA, including inclusion, diversity, equity and access, but also social justice, color brave, color blind, and intersectionality.

Information

IDEA stands for **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access**. These concepts are interconnected, but each addresses different parts of the system that can produce inequity in higher education.

Access and Diversity: who enters

Access and **Diversity** focus on the front door– who gets the opportunity to enter the university.

- **Access** is about removing barriers so that people from all backgrounds (regardless of income, race, disability, gender, or other identity factors) can apply and be admitted.
- **Diversity** refers to the presence of a wide range of people with different identities and experiences within the university community.

To have a truly diverse university, access must be equitable. That is why outreach, recruitment, admissions, and hiring practices all play a key role in shaping both access and diversity.

Inclusion (and Safety): who stays and thrives

Inclusion is about what happens after people are in. It asks: Do all students and staff feel respected, valued, and supported to succeed?

- **Inclusion** ensures that students and staff don't just enter the institution but also that there is retention. For this to happen, people need to feel a sense of belonging and have equal opportunities to participate and thrive.
- **(Social) safety**, in some contexts, is also part of inclusion. It refers to creating environments free from harm, discrimination, or exclusion.
- **Inclusion and Diversity are interrelated**. For example, having a diverse staff with certain (lived) experiences and skills is necessary to foster inclusive education and workplace culture.

This includes things like inclusive curricula, culturally responsive teaching, support services, HR practices, and policies that protect against discrimination and harassment.

Equity: who succeeds

Equity goes a step further. It recognizes that not everyone starts from the same place, and so simply treating everyone the same is not enough.

- Equity means recognizing that the system is inequitable and giving each person what they need to succeed— whether that's academic support, accessible resources, or adjustments to ensure fair treatment and outcomes.

An equity-minded approach can also be denoted as a color brave approach, as opposed to a color blind approach (figure 1).

- **A color blind approach** does not acknowledge inequities inherent in the system and applies the same, generic approach to everyone, based on the principles of equality rather than equity. The color blind approach views inequity as an individualized problem.
- **A color brave approach** acknowledges that the playing field is not level and that specific interventions for specific groups are needed to create equal opportunities for all. The color brave approach views inequity as an institutional problem.

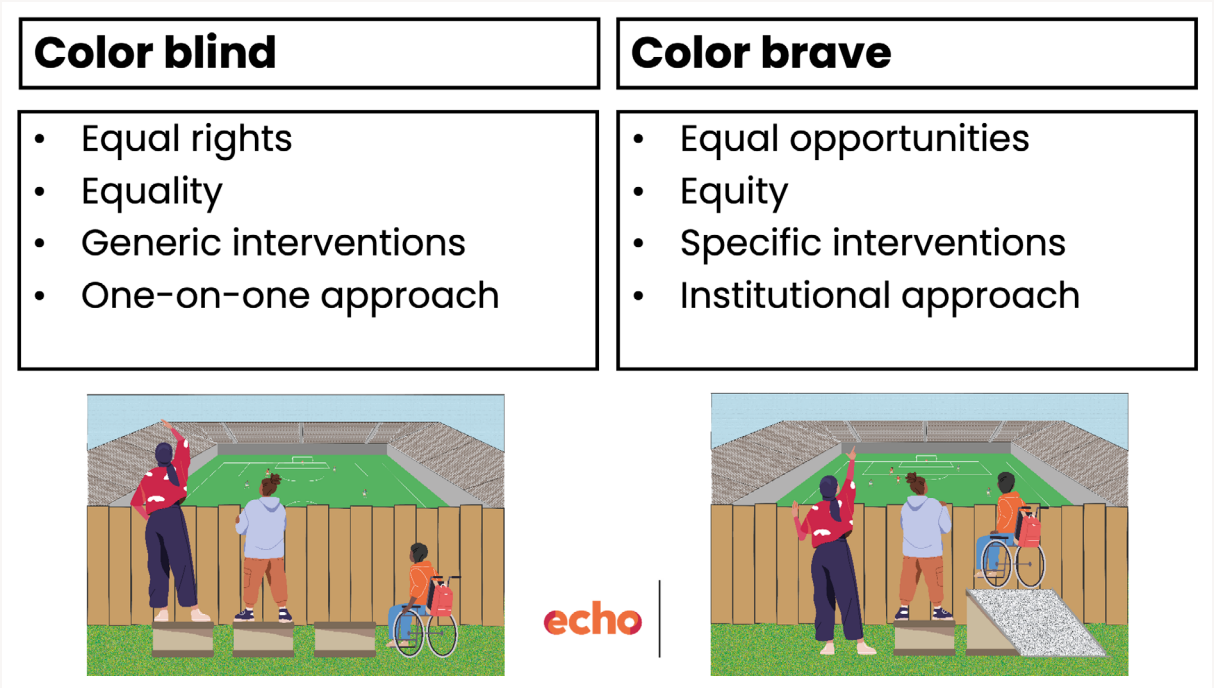

Figure 1: Color blind vs. color brave approach

Social Justice: transforming the system

Social justice relates to but extends beyond inclusion, diversity, equity, and access, by actively seeking to transform the systems that produce and sustain inequality.

- While IDEA efforts often focus on improving access, inclusion and representation within existing structures, social justice aims to dismantle and rebuild those structures to address root causes of inequity. This approach involves challenging institutional norms, redistributing power, and implementing policies that rectify historical and systemic injustices.
- If we relate it back to the metaphorical fence (figure 1), achieving social justice would mean that the barriers causing inequality have been removed altogether (figure 2).

In higher education, this means not only opening doors but also reimagining curricula, governance, and campus culture to foster true equity and belonging.

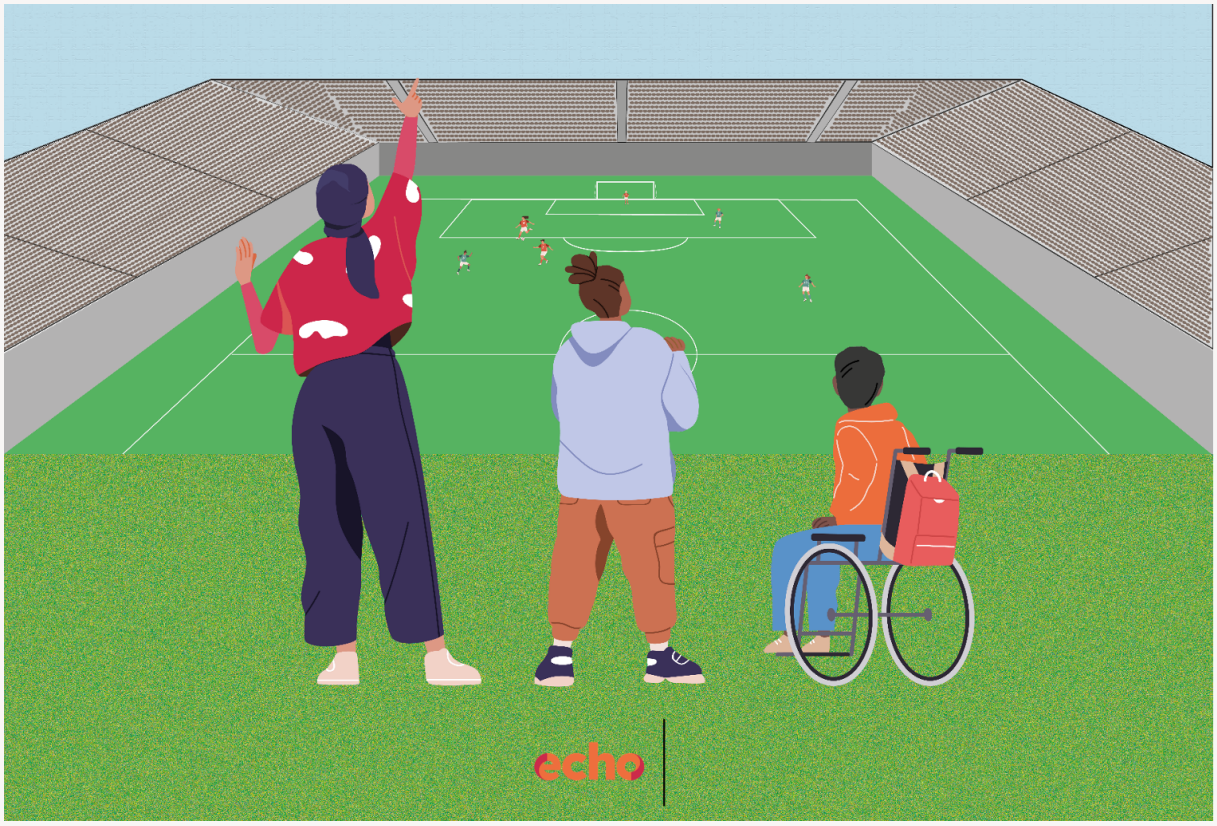

Figure 2: Social justice realized

Dimensions of diversity in IDEA policy

Which specific groups are the focus of IDEA interventions depends on national, social, historical, and political contexts.

In general, the following dimensions of diversity are commonly included in IDEA policies across (Western) institutions: gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic background, and others (see figure 3).

The exact target groups may differ by context, but they typically include communities that have been historically marginalized and have organized to fight for equal rights - such as through the women's movement, LGBTQ+ rights movements, anti-racism efforts, disability rights activism, and more.

It's important to note that these categories are not fixed or universally the same at every institution. For example, 'gender' and 'gender identity' are often one and the same category in policy, as to not reproduce a binary view of gender. Other specific target groups in certain contexts can for example be: indigenous groups, students that are parents, senior students, rural students, etc. Thus, the list below reflects the groupings most commonly found in institutional frameworks, not necessarily the only or 'correct' ones.

Common dimensions of diversity in IDEA policy

Dimension in IDEA policy	Typical target group
Gender	Women, sometimes men (in case of underrepresentation in specific field, e.g. care work)
Gender identity and sexual orientation	LGBTQIA+
Ethnicity	Ethnic minorities, migrants, people of color, etc.
Disability	Physically and mentally disabled; neurodivergent people
Socio-economic	Low SES; first generation students
Other	Age, religion, rural/urban, etc.

Figure 3: Common dimensions of diversity in IDEA policy

Intersectionality

However, by categorizing differences we do not always acknowledge that there is overlap between these groups. No one embodies just one dimension of diversity. Figure 4 and 5 show

the difference between looking at diversity in a one-dimensional way versus looking at it through an intersectional lens.

In figure 4, you see a **one-dimensional view**— maybe focusing on just one aspect, such as gender or ethnicity. This kind of approach tends to overlook the diversity within groups; it runs the risk of treating people as if they all have the same experience just because they share one identity.

But in figure 5, you see an **intersectional view**. This recognises that people don't fit into neat boxes. Someone can be, for example, a queer Muslim woman with a disability. Each of those aspects interacts with the others in shaping her experience.

Figure 4: One-dimensional view of diversity

Figure 5: Intersectional view of diversity

Thus **intersectionality**, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, is really about how different parts of who we are (like our background, gender, skin colour, religion, disability, or sexuality) come together and shape our experiences in life.

- **Layered identities & specific experiences:** We all have layered identities, and sometimes these layers can lead to overlapping challenges. For example, someone might face barriers not just because they're a woman, but also because they're a woman with a migrant background. That specific combination creates a unique combination of disadvantage and privilege.
- **Societal context:** It's important to remember that these experiences don't happen in a vacuum. They're shaped by larger systems of power in a specific societal context, like racism, sexism, or discrimination in education or the workplace. These aren't just personal problems; they're structural issues that affect how people are treated.

Intersectionality helps us see the full picture. It reminds us that people's experiences of exclusion or unfairness are complex, and we have to take all of these layers into account when working on IDEA.

Activity

Below are instructions for facilitating a discussion activity, to be conducted in a group setting such as a workshop, ideally at the start of a session that explores basic concepts related to IDEA. Choose and adapt the activity or slides to fit the needs and context of your group and situation.

Reflecting on Diversity, Inclusion and Exclusion

For who: A group of students or staff with little or varying levels of experience with IDEA-topics.

When: During a workshop or class. Use this activity at the start of a session on IDEA Concepts as a conversation starter, to get people to engage with the material immediately. After this activity, you can use the information, resources and slides of this module to further explain the concepts.

Activity:

1. Designate one corner of the room as "Diversity" (e.g. the left side of the room), another corner as "Inclusion" (e.g. the right side of the room), and another as "Exclusion" (e.g. the back of the room).

2. Show a statement on the slide (see presentation slides), such as:
    - Our university/faculty should be a reflection of society
    - I don't see difference, because everyone is equal to me
3. Invite participants to, if they are able to do so, walk over to the concept which they think best matches the statement on the slide. Ask them: "Do you think the statement relates most to Diversity, Inclusion or Exclusion?"
4. Once everyone is in position, discuss the different interpretations (max. 15 min. per statement). As a facilitator, make sure:
    - That several people from every 'group' (Diversity, Inclusion and Exclusion) get to speak and explain why they chose to stand there. Allow other participants to respond.
    - That participants stay on topic: the point is not for participants to go into why they agree or disagree with the statement, but why they think it relates to diversity, inclusion or exclusion. The point is to start to give different definitions/perspectives on these concepts.
    - To clarify that there is no right or wrong answer. The point is to discuss how these statements can be interpreted differently and how these seemingly simple concepts can have different meanings from different perspectives.
5. After 15 minutes, move on to the next slide/statement. Repeat.

Presentation Slides

Click here to download the presentation slides.

Resources & References

Concepts & definitions

Teaching Learning Center (n.d.). Begrippenlijst [Concept list]. https://www.tlcenter.nl/begrippenlijst/

On institutions and diversity work

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*. Duke University Press.

On intersectionality

Crenshaw, K. (1989). "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8

Guidelines and toolkits: potentially helpful frameworks

IDEA-net Guidelines Toolkit for setting up an IDEA office https://idea-net.eu/guideline-toolkit/

Erasmus University (EUR) Inclusive HR Toolkit for inclusive selection & recruitment https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2021-04-engbrochurewstoolkit21112018en

Good practices for inspiration

IDEA-net database - examples of worldwide IDEA offices and initiatives https://idea-net.eu/idea-net-cases/

MultInclude - database and analysis of 70+ evidence based practices to promote inclusion in higher education https://multinclude.eu/

Module 2: Creating Safe, Brave and Accountable Spaces

Explore how different types of intentional spaces – safe(r), brave, and accountable – can foster trust, openness, and dialogue in institutional settings

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the differential qualities of safe(r), brave and accountable spaces
- Understand and explore how these spaces can advance IDEA in your own institutional context

Information

To acknowledge diversity and advance a culture of belonging in higher education, it is important to create intentional spaces where people can navigate differences in constructive ways. Below are three types of spaces that serve different but complementary purposes.

Safe(r) spaces

In higher education, safe(r) spaces can be:

- **Institutional:** for example, a space facilitated by a confidential counsellor, for example to discuss sensitive issues and experiences like harassment, discrimination, etc.
  - These institutional safe(r) spaces can offer individual support, but can also be a starting point for (institutional) change, especially if issues are formally reported or complaint procedures are put in motion. However, institutional barriers may lead to these spaces not always feeling safe or effective enough. *For more information, review the resource*: Sara Ahmed - Complaint!
- **Student-led:** for example, a LGBTQIA+ center led by and for LGBTQIA+ students and allies. A student-led safe(r) space may be facilitated by the institution in terms of physical space, but it is organized on a peer-to-peer basis.
- **Staff networks:** these are informal networks or spaces led for and by staff, fully independent from or partially facilitated by the institution.

Brave spaces

Brave spaces are focused on dialogue, learning, and mutual understanding. They acknowledge that in settings like classrooms or team discussions, people bring different perspectives, experiences, and opinions– some of which may clash. **In a brave space, participants are encouraged to engage openly, even if that means facing discomfort or disagreement**. The goal

is not to avoid difficult conversations, but to manage them thoughtfully. A skilled facilitator helps guide the process, setting clear guidelines for discussion to ensure that conversations remain respectful and constructive.

The discussion guidelines for the brave space can be created collectively with the group – each participant bringing in their own needs to engage in potentially sensitive discussions – or can be pre-drafted by the facilitator (for example if the group is too large and time is limited). Examples of potential brave space guidelines are:

1. Do not interrupt others.
2. Listen actively and to understand the other, instead of just waiting to speak.
3. Give everyone a chance to speak.
4. Recognize and embrace friction as evidence that multiple ideas are entering the conversation– not that the group is not getting along.
5. If no consensus cannot be reached, agree to disagree.
6. Ask for clarification– do not assume or project.
7. Recognize we are all speaking from different perspectives, experiences and social positions.

Accountable spaces

Accountable spaces build on both safe(r) and brave spaces. They explicitly recognize power dynamics and emphasize personal and collective responsibility. Like brave spaces, accountable spaces tend to have (pre-)determined rules and guidelines to navigate the space. In these spaces, participants agree to be held accountable for the impact of their words and actions— not just their intent. Accountable spaces also aim to reduce the burden often placed on marginalized individuals by sharing responsibility for maintaining respectful and equitable dialogue. These spaces tend to work best in groups that already have a strong commitment to equity and inclusion, as well as groups that engage with each other over a longer period of time (so not just one session).

Accountable space guidelines are typically similar to brave space guidelines, with extra rules that focus on accountability and equity principles. For example:

1. Understand that we are all learning. If you said something offensive or problematic, apologize for your actions or words being offensive– not for the person feeling insulted.
2. Give credit where it is due. If you are echoing someone's previously stated idea, give the appropriate credit.
3. Words and tone matter. Be mindful of the impact of what you say, and not just your intent.

4. Speak for yourself. Use "I" statements and do not share others' lived experiences.
5. Self-reflect on actionable items to become an ally in your daily work or personal experiences, after leaving the space. Don't place the burden of educating yourself on others, especially those from equity-deserving communities.
6. If you attend as an ally of a community, please allow space for equity-deserving and marginalized communities to share their experiences.

These and the aforementioned brave/accountable space guidelines were adapted from the resource: Elise Ahenkorah – "Safe and Brave Spaces Don't Work (and What You Can Do Instead)"

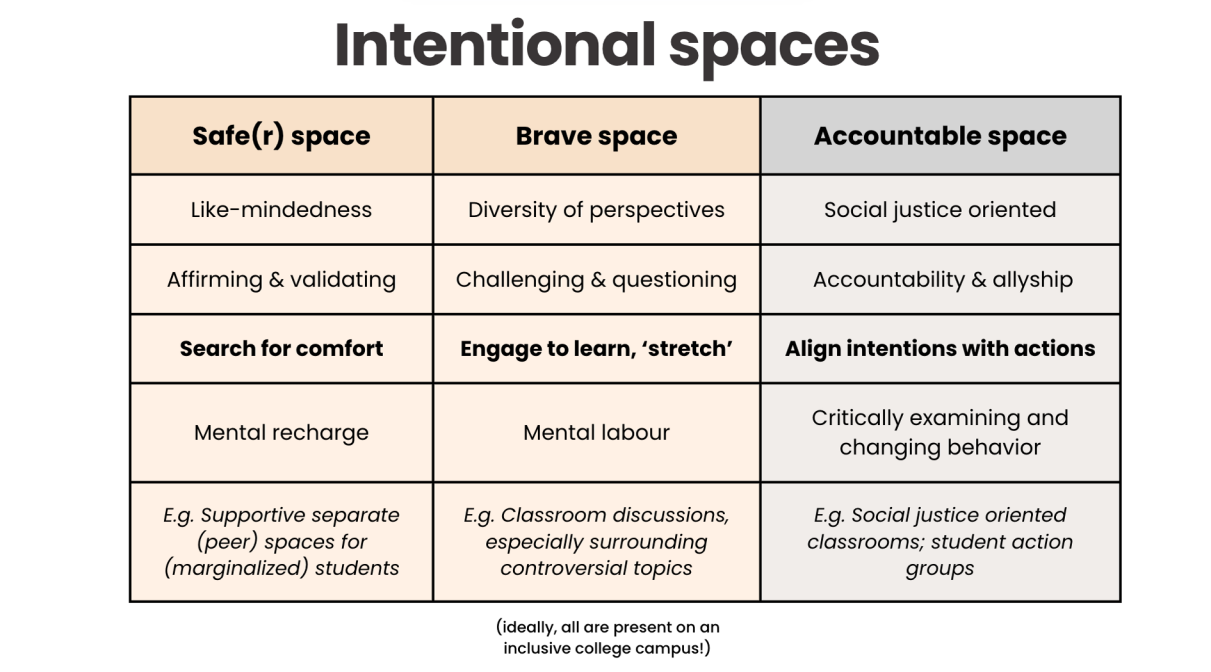

Figure 6: Different types of intentional spaces

Complementary power of intentional spaces

These three types of spaces are not mutually exclusive. They serve different needs and can complement one another when all present in an institution:

- Safe(r) spaces help individuals feel supported and validated, which can give them the strength, confidence and support network to engage in more challenging discussions elsewhere.
- Brave and accountable spaces allow for open dialogue and institutional learning, which are essential for driving meaningful change.

Having a mix of these spaces across an institution helps create a healthier, more inclusive environment where all members can learn, grow, and thrive.

Videos

American Academy of Arts & Sciences. (2019). "John Palfrey - Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces" [Youtube video] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYRe5ndgmk0

True Colors United (2019). "Safe Spaces are not enough to save the world" [Youtube video] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haUz1PMseyM

Activity

Below are two activities, to be done in groups or individually, to explore how the principles of safe(r), brave and accountable spaces can be made relevant for your institution, department or classroom. Choose and adapt one or both activities to fit the needs of your group and situation.

Activity 1: Reimagining safe(r) spaces at your institution

For who: Support staff, faculty and others who want to re-imagine the safe(r) spaces present at their institution, for example to create a plan for new support services.

Instructions:

1. Review the key aspects and differences between safe(r), brave and accountable spaces using the information and resources of this module. If leading a group, present the relevant information using the pre-made presentation slides, or your own. Discuss the key aspects, opportunities and challenges that come with organizing safe(r) spaces. You may also research and include examples of safe(r) spaces from other institutions for inspiration.
2. Individually or in groups, discuss the kinds of safe(r) spaces present at your institution and how these could look different to better fit the needs of the people that are served. Possible discussion questions can be:
    - *What groups/people are in need of safe(r) spaces at your institution/faculty/ department?*
    - *What could these spaces look like?*
    - *Who should be responsible to organize and ensure safety in these spaces? (e.g. institutional, student-led, etc.)*

Activity 2: Drafting guidelines for your own classroom

For who: Educators who want to create more constructive, respectful, safe(r) learning environments in their classroom.

Instructions:

1. Theory: Review the key aspects and differences between safe(r), brave and accountable spaces using the information and resources of this module. If leading a group, present the relevant information using the pre-made powerpoint slides or your own. Choose and explain what kind of space you intend your classroom to be and why (brave/ accountable space).
2. Practice: Individually, in groups with other educators, or in a classroom with your students, draft conditions that you want to put in place in your classroom in order to ensure a more constructive, respectful learning environment in which everyone feels ready to deal with potential discomfort. When drafting these conditions, draw upon brave and/or accountable space principles, and consider:
    - Clearly positioning your role as educator/facilitator of the space.
    - Your expectations from students.
    - How to ensure constructive, respectful, but 'brave' discussions.
    - Red lines (and accountability).

Presentation Slides

Click here to download the presentation slides.

Resources & References

Ahenkorah, E. (2020). "Safe and Brave Spaces Don't Work (and What You Can Do Instead)" [Blog post] https://medium.com/@elise.k.ahen/safe-and-brave-spaces-dont-work-and-what-you-can-do-instead-f265aa339aff

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American Academy of Arts & Sciences. (2019). "John Palfrey - Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces" [Youtube video] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYRe5ndgmk0

Palfrey, P. (2017) *Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces*: *Diversity and Free Expression in Education*. MIT Press. https://direct.mit.edu/books/book/3638/Safe-Spaces-Brave-SpacesDiversity-and-Free

Rolffs, D. (2021). "What do you mean brave spaces, I want safety" [Blog post] https://l3catalystgroup.com/blog/what-do-you-mean-brave-spaces-i-want-safety

Module 3: Recognizing Microaggressions & Being an Active Bystander

Understanding and practicing inclusion at the interpersonal level

Learning Outcomes

- Understanding what microaggressions and their effects are, in turn fostering a sensitivity that can help recognize and act upon them better
- Reflect on and/or practice different context-dependent strategies to use when witnessing microaggressions and other inappropriate behavior as a bystander.

Information

Microaggressions are 'everyday', subtle, often unintentional comments or actions that communicate bias, prejudice or a stereotype toward individuals from marginalized groups. They may seem minor, but over time, their cumulative effect can cause significant psychological, physiological and societal harm.

Microaggressions:

- reinforce **stereotypes**;
- **undermine professional and social confidence**;
- create **unwelcoming or unsafe environments** in schools, workplaces, and communities;
- are often **normalized** – treated as jokes, misunderstandings, or overreactions, often left unchallenged – which is why it's critical to recognize and disrupt them early.

Examples

Depending on the context, the following remarks may be considered microaggressions:

- Asking a person of color, *"Where are you really from?"*
  - This question may convey the message that the person doesn't truly belong and is perceived as a foreigner based on their appearance or ethnicity, even if they may have been born here. It can undermine their identity and communicate exclusion, even if unintentionally. Over time, such messages can contribute to feelings of alienation.
- Saying to a female colleague, *"You're very assertive– for a woman."*
  - This remark reinforces sexist stereotypes by implying that assertiveness is unusual

or inappropriate for women. It subtly penalizes women for traits that are praised in men, discouraging leadership and self-expression. The comment upholds gender-based behavioral expectations.

- Commenting on a disabled person's ability in a way that's patronizing: *"You're so inspirational!"*
  - Praising a disabled person for routine actions can be patronizing, reducing their identity to a source of inspiration for others. It shifts focus from their individuality to their disability. While often meant kindly, it objectifies and diminishes their everyday agency.
- Saying about a Roma student: *"How does the gypsy girl perform better in class than the other students?"*
  - This comment reinforces negative stereotypes about Roma people – implying that they are less intelligent and therefore less successful in education – whilst also discrediting the outstanding academic achievement of the Roma student. This remark also includes the out-dated term 'gypsy', which is by many considered to be an offensive racial slur due to its negative connotations.
- Microaggressions can also be non-verbal. For example, clutching your bag or crossing the street when a Black man walks by.
  - This action nonverbally communicates fear and suspicion, based solely on the person's race and gender. It reinforces the harmful stereotype that Black men are inherently dangerous or criminal. Even if done unconsciously, repeated exposure to this behavior sends the message: *"You are not safe to be around"* – which is dehumanizing and stigmatizing.

Impact on the individual

While these remarks and actions may not be intended to harm, **their impact remains negative regardless of intent**. It is typically not a single remark itself that causes harm, but the pattern of being repeatedly confronted with the same remarks or stereotypes on a frequent basis. In a way, microaggressions are like mosquito bites: one might not bother you, but getting bitten repeatedly, every day, can wear you down:

- **Psychologically**, repeated exposure leads to chronic stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression, as individuals internalize feelings of exclusion, devaluation, or hypervigilance in everyday interactions (Sue et al., 2007).
- This persistent stress doesn't remain in the mind– it can manifest **physiologically**: discrimination, as a social stressor, can cause elevated blood pressure, increased heart rate, and the secretion of certain hormones, such as cortisol (James-Bayly, 2023).

- **In academic and professional settings**, microaggressions can undermine motivation, concentration, and confidence, leading to a weakened sense of belonging, impaired performance, lower satisfaction, and increased likelihood of attrition and turnover.

Broader impact

The harm caused is thus **not only personal, but also affects institutions**, as environments that tolerate microaggressions often struggle to retain diverse talent and foster truly inclusive cultures.

Moreover, microaggressions aren't just isolated annoyances— they are part of a broader system of bias and discrimination. Every time we ignore or excuse subtle bias, we reinforce a system where bigger harms become more acceptable.

The Pyramid of Hate, developed by the Anti-Defamation League (see figure 7 for a simplified adaptation), illustrates how individual attitudes and behaviors, if unchecked, can contribute to increasingly explicit forms of bias and violence. At the base are implicit biases, stereotypes, and microaggressions– everyday expressions of prejudice that are often dismissed as harmless or unintentional. But when these are normalized and tolerated, they begin to shape the social climate, reinforcing the idea that certain groups are "less than," "foreign," or "suspicious." Over time, these biased attitudes lay the psychological groundwork for more overt acts of discrimination, such as exclusion from opportunities, unequal treatment, or institutional policies that disadvantage marginalized groups.

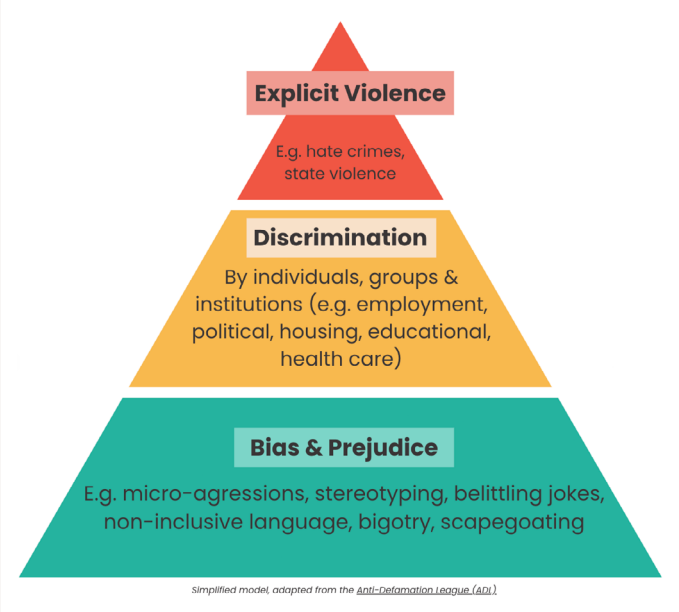

Figure 7: Simplified model, adapted version of the Pyramid of Hate, developed by the Anti-Defamation League (2021)

As this climate of normalized bias intensifies, it becomes easier for more extreme expressions (e.g. verbal harassment, hate crimes, or state-sponsored violence) to emerge and even gain social acceptance. The key message here is that bias doesn't begin with violence– it begins with silence. Stopping the escalation means interrupting harmful behaviors and narratives early, at the everyday level.

Being an active bystander

An active bystander is someone who not only witnesses a problematic situation but chooses to speak up or take action. Bystanders have the power to challenge harmful norms, support those affected, and signal what behavior is acceptable in a group or environment.

When you witness a microaggression or other unacceptable behavior, you may use one or more of the 5Ds– five practical strategies from bystander intervention research (Burn, 2009; Fenton et al. 2014; Right To Be, n.d.):

- Distract – Shift the focus to de-escalate.

  "Sorry to interrupt– can I grab you for a quick sidebar?"

- Delegate – Involve someone else with more authority.

  "Can we check in with HR/management about that comment?"

- Delay – Check-in with the person (the one affected, or the one who said the remark, depending on what you want to achieve) after the incident.

  "I saw what happened earlier. Are you okay? / I think what you said was harmful."

- Document – Take notes or record a video of a public incident (if legal, safe and appropriate to do so) as a witness testimony or proof

  "I recorded / wrote down what happened – what would you like me to do with it? Would you like help reporting this incident?"

- Direct Action – Address the behavior head-on.

  When taking Direct Action and addressing the person causing the incident directly, these are some examples of strategies that you could employ in the moment, depending on the context:

  - Address -> *"I see this happening, and I am uncomfortable with it."*
  - Challenge -> *"I don't think what's happening here is okay."*
  - Question -> *"What exactly do you mean by that?"*
  - Explain/educate -> *"This is why what is happening here is not okay."*
  - Correct -> *"What you are doing is not okay."*
  - Check interpretation -> *"This is what I think you said/did, is this what you meant?"*

Videos

Fusion comedy & TheTeacherColeman (2018). "How microaggressions are like mosquito bites • Same Difference (Clean)". [Youtube video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQ9l7y4UuxY

Activity

Below are three activity ideas, to be led by a facilitator in groups in workshop or class settings, to reflect on and/or practice interventions against microaggressions. The facilitator can choose and adapt one or multiple activities to fit the needs of the group and situation.

Activity 1: Reflection

For who: Large or small groups of participants (staff, students, etc.) with varying levels of awareness. Also ideal for workshops with limited time for interactive activities.

Instructions:

1. Introduce the concepts of microaggressions and active bystander using the information, slides and resources of this module.
2. Ask participants to reflect in **pairs** (5 min) on moments where they may have experienced, witnessed, or (unintentionally) contributed to a microaggression. Encourage them to consider these roles:
    - **Receiver**: Were you ever on the receiving end?
    - **Sender**: Have you ever realized you said or did something (unintentionally) harmful?
    - **Bystander**: Have you witnessed a microaggression? Did you respond?
3. Afterwards, invite participants to share reflections with the full group (10 min) to have an open discussion, share insights and identify common themes.
    - **Tip**: Remind participants to respect confidentiality and only share what they're comfortable sharing.
4. Finish with summarizing different intervention strategies (e.g. those in the module) and emphasizing that there is no 'right' intervention, as they are all context-dependent.

Activity 2: What would you do?

For who: Large or small groups of participants (staff, students, etc.) with varying levels of awareness. Also ideal for workshops with limited time for interactive activities.

1. Introduce the concepts of microaggressions and active bystander using the information, slides and resources of this module.
2. Present a realistic scenario on the slide involving a microaggression (e.g., a biased comment in a team meeting). Offer multiple-choice options representing different bystander strategies.
    - Example 1: *During the weekly team meeting, the discussion focuses on how to better reach underrepresented groups. While reviewing the profile of these groups,*

you notice that several colleagues express various assumptions and stereotypes about them. When would you say something?

A: I wouldn't.

B: After the first comment.

C: After the most hurtful comment.

D: After the meeting.

E: Other…

- Example 2: *During lunch, Colleague A makes a joke that was meant in good fun, but Colleague B finds it hurtful. When Colleague B says they didn't appreciate the joke, Colleague A responds with, "Oh come on, don't be so sensitive—it was just a joke! You can't say anything these days without someone taking offense. How would you respond as a bystander?*

  A: I wouldn't - it was just a joke.

  B: I would say the joke was very inappropriate and that he can't say that.

  C: I would say the joke made me feel uncomfortable.

  D: Other…

3. Invite participants to discuss, optionally first in pairs, then with the larger group:
   - What would they do and why?
   - What impact each choice might have?

   Tip: Emphasize there is no single "right" answer– the goal is to explore and reflect.

4. Finish with summarizing different intervention strategies (e.g. those mentioned in the module) and emphasizing that there is no 'right' intervention, as they are all context-dependent.

Activity 3: Practice through role play

For who: Medium-sized groups of participants (staff, students, etc.) who are looking to experiment with strategies, understand what feels authentic, and build confidence as an active bystander in a supported environment.

Instructions:

1. Introduce the concept of microaggressions and active bystander using the information, slides and resources of this module.
2. In small groups, invite participants to discuss real or fictional microaggression scenarios from work, school, or social settings.
   - Prompt: *"What is a situation where you wish you had spoken up, but didn't?"*

3. Ask participants in each group to choose one scenario emerging from their conversations to develop into a short role play. Make sure they include three roles:
    - Sender (perpetrator; person who makes the microaggressive remark)
    - Receiver (target of the microaggression)
    - Bystander (initially passive)
4. Once all groups have developed one case, invite each group to present their 'base scene' to the full group. The base scene is how the situation actually played out without (or with an ineffective) intervention.
5. Invite the whole group to vote on the case that they would like to explore further. This will be the case that will be used for the rest of the session.
6. Once the case has been selected, multiple rounds will be played:
    - Round 1: Invite the participants to perform the scene *as it originally happened* once more. All those who are not playing, are active observers.
    - Round 2 and onward: Re-play the same scene, but invite observers to take over different roles and step in to try different bystander strategies.

    Tip: Offer positive feedback and focus on learning– not performance.
7. Finish with summarizing different intervention strategies (e.g. those in the module) and emphasizing that there is no 'right' intervention, as they are all context-dependent.

Presentation slides

Click here to download the presentation slides.

Resources & References

On microaggressions

Lui, P. P., & Quezada, L. (2019). Associations Between Microaggressions and Adjustment Outcomes: A Meta-Analytic and Narrative Review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 145(1), 45–76.

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Dilemma Game app, developed by Erasmus University Rotterdam - *contains many examples of workplace microaggressions*. https://www.eur.nl/over-de-universiteit/beleid-en-reglementen/integriteit/wetenschappelijke-integriteit/dilemma-game

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Scully, M., & Rowe, M. (2009). Bystander training within organizations. *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association*, 2(1), 1-9.

Module 4: Inclusive Curriculum & Pedagogy

Inspiration and considerations for a more inclusive environment in and around the classroom

Learning Outcomes

- Become familiarized with different approaches to inclusive pedagogy.
- Reflect on inclusive teaching practices and how you as an educator can apply these in your own practice.

Information

From the many different frameworks and literature available, four broad approaches to inclusive pedagogy can be discerned (see figure 8-11):

- **Generic approaches**: Guided by the principles of fairness and equality (rather than equity), generic approaches apply the same pedagogical approach to all students. It assumes a single standard fits everyone, which often marginalizes students who deviate from the dominant norm. As a result, it tends to individualize underachievement, overlooking systemic barriers and excluding those whose learning needs and identities differ.

- **Support approaches**: Support approaches provide targeted assistance to students who are seen as not fitting the norm. These are often implemented as extracurricular or supplemental programs (e.g. mentoring, tutoring, or bridging initiatives) that aim to help students cope and succeed within the existing structure rather than transforming that structure.

  Examples of such approaches/frameworks:

  - **Student retention theories** (Vincent Tinto): Focus on creating conditions – academic, social, and structural – that keep marginalized students engaged and enrolled.
  - **Pedagogy of Excellence** (Adolfo Bermeo – Academic Achievement Program UCLA): Advocates for high expectations and robust support systems for underrepresented students to thrive.
  - **Special Education**: Provides tailored instruction and services for students with disabilities or specific learning needs.

- **Other D&I Approaches**: Other D&I approaches aim to reform the dominant norm to foster a greater sense of belonging. These strategies often involve integrating more diverse perspectives into curricula, integrating more inclusive teaching practices to accommodate different learning styles and backgrounds in class, encouraging and

incorporating student feedback, and fostering a sensitivity to diversity and inclusion among students. The aim is to shift the culture and content of education to be more inclusive by design.

Examples of such approaches/frameworks:

- **Trauma-Informed Pedagogy** (Mays Imad, etc.): Recognizes the impact of trauma on learning and promotes supportive, compassionate teaching practices.
- **Universal Design for Learning** (UDL) (CAST): Promotes flexible learning environments that accommodate diverse learners by offering multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression.
- **Inclusive Digital Pedagogy** (E-inclusion): Focuses on making online and blended learning spaces accessible and inclusive.
- **Inclusive Excellence** (Frank Tuitt): Combines academic excellence with diversity and inclusion, asserting that true excellence must include equity

- **Social justice approaches**: Social justice approaches are transformative. They aim to challenge and dismantle inequitable structures both within and beyond the classroom. Drawing from frameworks like critical pedagogy, anti-racist education, and decolonial thought, this approach empowers students to critique dominant narratives, co-create knowledge, and develop critical consciousness to pursue systemic change.

  Examples of such approaches/frameworks:

  - **Critical Pedagogy** (bell hooks, Paulo Freire, etc.): Encourages students to question power structures, engage in dialogue, and see education as a tool for liberation.
  - **Social Justice Education** (Lee Anne Bell, Maurianne Adams, etc.): Focuses on developing critical awareness and action to address inequality, both in and outside the classroom.
  - **Anti-Racist Pedagogy** (Ibram X. Kendi, Bettina Love, etc.): Confronts racism directly by embedding anti-racist principles in curriculum, teaching, and institutional policy.
  - **Decoloniality in Education** (Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Walter Mignolo, Catherine Walsh, etc.): Aims to deconstruct Eurocentric knowledge systems and legitimize Indigenous and marginalized epistemologies.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive, nor is one 'better' than the other: in practice, they often overlap each other based on what is both possible, fitting and desirable in a given context.

Generic approach

- Same approach for all students (equality rather than equity)
- Students who do not fit the norm cannot fully participate and realize potential
- Underachievement is individualized

Figure 8: Generic approach to pedagogy

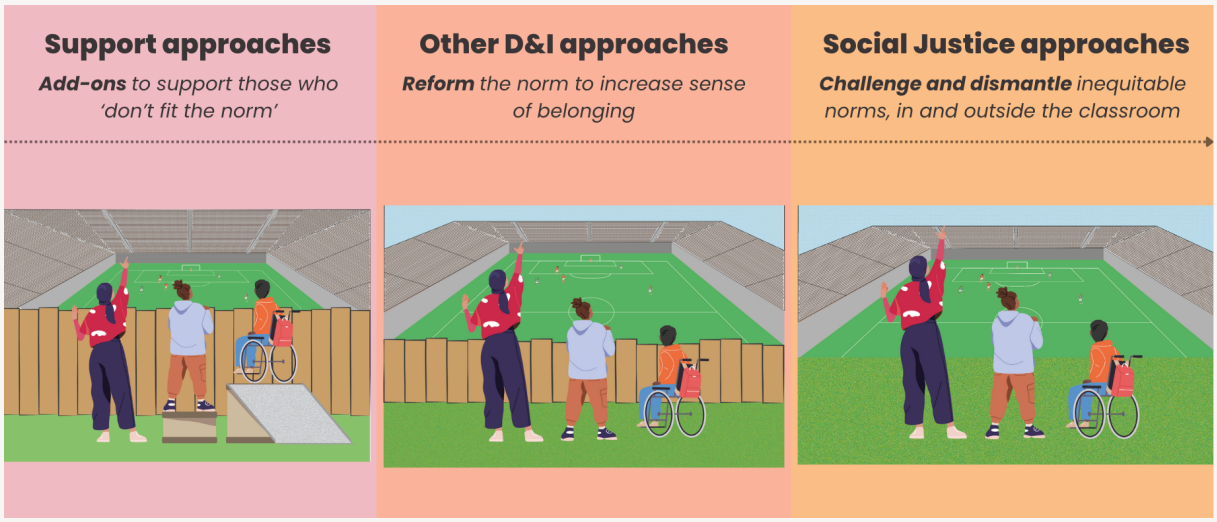

Figure 9: Other approaches for a more inclusive pedagogy

Support approaches	Other D&I approaches	Social Justice approaches
Few to no changes to the standard curriculum/pedagogy; **extracurricular**	**More diverse representation** in curriculum and avoiding stereotypes	**Challenge dominant, oppressive narratives** in the curriculum
Additional support services, programs, or institutions to accommodate needs	**Integrate diverse means** of engagement, information, evaluation in pedagogy	Legitimize diverse ways of knowing, learning and being (***'epistemic justice'***)
Mentoring, tutoring, development and well-being initiatives	**Student input** & feedback	**Curriculum co-creation** and other subversions of academic hierarchies
Stimulate **resilience, responsibility and coping strategies** in students	Adopt **inclusive teaching practices** and raise **awareness** among students	Stimulate **critical consciousness** in students and **empower**
Safe(r) spaces for marginalized groups	**Brave spaces** to discuss sensitive topics	**Accountable** or **principled spaces**

Figure 10: Overview of differences between approaches to inclusive pedagogy

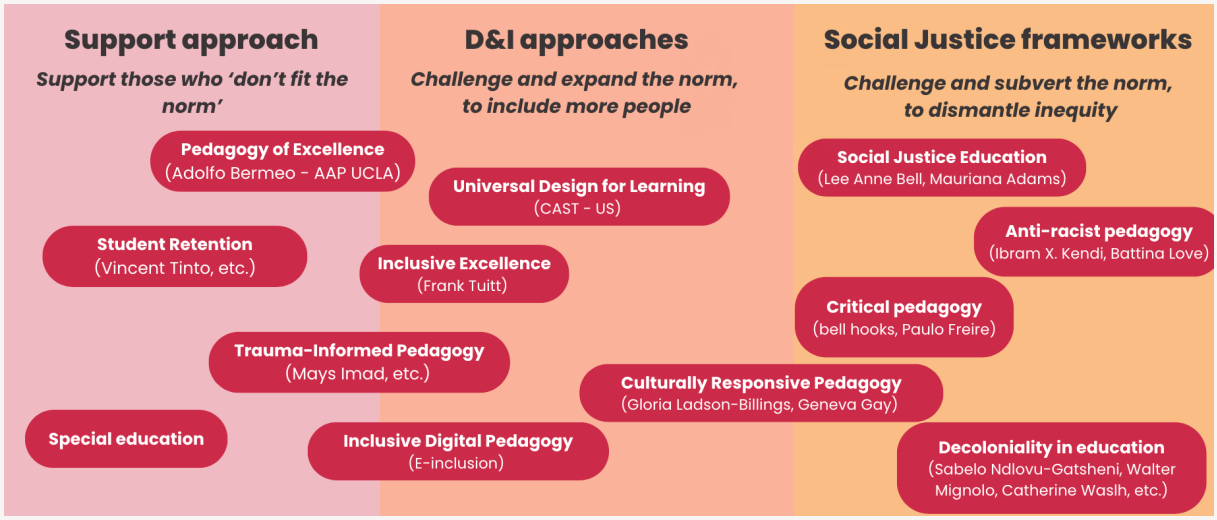

Figure 11: Overview of different frameworks in inclusive pedagogy

Activity

The activity below is to be led by a facilitator, in groups in workshop settings, to reflect on various inclusive teaching strategies and how inclusive their own teaching practices are. The facilitator can adapt the activity to fit the needs of the group and situation.

For who: Group of educators looking to develop their pedagogical practice.

Instructions:

1. In advance, prepare for the session by printing and cutting the teaching practice cards in the appendix. Fold the cards closed and put them in a hat or box.
2. Introduce the different approaches to inclusive teaching practices using the information, slides and other resources of this module.
3. Afterwards, introduce the activity. Have each participant draw one of the folded inclusive teaching practice cards from the hat/box. Then, ask them to form groups of 2-3 people.
4. Let the groups freely discuss the practices on their cards with each other. Some discussion questions are already on the cards, but here are some more general discussion questions to show on the slide:
    a. How could you adapt these strategies to your classes? Or how do you already?
    b. What challenges might arise? How could you address them?
    c. Are any of these strategies especially relevant in your national, institutional or disciplinary context?
5. After 15-20 minutes, ask the groups to share some of their reflections with the whole group.

Presentation Slides

Click here to download the presentation slides.

References & Resources

Critical pedagogy

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge.

Social justice education

Adams, M., Bell, L. A., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (2007). *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Bell, L. A. (2016). *Theoretical foundations for social justice education*. In M. Adams et al. (Eds.), Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice (3rd ed.). Routledge.

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Anti-racist pedagogy

Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to Be an Antiracist*. One World.

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Decolonial education

Mignolo, W. D., & Walsh, C. E. (2018). *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Duke University Press.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J., & Schramm, K. (2024). *Knowing–Unknowing: African Studies at the Crossroads*. Brill.

Baboeram, P. (n.d.). *The Uprising: A Guide for Educators to Engage Students in Decolonizing the Mind*. https://www.pravinimusic.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Uprising-Educational-Toolkit.pdf

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

CAST. (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. https://udlguidelines.cast.org/

Inclusive Excellence

Tuitt, F., Haynes, C., & Stewart, S. (2023). *Race, Equity, and the Learning Environment: The Global Relevance of Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies in Higher Education* (2nd ed.). Stylus Publishing.

Inclusive digital pedagogy

E-Inclusion. (2023). *Handbook for Inclusive Digital Education*. https://einclusion.net/project-outputs/handbook-for-inclusive-digital-education/

Pedagogy of Excellence

Bermeo, A. (2016). *Developing a Pedagogy of Excellence*. [Presentation] https://slideplayer.com/slide/7335897/

Teaching Learning Center (n.d.). Pedagogy of Excellence. https://www.tlcenter.nl/begrippenlijst/pedagogy-of-excellence/

Trauma-informed pedagogy

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Student retention

Tinto, V. (2012). *Leaving college*: *Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. University of Chicago press.

Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing college*: *Rethinking institutional action*. University of Chicago Press.

Other inclusive teaching & curriculum tools

Knowledge Platform - Inclusive Education. Developed by Erasmus University Rotterdam, IDEA Center. https://www.eur.nl/en/about-university/vision/idea-

Inclusive Teaching Resources. Developed by Brown University, Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. https://sheridan.brown.edu/resources/inclusive-teaching

Inclusive Education Framework. Developed by University of Hull and partners. https://www.inclusiveeducationframework.info

Inclusive Curriculum Design Toolkit. Developed by Higher Education Academy (Advance HE, UK). https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/inclusive-curriculum-design-higher-education

Guideline Toolkit: How to set up an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) Office. Developed by IDEA-NET project. https://idea-net.eu/guideline-toolkit/

Denktaş, S., de Bruin, G., & van den Ring-Bax, J. Turning DEI Goals into Reality: A Hands-On Guide to an Inclusive Workplace. [Book developed by Erasmus University Rotterdam IDEA-center] https://www.eur.nl/en/news/book-turning-dei-goals-reality

Module 5: Next Steps for IDEA at Your Institution

Learning Outcomes

- Identifying and analyzing IDEA-related problems and opportunities at your institution
- Creating actionable next steps targeting these problems and opportunities to advance IDEA in your context

Information

In this module, we focus on formulating next steps for IDEA at your institution. This should be used as a closing module after a longer capacity building process with professionals at your institution, for example at the end of a workshop day or training sessions focusing on IDEA.

We use an adaptation of Barbara Love's (2010) liberatory consciousness framework to guide this process (figure 12). In her framework, Love outlines four principles for individuals committed to challenge inequity within institutions and systems: awareness, analysis, action and accountability/allyship. These principles aim to foster a mindset and practice that supports justice, equity, and liberation for all.

In this specific context, we understand these principles as follows:

1. **Awareness**: Recognizing and understanding the existence of inequities and how they operate at individual, institutional, and systemic levels is our starting point. This involves continuous self-reflection and learning about privilege, power, and marginalization. This is what the previous modules aim to contribute to.
2. **Analysis**: This involves developing a deeper understanding of the causes and mechanisms of exclusion and marginalization. To analyze means to connect personal experiences to broader social structures and histories, and identifying patterns and systems of injustice. In this context, we aim to analyze how inequities translate to and manifest in your institution. This can for example mean you consider how exclusion affects certain groups in the classroom, in HR practices, in (the lack of) support services, etc. It is essential to conduct this analysis, as simply implementing good practices from other institutions can lead to ineffective interventions that do not fit your institutional context.
3. **Action**: Action means taking intentional steps to challenge and disrupt inequities. This includes speaking out, organizing, supporting others, and creating change through daily behaviors and larger movements. In this context, it can also mean designing and implementing IDEA at your institution.

4. **Accountability/allyship:** This involves being responsible for one's role in sustaining or dismantling oppression. It involves listening, learning from marginalized communities, building trust, and acting in solidarity with integrity and humility. In this context, it can also relate to monitoring, evaluating and being accountable for implemented IDEA-initiatives.

As this is a closing workshop to develop the next steps for IDEA at your institution, we focus on the principles Analysis and Action in this module's activity.

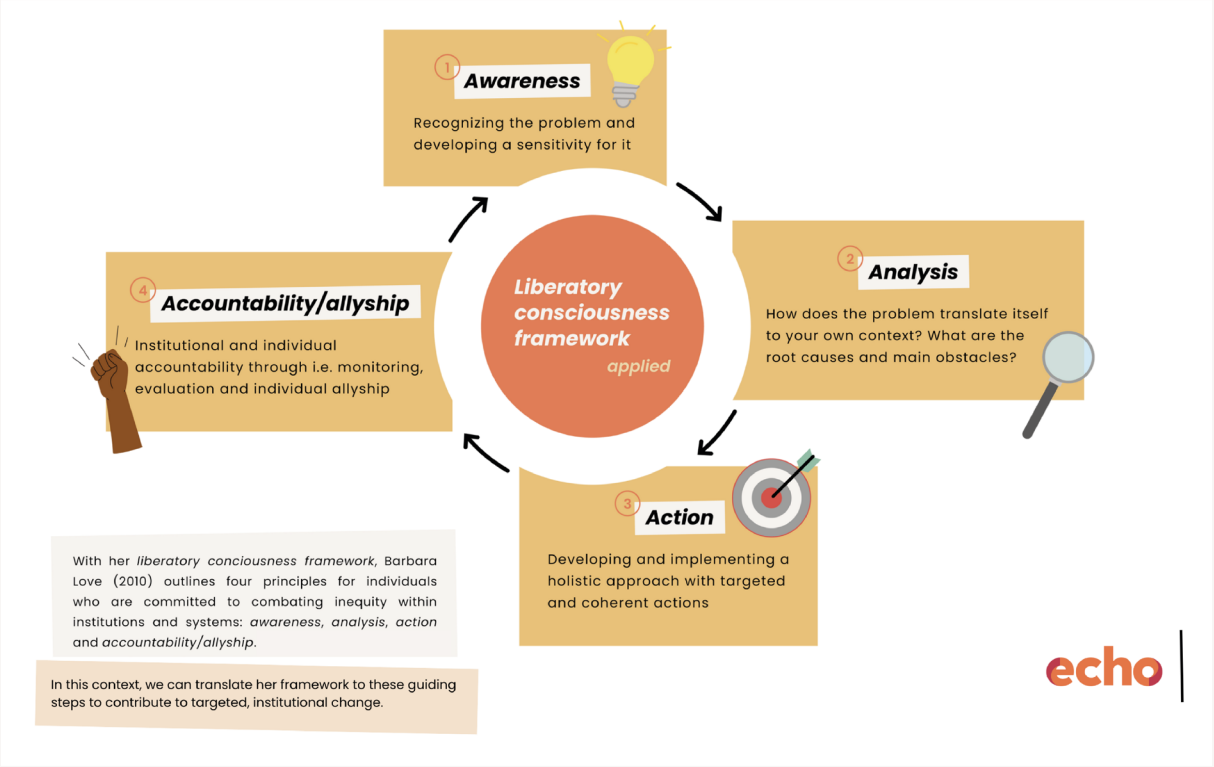

Figure 12: Adaptation of Love's (2010) liberatory consciousness framework

Activity

In a group setting, this should be used as a closing activity after a longer capacity building process with professionals at your institution, for example at the end of a workshop day or training sessions focusing on IDEA. Adapt the activity according to your context and group.

For who: Higher education professionals, administrative staff, students, and/or others looking to co-create a strategy for IDEA at their institution. Ideally, this co-creation should take place with a diverse representation of the institution and target groups, to contribute to a participatory, equitable and effective IDEA strategy.

Instructions:

1. Start by briefly introducing the liberatory consciousness framework using the information and slides in this module, emphasizing that it is essential to have an awareness of IDEA and to analyze our context before jumping into actions and strategy.

2. Then, either as a central discussion or first in groups, take some time to make a (visual) overview of the key acute problems/opportunities at your institution related to IDEA. Many of these have most likely already come up in discussions if this module is done at the end of a longer process of capacity building. Ask participants to reflect once more on what has been discussed and what else they have identified. They can for example discuss this in groups and write down their ideas on post-its to make a collective overview of the key problems/opportunities.

3. Once an overview of the problems at hand has been created, invite the participants to come up with a targeted approach for next steps related to IDEA at their institution. You can use the think-pair-share method for equal participation:

    a. **Think**: Brainstorm individually (3min) - Come up with max. 4 interventions/ideas/ actions that could potentially tackle the problems/opportunities we have identified.

    b. **Pair**: Compare in pairs (10 min) - Compare your lists and narrow down to 4 interventions combined.

    c. **Synthesize in groups** (30-40 min) Compare your lists, narrow down again & prioritize! Also consider: who and what is needed to take the first next steps?

    d. **Share**: Present action plan to other participants

4. After the workshop, the action plans can be used as a basis to formulate a concrete IDEA-net strategy at your institution.

Presentation Slides

Click here to download the presentation slides.

Resources & References

Liberatory consciousness framework

Love, B. J. (2010). Developing a liberatory consciousness. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, C. R. Casteneda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (pp. 533-540). Routledge.

Good practices for inspiration

IDEA-net database - examples of worldwide IDEA offices and initiatives https://idea-net.eu/idea-net-cases/

MultInclude - database and analysis of 70+ evidence based practices to promote inclusion in higher education https://multinclude.eu/

Guidelines and toolkits: potentially helpful frameworks

IDEA-net Guidelines Toolkit for setting up an IDEA office https://idea-net.eu/guideline-toolkit/

Erasmus University (EUR) Inclusive HR Toolkit for inclusive selection & recruitment https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2021-04-engbrochurewstoolkit21112018en

Appendix 1: Inclusive teaching practices

This is extra material for the peer-learning activity of module 4. Print the following pages (copies: number of participants / 5) and cut on the lines so that each practice becomes an individual card to distribute among participants.

Content warnings

Content or trigger warnings are what forecasts are for rain; they prepare us to weather distressing experiences. In a higher education context, these warnings allow students to choose if and how to engage with the course content, such as by employing emotional management skills, refraining from a discussion or leaving the classroom. Common content/ trigger warnings can for example related to abuse, violence, sexual assault, war, suicide, mental health struggles, poverty, racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism/misogyny, religious persecution (i.e. islamophobia, anti-Semitism), and more.

Do you, or would you use content/trigger warnings in your classes? For who would these warnings be important and how could they contribute to a more inclusive learning environment?

Diverse representation and perspectives in curriculums

When students see a range of people, voices and perspectives reflected in course materials, it can not only foster a sense of belonging but also a more critical awareness and a broad social impact. For example, the medical illustrations of Chidiebere Ibe—which feature Black bodies—challenge the longstanding Eurocentric bias in medical imagery, which has traditionally depicted only lighter-skinned patients. His viral illustration of a Black fetus in the womb sparked global discussions on the need for inclusive medical imagery and equitable healthcare education. By incorporating diverse representations, Ibe's illustrations help improve medical education, ensuring that students and professionals can recognize how various conditions appear on darker skin.

What might diverse representation look like in your discipline? What bodies, lived experiences and perspectives are dominant in your curriculum, and which may be underrepresented? What could be the impact of diversifying your curriculum?

Recognizing and challenging stereotypes in teaching materials

The materials we use in classrooms—readings, case studies, examples, and media—can shape students' understanding of the world. Sometimes, these materials reinforce stereotypes by portraying certain groups in limited or biased ways. For example, history textbooks may emphasize Eurocentric narratives while minimizing non-Western and Indigenous perspectives, or literature selections might predominantly feature male protagonists or heteronormative narratives. Underrepresented groups may not be represented or appear only in negative, stereotypical ways.
By actively evaluating course content, educators can work toward presenting more accurate, balanced, and inclusive materials. This might include diversifying reading lists, analyzing whose perspectives are missing, and encouraging students to critically examine representations in media and textbooks.

What stereotypical representations do you come across in your discipline? What are some ways to identify and address stereotypes in your teaching materials?

Diverse means of engagement, learning and assessment

Not all students learn in the same way. Providing varied ways to access and engage with material—such as readings, videos, discussions, or hands-on activities—can make learning more inclusive. For everyone, but especially for neurodivergent students (e.g., those with ADHD, dyslexia, autism), flexible approaches can help reduce cognitive load and increase engagement. Strategies like respecting different social needs, offering both visualized as textual content, or allowing movement-based learning can support diverse cognitive styles. Additionally, traditional exams work well for some but can be a barrier for others. Allowing students to select from different project formats (e.g., written essay, podcast, infographic) to demonstrate learning might provide more equitable opportunities.

How do you already implement diverse and flexible means of engagement and assessment in your classes? Where may there be room for improvement?

Inclusive language

Language shapes the way we perceive the world and interact with others. In the classroom, the words we use can either create an environment of inclusion and respect, or unintentionally reinforce exclusion and bias. Inclusive language acknowledges and affirms diverse identities, experiences, and abilities, making all students feel seen and valued.

For example, using gender-neutral terms like 'everyone' instead of 'ladies and gentlemen' respects students of all gender identities. Recognizing that terms evolve—such as shifting from 'illegal immigrant' to 'undocumented person', or shifting adopting culturally sensitive terminology—helps ensure language remains humanizing and respectful. Encouraging students to introduce themselves with their pronouns and learning correct name pronunciation are simple yet powerful ways to model inclusivity.

What inclusive languages practices do you already actively implement in and around the classroom? What are some other ways we can adapt our language practices to reflect inclusivity?
