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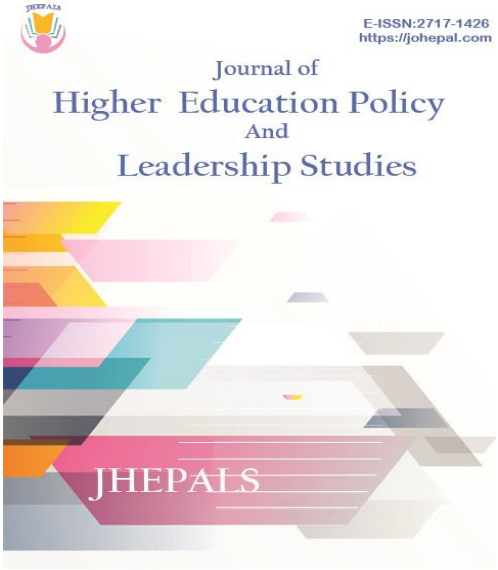
How to Be an Inclusive Leader in Higher Education



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Abstract

To make optimum use of the talents of all groups in society and have all voices heard in the transformations higher education is facing, inclusive leadership is gaining ground as a preferred leadership style (Stefani & Blessinger, 2017; Ferdman et al., 2020). This article reviews the literature on inclusive leadership and considers how it can be used to transform higher education institutions (HEIs) in the light of some of the 'megatrends' they face. The main suggestions that flow from this literature review are, firstly, to integrate conceptualisations of inclusive leadership with research on inclusive behaviour by followers and, secondly, to develop strategies that apply inclusive leadership to its multifaceted purposes, rather than mainly to the fostering of inclusive work groups. An integration of theories on inclusive leadership with research on fostering democracy, facilitating inclusive learning environments and stimulating inclusive societies reveals insights into how these concepts are related and what is expected of a leader, not only with respect to leading diverse teams but also with regards to how this is relevant in pursuing inclusion in the broader context of HEIs and in society.

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Keywords: Inclusive Leadership; Equity; Diversity; Inclusion; Higher Education

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Introduction

Current literature on leadership in higher education places an increasing emphasis on the development and practice of inclusive leadership to support the transformation of higher education (HE) - and the societies within which it operates - towards greater equity, diversity and inclusion (Burkhardt, 2022; Lewis, 2016; Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). In the context of the challenges the world is facing the growing demand for equity, diversity and inclusion is easily understood; however, these values are not fully realized in all higher education institutions (HEI) let alone in societies at large. A recognition of the importance and a commitment to these values is not sufficient to realise sustainable change (Burkhardt, 2022; Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). What strategies should HEIs adopt and what behaviours should leaders demonstrate to bring about this change and to contribute to the realisation of greater equity, diversity and inclusion in higher education and in societies at large? This literature review aims to describe the current state of research on inclusive leadership and to explore what it means to be an inclusive leader in higher education.

The Contemporary Context for Higher Education Leadership

Leaders in higher education face unprecedented complexity. In their report on the multiple challenges shaping the future of higher education, Choudaha and Van Rest (2018) list a number of what they term 'megatrends' that are affecting societies – and hence higher education – worldwide, which are listed below to provide a framework within which HEI leaders must function. The term megatrend was defined by Naisbitt (1982 as cited in Choudaha & Van Rest, 2018, p. 29) as "..a long-term transformational process with global reach, broad scope and a dramatic impact". The following trends may be judged to match this definition:

Demographic Changes

The first major demographic megatrend is the aging population. Worldwide the composition of populations in terms of age is changing. Between 2015 and 2030 82% of the growth of the total population will be in age groups aged 35 and older (Choudaha & van Rest, 2018). By 2050, the age group 65+ will be 16% of the total world population, which was 9% in 2019. In Europe and North America the 65+ group will even be 25% of the total population by 2050 (UN, 2022). This demographic shift will have an impact on the workforce and higher education participation rates in different age groups (Schuller, 2019), so HEIs in the Global North will need to focus less on the 18-21 year old full-time student and increasingly on life-long, part-time learning. A second demographic change is ongoing rapid urbanization. In 2018 55% of the world population lived in an urban area and this percentage is expected to increase to 68% by 2050 (UN, 2018), leading to a further concentration of higher education capacity-building in cities.

Labour Market Shifts

The labor market shifts referred to by Choudaha and Van Rest (2018) are related to automation and how this will continue to affect the global workforce. By 2030 14% of the worldwide workforce is expected to be replaced by automation (Choudaha & van Rest,

2018). Automation through technological advancements such as robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) is also referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4). The precise effects of IR4 are uncertain although the impact on societies, the nature and demands of the workforce, and on what and how universities teach their students, is already profound (Penprase, 2018). Related to these labour market shifts, there is already developing a significant skills mismatch, which refers to the gap between what employers demand and what education provides. This trend, combined with an aging population, will increase the demand for skills-based, career-long learning (Guruz, 2011).

Stricter Immigration Policies

Even though the total volume of international migrants stayed roughly the same between 1995 and 2015, the share of immigration to higher-income countries in the Global North increased from 36% to 51%. This change has been one of the drivers behind stricter immigration policies and specifically barriers for entry into such countries (Choudaha & van Rest, 2018), whilst inward mobility of international students has continued to grow. The longer-term impact on higher education is expected to be seen in a diversification of study destinations of international students, with traditional countries of origin of international students such as China and India developing into key destination countries, which is expected to also further increase regionalisation (Choudaha, 2017; Guruz, 2011).

Economic Shifts

Despite recent shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, it is predicted that the world economy will continue to grow, however that emerging markets will grow twice as fast as advanced economies. By 2050, Hawksworth et al. (2017) predict that six out of the seven largest economies will be the current emerging markets, led by China as the largest economy, followed by India, the United States and Indonesia. The European Union is predicted make up less than 10% of the world economy with the United Kingdom as the only European country in the top 10. These economic shifts fuel the demand for higher education in low- and middle income countries, whereas the supply is dominantly in high income countries. This capacity imbalance will provide further opportunities for HEIs in advanced economies through international student recruitment and transnational education. However it will also stimulate the development of HEIs in the Global South and, combined with the stricter immigration policies in the Global North mentioned above, will further drive regionalization of international higher education (Choudaha, 2017; Guruz, 2011).

Budget Pressures

In the next decade, student numbers are projected to increase to around 120 million worldwide, including approximately 2.3 million who are internationally-mobile students. This worldwide increase in student numbers leads to pressure on government funding of higher education and is an incentive for private institutions to develop (Guruz, 2011). It will continue to drive the policy agenda characterised by Qureshi and Khawaja (2021, p. 179) thus: “In higher education, government policy around the world has shifted from nationalization to liberalization, privatisation and marketisation, which has provided fertile ground for the growth and expansion of private higher education institutions in most countries”.

The megatrends listed above are similar to those described in other sources, such as *Trends Shaping Education 2022* (OECD, 2022) and the Ernst and Young report *Megatrends 2020 and Beyond* (EY, 2020), albeit that each source shows varying levels of detail and different ways of describing the interdependencies between each trend. A significant megatrend that is not included in Choudaha and Van Rest's list (2018) but is described in both the OECD and Ernst and Young reports is climate change. This trend will continue to have a major impact on higher education, requiring innovation in curricula, research, professionalisation and an overall mind shift to contribute to meeting this most serious of challenges the world is facing (Molthan-Hill et al., 2019).

The cumulative effects of these megatrends are expected to push higher education institutions towards offering more relevant, affordable, and flexible academic programs (Choudaha & van Rest, 2018). The transformations higher education institutions need to go through to face these challenges and to contribute to a socially-just and sustainable society are huge. To make optimum use of the talents of all groups in society and to have all voices heard in the design and implementation of the innovations required, inclusive leadership is gaining ground as a preferred leadership style (Ferdman et al., 2020; Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). The remainder of this article will define and review the literature on inclusive leadership to assess its applicability to higher education and the challenges it faces.

Inclusive Leadership in Higher Education

Research into effective leadership styles is extensive and has been built up over more than a century. A central theme running through various definitions of leadership is that it concerns the ability to influence others (Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). The type of leadership that is most effective is heavily dependent on the context within which it is exercised. The context for higher education in recent decades has prompted an increasing interest in and demand for inclusive leadership (Lewis, 2016), a field of study that originated in the 1990s and whose growth coincides with growing diversity on campuses. The number of publications on inclusive leadership has grown exponentially over the past two decades (Thompson & Matkin, 2020). The dimensions and purposes of inclusive leadership will be elaborated upon in a later section, but first the concepts of 'inclusion' and 'inclusive leadership' need to be defined.

Definition of Inclusive Leadership

To define what is meant by inclusive leadership, it is first necessary to define the concept of social inclusion. A definition of inclusion in the context of a work group, proposed by Shore et al. (2011, p. 1265) is: "the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness." Shore et al. define inclusion both by the need to belong and to be unique, which is based on Brewer's optimal distinctiveness theory (Randel et al., 2018). Optimal distinctiveness theory proposes that an optimal self-identity is realised if there is a balance between the need for inclusion and the competing need for differentiation (Leonardelli et al., 2010). Inclusion can also, according to Booysen (2013, p. 16) be seen as a practice: "…an interacting set of structures, values, norms, group and organizational climates, and individual and collective behaviours, all connected with

inclusion experiences in a mutually reinforcing and dynamic system." An alternative definition, particularly relevant to the context of education is provided by Lewis (2016, p. 336): "inclusion is about more than equal distribution of resources; it is about equal access and the full participation of historically marginalized groups". Social inclusion is a dynamic rather than a static process and is created through the relationship of the individual with surrounding systems at multiple levels, ranging from interpersonal relations to inclusive practices experienced in society (Ferdman, 2013).

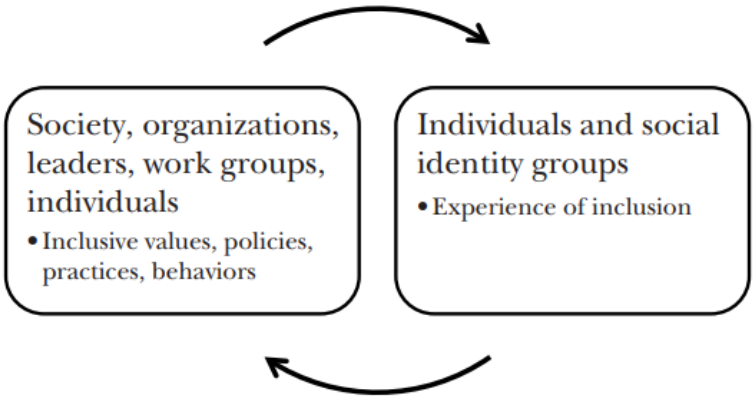

Figure 1. Inclusion as a Systemic and Dynamic Process (Ferdman, 2013)

Figure 1 above clearly includes a role for leadership. The phrase 'inclusive leadership' was conceptualised by Nembhard and Edmondson (2006, p. 947) as: "…words and deeds by a leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation for others' contributions. Leader inclusiveness captures attempts by leaders to include others in discussions and decisions in which their voices and perspectives might otherwise be absent". Although this definition implies both an appreciation for belonging as well for uniqueness and distinctiveness, this dual and contradictory element of inclusion as defined by Shore et al. (2011) is more explicitly part of the definition of inclusive leadership by Randel et al. (2018, p. 195): "Behaviours that collectively facilitate all group members' perceptions of belongingness to the work group and that encourage group members contributing their uniqueness to achieving positive group outcomes.".

There are numerous other leadership models in the literature, some of which have inclusive elements in them. Examples are transformational leadership, democratic leadership and distributive leadership (Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). Of these three , the main differences are that transformational leadership has a stronger focus on the needs of the organisation than on individual team members' needs (Randel et al., 2018), whilst democratic leadership focusses on shared decision making and distributive leadership is seen as a social process that is shared by both leaders and followers (Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). Inclusive leadership is distinguished from other, related, leadership styles by incorporating both belonging and uniqueness "…in ways that are not fully addressed by other leadership styles" (Randel et al., 2018, p. 194).

The Purposes of Inclusive Leadership

In literature on inclusive leadership different but related purposes are described. The different purposes can be categorised into four themes in which the focus is either on diversity, democracy, inclusive education or an inclusive society. Each theme is explored below.

Diversity

Diversity in the workforce is recognised as an important key to fostering more creative and innovative workspaces and improve performance (Connolly & Groysberg, 2013; Ellsworth et al., 2021). However, recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce is not sufficient to achieve these results. To make diversity work and to create an environment in which all voices are heard and everyone is able to reach their full potential, inclusive leadership is needed (Booysen, 2013; Randel et al., 2018). Aiming for both diversity and inclusion can create tension and is often perceived as a paradox (Ferdman, 2017). According to Burkhardt (2022), leaders are responsible for shaping a group identity and for creating boundaries for inclusion. The group identity and the boundaries for inclusion can be at odds with a need for greater diversity within the group, which is the essence of the inclusion-diversity paradox (Burkhardt, 2022) so one of the purposes of inclusive leadership is to resolve this paradox.

Democracy

Portela (2011, p. 19) describes the purpose of inclusive leadership with a focus on democracy; "[h]ere, the central function of education is to allow for the free expression and collective consideration of ideas…schools are central institutions for making democracy deliberative". Democracy as the primary purpose of inclusive leadership was also the main topic at the *Global Forum on Higher Education Leadership for Democracy, Sustainability and Social Justice* held at Dublin City University in June 2022. The conclusion of this forum was that without the commitment and leadership of higher education, there will be no real democracies, so advancing democracy through inclusive leadership should be seen as the primary mission of higher education (Bergan et al., 2022). An interesting finding by Stefani and Blessinger (2017) is that the demand for equal treatment is greater in more democratic societies, which are relatively equitable already, so the development towards inclusive leadership is most evident in these democratic societies.

Inclusive Education

Other sources on inclusive leadership highlight the purpose of creating inclusive education and addressing inequities such as the underrepresentation of minorities in higher education (Lewis, 2016). In this context, education is seen as a universal human right (Spring, 2000). Where inclusive education in the past focused largely on access and participation, the scope in recent years has broadened to also include completion and success in higher education and in later careers (Stefani & Blessinger, 2017).

Inclusive Societies

Lastly a purpose described in literature on inclusive leadership in higher education is the creation of inclusive societies. This focus relates both to the democracy purpose described above and to the development of students into the inclusive leaders of the future, who are

able to protect the interests of others and society as a whole (Meijer & Van Wijnen, 2016). This purpose of creating inclusive societies is also referred to in ethical terms as the 'right thing to do' (Ferdman et al., 2020).

These different purposes are strongly related but do not necessarily flow from each other. Having a diverse and inclusive university workforce does not automatically lead to inclusive education, let alone to inclusive and democratic societies. Instead of focusing on one of the purposes mentioned above, Stefani and Blessinger (2017, p. 34) describe the purpose of inclusive leadership as: "…. developing an inclusive culture and mindset that is reflected in the institution's mission, vision, and shared value statements".

Strategies and Behaviours Characteristic of Inclusive Leadership

A growing number of higher education institutions strive to implement a multi-facetted approach in which inclusion is integrated into all policies, structures and activities associated with the educational experience (Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). In doing this, what strategies should HEIs adopt and what behaviours should leaders in higher education develop to support the development of inclusive higher education? An overall theme that is apparent in the literature on inclusive leadership is that leaders should understand, value, and utilize differences as well as encourage a shared identity and collaboration (Roberson & Perry, 2022). This aligns with the definition of inclusion by Shore et al. (2011) which mentions both the need to belong and the need to be unique. As mentioned earlier, this definition is based on Brewer's optimal distinctiveness theory, which proposes that an optimal self-identity is realised if there is a balance between the need for inclusion and the competing need for differentiation (Randel et al., 2018). But what does that mean in practice? Which strategies, concrete actions and behaviours will contribute to the successful appreciation of differences and encouragement of a shared identity?

Institutional Strategies

Connolly and Groysberg (2013) propose eight strategies towards developing successful inclusive leadership in HEIs. The first two strategies relate to measurement and accountability. By setting key performance indicators (KPIs) for leaders on diversity and inclusion, the current status becomes clear, future goals can be defined and progress can be tracked. Diversity data are relatively easy to monitor, as metrics on for example age, race and gender can be collected and analysed. The analysis is more complex if it includes intersectionality, which refers to "the manner in which multiple aspects of identity may combine in different ways to construct social reality" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1274). Also, the measurement of inclusion is less straightforward than measuring diversity, but can be done through regular employee and student engagement surveys in which questions on a sense of belonging and a feeling of being heard can be asked. Measuring diversity and inclusion - and setting KPIs for their improvement - will lead to change if leaders are held accountable for progress and if organisations include diversity and inclusion goals in their managers' performance objectives (Connolly & Groysberg, 2013). The third and fourth strategies concern the recruitment and retention of employees. Connolly and Groysberg (2013) conclude that quotas are a useful way to increase diversity in the workforce. These quotas should apply not only to the recruitment of diverse employees but also to their promotion. Offering flexible work arrangements that allow for a good work-life balance are essential in

the recruitment and retention of parents, specifically women, and other care-givers. Strategies five and six are about professionalisation opportunities. The first recommendation is to provide leadership education. Developing inclusive leadership in all ranks and by all leaders, not only to those with previously disadvantaged backgrounds, is an investment that leads to more inclusion. A second recommendation is about less structured professionalisation opportunities in the form of employee research groups and mentoring programs. Strategy seven concerns offering role models. Employees from disadvantaged groups in leading positions can act as role models for the rest of organisation and will give impetus to the recruitment, retention and promotion of employees from diverse backgrounds. The last recommendation is to appoint a Chief Diversity Officer position with significant institutional power. Inclusive leadership should not be just a form or rhetoric but should receive full support from and be exercised by the most senior leaders in the HEI (Connolly & Groysberg, 2013).

Leader Behaviours

Randall et al (2018) describe different behaviours that inclusive leaders should demonstrate. To create a sense of belonging, leaders should first of all support group members with their individual needs as well as showing support for their opinions. By role-modelling this behaviour, leaders will also stimulate group members to support each other. Showing support for team members is confirmed in a study by Roberson and Perry (2022), in which it is recommend that leaders show appreciation for peoples' talent and work and acknowledge and account for individual needs. A second behaviour that will foster a sense of belonging is demonstrating justice and equity that results in team members' perception of fair treatment (Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011). Thirdly, inclusive leaders should exhibit behaviour that leads to shared decision making, by sharing power and broadening consultation on decisions to be taken. Overall it can be said that, in order to create a sense of belonging amongst team members, leaders have to establish a group identity, set the boundaries for inclusion and formulate a shared meaning (Burkhardt, 2022).

In line with supporting group members, specifically stimulating diverse contributions will facilitate the other main element of inclusion; uniqueness. This behaviour resembles what is promoted in the Lewis method of deep democracy, in which leaders actively seek for alternative viewpoints (Hassan, 2019). Another behaviour that will facilitate uniqueness as described by Randell et al. (2018) as helping group members to fully contribute, for example by writing down their ideas, or by having individual conversations if that is needed for someone to express their ideas. The behaviour of stimulating diverse contributions is supported by Roberson and Perry (2022), who found that encouraging employees to voice their opinions and share feedback in different ways - and to invite disagreement and debate - are ways to demonstrate inclusive leadership.

The characteristics of leaders who are able to demonstrate these behaviours are: having pro-diversity beliefs, humility, and cognitive complexity - which concerns the ability to perceive others multidimensionally - together with the ability to recognize both strengths and weakness in individual group members' behaviour (Randel et al., 2018). In addition to these characteristics, the ability to recognise bias and the trait empathy are also seen as essential for inclusive leaders (Bourke et al., 2020) as is the recognition of inclusion as a core institutional value (Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). Stefani and Blessinger (2017) also emphasize

the importance of building relationships using skills and behaviours that lead to empathy, listening, and a commitment to stewardship. This relationship perspective on leadership and its social capital focus distinguishes it from traditional leadership styles that are more focused on individual entities and human capital (Booysen, 2013). Booyens also reflects this emphasis in her definition of inclusive leadership:

> inclusive leadership is an ongoing cycle of learning through collaborative and respectful relational practice that enables individuals and collectives to be fully part of the whole, such that they are directed, aligned, and committed toward shared outcomes, for the common good of all, while retaining a sense of authenticity and uniqueness. (Booyens, 2013, p. 306).

Despite the growing body of research and insights summarised above, theoretical consensus and an integration of conceptualisations on effective strategies and inclusive leadership behaviours are lacking (Korkmaz et al., 2022). In their recent and extensive systemic literature review of 107 publications on inclusive leadership, Korkmaz et al (2022) propose a conceptualisation that adds two dimensions to the previously mentioned model by Randel et al. (2018): those of showing appreciation and of supporting organizational efforts. Showing appreciation is about a recognition and acknowledgement of achievements, both on an individual and on a team level. Supporting organisational change is about leaders being open to change and providing support for organizational initiatives towards diversity and inclusion (Korkmaz et al., 2022).

Discussion: Inclusive Leadership for HEI Transformation

The first point of discussion arising from the sections above is the seeming lack of integration between insights on inclusive leadership behaviour and the inclusive behaviour of followers. The literature on inclusive leadership primarily focuses on the behaviour of the leader. As collaboration, collective decision making, the existence of a group identity and shared meaning are key terms in the literature on inclusive leadership, whilst inclusion is seen as a dynamic process between actors on all levels ranging from the individual to society (Ferdman, 2013), it is surprising that more attention is not given to the behaviour of teams and individual team members. Inclusive leaders have to show appreciation for achievements and behaviour, but which achievements and behaviour should they praise? Performance planning and assessment is part of the role of a leader, but which behaviours by individuals and teams should be stimulated and assessed by leaders if the overall aim is to create an inclusive environment? Inclusion cannot exist based on the behaviour of the leaders alone; employees and teams are not purely variables that depend on the behaviour of the leader, but will also be determined by the quality and the personalities of individuals and the dynamics within a team, both of which are arguably beyond the influence of a leader. Unless the assumption is that recruiting and retaining a diverse team, led by an inclusive leader, is sufficient to create an inclusive environment.

There is literature on the inclusive behaviour of followers, together with specific traits and behaviours to look for in recruitment and promotion of employees in order to foster inclusive practices; however, these insights are not included in the literature on inclusive leadership reviewed for this report. There is a very strong focus on what the leaders should

do, which somewhat contradicts with the notion that inclusive leaders share responsibilities and power with other team members. Building relationships and social capital is important in inclusive leadership, but what is expected from the employees with whom a leader is building these relationships? Even though a central theme in various definitions of leadership is that leadership is about the ability to influence others (Stefani & Blessinger, 2017), the skills and behaviour of these 'others' nevertheless play a role in the effectiveness of leadership. An integration of research on inclusive behaviour with theories and frameworks on inclusive leadership will provide a more comprehensive conceptualisation of the field.

In the literature on inclusive leadership, multiple purposes for the application of this leadership style are apparent. The purpose of inclusive leadership varies from enabling a diverse workforce to function well, to safeguarding democracy, creating inclusive learning environments and ultimately the realisation of inclusive societies. Although related, these purposes differ in focus which may imply that the approach towards the realisation of these aims would also be different. However, regardless of the purpose, literature on inclusive leadership is predominantly about how to facilitate inclusive workspaces. Does an inclusive workforce also lead to inclusive education? To more stable democracies and inclusive societies? Despite the multi-facetted purpose of inclusive leadership, the strategies and behaviours proposed above focus almost exclusively on the inclusive workforce dimension. There seems to be an omission in the literature on inclusive leadership of theories and conceptualisations that link strategies and behaviours of an inclusive leader not only to inclusion amongst staff, but also towards inclusive learning environments, stable democracies and inclusive societies. Even though a growing number of higher education institutions strive to implement a multi-faceted approach in which inclusion in integrated into all aspects of education (Stefani & Blessinger, 2017), inclusive leadership approaches seemingly focus on diversity of staff and an inclusive work culture.

There appears to be a lost opportunity here to relate the practice of inclusive leadership in HEIs to broader institutional transformation in the context of the 'megatrends' referred to earlier. The last point of discussion relates to conflict management skills of inclusive leaders. Diverse environments can function well if they are also inclusive, but diversity can also lead to tension and complexities (Ferdman et al., 2020; Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). Knowing this, one would expect conflict management to be described as an essential skill of an inclusive leader. Tapia (2016) suggests competencies for inclusive leaders and mentions conflict management as part of the competency to build a trusting and open culture, however in other literature on inclusive leadership, conflict management does not play a dominant role or is not mentioned at all.

Conclusion

Inclusive leadership is a field of research that has gained growing attention over the past two decades (Thompson & Matkin, 2020). The concept is necessary in order to make diversity work (Connolly & Groysberg, 2013) and - especially in higher education, in which the free exploration and expression of ideas and opinions is a core purpose - inclusive leadership is also needed to safeguard democracies, facilitate inclusive learning environments and contribute to an inclusive society (Bergan et al., 2022; Burkhardt, 2022).

Despite these multifaceted purposes – which have the potential for institutional transformation - literature on inclusive leadership predominantly focusses on inclusion in the workspace. An integration of theories on inclusive leadership with research on fostering democracy, facilitating inclusive learning environments and simulating inclusive societies is needed to give more insights into how these concepts are related and what is expected of a leader, not only with respect to leading diverse teams but also with regards to how this is relevant in pursuing inclusion in the broader context of higher education institutions and in society.

Inclusive leaders can create a culture in which there is both a strong sense of belonging as well as the space for followers to be unique, and in which they can differentiate themselves from others (Shore et al., 2011). Inclusive leaders focus on relationships and on social capital, rather than on individual entities and human capital (Booysen, 2013). Literature on inclusive leadership is predominantly - and maybe even logically - about what is expected of the leader. Assuming that the leaders' success in establishing an inclusive culture and building relationships is not purely dependent on his or her behaviour but also on the behaviour of the followers with whom he or she is building relationships, an integration of research on inclusive behaviour with literature on inclusive leadership will provide a more comprehensive conceptualisation of the field.

Last but not least, this review has showed that, although diversity can also lead to tension and complexities (Ferdman et al., 2020; Stefani & Blessinger, 2017), the skill of conflict management receives surprisingly little attention in the literature on inclusive leadership. The field of research on inclusive leadership is relatively young (Thompson & Matkin, 2020) so the answer to the question of how to be an inclusive leader in higher education will no doubt evolve over time. The main suggestions that flow from this review are, firstly, to include conflict management skills in research on inclusive leadership, secondly to integrate conceptualisations of inclusive leadership with inclusive behaviour by followers and, thirdly, to look beyond the relevance of inclusive leadership in creating inclusive work cultures to place it in the broader context of creating inclusive learning environments in HEIs, fostering democracies and promoting an inclusive society.

Reflections on Inclusive Leadership in Our Own Practice

Our main point of reflection relates to the broadness of the topic. Leadership in itself is extremely broad and there are thousands of articles that span over a century. Inclusive leadership is a younger field of study, but is still a relatively broad topic. Initially we considered reducing the scope of this review by, for example, focussing on inclusion of a specific minority or in a specific country or case. However, we wanted to review the total concept first and use that overall view to decide on more specific research questions for later studies. The gap that stirred our interest is conflict and conflict management in inclusive environments. Potential conflict in diverse environments is mentioned throughout the literature on inclusive leadership (Ferdman et al., 2020; Stefani & Blessinger, 2017). However, detail on the types of conflict and how to manage it effectively in the context of inclusion, is hard to find.

Jessica's personal reflection: being a leader in higher education, I suppose I can consider myself an inclusive leader. Referring back to the opening quote, I think I show the

humility, curiosity and courage that characterises inclusive leaders. The feedback I get from the people I lead is that they feel supported and they feel heard. With regards to building relationships and social capital, essential in inclusive environments, there is room for improvement with regards to the depth of the relationships I build. To some extent this has to do with the size of the team but partly it is a personal point of improvement to truly connect.

Dan's reflection: having been in leadership roles in several HEIs I have witnessed some of the complexity and 'megatrends' referred to earlier in this article at first hand. I have been bewildered by the vast range of leadership models available, yet the urgent need to make universities more inclusive environments has driven me to adapt my approaches to working with colleagues, students and the wider community. The competencies required to be an inclusive leader require constant reflection, learning and development. But that surely adds to the excitement and makes us happy to be in this profession.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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This research did not include human participants

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