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### Inclusive Leadership Education in a Multicultural Educational Setting: A Review of Conceptual Models, Practices and Measurements

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**Inclusive Leadership Education in a Multicultural Educational Setting:  
A Review of Conceptual Models, Practices and Measurements**

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**Abstract**

The concept of inclusive leadership is not prevalent in the education field of pedagogy despite a renewed emphasis on diversity literature due to increasing diversity issues around the world. In this review paper, by utilizing the richer inclusive leadership literature in organizational studies, we carefully connect it to the related extant literature on education such as multicultural group work and intercultural competence measurements, in order to identify inclusive leadership education practices in multicultural educational settings and develop a measurement for those. We identified some similarities between organizational inclusion practices, which resonate with Shore et al.'s (2011) belongingness and uniqueness, and educational inclusion practices. We also found that extant inclusive leadership measurements are not sufficient to capture and measure students' inclusive leadership development in multicultural educational settings and point out a direction toward a sounder measurement.

Keywords: inclusive leadership, inclusion, diversity, multicultural education, multicultural group work, intercultural competence, measurement

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## **Inclusion Criteria and Outline of Paper**

We searched the Web of Science using “inclusive leader\*” as a keyword through scholarly articles published between 1990 and 2021. As of March 2021, there were 157 hits. The breakdown in the fields of studies of these articles are: management (55); education and educational research (33); multidisciplinary psychology (14); and business (13). So, the majority of research on inclusive leadership is done in the field of organizational studies, namely management and business. We further investigated the articles in the field of education and educational research and found the following breakdown in its sub-fields: school leadership (22); pedagogy for inclusive leadership (all the levels of formal education) (4); professional and adult training (2); inclusive leadership and diversity in the society (3); diversity at school (1); and assessment (1). As seen, the concept of inclusive leadership is not prevalent in the sub-field of pedagogy for inclusive leadership, although Portella (2011) points out the importance of inclusive leadership in education.

Hence, in this review paper, by tapping on the richer inclusive leadership literature in organizational studies, we will carefully bring that to bear upon the relevant extant literature on education such as multicultural group work and intercultural competence measurements, in order to identify inclusive leadership education practices in multicultural educational settings and develop a measurement for those. Thus, our literature inclusion criteria are: (a) the conceptual and theoretical framework of inclusive leadership from organizational studies; (b) inclusive leadership development practices in higher education; and (c) inclusive leadership measurements.

More specifically, this paper will begin with the definition and conceptual framework of inclusive leadership, then unpack the related literature on workplace diversity/inclusiveness. After that, we will review the literature on diversity/inclusiveness in higher education, particularly that in multicultural group work. Finally, we will show the current state of inclusive leadership measurements and indicate the direction towards a measurement in multicultural educational settings.

## **Definition and Conceptual Framework of Inclusive Leadership**

Shore et al. (2011) have defined inclusion as “*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*” that explicitly focuses on both belongingness and uniqueness. The recent systematic literature review in inclusive leadership studies conducted by Thompson and Matkin (2019) indicates that the first cogent inclusion framework was developed by Shore et al. (2011). The Shore’s inclusion framework is built on the optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT) of Brewer (1991) which is an extension of the social identity theory. ODT asserts that tensions within individuals which originate from the need for validation

and similarity to the others in a group and a countervailing need for uniqueness and individuation. Brewer argued that individuals seek to balance these two needs through an optimal level of inclusion in the groups to which they belong. Shore's inclusion framework is based on the concept that people want to feel a sense of belonging, as well as feeling valued, for their unique attributes and will put effort into balancing between these two senses; belongingness and uniqueness.

## **Workplace Diversity/Inclusiveness**

As stated, the majority of inclusive leadership literature rests on organizational studies, whose emergence matches a renewed emphasis on diversity literature because of increasing diversity issues around the world (Thompson and Matkin, 2020). Therefore, we will touch on the diversity literature from organizational studies.

### Surface-level Diversity and Deep-level Diversity

There are different dimensions in group diversity. Surface-level diversity is heterogeneity among group members in terms of their explicit biological and demographic attributes, including age, sex, and race (Ely, 2004). It may include language abilities or accents in multinational groups. On the other hand, deep-level diversity is heterogeneity among group members in terms of their implicit attributes including their personalities, values, and attitudes (ibid). These may be deeply influenced by nationalities in multicultural groups.

In long-term groups, the influence of social categories deriving from superficial-level diversity in racial, sexual and linguistic attributes is likely to diminish over time, as group members pay more attention to deep-level diversity in attitudes and values, resulting in less stereotyping by overt social categories (Ely, 2004; Harrison et al., 2002). On the other hand, and particularly for short-term groups, group members can be blinded by superficial-level diversity and thus are less likely to engage in group tasks by taking advantage of deeper differences in personality, values and attitudes (Joshi & Roh, 2009; 林祥平 et al., 2019) or the uniqueness of group members (Shore et al., 2011). For this kind of situation in particular, organizational interventions or what Sabbarwal (2014) called organizational inclusive behaviors (OIB) is called for.

### Organizational Inclusive Behaviors

Sabbarwal's (2014) study reveals that organizational inclusive behaviors (OIB), which include (a) ability to influence work group decisions; (b) fairness/equitable treatment; and (c) commitment from top leadership to foster inclusion, promote organizational inclusion. Ely and Thomas (2020) also concur with the finding that enabling organizational members to influence group decisions fosters organizational inclusion and elaborate that such an environment: "having the power to help set the agenda, influence what—and how—work is done, have one's needs and

interests taken into account, and have one's contributions recognized and rewarded with further opportunities to contribute and advance" (p. 117), which resonates with Shore et al.'s (2011) uniqueness.

Allport (1954) and Ely and Thomas (2020) support Sabbarwal's (2014) finding where fairness/equitable treatment fosters organizational inclusion. From the viewpoint of intergroup relationships, Allport (1954) states that the attitudinal transformation between groups can happen by minimizing their status differences. In a similar vein, Ely and Thomas (2020) point out that organizations can take advantage of diversity by reducing discrimination and subordination, accepting the different approaches of diverse organizational members, and making use of cultural differences for learning and improving organizational practices. This too has an affinity with Shore et al.'s (2011) uniqueness.

Finally, the extant literature also supports Sabbarwal's (2014) finding where commitment from top leadership fosters organizational inclusion. For example, Allport (1954) argues that support from authorities improves intergroup relationships. Also, leaders' beliefs in diversity are manifested in their actual behaviors, thereby influencing followers (Homan & Jehn, 2010; 谷口真美, 2016).

Other than what have been mentioned, pertinent to OID is Ely and Thomas' (2020) mention, in which leaders need to build trust among followers by creating a psychologically safe workplace where they can express themselves freely, echoing Shore et al.'s (2011) belongingness. Also related to OID is to create opportunities that facilitate work group members to reflect on and discuss group performance (ibid.).

## **Diversity/Inclusiveness in Higher Education**

The conceptual framework by Shore et al. (2011) and the findings from organizational studies have an affinity with the higher education context, particularly inclusiveness/diversity in multicultural group work.

### **International Students in Multicultural Group Work**

The insufficient language skills of international students in English-based courses in universities in the west and their cultural and academic cultural backgrounds form their stereotypical views as deficits and a problem (Popov et al., 2012; Safipour et al., 2017). More specifically, domestic students view them as free-riders, not communicating properly, lacking motivation, ignorant, and passive learners (ibid.). Popov et al. (2012) find that students' cultural backgrounds—whether they come from individualist or collectivist cultures—affect how they perceive and perform in group work. Students from individualist cultures are likely to pursue personal goals (of, for example, getting things done efficiently), while those from collectivist cultures are likely to try to

achieve collective goals (of, for instance, not disturbing group harmony) (ibid.). Through a systemic review, Safipour et al. (2017) identify that students' academic cultural backgrounds influence their approaches to learning. For example, if students come from that of a teacher-centered education, they tend to be good listeners and can be perceived as someone who lacks motivation by domestic students (ibid.). Popov et al. (2012) and Sapifour et al. (2017) argue that the lack of knowledge about the existence of different cultural practices and different pedagogical practices can partly explain domestic students' negative stereotypes towards international students. On the other hand, a study by Poort et al. (2020) reveals that cultural diversity in groups promotes students' engagement in group work to some extent, as multicultural group work requires or induces more efforts because of difficulties and complexities entailed by it.

### Equalizing Relationship

As highlighted above, the deficit perception surrounding international students in English-based courses in universities in the west, in which they are considered deficient in English language abilities as well as in the sense that they do not communicate properly, seem less motivated and appear to be free-riders, has been prevalent (Popov et al., 2012; Safipour et al., 2017; Shevellar, 2015). This deficit perception is also applicable to Japanese students with weak English abilities who are in English-based courses in increasingly internationalized universities in Japan and thus need to interact with international students with stronger English abilities there. Here both Shevellar (2015) and Cruickshank et al. (2012) suggest enabling them to enact the role of experts and bearers of resources rather than bearers of problems in multicultural classrooms and group work, by creating a safe and 'third space' for them to tell their stories. Such stories can be about, for example, their home country's cultural practices and social issues that they are familiar with and relevant to the courses they take (for example, environmental issues of their home countries in an environmental studies course). Here a student-centered learning approach, such as Think, Pair and Share, can be utilized to gradually increase their confidence and capacities to tell and share their stories in English (Cruickshank et al., 2012; Shevellar, 2015). Equalizing the relationship between those with power and those without power is critical for multicultural group work where the powerful should neither dominate nor segregate the powerless, the powerless feel included, and their differences/uniqueness are valued and appreciated, which echoes fairness/equal treatment in OIB by Sabbarwal (2014). For this to happen, Arkoudis et al. (2010), Popov et al. (2012) and Yefanova et al. (2017) indicate the importance of holding a peer learning workshop to learn such skills as facilitation, especially for soliciting the voices of minority students with weak English abilities.

### Strategies for Effective Multicultural Group Work

According to Poort et al. (2020), trust in the group is the strongest factor in students' engagement in group work in comparison with group diversity in the group and group formation, which has an affinity with Ely and Thomas's (2020) finding of the importance of building trust among followers from organizational studies. For this to happen, Poort et al. (2020) and Arkuoudis et al. (2010) suggest trust-building or ice-breaking activities at the earlier stage of group work. Particularly for multicultural groups, this can be activities that help students acknowledge cultural diversity in the group and formulate group specific cross-cultural communication protocols (Popov et al., 2012; Smith & Mraz, 2001). Trust building takes time—especially for multicultural groups—and hence courses should be designed in such a way as to focus on essential or absolutely necessary contents and to set aside sufficient group work time both in and outside the classroom (through outside-the-class group projects) (Arkoudis et al., 2010; Poort et al., 2020; Shevellar, 2015).

For multicultural group work in general, other than what has been mentioned, Arkoudis et al. (2010) suggest such practices as (a) incorporating multicultural interactions into course objectives; (b) aligning assignment tasks to such interactions; (c) assigning members from different nationalities to the group (Shevellar, 2015; 北出慶子, 2013); (d) setting expectations for multicultural interactions from the beginning (also Sabbwarl, 2014, from organizational studies); and (e) embedding reflection processes in course design—for example, an evaluation form/survey for multicultural group work (宮本美能, 2012; also Ely and Thomas, 2020 from organizational studies).

### **Inclusive Leadership Measurements**

According to Shore et al. (2018), many studies of inclusion are built on Mor Barak's framework. Her model first employed an “inclusion-exclusion” measure (Mor Barak and Cherin, 1998) and later expanded with the idea that “diversity and organizational culture would contribute to perceptions of inclusion-exclusion, which would then lead to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, individual well-being, and task effectiveness” (Shore et al. 2018, p.179) by Mor Barak (2020). Li (2021) states the most used measure of inclusive leadership in the literature is the ones developed by Carmeli et al (2010) and Nembhard and Edmondson (2006). Carmeli et al.'s measure assesses three dimensions of inclusive leadership: openness, availability and accessibility. Nembhard and Edmondson's measure focuses on leaders' words and behaviors which show their invitation to individuals' contribution in the healthcare setting.

However, Randel et al. (2018) point out the lack of consensus of what constitutes leader inclusiveness and how to measure it. Furthermore, although various measures were developed, Shore et al. (2018) argue that validated measures which are conceptually grounded are still needed, stating that it is not clear which measurements can best represent which inclusion theme and how valid the measurements are. Moreover, these measurements are not necessarily developed to analyze inclusion among diverse students in educational settings. Thompson and Matkin (2020) argue that inclusive leadership research does not directly address intercultural competence research, such as the well-known models by Bennet (2004) and the inventory by Hammer (2008) and suggest

these connect inclusive leadership research to education research.

To sum up, current measurements are not sufficient to understand and analyze inclusion in multicultural educational settings. Based on these models and measurements such as “inclusion-exclusion” measures and framework of Shore et al. (2018) and Randel et al (2018), more targeted measurements considering intercultural learning and group-oriented outcomes need to be designed. Our research therefore follows the conceptual frameworks in the literature and applies them to investigate inclusion in multicultural group work in higher education. For our measurement, we employ the inclusion framework of Shore et al. (2011) with the four quadrants of belongingness and uniqueness as key concepts. Then the concepts of perceptions and behaviors in inclusion by Randel at al. (2018) are added to examine inclusion both in perceptions and behaviors of group participants. Since we target multicultural groups in higher education, issues of languages, cultures, classroom group settings and outcomes are to be incorporated into measurement to fill the gap in the models and concepts in the literature.



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