

Transforming Higher Education through Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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Diversity, equity and inclusion (EDI) are prominent concepts in today's professional and academic environments that aim to promote fair treatment and full participation of everyone. Administrators of higher education institutions (HEIs) such as at The University of the West Indies (UWI) are acknowledging the importance of the EDI agenda in institutional operations. The objective of this paper is to examine and assess the EDI efforts across the campuses of The UWI. The central question is: How is EDI implemented across the five campuses of The UWI? The study employs a qualitative content analysis of the institutions' available information on EDI, including related policies, websites' content and other relevant initiatives to assess the nature and scope of its efforts.

Findings reveal the institutions' commitment to addressing the issue of inequality with an agenda grounded in its ED&I Policy. This is evidenced through several initiatives in the form of decentralized, faculty-specific strategies; a student ambassadorship programme, curriculum integration through courses and webinars, departmental EDI policies and tools, dissemination of tips for inclusive learning spaces and information sessions for staff. Those efforts are supported by partnerships with external organizations.

Along with the positive findings, gaps were also identified that require attention. First, while the ED&I Policy applies across different organisational domains, it was not evident how the concept is operationalised at the administrative and leadership levels. To further enhance efforts, the recommendation is for the institution to ensure that the EDI concept is modelled at the leadership level, as studies have shown that the impact and positive outcomes of EDI efforts start where diversity in leadership is promoted. The other issue identified is the lack of available EDI documentations or website information for the Global and Five Islands Campuses. On the assumption that those two Campuses are yet to develop EDI policies or strategies, the recommendation is that in the interim, EDI information such as the policies and related activities for the other campuses be promoted on those websites.

The UWI EDI efforts are not entirely unique, as globally, many institutions have implemented similar strategies and policies. Besides The UWI, the websites of at least five universities within the Caribbean were reviewed for EDI related content, and only two had a sparse mention of the same. The obvious EDI strategies within The UWI suggest that the institution may be setting the standards in the Region in exhibiting differentiated features aimed at providing an inclusive environment.