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Original paper

Implementation of Diversity Management Contents into the Curricula of Higher Education Institutions in Western Balkans Countries

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Extended summary

As a result of migrations and other social and economic changes, modern world is increasingly becoming more diverse. Discrimination based on diversity is also on the rise, due to deeply entrenched stereotypes and negative attitudes towards everything that is different. We have become a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society and educational institutions should be aware of this fact, which deems the changes of traditional educational contents in the curricula of the specific study programmes also necessary. The significance of diversity, its different forms and effects, the reasons for diversity, the impact of higher education institutions on the acceptance and fostering of diversity – these are all topics that must be discussed, if indeed we wish to encourage in our students the development of pro-diversity culture, values and attitudes. In this manner, we will achieve sustainable development in our higher education institutions. Sustainable development requires the respect of natural laws in the environment and balanced cultural relationships in the society, because it motivates, provides knowledge, creates new paths to a more just and equal world, enables the change of views about the environment, personal habits, behaviour and lifestyle, which in turn makes possible a better quality of life for the present and future generations.

This study, the purpose of which was to identify and analyse the implementation of diversity management contents in the curricula of the higher education institutions in the Western Balkans countries, included 1560 higher education teachers. Among the participants, there were 24% assistant professors, 21% teaching assistants, 18% associate professors, 15% full professors, 12% lecturers, 9% senior lecturers and 1% lecturers. Out of this number, 25% are employed at community colleges, and 75% at faculties. The majority of the participants (47%) have been working in higher education for up to 10 years, 30% between 11 and 20 years, 15% be-

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tween 21 to 30 years, 6% between 31 and 40 years, and 2% for more than 41 years. The majority of the participants were from Serbia (35%), then from Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (18% respectively), Croatia (18%), Macedonia (9%), and Montenegro (7%).

According to the results of the study, when asked about the dimensions of diversity included in the curricula of the subjects they were teaching at university, the teachers specifically stressed the dimensions influencing the students' self-confidence: sexual orientation ($\bar{x} = 4,1$), marital status ($\bar{x} = 4,0$), race ($\bar{x} = 4,0$), religion ($\bar{x} = 4,0$), discussions about income and appearance ($\bar{x} = 3,8$), ethnicity ($\bar{x} = 3,7$), gender ($\bar{x} = 3,6$), physical abilities ($\bar{x} = 3,5$), age ($\bar{x} = 3,4$) and personal habits ($\bar{x} = 3,2$). The respondents also believe that the students, regardless of their field of work, should be taught about the differences among individuals regarding their values (95%), personality (85%), level of education (85%), physical abilities (59%), personal habits (58%), ethnicity (46%), age (44%), gender (42%), income (41%), race (38%), religion (35%), appearance (34%), sexual orientation (33%) and marital status (26%). In the respondents' opinion, the methods most suitable for teaching diversity management are: case study (79%), discussion (78%) and problem-solving method (66%). According to the teachers, developing the students' understanding and awareness of diversity, as well as teaching about the importance of the inclusion of diversity in everyday life, are among the most important goals of education. The teachers also stated that there were obstacles to the development of the diversity management contents in their institutions, including some colleagues who are not interested enough in this topic ($\bar{x} = 3,8$), lack of the state-level incentives ($\bar{x} = 3,8$), and indifference regarding this issue in the national policy of the tertiary education development ($\bar{x} = 3,8$). Among the higher education institutions which plan to integrate diversity management in their work, 69% will integrate diversity management contents into their vision, mission and/or strategy, 56% will include it into the rules laying down the rights and obligations of students, 54% will include it in their scientific and research work, 48% into their internal acts laying down the rights and obligations of employees, 46% into the curricula of some of the compulsory courses, 41% in the curricula of elective courses, while 34% of institutions will integrate diversity management in the curricula of modular subjects.

The purpose of diversity management at colleges and faculties is to support the development of a just and safe environment in which opportunities are available to everyone. The tools for the managing a diverse society should be used for education of students, teaching about diversity and the relevant issues, including the knowledge about the laws and regulations. As many different cultures co-exist in the majority of countries and regions, institutions of higher education should learn how to adapt to the future success in diversity management. A long-term success or failure in teaching diversity management will be determined by the success or failure in teaching it in the future.

Key words: teaching diversity management, higher education institutions, sustainable development, curriculum, higher education teachers, students.

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