Proposal for Teaching Activity
Co-creating Globally Inclusive Classrooms

Abstract:
Experiential activity for creation of inclusion in higher education, globally diverse classrooms. Even when a university has a diverse student body, it often fails at the important goal that diversity ideally serves: meaningful interactions between people from different backgrounds and different ways of looking at the world. In the proposed activity, our goal is to share and elicit from participants ways to make their classrooms more inclusive, where ingrained assumptions are challenged, entrenched thinking disrupted, and frames of reference broadened. Classroom inclusion is about creating an optimal learning environment for all students: religious and non-religious, privileged and underprivileged.

Key Words: inclusive classrooms, connectivity, Ubuntic inclusion model, diversity

Learning Objectives:
Participants will leave the activity achieving the following learning objectives:
1. Understand the importance of inclusion for classroom learning.
2. Learn a broad model including seven dimensions of inclusion for creating a classroom community of learners.
3. Experience co-creation of a culture of inclusion during this activity.
4. Learn best practices for creating an inclusive classroom.
5. Leave with a new best practice that can be applied in each person's individual classroom.
6. Understand how to create deep, open discussions on identity and exploration of cultural values.

Contribution to Pedagogy
Inclusion is important in higher education. Even when a university has a diverse student body, it often fails at the important goal that diversity ideally serves: meaningful interactions between people from different backgrounds and different ways of looking at the world. In the proposed activity, our goal is to share and elicit from participants ways to make their classrooms more inclusive, where ingrained assumptions are challenged, entrenched thinking disrupted, and frames of reference broadened. Inclusion is about creating an optimal learning environment for all students: religious and non-religious, privileged and underprivileged.

Our activity is relevant for teaching topics related to international management, diversity, inclusion, leadership, ethics, cross-cultural learning, organizational culture, communication, decision-making, teamwork, and human resources.

In the educational literature inclusion was initially used for efforts to mainstream special needs students in a least restrictive environment (PL 94-142, 1975) where they spent their time with non-disabled students. Inclusive education differs from *mainstreaming*, which implied learners who are 'ready for' or deserving accommodation in a normal classroom. By contrast, inclusion involves restructuring classroom experiences so all students learn together, participating with acceptance and respect for the social, civil, and educational rights of everyone (1990, IDEA).

Many definitions of inclusion are fraught with conflated linkages to diversity and social justice (Pittinsky, 2012; Davis, 2011). For purposes of this activity, our definition of inclusion follows:

> "Inclusion is the combined state of organizational affairs that seeks, welcomes, nurtures, encourages, and sustains a strong sense of belonging and high performance... Said differently, inclusion is a state in which <u>all</u> organizational members feel welcome and valued for who they are and what they "bring to the table." All stakeholders share a high sense of belonging and fulfilled mutual purpose" (Smith & Lindsay, 2014, p. 1).

The benefits of diversity do not spontaneously arise merely from the presence of a varied student body. It comes from creating environments that nudge students into interactions outside their comfort zones. Without such nudges (Thaler &Sunstein, 2009), students default to sameness. It takes teachers who have figured out ways for students to build connectivity in order to listen to voices with viewpoints that are unsettling. It takes courage to teach when one is co-creating a community of learners where everyone (including the teacher) is fully present and engaged in the classroom, as students around a subject (Palmer, 1998).

We use Smith & Lindsay's (2014) model of inclusion derived from analysis of peak inclusion experiences of nearly 7000 respondents in retail, financial, and higher education institutions as an organizing principle for the activity. In that model, seven dimensions of inclusion, manifest themselves with internal and external stakeholders:
1. Connection—feeling a connection to one's organization itself, one's leaders, one's team, or one's external stakeholders (e.g., customer, clients, community)
2. Intrapersonal Inclusion—the varied internal self-talk and set of assumptions one has about whether or not they are included and whether or not to include oneself
3. Communication—the various ways and means that information is shared at the micro, meso, and macro levels in organizations
4. Mentoring and Coaching—the provision and receipt of guidance to or from other organizational stakeholders
5. Care—providing validation, good will, empowerment, and appreciation for one's customers, leaders, peers, and subordinates.
6. Fairness and Trust – the perception (or lack thereof) of fairness in the organization and the levels of trust (or distrust) found in the organization
7. Visibility and Reward—giving and receiving public feedback and exposure to others as a result of their efforts.

For brevity's sake, in this proposal we omitted subcategories of each dimension of inclusion. For example, there were eight themes in the way respondents experienced connection: "connection to a larger purpose, feeling a sense of community, connection through breaking bread, connection to the organization, connection with leaders, connection with coworkers, throughout the company, connection to one's team, and connection through fun" (Smith & Lindsay, 2014, p. 35). When introducing the model, we will discuss all dimensions at a more granular level.

However, inclusion is not an end, but a means to manifest tacit co-created connectedness: the embodiment of the African concept "Ubuntu." This concept embodies the knowledge and

enactment of mutual interdependence and connectedness. In such a paradigm, inclusion is not something "achieved"…it simply is "the way." When optimal learning occurs in a classroom many of the seven dimensions of inclusion are found.

Session Description and Plan

We highly value experiential learning. This activity is designed with experiential activities that help attendees viscerally grasp the classroom inclusion of which we speak. For example, we start the proposed session with an experiential exercise that navigates identity drawing on voices from the past. It is a creative alternative to standard introductions setting the tone for openness, depth, and exploration of values from the start. We then share the Ubuntu model of inclusion with them and have them brainstorm in small groups, then in plenary, peak inclusive moments and best practices of inclusive classrooms—and whether/how their ideas line up with the model. Finally, we end with an experiential exercise (Web of Inclusion) where participants create a symbolic, visual web as they share a key learning about inclusion that they will be able to apply in the future, showing them how to implement one of our best-practice activities.

<div align="center">

AGENDA
Time Duration: 90 minutes

</div>

Welcome (5 minutes)
- Learning Objectives
- Why inclusion is so important to classroom.

Introduction- (25 minutes)
      (Experiential Activity "Navigating Identity: Voices from the Past")

      Write name and culture (multiple identities) you identify with. In center of paper, include a comment containing a key message you heard from someone influential in your life about others. What message was repeated often or stood out that has influenced you?

      Introduce self, navigating your identity with voices from the past.

      What was it like to introduce yourself this way?
      What did you notice about the messages shared?

Presentation of Ubuntu (Tutu,1999) and Inclusion Model (Smith & Lindsay, 2014) (15 minutes)

Small Group Dialogue (groups of 3 to 5 depending upon session attendance) (15 minutes)
- When have I experienced a high point moment of inclusion?
- What I currently do in my classes to create inclusion?
- Brainstorm: What else I can do in my classes to create inclusion?
- How do these practices relate to the model?

Small Group Report-outs: (15 minutes)
- Share best practices for creating inclusion in the classroom. Be specific.
- Which dimension of the model might each represent?

Wrap-up- (15 minutes)
      Experiential Exercise - Participants create Web of Inclusion
      Question they will answer as they each participate follows:

      "What is one thing you learned about classroom inclusion that you can apply?"

Application to Conference Theme
Our activity is related to creating a classroom of mutual learning. Students engage respectfully with each other, learn together, and share perspectives and viewpoints, giving voice to their values. Learning to work with diverse others is key to organizational learning, teamwork, decision making, and innovation. In an inclusive classroom, students co-create a community to learn the subject matter and develop skills for listening and checking assumptions, appreciating how diversity of perspectives and experiences adds value to their own learning, to organizations and to the communities where students will live and work. The process of engagement is key to their development of character and further engagement as a professional in organizations. Through inclusion students are able to build bridges to diverse communities at work and at home for continued service and learning.

Unique contribution to OBTC
This work has not been presented at any conference nor is it under review.

References
Case, S.S. & Chavez, E. (in process). *Integrating religious identity into the classroom: Student transformation through moral conversation*, AOM 2016 paper submission.

Davidson, M.N. (2011). *The end of diversity as we know it*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

IDEA (1990). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for Improvement of Special Education and Inclusive Education.

Palmer, P.J. (1998). *The courage to teach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pittinsky, T. L. *Us + them: Tapping the positive power of difference*. Boston: MA: Harvard Business school Press.

PL 94-142 (1975). The Education of All Handicapped Children Act.

Smith, J.G. & Lindsay, J.B. (2014). *Beyond inclusion: Worklife interconnectedness, energy, and resilience in organizations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thaler, R.H. & Sunstein, C.R. (2009). N*udge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness*. New haven: Yale University Press.

Tutu, D. (1999). *No future without forgiveness: A personal overview of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. New York, 271.