

## **EDI in Research, Teaching, and Knowledge Mobilization at the Interface of Science, Society, and Policy Workshop 3: What We Heard**

**Date and Time:** April 26th, 2022/1:00-2:30pm

**Workshop Question:** What are some 'lessons learned' / 'good practices' based on your experience with EDI in your work at the SSP interface?

### **Discussion Prompts:**

1. What EDI practices have you seen in your own research, teaching, KMb activities or that of others that you would consider 'good practices'? What lessons have you learnt?
2. What would truly EDI-centered research, teaching, and KMb activities at the SSP interface look like? Does achieving this vision require radical change or can it be achieved through many incremental changes?

**Opening remarks:** Dr. Virginie Cobigo, Associate Professor, Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences., University of Ottawa

**Facilitators:** Marisa Beck, Research Director, ISSP; Jordan Barrett-Choy, Graduate Research Assistant, ISSP; Sandy Chung, Communications and Administrative Assistant, ISSP

**Participants:** 10 participants, including 4 scholars, 3 trainees (including undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows), 3 practitioners

**Workshop Format:** The event was conducted virtually via Zoom, and participants were encouraged to collaborate using the Mural app to document ideas and share notes.

### **What We Heard:**

*This document summarizes the range of comments and observations from the workshop presentation, panel discussions, breakout sessions, as well as input received through a bilingual survey that was shared with workshop invitees. We received a total of 6 survey responses, 4 in English and 2 in French.*

*Since the workshop proceeded under Chatham Houses rule, this report does not disclose the identity and affiliation of the workshop participants who shared the information included here. Importantly, we do not necessarily endorse the views expressed by participants that are documented in this report, but we present them here to document the full range of opinions expressed at the event.*

*We also do not mean to imply that the beliefs and opinions included in this document represent a consensus view among all workshop participants. To represent a diversity of views in this document we use the phrase 'one participant said,' when the belief or opinion was primarily expressed by one person; and we use the phrase 'some/many participants said,' when the same point was made by multiple people.*

**1. What EDI practices have you seen in your own research, teaching, KMb activities or that of others that you would consider 'good practices'? What lessons have you learnt?**

On-going evaluation.

- Some participants noted that there is a lack of evidence / data on the impacts of different EDI-centered practices, which makes it difficult to identify 'good practices' on EDI, which then slows collective learning about EDI .
- Participants spoke about establishing metrics for evaluating the success of EDI initiatives. Current GBA+ analysis principles used by the government could be helpful in the research context.
- Some participants noted that there is more experience with EDI-centered research practices in the social sciences compared to other disciplines. It is important to share experiences among researchers and practitioners to avoid having to 'reinvent the wheel'.
- All participants agreed on the importance of evaluating the impacts of EDI initiatives. One participant said that every research proposal should include evaluation plans. One participant explained that evaluation should at least involve asking participants and affected communities. EDI measures may have un-intended side effects. For example, when removing some barriers to increase diversity, one may accidentally create others.
- One participant noted that it might be useful to hire an evaluation expert.

Relationship building.

- Participants emphasized the importance of building trusting, iterative, long-term relationships with the people / communities in the study to enable true co-creation. For instance, a one-off workshop will not be sufficient for truly understanding others' perspectives and lived experiences.
- Multiple participants also noted that the relationship with research participants needs to be reciprocal in nature: both researchers and participants need to benefit from the collaboration and develop ownership. For study participants, benefits may include new skills or new work experiences.
- Scientific procedures to validate evidence may clash with participants' experiences. It is important to communicate clearly and manage expectations.
- One participant indicated that, ultimately, research / teaching / KMb processes are complex, and their context matters. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach for EDI does not work.

Re-defining research excellence.

- Participants agreed that a meaningful implementation of EDI principles requires redefining research excellence. This includes recognizing that science is important but not the only way to identify truth: researchers are not holders of truth, but rather numerous experts hold a piece of the truth, and it is the researcher's task to put the pieces together through a process of knowledge co-creation.
- Multiple participants said that good EDI practices require interdisciplinary, the use of mixed-methods, and an honest recognition that values and politics are necessarily part of knowledge creation. They require asking: How representative are the data sets? Do they reflect a diverse population? They

require including affected communities at the research design stage already and true co-creation of knowledge.

#### Involvement of next generation.

- Participants agreed that students need to be trained in this new EDI-centered research approach. One participant said, for example, students need to learn using mixed-method approaches.
  - One participant noted that students need to be involved in discussions on EDI – this should not be a one-way conversation.
  - One participant indicated that institutions need to think about creating a pipeline of diverse employees: uOttawa needs to train the people they want to hire (in terms of gender, ethnicity, etc.).
  - One participant suggested providing mandatory ‘introduction to EDI’ courses for all incoming students to expand their understanding of the issue and to increase their awareness of systemic barriers for marginalized groups.
- 2. What would truly EDI-centered research, teaching, and KMB activities at the SSP interface look like? Does achieving this vision require radical change or can it be achieved through many incremental changes?**

#### Truly EDI-centered research, teaching, and KMB activities at the SSP interface require substantive changes...

- One participant said that in an ideal world, equity would function as an overarching concept that shapes all decisions in research design, data collection and data analysis, dissemination of findings, evaluation, hiring, training, etc.
- Multiple participants said that a truly EDI-centered approach requires continuous reflection on potential ways to make processes even more inclusive and continuously ask collaborators and participants for feedback on what can be done better.
- A participant stated that there is currently too much of a focus on diversity, as opposed to other aspects. A participant noted that the diversity piece is critical to inclusion, because diversity determines who is at the table. Diversity is a necessary first step for establishing inclusion and equity.
- Political landscape and context: what has a chance of being funded (possibility to see support from private organizations, foundations)?

#### ... through incremental steps:

- While participants agreed that substantial changes are necessary, they also suggested that radical changes can be difficult to achieve and ultimately dangerous, because they are more likely to invite backlash. Instead, incremental progress on EDI is preferable, but its impact needs to be evaluated.
- Multiple participants suggested that the individuals’ leadership and actions can make a difference. For example, one participant said that a ‘good practice’ on EDI was to identify (‘call out’), inform (explain why EDI is important), insist (stand by EDI principles), and support underrepresented groups. Another participant said that it all starts with acknowledging our own biases.

- One participant emphasized that the SSP community has already done a lot on EDI and learnt a lot through the process – we must build on these lessons.
- One participant indicated that views on EDI among scientists vary, ranging from full support to hostility. Those with hostile views often consider EDI as political correctness, fluff, or a distraction, and are most likely to derail progress.

**Key takeaways:**

- It is important to continuously evaluate the intended and un-intended impacts EDI initiatives. Better evidence is needed to foster collective learning on EDI in research, teaching, and KMb at the SSP interface.
- Relationship building is key to building an EDI-centered practice in research, teaching, and KMb, which is based on true co-creation.
- EDI requires researchers, teachers, and knowledge mobilizers to think differently about research excellence, placing greater weight on inter-disciplinarity, qualitative / mixed methods, and recognizing that science alone cannot identify truth.
- It is important to involve the next generation in the development of EDI-centered research and incorporate what we have learnt about EDI into teaching and mentorship.
- Truly EDI-centered research, teaching, and KMb activities at the SSP interface require substantive changes that are best achieved through incremental steps and continuous collective learning. Individuals and leadership can make a difference, and change starts with the recognition of our own biases.