

*"To be an agent of change, you need
to understand your environment"*

Professor Monioluwa Olaniyi



Connectivity and Inclusivity
(C & I) in Higher Education

**A Solutions-Based Approach
from Environmental
Sustainability**

Acknowledgements



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Contents

Biographies of Contributors



Dr Cecilia Medupin is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Earth & Environmental Sciences, The University of Manchester, UK. Dr Medupin has a proven track record of managing projects,

leading design, delivery and evaluation of interdisciplinary environmental science workshops. Nationally, Cecilia is the convener of Women in Environmental Sciences (WiES), a co-investigator on NERC's Community for Engaging Environments, and a member of BES's Equality and Diversity Working Group. Cecilia brings her experience of being an African woman with diverse experience of living and working in the UK.

She is the convener for the pilot study, Connectivity & Inclusivity in Higher Education and environmental sustainability: a solutions'-based approach and convenes the WiES. She presented the outcomes of the C and I workshops to the Senior Leadership Team of the Faculty of Science and Engineering, The University of Manchester, UK.



Professor Monioluwa Omolara Olaniyi is Professor of Nematology and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Technology, Innovation and Research at the National Open University of Nigeria

(NOUN). Prior to this role, she held numerous positions within the University including the University Senate, member of the Governing Council of the University, was Dean, Head of

Department, Head of Unit and was pioneer Director of one of the largest Study Centres of the University in Nigeria (at Mushin, Lagos). In this role, Olaniyi put up an enduring structure, which formed a bedrock of it becoming one of the top 10 of the 107 Study Centres of the University in Nigeria.

Professor Olaniyi earned her doctorate degree in Applied Biological Sciences from the Catholic University of Leuven (KULeuven) and, a Postgraduate Certificate in Biosafety of Plant Biotechnology and an MSc. Nematology (Biology) from the University of Ghent (UG), Belgium, MSc. Agricultural Biology from the University of Ibadan, and Bachelor of Technology (BTech.) Crop Production from the Federal University of Technology, Akure in Nigeria.

She was a Visiting Researcher at the University of Bonn, Germany, a Research Fellow at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and she was a Lecturer at the Federal University of Technology, Akure. Professor Olaniyi delivered a keynote "to be an agent of change, you need to understand your environment". This speech showed examples of Connectivity and Inclusivity from the perspective of an African woman who is a leader working in HE in Africa and how she and her team overcame challenges.



Ms. OyeBanji (Banji) Adewunmi, MBE is Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at The University of Manchester, UK. Ms. Adewunmi is a highly skilled and very experienced

professional who brings her expertise and professionalism into her work and other activities. One of her notable achievements is the EDI initiative at the Barts Health NHS Trust in London.

Within and across the University of Manchester, Banji has been instrumental in initiating a cultural change through the development of key EDI strategies applied in teaching, learning and by the processes at the University. By sharing her personal stories and guiding principles, many people have benefitted from her wealth of experience.



Dr Cindy Regalado is the Co-Founder and Managing Director of Tekiu Limited. The company provides a range of knowledge sharing and capacity building solutions that help people to

benchmark and innovate through the power of diversity, sectoral exchange, connectivity, and cultural translation. Cindy is a member of the NERC-funded Engaging Environments project and is the evaluator for the project, Connectivity & Inclusivity in higher education and environmental sustainability: a solutions'-based approach. Cindy presented the results obtained from the two workshops held in 2022 and facilitated the panel session.



Ms. Fiona Le Ray is the Careers and Inclusion Officer for the British Ecological Society, a member-based organisation with almost 7,000 members globally. Inclusivity is a core

value of the society. Ms. Le Ray's activities include supporting the activities of the society which include promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion across all areas of the society's work. Fiona shared some of the applications of the C & I outcomes during the panel session.



Professor Chris Hardacre is Professor of Physical Chemistry, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering and, Head of the School of Natural Sciences at The University of Manchester, UK. Chris

supported EDIA initiatives within the Faculty of Science and Engineering and, at the University, led the senior leadership team of the faculty to implement the suggestions proposed by the participants of the connectivity & inclusivity in higher education events. He shared some of these applications during the panel session.



Dr Jane Mooney and Dr Sarah Shepherd are senior lecturers at The University of Manchester who have supported and explored students' transitions into Higher Education and the ways of working using LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®.



Executive summary

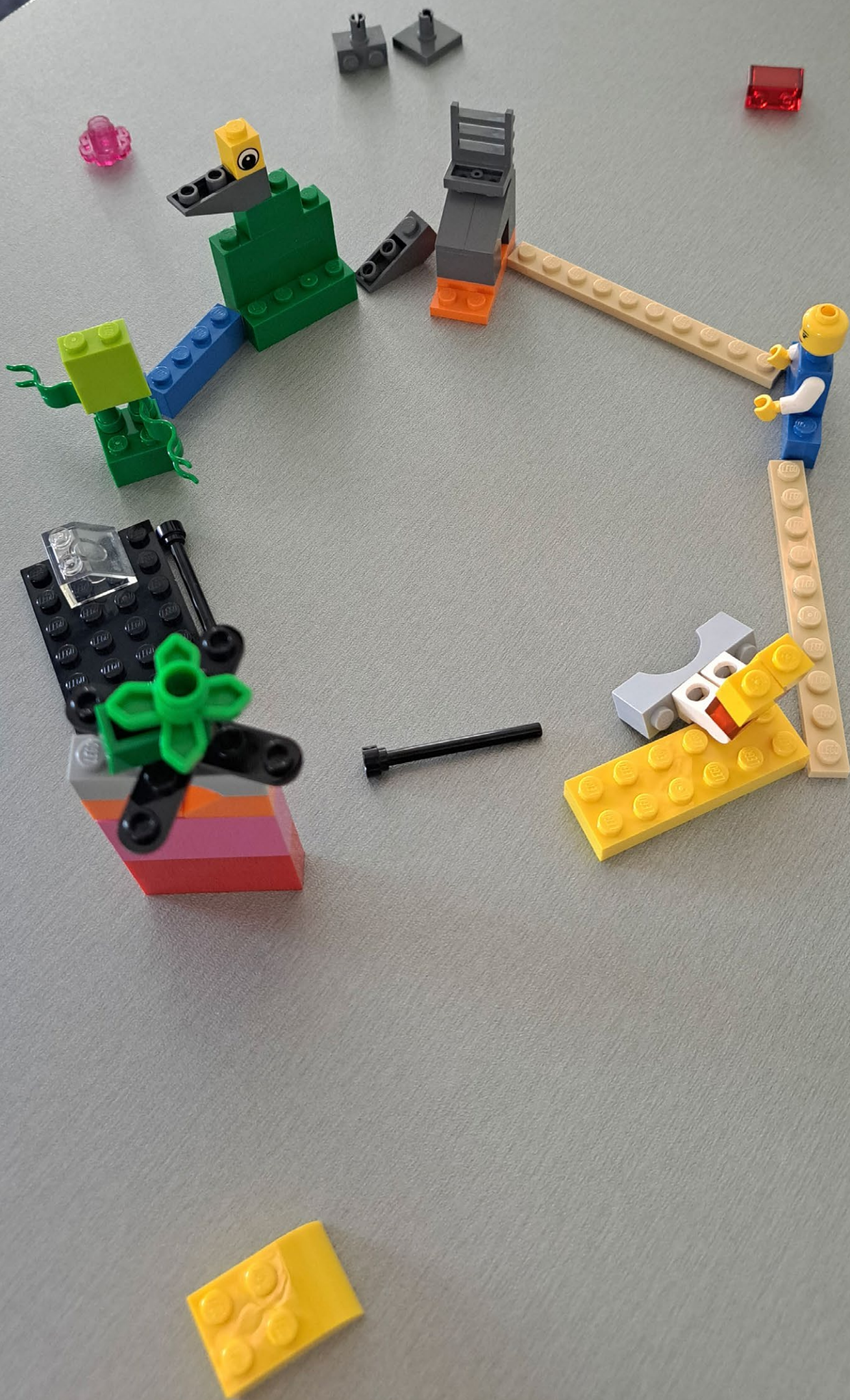
This report summarises the key findings and outcomes of the third of three events focused on Connectivity and Inclusivity in higher education, which started in 2022. The event aimed to create a space for genuine inclusion, diversity, and respectful interactions within educational institutions through four sessions.

The principles-focused evaluation session summarised the results of our study of the principles underpinning the practice of Connectivity and Inclusivity. The session emphasised the importance of principles in decision-making and supporting ongoing growth. On the keynote session speech highlighted the significance of understanding the environment, embracing equity, and promoting inclusivity in higher education and the workplace with critical examples from the Global South, in a higher education institute in Nigeria.

The panel session brought together practitioners to discuss strategies for improving Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) and fostering inclusive cultures for staff, Early Career Researchers (ECRs), researchers, academics, professional services staff and students.

The final session focused on knowledge exchange utilising LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® models to explore Connectivity and Inclusivity, highlighting the value of listening, sharing, and collaboration in creating inclusive spaces.

The event provided insights into the importance of Connectivity and Inclusivity and proposed strategies for fostering positive change within educational institutions. The report concludes with a toolkit for exploring Connectivity and Inclusivity in educational settings, offering practical guidance for institutions seeking to enhance inclusivity and connectivity.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF CONNECTIVITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION



Learning from nature's ecosystem



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF CONNECTIVITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION



The golden thread running through this project is that we can learn from the connectivity within nature's ecosystem to recognise our interdependence with nature and other humans. This helps us to understand how to connect with one another in contemporary times when we have silos and fragmentation brought about by social, technological, developmental, ecological, economic boundaries and hierarchies.

Effective connectivity and communication with our environment, with other people, at work, during projects or while studying can be achieved if we are deliberate about integration, intentional about developing ideas, meeting people where they are at, and leaving no one behind.

IT IS CRITICAL TO RECOGNISE THE COMPLEX CONNECTIONS IN NATURE BECAUSE IT IS A WAY TO HUMBLY ACKNOWLEDGE AND RECOGNISE OUR INTERDEPENDENCE WITH NATURE AND OTHER HUMANS.

This view also aligns with the aims of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals which aims to leave no one behind. Practising Connectivity and Inclusivity (C & I) involves a continuous process of exchange, listening and reflections, sharing the results and outcomes of collaborative activities carried out with organisers, participants, and collaborators to promote continuous Connectivity and Inclusivity.

The outcomes and results obtained from the syntheses of the two workshops delivered in 2022, including the evaluation of principles underpinning Connectivity and Inclusivity (C & I) practice, were disseminated in the form of presentations, printed resources (booklets, reports and tool kit <https://www.merimanchester.ac.uk/wies/research/resources/>) and a panel session.

Through these sessions, participants heard staff and senior administrators' lived experiences on how their previous contributions to this project have been applied across their organisations, including the professional learned society, the British Ecological Society. Some of these efforts are still ongoing and we aim to follow their journeys and impact over time.

This session was the third of three events delving into C & I in higher education. At this event, the participants saw the results of their contributions and applications of the outcomes from the previous two events and,

saw how these outcomes have been used to produce this third event.

In this third session of the C & I event, we introduced a keynote speaker, Professor Monioluwa Olaniyi of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

THE TITLE OF PROFESSOR OLANIYI'S KEYNOTE SPEECH - 'TO BE AN AGENT OF CHANGE YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND YOUR ENVIRONMENT', HAS BEEN CREDITED AS THE VERY IDEA WHICH ENCAPSULATED THE SPIRIT OF OUR LAST C & I EVENT.

Prof. Olaniyi provided key insights into the challenges of inclusivity within Nigeria and NOUN, and demonstrated how they overcame these barriers. Her message was clear: understanding your environment means deeply listening to others' lived experiences and perspectives to learning from them. As an institution with representatives from diverse cultures, ethnicities, languages and religious groups, Olaniyi shared stories of how balance is achieved through our need to understand our own roles and purpose within the organisation, we would then stand for a common purpose, carry others along and nurture a culture of inclusivity in our organisations.

Understanding your environment, is essential to C & I. It involves making time to reflect on your activities, identifying the barriers to creating connections with the people and environment around you so that you can become an agent of change. This objective was explored using a kinaesthetic form of learning through LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®.

This workshop engaged participants' creative minds and hands to communicate and share stories, listening, creating meaning, and connections. It created a space to dedicate time to empathise, immerse, learn, understand, and be inclusive. Through formal and informal feedback received, it became



evident that in these contemporary times, Connectivity and Inclusivity are fundamental values needed in our communities if we are to work and live sustainably on this Earth.

Our pilot project has also shown that we require a deep investment of time and understanding to build resilient relationships with those around us.

THE PRINCIPLES GUIDE WHAT WE DO, HOW WE DO IT AND WHEN WE DO IT.

By understating our principles of C & I, we can promote strong partnerships and collaborations into our interactions including applying components of emotional intelligence with others in our teaching, learning, and at work. As we strive to reduce fragmentation, siloing, inequality, and inequity, in the higher education sector, we aim, through this work, to promote a healthy environment and a sustainable future for all.

Dr Cecilia Medupin

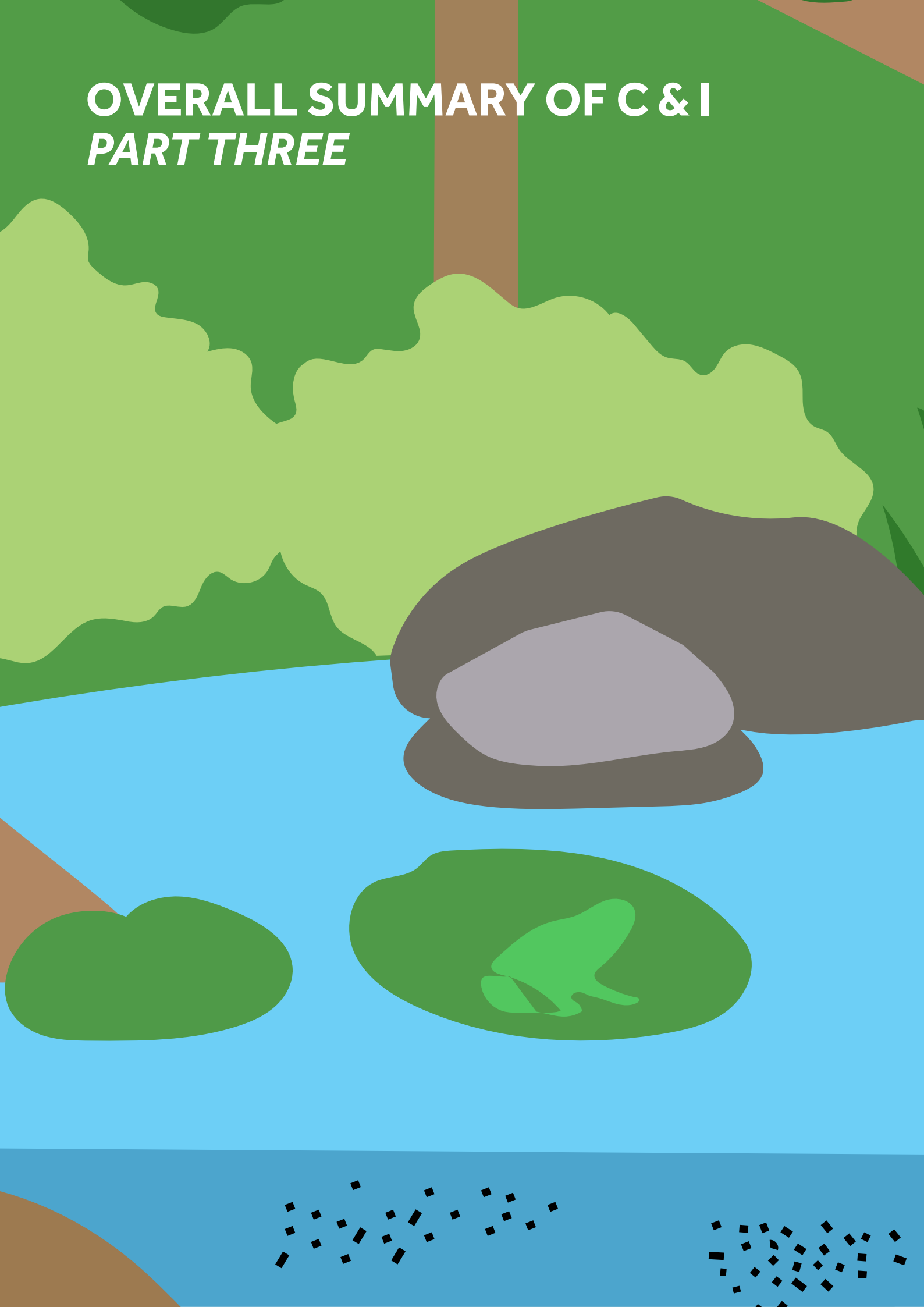
Convener & Principal Investigator, Connectivity & Inclusivity in HEIs, The University of Manchester.

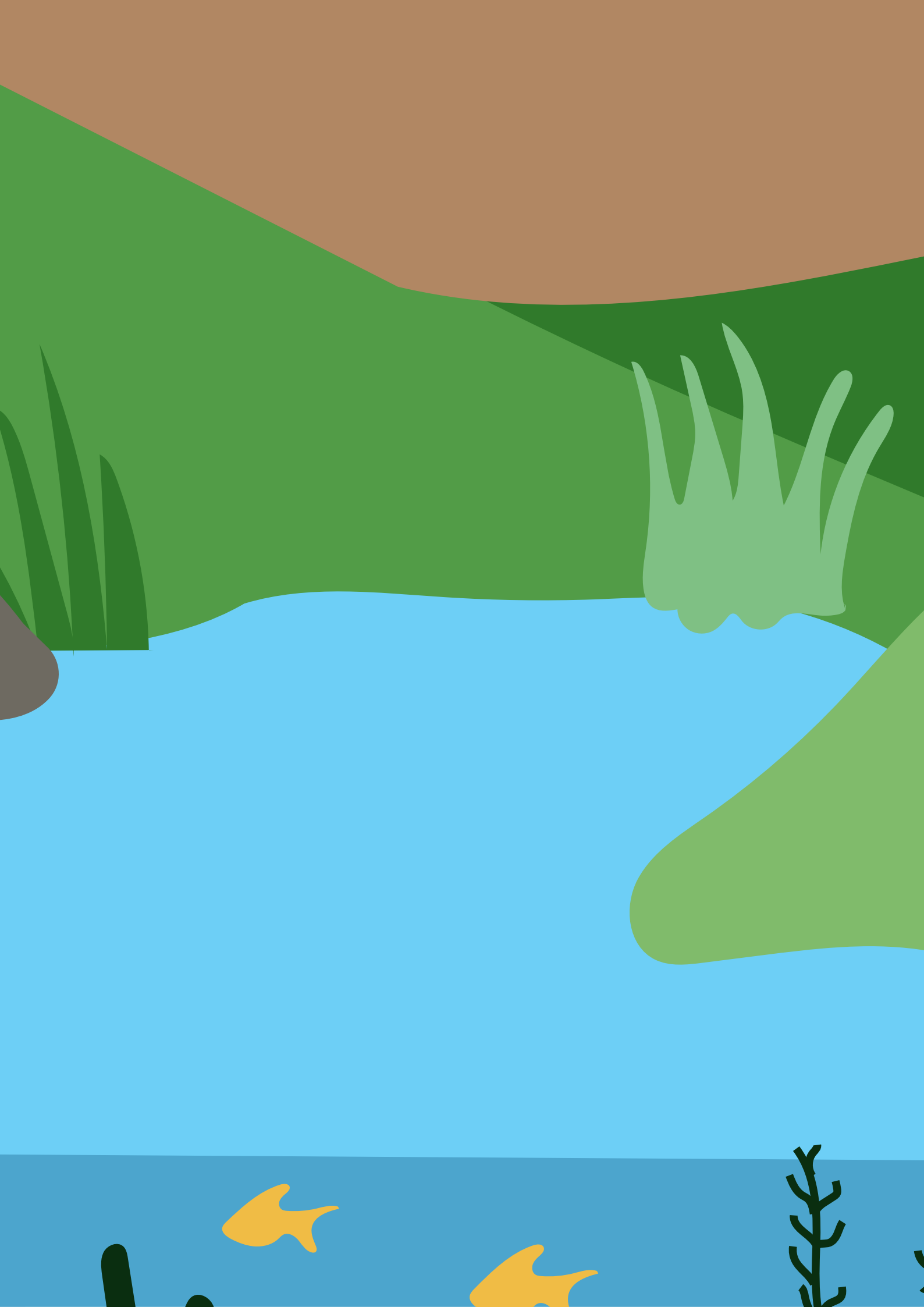


Introductory Speech

OVERALL SUMMARY OF C & I

PART THREE





OVERALL SUMMARY OF C & I

PART THREE



For a summary of the key workshop events (2022), and parts one and two (2023), click [here](#).

The event emphasised the significance of implementing C & I programmes to recognise the value of lived experience in exchanging knowledge to influence policy and practice. We aimed to study the design and creation of spaces for genuine inclusion, diversity, and respectful interactions. We also aimed to identify gaps in Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) with the key outcomes focused on creating a safe space for sharing experiences, and ideas, and considering others' inputs.

One of the main objectives was to foster connections between students, academics and non-academics, and institutions. To achieve this, the following priorities were proposed and achieved: creating an inclusive environment and culture (through staff introductions, coffee mornings, and focused meetings), effective communication (Q&A sessions), promoting positive values, reassessing teaching approaches to give teaching academics more time to focus on research, beneficial social interaction, and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusivity throughout the university.

These series of events brought together individuals from various sectors, from the higher education sector including senior administrators, senior and junior academic staff, students, researchers), and representatives from other professional and voluntary organisations.

1. The key insights in this report were derived from the guest speaker presentations, panel sessions, knowledge exchange, and participant feedback and provides a concise overview of the workshop proceedings, key outcomes and a tool kit.

RECOGNISING THE VALUE OF REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES:

The event emphasised the significance of C & I by recognising the value of creating dedicated spaces to share and learn from real-life stories and lived experiences and exchanging knowledge and informing practice.

2. **BUILDING CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS:** The event aimed to build connections between students, academics, researchers, professional services staff and institutions by creating a safe space for sharing experiences, ideas, and considering others' insights and views. It focused on creating an inclusive environment, promoting a culture of effective communication, and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusivity amongst all involved.

3. **Principles are foundations on which to build a culture of connection:** Principles inform and shape strategies, vision, and the implementation of initiatives. We rely on them tacitly when we are confronted with complex situations and the uncertainty that comes with change and pioneering change. This study found that principles of leadership, organisational culture, and ethical practice are among the foundations of building connections in teams, departments, and organisations.

OUR WORKS ALSO EMPHASISED OBSERVING EFFECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE IN ACTION AND ALIGNING ACTIONS WITH GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO FACILITATE MEANINGFUL CHANGE.

4. **Keynote speech on equity and inclusivity:** The keynote speech emphasised understanding one's environment, embracing equity, and promoting inclusivity in higher education and the workplace. It highlighted the importance of infrastructure improvements, equal educational and training opportunities, workplace culture understanding, effective communication, and collaboration.
5. **Panel session on EDIA initiatives:** The panel session discussed various initiatives and actions to improve Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) within the university. The panellists shared their experiences and highlighted the importance of communication, interaction, funding for social events, understanding human diversity, inclusive culture, leadership, and accountability.
6. **Knowledge exchange sessions using LEGO® models:** The session emphasised the value of creativity, listening, sharing, collaboration, reflection, and creating friendly, welcoming, and safe spaces to explore challenging topics and foster mutual understanding and connectivity.



Watch the event synopsis and conclusion here

RESULTS FROM THE PRINCIPLES FOCUSED EVALUATION





RESULTS FROM THE PRINCIPLES FOCUSED EVALUATION

CINDY REGALADO

SUMMARY

Defining and making our principles visible is a way to hold ourselves to account - a step towards becoming an agent of change.

Principles-focused evaluation is not a nice to have; it is a way of defining responsibility for ourselves and to those involved, It is also a way to hold ourselves accountable.

ONE OF THE FIRST STEPS TO BECOMING AGENTS OF CHANGE IS TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OVER OUR RESPONSES TO SITUATIONS, TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OVER OUR ACTIONS TO BE RESPONSIBLE AND ANSWERABLE TO OURSELVES FOR THOSE ACTIONS.

Principles-focused evaluation not only makes principles visible it also makes visible our intentions, and our processes of responsibility and accountability.

Why are principles important? Social innovators, who are deeply engaged in effecting change, often do not systematically document their experiences. Consequently, their decisions and valuable insights remain unarticulated, making them less accessible and shareable. Additionally, these innovators frequently find themselves in unexplored terrain as they innovate and develop new solutions, leading the way and driving social transformation; they confront complexity, uncertainty, and a lack of information and evidence to guide their work forward. Thus,

amidst the intricate nature of change, social innovators typically adhere to their hunches - in other words, their guiding principles.

Principles are propositions that serve as behavioural guidelines or criteria to assess actions, decision-making, and choices when confronted with difficult dilemmas. Effective principles assist in decision-making, setting priorities, inspiring individuals, and supporting ongoing growth and adaptation. Our principles are derived from lived experiences, expertise, values, and research.

Principles-focused evaluation, a methodology introduced by Michael Quinn Patton, aids innovators and organisations in identifying the underlying principles guiding their work. In principles-focused evaluation, the emphasis lies in observing effective principles of practice in action. This involves closely examining and documenting innovators' responses, decisions, and actions to distil the guiding principles that underpin their work.

EFFECTIVE PRINCIPLES PROMOTE POSITIVE CHANGE

Because principles underpin our practice, they play a crucial role in shaping the strategy, vision, and implementation of initiatives. Principles-focused evaluation enables us to assess the clarity, consistency, relevance, and feasibility of the principles that underpin our practices, strategy, and vision. It helps us determine if these principles are effective and if they are leading to the desired outcomes. Through principles-focused evaluation, social

innovators can **ENHANCE THEIR ABILITY TO ADAPT BY MAKING THEIR GUIDING PRINCIPLES VISIBLE, COMMUNICABLE, TESTABLE, AND IMPLEMENTABLE.** This process strengthens their capacity to align their actions with their principles, facilitating meaningful change.

ASSESSING YOUR PRINCIPLES IS AN ONGOING PROCESS

Assessing the effectiveness of the principles underlying EDIA practice in achieving desired outcomes requires a systematic and ongoing data collection process. It begins with the identification of principles through interviews and observations. These principles are further refined through interviews to understand how such principles are operationalised, i.e., how they operate in practice and under what conditions and circumstances. The identified principles are further refined by interrogating each principle in terms of the desired outcomes (from applying the principle) and the potential dangers and traps (that stem from not having or adhering to the principle).

Outlining the desired outcomes and the dangers of not adhering to principles is a critical step towards creating a principles framework and evaluating the effectiveness of the principles to guide our work, actions, decisions, etc. The effectiveness of the principles is evaluated on their **CLARITY, UTILITY, SIGNIFICANCE, AND FEASIBILITY.** The main purpose of evaluating principles is to make them visible and clear and to inquire whether adhering to these principles leads us to the desired results. To maximise the efficacy of this framework, individuals, groups, or organisations should **ALLOCATE DEDICATED AND COMMITTED TIME TO CONTINUOUSLY INTERROGATE THE DESIRED OUTCOMES AND POTENTIAL TRAPS ASSOCIATED WITH THE IDENTIFIED PRINCIPLES.**

In this study on C & I the principles from participating practitioners included categories

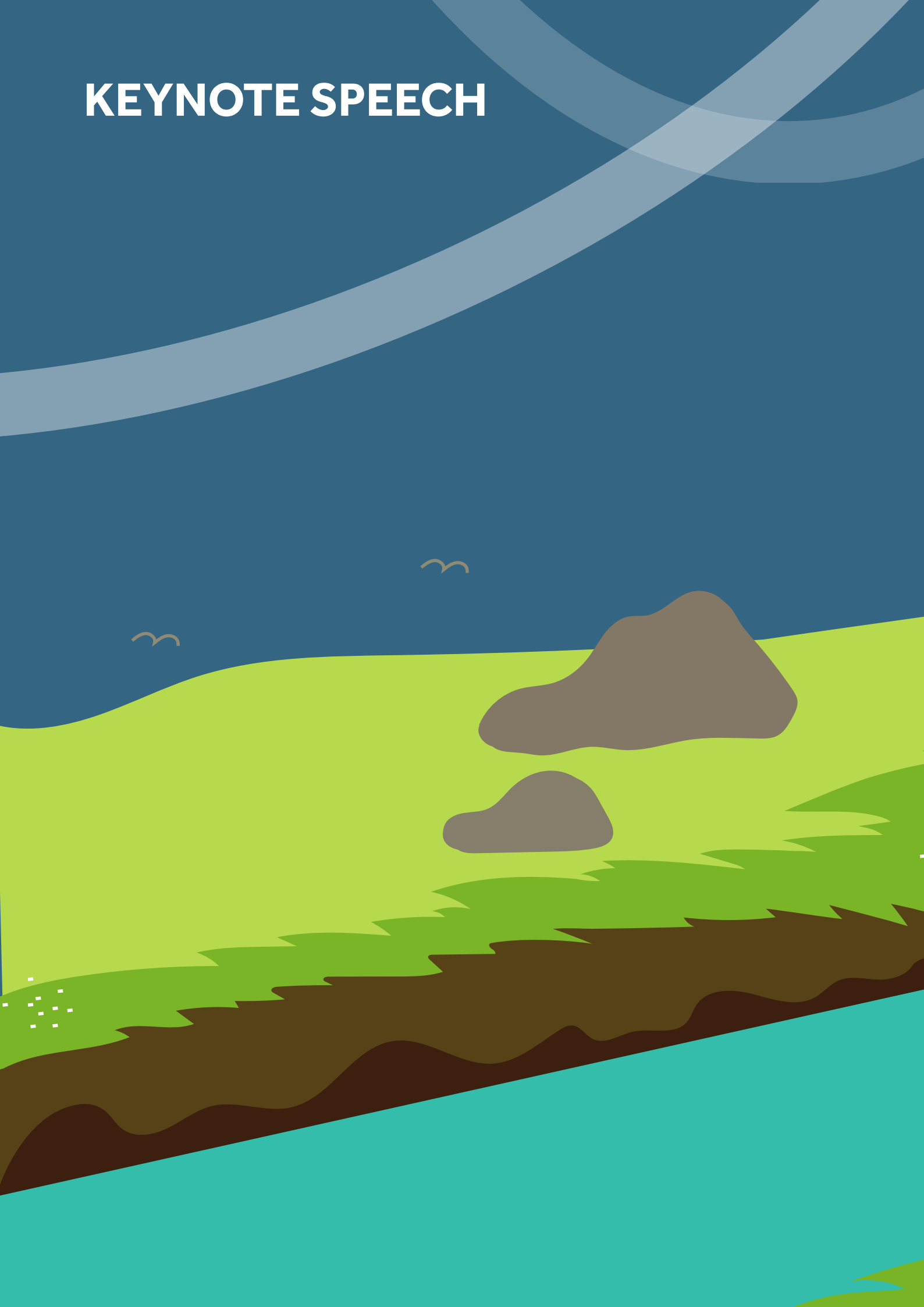
of principles such as 'principles of EDIA strategy', 'principles of inclusive culture', 'principles of organisational inclusivity', and 'principles of leadership'. Details of the evaluation from the PFE vs Connectivity and Inclusivity event will be published here, soon.

KEY MESSAGES

- We all have the responsibility to make our principles visible, be transparent about our practices and decision-making processes, and to hold ourselves accountable. By 'practising what we preach' we can also hold each other to account thereby building community accountability, thus promoting inclusivity and connectivity.
- Inclusivity starts with "I" and that means inclusivity is everyone's individual responsibility.
- To foster an adaptable and welcoming community, it is necessary to promote inclusivity by establishing secure environments where diverse perspectives can be acknowledged and expressed without judgement.
- To achieve an engaging environment of Connectivity and Inclusivity, we must, as individuals and as teams, embrace the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. This in turn builds and nurtures culture; EDIA culture stems from dedicated commitment not from policies – and it is an environment that develops personal and professional skills.

For background on the methodology of Principles Focused Evaluation, see published resources on Connectivity and Inclusivity. <https://www.meri.manchester.ac.uk/wies/research/resources>

KEYNOTE SPEECH





KEYNOTE SPEECH

MONIOLUWA O. OLANIYI

To be an agent of change, you need to understand your environment

SUMMARY

Monioluwa O. Olaniyi, a Professor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), emphasised the importance of understanding one's environment to drive change and **achieve equality through embracing equity**.

Prof. Olaniyi believes equity surpasses equality by acknowledging individual and contextual circumstances and allocating resources accordingly.

In contrast, equality treats everyone the same and potentially exacerbating differences and inequalities. Prof. Olaniyi and her team have developed a policy at NOUN that focuses on improving infrastructure and facilities for students with special needs. Her mission extends to ensuring equal educational opportunities for all, irrespective of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, culture, or socioeconomic background.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES ARISING FROM POWER DYNAMICS AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE WORKPLACE CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH CONNECTIVITY AND INCLUSIVITY, ALIGNING WITH SDG 17 ("PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS").

Understanding workplace culture, ethics, and colleagues' cultural backgrounds is vital, along

with fostering cooperation between units, universities, and individuals like students and professors.

Based on her own experience achieving **CONNECTIVITY AND INCLUSIVITY REQUIRES INTENTIONAL EFFORTS**. This involves integrating diversity which implies inviting diverse groups into discussion, meetings, and the work life. Ensuring that people with different viewpoints, cultures can take part in the decision processes, **COLLABORATING** across disciplines and regions, **ESTABLISHING COMMITTEES AND TEAMS, ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITIES, AND REFLECTING ON THE PROCESS WHILE SEEKING AND INTEGRATING FEEDBACK AND MAKING CUMULATIVE IMPROVEMENTS**.

Engaging in discussions with peers and superiors is vital for fostering new ideas. Effective communication, including creating the space, sharing and discussing ideas with colleagues at all levels, is essential. Given the sensitivity of certain information, effective communication will involve understanding the requirements of specific groups, openness and discretion.

To create innovative strategies, it is important to have a **CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE OF YOUR INSTITUTION, INCLUDING ITS VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS**.

Recognising and embracing diversity within your work environment is also crucial.



Fostered C & I can be achieved by actively seeking new collaborators, aligning with your supervisor's vision and mission, and avoiding conflicts that may undermine trust and harmony.

Additionally, **EXPLORING NEW APPROACHES TO IMPROVE THE WORK ENVIRONMENT** is recommended. To enhance effectiveness, it is advised to engage in discussions about goals, assign roles, monitor and evaluate progress, discuss successes, review strategies, and foster a sense of teamwork through socialisation with your colleagues.

Context: Nigeria, West Africa is ethnically diverse with a human population more than 221 million, 371 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages. Each institution would have representatives from each of the groups in Nigeria. Therefore, there is a great need for Connectivity and Inclusivity in the workplace and it is very important for peaceful coexistence and productivity.



Watch the full Keynote speech here

KEY MESSAGES

1. Understanding the environment is crucial for driving change and achieving equality through embracing equity.
2. Developing policies and improving infrastructure for students with special needs promotes inclusivity in higher education.
3. Understanding workplace culture, ethics, and colleagues' cultural backgrounds is essential for successful collaboration.
4. Creating connections also opens opportunities for other people.
5. Develop new ideas and seek support from subordinates, supervisors, and peers. Nurture your ideas and develop your strategy.
6. Evaluate your process, get feedback, collaborate, and follow up on the processes.
7. Know your role and purpose:
To work in purpose with your supervisor will bring harmony, trust and prevent frustration.
8. **SOCIALISING IS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE WORKPLACE.**
9. To be effectively connected at the workplace, you need to be connected at home. This statement aligns with the phrase "charity begins at home".
10. Connections could also come with challenges. Identify the challenges (not get rid of them), categorise them and build capacity. **BUILD CONNECTIONS, NOT SILOS.**

PANEL SESSION





PANEL SESSION

SUMMARY

The panel session brought together Banji Adewunmi, Fiona Le Ray, Chris Hardacre, Cecilia Medupin as panellists, and Cindy Regalado as the moderator. **The panellists brought diverse experiences and perspectives to the discussion, which revealed that they also shared similar principles of EDIA practice.**

For example, Cecilia's work applies ecological connectivity to human activities and behaviours and explores how to foster connectivity between people and their environment. Chris aims to reduce teaching staff workload and promote avenues for C & I within the University of Manchester. Banji outlined the infrastructure for **equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility that is necessary to have in place to create genuinely connected and inclusive academic environments, but emphasised that MORE SUPPORT IS NEEDED FOR THE TEAMS WORKING ON MAINTAINING IT.**

To enhance connectivity, Chris and the management team introduced schemes for future leaders, scholarships for students from diverse backgrounds, and open discussions on EDIA with proposed actions to address current issues.

Cecilia highlighted that the biggest obstacle to promoting and maintaining EDIA practices and culture at the University of Manchester is communication, as new



staff were expected to adopt the ideals and ways of the previous staff immediately. Chris emphasised **THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING INTERACTIONS AMONG INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING SOCIAL EVENTS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION OVER VIRTUAL MEETINGS.** He also highlighted that funding is being made available to facilitate such events, as a lighter workload will allow people to socialise and build connections. Fiona highlighted the **importance of listening to and involving Early Career Researchers (ECRs), new staff and interns in social events and meetings and decision-making processes, as they BRING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES THAT NOT ONLY ENRICH BUT ALSO CONSOLIDATE THE PRACTICE AND CULTURE OF EDIA.**

Although there is still work to be done at the University of Manchester to promote diversity, **conversations have begun, and discussions and actions are being taken to promote Connectivity and Inclusivity.**

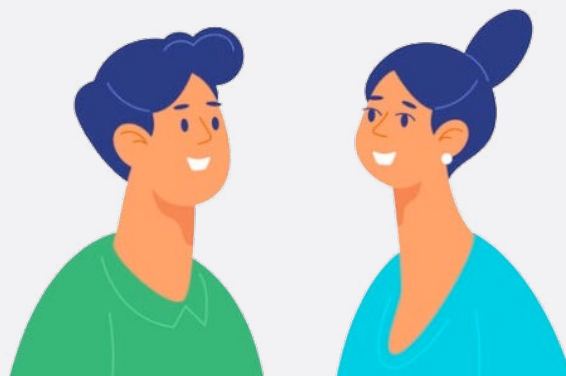
Banji mentioned the The University community is undergoing a process especially in having uncomfortable conversations – e.g. anti-racism development session held with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the Faculty of Humanities are taking steps to enable these discussions and, the Faculty of Biology Medicine, and Health's Higher Education

Anti-Racism Training (HEART) programme is helping university staff and healthcare practitioners to deal with the emotional and relational challenges of the work, to improve student outcomes.

Similarly, the British Ecological Society (BES) is actively working on EDIA, **focusing on supporting students from diverse and low-income backgrounds or underprivileged individuals through initiatives like summer schools and grants.** Fiona highlighted that the BES has implemented systems and processes to foster an inclusive culture. For examples, they created safe spaces for diverse groups of their members e.g. the Racial & Ethnic Equality & Diversity (REED) Ecological Network which is a supportive platform for members from under-represented & marginalised ethnicities; the Socioeconomic Equality and Diversity (SEED) Network which aims to highlight and breakdown socioeconomic barriers in ecology amongst other diverse networks. These networks are managed and led by the members who are largely students. The BES organised summer schools for college students of under-represented & marginalised ethnicities and recruited teaching facilitators from within the communities to participate in the programme. Fiona also acknowledged the use of inclusive language at the BES.

How to promote EDIA through our activities were discussed. Chris emphasised the importance of active listening to staff and students. Banji emphasised the principle of leadership. She emphasised how she leads her team by sharing her vision with them, making them part of the vision so that together they can achieve a common goal. Learning from the National Health Services (NHS), Banji mentioned the need to sign up to organisational values and live by those values and codes of conduct.

Also, the EDI strategy produced by Banji and her team provided a means of being visible to others and putting words into practice. Through her role, Fiona emphasised the significance of listening to both internal



and external stakeholders, particularly students, to enhance their opportunities and experiences. Cecilia emphasised how she promotes EDIA through organising events such as the C & I in higher education.

The planning, management and leadership processes which comes with organising these events, working with different stakeholders have led to successful deliveries. It has helped to promote engagement and safe space communication with and among diverse groups of people. The tool kits provide another means of sharing the lessons learnt with others. Through her teaching, designing of her lectures and, email communication to both students and staff, Cecilia promotes the idea of creating welcoming spaces.

While discussions on EDIA are increasing, institutional change requires navigating existing practices such as committees and acknowledging the governance structure of organisations, while also recognising that the process takes time. Banji and Chris highlighted THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSISTENCE IN RAISING CONCERNS AND PUSHING FOR CHANGE WHEN THESE HAVE NOT BEEN YET IMPLEMENTED.



Watch the Panellist Session here



KEY MESSAGES

- The infrastructure for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) is present, but more resources in the form of recruiting more staff to implement goals, being open about challenging conversations that affect staff and students are needed.
- The University of Manchester introduced schemes and discussions to enhance connectivity, including initiatives for future leaders and scholarships for students from diverse backgrounds.
- Communication is identified as one of the biggest obstacles to fostering and maintaining EDIA.
- **FACILITATING MORE FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTIONS AND SOCIAL EVENTS IS AN IMPLEMENTABLE ACTION TO FOSTER CONNECTIVITY**, with funding and

active support from key staff such as the role of a head of school.

- The BES highlights the importance of listening to and involving ECRs, new staff, and interns, in social events and high-level meetings and decision-making processes to bring different perspectives and embed culture across the organisation.
- As part of building a culture of EDIA, the BES supports students from underprivileged backgrounds through initiatives like summer schools and grants.
- Institutional change requires navigating existing practices such as committees while also recognising that the process takes time.
- Persistence is a key characteristic of change makers who aim to raise concerns and push for change.



Build connections,
not silos.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SESSIONS





KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SESSIONS

Lego® Serious Play® to explore Connectivity and Inclusivity in higher education institutions

Connectivity with LEGO® bricks was applied in this project to enhance our understanding of what the word “connectivity” means in reality. An understanding of nature’s connectivity could provide insight into this exercise. Connectivity in nature’s ecosystem is the fundamental process of cycling and transferring of materials and resources from one part of the ecosystem to others on which all living things - humans, animals, plants - depend. We can actively recognise this interdependence, learning from nature that we, as humans, need to connect effectively if we are to thrive sustainably on planet Earth and, to cope and adapt to global climate change.

Learning from nature’s ecosystem, there are different forms of connectivity i.e., interconnectivity and intraconnectivity. While interconnectivity is the connection with other people outside of ourselves, intraconnectivity is the form of engagement we have with ourselves, internally. To connect effectively therefore, both forms of connectivity need to be explored and engaged.

IT BEGINS WITH REFLECTING ON HOW WE CONNECT WITH OUR ENVIRONMENT, WITH OTHER PEOPLE AND, WITH OURSELVES.

Through our workshop using LEGO® Serious Play®, we explored hands-on the synergy between these two forms of connectivity.

METHODS

The workshop was led by Jane Mooney and Sarah Shepherd and designed with Cecilia Medupin. Participants were organised into groups of five or six at each table and the



activity was conducted within a specific time frame. The participants were asked a series of questions, including their understanding and experiences of C & I, the factors that enable connectivity, the barriers to connectivity, and the potential limitations of connectivity in the workplace. Following these discussions, the participants engaged in building models to represent their ideas. They then shared their models with the group and were invited to actively listen to others’ experiences and perspectives. Finally, each group contributed a summary of their reflections on each question by recording them on an online document.

SUMMARY

In this workshop, participants engaged in reflection and exploration of both interconnectivity and intraconnectivity using Lego. Creating models and sharing their outcomes in small groups, enables participants to creatively express their thoughts and engage in a hands-on approach that takes abstractions (and complex or difficult topics) and gives them shape as a form of visual communication.

Through building LEGO models in response to questions about connectivity, participants had the opportunity to reflect on themselves and their connections. The group shared their models and by listening to each other's perspectives they created meaning, understanding, and connection. The group also reflected on ways to improve Connectivity and Inclusivity and to build an action plan to make them happen.

SUGGESTIONS INCLUDED

- Tailored tutoring for underprivileged students
- Adapting organisational culture and leadership patterns
- Daring to reach out and seek help
- Celebrating team members' efforts
- Involving everyone through practical actions, embracing unlearning and relearning
- Recognising that difficult lessons and decisions may arise
- Accommodating individual needs and journeys

- Learning from others' experiences, fostering knowledge **SHARING**
- Increasing undergraduate involvement in academia through attendance at social events and laboratory meetings.

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE DISCUSSION

- Through the exercise, participants experienced the value of meaning creation, listening, sharing, and learning from different perspectives.
- The activity demonstrated the importance of creating safe and dedicated spaces where everyone has a voice and a space to participate actively and creatively.
- Taking time for reflection has proven to be therapeutic, allowing for personal growth and development.
- **COLLABORATION AND WORKING TOGETHER, RATHER THAN IN ISOLATION, HAVE BEEN EMPHASISED AS KEY FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CONNECTIVITY AND INCLUSIVITY.** The act of creating and sharing meaning initiates connections, and reminds us that we are not alone in our experiences as we strive for connectivity, equity, diversity, and inclusivity.
- By engaging with each other in friendly, welcoming, and safe spaces, we contribute to keeping actions and intentions alive, independent, and to revert old forms of thinking.

Details and evaluation from the LEGO® Serious Play® vs Connectivity and Inclusivity event will be published here, soon.

ASSESSMENT AND PARTICIPATION FEEDBACK





ASSESSMENT AND PARTICIPATION FEEDBACK

This section provides an overview of the data collected from the June 2023 workshop. Data collected from participants show a high level of satisfaction across the workshop. A breakdown of the survey results is available below:

- 100% of the participants were either 'Extremely satisfied' (78%) or 'Very satisfied' (22%) overall with the workshop.
- 100% of the participants were either 'Extremely satisfied' (76%) or 'Very satisfied' (24%) with the Speakers at the event.
- 89% of the participants 'Strongly agree' (33%) that the workshop met their expectations, whilst the remaining 57% 'Agree'.
- 94% of the participants were either 'Extremely satisfied' (47%) or 'Very satisfied' (47%) with the overall structure of the workshop.
- 100% of the participants were either 'Extremely satisfied' (61%) or 'Very satisfied' (39%) with the workshop objectives.
- 100% of the participants were either 'Extremely satisfied' (67%) or 'Very satisfied' (33%) with the quality of content.
- 93% of the participants found the session on introduction and results either 'Extremely useful' (67%) or 'Useful' (27%).





- 100% of the participants found the keynote session either 'Extremely useful' (79%) or 'Useful' (21%).
- 100% of the participants found the panel session either 'Extremely useful' (75%) or 'Useful' (25%).
- 75% of the participants found the Lego session either 'Extremely useful' (44%) or 'Useful' (31%).

This third event on Connectivity and Inclusivity welcomed 37 participants from four higher education institutions (faculties, departments and, professional services), industry (1), other professional (3), voluntary and non-governmental organisations(4) and a professional learned society (2).

The participants were 14 academic staff (38%) out of which 6 of them (43%) were senior administrators; professional services staff (19%), research associates (11%); 14%

were students (PG and UG), 5% were early career researchers and 13% were church administrators, knowledge transfer and financial brokerage analysts.

PARTICIPANTS' MAIN TAKE AWAY MESSAGES FROM THE WORKSHOP

- Connectivity covers all spectrum of human relations from the top and from the bottom.
- There are different ways of connecting with people e.g. showing an interest; being open to listen to their stories, **WE NOT ONLY OPEN OUR EARS TO LISTEN, BUT WE OPEN OUR MINDS AND HEARTS TO UNDERSTAND.**
- Inclusivity starts with "I".

KEY LESSONS FROM THE SESSIONS

CONNECTIVITY & INCLUSIVITY TOOLKIT

Introduction: When organising group sessions, aim to provide an overview, give updates and feedback to contributors and participants. Through this method, we carry others with us, we listen and promote C & I.

Results from the principles-focused evaluation: One of the first steps to becoming agents of change is to take ownership over our responses to situations, to take ownership over our actions to be responsible and answerable to ourselves for those actions. Apply a principles-focused evaluation to make our intentions, our principles, and our processes of responsibility and accountability visible to yourself and to your colleagues, collaborators, teammates, family, and friends.

Keynote speech: We learn from each other e.g., through practical case studies from different cultural and geographical backgrounds, with diverse lived experiences, and stories on how issues are addressed within their context. What are the similarities, synergies, differences or opportunities for improvement?

Panel session: Create a forum for discussion that is open, safe and free for all where different voices are heard and respected, while maintaining discretion during the sessions. Gather questions and input on the questions and topics for discussion from relevant stakeholders and audiences in advance and share it with the panel to facilitate a deep, well-prepared, and productive discussion.



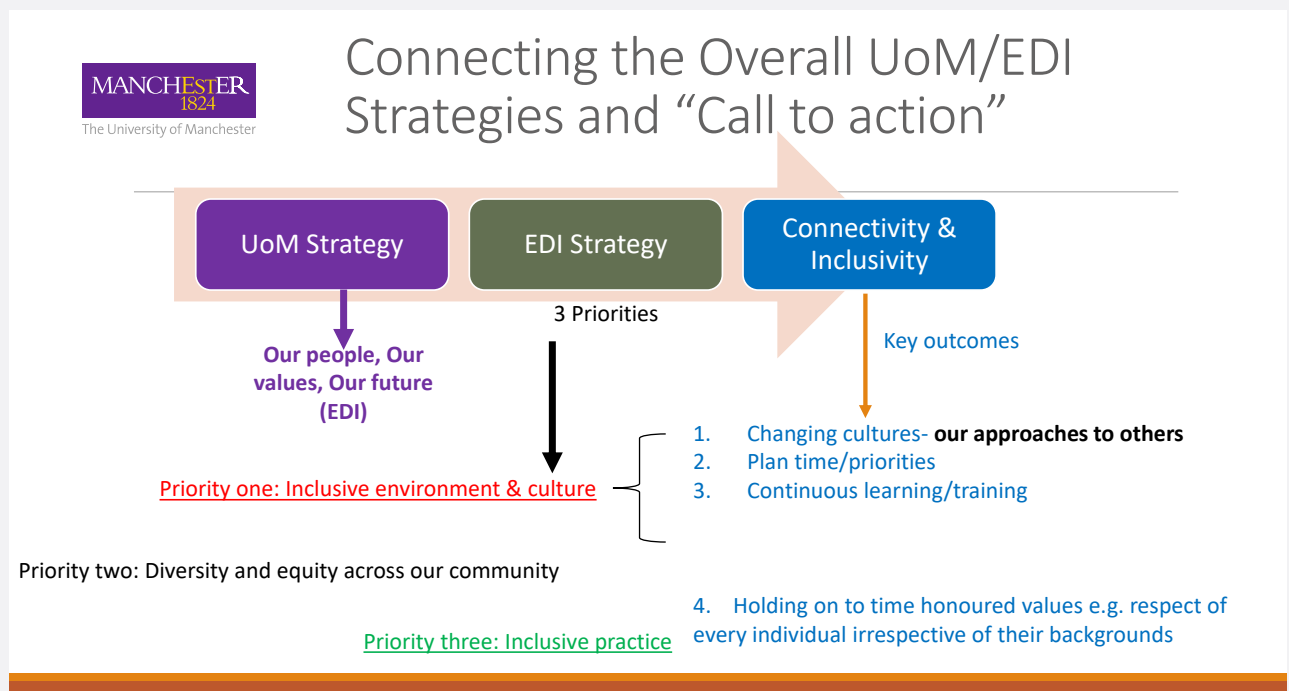
Knowledge exchange session: Facilitate opportunities to reflect deeply and to listen to others as part of personal and professional development. These spaces promote connection with self and members of a group or team. Share and follow norms of inclusion (or a co-created and agreed code of conduct) to create a genuinely safe and respectful space where connectivity is fostered through empathy, consideration, open-mindedness. LEGO® Serious Play® provides a creative medium for adult learners to explore and communicate abstract, difficult, and/or complex topics.

Assessment and feedback: Participants' contributions are gathered individually during or at the end of an event. The feedback is reviewed through the senior leadership teams within the Faculty of Science and Engineering and other leadership channels within the University of Manchester and the results are shared back with participants in a timely manner. This process fosters trust and confidence in the event and activities' purpose as well as among the participants as virtues needed for connectivity.

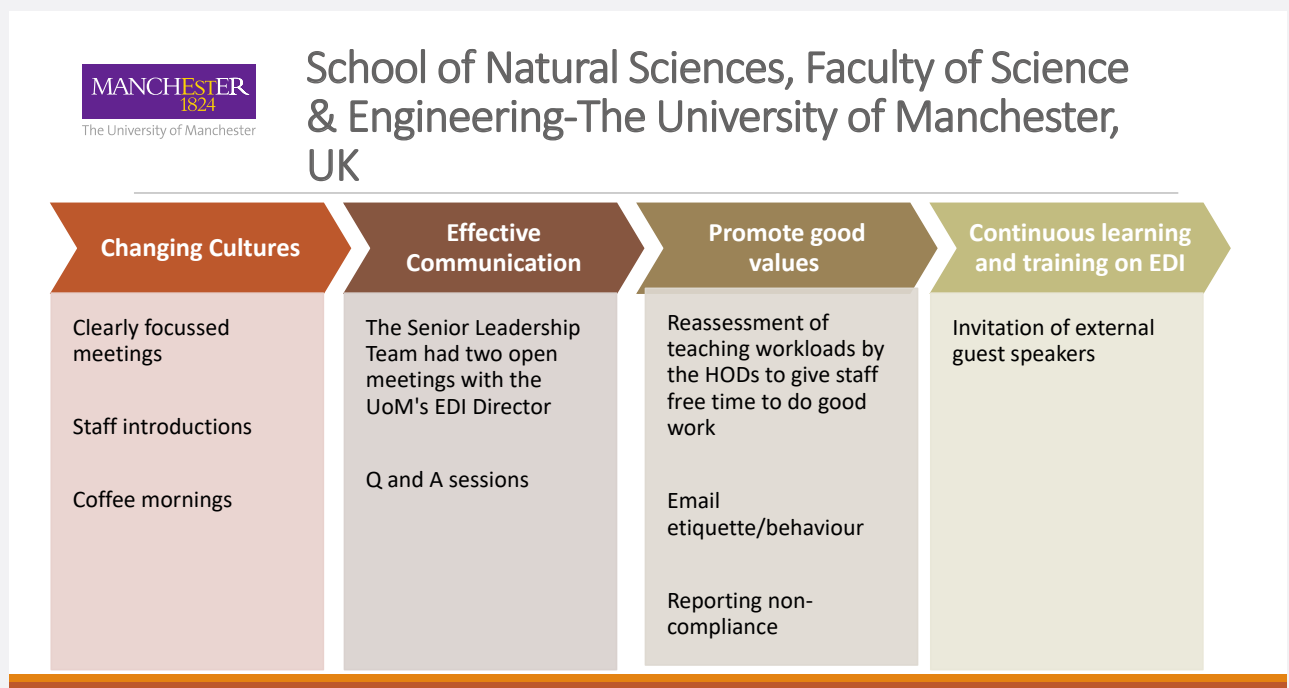


TESTIMONIALS/ APPLICATIONS OF C & I

At the University of Manchester, the key action plans are being implemented as follows:



Please click on Connectivity & Inclusivity above to visit our webpage



Revised process
of EDIA policy
development

Connectivity &
Inclusivity is
BES culture

TOTAL NUMBER OF REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS FOR THE THREE EVENTS WERE 213

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES FOR THE THREE EVENTS: 129

Senior Administrators

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Technology, Innovation and Research, National Open University of Nigeria; Vice President for Social Responsibility, The University of Manchester, UK

Two Heads of Departments – Earth and Environmental Sciences and Mathematics; Vice Dean/ Head of School of Natural Sciences; Associate Dean for Inclusive Education & Engagement

Two Directors of People & Organisational Development, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Academics

11 Professors of Atmospheric Radiation, Physical Chemistry, Applied Mathematics, Lunar and Planetary Science, Molecular Pathology, Nematology, Geochemistry, Synoptic Meteorology, Geo & Cosmochemistry

13 Senior Lecturers/5 Lecturers at the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health and, the Faculty of Science and Engineering.

Their roles include Clinical Psychologist, Earth and Environmental Scientists(i.e. Geologists, Lunar and Planetary Sciences, Volcanologists; Geo & Cosmochemistry, Ecology and

Evolution Biologists), Medical Education, Engineering- Sustainable Built Environment and Project Management; Intercultural Public Health.

Students

(Eleven PGs and ten UGs),

13 **Research Associates**

2 **Research Strategy/Officers**

Non-academic

Three Catholic Priests; Analytical Scientist; Administrative Officer; Convenor, WiES; Careers and Inclusion Officer; Programme Manager/Managing Director; Health & Safety Assistant; Project Officer; Curator, Teaching and Learning Officer

Three Senior Technicians (teaching); Projects Manager; Software Analyst; Teaching Research Technical Specialists; Compliance and Risk Officer

Three Social Responsibility and Public Engagement Managers; Deputy School Operations Manager; Data Analyst; NGO participant – Women of St. Joseph

PARTICIPATING/ REGISTERED INSTITUTIONS

1. The University of Manchester (Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health; Faculty of Science and Engineering, Faculty of Humanities)
 - b. School of Environment, Education and Development, The University of Manchester
 - c. Department of Mathematics, The University of Manchester
 - d. Department of Chemistry, The University of Manchester
 - e. Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, The University of Manchester
 - f. Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, The University of Manchester
 - g. Division of Medical Education, The University of Manchester
 - h. Division of Psychology and Mental Health, The University of Manchester
 - i. Division of Population Health, Health Services Research and Primary Care, The University of Manchester
 - j. Division of Physics and Astronomy, The University of Manchester
 - k. Directorate of People & Organisational Development, The University of Manchester
 - l. Directorate of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, The University of Manchester
 - m. Directorate of Compliance and Risk, The University of Manchester
 - n. Directorate of Human Resources, The University of Manchester
 - o. Office for Social Responsibility, The University of Manchester
 - i. *Social Responsibility and Public Engagement, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health, The University of Manchester*
 - ii. *Social Responsibility and Public Engagement, School of Natural Sciences, The University of Manchester*
2. Henry Royce Institute, Manchester, UK
3. Manchester Environmental Research Institute, Manchester, UK
4. Institute of Teaching and Learning, The University of Manchester
5. Learning & Organisational Development, The University of Manchester
6. Media Services, The University of Manchester
7. Liverpool John Moores University
8. The University of Reading, UK
9. The University of Surrey, UK
10. The National Open University of Nigeria
11. Newcastle University, UK
12. Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), Manchester
13. British Ecological Society
14. Brokerage Services, Abuja-Nigeria
15. Earthwatch Institute, Europe
16. NERC Engaging Environments - <https://www.engagingenvironments.org/>
17. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, Blackley, Manchester
18. Sacred Heart Church, Sheffield
19. Siemens Healthineers, UK
20. St. Mary's Catholic Church, Dukinfield, Manchester
21. Tekiu Ltd
22. The Association of Commonwealth Universities, London
23. Women of St. Joseph, Stockport

