



INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT-1

COUNTRY SPECIFIC TEXT: GREECE

How inclusive is Greek Higher Education? Attitudes and Practices of Faculty Staff and Students' Experiences on Inclusive Education at Tertiary Level

Abstract

Although extensive efforts have been made for promoting equity in many education systems worldwide, discrimination and inequality issues are still permanent, with Higher Education systems being the least researched in terms of inclusive practices and policies. The purpose of this study was to investigate attitudes and practices of faculty staff as well as students' experiences in Greek Higher Education on five diversity aspects: cultural background, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Data from 73 members of faculty staff and 175 university students from different Higher Education Institutions were collected through two structured questionnaires. Results indicate that positive attitudes prevail toward diversity issues within faculty staff while there are some of them also showing negative and conservative attitudes or taking neutral stance. Respectively, students report mostly positive experiences from their instructors' teaching practices in regards to the diversity issues explored. However, negative experiences or neutral stance are also reported. Both instructors and students agree that faculty staff lacks skills and knowledge to teach students with disability and adjust their teaching to their needs. Interestingly, almost half of the faculty staff do not know where to report discriminatory behaviours when experienced. The findings indicate that inequality issues at tertiary level should be examined more in depth contributing thus in the redesign and promotion of inclusive policies and practices in Universities. In the light of this, academics' skills and knowledge on diversity issues should be supported and enhanced in relevance to their needs.

Keywords: higher education, inclusion, inclusive education, diversity, cultural diversity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, gender, Greece

1. Introduction

Many countries worldwide have made extensive efforts to promote equality and equity in education. It is widely agreed in contemporary education systems that the right to equal access and full participation in education is fundamental for all students irrespective of their study level. Having said that, there has been considerable discussion consistently focusing on the challenges of supporting diversity in various educational settings and the evidence of inclusive education (Florian, 2014; Genova, 2015; Moriña, 2017). Diversity is a common human trait referring to a wide range of differences that potentially characterize our preferences, behavior, skills and many other aspects of our life. According to APA Dictionary of Psychology (n.d) "*When describing people and population groups, diversity can include such factors as age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion, as well as education, livelihood, and marital status*". The cultivation of the appropriate conditions as to ensure inclusion in the education systems by offering equal participation to all students independently of their differences, needs and vulnerabilities, is basically addressed under the legislative frame of each country and relevant decisions made by the political bodies and the committees in the education sector.

Despite the fact that inclusion and inclusive education are two much-discussed concepts in the field of pedagogy, there is no agreement on a common and clear definition by experts. Different definitions reflect different conceptualizations and perspectives but also complementary ideas (Florian, 2014; Messiou, 2016). Traditionally, inclusive strategies in education systems had focused on promoting equal opportunities for participation mainly to students with disabilities at primary and secondary education level. Therefore, initially the idea of inclusive education was oriented towards the special education and the adoption of person-centered approaches. However, the deep and real meaning of inclusion lies on the philosophical basis of equity. Specifically, it refers to the basic and universal human rights of equity and equality in the corpus of society. It's about *presence, participation and achievement of*

all, as Messiou (2016) argues, while Unicef (n.d) characteristically mentions *"Inclusive education allows students of all backgrounds to learn and grow side by side, to the benefit of all"*.

Nowadays, current perspectives on education have unhooked the exclusive focus of inclusive education on disability issues and have introduced a wide range of inclusive strategies to embrace all students in schools and classrooms irrespective of their culture, ethnicity or socio-economic background, age, gender, sex or diverse religion beliefs, as well as other exceptionalities, at all education levels. In other words, today inclusive education refers to the educational approaches targeting the full participation of all students in the school context (Moriña, 2017). From this perspective, intolerance and discriminations can be seen as the opposite polar of inclusion. In practice, there is still much discussion about the wide association of inclusive education with special needs education. A review of Messiou (2016) highlights that most of the studies examined focus on certain groups of students and not all students.

From the aspect of continuity, Higher Education cannot be seen as a separate and distinguished education level. It constitutes the upper level in each country's education system that welcomes and educates students having graduated from the primary and secondary education in the same or another country. As mentioned previously, traditionally inclusive education aspired to maximize equal access and participation to students enrolled in primary and secondary education schools. However, during the last decades, much attention has been paid to expand the inclusive policies at all education levels including the tertiary one.

In alignment with this holistic inclusion insight, the European Pillar of Social Rights endorsed by the European Council, European Parliament and the Commission (2017) highlighted the value of inclusive education in its first principle: *'Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market'*. In practice, EU Commission has committed to develop flexible modules supporting access to higher learning and voluntarism through Erasmus+ strategic partnerships and relevant activities, promote Erasmus+ exchanges in studies, teaching and training by prioritizing the adoption of equality criteria and interconnections between different education levels and sectors across European and non-European countries (European Commission, n.d).

Additionally, on the top of the EU agenda is the recognition of qualifications held by refugees to facilitate their access to higher education. More specifically, on 14th of November 2017, the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee concerning the Higher Education in European Region adopted the Recommendation on the Recognition of Qualifications held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation. The aim of the Recommendation has been to facilitate the recognition of the refugees' qualifications where not documented, and ensure their accessibility in Higher Education in host countries.

Notwithstanding, it is quite interesting and controversial simultaneously that although the students' enrolments and interest in universities have been hiking during the last decades globally (The World Bank Data, June 2022), equal access to higher education seems to have a long way to go in order to ensure full participation of all students (Moriña, 2017).

Furthermore, estimating the level of inequalities in Higher Education Level seems to face hurdles as only a restricted number of studies have been conducted in regards to the metrics of disparities in Higher Education. In a paper commissioned for the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report, Inclusion and Education, it is stressed out that *attempts to measure inequality in higher education are even less frequent, particularly in an international comparative perspective*. Therefore, the scarce research in this fields offers the experts a blur picture on how much inclusive the higher education is ultimately today.

In the light of the above, the current work aims to explore the academic staff and university students' views and perceptions on inclusion and education at tertiary level in Greece. It aspires to shed light on inclusive practices in Greek tertiary level via the views, attitudes and experiences of both students and academic staff. This paper is organised into five main sections: an introduction about inclusive education in general and in relevance with higher education in contemporary education systems, a description of the inclusive higher education frame in Greece in relation to five aspects of diversity (cultural diversity, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability), the methodology adopted in this study, the results derived from the analysis and finally the discussion on the findings in relation with relevant studies and the existing inclusive policies and practices in Greek Higher Education.

2. Inclusive Education at Tertiary Level in Greece

The education system in Greece is highly centralised. Most of the decisions and educational strategies are decided centrally by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs providing thus restricted autonomy to education institutions (OECD, 2020, 2018). Through numerous laws, ministerial decisions, Presidential Decrees and circulars, Greek governments have been arranging a variety of issues in Greek education of all levels for many years. However, Higher Education Institutions have had greater flexibility on making decisions on specific educational issues aligned with the legislative frame than schools in primary and secondary education.

The education system in Greece is organised around three levels: the primary, the secondary and the tertiary education level. Higher education comprises universities, Polytechnics, the School of Fine Arts and The School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (ASPETE). Most of the undergraduate study programmes at universities have duration of four academic years of full-time study with the exception of medical studies while undergraduate studies at Polytechnics last five years. Postgraduate and doctoral studies are also offered by the majority of the Higher Education Departments in Greece.

Next, and in the light of the background we outlined in introduction, we will highlight inclusive strategies and practices adopted in Greek Higher Education in regards to five aspects of diversity: culture, ethnicity, gender, LGBT+, and disability.

2.1.Culture and Ethnicity

Inclusion in the context of Higher Education in Greece is regulated institutionally both centrally (laws and guidelines from the ministry of education to the universities) and locally in the context of each university.

The Ministry of Education, as central state agency, designs and regulates the entry criteria for new students. It also designs the general framework of the universities' agendas. This does not mean that each university has no possibilities of developing an agenda that reflects its own priorities regarding the curriculum structure in the existing departments, the culture and ethnicity policy towards students of diverse backgrounds, the extra actions that are designed and carried out in order to serve the community, the foundation of master courses and further education / training courses that highlight diversity issues, and the foundation of new departments that focus on diversity.

Starting from the last point, the Hellenic Open University is the first Greek university to have a graduate programme devoted entirely to refugees' and migrants' language education. This Master programme called "Language Learning for Refugees and Migrants" (LRM) (Kitsiou et al., 2019) approaches language education through multiple diversity lens that takes into account social, cultural and legal issues that influence design, implementation and outcomes of educational programmes. We just mention here a few modules to highlight the range of the issues covered by the programme's curriculum. Apart from the modules that cover a range of sociolinguistic aspects, the module LRM 61 "Human Rights and International Law for Refugees and Migrants" highlights the Greek and European legal framework, while module LRM 60 "Introduction to Arabic language and Arab Culture" gives students an insight into the language and culture of a large group of refugees in Greece.

In the context of undergraduate studies, University of Thessaly (located in central Greece) founded in 2019 a new education department, the "Department of Language and Intercultural Studies" that focuses exclusively on diversity issues by combining cultural, language and transnational studies.

According to its founding declaration, the Department of Language and Intercultural studies "*aims to respond to the challenges arising in the modern field of intercultural and transnational communication, and intercultural relations. These are the main contemporary issues challenging the internal cohesion and structure of Western societies, the transnational working environments, the ever-growing need for multi-tiered communication with geographical areas linguistically adjacent and cultural contexts outside the Western world*" and continues mentioning that "*.... in Greece is a top priority based on the strategic geopolitical planning of the country and its future prospects...*". The geographical context refers to Greece, Europe, Middle and far East, while the cultural/political focus is on the challenges for the established Western societies in terms of social cohesion and the "*transnational working environments*". This orientation reflects the emerging discourse on neoliberal and neo-colonial approaches and the need for decolonizing humanities (Pennycook & Makoni 2020).

Furthermore, in all education departments at the Greek universities there are one or more courses that deal either with intercultural education or/and with bilingualism and teaching Greek as a second/foreign language. See, e.g., School of Early Childhood

Education at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki the course “Bilingualism and Education” or at the Department of Primary Education, University of Crete the course “Bilingualism and Teaching Greek as a Second Language; Or at the Department of Educational Sciences And Early Childhood Education at the University of Patras, the course “Intercultural Education”.

Furthermore, diversity is a central subject matter in Humanities and Social Sciences Faculties, e.g., in departments of Social Anthropology, Sociology, Geography, Political Science.

We focus here on the example of the University of the Aegean: the entry of new students is, as already said, centrally regulated. There is no mechanism to enable an institution to set its own entry criteria and to select students. Following the Ministerium’s policy, the students are admitted through a central examination procedure. The admission criteria vary though in favour of students that belong to the Muslim minority in North Greece as well as in favour of students who attended a high school in one of the third countries. The Ministry of Education has issued detailed guidelines referring to who is entitled to have access to a Greek university as a student coming from a third country and who is excluded from this possibility.

Though each department has a record of students that are admitted according to specific admission criteria, there is no policy targeting these students, to help them adjust. It is up to the individual lecturers and professors to provide a supporting context in their lectures.

As for the lectures and seminars offered, the education departments as well as the departments of Social Anthropology, Sociology, Geography offer in the context of the undergraduate studies a series of subjects that deal with education, language, second language, translanguaging, literacy, migration, borders, refuges, minorities. Similarly, all these subjects are represented in the context of graduate studies, doctoral studies, and post-doc research.

The issues of ethnicity and culture are often part of related subject matters, e.g., intercultural education, and they are addressed in relation to educational and language learning issues. This is the case mostly for the education departments. In the departments of Social Anthropology, Sociology, Political Sciences, these issues are often directly addressed.

Coming back to the educational departments, they are of great interest because in Greece (like in all host countries for refugees and migrants) there are specific central questions to be answered: E.g., is there space for diversity? Does diversity function as a helping tool or as an obstacle for learning? Our experience in education departments tells us that these questions (and other relevant ones) are addressed in relation to the future professional involvement of teachers in public schools rather than in relation to studying as immigrant or refugee student at a Greek university. At the same time, the Greek universities accommodate Erasmus students who take lessons in Greek. This creates a space for learning Greek as a second or foreign language where migrant or refugee students could also take part.

As noted already, it is up to the individual professors to provide a supporting context in their classes. The recent research gives us an idea how this happens. In any case, we could rather speak of indirect intervention rather than of actions that explicitly target the issues of ethnicity and culture.

It seems that courses that are not part of the main curriculum and that are offered more to the community outside the university than to the community inside it, are more practically orientated to issues of ethnicity and culture. We refer here to the language courses that have been offered to refugees' adults and children at the Department of Primary Education / University of the Aegean. These courses are often of short duration depending on the unstable living conditions of the refugees involved. Nevertheless, these courses give the opportunity to build new communities of learning that bring together both the external students (i.e., the refugees) and the internal students (i.e., undergraduate and graduate students) who function as tutors for children or as assistants in teaching Greek to adults. How these communities are built and what challenges emerge are documented in Oikonomakou et al. (2021) and Kourtis-Kazoullis et al. (2019).

2.2. Gender

Since the mid-1970s, gender issues and equality between men and women have been an issue in theory, the feminist discourse and action, and in policies. As far as Greece is concerned, during this period, laws, policies, actions and strategies combating gender inequality have been adopted, under the influence of the developments in global,

European and national scale. One of the main reasons for the intensification of such efforts in public policy was the need to harmonize national policies with the EU legislation (Maloutas, 2005; Stratigaki, 2006).

Such initiatives were also incorporated in higher education in Greece. However, it was not until the introduction of Law 4589/2019 that these issues were explicitly referred to. In particular, this law incorporates and promotes gender equality in administration, research and teaching, and introduces the establishment of a Gender Equality Committee (GEC) in each University consisting of 9 members of the Institution (teaching and administrative staff) with the responsibility of promoting gender equality at tertiary level. Among the duties of the Committee is the planning, monitoring and evaluation of gender related issues in research and teaching, as well as training staff and students in such matters, and providing assistance to victims of discriminatory behaviour(s). These Committees played an important role in the introduction and further development of study programmes related to gender studies at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, supported research in gender issues, and in 2020 joined a common network in cooperation with ELEGY¹, with the aim to coordinate and promote common gender actions and practices, and were active in bringing out MeToo issues in universities (Kambouri, 2021).

Under the latest law 4957/2022 for education, introduced in summer 2022, the Gender Equality Committee is replaced by the University Equality Committee of Gender and Anti-Discrimination with the aim to promote gender equality and combat discrimination based on gender, race or ethnicity origin, religion or belief, status health/disability, age or sexual orientation at all levels of operation and in all the processes and activities of academic life, thus expanding the scope of the committee, allowing each university to set its internal regulations and procedures.

We can argue that there is no systematic data collection and reporting for gender discrimination in academia, however the available data and research indicate that the issues of equality in Greek Universities have not been achieved even though some progress has been made mainly concerning percentages of representation of women in Universities (EKT, 2021).

¹ Greek Association of Academic Women - a nonprofit organization which established in 2008 in order to promote gender equality and manage gender and sexual discriminations in academia

In particular, concerning students the percentage of women exceeds that of men. As far as academic staff is concerned, there has been a steady increase of the percentage of women, however still below that of men but a uniformly low representation in Universities governing bodies (Papalexandri, & Mousidou, 2021). Moreover, there are fluctuations for both students and staff depending on various disciplines, almost equal representation in arts and humanities and steady under representation in Science and Information and Communication Technologies (EKT, 2021; Papalexandri, & Mousidou, 2021).

Another interesting aspect on the subject is that of the students' views on gender mainstreaming, a strategy which is adopted by the EU and Greek policies. The results of a research conducted on students' perceptions of gender mainstreaming implementation in university teaching in Greece showed that "gender is not part of or, at best, is poorly considered in Greek university degrees and programmes" and gender mainstreaming "is scarce, not well articulated, optional and lacks well-prepared educators" (Kitta, & Cardona-Moltó, 2022).

As an overview, we may argue that the situation for gender in universities has improved in figures but women continue to experience discrimination and physical, verbal and other forms of violence (Zavos, 2018; Kampouri, 2021). There is need for a change of policies towards more effective and substantial anti-discrimination targets. Of course, this requires a careful definition and re-assessment of what we mean by gender, which should necessarily include the recent discourse on gender studies as a theory, challenging the norms and practices, adopted policies and their implementation that seem to re-produce inequalities and discrimination.

2.3. LGBT+

In many countries LGBT+ people experience discriminatory behaviors in many sectors, such as workplace, education, social activities, and many others affecting thus their life at a significant degree. Research demonstrates that LGBT+ students in higher education face many challenges compared to their heterosexual classmates on a traditional campus and their academic progress and success are influenced by their sense of safety (Okerson, 2014). In addition to that, when university students enrol in diversity courses, interact across race or with LGB individuals, they tend to develop more accepting attitudes toward them (Engberg, Hurtado, & Smith, 2007).

In Greece, currently, there is scarce research on sexuality diversity in higher education and most research conducted in this field has investigated perceptions and attitudes toward LGBT+ individuals and their relationships. Grigoropoulos (2018) showed that among university and non-students most intolerant attitudes towards same sex marriage were found among older and men, those with high sense of religiosity and high level of political conservatism, as well as those who had not experienced previous contacts with LGBT+ people. Among the same students studying in Athens, negative attitudes toward transgender individuals were found to positively associate with religiosity and frequency of attendance at religious services, political ideology (conservatism), gender, and sexual prejudice (Grigoropoulos & Kordoutis, 2015).

Moreover, a comparative study in Belgium, Italy, France, Portugal, Poland, Spain, and Greece revealed less negative attitudes toward LG people, support for same-sex coupling and parenting, gender roles, traditionalism beliefs, frequency and quality of the contact with LG people, and religiosity in Greece (D' Amore et al., 2014).

In Greece, during the last decades, actions have been taken in order to strengthen the legislative frame towards the protection of LGBT+ rights and to raise awareness on sexuality diversity within the education system. Meanwhile, gradual steps have been made from the early 2000's to today towards a more inclusive primary and secondary education in terms of sexuality diversity issues by incorporating the sexuality education as an axis of the formal curricula activities from 2003 till 2021-2022 (Chiou & Sideri, 2022). Focusing on the provisions on LGBT+ issues in Higher Education, it is evident that no specific strategies had been promoted till recently for individuals with diverse sexuality identity. Though, as mentioned in gender section previously, the law 4957/2022 foresees the establishment of the University Equality Committee of Gender and Anti-Discrimination with the aim to promote gender equality and combat discrimination on a wide range of diversity aspects including also sexual orientation.

2.4. Disability

Disability is defined as the lasting physical or mental impairment that significantly interferes with an individual's ability to function in one or more central life activities, such as self-care, ambulation, communication, social interaction, sexual

expression, or employment (APA dictionary, n.d). As UNESCO (n.d) mentions *“Disability is one of the most serious barriers to education across the globe”*.

In Greece, Higher Education opened its doors to students with certain disabilities forty years ago with the Law 1351/1983, article 3, which had foreseen the right to blind and deaf persons as well as to people suffering from beta thalassemia to be enrolled to higher education departments while the law 2640/1998, article 12, addressed further types of disabilities for the enrolment to higher education excessively to the total official number of enrolments. Moreover, an enriched catalogue with 80 approximately serious diseases has been introduced so far by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, as those permitting admission to individuals suffering from them to higher education without participating in the Panhellenic examinations.

Since then, legislative and regulatory initiatives were taken to facilitate students with various types of disabilities during their studies. For example, according to the Ministerial Decision YPPO/DIOIK/98546/24-10-2007, article 6, publishers have the obligation to provide higher education institutions with all the compulsory books in electronic form for the benefit of students with disabilities. Moreover, the article 12 of the law 3549/2007 introduced among others the establishment of a departmental service for the support of students with disabilities, while with the law 4009/2011 this service was transferred to each University School. The same law (4009/2011) passed to Deanery of each School the jurisdiction to ensure equal access to and participation of all students in the study programmes, without discrimination and regardless of gender, disability or other characteristics.

Recently, the new law 4957/2022 for Higher Education, released on 21 July 2022, moves a step forward to a more inclusive education for university members with disabilities and addresses:

a. the establishment of a Unit of Equal Access for individuals with disabilities and with special educational needs with the aim to ensure the full participation of university community's members with respective exceptionalities in the set of educational, research and administrative activities (article 209). At this point, it is worth noting that respective Units exist in a number of Greek HEIs, such as the Accessibility Unit at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the University of Macedonia, Prosvasi (means Access) at the University of Thessaly, and the Unit of Accessibility and Social Support for Students at the University of Ioannina.

- b. the constitution of a nine member Committee for Equal Access for Individuals with disabilities and with special educational needs. This Committee will be an advisory body for the Higher Education Institution and its mission will be the submission of proposals to responsible bodies for the design and the implementation of equal access policy for individuals with disabilities.
- c. The adoption of measures on behalf of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to ensure the equal access of the teaching, administrative and other staff, students and third parties - visitors with disabilities and special educational needs to tertiary education. These measures include a) physical accessibility at the premises and buildings, b) access to educational process and the other educational activities, c) electronic accessibility, d) supporting integration into the labor market, and e) equal participation in the academic life in general.

As can be concluded, from early 1980's till now, legislative frame in Greece defines the obligations of the state and the Higher Education Institutions to provide all possible assistance to people experiencing some type of disability. The question is not how many inclusive educational policies the legislation has introduced at tertiary level, but how much inclusive is finally the Greek Higher Education.

This question is not easy to be answered. Apparently, the legislative frame provides us with a rich repertoire of inclusive strategies for students and staff with disabilities, but the scarce research in this field do not provide us with sufficient data regarding the inclusivity level of higher education in Greece. A research conducted by Papadakaki et al. (2022) in a Greek HEI showed that faculty staff did not feel comfortable about their awareness on the legislation framework for students with disabilities. Most importantly, they were characterized by unwillingness to modify their teaching methods in order to adjust them to the needs of the students with disabilities, despite the fact that they seemed positive to deliver the courses' material to them. Furthermore, the same research revealed that faculty members performed negative attitudes towards providing facilities to students with disabilities. Similarly, in a qualitative study (Vlachou & Papananou, 2018), university students with disabilities reported among others restricted accommodation of their needs (i.e physical access, academic resources, etc) and lack of awareness of the faculty staff on their needs and absence of a comprehensive supportive system which was actually limited to providing oral examinations.

3. Methodology

This study aims to investigate academics' attitudes and practices, and university students' experience on inclusion at tertiary level in Greece. Adopting a quantitative framework, we collected and analysed primary data for answering the research questions described below.

Research questions

In this context, the research questions that will be examined in this study are:

- What are academic staff's attitudes and practices regarding inclusion and a) cultural diversity, b) ethnic background, c) sexual preferences, d) gender, and e) disability, in Greek universities?
- Do academic staff's demographic characteristics differentiate their attitudes and practices regarding inclusion and a) cultural diversity, b) ethnic background, c) sexual preferences, d) gender, and e) disability, in Greek universities?
- What are university students' experiences regarding inclusion and a) cultural diversity, b) ethnic background, c) sexual preferences, d) gender, and e) disability, in Greek universities?
- Do university students' demographic characteristics differentiate their experiences regarding inclusion and a) cultural diversity, b) ethnic background, c) sexual preferences, d) gender, and e) disability, in Greek universities?

Procedure and Research Instrument

The research was conducted during the winter semester of the academic year 2021-2022 starting from November 2021 and expanding till February 2022. It was part of a wider study co-funded by the Erasmus project "Joinme2" and conducted in six different European countries: Belgium, Germany, Greece, Poland, Turkey and United Kingdom.

With the cooperation of all partners, two structured questionnaires were designed based on recent literature and relevant research instruments assessing various aspects of diversity such as cultural and ethnic differences, gender and LGBT+ issues, and disability:

- a) The Questionnaire for the Academic Staff
- b) The Questionnaire for the University Students

Both questionnaires were designed to address questions to members of the academic staff and university students in different universities in the aforementioned countries, respectively, in alignment with the aim of the research.

The first section of questionnaires included close-ended questions on participants' demographic characteristics while the second section consisted of five subscales; a. Cultural awareness, b. Ethnic background, c. Sexual preferences, d. Gender, e. Disability. Each subscale included questions on a five likert scale focusing on views, practices and experiences on diversity and inclusive education at tertiary level.

The design and the testing procedure followed for the creation of the questionnaire is described thoroughly in the first chapter of this publication. In this section we will focus primarily on the procedure followed in the part of research conducted in Greek Higher Education Institutions.

The questionnaires were distributed online to both members of the academic staff and university students in different Greek Higher Education Institutions through a variety of paths: a. department's secretariat using staff and students' institutional email accounts, b. social media (they were uploaded on different institutions' and departments' FB pages), c. courses platforms (e.g. e-class), and d. personal contacts.

The participation in this research was voluntary. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research and were ensured about the confidentiality and the anonymity of their data provided. Names and emails were not required.

Statistical analysis of the data was conducted using SPSS version 28. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were performed to present the distribution of the variables and the differences between the groups.

3.1.Participants

In this research, 248 participants participated by completing the questionnaire; 73 members of the academic staff and 175 university students from Greek Higher Education Institutions.

Academic Staff

Table 1 presents the distribution of the demographic characteristics of the academic staff participated in this research.

Table 1. Demographic information _ Academic Staff

Variables		f	%		Variables	f	%	f
Gender	Female	34	46.6		Years of Seniority	0-5	7	9.6
	Male	38	52.1			6-10	15	20.5
	Don't want to specify	1	1.4			11-15	15	20.5
Age	36-45	9	12.3			16-25	22	30.1
	46-55	41	56.2			26+	14	19.2
	56-65	23	31.5					
Degree	Bachelor Degree	1	1.4					
	Master Degree	1	1.4					
	PhD Degree	23	31.5					
	Professor*	48	65.8					

*full professors, associate or assistant professors

Out of the 73 academics, 50 (68.5%) have lived in a foreign country longer than 6 months, 18 (24.7%) have someone in their family or their surroundings with disability/ies and 24 (32.9%) have someone with different sexual preferences.

University Students

Table 2 presents the distribution of the demographic characteristics of the university students.

Table 1. Demographic information _ University Students

Variables		f	%		Variables	f	%	f
Gender	Female	109	62.3		Age	18-25	103	58.9
	Male	58	33.1			26-35	30	17.1
	Don't want to specify	8	4.6			36-45	27	15.4
Level of Study	Bachelor Degree	121	69.1			46+	15	8.6
	Master Degree	42	24					
	PhD Degree	12	6.9					

Based on the data, 23 (13.1%) of them have lived in a foreign country longer than 6 months, 45 (25.7%) have someone in their family or their surroundings with disability/ies and 80 (45.7%) have someone with different sexual preferences.

3.2.Results

In this section, the findings will be presented separately for academic staff and university students.

Section A. Academic Staff

Results on academic staff's attitudes and practices on diversity issues, inclusion and education at tertiary level are presented in tables 3 - 7 below.

Table 3. Academic staff's attitudes and practices on cultural diversity and inclusive education at tertiary level

Cultural Awareness	This statement is valid for me										This statement is not valid for me	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral %		Agree		Strongly Agree %			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I adequately address multicultural issues in my class	0	0	2	2.7	11	15.1	33	45.2	25	34.2	2	2.7
I try to provide opportunities for activities related to cultural awareness.	0	0	5	6.8	13	17.8	28	38.4	23	31.5	4	5.5
I feel comfortable working/studying with colleagues/students of different cultural backgrounds.	0	0	1	1.4	4	5.5	25	34.2	42	57.5	1	1.4
I feel uncomfortable when I am in the company of people from different cultural backgrounds.	41	56.2	20	27.4	1	1.4	3	4.1	8	11	0	0
During group discussions or exercises, I make efforts to ensure all students are included regardless of their cultural backgrounds.	1	1.4	0	0	3	4.1	29	39.7	40	54.8	0	0
I feel comfortable discussing cultural issues in the classroom	3	4.1	0	0	11	15.1	29	39.7	27	37	3	4.1

Results indicate that the majority of the academic staff participated in this study feel comfortable towards cultural diversity while teaching trying also to adopt inclusive teaching practices by providing equal opportunities to all students independently their cultural background. Therefore, a relatively smaller percentage of the respondents

declare that they feel uncomfortable with people with diverse cultural background and do not adopt inclusive strategies in multicultural classes.

Table 4. Academic staff's attitudes and practices on ethnic diversity and inclusive education at tertiary level

Ethnic Background	This statement is valid for me										This statement is not valid for me			
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral %		Agree		Strongly Agree %					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
I accept different behavioural/verbal expressions of ethnicity in my classes.	0	0	2	2.7	16	21.9	25	34.2	26	35.6	4	5.5		
I am concerned about racial inequality in education.	0	0	3	4.1	7	9.6	28	38.4	35	47.9	0	0		
A student's ethnic background does not affect how I behave in the classroom.	0	0	4	5.5	2	2.7	26	35.6	39	53.4	1	1.4		
I feel comfortable when I am in the company of people from different ethnic backgrounds.	0	0	0	0	2	2.7	36	49.3	35	47.9	0	0		
I understand why students of other ethnic backgrounds act differently.	0	0	3	4.1	5	6.8	46	63	18	24.7	1	1.4		
I try to stop racist behaviours in my classroom.	1	1.4	0	0	2	2.7	18	24.7	46	63	6	8.2		
I think students should avoid telling jokes about other ethnicities and racial groups.	1	1.4	2	2.7	2	2.7	31	42.5	37	50.7	0	0		
I think prejudice about different ethnic or racial groups are wrong.	1	1.4	1	1.4	2	2.7	23	31.5	46	63	0	0		

Data analyses shows that academics feel comfortable and are open-minded when teaching to students with diverse ethnic background showing intolerance to racist behaviours in their classrooms in contrast to a very smaller number of respondents who are bystanders to racist behaviours, accept prejudices about diverse ethnic groups and do not adjust their teaching based on students' ethnic background.

Table 5. Academic staff's attitudes and practices on sexual preferences and inclusive education at tertiary level

Sexual Preferences	This statement is valid for me										This statement is not valid for me	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral %		Agree		Strongly Agree %			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I think that students who are gay should be able to receive equal education as heterosexual	2	2.7	0	0	0	0	14	19.2	57	78.1	0	0

I would feel comfortable teaching a gay student.	2	2.7	0	0	1	1.4	18	24.7	52	71.2	0	0
My sexual orientation doesn't influence my academic life.	0	0	0	0	2	2.7	15	20.5	54	74	2	2.7
Homosexuals affect the University's reputation negatively.	60	82.2	9	12.3	1	1.4	1	1.4	1	1.4	1	1.4
Homo and heterosexuals have the same learning-working habits.	0	0	0	0	10	13.7	24	32.9	37	50.7	2	2.7
I would feel comfortable having a homosexual officemate.	0	0	0	0	4	5.5	30	41.1	39	53.4	0	0

Exploring the distribution of academics' attitudes and practices towards sexual diversity, findings suggest that the majority of academics feel comfortable teaching to gays and do not support or promote discriminative actions towards people with diverse sexual preferences. Only a restricted number of respondents feel uncomfortable with diverse sexuality and express conservative opinions in regards to homosexuality and academic life.

Table 6. Academic staff's attitudes and practices on gender and inclusive education at tertiary level

Gender		This statement is valid for me										This statement is not valid for me	
		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral %		Agree		Strongly Agree %			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Students should be treated equally, regardless of their gender.	0	0	0	0	1	1.4	24	27.8	59	80.8	0	0	
Females are better students than males	25	34.2	20	27.4	17	23.3	8	11	0	0	3	4.1	
Some jobs/departments are not appropriate for females to study.	47	64.4	18	24.7	5	6.8	0	0	1	1.4	2	2.7	
For females, marriage is more important than education.	48	65.8	18	24.7	3	4.1	2	2.7	1	1.4	0	0	
During my lessons, my attitude is different with males and females.	52	71.2	17	23.3	4	5.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	
I prefer to teach only male or female classes.	60	82.2	12	16.4	0	0	0	0	1	1.4	0	0	
I expect females to obey school rules more than males.	55	75.3	14	19.2	3	4.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
I consider specific interests and needs of males and females.	12	16.4	8	11	28	38.4	20	27.4	3	4.1	2	2.7	

Data provided in table 6 indicate that gender issues affect teaching and academics' attitudes. Although the majority of the academic staff's attitudes and practices are aligned with the principles of gender equality, there is a considerable

number of respondents that express neutral opinions in a number of items in the gender subscale. Interestingly, there is also a relatively small number of respondents who believe that "For females, marriage is more important than education".

Table 7. Academic staff's attitudes and practices on disability and inclusive education at tertiary level

Disability	This statement is valid for me										This statement is not valid for me	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral %		Agree		Strongly Agree %			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Students with disabilities can socially and emotionally develop when they study with students without disabilities.	2	2.7	0	0	10	13.7	37	50.7	21	28.8	3	4.1
I have knowledge and skills to educate students with disabilities.	10	13.7	23	31.5	18	24.7	19	26	2	2.7	1	1.4
I am willing to adjust my teaching to support students with disabilities in my classes.	1	1.4	0	0	0	0	39	53.4	33	45.2	0	0
I feel comfortable working with students with disabilities.	0	0	1	1.4	11	15.1	39	53.4	20	27.4	2	2.7
I think students with disabilities should be educated in separate classes.	40	54.8	20	27.4	11	15.1	1	1.4	0	0	1	1.4
Students with disabilities are a burden on the educational system.	56	76.7	12	16.4	2	2.7	1	1.4	0	0	2	2.7
I tend to become impatient with disabled students.	40	54.8	23	31.5	6	8.2	0	0	2	2.7	2	2.7
I don't expect too much from disabled students.	30	41.1	31	42.5	11	15.1	0	0	0	0	1	1.4

Almost similarly, results suggest that the majority of the academics have positive attitudes towards disability while there is also a small number of the respondents expressing intolerant or non-inclusive behaviors. Though, it is worth mentioning that a respectful number of respondents express neutral opinions towards inclusion and disability in universities. Data also show that almost half of the respondents report that they don't have the skills and the knowledge to teach students with disability.

Correlations between total scores of the subscales

Examining the correlations between the total scores of each subscale, statistically significant relations were detected between academic staff's attitudes and inclusive teaching practices in regards to a) cultural diversity and diverse ethnicity

background at a modest degree ($r=.584$, $p=.000$) and b) diverse ethnicity background and different sexual preferences at a low degree ($r=.253$, $p=.031$). These findings indicate that members of the academic staff that have high cultural awareness tend to have also increased awareness on ethnic diversity, and those that have increased awareness on diverse ethnicities show higher awareness on sexuality and diversity with focus in education.

Relationships between academics' demographic characteristics and other variables.

Exploring possible relationships with academics' demographic characteristics and total scores of each subscale, the findings showed statistically significant gender differences between academics' attitudes and inclusive teaching practices in regards to cultural diversity [$t(70)=-2.854$, $p=.006$], with female academics showing higher cultural awareness than their male colleagues (mean: 23.91 vs 21.32). Moreover, the fact of having someone in their family or surroundings with different sexual preferences was statistically significant related to academics' views and their teaching inclusive behaviours in regards to cultural diversity [$t(71)=-2.079$, $p=.041$].

No further significant relationships occurred in relation to other demographic characteristics.

Academics' Knowledge on existing procedures for reporting discrimination

At the end of the questionnaire, five questions were addressed to the academics exploring their knowledge on existing procedures for reporting discrimination on the issues explored in their Universities.

Results presented in table 8 reveal that approximately half of the academics do not know whether procedures exist in their Universities for reporting discriminations experienced.

Table 8. Procedures to report discrimination at University _ Academic Staff

Is there any procedure for instructors to report discrimination based on		f	%
a. cultural awareness	No	16	21,9
	No idea	41	56,2
	Yes	16	21,9
b. ethnic background	No	17	23,3

	No idea	39	53,4
	Yes	17	23,3
c. sexual preferences	No	15	20,5
	No idea	37	50,7
	Yes	21	28,8
d. gender	No	14	19,2
	No idea	32	43,8
	Yes	27	37
e. disability	No	14	19,2
	No idea	39	53,4
	Yes	20	27,4

Section B.

Results on university students' experiences on diversity issues, inclusion and education at tertiary level.

Tables 9 - 13 present university students' experiences on diversity issues and inclusive education at their universities.

Table 9. University students' experiences on cultural diversity and inclusive education at tertiary level

Cultural Awareness	This statement is valid for me										This statement is not valid for me	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral %		Agree		Strongly Agree %			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The instructors at my university adequately address multicultural issues in their classes.	8	4.6	20	11.4	55	31.4	64	36.6	14	8	14	8
My instructors try to provide opportunities for activities related to cultural awareness.	9	5.1	22	12.6	56	32	64	36.6	17	9.7	7	4
My instructors are comfortable working/studying with colleagues/students of different cultural backgrounds.	3	1.7	5	2.9	17	9.7	88	50.3	52	29.7	10	5.7
My instructors help me to increase my understanding of multicultural issues.	11	6.3	10	5.7	57	32.6	63	36	29	16.6	5	2.9
During group discussions or exercises, the instructors make efforts to ensure all students are included regardless of	4	2.3	6	3.4	33	18.9	75	42.9	50	28.6	7	4

their cultural backgrounds.														
My instructors seem comfortable discussing cultural issues in the classroom.	4	2.3	13	7.4	41	23.4	73	41.7	37	21.1	7	4		

The majority of the students express positive experiences about the faculty staff's attitudes and teaching practices in the classroom in regards to cultural diversity issues compared to a smaller percentage reporting negative attitudes. However, there is also a significant number of students who take a neutral stance. The most negative experiences are mentioned for the items "The instructors at my university adequately address multicultural issues in their classes" and "My instructors try to provide opportunities for activities related to cultural awareness", while the most positive ones for items "My instructors are comfortable working/studying with colleagues/students of different cultural backgrounds" and "During group discussions or exercises, the instructors make efforts to ensure all students are included regardless of their cultural backgrounds".

Table 10. University students' experiences on ethnic diversity and inclusive education at tertiary level

Ethnic Background	This statement is valid for me										This statement is not valid for me	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral %		Agree		Strongly Agree %			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
My instructors accept different behavioural/verbal expressions of ethnicity.	7	4	5	2.9	40	22.9	83	47.4	25	14.3	15	8.6
My instructors are concerned about racial inequality in education.	3	1.7	12	6.9	58	33.1	62	35.4	22	12.6	18	10.3
Students' ethnic background does not affect my instructors' behavior in the classroom.	2	1,1	8	4,6	23	13,1	85	48,6	51	29,1	6	3,4
My instructors help me develop my awareness of different ethnic backgrounds.	12	6.9	13	7.4	64	36.6	61	34.9	19	10.9	6	3.4
My instructors understand why students of other ethnic backgrounds act differently.	4	2.3	11	6.3	57	32.6	71	40.6	17	9.7	15	8.6
My instructors try to stop racist behaviours in my classroom.	3	1.7	2	1.1	46	26.3	67	38.3	43	24.6	14	8
My instructors avoid telling jokes about other ethnicities and racial groups.	8	4.6	11	6.3	31	17.7	65	37.1	51	29.1	9	5.1
My instructors react to ethnically biased behaviour in the classroom.	7	4	12	6.9	49	28	63	36	17	9.7	27	15.4

In respect to ethnicity background, the majority of the university students report positive experiences about the faculty staff's attitudes and teaching practices in the classroom in regards to ethnic diversity issues compared to a smaller percentage declaring negative attitudes. Interestingly, the highest negative experience is reported for the item "My instructors help me develop my awareness of different ethnic backgrounds". As can be seen a significant number of students are neutral, not expressing either positive or negative experiences. The most positive experiences are mentioned for the item "My instructors accept different behavioural/verbal expressions of ethnicity" and "Students' ethnic background does not affect my instructors' behavior in the classroom".

Table 11. University students' experiences on sexual preferences and inclusive education at tertiary level

Sexual Preferences	This statement is valid for me										This statement is not valid for me	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral %		Agree		Strongly Agree %			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
My instructors offer equal learning opportunities to gay and heterosexual students.	3	1,7	0	0	25	14,3	64	36,6	67	38,3	16 9,1	
Any mentions of the word “homosexuality” makes my instructors feel uncomfortable.	38	21.7	50	28.6	50	28.6	10	5.7	5	2.9	22	12.6
According to my instructors homosexuals affect the University’s reputation negatively.	73	41.7	54	30.9	24	13.7	3	1.7	3	1.7	18	10.3
According to my instructors homo and heterosexuals have the same learning-working habits.	3	1.7	4	2.3	44	25.1	58	33.1	37	21.1	29	16.6
I think my instructors would feel comfortable having a homosexual student.	4	2.3	4	2.3	34	19.4	80	45.7	42	24	11	6.3
According to my instructors homosexuality is a psychological disorder and requires therapy.	70	40	48	27.4	24	13.7	5	2.9	4	2.3	24	13.7

Regarding sexual orientation, positive experiences are reported from the majority of the students for all items. Out of them, most of the students report that their instructors would feel comfortable having a homosexual student in the classroom. Most of them also mention that their instructors offer equal opportunities to both gays and heterosexual students, not believing that homosexuals affect University's reputation,

and that homosexuality is a psychological disorder. It is also noticeable that a considerable number of students take neutral stance for most of the items while there is a smaller percentage expressing negative experiences from their instructors' attitudes.

Table 12. University students' experiences on gender and inclusive education at tertiary level

Gender	This statement is valid for me												This statement is not valid for me	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral %		Agree		Strongly Agree %					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
My instructors treat students equally, regardless of their gender	5	2.9	13	7.4	19	10.9	70	40	65	37.1	3	1.7		
According to my instructors females are better students than males.	55	31.4	58	33.1	34	19.4	10	5.7	3	1.7	15	8.6		
According to my instructors some jobs/departments are not appropriate for females to study.	69	39.4	46	26.3	32	18.3	11	6.3	7	4	10	5.7		
According to my instructors marriage is more important than education for females.	85	48.6	54	30.9	21	12	0	0	4	2.3	11	6.3		
During lessons, my instructors' attitude is different with males and females.	64	36.6	54	30.9	26	14.9	19	10.9	6	3.4	6	3.4		
My instructors would prefer teaching only male or only female classes.	90	51.4	47	26.9	20	11.4	2	1.1	5	2.9	11	6.3		
My instructors expect females to obey school rules more than males.	80	45.7	49	28	18	10.3	10	5.7	9	5.1	9	5.1		

Students report positive experiences from their instructors' attitudes in respect to students' gender in the classroom environment during their teaching for all items. However, it is important to mention that also some of them do not express clearly positive or negative experiences, being thus neutral, and that there is still a number of students who experience gender inequality in the classroom.

Table 13. University students' experiences on disability and inclusive education at tertiary level

Disability	This statement is valid for me										This statement is not valid for me	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral %		Agree		Strongly Agree %			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
My instructors treat students with a disability as if they have no feelings.	88	50.3	43	24.6	23	13.1	4	2.3	4	2.3	13	7.4
My instructors have knowledge and skills to	8	4.6	24	13.7	53	30.3	58	33.1	14	8	18	10.3

educate students with disabilities.													
My instructors are willing to adjust their teaching to support students with disabilities.	6	3.4	10	5.7	36	20.6	82	46.9	24	13.7	17	9.7	
My instructors are comfortable working with students with disabilities.	5	2.9	6	3.4	44	25.1	75	42.9	25	14.3	20	11.4	
According to my instructors students with disabilities should be educated in separate classes.	37	21.1	47	26.9	46	26.3	11	6.3	4	2.3	30	17.1	
Students with disabilities are a burden on the educational system.	101	57.7	41	23.4	12	6.9	6	3.4	5	2.9	10	5.7	
My instructors become impatient with disabled students.	46	26.3	53	30.3	35	20	10	5.7	4	2.3	27	15.4	
My instructors don't expect too much from disabled students.	41	23.4	52	29.7	39	22.3	15	8.6	6	3.4	22	12.6	

Finally, students report mostly positive experiences from teaching staff's attitudes toward disability issues who take into account the needs and the feelings of their classmates with disability. However, it is important to mention that there is a small percentage of students who express negative experiences or are neutral. The most negative experiences refer to their instructors' limited knowledge and skills to educate students with disability.

Correlations between total scores of the subscales

Exploring the associations between the total scores of each subscale, statistically significant relations were found between students' experiences in inclusive education in regards to cultural diversity and diverse ethnicity background ($\rho=.681$, $p=.000$) at a modest positive level. Similarly, students' experiences in inclusive education on cultural diversity at University were significantly correlated at a very low degree with their experiences from teaching at University on diverse sexual preferences ($\rho=.184$, $p=.015$).

Relationships between university students' demographic characteristics and other variables.

We also explored how socio-demographic characteristics are related to students' experiences in inclusive education at their University. Results from

Spearman's rho test suggested that age was significantly associated with students' awareness on cultural ($\rho = .226$, $p = .003$), and ethnic diversity ($\rho = .237$, $p = .002$)

Furthermore, Kruskal Wallis H-Test shows that students' level of study differentiate significantly their experiences at the University in regards to cultural diversity and inclusion [$\chi^2(2) = 13,298$, $p = .001$] as well as diverse ethnic background [$\chi^2(2) = 7,171$, $p = .028$]. Mean Ranks in table 14 indicate that Ph.D students and Master level students have more positive experiences in inclusive education at the University regarding cultural and ethnicity diversity.

Table 14. University students' experiences on cultural and ethnicity diversity based on their level of studies.

	Level of study	N	Mean Rank
Total score	Bachelor Degree	121	78,73
	Master degree	42	107,62
	PhD Degree	12	112,79
	Total	175	
Cultural awareness	Bachelor Degree	121	81,17
	Master degree	42	102,70
	PhD Degree	12	105,38
	Total	175	
Ethnicity background	Bachelor Degree	121	81,17
	Master degree	42	102,70
	PhD Degree	12	105,38
	Total	175	

4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the faculty staff and the university students' attitudes, practices and experiences on inclusive issues at tertiary level. Results show that faculty members have a positive attitude toward diversity issues regarding cultural diversity, ethnicity background, sexual preferences, gender and disability in the frame of academic life and their teaching. Interestingly, a small percentage of academics express more conservative ideas toward diversity in education which apparently hinders the inclusivity level in their classrooms. One of the most interesting results derived from academics' data is that a significant percentage of the respondents report that they lack the skills and knowledge to support the teaching in classrooms with students with disability. This result should be taken seriously into consideration from Higher Education Institutions and Ministry of Education in order to promote suitable training to those who are in need.

In addition, in our study, female academics were found to show higher cultural awareness than their male colleagues. Also, having someone with diverse sexual orientation in their surroundings was related to the academics' positive practices on cultural diversity issues in university. Findings also show that academics with high ethnic diversity awareness tend to have also increased awareness on cultural and sexuality diversity with focus in education.

Here, it is important to note that approximately half of the academics had no idea if there is any procedure for instructors to report discrimination when experienced in cultural, ethnicity, gender, disability and sexual orientation issues. This finding indicates that Universities should reconsider the information distribution paths to the members of the university communities and to organise meetings or campaigns for supporting members' knowledge on where to report discriminatory behaviours.

As for students, the findings also indicate that in general they have positive experiences from instructors' attitudes towards the explored diversity issues in their classroom. Consistently with the aforementioned results, there are also students who declared that faculty staff have not got the skills and knowledge needed to teach students with disability and adjust their teaching, respectively. This result agrees with academics' declarations on this issue and leads to the conclusion that teaching staff apparently need training on how to promote inclusive education in classrooms with students facing disability.

On the other hand, students' age and study level are also associated positively, although at a low degree, with their experiences from their instructors on cultural and ethnic diversity, with older as well as Master and Ph.D. students to express more positive experiences.

5. Conclusion

Higher Education in Greece is highly centralised. In this light, decisions promoting inclusive policies and strategies are made by the government offering relevant freedom to universities to be adjusted to those. A review of these acts led us to the conclusion that most of the decisions are oriented mostly to individuals that face disability and till recently they were restricted to issues related to their admission to Higher Education or examination procedures in universities. However, more inclusive policies have been introduced during the last years supporting a wider variety of diversity issues such as gender, sexual preferences, and diverse cultural backgrounds. We believe that this is a

step forward to a more inclusive education, however, the scarce research on diversity issues in Higher Education do not offer us a clear picture of the disparities and the inclusivity level at tertiary education in Greece.

This study shed some light on teaching staff's attitudes and practices regarding inclusive education in universities as well as students' experiences from their instructors' teaching in classroom. The results are indicating positive attitudes and teaching practises from faculty staff in relation to inclusion and positive experiences from the students. However, conservative attitudes and negative experiences reported, even in smaller percentages, should be taken into account in future reconsideration of policies and training designs. In our opinion, it is also very crucial for a better understanding, for further research to be conducted with in depth interviews in order to explore neutral opinions and the background of positive or negative attitudes.

Based on the findings, authors suggest that Higher Education Institutions should organise campaigns and seminars into their corpus in order to inform adequately the members of their communities about diversity in education, discrimination that may occur and where to report them if needed. Finally, institutions and Ministry of Education should take into account that there are faculty members who declare that they are not skilled or aware on how to adjust their teaching to the needs of students with disability. Future training should take into account the evaluation of these needs for organising an aligned with staff's needs training programme.

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