

# Social inclusion, graduate attributes and higher education curriculum

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Drawing on data from 39 Australian universities over the past 15 years, this paper examines the social inclusion curriculum in higher education through an analysis of university statements of graduate attributes. Graduate attributes articulate an institution's vision of students they seek to develop, and the knowledge, values and dispositions they wish to impart. Such statements and their justifications represent an aspect of the intended curriculum, but may not reflect the enacted or experienced curriculum. In the context of the Bradley review of Australian higher education, social inclusion discussions have focussed on access to opportunities and the social and economic dimensions of participation. Curriculum and pedagogical issues have, to date, received less critical attention. Australian graduate attribute policies and statements frequently articulate social inclusion in terms of respect for and appreciation of diversity; possessing a global or international perspective; commitment to equity and social justice; having a sense of social responsibility; and participating in the community. These outcomes reflect key themes found in most definitions of social inclusion. This paper examines the influencing factors for graduate attributes, and discusses two dimensions in detail: diversity and global perspectives.

**Key Words:** graduate attributes, social inclusion, curriculum, global citizenship, internationalisation, diversity.

## 1. Introduction

In Australia, the federal government has set a national target of 20% participation of students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds at undergraduate level, and an overall target of 40% of 25 to 34 year olds holding a Bachelor degree or higher qualification by 2025 (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). In this context, it is unsurprising that issues of access, equity and transition to higher education dominate discussions of social inclusion, while curriculum and pedagogy have received less critical attention to date. Statements of graduate attributes, which have become ubiquitous at Australian universities in the past decade, increasingly encompass concepts related to social inclusion.

This paper reports the findings of an analysis of graduate attribute statements from 39 Australian universities over the past 15 years. A social inclusion agenda is evident in attributes such as respect for and appreciation of diversity; possessing a global or international perspective; commitment to equity and social justice; having a sense of social responsibility; and participating in the community, which align with definitions of social inclusion (Hayes, Gray, & Edwards, 2008). In order to address the challenges of increasing participation in higher education, and ensure these graduate capabilities are themselves inclusive of all students, the relationship between graduate attributes, social inclusion and curriculum deserves closer critical attention.

Graduate attributes articulate an institution's vision of the students they seek to develop, and the knowledge, values and dispositions they wish to impart. Marsh and Willis's (2007) conceptual framework for curriculum consists of the intended curriculum, the enacted curriculum, and the experienced curriculum. Graduate attributes represent the intended curriculum, but may not necessarily reflect the enacted curriculum (graduate attributes as they are taught within disciplines) or the experienced curriculum (what the student actually develops). Taken as whole, our data provides an overview of intended curriculum for social inclusion and tracks the influence of community attitudes and concerns, government policy and educational trends at the time these statements were developed, adopted and ratified. This paper explores factors influencing the development of graduate attributes and examines the impact of two social inclusion dimensions on curriculum in detail: global perspectives and diversity.

## 2. Background

Social inclusion is often defined in terms of social *exclusion*, with the terms generally seen as "inseparable sides of the same coin" (Rawal, 2008, p. 171). However, conceptualising it in this way has attracted criticism, with some arguing that the failure to define social inclusion in its own right has led to the "nature and meaning" of social inclusion in much of the literature being "merely implied or asserted" (Cameron, 2006, p. 396). There is no widely accepted definition of social exclusion; the term is used in different ways to refer to a number of factors, with the meaning reflecting the national and ideological context in which it is used (Buckmaster & Thomas, 2009). While lack of definitional clarity makes it difficult to pinpoint the various aspects of social exclusion, most definitions refer to a lack of opportunity and consequent limited capability (Hayes et al., 2008). Previously synonymous with financial disadvantage and poverty, there is now a consensus that social exclusion is multi-dimensional (Saunders, Naidoo, & Griffiths, 2008; Buckmaster & Thomas, 2009). Social exclusion can be the result of various sources of deprivation; different social, cultural, political and economic processes; and may or may not be associated with a lack of financial resources or low socio-economic status (Kurzac, 2010).

A review of the literature around graduate attributes demonstrates four broad conceptions of their purpose: employability; lifelong learning; preparing for an uncertain future; and acting for the social good (Bosanquet, Winchester-Seeto & Rowe, 2010). The latter two are closely aligned with social inclusion, with an emphasis on transforming the student, the curriculum and the future (Bowden & Marton, 1998) and acting to benefit the international community (Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell, & Watts, 2002). Within these conceptions, students are characterised as entering an unknown and uncertain future in need of social reform. Higher education should, in this view, equip students with the capacity to manage ambiguity and complexity; with flexibility and creativity to solve problems; and with a commitment to social justice. Barnett refers to the future as one of "supercomplexity" in which graduates are witnessing a "new world order" that challenges their understandings of themselves and their place in the world (2004, p. 248).

Graduate attribute statements and academic papers that promote their adoption often expound the importance of citizenship, working for the common good, appreciating and valuing diversity (see, for example, Haigh & Clifford, 2010, 2011; Bourn, 2011). The agenda of using graduate attributes as a means to prepare students as "agents of social good" has been previously discussed by a number of commentators (Bowden et al., 2002; Barrie & Prosser, 2004; Barrie, 2006; Bosanquet et al., 2010).

In contrast, little attention has been given to graduate attributes, curriculum and pedagogy in the social inclusion literature, which has to date focussed around issues of opportunity, access and participation. Some social and community groups promote specific curriculum emphases that address social inclusion dimensions. A report from the *Australia 2020 Summit*, held in 2008, summarised the findings of groups of invited citizens who were brought together to provide advice about government priorities over the next decade. It included the recommendation to:

Modify curricula from kindergarten to postgraduate education to include civic and moral education and engagement, and social inclusion in the education system, which will ensure children are exposed to diverse value systems, other cultures and levels of disadvantage, with a specific focus on Indigenous issues. (Costello & Plibersek, 2008, p. 182)

Similarly, an international group of academics through the *Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education* have outlined several areas where universities can better serve the communities around them and prepare students for global citizenship. Areas with implications for curriculum include: “expand civic engagement and social responsibility programs in an ethical manner through teaching, research and public service” and “establish partnerships ... so that education for active citizenship becomes an integral part of learning at all levels of society and stages of life” (O’Connor, Lynch, & Owen, 2011).

The role of educational curricula, particularly in higher education, as it relates to the increasing focus on social inclusion is thus equivocal, with no real consensus about what it should be and what form it should take. As a first step it is important to gain an idea of how institutions conceptualise social inclusion. Our contention is that graduate attribute statements offer the most tangible and comprehensive representation of curriculum relating to social inclusion available to date.

### 3. Method

Data for this project draws on graduate attribute statements and lists from 39 Australian universities. Systematic searches of university websites, policy documents, and minutes of committee meetings yielded 95 statements from the 1990s to 2010. These were sorted into three time periods according to the year they were formally accepted by the institution: 1996-2000, 2001-2005 and 2006-2010. Two types of analyses were undertaken: a *lexical-text analysis* of the last time period and a *thematic analysis* of all three time periods. A grounded theory approach was used, which is a complex iterative process where theories are formulated by working with the data (Flick, 2006).

(a) **Lexical-text analysis:** The primary aim of this approach was to discern what aspects of the notion of social inclusion were articulated in graduate attribute statements. To provide an overview, the software tool Leximancer was used. This tool is used for both data mining and lexical-text analysis. Text is analysed and a ranked list of terms is produced based on frequency and co-occurrence. The terms are automatically grouped into concepts which are based on portions of text, and concepts are grouped into themes (for details about how the software works, see Smith & Humphreys, 2006; Zamitat, 2006).

For this part of the analysis, only data from the last time period was used. The main intention was to capture the full breadth of the concept of social inclusion and any related ideas in the graduate attribute statements from 2006-2010. We experimented with two approaches, firstly analysing the full set of statements, and secondly using data from a cut-down version of the same set which included only ideas usually associated with social inclusion such as social responsibility, community, social justice, diversity, internationalisation, and Indigenous people.

Both sets gave slightly different results, but each view was useful. As the emphasis was to look at the full extent of graduate attributes, we did not wish to exclude any potentially useful data. Thus we used both sets of data and reorganised the ideas under similar headings. For each set of data we revisited the original statements to drill down into the detail of what was covered, and the results are laid out in Table 1.

(b) **Thematic analysis:** The data for each separate time period was sorted into categories using a constant comparative approach (Thorn, 2000). This process seeks to group similar ideas and to capture both similarities and any differences. Once the major categories were determined, the number of universities with graduate attributes statements within that category for each time period was determined and converted to a percentage. Selected relevant categories and their

percentages for each time period are listed in *Table 2*. This process is reported in Winchester-Seeto, Bosanquet, and Rowe (2012).

#### 4. Findings

Social inclusion is little represented in graduate attribute lists from 2006 to 2010. The terms *social inclusion* or *inclusion* do not occur in any graduate attribute list, nor does the term *social exclusion*. *Inclusive* is found in the list from only one university. There are, however, a number of related dimensions that occur in lists from most universities, including: *social or community responsibility*; *ethics and values*; *social justice*; *global or international perspective*; *diversity*; *tolerance*; *Indigenous people*; *sustainability*; *impacts of social, economic and political decisions*; and *contexts*. These outcomes reflect key themes found in most definitions of social inclusion (Hayes, Gray, & Edwards, 2008; Vinson, 2009), and are further explored in *Table 1*, with details of the main aspects of each dimension and level of engagement indicated across the graduate attribute lists.

Perusal of *Table 1* shows that the dimensions and aspects of social inclusion fall into two major categories with respect to curriculum. There are dimensions related to educating *about social inclusion*, such as social justice, Indigenous perspectives and history. There are also dimensions related to educating *for social inclusion*, including social responsibility, diversity, tolerance, global perspectives and so on. These two areas overlap.

In addition to the different dimensions and aspects of social inclusion articulated by universities, there are varying levels of engagement. At one end there are requirements of low levels of engagement such as *awareness of* and *understanding* and at the other *engage*, *take action* and *appraise and critique*. In part this parallels the findings of Andreotti (2006) who contrasts “soft global citizenship education” and “critical global citizenship education” and points out, inter alia, the differences this brings to the strategies for global citizenship education (p. 48). This is similar to the range of level of engagement shown in *Table 1*, for instance strategies for the “soft” end education includes “raising awareness of global issues”, whereas the “critical” end promotes “engagement with global issues and perspectives”. Similarly, the benefits of global citizenship education range from “greater awareness of problems” at the soft end to “independent/critical thinking and more informed, responsible and ethical action” at the critical end (Andreotti, 2006).

**Table 1.** Key dimensions of social inclusion in Graduate Attributes statements 2006-2010.

Dimensions	Main aspects	Level of engagement
social responsibility	professionalism; social/civic/corporate responsibility; human rights; ethical action	ranges from acceptance, to understanding and appreciation, to committed to, and demonstrates
ethics and values	ethical standards; personal value system; ethical action and responsibilities; professional ethics and integrity	ranges from awareness of, to appreciate and articulate, to committed to and demonstrate, and ethical actions
social justice	social justice principles and issues; disadvantage; social justice in particular disciplines; make a positive difference for the common good; use professional knowledge for the benefit of others	ranges from awareness of, to assess and evaluate, to take action and engage
global or international perspective	local, national and international/global perspective or outlook; cross cultural outlook; global outlook in field of study; international standards and practices; global environment; local decisions and their international impact, and international decisions and their local impact	ranges from awareness of and recognise, to understand, to apply and consider issues from, to act with integrity, and play effective and responsible roles in

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Table 1 cont'd.

Dimensions	Main aspects	Level of engagement
diversity	language, culture, humans, opinions of others, gender, customs, communication styles, cultural literacy;	ranges from awareness of, to respect for, value and appreciate, to understanding/knowledge of, to discuss and debate
	diverse culture/communities; different cultural perspectives and environments and people; people and ideas beyond own; social and cultural boundaries; cross cultural/ international outlook	ranges from awareness of own culture and attuned to other cultures, to be inclusive and open to other cultures, to interact, operate and collaborate effectively, to engage positively, thoughtfully, harmoniously and effectively, to contributing positively and employ and adapt professional expertise
tolerance	for all kinds of difference: e.g. culture, gender, religion, sexual orientation, identity, ability, others	ranges from show tolerance, to non-discrimination and sensitivity to others, to respond appropriately to, to be inclusive, to interact and collaborate effectively with others
Indigenous	knowledge, values, social and cultural heritage; history; social justice and equality/inequality issues; Indigenous cultural competence	ranges from appreciate/respect/show understanding of, to analyse, examine and explain, to actively engage with Indigenous peoples
sustainability	environment, social or communities and economic sustainability	ranges from demonstrate literacy, to apply theory to practice, demonstrate leadership,
impacts of	social changes; particular technologies; political decision making processes; economic imperatives of industry and business; own actions; research; use of information	ranges from appreciate and acknowledge, to understanding, to appraise and critique
contexts	diverse contexts: cultural, linguistic, social, cross cultural, global, multi-cultural, discipline, philosophical, historical, professional, vocational, local/national/global	

There have been a number of significant changes in graduate attribute lists over the past 15 years (Winchester-Seeto, Bosanquet, & Rowe, 2012). Changes in the dimensions that relate to social inclusion are detailed in Table 2, and are some of the biggest changes, measured in terms of the number of universities with each attribute in their list. These dimensions include the attributes of *social and community responsibility* (now adopted by 50% of Australian universities), *global perspective* (53%), *ethical awareness and behaviour* (47%), and *appreciate and value diversity* (43.5%).

Except for *social or community responsibility* which remains high in the last time period, all other references to responsibility peak in the middle time period (2000-2005) and then decline. The reasons for this are not immediately apparent. In contrast to the rise and plateauing of *social or community responsibility* is the sudden decrease in the number of universities incorporating *respect for individuals or individual's rights*. This trend is also reported in a previous paper by Bosanquet et al. (2010), which showed a decline in a number of categories of attributes relating to the "individual" and in the language used. In contrast, there was a rise in the categories related to notions of community over this same period.

**Table 2.** Changes over time in the popularity of various categories and attributes associated with social inclusion, as measured by the percentage of universities (n = 39) that included these as part of their Graduate Attributes statements.

Graduate Attributes	Percentage of universities		
	1990s	2000-2005	2006-2010
<b>Good Citizenship and/or Responsibility Category</b>			
social or community responsibility	32.3	50	50
ethical responsibility	9.7	29.2	6.3
professional responsibility	6.5	20.8	12.5
environmental responsibility	12.9	25	15.6
personal responsibility or obligation	12.9	–	18.8
<b>Diversity Category</b>			
appreciate and/or value diversity	16.1	37.5	43.5
able to work in culturally or socially diverse environment	9.7	20.8	31.3
understand different cultures	12.9	20.8	18.8
respect and/or empathy for different cultures, religions, minority groups and their needs	6.5	4.2	6.3
able to work with diverse groups of people	6.5	8.3	18.8
mutual respect	3.2	–	18.8
cross cultural sensitivity	9.7	12.5	31.3
communicate across cultural boundaries	–	–	9.4
<b>Global Category</b>			
global perspective	29	45.8	53.1
think locally, nationally, globally	6.5	29.2	40.6
function in a global context	3.2	12.5	18.8
contribute to the international community	12.9	12.5	9.4
<b>Ethics Category</b>			
ethical standards	16.1	25	15.6
ethical awareness and behaviour	12.9	12.5	46.9
integrity (including academic integrity)	9.7	–	12.5
sensitivity to moral issues and conflict	3.2	4.2	–
<b>Indigenous Category</b>			
understanding of and/or respect for indigenous cultures and people	9.7	16.7	31.3
reconciliation	–	4.2	–
responsibility for raising the standard of professional service delivery to Indigenous Australians	–	–	3.1
capacity to engage and partner with Indigenous Australians	–	–	3.1
understands the circumstances and needs of Indigenous Australians	–	–	3.1
<b>Social Justice Category</b>			
social justice	16.1	37.5	34.4
respect for individuals and their; assert individual rights	22.6	8.3	9.4
service to the community	12.9	4.2	12.5
recognise social justice issues, ethical practices and legal considerations pertinent to field of study	–	4.2	–
awareness of or engage with social issues	–	–	12.5
able to critique social and economic effects of business activities on groups/or individuals	–	–	3.1
appreciate impact of social change, political decisions and economic imperatives	–	–	3.1
willingness to speak out against prejudice, injustice and abuse of power	3.2	–	3.1

In the general category of diversity, the attribute of *appreciate and value diversity* increases markedly, as does anything related to being able to work with different groups or in diverse environments, or having *cross-cultural sensitivity*. Being able to *communicate across cultural boundaries* makes an appearance in the last time period (2006-2010). It is unclear whether this is related to the globalisation push in many universities or whether it is a response to employer pressures for graduates to be able to function in an increasingly global business environment, or, indeed, both. All attributes in the global category show a steady rise over the three time periods, except *contribute to the international community*, but this may be an artifact of the data.

*Ethical standards*, and incidentally *ethical responsibility*, peak in the middle time period (2000-2005) and then decline. In the last time period (2006-2010), *ethical awareness and behaviour* increase quite markedly. It is possible that this is a curriculum response to the financial and business scandals of the late 90s and early 2000s, such as ENRON.

Attributes related to Indigenous people, such as *understanding of and respect for Indigenous cultures and people* show a steady rise, but still feature in only about one third of graduate attribute lists. Interestingly the attribute, *respect and empathy for different cultures, religions, minority groups and their needs*, has a much smaller representation on the graduate attribute lists. *Reconciliation* appears only once in the middle time period (2000-2005). This may be related to the Sorry Day movement, and the speech by the Australian Prime Minister in 2008 apologising to Australian Indigenous people for past mistreatment. Only in the last time period (2006-2010) is there any mention of a greater engagement with or a responsibility to Indigenous people, and these attributes all stem from a single institution.

*Social justice* peaks in the middle time period (2000-2005) and remains popular in about one third of graduate attribute statements in the late 2000s. Again this is an interesting juxtaposition with the steady decline in the *rights of the individual* from the 1990s. *Service to the community* is low and steady throughout the three time periods. In the late 2000s the lists start to include attributes related to *awareness and engage with social issues*, or *appraise and critique social and economic effects of business and political activities* or *the impact of social change*. These echo the notions of critical global citizenship described by Andreotti (2006). Perhaps this is the start of a more activist agenda in at least some universities, particularly as social inclusion has an increasing impact on curriculum through, for example, participation and community engagement opportunities for students (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2012).

## 5. Discussion

Of the graduate attributes associated with social inclusion, the global category shows the greatest popularity with over half of Australian universities identifying *global perspective* as a desirable outcome for students. In the diversity category, *appreciate and/or value diversity* shows the greatest rise, with 43.5% of universities now including this graduate attribute. The discussion that follows explores these categories and the implications for curriculum (at the intended, enacted and experienced levels) in greater detail.

### 5.1. Global perspectives

As shown in Table 1, the global category encompasses multiple concepts including a local, national and international / global perspective or outlook; cross cultural outlook; global outlook in a particular field of study; international standards and practices; global environment; local decisions and their international impact, and international decisions and their local impact. This multiplicity of terms – many of them ambiguous, contested or value-laden notions – and consequent conceptual fuzziness has been noted in the literature (Leask, 2008; Lunn, 2008). Alternative terms such as planetary citizenship or cosmopolitanism do little to alleviate the problem, with the notion of citizenship itself perceived as divisive (Haigh & Clifford, 2010). As Donald notes, “for many people – refugees, asylum seekers, guest workers and others – being a citizen of the world is a forced choice” (2007, p. 306).

Specific examples of graduate attribute statements and their justifications further show the multiplicity of meanings; consider the following (de-identified) institutional statements:

Our students will enter a globalising world of major environmental change and resource constraints, of scientific and technological advance and ethical challenge, of continuing political instability and possible international conflicts, of unlimited creativity and increasing social surveillance. (Institution A)

The undergraduate curriculum enables students to develop their capabilities in intercultural understanding and global citizenship. This includes gaining a heightened awareness of their own and other cultures; developing cultural sensitivity and interpersonal skills for engagement with people of diverse cultures; and performing social responsibilities as a member of the global community. (Institution B)

The level of engagement within the category ranges from being *aware* and *recognising* to *understanding*, *applying* and *considering issues* to the critical level of *acting with integrity* and *playing effective and responsible roles* at a global level. Andreotti (2006) describes the former as soft or passive forms of global citizenship, whereas the latter level of engagement is linked to social justice and critical thinking.

Internationalisation and global citizenship are interrelated as graduate attributes, and are based on a transformative or social reform philosophy of higher education (Hanson, 2010; for a diversity example, see Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011). This discourse is evident in a definition of global citizenship synthesised from research on the experiences of global health students at a Canadian university:

A good global citizen is involved locally, nationally and internationally; is conscientious, informed and educated about issues; exhibits environmental and social responsibility; advocates alongside of the oppressed; or lives by the dictum, 'Be the change you want to see in the world' (Hanson, 2010, p. 80).

Internationalisation and global citizenship are closely aligned with globalisation, which is a contested notion in the scholarly literature (see Bourn, 2011). On the one hand, it can be understood as the breaking down of borders between cultures, nations, economies, regions, and institutions as a worldwide network of communication and transport opens up; on the other, it may refer to the amalgamation of multiple peoples and places into "a single world society" which is underpinned by imperialist values (Marginson, 2007; Leask, 2008). The latter risks reinforcing existing power relations and entrenching inequality, rather than celebrating difference and diversity.

Calls to change university curricula to incorporate global citizenship and internationalisation are widespread. This is driven by a number of factors including government strategy and demands from employers and professional bodies. Hanson (2010) refers to the "need for radical reform of curricula to foster engaged global citizenship" (p. 70). Leask (2008) similarly emphasises the requirements for "radical, rather than incremental, innovation – that is, new ways of conceptualising knowledge and the curriculum" (p. 13). Davies, Evans, and Reid (2009) are explicit in their call for educational revolution:

We believe that national citizenship is now being weakened and that a new form of education is necessary ... The long established frameworks associated with the relationship between statehood and education are ... ready to be dismantled (p. 69).

Nevertheless, Lunn (2008) notes that the extent to which global perspectives are addressed in the curriculum depends on "individual enthusiasm and discretion" (p. 231). For the most part, university educators have taken a moderate approach by, for example, including international content on reading lists; providing culturally diverse case studies and examples; addressing issues of social justice, sustainability equity, human rights and globalisation in course content; as well as utilising diverse teaching and learning strategies such as collaborative learning, critical reflection tasks, role plays, and peer evaluation (Whalley, 1997). Evaluations of extra-curricular experiential learning activities (for example, study abroad programs) suggest



significant benefits to students, particularly in relation to employability (Mohajeri, Norris, & Gillespie, 2008; Fuller & Scott, 2009). However, as Clifford (2011) notes, only 5% of students participate in such programs.

For the most part, developing a global perspective finds its strongest expression in the intended curriculum. The broader context of global citizenship, internationalisation and social inclusion in higher education includes the complex challenges and interactions between: international students; offshore teaching; cotutelle programs; research partnerships and outside studies programs; community and industry engagement; mobility of staff and students between institutions; massification or democratisation of higher education; international benchmarking; sector-wide funding pressures; and an increasing emphasis on measuring the standards and quality of research, teaching and learning and contributions to the community (Leask, 2008; Lunn, 2008). Moving global perspectives beyond the intended curriculum involves these complexities, and also means responding to the diversity of students – not limited to students from families and communities who have not participated in higher education in the past; students with disabilities; from low socio-economic status backgrounds; equity groups; balancing study with paid work or caring responsibilities; mature-age; and off-campus students.

## 5.2. Diversity

As seen in Table 1, there are two aspects to diversity as a graduate attribute: (a) cultural literacy encompassing language, culture, humans, opinions of others, gender, customs, communication styles; and (b) cross-cultural or international outlook including diverse cultures and communities; different cultural perspectives, environments and people; people and ideas beyond one's own; social and cultural boundaries. As with global perspectives, the level of engagement ranges from the soft to the critical, with the latter more readily embedded in enacted and experienced curricula.

Lists of graduate attributes from the 1990s tend not to include diversity as a graduate attribute; in the 1990s, only 16% of institutions include *appreciate and/or value diversity* as a graduate attribute (as shown in Table 2). In this time period, the main focus is on professional skills including communication, self-management, and IT as previously reported (Bosanquet et al., 2010). When diversity is mentioned in graduate attributes statements of this era it is linked with concepts such as life-long learning and teamwork. More recent statements have diversity emerging as a stand-alone attribute linked to ideas of community responsibility and global citizenship, as the following example shows:

The undergraduate curriculum enables students to develop their capabilities in intercultural understanding and global citizenship. This includes gaining a heightened awareness of their own and other cultures; developing cultural sensitivity and interpersonal skills for engagement with people of diverse cultures; and performing social responsibilities as a member of the global community.

In the time period 2006-2010, more than 43% of institutions include *appreciate and/or value diversity*. Most other graduate capabilities in the diversity category have similarly increased, in particular *working in culturally or socially diverse environments* and *cross-cultural sensitivity*. The greater prominence of diversity as a graduate attribute can be traced to a number of political, economic and social factors. The employability agenda has been a key driver, as evident from the emphasis on *professional expertise* in the list above (Shiel, Williams, & Mann, 2005 for a UK perspective). The notion of global citizenship and community responsibility is closely aligned with diversity (Otten, 2003) and can be traced to Oxfam's *A Curriculum for Global Citizenship* (1997) (Shiel et al., 2005; Shiel, 2007) which identifies respecting and valuing diversity as one quality of a global citizen.

Diversity can be embedded in various ways in the curriculum (through course content, teaching activities, and assessment tasks) as well as experienced formally (through institutional programs and resources) or informally outside the classroom. There is a strong view in the literature that the development of diversity as a graduate attribute needs to be facilitated by teachers (Gurin et

al., 2002), and that the composition of the student body is an insufficient condition in itself for developing diversity awareness. Denson and Zhang (2010) surveyed UNSW students to explore whether local and/or international students who perceive themselves to be experiencing diversity (e.g. through the curriculum, informal interactions, and culture diversity) develop some of the common graduate attributes. Findings showed that student experiences with diversity positively impact on graduate attributes, including the ability to work with others, appreciation of and respect for diversity and so forth.

Another Australian study, Campbell (2010) found that studying and interacting socially with students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds makes the greatest contribution to the development of valuing and respecting difference. As Campbell notes, this study confirms previous research indicating that peers have a greater influence on the development of student generic skills than any other aspect of the higher education experience (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993; Milem, 1998).

The development of various aspects of the graduate attribute of diversity appears to depend on multiple factors, some aspects of which are best developed by curriculum and some by direct experience with peers. Nonetheless, whichever approach is used, education that can promote appreciating and valuing diversity, along with the ability to work with people from other cultures and social strata, is an important step in education for social inclusion.

### 5.3. Influencing factors

In 1898, when asked about defects in the university system, Swami Vivekananda answered: “It is almost wholly one of defects. Why it is nothing but a perfect machine for turning out clerks” (Haigh & Clifford, 2010, p. 2). The question now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is how far have we progressed from this level of accomplishment, and who decides what kinds of attributes graduates should have and for what purposes. In the context of this paper, there is the further question of who determines the social inclusion agenda for university graduates. Figure 1 responds to these questions with influencing factors on graduate attributes drawn from our research findings.

As described above and evidenced by our analysis, university graduate attribute statements include a multitude of different skills, capabilities, attitudes, values and dispositions. Haigh and Clifford (2011, p. 1) comment that the “current literature on graduate attributes covers a wide range of intentions from the narrow and mechanistic to the holistic and spiritual”. The lists of graduate attributes do not just spring from the imagination of university managers. University degrees are high stakes ventures for all stakeholders including business and industry, governments, higher education providers and the community in general, not to mention academics and students themselves. There are many expectations of what higher education institutions should do and what functions they actually serve. Figure 1 shows some of the main factors synthesised from the literature that influence the choice of graduate attributes, and there may well be others as yet not discussed.

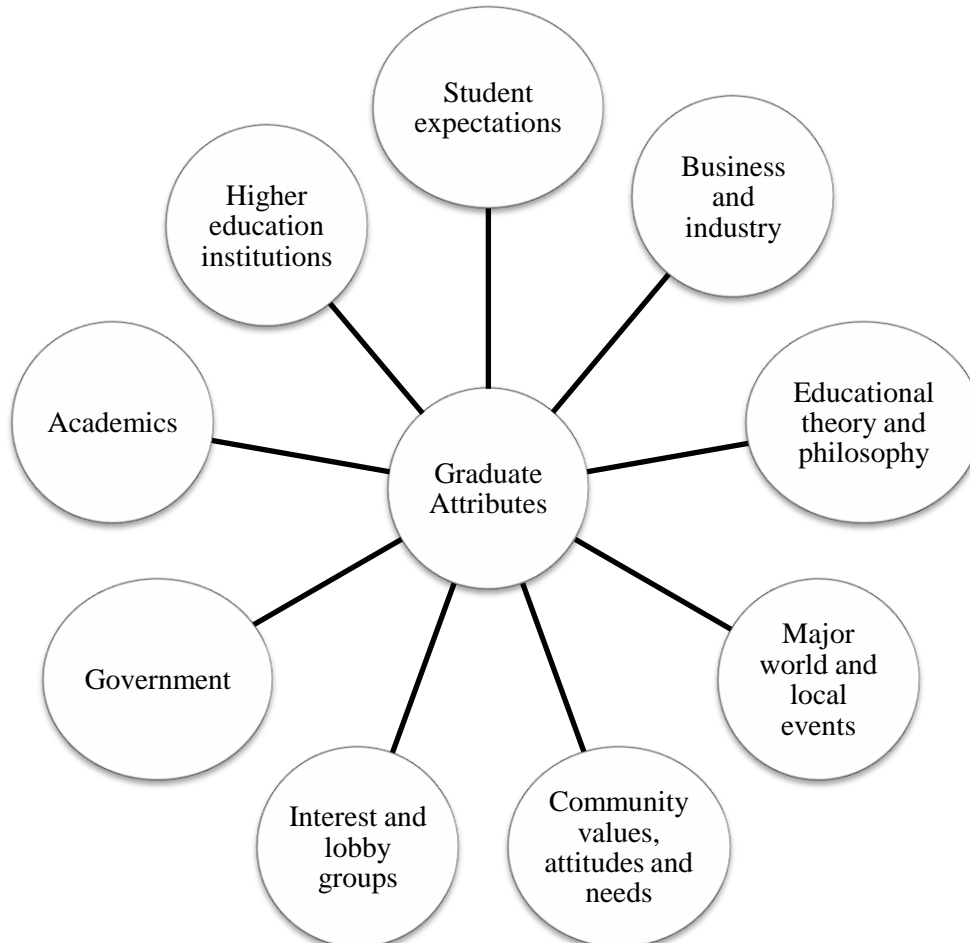
Employability of graduates is one key driver (Bowden et al., 2002); Bridgstock (2009) identifies it as “the main impetus” for defining graduate attributes (p. 32). Employability is also aligned with factors such as *student expectations*, *major world and local events* (for example, the Global Financial Crisis in the late 2000s) and *business and industry* (Figure 1). The influence of the latter is evident in several ways, for instance the needs of employers for particular capabilities. Programs such as Chiropractic, Education, and Accounting need to satisfy stringent accreditation requirements, made up of competency-based professional standards developed by independent industry bodies and this in part determines what attributes are evident in these programs. The Business/Higher Education Round Table (B-HERT) notes that students are required to become internationally competitive graduates and global leaders (Hager, Holland, & Beckett, 2002) and have lobbied to ensure this is addressed by universities. Similarly, attributes related to ethics and social responsibility have been introduced into the undergraduate curriculum in business (Nicholson & DeMoss, 2009) based on employer demand, stimulated by public scandals and corporate misconduct over the past decade. Thus some of the attributes that are related to social inclusion appear in graduate attribute lists at least in part to satisfy the needs

of business and industry. These include global perspective, diversity, ethics and social responsibility.

*Government* is in the position to exert considerable influence, not only through the Bradley Review targets previously mentioned, but through funding priorities, quality assurance and enhancement bodies and policy. Business and industry can exert influence here, but government and universities are also affected by broader *community values, attitudes and needs*. These values, attitudes and needs change and evolve over time and some of this change is evident in Table 2; note for instance the increase in the number of universities featuring *understanding and respect for Indigenous cultures and people*. *Major and local events* can crystallise community concerns. Bourn (2011) for example, talks about the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers and the subsequent desire by some US higher education institutions “to equip students with not only greater knowledge and experience of the world, but also a more positive outlook on wider world affairs” (p. 563).

Many graduate attributes are inherently value-laden, as seen in emphases on ethics, social justice, equity, accessibility, environmental sustainability and internationalisation. Some of these values are emphasised by individual *higher education institutions* in response to a range of factors, including religious affiliation, location and proximity to particular communities and institutional mission statements. *Interest and lobby groups* may also have an impact on graduate attributes, including Universities Australia (formerly the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee) and the National Tertiary Education Union.

*Individual academics*, perhaps driven by a particular *educational theory and philosophy* can influence graduate attributes and their impact on curriculum and student experience. For example, learning through participation is designed to allow all students to undertake a range of experience-based learning activities, including service-learning opportunities, for credit and as part of their core curriculum (Mackaway, Winchester-Seeto, Coulson, & Harvey, 2011).



**Figure 1.** Examples of influencing factors on graduate attributes.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the relationship between graduate attributes, social inclusion and curriculum. We contend that graduate attributes statements offer the clearest articulation of social inclusion curricula at Australian universities to date. The dimensions of diversity and global perspectives represent an aspect of the intended curriculum at the majority of Australian universities, but the extent to which they are embedded in the enacted or experienced curriculum varies considerably across institutions. This remains a focus for further research. Definitions of social inclusion in higher education are not static, and will necessarily evolve over time in response to the influencing factors identified in this study. Nevertheless, a significant factor will be responding to the challenges of increasing participation in higher education. The extent to which universities can meet the needs of low SES students for access, equity and transition in higher education, and simultaneously produce graduates who are educated within a social inclusion framework (encompassing Indigenous and global perspectives, diversity, citizenship, ethics, and social justice) remains to be seen.

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