Presentation script

Hello everyone, my name is Yezi Lin, I'm a master's student studying architectural design at Cardiff University. Today my topic is about how architectural design could help to create inclusive university campuses for our present society.

* Definition of higher education

First of all, I would like to share with everyone about James alexander’s article ‘three ideas of university’, which inside universities were divided into three ideas: eternal, immortal, and immediate, which points to different purposes. However, as the author thought, nowadays universities are combining one or more of these three ideas, creating a new higher education system, which is facing all people in the society to satisfy everyone’s own purpose to achieve higher education. As the world is changing rapidly among climate, technologies, and uncountable aspects (Tindemans and Dekocker, 2020), universities tend to be diverse and should be applicable for multiple students with disparate purposes. Nowadays every student might have their own purposes for receiving higher education, such as for their personal enrichment, learning skills to prepare for the labor market, and so on (Brooks et al. 2020). Therefore, it is reasonable that university staff should help to find ways to cooperate better with diverse students. And university campuses should be developed to be highly inclusive.

* Social equality and justice

Nowadays, even though we are living in a relatively mature equal society, there are so many notable issues inside the world, especially in areas with financial difficulties and a lack of basic education. The speed of emerging new technology development in different regions and the pandemic even widened the gap of social inequality. Here are several real-life cases which show serious injustice and inequality situations in our daily lives. The first pic was taken in a low-income neighborhood adjacent to the business district in Panama City, directly showing the vast difference in living conditions between different economic conditions. The second one focuses on female education Attainment issues in Underdeveloped Countries (Nigeria). The third pic shows even in developed countries, there are still much higher education admission issues hidden within, directly or indirectly contributing to injustice in the higher education system. That is why I think it is necessary to design and create a university campus where everyone can be treated equally and feel comfortable inside.

* Higher education for everyone

Here is a definition that an inclusive university should respect all students’ talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and so on, and also need to provide a sense of belonging for them. As the diagram shows, from 2015 to 2020, the majority of undergraduate students admitted to UK universities are white, while the remaining ethnic minorities or those with minority cultural backgrounds have relatively much lower chances and odds of gaining HE. There are many issues related to widening the participation agenda in higher education. Barriers to higher education might be related to gender bias, poverty, and other socio-economic factors. For instance, statistics show that children from families with higher economic levels have a greater chance of receiving higher education, and vice versa.[[1]](#footnote-1) Therefore, providing equal and fair access to all applicants from different backgrounds is the first step towards inclusive education. At the same time, with a focus on the physical, mental and psychological well-being of on-campus students, case studies and surveys have been conducted to provide a harmonious and secure architectural environment on campus, thereby contributing to the progress of an inclusive university.

* Disadvantaged groups

Here is a diagram showing mainly disadvantaged groups of students at universities, and I listed those serious problems they may face and how architectural design can help to improve their experiences on the university campus.

* Key factors for student success

To go further, I collected more information and conclude the main factors for students to succeed, here is the diagram, divided into six aspects, which are all significant in the inclusive campus design.

I would like to explain the Belonging in detail: from the literature studied, a sense of belonging can be conceptualized as students’ perception of feeling valued and respected by other students and feeling like a valued part of the university context. Less belonging will cause students more likely to leave the university because of feeling their values and norms are dissimilar to the mainstream student community, and their contributions are not valued by others.

Students from minority groups are less likely to identify with the values and norms of majority-group students and make interpersonal connections (Strayhorn, 2012). This contributes directly to a lack of a sense of belonging, social isolation, and loneliness. Interaction with peers and interpersonal relationships are key to the development of a sense of belonging.

Fortunately, in today's society, technology is advancing at a rapid pace and a wider variety of educational facilities are being designed to help bring equitable and non-discriminatory resources to a wider range of people. For example, there are many common misconceptions in society about the link between older people and technology, that they are not interested in digital technologies or do not want to use them, when in fact the adoption of digital technologies for teaching in universities directly facilitates the use of the network and digital technologies by older people to enjoy their online communication and interaction activities.[[2]](#footnote-2) Therefore, it is believed that the use of digital technology in education can also assist in the realization of the idea of inclusion in higher education institutions, to include all people in society, increase the sense of belonging for them and achieve the goal of improving the well-being of society.

* Campus design

After analysis and site visiting the whole Cardiff University campus, I found many spare spaces or wasting spaces that can be used to create the network of my inclusive campus. For example, there are many spare colonnades and outdoor decks that can provide spaces for students to gather for study, meals, discussions, etc. Other larger space spaces such as car parking areas and tunnels can be used for developing interests such as sports, and help to bring together students with similar hobbies and activities to improve their well-being on the university campus.

Based on the research, a series of user surveys through personas, and so on, it was found that there are many categories of minorities and disadvantaged groups that are very easily overlooked by others. However, these groups need to be inclusively considered in the design of campuses and the buildings therein.

* Proposed campus design

The findings suggest that increasing the sense of belonging of various groups on campus is essentially based on providing more opportunities to socialize and meet people, and thus architectural design can help a lot in this regard. For example, there need to be public spaces on campus where people can gather in large numbers to support and attract fair participation in activities without discrimination, basic amenities such as a kitchen and inclusive washroom can be made available to those who need them, etc.

Here I designed my proposed campus map, wishing to make use of those spare areas. For example, the spare colonnades areas can be used for club activities, these open spaces can attract students easier, give disadvantaged groups of students less pressure; create the old student union building with graffiti and the spare area as a skateboard park, attract students who enjoy street cultures or have the cultural background.

* Conclude

All in all, to create an inclusive campus need to conclude all students, especially care for those minority groups of students, and let everyone inside the university have a sense of belonging and feeling at home on our campus. And it is my aim to provide all students with those spaces through architectural design, let them have enough opportunities to discover and find suitable areas to develop their social activities and let them engage in the university community.

* Questions

Furthermore, there are several thoughts I think can also be helpful for the further development of creating the inclusive campus: including considering bringing modern, high technology to the campus to make higher education more accessible and engaging for all. And also more questions can be discussed: How to connect inclusive higher education with communities, and the public? How to ensure equal access to higher education for everyone? How to make it possible for students of all ages to successfully access knowledge in online and face-to-face instruction? How to obtain more professional educational skills that are suitable for all?

That is the end of my presentation, thank you for your time and listening.

1. “A World of Inequality”, PennState, March 27, 2017, <https://sites.psu.edu/inequalitycivicissues/2017/03/27/civic-issues-4-inequality-in-college-admissions/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Charmarkeh, Houssein. "Seniors and technologies: Issues of inclusion and exclusion." Canadian Journal of Communication 42.2 (2017): 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)