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**Higher Education Taking Action Towards the Sustainable Development Goals:
 Perspectives from Asia and Europe**



Interview | Conducted by Áine Hanrahan

ARC7 Interview with Professor Stephen Shute

On the author:

Áine is currently doing a Master's degree in Gender, Violence, and Conflict at the University of Sussex. Her undergraduate degree was in Politics and International Relations with Sociology at the University College Dublin. During her studies, she was the treasurer two years running for the newly founded Politics and International Relations Society. Through her studies and from working with the society, Áine developed a passion for gender studies and related troubles faced by men, women and other genders inclusive of conflict, violence, environment, race, economic, health, LGBTQI+ rights, accessibility and inclusivity rights and cultural factors. In the future, she hopes to incorporate SDGs in her work and discuss how the goals have impacted these sectors.

On the interviewed:

Professor Stephen Shute as he is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Strategy and Resources for University of Sussex (US) as well as being heavily involved in the universities internationalisation. He is the former head of School in Law, Politics and Sociology Professor Shute led the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion portfolio from 2014 to 2016.

An interview with Professor Stephen Shute was conducted on the 25th of May 2019 by Áine Hanrahan in order to discuss “The inaccessibility of education to international students due to high fees hoping to attend university in the UK.” As our conversation evolved the interview touched on several areas such as: what University of Sussex (US) does to make the university more accessible to international students; how the UN Sustainable Development Goals are being implemented; what affect Brexit may have on International Students studying in the UK and the incentives to study in the US.

When asking Professor Shute about his work in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion he said he developed a strategy that has continuously been updated and grown as there is never a finish line when it comes to advancing, creating change and making a more inclusive environment for all. His work on campus has impacted International Students and is continuing to develop a more equal and diverse society.

The second inquiry I made was in what ways are prospective international

students being encouraged or discouraged by the fees system in place at Sussex. Prof Stephen Shute emphasised the investment students make when they choose to study at US. The quality of staff; the research output; and the running of the university are all considered when deciding on the fees allocated. The UK in 2012 introduced home fees of £9000 that has been risen once by £250, these fees apply to EU students who also have access to the governments loan scheme that is paid based on income and is cancelled after 30 years of low payments. Prof. Shute showed a very empathetic awareness of how fees hinder students from attending US; when he was head of the Law, Politics and Sociology School he created international programs with international community colleges so that they could provide cheaper and faster degrees of a higher standard. He also spoke of the generous scholarships provided by the University and in universities around the UK that attempt to end the inequalities that are created by the fees system. Prof. Shute also notes the relationships US creates with other universities and partnerships made across the globe.

Prof. Shute is currently carrying the Sustainability portfolio at the US. He stated there are two core sides to the SDGs in universities; the first being the research and programs that universities are completing in order to support and achieve each goal; and the second is how the SDGs are being taught in the courses across campus. The impacts of the SDG's are yet to be seen due to how new the SDGs are. The US is already very involved but is continuously increasing its involvement and Prof. Shute hopes to see them further integrate into the educational programs. Sustainability is at the core of the University and intends to make the college more sustainable and lower their carbon footprint and improving the transport policies. He goes on to state that sustainability is "and ought to be at the core of how we think about how we run this beautiful campus."

When discussing international fees and what the UK are doing it was unavoidable to discuss the pressing issue of Brexit. Prof. Shute and the US have concerns for the potential fee discrimination that may occur once the UK leaves the European Union. The current system in place is one of equal opportunity to all students in the EU but this has the potential to change radically once Brexit goes through. Both UK students and EU Students wanting to study in the university of their choice may be hindered or have increased hurdles to face such as visa applications and increased fees. The US want a more inclusive environment for all genders, races, ethnicities and religions

Conducting this interview was a pleasure and Professor Shute could not have been more welcoming and open to discussing this topic with me. I am very grateful for his time and insights in what the University of Sussex is doing as well as the UK especially in areas such as fees, equality, SDGs and inclusivity.