



### **+1 Podcast**

*Season 1: Episode 7*

*Professor Tava Olsen*

Medo Pournader:

Hello and welcome to the +1 Podcast where we discuss diversity and inclusion in our workplaces at the University of Melbourne. I'm your host, Medo Pournader, Senior Lecturer in Management and Marketing at the Faculty of Business of Economics, University of Melbourne.

In this episode we host Tava Olsen, Professor of Operations and Supply Chain Management and Deputy Dean, Academic, Melbourne Business School. I talk to Tava about strategic initiatives that address diversity and inclusion matters at Melbourne Business School. Specifically, we talk about gender equity and equal opportunities in the classroom and outside of classroom at Melbourne Business School.

This episode was recorded on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples. I hope you enjoy the conversation.

Medo Pournader:

Hello, Tava, how are you?

Tava Olsen:

I'm very good. Good to be here.

Medo Pournader:

Good to see you again. I remember the first time I saw you, I was doing my PhD, 10 years ago almost or less. And then there was an Operation Supply Chain Management conference in Auckland, University of Auckland that you were hosting. And I attended the conference and it was great. I had a really good time and it was the first time I met you and I knew about your profile and then it's amazing that you joined us recently and we are in the same institution.

Tava Olsen:

Thanks. Yeah, it was a lot of work organising that conference, but I think it was worth it.

Medo Pournader:

I could imagine. And you are our first guest with operations and supply chain management background, which I think is fantastic.

Tava Olsen:

Yes, I think we can give more profile to ops and supply chain. That'd be great.

Medo Pournader:

That would be awesome actually. Firstly, tell me, how have you been dealing with this weather? Suddenly we're having winter in Melbourne again. Like it's winter, but it's very cold these days.

Tava Olsen:

Yeah, it's kind of cold. And actually shortly after I moved here and it was still cold and that was back in October last year, I actually went and looked at a map and realised that we're one degree further southern than Auckland, so that explains some of the cold.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And then as we have been talking before the podcast, the weather especially the last year has been a bit weird. So we had a cold and unusual summer. And we are going through ups and downs in winter. Some days are cold, some days are hot. And well, we are in Melbourne, this is expected, I guess.

Tava Olsen:

Yeah. And even though it's cold, it's not US cold. I mean, I did spend six years in Michigan. You know, that's cold.

Medo Pournader:

We actually had Professor Tarulli with us a month ago or two months ago, and then we were talking about winters, and he's from Michigan State and yeah, he was telling us winter in Melbourne is very mild compared to in the US and in the Michigan. So I'm glad in a way. Again, welcome to the podcast and it's lovely to have you and I think as the deputy head of school at Melbourne Business School, if I'm not-

Tava Olsen:

Deputy Dean.

Medo Pournader:

Deputy Dean.

Tava Olsen:

Yep.

Medo Pournader:

It is a great privilege to have you. And also, as the focus of the podcast is on diversity and inclusion, it would be great to get your insights overall on the topic from a personal perspective in your role at

Melbourne Business School and where we are headed to. But if you don't mind, I'll start with a bit of your background in operation supply chain, and I also was listening to your interview on Melbourne Business School's website that you talked about the three E's - excellence, engagement, and equity. And I would love to explore further on how it manifests at Melbourne Business School now and in the future with respect to diversity and inclusion.

Tava Olsen:

Sure, absolutely. So, a bit about my background. I grew up in Auckland and then I went to the US to do my PhD at Stanford. And that was in what was then the operations research department in the engineering school at Stanford. And so, my first academic job was in an engineering school. It was in the University of Michigan Industrial Operations Engineering department. And then while I was there, I realised that business was a much better fit both for my teaching and my research interests. So, I moved to Olin Business School, which is in Washington University in St. Louis. And I was there for about 10 years. And then at that point my daughters were six and nine, so it was time to head back to Auckland. So, I headed back partly because of my daughters and partly because of the role, I took up the directorship of the Centre for Supply Chain Management when I headed back. So yeah, I moved back to Auckland. Now my daughters are done with high school, so I moved here to take up the deputy dean role.

Medo Pournader:

That's awesome. Are your daughters here or back in New Zealand?

Tava Olsen:

Back in New Zealand. So, the older one's working at PwC and the younger ones studying psychology and sociology at University of Auckland.

Medo Pournader:

Great. Fantastic. And now in the new role in Melbourne Business School, how do you find it? How is everything going, if you don't mind sharing with us?

Tava Olsen:

Sure. I'm really enjoying the new role. There's a lot of autonomy to the role. There's a lot of ability to get on and herd those cats that are faculty but actually make a difference, hopefully make a positive difference to faculty. And yeah, I mean, we've already put in a new workload model, so that was an achievement, I think, and hopefully again makes faculty's lives a bit better. So yeah, I'm really enjoying the opportunities.

Medo Pournader:

Fantastic. Sounds great. So, with respect to diversity and inclusion at Melbourne Business School, we have had two guests so far, if I'm not mistaken, that have been talking about the topic, Teagan and Keke, from different perspectives. But as a deputy dean, I would assume that you are involved with the overall strategic initiatives with respect to diversity and inclusion. If so, would you mind sharing those perspectives with us, where we are at, where we are going to be in the future, and then we'll take the conversation from there?

Tava Olsen:

Sure. So, I think there's a much more awareness these days of the importance of diversity and inclusion. And from a strategic perspective, often it's setting the processes, how we measure, but also the culture, the climate, just being aware of the need to be inclusive is we're better, but we've still got a long way to go. A lot of the focus recently at MBS has been around gender equity because we do have significant challenges in that regard. There was a fair bit of work done before I joined. There was an action plan made. There was also a group that worked together with FBE and Melbourne Business School to come up with a bit of a strategic plan, but we're still on the journey. One of the biggest achievements out of that plan, I think, was our new mentoring program for junior faculty. I'm a big believer in mentoring and particularly for women and other people who may be a bit marginalised. I think there's huge benefit in actually having a formal mentoring program rather than just assuming that the people are going to get the mentoring that they need.

Medo Pournader:

That's amazing. I personally have asked one of the senior members of the faculty to be my mentor, but it wasn't, or at least as I know at our faculty is not a program or I might be mistaken, but how does this mentoring, formal mentoring work and what do you think are going to be the outcomes of this program moving forward?

Tava Olsen:

So, I might step back a bit and just sort of talk a little bit about my first experience with mentoring, which was when I was at University of Michigan, we had no formal mentoring program and I actually lobbied for us to get a formal program, me as a little assistant professor. I got assigned a mentor. I got what I thought were terrible referee reports from Management Science, which was one of the top journals. And so, I thought, I'm going to have to send this somewhere else, but I had a mentor. So, because I had a mentor, I thought, oh, I can show them the reports and the paper, and he can advise me on what to do next. What he came back with was, "Tava, these reports are not that bad. You should be resubmitting. This is not a reject and go away. This is just a sort of normal set of reports that you just need to do what they're asking." And I was just so inexperienced, I just didn't know that.

So yeah, I followed his advice. He gave great advice around writing the introduction, and I remember he circled one paragraph and said, "Tava, you're asking the reviewers to reject your paper here." Because it was just written not in a confident style. And so, I followed his advice, I revised, I think there was probably another round, and that was my first Management Science paper. And it was entirely because I had a formal mentor that I felt like it was his job to help me because I never would've actually asked him to do it, even though he probably would've said yes anyway, but it just didn't feel like something I could ask for until I had a formal mentor assigned.

So, when I was at Olin Business School, I also introduced a mentoring program, at Auckland I did too. And then here at Melbourne Business School, it was already well underway. So yeah, so we do have a very formal program. It covers both teaching and research, but it's actually run by our Associate Dean Teaching and Learning in terms of, it's quite structured. We've got a PowerPoint that outlines all the expectations, and we actually give a small amount of teaching relief for the mentors in the very start of the relationship, although the relationship's supposed to go for multiple years.

Medo Pournader:

That's amazing. And except for teaching and learning, which is absolutely necessary, other mentors are going to, for example, have special advice to those marginalised communities like LGBTQI+, communities with neurodiversity, still though specifically in our field, operation supply chain management, for example, to women who are still not, the numbers are not as equal as men. Are there any topics that are covered as topics that can be discussed formally with mentors and mentees, those sessions?

Tava Olsen:

So mostly it's teaching and research. I suspect many of our faculty are not that qualified to give advice. I think probably we should be doing more in those areas in terms of identifying people who are actually comfortable having those conversations. But yeah, at this point, the mentoring program really does stick to research and teaching and it's more important to match up someone in the discipline so they can give that research advice. And ideally the mentor sits in on their class as well, so they sort of get up and running with their teaching. But that's where it is at this point. But at least we have that program.

Medo Pournader:

Absolutely. And I think it's a great start to have that. Just to clarify, I think at FBE, Faculty Business Economics, we have the peer mentoring for teaching specifically, but I don't think I'm aware of any formal mentoring program. Again, I might be mistaken. So, you mentioned something about gender equity as part of the strategic initiatives of Melbourne Business School. Can you please elaborate if it is about the MBA students? Is it about the faculty or both and how it works overall as the initiative?

Tava Olsen:

At this point, it's mostly focused on faculty. We do have some scholarships as ways to try and encourage a higher percentage of women. As you may know, MBA programs usually don't have equal numbers, and ours don't, either. It's actually our senior executive MBA, that's one of the better ones, get 40%, but it's still not 50/50, which it makes for much richer classroom discussions if you can have diversity in the classroom, both in terms of equity, but in terms of other groups as well. So yeah, at this point our focus is more on faculty because we also are challenged there. Our percentages are not where we would like them to be. And so, one of the things that happened before I joined was a change in our hiring processes. And that's actually been a bit interesting because we went to a blinded process for the first-round screening, and I think we're actually going to move away from that because I don't think it's actually being helpful, because if you think about, for example, a woman's CV, if she has children, there's going to be a gap there. Right?

Medo Pournader:

Exactly.

Tava Olsen:

But if you've blinded it completely, all you see is the gap and not any sort of explanation. So yeah, I'm not convinced that the blinded reviewing has actually improved our equity.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah, it's a double-edged sword sometimes. I have heard of this study where some researchers send out this CV with a really western name compared to the same CV with a name that is not very western. And then the name that looked, for example John Smith, that sounded western, had got more interview

invitations. So I think that was a research somewhere, but also as you mentioned, if it is completely blind, and then if there are gaps, for example, if you're a woman with children or for any reason because of your gender or because of any other considerations you had those gaps, then if it's completely blind, then it might not be a complete fair process to the person being assessed.

Tava Olsen:

Yeah. So, we're still trying to think hard about is there a balance there and what we should do, because I've seen some of those studies too, and they're pretty clear that there's a lot of implicit bias out there just based on names.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah, absolutely. I agree with you completely. So, moving on from that, what other initiatives are you personally passionate about at Melbourne Business School or overall, at the university or that you have there you want to promote further, or you want to have in the future?

Tava Olsen:

So, a relatively minor one that I am quite passionate about is changing how we measure teaching. So, at the moment, our measures of teaching are largely around the scores that the students give, and there's huge amount of research now showing just how biased those scores can be, not just on gender, on other ones too. But there was a fascinating study that was gender-based where it was an online class, so they actually flipped the names of the instructors. So, there were four sections, two that were taught by the man, two that were taught by the woman, but all the interactions were online, so the students couldn't actually tell who they were interacting with. So, they switched two of the sections and the students who thought they were being taught by the man gave significantly higher teaching ratings, even though half of them were being taught by the woman, so. And even on things that are in theory objective, like timeliness of returning the assignments, it's like that should be objective, but it's not. So, we rely far too much on these teaching ratings. And so, what we are trying to do is introduce other measures, but also more peer review of teaching. And I know FBE does peer review of teaching, which is great, and it's figuring out how to do that peer review that is both developmental, so it helps the person teaching, but also evaluative so that we can try and get a richer view of somebody's teaching performance.

Medo Pournader:

I think that's great, and we all acknowledge that some of, not all, but some of the assessments taken from the students are biased. And we might have, and to be fair to any person that might have those implicit biases, they might not be aware of it, but I could totally imagine, and I acknowledge that there have been research showing that men overall or averaged or middle-aged men looking like a professor, which comes into your mind as a typical professor who has got a beard, glasses, middle-aged man might have, I'm not saying they do necessarily all the time, but might have better chances of higher student assessments compared to, for example, someone like me who looks international woman, a bit younger. But the good thing about me is that I have those glasses, so I am hoping that that would help a bit with the assessments.

But then again, I saw that in the assessments of my class, and I have been seeing that consistently since I've been teaching at MBA in post-grad levels. But this semester I was talking to my teaching team after we got the student assessments. So, it wasn't myself, a female and two male teaching fellows of our

departments, and they're quite experienced, but we are same age. And I was the subject coordinator, so I coordinated the content and the delivery style and so on and so forth. And we had to make some changes moving from online to on campus and in person.

Long story short, when we got the assessments and I was reading through the comments by other students, overall, it was good assessment, but it was fascinating to me that my name was mentioned only once to thank me as the lecturer. And my teaching fellows, the two fellows that we have been teaching together, they have been mentioned multiple times, and I was telling them, "I'm jealous. I want my name to be there at least once more." I mean, it can be my teaching style to be fair, but you can't help but thinking, is it because I'm a woman? I might have that bit of accent or not, or how much of it is because of that. So, I always wonder about that in my own teaching evaluations.

Tava Olsen:

And I think that's what makes it so challenging is all the intersectionality in terms of it's not just a gender thing, it's the background, it's the race, it's all of the percept. Because these ratings are so perception-based, it's how do you present yourself and can you actually bring your authentic person into the classroom? There's very few people who can actually do that successfully and wholly and feel comfortable. So certainly I know when I teach, I do hold some of myself back. It's weird.

Medo Pournader:

Well, why do you do that? What aspects?

Tava Olsen:

It's to project that professional image that's so important. You have to own that classroom. So you just walk in. And I too have the glasses.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah. It helps.

Tava Olsen:

And often when I was younger, particularly I'd often, I'd usually wear my hair up at least for the first class or two. And yeah, it's so hard to judge. Does it make a difference? I mean, how do you scientifically test whether this is actually making a difference or whether this is just your own perception?

Medo Pournader:

Exactly.

Tava Olsen:

It's super challenging. And so, I just think we need to put much less weight on these because there is so much noise in what goes into those evaluations. And I do think one of the big differences is that women do need to walk a much narrower line in terms of student expectations. So, women can do extremely well, but if they deviate from those expectations of what the students have, it can be quite challenging.

Medo Pournader:

Absolutely. Not to mention, when I was teaching MBA at Macquarie, I remember I had this chat with another professor there, very seasoned professor. She was talking to me about her experiences as a female professor, and she was telling me one difference that she noticed while teaching MBAs was that the expectation of the MBAs or any cohort of student, I'm not singling out MBAs specifically here, is for a woman to be nurturing, to show those attitudes of femininity. But for males, it's more like being assertive, and I don't know, being serious. But what if I'm a female and I want to be like that? I want to make that jokes in class. I want to be my authentic self, but as you mentioned, is it going to align with the expectation, with the norms, with those implicit biases that we might have? And she told me that I have learned earlier in my career that the expectation from me is that, and I have been trying to change that in my classes as much as I can. She has been to some extent successful. But then again, most of the times it's an uphill battle.

One other thing was that six and seven years ago when I was teaching MBA and I was much younger than I am, and when you first start teaching you already, and especially for women, I think that might be the case, you have that imposter syndrome. You think, do I deserve to go to this class and teach? Is it the reality that I'm experiencing right now and how the others are going to perceive me? And I remember as a young lecturer, what I try to do is to over-present myself and my abilities. And I remember if the dynamic of the classroom was good and the students were accepting me and I felt that they did, the class went well. But I have had classes that the student cohort didn't accept me very well, and then the class didn't go very well. And then I thought, oh, okay, maybe because I'm young or maybe because I'm just not confident enough and I don't exude that confidence enough.

But all I'm trying to say is that being a female and experiencing that, it has been a learning curve for me at least to be trying to cope with that. And it's great and really encouraging to hear that the assessments of teaching are moving toward triangulating all those data and experiences and to come up with something that correspond to the reality of the lecture, the background of the lecture and those biases, and to capture those biases in the classroom. Because we use, for example, for the audience who might not be familiar, we use those teaching assessments for our promotions. We use them to show that we have made progress. We are doing good high-quality teaching, and that's very important at the university or any other universities across Australia. So no, that's amazing. That's an amazing initiative.

Tava Olsen:

Yeah, thanks. And I agree that the teaching ratings are important because it does matter how our students are learning, how they're perceiving. So, we can't just ignore them. And as you said, it's more about triangulating them. And I had a similar experience to you when I first started teaching MBAs back in Olin because it was pre-tenure, these things, these evals feed into your promotion decisions. And so, I was nervous. And so of course when you're nervous, the teaching doesn't go well. So, it's a bit of this vicious cycle in terms of how do you not be nervous when it matters so much?

Medo Pournader:

Absolutely. And for example, I personally felt that whenever I felt comfortable enough to be myself, things went much better, compared to whenever I just wanted to show that I'm good enough to fit in. And I think, but there is also, as you mentioned, for women especially, there is a narrow line. How much comfortable can you be? So, no, absolutely, I agree with you. But still, I think we are using the assessments that are basically score-based and we are using those on our side of the faculty. That's great. So, what else, Tava, what other kinds of initiatives are you guys working on or are you personally



passionate about, not only at MBS, but also in supply chain and operations management? I'm keen to hear your thoughts on that too, but let's just focus on MBS for now and then we'll move on to our field.

Tava Olsen:

Sure. So, as I mentioned, our faculty isn't as gender balanced as we would like. So, we are trying to do initiatives just to improve the culture, just make it a more pleasant place to be there. We haven't done anything with our faculty families since I've been there. And that's definitely on my agenda once this weather starts improving.

Medo Pournader:

Oh, tell me about it.

Tava Olsen:

Is whether we can actually do something in terms of an event that involves family, because I think that's one thing we need to get better at.

Medo Pournader:

So, you mean inviting the families?

Tava Olsen:

Yeah, inviting the families to some sort of picnic, et cetera. So just an informal, but just social, getting people together, but also embracing the fact that people have families, and everyone has different living situations, and can we actually make ourselves a little more social? The corridor where our faculty are at MBS is very quiet. So, one of our challenges is how do we get more faculty back in the office but without mandating it? So, we've got challenges there in terms of just making it a more pleasant place to work. And so, if you have any bright ideas on how to do that?

Medo Pournader:

I think we are facing the same issue in our faculty as well in The SPOT building that the rate of the academics visiting campus has declined during COVID and after. And the Dean, actually, Paul Kofman, sent a message a year ago, I think, encouraging everyone to come back, but you cannot make people do that. You have to encourage them. But to me personally, I live close by and every day I'm here and then I see people and I like to be surrounded by people, but I understand that as an academic, for example, sometimes you really want to sit down at your desk at home and work on that pressing idea, on the paper, research paper or something like that. But no, I don't have any ideas that would help, unfortunately.

Tava Olsen:

No, I think it's a challenge for a lot of academic institutions. So yes, I try to come in, but it's difficult, right?

Medo Pournader:

Yeah.

Tava Olsen:

So, then another thing we've been doing is revising our parental leave policy. I know FBE's revised theirs, so we are revising our one in line with that.

Medo Pournader:

And how would that look like?

Tava Olsen:

So, it's giving more teaching relief after the baby is born. But when I started in academia, there were very, very few parental leave policies. So, it's actually been really good to see these develop. One of the things I'm a little passionate about though is that I do think these parental leave policies need to be written to give more benefits to primary caregiver. There's actually a really interesting paper done by economists that study, it's a US-based one, that studies parental leave policies that are gender-blind and primary caregiver-blind. And they actually showed that they make things worse for women because so many junior faculty will become a parent. And so, if the standard is to actually extend the tenure clock by one year for everybody, then women who, particularly if they've actually birthed the baby, there's huge productivity loss during pregnancy. And then of course after the baby's born, huge productivity loss. I mean, even nursing, it's exhausting. It's time-consuming.

Medo Pournader:

Absolutely.

Tava Olsen:

And so that extra year on the tenure clock in the US system is really important, but if just about everybody's getting it, then it actually makes the tenure hurdle higher because people have one more year to be publishing those papers. So, no reason it has to be gender-based, but I do think it has to be primary care.

Medo Pournader:

Primary care, absolutely. And it's not a joke. Taking care of a newborn takes a lot of time outside of one's schedule, not to mention emotionally also. It affects the person as well and the exhaustion of it and all that affects the productivity. And also, I mean, in the US it's one year extra, not to mention, at least in our field, if you want to publish in a good journal, at least it takes one and a half, two years at least to multiple years. I've got a colleague that has got a paper in pipeline to be published in a really good journal that has been nine years into making. So, one could just imagine.

Tava Olsen:

Yeah, I have a paper in operations research that took 10 years all at the same journal.

Medo Pournader:

Jesus.

Tava Olsen:

Jesus. So, I just kept sending it back.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah. The perseverance in our job is just crazy. But how is this primary care new incentives, how is it going to look like and how is it going to change, if you don't mind me asking?

Tava Olsen:

So, this one is much more about teaching relief rather than extending clocks, et cetera, like the sticky, the US tenure system, which is just so strict. So, it's reducing the teaching while the person is still working full time, so they'll have more time to spend on their research.

Medo Pournader:

Fantastic. No, that's great. I believe that Melbourne Business School prides itself in its engagement with industry, and we had some chat with Teagan Donnelly about that aspect of Melbourne Business School and diversity inclusion considerations in internships and in placement of individuals into workplace opportunities and basically communicating those considerations with the industry. From your perspective in MBS engagement with industry, what aspects of diversity and inclusion are considered at MBS? What aspects do you see that the industry is emphasising on and how do you think it affects teaching and learning at MBS?

Tava Olsen:

Sure. So, one of the things we do at MBS is we have our Dean's Leaders Forum where we have someone who's interviewed by the Dean and there's a whole group of people listening. And so, we do try and ensure diversity both in terms of the people who are invited to be interviewed as part of that forum, but also in terms of who we invite to be in the room. So, it's a little bit easier. We always try and invite a handful of our students, so it's a little bit easier to ensure diversity of our students rather than our alumni and industry members. But it's an act of consideration in terms of making sure as much as we can that the people invited into the room are a diverse set because that really is a responsibility. As you say, we do a lot of engagement. So, it's not just the Dean's Leadership Forum, but that's one example. And so, I think we really do have a responsibility as a facilitator of engagement to try and make sure that we have diverse people in the room.

Medo Pournader:

Absolutely. And I would assume that slowly it would reflect on, which is, I think it's hard, but I think that discourse has started that those topics of diversity inclusion as well as for example, the topics of sustainability that has been for some time now included in the curriculum in business schools. How do you think that has progressed so far and how do you think it will go in the future?

Tava Olsen:

So, I think we're particularly intersected in business schools as in the leadership discipline. So, there's now quite a lot of research around leadership styles and how to be a successful leader from a diversity and inclusion perspective. The fact that people do have very different styles depending on their backgrounds and yet can actually be successful leaders, I think that's much more acknowledged now. So, we do actually have a variety of specialised leadership programs. So, we have the MURRA Program, for example, looking at indigenous leadership. And then we also have a couple of, we have Women in Leadership as a short course, Senior Women in Leadership as another short course. So, we also sponsor the Blue Nile Program, which is for African Australians. And again, it's a leadership-focused program. So, I think the more we can talk about there are many types of leaders, many styles of leaders, and there's a

richness that various aspects of diversity can actually bring to leadership. I think again, that's a bit of a responsibility we have as MBS.

Medo Pournader:

Absolutely. And it's encouraging to hear that we have all those support schemes for different groups of relatively minority groups to be able to continue with their MBA studies. Now, I want to move on a bit into a more passionate topic of mine, which is in supply chain and operations management. And we share that as a topic that we research on, and we have worked on. Overall, in our field, Tava, considering your years of experience in the field and being a senior person in Australia and New Zealand in operation supply chain management, and overall globally, how do you think our field looks like? How diverse is it? How diverse are those top people in our field, and is there a room for improvement?

Tava Olsen:

Well, there's definitely room for improvement, but having said that, it's better than it used to be. I'm not sure that's a huge measure of success, but yeah, there's very definite room for improvement. One of the things we started in Auckland as part of the Centre for Supply Chain Management was, we started a women in supply chain group and there were large numbers of young women working in supply chain. So that was kind of exciting to see because the group was started as a joint effort between the centre and then a number of senior supply chain women in New Zealand. So, they were used to being the only woman in the room. And that is changing. And so, I think what companies should be doing is making sure that their work environments are a place where people feel like they can make a difference, they can belong, they are included, and there are still challenges there. And across all forms of diversity, because it's still very much white, straight, male field.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah, I agree with you. I mean, my experience is that even in terms of just academically speaking, the top journals in our field, the editorial boards of the journals are very not diverse. Although some journals are starting the movement, I'm not going to name any names, but like in a praise actually because I know some top journals in our field are starting to consider having a more diverse editorial board. And also, there have been publications that I've seen about gender equity women in supply chain, as you mentioned, at least in Australia. I mean, we're seeing increasing number of women, for example, in our massive supply chain management program, but still, it is in favour of men. But that's one aspect of diversity and inclusion. There are so many other groups that you would like to include and would like to be there.

But yeah, I mean, still though, you can just feel that supply chain operations is quite in favour of males, which I do not have anything against. But you and I both wanted for more females to be included, especially on top levels in industry and in academia from different backgrounds, different regions around the globe, at least in academia. Now, that's great.

Tava Olsen:

So, our main society, INFORMS, Institute for Operations Research and Management Science runs many of the top journals as you know, and they have now for a few years at least been measuring the diversity of their editorial boards and publishing it. So, you can actually go to a public facing website and look at, I believe they have race-based, they have gender-based, I think they look at region as well. So, the numbers don't look great, but I think by at least measuring and making public, there becomes a bit more

of awareness in terms of the need to improve. And the appointment hasn't been announced yet, so I can't say anything, but one of our very good journals is about to get their very first ever female editor in chief. And no, it's not me by the way.

Medo Pournader:

I was like, "Is it Tava? Is it Tava?" That sounds awesome.

Tava Olsen:

That's exciting.

Medo Pournader:

That's exciting. No, I need to Google after this podcast which journal that might be. No, that's great. So, because this podcast is going to be a public podcast and in terms of engagement of people who are listening to the podcast within university outside of university, with any diversity and inclusion-related initiatives at MBS as prospective MBA students or as members of public who want to be involved, are there any initiatives out there that you would recommend, you would suggest for them to be involved?

Tava Olsen:

Well, we are always looking for sponsorship of our scholarships, for example, I know that's a huge ask and probably not something that someone's going to jump in with, but maybe there's a corporation that's looking to improve the diversity of who they can hire. So, one way you can do that is to make sure that there's actually more graduating students who have the profile that you're looking for as a company. So obviously, again, that sort of direct assistance is a large ask, but there's lots more volunteer type roles, one could imagine. We have, for example, guest lectures. So, if you are someone who's from a typically underrepresented group and working in a field, whether it's supply chain or finance, it's great to be able to get you, if we're talking to the person out there in front of our cohorts so they can just see someone who looks a little bit different and has a different background.

Medo Pournader:

Great. Fantastic. And this is the final question that I ask all our guests. How do you think the future looks like?

Tava Olsen:

I'm an optimist. And I've also seen huge improvements in my lifetime over my career. The awareness of the importance of diversity, the strength that diversity actually brings business. So even if we just are looking at it from a profit standpoint, which I don't think we should be, but even if we are just looking from a profit standpoint, diversity makes huge sense in terms of who you hire, who you include, who sits around that table, helping make those complex decisions. So, I think people have largely woken up to that and will continue to do so. We have a lot of way to go. There's a lot of improvements we can do in terms of our environment, in terms of our processes, et cetera. But yeah, I think the future will continue to improve from that perspective.

Medo Pournader:

I'm happy to hear that. Tava, thank you so much for your time. I hope we get to have you again in the future.

Tava Olsen:

Thank you so much. I've enjoyed it.

Medo Pournader:

Thank you for listening, and please don't forget to subscribe to the podcast series. Please also reach out, let us know what you think, and whether you'd like to contribute to +1 Podcast series.