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## How Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Enhance the Effectiveness of Higher Education Institutions? A Comprehensive Analysis

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### Abstract

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are crucial components to foster a positive and thriving organizational culture. DEI is not a theory to read and remember rather it is a strategy used to enhance the productivity of an organizations. These values, when integrated effectively, contribute to a more fair, respectful, equitable, and innovative workplace environment where employees feel comfortable, valued, motivated, and supported. DEI practices promote an inclusive and collaborative working atmosphere where differences in capabilities, ideas, perspectives, and identities are appreciated and celebrated to enhance cooperation and problem-solving abilities. A diverse and inclusive workforce not only drives organization successfully but also ensures that all employees are treated with respect and have impartial access to career and professional development opportunities. Therefore, this study reviewed literature to gain insights into DEI and to study the role of DEI in effective operation of higher education institutions. After analyzing different studies from different sources such as journals, research papers, and textbooks, it has been found that practice of DEI goes beyond merely recognizing or defining diversity; it includes actively creating policies and rules that encourage fairness, equity, accessibility, and psychological safety, to ensure that all the members can contribute their full potential towards the achievement of goals. Although, in higher education institutions ensuring diversity is quite easy and sustainable, but for nurturing inclusion and equity, the educational institutions need to ensure DEI practices such as fair recruitment, retention, inclusive curricula, and providing supportive and positive environments for underrepresented groups to enhance the continues learning and professional environment.

Key words: diversity, equity, inclusion, positive environment, inclusive curricula

### Introduction

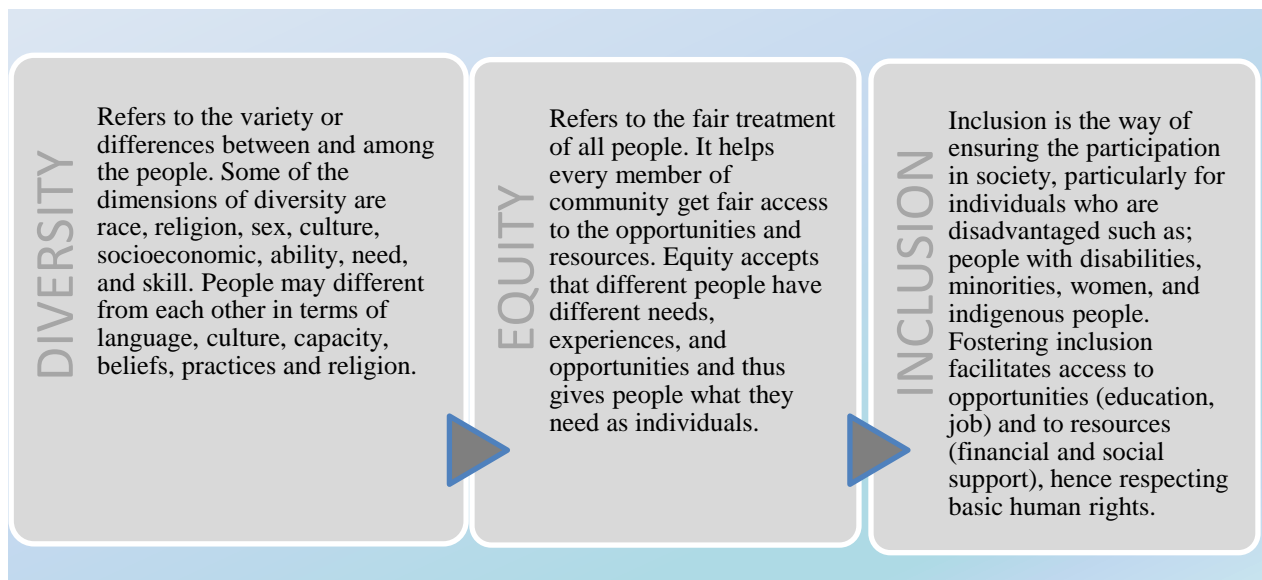
Diversity, equity, and inclusion are three different values working together to support



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diversified culture inside the organizations (Edmans, Flammer and Glossner, 2023). Hasan (2024) determined that organizational rules and policies that create inclusion, provide equitable and fair access to career development, and make all employees feel valued, welcomed and respected. Such organizations appreciate and celebrate the contributions and accomplishment of their employees to achieve the organizational goals (Beach and Segars, 2022). Employees of diversified and inclusive organizations are experiencing a deep ownership towards their organizations and feel empowered and growing (Urmila, Itam and Bagali, 2018).

The organization with practice of DEI manage workforce diversity. They go beyond just acknowledging difference but involve them actively to foster an inclusive environment where every individual feels valued and empowered (Adediran, 2022). Khan and Khan (2023) stated that incorporating an individual's idea, and perceptions into an organizational decision can lead to a positive result by making that person feel valued and comfort. As we know that psychological safety and mental peace a is a crucial aspect to work effectively. Therefore, having a sense of belonging at workplace means that the work environment is psychologically safe and peaceful which can assist the employees to bring their full potential to workplace without fear of judgement (Lynn.et.al., 2018). Feinberg (2023) found that an inclusive working environment can help employees to become comfortable in expressing their thoughts and ideas freely. Inclusive organizations not only work for the upliftment of their employees but also on the for the welfare of broader communities in which they function. They function for broader level social justice and equity on community members (Ganeshan and Vethirajan, 2022).



### DEI in the Workplace

In the competitive world, an increasing number of organizations have started to create fair and conducive working environment to compete the global competition (Gupta, 2023). Recently, a majority of companies start to pursue DEI as a developing agent. This approach is considered as a positive and innovative transformation to promote more



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respectful and healthier working environment (Huang, 2023). DEI is a key to create positive social and professional culture inside the workplace. Diversity in abilities, perspectives, thoughts, and skills can widen the horizon and expand the knowledge. An organization can embrace the diversity and inclusion by respecting each other's ideas, thoughts, and identities. This practice can foster the fruitful discussion and creativity to identify and solve the complex problems (Hasan, 2024). DEI is a crucial aspect of workplace which can enhance inclusiveness, appreciation, acceptance, honesty, and professionalism among employees (Cardona, 2021). It is necessary to ensure all the three components of DEI, because having only one cannot be effective. Such as if an organization has diversity but lacking of inclusion or equity, then it cannot fulfill the requirement of DEI (Abrams, 2022). Practicing DEI can enable the organization to set fair and uniform policies to facilitate each and every employee to promote unity and peace (Nguyen, Evan, Chaudhuri, and Williams, (2024).

The need of inclusion is primary important at all levels to develop a diverse, inclusive and engaging workforce. Inclusion also ensures fair hiring, development and retention. (Huang, 2023). In a workplace the term "inclusion" refers to the degree to which each member feels appreciated, supported, and valued as a team member. Every employee should tend to feel more involved and is more willing to contribute to the organizational outcomes. People from different backgrounds must communicate, collaborate, and comprehend one another's needs and viewpoints in this type of workplace (Ahuja, 2021). Apart from that, equity consider treating everyone equally in terms of opportunity, access and advancement (Ganeshan and Vethirajan, 2022). Claville (2024) specified that equity refers to the fair and transparent treatment for all employees. It is a need-based facilitation of employees where everyone get benefit and remove obstacles to grow and develop. Sundiatu, et al. (2020) stated that equity is a way of locating and attempting to remove obstacles and barriers to disadvantaged groups receiving equitable treatment, from team level through systemic changes in the organizational policies and procedures. Zheng (2022) explored that organizations with strong DEI initiatives are more likely to have employees who are committed, engaged, motivated and have enhanced job satisfaction, and higher levels of trust. Corsino and Fuller (2021) concluded that DEI, in general and inclusion in particular measures components of workplace culture that have an impact on employee engagement and productivity. Diversity fosters efficiency and effectiveness inside the company and raises employees' morale (Adediran, 2022).

### **Objectives of the study**

This study was conducted to achieve the following objectives.

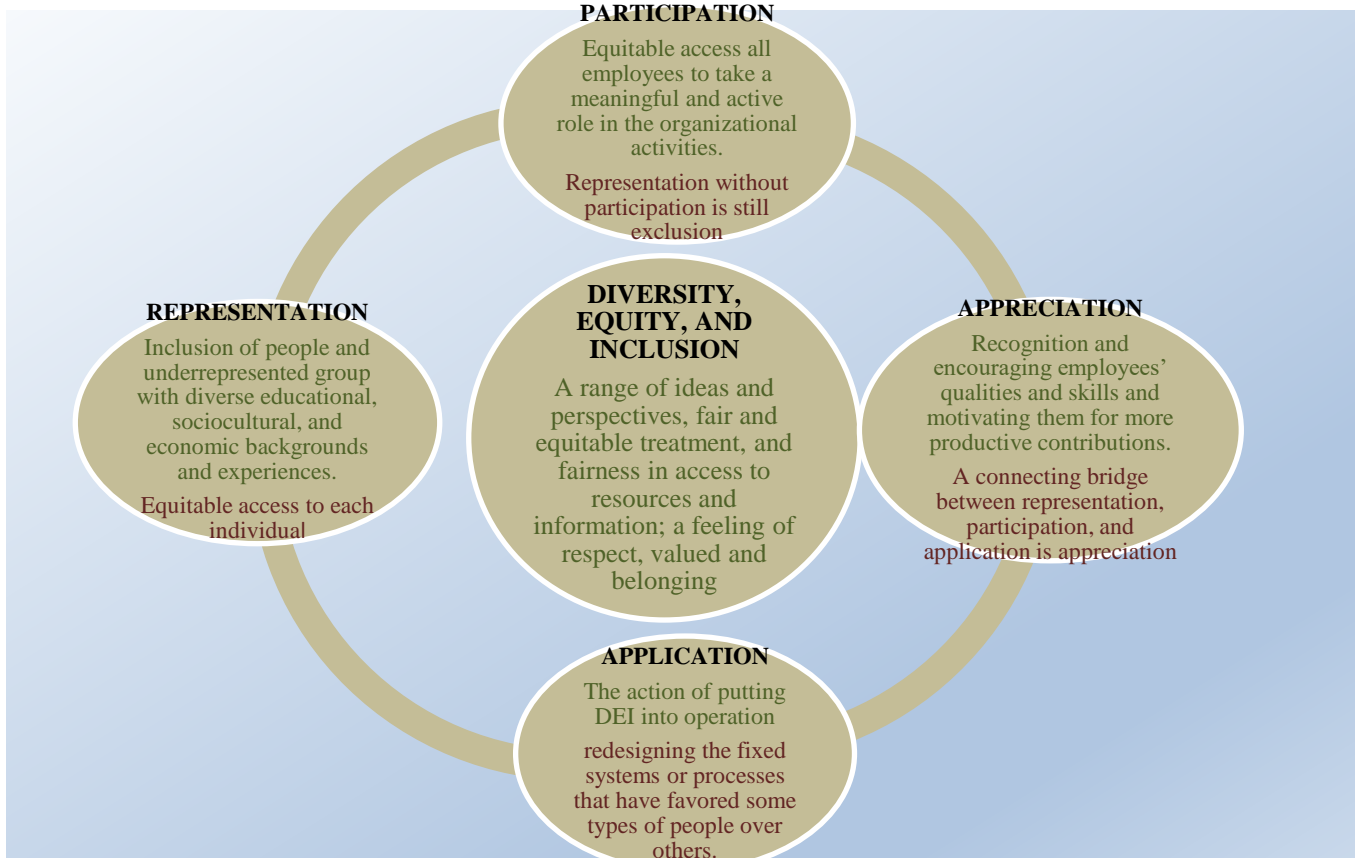
1. To gain insights into diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace.
2. To identify the role of DEI in enhancing the effectiveness of higher education institutions.

### **Four Core Values of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**



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It has been found that organizations that have diversity without ensuring equity and inclusion are unable to meet the DEI missions (Dei, 2016). To ensure positive working environment, fair treatment, equitable access to resource, and promote collaboration, organization need to develop practices that should ensure the application of all three components of DEI. So, practicing following DEI strategies can help



to see higher rates of employee satisfaction and productivity (Beach and Segars, 2022).

Figure 1. Four Core Values of DEI

### What are some important ways to contribute to DEI mission?

Zheng, (2024) and (2023) analyzed some impactful strategies to ensure DEI practice in the higher education institutions, Firstly, the active and fair recruitment and retaining of diverse faculty, student and staff are essential. This could be possible using scholarships, outreach programs, and support services tailored to underrepresented groups. Secondly, inclusive and reflective curriculum content that incorporate diverse histories, ideas, perspectives, and contributions from various cultures to ensure inclusiveness of global diversity. Thirdly, providing inclusive spaces on campus, such as safe zones, cultural centers, affinity groups, and nurturing a sense of belonging and community. Fourth is awareness and development on DEI topics for faculty, students,



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and staff to develop competences in handling diversity-related issues. Fifth is developing policies and advocacy efforts to address and remove the barriers within the institution are crucial, providing equitable access to institutional resources and opportunities. Finally, involving the broader community in academia through partnerships, committees, and outreach programs.

### **Impact of prioritizing DEI at workplace**

**Contemporary viewpoints:** When people from different backgrounds, culture, understanding, and nationalities come together to share their ideas and thoughts, they can bring a fresh array of perspectives to the table. This can lead to enhance productivity and better problem solving. Research has shown that diverse teams see a 60% improvement in decision-making abilities (CIPD, 2017).

### **Diverse talent**

Having DEI enable an organization to experience a diverse talent which contribute to creativity and productivity. Organizations having diversity report high performance as compare to those who have least diversity (Glassdoor, 2021). Thus, organizations that practice DEI will attract a wider range of candidates who are looking for an inclusive and progressive place to work. DEI initiatives help organizations to reach a wide pool of talents.

### **Quality decision making**

It is a crucial element of higher education institution to run and accomplish the organizational activities in a smooth way (Dudu, 2023). So, diversified and inclusive culture collaborates the diverse perspectives and ideas together to make quality decision making when it comes to solve problems and improve problem solving skills (Bagali 2018).

### **Increase Innovation and productivity**

Norman and Johnson (2022) concluded that diverse team inside the organization can promote innovation through collaboration and connection. Raja and Abirami (2022) found that diversification can assist the organization to promote collective efforts to face the challenge, create and innovate and solve organizational problems. A diversified team can think differently and can find out variety of ways to solve the problem.

### **Employee motivation and satisfaction**

Ensuring DEI motivate employee and increase job satisfaction. They get more motivated and committed to their job descriptions (Kruse, 2020). Further, employee engagement has a strong link with the inclusion of employee. Those who are more included in the organizational activities feel more committed.

**Better Performance.** Research has found that diverse representation and equitable treatment of employee can lead to better performance of workforce (McKinsey & Company, 2020). An equally treated employee can be more honest, committed, and



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motivated with their profession.

### **Attract agencies and customers**

Developing and inculcating the DEI policies and laws can attract the customers outside the organization. It encourages fair and inclusive system which motivate people to be part of that organization where everyone can get opportunity to develop their career (Dudu, 2023).

### **Positive impact on society**

Practicing DEI inside the organizations can give a positive message to the society and community. It can attract the stakeholders to contribute for continues development of the organization. So, they can develop a productive network with community members and can ensure the community involvement as well (McKinsey, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

The effective application of DEI principles and strategies are critical for creating productive workplaces in academic institutions that can encourage fair, inclusiveness, and innovation. By ensuring the consistent DEI implementation at all levels, organizations can promote employee morale, active engagement, and overall performance. Organizations that embrace these DEI values not only create a positive work atmosphere but also contribute to wider societal goals of equity and social justice. In higher education, DEI initiatives and policies are key to fostering a dynamic and supportive learning environment where all members, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to develop and succeed. The continuous integration of DEI strategies in academia will enable educational institutions to remain competitive in a local and globalized world, developing both internal and external growth and enhancing a more inclusive society.

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