Diversity 'Phyllophyte' in Institutions of Higher Learning

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Abstract
An exciting debate about diversity management, a subject of increasing interest over the last four decades in the business context, is even more relevant to institutions of higher education where diversity is present both in the supplier and customer side. The paper argues that the instrumental rather than normative argument that is presented in it will be based on the business case for diversity. Ordinarily the business case approach sees as a business opportunity and a means but not an end to attaining competitive edge making it possible to build creativeinstitutions (Cox & Blake, 1991; Pitts & Jarry, 2007).The paper further interrogates in nature-exploring diversity Management practices as embraced by institutions of higher learning, with special attention paid to Botswana context. The investigation employed dedicated focus group interviews, in-depth interviews and study of existing literature on diversity management. The adoption of triangulation meant that weaknesses and strength of each method offset the other solidifying the study findings. The paper also highlights the existing status quo in terms of diversity management in institutional contexts and further consolidates existing knowledge on diversity cultures across and within institutions. It further opens up an open –minded approach to dealing with unrelated and related aspects of work socially, economically, religiously and otherwise. The paper has just been written just when the COVID 19 pandemic effects and debates are ongoing. The findings of this paper have significant practical and research implication for scholars, academics, practitioners, policy makers and general populace. Given the fact that as individuals we construe meanings based on our values and beliefs the creation of an organizational culture which values diversity may rely on not only a shift in attitudes but an examination of underlying values.
Key words:Institutions of Higher learning, Compliance, Equality, Managing Diversity, inclusiveness, 'Phyllophyte'

1.1 Introduction

Lattimer (1998) maintains argues that embracing diversity by identifying, comprehending and valuing the differences among the employees is a major challenge. This is due to, according to the study a result of intensified competitive pressures, deregulation, progressively more

complicated and diverse clientele bases as well as the need to manage performance of individuals who are a part of a more diverse workforce. Existing studies on diversity management, strongly informed by my personal experiences over the 30 years I have worked in the education sector. It is very simplistic and easy to think of Tertiary institutions as islands – academic havens with little interaction with the greater world beyond. The present paper argues that tertiary institutions must represent all societies from nothing to thatthing *(every aspect of life representation)*.The paper further argues thatwhen everyone at an institution brings the same experience to a problem, there will be less ways to solve it, thus multi-representation of employees and student population is critical for the good and advancement of tertiary institutions –even societies and economies they represent A diverse institution body means a more diverse workforce too.One of the key and recurring issue on diversity is the need by leadership to acknowledge that diversity is a critical component of business development, so the same with institutions of higher learning (Yang & Konrad, 2011; Pitts &*Jarry*, 2007).The present of diverse perspectives and multiple viewpoints on diversity perspectives also contribute to a better understanding of issues. Hence in tertiary, where creation and transfer of knowledge are the paramount end-goals, a diversity of ideas and ways of thinking is a matter of direct relevance (Miller et al., 2008).It is important to highlight that the study of diversity to date has its limitations as most of it is limited to individual or single institutions (Yang & Konrad, 2011; Barbosa. Í., & Cabral-Cardoso, C. (2007).

Existing studies shows that diversity and diversitymanagement are no longer mere topical issues for debate in organizations but are now a reality to be confrontedExisting literature shows that no consensus has been reached for the present on the approaches to harnessing of differences in employees for organizational benefits (Pitts & Jarry, 2007; Yang & Konrad, 2011)Functionally moving on, this paper first attempts to not only define diversity in order to fit the context within which the study is made, but also present other heterogeneous and generic social tenets and business model for diversity in institutions of higher learning. Critical question requiring attention in this paper include among others; investigating the extent to which diversity practices are embedded in institutions of higher learning, examining the perceived positive effects of diversity and its management in higher education institution and developing a diversity management matrix relevant to institutions of higher learning. Clarity of diversity practices, with the advent of globalization and the shift in employment policies in the region- has become an issue of strategic importance both in institutions of higher learning and business fraternity.The paper first provides a brief account of the meaning of managing diversity and presents theories to diversity, and the related literature, followed by methodology, findings and conclusions tied to future research and the overall paper conclusion, with a reference list at the end of the paper.

1.2 Methodology

The The paper further interrogates in nature-exploring diversity Management practices as embraced by institutions of higher learning, with special attention paid to Botswana context. The

investigation employed dedicated literature review, empirical study that employed focus group interviews and in-depth interviews and all this complemented by observation and personal experience over the years I have worked in the education sector. Four institutions of higher education where sampled with 17 leaders and 15 students interrogated to capture on the diversification phenomenon. Relevant data on the institutional definition of diversity was sought along with evidence that the organizational structure supported diversity. Data and information were obtained from the research respondents who were Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, Rectors, Deans of Faculties and Directors of various sections.The adoption of triangulation meant that weaknesses and strength of each method offset the other solidifying the study findings. This is a way of assuring the validity of research through the use of a variety of methods to collect data on the same topic, which involves different types of samples as well as methods of data collection. I have to categorically clarify here that the purpose of triangulation is not necessarily to cross-validate data but rather to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon.A major focus was to collect data about whether diversity was referenced in the university's vision and mission and was both theoretically and practically grounded In all the surveyed Tertiary institutions in Botswana, the researcher also collected data about affirmative action, equal employment opportunities, languages, ethnic origin, programme diversification, religion, , committee structures, curriculum, training and diversity policies.

Table 1 Summary of Key issues addressed by diversity proponents

Area of diversity	Articulation
Internationalisation and its impact on diversity management	Management of diversity in relation to institutional autonomy is a critical practice and culture to be expedited and adopted as a culture. In this endeavor it is important to underline the role of governmental higher education policies and how it affects institutional autonomy and diversity management. In many developed economies, governmental policies are critical drivers and act as steering mechanisms for diversity.
Migration issues	Another critical component in the prevailing literature is the issue of migration. Studies conducted to date on impact of migration on

	diversity shows that migration dynamics within a country and across national boundaries cannot be underemphasized.
Traditional vs. non-traditional students and appropriate admission requirements	The present status quo of students coming from different diverse background s need to be respected .
Selection and integration of students from socially disadvantaged families.	Minority and disadvantaged students need to be taken aboard for effective learning to take place.
Entering students from the schooling system.	Students from the schooling environments needs to be acknowledged
Integrating and accommodating working people in a higher education environment	Migration issues to consider integration policies and weaving them together for the common good.
Gender/age/nationality/ethnicity/language/disability/religion/sexual orientation, andculture of staff and students as indices of diversity	Ethnic and racial group considerations –treatment must be the same across institutions
Assuring quality in relation to diversity management	Continuous improvement consists of incremental initiatives and innovations to achieve best practices.
Design of study programmes as a means of managing diversity	A diversified curriculum that takes into account the diversy cultires

Source: List created by the study (2022)

1.3 Literature Review

Literature on diversity management is abound but with less work has been done to explore diversity issues in institutions of higher education (Nepson, 2020, Quenchman, 2017). It is undeniable that several profound trends are shaping the labour markets of modern institutions. Researchers suggest that current workforce characteristics are radically different from what they were several decades ago (Cummings & Worley, 2009). It is important to zero in on various definitional perspectives as propounded by various authors in the context of their environments. Studies conducted by several researchers including Capozza and Brown (2000) show that a positive response to demographic changes and equity promotion in the workforce enhances

institutional performances and reputation. It is important to realize that actions that promote diversity for both academic and administrative staff are those that lead to a work environment that maximizes the potential of all employees whilst also acknowledging their unique contributions and differences (Capozza and Brown,2000).Other dimensions of diversity management come from researchers including Fujimoto et al. (2013) who defines diversity management as managerially-initiated programs and human resource management that seek to empower the diverse workforce by integrating social groups. Pitts (2009) focuses at diversity management as a comprehensive method that merges the affirmative action and diversity management programs. Daft (2010) defined diversity management as a creating suitable organizational climate that improve individuals and groups performance in the organization and minimize potential disadvantages.

Today's managers have found that employees do not put aside their cultural values when they come to work (Decenzo et al., 2010). The focus should , therefore, be to make organizations more accommodative to diverse groups of employees through integrative management approaches that includes effective handling of different lifestyles, family needs, and work styles of their employees.

1.3.1 Diversity and Diversity Management defined

Contemporary literature shows that diversity management is a relatively a young and new discipline, which originated out of a maze of many different historical currents and social issues globally. Contemporary literature on managing diversity emanates from various disciplines such as psychology, sociology and anthropology. In approaching this issue it should be understood that managing diversity is best perceived as a social construction of reality where various ideologies and perspectives are applied to the management of people.The contextual meaning of diversity in United States of America diversity management is considered right or wrong with "affirmative action" and "equal opportunity" in multi-cultural (ethnicity, race, gender, sexual preference, etc.) contexts. In most parts of Europe emphasis is on the management of language differences and national differences and this includes equal opportunities for women and disadvantaged minorities-both at work and in general communities.

Most academics (e.g. Cox, 1993; Ingley & van der Walt, 2003; Mor Barak, 2010; Milliken & Martins, 1996) defines and focus on the differences in attributes such as gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability and ethnic origin.

Another way to look at diversity management is to focus on its multi-disciplinary nature perspective. In that endeavor it is regarded as

> *'a strategic organizational approach to workforce diversity development, organizational culture change, and empowerment of the workforce. It represents a shift away from the activities and assumptions defined by affirmative action to management practices that are inclusive, reflecting the workforce diversity and its potential. Ideally it is a pragmatic approach, in which participants anticipate and plan for change, do not fear human*

differences or perceive them as a threat, and view the workplace as a forum for individual's growth and change in skills and performance with direct cost benefits to the organization" (Arredondo, 1996).

A study conducted by Kandola and Fullerton (1998) argue that the fundamental concept of Diversity Management presupposes that the human resource pool is made up of a diverse populace. In their conclusion they concurred that the foundation of diversity management lies on the principle that embracing and taming those differences would ultimately lead to a productive and motivating business/institutional environment in which a sense of being valued is felt in the workforce, an environment where talents are being utilized to the fullest and in which goals and objectives of the organization are met.The complexities with which diversity management is associated presuppose that as a consequence, in attempting to deal with this complexity, diversity management has to assume that people are able and willing to change themselves and their thinking, and thereby define and redefine diversity in a positive light.

1.3.2 Issues on diversity

The study conducted by (Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorklund & Parente, 2001),show that a diverse organizational environment, which applies also to education institutions, is more effective for the learning process than one that is less diverse or homogeneous . Terencde et al,(2001) further argues that greater tolerance and understanding have been endorsed among racially and ethnically diverse student groups, with implications that ethnical and racial diversity has a relatively positive effect on the learning settings for different students than otherwise. While this may not be conclusive, I position myself to defend the position while advocating for further studies.Let me quickly connect the view propounded by many researchers where diversity management is said to emanate from affirmative action (positive action) as opposed to negative one. Agocs and Burr (1996) noted that there have been claims that managing diversity affords a less questionable option to affirmative action. The following quote summarily provide a rich discourse on this assertion:

"Diversity Management is a corporate or managerially initiated strategy. It can be proactive and is based on operational reality to optimize the use and contributions of an increasingly diverse national workforce. Affirmative action is reactive and based on government law and moral imperatives. The improper or underutilizations of a diverse workforce is not a legal issue but it is a managerial and leadership issue" (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000, p. 88-89).

1.3.3 Theories underpinning the study-

Fundamentally it is critical that I highlight two very important pillars to the study and understanding of diversity management in organizations, institutions of higher education

included. The so called social justice theory lays a key foundation to the debate of diversity in organizations.

1.3.3.1 Social Justice Case for Diversity

Understandably, the social justice theory has its significance being the basis for the legal requirements related to diversity and equal opportunities. It is undeniable that social justice it has a historical importance and forms a part of the modern corporate social responsibility practices (Goodman, 2001) Fundamentally, Miller (1999), from his study on social diversity suggests that there are two kinds of equalities in social justice. First, distributive equality stands for an equal distribution of rights (or other benefits of this kind) for all people since this is what lies in the core of justice for society in general. Second, people within society treat and live with each other as equals, i.e. there are no hierarchical categories or classes established.Existing studies on social justice argues that this 'perspectives' is founded on the conviction that no one should be denied equal access to employment, and when employed should be provided with equal access to training and development. It is against this background that the social justice case also holds that no one person should be subjected to any form of discrimination, bullying and harassment, be it direct or indirect (CIPD, 2005). According to CIPD (2010) it is known to be the right to fair treatment, and the law is what sets minimum standards. Organizational justice refers to a situation with colleagues status at work, or the workers perceptions and justice recognition in the workplace, which ultimately affects their attitudes and behaviors at work (Steers & Porter, 2006).Existing literature shows that the historical roots of organizational justice go back to Adams' theory of equity, which is based on a basic assumption that individuals tend to judge justice by comparing their inputs to the outputs they receive, as well as comparing the ratio of inputs to their outputs with their peers (Luthans, 2008).

1.3.3.2 Business Case theory

Close look at contemporary studies on diversity shows that it was during the 1900's that diversity rhetoric was seen to accentuate the business case for workforce diversity (According to Kochan et al. 2002; CIPD, 2010). Today, there exist numerous studies that present support for the business case for diversity. A study conducted by Cox (1993) states that the business case for diversity can be made in a number of ways.Most researchers and scholars argue for the business case is built on the social justice arguments, it must be we cannot easily concur and concludethat the business case is a substitute for the social justice case. Simply put, diversity management makes good business sense. This statement is what is now recognized as the business case for diversity. It is thus important to point out that contrary to many views, the business case theory

for diversity is strong and undergoing constant changes as businesses too, are changing. Robinson and Dechant (1997), argues that the cost savings and winning the struggle for talent are regularly cited as arguments for diversity, especially since the early 2000.

Table 2 Business case determinants

Determinant	Business Case explained
Better Problem Solving	- People of diverse and different backgrounds are better placed to solve problems inan organization than people –all with one experience and same background. - Page (2007) in his book, The Difference, states that cognitive diversity is good at driving better problem solving and better solutions - If an organization understands and believes in the value of cognitive diversity, it must find means to bring them together. - Authors such as Richard, McMillan, Chadwick and Dwyer (2003) and Thomas (2005) note that diversity can be a knowledge resource for problem solving - Identify ways of bringing different thinking styles together and deal with the friction that may accompany that heterogeneity. - Robinson and Dechant (1997) hold that even though conflict may arise within diverse groups; they eventually perform better than homogenous groups in establishing problem views and propagating other solutions.
New Talent Pool	Organizations continuously endeavors to hire and retain top employees from the minority groups as well as the dominating ones (Robinson and Dechant ,1997)
Competitive advantage	Different stakeholders including Consultants, business leaders and academics have championed the 'valuing diversity' approach to diversity management and draw attention to the fact that that a diverse workforce that is managed well, is a potential source of competitive advantage for organizations (Cox & Blake, 1991). For the purposes of innovation, an organization/institution has or ought to acquire diversity, be proficient at finding differences and bringing it together in a healthy functional way.

	Optimizationof diverse workforce, creativity and innovation can be kindled (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). The new opening for competitive advantage is innovation which like diversity, tends to be misunderstood. Contrary to what many think, innovation occurs at intersections, when different things are brought together (Johansson, 2005).
Cultural Elements	DiMaggio (1997), Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv and Sanders (1990), Wilderom, Glunk and Maslowski (2000), and Gwakwa (2017) are increasingly aware of the impact of organizational culture In order to adjust retention numbers or employee engagement numbers, organizational culture is one of factors that must be understood –has a direct bearing on employee retention and financial incentives
Consumers	The consumer market for goods and services is becoming increasingly diverse The very demographics are shifting to the consumer populations. Not only are the numbers changing but also buying power is changing Niche markets can be exploited upon understanding - racial and ethnic minority populations of diverse cultures. In institutions learners from different racial and ethnic background makes up a significant ration to their enrolment figures

Source: Research compiled (2022)

I conclude from the business case scenario that it does not necessarily follow that the business case is a better case than social case nor does it have more benefits than its sister case. However, I still insist that the business case has more relevance to dealing with issues of diversity in institutions of higher learning.

1.4 Findings

The HEIs studied were found to manage diversity for purely ethical and social reasons, be motivated by a combination of moral considerations and perceived performance improvements, or completely culturally embrace diversity in the environment with less designated initiatives of diversity management, dependent on a range of variables present in each institution related to their perceptions, goals and environment.The studied literature reveals that most countries owe

their internal conflicts to intercultural misunderstandings and these have negative spillover effects into the workplace which in turn, have serious implications for research and practice.

The 21st human capital value diversity and tend to seek out employers with a strong record on equality and diversity but their expectations are not always met in practice. 75% of respondents agreed with the statement that "Universities in the country talk about diversity but all expressed dissatisfaction and feel opportunities are really not equal for all".Several authors from the studied literature who includes (Thomas, 2002, Winston, 2007,Argies,2019) posits that employment equity and equal opportunities fallacies must necessarily be embarked upon as a holistic process. It is important to consider not just numbers but also consider issues relating to training, development and competence transfer for those recruited into companies. Apparently most institutions understand diversity myopically with the management of culture predominating at the expense of other critical variables including age and culture as noted in 80% of the studied campuses.

Existing literature also shows that the concept of managing diversity creates a labor aristocracy where only a small section of the working class benefits. This came out in one of the studies conducted by Mogalakwe, (2008) who argued that foreign workers in Botswana have benefited more than local employees as they are paid gratuities, presumably in order to compensate them for the lack of job security, while citizens only benefits from and are locked in pension schemes.

A similar concern on diversity embracement is deduced from Ongori and Agolla (2007) who highlighted that efforts to embrace diversity in Botswana and South Africa have not been assimilated by some of the locals institutions as reflected in the use of the word *"makwerekwere"* refers to Africans of other nationalities, *"Makola"* refers to people of Indian origin and *"Makgoa"* refers to white people. This name calling practice which has been termed *bashism* by Rosaldo (2006) is very unfortunate and degrading and often makes others feel insecure,discriminated against, demotivated at work and undermines social cohesion in countries across the region.

Botswana Tertiary institutions (70%) acknowledge the realities of a country major languages (Setswana and Kalanga) society and a multilingual university environment composed of other languages spoken outside two major ones alluded to due to various students coming from within and and from abroad. Consequently, the language management approach of the institutions leave room for different strategies and models for the implementation of functional multilingualism with this overarching multilingual context. Present policy presents English as the official language of communication while other languages play secondary roles in building a diverse tertiary community. Findings show that the language policy 40% unwritten) and the language plan (totally unwritten) are linked to the institutional plan of the institution. Efforts to document diversity policies were visible in 50% of the sampled institutions (names concealed for ethical reasons).

Highly regulated education system provides challenges for inclusive practices in Botswana as evidenced from this study. This finding concurs with research conducted by (Makambe, 2017; Samboma, 2017) where they alluded that private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in

Botswana operate under a highly regulated higher education (HE) environment), making implementation of the curriculum a tenuous task for these institutions. This implies performance of institutions is affected due to the challenges alluded to.

On a negative note, the study through both its literature interrogation and empirical evidence from the studied institutions shows that there are negative outcomes that impede institutions overall health. 80% of the institutions sampled shows that by neglecting diversity and inclusion in the workforce, high levels of stress,tension among employees, complaints and legal actions are experienced.Three institutions were clear on the loss of productivity and peak performance, loss of good talent and stable retention and an inability to attract high quality talent-results of unclear policies and diversity management practices.

1.5 Contributions, Implications for Theory, Research, Practice

The findings of the study have both theoretical and practical implications. From a literature episteme perspective, the scientific contribution of the paper is a filled literature gap in the impact of diversity management on organizational justice while diversity management and organizational justice is popular research discipline in many countries; the question of the impact diversity management on organizational advancement remains relatively unexplored and stills an emerging issue in Botswana. The findings of the study show that diversity management embracement is an important factor for fostering organizational justice.

1.6 Recommendations

Issues emanating from this study present a lot of cracking resolutions which carefully need to be intertwined and crafted. I therefore, in pursuance of the emerging findings from this paper resolve to make a few recommendations for institutions of higher learning to adopt Policy presents appeared scarce in the five institutions that were investigated. The need to put in place, in black and white a Diversity Policy cannot be taken for granted. The policy is critical in providing a blue print. A culture of diversity practices and policies ordinarily presents commitment to ensure that all 'contexts' are implemented and represented thereto.

From the study, I observe and note that institutions in Botswana and elsewhere need to reconsider their diversity perspectives by investing heavily in diversity programs. The investment in diversity programs includes talent development, learning, performance management and retention of top talent to be future leaders in the organization. This is of course a culture shift that requires commitment and patience. It is therefore paramount to weave in diversity and inclusion in your organization's values, mission statement, vision, marketing plans and public image. A strong diverse culture that incorporates many different perspectives and outlooks should be built around all institutions of higher learning.

I also recommend that in order to retain and motivate academics, scientists and staff to work in our institutions itis critical, more critical for institutions to create a healthy and wealthy work environment taking care of people's personal and private needs. Diversity management policies and tools may represent a positive opportunity to develop conducive and respectful work places, where different cultures and religions are appreciated, equal opportunities rights policies are really developed and related physical handicaps are not a hindrance to professional etiquettes and development.

In addition to policy clarity, institutions are encouraged to:

- Create diversity mentoring programs
- Run regular workshops on diversity management across departments and faculties as well as communities
- Create diversity networks4
- Have independent budgets to support diversity initiatives

1.7 Future Research

It is important to acknowledge that the present research could serve as a useful guide for further research on managing diversity. However it would be quite interesting to empirically research on whether managing diversity is a matter of compliance or a socio-economic ploy aimed at advancing and improving productivity at work places. A continent wide study need to be commissioned to interrogate diversity practices in institutions of higher learning and assess how these are linked to innovation and creativity, and creating a knowledge society.

1.8 Conclusion

I cannot conclude this paper if we do not unconclude it by asserting that the globalization philosophy of many institutions and economies requires more interaction among people from diverse cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds. it is fundamentally quite clear to note that there are complexities and dynamics that are inherent within the managing diversity discourse. Thus accomplishing positive diversity initiatives calls for a situational and contextual flexibility/adaptability that affirms the values of a diverse workforce. It emerges from this study that In every system, public or private, no two organizations are the same as they Each have individual histories, different geographical localities and have different faculties, learners and staff- thus diversity is inevitable in institutions of Higher Education.This scenario has to be promoted at all levels of institutions. Evidence from various researches shows that well managed diversity and even having diverse work force leads to competency and multidimensional improvement in work culture and employees' personality development. I reiterate in this paper that the justification for promoting and advancing the cause for diversity in a multicultural institutional environment is based on the claim that policies among other ethos create more effective decision making processes and promotes creativity and innovation. A handful of studies

(Jupiter,2017, Arnold and Jameson,2019 ,including this present study (Ndlovu,2022), argues that managing a diverse workforce well can contribute to increased staff retention and productivity.Effective management and adoption of diversity, all employees have to assimilate and accommodate different beliefs and value systems as embedded in different cultures. I will conclude by embracing the outcome of the study by Dessler (2008,Nison,2018) who argued that practitioners and academics should be vigilant of the fact that concentration on managing diversity can be derailed by an over emphasis on cultural differences at the expense of the broader contextual factors such as individual identity and power relations . The study provides a clear direction of the need for adopting inclusion philosophy involves bringing together and harnessing diverse forces and resources in a way that is beneficial to all stakeholders within institutions. It must be emphasized in this paper that inclusion puts the concept and practice of diversity into real action by creating an environment of involvement, respect where the richness of differences, backgrounds and cultures are harnessed to create business value.

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