

CHAPTER 9

THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION: DIVERSITY AND MAINSTREAMING

Preamble

Diversity can be regarded as a value that implies the recognition, acknowledgment and acceptance of differences among human beings and groups. The variances are classically based on numerous human characteristics that possess a varying quality. These characteristics include, but are not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, body size, religion, political affiliations, disability and socio-economic status. For the purpose of creating an equitable and inclusive environment, it is imperative to embrace diversity. As a result, everyone feels respected, supported, valued and empowered. Diversity in academia can enhance the learning experience by exposing students to different perspectives, ideas and ways of thinking whilst preparing them to navigate a diverse and globalised world.

Entities such as organisations and business companies that adopt measures in diversity and inclusion construct an environment where employees feel recognized and valued, resulting in a heightened morale. These entities can therefore leverage the distinctive skills, experiences and perspectives of their employees to drive innovation and improve overall performance by embracing a diverse and inclusive workforce (Anil 2022b). Workforce diversity used to be limited primarily to skin colour and gender. Nevertheless, this concept has expanded and grown to include employees from wide and different backgrounds to include gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, social origin, socioeconomic status and religion amongst other things. It also includes hiring employees with a range of skills, abilities and disabilities (Anil 2022b; Lee 2020).

Diversity in academia

Diversity is not only a term but also a value that has gained increasing standing in the last few years, particularly within the field of higher education.

The importance of diversity in higher education is firmly rooted in the fundamental principles of equality and justice. As institutions seek to prepare their learners for professional and leadership roles in an ever increasing complex and interconnected world, they must create a learning environment that is inclusive, supportive and reflective of the diverse perspectives and experiences of their stakeholders - their students. This not only ensures that all students have equal access to educational opportunities, but it also enables universities and colleges to provide a more well rounded education that prepares students to succeed in a diverse and ever changing global landscape (Milem 2002).

One of the most important aspects of diversity in higher education is the equal **representation of gender**. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to promote gender equality in higher education. This includes the recruitment and retention of women in STEM fields and that of men in education and social wellbeing. While there have been some notable advances in the STEM area, much work remains to be done to address persistent gender disparities in academic and research opportunities.

Despite the growing number of women pursuing higher education, women continue to be persistently underrepresented in many STEM disciplines and particularly in the relevant senior leadership positions. To address this, universities and colleges must make an intensive effort to provide women with the support, resources and opportunities they need to prosper in these fields. This includes offering mentorship programmes, funding for research, for travel and flexible work arrangements that accommodate the needs of working mothers and other family caretakers.

Another aspect of diversity in higher education is the **representation of age**. As the population continues to age, universities and colleges must adapt to the needs and perspectives of an increasingly ageing student body. Universities must provide study programmes and resources to meet the needs of non-traditional students, including older adults who are returning to school after sometimes a long break, as well as older students who are seeking new career opportunities or re-skilling.

Several universities and colleges are now offering flexible courses, micro-credentials and online learning options to cater for the needs of older students; who may have other commitments such as work or family. Additionally, some institutions have established study programmes specifically designed to support these older students through counselling services, mentorship programmes and career development resources.

Another important aspect of diversity in higher education is the representation of **migrants and ethnic minorities**. In such a connected and globalised world, universities and colleges must be prepared to support and engage with students from a wide range of cultural, ethnic and national backgrounds. This includes providing resources and support such as language assistance and cultural orientation programmes for students who are new to the country, as well as resources and support such as student clubs and events for learners who are from different cultural backgrounds and far from home.

In fact many universities and colleges have established international student centres, units or offices that provide a wide range of services and resources to support these students. These units offer information and support on a wide range of topics, including immigration procedures, housing, transportation and whenever needed cultural adjustment. In certain institutions, international students are offered mental health support as loneliness leaves a toll. Additionally, some institutions have established partnerships with local organisations to provide additional support and resources to international students, such as mentorship programmes and internships.

Finally, the representation of **socio-economic backgrounds** is an important aspect of diversity in higher education. Universities and colleges have a critical role to play in creating opportunities for students from all social backgrounds and social strata, regardless of their financial means. Institutions may financial aid, scholarships, arrangements and grants to ensure that students from low-income backgrounds have access to higher education.

In brief, diversity in higher education has an impact on the individual, the institution and on society (Milem 2002). These benefits can be summarised as follows.

Diversity:

1. **encourages creativity and innovation** as it brings together different people with different perspectives and ideas;

2. enhances critical thinking since it exposes students to a variety of perspectives, helping them develop their mental abilities and challenge their working assumptions;

3. promotes equity and inclusion through an environment that supports and values the unique qualities and perspectives of every single individual;

4. supports student success as studies have shown that students from diverse backgrounds who attend schools and universities with a strong commitment to diversity are more likely to persist and graduate than their peers in less diverse environments (Stuart Wells et al., 2016);

5. prepares students for a global workforce in allowing learners to work with other students and staff from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives;

6. fosters cross-cultural understanding by providing students with opportunities to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds thus breaking down cultural stereotypes;

7. enhances the academic experience in providing students with the opportunity to learn from and engage with people from different and diverse backgrounds from their own;

8. increases representation of underrepresented groups in higher education, ensuring that more students have equal access to educational opportunities;

9. supports the development of a positive campus climate by fostering a sense of community. This helps reduce incidents of discrimination, prejudice and possibly harassment;

10. increases social and cultural awareness thus helping reduce prejudice and promote social and cultural harmony;

11. supports student retention particularly for students from underrepresented groups who may otherwise feel isolated or unsupported in a more homogenous and less diverse environment;

12. promotes interdisciplinary collaboration leading to new and innovative approaches to research and problem-solving;

13. improves the quality of research as diverse perspectives can lead to new and innovative approaches to research questions;

14. supports faculty recruitment and retention that can help to attract a diverse body of academic members of staff, which in turn can help to increase diversity among students;

15. finally supports the development of a more just and equitable

society by ensuring that all students have access to the right educational opportunities and all the resources they need to succeed.

Diversity in the workplace

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) have gained great importance in the corporate landscape globally. According to research conducted by **Glassdoor Economic Research**, there was a remarkable 37% rise in job openings related to DEI in the US, UK, France, and Germany in 2019 compared to the previous year (Zhao 2019).

Apart from being an ethical obligation, fostering an inclusive work environment also results in enhanced revenue growth and productivity (Hunt et al., 2015). In today's progressively interconnected and competitive world, prioritising diversity and inclusion in the workplace should not be neglected. It is therefore, crucial to prioritise the satisfaction of both employers and employees.

A diverse workforce, consisting of individuals from different backgrounds and experiences, leads to superior problem-solving, a broader range of perspective and ideas, innovation and creativity. Furthermore, organisations that prioritise diversity can attract and retain top talent from wider demographic groups, resulting in a more skilled and versatile workforce. Inclusive workplaces that value diversity also create a sense of belonging and acceptance among employees, leading to increased morale and engagement. Additionally, DEI management contributes to improved customer relations by reflecting the diverse customer base and enhancing cultural understanding and communication. These companies are seen as socially responsible, thus improve their brand reputation and possibly their customer loyalty. Moreover, embracing diversity allows companies and other organisations to tap into new markets and new customer segments, fostering business growth and increasing their market share. Diverse teams also cultivate a learning culture, exposing employees to different perspectives, experiences and ideas, thus enhancing personal and professional development. In valuing inclusion such organisations invest and showcase equal opportunities for all employees, leading to higher satisfaction, loyalty and reduced turnover. Lastly, embracing diversity and inclusion helps organisations comply with legal and ethical obligations related to equal employment opportunity and non-discrimination (Anil 2022a).

The benefits of diversity in the workplace

The benefits of embracing and prioritising diversity in the workplace are

numerous and can be reviewed as follows (Anil 2022b; Lee 2020; Hunt 2015; Zojceska 2018).

By hiring people from diverse backgrounds, nationalities and cultures, companies gain continuous access to new perspectives, resulting in better and quicker problem-solving, increased productivity and improved decision-making abilities. Diverse teams consider facts more thoroughly, typically leading to more innovative and data-driven decisions.

Moreover, a diverse workforce attracts a wider talent pool, as employees today seek not only a well-paying job but also a space where they can grow and be challenged and ultimately working in a place where they feel accepted. Embracing diversity is particularly appealing to millennials and Gen Z; the most diverse generations in history. By embracing diversity in background, thought, ethnicity and other compelling factors, companies can tap into this broader talent pool and find the best candidates on the market.

Workplace diversity also fosters and nurtures more innovation. Homogeneous teams tend to have similar thought and reasoning patterns, life experiences and problem-solving skills, limiting their ability to generate more creative solutions. On the other hand, a diverse group of employees brings at the table, unique perspectives that can lead to breakthroughs in thought and ideas. Companies that score well on indicators of diversity tend to be more innovative and adaptive. Additionally diversity in the leadership, leads to more effective risk management (He and Kaplan, 2017). A diverse political leadership in fact is more inclined to change proposed policies and decisions previously taken (Franceschet et al., 2009).

Creating an inclusive work environment where employees see a representation of various cultures, backgrounds and ways of thinking leads to increased employee performance. When individuals feel comfortable being themselves at work, they are happier and therefore more productive. In contrast, a strong, homogeneous culture can stifle and suffocate natural cognitive diversity and hinder employees from producing their best work. It is however, crucial to ensure that no unconscious biases seep into performance processes so as to truly tap into the benefits of diversity.

Furthermore, diversity has a direct impact on a company's profitability. Ethnically and culturally diverse companies are more likely to be successful, with higher financial returns compared to their non-diverse counterparts. Hunt

et al. (2015) have shown that companies with diverse management teams and executive boards outperform industry averages. Diversity in the workplace additionally enhances brand reputation, as employers who accept and accommodate all backgrounds are seen as good companies, attracting top talent.

Additionally, a diverse workforce contributes to reduced employee turnover rates. Inclusive workplaces, where unique contributions are recognized and acknowledged, boost employee satisfaction, comfort levels and self-esteem. Diverse teams have higher morale, are more effective, innovative and committed thus leading to lower turnover rates.

Hence embracing diversity in the workplace brings numerous advantages. It leads to new perspectives, a wider talent pool, increased innovation, better employee performance, higher profits, and reduced employee turnover (Lee 2020). In recognising the value of diversity and fostering an inclusive environment, organisations can thrive and succeed in today's interconnected and globalised world.

The Challenges of diversity in the workplace

Promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace is a substantial commitment for organisations nowadays. Nevertheless, it is not without its challenges. Several key obstacles need to be tackled to ensure successful implementation and foster a truly inclusive environment (Lee 2020, Anil 2022b).

1. Customising diversity practices in line with the organisational goals

Implementing diversity proposals requires altering them to fit your company's objectives. Instead of blindly adopting practices from other workplaces, consider your own existing strengths and focus on areas in line with your culture and goals. Conducting a diversity-focused survey can help identify gaps and guide your resource allocation to ensure meaningful impact.

2. Bridging the gap between design and implementation

Designing a comprehensive diversity programme is important, but it must be effectively managed to make a difference. Securing leadership buy-in and ensuring that your team is prepared and supported is crucial for successful implementation. Consider appointing a dedicated Head of Diversity and Inclusion – a diversity manager - or exploring creative solutions like rotation programmes to hold the organisation accountable (He and Kaplan 2017) and drive results.

3. Training managers for diversity success

The success of diversity measures relies on the cooperation of everyone within the company, especially of managers who play a significant role in the implementation of these initiatives. Investing in your management training helps them understand the importance of diversity goals, their expected behaviour towards employees and the potential impact of their actions on the overall company culture. Partnering with companies that specialise in diversity training can provide valuable support in this field.

4. Addressing bias and promoting inclusivity

Humans are prone to bias! This can obstruct inclusivity and erect barriers at the workplace. However, increasing diversity may lead to a rise in bias, discrimination, and possibly harassment. Hence it is essential to address implicit/unconscious biases through training. This training should additionally promote awareness and understanding any common pitfalls. While bias may still exist, being aware of it and taking those necessary steps to avoid or tackle it can make a significant difference in nurturing inclusion.

5. Overcoming internal resistance and fostering understanding

Not everyone may be receptive to the idea of workplace diversity and this may lead to internal resistance. It is important for leaders and managers to continuously educate and form employees about the reasons behind diversity efforts of the company. Any conflicts or lack of respect should be addressed. Encouraging respect, acknowledgement and comprehension of divergence through diversity training can help build the required acceptance and collaboration among employees.

6. Effective communication across language barriers

Language and communication barriers can impede, the much desired, effective collaboration and productivity. Providing language training for non-native speakers and hiring bilingual or multilingual employees can help bridge these gaps and improve the overall communication within the team.

7. Navigating cultural misunderstandings

Blending individuals from different cultures can lead to repeated misunderstandings. Fostering understanding and respect for cultural differences can help mitigate these. In promoting a culture of acceptance and providing education on diverse cultures, team members can offer each other the benefit of the doubt so as to work together more harmoniously.

8. Promoting gender equality in the workplace

Gender inequality remains a major issue, with women facing challenges in career advancement and representation in leadership positions (Gascoigne et al., 2022). Despite the course of a century since women achieved the right to vote and the first election of women to parliament in certain EU nations, evidence reveals an ongoing under-representation of women in politics and in the public spheres. Such disparity is evident in the European Parliament, the national parliaments, governmental bodies, and the local assemblies (Shreeves and Boland 2021). In addressing this requires proactive efforts to eliminate bias and create opportunities for women to thrive at all levels of the organisation. Hence clearly defining the organisation's commitment to gender equality, individuals who do not align with these values may self-select out, allowing for a more inclusive environment.

Mainstreaming diversity

Mainstreaming can be understood as the process of incorporating perspectives, needs and experiences of individuals and groups who have traditionally been excluded or marginalised into the dominant culture or group. Mainstreaming, therefore, involves recognising and valuing the diversity of human experiences. It also means actively working to challenge the prevailing power structures that prolong exclusion. The process of mainstreaming seeks to create a more representative society by promoting equity and social justice through the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences. This can be achieved through the adoption of policies, practices and systems that prioritise and revolve around the needs and voices of the underrepresented groups. In an academic context, mainstreaming can involve rethinking the curriculum, research projects and other relevant institutional practices to ensure that they reflect the diversity of human experiences thus creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students.

The following reasons support the idea that mainstreaming diversity in a societal context is advantageous (Milem 2002; Anil 2022b; Lee 2020).

1. A diverse group of people **enhances creativity and innovation** as the members provide different perspectives, experiences and knowledge.
2. Incorporating a variety of viewpoints into the decision-making process results in **more informed, well-rounded decisions** that consider the needs and interests of a larger spectrum of people.
3. Mainstreaming diversity helps **fostering a more inclusive and accepting**

society where everyone is valued, appreciated and has equal opportunities to participate, prosper and succeed.

4. Exposure to diverse cultures, languages and traditions **helps broaden one's understanding, cultural competence** and appreciation of different ways of life. This definitely helps cut misunderstandings and conflict.

5. Diverse communities and workplaces have proven to be more productive and profitable - absolutely **boosting economic growth** (Hunt et al., 2015).

6. Diversity helps break down barriers between different groups as it **promotes social cohesion** instead. This allows space for a sense of shared identity and community.

7. The same mainstreaming process helps safeguard and **promote a society where everyone is treated fairly and has access to equal opportunities**, irrespective of their background or identity.

8. It also serves as an important aspect of promoting and **protecting human rights**, including the rights of minorities and sidelined groups.

9. It is important for people to have an understanding and appreciation of different cultures and perspectives to succeed and **be better prepared in a globalised world** and its economy.

10. When diversity is mainstreamed, it helps **reduce prejudice and discrimination** by challenging stereotypes, promoting mutual respect and common understanding.

Consequently we can apply these arguments in the context of academia and research institutions to compile and understand the following benefits to students and staff of these institutions. The studies quoted above support the following points.

1. Improves academic performance. A diverse and inclusive learning campus space may help students feel more engaged and motivated. This typically leads to improved academic performance, higher retention and higher graduation rates.

2. Enhances critical thinking. Exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences helps students develop and hone better critical thinking skills and learn to approach problems from several and multiple angles.

3. Increases cultural competency. Mainstreaming diversity in academia and research settings can help students develop a deeper understanding of different and diverse cultures and hence help improve their ability to navigate a wide and diverse world.

4. Promotes research and scholarship. Including different perspectives in research can lead to more comprehensive and more accurate results thereby promoting a more thorough understanding of complex issues.

5. Promotes social justice. Mainstreaming diversity in academia can help promote social justice by challenging those power structures that maintain inequality. The due process additionally creates opportunities for minority groups to succeed.

6. Prepares students for a diverse workforce. In today's globalised economy, it is more important than ever for students to have experience working in diverse environments and mainstreaming diversity in academia can surely help in this preparation.

7. Fosters a sense of community. Mainstreaming diversity on campus helps create a sense of community among students and staff by promoting mutual respect, understanding and in creating opportunities for dialogue and collaboration.

8. Supports student wellbeing. Creating a supportive and inclusive learning campus space can help students feel more connected within and with the others, more valued and supported, thus leading to an improved mental health and with a sense of belonging.

9. Increases cultural capital. Exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences can help students develop cultural capital or the knowledge and skills needed to navigate diverse social and cultural contexts in preparation for professional careers.

10. Promotes lifelong learning. Mainstreaming diversity helps fostering a culture of lifelong learning by encouraging students to continue exploring new ideas, perspectives and experiences beyond their formal education at university.

Applying mainstreaming to specific areas of study

Let us now apply the ideas and concepts illustrated above to particular areas of study that typically exhibit gender underrepresentation of some sort.

(i) Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines

Diversifying STEM curricula. Mainstreaming diversity in STEM can involve integrating diverse perspectives and experiences into course materials and assignments, including readings and case studies that highlight contributions by underrepresented groups in science and technology. It is in fact, particularly useful to provide material related to successful women in STEM subjects.

Increasing representation in STEM fields. Mainstreaming diversity in these disciplines, can involve developing targeted recruitment and retention programmes to increase the participation of underrepresented groups, such as women. It is also profitable to provide mentorship and support to help students from diverse backgrounds to complete their studies successfully.

Addressing bias and stereotypes. Mainstreaming diversity in STEM courses can involve addressing implicit bias and stereotypes that may possibly limit the opportunities available to individuals from underrepresented groups, like people with disability, say in engineering studies, hence promoting awareness and understanding of different cultural norms and practices.

Encouraging interdisciplinary research. Mainstreaming diversity in STEM can involve promoting interdisciplinary research that combines perspectives and expertise from a variety of fields, including the social sciences and other humanities, so as to address complex societal challenge.

Creating inclusive STEM environments. Mainstreaming diversity in STEM subjects can involve the creation of inclusive environments so as to promote a sense of belonging for individuals from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, this can include the provision of resources and the necessary support for students and faculty to promote a culture of respect and inclusion in the classroom and/or the laboratory.

(ii) Education and Pedagogy

Incorporating diverse perspectives into teacher education. Mainstreaming diversity in these faculties can involve incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences into the teacher education programmes. These measures should include courses and training on culturally responsive teaching and classroom management strategies that support students from diverse backgrounds.

Promoting inclusive teaching practices. Mainstreaming diversity here can involve promoting inclusive teaching practices, like creating warm classroom environments that are welcoming and supportive for all students. For this reason it is important to use inclusive language.

Addressing issues of equity and access. Mainstreaming diversity in the faculty of education/pedagogy can involve addressing issues of equity and access, through the provision of resources and support to students from minority groups and by having policies and practices in place that promote educational equity.

Engaging with diverse communities. Mainstreaming diversity in the faculties of education and pedagogy can involve engaging with diverse communities, including partnering with particular organisations and other local schools promoting cultural exchange and to support the needs of underrepresented students, like males.

Integrating diverse perspectives into research and scholarship. Mainstreaming diversity in the faculty of pedagogy can involve integrating diverse perspectives into research and scholarship, including conducting surveys that explore the experiences of underrepresented students, typically male and examining the impact of cultural and societal factors on the teaching and the learning outcomes.

(iii) *Social Wellbeing*

Diversifying curricula. Mainstreaming diversity in faculties for social wellbeing can involve expanding and differentiating the curricula to include a range of topics and perspectives that reflect the experiences and needs of diverse communities, including those that are often underrepresented, like male students or professionals in social work and related fields.

Increasing representation in leadership and decision-making roles. Mainstreaming diversity in the social wellbeing faculties can involve increasing representation of people from diverse backgrounds in the leadership and the decision-making roles, including faculty, staff and administration, to help ensure that policies and practices are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs.

Providing culturally responsive training and education. Mainstreaming diversity in these faculties can involve the provision of training and education that is both culturally responsive and relevant to the experiences and the needs of diverse populations, including those from minority, marginalised and underrepresented communities.

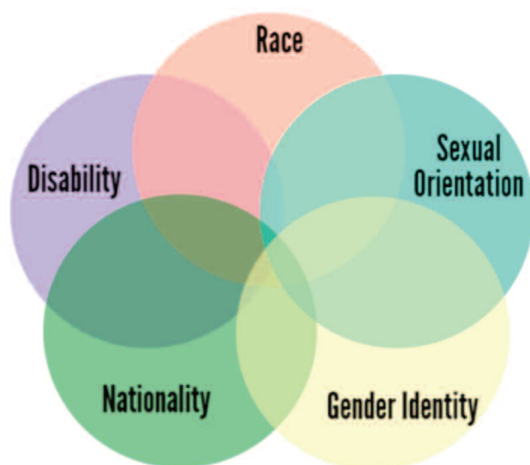
Promoting equity and social justice. Mainstreaming diversity in the faculties for social wellbeing may also involve promoting equity and social justice by addressing issues of discrimination, privilege, oppression and marginalisation whilst advocating for policies that promote social inclusion and empowerment.

Creating inclusive and supportive environments. Mainstreaming diversity in faculties for social wellbeing can additionally involve creating inclusive and

supportive environments that promote a deep sense of belonging for students and staff from diverse backgrounds by providing resources and support to help students succeed and promoting a culture of respect.

DIVERSITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a concept, an idea that recognizes **how different aspects and characteristics of the identity of a person**, such as their race, gender, sexuality, religion, age, class, ability amongst others, intersect and **interact with one another to create unique experiences of privilege and/or oppression**.



“Intersectionality is the idea that multiple identities intersect to create a whole that is different from the component identities. In other words, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” - Kimberlé Crenshaw, American civil rights advocate and scholar who coined the term *intersectionality* in 1989.

In the context of diversity, equality and inclusion, intersectionality stresses the importance of recognizing and valuing the diversity of individuals and/or groups in order to understanding how multiple forms of discrimination and marginalisation can impact them.

The importance of an intersectional approach

Understanding intersectionality helps us better understand the experiences of people who belong to several marginalised groups. It helps us gain awareness on how those experiences are different from those of individuals who only belong to a homogenous group. A person who is both a woman and black may face different forms of discrimination than a white woman or a black man.

Working to create a more inclusive and equitable society, we encourage an intersectional approach as it is particularly useful as it truly values and respects the unique diversity of every person. Promoting a culture of solidarity and allyship may be involved to implement practices that account for the variety of experiences of minority groups.

The following models may show how intersectionality can help us understand social inequality.

(i) Racial or ethnic background

Intersectionality can offer a window onto through which we understand the unique experiences of discrimination and oppression faced by individuals who belong to several racial or ethnic groups. Someone who is both black and LGBTQ+ may experience discrimination not only for their race, but also for their sexual orientation or gender identity leading to a composite effect of oppression.

The experience of Marsha P. Johnson, a Black transgender woman and an activist can help us appreciate more the concept. Johnson was a prominent figure in the Stonewall uprising and fought endlessly for LGBTQ+ rights. Johnson faced discrimination and marginalisation on two counts: as a black person and as a transgender woman. Her intersectional identity and her activism helped shed light on the particular experiences of discrimination and violence faced by individuals who belong to several marginalised groups.

In Germany, Afro-German women face discrimination based on their gender but also for their racial or ethnic background. These women are quite often subject to stereotyping, racism and sexism and face unique barriers in accessing education, employment and even healthcare. One prominent Afro-German activist is May Ayim, who wrote extensively about her experiences as a Black woman in Germany and helped raise awareness about intersectionality in the country.

(ii) Gender identity and racial background

A transgender woman, who is also a black, may face discrimination not only for her gender identity, but also for her race and/or ethnicity, leading to a specific experience of oppression that is different from that of a white transgender woman or a cisgender black woman.

In this respect let us consider the experience of Laverne Cox, a transgender woman and an actress who is also black. Cox has spoken extensively about the

unique challenges faced by black transgender women, who very often face high rates of violence, discrimination and poverty. Her advocacy and her visibility as a black transgender woman have helped raise awareness about intersecting forms of oppression faced by individuals who belong to several marginalised groups.

In Europe, the experiences of Muslim women who wear the hijab or other forms of religious clothing need to be taken into consideration. These women may face discrimination not only for their gender, but also for their belief and ethnic identity. In France, a ban on wearing religious symbols in public schools has been criticised for disproportionately affecting Muslim girls and women who wear the hijab. Intersectional feminist activists, such as Saida Grundy and Sara Salem, have stressed the need to recognize the unique experiences of Muslim women in the fight for gender equality.

(iii) Age

Intersectionality can additionally help us understand the experiences of individuals who face discrimination based on their age as well as other factors, such as race together with gender. An older woman who is also a black person may experience ageism as well as racism and sexism, leading to a compounding effect of discrimination and marginalisation based on multiple intersecting identities.

Grace Lee Boggs, was a Chinese American philosopher and an activist who fought for civil rights and labour rights throughout her life. Boggs faced discrimination based on her race as well as her age, but this intersectional identity also gave her a unique perspective on the struggle for social justice. In her later years, she focused on intergenerational activism and worked in bridging the gap between older and younger activists in the fight for social change.

Other examples can be found in Europe in the experiences of older women, in their 50s and 60s who are seeking employment but may face ageism as well as sexism and may be more likely to experience long-term unemployment and poverty. Intersectional feminist activists and scholars in Ireland, such as Helen Russell, have advocated for policies that address the unique challenges faced by older women in the workforce.

Intersectionality and the Gender Pay Gap

It is also important to apply the concept of intersectionality in relation to the gender pay gap and to recruitment. In turn, this helps us appreciate that

gender is not the only factor impacting on these issues. In realising that individuals can face several forms of discrimination and oppression, we can thus develop better policies and strategies to address the specific needs and experiences of diverse groups.

Other factors such as race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender variance can also play a role in influencing the pay. Black women very often face greater pay disparities than white women due to the intersecting effects of racism and sexism. Acknowledging and addressing these multiple forms of discrimination help us develop more comprehensive and effective strategies for closing the gender pay gap.

Similarly, applying an intersectional lens to recruitment can help us understand that gender is not the single factor affecting who gets employed or not. Other factors such as race, ethnicity, class and education, disability and/or cultural background can also impact an individual's access to employment opportunities. Unfortunately black women are often underrepresented in leadership positions due to the intersecting effects of racism and sexism in hiring and promotion practices.

Intersectionality at the service of society

Governments can take several tangible steps to apply the principle of intersectionality and reduce inequality. The following are just some ideas how this can be done.

States may **collect and analyse disaggregated data** that captures the experiences of diverse groups. This helps identify patterns of discrimination and disadvantage that may be overlooked when data is collected on a single dimension, such as gender. In this case, collecting data on the intersection of gender and race can help identify pay disparities that affect black women, for instance. Using such data to inform public policy, administrations can ensure that their efforts are more targeted and effective.

Governments may **develop targeted policies and programmes** addressing the specific needs and experiences of different groups. Governments could provide funding for programmes that support, say, black women in entering and advancing in male-dominated fields, such as science, engineering and technology. States can also develop policies that address the unique trials faced by older women in the workforce, due to ageism and discrimination. In this way, governments can ensure that their efforts to reduce inequality are

more equitable and effective. Policies may be developed in consultation with civil society and trade unions to ensure a more effective targeting and thus give more positive results.

Finally, states can **engage in intersectional advocacy and outreach** raising awareness about the importance of intersectionality to promote policies addressing discrimination affecting minority groups. This can include partnering with non-governmental organisations to develop and implement policies that reflect the needs and priorities of these minorities. Moreover states can also work to build alliances across different communities promoting shared goals and building solidarity.

In the matter of reducing pay gaps, already a complex issue in itself, governmental administrations may require a multi-faceted approach. Hereunder are some specific steps that governments can take to reduce pay gaps.

1. Enact and enforce strong pay equity laws that require employers to pay employees fairly for their work, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity or any other characteristics. Governments can oblige employers to conduct regular pay equity analyses to identify and address any pay disparities that exist within their system.

2. Increase transparency around the pay by requiring employers to disclose salary ranges for the different positions within and to report on their efforts to resolve pay gaps. This can help to ensure that employees are paid fairly and that pay disparities are identified and tackled in a timely manner.

3. Promote flexible work arrangements like teleworking, flexible schedules and job-sharing allowing employees to balance off work and family duties. This helps lessen the impact of gender-based pay disparities that can result from women taking time off or working part-time to care for children or other family members. It can also be helpful for persons with disability who might need to take breaks frequently due to health reasons.

4. Provide training and education to employers, employees and trade unions on the importance of pay equity and how to identify and address pay gaps. In this way, such training helps raise awareness about the issue and ensure that employers have the knowledge and the tools they need to address these gaps within their workplace.

5. Increase representation of underrepresented groups, such as women

and other people from minority groups, in leadership positions and in higher-paying industries. These also need to be represented in trade unions. Such practice can help address the root causes of pay gaps and promote greater diversity and inclusion in the workforce.

Overall, reducing pay gaps demands a prolonged and coordinated effort from governments, employers, trade unions and even employees. These efforts may contribute to help ensure that all employees are paid fairly and have equal opportunities at work.

The role of universities and research institutions

Institutions of Higher Education, such as universities, play a decisive role in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in society. As seats of knowledge generation and dissemination, universities have the responsibility to not only educate but to additionally contribute towards shaping public discourse and policy on issues of social justice.

In relation to an intersectional approach, universities can promote and advance intersectionality through a variety of means. Here are a few examples:

1. Curriculum development that integrates intersectional methods across all disciplines and that represents a wide variety of perspectives. This can include:

- a.* using a variety of material and examples in the courses, such as literature written first-hand by and about people from different cultural, ethnic, gender, disability and socio-economic backgrounds;
- b.* fostering inspiring conversations and discussions in the classroom on topics such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, disability and social justice whilst creating a safe space for all students to express their thoughts and experiences;
- c.* designing courses and programmes that specifically address intersectionality and social justice issues, such as a course on “Intersectionality and Inequality” or a programme on “Social Justice Studies”.

2. Research that addresses problems of intersectionality and social justice. This can involve:

- a.* supporting and funding research on the experiences of minorities and promoting research collaboration across disciplines and with different partners within the community

b. integrating an intersectional lens in research design and analysis. Exploring how the intersection of gender, race and socio-economic status impacts certain outcomes like health may do this. Additionally one may examine how certain policies impact varied communities differently

c. encouraging the use of intersectional frameworks in research, such as using the “matrix of domination” analysing how various forms of oppression intersect in the experiences of marginalised communities.

3. Campus culture and policies need to be developed to build a fair, equitable and inclusive setting reflecting an intersectional approach to accommodate a wider student and academic body. Addressing issues such as campus climate, discrimination and sexual harassment, whilst promoting diversity and inclusion activities and engaging with marginalised communities in decision-making processes, may prove to be helpful.

Generally, universities have the potential to be important agents of change in promoting diversity and equality through an intersectional approach. This kind of teaching and research strategy can help universities foster an environment that is more fair and inclusive for both students and faculty, as well as contribute to the creation of knowledge that is pertinent and sensitive to the needs and experiences of diverse populations.

SUGGESTED METHODS OF INVESTIGATION WITH EXAMPLES

Research methods that may be employed in studies related to the field of diversity and intersectionality, include but are not limited to:

- Quantitative research based on questionnaires and surveys
- Qualitative research based on interviews and focus groups
- Literature review
- Expert interviews
- Researching legal texts
- Statistical analysis

Examples of Research in the Area of Diversity

Study 1. Race in the UK workplace: The intersectional experience is an article and collaborative effort by Sundiatu Dixon-Fyle, Klaudia Gegotek, Tania Holt, Tunde Olanrewaju, Dara Olufon, Nyasha Tsimba, and Ammanuel Zegeye, representing views from the McKinsey Institute for Black Economic

Mobility. This research was carried out in the United Kingdom between 2022 and 2023.

The focus of the article are Black, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani groups (hereafter referred to as BBP). The authors found that BBP people in the United Kingdom were the furthest behind on pay and labour force participation.

Data analysis was carried out on the UK Annual Population Survey spanning 2012 to 2022. To approximate the experiences of the BBP population in the labour market, the researchers conducted a survey of 2,758 respondents across all ethnicities, with an additional boost for the BBP population. To obtain a view on the lived experiences of BBP women and provide a preliminary assessment of the field-tested diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) solutions, the authors conducted interviews with nearly a dozen HR executives and everyday workers who agreed to share some of their experiences and lessons learned on DEI efforts. The analysis relied on several data sources, which were augmented with proprietary research in the form of surveys and in-depth interviews.

The article presents the following results: i) Two-thirds of companies have high female representation, but only 50% have high ethnic-minority representation, ii) BBP women are more vulnerable and fare worse than White women and BBP men across pay and labour participation, iii) younger BBP generations are driving improvements in pay and participation, iv) young BBP women now earn as much as or more than White men of the same age, v) BBP women aged 16 to 25 are securing more higher-paying jobs than they were a decade ago, vi) BBP women aged 26 to 55 have seen little progress in their participation in higher- and lower-paying occupations, vii) Black women nearing the end of their careers are more likely to rent than own their home, viii) White women retire earlier than BBP women overall, while Black women keep working the longest and ix) achieving pay and representation parity for BBP women could increase their average annual salary by nearly 30%.

Particularly interesting is how the article explores four actions on how UK companies can make progress on racial equity in the workplace. This study can be used as a form of monitoring and/or evaluation.

- **Source:** <https://www.mckinsey.com/bem/our-insights/race-in-the-uk-workplace-the-intersectional-experience?cid=other-eml-dre-mip-mck&hlkid=6a56712a00854236947e707c3dd93b31&hctky=12660722&hdpi=d=c73d766a-9eef-4f74-bcea-d7b7295192e0>

Study 2. The intersectional effect of age and gender on the work-life balance of managers is a study carried out in the United States of America with data being collected between 2010 and 2015. Although there is a small body of empirical research on the working lives of managers, both the popular media and the academic literature tend to ignore the distinct ways that role identities such as age and gender intersect to create a complex work-life interface for diverse managers. This gap is especially surprising considering that managerial roles are defined by unique demands and expectations that likely intersect with the differential life course shifts experienced by men and women, which has the potential to create specific challenges across the work and life domains of managers. The current study aims to address this gap through an intersectional examination of the non-linear effects of age and gender on the work-life balance of managers.

A sample of 421 managers in the USA was involved in the study. Participants included managers from the United States of America who took part in a development programme administered by a large leadership development firm within the USA.

The authors apply statistical tests of the incremental validity of non-linear interaction terms to examine the complex relationship between age, gender and work-life balance. Results support a non-linear U-shaped main effect of age on leader work-life balance. This effect is moderated by gender, however, with a non-linear U-shaped effect of age on work-life balance being supported for male managers – with female managers displaying no effect of age on work-life balance.

Particularly interesting is that based on these findings, the authors highlight the need for increased availability of flexible schedules and employee empowerment for managers as well as general employees. This study can be used as a form of evaluation.

- **Source:** Thrasher, G.R., Wynne, K., Baltes, B. e Bramble, R. (2022). *The intersectional effect of age and gender on the work-life balance of managers*, Journal of Managerial Psychology, 37(7), 683-696.
<https://doi-org.ejournals.um.edu.mt/10.1108/JMP-03-2021-0169>

Study 3. Inequity in disability pension: an intersectional analysis of the co-constitution of gender, education and age is a study that was carried out in Western Norway around 2017. Social position, education, gender and increasing

age are all identified as important risk factors for disability pension. This study takes an intersectionality approach and examines their co-constitution, in relation to inequity in disability pension.

The population involved in the study included 22,203 middle-aged men and women that had participated in the community-based Hordaland Health Study, Western Norway (1997-1999). The participants were categorised in four exposure groups: higher educated men, higher educated women, lower educated men and lower educated women. The population eligible for the study were participants in the Hordaland Health Study (HUSK; N = 22,203, 65% of the invited), a community-based study. Invited individuals consisted of all citizens born in 1953-1957 living in Hordaland County, Western Norway as well as those born in 1950-1951 who had previously (1992-1993) participated in the Hordaland Homocysteine Study. At baseline (1997-1999), all participants underwent a brief physical examination and completed questionnaires including socio-demographic information, health status, and health-related behaviours. HUSK was a collaboration between the National Health Screening Service, the University of Bergen and local health services. The sample of the disability pension was elicited from a national registry and covered 1992 to the end of 2007.

The main research tool was statistical analysis. Using recommendations for intersectionality-informed quantitative research, the researchers estimated the main effects of gender and educational attainment on disability pension, and potential statistical multiplicative interactions between gender and education in relation to cause-specific and all-cause disability pension. For all-cause disability pensions, men with higher education had the lowest risk for disability pension (rate per 1000 person-years: 2.01) during the course of working life (from age 35 to 57), followed by higher educated women (rate 3.56), and lower educated men (rate 4.59). Finally, women with lower education had a substantially increased risk already in early middle age (rate 8.39). The researchers found a statistical multiplicative effect of lower education and female gender on all-cause disability pension and disability pension with musculoskeletal disorders compared with men with higher education.

The discussion highlights that inequity in disability pension is not only about defining vulnerable groups, but also about understanding how privileges and disadvantages are unequally distributed. The researchers argue that incorporating an intersectionality approach in population health research may better

capture the lifeworld of social groups, and thereby provide knowledge that is more accurate and suitable to developing preventive policies. This study can be used as a form of evaluation.

- **Source:** Haukenes, I., Löve, J., Hensing, H., Knudsen, A.K., Øverland, S., Vahtera, J., Sivertsen, B., Tell, G.S. & Christoffer Skogen, J. (2019). *Inequity in disability pension: an intersectional analysis of the co-constitution of gender, education, and age*. The Hordaland Health Study, Critical Public Health, 29(3), 302-313, DOI: 10.1080/09581596.2018.1469730
<https://doi-org.ejournals.um.edu.mt/10.1080/09581596.2018.1469730>

Study 4. Ethnicity, gender, and intersectionality: How context factors shape the intersectional (dis)advantage under proportional representation rules is research carried out between 2018 and 2021 in Brussels, Belgium.

The article aims to highlight the contextual impact of proportional representation (PR) rules on the intersectional representation of gender and ethnic groups. The researchers assert that the combination of the institutional and sociodemographic context generates barriers and opportunities for the inclusion of intersectional identity groups in politics. The researchers analysed how the socio demographic makeup of the district electorate influences parties' and voters' behaviour within PR systems to shape electoral outcomes in the Brussels local elections. They focused on parties' list composition strategies and candidates' personal score to determine parties' and voters' leverage on representational outcomes.

Brussels was an ideal setting to study intersectional representation because the political inclusion of ethnic minorities is an extremely salient and politicised issue while legally binding gender quotas ensure equal gender representation on party lists. This generates incentives and constraints for parties to include ethnic minorities and women. Moreover, local elections take place in 19 municipalities with varying levels of ethnic minority groups concentration across the Brussels region.

The focus of the research was on Maghrebian origin candidates because they are the most important extra-European minority group among candidates, and within the Brussels population.

The electoral data analysis is based on a large dataset including 10,124 candidates, 298 party lists and 19 municipalities over 3 local elections (2006, 2012,

and 2018) in Brussels. Parties tend to nominate more ethnic minority candidates among male candidates than among female candidates. Maghrebian origin candidates make up about 9% of all male candidates and about 7% among women. The gender gap is wider among elected candidates, as men again outnumber women.

This research demonstrates that ethnic minority male and female candidates experience a similar advantage on their ethnic majority counterparts in the (s)election process, and that their advantage grows as districts get more diverse. The research shows that ethnic minority candidates' advantage comes mainly at the expense of ethnic majority women, while ethnic majority men's dominant position is not affected by the sociodemographic context.

The study overall calls for a clear definition of intersectional categories and the social cleavage(s) they represent within societies in order to understand political inequalities and opportunities. This study can be used as a form of evaluation.

- **Source:** Janssen, C. (2022). *Ethnicity, gender, and intersectionality: How context factors shape the intersectional (dis)advantage under proportional representation rules*. *Politics*, 42(3), 289–308.

<https://doi-org.ejournals.um.edu.mt/10.1177/0263395721997676>

Study 5. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategies Adopted in a European University Alliance to Facilitate the Higher Education-to-Work Transition was carried out across the European Union and then published in 2022.

This article proposes a comprehensive approach to promote EDI within the EUA ULYSSEUS. When the obligation of providing a GEP to qualify for funding under Horizon Europe was announced, the Taskforce from the Work Package 5 aimed at creating a Project Gender Equality Agenda. Not all ULYSSEUS Universities had a GEP at this stage, and Taskforce participants felt that reciprocal support was needed to reach this goal. The work to be done to promote gender equality, diversity, and inclusion in ULYSSEUS was, therefore, reshaped, following the new Horizon Europe concept of gender+ and the new request to apply a gender dimension, so that it could be integrated, where possible, into future GEPs. They applied EDI principles at project level. They felt that implementing these values through visible micro-actions could document and counteract the disadvantages underrepresented groups face in academia.

They felt that adopting EDI in micro-actions could facilitate the higher education-to-work transition of non-traditional students.

Spanish, Italian, Austrian, French, Finnish, and Slovakian universities were involved in this purposive sample, namely the University of Genoa (UniGE) together with five other European universities: University of Seville (Spain), Université Côte d'Azur (France), Technická Univerzita v Kosiciach (Slovakia), Management Centre Innsbruck (Austria) and Haaga-Helia University (Finland).

The authors used documentary analysis and their academic expertise in promoting strategies connected with the European values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union: pluralism, tolerance, justice, solidarity, non-discrimination, and equality. To identify the micro-actions, a qualitative research technique, the focus group, was chosen because of its technical potential, which derives from the exploratory capabilities inherent in the interactive, verbal, and non-verbal communication of small groups. In the study presented, the objective consisted in the detailed description and knowledge of the phenomenon investigated (EDI within the alliance and possible developments) and there was no interest in generalisations. The pursuable goal was not to lead the group toward decision-making, nor to seek consensus on a topic. In the end, the taskforce participants chose the micro-actions from an initial list of possible actions provided by the Task leader, adding others that were deemed relevant at local level or significant at consortium level.

Currently, there is no direct link between the importance of valuing and incrementing inclusion, raising awareness of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) strategies and policies, and the transition from HE to work. This paper contributes to filling this gap through a case study in which micro-actions related to EDI are enacted at the international level in a European University Alliance (EUA) through an innovative strategy unseen in other EUAs. The choice of a new strategy not directly related to facilitating young people's transitions from education to employment is due to the awareness of the importance of using any available strategy to address the topic. Other academic initiatives address the HE-to-work transition directly but adding new perspectives and strategies may help understand EDI's importance in working and life contexts throughout life, further enhancing students' employability competencies and integrating current strategies aimed at other skills.

The limitations of GEPs were pointed out. EDI is the beginning of a process that needs continuous and rigorous monitoring. Work labelled as EDI focuses,

very often, solely on supporting diversity efforts. In academies, for example, it is limited to increasing the representation of vulnerable and/or underrepresented groups in various roles but does not stimulate exploration of the ways in which current work structures and practices allow injustice to flourish. One example is the language used; using words with different meanings as synonyms, such as “equality” and “equity”, “diversity” and “inclusiveness”. This confusion of terminology creates a false sense of individual and institutional progression and helps to mask systemic injustices. The acronym “EDI” itself is a nebulous term that brings together three distinct ideas, “diversity”, “equality”, and “inclusivity”, linked in complex and articulate ways that require deep reflection in their application in the contemporary educational and social context. Treating EDI as a complete package and not as separate entities risks leading to the erroneous belief that respecting diversity will automatically guarantee “inclusion” and “equality” and vice versa. Increasing the representation of minority groups demonstrates an effective commitment to change, but this is not enough; academia needs to be open to learning more from community relationships, both inside and outside the institution, and to initiate an effort that is not individual, but community based. This study can be used as an evaluation of EDI.

- **Source:** Siri, A.; Leone, C.; Bencivenga, R. *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategies Adopted in a European University Alliance to Facilitate the Higher Education-to-Work Transition*. Societies 2022, 12, 140.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12050140>

Study 6. Curriculum co-creation as a transformative strategy to address differential student outcomes: the example of Kingston University’s Student Curriculum Consultant Programme, is a paper published in 2019, that examines the role that curriculum co-creation can play in creating a more inclusive higher education and, in so doing, addresses the complex challenge of differential student outcomes and attainment. It achieves this by exploring Kingston University’s Student Curriculum Consultant Programme (SCCP), an integral part of the institution’s Inclusive Curriculum Framework (ICF). Students who work as Curriculum Consultants use their own diverse lived experiences and Kingston University’s ICF to collaborate with staff to create more accessible, meaningful and globally-relevant curricula at all levels of the institution. The consultants work with staff in a variety of ways to address

potential barriers in the curriculum. This paper examines three instances of co-creation facilitated through the SCCP. The paper argues that this programme acts as a mechanism through which the institution can legitimately, actively endorse and encourage co-creation in order to create more inclusive curricula.

Kingston University's Student Curriculum Consultant Programme, non-traditional (on the basis of socio-economic status, age as well as black, and minority ethnic) students who work as Curriculum Consultants were involved in this study. The main research tool of this purposive sample was action research through a feedback survey and interview.

Academics remain the principal gatekeepers of curricula in HE. There is a growing recognition of the role that students can play in curricular co-creation which, in turn, contributes to teaching excellence. Kingston University tried to do away with this by setting up an Inclusive Curriculum Framework which ensures that staff work with students to create inclusive curriculums. Curriculum Consultants are undergraduate and graduate students, trained and supported by academic and professional staff to share with academic course teams and professional services their diverse perspectives on curricula. They use the principles of the ICF to review course materials and discuss how a particular course or module can work toward becoming more inclusive of and accessible to the diverse student body. The 2016-2017 pilot programme trained more than 80 student consultants. Evaluation of this programme suggested that fewer, more robustly trained consultants would be more effective. The evaluators of this programme maintained that eight undergraduate Curriculum Consultants and two Senior Consultants (Level 7 Masters students) as leaders would be enough. These were paid roles, so that students who might not, for time and money reasons, undertake them on a voluntary basis would be encouraged to participate and offer their perspectives. The appointees represented such institution-wide courses as visual arts, social sciences, business and maths. Those engaged had to fulfil the key criteria of commitment to equality and the desire to contribute to making the University more inclusive. The two Senior Consultants took responsibility for mentoring the others as well as for speaking publicly and delivering workshops, in both of which opportunities they supported their team to share.

A week after the different course teams met the consultants, they were provided with a feedback survey containing open-ended questions focused on how their understanding of inclusion had developed and what changes

they had already made or planned to make as a result of connecting with the consultants. Subsequently, the course teams were interviewed to assess the programme's longer-term impact and logged curricula transformation resulting from the teams' engagement with the consultants; at the same time, the researchers identified case studies of change that might be shared more widely across the University. Finally, to gain an even deeper understanding of how the programme had operated all participating staff were asked to take part in a twenty-minute interview to glean their personal experiences of the programme.

Particularly interesting is the involvement of non-traditional students as curriculum consultants, and the fact that they were paid. This study is a good example of an evaluation of a programme.

- **Source:** Livingstone Hughes, A., Michener, C., Mohamed, K., McDuff, N. (2019). *Curriculum co-creation as a transformative strategy to address differential student outcomes: the example of Kingston University's Student Curriculum Consultant Program*. *Compass: Journal of Learning and Teaching*, 12(1).

<https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/compass/article/view/955/pdf>

Study 7. Burning Bikinis is a research study carried out by aditus foundation, human rights NGO based in Malta, in collaboration with Subway Lab. The final product, a documentary entitled **Burning Bikinis**, was launched in 2017.

Burning Bikinis takes its cue from the introduction of the bikini into Maltese seaside culture in the early to mid-60s, and the social and religious furor that surrounded it. The project reflected on this period in the light of female emancipation in Malta and the various actors that had and still may have a role today. The project starts with the bikini, a seemingly frivolous piece of clothing, in order to explore the social and cultural impact it had on Maltese society from a gender perspective.

The Burning Bikinis project explores feminism in Malta from a historical perspective by looking at events that happened in Malta, through talking to those who lived it and adopting an introspective voice by inviting Malta to reflect on today's role of women in the community.

The interviews were conducted with Ms Renee Laiviera, then Commissioner of the National Commissions for the Promotion of Equality and an exponent of the feminist movement of the 70-80s in Malta; Ms Gaby Calleja, a

major exponent in LGBTIQ activism in Malta; Prof. Dominic Fenech, professor of history at the University of Malta; Mr Toni Terribile, local expert of the Diocese of Malta; Ms Maria Grech Ganado, popular poet and common people who lived through the era.

The project leaders approached the individuals involved in the documentary based mainly on their expertise. Any documents and letters presented in the documentary were researched in the National Archives directly. The first phase of the project consisted of extensive research on the period in question, whilst consulting with key actors to comment on the historical events and their meaning from a gender perspective. This research was complemented by filmed interviews on memories of that period and commentaries on Malta's brand of feminism. During the second phase the interviews and information gathered during the first phase were edited into a short film that was shown and is still available to the public.

The result is a documentary product that can be used freely in classes with adolescents as well as undergraduate students. In certain settings it may also be used with other adults and professionals. The product may be accessed through: <https://vimeo.com/383476123>.

The interesting part of this study is the very same objective, that is an opportunity for the community to reflect on recent history which remains largely unexplored, to take stock of it and to make it their own. Collective memory was tapped into to elicit popular perceptions of gender stereotypes, their evolution, and their impact on contemporary Maltese society. This study is a form of **evaluation**. It can also be used for **awareness** purposes too.

- **Source:** Aditus Foundation website, <https://aditus.org.mt/our-work/projects/burning-bikinis/>

Study 8. Diversity, equity and inclusion in European higher education institutions: results from the INVITED project research was published in 2019. It was carried out by the European University Association (EUA). This association is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries.

The INVITED project, conducted between 2018 and 2019, aimed to support universities in developing strategies towards equity, diversity, and inclusion. It also sought to promote dialogue between stakeholders at the system level in order to ensure that regulatory and funding frameworks

empower universities to fulfil their social responsibility. EUA has conducted this research to build a knowledge base on institutional approaches, success factors and challenges as well as the support needs of higher education institutions. EUA, in partnership with the European University Continuing Education Network and supported by the European Students' Union, led the INVITED project and collected responses from 159 higher education institutions spread over 36 European countries.

The survey was sent out to all the members of EUA. The main tool used was the INVITED questionnaire. Semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted with 12 higher education institutions from 11 countries. Link to survey: https://www.eua.eu/images/site1/team/INVITED_survey.pdf

The report presents a broad picture with data from 159 higher education institutions in 36 European systems. It shows different institutional strategies and measures and analyses success factors, challenges and needs for support to build institutional capacity. It is of interest to university leaders and managers developing their institutional strategy, staff charged with implementation, researchers and students interested in the topic, as well as policy makers and administrators at European and national levels as they develop new policies for higher education and research. This report is both a diagnosis and evaluation.

- **Source:** <https://www.eua.eu/resources/publications/890:diversity,-equity-and-inclusion-in-european-higher-education-institutions-results-from-the-invited-project.html>

Study 9. *Dari? Refugee Voices on Making Malta Home* is a research project carried out by three local NGOs between January 2015 and December 2016 in Malta. *Dari?* (*Dari* is a Maltese word meaning my home) presents data from around 80 visits conducted by Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Malta, *aditus* foundation, *Integra* Foundation and UNHCR Malta to refugee homes in 2015 and 2016. Part of a broader project (Project Integrated) supporting refugee integration, these home visits sought to talk to refugees about their integration experiences in Malta. The interviews covered recently arrived refugees, as well as refugees who have been living in Malta for several years. Only refugees who left the open centres to live in private accommodation were interviewed.

The research only includes persons benefiting from either international or national protection. For ethical reasons, persons who were already receiving

in-depth social work support from JRS Malta were excluded from the home visits research since it was felt that this might interfere with the social work care-plan designed and implemented by the responsible social worker.

All potential participants were identified from refugees visiting or benefiting from the services offered by the three partner NGOs JRS Malta, aditus foundation and Integra Foundation, as well as by UNHCR Malta. This means that all had existing experiences and relationships as service-users with one or more of the collaborating organisations. All potential candidates were listed in a database and contacted directly, usually by phone, by a representative of one of the organisations or an interpreter where required. During this contact, candidates were given information about Project Integrated and about the home visits research. They were then invited to participate and – where a positive response was elicited – appointments for the home visits were set. Some refugees declined to participate, whilst some refugees were not contactable.

Data collection was done by direct engagement with refugees through the use of a questionnaire composed of thematically gathered guiding questions. Being a semi-structured interview, it was not mandatory for refugees to reply to all queries, and interviewers were invited to adapt questions and flow according to the specific interview context and setting. This informal and open approach also provided space for the research participants to reflect and elaborate on issues considered important to them, rather than on the preconceived ideas and priorities of the researchers.

The data reveals a refugee community that is heavily reliant, and at times dependent, on its own resources to support its members' integration efforts. A primary source of valuable information on life in Malta, co-ethnic communities also hold a monopoly over social networks and activities, job-hunting, and support structures. The data also reveals a sense of discomfort at this relationship on the part of many refugees, commenting on how it has the potential of fuelling insecurity, lack of privacy, and cultural homogeneity.

Although many refugees commented positively on the working conditions they experienced regularly: different treatment for equal work, bullying and harassment, unsatisfying jobs, lack of improvement potential/opportunity, job seasonality, and refusal of employers to register employment.

Concerns were also expressed at the quality of living conditions. Many of the respondents share their living spaces with several other refugees, with some households having over five persons in a relatively small space.

Furthermore, our data reveals an extremely high level of accommodation mobility amongst refugees. These elements indicate difficulties they face in securing a home that meets their needs of stability, sustainability, and peace of mind.

The research indicates a relatively low level of interaction between refugees and Maltese people. Beyond day-to-day interactions at work and whilst shopping for groceries, engagement with Maltese people and – importantly – Maltese social and cultural life is extremely limited. Although many refugees attend the village festa, indicating the establishment of roots at an extremely local level, very few participate in other events and activities, citing limited financial means and lack of information about such events.

The research highlights the multiple facets of isolation. As a result of lack of inclusion, co-ethnic communities develop practices that add to the oppression and the general feeling of isolation. The recommendations to the government are very practical and rooted in the findings of the study. This study is a form of an evaluation.

- **Source:** <https://aditus.org.mt/Publications/dari.pdf>

Study 10. Research-based Assessment of the National Education Policy on Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Children is an inter-agency project implemented throughout 2015 in Malta. The research was intended to conduct a qualitative research exercise assessing the immediate impact on schools of the 2015 policy. The project was run by the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement (MGRM), aditus foundation, the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties (MSDC) and the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE).

Interviews were held with officials from Public and Church schools, MEDE and trans individuals. All conversations were guaranteed anonymity and with prior authorisation for such research from the Research and Development Department within MEDE. The samples were mostly identified by MGRM through their contacts with a number of schools and gender-variant students. A Policy Assessment Tool used in various qualitative interviews with relevant stakeholders including trans, gender-variant and intersex children and youth; elements within the School Community and officials from MEDE.

Despite the general welcoming of the policy, feedback from all the stakeholder and individual meetings expressed concern about its actual

implementation at school level. These concerns include frequent instances of LGBTBIQ-related bullying, attitudes of educators and parents, and lack of professional capacity. All interviewees reiterated the need for the policy to reach the broader community for it to be truly effective within the school environment, underlining the school's role in acting as social educator. The practical recommendations try to strengthen the policy and its implementation are of particular interest in this study. This research is an evaluation.

- **Source:** https://aditus.org.mt/Publications/transgendervariantintersexreport_29022016.pdf

CONCLUSION

Embracing diversity and promoting gender equality within both the workplace and the study place is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic advantage for both business entities and educational institutions. These entities may reap numerous benefits by appreciating diversity and encouraging an inclusive environment. Benefits include approaches to new perspectives, an enhanced innovation, increased performance, higher student satisfaction and reduced attrition rates. However, achieving gender equality requires a comprehensive approach that considers intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, disability, age and belief, amongst other characteristics. The following practical suggestions may be taken into consideration whilst formulating a strong and relevant Gender Equality Plan that incorporates mainstreaming and intersectionality in both the workplace and the study place.

- 1. Perform an Intersectional Analysis.** Start by conducting an in depth analysis of your organisation or institution to understand the unique challenges faced by employees or students belonging to multiple minority groups. This analysis should examine the intersecting dimensions of several characteristics. It will help identify barriers and inequalities that need attention.

- 2. Develop Inclusive Policies and Practices.** Design policies and practices that are prioritising diversity and inclusivity in both the workplace and the study place. Ponder implementing measures such as inclusive recruitment, admissions processes and diverse representation in leadership positions, curriculum diversity, inclusive teaching methods and flexible study

arrangements/accommodation for students or employees with disabilities. Ensure that these policies and practices are explicitly addressing the intersecting identities of individuals to promote equal opportunities.

3. Provide Intersectional Training. Organise training and educational programmes to educators, employees and students about the principle of intersectionality and its weight in creating an inclusive environment. These sessions should promote awareness of bias, stereotypes, and discriminatory behavior. Provide practical tools and strategies for mitigating these biases to foster a culture of inclusion in both the workplace and the study place.

4. Establish Support Networks and Resource Groups. Form support networks and groups that tend to the specific needs of employees and students with intersecting features. These groups can provide a safe and secure environment to connect, share experiences and therefore support each member. They can also serve as valuable stages for raising awareness, advocating for change and influencing organizational/institutional policies.

5. Review and Adapt Organisational or Institutional Practices. Get into the practice of regularly reviewing and evaluating institutional practices, policies and procedures to ensure they are in line with the principles of gender equality, diversity and intersectionality. Identify areas that may unconsciously prolong inequalities so as to make the necessary adjustments to promote inclusivity. This may include revising curriculum content to reflect diverse perspectives, addressing biases in marking and grading or evaluating performance. Ponder implementing mentorship and sponsorship programmes for students or employees with intersecting characteristics.

6. Engage in Partnerships and Collaborations. Collaborate with external organisations, academic institutions and other community groups specialising in intersectionality, diversity and gender equality. Engaging in such partnerships can provide a path to valuable expertise, resources and good practices that can strengthen your Gender Equality Plan and ensure its effectiveness within your operations.

7. Communicate and Monitor Progress. Communicate your organisation's or institution's commitment to gender equality, diversity and intersectionality by regularly sharing progress, achievements and challenges with your employees, students, stakeholders and the general public. Report in a transparent manner on key indicators, such as representation and retention

rates of individuals with intersecting identities, so as to demonstrate accountability and encourage continuous improvement.

Incorporating these practical suggestions into a Gender Equality Plan, may effectively help organisations and educational institutions mainstream intersectionality and diversity. This approach will ensure that gender equality efforts extend beyond the single focus of gender and actively address the collection of unique experiences and challenges faced by individuals with intersecting identities in both the workplace and the study place. By nurturing inclusive and equitable environments valuing and supporting their communities, organisations and educational institutions can grow, attract diverse talent, drive innovation and contribute to a more just and inclusive society.

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