Global Diversity Management – issues for the big and the small   Springer 2019

Chapter 1

What do we know about the implementations of equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace?
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This short literature review first considers the academic literature that nests diversity management within an international context.

Ways of thinking

Thinking about the underlying issue of EDI open pathways to understanding show us how the human condition is complicated by incompatible forces: the intellect cannot feel emotion fully and our senses can never be rational. How then can we act in a just and fair manner towards each other? David Hume brilliantly asserted that we respond to our senses' desires, act as we wish to and then rationalise our choices after the event. He believed humans to be bound together by natural affection for each other, but saw little natural justice in human nature or the will to follow shared rights, as that would mean having to abandon one's desires and one's habits for the common good. Bentham (1843) went even further and mocked the very idea that humans are entitled to natural rights, calling such a hope 'nonsense upon stilts.' Enlightenment thought from Kant onwards has often proposed a third position; a place where intellect– abstract thought – and our senses – physical responses – can meet. In order to establish, recognise and maintain such a third term it is necessary to accept insecurity, for it will be necessary to oscillate between the terms and accept provisionality and a degree of relativism: it is both rationally and emotionally impossible to have clear and unambiguous understanding of diversity, because difference is what defines diversity

. The work of the British Council is informed by human rights principles, that seek to guarantee freedom of thought, conscience and religion and forbid discrimination against those who hold different beliefs from the dominant belief systems. Yet remaining flexible and relativist about our understanding of equality and diversity invites an element of subjectivity that is at odds with human rights and with organisational culture: flexibility implies that some may be treated differently from others and this contradicts the ideas enshrined in equality legislation.

Indeed the UN Global Compact principles exist to meet fundamental responsibilities in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Central to this is and the development of EDI is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html) of the United Nations. This imperative and the consequential duties and responsibilities which fall upon countries and companies are monitored

through The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Their work is important in raising issues of common compliance to international human rights systems and of the apparatus for the protection of human rights, in order to enhance and thus promote a fuller observance of those rights, in a just and balanced manner. These rights include the rights that directly impinge on the development of EDI. They include conventions on the rights of indigenous people and minorities, women, children, disabled, older persons and the prevention of discrimination.

Foregrounding diversity Management

The range of research into EDI is significant and broad. It deals with the complex relationship between equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights through a plethora of various theoretical, methodological and empirical viewpoints. It has, at its core, a business rationale of the effects of identity group upon the potential for organisational enhancement in processes and outcomes which has emerged in the US but has spread to other western countries. (Zanoni and Janssens, 2008). Indeed, Tatli has suggested that diversity management originated in the late 1980's in the USA as a supposedly new management parading to "deal with the issues of workplace inequality and diversity" (2011:238).

This has led to studies which demonstrate that specific identities and diversity are constructed in distinct ways is distinctive social, historical and organisational contexts (Zanoni and Janssens (2004) Identities are pre-defined and the focus then tends to be on which identities are salient in the business process rather than on the context shaping the meaning of identity itself. Significant numbers[1] of studies have shown the benefits of diversity and equality management for organisations. This literature shows that well managed integrative approaches to equality and diversity have resulted in higher labour productivity, higher levels of employee innovation and lower voluntary turnover (Evans, 2014; Armstrong, Flood, Guthrie, Liu, MacCutain and Mkanwa.2010). Of specific relevance to this study with the British Council, Gotsis and Kortezi (2013), suggest that a strategy that is based upon ethical concepts of organisational virtue, care and human dignity will result in financial benefits for the organisation. Indeed, numerous studies have shown that top management diversity positively influences firm performance and financial results (Baixauli-Soler, Belda-Ruiz and Sanchez-Marin., 2015).

However the literature on diversity management has also followed a path of what Oswick and Moon (2014) call 'management fashion' where each term has come to dominate the others in the literature and this domination is enforced by a rhetoric of disparagement of previous work. They state that by "dispensing with the rhetorical framing of new antidiscrimination approaches as 'better' and instead re-presenting them as 'different', it might be possible to move beyond the unhealthy marginalization of valuable approaches simply because they are not fashionable" (2014:36). Yet diversity management is critiqued in much of the literature not for its contribution to improving the

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[1] See for a comprehensive review Davis Frolova and Callahan , (2016),

context and engagement with others but for its lack of recognition of individual identity – in and for itself diversity management institutionalises diversity and neglects issues of power. A recent overview concluded that critical diversity studies (Zanoni et al., 2010) rests on three primary critiques of mainstream diversity management: a positivist ontology based on notions of a fixed identity, an inadequate theorization of power and the minimal place given to the influences of context. Diversity and identity are profoundly intertwined in ways often not explicitly in the practical application of how differences are and should be managed in organizations, and to what ends (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). This paradigm does have its critics for it has tended to assume that identities are conceptualised as fixed and unproblematic, and that take a model of white heterosexual, western, middle class able bodied men as the reference point. Second an inadequate theorisation of power and thirdly and the tendency to down play the organisational and societal context in shaping the meaning of diversity (Siebers, 2009). Indeed Tatli and Özbilgin,2012 suggest an emergent Bourdieuan approach to diversity where diversity is managed in response to the role it plays in generating power, privilege advantage , disadvantage , discrimination and inequality within the work force. This is a dynamic view of the workplace as one which frames diversity management as a dynamic construction which "attends to temporal and geographic conceptuality of ructions of power, privilege, inequality and disadvantage" (2012:181).

Implementing diversity management – an under researched area

Diversity and inclusion seems to be a key policy area for organizations, with the vast majority having a written policy or set of guidelines. Often as well, these policies cover the majority of protected characteristics through legalisation. However, translating policy into actions can be challenging. Although there has been substantial research into the role played by EDI in organisations, particularly around diversity theory, there has been a lack of attention around the implementation of diversity policy internally. Those studies that have focused on implementation and the practical aspects of engagement with diversity agendas are characterised by contextual limitations (e.g. Foster and Harris' 2005 study which exclusively looks at a large retail company). Kirton et al. suggested that there was a gap between policy agendas around diversity and implementation on the ground, which they attributed to 'managerial agency'; although recognising that the process of implementing any such agenda is necessarily complex and involves a range of stakeholders (2016, 321).

By comparing studies which have looked at the implementation of diversity agendas across a variety of contexts it is possible to identify a number of factors which appear to inhibit the adoption of such practices. On a fundamental level, Dick and Cassell explored broad resistance to diversity and initiatives which promote EDI; challenging the discourse which promotes diversity as being in the interest of all groups (2002, 954); and recognising that some groups might rebel or push back against such initiatives, e.g. white males (Arnold 1997). Dick and Cassell argued that:

> The power relations that exist in any organization … ensure that any initiatives that are designed to further the interests of some groups will be targeted with discrediting discourses … and thus will compromise the subjectivity of any individual who benefits through them, and ensures that the credibility of the initiative will always be called into question at some time or other (Dick & Cassell 2002, 972).

Similarly, Greene and Kirton suggested that increasing diversity could ultimately lead to greater divide or conflict within teams (2009).

As well as this fundamental hurdle that organisations are likely to have to overcome, there are a number of further issues identified in the literature, relating to the more practical or logistical concerns of implementation. While the business case for diversity is acknowledged (e.g. SHRM 2009), it can be a 'hard sell' because the benefits are sometimes difficult to observe (at least in the short-term) (Kulik 2014, 131) – a directly observed feature of the study by Kirton et al. (2016, 333). This relates closely to a somewhat short-termist approach (e.g. Schneider and Northcraft 1999) adopted amongst managers; founded upon a lack of incentives to pursue diversity in contrast to the immediate cost or disruption. Similarly, if managers are not encouraged to both understand and appreciate the longer-term benefits from diversity other initiatives might suffer a similar fate: online diversity training was viewed as a superficial 'tick-box' exercise by the managers in Kirton et al.'s research (2016, 328) because the benefits weren't clear.

Implementation of EDI relies on a range of stakeholders, as suggested above; which can be compromised when there are differences of interpretation or understanding amongst these stakeholder groups. Foster and Harris' research found that because the concept of diversity itself was ill-defined and open to interpretation there was 'a lack of a common understanding' which contributed to difficulties in implementation (2005, 10) as a result of 'inconsistencies and the dominance of expediency among those required to put the concept into practice' (2005, 5). Kirton et al., meanwhile, found that there was a distinction between an approach founded upon not discriminating and one which actually valued diversity – and that this distinction was evident within the management structure (2016, 328). The environment at the IT firm which they studied allowed managers autonomy regarding the composition of their teams, 'thus, the teamwork structure and managerial agency lay at the core of the implementation of the diversity policy' (Kirton et al. 2016, 325). However, this led to a dislocation between company/corporate policy and managerial implementation.

A further failing on the part of organisations was often that diversity strategies were not fully embedded; instead corporate policies employed rhetoric to imply value or appealed to managers' common-sense and fairness (Kirton et al. 2016, 333). A series of studies have, however, shown that, on its own, rhetoric is largely unsuccessful (e.g. Foster & Harris 2005; Greene & Kirton 2009). As such, instead of being fully embedded, implementation of EDI feels superficial:

> The lack of clarity surrounding the concept of 'managing diversity' and the variable mix of contextual influences meant that for many operational managers managing diversity became

whatever was deemed to be the most expedient solution at the time (Foster & Harris 2005, 13).

While there are clearly a host of difficulties associated with the implementation of EDI, the literature does suggest routes to success for organisations – which clearly relate to the problems identified above. Of primacy was the ideal that managers – those ultimately responsible for activating processes, should feel that they owned these processes. Although HR departments often played important roles, the diversity strategy should be led by managers themselves (Kirton et al. 2016, 328). Necessarily, this approach must be partnered with a strong accountability structure (Gilbert & Ivancevich 2000).

Perhaps unsurprisingly stakeholder engagement is another key marker of more successful approaches, even when HR specialists do undertake much of the work around initiatives, 'management engagement' is absolutely vital to their success (Kirton et al. 2016, 328). Disseminating the business imperative to management enables them to recognise the importance of their role and holistic training plans ensure that this is not just communicated but understood (SHRM 2009). The SHRM report also suggested that it can be beneficial to offer 'appropriate management incentives' in order to show commitment to the process and to motivate managers (2009, 28). Ultimately a successful approach to the implementation of EDI in an organisation must be guided by an understanding and recognition of value in workforce diversity combined with the practical aspects of engaging managers in the corporate agenda for diversity (Kirton et al. 2016, 321). Thus far there is little empirical work to suggest that implementation of diversity policies improves productivity or effectiveness (*Storytelling and Diversity Management* an unpublished paper by Mustafa Özbilgin and Ahu Tatlı)

The centralising of an international policy

Within this huge literature indicated above we will concentrate on the implementation of management and its relationship to the international context where an organisation has a central head office and an international structure. We suggest that the literature illustrates how the authors of policy on the one hand and practitioners on the other have specific positions on how they, respectively, develop diversity policies or engage with diversity and that these may not be congruent. Indeed against this background Yang and Konrad (2011) show that diversity management policies will necessarily differ due to a complex mix of legalisation and national policies. Indeed Daya (2014) argues that there is limited research on how organisation operate is multi contexts and especially in transition economics. For instance there is the potential as suggested by Edwards, Marginson and Ferner (2013) in all multinational organisations for there to be tensions between the converging notion of technology, markets and multinational practices and the divergence of cultures and institutions. This leads to a country of origin effect of the central head office on how the policies are implemented, emphasised or countered and to what degree and

this requires a study of how central policy towards diversity management is interpreted and practised in foreign subsidiaries.

To investigate these issues Syaed and Ozbiligin (2009) have adopted an analysis of different realties to explore international transfer of practices consisting of a *macro*-level (laws, nationals cultures) *meso*-level (organisational approaches) which are often interwoven and *micro* level factors (identify and relationships). Within such a framework the research indicates that the greater the legal difference between the host and the home countries the lower the degree of similarity between the *macro* and *meso* practices. A number of important studies have recently used this approach in multinational studies and three are discussed briefly here; Daya's (2014) study in South Africa; Pringle and Ryan's (2015) in New Zealand and Bešić and Hirt (2016) in Austria and Bosnia.

In the first of these studies Daya identifies that in multinational organisations working in South Africa the leaders of these pluralistic and multicultural organisations should focus their attention on developing inclusion areas that are weak and require more consideration. She suggests that in order to build multicultural, inclusive environments, organisations should continuously focus on achieving diverse representation on all levels through senior leadership, organisation climate, organisational belonging, communication and transparent recruitment, promotion and development.

The Pringle and Ryan research is a study of Maori culture in the profession of accounting: they argue that "multi-level analyses of context and power have the potential to enhance theory and practice of diversity management (2015:479) and that an analysis of power will show multiple diversity managements; specific to country, region and organization. Further Bešić and Hirt (2016) reveal challenges for the transferability of such diversity management arguing that societal, legal and political factors determine the general view of diversity management and hence this influences the transferability of such practices. They also concluded that there is a need for clarity when seeking interconnectedness of local practice with central policy diversity management.. They support the findings of Pringle and Ryan, 2015 in that authors do not identify a significant transfer of DM practices from the head office to its foreign subsidiaries and attribute this to concerns relating to local cultural values and even to the trivializing of important issues including ethnicity.

The idea of realities as a dynamic field of relationships provides he framework within which we will conduct and report our narrative study. The second part of this review discusses the narrative and interpretive approach and its relevance to the project. The approach has a strong endorsement from Greeff 's (2015) study in South Africa where he concludes that:

" it becomes clear that organisations are only in a position to wholly or utterly manage diversity once the collectively constructed experience of employees within their specific organisational context are understood, in all its diversity" (2015:508).

Researching diversity management

There is a wide and varied literature on approaches and methods within the rubric of narrative inquiry. Texts explore the methodological requirements of approaches and offer detailed

processes and rationales for how data should be collected and analysis. The most interesting and recent texts include: Andrews, Squire and Tanboukou (2013); De Fina (2011), Livholts, and Tamboukou; Underberg and Zorn (2014), Wells (2011) and Zorn (2014). .

The use of narrative inquiry in the literature on equality, diversity and inclusion is extensive and beyond the scope of this paper to catalogued in detail. Sufficient, for this study, is to give an indicative outline of the extent, forms of analysis used and the topics covered. The analysis is constructed by selecting academic papers in which EDI projects which have used narrative enquiry in their research methods. This search was conducted using the Middlesex University search engine *Summo*n, searching for full texts and using equity, diversity and inclusion with stories. There were over 500 for the year 2016. To give an indicative idea of the driplines and topic the final 6 month of 2016 (190 academic papers) were analysed The results reveal that management/business/human resources accounted for the largest number of papers (28%) followed by social policy/sociology (20%), education (15%) then law (9%), communication/media studies (8%) and health care (8%). There were a number of other but smaller categories. The topics in this are varied but included studies on; LGBTQ, disability, children's rights, multiculturalism and racism. The papers were written by or upon the following geographic hic regions; Europe, Aricia, South Asia, the USA and Australia. The most explicitly philosophical stances were feminism and humanitarianism

The interrelationship of theory and ethnography (cultural description) in the building of understanding and sense making lies at the core of the discipline of anthropology, integrating its commitment to taking seriously individual lives within the comparative dimension of an institutional existence which is both counter-cultural and chosen. Certainly socio-cultural anthropologists have long studied myths, legends, life histories and other stories for what they tell us about the story teller, their audiences and the social and cultural frameworks in which the stories are told.

The ethnographic approach used here builds upon the synthesis developed by Maggio (2014) from the anthropological literature and considers the story at three levels.

- The relational - where dynamics between the people involved in the storytelling situation are considered. These might include the: "the storyteller(s), the listener(s), but also the entities who take the role of characters in the story, who might be real persons (such as members of the storyteller or listener's social network) or representations of real persons (such as fictional versions or caricatures)" (ibid:92)

- The Content of the story - here the focus is on the action of telling and listening to stories and the reasons why a story is particularly appealing for a particular audience which "might be found in people's reactions to the cultural relevance of characters, plot, and/or theme of the story (*ibid*:93).

- The type of storytelling techniques - how to obtain particular effects; how shared knowledge is negotiated with their audience and the stories formulated accordingly and "to

what extent they show their personal selves as opposed to making themselves mere medium for the telling of the story" (*ibid*).

The approach is well suited to studying subjectivity and identity in context largely because of the importance given to imagination and the human involvement in constructing a story as a way to make meaning of both familiar and strange phenomena experienced in space, place and time. Ethno-narratives also reveal much about social life or culture, as culture, as a system of homogeneous and heterogeneous practices, speak through a story. Finally, following good practice, we support the view that ethnographies should be written or embodied in a way that is accessible to most of the people who provided the original information.

Contextualizing an International Policy

There is no convincing evidence of a causal or even correlational relationship between increased equality, diversity and inclusion and their professed benefits, nor is it clear whether business models are asking the right questions (Özbilgin,, Tatli, Ipek and Sameer 2016). More importantly, Zanoni's 2010 tripartite challenge to diversity studies remains unanswered, that is, that such work is often weakened by three specific features: *a positivist ontology based on notions of a fixed identity; an inadequate theorization of power; and the minimal place given to the influences of context.* These three features will provide the structure for this section and seek to provide solutions. Setting aside the literature discussed in the paragraphs above, we will concentrate on looking at Zanoni's challenge with regard to research about the implementation of management and its relationship to the international context, where an organization has a central head office and an international structure.

With regard to *a positivist ontology based on notions of fixed identity,* we note that sampling may reflect researchers' assumptions: Sippola and Smale interviewed a small sample of 12 Finnish staff in order to look at a company (TRANSCO) that has operations in over a hundred countries (2007). The voices of those considered to be diverse are not heard in that research and, indeed, are very seldom heard in current research.

We suggest that the literature illustrates how the authors of policy on the one hand, and practitioners on the other, have specific positions on how they, respectively, develop diversity policies or engage with diversity, and that these may not be congruent. Marfelt and Muhr assert that it is not the actual differences among people that determine diversity practices, but the ways in which diversity 'is produced, presented and negotiated in a given context' (2016: 248). As a solution to this, Tatli and Özbilgin offer a way of thinking differently (emic) that identifies relations and processes of power instead of working with accepted types of diversity, which involves accepting the status quo (etic) (2012: 196). Emerging from the diversity management sampled in previous paragraphs is a fascinating strand that challenges the positivist thinking upon which such work is often based. This challenge is made either by critiquing management literature (Marfelt and Muhr 2016) or by offering a new paradigm taken from beyond the business world (Tatli and Özbilgin 2012), and this is particularly necessary in international contexts.

We need to account for the characteristics of international organizations: Yang and Konrad (2011) show that diversity management policies will necessarily differ due to a complex mix of legalization and national policies (which is an unavoidable source of 'positivist' thinking). Indeed, Daya (2014) argues that there is limited research on how organizations operate in multi-contexts and especially in transition economics. For instance, in all multinational organizations there is the potential, as suggested by Edwards, Marginson and Ferner (2013), for tensions between the converging notion of technology, markets and multinational practices and the divergence of cultures and institutions. This leads to a country of origin effect of the central head office on how the policies are implemented, emphasized or countered and to what degree'. It requires a study of how central policy towards diversity management is interpreted and practised in foreign subsidiaries.

To investigate these issues, Syed and Özbilgin (2009) have adopted an analysis of different realities to explore the international transfer of practices consisting of: a *macro*-level (laws, national cultures); a *meso*-level (organizational approaches), which are often interwoven; and *micro* level factors (identity and relationships). Within such a framework, the research indicates that the greater the legal difference between the host and the home countries, the lower the degree of similarity between the *macro* and *meso* practices. A number of important studies have recently used this approach in multinational studies and three are discussed briefly here: Daya's study (2014) in South Africa; Pringle and Ryan's study (2015) in New Zealand; and Bešić and Hirt's study (2016) in Austria and Bosnia.

In the first of these studies, Daya identifies that in multinational organizations working in South Africa the leaders of these pluralistic and multicultural organizations should focus their attention on developing inclusion areas that are weak and require more consideration. She suggests that in order to build multicultural, inclusive environments, organizations should continuously focus on achieving diverse representation on all levels through senior leadership, organization climate, organizational belonging, communication and transparent recruitment, promotion and development. It is worth pausing for consideration of the issues around leadership and diversity in international settings: the literature tends to rely upon researching leaders' attitudes towards diversity, rather than their impact in increasing diversity. Moreover, these research models do not question the conventional definitions of diversity (Nielson 2010; Ng and Sears 2012).

With regard to Zanoni's second challenge, *the inadequate theorization of power*, Pringle and Ryan conducted a research study of Maori culture in the profession of accounting: they argue that 'multi-level analyses of context and power have the potential to enhance theory and practice of diversity management' (2015: 479) and that an analysis of power will show multiple diversity managements specific to country, region and organization. Further, Bešić and Hirt (2016) reveal challenges for the transferability of such diversity management, arguing that societal, legal and political factors determine the general view of diversity management. Hence this influences the transferability of such practices. They also conclude that there is a need for clarity when seeking the interconnectedness of local practice with central policy diversity management. They support the

findings of Pringle and Ryan (2015) in that the authors do not identify a significant transfer of diversity management practices and power from the head office to its foreign subsidiaries, attributing this to concerns relating to local cultural values and even to the trivializing of important issues, including ethnicity.

There are certain identifiable trends in the literature: when conducting literature reviews on the subject and focusing upon international human resource management as if it is a measurable phenomenon, poor consideration is given to complex issues around power, equality and inclusion. (Scroggins and Benson 2010; Holck, Muhr and Villesèche 2016). Even acknowledging this fact has not usually led to deeper investigations (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto and Monga 2009; Shin and Park 2013), although Lauring (2013) begins to extrapolate from power to its possible impacts, arguing that headquarters and subsidiaries need to be in constant dialogue about international and local issues, their interconnectedness and their possible relationships.

Tatli and Özbilgin propose that we need to look much harder to find the sources of power. They draw on French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu to analyse diversity through identifying relations and processes of power. Their 'emic' approach looks ahead with a view of human existence as dynamic and growing, and rejects the 'etic' approach in which ideas about diversity are pre-decided and thus form a pre-existent source of power through labelling. They use Bourdieu's analysis of human activity as determined by capitals (economic, social, symbolic and cultural) to show 'how privilege and disadvantage work across the lines of difference' (2012: 196). Transnational dialogue and transfunctional partnerships are advocated (Özbilgin, Tatli, Ipek and Sameer 2016).

Thirdly, in Zanoni's challenge, what can we do *to be more sensitive to context.* Some advances have been made here through research in international contexts, but must be treated with caution. Lauring and Selmer (2011), for example, consider language as part of context and analyse the use of English as the common corporate language in culturally diverse organizations. They conclude that diversity improves when English is used in this way, but their work was conducted in Denmark among university academics from many countries, so English seemed reasonable as a shared language.

If we compare this approach with Tatli and Özbilgin, (2012), they look critically at the context of management literature itself and assert the need to draw on ideas from beyond management literature. In using Bourdieu to suggest an emergent approach to diversity, they take diversity to be managed in context in response to the role that it plays in generating power and in privileging advantage, disadvantage, discrimination and inequality within the workforce. They are offering us a critical view of the workplace as one framing diversity management as a contextualized dynamic construction that 'attends to temporal and geographic conceptuality of ructions of power, privilege, inequality and disadvantage' (2012: 181). Again, the voice of the person viewed as different in the workplace is not present in their research, yet they offer a different and potentially productive way of understanding.

Where next?

The following chapters take this context chapter and develop it further in a comprehensive discussion of global diversity management which is followed by a more in-depth exploration of the this methodological issues of narrative inquiry as a precursor to a discussion of the main topic of this section; the case study of diversity management within the British Council in more detail and it appropriateness for diversity management studies.

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