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Observational Assignment 4:
Diversity in the Workplace



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Part 1: Understanding Diversity in the Workplace

Diversity in the workplace refers to the inclusion of individuals from different backgrounds, experiences, identities, and perspectives within an organisation (CIPD, 2022). It encompasses characteristics such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and socio-economic background, as well as diversity of thought and experience. True diversity goes beyond representation; it is about creating an environment where every employee feels valued and included.

There are several types of diversity, including internal diversity (personal characteristics like gender and ethnicity), external diversity (factors such as education or marital status), organisational diversity (differences in job roles or hierarchy), and worldview diversity (variations in values or cultural perspectives) (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). Understanding and embracing these differences can transform how teams communicate, innovate, and perform.

Diversity plays a key role in improving productivity and performance. According to McKinsey & Company (2023), organisations with diverse teams are more likely to outperform their peers in profitability and innovation. Diversity fosters creativity by bringing together varied perspectives, which enhances problem-solving and decision-making. Moreover, inclusive teams tend to demonstrate higher employee engagement and lower turnover rates (Deloitte, 2017).

From a cultural perspective, diversity enriches workplace interactions and encourages empathy and respect among employees. It helps build a positive organisational culture where differences are viewed as strengths. Promoting inclusion requires deliberate leadership, fair recruitment, and equitable development opportunities for all staff.

To enhance diversity, organisations can implement strategies such as inclusive hiring practices, diversity training, mentorship programmes, and policies that promote flexible work arrangements (CIPD, 2022). Leadership commitment and continuous evaluation of diversity goals are also crucial to ensure progress and accountability.

Part 2: Reflection on Diversity within My Organisation

As a Project Coordinator in the Marketing and Student Recruitment Unit at a large South African university, I have observed a growing emphasis on diversity and inclusion, though there is still room for improvement. My department is made up of individuals from different cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. For example, our design team includes young graduates from diverse ethnic groups, while senior leadership comprises experienced professionals with varied institutional histories. This blend of perspectives enhances creativity during campaign planning and helps us connect authentically with a wide student audience.

To me, diversity means valuing difference and ensuring fairness in opportunity and treatment. It goes beyond visible characteristics and includes diversity of thought, lived experience, and work style. Personally, I see diversity as essential for collaboration and innovation, particularly in higher education marketing, where understanding a wide range of student experiences is vital.

The university promotes diversity through formal structures such as an Employment Equity Committee and policies aligned with the Employment Equity Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Recruitment panels are encouraged to consider representivity, and training workshops on inclusivity and unconscious bias are occasionally offered. While these are important steps, I have observed that discussions about inclusion often focus on compliance rather than lived experience. There is sometimes a disconnect between policy and practice, especially in terms of mentorship and upward mobility for younger or underrepresented employees.

If I were to promote diversity more effectively within my department, I would prioritise three strategies: **(1)** active mentorship; **(2)** inclusive communication practices; and **(3)** celebration of cultural diversity. Reflecting on my own experiences, I have learned that diversity is not simply about demographics, it is about creating psychological safety where people can express their authentic selves. I have seen how inclusive collaboration improves morale and creative output, particularly in projects that aim to attract students from different regions and cultures.

In the future, I would advocate for a shift from diversity as a “tick-box exercise” to diversity

as a lived value, something reflected in leadership, daily interactions, and recognition systems. Creating this change requires consistent dialogue and commitment from all levels of the organisation.

Reference List

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