

# Globalised Workplaces: Exploring attitudes towards cultural diversity in the graduate workplace

## Introduction

Cultural Diversity refers to the coexistence of diverse knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, religions, languages, abilities and disabilities, genders, ethnicities, races, nationalities, sexual orientations, etc., of human beings. (Lin, 2020) Workplaces that increasingly resemble microcosms of the global community have led to the need to embrace cultural diversity. Its significance can be observed in various aspects of life, from education and healthcare to business and politics, engendering a transformative impact on society as a whole.

Delving deeper into understanding the strengths and weaknesses that diversity brings presents a dual narrative. While it is celebrated for its potential to realise novel methods of working, bring creativity and foster inclusivity, it is scrutinized for potential challenges such as communication barriers and conflicting values. Hence, diversity management emerges as a pivotal theme within this exploration, signifying the delicate equilibrium required to harness the benefits while mitigating the drawbacks of cultural diversity in the workplace.

This literature review provides an overview of the current knowledge landscape and functions as a foundational framework for future inquiries to build on that seek to understand the dynamic interplay between cultural diversity, graduate workplaces, and the broader spectrum of society.

### Economic Benefits



Cultural diversity has benefitted native workers through increased productivity, as witnessed in the US and German labour markets (Ottaviano and Peri, 2012; Wolf and Blien, 2012)

Foreign-born residents naturally possess different skill sets and abilities as compared to their local counterparts, which could serve as beneficial factors in the production of distinctive goods and services.

Immigrant diversity has been positively correlated to economic prosperity and introduced the idea of production optimisation through cultural distance (Alesina, Harnoss and Rapoport, 2016)

However, evidence of social conflict (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2005), decreased economic growth (Easterly and Levine, 1997) and social trust (Putnam, 2007) have also been documented alongside cases of enhanced innovation (Saxenian, 2002) and growth (Alesina et al., 2013).



### Organisational Performance

Horwitz and Horwitz (2007) highlighted that diverse teams tend to outperform homogenous teams in complex problem-solving tasks.

Research by Nielsen and Nielsen (2013) demonstrated that companies with diverse teams are more likely to introduce new products to the market and exhibit higher levels of innovative activity.



Companies have made a strong business case for diversity's role in corporate excellence

However, teams can run into cultural barriers, succumb to prejudice and have miscommunication that can hamper decision-making processes

By fostering an inclusive environment, organizations utilise the potential of diverse perspectives to drive innovation, improve problem-solving, and enhance employee engagement. This can help them minimise barriers and successfully compete in a complex business landscape.



### Social Impact

Cultural diversity can be seen to have both a positive and negative influence on people's lives based on theoretical arguments.

It could serve as a positive social amenity leading to greater personal choice and freedom through a variety of services available (Mazzolari and Neumark 2012)



However, competition for scarce resources among culturally diverse groups may result in racism and social conflicts (Alesina and La Ferrara 2002; Putnam 2007; Sturgis et al. 2011) and a decrease in trust (Costa and Kahn 2003; Letki 2008).

It allows for building an atmosphere accommodating multiple ideas and perspectives. (Page, 2007) New ways of thinking lead to scientific breakthroughs, business solutions as well as birth of hybrid art, music and dance forms - advancing society in every dimension



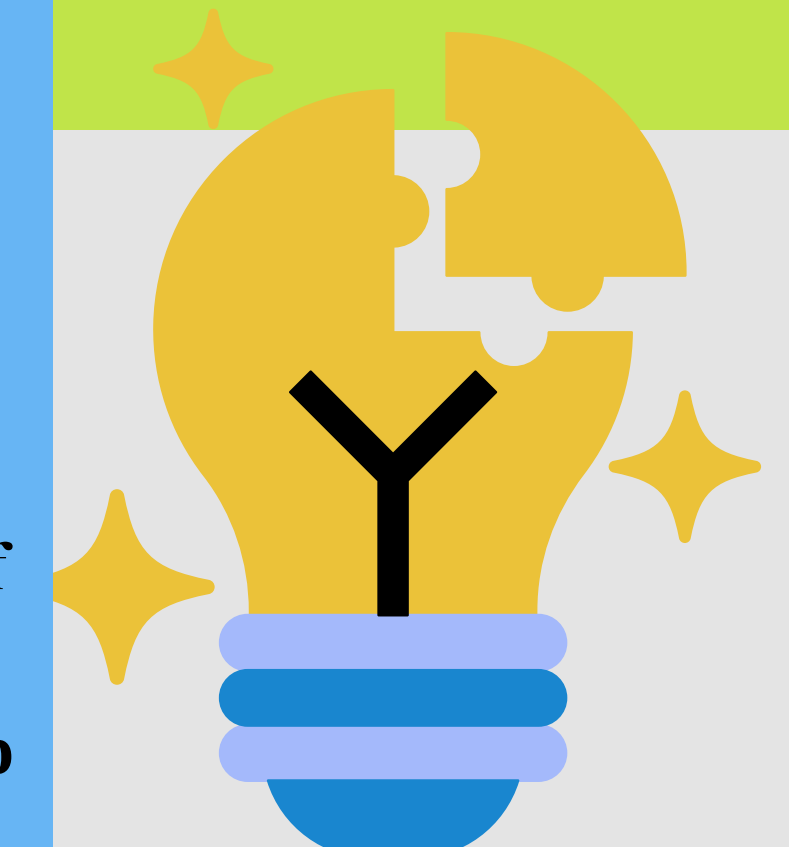
### Challenges and Enhancement Strategies

Culturally diverse work groups do not always reach their full potential compared with less diverse groups and the value addition through cultural diversity needs to be balanced against the increasing difficulty for group members to develop shared values (See Jehn, Chadwick, & Thatcher, 1997; Luijters et al., 2008)

The potential for international students to reshape educational content and delivery indicates the need for cultural diversity training that enhances intercultural communication for all stakeholders (e.g. Bennett, 2004; Lo Bianco, Liddicoat, & Crozet, 1999; Ward, 2001)

Kalev et al. (2006) have emphasized the role of managerial practices in mitigating the negative effects of diversity-related conflicts.

So, informed education coupled with inclusive leadership and appropriate HR practices can enhance cultural intelligence in organisations.



## Conclusion

The study of cultural diversity goes beyond mere definition; embodying a profound relevance extending across diverse environments and contexts. As we've seen, it is not a one-size-fits-all concept but rather a multifaceted gem like a diamond. Characteristic of their scarcity value, diamonds require careful polishing and refining to reveal their true brilliance. Similarly, multicultural teams demand astute attention and careful management which allows them to bring out the best in people. The journey so far has been underpinned by a significant shift in diversity management policies. Initially designed to combat discriminatory practices, they have now evolved to encompass a broader perspective, recognising diversity as an asset with inherent value. (Lauring and Colin, 2004) In this contemporary landscape, perhaps now there is a need for further redefining the value of diversity within workplaces, where it serves not only as a moral imperative but also as a catalyst in enhancing competence and driving overall organisational growth, ultimately leading to a more inclusive and prosperous society.