

***Performative to Transformative:
Implementing Authentic Diversity and Inclusion Training in Higher
Education***

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Abstract: This exploratory conceptual review addresses the challenges between performative diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in higher education and authentic DEIB training practices. Performative diversity is utilized to express an assurance to DEIB implementation and execution. Conversely, in doing so, performative diversity neglects to provide strategic visioning, planning, investment, policy directives, actions, or empowered individuals to develop and sustain racial equity. Performatives are procedural social practices sanctioned to avoid potential litigation or discontent from clients or stakeholders. A further consideration is how higher education can effectively use online DEIB training strategies to help institutions effectively implement DEIB initiatives and programs. As a result, critical progress has been made in incorporating innovative online DEIB training methods, which are proven to transform learning and DEIB training processes.

Keywords: Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), performative diversity, DEIB training innovation, haptic and experiential learning, higher education.

Introduction

The problem related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) efficacy includes the failure of institutions to identify process improvements, ascertain appropriate stakeholders to accomplish institutional goals, and implement streamlined processes (Guenther et al., 2022; Stanley et al., 2019). Consequently, current performance measures of DEIB programs illuminate issues within DEIB program implementation, processes, the quantity of trained leaders, mentors, professional support networks, and existing programming, which may need improvement yet are not addressed in higher education institutions (Bernstein et al., 2020). DEIB performance measurement factors impacting long-term institutional efficacy still need to be discovered within educational institutions (Clason & McKnight, 2018). To this end, DEIB training application aims to examine whether current modes of DEIB program implementation are a factor in DEIB efficacy.

Indeed, the ability of higher education leaders to implement improved performance within organizations provides insights into the success rates of DEIB program implementation (El-Amin et al., 2021). Moreover, organizational performance is a critical aspect of effective and efficient management. Further, educational leadership factors are determined as appropriate for organizational performance within higher education (Greller & Drachsler, 2012; Spranger, 2022). Likewise, the role of higher education leaders is to improve organizational performance, identify stakeholders to develop and execute quality initiatives of performance within the organization, provide collaborative decision-making to foster a team environment and develop integrated leadership systems that focus on value-added leadership to create a welcoming culture (Cook-Sather et al., 2018; Doscher & Landorf, 2018; Morieson et al., 2018; Randel et al., 2018).

This exploratory conceptual review investigates the interplay between performative diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) practices in higher education and the need for authentic and transformative DEIB training methodologies. The study aims to elucidate the limitations of performative diversity, which often manifests as superficial commitments to DEIB principles, lacking the strategic planning, resource allocation, and actionable frameworks necessary for fostering genuine racial equity and systemic change.

Thus, performative diversity is identified as a procedural social practice, implemented primarily to satisfy institutional or stakeholder expectations and mitigate risks, such as potential litigation or reputational damage (Plotnikof, et al., 2022). However, these practices frequently fall short of addressing deeper systemic inequities or empowering individuals to enact and sustain meaningful change (El-Amin, 2023). This review critically examines the inherent tensions within such approaches, particularly their failure to support long-term progress in racial equity and inclusion within academic institutions.

The primary objective of the study is to explore how higher education leaders can leverage innovative applied DEIB training strategies to overcome the shortcomings of performative diversity measures. By doing so, the study seeks to identify methods that can transform the learning and application of DEIB principles, ensuring that initiatives and programs are not only implemented but also embedded as integral components of institutional culture.

Ultimately, this review highlights the importance of strategic, evidence-based approaches to DEIB training that transcend performative measures, offering a pathway for higher education institutions to achieve authentic, measurable, and sustainable progress in equity and inclusion.

Transitioning From Performative Diversity to Authentic Diversity

Implementation

Additional benefits of DEIB training advocacy impress upon institutions that necessitate skilled facilitation to engage DEIB training participants as an indicator of organizational performance and inclusivity (Nieminen, 2022). Developing an applied practice for training is to contextualize DEIB strategic planning incorporating andragogical experiences (Scaffold & Eddy, 2006). Developing effective training (applied practice) for adult learners includes engaging learners and using best practices for andragogy. Andragogy, as purported by Malcolm Knowles, is the paramount study indicating that adults learn differently from youth/young people. Knowles (1984) specified six assumptions underlying andragogy, which are self-concept, experience, readiness to learn depending on need, problem-centered focus, internal motivation, and

indicates that adults need to know why they need to learn information (as cited in Merriam et al., 2007).

Likewise, a well-designed training experience is determined by developing effective and engaging content (Rankin et al., 2022). For instance, higher education offers facilitators alternative and adaptable instructional methods, which is valuable for training participants with varied learning styles and needs (Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Dransfield et al., 2022). While innovation empowers DEIB training participants and facilitators, it presents new difficulties for educators (Rankin et al., 2022). Nevertheless, adaptable instructional methods are needed to engage DEIB training participants.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Training (Applied Practice)

DEIB training as an initiative focuses on establishing a comprehensive framework for educational leadership and the effective implementation of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) principles. By emphasizing applied best practices, the program seeks to address critical institutional challenges related to leadership support, stakeholder accountability, and barriers to implementing meaningful DEIB initiatives. The goal is to equip leaders with the tools and strategies necessary to foster inclusive environments and drive sustainable, equity-focused change within their institutions. As a result, DEIB training outcomes aim to create a paradigm for educational leadership and DEIB implementation (Binkley et al., 2012). DEIB exemplifies best practices and principles for inclusionary training (applied practice). The training seeks to discover DEIB institutional issues of:

- 1. Institutional leadership support;*
- 2. Accountability to stakeholder engagement;*
- 3. Issues leaders face implementing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives.*

DEIB Key Process Indicators (KPIs) – Set One

The ability of leaders to implement DEIB initiatives within higher education provides insights into their commitment levels to diversity and inclusion. For instance,

DEIB training aims to help educational leaders determine institutional factors related to DEIB efficacy (reduction of bias, implicit bias, microaggressions, macroaggressions, and imposter syndrome) (Davis et al., 2022). Moreover, DEIB training evaluation is critical to efficient organizational development and management (Steiner et al., 2007; Webb et al., 2022). As currently applied within DEIB program implementation, factors for DEIB efficacy include the strategic objectives of the institution, the significance of implementing DEIB initiatives, the rationale for implementing DEIB initiatives, and the factors impeding the implementation of DEIB initiatives (Gomez & Bernet, 2019; Rankin et al., 2022). As a result, the central theme of DEIB training is to develop a sustainable DEIB culture in higher education.

Training Overview

Higher education leaders provide support by creating and implementing efficacy at all institutional levels (Saha et al., 2020). Educational leaders provide a review of internal and external DEIB organizational factors, initiate programs, and execute change management (Muhammadiyah et al., 2022). Leadership development through coaching, assessment, and development planning reinforces embedded organizational ethos (El-Amin, 2022). Educational leaders' organizational development, strategy, and change management abilities improve DEIB internal and external operations (Schachner, 2019; Stanley et al., 2019; Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2020). Educational leaders advance, facilitate, and execute organizational efficacy by encouraging stakeholder participation (Challis, 2005; Guenther et al., 2022). As a result, leadership skills comprise exceptional facilitation, communication, and coaching expertise in times of crisis.

Purpose

Integrated DEIB analysis is the best approach to execute and analyze DEIB training (Pati & Lorusso, 2018). Thus, data collection involves surveying literature to ascertain how leaders utilize development assessment techniques in their institutions to ascertain leadership commitment, support services, information technology services, programming, continuous improvement, and DEIB program implementation quality (Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2020). Systematic results of the training may have a cross-

sectional outcome based on individual and institutional occurrences (Ramdeholl & Jones, 2022). The justification for utilizing integrated DEIB analysis occurs in the methodology section of DEIB training.

Objectives of DEIB Training

The objectives of DEIB training in higher education are rooted in empowering leaders to drive meaningful change at institutional levels. By addressing both internal and external organizational factors, educational leaders are equipped to initiate and sustain DEIB programs through strategic planning and effective change management. Leadership development further reinforces the organizational ethos by fostering coaching, assessment, and planning skills, which enhance the execution of DEIB initiatives and stakeholder engagement. Consequently, higher education leaders provide support by creating and implementing efficacy at institutional levels (Saha et al., 2020).

- 1. Educational leaders provide a review of internal and external DEIB organizational factors, initiate programs, and execute change management.*
- 2. Leadership development through coaching, assessment, and development planning reinforces embedded organizational ethos.*
- 3. Educational leaders' organizational development, strategy, and change management abilities improve DEIB internal and external operations (Schachner, 2019; Stanley et al., 2019; Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2020).*
- 4. Educational leaders advance, facilitate, and execute organizational efficacy by encouraging stakeholder participation.*
- 5. As a result, leadership skills comprise exceptional facilitation, communication, and coaching expertise in times of crisis.*

DEIB Key Process Indicators (KPIs) – Set Two

Developing robust DEIB Key Process Indicators (KPIs) is critical for fostering an environment that embodies genuine diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within institutions. This second set of DEIB KPIs emphasizes three core dimensions: DEIB Efficacy, Institutional Development, and Support Mechanisms for DEIB Communities.

Together, these indicators serve as actionable benchmarks to measure cultural integration, organizational progress, and inclusive support structures that cater to diverse community needs.

1. *DEIB Efficacy (An environmental culture of DEIB, increased metrics for recruitment, hiring, promotion, succession, and stakeholder satisfaction).*
2. *Institutional Development (STEEP – Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, and Political), including financial, program, and staff capacity.*
3. *Support Mechanisms for DEIB Communities (BIPOC, Women, LGBT, Accessibility, Religious, Aging, Cultural) (programming).*

Content

Implementing the DEIB program requires performance measurement to gauge if KPIs are met. Using the interactive DEIB SWOT analysis, variation in many factors and existing correlations may emerge. These outcomes are ascertained by participant collaboration to extract training findings. As such, an organized approach to DEIB program performance measurement framework is assessed. Further, the interactive DEIB SWOT analysis provides data for better strategic planning and decision-making.

Integrated DEIB analysis as an examination technique has likewise expanded in educational exploration, corresponding to the patterns in evidence-based data needed to review prior training (Munn et al., 2018). Subsequently, the interactive DEIB SWOT analysis framework is utilized as an engaging training technique. Moreover, the computerized benefits of electronic information sharing advance systematic exploration as a feasible and logical strategy for examination and support training effectiveness (Pati & Lorusso, 2018).

The integrated DEIB analysis technique seeks to resolve one execution and transformative question: *How is it possible to develop a sustainable diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging culture in higher education?* Four essential components may emerge: (a) change management, (b) institutional capital, (c) leadership commitment, and (d) diversity staff expertise and proficiency.

Interactive Elements: DEIB SWOT Analysis

Participants in this training session will engage in a collaborative exercise to create a DEIB-specific Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis tailored to their organizational contexts. Working in small groups, they will identify key elements that influence the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives, exploring both internal and external factors. The session concludes with group presentations, allowing participants to share insights and strategies with the broader cohort, fostering collective learning and actionable feedback.

Table 1. Example of a DEIB SWOT analysis

Strengths	Opportunity
Relationship building. Large buy-in from staff. Quantity and growth. Collaboration. The staff has a broad amount of experience, expertise, and skill sets that lead to strong collaboration when combined. Continually increasing DEIB performance, improving relationships, and buy-in with internal partners. Stakeholders who genuinely care about DEIB success and find different pathways for the institution to achieve its goals.	Building DEIB program and community-building pathways. Regularizing systems within the institution. Helping stakeholders gain important skills such as intercultural communication, emotional intelligence, and understanding the Theory of Generative Interactions (Bernstein et al., 2020). DEIB capacity increased metrically by at least 5% annually for all institutionally identifiable indices.
Weakness	Threats
Lack of future planning; consistency. Gaps in communication with institutional leadership. A need for defined processes to ensure consistency.	Lack of support for DEIB programming or initiatives. Limited DEIB program budget. Lack of DEIB support staff.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

In addressing frequently asked questions (FAQs) about diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in higher education, participants engage in small group discussions to explore these critical topics in depth. These discussions are then presented to the full forum for collaborative analysis, fostering a comprehensive understanding of challenges

and opportunities in implementing DEIB initiatives. The insights are recorded in a detailed training transcript and shared with participants post-training to reinforce learning and support ongoing efforts to create sustainable DEIB cultures.

FAQ 1. *How is it possible to develop a sustainable diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging culture in higher education?*

FAQ 2. *Are higher education leaders implementing DEIB initiatives?*

FAQ 3. *What are the barriers to implementing DEIB initiatives?*

FAQ 4. *What are the best practices for higher education DEIB initiatives?*

FAQ 5. *Are leaders aware of their role and impact of DEIB implementation?*

DEIB Training Plan in Alignment: Andragogical Principles and Best Practices

Transformative learning is utilized to help training participants understand the significance of change management while working with cohort participants to determine viable solutions to institutional challenges relating to DEIB implementation (Muhammadkadirovna et al., 2022). The transformative worldview within DEIB training best lends itself to the notion that educational institutions need alternative or different institutional development practices to improve DEIB performance and align with andragogical principles for training modality. The goal is for participants to share training outcomes with institutions and leaders, identify working performance measures, and support tools that are utilized, if at all. As a result, higher education leaders are better positioned to build capacity for the long-term development of DEIB institutional objectives. Additionally, the experiences obtained by the DEIB SWOT analysis illuminate trending practices that assist education institutions in realizing more significant levels of DEIB performance towards institutional goals.

Recommendations

Inclusive practices in higher education focusing on student retention and satisfaction require faculty and administrators to adopt behaviors that prioritize individual engagement and active support for students (Spranger, 2022). Faculty and staff should schedule one-on-one meetings with students to actively listen to their needs and concerns, providing tailored guidance and resources.

Positive diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) practices in higher education include fostering equity in academic assignments and campus opportunities, employing diverse admissions and recruitment practices, and ensuring fairness in hiring and compensation for student workers, teaching assistants, and staff. Additionally, institutions should offer both virtual and in-person DEIB training annually, with supplemental training provided as needed to address specific incidents of noncompliance.

To align institutional DEIB strategies with departmental and student-focused functions, administrators and faculty can frequently communicate DEIB metrics and progress through dashboards or updates, ensuring transparency and accountability. These efforts promote a culture of fairness, belonging, and continuous improvement, contributing to enhanced student satisfaction and retention.

Common mistakes that administrators make that prevent an inclusive atmosphere are not inviting diverse associates to key meetings, lack of hiring, equal pay for equal work, job category pay discrepancies, promotion contracts, and opportunities to prove expertise - employees need assignment of complex work appropriate to skill level (El-Amin, 2023). Further, effective execution of DEIB training emphasizes the need to provide the resources to deliver instructive practice and transformative experiences tailored to DEIB issues, challenges, behavioral changes, and solutions.

Results and Discussion

Leaders can train administrators to better support a diverse workforce by implementing practical strategies such as conducting equitable interviews, employing diverse hiring practices, ensuring equal pay for equal work, treating everyone fairly, and providing equal opportunities across the board. Leaders should also transparently communicate who receives certain opportunities and the rationale behind those decisions. Additionally, leaders must take intentional and actionable steps to manage diverse teams effectively, fostering a workplace grounded in DEIB principles. A culture of diversity thrives when leaders fully commit to DEIB by developing, clearly communicating, and actively investing in a transformative DEIB strategy. (Al-Alawi et al., 2019).

Hiring or appointing a performative chief diversity officer (CDO) without authenticity or support is counterintuitive to a culture of DEIB performance. When employees look across the organization and see people who look like them, they trust organizational commitment to a culture of DEIB (Guenther et al., 2022). Equity ensures that EEOC and corporate compliance protocols are strictly followed: recruiting, interviewing, hiring, onboarding (30-60-90 plans), training, supporting, mentoring, promoting, highlighting, succession, retirement, and paying employees 'equal pay for equal work.' Inclusionary Equity (IE) is created by ensuring that all individuals get an equal opportunity for employment, training, and promotion and are part of a supportive workplace community. Belongingness is a feeling where employees feel valued through opportunities to build community in employee resource groups (ERGs), volunteer in missions that are important to their communities during work hours, and input where corporate social responsibility (CSR) investments are spent. All employees must be paid and valued according to their education, expertise, performance, passion, and commitment to the organization (El-Amin, 2022). When organizations authentically apply the recommendations provided, we can all get back to work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many traditional and online training methods for DEIB training. DEIB training indicates that for many institutions, providing DEIB services and securing resources are top priorities. DEIB efficacy efforts that build the institution's capacity, improve internal systems. Regardless of institutional, economic, environmental, and social capacity, institutions can utilize performance plans in anchoring and increasing their DEIB efficacy. The goal is to discern what factors for improvements occur if institutions apply DEIB performance measurements to improve leaders' capacity to effectively lead DEIB initiatives (El-Amin, 2023). Another purpose of the training is to identify issues regarding a higher education leader's ability to apply DEIB performance measurements, which focus on performance issues in educational institutions within the framework of DEIB program implementation and DEIB efficacy.

An Integrated DEIB analysis approach occurs in DEIB training to identify higher education DEIB program implementation frequently practiced and adopted in educational institutions (Bernstein et al., 2020). An interactive DEIB SWOT analysis is

tailored to educational institutions, identifying factors for educational DEIB program implementation by higher education stakeholders (administrators, faculty, or staff).

Moreover, there are various distinctive aspects of validity. Internal validity is the extent to which questions correlate. The training aims to identify the internal validity of the interactive DEIB SWOT analysis to ensure that subjectivity is nonexistent so that results are accurate. As a result, relationships are measured by the connections between KPIs and the interactive DEIB SWOT analysis (Pati & Lorusso, 2018).

DEIB efficacy measurements within higher education are an operational variable for training. Higher education leaders' performance is associated primarily with institutional development and support mechanisms for DEIB communities (BIPOC, Women, LGBT, Accessibility, Religious, Aging, Cultural). The goal is to assist leaders so they can provide quality DEIB program implementation. The training identifies higher education stakeholder experiences to measure KPIs: DEIB efficacy, institutional development, and support mechanisms for DEIB communities (BIPOC, Women, LGBT, Accessibility, Religious, Aging, Cultural).

The interactive DEIB SWOT analyzes higher education best practices and is determined by cohort members' shared experiences to validate findings. The generalized results of the interactive DEIB SWOT analysis may be that data provides a cross-sectional outcome based on individual and institutional experiences (Siddawa et al., 2019). The interactive DEIB SWOT analysis reveals various educational DEIB program implementation performance measurements. The results are operationalized based on the interactive DEIB SWOT analysis developed by training participants.

By choosing the best blend of media applications for DEIB training, whether face-to-face, online, or blended, DEIB participant engagement increases and transitions institutions from a performative state to authenticity (Chau & Cheng, 2010; Plotnikof et al., 2022; Seeley, 2022). Effective execution of DEIB training methods highlights the capacity of higher education to provide needed resources to deliver instructive practice and transformative experiences tailored to DEIB training participants (El-Amin & George, 2020). Furthermore, concept mapping should improve curriculum quality, educational leadership, support and enhance DEIB training effectiveness (Spranger, 2022).

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