



Creating an Inclusive Workplace: The Effectiveness of Diversity Training

Steven Royall¹, Vikkie McCarthy^{2*} and Gloria J. Miller³

¹College of Business, Austin Peay State University, Kimbrough Building Room 235, PO Box 4416, Clarksville, TN 37044. E-mail: royalls@apsu.edu

²College of Business, Austin Peay State University, Kimbrough Building Room 235, PO Box 4416, Clarksville, TN 37044. E-mail: mccarthyv@apsu.edu

³College of Business, Austin Peay State University, Kimbrough Building Room 233, PO Box 4416, Clarksville, TN 37044. E-mail: millerg@apsu.edu

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of how companies approach diversity training in the workplace and effectiveness for fostering an inclusive workplace environment. Research indicates that resistance may accompany diversity training programs which may in turn undermine efforts to create inclusive workplace environments. By defining inclusion and differentiating between diversity and inclusion, we argue for a contemporary approach to developing diversity training in the workplace for creating an inclusive environment. Using theoretical frameworks for workplace training and development, organizational culture, and research related to diversity training programs, this paper presents a conceptual model for creating an inclusive workplace environment. This model indicates a reciprocal relationship between diversity training and an inclusive workplace culture that includes four dimensions of organizational culture: adaptability, involvement, mission, and consistency.

Keywords: Diversity, inclusion, culture, workplace environment

1. DIVERSITY TRAINING, INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTS & ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES

Many businesses create strategic plans that incorporate the creation of inclusive workplace environment that successfully promotes diversity. While the goal of inclusion is constant across the corporate realm, the approaches and resources businesses utilize to create an inclusive environment vary in degrees of aggression (Sanders, 2017). Businesses that approach workplace diversity and inclusion assertively may hold mandatory seminars on diversity or offer courses on diverse cultures for employees. In contrast, businesses that approach workplace diversity cautiously, or with apparent apathy, may “tip toe” around potential controversial

discussions by passively including a statement on diversity in employees' handbooks. While most businesses fall in the median of these two extremes, the processes, implications, and effects of a business's approach to diversity and inclusion determine the overall positivity of the workplace environment as well as the success and satisfaction of individual employees (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2020; Moon & Christensen, 2020; Phungsoonthorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2020).

An inclusive environment is symbiotic with an organizational culture that actively pursues equity within the workplace (Moon & Christensen, 2020). Lussier & Hendon (2019) argue that "every organization has a culture, and success depends on the health and strength of it" (p. 57). For this reason, it is essential that leadership consistently works to build and foster an observable inclusive culture. Employees learn acceptable and unacceptable behavior by adopting the behavior they observe from other employees, further developing the preestablished culture. "Fostering the right organizational culture is one of [management's] most important responsibilities," because "establishing shared values, beliefs, and assumptions" (Lussier & Hendon, 2019, p. 56) creates norms that show employees how they are expected to act within the workplace. Riccò & Guerci (2014) argued that businesses must adopt integrated processes for promoting diversity at strategic, tactical, and operational levels for diversity programs to be successful. A general diversity statement is insufficient to establishing such norms; instead, leadership must actively take steps to establish an organizational culture with norms that includes inclusiveness (Moon & Christensen, 2020).

2. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

As the business world becomes more globalized, it is essential for companies to create and foster an inclusive environment in order to maintain a competitive residence within the global economy (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2020; Köllen, Kakkuri-Knuuttila & Regine, 2018). Analyzing positive effects of inclusiveness within the workforce requires a foundational understanding of how inclusion differs from diversity.

Diversity in the workplace refers to different types of people, or different characteristics of people, in an organization (Lussier & Hendon, 2019). Inclusion is an organization's strategic approach to creating a diverse workplace that is welcoming toward employees, supervisors, customers, and clients alike. Thus, diversity refers to a group of people with different outward characteristics, cultural backgrounds, and beliefs; inclusion is how an organization approaches this diversity (Ashcraft, Muhr, Rennstam, & Sullivan, 2012).

Scholarly sources present a complex plethora of definitions for inclusion, but each professional definition carries similar underlying themes. First, a professional environment that is inclusive approaches diversity in a way that evokes trust, respect and loyalty from each individual party so that, “like a strong safety culture, a diversity culture [becomes] the responsibility of every employee” (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016, p. 23). A truly inclusive workplace environment extends from the highest supervisor to the local manager to the newest employee. In her early analysis of how diversity and inclusion affect a company’s success, Giovannini (2004) defines inclusion as “a state of being valued, respected, and supported” (p. 22). Her focus on employees’ emotional reaction to their environment continues to modern definitions of inclusion. An article discussing how six major companies approach diversity defined an inclusive environment one in which “all employees are respected, valued and able to fully contribute” to the success of the company (Derven, 2014, p. 84). This idea is further emphasized and explained by the conclusion that “(e)ach individual must be included and accept the cultural differences in a way that they can be proud of being part of this culturally diverse environment” (Leca & Vranceanu, 2014, p. 362). Additional research into current academic literature shows this theme to be a consistent conclusion: An inclusive workplace is one that makes its employees feel that they are valued, essential components of the company in which their input and contribution matters to the business’s success.

A second reoccurring theme in how inclusiveness is defined and explained is that an inclusive workplace is one that deliberately approaches the advantages and potential conflicts that come with diversity (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2020). A successfully inclusive environment has established strategic methods, such as employee resource groups and cultural training, in place for fostering diversity. If conflicts arise that threaten the cultural safety of diversity in the workplace, the company already has the resources and strategies it needs to correct the problem. Giovannini’s (2004) statement “[Inclusion] is based on an organizational culture, management practices, and interpersonal relationships that support the full utilization of a diverse work force” (p. 22) coincides with research conducted ten years after its publication date. Recent literature demands that a “company should embed an inclusion program, through which it can be aware of its employee skills for inclusion and cultural diversity” (Leca & Vranceanu, 2014, p. 362) as a method for positively managing a diverse workforce.

The third similarity that consistently appears across scholarly research is that inclusion is the answer to a problem, but diversity is not the problem to which it is responding (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2020; Moon & Christensen, 2020; Phungsoonthorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). The overarching problem is that qualified applicants are becoming scarce in the workplace. Lussier and Hendon (2019) emphasize this problem, stating, “the shortage of capable employees certainly affects our ability to select individuals for our workforce” (p. 215). The solution to this problem is to create a workforce that fosters inclusiveness so that the company grows in both diversity and in correlating quality to globally attract qualified, capable applicants. From this standpoint, inclusion is defined as a business strategy developed to take advantage of the increasing global influx of diversity (Derwen, 2014). Business operation and philosophy changes in reaction to societal shifts; therefore, finding successful ways to create a workplace environment that fosters inclusiveness is an imperative part of a business’s success.

3. THE CORRELATION BETWEEN INCLUSION AND BUSINESS SUCCESS

The section above defines inclusion as it applies to three elements: how individuals in the company react to diversity, what strategies the company implements to foster diversity, and how diversity ties into business strategies. The last part of this definition streamlines into how inclusion determines a business’s economic success. Fostering inclusiveness in the workplace does not just benefit the individual clients and employees; it also benefits the business as an entity. Research presents an abundance of varying advantages resulting from a successfully inclusive atmosphere, but three core advantages manifest consistently across literature on inclusion: employee effectiveness, employee satisfaction, and improved organizational outcomes.

3.1. Employees in a Workplace that Fosters Inclusiveness are Highly Effective

The most evident advantage of inclusion is that an inclusive environment generates employee efficiency. Returning to Giovannini’s preemptive analysis of inclusion in the workplace, research from the early 21st century viewed inclusion as an advantageous method for increasing employee performance that, in turn, improved the business as a whole. This viewpoint is summated by Giovannini’s statement, “An inclusive environment strengthens everyone’s

capacity to commit full effort to the learning, performance, and development required for exceptional business results” (2004, p. 22). Since then, research on the relationship between inclusiveness and employee effectiveness has continued to show that an inclusive work environment directly affects employee satisfaction, which generates heightened employee productivity (Back, Lowry, & Cartier, 2018).

Studies show an inclusive culture in a workplace “allows individuals to be themselves at work” (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016, p. 22) and increases “employees’ perceptions of belongingness and uniqueness within the work group” (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014, p. 236). When employees feel confident in who they are as part of an organization, their job performance, engagement with their workplace, and overall satisfaction with their position increase (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016). Ortlieb and Sieben emphasize this conclusion in stating, “The degree of perceived inclusion in turn impacts various outcomes such as individual well-being, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and task effectiveness” (2014, p. 236). Back, Lowry, & Cartier (2018) conducted a study of the impact leadership practices to promote inclusivity in a South African hospitality business had on marginalized employees. They found that innovative inclusivity programs led to an increase of disadvantaged employees in management roles (Back, Lowry, & Cartier, 2018). In other words, inclusive work cultures create successful and satisfied employees.

The connection between employee satisfaction and employee success applies to both individual employees and employees collaborating in a team or group (Moon & Christensen, 2020). Research indicates that employees can be more productive individually in an inclusive environment and work better together in teams in an inclusive environment (Moon & Christensen, 2020). Creating products and generating ideas in a work team can be intimidating for many employees, but when managers have deliberately fostered an inclusive environment, employees feel more comfortable and confident contributing to group projects. Individual satisfaction translates to group effectiveness as “employees’ perceptions of belongingness and uniqueness within the work group” contribute to the overall effectiveness of a collaborative team (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014, p. 236).

3.2. Diverse Workplaces that Foster Inclusiveness have Higher Financial Returns

An inclusive work environment has higher financial returns than a workplace that dismisses the need to address diversity (Phungsoonthorn &

Charoensukmongkol, 2020); Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016). This is partly because fostering inclusion positively affects employee productivity, but another contributing factor is that clients and customers value companies that are visibly diverse. A local company that caters their products to a homogenous community limits their consumer audience to whatever diversity resides in the immediate vicinity. In contrast, a local company that fosters an inclusive environment and advertises workplace diversity broadens its consumer market to include consumers of diverse characteristics and beliefs. Diversity attracts clients and customers because they can personally identify with the product or service marketed by the company. As companies that promote diversity bring in higher financial returns, their companies start to outperform rival companies that do not strategize for workplace diversity (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016).

3.3. Companies that Foster Inclusiveness are more Competitive in the Global Market

To be competitive in the global market, a company needs to be both perceptively diverse and perceptively inclusive. Mirroring how diverse companies attract consumers, diverse companies attract potential employees, and these employees can only be recruited and retained if they perceive the diverse workplace to be an inclusive environment. A business is only as successful as its employees, so recruiting, hiring, and retaining high quality employees is a top priority. While evaluating the effectiveness of instruments used to measure employee satisfaction, a study concluded that “A diverse organization realizes benefits from its ability to retain talent, to be in tune with market conditions, to work creatively and to innovate” (Turbull *et al.*, 2011, p. 11). This is especially true for companies seeking to recruit new graduates, as reflected in researched observations of current recruitment: “Evidence suggests that employees today, especially millennials, prefer to work in a diverse, inclusive workplace. Companies will not get or keep the best talent if diversity is not a visible and functioning part of their operations” (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016, p.21). Employees, including potential employees, must be able to clearly perceive the workplace to be a place that fosters inclusiveness. The majority of qualified candidates will shy away from a workplace with limited diversity; in the same way, qualified candidates often avoid diverse companies that lack a visible strategy for creating workplace inclusiveness. As the pool of qualified candidates diminishes, companies’ demand for qualified applicants becomes more intensely competitive (Lussier & Hendon, 2019). For a company to attract highly qualified candidates, it must visibly present diversity as an *essential asset* to the company’s success.

Showing diversity in the workplace advertises diversity itself, but a company that shows diversity to be a contributing factor to its overall success convinces applicants that they will be an asset to the business. When employees perceive that an organization accepts them as they are, they have a higher level of commitment to the organization (Findler, *et al.*, 2007); in the same way, applicants who perceive inclusiveness in an organization are more likely to commit to the company. If a company does not show applicants that it fosters inclusiveness and values diversity, applicants will seek other employment opportunities. As a result, companies that dismiss the need for diversity and inclusiveness will limit its candidate recruitment to applicants who are less qualified and less committed to the organization. Research on the relationship between inclusiveness and employee performance has rapidly expanded to prove inclusion as an essential component to the business's success and survival within the global economy (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016).

Another way that inclusiveness increases companies' success in a global economy is through encouraging the cross-pollination of ideas within the workplace (Derven, 2014). Once a company successfully recruits and retains qualified applicants in a diverse, inclusive environment, it opens the door for innovation. Derven clarifies this connection, stating, ". . . new perspectives and ideas [are] essential to promote innovation. Diverse viewpoints, welcomed in an inclusive culture, can promote cross-pollination of ideas and yield new insights that would otherwise not occur" (2014, p. 90). Employees bring their individual backgrounds, experience, and beliefs, and the more diversity that is present, the more varied the innovative ideas and connections become. Evidence indicates that innovation contributes to a business's overall success, creating a diverse and inclusive workplace environment increases a business's ability to become globally competitive (Back, Lowry, & Cartier, 2018; Brondoni, 2018).

4. CROSSROADS IN THE LITERATURE RELATED TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

As demonstrated in published research and studies, diversity and a correlating inclusive environment are essential for a business to be globally competitive in a global economy (Back, Lowry, & Cartier, 2018; Erskine, Archibold, & Bilimoria, 2021, Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016; Lussier & Hendon, 2019).

Creating a diverse workforce and fostering an inclusive culture is a business strategy that can 'make or break' a business's success as a global competitor. The necessity of using diversity and inclusiveness as a business strategy is a

consistent conclusion across studies and literature. Early studies determined that “a culture of inclusion is established, sustained, and internalized as an integral part of the company’s overall business strategy” (Giovannini, 2004, p. 27). Current studies expand this preemptive claim to show that diversity and inclusiveness are the foundation of employee satisfaction and performance, industry financial returns, and a company’s ability to survive and thrive in the global economy. A current study analyzing how diversity affects the workplace summarizes current research conclusions by stating, “The bottom line is that companies need diverse leadership, management, employees, and suppliers to serve diverse customers and take advantage of a rapidly changing global business environment” (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016, p.22).

4.1. Conflicts with Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplaces

As concluded above, a diverse workplace that fosters inclusiveness is more successful than a company that lacks diversity or disregards the benefits of generating an inclusive culture. While most companies acknowledge the value of diversity and inclusiveness, not all companies are successful in creating an inclusive environment. The two main reasons that companies fail to establish inclusiveness are that the company’s strategy for embracing diversity fails on the individual level or on the management level. On the individual level, diversity training programs have the potential to challenge unspoken ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is an individual’s belief that his or her own ethnic group, culture, or values are superior to others (Lussier & Hendon, 2019). In the workplace, ethnocentrism becomes dangerous when employees assert their superiority in attempt to create a cultural hierarchy. This can cause an environment that employees view as unsafe, discriminatory, and unsatisfactory. To combat conflicts based in ethnocentric beliefs, companies must provide resources and training on diversity to all employees. It also important for companies to mentor marginalized employees and place them in “visible positions” within the organization (Erskine, Archibold, & Bilimoria, 2021).

A second reason strategies to create inclusiveness fail is because leaders within the company do not have the knowledge, tools, or support they need to create and foster an inclusive culture (Turnbull, Greenwood, Tworoger, & Golden, 2011). Employees, applicants, and clients look to leaders in the company as an example of the overall workplace environment. Studies explain how leaders’ attitude and behavior exemplify the culture of the organization, as shown in the statement, “A company’s commitment to diversity needs to come from the

highest management levels, and should be made highly visible. The leadership should identify the need for a strong diversity culture, and foster cultural change to sustain an inclusive environment” (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016, p.22). Managers and supervisors show the world what it is like to work at their company. Findler builds on this to explain why leadership is essential to create inclusiveness, stating “Employee perception of [inclusion] is conceptualized as a continuum of the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes, including access to information and resources, connectedness to supervisor and co-workers, and ability to participate in and influence the decision-making process” (2007, p. 67). Since organization leaders have the greatest influence on the culture of a workplace, they have a responsibility to determine the best approach to diversity and to implement a culture of inclusiveness. Unfortunately, if the organization does not support leaders in this endeavor, the leaders fail to create a truly inclusive atmosphere (Leca & Vranceanu, 2014).

4.2. Approaches to Diversity and Inclusion

Research indicates that diversity and inclusion are important for an organization’s overall success (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2020; Moon & Christensen, 2020; Phungsoonthorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). The advantages of valuing diversity and fostering inclusiveness summate to propel a company’s global competitiveness in the global economy; however, visible diversity and inclusiveness do not guarantee success (Podoshena, Ekpob, Oluwatoniloba, 2021). Approaches to diversity are not equal in quality or effectiveness, and each approach is only successful when applied effectively at the organization level, leadership level, and individual employee level (Tanja, del Carmen, Seo-Young, & Bosch, 2020; Findler, *et al.*, 2007).

While the goal of creating inclusive workplace environments may be similar across business organizations, the approaches and resources businesses utilize to create an inclusive environment vary in degrees of aggression. The history of diversity approaches shows how business strategies for inclusiveness have evolved into methods that are appropriate for the current world. According to Lussier & Hendon (2019) the evolution of diversity training approaches, began “primarily focused on organizational compliance with equal-opportunity laws. Later on, diversity training moved through a sequence of options—from attempting to assimilate different individuals into an organizational culture through attempting to make employees sensitive to others and their differences and more recently to trying to create inclusion of all individuals, from all

backgrounds, into the organization” (p. 564). Research studies further explain how organizations strategize on how to best approach diversity. Some organizations create employee committees or groups that support diversity. Derven (2014) argued the effectiveness of such committees that “were initially established to promote a welcoming environment for minority or underrepresented groups, serving this important purpose well.” (p.84). Gephardt, *et al.* (2016) expanded Derven’s explanation to connect employee resource groups with diversity training, as follows, “(n)ormal ways in which companies develop and foster inclusion practices and diversity include: employee developed diversity action plans with measurable objectives included in performance evaluations; diversity councils; employee groups; diversity training committees; and supplier diversity programs” (p. 23). Similarly, in a study on how culture affects inclusion, Stoemer (2016) analyzed the shifting demographics that created increasingly diverse workforces. He concluded that “the effectiveness of organizational diversity and inclusion management practices that have been implemented to facilitate the establishment of an organizational inclusion climate” (p. 289).

Research indicates that companies need a more purposeful approach for promoting diversity and inclusion than simply adding a statement on diversity and inclusion in a company handbook (Nadiv & Kuna, 2020). For this reason, it is important to consider the effectiveness of mandatory diversity training in the workplace.

4.3. The Effectiveness of Diversity Training

According to Warrick’s (2012) study on the relationship between business and culture, a strong and healthy organizational culture promotes psychological safety where employees feel free to share their ideas with their leader and communicate with coworkers and leaders within the workplace. Socialization and training are practices used to promote desired organizational cultures (Abdul-Halim, H., Ahmad, N., Geare, & Ramayah, 2019; Espasandín-Bustelo, Francisco, Juan Ganaza-Vargas, & Rosalia Diaz-Carrion, 2021). Studies have found that a commitment to diversity demonstrated by diversity training can lead to increased business performance (van den Brink, 2020; Slater, Weigand, & Zwirlein, 2008). However, mandatory employee trainings on diversity are a hot topic in business literature because such trainings often experience resistance from employees (van den Brink, 2020; Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016, Hamdani & Buckley, 2011). For example, if an organization requires its employees to sit through an annual briefing on the value of diversity, the employees will probably view diversity

training as a boring, aggravating job requirement. When employees perceive diversity training as a waste of time, it negatively affects the inclusiveness of the workplace environment. Obviously, this is the opposite result of what diversity trainings hope to accomplish, and, as a result, studies often question the validity and effectiveness of diversity training (Hamdani & Buckley, 2011; Conklin, 2001). For example, Gephardt *et al.* (2016) argue that, “(u)nfortunately, diversity management is often applied ineffectively. For example, while many organizations attempt to translate this concept into organizational policy and procedures by instituting diversity-training programs, this approach, at best, may only support individual-level change” (p. 23). If diversity training programs are only effective in changing employees on an individual basis, then direct diversity training is not effective in creating an overall inclusive environment. However, if we revise the definition of diversity training assumed in Gephardt *et al.* 's (2016) claim, the effectiveness of diversity training increases in value. Narrowly defining diversity training as a mandatory program led by either organizational leaders or external professionals does not capture all diversity training programs. Similarly, Gephardt *et al.* (2019) present diversity training as a stagnant session rather than a reoccurring system. Neither of these assumptions are necessarily true. There are examples of corporations that use direct, deliberate diversity training programs as a foundation for implementing processes that foster cultural inclusions (Fujimoto & Härtel, 2017); Derven, 2014). For example, China Merchants Bank New York approaches diversity and inclusion with an aggressive, future-forward mindset that uses “who used training and cultural profiles to promote understanding of diverse frames of reference and ways of thinking” (Derven, 2014 p. 91). China Merchants Bank requires all employees to participate in diversity training that is aimed to “create self-awareness and sensitivity [to] cross-cultural differences and similarities” with the goal of “enhancing communication” across the organization (Derven, 2014 p. 91). What China Merchants Bank does differently to make its diversity training successful is that its entire program focuses on similarities and differences in cultures. Employees participate, identify, and communicate with organizational leaders who speak for diverse cultures that they represent. By modeling both the value of diversity and the necessity of inclusiveness, organizational leaders are more successful in hosting mandatory diversity training programs than what studies have anticipated. The vision of the CEO of China Merchants Bank, Monsanto, created value in an effort to foster inclusiveness. “Over the last two years, Monsanto has focused on training all company leaders to identify unconscious biases and to develop strategies to mitigate the impact of unconscious bias on

the workplace” (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016, p.23). The success of China Merchants Bank’s diversity training surpasses rival programs partly because of the focus on strategically training company leaders on how to negate bias and create inclusiveness in the workforce. Even if China Merchants Bank’s diversity training is only successful on the individual basis in the moment of direct trainings, organizational leaders are specially trained to continue diversity training strategies throughout employees’ daily experiences.

Another element of China Merchant Bank’s diversity training that positively contributes to its success is the cohesive structure of its design. China Merchants Bank’s CEO Monsanto implemented a comprehensive diversity curriculum that serves as a structure for each branch location so that diversity training parallels itself at each bank. This consistency limits human error associated with the process and creates an expected equilibrium across the company that fosters an overall focus on inclusiveness and an ever-developing value of diversity. China Merchants Bank’s diversity training strategy supports Findler, *et al.’s* (2007) argument that, “(n)ow more than ever, a more comprehensive structure is needed; one that concurrently supports implementation of fair policies, promotion procedures, training programs, and mentorship that promote inclusion of diverse employees” (p. 86).

China Merchants Bank’s curriculum structure for diversity training continues to show successful results (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016) that contribute to the overall success of intentional diversity training in the workplace (Lussier & Hendon, 2019). The foundational elements in China Merchants Bank’s diversity training that separates his strategy from similar programs in other organizations are the consistency of the curriculum at an organizational level and the consistent leadership training that translates to the daily environment of the workforce. China Merchants Bank’s program demonstrates how direct diversity training can generate and develop a culture of inclusiveness, but the foundation of China Merchants Bank’s curriculum is teaching the similarities and differences of diverse cultures (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016).

Research indicates that cultural “training and development should contribute to inclusion” because cultural “trainings give employees the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities that they can use as allocative resources” in the workplace (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014, p. 241). Lussier & Hendon, (2019) argued that there are multiple issues organizations encounter when implementing diversity training. One issue is that sometimes diversity programs are ineffective or inaccurate in their presentation of cultural characteristics, especially when

the leaders present a culture that is not their own. If the leadership in an organization is equally as diverse as the employee population, this may not be a significant pitfall; however, with the global workforce changing rapidly, the influx in diversity of characteristics, cultures, values, and beliefs guarantees there will always be more diversity than what leadership can represent. In order for diversity training to be effective in fostering an inclusive workplace culture, it must be embedded within all dimensions of organizational culture. These dimensions include adaptability, involvement, mission, and consistency (Fujimoto, Y. & Härtel, C., 2017). Based on the research related to diversity training and China Merchants Bank's example, we present a conceptual model for diversity training that promotes an inclusive workplace environment.

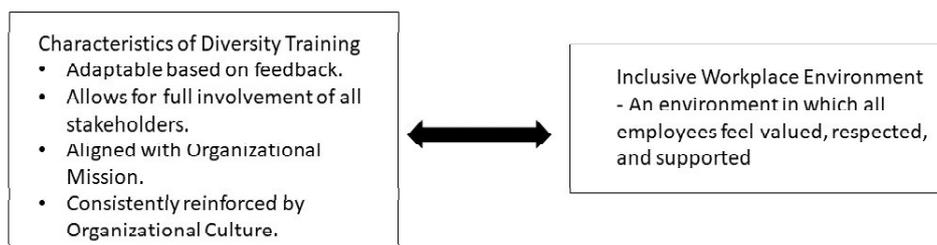


Figure 1: Diversity & Inclusion Model

As we interact with people whose cultures are different from our own, we adapt our preferences and adopt some of theirs. While some people resist the influence of diversity, most people naturally assimilate some of the characteristics they perceive in other people. As the world becomes more globally diverse, we are exposed to a vast variety of cultures different from our own. Eventually, the line of differences between cultures that are constantly exposed to one another becomes more fluid as people adapt their characteristics to fit the culture of their surroundings.

Gephardt separates cultural traits into two categories. The first is individual traits, which are characteristics that we are born with. The second is acquired traits, which is what we adopt from experiences (2016). Research indicates that cultural traits are transferred and acquired in diverse environments despite workforce direct training on diverse cultures (Stoermer, Bader, & Froese, 2016). Workplace training and development is dependent on the transfer of knowledge that leads to specific behaviors (Griffin, 2011). Diversity training can successfully generate inclusiveness when culture is *learned* through collaboration,

communication, and socialization. Effective training needs a cohesive structure and consistent leadership training; in addition, diversity training must be an ongoing, daily process that naturally develops within the workplace as an extension of formal training. This training should be adaptable based on feedback from the workplace environment, fully involve all workplace stakeholders, align with the organizational mission, and be continually supported by the organizational culture. As the model above demonstrate there is an ongoing and reciprocal relationship between diversity training and workplace environment.

5. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Due to the ongoing, reciprocal nature the relationship between diversity training and an inclusive workplace, open conversations within an organization are necessary for establishing effective programs. Lussier & Hendon (2019) argue for a safe environment where cultural similarities and differences can be discussed and then these discussions carry over to daily social interactions in order for employees to “learn” other cultural characteristics. Leaders trained on how to negate ethnocentric viewpoints, how to identify and correct unconscious biases, and how to foster an inclusive environment are the pathway between formal diversity training and ongoing collaborative cultural “teaching” (Lussier & Hendon, 2019). Leaders should be aware of cultural similarities and differences within their workplace, and it is their responsibility to create work teams, employee groups or committees, and social opportunities that allow employees to view, or even adopt, diverse cultural traits (Gephardt, *et al.*, 2016).

Often times implementing and fostering inclusiveness in a visibly diverse workplace encounters complications; cultural training must be deliberate on the part of the organization. For this reason, mandatory, diversity training can be effective if it includes discussions of similarities and differences between diverse cultures that can help employees clarify misconceptions or spark cultural conversations. However, diversity training is only effective when the formal training is “learned” on an ongoing basis through teamwork, collaboration communication, and social interaction within the workplace. If diversity training is adaptable, allows for full involvement, is supported by the organizational mission and is continually reinforced, it can be successful in creating and fostering inclusiveness in the workplace. Once organizations successfully provide formal, direct diversity training that serves as a foundation for guided, ongoing cultural training, then they will successfully create a truly inclusive environment.

Future research would need to be conducted to identify which types of teamwork, collaboration, and social interaction within a company best create an inclusive atmosphere where employees successfully recognize and share cross-cultural traits. For the present, the conclusion of this research shows both the advantages of fostering inclusiveness and the correlating advantages of deliberate diversity training. The most important takeaway from the research presented is that any business that wants to be a global business competitor has to value diversity, foster inclusiveness, and strategically train its members on diverse cultures in order to be successful in the overall global economy.

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