

Equality, diversity and inclusion at work: yesterday, today and tomorrow

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INTRODUCTION

Centuries of human rights activism and decades of political, demographic and social changes have been driving the agenda for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the world of work. This long period of transformation has witnessed substantial progress as traditionally excluded and marginalised groups made inroads into the fields of education and employment, from which they were previously excluded. In many industrialised countries, these positive changes in access to education and work have led recent generations of young women and men to feel that equality of opportunity has been largely achieved. Consequently, cohorts of students in higher education believe that their prospects of work and employment are without bias or prejudice. Some students find discussions of inequality and discrimination as irrelevant to their career plans. Unfortunately, much of this optimism is misguided. Despite a long history of progress towards EDI at work, multiple forms of inequality, discrimination and exclusion continue to mark the experience of individuals across their life course.

This edited volume consisting of an introduction and 31 contributed chapters is a collective attempt at examining the continued relevance of studying EDI at work. In this introductory chapter, I first define the EDI field at work. The chapter goes on to outline some salient frameworks for studying EDI across time and space. Then I explain the rationale for the volume, its structure as well as an overview of each chapter.

FRAMING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT WORK

Amartya Sen (1995) explains that the richness of human diversity and availability of a wide array of criteria against which equality of opportunities,

entitlements and outcomes are judged, require us to develop robust and sophisticated ways to explore EDI at work. Due to the relevance of EDI to all domains of social, economic and political life and scholarship, there are a myriad of complex ways in which EDI may be practised and theorized at work. In this volume we examine the complex nature of EDI in the world of work through interdisciplinary, comparative and critical perspectives. The volume is interdisciplinary as contributors bring insights from across disciplines of social sciences and humanities. Second, it provides a comparative perspective as many of the chapters provide cross-national and multidimensional insights through comparative analysis. Third, it is critical as it focuses on structures of inequality in relations of power in exploring issues of EDI at work.

The terms, 'equality, diversity and inclusion' were chosen specifically to delineate the conceptual frame of the volume. Each of these terms adds a different and unique dimension to the study of relations of power at work. While the term 'equality' allows for a comparative reading of relations of power in the workplace, the term 'diversity' draws attention to the multiplicity of strands of difference and the term 'inclusion' adds a purposive and strategic dimension to the investigation of interventions to relations of power at work. These subtle differences aside, equality, diversity and inclusion are also used in interrelated ways, reflecting their interconnectedness at the level of theorisation and practice.

I shall now address the temporal and spatial dimensions of the study of EDI at work. These two dimensions are important in understanding how EDI at work can be realistically framed. I describe the significance of reflecting on time and place in understanding EDI, and provide an assessment of limitations and pitfalls in subscribing to narrow conceptions of each dimension.

Importance of Time and the Tyranny of History

Time is an important dimension for understanding equality. Although time may witness progress towards equality, it is debatable whether passage of time ensures greater EDI at work. Indeed, the field of EDI field does not present a trajectory of constant advancement but a fragmented picture of progress, stagnation and even retrenchment. Scholars who advocate voluntarism in terms of anti-discriminatory action as well as equality and diversity initiatives would like to make us believe that time alone, without any intervention, can provide greater levels of equality and inclusion. While certain forms of equality are achieved over time, others may prove resilient during the same period. New forms of inequality are also recognised in line with the development of social and economic morality.

Understanding EDI in the context of time and history permits us to see the real extent of change through transformation, backlash, atrophy and retrenchment as well as inertia in the form of resistance, conservatism and apathy. Historical analyses provide an understanding of dependencies in terms of resources, rules, and cultural and institutional arrangements, and render it possible for us to envisage more realistic trajectories of future change.

However, historical analyses may also ground our imaginations and demarcate our visions of a better and more egalitarian and inclusive future. Feminist and post-colonial critique of work has been marked with this pessimism, which is highly skilled in documenting discrimination and yet anaemic in terms of providing a vision for transformation and change. History, therefore, offers an important but at best inadequate resource for emancipation. It is the treatment of history, rather than the history itself that is important. Recognising history as a possibility, rather than destiny, is important for scholars in the field to understand and transcend the trajectories of inequality, discrimination and exclusion that history presents us. Thus, it may be possible to overcome the tyranny of history, which is littered with triumphs of justice in equal measure as episodes of injustice, only by drawing on the power of foresight.

Importance of Place and the Tyranny of Context

Although the values of EDI are context specific, English language scholarship in this field has fairly recently begun to take an interest in countries outside the English-speaking world. Internationalisation of business, global acceptance and spread of business education in English as well as the development of strategies for global EDI management have brought cross-national variations in theorizing, legitimating and practising EDI. In recent years, we have seen publications of books and papers on country perspectives as well as cross-national, comparative and domestic aspects of EDI at work. All of these efforts herald the rise of context sensitivity in this field.

The contextual approach originally emerged as a reaction to the North American and British domination in theorisation, which failed to account for issues facing countries and regions with different sets of priorities, processes, institutions and traditions in terms of managing equality and diversity at work. We can now see that the contextual approach is well represented in scholarship and has gained an elevated status which almost defies criticism in the field. Indeed, rediscovery of the national context in relation to EDI at work sometimes leads to glorification of the context under study, with little attention paid to inequality,

discrimination and bias which may be inherent in that specific context. On the one hand, the contextual approach offers possibilities of enriching the repertoire of EDI at work and on the other, it may suffer from unique biases of its own.

While recognising the strengths of the contextual approach, I would like to draw attention to the tyrannical potential of this approach. First, the theory, practice and policy of equality, diversity and inclusion has never been limited to a single country. In the world of work, there has always been cross-border (cross-national, cross-sectoral) migration of ideas. The same is also true for EDI at work. Development of progressive practices at the national level has always benefited from international and cross-national influences. For example, the civil rights movement in France and the United States has fuelled civil rights movements in other countries. Similarly, inclusion of Northern European countries in the European Union has promoted the transposition of some progressive approaches to equal opportunities across the European Union. Therefore, international, cross-national and global influences partly account for progress in domestic-level policy and practice of equality. A contextual approach, which narrowly focuses on a single domestic context, may underplay the significance of migration of ideas and fail to consider the broader picture of dynamic international relations in exploring equality in domestic settings.

Second, framing context as destiny, rather than a possibility, may hinder innovative and progressive work in the field of equality. When contextual circumstances are described, there is often a tendency to consider that the processes which are unique to that specific context are relatively stable, fixed and resistant to change. The particular example of this is the women's rights issues in the Islamic countries of the Middle East. There is an essentialism associated with depictions of national cultures and regimes of gender segregation, which may indeed hinder and stunt the development of emancipatory movements as inequalities are legitimised through contextual formulations which consider context as destiny.

Finally, a contextual approach may prevent the study of silenced forms of inequality, discrimination and disadvantage. Cross-national and cross-cultural analysis can help us understand the social construction of relations of power across diverse groups, whereas a contextual approach which focuses on a single country may suffer from the adoption of dominant logics in exploring issues of equality. The danger then is that certain forms of inequality which are considered taboo, or which are marginalised through processes of political and economic domination, are rendered further invisible in narrowly framed contextual approaches which do not benefit from cross-fertilisation of ideas.

In order to transcend the dualism of contextual versus universalist

approaches to equality and diversity, I propose that context is framed as a possibility rather than a destiny; as a process of becoming rather than a state of being; as dynamically forming rather than fixed in time and place; and as a relational construct rather than an essential conception of social reality.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: SCHOLARSHIP AND WORK

There is a Turkish proverb that roughly translates as ‘one mad person threw a pebble in a well and forty wise people could not take it out’.¹ The feeling associated with trying to understand the anatomy of equality and diversity resonates with the struggle of the forty proverbial wise people, who may need more than conceptual tools to achieve this. They also need material resources to achieve their goal. Similarly, understanding EDI scholarship and work requires us to understand symbolic and material resources and constraints of scholars and practitioners in the field.

Paulo Freire (1970) aptly noted that any social change project may suffer from the two ailments of either excessive reflection and little action (verbalism) or abundance of action in the absence of reflection (activism). Freire argued that it would be possible to place all social change programmes on a continuum of verbalism and activism. In the same vein, it is possible for us to look at EDI through this lens. In many fields of social science, there is an expectation that the scholars remain dispassionate about the subject which they are investigating. It is my belief that what motivates many scholars to enter the field of EDI defies this expectation of objective distance from the subject, as tackling injustice serves a significant motivation for engaged scholarship. The personal and political engagement of scholars in this field has been responsible for the work in this area to be characterised as emotive, rendering the work of scholars ineffectual by characterising them as either verbalism or activism.

As the domain of business and management operates largely with instrumental logics, the outcome was often the rejection of passionate and emotional scholarship which was considered irrelevant to business and management practice. Therefore, the transition from ‘equal opportunities’, which is linked to more emotive scholarship, to ‘diversity management’, which operates with instrumental logics of bottom-line business benefits, may be seen as an attempt by scholars to push equality issues into the mainstream of business and management, by removing its emotive and emancipatory content.

While academic struggles to reframe EDI are continuing, at the level

of practice understanding equality requires us to consider a wide range of factors including individual choices, chances (structural conditions), motivations, access to resources including education, skills, experience, financial, social, cultural and symbolic capital, as well as the strategies of EDI practitioners in negotiating their long- and short-term vision in the context of interpersonal, group level and macro-institutional arrangements.

Recent work (Özbilgin and Tatli, 2008) suggests that organisational support for EDI is an important but insufficient precondition for the effectiveness of interventions for change in this field. An organisational approach and the power and status of equality and diversity practitioners are also interlinked. Not all practitioners of EDI are offered similar levels of power and influence at work. They enjoy more power and influence in organisations which espouse more sophisticated approaches to equality and diversity that embrace legal, moral, social, business and economic arguments for equality and diversity, than organisations which subscribe to a narrow set of drivers for change and advocate more polarised conceptions of equality and diversity. Practitioners themselves can also make a difference. Those who are able to transcend the dichotomies, such as verbalism versus activism, business case versus legal case, individually based versus collectivist conceptions of diversity, and who can use more sophisticated and inclusive repertoires of equality and diversity, are often more effective in engaging significant organisational actors, and are better positioned to mobilise organisational resources for transformational change.

What appears in our efforts to understand equality and diversity as action is an overly complex picture, which evades linear logics. In order to develop a more realistic understanding of the role of agency, rules, resources and institutions in promoting EDI at work, we need to develop multilevel frameworks which can consider a complex set of factors at the macro-institutional, meso-relational and micro-individual levels. At the macro-institutional level reside the employment relations actors and institutions which regulate or liberate the relationship between organisations and interventions of equality and diversity. At the meso-level are the workplace relations, cultures and processes which shape the real and symbolic value of diversity and which determine the urgency for change towards equality, diversity or inclusion as well as the forms of resistance that diversity interventions may meet. At the micro-level are the efforts of the individual agents of change, which are negotiated through meso- and macro-level enablements and constraints of the particular field of equality and diversity. Multilayered analysis of EDI at work also requires attention to relationships of domination and subordination as well as inequities in distribution of power among actors and agents of change. I propose that

it would be possible to arrive at both a realistic and a critical conception of the field in this way.

RATIONALE AND STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

This volume is an ambitious project. The original idea was to bring together chapters in which established scholars as well as novices of the field can reflect on their own contributions to the field of EDI, with a view to redress what Barack Hussein Obama calls ‘the moral deficit’, absence of EDI in our societies and in the world of work. The different approaches adopted in the volume reflect the heterogeneity of approaches taken when studying and writing about EDI. As such, the initial call for chapters which allowed authors extensive own voice has received a highly variable response from contributors. While some have focused on their work across a number of field studies with extensive self-reflection, others have chosen to concentrate on single studies with little reflection, which mirrored the diversity of ways in which EDI research is treated across cognate fields of study.

This book is organised across seven parts with several chapters in each part. Academic attention to EDI at work may sometimes lead us to believe that academia would be free from those inequalities that we study elsewhere. Counterintuitively, international research suggests that the higher education sector often lags behind other sectors in terms of its provision of EDI at work. In order to problematise this apparent gap between the espoused values of academic scholarship and its own practices in terms of equality of opportunity, recognition of diversity and the promotion of inclusion, Part I focuses on scholars, scholarship and inequality. This focus allows us to have an introspective, albeit critical, look at scholars and scholarship through the lens of EDI.

Due to its interdisciplinary exposure, the field of EDI benefits from waves of conceptual innovation. Part II is dedicated to chapters which seek to reframe our understanding of EDI, drawing on evidence from the field. The chapters allude to the significance of studying EDI from multilevel perspectives which bridge macro, meso and micro themes of EDI. In order to provide a platform in which EDI can be studied from multiple levels, Parts III and IV bring together chapters that explore EDI from macro-sociological and micro-psychological perspectives, respectively. Despite this broad thematic distinction of levels and disciplines, these chapters do not subscribe to purist standards of macro-, meso- and micro-level analyses and often provide more sophisticated and multilevel analyses. Part V looks at the politics of labour, providing an investigation of trade union organisation and EDI.

While most EDI-related work provides evidence from organisational settings, documenting current practices, experiences and processes, Part VI turns to the issue of management of change and interventions of EDI. This part departs from retrospective accounts of EDI in organisational settings and offers an assessment of change in the context and content of EDI at work.

Feminist critique of academic writing in the field of employment relations and work refer to marginal and compartmentalised treatment of issues of women as afterthoughts rather than central concerns. Reversing this trend, without disregarding women from the analysis of gender equality, Part VII is dedicated to men and masculinities in the context of EDI at work. This last, but not the least, part of the volume accounts for the continued transformation and domination of masculine order in the world of work.

Part I Scholars, Scholarship and Inequality

Part I, in four chapters, examines the relationship between scholars, scholarship and inequality. In Chapter 1, Myrtle P. Bell provides an introduction, drawing on her experiences as an established academic in the field. Through this reflexive account, Bell examines the challenges facing EDI scholars and points to opportunities that this field of scholarship offers. Chapter 2 focuses on contemporary forms of gender inequality which plague academic employment. Patricia A. Roos examines how subtle forms of sex discrimination operate in academia, through beliefs, attitudes and relations at work, as well as structural mechanisms of policy and institution making. Roos achieves this by situating her framing of subtle mechanisms in recent theoretical developments in social sciences.

In Chapter 3, Diana Woodward provides a comparative account of her work on work–life balance in academic employment in the UK and Japan. Drawing on her findings, Woodward offers a cross-national account of the yesterday, today and tomorrow of gender inequality in academia and the ways through which academic women and men achieve work–life balance. The chapter also offers a number of strategies for combating gender inequalities in accommodation of work and life demands. In Chapter 4, Marianna Fotaki argues that the knowledge on institutional barriers produced by sociologists, and the feminist research illuminating the origins of social structures do not intersect in theorising about the position of women in universities, leaving out important aspects about the genesis and dynamics underlying this bias and discrimination. Using feminist psychoanalytic theory, and more specifically Luce Irigaray's work, Fotaki considers this inequality as a foreseeable consequence of woman's absence

from the socio-symbolic space and her in/signification in language and in the male scientific discourse.

Part II Reframing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The field of EDI is characterised by waves of innovation, which reframe the way we conceptualise EDI at work. This part contains six chapters which reframe EDI at work in different sectors of work. In Chapter 5, Judith K. Pringle reconceptualises workplace diversity as a multilevel phenomenon spanning macro and micro levels of social reality. Pringle proposes that power and context are pivotal in explaining the dynamic nature of workplace diversity. In order to achieve this, she turns to the social theory of Bourdieu to operationalise her framing of power and context in workplace diversity. Drawing on her research on resilience of inequality in organisational settings, Geraldine Healy (Chapter 6) offers her reflections on researching inequalities and intersectionality. Healy's chapter underlines the significance of understanding context in order to investigate intersecting inequalities at work. The chapter also considers the appropriateness of Acker's concept of inequality regimes in reframing the way we study multiple forms of inequalities.

In Chapter 7, Jawad Syed argues for contextualising the diversity management discourse, in a way that considers local macro-national, meso-institutional and micro-individual factors as irreducibly inter-related. For this purpose, the chapter argues the case for a context-specific management research and develops a relational perspective for managing diversity. The chapter also illustrates why the cross-border transportation of the conventional US-based approach towards diversity management is problematic. In Chapter 8, Miri Lerner, Ayala Malach Pines and Dafna Schwartz outline the interplay between exclusion, inclusion and female entrepreneurship. They explain that owning a business is a way for women to climb out of poverty, and argue that the theoretical perspective of social inclusion/exclusion provides a conceptual framework for understanding different types of female entrepreneurship. This chapter presents Global Entrepreneurship Monitor data, showing that social exclusion of women in the labour market pushes them towards necessity entrepreneurship.

In Chapter 9, Iris Koall and Verena Bruchhagen argue that managing diversity can challenge hegemonic cultural assumptions within organisational processes, as diversity management offers the possibility of systems evolution, which can counteract the tendency of actors and constituent groups in modern organisations to resist perceptions of difference and otherness. This chapter also offers an examination of complexity in systems thinking as communication in organisations, which in

turn requires attention to inherent systemic paradoxes of organisational systems. Finally, Chapter 10 critiques the tendency of research on gender to adopt approaches of counting women, assigning certain attributes, attitudes and values to groups of men and women and using gender as a variable to test theories. In contrast, Elisabeth K. Kelan and Julia C. Nentwich explain the value of seeing gender as doing. The authors argue that reframing gender in this way allows researchers to question and to move beyond essentialist assumptions in research on gender at work.

Part III Sociology of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In Chapter 11, Michael Meuser investigates the professionalisation of gender politics in Germany. He argues that gender politics is at a turning-point in terms of professionalisation, and may either go towards the emergence of a professional class in this field or peter out. Meuser's analysis points to the depoliticising effects of the process of professionalisation. Chapter 12 demonstrates that the problem of depoliticisation is not limited to gender politics, but endemic in the context of management. In this chapter, Alexander Fleischmann provides a queer reading and critique of scientific management. He argues that the construction of scientific management discourse is saturated with processes of othering and that the way we imagine a manager is, therefore, always limited to images of white, middle-class men.

Jean Helms Mills and Albert J. Mills examine processes and possibilities of making sense of and navigating the muddy waters of organisational life in ways which remain focused on issues of power. In Chapter 13, they define critical sensemaking and explain its possible uses for destabilising organisational inequities and supporting resistance. In Chapter 14, moving from individual navigation of inequalities to organisational settings, Shona Hunter explains that one of the most persistent and pressing problems for contemporary organisations is their contradictory relationship to processes of inclusion and exclusion. These contexts are characterised by the paradoxical recognition that racism, sexism and other social inequalities exist, coupled with an ongoing denial of their institutional reproductions, the 'recognition denial paradox'. Hunter describes how a feminist psychosocial approach can account for the paradoxical nature of unequal social relations.

Part IV Psychology of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In Chapter 15, Johannes Rank explores employee proactivity as linked to notions of EDI and proposes a model of individual, situational and group-

level facilitators of diverse employees' voice and initiative based on findings of studies conducted on antecedents of proactivity. Complementing this chapter, in Chapter 16, Kurt April and Amanda April give voice to the psychological reactions of a group of disadvantaged workers. They explain that as diversity increases in the workplace, so does diversity in the nature of discrimination and exclusion that workers, especially foreign/immigrant workers, experience during employment. The authors provide a critical assessment of the psychological reaction of immigrant and foreign workers to such discrimination in the context of South Africa.

Neither the prognosis of inequality nor reactions to its redress operate with linear logics. For example, home and work interface has been studied extensively as a central concern of gender inequalities at work. In line with this tradition, T. Alexandra Beauregard, in Chapter 17, examines sex differences in the home and work interface; she finds that divergent expectations of women and men at work and home reduce the effectiveness of some individual strategies for reconciling the demands of work and home, and provides some counterintuitive findings. In Chapter 18, David A. Kravitz explains the reactions to efforts to redress inequalities through affirmative action. His analysis challenges the common assumptions about reactions to affirmative action and points to the complexity of such reactions.

In Chapter 19, Stephen M. Garcia, Mitchell J. Meyle and Eric A. Provins review the implications of another psychological phenomenon, 'people accounting', for equal opportunity in the workplace. People accounting is a hypothesis that a simple numerical imbalance in representation along nominal social category lines can affect third parties' decisions on whom to reward and offer opportunities in highly competitive situations. The authors demonstrate that highly competitive workplace decisions are routinely influenced by headcounts along mundane social category lines.

Part V Labour Politics, Trade Unions, Equality and Diversity

In recent years, little attention has been paid to labour politics in the context of diversity and equality at work. In Chapter 20, Anne-marie Greene and Gill Kirton explain that there has been very little discussion about how trade unions view and have responded to the shift from 'equal opportunities'. They highlight the main features of diversity management which potentially threaten trade unions in the broader employment relations context. In Chapter 21, Sue Ledwith turns a critical eye on gender equality and diversity in trade unions and labour politics, arguing that there is a window of opportunity for trade unions to be reformed, so that they become more gender inclusive. Through an exploration of the main

theories of counter-hegemonic transformation, Ledwith offers a vision for trade union renewal.

Part VI Equality and Diversity Interventions and Change

EDI scholarship has sometimes been criticised for being more interested in documenting inequalities and forms of discrimination and thus being less focused on future strategies for change and transformation. In this part, the authors focus more explicitly on what can be done to promote and operationalise equality, diversity and inclusion. In Chapter 22, José Pascal da Rocha questions the foundations and challenges of multiculturalism in order to explore complexities of pluralism. Furthermore, based on the methodological framework of comparative cultural studies, he offers a comparative and interdisciplinary approach to understanding intercultural challenges. In doing so, he points to the significance of interactions between the individual and the organisational structure in the process of change.

In Chapter 23, Mary Gatta turns our attention to the possibilities of collaboration between academics and practitioners. In doing so, she explains the importance of gender analysis of public policy, which in turn can become a tool for social change. Reflecting on the processes of an innovative training programme in the US, Gatta explains how academic–practitioner collaboration offers possibilities of progress towards greater gender equality.

Diversity training has received a mixed reception in organisational settings. In Chapter 24, Elaine Swan considers the possible reasons for this and provides a heteroglossic frame for understanding diversity and shaping diversity training. She explains that the monolithic conceptions of diversity management do not do justice to the wide range of tools for change and voices of representation that are present under the umbrella of diversity management and training.

Organisational change initiatives can be driven by voluntary efforts of the managers or enforcement of regulation at state and sectoral levels. The same is also true for the efforts to manage diversity and discrimination at work. Alain Klarsfeld, in Chapter 25, examines the voluntary and coercive measures to promote more effective management of equality and diversity in the context of France and argues the merits of coercive measures, which remain undersupported in contemporary diversity management literature.

In Chapter 26, Ronald J. Burke reviews the current evidence for positive outcomes of supporting the career development of managerial women. His chapter provides an assessment of a wide range of supportive organisational initiatives across a range of contexts, and points to the contribution of supporting women's career development to organisational well-being.

Daniel E. Martin, in Chapter 27, examines internal compensation discrimination and concludes that job evaluation systems and best practices associated with these should be subjected to further scrutiny to eliminate gender- and race-based prejudice. Martin outlines evidence from two studies to demonstrate the perseverance of bias in job evaluation systems.

Part VII Men, Masculinities, Equality and Diversity

There is a tendency in literature to equate gender equality with women and feminism. However, in Chapter 28, Michael S. Kimmel argues that men should be included. He goes on to advocate the necessity of men's inclusion in the theory, politics and practice of gender equality as agents of transformation, rather than resistance, if equality is to be achieved. In Chapter 29, Jeff Hearn and David L. Collinson reflect on the absence of men in formulations of equality and diversity and argue that there is need for an analysis of gendered relations of power and domination in order to understand the significant role that men and masculinity play in the politics and practices of equality and diversity.

In Chapter 30, Jeff Hearn provocatively asks why gender equality is of interest to some, often relatively few, men and what are the promises, dangers and implications of bringing men into gender equality formulations. He provides a vision of gender equality in which men and men's power, influence and difference can be considered. The volume concludes with Chapter 31, by Michele Rene Gregory, who demonstrates the relevance of 'talking sport' to the pervasive processes of hegemonic masculinity, which is instrumental for white, middle-class men to construct knowledge, skills, difference and acceptability at work to suit their own lives, at the expense of excluding women and other men.

NOTE

1. Bir deli kuyuya taş atmış, kırk akıllı çıkaramamış.

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