Diversity management at the tertiary level: an attempt to extend existing paradigms

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to adopt a holistic diversity lens with the aim to enhance the understanding of the multifaceted paradigms for diversity management at the tertiary level.

Design/methodology/approach – This contribution takes the inspiration of existing diversity paradigms used in business settings and relates them to higher education. It then articulates them in greater depths in line with the diversity segments of the so-called higher education awareness for diversity wheel and seeks a common denominator that may be shared across disciplines by adding an eclectic and context-specific approach.

Findings – It was identified that the underlying assumptions which constitute the commonly known diversity paradigms are only partially applicable for the tertiary level. It is further suggested that in view of the highly dynamic kaleidoscope of higher education institutions, multiple, at times conflicting rationales for diversity management need to be addressed.

Originality/value – This paper seeks to address the paucity of studies with regard to diversity management at the tertiary level. By drawing on relevant paradigms and relating them to specific diversity segments, this study intends to make a meaningful scholarly contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

Keywords Higher education, Diversity management, Diversity paradigms, HEAD wheel

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In European higher education institutions (HEIs), diversity aspects have recently gained momentum due to the rising demand for the creation of inclusive teaching, learning and service environments (Vedder, 2006). This is all the more relevant in view of increasingly heterogeneous student populations that are demographically different from traditional students in terms of age, modes of study, admission pathways and social integration.

For these purposes, this paper sets out to discuss a multidimensional and intersectional approach toward diversity management that is particularly suited for the higher education sector. Despite the existence of some widely embraced models of diversity (Loden and Rosener, 1991; Loden, 1996; Gardenswartz and Rowe, 2003), such a perspective seems useful for the following reasons: first, the much cited diversity wheel is a model used to map social characteristics of personal identity. In doing so, it puts personality at the core as the innately unique aspect that permeates and unifies all other layers. In contrast to this view, the frame that is presented here does not depict personality as a black box in the center, but rather seeks to integrate it as a cognitive dimension encompassing different learning strategies, problem-solving approaches and prediction and perception models.

Second, existing models look at workforce diversity without taking account of any university-specific demands and opportunities. Third, no particular attention is being paid to the

requirements of the student population and how to manage an increasingly diverse student body. Hence, this model attempts to combine workforce and student diversity in one framework.

While the diversity wheel seeks to illustrate the myriad combinations of characteristics that make up diversity, the current model can be used as a visual organizer for HEIs to capture the interplay of five crucial diversity segments at the tertiary level, namely demographic, cognitive, disciplinary, functional and institutional diversity.

In an attempt to provide a comprehensive framework to address diversity in its full entirety, a governance frame – which the authors would like to call higher education awareness for diversity (HEAD) wheel – is introduced. It looks at the concept of diversity from a demographic, cognitive, disciplinary, functional and institutional angle and seeks to capture a broad spectrum of variables that impact the effect of diversity management at the tertiary level. It is further aimed to synthesize existing diversity paradigms (resistance, discrimination, access, learning and responsibility) and provide an overview of the underlying rationales for diversity management. Thereby, an additional paradigm, namely "pluralism and eclecticism," is identified and discussed in detail. It is also argued that HEIs draw on differing rationales – e.g. education ethics, social dimension or third mission – in their attempt to implement diversity strategies. While organizations tend to put forward business case arguments and corporate social responsibility (CSR) reasons when driving diversity initiatives, HEIs are more likely to engage in social mobility discourse. This is due to historically and socially grown values which include notions of morality (Langholz, 2014) and foreground equity and humanistic perspectives.

The HEAD wheel – a holistic approach toward diversity management at the tertiary level

The HEAD wheel (Gaisch and Aichinger, 2016a, b), short for higher education awareness for diversity provides a comprehensive overview of five diversity segments that play an integral role at the tertiary level (Figure 1). It is understood as an all-inclusive lens that takes account of the reality that people "have both multiple differences and similarities" (Kirton and Greene, 2005, p. 132) that intersect and consequently reshape the meaning of diversity. This frame seeks to reinforce the perspective that persons studying and working at an institution of higher learning draw on a variety of demographic, cognitive, disciplinary, functional and institutional backgrounds that flow into one another, mostly with no defined borders.

Given that the wheel has no designated access point, it lends itself well to act as a gate-opener and entrance portal to various angles of diversity. Due to the intersectional nature of the wheel different agents can enter diversity-related issues through one of the five HEAD wheel segments and therefore approach them through different doors, with differing rationales and various purposes. From there, further sensitivity for diversity-relevant topics may unfold and further develop. In other words, if someone deals with interdisciplinary teams, they will most certainly need to look beyond disciplinary diversity and also embrace factors of demographic, cognitive, functional and institutional differences. Team members may not only have different epistemological and ontological traditions; they will be shaped by these different worldviews which results in substantially varied knowledge bases and cognitive styles. Additionally, they may be embedded in specific functional or institutional cultures with fundamentally different assumptions, spheres of action and targets. At the same time, each member has distinctive demographic characteristics which may have a decisive impact on their mode of empowerment.

A closer look at the wheel reveals a second ring which depicts specific challenges and potential opportunities that HEIs are confronted with within this kaleidoscope of diversity. Demographic diversity as one component of the changing landscape of higher education is increasingly reflected by the growing number of non-traditional students enrolling in colleges and universities (Chung et al., 2014). To cater the needs of this newly arriving student population, HEIs have to create operating conditions that allow for more flexible modes of learning and a more diversity-sensitive student lifecycle management (Gaisch and
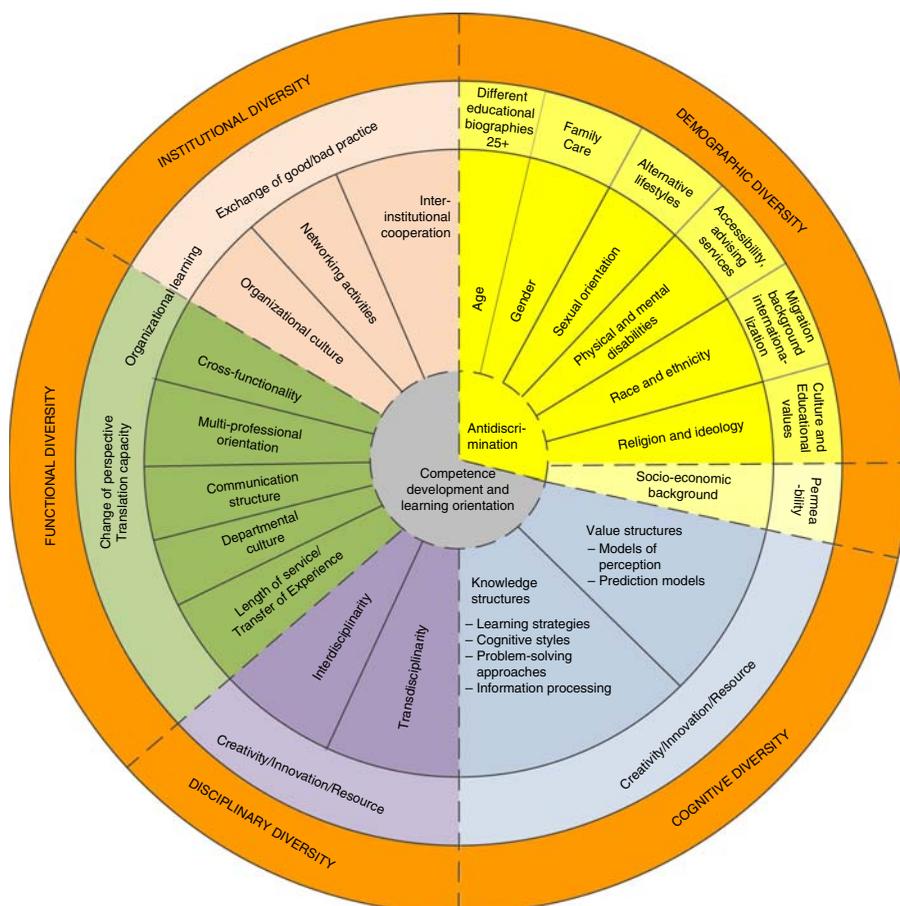
INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY

Exchange of good/bad practice

Inter-institutional cooperation

Networking activities

Organizational learning

Organizational culture

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

Different educational biographies 25+

Family Care

Alternative lifestyles

Accessibility advising services

Age

Gender

Sexual orientation

Physical and mental disabilities

Migration background internationalization

Race and ethnicity

Culture and Educational values

Antidiscrimination

Religion and ideology

Socio-economic background

Permeability

FUNCTIONAL DIVERSITY

Change of perspective Translation capacity

Cross-functionality

Multi-professional orientation

Communication structure

Departmental culture

Length of service/ Transfer of Experience

Competence development and learning orientation

Value structures
– Models of perception
– Prediction models

Knowledge structures
– Learning strategies
– Cognitive styles
– Problem-solving approaches
– Information processing

Creativity/Innovation/Resource

COGNITIVE DIVERSITY

Interdisciplinarity

Transdisciplinarity

Creativity/Innovation/Resource

DISCIPLINARY DIVERSITY

Figure 1.
HEAD wheel

Aichinger, 2017). As to the other four diversity segments, it is believed that by drawing on all those facets as a resource within an all-inclusive learning, teaching and working environment (David, 2010, p 5), all stakeholders may obtain equitable academic and institutional benefits. In the middle of the wheel, one can find the main drivers for diversity-related action which are predominantly striving for antidiscrimination, fairness and equity, competence development and learning orientation.

To begin with, demographic diversity is increasingly regarded as a normative goal for HEIs to address social groups that had previously been excluded from higher education. Understandably, then, that new populations – differing in age, gender, sexual orientation, physical and psychological abilities, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status from the norm – bring about new challenges for HEIs. To successfully integrate historically underrepresented student populations and to increase diversification, accessibility and permeability, HEIs need to offer support structures that promote educational equity, accountability and social justice.

The second segment depicted in the HEAD wheel is the one of cognitive diversity which encompasses differing value structures such as various models of perceptions and prediction, predominantly due to socio-cultural socialization. They are manifested in tacit assumptions of commonly accepted values, all of which are salient within a specific culture.

Hence, they are frequently crystallized through the adoption of social identities and revealed in specific cognitive processes. The second component of cognitive diversity is based on different knowledge structures, so to say on various learning strategies, cognitive styles, problem-solving and information processing approaches. These structures are strongly linked to the respective educational background or disciplinary socialization.

In this context, it is vital to outline that handling cognitive diversity is a critical success factor for HEIs. To effectively deal with cognitive diversity, teaching and learning settings require transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1992), so to say teaching staff that "call into question their dominant societal and educational values that typically frame their teaching approaches" (Gaisch, 2014, p. 21). At the same time, they need to promote critical thinking and ethnorelative reflection (Bennett, 1986). In doing so, they may use difference as a resource by taking the advantage of an international student body and draw on their different socio-cultural perspectives and approaches toward teaching and learning.

Disciplinary diversity as the third segment of the HEAD wheel relates to specific and target-oriented cooperation between persons that are socialized in disciplines grounded in different epistemological backgrounds. According to Kuhn (1970), scientists judge contributions and agree on their reliability and universal truth based on a shared perception of the world leading to visible outcomes. When it comes to transdisciplinary border crossing, however, this set of shared practices no longer applies. Mutual trust in each other's expert knowledge is vital when working in interdisciplinary teams. Appreciation of various skill-sets and a dynamic exchange of different disciplinary perspectives create new opportunities and may lead to more creative solutions and a strengthened potential for innovation. In the context of higher education, disciplinary diversity seems to increasingly become a strategic imperative for graduate employability. For a rapidly changing employment market, new job profiles that also entail entrepreneurial and innovation skills, intercultural understanding and critical thinking ability have become a critical asset (see Yerevan Communiqué, 2015). Undoubtedly, broad educational choices and settings that aim to create inclusive and inspiring learning spaces for all students are a prerequisite to prepare future graduates for interdisciplinary border crossing. What is more, HEIs that engage in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research activities seem to be best prepared to establish close ties with and sustainable development for the local industry. In doing so, they go beyond the classical tasks of teaching and research and pursue the so-called "third mission" agenda which may be broadly described as "dissemination or outreach activities" for increased innovation and social change (Guldbrandsen and Slipersæter, 2007, p. 113).

Functional diversity is achieved if employees (and in HEIs also students) take on different roles, perform different functions, engage in different practices or work outside their traditional functional areas. This blurring of boundaries requires the ability to change perspectives in line with the tasks and groups involved. Institutions that recognize the added value of functional diversity encourage cross-functional team work and support a multi-professional orientation. They also foster a departmental culture in which good and bad practices are shared, and the transfer of experience is appreciated. Hence, segment 4 of the HEAD wheel takes account of functional diversity and places an institutional focus on internal processes of organizational learning, team cohesion and team performance. In this regard, it was found that functional diversity positively affects group performance and innovation (Auh and Menguc, 2006).

Consequently, working in functional groups may help to detect blind spots or mental models that typically impair an agent's capacity to see beyond one's department or discipline (Senge, 1990). A shift of perspective may occur along the lines of interdepartmental communication and intra-organizational cooperation where intergroup relations can unfold and know-how and expertise can be passed on to junior or uninitiated colleagues. When taking on different roles on campus, be it as a student advisor, tutor, marketing assistant or representative, also students learn to think laterally and get prepared

for future challenges of the world of work. Thus, HEIs profit from a student population that is capable of seeing the big picture.

The fifth and last segments of the HEAD wheel take the institutional diversity which, in this context, refers to the collaboration and network activities with external stakeholders, be they different HEIs, industrial, political or scientific partners. At the same time, knowledge of coherences and awareness of how functional systems work can help to enhance collaboration and create emergence. If this happens, institutional diversity can be a source for institutional learning, a resilient foundation for sustainable development (McGinnis and Walker, 2010). In addition, a more diversified HE system may also enhance students' choices and consequently improve their levels of participation (Huisman *et al.*, 2007, p. 563). This certainly also serves the purpose of the third mission mandate according to which HEIs may cooperate with non-university institutions for the sake of a societal contribution, either with regard to teaching, learning, applied or fundamental research activities or social responsibility.

Diversity paradigms revisited

In the following, an attempt is made to sketch the paradigms for diversity management and to explain why certain diversity perspectives are more likely to be found in specific settings than others. The five diversity paradigms are summarized in Table I together with their strategic alignment, perspectives, focus and objectives. Given that all those paradigms were identified in and related to a business context, it is attempted here to also look at them from a higher education point of view and to carve out how they may differ in terms of rationale.

When taking a closer look in Table I, it becomes obvious that the resistance approach is adopted by organizations that seek to maintain the status quo of demographic and cultural homogeneity (Dass and Parker, 1999). In general, diversity is regarded as a threat which contributes to the resistance of change, the reproduction of inequality and discrimination at the workplace (Kirton and Greene, 2005). In this context, businesses employ accommodative strategies to demographic pressures by foregrounding the advantages of a monocultural organization that mainly consists of "old boys" networks (Oakley, 2000) and closed shops (Rastetter, 2006). Such a groupthink also applies to HEIs where homosocial reproduction, so to say the tendency to advance and recruit others similar in appearance or background (Gilbert *et al.*, 1999), is coupled with the demand for excellence and elite thought. What we would like to call an "ivory tower attitude" toward the outer circle appears to permeate both systems, for one in the form of a rigid monolithic organization (Cox, 1991), for the other in the shape of a "monoversity" (Matuko, 2009) where monocultural HEIs counteract current efforts of social mobility and permeability of class structures and social categories.

In contrast to the resistance approach that is blind to all diversity segments, the discrimination and fairness paradigm is clearly linked to the demographic segment of the HEAD wheel by placing emphasis on equal opportunity, fair treatment, recruitment and compliance of protected groups. Here, difference is regarded as a cause of problems with a normative obligation to accommodate persons of different backgrounds and recognize and support all kinds of demographic minority groups. While companies may be predominantly driven by political correctness and fears of non-compliance (Kulik, 2014), HEIs tend to foreground education ethics and seek to create a "safe, respectful and supportive space which is inclusive, ensuring fair and equal treatment for all through appropriate support mechanisms" (Caruana and Ploner, 2010, p. 58). What the Bologna communiqués address as the "social dimension in higher education" are, *inter alia*, "alternative access routes targeting non-traditional learners and guidance and counseling services available to students during their studies" (Crosier *et al.*, 2012, p. 72). While the corporate system also takes account of equal opportunities for previously excluded persons, HEIs seem to have an even stronger commitment to enabling a broader participation of disadvantaged groups, and in doing so,

Diversity paradigms	Prescription	Focus	Business rationale	Higher education rationale	Common denominator
Resistance (Dass and Parker, 1999)	Sustain homogeneity	Diversity = threat Reactive	Diversity-resistant Groupthink	Elite thought Excellence for an exclusive group	Protection of status quo Keep established insider Ivory tower attitude
Discrimination–fairness (Thomas and Ely, 1996)	Assimilate individuals	Diversity = problem Defensive Surface level = based on the principle of color blindness	Compliance with law Political correctness normative	Education ethics Educational equity (stakeholder) participation Social dimension	Equal opportunities Fair treatment Mentoring and career development programs Societal attitude
Access legitimacy (Thomas and Ely, 1996)	Accept and celebrate differences	Diversity = competitive advantage Accommodative surface level = based on observable parameters	Economical/business perspective	Equity perspective Educational mandate on behalf of society Be better prepared for a highly complex world Employability focus	Access underrepresented markets to get broader customer base Achieve better (financial) results Recruit a broader pool of students/staff inclusive attitude
Learning effectiveness (Thomas and Ely, 1996)	Acculturate pluralism	Diversity = resource Proactive deep level = non observable traits	Collective learning to enhance performance of all employees	Collective learning to enhance performance of all employees and students	Transformation of learning capability and mental models due to organizational learning and institutional cooperation Transformative attitude
Responsibility sensitivity (Schulz, 2009)	Value differences and communalities	Diversity = social responsibility Accountable/sustainable	Corporate social responsibility	Third mission Humanistic conception Academic responsibility for the creation of a democratic and sustainable society	Sustainable impact Co-creation for regional transformation responsible attitude

Table I.
Diversity paradigms and their differing rationales: a comparison between business and HE rationales

increase the overall number of students. Hence, educational equity is increasingly gaining in importance (Kugelmass and Ready, 2011) which is also reflected in the attempt to open up narrow lenses of inequality by addressing a much wider array of contextual factors that impact the perception of justice (Baye and Demeuse, 2008). In this sense, educational equity is understood as the capacity of institutions of higher learning to engage in institutional action that improves the access and retention of a minority student population (visualized in the demographic segment of the HEAD wheel) to also reflect societal diversity. This approach is certainly reinforced through specific legislations, incentive funding and a general discourse related to social justice and social responsibility.

Access-legitimacy works with the assumptions that diversity – as a useful instrument directly influenced by business forces – can be employed as a competitive advantage in multicultural societies. It brands diversity in line with accommodative strategies aimed at increasing a company's reputation of a good employer (Maiorescu and Wrigley, 2016) or attracting relevant employees for a particular organizational goal (Curşeu, 2015). From a business perspective, this paradigm is useful to gain access to previously neglected customer bases, attain legitimacy by diverse stakeholders and positively affect an organization's public image (Roberson and Park, 2007). What Thomas and Ely (1996, pp. 83-85) describe along the lines of "accepting and celebrating differences" are organizational objectives that make business sense and help to achieve competitive edge. This is in line with the "value all differences" paradigm brought forward by Palmer (1994, p. 255) or "valuing diversity" approach adopted by Loden (1994, pp. 294-300) where cognitive diversity with its differing value and knowledge structures is generally acknowledged as a source of creativity and innovation. Undoubtedly, the value of such a stance may also be significant for HEIs especially when it comes to the recruitment of a wider pool of students and staff. Yet, the question remains whether the focus on diversity issues should not go beyond an economization of difference (Andresen and Koreuber, 2009) and also embrace an educational mandate on behalf of society. HEIs have a societal duty to holistically educate future graduates for the challenges that an increasingly complex future holds in store. To achieve this, students need to be aware of the existence of various models of perceptions and prediction and also be trained to deal with cognitive styles, problem-solving approaches and information processing that differ from their internalized value and knowledge structures (Gaisch and Aichinger, 2016a, b). Thus, it strongly refers to the cognitive dimension of the wheel while at the same time opening up for an intersectional approach. The acquisition and application of practical knowledge together with transversal skills are crucial competencies that HEIs need to convey. To understand that a reasonable breadth of education may enable future graduates to better deal with issues beyond their disciplinary content knowledge requires an inclusive and accommodating attitude toward all segments of the HEAD wheel.

When applying the learning-effectiveness paradigm to HEIs, it seems to generate the same effects as in enterprises. Not only are differences and similarities valued in both systems, but the appreciative way of dealing with diversity as a concept (Krell, 2011) also adds to customer satisfaction, social responsibility, innovation and increased productivity. Here, companies seek to tap into new and often foreign market segments with a sharp eye on organizational learning. In a similar vein, HEIs open up to an increasingly diverse student population from a variety of socio-demographic backgrounds. What both systems have in common is a vested interest that staff (and in the latter case also students) acquire appropriate skills that equip them with the ability to manage cross-border projects, tackle complex global challenges and proficiently interact with stakeholders around the world. To achieve this, both individual growth and organizational growth are a key parameter that allows agents to flexibly adapt to dynamic changes, often for the benefit of the respective organization. In this sense, transformative interventions need to be offered that encourage deep-level diversity through extended interactions and enhanced group efficacy. Since the

acculturation in pluralist knowledge communities is based on collective and organizational learning processes (Langholz, 2014), suitable windows of opportunities need to be provided so that cognitive, disciplinary, functional and institutional cooperation between different individuals can be achieved.

The responsibility-sensitivity paradigm seems a logical progression from the recent attention given to employee-focused CSR and ethical aspects of human resource management (HRM). Increased scholarly interest has been devoted to socially responsible HR practices in relation to diversity management (Mazur, 2013). Not only has diversity management been one of the most popular HRM strategies since the 1990s, but it also has by now become a widely accepted and powerful management tool for corporate governance (Mazur, 2013, p. 43). What is foregrounded here is a diversity perspective that has both accountable and sustainable impact. While CSR is predominantly taking place at firm level and is therefore an issue for international corporations, such "visible doing good activities" (Minor and Morgan, 2011, p. 44) in the field of diversity management are becoming increasingly vital in the tertiary sector too. What has been generally described as "third mission activities" throughout HEIs are measures that facilitate technology transfer, outreach and engagement to benefit society (Piirainen *et al.*, 2016). Such activities include non-commercial and social innovation or consulting, services to the community, and/or contracts with industry and business enterprises (Koryakina *et al.*, 2015). In this sense, the humanistic conception of HEIs and academic responsibility for the creation of a democratic society take shape in activities that support sustainable development. On a similar note, it is also vital to engage in cooperation with differing enterprises and institutions to further accelerate technology transfer. On these grounds, it is reasonable to assume that both the cognitive and institutional segments of the HEAD wheel are particularly applicable.

The glue that holds both systems together is a sharp awareness that a responsible attitude toward society is not only a nice to have, but also seems to become a prerequisite for modern enterprises and knowledge communities.

A need to extend current paradigms
Although the five previously discussed paradigms appear to well describe different prescriptions and rationales for engaging in diversity-related activities, they still seem – so it is argued by the authors – not fully capture the dynamic interplay of diversity aspects that are prevalent within complex organizations and institutions of higher learning with frequently conflicting interests and forces.

What needs to be foregrounded here is a context-sensitive motivational needs-driven approach for diversity management that facilitates intersectional perspectives and a deeper discussion on the socio-demographic and socio-economic phenomena that currently shape both corporate and institutional realities and thus leads to "a shift of perspective from a deficit approach to an approach that views the diversity of their students and staff as an asset (potential approach)" (Langholz, 2014).

To adopt such a lens, a further paradigm is introduced, which we would like to refer to as "pluralism and eclecticism" to take account of the complex societal challenges of today's knowledge society that need to be addressed with informed decisions in a context-specific manner. In line with the dynamics of our contemporary world in which demographic shifts, technological advances and globalization reshape our lives, industries, working areas and education systems, this paradigm is of eclectic nature. In this sense, it is not determined by one single driver but draws on intersectional considerations and multiple rationales. By taking account that an organization is not a single, cohesive and static entity but exists of competing powers, conflicting interests and a complex interconnected constellation of factors that influence an aggregate of individuals at multiple levels, it points to more fluid constructions of diversity paradigms.

In this sense, diversity is regarded as a context-sensitive commodity that can be pro-actively used in line with the corporate or institutional mission statement, with the formal or informal change management strategy or the willingness to engage in adaptive action.

In order to eclectically draw on specific paradigms and make informed and context-specific decisions, it is vital to have an extensive knowledge base of the multitude of diversity paradigms, their underlying rationales, prescription and focus. This is where pluralism comes into play – meaning that relevant stakeholders need to possess a vast repertoire of differing strategies. By adopting a situational lens, dedicated action toward diversity management can be sustained on various levels with certain variations in line with the respective organizational/institutional/departmental vision, mission and strategic outlook.

Given that this newly coined pluralism-eclecticism paradigm takes the dynamics involved in diversity management into account, it allows for an intersectional analysis of all previously discussed diversity segments. Dynamic systems with their inherent conflicting interests most certainly need to subscribe to more than one diversity paradigm. Consequently, knowledgeable agents require the openness and adaptability to adopt several approaches and relate them to specific settings. They need to look beyond the narrow confines of their internalized settings and further anticipate and begin to understand the broader context of diversity management.

Not only does this customized approach lend itself more naturally to the development of a contextual understanding of the diversity aspects at stake, but it also refrains from either/or solutions that may have a somewhat limited view of the underlying mechanisms that enable or disable specific diversity action and interventions. Behind any diversity management activity – we would claim – lies a motivational or needs-driven explanation which may lead to a constructivist diversity paradigm shift. In this light, the ability of contextualized and critical high-order thinking and interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and translational action should become the major driver behind any diversity-related intervention.

In Table II, diversity paradigms are extended by the pluralism/eclecticism approach.

Theoretical and practical implications

It is argued here that as HEIs want to attract more demographic diversity (demographic segment), they should not only focus on fairness and antidiscrimination paradigm types of initiatives which manifests itself in directives on equality treatment that are up to now most common in HEIs (such as preventing lawsuits and fulfilling legal obligations), but also try to market themselves to diverse demographic groups (access and legitimacy paradigm) or put forward a diverse academic and administrative staff. At the same time, they should try to understand whether certain demographic traits have special linkages with specific disciplinary areas or with specific cognitive styles (learning-effectiveness paradigm). Here, women in STEM studies (Beede *et al.*, 2011) may provide crucial impetus as well as studies that take reflective accounts of academic content, student characteristics and faculty beliefs (Tsui, 2001). Hence, a holistic integration of diversity management in HEIs may lead to a paradigm shift from a deficit approach (antidiscrimination angle) to a more resource-based approach (learning effectiveness) that considers the diversity of students and staff as an asset.

To become a genuine transformative institution of higher learning (responsibility paradigm) where regional and societal engagement and social innovation are foregrounded (in the sense of the third mission mandate but also in line with the responsibility-sensitivity paradigm), it not only requires industry cooperation and outreach activities but also international collaboration with other HEIs (institutional diversity).

Diversity paradigms	Prescription	Focus	Business rationale	Higher education rationale	Common denominator
Resistance (Dass and Parker, 1999)	Sustain homogeneity	Diversity = threat reactive	Diversity-resistant Groupthink	Elite thought excellence for an exclusive group	Protection of status quo Keep established insider Ivory tower attitude
Discrimination–fairness (Thomas and Ely, 1996)	Assimilate individuals	Diversity = problem Defensive surface level = based on the principle of color blindness	Compliance with law Political correctness normative	Education Ethics Educational equity (stakeholder) Participation social dimension	Equal opportunities Fair treatment mentoring and career development programs Societal attitude
Access legitimacy (Thomas and Ely, 1996)	Accept and celebrate differences	Diversity = competitive advantage Accommodative surface level = based on observable parameters	Economical/business perspective	Equity perspective Educational mandate on behalf of society Be better prepared for a highly complex world Employability focus	Access underrepresented markets to get broader customer base achieve better (financial) results Recruit a broader pool of students/staff inclusive attitude
Learning–effectiveness (Thomas and Ely, 1996)	Acculturate pluralism	Diversity = resource Proactive deep level = non observable traits	Collective learning to enhance the performance of all employees	Collective learning to enhance the performance of all employees and students	Transformation of learning capability and mental models due to organizational learning and institutional cooperation Transformative attitude
Responsibility sensitivity (Schulz, 2009)	Value differences and communalities	Diversity = social responsibility Accountable/sustainable	Corporate social responsibility	Third mission Humanistic conception Academic responsibility for the creation of a democratic and sustainable society	Sustainable impact Co-creation for regional transformation Responsible attitude
Pluralism eclecticism (Gaisch et al., 2017)	Customize differences and intervention	Diversity = context-sensitive –commodity dynamic	Motivational needs-driven approach	Constructivist paradigm shift Inter- and trans-disciplinary thinking	Implement diversity management in line with organizational culture Dialogical attitude

Table II.
Extension of existing diversity paradigms and their differing rationales

Conclusion

The core contribution of the frame of reference that was presented in this paper is its systematic, wide-scope and cross-sectoral way of addressing diversity segments at the tertiary level that allows for a contextual understanding of diversity management in a more nuanced way. As such, the HEAD wheel may serve as an academically informed qualitative assessment tool for diversity managers that wish to make more informed decisions. Such action may go beyond either compliance or opportunity-oriented diversity approaches but address genuine and context-specific needs. To identify those needs, the HEAD wheel may serve as an overarching structure that enables an in-depth understanding of existing practices, its consequences, limitations and underlying rationales.

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