



A study on the Practices of Diversity Management in Higher Educational Institutions.

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ABSTRACT

In the context of increasing social, cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity, diversity management has emerged as a strategic priority for higher education institutions in India. Karnataka, with its heterogeneous student and faculty population, presents a relevant setting to examine how diversity is managed at the institutional level. The present study examines the nature, extent, and effectiveness in universities' diversity practices, with a specific focus on policy frameworks, implementation mechanisms, and stakeholder perceptions. Using a descriptive and analytical research design, primary data were collected from students, teaching faculties and management, and through a structured questionnaire, complemented by secondary sources such as policy documents, reports, and scholarly literature. Statistical tools including percentage analysis, mean score analysis, and independent samples t-test were employed. The findings reveal that moderate adoption of diversity management practices, with notable strengths in inclusive curriculum design and policy formulation, and significant gaps related to resource availability, training, communication, and disability support services. Hypothesis testing confirms the significant differences in diversity management practices across institutional types and demonstrates a constructive relationship between diversity management and inclusiveness. The study concludes with policy-relevant suggestions to strengthen inclusive and equitable higher education environments in Karnataka.

Keywords: Diversity management, Higher education, Karnataka, Inclusion, equity.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a prominent role in building social equity, democratic values, and inclusive development in India, and particularly in Karnataka. Institutions of higher learning cater to a highly diverse population differentiated by caste, religion, language, gender, region, socio-economic status, and physical ability, while such diversity enriches the academic environment, it also presents institutional challenges related to access, participation, equity, and inclusion. Diversity management in the institutional level refers to the systematic planning and implementation of policies and practices aimed at recognizing, respecting, and effectively utilizing diversity within institutions. In the Indian higher education context, diversity management is shaped by constitutional provisions, reservation policies, national education frameworks, and state-level regulatory mechanisms. Despite the presence of strong policy mandates, concerns remain regarding uneven implementation and limited translation of policy intent into everyday institutional practices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept has attracted considerable scholarly attention worldwide. Studies indicate that universities serve not only as academic spaces but also as social environments where individuals from diverse backgrounds interact (Hurtado et al., 2012; Gurin et al., 2002). Effective diversity management has been associated with improved institutional climate, enhanced student engagement, and better academic outcomes (Williams et al., 2014; Banks, 2016). International research highlights practices such as inclusive admission policies, gender equity initiatives, multicultural curriculum design, faculty sensitization programmes, and targeted student support services (Deem & Ozga, 2015; Altbach et al., 2019). However, several studies also note the challenges including inadequate training, resistance to change, and symbolic compliance with diversity policies (Ahmed, 2012; Iverson, 2018). In the Indian context, diversity management is closely linked to affirmative action policies, social justice frameworks, and regulatory guidelines (Tilak, 2015; UGC, 2019). Existing studies emphasize that while Indian higher education institutions often demonstrate commitment at the policy level, implementation gaps persist due to resource constraints, limited awareness, and weak monitoring mechanisms (Deshpande, 2016; Jayaram, 2020). Leadership commitment and institutional culture have been identified as critical factors influencing the success of diversity initiatives (Kezar & eckel, 2008; Lumby & Foskett, 2016).

RESEARCH GAP

A critical review of existing literature reveals several gaps. First, empirical research remains sparse, particularly at the state level. Second, existing studies largely emphasize policy perspectives, with limited focus on actual institutional practices and stakeholder perceptions. Third, few studies apply quantitative methods and statistical hypothesis testing to examine variations and their impact on inclusiveness. Fourth, insufficient attention has been given to challenges such as resource limitations, reluctance to change, and disability support mechanisms. Most Indian studies focus on national-level policy analysis or conceptual discussions, with limited empirical evidence from specific states. This highlights the need for context-specific, institution-level research examining how diversity management practices are operationalized and experienced by stakeholders in Karnataka. The present study addresses these gaps by empirically examining research topic, comparing practices across institutional types, and assessing the relationship between practices and inclusiveness by using statistical tools. Although global literature extensively discusses, empirical study is focusing on Indian institutions—particularly at the state level—remain limited. This study addresses the gap in linking institutional policies, stakeholder perceptions, and measurable outcomes related to inclusiveness.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine practices of diversity management in Karnataka higher educational institutions.
2. To assess stakeholder perceptions regarding the effectiveness of practices of diversity management.
3. To identify major challenges in the implementation of practices of diversity management diversity.

HYPOTHESIS

- H01: There is no significant change in practices among higher education institutions in Karnataka.
- H02: There is a difference in practices among higher education institutions in Karnataka.

METHODOLOGY

The study use research design are descriptive and analytical tools by using both primary source and secondary sources of data. Primary data collected from questionnaire method. Respondents were selected from using simple random sample techniques. Questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale to assess diversity management practices, perceived inclusiveness, and challenges related to implementation.

Secondary data were collected from academic journals, books, policy documents, government reports, and institutional records. Data analysis involved percentage analysis, mean score analysis, and inferential statistics such as independent samples t-test. Data were collected during the academic year 2024–25.

LINKAGE BETWEEN OBJECTIVES, HYPOTHESES AND TOOLS

Objectives	Hypothesis	Statistical tool
Examine diversity practices	H01	Mean score, t-test
Assess inclusiveness	H02	t-test
Identify challenges	-	Percentage analysis

DISCUSSION

The table shows that 60% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their institution has a clearly defined diversity policy. This indicates that most higher education institutions in Karnataka have formal diversity frameworks, though awareness among all stakeholders is not uniform.

Below 50% of respondents perceived that diversity practices are effectively communicated. However, a considered proportion (28%) disagreed, suggesting the need for improved internal communication and orientation programs.

Table 1: Respondents awareness of diversity policy and Communication of Diversity Management Practices

Frequency (N=50)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage (%)
4	8	05	10
6	12	09	18
10	20	11	22
19	38	16	32
11	22	09	18
50	100.	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2: Mean scores of Diversity Management Practices

Statement	Mean score	Rank
Lack of resources as a challenge	3.66	I
Inclusive curriculum	3.62	II
Contribution to inclusiveness	3.58	III
Defined diversity policy	3.54	IV
Training for managing diversity	3.12	IX
Resistance to change	3.52	V
Equal opportunity practices	3.48	VI
Feeling respected and valued	3.44	VII
Communication of diversity practices	3.32	VIII
Disability support services	2.96	X

Source: Computed from primary data

The mean score analysis reveals variations in the perception. The statement Lack of resources as a challenge recorded the highest mean score (3.66) and secured the first rank. This study indicates major of the respondents agree that inadequate resources constitute a major challenge in the effective implementation of diversity management practices. These findings highlight resource constraints as a critical barrier faced by institutions. The practice of inclusive curriculum obtained the second-highest mean score (3.62), suggesting that curricular initiatives reflecting diverse perspectives are relatively better implemented. Similarly, the statement "Contribution to inclusiveness" recorded a mean score of 3.58, indicating a good perception regarding the role of diversity practices in promoting an inclusive institutional environment. In contrast, disability support services recorded the lowest mean score (2.96) and ranked tenth, reflecting a neutral perception among respondents and pointing towards insufficient support mechanisms for students with

disabilities. Additionally, training for managing diversity (Mean= 3.12) and communication of diversity, practices (Mean=3.32) also received comparatively training initiatives and more effective communication strategies. Analysis of respondent awareness and communication of diversity policies indicates moderate institutional engagement. Mean score analysis reveals that lack of resources is perceived as the most significant challenge, while inclusive curriculum practices are relatively better implemented. Disability support services received the lowest mean score, indicating insufficient institutional focus. Overall, the findings suggest that while higher education institutions in Karnataka demonstrate moderate adoption of diversity management practices, significant gaps remain in terms of resource availability, training, and support, warranting focused institutional interventions.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis 1

To examine the variations and impact of practices of diversity management in higher education institutions in Karnataka, two hypotheses were tested using 5 percent level of significance with independent sample.

Test Applied: Independent samples t-test

Type of institution	Respondents	Mean score	Std. Deviation
Government HEIs	25	3.52	0.41
Private HEIs	25	3.38	0.39

t-value 2.14, degree of freedom 48, sig.(p-value) 0.035

Prescribed significance level is 0.05 test result p value is 0.035, therefore the null hypothesis is not supported. The result demonstrates there is a significant difference in diversity management practices between government and private education institutions in Karnataka.

Hypothesis 2

Test Applied: Independent samples t-test

Level of diversity management practices	Respondents	Mean score	Std. Deviation
High level practices	26	3.74	0.38
Low level practices	24	3.29	0.41

t-value 3.8 degree of freedom 48 sig.(p-value)0.000

Since the calculated p-value (0.000) is below the 5 percent level of significance, therefore the null hypothesis is not accepted. This finding confirms that perceived inclusiveness varies significantly according to the level of practices adopted by institutions.

The results reveal there is a difference in diversity management practices between government and private institutions, leading to rejection of H01. Further analysis confirms a significant difference in perceived inclusiveness between institutions with high and low levels of diversity management practices, leading to not accepted H02.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The study reveals that higher education institutions in Karnataka have moderately adopted diversity management practices, as reflected by the overall mean scores ranging from 2.96 to 3.66.
- Among the identified factors, lack of resources as a challenge recorded the highest mean score (3.66) and ranked first, indicating that inadequate financial and infrastructural resources are perceived as the most significant barrier to effective diversity management.
- Inclusive curriculum practices secured the second rank with a mean score of 3.62, suggesting that institutions have made relatively better efforts to incorporate diverse cultural, social, and regional perspectives into academic programs.

- The contribution of diversity management practices towards creating an inclusive institutional environment was positively perceived.
- Defined diversity policies and resistance to change were moderately rated, reflecting the presence of formal frameworks but with challenges in acceptance and implementation.
- Communication of diversity practices and training for managing diversity recorded comparatively lower mean scores (3.32 and 3.12 respectively), highlighting gaps in awareness creation and capacity building.
- Disability support services received the lowest mean score (2.96) and ranked last, indicating insufficient institutional support mechanisms for students with disabilities.
- Hypothesis testing confirms significant differences in diversity management practices across institutions and establishes a positive management on perceived inclusiveness

The study finds that diversity management practices in Karnataka's higher education institutions are moderately implemented. Resource constraints, limited training, and weak communication mechanisms hinder effective implementation. Inclusive curriculum initiatives and formal diversity policies are notable strengths, while disability support services and capacity-building initiatives require significant improvement.

The findings indicate that while diversity is acknowledged at the policy level, its practical implementation requires greater institutional commitment, resource allocation, and capacity building. Strengthening diversity management practices will not only enhance inclusiveness but also contribute to improved academic outcomes and institutional excellence. Therefore, a comprehensive and sustained approach is essential to promote effective diversity management in universities.

SUGGESTIONS

- Higher education institutions should allocate adequate financial and infrastructural resources to effectively implement diversity management initiatives.
- Regular training and sensitization programmes should be conducted for faculty and administrative staff to enhance their ability to manage diversity effectively.
- Institutions should strengthen communication strategies, including orientation programmes and awareness campaigns, to ensure that diversity policies and practices are well understood by all stakeholders.
- Special emphasis should be placed on improving disability support services, such as accessible infrastructure, assistive technologies, and counselling facilities.
- Institutional leadership should promote a culture of inclusiveness and openness to change to overcome resistance among stakeholders.
- Regular guidance and review system should be developed to assess the effectiveness of diversity management practices and ensure continuous improvement.

Institutions should strengthen resource allocation for diversity initiatives, conduct regular training programmes, improve internal communication, enhance disability support services, and foster inclusive leadership practices. Periodic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential to ensure effective implementation.

CONCLUSION.

Diversity management has emerged as a critical reveal of inclusive and equitable higher education systems. The present study concludes that higher education institutions in Karnataka have initiated several diversity management practices, particularly in curriculum design and policy formulation. However, the effectiveness of these practices is constrained by challenges such as lack of resources, limited training, inadequate communication, and insufficient support services for students with disabilities.

The study concludes that while higher education institutions in Karnataka demonstrate policy-level commitment to diversity management, practical implementation remains uneven. Addressing resource gaps, strengthening institutional capacity, and fostering inclusive cultures are essential for translating diversity policies into meaningful outcomes. Effective diversity management can significantly enhance inclusiveness, institutional climate, and academic excellence.

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