

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318040514>

Organizational Multicultural Competences of Ethiopian Public Universities

Article · September 2016

CITATIONS

3

READS

930

2 authors:



Frew Amsale Tesfaye

Jimma University

13 PUBLICATIONS 26 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Abeya Geda

Jimma University

9 PUBLICATIONS 21 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Analysis of Educational Management and Leadership Training Practices in Ethiopia [View project](#)



Ethical Leadership: Perceptions and Practices in the western cluster public Universities of Ethiopia [View project](#)

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

An Assessment of Organizational Multicultural Competences of Ethiopian Public Universities

Abeya Geleta¹ and Frew Amsale¹

Abstract

Higher education institutions (HEIs) as multicultural organizations refer directly to the degree to which everyday institutional policies and practices support cultural plurality, which is the focus of the present study. In line with this, the multicultural competence levels of Ethiopian public universities were investigated. The convergent parallel mixed-methods design, including document analysis, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, was used in the study. Multi-stage, simple random and purposive sampling techniques were employed to select 316 participants for the study. Inferential statistics including mean, standard deviation, t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to analyse the quantitative data. The findings revealed that the universities lacked policy frameworks, units, practices and programmes that adequately focus on multiculturalism. Progress in addressing gender issues was still limited, including in terms of women's empowerment, and the rate at which opportunities are utilised by men and women is still skewed in favour of men, as with the low numbers of female lecturers. The staff associations were weak and poorly equipped to provide or promote opportunities for skills development in the management of diversity. There is a need for universities to establish internal rules and policies and to provide conducive environment for managing diversity amongst students and staff. There is also a need for the creation of open and trusted mechanisms for staff and administration to freely interact with each other. It is imperative that university leadership adopt multicultural competence as an essential competency within their profession, continue to seek out opportunities to further enhance personal multicultural competence, and infuse it into their daily practices.

Key words: Multicultural competence; leadership; cultural competency; organizational policy and procedures; personnel practices; attitudes, knowledge and skills

INTRODUCTION

Today, more than ever before, the need to recognize cultural pluralism is inexorable

¹Jimma University, College of Education and Behavioural Sciences, Department of Educational Planning and Management

for the “rapidly increasing interconnections among all nations in the world, particularly, as we face global issues related to the ecosystem, nuclear weapons, terrorism, human rights, and scarce national resources” (Connerley and Pedersen, 2005) and thereby to the realization of an ideal and healthy situation in any productive society.

Similarly, as the sustainability of organizations by large depends upon the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes of all workers, the recognition of the cultural pluralism within organizations is of paramount importance for the sustenance of organizations (Connerley and Pedersen: 2005). Hence management practices that encourage innovation, high performance, and a learning culture that embraces all employees (Macdonald, 1995), regardless of the cultural similarity with their leaders are needed. In other words, the age of cultural pluralism in which we are living calls for multiculturalism, that is the art of managing diversity in a total quality manner is highly needed to manage diversity effectively both at societal and organizational levels.

Multiculturalism can be broadly defined as a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society. Multicultural competences, be it at the societal or organizational level, is the capability of managing diversity. It is an on-going process that unleashes the various talents and capabilities which diverse populations bring to an organization, community or society, so as to create a wholesome, inclusive environment, that is

safe for differences, enables people to reject rejection, celebrates diversity, and maximizes the full potential of all, in a cultural context where everyone benefits. Organizational multicultural competences (OMC) particularly refer to the capability of an organization managing diversity in a total quality manner. Organizations are required to be multiculturally competent as “... the adjustments that employees will make within an organization depend on the organization’s tolerance for ambiguity, the demand for conformity, and the value placed on diversity, cultural fit, and acculturation” (Carr-Ruffino, 1996).

OMC is related to the extent of the inclusiveness of organizational programs, policies, procedures, physical environment, health and social services and the like to the existing diversity in an organization. Determining whether organizations are multiculturally competent or not needs us to assess the efforts exerted by organizations to create a wholesome, inclusive environment – where differences are safely treated, where people are empowered to avoid cynicism, where diversity is celebrated, where the full potential of all are being excelled and where everyone is a winner in a cultural context. Multicultural organizations value diversity and attempt to accommodate continuing cultural change. These organizations (a) work with a vision that reflects multiculturalism; (b) reflect the contributions of diverse cultural groups in their mission, operations, products, and services; (c) value multiculturalism and view it as an asset; (d) engage in visioning, planning, and problem-solving activities that provide for equal access and opportunities; (e) understand that equal access and opportunities are not the same as equal treatment; and (f) work on diversifying the environment (Sue, 2001).

The key elements of OMC includes things such as a mission statement, program goals, organizational norms, principles, policies, hiring practices; the cultural appropriateness of the physical environment of the university, the cultural competence of the university's governing structures and the like. While an organization may have many components of cultural competence, if they are not supported and upheld by policy, they may be put aside as a result of issues such as lack of funding. OMC includes both policies and practices related to employees; the level of satisfaction and retention of staff. It also refers to the inclusion of cultural competencies in the mission statement of the organization, leadership commitment to a culturally competent organization, the presence of an advisory committee for cultural competence, and a culturally sensitive and welcoming physical environment. The OMC further includes the development of systems and methods for determining what is culturally appropriate for the organisation community and for providing cross-cultural training and supervision for all concerned. It also refers to the degree to which multicultural interventions are institutionalized.

Developing OMC can also be considered as a strategy for securing competitive advantage for organizations. In lines with this, Webb, Darling, and Alvey (2014) stated that "Multicultural capabilities are increasingly becoming a significant source of competitive advantage and business strategy."

Statement of the problem

In society where there is ethnic and religious diversity, the issue of multiculturalism is inevitable responsibility of higher education institutions (Hurtado, 2007). The cultural pluralism within the institutions makes them such models of the

pluralistic democracy (Ameny-Dixon, 2004). Moreover, the issue of diversity in Ethiopian universities makes the agenda of multiculturalism of their priority. Higher education in Ethiopia has a relatively short history of some 60 years only, and until 2000, Ethiopia's higher education system was comprised of just two universities, seventeen colleges, a total of 31,000 students, and a small supervisory department in the Ministry of Education. However, during the past ten years it has undergone both major quantitative and qualitative change. This can be attributed to the fact that the succession of new policies, development programs and legislations were designed and implemented. Consequently, today it comprises about 36 (33 take students directly from Grade 12) public universities, and several private colleges. The enrolment in the public institutions also rose from 447,693 in 2010/11, to 593,571 in 2013/14 (MoE, 2015/16).

To 388,529 in all programs by the year 2011/12 (MOE: 2011).

According to ESDP V (MOE) in the coming years of the implementation of ESDP V, the total enrolment in higher education both undergraduate and post graduate will continue to rise up. The proportion of females and disadvantaged groups in the enrolment will be given a particular emphasis by strengthening affirmative action's through preferential access, academic support programs, and the establishment of a gender friendly environment and climate at HEIs (MoE, 2015/16)). To this end OMC becomes of paramount importance for Institutions of higher education today as they are made of culturally diverse student and faculty populations(Ameny-Dixon, 2004). In a condition highly marked by cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, making constructive use of this diversity in the

development of new ideas and solutions can increase the opportunities for recognition, equal opportunity, achievement and development for all. Our HEIs are required to promote democratic culture and uphold multicultural community life.

Though, numerous studies have been carried out to study multiculturalism in both Western and non-Western countries, their implications on educational leadership have not been studied and analysed sufficiently (Andersen, 2012). In addition to these, there are evidences that universities in Ethiopia have not properly addressed the challenges of diversity in their own context, let alone playing a vital role in addressing the diversity-related problems of the larger society (Levine, 1991). That is why in the last decade our HEIs have been experiencing several conflicts of the group of students due to misconceptions that resulted from the differences in religion, ethnicity and linguistics. Universities usually spend much of their resources in resolving such conflicts of students rather than placing proactive measures. Therefore, the context in which the HEIs are practically functioning calls for the development of multiculturalism in their leadership as well as organizational contexts.

Prior to the development of multicultural competences of HEIs, it seems wise to assess the existing multicultural competences. The assessment believed to avail necessary data that help to understand the multicultural competences of HEIs and thereby help to determine the possible ways to develop multiculturalism accordingly. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to provide a better insight of the multicultural competences of Ethiopian public universities by examining the multicultural competences Ethiopian public universities at the institutional level.

To achieve this purpose the study has raised the following basic questions:

1. To what extent organizational arrangements (such as policies, programmes, rules, regulations, decision making procedures, communication tools) in Ethiopian public universities are multicultural-oriented?
2. To what extent organizational cultures of Ethiopian public universities are multicultural friendly?

The purpose of the study

The overall purpose of this study was to assess the organizational multicultural competences of Ethiopian HEIs.

Significances of the study

The study is significant in that it tried to study the multicultural competences of Ethiopian HEIs and factors that hamper it. The study helps to understand the extent to which HEI's in Ethiopia are multiculturally competent and to design systematic ways of developing their multicultural competences so as to enable them discharge their educational and social responsibilities for now and for the future.

The study might enable to have a better insight for policy makers on what essential areas are to critically focus on in order to develop the multicultural competences of HEI's. The study might also provide better insights for researchers who are interested in the area of multiculturalism in further research undertakings.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The Research Design

The study applied convergent mixed methods research approach by parallelly collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data in order to bring about more reliable result. The qualitative data were collected from educational leaders through interview and by analyzing necessary documents whereas the quantitative data were collected from teachers, administrative staff and leaders of the public universities through questionnaires.

Sources of the data

University presidents, administrators, college deans, department heads, teachers and administrative staff working in the three public universities were included in the study as primary sources of data. Besides, essential documents such as policy documents, senate legislations, strategic plans and programs and were also used as secondary data sources for the study.

Sample Size and Techniques

The public universities in Ethiopia can be categorized in to three based on their generations (MoE, 2011). From each of the three generations one sample university was selected using simple random sampling method. Accordingly, Jimma University (JU), Mizan-Tepi University (MTU) and Wollega University (WU) were included in the study. Multistage random sampling technique was employed to select five colleges from each of the sample universities and then three sample departments from each of the sample colleges were included in the study.

Summary of the study participants

Respondent Type * University Type Cross-Tabulation					
		University Type			Total
		Jim ma	Mizan- Tepi	Wollega	
Respondent Type	Academic staff	104	68	46	218
	Academic Manager (vice presidents, college deans, department heads)	24	16	6	46
	Administrative staff	8	8	6	22
	Administrative Officers (administration team leaders)	14	9	7	30
Total		150	101	65	316

Instruments of Data Collection

In this study, data were collected through three major instruments. These are questionnaire, interview and document

analysis. Each of instruments is discussed as follows:

Questionnaires

Two sets of questionnaires were used to assess the multicultural competences of HEIs. The two sets of questionnaires were designed in line with the nature of data required from the participants. The first set of questionnaire was administered to academic and administrative staff and the second questionnaire for the educational managers (academic and administrative officers). The questionnaires were designed by consulting relevant literatures in the area of multiculturalism. Accordingly, structure, roles and commitment of administrators, organizational policy and procedures, culturally biased incidents management practices, staff retention and personnel practices, cultural competency in the service delivery and communication tools were identified and included as major teams in the questionnaire.

Interview

In this study, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to elicit relevant information on the attitudes and perceptions of the participants regarding multicultural competences in the public universities. The interviews were carried out on face to face basis. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select the key participants for the interviews of the study who were perceived as possessing the information needed to make a contribution to the phenomenon under study. Consequently, 18 participants were selected for participation in the semi-structured one-to-one interviews. The sample included three vice presidents, three administrative team leaders, six deans and six senior teachers. The intention for interviewing the managers and senior teachers was to get more insight into multicultural practices of the universities.

Document Analysis

For the purpose this study all essential documents such as senate legislations, strategic plans, visions and missions, value statements, programs and etc. of the public universities under consideration were analysed and used to complement the quantitative data.

Validity and Reliability Checks

The study, as indicated earlier, involved the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Regarding the qualitative data, the items of the interviews were developed by consulting substantial works and literature regarding the multicultural competences. They were then modified, omitted as well as added as per the qualitative data. Regarding the validity of the questionnaires, prior to the main data collection phase a pilot study was carried out to maintain the reliability of the questionnaire items. Besides, the questionnaires were presented to the groups of experts at Jimma University, college of education and behavioural sciences for professional comments. A pilot study of the questionnaire was conducted using purposive sampling of 17 respondents in a single university which is similar to the ones included in the study. The participants in the pilot study were chosen because they had a similar background and knowledge to the target population about the issues being investigated. They did not form part of the group to be surveyed. The analysis of the pilot study data indicated that the sub-scales of the questionnaire have good item characteristics in terms of internal consistency and homogeneity of the items contained in each sub-scale. The results showed that the reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) for the educational leaders' questionnaire ranges from 0.840-0.963 and it ranges from 0.856-0.932 for the administrative staff questionnaire, which are considered very

good for the purpose of this study. The results of the pilot study have not been included in the final results.

Procedures of Data Collection

To answer the basic research questions, this study involved series of data gathering procedures. The questionnaires were administered to respondents after a brief orientation about the purposes of the study and how to answer the questions. To maximize the quality of the responses and the rate of return, convenient time for the respondents was arranged. The completed questionnaires were collected from the respondents with the help of assistant data collectors. To elicit the desired information, the researcher discussed and arranged appropriate time and place so that the interviewees might be at ease during the interview period. Besides, the purpose of the interview was explained and all possible effort was made to establish proper rapport with the interviewees before and during the interview secludes. In order to reduce the possibility of losing confidentiality through the involvement of many interviewers (Patton, 2002:354), the data in this study were collected only by the researcher.

Data analysis Methods

In this study, the data collected through the questionnaires were coded, entered, cleaned and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20) computer software. The quantitative data were analysed using inferential statistics such as mean, standard division, t-tests and one-way ANOVA. The qualitative data were also transcribed, coded and interpreted thematically.

The one-way ANOVA was conducted, based on results of inter-item correlation and factor analysis of data, to examine differences in perceptions among the

different groups of respondents in the university as well as among the universities. Besides, a post hoc test was made to see the directions of the differences among the universities. An independent sample t-test was computed to examine the significant perception differences that might exist between university leaders and workers groups. Prior to the independent sample t-test, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was carried out to check the equality of the variances between the two groups. Equality of variances were taken in to consideration in computing the independent t-test when there are no statistically significant variances between the mean values of the two groups. On the other hand, when statistically significant variances between the mean values of the two groups are found, equality of variances were not taken in to consideration in computing the independent t-test. The interview transcripts and data from the documents were analysed for descriptions and patterns related to OMC. Analysis of quantitative data is displayed first and then corroborated by qualitative data analysis in the form of texts and quotes.

Ethical Considerations

Even though the data collected for this study are not politically, socially or physically sensitive in nature, ethical issues are considered important. For the survey questionnaire, respondents were reminded not to write their name on the questionnaire. The process of getting access to the universities began by requesting permission formally, in writing, through the official channels. The first step the researcher took regarding this matter was to write and explain in detail the purpose of the study and the data-collection methods to be used to the target universities to get permission to conduct the research.

The research offices at the sampled universities were requested to issue an ethical clearance certificate for this project. Interviews participants' right to privacy was also maintained through the promise of confidentiality. A number of techniques were included to ensure anonymity and confidentiality in terms of the findings. The participants were informed of the purpose, methods and time frame of the study as it is unethical in terms of human relationships to conduct an investigation when the subjects are unaware of the real purpose.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Structure, Roles and Commitment of Administrators

A culturally competent public organization is one that acknowledges and incorporates – at all its structure levels – the importance of culture, vigilant towards the dynamics that result from cultural diversity, expansion of cultural knowledge and prompting cultural competence to meet culturally unique needs (Betancourt et al,

2003). Accordingly, the study seeks to examine the appropriateness of the structure as well as the roles and commitment of administrators in promoting cultural competency in the three universities.

Table 1 shows the perceptions of workers and managers regarding the structure, roles and commitment of administrators in promoting cultural competency in the university. Hence, both the workers (M=2.68, SD= .792) and managers (M=2.92, SD= .668) perceived that the structure, roles and commitment of administrators in promoting cultural competency in the university were generally low. However, statistically significant differences exist between the perceptions of teachers and managers $t(298) = -2.377, p < 0.05$, suggesting that the structure, roles and commitment of administrators in promoting cultural competency in the university were perceived lower by the workers (M=2.68, SD= .792) than the managers (M=2.92: SD= .668).

Table 1: Independent sample t-test of the perceptions of teachers and managers regarding structure, roles and commitment of administrators

		Independent sample t-test					
Structure, roles and commitment of administrators	Position	Mean	SD	t	df	sig	Mean difference.
	Workers	2.6830	.79245				
	Managers	2.9263	.66883	-2.377	298	.018	-.24326

A one-way ANOVA was conducted in order to examine the differences in perceptions of the staff on the appropriateness of the structure and roles and commitment of administrators in promoting cultural

competency in their respective universities. To this end, 11 items were aggregated (as measuring the same thing) based on the results of inter-item correlation and factor analysis of data.

Table 2: ANOVA on differences of perceptions of staff regarding structure, roles and commitment of administrators in promoting cultural competency across the Universities

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.860	2	2.930	5.077**	.007
Within Groups	171.388	297	.577		
Total	177.248	299			

As indicated in Table 2 above, there were significant differences in the responses of staff in the three universities regarding the appropriateness of the structure as well as the roles and commitment of the managers in promoting cultural diversity across the universities, ($F(2, 297) = 5.077, p = .007$). In order to determine which university staffs' perceptions differs significantly from which, the *Tukey post hoc* multiple comparisons methods were employed. The results indicated that a significant difference exist between the MTU and the other two universities, suggesting that the appropriateness of the structure and commitment of the managers in supporting cultural diversity were relatively in place in the JU ($M = 2.86, SD = .757$) and WU ($M = 2.78, SD = .608$) than in MTU ($M = 2.55, SD = .829$). However, in general the appropriateness of the structure and the roles and commitment of the university leadership in promoting cultural diversity across the universities were found to minimal.

Furthermore, the results of the qualitative data revealed that the mission statements did not explicitly recognizes cultural diversity in the universities and new members of the universities received no orientation with respect to the universities policy statements, goals and functions and

responsibilities vis a vis multicultural competencies. There were no practices of evaluating leaders on, among other skills, their knowledge and skills pertaining to cultural competency and staff and students had no access to training activities that focus on issues relating to cultural competency. Majority of respondents did not believe that the university leaders were selected from a field of candidates with the requisite knowledge and experience in managing culturally diverse workforce. The universities under study did not have a special office or function to address ethnic/cultural diversity issues and consequently students and workers were not involved in identifying key diversity issues and the universities had no culture of collecting, analyzing and incorporating demographic and statistical information pertaining to cultural diversity in its planning process.

Organizational policy and procedures

Multicultural competence from the organizations perspectives is related to the extent of the inclusiveness of organizational programs, policies, procedures, physical environment, health and social services and etc. to the existing diversity in an organization. It is, among other things, through supporting such multicultural competencies in their stated

strategies, policies, procedures, and implementations that organizational leaders be able to develop multi-culturally competent employees (Sue, Parham, & Bonilla-Santiago, 1998).

It is in line with this notion that this study attempts to examine the organizational policies and procedures of the three public universities. Table 3, shows the perceptions of the participants regarding the extent to which the organizational policies and procedures ensure cultural diversity in their universities. Accordingly, the mean values of both the workers

($M=2.68$, $SD=.792$) and managers ($M=2.92$: $SD=.668$) of the public universities were found to be low. This indicates that both groups of participants in general perceived that the organizational policies and procedures of their universities were not adequate to ensure cultural diversity. Besides, no statistically significant differences were found between the perceptions of the workers and the managers pertaining to organizational policies and procedures in ensuring cultural diversity in the universities, $t(298) = -1.387$, $p > 0.05$ (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Independent sample t-test of the perceptions of teachers and managers about organizational policies and procedures

Independent sample t-test							
Organizational policy & procedures	Position	Mean	SD	t	df	sig	Mean difference.
	Workers	2.8219	.73139	-	298	.166	-.13640
	Managers	2.9583	.71459	1.387			

Further analysis was carried out to examine if there were differences in the staff's responses among the three Universities. To this end, ten items were aggregated (as

measuring the same thing) based on the results of inter-item correlation and factor analysis of data. Then, a one-way ANOVA was conducted in order to examine the differences in perceptions of the staff across the three universities (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: ANOVA on differences of staff perceptions concerning the availability of organizational policy and procedures to ensure cultural diversity in the University

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.974	2	.987	1.870	.156
Within Groups	156.730	297	.528		
Total	158.703	299			

The ANOVA result in the Table 4 indicates no statistically significant difference in the staff perception across the three Universities concerning the availability of

organizational policy and procedures to ensure cultural diversity, $F(2,297) = 1.870$, $P > 0.05$). The *Tukey Post hoc* analysis revealed no significant difference among

the mean ratings of the three Universities, JU (M=2.93, SD =.751), WU (M =2.80, SD =.644) and MTU (M =2.76, SD =.733). Thus, participants in general perceived that there were no organizational policies and procedures in place to ensure cultural diversity in the universities.

Moreover, the qualitative data confirmed that the universities had no mission statements, policies, programs and practices that explicitly acknowledge and address cultural diversity and reflects compliance with the country’s state statutes. The participants reported that there

were no personnel or organs appointed to take responsibility for and have authority over the development, implementation, and monitoring of the cultural competence activities and/or to advice the management on matters pertaining to multicultural services.

Dealing with culturally biased incidents

Participants of the study were asked about the capabilities of their universities in dealing with culturally biased incidents. Their responses were computed through independent sample t-test and results were presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Independent sample t-test for the mean scores of workers and managers about the capabilities of their universities in dealing with culturally biased incidents

Independent sample t-test							
Culturally biased incidents	Position	Mean	SD	t	df	sig	Mean difference.
	Workers	2.57	.923	-2.196	166.312	.030	-.222
	Managers	2.80	.706				

Table 5 shows that both groups of the participants, workers (M=2.57; SD=.923) and managers (M=2.80; SD=.706) perceived the capabilities of their universities in dealing with culturally biased incidents as low. However, there are statistically significant differences between the perceptions of the workers and the

managers, $t(166.31) = -2.196, p < .05$, in that the capabilities of sample public universities in dealing with culturally biased incidents were perceived to be lower by the workers (M=2.57, SD=.923) than it as perceived by the managers (M=2.80, SD=.706).

Table 6: ANOVA on differences of staff perceptions regarding the management of culturally biased incidents across the universities

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.436	2	3.218	4.252**	.015
Within Groups	229.318	303	.757		
Total	235.753	305			

The ANOVA result in Table 6 showed that significant difference existed among the three Universities regarding the management of culturally biased incidents

across the universities, $F(2, 303) = 4.252, p < .05$. The *Tukey post hoc* comparisons of the three Universities showed that the attempts university leaders made to

effectively managed culturally biased incidents was relatively better in the JU ($M=2.78$, $SD=.924$), than in the MTU ($M=2.47$, $SD=.809$), $p=.018$. There

$SD=.827$) and the two other groups, $p>.05$. The qualitative data also support the above findings. The FGD data confirmed that the three universities had no clear and written procedures to deal with culturally biased incidents. The universities have clear limitations in providing staff with training in conflict resolution and to recognize and deal with culturally biased and discriminatory practices or behaviours. The leadership did not arrange multilingual services when appropriate. Human resource policies and procedures were not in place to address concerns or complaints regarding unfair treatment in the area of ethnic/cultural issues.

Overall understanding and commitment to cultural competency

The university's overall understanding and commitment to cultural competency refers

was no statistically significant different between the mean ratings of WU ($M=2.52$,

to the extent to which it acknowledges and respects the right of an individual to his or her cultural customs, beliefs and practices and responsive to issues of cultural diversity, and designs programs and services that reflect its populations. The university's overall understanding and commitment to cultural competency has to do with the extent to which the principles of equality, freedom from discrimination, and access to participation outlined in the Ethiopian constitution are incorporated into its management and service delivery strategies. In general, a University that possesses adequate understanding of and commitment to cultural diversity respects the diversity and rights of the individuals it serves. It is in line with this notion that the study seeks to investigate the overall understanding and commitment of the three public universities to cultural competency.

Table 7: Independent t-test of the perceptions of teachers and managers about Universities overall understanding and commitment to cultural competency

Independent sample t-test							
	Position	Mean	SD	t	df	sig	Mean difference.
understanding & commitment to cultural diversity	Workers	3.3276	1.14700	-	172.8	.037	-.25019
	Managers			2.097			
		3.5778	.78547				

The mean values of the perceptions of workers and managers regarding their universities overall understanding of and commitment to cultural competency found to be ($M=3.32$, $SD=1.147$) and ($M=3.57$, $SD=.785$) respectively showing that the sample universities have more than average

understanding and commitment to cultural competency (Table 7). However, there is a

statistically significant difference between the perceptions of workers and managers in this aspect, $t(172.805) = -2.097$, $p < .05$. The managers in the sample public

universities perceived that their respective universities have higher level of overall understanding and commitment to cultural competency as compared to the workers.

Table 8: ANOVA on differences of staff perceptions with respect to the university’s overall understanding and commitment to cultural competency

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.248	2	5.124	4.524**	.012
Within Groups	340.899	301	1.133		
Total	351.147	303			

One way ANOVA was computed to examine the differences in staff perceptions with respect to the university’s overall understanding and commitment to cultural competency across the three universities. It was identified that significant difference exists among the three Universities as perceived by the staff respondents, $F(2,301) = 4.524, p = .012$. The *post hoc* test showed significant difference in the mean scores of the staff respondents between JU ($M=3.51, SD =1.03$) and WU ($M =3.01, SD =1.10$) showing that the overall understanding and commitment of the university community to cultural diversity was high in JU than the WU, $p =.008$. There was no statistically significant different between the mean ratings of MTU and the JU, $p = .705$. The result of study shows that the sample universities have average understanding and commitment to cultural competency (as in Table 8).

The respondents believed that the universities were incorporated the

principles of equality, freedom from discrimination, and access to participation outlined in the Ethiopian constitution into its management and service delivery strategies. However, they were remaining ambivalent whether the universities consider cultural factors such as language, and ethnicity in developing their management and service delivery strategies and whether universities respect the diversity and rights of the individuals they serve.

The personnel practices

Table 9 portrays the multicultural competencies of the personnel practices of the sample universities. The data on the Table 10 show that workers in the sample universities in general have perceived the personnel practices of their universities to be lower in terms of their multicultural competencies ($M=2.71; SD=.848$) than they have been perceived by the managers ($M=3.14; SD=.528$).

Table 9: An independent sample t-test of the perceptions of teachers and managers about universities personnel practices

Independent sample t-test							
Personnel practices	Position	Mean	SD	t	df	sig	Mean difference.
	Workers	2.71	.848	-	169.323	.000	-.42825
	Managers	3.14	.528	4.850			

There are statistically significant differences between the perceptions of workers and managers regarding the personnel practices of the sample

universities, $t(169.323) = -4.850, p < 0.05$, showing that managers have relatively evaluated as high as compared to the workers' mean ratings.

Table 10: ANOVA on differences of staff perceptions concerning the personnel practices

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.846	2	5.423	8.837**	.000
Within Groups	166.310	271	.614		
Total	177.157	273			

The ANOVA result showed statistically significant difference among the three Universities relating to personnel practices, ($F(2,271) = 8.83, P < 0.001$). The *post hoc* test results showed that the attempts made in the JU ($M = 3.01, SD = .791$) to incorporate multicultural competences to the personnel practices was significantly higher than in WU ($M = 2.51, SD = .717$) and MTU ($M = 2.69, SD = .803$) (as in Table 10).

From the above result it was learned that the personnel practices of these two universities were not effective as evaluated against personnel recruitment, hiring, and retention practices. There were no strategies to recruit and retain a culturally diverse staff. Academic and administrative staff members from culturally diverse backgrounds were rarely employed at all levels of the universities. However, participants from the JU argued that the university had an equal opportunity employment policy and it regularly examines and eliminates selection procedures that inadvertently exclude culturally diverse candidates. Yet, the resources were not committed to support initial and ongoing training for personnel to

develop cultural competence and system was not designed to continually monitor, evaluate, and reward the cultural competence of the staff. The participants in the Jmma University did not believe that forms of communication were culturally and linguistically appropriate for the populations served.

Staff retention

Staff retention refers to the university's effort in retaining its diverse staff through such mechanisms as developing a database on the cultural composition of staff for evaluating its progress towards a culturally diverse workforce; regularly reviewing its cultural competency performance; and paying attention to cultural identity, customs, communication, and norms. Besides having a clearly written non-discriminatory policy, the university can retain its staff through recognizing, supporting and acknowledging staff members who are actively demonstrating cultural competency in their practices. Thus, the sample public universities were evaluated against the extent to which they have devised such staff retention mechanisms.

Table 11: An Independent sample t-test for the mean ratings of respondents regarding Staff Retention

Independent sample t-test							
Staff retention	Position	Mean	SD	t	df	sig	Mean difference.
	Workers	2.74	.886	-	296	.281	-.124
	Managers	2.87	.796	1.08			

The study found that both workers (M =2.74, SD =.886) and managers (M =2.87, SD =.796) reported that the three universities in general were performing low in relation to implementing staff retention

mechanisms. The perceptions of both the workers and the managers have shown no statistically significant difference in this regard, $t(296) = -1.08, p = .281$ (Table 11).

Table 12: ANOVA on differences of staff perceptions with respect to the staff retention Practices

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.672	2	1.336	1.794	.168
Within Groups	219.623	295	.744		
Total	222.295	297			

As indicated in the Table 12, there were no significant differences in the response of staff in the three Universities concerning the staff retention practices, $F(2,295) = 1.794, P > 0.05$). The *Tukey post-hoc* mean comparison also depicted no significant differences in the mean ratings of the respondents across the Universities. However, in general, the mean ratings of the three universities revealed that they had low staff retention mechanisms and strategies.

It was learned from the qualitative data that all the three universities have had critical problems regarding staff retention practices. There were no databases on the cultural composition of staff that might

help the universities to evaluate and design strategies regarding the development of a culturally diverse workforce and the respondents did not believe that staff members pay attention to cultural identity, customs, communication, and norms in the sample universities.

Cultural competency in the service delivery

Cultural competency in the service delivery process is one of the areas of the multicultural competencies of the universities. The University’s cultural competency in the service delivery process could be extrapolated from its effort exerted to design its mission, goals and objectives and creating an atmosphere of

support which states that all persons shall receive appropriate services. The University also ensures that methods of service delivery are culturally appropriate and in doing so it recognizes and uses the knowledge and expertise of culturally diverse staff. Besides, the University identifies cultural, linguistic etc. barriers that may limit or prevent culturally diverse

individuals from having access to its services and it collects feedback to learn more about the effectiveness and responsiveness of its programs and services.

In line with this, the cultural competency of the three public universities in terms of the service delivery process was computed.

Table 13: An independent sample t-test scores of the staff regarding the University's service delivery system

Independent sample t-test						
Position	Mean	SD	t	df	sig	Mean difference.
Workers	2.94	.825	2.365	270	.019	-.28442
Managers	3.22	.855				

The study found that the perceptions of workers and managers pertaining to the cultural competency of the universities differ significantly, $t(270) = -2.365$, $p = .019$. Workers in the three sample universities perceived the cultural competence of their university in the service delivery process below the average ($M=2.94$ $SD=.825$) whereas the managers had a relatively positive perception of the cultural competence of their university in the service delivery process ($M= 3.22$, $SD=.855$) (as in Table 13).

Nine items were classified into similar categories through inter-item correlation and factor analysis of the data and then one-way ANOVA was calculated to identify any differences in terms of the staff perceptions across the universities regarding the extent to what they incorporate cultural competency in their service delivery processes. There was statistically significant differences among the three Universities in the service delivery system, $F(2,269) = 4.874$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 14: ANOVA on differences of staff perceptions regarding the extent to what the university incorporates cultural competency in its service delivery process

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.673	2	3.337	4.874**	.008
Within Groups	184.165	269	.685		
Total	190.838	271			

In order to determine which University staff perceptions differs significantly from which, *Tukey post hoc* multiple comparisons methods were employed. The

results in Table 14 indicated that a significant difference exist between JU and the other two universities suggesting that the practice of service delivery is relatively

efficient and effective in addressing multiculturalism in JU (M =3.17, SD =.809) than MTU(M =2.89, SD =.850) and WU (M =2.81, SD =.831). There was no statistically significant difference between MTU and WU, $p > 0.05$.

The staff respondents in MTU and WU universities argued that their respective universities were not committed to create an atmosphere of support that might better meet diverse, unique needs of students and staff of various cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

Communication

The University regularly identifies and seeks to overcome barriers in its communication with culturally diverse populations. The University identifies communication networks that will reach culturally diverse populations. The University assesses all existing materials for cultural bias and makes appropriate changes. The University clearly outlines programmes or activities that will ensure cultural competency.

Table 15: Independent sample t-test for the mean ratings of respondents regarding communication and materials

Independent sample t-test							
	Position	Mean	SD	t	df	sig	Mean difference.
Communication & materials	Workers	2.7522	1.00	-	252	.175	-.22701
	Managers	2.9459	.943	1.360			

As discussed in the Table 15 above, the competence of the three public universities in creating muticulturally competent communication system was found to be below the average. There seems a consensus between the two groups of participants pertaining to the

communication process in that as there were no statistically significant differences between both of the workers (M=2.75, SD=1.00) and managers (M=2.94, SD= .943) groups in this regard, $t (252) = -1.360, p = .175$.

Table 16: ANOVA on differences of staff perceptions concerning the communication and materials in your universities employed to ensure cultural diversity

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.454	2	5.727	6.048**	.003
Within Groups	285.055	301	.947		
Total	296.510	303			

In addition, one-way ANOVA was calculated to identify any differences in terms of the staff perceptions in respect to the appropriateness of the communication and materials to the culturally diverse

groups across the three Universities (see Table 16). The one-way ANOVA test confirmed that there were statistically significant difference in the perception of staff across the three Universities regarding

the practices of communication and materials, $F(2, 301) = 6.048, p < 0.05$. The *Tukey post-hoc* mean comparison depicted significant differences between JU ($M = 2.99, SD = 1.01$) and MTU ($M = 2.57, SD = .998$), $p = .002$. In general, the low mean ratings of the staff confirmed that the three public universities were not competent enough in establishing and implementing muticulturally efficient and effective communication system in their respective universities.

Summary of the major findings

Jackson (2002) argued that, if leaders are successful in negotiating the cross-cultural barrier, they can reduce other barriers and facilitate trust. In line with this, the multicultural competence levels of Ethiopian public universities were investigated. The mixed methods research approach was used. The following are the main gaps identified; they also provide indicators of the issues that could be addressed.

The study showed that the appropriateness of the structure and the roles and commitment of the university leadership in promoting cultural diversify across the universities were generally low. The universities visited did not directly address the management of multiculturalism through a policy framework. In the universities, there were no extensive mechanisms to promote and monitor pluralism and the enjoyment of equal rights and treatment by the student and staff body. University administrations lacked actions and programmes that adequately focus on multiculturalism. There were no personnel or organs appointed to take responsibility for and have authority over the development, implementation, and monitoring of the cultural competence activities and/or to advice the management on matters pertaining to multicultural services. The universities had not made use

of academic associations, which by their nature encompass diverse groups of staff and provide natural spaces for engagement. The universities had no identifiable programmes or units to manage the issue of diversity across the system.

Human resource policies and procedures were not in place to address concerns or complaints regarding unfair treatment in the area of ethnic/cultural issues. The low mean ratings of the universities revealed that they had low staff retention mechanisms and strategies. There were no strategies to recruit and retain a culturally diverse staff. Academic and administrative staff members from culturally diverse backgrounds were rarely employed at all levels of the universities.

Efforts to engage with diversity or to promote a multicultural environment were often ad-hoc, resulting in efforts reaching a few individuals, without affecting the outlook and practice of the universities as institutional entities. Efforts were also insufficient to comprehensively address the different challenges faced by members of the university staff in engaging with diversity. Progress in addressing gender issues was still limited, including in terms of women's empowerment, and the rate at which opportunities are utilised by men and women is still skewed in favour of men, as with the low numbers of female lecturers.

There was a limited use of available opportunities to promote the understanding and appreciation of multiculturalism, such as using cultural groups as a conduit to bring staff and students together through joint or complementary programmes. These groups need to come together to learn about and appreciate difference. There was no uniformly applied discussion and training on diversity and pluralism, pertinent to all aspects of the university learning and social environment.

CONCLUSION

In the literature on organizational cultural competence, policies, programs, and practices are frequently described as the areas in which an organization's underlying cultural values and beliefs are most tangible (Cross et al., 1989; Sue, 2001). Practices, however, did not emerge from the quantitative data analysis, although they have been considered one of the most essential aspects of cultural competence because they most focus on ways of being and behaving in organizations (Sue, 2001).

This study highlighted a number of obstacles for the universities to achieve organizational level multicultural competences. The mere presence of cultural plurality is not enough to make an organization a multicultural one. Although diversity among the workers is an important factor, multiculturalism is more than that: it refers to what makes an organization into a place where all workers feel valued, whatever their culture. D'Netto and Sohal (1999, p. 531) argued that managing diversity means building skills and creating policies and practices that get the best from every employee within an environment that encourages all employees to reach their full potential within the context of organizational goals. In order to achieve that, diversity practices in recruitment, training, development, appraisals, and pay are important.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study highlighted the need for universities to establish internal rules and policies and to provide conducive environment for managing diversity amongst students and staff. They should develop policy and strategies that address elements of difference, such as gender, disability, and ethnicity. Pluralism has to be placed on the university agenda, across all

faculties, as one way to ensure the future stability of the country. Diversity and its management can also provide a regular topic for papers to be presented at annual university conferences, public lectures and student debates. Debates can also be organised on difference and life on campus. Cultural associations provide important avenues for the management of diversity. Cox (2001, p. 119) discussed the factors related to leaders that support multiculturalism, such as openly expressing support for diversity-related goals; inviting feedback from colleagues on behaviour related to diversity; seeking persons who are culturally different for informal contact; bringing diversity-related problems or opportunities to the attention of higher levels of management; mentoring people from diverse backgrounds; and participating in diversity-related education activities.

The managers' and workers' awareness of the varied cultures, behaviour, and expectations of the different groups and sub-cultures on campus and how they interact with each other needs to be improved. Academic and non-academic staff should be better equipped than they presently are to manage such diversity. Universities should include opportunities for discussions on diversity and its challenges, to benefit both new and senior staff.

These findings confirm the position that the need to prepare university leaders with multicultural knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The university leaders were not adequately familiar with or knowledgeable about cultural competences. In the academic literature on individual cultural competence, researchers typically focus on the development of awareness, knowledge, and skills (Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, Ananeh-Firempong, 2003;

Connerley & Pederson, 2005; Sue, 2001). Awareness relates to one's perceptions and recognition of his or her own biases and worldview, as well as recognition of the realities of privilege and inequities in the surrounding environment. Raising educational leaders' awareness of their biases and privilege is an important starting point in developing individual cultural competence. Knowledge has to do with familiarity with concepts and theories about injustice as well as specific knowledge about other cultures or the ability to learn about them. For educational leaders, knowledge of instructional leadership strategies also is essential to promote organisational-wide cultural competence (Ruff & Shoho, 2005). Skills refer to a leader's ability to behave in ways that effectively and appropriately communicate with those who are different. Certain skills have also been associated with socially just organisational leadership that complement the notion of cultural competence such as: the ability to lead change effectively (Fullan, 1991), a purposive moral imperative (Dantley, 2003), distributive leadership (Brooks et al., 2007), and the ability to handle resistance (Theoharis, 2007), among others.

The staff suggested that organisational-wide cultural competence could be accomplished through the implementation of a series of programs designed to enhance and promote intercultural integration. There is a need for the creation of open and trusted mechanisms for staff and administration to freely interact with each other. Deliberate efforts could be made to regularly collect staff ideas and provide an opportunity for discussions on these issues, to ensure that staff and administration are well informed. It is imperative that university leadership adopt multicultural competence as an essential competency within their profession, continue to seek

out opportunities to further enhance personal multicultural competence, and infuse it into their daily practices.

REFERENCES

- Ameny-Dixon, G. (2004). Why multicultural education is more important in higher education now than ever: A global perspective. *International Journal of Scholarly Academic Intellectual Diversity*, 6(1), 1-12.
- Andersen, F. (2012). The concept of multiculturalism and implications for school leadership. Retrieved September 21, 2014 from , from <http://www.emasa.co.za>
- Banks, J. A. (1989). Multicultural education: Characteristics and goals. In J. A. Banks, & C. A. Banks, *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Banks, J. A., & et.al. (2005). *Democracy and Diversity: Principles and Concepts for Educating Citizens in a Global Age* . Seattle: Center for Multicultural Education, University Of Washington.
- Carr-Ruffino, N. (1995). *Managing Diversity: People Skills for a Multicultural Workplace*. Paperback.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6 ed.). Abingdon: Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- Connerley, L. M. (2004). LEADERSHIP IN A DIVERSE AND MULTICULTURAL: The Development Of Multicultural Competencies. In P. Pedersen, 110

- Experiences For Multicultural Learning* (pp. 69-88).
- Connerley, M. L. (2005). *Leadership in a Diverse and Multicultural Environment: Developing Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills*, . Thousand Oaks, California : Sage Publications, Inc.
- Connerley, M. L., & Pedersen, P. B. (2005). *Leadership in a diverse and multicultural environment: Developing awareness, Knowledge, and skills* . Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3 ed.). New Delhi: SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
- Jupp, V. (2006). *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. (2007). *Exploring Leadership: For College Students Who Want to Make difference* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2003). *Exemplary Leadership*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2007). *The Leadership Challenge* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Louis Cohen, L. M. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6 ed.). Abingdon: Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- MOE. (1994). *EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY*. Addis Ababa.
- MOE. (2010). *Education Sector Development Program IV (ESDP IV) 2010/2011 – 2014/2015 2003 EC – 2007 EC*. Addis Ababa.
- MoE. (2012). *Education Statistics Annual Abstract 2004 E.C (2011/2012)* . Addis Ababa. doi: www.moe.gov.et
- Northouse, P. G. (2013). *leadership: Theory and Practice* (6 ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Sue, D. W. (2001, November). Multidimensional Facets of Cultural Competence. *The Counseling Psychologist* , 29(6), 790-821.
- Webb, L., Darling, J., & Alvey, N. (2014). *Multicultural Leadership Development in the 21st Century . White Paper*.