**Teachable diversity moments in management: Leveraging case studies for teaching diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)**

Abstract

Delivering and instructing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) topics are, in some instances, complex endeavors for instructors to undertake, and can equally difficult subject matter for students. The most common approach for teaching this important topic of DEI has typically focused on theoretical models, oftentimes marginalizing the application of this knowledge. Teaching with cases is a common pedagogical method that allows instructors to introduce to complex business problems in real world companies. Especially when considering DEI issues comprise and important ongoing conversation in management education, we propose a round table session that brings together management educators that use this approach to teach DEI and guide those interested in using them.

Keywords: DEI, Case Studies, pedagogical approaches.

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**Introduction**

Practitioners attribute the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) emergence in the US workplace to equal employment laws and affirmative action (Dong, 2021). Since the mid-1960’s the private and public sector have worked to design and implement DEI programs intentions to comply with both legal and ethical obligations. However, a large body of research in the DEI field focuses beyond the compliance and ethical motivations, and instead has discovered there a competitive advantage conferred to firms who promote DEI initiatives. In fact, a most recent study by McKinsey & Company (Hunt et al., 2020) provides support for the notion that companies who invest and strategically enact DEI, both within management practices and standards, as well as through human resources actions. In other words, more diverse companies outperform those that are no, and in addition, such organizations are charting new territory for the development of DEI best practices.

Nevertheless, a big concern in relation to pedagogy of DEI relates to it complexity. Harris et al.(2021) argue that “Without universally accepted best practices for increasing and measuring diversity, each institution has been left to its own devices.” Consequently, it is debatable that there are individual experiences among organizations that have been successful or not in relation to DEI. Considering that most dramatic outcomes related to DEI are first identified by organizations, we foresee that presenting real world situations to the students can expedite and improv teaching and learning processes related to DEI, thus using case studies to teach DEI is an innovative and exciting pedagogical approach.

Traditional lecture approaches can easily explain foundational and conceptual DEI principles to students, but as indicated by Freeman & Schiller (2013) case studies directly benefit student learning through increasing students’ engagement and helping them to improve their critical thinking skill and apply them to real word problems.

This MOBTS roundtable is targeted at those management faculty members who are interested in using case studies to teach DEI, as well as those who may have already incorporated such cases in their classrooms. The roundtable will provide an opportunity for participants to share information about successful and unsuccessful approaches to teaching DEI cases. The following questions will be considered:

* What are the DEI dimensions or areas commonly examined through case studies?
* What are some potential exemplar case studies that can be used to teach DEI?
* What types of positive and negative feedback do students provide in response to learning in course utilizing DEI case studies?

The expected outcome of the session is to share the discussant and audience experiences and ideas in relation to teaching DEI using case studies. If participants are interested in exploring the topic further, a working group may be formed to consider opportunities for creating a set of teaching materials related to the pedagogical approach.

**Theoretical Foundations/Teaching Implications**

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion or DEI as it is known in the practitioner’s world, although is used as an amalgam of elements, each part clearly address issues that tend to overlap with each other. For instance, early concepts of diversity focused attention on the observables or not differences among individuals (Fullerton & Kandola, 1994). For instance, these differences could be age, gender, personality, religion, race. In the case of equity it relates to the perception of fair treatment employees may feel in their workplace (Budd, 2018). This sense of fairness connects with those differences among individuals mentioned before. Thus, when a group of people may have differences that limit their access to opportunities, under the concept of equity the ideal is to offset those differences by giving depending on each personal need. Lastly, Pelled et al. (1999) define inclusion as “the degree to which an employee is accepted and treated as an insider by others in a work system”. This inclusion concept, although not directly mentioned, assumes that there are no differences among individuals, but as indicated previously, these individual differences are to be expected. Therefore, creating conditions to minimize these differences through equity and affinity groups within organizations can allow for more constructive DEI practices to become normalized and accepted in both public and private sectors.

In our opinion, DEI in the workplace can be define as the approaches taken in the workplace to normalize and accept the differences among contributors or participants, providing a mechanism that all individuals feel they have same opportunities while creating and environment that invites individuals with or without differences, making them feel part of it regardless of.

DEI can be easily explained using social, ethical, and moral conventionalisms. Still, in many instances, these approaches tend to focus on theoretical argumentation based on the “because is the right thing to do.” Recognizing the lack of DEI may come to the students through the concept and theory interpretations. Or simply by perceiving it. Although, as scholars, we support theoretical learning, as business educators, our roles include preparing our students to solve problems in their future jobs. Understanding business issues is often an issue of recognizing patterns (Christensen & Raynor, 2003). Students sometimes may have limited exposure to business and workplace situations to recognize these patterns. In these instances, it is when other pedagogical approaches beyond traditional lecturing.

Teaching with cases, also known as a case method, provides a narrative (Freeman, 1997) and information battery. Its interpretation may force decision-making from those who have analyzed. Usually, these narratives are associated with situations in which problems are raised in a context, organization, or group. The solutions to these complications are nested in the narrative. It depends on the analysis unveiling these. Reviewing and analyzing multiple cases may allow students to acquire the experience to recognize the patterns (Andersen & Schiano, 2014). Ultimately preparing them to solve similar problems in their future jobs.

There are several cases available to be used when teaching. However, we identified two large groups, teaching cases and case study research. Teaching cases usually fit the description presented in the paragraph above. In simple words, a narrative with information, and in some cases, a prompt, that students must solve with the information provided. This category is commonly used in teaching with cases (Andersen & Schiano, 2014), and are the cases that Ivey Publishing, Harvard Business Publishing, INSEAD Publishing, and many others offer. These groups tend to provide the case's prompt, teaching notes, and instructions to instructors.

The second group research cases are papers that follow the traditional research case format (Farquhar, 2012; Lee & Saunders, 2017; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018) or research articles focusing on a phenomenon or situation with a defined population test the hypothesis. This latter is the group that in their titles says things like "... the case of …" Although these are designed as research pieces, these papers can use them in the pedagogical process. This group requires a higher commitment and work on the instructors because they will have to create and define the case's prompt.

Both groups of cases can exemplify either context and condition, and in some others, link variables that may have a certain impact on the outcome and the hypothesis that these may try to support.

Seeing that there is a clear proxy between DEI issues and case studies, we consider that a round table session that help instructors to use cases as pedagogical approach, will add value to the MOBTC attendees. Also, it could increase the potential authors network that the conference traditionally has develop.

**Session Description**

We propose formatting our session as a 60-minute roundtable discussion. The session leaders will provide a structured discussion about current DEI case teaching approaches, as well introduce examples of DEI topics and specific cases that can be used by participants to teach hem in their own courses.

The timeline for the session will be:

* 15 min: Introduction to the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion, including an outline how current HRM practices across various industries have leveraged DEI to improve their performance and recruitment/retention/promotion outcomes.
* 15 min: Participants will introduce themselves and answer these questions:
  + Do you have any prior experience teaching DEI?
  + What is the most appealing aspect of teaching DEI at your institution?
  + What is the most frightening aspect of teaching DEI at your institution?
  + Which pedological approaches have you used to teach DEI, did it involve lectures, article readings, journal readings, or cases studies?
  + How does teaching DEI integrate with the mission of your school and/or institution?
* 15 min: Organization and discussion of what was shared.
  + What are the commonalities of teaching DEI compared to other case studies?
  + What are the best practices for DEI case teaching that should be highlighted and spread?
* 15 min: Wrap-up
  + What issues does DEI case teaching solve and where does it fall short?
  + What are the key takeaways from today’s discussion?
  + Is there interest in continuing to explore this topic of DEI case teaching via a coordinated discussion group or collective research project?

Attendees will be expected to participate by contributing their own experiences, opinions, and knowledge to the discussions. In addition, they will help to organize the information that is shared, and they will provide feedback regarding a proposed list of best practices for how to best teach and deliver DEI cases in both undergraduate and graduate business classes.

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