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MANAGING DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE: A perspective of Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU)

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Abstract

In today's society, cultural diversity is at the highest point it has ever been. As organizations become more diverse, it is more important for them to understand and manage that diversity. People of different backgrounds, races, ages, sex, and/or religions create a diverse workforce. People no longer live and work in isolation, they are part of a worldwide economy with competition coming from nearly every continent. Managing diversity at Islamic University is an on-going process that unleashes the various talents and capabilities which a diverse population brings to the university, so as to create a wholesome, inclusive environment that is "safe from differences. Therefore managing diversity remains a significant organizational challenge; managers must learn the managerial skills needed in this heterogeneous environment. Both supervisors and managers must be prepared to teach themselves and others within their organizations to value multicultural differences in both associates and customers so that everyone is treated with dignity. This paper therefore is designed for managers and supervisors to effectively manage diverse workforce populations. It provides a general definition for "diversity", discusses the benefits of diversity in the workplace, the challenges of managing a diverse workplace, and presents effective strategies for managing diverse workforces. The paper concludes that it is imperative for employers and policy makers to understand changing workforce demographics and the impact of increasing diversity on human behavior in the workplace.

Keywords: Globalization, cultural diversity, diversity management, workplace, human behavior, Uganda

1. Introduction

Whereas our diversity across organizations, communities and nations is a source of wealth, this diversity needs to be managed for the good of all and, as the world increasingly becomes a global village, intolerance rooted in ethnicity, religion, political affiliation and social class becomes especially perilous. Islamic University in Uganda is an Institution of Higher Learning that offers university education to students coming from across Africa and its staff comes from across the same spectrum. It is an Islamic Institution founded by the Organization of Islamic Conference in 1988 and the only university ever established by the Act of parliament (IUIU Act 1990 Cap 131), since Uganda got its independence in 1962. Its population to date consists of

about 10,000 students, both males and females and about 600 members of staff while being influenced by the policy, academic, social and political space that surround them.

Diversity in the workplace includes all of the ways people are different in age, ethnicity, gender, educational background, social status, work experience and so on. Employees and students from different generations, gender, nationalities and cultures often work together and this has built an inclusive and harmonious workplace. Diversity management as a process intends to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued, so that all can reach their potential and maximize their contributions to the university's strategic goals and objectives. Management need to recognize that people from different settings bring fresh ideas and perceptions, which can make the way work is done more efficient and make products and services better. Managing diversity successfully will help organizations to nurture creativity and innovation and thereby tapping hidden capacity for growth, improved competitiveness and can be well positioned for the demands of the knowledge –based economy. Therefore, the need to create organizational environment receptive to diversity is therefore greater than ever.

Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) is a multi racial, multi ethnic, multi tribal and is highly heterogeneous with regards to the differences in the length of service of staff, the chronological ages of staff, the rank differentials among staff as well as in terms of qualifications. With such workforce diversity, it has become necessary for Islamic University in Uganda to put in place policies and practices to build an inclusive and harmonious workplace that appreciate differences amongst workers and students to works towards maximizing their potentials.

2. Origin of managing diversity

The conceptualization of managing diversity started in the United States and later was widely acknowledged (Konrad 2003; Kelly & Dobbin 1998) and that a major impetus to its development was a government commissioned report entitled Workforce 2000 (Johnston & Packer 1987), which examined the changing demographics of the US workforce. The term 'managing diversity' and its variations entered the English lexicon in the 1980s and by the 1990s were in fairly regular use. Various terms have been used to signify the new thinking surrounding the development of increasingly heterogeneous workforces, including the word 'diversity' itself and 'workplace diversity' (Konrad 2003). Within organizations, a variety of terms and expressions are used to denote programs developed in response to this diversity, but the terms 'managing diversity' and 'diversity management' are now widespread (Maxwell, Blair & McDougall 2001: 469)

.**Definition**: There is no one generally accepted definition of managing diversity; it is the subject of wide debate among both practitioners (human resource managers and related professionals) and academics. Heery and Noon (2001: 215), in the Oxford Dictionary of Human Resource Management, describe managing diversity as 'the concept of recognizing the wide variety of qualities possessed by people within an organization'. They go on to say that managing diversity, emphasizes the individuality of people, and the importance of valuing each person for his or her unique combination of skill, competences, attributes, knowledge, and personality traits. In the context of personnel policy or a university's strategy, it describes the degree of heterogeneity of employees and students. The diversity of a university is in particular characterized by aspects such as the gender, age, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, marital status or values/positions of its employees and students. According to Thomas (1991), diversity means more than race and gender in the workplace. It can refer to lifestyle tenure, position in the

organization, age, sexual preference, functional specialty, organization location. It is the human difference that plays an important role in the culture and operations of organizations (Brazzel, 1991). According to Esty et al. (1995) cited in Green et al. (2002:1) diversity refers to "a acknowledging ,understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexually orientation , spiritual practice and public assistance status. Diversity includes cultural factors such as race, gender, age, color, physical ability, ethnicity, etc. The broader definition of diversity may include age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, values, ethnic culture, education, language, lifestyle, beliefs, physical appearance and economic status (Wentling and PalmaRivas, 2000). However within the context of this paper, diversity refers to "any attribute that happens to be salient to an individual that makes him/her perceive that he/she is different from another individual" (William & O 'Reilly 1997, cited in Friday & Friday 2003: 863). Therefore this implies that the concept of 'diversity' denotes the presence / existence of different people, cultures, ideas, interests, and practices occupying a particular space in a particular society in which they exist.

3. Methodology

The paper essentially relies on legislation, staff regulations, policy documents, university prospectus, News Bulletin, graduation pamphlets (1991-2014) articles, journals, textbooks. Additionally, Coordinator's Department Students Rules as amended 2007, Islamic University Stundents'Union (IUSU) Constitution2009/10, Students' leadership Charts (199-2014), secondary literature pertinent to issues of pluralism, diversity and wealth of experience of the author.

4. Benefits of diversity in the workplace.

Diversity management is a holistic and strategic intervention aimed at maximizing every individual's potential to contribute towards the realization of the organization's goals through capitalizing on individual talents and differences within a diverse workforce environment. While many organizations have embraced diversity, others still consider it merely as an issue of compliance with legal requirements. Nevertheless effective diversity management has historically been used to provide a legally defensive position; that is, a firm with a diverse workforce could argue that they were not guilty of discrimination because of the prima facie case based on their workforce demographics representing the demographics of the local community. Managing diversity can create a competitive advantage. Potential benefits of this diversity include better decision making, higher creativity and innovation, greater success in marketing to foreign and domestic ethnic minority communities, and a better distribution of economic opportunity (Cox, 1991; Cox and Blake, 1991).

According to Lioydan Leslie (2000), in the IRS Employment Review 2003, the business benefits for having diversity of employees include:

•Improved customer satisfaction and market penetration by employing a diverse workforce whose composition is similar to that one of the local population.

•Enhanced worker motivation and the use of skills from a diverse workforce.

•Improved supply of labour because the organization is seen as a good employer.

•Avoidance of costly discrimination cases because action has been taken to ensure the use of systematic and professional HR practices in selection and promotion.

Researchers have suggested that diversity has enhanced performance by broadening the group's perspectives. There is a strong empirical confirmation that successful diversity management and a resulting improvement in organizational performance are positively correlated (Ozbilgin and Tatli 2008). However, there is a consistent finding that differences should be sought in moderation. Group members' ability to elaborate diverse information may also develop over time as members become more familiar with each others' perspectives and develop transactive memory. This suggests that, especially for diverse work groups, it is important that they can reach more extended tenure, and that they are allowed a more extended start-up phase than more homogeneous groups (Knippenberg,de Dreu & Homan 2004). In multidisciplinary teams, in the oil and gas industry, expertise levels of performance diversity were most strongly associated with team performance at moderate levels of diversity (Van Der Vegt & Bunderson 2005).

Diversity is beneficial to both employees and employers. Although employees are interdependent in the workplace, respecting individual differences can increase productivity. Diversity in the workplace can reduce lawsuits and increase marketing opportunities, recruitment, creativity, and business image (Esty, et al., 1995). In an era when flexibility and creativity are keys to competitiveness, diversity is critical for an organization's success. Also, the consequences (loss of time and money) should not be overlooked.

By encouraging employees to feel included and valued, managing diversity fosters organizational commitment and trust, internal motivation, and satisfaction for both minorities and nonminorities alike (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). It also allows individuals, freed from concerns about inclusion, to innovate, flourish, and reach their fullest potential. An environment of inclusion and receptiveness serves as a backdrop against which employees subsequently interact with one another across demographic lines. Because no single demographic group is valued more than another, leaving no group marginalized, employees are more freely able to engage and challenge each other yet be supportive at the same time.

5. Challenges of managing diversity at the workplace:

Although employee diversity offers opportunities that can enhance organizational performance, it also presents some challenges to management. Managing interpersonal relationships within a diverse workforce environment presents a number of challenges related to changes in the social, legal and economic landscape, individual expectations and values as well as the inevitable change in organizational culture (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 2005: 1-7). One of the many challenges that accompanies increasing diversity is the widening range of employee needs, which employers are meeting with such benefits as flextime, job-sharing, telecommuting and child and elder care programs,(Dessler2003:10). Barlow, Bergen, Foster (2002), noted that if handled improperly, diversity can easily turn into a losing situation for all involved, leading to demoralization. This important note should be taken seriously by all organization's management because, no organization that is homogenous-all are heterogeneous and arc thus diversed.

Diversity can be a breeding point for low morale, employee turnover, harassment, discrimination, absenteeism, and disruption to work teams that can results in a loss of productivity among the workforce (McArthur, 2010). When people feel isolated or discriminated against, their productivity is normally lowered.

Managers may also be challenged with losses in personnel and work productivity due to prejudice and discrimination and complaints and legal actions against the organization (Devoe, 1999). Negative attitudes and behaviors can be barriers to organizational diversity because they can harm working relationships and damage morale and work productivity (Esty, et al., 1995). Negative attitudes and behaviors in the workplace include prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, which should never be used by management for hiring, retention, and termination practices, could lead to costly litigation.

6. Strategies for managing diversity at the workplace.

There is no single best way to manage workforce diversity, in most cases; the approach used by an organization depends on the amount of pressure for diversity, the type of diversity in question, and managerial attitudes (Dass and Parker, 1999). Globalization is one such pressure and it presents challenges to managing the workforce. Some of the challenges as identified by Roberts, Kossek and Ozeki (1998) are deployment, knowledge and innovation dissemination, and talent identification and development. The main reasons for managing diversity as can be said is to improve productivity and remain competitive, to form better work relationships among employees, to enhance social responsibility, and to address legal concerns (Wentling and Palma-Rivas, 1998). Nevertheless, organizations can succeed at diversity if the initiative to create, manage and value the diverse workforce has the full support of the top management (Hayes, 1999; Jackson et al., 1992).

Managers need to shift their way of application with workforce diversity, and change from treating every staff member alike to recognizing the differences in the workforce thereby responding to the differences in ways that ensures employee motivation and retention and high performance (Smit et al., 2008). This requires implementation of programs such as training and creating environments that can utilize the full potential of the entire workforce. Managers should expect change to be slow, while at the same time encouraging change

Communication is essential in a workplace as it is the backbone of productivity and relationships for the success of the organization (Mayhew, 2010). It is therefore necessary to evaluate ways on how to improve communication effectiveness especially in diverse workforce. Communication in a diverse workforce requires understanding on how different persons perceive communication. Crowe (1997) observed that some employees believe that constant memoranda and employee meetings are time wasters while others want frequent information on company moves. Communication is very critical in maintaining good relations at work and it is quite difficult to modify the type of communication that is already in place. Employers need to establish communication channels considering the different communication preferences of the workforce. It is easy to misunderstand one another due to different communication styles (Holt, 2010). To promote better communication Holt (2010) suggests that workmates should learn their colleagues' communication methods through office retreats, frequent diversity meetings and diversity seminars.

To ensure that the benefits of workforce diversity is fully utilized, Ribbink (2003) suggests seven steps managers can take:

- First learning how the source culture best receives communications since different people receive information differently for example there are some employee who do not prefer open praise and would rather have it in the privacy of an office, for such, public praise may not be received well.

- Secondly, training international employees early and often by doing orientations sessions so that they are absorbed into the system's culture. The employees should be trained on the company policies early to avoid future misunderstandings.
- Thirdly, training those who are native born help them relate with the non-citizens. Training employees to understand the mindset of others help them to look at issues not only through their eye and to help each other through cultural transition as some might go through a culture shock.
- Fourthly, assign mentors and take care of the partners, this helps the new employee to easily integrate in the system and be a contributor. Effective mentoring is critical and using a person of experience to mentor the new employees who might have come from a different culture enables the person to adapt in to the new culture. The mentor also helps in mediating in situations.
- Fifth, practice open-door communication where employee can feel free to go to a person their senior for advice and guidance. The use of representatives is ok, but in the long run, there are some of the employees who will feel not represented. Those considered senior can also go to their juniors to ask about their opinions or concerns. In this way, communication gap is bridged thus making communication easier.
- Sixth, in company-wide communications, avoid jargon and slang as employee from outside might find it difficult to understand the company communication. Metaphor uses differ across different cultures and what one means might be different from what the other party interprets. Play by the rules and stick to business by communicating company mission and goals ahead of time and ensuring that the workplace is business driven rather than individual interests. Decisions made should not be based on personal preferences or traditional convenience but on the goals and requirements necessary for achieving the goals.
- Seventh, in communicating diversity messages, organizations should be able to inform employees why it is important to have an inclusive environment that is harmonious, the benefits they are likely to get, the roles of employees and the strategies on how to enhance diversity at workplace. Key progress and achievements should be highlighted and updates on progress should also be passed on through different media.

Leadership dynamics

The leadership of an organization is tasked with the responsibility of initiating and leading the dynamics of the organization, fostering desired behaviors and ensuring that their policies and practices support the vision of the organization while being responsive to change. In managing diverse workforce, the leaders should communicate. Additional benefits are also realized when the leadership of an organization is diverse. Effective methods of leadership development can enhance organizational productivity, profitability, and responsiveness to performance if applied to a good number of persons in an organization. A number of studies have shown that in diversity management, leadership is considered to be an element of an effective diversification strategy of a company (Marquis, Lim, Scott, Harrell and Kavanagh, 2008).

Leaders in organizations are coming up with goals for diversity strategy, which are not limited to employees only but extend to stakeholders and the public. The leaders are expected to communicate the strategies and talk about the business goals and achievements in relation to the

management of workforce diversity for the success of the strategies identified and the company as a whole (McArthur, 2010).

Shared responsibility.

A well organized diversity plan is able to push an organization to greater heights and give it competitive advantage among its competitors. Disorganization can frustrate efforts to adopt diversity in workforce and caution should be taken when developing a diversity plan for an organization (Holt, 2010). Employees should be encouraged to participate in developing and implementing the plan. When developing an effective strategy for managing diversity, clear communications should be ensured and responsibilities should be shared such that nobody carries the burden alone.

Training programs

Training programs should extend commitment to diversity from leaders at the top to all employees who perform the day-to-day activities of the organization. The training makes the employees aware of stereotypes that exist among them and barriers and give them a chance to address the issues that prevents minority employees from advancing or integrating in to the system smoothly. This is in support of Wentling and Palma-Rivas (2000) are Marquis, et al (2008) who said that diversity training should be done at all level, not just for the majority strong employees. Companies should seek to develop their minority groups and assign them responsibilities that will keep them enthusiastic in their work.

Setting good example

This basic tool can be particularly valuable for small business owners who hope to establish a healthy environment for people of different cultural background. This is because they are generally able to wield significant control over the business basic outlook and atmosphere. Leaders must exhibit strong commitment to addressing issues like myths, stereotypes and real cultural differences as well as organizational barriers that interfere with full contribution of all employees.

Recognize individual differences

There are various dimensions around which differences in human relationships may be understood. These include factors such as orientation towards authority, acceptance of powers inequalities, desire for orderliness and structure, the need to belong to a wider social group (Goffee 1997). According to Roosevelt (2001), managing diversity is a comprehensive process

for creating a work environment that includes everyone. When creating a successful diverse workforce, an effective manager should focus on personal awareness. Both managers and associates need to be aware of their personal biases.

Seeking input from the minorities.

Soliciting opinions and involvement of minority groups on important working committees. This beneficial not only in terms of contributions but also because such overture confirm that they valued by the organization, empowered and use their full capacity (Schauber 2001)

Make room for social events.

Organization's sponsored events, such as picnics, softball games, volley ball leagues bowling league, Idd and Christian parties among others can be tremendously useful in getting members together and providing them with opportunities to learn about one another.

Continuous monitoring:

Experts recommend that business and managers establish and maintain systems that can be continually monitor the organization's policies and practices to ensure that it can continue to be a good environment for all employees. Jorgensen (1993) further opines that should include research into employees needs through periodic attitude surveys,

7. Managing diversity at IUIU: Selected cases.

While based on Islamic law and teachings, IUIU however recruits Muslims and non-Muslims, Ugandans and foreigners, hence sowing the seed for a pluralistic society. It professes values that promote diversity, tolerance and engagement, including "freedom of thought and expression within the boundaries of Islam; and tolerance of contrary views and ideas "as enshrined in the Vision, Mission and core values. The Vision of Islamic**:** University is to be a centre of excellence in the production and dissemination of knowledge that contribute to relevant skills as well as appropriate training necessary for production of an all round believing individual capable of participating fully in his/her society.

Mission: The Islamic University in Uganda aspires to function as a highly academic and cultural institution based on Islam and the love of the country. It aims at promoting and enhancing the civilization and scientific influence of Islam and the physical world to produce well cultured, morally upright graduates of sound character, equipped with sound character, equipped with useful skills and knowledge, which are able to participate positively in the development process of their countries. The University aims at achieving these goals through the pursuit of teaching, learning, research, scholarship, good governance and service to humanity.

Core Values**:** The University's Vision and Mission are supported by the following core values;

a) Freedom of thought and expression within the boundaries of Islam – as the primary pre-condition for the growth of academic excellence.

b) Tolerance of contrary views and ideas – to enable the University to exist and operate in a heterogeneous society.

c) Research as the major basis for building the knowledge productive capacity of a University institution.

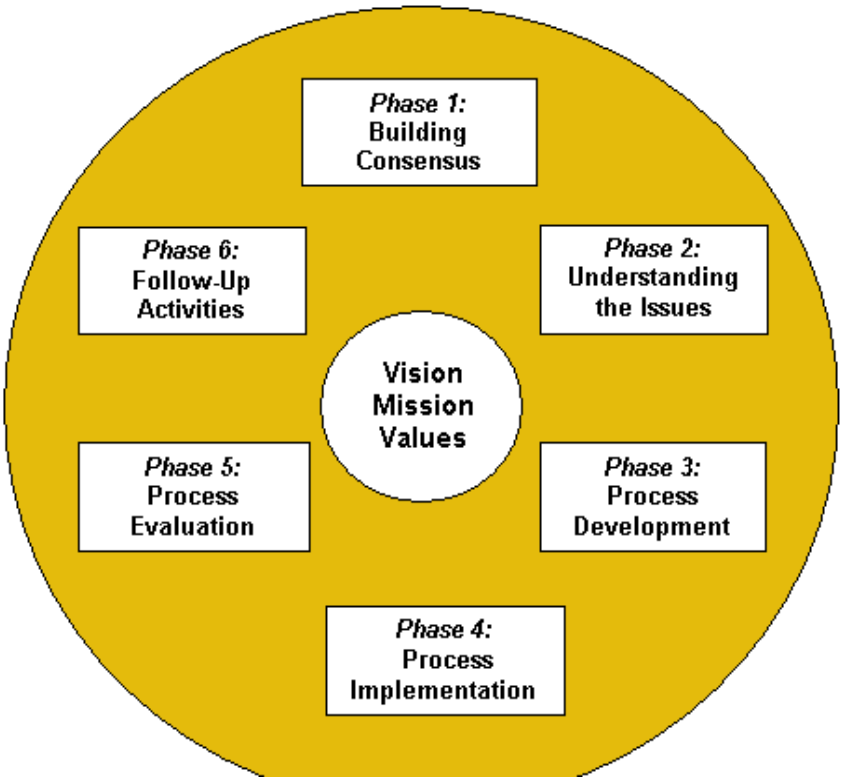
d) Attraction and retention of brilliant staff who are the core of academic excellence.

e) Enrolment of enthusiastic, well-behaved and studious students

f) Promotion of merit, sincerity, honesty and truthfulness in all academic and life pursuits.

g) Promotion, protection and dissemination of Islamic ideals and values.

The Islamic University in Uganda has established itself as an educational beacon for people from all across Africa with its graduates reaching high academic levels and serving at prominent positions around the globe. To manage diversity and promote lasting change, IUIU has developed diversity initiatives around its systems, people and culture as summarized in the descriptions and **Figure 1** below:



Source: Adapted from IEC, Enterprise, Inc 2002

The figure above depicts IEC's Process. It is circular to reflect the principle of continuous improvement, which all successful diversity management efforts must embrace. Diversity management is not a one-time event; rather it is a long-term process and continuous aligned with business goals

8. Appointments and controls of staff.

This is done by the appointment's committee of nine (9) members appointed by the council. All members whether academic or administrative are subjected to the general authority of the Council and the Rector

Section 51, clause 4 of the IUIU Act 1990, Cap 131, as far as possible, 80 percent of the academic staff; have to be Muslims originating from the member States or from any other country. Regarding academic staff, clause 5 states that priority shall be given to the candidates in the following order:

(a) Citizens of the Republic of Uganda.

(b) Citizens of any other African country and

(c) Citizen of any other country.

Section 52, clause 3 and 4, of IUIU Act 1990.state that 80 percent of the administrative staff shall be persons who are Muslims and priority shall be given to the candidates in the following order:

(a) Citizens of the Republic of Uganda.

(b)Citizens of any other African country and

(c) Citizen of any other country.

This is in conformity with Maicibi (2003); states that all institutions and organizations should strive to create a diverse workforce using recruitment and selection exercise. Yet on Staff Regulations of IUIU (2004) Appendix IV section 9 states that all appointments and promotions shall ultimately be scrutinized and approved by the Appointments Committee on the behalf of the Council.

Schedule V of Staff Regulations (2004), sections 1-2 highlights on the appointments and promotions of non-academic staff basing on some attributes such as qualifications, experience, exemplary conduct and higher qualification since the last promotion or appointment.

9. Gender.

The Uganda Gender policy promotes equal opportunities, including in education, for men and women, boys and girls of all social categories and promotes affirmative action as a strategy for attaining equity. Gender issue is so crucial and the University is so concerned both on the students and the employees. For instance during the 1st graduation in 1991, there were 18 female and 52 male. During the recent 22nd graduation November 2014, there were 935 female and 938 female. In terms of responsibilities, the University has some ladies holding positions of Directors, Deans, head of departments, internal auditors. Co-ordinators of various programmes among others.

10. HIV/AIDS Policy

The Islamic University HIV/AIDS policy aims at creating a healthy learning and work environment by preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS infection, providing equal access to treatment, care and support to people with HIV/AIDS, generating and disseminating HIV/AIDS knowledge, providing a strong committed leadership, mainstreaming, teaching and conduct research in response to the epidemic at the Institution and the wider society for the betterment of humanity. The policy has been developed basing on the ILO code of practice and on guidelines of the National Policy on HIV/AIDS at the place of work.

During staff recruitment, renewal of contracts and student admissions, administration does not demand for HIV status. When a staff or student is found positive, she/he is not terminated from the university, unless the physical state no longer enables him/her to perform his/her duties effectively. There is equal treatment of the lecturer and the student rights regardless of the HIV/AIDS status. Islamic University takes up the effort to fight any form of stigmatization of staff and students and other community members with HIV. Disciplinary actions as defined by the University structures are taken against those found stigmatizing others. Protection of students

and staff is enhanced through provision of education, training, information and sensitization on HIV/AIDS.

Information about HIV/AIDS positive students and staff members who go through the University Health Centre is handled in utmost confidentiality and in any case known by the University Medical Officer or his/her representative. Staff and students who are infected with HIV/AIDS are however encouraged to disclose their status for purposes of strengthening prevention efforts and limiting further spread but importantly so that they can access any available care and support.

IUIU acknowledges that HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects women and men but women are more vulnerable to the risk of acquiring HIV/ AIDS. This is because they undertake the major part of caring for those with AIDS related illness and pregnant women with HIV/AIDS have additional special needs. IUIU Community follows the Sharia tradition as in the Holly Qur'an which too addresses gender concerns. There are some gender specific programs in the University community; a formidable atmosphere has been created at the University including having a Females Campus which gives chance to female students to exercise their potential, free from male chauvinism. This is in recognition to the fact that women are more predisposed to HIV/AIDS than men and the University has taken up some measures to empower female members of staff to fight against HIV/AIDS.

11. Student enrollment and leadership.

The numbers have increased from 80 in 1988 to over 8000 in 2012. This is attributed to the popularity of the University and expanded growth in infrastructure which enabled the University to admit more students. The University has been able to introduce more academic programmes that are industry relevant and in line with the aspirations of the national and global vision. Currently there are many market driven academic programmes both in Arts and sciences designed to give students more career chances and entrepreneurial skills. The admission of students is well guided by the IUIU Act 1990 section 65- taking into consideration the heterogeneity perspective.

(a) 50 percent of the students from Uganda.

(b) 30 percent of the students from the other East African states

(c) 10 percent to be students from other African countries and

(d) 10 percent to be students from countries other than African countries.

Under section 65 clause 3 of the Act1990, in selecting students for admission to the University, priority is given to the Muslims and this is no different from other universities that are religious-based.

The student leadership at the University is tasked with the responsibility of initiating and leading the dynamics of IUIU, fostering desired behaviors and ensuring that their policies and practices support the vision of the university while being responsive to change. In the process of students' formation of cabinet from the Guild President, cabinet ministers and state ministers, ethnicity, regionalism, religion and gender among others are considered. The leadership under the umbrella of Islamic University Students' Union (IUSU as amended 2009/2010) operates in accordance to the University Statute and other policies that profess diversity. Student leadership

is obliged to foster unity among the students, institute an efficient students' administration and promote matters of common interests at the main Campus and all its branches.

12. Religious beliefs.

The religious beliefs of the employees and students in the University are identified, respected and accommodated to a reasonable extent and this has been appreciated by both parties. Students Rule as amended (2007) part 39 section 1(a) provides that; every student must conduct himself/herself in a manner reflecting exemplary moral and spiritual standards. The Daawa Department is the custodian and overseer of this section.

13. Conclusion

As the economy increasingly become global, the workforce becomes more and more diverse. Managing diversity therefore is about accepting that all employees, professional and non-professional, from the cleaning staff to the chief executive officer can contribute positively towards the realization of the institution's mission and goals . It is only through understanding diversity that businesses can achieve equality and cohesion in the workplace. An effective diversity management benefits employees as well, by creating a fair and safe environment where everyone has access to opportunities and challenges. Leaders therefore should be obliged to help members appreciate cultural diversity, realize that such diversity can strengthen, acquaint them with specific roles they can play in developing and maintaining a harmonious workplace. Nevertheless, challenges to workforce diversity management include political influence, cultural differences, omission of talented workforce due to bureaucracy in a company, and majority companies complying with workforce diversity due to legal implications and not the general benefits. In order to excel in diversity practices, organizations should go beyond the frontiers of some laws that protect diverse employees. Both the employers and all employees need to have an open mind and be willing to learn every day with each other in order to promote a positive, safe, productive and successful workplace. Leaders should focus on performance regardless of any gender bias, race, religion or sexual orientation, lead by examples in order to create a positive workplace for everybody and increase company competitiveness.

Implication for policy makers and future practices

Workforce diversity has major implications on the management practices of an organization. Drawing from the proceeding discussion in the article the following recommendations are made, as way forward and lessons for all organizations.

1. Managers need to shift their way of application and change from treating every staff member alike, differences in the workforce must be identified and employees be managed in accordance to those differences.
2. Attraction and retention strategies need to be put in place by organizations for the employees to stay longer. Competent and long serving employees who have reached retirement age (organizational memory), because of their tacit knowledge, experience and skills should be handled with care.
3. Possessing and portraying an international character in terms of race, ethnicity and nationality, an organization a higher and brighter future thus giving it a competitive advantage over others.

4. The Human Resource department should most be facilitated for the organization to realize its objectives. This is necessary especially in the current situations whereby the work force continue to increase in its diversity. The modern trend of managing people is by the use of technology such as computers both in sufficient quantity and quality (Maicibi 2003).
5. Organizations should scan the environment they operate in, especially the socio cultural, health and safety conditions because no organization operates in a vacuum. The interactions with the environment, sometimes has both direct and indirect effect on the employees of the organization.
6. Most importantly, managing diversity must be a mainstream issue, owned by everyone. Essential to the implementation process is ensuring that

   (a) Periodic review of progress is conducted,

   (b) diversity management strategic interventions are supported through resource allocation and

   (c) individual performance of all managers should be in alignment with the institution's diversity strategic goals.
7. All organizations have diversity among the workforce and there is need to recognize and harness this diversity to further productivity. Therefore organizations should appreciate and apply the issues and lessons raised and presented in this write up.

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