



Diversity and the Youth Welfare System

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“First of all, in my early life in India, diversity was always a keyword because of the regular use of the slogan of “unity in diversity”. It was the theme that Jawaharlal Nehru and other nationalists used for how they hoped to bring India together when it was obviously a country of enormous diversity. ... We have a myriad of castes and many religions. We have twenty or twenty-five major languages, and maybe five or six hundred dialects. Today, we have twenty-seven or twenty-eight states in the country, many of which are based on language difference. We also have significant religious differences and that is the source for a lot of fundamentalist politics in India. So in a way (without knowing it), I was growing up in a society in which some of the central questions were: how do we develop? How do we modernize? How do we become part of the modern world without denying the huge amount of internal difference?”

Arjun Appadurai

1. Diversity – a multifaceted dispositif

Diversity is a buzz word with an equivocal meaning:

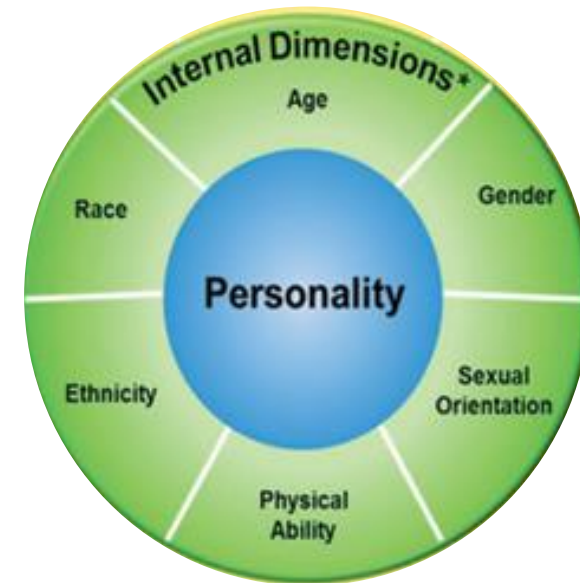
- Analytical term
- Management concept (with a focus on the «business case»)
- Critical approach within social and civic movements
- Political concept

Diversity connects a broad array of discourses from different social worlds – it is a *boundary object* which makes us believe that we understand each other.

1.1 Diversity as an analytical concept

Diversity describes the ongoing process of cultural, ethnic, religious, socio-economic etc. differentiation in society.

“We understand diversity to be the outcome of a continuous *process of mediation and translation* whereby power relations and modes of social action construct potential differences into socially effective markers within specific socially, culturally, and politically constructed physical and symbolic spaces that change over time.”



1.1 Diversity as an analytical concept

Diversity...

- re-examines core questions in social science, particularly around differentiation and the nature of society
- provides an alternative lens for looking at a variety of longstanding social and cultural issues
- examines the discrete workings of different kinds of difference, avoid lumping together dissimilar types of difference and instead explore the relations or parallels between them
- interrogates purported fixed differences and overlapping multiplicities
- understands, appreciates and explores the intersectionality, multiplicity and boundary-crossing dynamics of social categories
- adopts a perspective on otherness grounded in recognizing the partiality and emplacement of categories

1.2 Diversity as a practice concept

Diversity management:

- A term translated from economy into social sciences, focused on organisations, not on social inequalities
- Not a deficit perspective, but emphasizes the importance of differences and commonalities within organisations.
- Focuses on the relation of different groups, not on specific groups that are created by othering processes

1.3 Diversity as a normative ideal



2. Diversity in a historical context

- Enlightenment as Western intellectual movement(s) which emphasized recognition of diversity against the background of the ideal of rationalization
- Diversity as the recognition of differences in religion, gender, class, ethnicity, ability, etc. is a longstanding controversy
- Life world approach (H. Thiersch) emphasises the diversity of experiences of the concrete life world.
- Support in the diverse every-day coping strategies of the people is the leading idea of social work from a life world perspective
- (Settlement House Movement as another tradition within social work that sees the recognition of relational differences, e.g. classes, migration experiences, as pivotal)

2. Diversity in a historical context

- Enlightenment and its instrumental rationality as a Western tradition of thought which is focused on people's agency within a national context
- Normality as a diffuse, but powerful concept which paradoxically counteracts the recognition of diversity within society
- Struggles for normality of clients

“We are oriented towards societal normality. (...) Therefore, we are focusing on the human being as an individual with its unique biography and its ability to act.”

3. Youth welfare and Diversity

- Study on «intercultural opening» / «cultural diversity» within German youth welfare offices (Jugendämter) (Maria Albrecht)
 - Underrepresentation of staff with migration background: only 7.7% on the average (median 3.0%) have migration background compared with 23% of the general population
 - Mission statement: 24% of participants state that the topic of cultural diversity is included
 - Recruitement strategies:
 - 38.3% of participants state that in employment ads cultural competences are asked for
 - 38.8% of participants state that agencies search actively for staff with migration background
 - 33% complain about lacking services suited for the needs of clients with migration background

3. Youth welfare and Diversity

- Case study on a German youth welfare office (Timo Schreiner)
 - *“Yes, because it is new. I think because it is new. It is remarkable. Three years ago, I wouldn’t have seen a colleague who wears an Islamic headscarf and long skirts. I wouldn’t have recognized her as a colleague in this building.”*
 - Change in organisations in a normality plus modell which adds certain groups to a “normal” workforce

3. Youth welfare and Diversity

Youth welfare offices (often) lack a coherent organisational strategy to further diversity which would include:

- A diversity informed recruiting strategy
- Including diversity in the organisations mission statement and policies
- Diversity training of staff, not only with respect to clients, but also for dealing with diversity among colleagues.
- Managing diversity within teams
- Enabling team reflection on diversity matters

Promoting **inclusion** seems to be important:

- to offer all staff members same opportunities to gain promotion within organisations
- to create awareness of social injustice within organisations and promotes the value of diverse professional interpretation and action patterns
- to understand the complexity of migrant diversity which is not restricted to cultural differences.

4. Researching Diversity

1. Identities at work

“We are chameleons. Wherever we go, the situation requires this, we are that. The situation requires something else, we change... and by doing that, we change our identity...to suit the situation you are in (I12).” (Ho and Bauder 2010)

2. Openness at work

“In sum, a cultural humility perspective encourages workers to take into account an individual’s multiple identities and the ways in which their social experiences impact their worldview, particularly as it relates to their expression of their culture” (Ortega and Faller 2011)

3. Categories at work

- Microlevel: “Diversity can offer an analytical approach to study how the complexity of person-related differences is reduced by distinguishing between relevant and non-relevant categories and by configuring their relation.” (Nieswand 2017)
- Mesolevel: Organisational Diversity (see above)
- Macrolevel: Institutional programmes

