An introduction to…

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

5

This course is a 5min read
with additional time required
for exercises

Making things better, for everyone

We've all come across the term 'equality, diversity and inclusion' – but do we really understand what it means? From Social Justice to Equal Opportunities, terms evolve as our understanding improves. But let's look past the terms; it's the stuff underneath that matters.

Equality is about creating a fairer society. We can achieve this by providing all people with opportunities to make the most of their lives and talents. Irrespective of where they come from, what they believe in, or how they look, no one should have poorer life chances based on things out of their control.

Diversity is about recognising our individual differences. It's about understanding that every person is unique and celebrating it! Diversity provides strength. Embracing and learning from differences in age, ethnicity, sex, gender, culture and education makes everyone better. Everyone is invited, and everyone is welcome.

Inclusion underpins both equality and diversity. It's not just about being invited. It's first feeling comfortable enough to attend. Being inclusive means creating an environment people feel comfortable in. Comfortable to be the best and most authentic versions of themselves. Feeling welcomed and invited to join in, in a way that best suits them.

ED&I terms:

Microaggression
A term used for brief and often commonplace verbal, behavioural, or environmental action, whether intentional or not, that is hostile or derogatory. It could indicate negative prejudices or insults towards a group – particularly towards those in culturally marginalised groups.

Unconscious Bias
Learned social stereotypes and prejudices about 'others', ie. groups we do not self-identify with, that impact our behaviour towards them. Not only is it automatic and deeply ingrained, it can negatively affect our overt behaviour, such as in the workplace.

Systemic problem
Systems that often embed discrimination. The visible organisational culture, or the way we 'say' we get things done, to the detriment of others. For example, embedded in a company's vision, values, policies and procedures.

Culture
The way we 'really' get things done. This is about behaviour – the invisible organisational culture that enables discrimination. This includes – privilege, in/out groups, unwritten rules, personal values, traditions, shared assumptions, and social codes and biases.

Why is it important?

1.   It makes business sense
Why should EDI matter to business? Valuing EDI has a positive financial and reputational impact on your business. Having a more diverse workforce has been shown to build trust in your brand. According to PWC, 80% of young professionals look for diversity and inclusion markers before applying to a role. It also helps you better understand diverse markets and foster a 'growth' culture within your organisation.

Valuing diversity enhances employee engagement. It shows that your company understands and respects different cultures. This can cut costs by reducing turnover and absenteeism, which in turn increases overall productivity.

Most importantly, it creates happier employees!

2.   It is legally right
Not only is EDI important for leadership, it's a legal requirement.

There are 9 characteristics protected by law: age, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion and beliefs, and pregnancy and maternity rights.

Employers are able to take positive action under equality law, meaning they are able to encourage people from underrepresented groups to take job opportunities.

There are also minimum policies and procedures for equal opportunities, both policy and training – which ones can you think of?

3.   It is morally right
The moral case for improving EDI is perhaps the most simple – it's the right thing to do.

By valuing the idea of giving everyone access to the same opportunities to fulfil their potential, dependent on people's individual needs, you ultimately contribute to creating a kinder, more compassionate society.

Frame of reference

Humans make judgements about each other based on selective information. Every situation we encounter is also based on selected data. We can't always take in and process every single piece of data surrounding an action or event – we would probably explode!

However, we can select the significant data based on our 'frame of reference' – a set of lenses through which we filter the reality around us. We all have a unique set of lenses, built from experiences and influences. Common influences are based on: our sex, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, the languages we speak, our personal values and beliefs, where we grew up, where our parents grew up, and disabilities.

The point is, we all make judgements about others based on these lenses, which may affect how we behave towards them – and not always in a positive way. This isn't a blame game. It's about self-awareness.

What lenses and filters do you see the world through? Can you see how they influence you?

15
This activity takes 15min

Activity: The Tale of 'O'

Watch this **YouTube video** about The Tale of 'O'. Once you've done that, think about these questions…

- How were the 'O's treated by the 'X's?
- What behaviours did you observe? Make a list of them.
- Have you ever been in a situation, personal or professional, where you came across or experienced any behaviours from this list? What happened? How did you feel?
- Have you ever been an X? What happened?
- How did that situation influence the forming of relationships with 'O's?
- Who are the X's and O's in your working environment?

Further resources

Watch the film on everyday microaggressions: **What kind of Asian are you?**

Film on reverse microaggressions: **If Microaggressions Happened to White People | Decoded | MTV News**

Watch the film on micro-inequalities in a workplace: **The impact of micro-behaviours in the workplace – PREVIEW**

In collaboration with
Bath Third Sector Group

3SG
B&NES 3rd Sector Group

UNIVERSITY OF BATH