

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Online Course

### Module 1: Meaning and importance of DEI

#### Transcript

We're going to get started with the basics. We're going to ask ourselves the question, what is the meaning of diversity, equity and inclusion, and why are we spending all of this time and resources trying to learn about it, and how it translates into our organization.

#### Key concepts

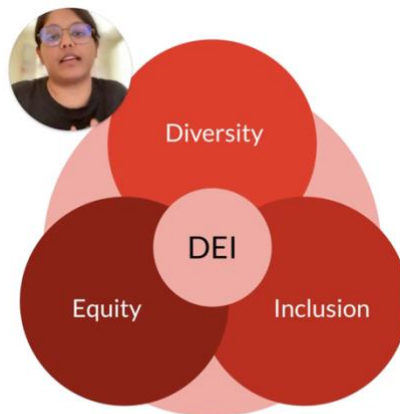
In this module, we're going to try and understand what the meaning and importance of DEI is. Through the course of this video, we are going to be covering four main concepts. The first is what is the meaning of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will realize that each of these are very distinct topics, leading to very distinct outcomes. But we will also move on to point two of this video to try and understand, even though they are distinct, how do they interrelate with each other. We'll soon realize that for each of these to be successful, each of the other pillars also needs to be equally strong and together they are able to lead to a more sustainable and holistic outcome for the organization.

We're then going to try and understand and explore why engaging with DEI may be important for workplaces and organizations of different shapes and different sizes.

Finally, we're going to understand the diversity equity inclusion continuum and also perhaps share some tips and tricks and exploratory questions to try and place your organization on this continuum to understand and place where we are on our DEI journey while also recognizing what we may need to move ahead on it.

#### Diversity, Equity Inclusion

Let's get started with unpacking what we mean when we say diversity equity and inclusion. This is probably what would come up and this would probably be the most accurate depiction of how the three concepts are distinct, but also have to function together for each of the three to be successful. We're now going to try and unpack each of these topics separately Then we will move on to understand how they relate to each other.



- Diversity is the existence of a demographic mix of different characteristics that give each person their own unique identity
- Equity refers to the systematic fair and just treatment of individuals, where resources are distributed according to each person's needs to create a level playing field
- Inclusion is diversity in practice
- Together, these three produce an environment where every individual is valuable because of their differences, and not despite them

We'll start with diversity. Diversity is the existence of a demographic mix of different characteristics that give each person their unique identity. Diversity just refers to the different elements and different identifying factors that every individual has with themselves. This could be based on their gender, it could

be based on their religion, it could be based on their caste, on their class, on any other identifying factor that you think is relevant. Diversity just refers to this difference that exists between the different people.

Equity refers to the systematic, fair, and just treatment of individuals, where resources are distributed according to each person's need to create a level playing field. You realize that equity is a little different from equality in that it is not looking to treat everyone despite their differences in the same way but is looking to meet people with differences at the point at which they are at.

Finally, Inclusion is really diversity in practice. Together these three concepts produce an environment where every individual is valuable, because of their differences and not in spite of them. Let us look at the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion with the analogy of a dance floor and a dance programme. It is a very famous analogy, and an analogy you have probably heard in the past as well. Think of diversity as being invited to the dance programme. Your friend is hosting a n evening where thy have a little bit of dancing and they have invited you and many different friends to participate in it. But say you show up to the dance floor and you are not invited to actually come and dance. You are just there sitting around not really feeling welcome, not really being invited to dance, not really being invited to be spoken to. So you maybe someone that is present in the room, but not really included in the room. So think of inclusion as being invited to dance. You have gone to the event and there someone has invited you to be able to come and dance. But now imagine that you have been invited to the dance. You go to the dance floor and you realize that there is no space for you. Or the dancefloor is not somewhere you are able to access. The floor is just so full of people, you have absolutely no space for yourself. Is that still a place where you would continue to feel welcome and would you still feel included? Not the attempt of the person, or the host who has invited you to dance is also going to be making sure that there is space for you to really own your dance, able to actually perform your dance. That is referred to as equity.

So think of it in a way that diversity is being invited to the dance. Inclusion is being invited to dance. And Equity is having space on the dance floor to be able to actually dance.

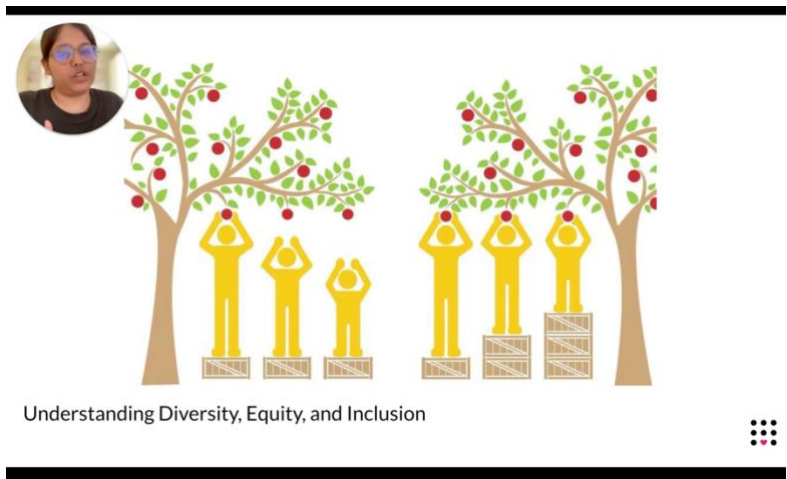
**Equity Diagram**

Now we try and place equity, diversity and inclusion, through a diagram. Think of this diagram as an exercise in making sure that every single individual, irrespective of how tall they are should be able to get at least one apple. Now you can see in the diagram people of different heights and each of them has been given a stool to stand on to be able to access the apple.

In the first half of the diagram you see that there are people of 3 different

heights but who all have the same stool, which is to say that some people are able to reach the apple because of the stool but not all of them.

In the second half of the diagram the same three individuals are given stools of different heights. Each of these sizes is determined by how tall each person needs the stool to be to be able to reach the apple



I want to take a couple of minutes and try to reflect on the following questions. 1. How is the orchard owner addressing the problem? 2. What is difference in approaches between the two images. 3. Which approach is most likely to be successful in meeting the goal that every single person has access to an apple? This image is a very clear and important example of the difference between equality and equity, and how they are equally relevant for DEI. You will see that even though the group here is diverse, which is to say they come from different backgrounds and have different heights, so they are quite diverse. They are not all included in the process to begin able to secure the apple, And it is definitely not an equitable process, even though everyone is invited only some people are able to actually access that particular apple. There is therefore a need for us to move beyond just being equal in our approaches because we realise very very soon that equality may not solve the problem for everyone. Equality rests on the assumption that everyone is already at an equal standpoint. And if everybody is given the same resources they will all be able to reach the same outcomes. As is visible in this particular diagram we can understand that that is definitely not true.

Equity therefore means that we are able to give the different people what they need in order to achieve success. Diversity implies that there is going to be diversity in what is needed to be able to succeed as well. And therefore, we are thinking of making an equitable approach towards success rather than an equal one This is also another example of how diversity, equity and inclusion are very interrelated.

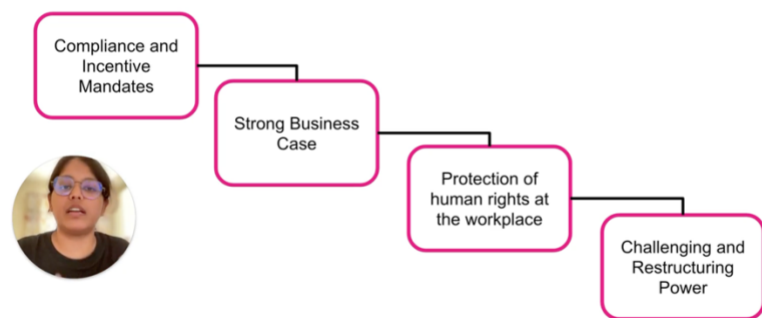
Like I had already mentioned it is already a fairly diverse group, so that end of the spectrum is fairly clear. I think we have done well on it. But we are not really being inclusive because we are being inequitable. And without inclusivity the persistence of the existence of the diversity loses its significance.

It is not so important anymore that we are diverse because what is the point of this diversity where we are not able to ensure that everybody's needs are being met. Try and take a step back here, take a minute or two, try and answer these questions. Explore which option if any you prefer

### Rationalising DEI Initiatives

Lets we move into trying and understanding what are the different rationales that organizations use to justify investing in DEI initiatives. The four rationales that you are seeing on your screen are by no means an exhaustive list of rationales but think of them as four distinct categories of rationales that we have seen emerge over the course of our work on DEI.

### Rationalising DEI Initiatives



The first rational is straightforward. It says that we invest in DEI because it is a compliance requirement and because we have certain incentives attached with DEI initiatives. So, for example, if you have a law in your country or your state where you need to have a particular DEI initiative without which your company will perhaps be shut down or will face the threat of being shut down, that is considered to be rational.

Second, if there is a certain incentive attached to the number of DEI initiatives you have at your workplace for example, your investors are seeking it or your funders are asking for it or you have this international

award that is being given out to an organization because of their DEI efforts. And that's the main reason that an organization is engaging with it. The second reason we've seen is that there is a strong business case attached to DEI. By business case here, we mean to say that there are obvious positive outcomes on the profit or on the success of an organization as a result of investing in DEI. So there is a clear correlation between diversity, equity and inclusion and the financial prosperity of a particular organization. Over here, we are really looking at the fact that DEI has contributed to greater innovation in organizations. It is a way to ensure that employees are happy. It is a way to ensure that we are attracting a very diverse pool of applicants from across the world, and it is also a way for us to ensure that we are retaining top talent in the industry. These are all very profitable outcomes for a business and that by itself becomes a reason for them to want to invest in DEI.

The third and fourth rationale, are a little deeper in why organizations want to invest in DEI initiatives. The third rationale tries to look at DEI initiative as a way to protect human rights violations in the workplace. Under this rationale organizations are likely to see any sort of identity-based discrimination, harm or violence caused as a violation of human rights and therefore view DEI initiatives as a way to make sure that does not happen.

And finally, the last rationale we have often seen being used by companies is that we want to challenge, identify, name, and restructure the existing power asymmetries within the organization. Each of these rationales are perfectly valid. It is also likely that each of these rationales will lead to effective DEI initiatives and effective outcomes.

Why then are we asking what the rationale is? The reason we are asking what the rationale is, is because it often impacts the quality and the outcome of a particular DEI initiative. A compliance-based DEI initiative is likely to be treated as a checklist. Maybe there's no monitoring and evaluation. Maybe there is no collection of feedback.

A strong business case DEI initiative tries to only view DEI and give the importance to DEI it deserves as long as it continues to feed into the profitability or the success of a particular organization.

When we look at it as a human rights issue, while it is a very, very strong and positive foundation for a DEI initiative, there is a possibility that a lot of our DEI initiatives emerge from a paternalistic point of view where we seek to protect those who have faced some sort of minority which may not always be necessary and honestly even welcome.

The final structuring of the rationale for DEI gives us the necessary knowledge and the tools to be able to critically think about individual systemic and collective interactions at the workplace and try to ensure how do we rebalance that power. There is of course power within an organization as a result of hierarchy, as a result of pay scale, as a result of responsibilities. But is there also certain forms of invisible power which continue to exist within an organization? In the final rationale, there is going to likely be a greater investment of resources by organizations to really go deep into attitudes, behaviors and knowledge levels of employees and really map out what is the existing power structure within the organization. Visible power or invisible power or even hidden power. Is there a need to restructure it and how can we restructure it?

### **Importance of DEI**

We are now moving on to trying and understanding what the importance of DEI is. We have already done that I think in a lot of different ways so far. But a quick overview of why we need to be investing resources

into DEI. First, of course, is that there is higher innovation, creativity and diversity of perspectives to any sort of problem or challenge that an organization may be facing.

Second, because of the diversity that exists within the workplace and because people are really encouraged to be who they are and to bring their whole selves to work, there can be improved workplace culture. There is greater awareness, there is a greater sense of awareness of even what we don't know about other people, which can lead to a more open, a more transparent and a curious workplace culture.

The third is it has known to increase employee well-being and workplace satisfaction, which in turn leads to an increased rate of retention and larger talent pools for the companies to hire from.

Finally, an organization that is constantly looking to invest in DEI is also an organization that is looking to invest in building transparency, accountability and fluidity internally.

We are now going to look at something called the DEI continuum, where we want to try and understand what the different stages within an organization are when they are working with DEI.

### The DEI Continuum

We are going to start off with Aware, which is basically where an organization is deliberate about DEI, but this deliberation about DEI is a result of a trigger or a catalyst. Maybe that's because somebody is talking about it, maybe there is a lawsuit, maybe somebody has faced an unpleasant experience. And it is a result of this that there is a conversation about DEI even beginning to happen at the organization. Over here, the organization is merely aware that something like this exists.



The next stage of the continuum talks about being DEI compliant. Over here, the organization's primary focus is to adherence to the rules and the laws pertaining to inclusion and diversity. We're not really thinking about culture transformation here. We're not thinking about challenging power. All we want to make sure is if there is a law, we want to be compliant with it because if we're not, there are going to be penalties for it.

The third is tactical, where the organizations are actively involved. We want to be involved in implementing specific, maybe disjointed DEI programs to address issues related to diversity and inclusion. Here there is clearly an intent to be more diverse, to be equitable, to be inclusive, but there is still a sense of separating DEI from the larger workplace organizational culture.

And therefore, we move to the fourth segment on the continuum which is DEI integrated. In this particular stage, organizations established an inclusive culture throughout and include diverse and inclusion into all of their practices and policies. Diversity and inclusion is not seen as this specific segregated topic that perhaps

the human resource team of the organization should be invested in. But as a part and parcel of every single operation and programmatic pathway within the organization.

Finally on the continuum is DEI sustainable. Over here organizations maintain their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, establishing equity in both policy and practice. It's probably easier for an organization to integrate the DEI agenda within their entire organization, but it can be very challenging to ensure that it continues remaining integrated and continues remaining successful. It is therefore necessary for us to be able to build a DEI platform and a DEI agenda within our organization that is not just integrated across but is also something that is sustainable.

### **Reflection Questions**

As we come to the end of the first module, I want to leave you all with a few reflection questions.

- How does Diversity, Equity and Inclusion show up within your organization? Does it show up at all? Is it at all relevant to you all? How does it show up?
- Go back to the continuum that we've looked at. Where would you place your organization on that scale? And why would you place it where you did?
- And if you want to move ahead or if you're at the sustainable stage, how do you ensure that you have what you need to move ahead or continue remaining where you are at that particular scale?

Try and think about these questions? Talk to your team about it. Try and brainstorm a little bit. Try and write down your answers and I will see you in our next video.