

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Online Course

Module 3: Key concepts of DEI

Transcript

Hello and welcome to the third module in the online self-paced course on Introduction to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. In today's module, we're going to be talking about some of the key concepts pertaining to DEI. This course is brought to you by One Future Collective in collaboration with ICVA. The International Council of Voluntary Agencies. As always, we're going to begin with a very quick recap of what we discussed in the previous module.

Quick Recap

We focused mainly on unpacking some guiding principles of diversity, equity and inclusion and tried to understand how they can be relevant to our organizations. Some of the key principles that we looked at were empathy, accountability, transparency, accessibility amongst a host of other key principles. Before we jump into the content for today, I do have a few questions for you. What amongst these principles stayed with you and why? Which of these principles didn't really speak to you and didn't really influence your thought process about DEI in any way? Was there anything that was missing in the list of principles? Was there anything that you would specifically like to take back to your organization and see what it looks like in practice? There are no right or wrong answers but I'm just curious so I would like for you to nudge yourselves and maybe even your colleagues to try and think through some of these questions before we jump on to what we have in store for us today.

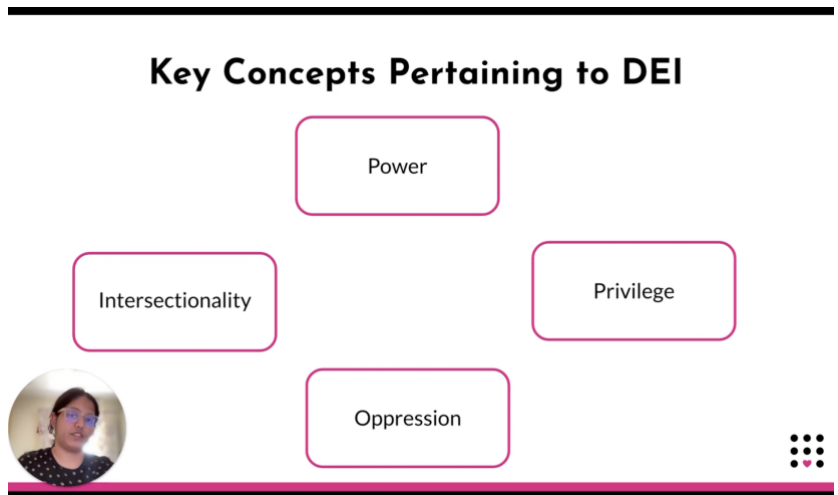
Key Concepts Pertaining to DEI

We're going to be discussing some of the key concepts that pertain to diversity, equity and inclusion. We are also going to spend some time engaging with the question of how do I start engaging with these concepts? How do I start thinking about this and applying it in my daily lives and also in the context of my organization?

What you can see on your screen are a set of some of the concepts that we think are foundational to diversity equity and inclusion.

Again, a very quick disclaimer. None of these is an exhaustive list, which is to say that there can be 10 other concepts that can be equally relevant to the conversation around DEI.

But these four concepts that you can see on your screen are some of the most foundational ones and also some of the most interrelated concepts that can be important for us to understand if and when we want to engage with DEI in a meaningful manner.



Power / Privilege

We'll keep it very simple, and we'll start with the definition and the meaning of power. We've all used the word power in many different contexts. We've seen power. We have felt what power can look like. We've also seen powerlessness and we can also imagine what powerlessness can look like in some situations. In very simple terms, power is the ability to influence someone else's or another group's behavior, decisions and attitudes. In other words, it is the ability of an individual or a group of people to decide the next step or next course of action when a decision needs to be made.

Power is generally seen as this ability to wield control over another person and their actions and all the decisions they make. Power in the context of diversity, equity and inclusion relates to more than just physical notions of power that we have probably been most acquainted with. Power in this context is trying to understand the kind of influence and the kind of control that you have and wield over situations as a result of your identity and as a result of your social locations.

Try and think about the various social locations that you come from. What is your gender? What language do you speak? Which country are you from? How much generational wealth do you have, if at all? Are you a first-generational learner? Do you have any physical or mental disabilities? Are there any other points of your identity or your social location that are coming alive for you right now? As you are thinking about this, try and also answer this other question for me. Which of these identities or social locations do you find yourself relying on in situations where you are nervous? Or in situations where you are not fully sure about what the outcome is going to be. Try and also look at the identities that you may have mapped out in your mind or on a piece of paper. and try and understand if there are, identities that you derive power from and if there are identities in social occasions that you hold that you lose power because of.

Now from that let's move on to the next point which is to say that power is not static. Power is relational and dynamic and often determined by the power of the other group or the other individual that you are engaging with. There can be a situation in which you are able to wield a certain amount of power because of your gender when you're speaking to someone who does not have the same amount of power owing to their gender identity. However, when you are speaking to another person perhaps where they have more financial stability than you do, it is possible that even if they shared the same gender identity as the previous room, they may still have more power over you. This is an example of how power is dynamic and often determined by the power that the other person also brings to the particular room.

From power, I want us to start thinking about privilege. And what do we mean by privilege? I think we've used the word privilege in many different contexts and in many different backgrounds and experiences as well. In the most simple terms, privilege refers to your rights, the benefits, the opportunity, the advantages that individuals or groups of individuals have which are not necessarily earned.

Try to think about all of these points in relation to you and your own community and try and understand how much of this was something that you have worked for, that you have earned, or that you have been awarded. Privilege in its most simple terms is unearned rights, benefits, opportunities, and advantages that an individual is able to enjoy just because of who they are and where they come from, and not necessarily because they have earned this. Unfortunately, the fact that there is a privilege also means that there is a group which is not privileged, or a group that is oppressed. When we talk about power, we cannot talk about power without talking about privilege, and we cannot talk about privilege without talking about power.

They are both interconnected in a way that power is a way for me to understand where derive my privileges from, and on the flip side, my privilege by itself can be a source of me getting power.

Oppression / Intersectionality

I am going to now unpack some of the other concepts which are relevant for DEI.

Oppression is another concept we should be speaking about. It refers to a form of injustice where one group is discriminated against to maintain the power and the privilege of another group. Here think of it as two different and distinct groups where one group is, is decisively and intentionally kept in check so that the other party or the other group is able to continue enjoying their power and their privilege for a long time. Oppression is often reinforced by social norms, beliefs, attitudes as well as relationships and can show up in many different forms. Oppression may not always be visible, it may not always be shocking and it may definitely not always be something that is overt. Oppression can very easily be something that is very subtle, easy to miss. And something that happens in hidden atmospheres without enough visibility being given to it.

Microaggressions is a form of an oppression that is subtle and often very easy to miss. Violence, on the other hand, is the opposite. This is not to say that one form of oppression is more severe than the other or to pass judgment on the severity of either of these forms, but to see that when we think about oppression, we need to be intentionally and mindfully careful about what we are doing. We are able to recognize oppression, how we are able to recognize a name oppression, and also to be mindful in ensuring that we are not ascribing certain levels of severity to a situation for us to be able to recognize that that constitutes to be an oppressive situation.

Another term which becomes a foundational concept of DEI is Intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as your race, class, gender, etc. as they apply to an individual or a group regarded as overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. In its very simplest form, intersectionality is really about how an individual can have a multiple different social categorizations within them. Even though I am a woman, I am also a person of color, I am also someone who does not suffer from a physical disability, I am English-speaking and I am a first-generation learner. My identity is not limited by just my gender and neither is my gender the only aspect of my identity that shapes how I navigate the world. My gender along with my race, along with my learning potential along with how much money I have. All of these different identities come together to shape how I collectively navigate this world.

Key concepts pertaining to DEI

This is the same slide that we saw when we started the video.

And here I want us to take a minute back and try and see if the distinction between each of these is really as clear as it once was when we started talking about it.

We started by speaking about power, privilege, oppression, intersectionality as four distinct concepts. But as we tried to unpack them, as we tried to understand them, we are also noticing that they are actually very, very similar which can make it quite difficult for us to really segregate them and see them as distinct concepts.

The idea here is not to give you a blueprint of how we can distinguish between them even though that may have been helpful, but really for us to be able to build a nuanced and holistic understanding of how different concepts come together to influence our approach to diversity, equity and inclusion.

your space to be taking up at all. If it is someone else's space to be taking up, it is important that we give that space to them and we ensure that their voices are heard identified and acknowledged.

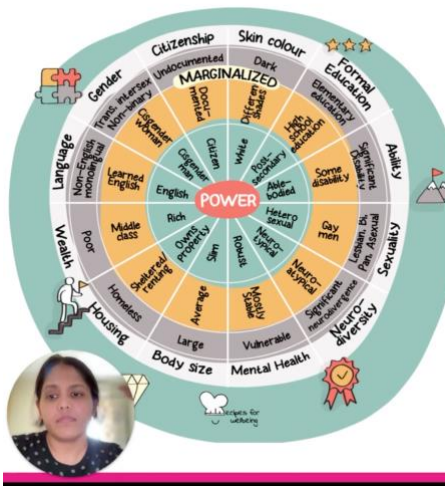
We also need to be able to speak up and be brave when we witness discrimination and ensure that we are not just looking the other way and moving on with our lives.

Like I said earlier, as with DEI, even with this, there is going to definitely be instances where your beliefs are going to change, where your thoughts are going to be challenged, where your views are going to be questioned.

To the extent possible, try and be open to feedback and criticism to the extent possible, to learn and grow as a person and develop a level of security, knowledge and also comfort with being wrong but also comfort with learning more. And learning from those who you should be learning from.

Wheel of Power and privilege

Today I am going to leave you with an activity and not necessarily reflection questions. On your screen there is something called the wheel of power and privilege and this exercise is meant to provide you a well-rounded understanding of your potential privileges and marginalizations.



Wheel of power and privilege

This exercise is meant to provide you a well-rounded understanding of your potential privileges and marginalization. Assess your proximity to power (closer to the centre of the circle) or marginalization (closer to the outer limit of the circle) for each category. Your location throughout the various dimensions can be marked with a symbol or circled.

Adapted from: Recipes for Wellbeing



You can either draw this or print out this image for yourself and try to map where on this wheel you find yourself.

On the outermost circle, you will see a mention of identities, social locations, and many different identifying factors, such as formal education, your language, your body size, your neurodiversity, sexual orientation, etc. As you keep getting closer and closer to the core of the circle, the centre of the circle, you start realising who has power and where do you see yourself on this wheel? For example, if I am looking at skin colour, I am likely to find myself somewhere between dark and white in the orange space. I am probably going to be there that means I am that much further away from having the most amount of power in a particular situation in the context of skin colour.

This activity is just a tool that will help you reflect on how much power we may hold as individuals. This tool is just a way for us to reflect on how much power we may hold as individuals or as groups of individuals and may not even be aware of it.

This is a tool that we can use to be able to lead conversations, to build our own awareness and to try and situate ourselves in the larger context of diversity, equity and inclusion. I hope that this tool is also a way for you to see just how diverse the wheel of power and privilege can be and how diverse the experiences of people can be and how each of these experiences, each of these identities determine how much power we have and extension determine how we experience and navigate the world. I invite you to do this exercise alone or with a group of trusted people who you feel comfortable doing this with and trying to outline what power looks like for you and in your context and also within your organization.

Within the context of your organization also you can use this power and privilege wheel to try and point out perhaps where most of your employees come from and where most of your colleagues fall on this particular circle.

Is that enough diversity? Would you like more diversity? What is coming in the way of ensuring such diversity? These are just some of the things that I want to talk about today. Some questions but also a reflection in how the individual makes the system and how the system can shape an individual as well. That's it for today and I'm very excited to see you in our next module where we will start talking about diversity, equity inclusion particularly within the humanitarian sector.