



Demonstrating cultural diversity and inclusivity in selecting academics in higher education in Australia

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The benefits of a diversified workforce are undeniable. Many studies focused on the importance of diversity of students in higher education. Campbell (2000) argues that to educate a culturally diverse society effectively, a culturally diverse teaching team is a 'necessity'. This research aims to contest the idea of inclusion and the impact of biases in academic appointments. It is argued that the meaning of inclusion is significantly framed by the selection panel members' biases around the candidate's identity. We argue that a genuine aim of diversity and inclusivity among students needs to be preceded and demonstrated by the same goal in selecting academics in higher education. Studies suggest that decision-makers personal and organisational characteristics can influence the screening of immigrant professionals during the recruitment and selection process (Fernando et al., 2016). Norton et al. suggest that individuals use questionable arguments to justify implicit biases around race (Norton et al., 2004). The result of this research would provide insight into how the biases of the selection panel members influence the selection process for academic recruitment in Australian universities. The results will also shine some light on the idea of inclusion and how it is an opportunity in education and society to identify and challenge discrimination and exclusion at the local and national levels (Armstrong et al., 2011). Another dimension of the outcome of this research is how the biases impact peoples' self-perception, predominantly in the minority (Clance & Imes, 1978; Cokley et al., 2017). Research into racial and cultural stereotyping indicates that racial stereotyping increases the threat among the group resulting in underperformance as the stereotyped group may not be able to connect to the mainstream (Miyake et al., 2010; Spencer et al., 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The exhaustive literature review revealed a gap in this area of research. There are no studies on how the racial and cultural biases of the interviewee or members of selection panels impact the selection process and how biases could influence performance and self-efficacy. This study will not only help the prospective academics to understand the recruiter's preferences but could also bring about change in the higher education academic recruitment process and thereby demonstrate universities' genuine commitment to cultural diversity and inclusivity among academic staff and students.

The participants of this research will be university employees who either have been interviewed for academic positions or have served on selection panels of academic recruitment. The participants will be from different gender, cultural and racial backgrounds, people with disability and people from LGBTQA+. This research will employ a mixed-method approach through semi-structured interviews and surveys. Ethics is being sought for this research. In the first phase, we aim to have 25 academics who had been interviewed and ten selection panel members. We also plan to send the survey to the extended university community and receive a more significant number of responses. The questions in the survey and interview would include questions on explicit/implicit biases and stereotypes. Expertise of the behavioural psychologists may be sought in designing the question and suggestions on methodological aspects of this research.

Keywords: academic selection process, bias and stereotypes, inclusivity, diversity

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