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Menno Vos Gürkan Çelik Sjiera de Vries

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Making cultural differences matter? Diversity perspectives in higher education

Menno Vos
Faculty of Business, Media and Law,
Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, Zwolle, The Netherlands
Gürkan Çelik
Business Research Centre, Inholland University of Applied Sciences,
Rotterdam, The Netherlands, and
Sjiera de Vries
Lectoraat Sociale Innovatie, Windesheim University of Applied Sciences,
Zwolle, The Netherlands

Abstract

Purpose – The higher education sector has become increasingly aware of how the increasing diversity in society affects their institutions. The student population has become more diverse and future employers increasingly require trained students who are able to meet the demands of dealing with a more diverse market/clientele. In this regard, education institutions need to align their strategic approach to diversity within their organization. The purpose of this paper is to examine strategical reasons to diversify in different education teams in relation to two different diversity practices: attraction and selection of culturally diverse lecturers and utilization of cultural differences in team interaction.

Design/methodology/approach – In a qualitative study the authors conducted 19 interviews with educational professionals in six different education teams in a university of applied sciences.

Findings – Interviews with 19 members of six educational teams revealed that some teams acknowledge they need more diversity and exchange of knowledge and skills in order to meet the requirements of the labor market. Especially teams that prepare students for international careers foster this "Integration and Learning" perspective. Other teams, e.g. the Law team, notice less changes in labor market requirements. Still, these teams were open for recruiting diverse lecturers and found it important, especially to meet the needs of the diversity in students (access perspective). They also found value in the interaction and mutual learning in their team, but saw no extra value of diversity (colorblind perspective). Labor market demands for diversity seem to have more influence on the diversity perspective of teams than the diversity in the student population.

Practical implications – Since earlier research has shown that the diversity practices of organizations are more effective when they are in line with their diversity perspective, the differences between teams suggest that when dealing with diversity issues, universities can best work toward a common understanding of the importance of diversity but leave room for team differences in diversity practices.

Originality/value – Most studies on diversity management assume or argue that organizations adopt one diversity perspective. The present study shows that intra-organizational differences may exist with regard to the specific needs or concern for diversity management practices.

Keywords Higher education, Qualitative research, Diversity perspectives

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The student population in higher education has become more culturally diverse in many countries (Banks, 2007), partly due to the increasing educational level of migrants and a higher percentage of migrants enter the higher education system

(Crul and Mollenkopf, 2012). In addition, there is an increasing need to prepare students for dealing with the complex demands and needs of various cultural groups, customers and clients in society that they will work with in their future professional role (Leask and Bridge, 2013; Killick, 2006). To adapt to the increasing diversity in the student population and the need for diversity related knowledge and skills for future professionals, many universities experience the urgency to invest in a more heterogeneous workforce and implement diversity management practices. These diversity management practices refer to proactive and inclusive approaches related to recruitment and effective utilization of personnel from different cultural backgrounds (Cox and Blake, 1991). For example, universities may attract lecturers with diverse backgrounds, or utilize cultural differences among lecturers in educational teams to develop educational curricula that fit the notion of preparing students for "global citizenship" (Leask, 2001, 2009) or the labor market that requires multicultural skills (Çelik *et al.*, 2014).

Research has shown that the implementation of diversity management practices is more effective when these practices reflect the beliefs about the value of diversity in the organization (see Ely and Thomas, 2001; Van Knippenberg *et al.*, 2007), and the fundamental strategic choice in the reasons to diversify (Dass and Parker, 1999; Jansen *et al.*, 2016; Thomas and Ely, 1996). Although the attention for internationalization and diversity in the educational sector is rising (e.g. Teichler, 2004), little is known about these fundamental choices on why to diversify and how they relate day-to-day diversity practices within universities. This is important to know, as previous studies have suggested that when a diversity strategy does not fit the diversity management practices, such practices are deemed to be less effective (Cox, 1994; Richard, 2000). The current case study attempts to address this empirical gap and examines the diversity strategies and practices in a Dutch university setting, with a focus on staffing of lecturers from different cultural backgrounds and team interaction (i.e. the extent to which differences in cultural backgrounds of lecturers are utilized on the work floor).

Strategic reasons to diversify: the diversity perspectives framework
When considering strategic reasons to diversify, the "Diversity perspective framework" by Ely and Thomas (2001) is relevant. Diversity perspectives reflect organizations' normative beliefs and expectations about the reason to diversify, and about the value of cultural diversity and its connection to work processes (Stevens *et al.*, 2008). These perspectives can be classified on a continuum ranging from "not doing anything" to "having a full blown diversity strategy" (Dass and Parker, 1999). Studies on diversity perspectives have been conducted in both private and public organizations and institutions and have proven to be important predictors of how organizational practices are shaped, such as personnel selection or training of employees on how to deal with diversity (e.g. Ely and Thomas, 2001; Hicks-Clarke and Iles, 2000). Building on the work of Roosevelt (1995) and Thomas and Ely (1996) and Podsiadlowski *et al.* (2013) proposed and empirically tested a conceptual framework of five diversity perspectives: reinforcing homogeneity, colorblindness, fairness, access, and integration and learning.

Reinforcing homogeneity refers to actively avoiding a diverse workforce. According to this perspective, organizational goals are best reached under conditions of shared values and a common goal (Podsiadlowski *et al.*, 2013). Correspondingly, they can operate under conditions of strong unity and attract and retain staff that shares the dominant culture and values of the organization. Educational institutions that endorse

a reinforcing homogeneity strategy actively avoid to attract lecturers from a different cultural background and refrain from utilizing cultural differences between lecturers.

Both colorblindness and fairness stretch the importance of ensuring equal and fair treatment and avoiding discriminatory practices. But they are different in their reasons for ensuring equal employment opportunities. Colorblindness refers to the belief that racism and discrimination are no longer relevant for contemporary society's economic and social realities (Neville *et al.*, 2010). From this perspective, educational institutions attract people that fit into the organization and match the required job qualifications, regardless of their background. As job criteria oftentimes reflect dominant norms and values of the majority members within the organization, the likelihood that minority members are perceived just as suitable for the job as majority members will be low (Plaut *et al.*, 2011; Jansen *et al.*, 2016). With this practice, educational institutions ignore the existence of institutional discrimination (Gasman *et al.*, 2011).

Aiming for diversity from a fairness perspective revolves around the notion that it is important that the demographics of the organization reflect the demographics of society (Ely and Thomas, 2001). This is in line with the "heterogeneity rationale" which concentrates on representation of minority and majority students and lecturers (Klein, 2016). By recruiting people of various cultural backgrounds, organizations that endorse this perspective strive to provide equal opportunities for everyone. Furthermore, in order to promote the advancement of minority groups in the organization, this perspective emphasizes the importance to take extra measures to support them. Communicating the preference of selecting a minority candidate in job vacancies to match the representation of minorities in the student population illustrates this perspective.

According to the access perspective, people fit into the organization when the diversity of the employees matches the diversity of the "market" they serve (Ely and Thomas, 2001). These organizations aim to become more diverse and utilize this diversity because they think that with different cultures represented in the staff, they will be better able to serve clients/customers who come from various backgrounds (Podsiadlowski *et al.*, 2013). This is in line with the economic rationale that "diversity sells" and this rationale fits with the rapid transformation of institutions of higher education into "entrepreneurial universities" (Etzkowitz, 2003; Hannon, 2013). From this perspective diversity among lecturers is promoted and utilized in the education institution as a mean to fit the demands of the labor market (e.g. equipping students with multicultural skills).

Finally, the integration and learning perspective focusses on diversity as a source for learning for everyone in the organization. Cultural diversity is perceived as a catalyst for creativity which will likely result in better performance, because differences in background lead to divergent thinking and new ways to organize tasks and work processes (Ely and Thomas, 2001). Van Vught (2008) also argued that diversity in higher education offers opportunities for experimenting with innovation. For example, creating cultural diverse teams provides opportunities for mutual learning and developing innovative curriculum material that fits both the needs of the diverse student population and the professional skills the labor market asks for.

Insights in the aforementioned five diversity perspectives have important implications for the understanding of how diversity is managed: from defensive (e.g. actively resisting diversity) to reactive (e.g. meeting demands of the market or diversity quota) to proactive (acknowledging the economic benefits of diversity and encouraging diversity as a learning opportunity for the entire organization). Empirical studies on diversity perspectives have linked specific strategies to diversify to various diversity practices within the organization (Ely and Thomas, 2001). However, little is

known about how educational institutions develop their diversity management practices, nor on how this is related to their diversity perspectives. Insights in this may be helpful to develop more practical tools to improve diversity management that fits with the diversity strategy of the educational the institution.

The first aim of the present study was therefore to link strategic diversity perspectives to diversity management practices in educational teams. In line with Cox and Blake's (1991) notion that diversity management entails recruitment of a diverse workforce as well as utilizing differences between employees on the work floor, we focussed on diversity in the staffing of lecturers and how differences in cultural backgrounds of lecturers is utilized in their day-to-day work within the faculty or team. Strategic choices on the recruitment of new employees is important as it is a first key step in becoming more heterogeneous (Cox, 1994; Pitts *et al.*, 2010). Also, attracting lecturers from a different background can be seen as an indication of how serious the organization is about diversity management (Gasman *et al.*, 2011). Second, how differences in cultural backgrounds of the lecturers are utilized in their day-to-day work is very relevant for educational institutions. The key goal for most schools and universities is student learning and well-being (see Leithwood *et al.*, 2004), and with an increasing diverse student population and more complex demands from the globalizing labor market, lecturers need a different approach to what students should learn and how to adjust to the different needs these students have. In order to create more fitting curricula, lecturers need a broad set of knowledge and skills that can only be achieved when working with colleagues with a variety of backgrounds in collaborative learning structures (cf. Lueddeke, 1999; Steinert, 2005). Emphasizing the importance of diversity between lecturers in team interaction may increase mutual learning effects by improving the utilization of each other's specific knowledge and expertise.

One organization, one diversity strategy?

Most studies on diversity perspectives implicitly assume or argue that organizations adopt (or work from) one perspective. That is, if an organization, for example endorses an approach in which they aim to diversify their workforce according to the diversity in society, all the departments within that organization are assumed to endorse this strategy. However, some studies found that intra-organizational differences may exist with regard to the specific need or concern for diversity management practices (Hite and McDonald, 2006; Sanchez and Medkik, 2004). This suggests that a specific educational team within the same university may require more variety in team diversity to fit the requirement (e.g. due to a large influx of students from a different cultural background or a stronger need to adjust to the demands of the labor market) compared to another team. As a result, the importance of diversity and how to manage it may differ between these faculties or teams. The second aim in the present study was to explore the extent to which diversity perspectives in relation to recruitment of new lecturers and utilization of cultural differences among lecturers were shared among education teams within the same education institution.

Method

We used a case study approach (Yin, 2012) to examine the diversity perspectives in different educational teams within one educational institution. The present study was conducted in Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, a large Dutch university with over 20,000 students, 1,800 members of staff and situated in two different cities. Furthermore, this

university covers a variety of educational faculties (technical studies, business, media and law studies, sports and education studies, and health and welfare studies) that is representative for the educational domains of other Dutch applied universities.

The reason for choosing Windesheim for this study was that the university recently stated diversity as one of the four core principles in their strategic documents, but was still discussing the importance of diversity for the different educational domains and teams. In addition, the organization was also exploring on how diversity should be reflected in the daily practices of the institution, as the number of lecturers with a migrant background is rising (15 percent of the lecturers had a non-Dutch nationality during this study). Therefore, the authors were invited to assist the university in their search for ways to become a more diversity sensitive organization.

As we were specifically interested in understanding how strategic choices with regard to diversity management within educational teams are shaped and how this affects recruitment of lecturers and team interaction patterns, we opted for a qualitative research approach, in which we gathered our data through semi-structured interviews.

We selected teams based on purposive criterion with the aim of garnering a sample that exemplifies the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 1990). Based on explorative pilot interviews among representatives of 16 different education teams, six teams were selected for inclusion. The first criterion for inclusion was that we strived for teams in different educational domains. The second criterion was the possibility to conduct interviews with at least three team members, including the team manager, a team member from a minority background (non-Dutch lecturer) and a team member from a majority background (Dutch). Table I shows an overview of our sample, including the proportion of non-Dutch lecturers.

A total of 19 individuals participated in semi-structured face-to-face interviews that lasted 60-90 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. We developed data collection protocols based on the conceptual framework and the two diversity practices (recruitment of lecturers and team interaction in terms of utilization of cultural differences).

To analyze the data, we first created a database that included transcriptions from the interviews. We developed a preliminary list of codes using the conceptual framework and knowledge of prior research while also allowing additional codes to emerge. To ensure reliability, we employed software for analyzing qualitative data (Kwalitan 5.0) to assist in the coding and compiling of data into categories. To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings and conclusions, we shared our codes with a research colleague who subsequently reviewed and helped us to modify them.

Team	Domain	No. of team members	% ethnic minority	No. of participants in the study
Honor's College	Business, media and law	14	43	3
Social Work	Health and welfare	35	11	3
International Consultancy	Business, media and law	8	25	3
Sport and Motion Studies	Sports and education	23	13	3
Pedagogy	Sports and education	29	10	3
Law	Business, media and law	19	11	4

Table I.
Overview of the team characteristics

Results

Based on the verbatim transcriptions, we will first discuss the findings on the two different diversity practices (recruitment and team interaction) separately for the six educational teams. Consequently, we will look at general patterns, which could be derived from the data based on the first step.

Recruitment and selection of lecturers

Strategic choices with regard to recruitment of new personnel give important information of an organization's willingness to invest in a diverse workforce. Educational teams differed in their opinions on the importance of diversity in recruiting new personnel. None of the teams denied the importance of diversity or actively strived for a homogenous workforce, but the reasons to diversify ranged from regarding it as a negligible criterion in the recruitment of new personnel to perceiving diversity as one of the core criteria in selection.

When it comes to hiring new staff, the access perspective, in which diversity is advocated as a business case, was found to be the dominant perspective among three out of six teams (Sports and Motion Studies, Social Work and International Consultancy). "An important reason to diversify our team and attract lecturers from different cultural backgrounds would be to better adapt the multicultural work settings our students face" (Dutch lecturer from the Social Work team).

A colorblind perspective was strongly endorsed in the Law team. "When hiring new staff, we just look at the qualifications the new lecturer needs to have and to what extent the job candidates meet these qualifications. We just want the best person for the job" (team manager). A fellow team member with a Surinam background underlines this: I'm against using diversity as a selection criterion. I would feel uncomfortable if I would be recruited based on my ethnic background or gender. I've been raised with the notion that only quality matters and that's what it's all about." Support for the endorsement of a colorblind perspective was found in the Pedagogy team as well, but this was combined with aspects of the fairness approach. " 'Quality' is the most important criterion to hire new lecturers, but I have become more aware of the importance of trying to attain a balanced workforce that reflects the diversity of our students" (team manager).

Finally, an integration and learning approach was endorsed by the Honours College team. "We actively strive for a diverse workforce as diversity is one of our core values in this team. For this reason, almost all new lecturers we have recently added to our team have different cultural backgrounds" (team coordinator). Furthermore, multicultural skills are also regarded as an important criterion to be part of this team. "Besides the basic qualifications and knowledge of the course you are needed to give, I think this team is also looking for people who have an open learning attitude and a high tolerance for ambiguity" (German lecturer).

Interestingly, the diversity strategy of the teams appeared not always to be a reflection of the actual diversity within the team. Among teams that regarded diversity as important, only the team configuration of the Honours College team was a reflection of their perspective on diversity. The other teams predominantly consisted of lecturers from Dutch descent. A team manager: "A few years back we really didn't think about diversity at all, but this changed when the discussions on the importance of diversity became part of the public discourse. However, we are bounded by possibilities to attract new lecturers to increase the diversity in our

relatively homogenous team." Thus, while teams seem to have made a positive shift in attitude toward diversity, limited job openings restrict their possibilities to recruit more lecturers from a different background. This suggests that diversity practices in these teams are developed in response to changes in the situation, rather than the other way around.

Team interaction: utilization of cultural backgrounds among lecturers
While individual lecturers are responsible for the courses they lecture, they rely on cooperation with fellow team members in developing new courses and material and tuning existing ones. "Learning from each other is very important in our team. It's not only about learning new facts or insights on a certain topic or an interesting article that can be used in class, but also on new ways of teaching" (lecturer International Consultancy team). All participants of the six teams acknowledged the importance of learning from colleagues and a cooperative working environment, but they differed in the extent to which diversity is emphasized and utilized in such an open learning environment.

From the interviews two contrasting patterns could be derived. Four teams indicated that that mutual exchange between team members was largely focussed on exchanging practical information rather than learning from each other. As a result, the existing (cultural) diversity within their team is not much utilized. "While we have some cultural diversity in our team, it's not really being utilized. There is not much exchange other than information related to the content of the courses" (lecturer Sports and Motion Studies). One of the Dutch lecturers in the Law team is more specific on this topic: "Most of the exchange with colleagues I have is when I need some specific information about a certain topic. For example, my knowledge about administrative law is limited, but I know whom to consult when I need to lecture something about this topic in my course." Furthermore, these teams put less emphasis on lecturers' interpersonal skills related to being effective in a diverse work context. "I do not really see the point of having lecturers with multicultural skills for better cooperation in our team, just focus on what someone's abilities are!" (Surinam lecturer Law team). Taken together, these four teams seem to endorse a colorblind approach, in which team interaction is mainly determined by emphasizing each other's qualities in terms of knowledge about the content.

In contrast, the International Consultancy team and Honours College team endorsed a more integration and learning perspective on team interaction. In both teams emphasis was put on mutual learning about ways of doing rather than a mere exchange of content related course material. "There is a difference between the Dutch and Turkish way of doing business. I share my experiences about this topic with my colleagues and noticed their curiosity and openness. I therefore think my competencies are being recognized in this team" (Turkish lecturer). In line with this, an American lecturer of the Honours College states: "Almost all lecturers have experience with working in a diverse work context and you notice that in the way we interact with each other. We may differ in the way we approach things, but colleagues are very open and eager to learn from each other, which makes our teaching better."

General patterns: cross-case analysis
Overall, teams predominantly approached diversity either from an access or colorblindness perspective. The first seemed to be strongly advocated in the context

of recruitment lecturers, and the latter especially when it comes to utilization of differences among lecturers in terms of cooperation, mutual exchange and learning. Most teams attract new lecturers by taking in to account the specific "diverse needs" of the customer/client, i.e. the student. On the other hand, when it comes to team interaction between lecturers and mutual learning, the importance of differences between individuals is recognized, but the importance of cultural diversity is often ignored.

In the introduction, we argued that there are two important reasons for investing in diversity practices in higher education: an increasing diversity of the student population and an increasing need for diversity related knowledge and skills in the labor market. Based on the first reason, one could expect that the importance of diversity for the selection of new lecturers would correspondent with the diversity of the student population. We found, however, that while the highest proportion of minority students were found in law studies, this team experience no additional value in recruiting more diversity nor in the utilization of different cultural backgrounds among lecturers. In contrast, the Honours College predominantly attracts western students, but they seemed to be the most pro-diversity oriented and strongly advocate an integration and learning approach.

The findings in the Law team and the Honours college team seem to be in line with the second reason, namely, that diversity would be considered more important when there is an increasing need for diversity knowledge and skills in curricula. The Law team claims that the content of their professional is not diversity related ("the law is neutral"), and so experience no need for more diversity knowledge and skills. The Honours College aims to prepare students for an international career and considers diversity issues as an important feature of their curriculum. The same holds for international business studies, another team that actively utilizes the diversity in their team. Interestingly, the Social Work and Pedagogy teams, experience less need for diversity, even though one could argue that they, too, prepare students for working with a diverse client population (see Sue *et al.*, 2016). However, these teams expect their students will find employment in the predominantly homogeneous institutions in the direct environment of the university.

Discussion

The higher education sector has become increasingly aware of how the increasing diversity in society affects their institutions. The student population has become more diverse and future employers increasingly require students who are trained to meet the demands of a more diverse market/clientele. In this case study we examined how one of the large Dutch universities of applied sciences responds to this change. Is it reflected in its strategic perspective to diversity and its diversity practices in terms of recruitment of new lecturers from various cultural backgrounds and utilization of cultural differences among lecturers in day-to-day team interaction?

Several important conclusions can be derived from the present study. First, we found differences between teams within the same educational institution in the underlying belief about the value of diversity for the team. In addition, we also found variety within teams in how diversity was managed. For example, a focus on attracting a more diverse pool of new lecturers did not necessarily imply that cultural differences between lecturers were being utilized. Vice versa,

utilizing cultural differences between lecturers did not necessarily imply that the team was actively recruiting lecturers with another cultural background. These findings seem to converge with the notion that an integral vision on how diversity should be managed is difficult to attain and that in practice departments differ in how diversity is managed (see e.g. Gasman *et al.*, 2011).

Despite this variety of diversity perspectives, we did find some patterns in dominant preferences for certain diversity strategies connected to a specific diversity practice. When it comes to recruitment of minority lecturers, an access approach was predominantly favored in educational teams. From this perspective, recruitment of lecturers from a minority background revolved around the idea that it is important to have a diverse workforce to equip students with knowledge and skills that that fit the demands of the labor market. This finding fits the shifting attention in the public sector from "diversity as a mean to achieve social justice" to "diversity as a business case" (see e.g. Herring, 2009). In contrast, diversity is hardly emphasized in education teams when it comes to utilizing cultural differences among lecturers in team interaction. From the results we could derive that exchange between lecturers is mainly driven by a colorblind view on diversity: there was hardly any exchange with regard to learning from differences in approach or exploring novel ways of lecturing by taking cultural differences between team members into account. Consulting other colleagues was mainly based on the existing expertise in the team and primarily content driven. The danger of such approach may be that the qualities that are regarded as important will therefore most likely be a reflection of the dominant norms and values of the majority members within the team of lecturers. Consequently, qualities that deviate from the norm will probably be less recognized and utilized (Plaut, 2002).

Taken together, the present case study shows that the demands of the labor market that educational teams serve have a strong impact on how diversity is valued in these teams. An entirely integral approach to diversity management across educational teams in the same university would not do justice to these differences and will therefore probably be less effective than an approach that reflects shared values among teams with regards to diversity and aims at optimizing the room for and use cultural differences and at the same time leaves room for teams to apply diversity practices that fit their specific needs.

Limitations
We used a case study methodology in which we compared six different educational teams within one university. On the positive side, the chosen methodology provided us deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms in the choices for how to manage diversity at the team level. In addition, even with such a small sample we found substantial differences between and agreements among teams to – as we believe – warrant conclusions about the relationship between diversity perspectives and diversity practices. Notwithstanding, future studies could expand to more teams in different education institutions. A larger scale survey study would complement the findings of the present study, and extend the generalizability of the results. In this regard, Podsiadloswki *et al.*'s (2013) 30-item Diversity Perspective Questionnaire (DPQ) is a useful tool in assessing an organization's diversity approach and could be adjusted to make it suitable for measuring diversity perspective preferences at the team level.

Furthermore, although the data was not only gathered among lecturers, but also among team managers, it would have been useful to expand the pool of interviewees to include students. This may provide insight from a different angle in the significance of diversity practices in relation to the diversity in the lecturer population and the extent to which attention to diversity in the educational curriculum is perceived.

Implications

Despite the aforementioned drawbacks, we believe this study may have several important implications for other educational institutions. The present study suggests that an integral approach to diversity management across teams or faculties in the higher education sector is not a given. The question is whether an integral approach should be the ultimate necessary aim for organizations. On the one hand, an integral approach makes it easier to implement organization-wide diversity practices that fit the institution's view on diversity. It also makes it easier to communicate a transparent image of the institute to the outside world, increasing its legitimacy (see Banks, 2015). Consequently, potential new personnel but also students have a clearer representation of what the university stands for with regard to diversity. From this perspective, differences in approaches toward diversity management should be more aligned to fit the educational institution's fundamental beliefs about diversity (Klein, 2016). The first step for alignment is to diagnose potential differences within the education institute in how diversity is (or should) be managed, by employing diversity perspective assessment tools (see e.g. the aforementioned DPQ; Podsiadlowski *et al.*, 2013). The second step would be to assess differences and communalities in approach between teams and/or departments and discuss with teams what actions should be taken to converge their diversity initiatives to the organization's view on diversity management. This fits the notion of advocating a more systemic approach in how diversity is managed in organizations (see Gasman *et al.*, 2011).

On the other hand, the question arises whether educational institutions should radiate one dominant diversity perspective, because it may not do justice to the different needs and priorities teams have. The teams under study served different student populations, with different proportions of ethnic minorities. More importantly, also the necessity to invest in diversity determined by the prospects of future work contexts differed. Internationally focussed study programs – such as the International Consultancy team – or studies that have an apparent connection to working with a diverse clientele – such as the Social Work team – may experience a stronger urgency to adjust to the requirements of developing intercultural competencies, whereas this may be lesser the case for other studies, such as law or sports and motion studies. Imposing a uniform diversity strategy may imply that some teams consider their own vision too divergent from the general view. From this perspective, a more tailored approach seems appropriate in which every team has decision-making authority in developing diversity practices that suit the needs of the team (cf. Shen *et al.*, 2009). However, this has the danger that teams do not see the benefit of diversity, stick to their old habits and refrain from experimenting with attracting and utilizing differences in their team. From this perspective, teams should be stimulated to explore diversity practices that fit the boundaries in which the team operates. Taken together, this pleas for an integral approach in which the basic principles about how diversity should be managed is communicated by the organization as a whole, but at the same time does justice to the diversity between teams.

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Corresponding author
Menno Vos can be contacted at: mw.vos@windesheim.nl