



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY

*Jönköping International  
Business School*

# Managing Cultural Diversity at Workplace

*How is cultural diversity management perceived by  
employees at JIBS?  
Are the policies and practices same in terms of how they  
are being delivered?*

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## Abstract:

**Background:** Cultural diversity within a workplace is increasingly becoming important as more organisations are embracing it within the global workforce. Some of its effect have been linked to performance outcomes according to past reviews and as a result, there are more suggestions on the need to study how various organisations manage their cultural diversity. Universities as an organisation has also blended in the internationalisation practice through human resources and diverse employees to form a part of the economic globalisation.

**Purpose:** The purpose if this paper is to examine how cultural diversity is managed in a Swedish university, Jönköping International Business School (JIBS). Also, further investigation is on the employee's perception of how the practices and policies of cultural diversity is being delivered by the management at the university.

**Method:** An exploratory research is conducted for this paper and the empirical findings is gathered through a qualitative research. The primary research is retrieved by semi-constructed interviews. The human resource department and teachers from different backgrounds and countries were interviewed to find out how the teachers perception of cultural diversity management at their workplace based on how the practices and policies were delivered to them.

**Findings:** Based on the interviews it was found that the cultural diversity management as a topic is well understood by both the management and the employees. However, the study revealed that the employees do not perceive it in the same manner it was being delivered to them by the management. The issues and practices connected to managing cultural diversity is not entirely provided by the management within the work environment. It essential that the management provide for more effectively communicated structure

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# 1. Introduction

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*The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the study of Cultural Diversity Management at a workplace. The chapter will begin with presenting the background, and move on to the problem formulation and purpose of the study.*

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## 1.1 Background

With an increasing globalisation, people from diverse cultures, beliefs and backgrounds are required to interact more nowadays (Mazur, 2010). For years, an effective diversity management has been utilised as a support and as a defence against discrimination (Shen, J, Chanda, D'Netto, and Monga, 2009). It became interesting to study diversity at a workplace, as the authors of this paper have noticed the growth of diversity over the years. Also, attending an international business school which consist of diverse community becomes another interesting factor to see how diversity is being managed. In recent years, diversity has become a significant part for the management. In addition, due to differences increasing in the population, diversity is expected to become even more significant in the future. People are now a part of a worldwide economy that involves competition from all around the world and therefore diversity is needed in organisations. Diversity in organisations is required to accept and adapt easily to change, and to increase creativeness (Shen et al., 2009). Furthermore, Shen et al, (2009) adds that diversity issues are becoming more important and a relevant issue, and especially for the future, since the differences in the population is increasing in many countries.

Valuing and as well as managing diversity is a key element for an effective people management, which in turn can improve workplace productivity (Mazur 2010). Internationalisation of business, growing workforce flexibility, world market development and increasing the awareness of diverse individuals, results in how diversity management can take advantage of the increasing multiculturalism. In this regard, multiculturalism is a process where different culture or groups have same rights and opportunities and no one is considered unimportant. By having an equality in a workforce, leads to an organisation that can attract and maintain a qualified workforce. Moreover,

not only does diversity management identify the diverse workforce, it also values and controls the multicultural workforce, such as the background, individual characteristics, orientations and religious beliefs, to fully take advantage of and use the employees' individual talents, also to fulfil the organisational goals (Shen et. al, 2009).

## **1.2 Problem Formulations**

From previous studies, it was discovered that scholars in the management field and organisations have increasingly developed interest in the topic of cultural diversity in a work environment. A review suggests that the topic is not very straightforward and simple (Gloria. 1999). It is also thought that the method an organisation uses towards managing diversity forms the negative or positive outcomes they get and not the diversity itself (Ongori and Agolla 2007). Some of these methods includes attitude, initiatives, work delegation, performance standards and motivational techniques.

What is also known from findings is that diversity management is an important and relevant aspect of HRM in organisations (Paul, 2016), especially for the future, since the differences are growing within the population at the workplace. But then, study suggests that it may not really be diversity that affects employee retention, motivation and performance but, an employee's perception of exclusion or inclusion in organisation process (Mor-Barak and Cherin, 1998). Having said that, how an organisation and its employees perceive cultural diversity may be a hindrance without them knowing. Shen et.al, (2009), mentions a study in his paper conducted by Allen, Dawson, Wheatley and White (2004), where it was shown the differences in the perceptions of both employees and the managers in the same companies regarding the diversity practices. The employees felt that their workplaces were not implementing the various diversity practices and strategies, while the managers in the same companies thought they were applying the diversity strategy practices efficiently. In this regard, it can be deduced that what is being practiced may not align with how or what employees perceives it to be. The performance standards should be effectively communicated, and objectively established (Ongori and Agolla. 2007). The research will explain how Jönköping International Business School (JIBS) manage diversity in terms of policies and practices and what the employees perceive it to be.

There is an increasing need to study whether policies, strategy or practices of organisations could help implement positive outcomes for how they manage cultural diversity within a workplace. Another aspect is to also find out about the employment policies and practices provided for the diverse group. This will give better understanding on the topic of managing cultural diversity by weighing in the employee's perspective of how it is being delivered.

The issue of managing cultural diversity is a primary concern for many international organisations. Previous reviews have discussed different aspect of cultural diversity management in language, race, religion, ethnicity, age and gender. A few authors in their findings pointed out the need to assess inclusiveness in work environment practices and how organizations could benefit from diversity initiatives. The study explains further, how the employees perceive cultural diversity within their work environment, the practice of inclusiveness, policy issues and challenges the employees encounter. JIBS was chosen due to its distinctive position as an international business school with a culturally diverse background. This study will focus findings on the Human resource department of the school faculty and the employees of the faculty. Then, an observation of the two will be made in terms of how diversity policies, practices or strategy are being delivered and perceived. Does the policies, practices and strategies of the university help or hinder the management of cultural diversity?

### **1.3 Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine how cultural diversity is managed through Human Resource policies and practices, and how these practices are perceived by the employees. This exploratory research will contribute to the academia for future readers, it will also add more knowledge and insights on the topic of managing cultural diversity, in terms of policies or strategies to support the employees in a workplace.

### **1.4 Delimitations**

There are a few delimitations to this study. Firstly, not all the teachers are being interviewed JIBS. Therefore, the authors will get limited information and individual perceptions of the focus group of the research, since only a few thoughts will be analysed.



Secondly, the focus is only on JIBS as an organisation, a comparative study of another company is not carried out, hence outcomes may be based on JIBS observation.

## **1.5 Definitions**

There are a few key definitions relevant to this paper, this chapter provides definitions of the keywords that are used throughout the thesis as an effort to interpret its application to the thesis and to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretation.

### **Diversity**

Diversity have been defined in different ways but in this case, it will be discussed in the context of a workplace. According to Sharma (2016), it is any significant difference amongst individuals such as age, race, religion, functional, profession, sexual orientation, geographic origin and or lifestyle.

### **Diversity Management**

Pitts (2006) described the concept as multifaceted which includes three components; programs aimed at increasing cultural awareness, recruitment programs, and pragmatic management policies.

### **Cultural Diversity Management**

It is any significant difference in race, nationality, language, ethnicity, religion shown within a community (Martin, 2014). Also, a management of differences and similarities of employees working at a workplace and further said “the degree of ‘otherness’ felt by individuals” (D'Netto, Shen, Chelliah, and Monga, 2013).

### **Human Resource Management**

Human resource management is defined as, all the activities related to the management and the people within an organisation (Boxall and Purcell, 2011). Jose Chiappetta Jabbour et al. (2011) explained that human resource management is about planning, integration, and actions to gain an effective management of all employees working in a workplace.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

RQ1: *How is cultural diversity management perceived by employees at JIBS?*

RQ2: *Are the policies and practices similar in terms of how they are being delivered?*

## **2. Theoretical Background**

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*This chapter is to introduce the reader to the theoretical background of this paper about diversity management in workplace, the benefits and challenges, and further connecting diversity management to human resource management.*

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### **2.1 Cultural Diversity Management at Workplace**

Cultural diversity is any significant difference of an individual shown in a culture. The cultural environment in a workplace is reflecting the present demographics, social and cultural differences on a societal level. For any organisation, to manage a cultural diverse workforce is a great challenge (Mateescu, 2018). No person is the same, every individual is different from each other depending on their religion, background, age, education, perceptions etc., (Saxena 2014). Saxena (2014) also stated that diversity makes the workforce heterogeneous, when various multicultural individuals come together to work at the same place (Saxena, 2014). Mazur (2010) additionally mentions that a cultural diversity workplace reflects on the changing marketplace and the world.

Sharma (2016) explained six reasons for having a diverse workforce, such as, 1). Improved understanding of customer base, 2). Increased productivity, 3). Greater innovation and creativity, 4). Increased skill set, 5). Improve new employee and retention and 6). A larger talent pool. In the first reason, “Improved understanding of customer base”, the author mentions that, with a wide range of multicultural workforce with different backgrounds and experiences, it is easier to serve the customers. The next reason is about increased productivity, where the author mentions that diversity comes with different ways of thinking, combining of various experiences and expertise, which result in teamwork, greater productivity and employee satisfaction. The third reason explains that having a diverse workforce leads to an increased level of skills, talents, ideas and innovation. The fourth reason, mentions that with a diverse environment, that has numerous different skills, it becomes easier to cope with, adjusting to, and further succeed

in a constant changing market. Reason number five discusses that new employees that are more comfortable in a multicultural environment since they can easily integrate with everyone and they also feel more valued. This later benefits into building expertise and experience of an employee. In the last reason, the author states that rather than viewing and referring to only select groups with potential applicants, organisations can benefit from taking advantage of a larger talent pool, since there are individuals from different backgrounds that provide a variety of skills.

## **2.2 Different Dimensions of Diversity**

Diversity has different dimensions and therefore diversity is complex and requires a lot of study regarding it (Mazur, 2010). Mateescu (2018) describes the different dimensions of diversity such as, the primary dimensions, which includes the inborn differences, such as age, race, ethnicity, gender and disability. These dimensions gives form to an individual's basic self-image and the fundamental worldviews (Mazur, 2010). The secondary dimension has to do with religion, beliefs, family backgrounds, culture, sexual orientations, lifestyle, education etc., (Mateescu, 2018). Mazur (2010) explains that this dimension is less visible and impacts the self-esteem and self-definition. Finally, the tertiary dimensions, which is based on beliefs, assumption, perceptions, attitudes, feeling and values (Mateescu, 2018). Mazur (2010) explains that these dimensions shows the historical experienced moments. Mateescu (2018) further describes that these dimensions are interacting with each other to create an identity of an individual that brings out the similarities and differences that in turn affects the work environment. This study is going to examine the primary dimensions with the inborn differences, particularly in terms of race and ethnicity, how these diverse employees are managed and how they perceive the practices at the university.

## **2.3 Benefits & Challenges of Cultural Diversity Management at Workplace**

Diverse workforce is a “double edged sword” that generates both positive and negative results. However, if the diversity management is managed effectively, it can lead to great advantages. There are various challenges and benefits when it comes to diversity management, however they are likely to vary depending on different countries (D'Netto et. al., 2013). Another author pointed out that a workplace cultural diversity could be both unfavourable and favourable. Unfavourable in the sense that harmony is difficult to

achieve amongst work colleagues which could also bring lost productivity, and favourable, in terms of creating a strong force on knowledge as a result of cultural differences or experience (Martin 2014).

### **2.3.1 Benefits of a Diverse Workforce**

There are several benefits and advantages to cultural diversity at a workplace. Cultural diversity in a multicultural organisation attracts the best talent (Mazur 2010). To have a multicultural organisation makes it easier to serve an increasingly global market since these organisations have a deeper insight of the requirements of the legal, political, social, economic and cultural environments of foreign countries (Saxena, 2018). To retain a diverse environment results in employees being better at problem solving, suggesting multiple interpretations and perspectives when managing various complex problems (Mazur, 2010).

Additionally, the employees are able to comply with the changes and they acquire organisational flexibility (Mazur, 2010). They also bring their own individual experiences, talents, and skills to easily adapt to customers' demands and further serve customers on a global basis (Sharma, 2014). The presence of diversity in an organisation also means that the institution is socially responsible and provides equal opportunity to the groups without discrimination (Cunningham & Melton. 2011). Other authors argue that diversity increases the innovativeness and creativity at a workplace (D'Netto et. al., 2013). According to these authors, diversity management improves quality of the decisions made, and it also increases the organisational effectiveness, efficiency and profitability. Overall, a diverse environment results in a positive effect on a firm's performance and additionally, the author states that diversity management can lead to competitive advantage, while also improving the quality of an organisation (D'Netto et. al., 2013). Other advantages of diversity management at a workplace involve, increase in labour turnover and absenteeism, and employees who see themselves as valued at the workplace, tend to work harder, more involved in the processes and are more innovative (Ongori and Agolla, 2007).

Ongori and Agolla (2007), also added that diversity comes with improved decision making, with immense success in marketing in foreign and domestic ethnic minority

communities, and diversity also brings a better distribution of economic opportunity. A study conducted by (Watson, Kumar, and Michaelsen, 1993), revealed that a cultural diverse group that has been working together for a longer period, is more effective in the interaction process and job performance.

### **2.3.2 Challenges for Cultural Diversity**

Diversity management also comes with several challenges or disadvantages; a diverse environment can create dysfunctional conflicts, which in turn can lead to frustration and confusion, especially in terms of uncertainty and complexity (Mazur, 2010). Conflicts arise mainly because of ignorance to diversity (Ongori and Agolla 2007). Combining different cultures at a workplace can result in employees finding it difficult to arrive at agreements, which in turn can lead to cultural clashes and negative dynamics (Mazur, 2010). Saxena (2014) additionally stated that, when individuals with different mind-sets, thinking and perceptions, not agreeing with each other upon decisions, can result in a damaging effect on the interpersonal relationship among the individuals. According to previous researches, a diverse environment, especially when it comes to race, may lead to several issues, such as communications breakdown and low cohesion (D'Netto et. al., 2013).

Certain individuals may feel threatened when working together with people from diverse backgrounds such as age, sex or culture. A diverse environment can also lead to lack of acceptance, due to offensive comments or prejudice feelings, which in turn creates negative dynamics, for instance, ethnocentrism, stereotyping and culture clashes at the workplace. On the other hand, members belonging minority-group tend to feel less valued than the members from majority-group because of stereotyping, prejudice and ethnocentrism (Ongori and Agolla 2007).

Restricting employees' abilities and motivation occurs due to unfavourable treatment of the workers, which in turn results in lower job performance. This situation occurs when mismanagement of diversity develops at the workplace. Hence, conflicts arise when corporations neglect the significance of a diverse workforce (Ongori and Agolla 2007).

## **2.4 How to Manage Cultural Diversity Differences**

To recruit a diverse workforce is hard and, to retain and maintain a diverse workforce is even a greater challenge. By viewing the “best practices” by Farren and Nelson (1999), aids in recognising the tools to maintain and manage a workforce that is diverse.

Farren and Nelson (1999), has described the four best practices for a healthier diverse workforce. The first practice is to have an open communication, since communication is what holds an organisation together. An open communication is the first critical step, which subsequently has to be followed by taking actions that shows the concern and needs of an employee in a workplace. In companies where the workers respect each other, they are more successful in retaining and maintaining the employees. Another practice is to educate and give training about other people's cultures, and to make them more sensitive towards discrimination and other employee's feelings. Some companies have training towards how to handle situations regarding the occurrence of cultural clashes. The third practice is to provide mentors, in order to decrease discrimination. Allocating of mentors to employees, aids in networking possibilities that can often be missed out for women, people of colour, and disabled people at work. Finally, the last practice is to make managers more accountable, by including diverse accountability in the job descriptions to intensify their actions towards diverse workforce. Even though the top managers believe that diversity programs are significant, however not many companies link the diversity practices to performance and compensation.

Further contribution is that a company that retains a diverse workforce are likely to serve and compete better in a multicultural market. By maintaining a diverse workforce makes all employees at a workplace feel connected and relate more to the company they are working for (Farren and Nelson, 1999).

Kundu (2001) mentioned that in order for a company with a diverse workforce, to effectively manage in a globally and in a domestic multicultural environment, they must identify the differences that may occur by working with a diverse people. Moreover, companies need to turn these differences into the advantages instead of ignoring them or allowing them to create even more issues. Thus, the managers need to be taught how to respect the diversity and also learn how to work with them in order to gain full

contribution of each worker in an organisation. It depends on how the managers and employees view the cultural diversity and its advantages and disadvantages, in order for the organisation to manage the cultural diversity overall. He further explains three different strategies to manage cultural differences.

The first and the weakest approach is to ignore the differences, where the managers in an organisation do not see the cultural differences, or the effect it has on the company. The managers in this situation sees diversity as irrelevant, and believes in what they do is the correct way. Another method is to minimise the differences, which is followed by an ethnocentric organisation. In this approach the managers sees the diversity itself as a problem of the source, and reduces the problem by eliminating diversity overall. The last strategy is to manage the differences, where an organisation sees the effects of having a diverse workforce and also its advantages and disadvantages. The managers in this organisation adopt a synergistic approach, where they try to minimise the issues by managing the impact of cultural diversity rather than eliminating the diversity itself and instead increasing the advantages of a diverse workforce. In this strategy, the organisations train the managers and employees to identify cultural differences and to turn them into advantages (Kundu, 2001).

## **2.5 The Relationship between HRM and Cultural Diversity Management**

### **2.5.1 Human Recourse Management Practices**

Since the past few decades, human resource management (HRM) has extensively grown, and now deals with a range of people management processes. The human resource function is a collection of several different activities, processes and functions, used to attract, direct and maintain the organisation's human resource. As widely recognised, the key practices of HRM department include, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management and pay (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto and Monja, 2009).

#### **Recruitment and selection**

It has been suggested by previous studies that managers and employees refer equal opportunity as equal to diversity management for a person to be employed into an organisation. However, despite equality legislation and commitment to equal opportunity,

a systematic discrimination in recruitment and selection process still exists (Shen et. al, 2009). Hiring companies are expected to arrange for an appropriate staffing in their budget plans before the recruitment process, and grade the number of employees that are needed for job. Recruitment and selection reduces the cost of mistakes in hiring under qualified and incompetent employees while the process of firing them is also expensive. Also, organisations should ensure that its employment practices and policies provide for career planning, developmental opportunities, mentoring for disadvantaged group and reduce work-family disputes (Shen et. al, 2009).

### **Performance management**

This is the assessing and observing of employee's performance, providing feedback and recording of the employee's assessment. In this process, managers give feedbacks and describe the performance areas that requires improvement (Daft and Marcic, 2016).

A study by Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) shows that negative attitude resulting from a poorly applied HR policy are experienced by employees more than they do when there is absence of a particular practice. The tolerance for an underperformance could emerge as a main issue of employee dissatisfaction in an employee opinion survey so an organisation should specify what an acceptable performance is among its staffs and managers.

### **Pay**

An effective compensation system is important in HRM since it helps organisations to retain or attract talented workers, also it helps impact on company's strategic performance (Daft and Marcic, 2016).

Although, an inequality in Pay could be a cause for job dissatisfaction or demotivation which is a major issue in diversity. In this regard, gender inequality is still a global issue because of the differences in earnings between women and men (Shen et al., 2009). The other HR system and practices may be redundant if there is no satisfaction in the pay and benefits received by employees

### **Training and Development**

Training and development are necessary functions in human resource management and studies have proved it is an aspect that have received a considerate amount of attention



from most organisational management (Shen et al, 2009). Its functions include job skills training, employee orientation, professional development and leadership training.

An organisation should always attempt to improve on the future and current performance of its employees through education that increases their skills and knowledge in a field (Benson, 2006). The HRM functions here reflects promotion from within practices that supports employee work goals. Diversity awareness training is also a function that promotes effective integration of diverse group members and such training promotes a common understanding and assist in building a sense of belonging that could improve organisational and individual outcomes. The managers in organisations that lacks effective policies that guides diversity are likely to rate highly the subordinates that have similar experience and cultural background (Shen et al, 2009).

### **2.5.2 The Role of HRM in Cultural Diversity Management**

Diversity management in an organisation can lead to positive performance outcomes, when the HR practices supports the multicultural workforce that possesses the skills to turn diversity into an advantage for the organisation. Not only does HRM ensure equality, the function also values and makes use of diversity in an effective way, therefore HRM has a vital role when it comes to diversity management (D'Netto et al., 2013).

Diversity management and human resource management are two functions that are overlapping each other (Shen et. al, 2009). The authors further explain the main difference between the two functions, the human resource management is the function that handles the people management processes, while diversity management is an approach towards the employees in an organisation.

Both Shen et al, (2009) and D'Netto et al., (2013) states that the functions, HRM and diversity management take individual differences, development and the well-being of every individual at the workplace into interest. Therefore, the authors have concluded based on previous researchers that, for an organisation to achieve an effective diversity management, it is necessary to have the appropriate HR strategies and functions. The organisations' HR strategies should focus on increasing the learning, flexibility, knowledge creation and development of the organization's work environment, in order to have an effective HR, which is favourable for the diversity management in an

organisation. Jose Chiappetta Jabbour et al., (2011) agrees on this statement by including, that if diversity is the objective and if the HR function supports these objectives of an enterprise, it can result in the HRM being favourable for the diversity management. Shen et al, (2009), states that since diversity management is a part of HRM, it should therefore be at the heart of human resource management policies and practices. Also, (Boerner, Linkohr and Keifer, 2011) suggests that the upper management of a company is the most important for making an inclusive culture meaning better that it is relevant for the HR to be identified with implementing efficient policies.

### **2.5.3 Employee Perception Towards HR Practices**

Perceptions are feelings or notions of an employee's, concerning fairness, effectiveness and support of Human Resource Management practices at a workplace. It can be said that employees are more satisfied with their job and the place of work, if they perceive the HRM practices to be fair, effective in terms of positive outcomes and, useful and supportive in welfare and development (Ansari, 2011).

Knowing the perceptions of employee about cultural diversity is important for organisations, as it may be a tool for forming strategies that may help shape its management (Hofhuis, 2015). Whether the perceptions have negative or positive effects, they may be reduced by the manner the policies are being justified and communicated within the workplace (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, and Lev-Arey, 2006). When the managers, employees and other groups in an organisation have different perspectives towards the diversity management, it is because of poor implementation of the HR diversity practices (Shen et al., 2009).

A research of HPWS (high performance work systems) revealed that interpretations of HR practices by employees, are influenced by the employees' demographics and attributions (Frenkel, Restubog and Bednall, 2012). HPWS is a theory, where the main purpose is to support and encourage employees' skills and involvement (Choi and Lee, 2013) and it is a combination of HR practices to increase individual and organisational performance (Frenkel Restubog and Bednall, 2012). The processes of communicating HR practices and the practice itself, influences the employees' interpretations. Employees agree more with each other, by generating a strong HR climate, which is created by when

HR policy and the practices are visible and attractive, agreed by the managers and consistent in their message. A positive outcomes of a strong HR climate leads to positive employee responses and subsequently higher performance by them (Frenkel Restubog and Bednall, 2012). The authors, further argues that HR practices influences the employees' attitudes in complex way, which are related to their sense of what fairness is.

Moreover, the HR policies that are perceived as fair by the employees, when it comes to outcomes and procedures, leads to strong pay-off in increased organisational identification, effort and co-worker support (Frenkel, Restubog and Bednall, 2012). The attitudinal reactions of HR practices can be said to be dependent on employees' perceptions towards these practices regarding their work. The perceptions of employees are significant in terms of HR, if an applicant perceive a firm negatively, the applicant will most likely not select the firm. It is vital for organisations to see how the employees perceive the HR practices at the workplace, in order for the employees to obtain higher performance in their work and feel one with the company they are working for (Choi and Lee, 2013).

### **3. Methodology & Method**

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*This chapter will explain the methodology and method used in the thesis. A thorough discussion on why the method and strategy was chosen and how it was used in this paper. This part will also examine the data collection, data analysis, and lastly conclude with the trustworthiness and ethical issues regarding the sources.*

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### **3.1 Methodology**

#### **3.1.1 Research Philosophy**

The philosophical commitments that are made through the choice of research strategy, has an impact on what is being done and what is further going to be investigated and the adopted philosophy has to be influenced by practical considerations. There are two different research paradigms to choose from when conducting a research, namely the positivist and the interpretivist paradigm, and the better option to adopt depends on the research questions that are to be examined (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

The positivist paradigm is associated with quantitative research, with a traditional and scientific research and on the other hand the interpretivist is based on qualitative data. After viewing the different options, an interpretivist paradigm was suggested for conducting the qualitative research (Collis and Hussey, 2013). The interpretivism refers to and aids in understanding the differences between individuals as social actors and therefore putting the emphasis on examining individuals rather than objectives. This philosophy concerns how humans try to make sense of the world that revolves around them (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

#### **3.1.2 Research Approach**

There are three different approaches that can be applied in researches, deductive, inductive and abduction (Arbnor and Bjerke, 2014). A deductive approach is when developing a theory and a hypothesis, and subsequently designing a research strategy that tests the made hypothesis, which is more suitable for a positivism paradigm. On the other hand, an inductive approach refers to collecting data and as a result of the data analysis, developing a theory, and this approach is applicable to an interpretivism paradigm (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The last-mentioned method, abduction, is a combination of both deductive and inductive, which also brings up new steps (Arbnor

and Bjerke, 2014). Since this research is adopting an interpretivism paradigm with collecting data and later developing a theory, the inductive approach was more suitable for this paper.

### **3.1.3 Research Strategy**

There are two different ways of collecting data, depending on what type of research is being conducted, namely quantitative and qualitative data. Collis and Hussey (2013) mentioned that quantitative is numerical data that can be used for a positivist study, whereas qualitative is collected data in form of words and images. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), added that the quantitative data is predominantly used for techniques such as questionnaires and on the other hand, the qualitative data is mostly used for interviews which requires non-numerical data.

Qualitative data are associated with an interpretivist paradigm and are normally short-termed and hence, the result comes with a high level of validity. Moreover, in an interpretivist paradigm, there are no intentions of quantifying data or analysing the data statistically, since the emphasis is on the quality and depth of the data collected, resulting in rich data being collected (Collis and Hussey 2013). The more suitable approach for this thesis was to choose qualitative data as it is based on an interpretivist paradigm to gather in-depth information about the employee's perceptions towards the policies and practices in Jönköping International Business School (JIBS) and how they manage the diverse background.

### **3.1.4 Case Study**

A case study was chosen for this paper, since the authors wanted to attain rich data and understanding for diversity at a workplace, (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). According to, Yin (2003) a case study refers to 'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence'. The study is a focus on cultural diversity management within a workplace therefore it was based on organisational perspective. A study should focus mainly on what the authors can present, not on theories or other sources contributed to a research to form the result (Creswell. 2007). The study is also about a topic in relation to organisations operating with different nationalities

under one umbrella in which the process facilitates benefits and challenges to the company. It may be interesting to observe a company as opposed to a comparative study of multiple companies which is more common. Since JIBS has an openness towards the issue of cultural diversity and interest of its employees on the topic. Therefore, JIBS was chosen as it is an international school that consists of employees from different countries and it will be the only organization that will be analysed.

## **3.2 Method**

### **3.2.1 Data Collection**

Previous researches were analysed and investigated in order to get a deeper knowledge and insight of the topic in question. From previous reviews a gap was found regarding managing cultural diversity at workplace such as in a university, and a request for further research was thereby found. Several researches have previously studied cultural diversity management in various organisations and manufacturing companies, however, there are not many investigations towards how employees perceive cultural diversity at a university. For this study, both primary and secondary data were collected in order to gain as much relevant and rich information as possible regarding the topic.

### **3.2.2 Primary Research**

For primary research of the study, face-to-face interviews were the preferred method for first-hand information to gather as much detailed information as possible about diversity in the workplace. The interviews were done to get an overview of how they work and what policies they implement in their practices at the university.

The reason interview was the chosen method, was to get a deeper knowledge and more in detail information about the topic and the teacher. Hence, they could give the information in detail, about their opinions and experiences, and their feelings and attitude towards the research question (Collis and Hussey 2013).

However, there are a few downsides to interviews as well. Teachers may not feel comfortable with sharing all information and will conceal confidential information, which can result in that the authors will not get a full view of what is being asked and the teachers may tend to be biased in delivering responses. Additionally, interviews are time

consuming when it comes to generating and also conducting them, and the teachers may also have a busy schedule. Also, there could be interviewer bias because of the way the questions were asked, since there will always be influence from the interviewees (Kvale, 2007).

### **3.2.2.1 Criticism of the Chosen Method**

Several techniques and different qualitative methods to gather data and information were discussed before selecting and finalising interviews, such as online surveys and observations. However, the reason for not choosing to conduct a survey or a questionnaire was because, it would have been harder to get all the information that was needed for the research question. It will be difficult to determine how the participants will react and feel about the questions. The observation method was also considered but not chosen, as the information would not have been enough for what is being researched. The interviewees may behave in certain ways which can be misjudged or not enough for what the authors are searching for. Also, observation method could take a longer period and considering the limited time frame given, this method did not feel possible (Collis and Hussey (2013). Therefore, it was more efficient to choose the face-to-face interview to get as deep information and rich data as possible.

### **3.2.3 Sample**

The sample selected for this thesis was five teachers from different backgrounds, countries and ethnicities within JIBS, and they were conducted with the consent of the teachers within the university premises. Additional information was also gathered about JIBS practices and policies through the Human Resource Management specialist for JIBS, and the Associate Dean of Faculty at JIBS. One teacher that was interviewed gave several suggestions of other teachers from different backgrounds and ethnicities the authors could interview and the suggested teacher were later emailed to book time for the interviews. The ADF also recommended seeing the HR specialist that supports the two ADF's at JIBS, for further information regarding the diversity policies and practices.

### **3.2.4 Interview Design**

Interviews were conducted using the face-to-face method to gain a comprehensive data and easy interaction with the participants. Also, the method was beneficial to this study

due to the sensitivity and complexity of the questions. Both authors were present at the interview sessions, holding the conversation by asking the prepared questions as well as the questions that developed during the interview. The entire interviews were done by taking both notes and recording with mobile phones, which were based on the consent of each interviewee.

The questions for the interview sessions were formulated by the authors in order to get all the relevant information needed. Interview questions were semi-structured, some questions were pre-planned and prepared beforehand and other questions were developed during the interviews. Open questions were prepared to gain as much information as possible from the staffs, since more insightful answers was needed to get a broad knowledge of their experiences and perceptions. Therefore, ‘yes’ and ‘no’ questions were avoided, and when a teacher responded to a question, ‘yes’ or ‘no’, further questions were asked to elaborate on the answer. The questions were not structured in any particular order because some responses cover some aspects the interviewees mentioned prior to asking them. Therefore, the authors were flexible in the process of asking questions, in order to avoid asking the interviewee repetitive questions. Furthermore, the interviews were strictly confidential as the teachers were interviewed anonymously.

All the interviews conducted are summarised in a table below, with the date and the length of the interviews. Since the interviews were conducted anonymously, no names are mentioned and the teachers are referred to A, B, C, D and E.

Table 1. Interview at JIBS

<b>INTERVIEWEE</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>LENGTH OF INTERVIEW</b>
ADF	ADF at JIBS	19-03-2018	1:28:58
HR Department	Specialist for JIBS	03- 04-2018	56:44



Teacher A	Teacher	18 -04-2018	42:06
Teacher B	Teacher	23-04-2018	55:27
Teacher C	Teacher	27-04-2018	1:10:43
Teacher D	Teacher	27-04-2018	52.45
Teacher E	Teacher	2-05-2018	47.36

### 3.2.5 Secondary Data

The information of JU and JIBS, was gathered from their self-assessment report for EQUIS (Jönköping International Business School Self-Assessment Report for EQUIS Re-Accreditation, 2017), a quality improvement system which accredits JIBS, and the JU webpage. The report aided in getting a reliable insight of the university's internationalisation and HR practices, and additionally, what they state in their strategies and policies. Further, other reports and documents regarding diversity management of JIBS were searched and viewed at.

### 3.2.6 Data Analysis

The method for choosing how to analyse data depends on what paradigm was chosen and whether it is qualitative or quantitative data (Collis and Hussey, 2013). After collecting the data for the study, it was analysed by transcribing the interviews.

Since the initial stages of collecting data and throughout the whole process of the data collection, the data has been added and removed, as it is important in a process of selecting, focusing and simplifying of data. This is to make sure that the data that is being collected is coherent and this results in making the data more stronger (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Therefore, the data collected from the case study was intended to gain an insight of the practices of the organisation and perceptions its employees regarding managing cultural diversity. One difficulty with qualitative research is that it instantly produces a large database, since it relies heavily on prose, such as media as interview transcripts or documents (Bryman and Bell, 2015). A selection of relevant aspect of the data has been carefully chosen after much evaluation in order to arrive at a credible

outcome. The authors Bryman and Bell (2013) further suggests that collecting and coding of data should be executed together and be intertwined, instead of waiting until all data has been collected.

### **3.3 Trustworthiness of Sources**

Reliability and trustworthiness concerns with questions such as whether the sources and the results of a study can be repeated and used again or not (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The sources used throughout this paper, were chosen carefully to collect relevant and trustworthy data, hence only scientific articles and published books have been used. It can however be argued and that some articles and books are fairly old, however recent articles and researches still mention and refer to these articles till date. Therefore it can be concluded that these articles are still relevant and reliable to be used in this paper. It is however acknowledged by the authors about the use of these relatively old sources in the paper. Interviews were done face-to-face, which makes it relevant since it is the interviewee's own experiences and opinions regarding the subject. However there is a possibility of them concealing information they do not intend to discuss with the authors.

### **3.4 Ethical Issues with Interviews**

For any research the ethical issues needs to be considered as well, it needs to be seen by the authors that people are not being harmed by the study or the methods used in the study (Bryman and Bell, 2015). There are several ethical issues and concerns in the entire process of an interview investigation, and should therefore be considered from the beginning of an investigation until the report is finally finished. An interview research is infused with both moral and ethical issues. Ethical issues arise especially when it comes to complexities with the research of private lives and also placing these records in the public area (Kvale, 2007).

The teachers were informed beforehand about the confidentiality, the purpose of the research, the questions they were going to be asked, and also the benefits from their participation in the research. The teachers were also asked in advance whether the interviews could be recorded with notes taken. They were further informed regarding the participation being voluntary and that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time, also, that their private data will not be reported outside this report (Kvale, 2007).

## **4. Empirical Findings & Analysis**

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*This chapter will introduce the empirical findings and the analysis of this research. It explains the organisational level information that was sought from the ADF and HR specialist who are managers/decision makers on how cultural diversity is being managed and experienced at JIBS, followed by interviews of selected teachers and their analysis.*

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### **4.1 Jönköping International Business School**

JIBS is an international business school and a faculty under Jönköping University. It is well known for its diversity in terms of its students, professional staff, faculty, research, student exchange and global partnership with other schools and organisations. It was founded in 1994 as part of an effort to integrate further the European Union and the first Swedish business school with a mission to educate people from diverse backgrounds and help to promote its international trade opportunities. As part of the school's requirement for study and employment, all international programmes are taught in English language and there is a high collaboration between the school, staffs and students with several international association. In JIBS mission statement, the aim is to mainly advance in the theory and practice of business with specific emphasis on Entrepreneurship, Ownership and Renewal. One of the relative principle to the mission is the school's promise to be international at heart which represents its culture of internationalising their practices on a local, regional and global level. About 37% of the core faculty staff comprises of 17 different nationalities and the study is mainly focused on employees and not students.

#### **4.1.1 JIBS Organisational Structure**

The study of previous review shows that in order to gain an understanding of how diversity is managed, it is particularly relevant to take into consideration the specific roles of an organisation's primary decision makers (Podsiadlowski, Gröschke, Kogler, Springer and van der Zee, 2013). Ensher, Grant-Vallone and Donaldson (2001) also argued that it is the approval from the top management support that are important for a workplace positive intergroup relations. They are considered valuable information source on how diversity is being managed and how the employees perceives it (Cox, 1993; Dass

and Parker, 1999; Ely and Thomas, 2001). Therefore, this study puts an insight in the roles played by JIBS HR Department.

The JIBS faculty is under the umbrella of JU, in which the appointment of its chairperson and external members are performed by the Swedish government based on recommendations of a nominee committee. There are four schools under the university that is being governed by a board including a service company that collaborate in the support of the school. The leadership team comprises of the Dean of faculty, Associate Dean for research and education as well as the operations manager. The JIBS Dean of faculty is responsible for all school operations with the power to decide over employment, finances, school's programme portfolio and fulfilment of JIBS strategy. The Associate Dean of Faculty (ADF) is also a member of the leadership team in which its role includes an overall development of JIBS for instance, revising of JIBS strategies and the competence supply plan (*kompetensförsörjningsplan*).

JU operates a centralized Human Resource (HR) department and there is an external sub-division of HR specialists affiliated to each of JU faculty. The managers contact the HR for support and they (HR) have the power to propose actions for implementation in terms of equal opportunity, development, rehabilitation and competence. The ADF performs duties relating to Human Resource within the faculty and reports to the Dean as the line manager, the office supervises the leaves of absence of staffs, annual evaluation, training and development, holidays. The other responsibilities of the ADF includes implementing strategic priorities and fostering new initiatives among faculty staffs, tracking and supporting competence faculty development, fostering new initiatives among staffs and allocating resources for activities. There is the Associate Dean of Education (ADE) who also supervises budget, development, assessment and international accreditation for JIBS. They allocate teaching resources and pedagogical training, they foster educational initiatives for teaching according to the school strategy. Office of the Operations Manager coordinates the activities of the University's operational staffs, Unions and compliance to administrative rules and policies.

#### **4.1.2 JIBS Policies, Practices & Strategies**

Managing cultural diversity is said to be based on the organisational approach used in terms of initiatives and methods that are adopted. Which in turn, should have its consequences between the organisation and staffs. A standardised and dependable measurement of these approaches is expected to help in clarifying the effects of diversity, create an identification of an organisation's strategy and help in monitoring the management of diversity (Podsiadlowski et al. 2013). Initiatives that are adopted for managing diversity can be complex, therefore there are no standardised measurement approach mapped out towards analysing the process (Richard and Johnson. 2010).

JIBS practice an internationally oriented school activities where the governance and management of nationalities is not separated. There is a strategy board both internal and external that handles matters relating to the faculty alongside the Dean of faculty who ensures that there is continuity in programme improvement to meet global standard. The strategy group act as advisers to the Dean in terms of budget, annual action plan, they play a role in reviewing strategies, give feedbacks to member's constituencies and inform important issues to the Dean regarding colleagues. The school support its staffs from various nationalities in terms of their work environment, inclusion activities amongst colleagues. There is a yearly reviewed action plan towards equal opportunity treatment of staffs, which is significantly emphasized upon in the yearly self-assessment report.

In the latest review of the action plan (2017), the university re-emphasized its commitment towards providing an inclusive work environment where all employees are treated with respect. They mentioned that a great importance is attributed to employees well-being, performance related needs and personal development. They also stated that the Discrimination Act requires active measures towards combating discrimination and promotion of equal treatment should be taken by employers towards their employees. The active measures in this context means analysis, continuous identification, and elimination, a follow-up of risks for discrimination and equal treatment barriers.

However, there was a review on some aspects relative to equal opportunity management in this document, such as working conditions, recruitment and promotion, education and skills developed, salaries and terms of employment and lastly, combining work with

parenting. Certain risks for discrimination or obstacles to equal treatment were identified under the above mentioned aspects, which are related to cultural diversity management and a future plan was identified with each examined area.

After a review on the last JIBS policy dated back to 2002, the faculty decided to re-strategize by embracing a no-written policy on cultural diversity, rather, they chose to embrace it through visible practice within the workplace.

#### **4.1.3 Associate Dean of Faculty on Diversity Management**

An interview with the ADF of JIBS was conducted in order to gain more insight about the policies and practices that were implemented by the management, and how they work and manage their cultural diversity at JIBS. As mentioned before, part the role of JIBS Associate Dean of faculty is be responsible for employee operations.

The author started by asking the ADF how the recruitment process is at JIBS, and the ADF mentioned that the aim is to get the best candidate as possible for the job, which usually takes time. The Dean went on to explain the full process of the recruitment.

First, an analysis will be made of what competent profile is needed for teaching of courses or in research areas and there are strategic discussions taken in the leadership teams.

Secondly, announcements are published and applicants are received. Recruitment group will decide whether to take all applicants out for review or not, by looking into all candidates, view their strength and weaknesses then select the best ones. The reviews are then approved by the research faculty members.

Lastly, interviews are held with candidates with trial lectures, trial seminars, trial research site, there is also a whole day to one and a half day arrangements with the applicants, with social meetings such as dinners. The recruitment group subsequently gives recommendations to the dean regarding what candidates are suitable.

Recruitment takes time and therefore they are satisfied if the process could be done within six months, however it could take up to seven to nine months.

The ADF was also asked whether there was any help provided by the University for the Family that moves along the selected employee. According to the ADF, there is no formal process regarding this matter and the family that comes with the employee has to unfortunately do everything alone. This means they have to look for a house and job

personally, and also it may depend on the spouse's type of profession, they need to find a job or have to learn Swedish in order to work in that profession in Sweden.

Since no policy was found regarding internationalisation or diversity management in the self-assessment report for EQUIS, the ADF was asked questions regarding the situation. The ADF confirmed that the management decided not to have a specific policy, because they have it everywhere else and in everything they do. The management discussed about the matter last year and worked internally, they also involved external people in the process and raised a question whether to formulate a policy or not, they concluded with not having a policy at all. JIBS is an organisation that shows internationality everywhere, in the corridors, classrooms, what is seen in JIBS cannot be seen in other universities. Therefore, it was decided that it may not be right to state a policy about something that is self-evident, according to the ADF.

*“You can see the internationalisation everywhere and in everything we are doing”*

A question was asked regarding how the ADF embraces and values diversity and the ADF stated that he follows JU's guiding principle “International at heart”. How the university works, how they are teaching, are viewed as a competitive advantage and as a strength, which can be seen in the classroom with all the different nationalities. The ADF believes that the skills and resources are welcomed along with the international employees. They wanted an international business school, and it can be said that they have succeeded in that, as it can be seen when students from other parts of Sweden and people from other countries are continuously applying to JIBS for their English programs.

*“We welcome the skills and resources with the international employees”*

Regarding where the employees can seek help and how the ADF helps them, the ADF said that the way they work is very limited, but they want to support the new entrants even more than what is being done right now. With the change of management, the support reallocated from JIBS to JU and the resources now being central in JU, comes with limitations. Employees can get support from the HR, but according to the ADF, it is hard for the department to sort some of the matters out, since there is lot of responsibility on the person who moves as well.

*“We want to support the new entrants even more than what is being done right now”*

Based on a recent survey made by the management, it was revealed that the employees mostly get support from their colleagues with the usual problems. The employees know they can get help from the ADF if they have any problems and they try to do the best they can. The ADF mostly get questions regarding the Swedish system, health and childcare, and accommodation. Every week, these types of issues are being addressed by the ADF and they are mostly from the new entrants.

On the matter of cultural diversity challenges that occur, the ADF said that mostly everything is in English now but they still need to take more steps towards this, since a few documents are still in Swedish, such as the collective agreement along with some other important documents. According to the ADF, they are aware of this issue and address the challenges that occur, and are in constant discussions with the accreditation organisations to understand the situation more in order to take action towards it.

*“Everything is mostly in English now, but we still need to take more steps”*

There was further question asked on how they tackle the culture clashes when they occur. The ADF mentioned that the management is aware of some issues, but want to dig deeper into them, and want to understand more about the layers that has not yet being acknowledged, such as what is driving those situations, and whether the culture clashes are based on religious or values. The ADF has not seen any problems regarding someone's ethnic background, and on the other hand it is more about the practical issues the staff experience. This could be that the employee may end up in a bad situation by stating issues with someone's background and therefore act strategic. Also before getting employed, they are well aware of the university being an international school and therefore will not choose the university if they do not want to work with diverse people. The ADF further added that they want JU to be more international, and further wants to get all documents and regulations into English for the international people. The university is completely not there yet, but JIBS has come a long way. There are always going to be challenges and culture clashes, but people that chooses JU comes with an open mind when it comes to internationalisation.



*“We are aware of the issues but we want to dig deeper to understand more”*

Since the university involves both Swedish and international employees, the ADF was asked whether the Swedish employees have more advantages than the international employees. The ADF explained that the Swedish staff have huge advantage in terms of the Swedish background, since they know more about how to manage and how everything works around in Sweden. The Swedish employees help and introduce the other colleagues with some issues. They do have several other benefits, since they have lived and being raised here and knows what values are there, which others could find hard for being international. However, the ADF sees that there is an equal treatment in this university and it is expected of him to be fair on common ground. International employees do not have a big advantage when it comes to the Swedish language either. Mostly everything within the university is in English however, when they step outside the university campus, every other thing will be tied to the Swedish language and not English.

*“I see that there is an equal treatment in this university and it is expected to be fair on common ground”*

The ADF has acknowledged the various issues occurring with new entrants and wants to help them even more. Currently, they have very limited resources and are not able to help them as much as they want. The management are however trying to figure out several ways of how to help the international employees even more. They are also aware of the problem that the university is not challenging international employees to learn the Swedish language. Therefore there is need to integrate employees and make them connected as a team, the university could encourage the employees to learn Swedish.

#### **4.1.4 HR Specialist for JIBS**

An interview was also conducted with the HR specialist for JIBS in order to get more information about the HR practices, and also how they view and manage the cultural diversity within JIBS. The HR specialist that was interviewed supports the ADF of JIBS and they work with equal opportunities among employees throughout the whole JU.

The HR specialist mentioned that they have an old diversity policy from 2002, however most employees are not aware of any diversity policy that previously existed, since it is very old. It was acknowledged by the HR specialist that the school intend to update and improve the policy in future. Employees who have recently started to work at the university or who has been working since after 2002 do not know that there is a policy about diversity. JIBS has come a long way in becoming an international school where English is the number one language at the university and, mostly everything is in English language now. Although, many documents are still written in Swedish language till date but the department said that they are in a process of improving and are still trying to make all documents in English. On the other hand, the HR department also wants to encourage the international staff to learn Swedish, since it will be easier for life outside the university. The HR specialist mentioned that they are thinking of providing training in the Swedish language for the international employees.

*“English is the number one language used throughout JIBS”*

*“We want to encourage new entrants to learn the Swedish language”*

When asked whether the HR specialist had employees coming to the HR for help, the specialist said that mainly, employees would first talk to their managers when any problem or issue occur. However, the HR specialist has helped some employees in terms of work permit and issues concerning *Migrationsverket*, the Swedish migration authority. Regarding employee’s accommodation, the HR specialist mentioned that JIBS could help the staff by providing “emergency” apartments, for a period of time, until they find themselves a place.

There are several issues regarding new international employees moving to Jönköping, in which the department is well aware of. For instance, there are problems with finding accommodation, adaption into the society, childcare, healthcare, families moving with the selected employee amongst others. The HR department want to make a change where they want the international employees to feel more welcomed to the university and retain them for a longer period, and they are trying to take actions to improve these matters. The department occasionally hold reference group meetings and a tip off box was made

available online a few months ago, for employees to see whether they see any type of barriers in the workplace.

*“We want to support them in every way possible”*

Furthermore, the HR department has started a relocation project which is still in its initial stage, where they are trying to gather all the necessary information a new entrant needs when moving to another country. The focus of this project is to figure out what problems occur for a moving employee and how they can improve and help them in the process. This will help to provide the employees with all necessary information, and to be able to support them in every way possible. The HR also recently launched a new page on the JU website for the diverse employees, providing all essential information needed prior to moving to Sweden and after they have arrived. Information concerning employment, migration, registration in the Swedish Population Register, salary and taxation, bank, housing, insurances, accompanying families and an A-Z guide with several Swedish essential (good-to-know) terms were included.

*“The department has started a relocating project for international people moving to Jönköping”*

According to the HR specialist, the department has acknowledged several issues the new entrants have when relocating to Jönköping and are trying many different ways to help them. They have several good ideas, but still have a long way to go. Especially when it comes to accommodations, since Jönköping is a small city it is very difficult to find an apartment, the management would need to get assistance from other companies in order to help the new entrants with housing, however it can be costly in the long-term. The department are taking all the problems into consideration to trying and improve for the new entrants coming to JIBS.

*“We are in a process of improving”*

## 4.2 Selected Teachers at JIBS

Interviews were conducted with five teachers from different nationalities to get an insight of their thoughts about cultural diversity and how they perceive the practices and policies the university applies.

The teachers were asked how they found the recruitment process to be when selecting JIBS, both Teacher *A* and *D* said that the recruitment process was very competitive since it was open for both Swedish and international applicants. On the other hand, Teacher *C* and *E* suggested that the management needs to create better and easier processes for the international profiles. Teacher *B* stated that the process is different for each position at JIBS. Overall, it can be concluded that the teachers found the recruitment process to be competitive and there should be better processes for the international students made by the management.

*“It is very competitive”* - Teacher D

*“They need to create better processes for international profiles”* - Teacher C

As the ADF said during the interview, the recruitment process is a time-consuming process, and the aim is to select the best candidate for the job. Additionally, since the applications are open to both international and Swedish applicants, the process tends to be more on the competitive side, as there are plenty of good candidates to be selected.

The teachers were also asked why they chose JIBS. Nearly all of the teachers had at least two different options before choosing JIBS, and they chose this university based on different aspects. Teacher *A* expressed an interest for the Nordic countries since the salaries and work conditions are better here than in other countries. Teacher *A*, *D* and *E* stated that the content of program in JIBS was appealing when choosing the university, and Teacher *C* liked that JIBS is practitioner oriented that works with sustainability and with a young team. Based on the responses, it could be said that the teachers chose JIBS for its appealing content and what it offered.

*“The content of program was better at JIBS”* - Teacher B

*“JIBS is a practitioner oriented school who also works with sustainability and works with a young team” - Teacher C*

When the teachers were asked about how they were welcomed into the school system, different answers were received depending on the teachers different experiences. Teacher A got help from colleagues outside Sweden, whereas Teacher C was handed a tutor during the first days. However, Teacher C was lucky as this is not a formal process, this was done because a staff was available to help C around. C further explained that there were some meetings and introduction of employees. However, both Teacher C and D said that they received no formal processes of training or orientation when coming to the university, which made it very hard. Teacher B had another experience since B came as master student and later got employed by the university and by that time B already knew the way around. Conclusively, the teachers found that there was no formal process with training or orientation at the university for the new entrants.

*“I came as a masters student and later got employed by the university” - Teacher B*

*“I received no formal process of training or orientation” - Teacher D*

### **4.3 Diversity Management at JIBS**

Regarding the cultural diversity, the teachers were asked whether they knew about the JIBS practices and policies towards it. None of the teacher knew of any policies regarding diversity management. Teacher A is aware of the basic aspects of respecting other people. Teacher B has not been in any situation where a policy needs to be viewed at, since B has never being treated differently from others. However B believes that JIBS takes actions if any problems occur since the university is an equal opportunity employer. Teacher C and D received no information regarding any policy either, and added that most documents were in Swedish. All the respondents said that there is no visible policy to follow at JIBS.

*“I do not know about the policy” - Teacher A*

*“JIBS is an equal opportunity employer” - Teacher B*

The management is aware of the challenges that occur with the language barriers and most documents still being in Swedish. However, according to the ADF they are in

constant discussions with the accreditation organisations in order to take further action towards it to try and change this matter.

The teacher did not know about the diversity policy from 2002 either, which the HR specialist talked about, as it was not mentioned during the interviews. The implementations of HR diversity practices are poor when the employees and the managers within an organisation perceive and view the diversity management differently (Shen et al., 2009). Therefore there should be a visible policy, which everyone is aware of, regarding diversity management, and it should be followed by everyone at an organisation. However, one of the teachers believed that JIBS gives equal opportunity to all the international and Swedish workers, even though it is not visible in any policy. As previously reviewed, Cunningham & Melton (2011) said that an organisation with diverse workplace provides equal opportunity without discrimination.

Because the teachers work with different international and Swedish employees, they were asked whether there are activities that facilitates inclusion. According to most teachers, there are always activities such as after-work, “*fika*” (A Swedish tradition of having coffee with a snack) and lunch with colleagues. However, not many activities are formal or provided by the university. Teacher A said that these activities happen naturally and Teacher C and E added that these activities are informal and personal which are created by the colleagues. Teacher B mentioned that when JIBS plan activities, they are not planned after the culture or what country the employees are from, they are rather organised based on what role or occupation you have at the university. Overall, based on the responses, there are not many formal activities by the university and the employees create most of the activities themselves. However, when JIBS organise activities, they organise different activities for teachers, different activities for PhD students, and different for other occupations at the university, and they are not organised based on the countries.

*“Not many activities are provided by the university”* - Teacher A, C and E

*“The activities that are organised are based on the role you have at JIBS and not where you are from”* - Teacher B

As there are employees from many other countries and culture working together within the same faculty, problems may occur on various reasons, since everyone works in a different way or behaves in certain ways which is different from others. Therefore, the interviewees were asked whether they have experienced any cultural differences, and how they tackle them. Teacher *A* is used to working with people from different countries, and noticed the teaching becomes different in every country and if any problems arise, *A* will consult with other colleagues. Teacher *B* has experienced problems with the English language, since everyone speaks in different accents. *B* also added that people speak in different manners, for instance with hand gestures, which can be misinterpreted by others from different countries. Teacher *C* also stated that there should be formal process for this and further added that *C* wants to connect more with people and in order to minimise the cultural issues, there should be training regarding cultural understanding. *B* also said that being understanding and respectful, helps in those situations. By viewing the responses, if any problems occur with any colleague, all the teachers said that they would speak to the specific colleague personally to resolve the issues.

*“I talk to the colleagues to resolve any problems”* - Teacher *D*

*“There should be training regarding cultural understanding”* - Teacher *C*

In view of the “best practices” by Farren and Nelson (1999) in this situation, the first step to manage the diversity differences, is to have an open communication and later on taking action towards the matter. This phase is followed by all the teachers, were they first talk to the respective colleague to solve any issues with them. Farren and Nelson (1999) also explained that if the employees respect each other, they are more likely to stay in an organisation for a longer period. The teachers are well aware of respecting each other at the university, and they feel respected as well.

Another practice discusses that employees should be educated and given training on other people's cultures, and further make them more understanding about discrimination and other employees feelings (Farren and Nelson, 1999). This point was stressed by Teacher *C*, suggesting that the university should provide formal process and give training in cultural understanding, to learn and understand more about other cultures. Teacher *A* also mentioned that the Swedish employees should be more sensitive and considerate towards

the international employees, since they tend to think that the internationals knows everything, when it is actually not the case.

Kundu, (2001) mentioned that for a company with a diverse workforce to effectively manage a multicultural environment, it is significant to identify the differences that may arise. In Kundu's (2001) last strategy, managers should minimise the issues by managing the impact of cultural diversity also, managers and employees within the organisation should be trained to identify the differences that arise and turn them into advantages. Therefore, the managers should identify the culture clashes that arise at JIBS and turn them into something they can benefit from. According to the ADF, the management is aware of the issues occurring and they want to understand the problems even more to be able to solve them. The management could also try to make the issues beneficial and turn them into advantages, as suggested by Kundu (2001).

Teachers were also asked about their relationship with other employees, whether they have any social interactions with each other. The responses were all positive and all of the teachers have a good relationship with their colleagues, they spend time with them, have dinner together sometimes, along with other activities created by them or the university.

*"I have a good relationship with the colleagues"* - Teacher A

*"We try to get together for different activities and events"* - Teacher D

As reviewed by Farren and Nelson (1999) the teachers are well aware of respecting each other at the university, and they feel respected as well. This is evident in the sense that they have a good relationship with each other and they spend time together by participating in various activities. A study revealed that a diverse workforce that has worked with each other for a long time, tend to be more effective in terms of interacting with other people and also in their job performance (Watson et al., 1993).

Since the teachers that were interviewed are from different countries apart from Sweden, they were asked whether their opinions are welcomed by the managers and other staff around the university. Teacher C, said that there used to be formal meetings where employees could bring up different sort of issues or improvements, however since the change of format, there is no such platform anymore. Both C and E also argued that, at



this point, there is no formal place or time allocated for brainstorming or discussions. Teacher *A* stated that the system is built in a certain way, hence they are not a part of the decision making.

*“There is no formal place or time allocated for brainstorming or discussions to be heard” - Teacher C*

According to (D'Netto et. al., 2013), through diversity management the quality of the decisions made are improved, along with the increase of effectiveness, efficiency and profitability of an organisation. Therefore, the management should include employees in decision making, especially with a diverse workforce that brings their own experiences, talents and skills in order to serve people from other countries (Sharma, 2014). A good example here is JIBS being an international school that employs staff from culturally diverse backgrounds to match and meet some of the expectations of its culturally diverse students and community.

The authors asked whether the teachers had any recommendations regarding managing cultural diversity at JIBS. All of the teachers agreed on the fact that there is lack of information and that there should be more support regarding relocating and accommodation in Jönköping, and the university should take action and help them more. Teacher *B* mentioned that it is good to work with a diverse workforce, where everyone comes together with various ideas and different ways of working. Teacher *B* and *C* further suggested that there should be a possibility for the international students to learn the Swedish language and also about the Swedish culture. Teacher *B*, *C* and *D* added that it is important to connect with other people as well as other Swedish colleagues. *C* also argued that they should learn more about each other, internationals should learn from Swedish people and vice-versa, and internationals should also learn from other internationals. Teachers *C* and *E* mentioned that there should be more activities and events provided by the universities, and the language should be consistent everywhere. Teachers *A* and *D* added that even though the policy is not visible, JIBS is a very welcoming university. Based on the responses, it can be deduced that there is a lack of information and there are some areas that the management has to improve on, however the teachers are still enjoying working at JIBS.

*“There is a lack of information” and “The policy is not visible, but JIBS is very welcoming” - Teacher A*

*“We should learn and interact more with people from other culture” - Teacher D*

As mentioned previously in the interviews with the ADF and the HR specialist, they are aware of some issues that constantly arise and they are trying their best to identify them and improve on them. Also, when it comes to the Swedish language, both of them suggested and wants to encourage the teachers to learn Swedish. The specialist also added that they are considering providing training in the Swedish language for the international employees. Farren and Nelson (1999), also mentioned that maintaining a diverse workforce in an effective way results in the employee’s feel for more connection to each other at a workplace and relate more with the company they are working for. Therefore, the management at JIBS should manage the diverse workforce in a more effective way, in order for the international employees to feel more connected to each other and feel one with the university.

#### **4.3.1 JIBS Employee’s Perception of Cultural Diversity**

The teachers were asked about how they view the cultural diversity and the managing of the cultural diversity at their workplace. Overall there were positive responses from the teachers about cultural diversity and all the teachers that were interviewed said that they are happy that many international people can be seen at the university. Teacher A said that it sometimes does not feel like A is in Sweden and thinks JIBS is a good working environment. Teacher C said that it is very motivating to be an international employee at JIBS and that the university is very ambitious in their work. Both Teacher A and E added that there is a feeling of inclusiveness amongst the employees.

On the other hand, Teacher B also stated that JIBS has good approaches, but there are areas that needs improvement, especially when it comes to the new relocating employees, they need to think more about how to help them. However, the teachers have over the time come across some problems regarding the language spoken at the university and also the level of the organisational structure. Even though mostly everything is in English language, all the policies, the organisational structure, and the way the entire university is run is still very Swedish. Although everyone speaks English at JIBS, there are times

where, for instance, emails are only written in Swedish and in meetings some speak in Swedish rather than in English. This is when the international staff feel that they are being left out. Regarding this matter, Teachers C suggested that the university needs to embrace the international side even more. Even though there are good responses regarding the diversity management among the teachers at JIBS, there are few areas that needs to be improved on according to the responses, particularly in terms of newly relocated employees and language issues.

*“I know that JIBS prides itself for being international and I am happy to see more international people at the university” and “JIBS has good approaches, but there are areas that needs to be improved”* - Teacher B

*“JU overall needs to embrace the international side even more”* - Teacher C

There are several different benefits and challenges with diversity management, which tend to vary depending on different countries (D'Netto et. al., 2013). Those teachers that has been working in several countries has seen the distinctive ways of how diversity management has been viewed at and being managed. The teachers have additionally noticed differences between their home countries and Sweden, in terms of how people work, the different culture, the language, and also living in Sweden. As Ongori and Agolla 2007 said, members from a minority-group tend to feel less valued than the members from majority-group in terms of stereotyping, prejudice and ethnocentrism. In this case, it can be seen that although some communications are still in English, the university itself is international and very welcoming towards the international employees. It is perceived by the diverse employees that the Swedish employees rather speaks in Swedish and other areas at the university are also managed in a Swedish manner, which is when the international employees feel left out. Furthermore, all the teachers also noticed that the university is grouped, with only Swedish employees in one place and the international employees in another place, and not many groups are mixed.

The teachers were asked whether they think JIBS practices meet their policies. As mentioned previously, none of the teachers found any policy regarding cultural diversity, hence they were unsure whether the practices meet the policies. Teacher C stressed that there are still language barriers and that many documents are still in only Swedish.

Teacher *B* on the other hand, mentioned again about JIBS being an equal employer and they are big on internationalisation, and cultural diversity is always welcomed. *B* further believes that the management is doing everything in their part to conform to their policies and to keep cultural diversity growing. On the overall responses, there is no visible policy for the teachers to see whether the practices meet the policies. On the other hand, the teachers know that the management are trying to take action towards the issues constantly occurring.

*“I do not know of any policy”* - Teacher A, C, D, E

*“The university is big on internationalisation and cultural diversity is always welcomed”* - Teacher B

When comparing this paper to Allen et al's., (2004) study, differences in the perceptions of both employees and the managers in the same companies regarding the diversity practices were revealed. The employees felt that their managers were not implementing the diversity practices and strategies in their workplace, while the managers thought they were. Whereas in this study, it was found that the diverse employees did not find any policy at all, additionally the ADF revealed there is no policy. Hence, in this paper it is consistent between the management and employees about there being no policy in place.

Based on where the employees are from, they build up their own perceptions and interpretation towards HR practices (Frenkel, Restubog and Bednall, 2012). It is of great importance to see how the employees perceive HR practices for an organisation, this is for employees to obtain higher performance in their work and also to feel one with the company (Choi and Lee, 2013). Frenkel Restubog and Bednall (2012), argued that when HR policy and practices are visible and attractive, consistent and agreed by managers, the employees can easily work with each other. Due to people coming from different places and they view diversity in different ways, there should be a visible policy about diversity management and internationalisation for the employees, to work efficiently and to interact with other employees.

It was reviewed by Ansari (2011) that when HRM practices are perceived to be just and fair at a workplace, it results in employees being more satisfied, positive outcomes and further, supportive when it comes to welfare and development. This promotes an

increased organisational identification, effort and co-worker support (Frenkel, Restubog and Bednall, 2012). Therefore, it is significant that the employees are treated fairly and also, should be perceived to be treated fairly by everyone at JIBS. This in turn will result in the employees being more satisfied and the identification of the faculty will also increase.

#### **4.4 Support from JIBS and HRM**

The international employees had to leave their homes and relocate when accepting the job at JIBS and moving to Sweden. Many employees moved with families, therefore the teachers were asked whether they received any support from the University for their Families when relocating. All of the interviewees said that there was no support plan regarding moving with family to Jönköping. Teacher *A* and *D* said that because Jönköping is a small city, it becomes very hard to find a place to live in and also, finding a job for their spouse is very difficult since the language becomes a barrier. Teacher *C* also found no plan for family and also mentioned that during application to the university it was encouraged by the school that the spouses will get job in Jönköping, which turned out to be wrong. *C* further stressed that there should be better processes for families that come along with the employee. According to the teachers, no support or formal processes were provided for families by the universities, when moving to Jönköping.

*“There was no plan provided for family by the school when relocating”* - Teacher *A*, *B*,  
C, *D* and *E*

As previously mentioned by the ADF, they are very limited in the way they work, however the management wants to help more. The ADF further added that there are unfortunately no formal procedure for families moving along with the selected employee. Everything is on the employee who moves, both looking for a place to stay and also a job for their spouses. However, one of JIBS challenges is to maintain a high quality and fast recruitment process for internationally diverse employees and provide relocation services to support them.

The authors asked the teachers whether they received any support from the university. The teachers once again had different answers regarding this matter based on their various experiences. Teacher *A* and *D* said that they did not receive much help from JU, but

instead got help from other colleagues at the university who has been working at the university longer. Whereas, Teacher *C* mentioned again that there was a lot of help from the tutor, however, this was not a formal process. On the other hand Teacher *B* believed that there is help for them who seek it.

On whether the teachers know where to seek help if they have any questions or problems. Teacher *A*, *C* and *D* mentioned that they first talk to their colleagues and later take the matter further to the manager and lastly to the ADF. Teacher *C* and *E* added that they however do not always help, but they know that the management is aware of several issues and knows that they need to improve in some areas. Teacher *B* knows that there are different levels of seeking help, there are different colleagues to approach for different types of issues. *B* receives help from the manager, and if it is not enough, *B* knows the matter can be taken further. Conclusively and based on the responses, the teachers know where they can go to find help, however there is not much help provided by the university, according to the teachers and mostly receive help from fellow colleagues.

*“I did not get much help from JU”* - Teacher *D*

*“I believe there is help for them who needs it”* - Teacher *B*

It was further asked whether the teachers refer to the HR department when they seek help. Most teachers replied that they received no help from the HR either. Teacher *A* did not receive any assistance from them, especially with the housing problems, the HR said that accommodation issues are personal problems, and have to deal with them by themselves. On the other hand, Teacher *B* has no dealings with the HR on a daily basis, the HR is approached when *B* wants to take holiday or other reasons. Teacher *C* and *E* further added that a new website was recently launched by the management, with links including various important information needed for the internationals. By the responses it can be seen that not much help is received from the HR.

*“The HR does not help much”* - Teacher *A*, *C*, *D* and *E*

HRM has a significant role within the diversity management (D'Netto et al., 2013). HRM and diversity management concerns about the individual differences, development and

the well-being of individuals at the workplace (Shen et. al., 2009; D'Netto et al., 2013). The HRM department along with the ADF at JIBS, knows about the issues occurring for international employees and are trying to make a change towards it and help them even more. They are taking their well-being into consideration by acknowledging the problems and trying to figure out how to help them further.

It was stated by two of the teachers about the new webpage that was launched, which the HR specialist mentioned. Providing all necessary information for the international employees coming to Jönköping, and added that in this way it is visible that the management is considering the issues and are trying to help.

According to Benson (2013), organisations constantly have to improve on the future as well as the current performance of their employees in terms of education in order to increase the skills and knowledge. Furthermore, diversity awareness training is also another way to promote effective integration of the diverse workforce in an organisation, this benefits into understanding, a sense of belongingness, and improving organisational as well as individual outcomes (Shen et al, 2009). Therefore, JIBS could also implement training and development in their practices in order to improve in various areas. With the help of training and development, one will become more aware of the cultural diversity, individuals will develop an understanding towards it and both individuals and organisations will benefit from positive outcomes.

## **5. Conclusion**

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*This chapter provides a conclusion drawn from the research conducted in the empirical finding and analysis and the research questions will be answered.*

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The purpose of the thesis was to examine diversity management at Jönköping International Business School. The authors wanted to investigate how the diverse workforce is being managed at the university from an employee's perspective as well as to view whether the policies and practices are met.

**RQ1: *How is cultural diversity management perceived by employees at JIBS?***

Based on the research conducted on this study, the authors found that Cultural diversity is a topic that is well understood by the management and employees at JIBS. The university has a strategic method they follow in terms of recruiting diverse people and welcomes a diverse community to maintain its international standard. However, the study also reveals that there is no unification in terms of how diversity is being perceived. There is more evidence of equal opportunity than they have on cultural diversity. The major issues and practices that are associated with diversity are not entirely provided by the management within the work environment.

**RQ2: *Are the policies and practices same in terms of how they are being delivered?***

JIBS operate on a deliberate no-policy rule in terms of cultural diversity. This is a way of re-strategizing from the old policies when it was due for a review. The new method is to have a practice that is rather evident in practice and everyday performance. As a result, it is more of a spontaneous practice and this in turn has many implications and challenges that constantly occur according to the information gathered from the interviewees. Therefore, it can be concluded that the policies and practices are not same, since every issue is treated differently and there is no structured procedure towards employee management. Employees have different personal experiences but same understanding that no policy is being provided by the university.

## **6. Discussion**

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*This part will conclude the thesis by including a general discussion regarding this paper, with a managerial implication, recommendations, the limitations and the future research.*

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### **6.1 Managerial Implications**

There are managerial implications that were deduced from the empirical findings of this research, as well as recommendations for the human resource and managers towards managing cultural diversity at JIBS.



The management are recommended to have a more effectively communicated structure, which will make significant emphasis on cultural diversity within the workplace as well as be a reminder of the Internationalisation nature of JIBS. They can introduce a more formal recruitment process, which will include orientation and training process to initiate employees into the Swedish/ school system. There should be provision for platforms where employees can be heard and have a say in development of the faculty and in decision-making. Employees need to understand the different cultures of people within their environment in order to avoid misinterpretations or culture clashes.

The management is aware of some occurring issues and taking all the matters into consideration but a further delay in implementing the new practices could bring further damage to the main mission and vision of the school. It is important that the management increases their awareness towards cultural diversity, in terms of language, training and development, communication within the working environment, employee's phase of integration, feedback on employee's personal lives and well-being. Also, more social events could be provided by the university that will promote inclusivity of the diverse staff and their families to promote and achieve a better work productivity and positive outcomes within their diverse workforce.

## **6.2 Limitations**

There were limitations faced by the authors in the process of writing this thesis. More data could have been collected in terms of number of interviewees if the time frame given was longer, therefore the conclusion made was based on the perception of only five teachers and two managers at JIBS. Another limitation was the time schedule of the interviewed teachers, the authors were restricted to the time given by the interviewees which in turn took a longer time to finalise the analysis based on the interview responses.

Lastly, writing a case study itself was a great challenge for the authors and a lot of uncertainties occurred during the process. Even though it was a time-consuming process trying to understand how to structure the whole thesis, it was a learning experience throughout the wholes.

### 6.3 Future Research

As diversity keeps growing globally, it becomes even more interesting to investigate diversity from other perspectives and in different areas. Sweden has over the years become a multicultural country, people from different countries can be seen in the schools and universities therefore, a future research could also examine;

The diversity management from the student perspective, it would be interesting to see how the students perceive the diversity at their university.

Another focus could be on the implication of poor organisational awareness on cultural diversity.

Lastly, researchers could look at how employee's perception of cultural diversity affects employee's work performance.

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## **Appendix**

### **Appendix A - Interview Questions (ADF)**

#### **Interview Questions**

1. What is the relationship between the university HR department and the ADF since both offices are different under HR?
2. What is the role of an ADF?
3. You oversee the development as well?
4. What are the criteria for the recruitment?
5. We could not find policy for internationalisation, why?
6. Any challenges that occur?
7. How do you value and embrace diversity?
8. How do you support staff? Where can they seek help?
9. Is the family included in the school plan?
10. How do you tackle culture clashes?
11. Do the Swedish employees have more advantages than the international employees?

### **Appendix B - Interview Questions (HR)**

#### **Interview Questions**

1. What is the role of the HR department The ADF and HR specialist at JIBS?
2. What are the policies and practices you implement towards managing diversity?
3. How are you trying to improve on cultural diversity management?
4. Where/how do employees seek help? Do they come to you?
5. What are the school's future plan for managing diversity?

### **Appendix C - Interview Questions (Teachers)**

#### **Interview Questions**

1. What are your thoughts about JIBS recruitment process?

2. Why did you choose JIBS?
3. What do you know about JIBS policies and practices about cultural diversity?
4. What are your thoughts about cultural diversity in your workplace
5. Are you aware of JIBS policy and practice about cultural diversity?
6. How were you welcomed into the school system?
7. What kind of support did you get during your relocation to Sweden?
8. What are the activities that facilitate inclusion of diverse staffs in the workplace?
9. What support do you get since it is a different culture here?
10. Is your family included in the school's support plan?
11. How do you seek support/help?
12. How do you tackle the cultural differences?
13. Do does the school's HR lend support/assistance?
14. What is your relationship with other employees, what type of social interaction exists?
15. How do you think JIBS practices meet the policies?
16. What is your opinion regarding managing cultural diversity here?
17. How are your opinions welcomed by the people around you or the school?
18. Any recommendation about managing cultural diversity in your workplace?