

The inclusion of cultural diversity in IIUM's mission and vision: Challenges and solutions

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Introduction

IIUM is a melting pot of a group of individuals from different cultures and countries. Among the missions of IIUM are: to incorporate diversity into research, teaching and learning; to enhance intercultural understanding and foster civilization dialogues in Malaysia as well as across communities and nations; equipping students with a broader understanding and opening their minds to deeper insights; to offer a diverse working and learning environment.

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What does it mean to have a mission and vision and why are they important?

What are the differences between mission and vision?

What is cultural diversity and why is it important?

Differences between vision and mission

Although the two terms are used interchangeably by some scholars, there are differences between the two that need to be highlighted.

The vision statement focuses on tomorrow and what the organization wants to become.

The mission statement focuses on today and what the organization does.

It is important to have both. One doesn't work without the other.

Importance of mission and vision

- An organization is defined by its mission and vision.
- The mission statement drives an organization.
- Mission and vision are important to communicate the purpose of the organization to stakeholders; what the organization is striving for, and what it wants to achieve or become in the future.
- Having a vision is important in the path of the organization's success.
- Vision provides a sense of purpose and direction for an organization.
- Vision guides the decisions made by the organization along the way.
- A vision is abstract and challenging.

Cultural diversity

Islam recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society; it acknowledges and values the socio-cultural differences.

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things) (Qur'an, 49:13).

Two types of diversities that shape our identities

1. Acquired diversity
2. Inherent diversity

Acquired diversity - refers to perspectives, ideas, and traits we gain from our life experiences. Acquired diversity is also known as cognitive diversity.

Inherent diversity – refers to the traits we are born with.

Three types of inherent diversity:

Demographic diversity (gender diversity).

Racial diversity

Ethnic diversity (cultural diversity).

Meaning of *ta'aruf* and its realization

To learn from each other – This leads to acquired diversity (traits one gains from experience)

To empower each other

To recognize the abundant diversity of cultures (openness to differences among people).

To respect the differences

To value what other cultures offer – each community has a unique and positive contribution to the larger society.

To celebrate the differences

Not to use our own culture as the standard to judge other cultures;

Not to discriminate against others whose “ways of being” are different from ours

What is cultural diversity?

Diversity - Anything that sets one individual apart from another.

Cultural diversity – The existence of a variety of cultural or ethnic groups within a society, each with different interests, skills, talents and needs.

Co-existence of people of different culture, language, etc.

Diversity is described by the following words: Heterogeneity, Plurality, multiplicity, etc.

Importance of cultural diversity

Our countries, workplaces and schools or universities consist of various cultural, racial and ethnic groups.

Before we learn from each other, we must have a level of understanding about each other in order to facilitate collaboration and cooperation.

To understand about others we have to interact with them.

Often we tend to fear that which we do not understand.

Why is cultural diversity important in education?

- One of the objectives of setting up universities is to bring people together from a diverse set of backgrounds and cultures.
- When working and learning with people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, students gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter; they develop a deeper knowledge of the subject as they explore it from varying perspectives.
- Group activities with diverse group members lead to creative and collaborative learning.