**Research Article**

# MULTI-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS: AN APPROACH TO CULTIVATE A POSITIVE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

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## Abstract

Multicultural environment means diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender, and religious, social belonging, etc. This environment retains workers from a variety of cultural backgrounds (StanislavaStoyanova, 2013).This study was conducted in order to determine if an organization like the Eastern Samar State University (ESSU) embraces practices that encourage multiculturalism among its diverse community. Specifically, the study identifiespractices that promote multicultural environments at ESSU; describe the different best practices in cultivating a positive environment; and describe how best practices foster positive organizational climate.The study employed a narrative inquiry qualitative method. The study found out that employees of ESSU are aware and engaged in nurturing diversity within the educational organization: The automatic exercises being performed by the different colleges/departments within the institution that embraces the ideas of multiculturalism: Some respondents have also mentioned that there are also administrative practices and policies given by the support members in an educational organization. They signify habits that promote multiculturalism and positive environment; and that, the different ways of doing things that boosts positive organizational climate. This concludes that there is adherence to cultural diversityin the different educational organizations at ESSU Main Campus.

**Keywords:** Multi-cultural diversity, Educational community, Cultivation of culture, Eastern Samar State University, Multicultural environment.

## INTRODUCTION

A culture is a way of life of a group of people, the configuration of all the more or less stereotyped patterns of learned behavior that are handed down from one generation to the next through the means of language and imitation (Adler, 1983). Based on the management study conducted by Hofstede, 1980 it has been shown that culture has a distinct influence on management conceptions, on attitudes of employees and managers within the organization, on decision-making behavior and on perceived determinants of career success. In the published paper of *Turkkahraman*, 2015she emphasized that schools are social organizations with organized structures and considered as an indispensable part of the general social system of the societies. She added that all kinds of innovations and changes in the society or in the world directly have an effect on education and school in terms of process, organization, structure and functional dimensions. More so, a school as a learning organisation has a shared vision that gives it a sense of direction and serves as a motivating force for sustained action to achieve individual and school goals. Ideally, a shared vision is more an outcome of a process than it is a starting point – a process that involves all staff, students, parents and other stakeholders. An educational institution is an assemblage of people who unite to undertake a common goal, led by a person or a group. It is made up of individuals coming from different backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures. This can be described as an organization or workplace with diversity. Based on the paper posted by Eric Dyson, 2020 on the people scout company, he described workplace diversity as a variety of differences between individuals in an organization which includes how individuals identify themselves but also how others perceive them.

Diversity within a workplace encompasses race, gender, ethnic groups, age, religion, sexual orientation, citizenship status, military service and mental and physical conditions, as well as other distinct differences between people. According to Mohanty, 2012 he emphasized that diversity within an organization promotes success in the workplace provided unity is applied in its diverse workforce. It may be a daunting task to manage such characteristics of the workforce, uniting a diverse workforce necessitates perseverance, commitment and dedication. Multicultural environment means diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender, religious, social belonging, etc. This environment retains workers from a variety of cultural backgrounds (Stanislava Stoyanova, 2013). Promoting diversity in a multicultural work environment enhances the capability of an organization like schools to create better decision making process and stimulates creativity and innovation among its members. Similarly, managing workplace diversity is intended to create and maintain positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued (Patrick and Kumar, 2012). This positive impact of managing diversity of a workplace is reflected on the paper published by Singha, 2014 which underlined that organizations with policies support diversity in workplace creates positive results by catering the needs of its diverse employees through a multiple dimensional prospective and by value creation focused on customer service. Managing a diverse workplace improves the process by the involvement of employees' inherent skills and acquired experience. A diverse group is more likely to become responsive to the needs of the global market.

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**Objectives of the Study**

This study was conducted in order to determine if an organization like the Eastern Samar State University (ESSU) embraces practices that encourage multiculturalism among its diverse community. Specifically, the study:
1. Identified practices that promote multicultural environments at ESSU;
2. Described different best practices in cultivating a positive environment;
3. Described how best practices foster positive organizational climate.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study employed a narrative inquiry qualitative method. Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research where it is aimed to collect and analyze people's account. It also tells to describe their experiences and offers interpretations. According to Connelly and Clandinin, 1990 narrative inquiry has a long intellectual history both in and out of education, it is increasingly used in studies of educational experience. Further, narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general concept is refined into the view that education and educational research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; learners, teachers, and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories.

### Research Locale

The research study was conducted at Eastern Samar State University (ESSU) Main Campus particularly at the different colleges.

### Research Participants

For this narrative study, program/department headsfrom the different colleges were purposively chosen at random and comprised the participants of the study. Department program heads were "interviewed" because the researcher believed that these individuals have a great deal of contact and collaboration with the faculty members. The number of participants is consistent with the rationale of small studies presented by Crouch and McKenzie, 2006.

### Data Gathering Procedures

The qualitative data collection commenced after the consent by the participants have been given. Standardized open-ended interview questions were utilized after an informal conversation talk with the participants.

### Analysis of Data

This study employed the thematic analysis where the content within the text was the primary focused (Butina, 2015). First, the gathered data were prepared and organized. Second, the general sense of the information were determined. This process followed by the coding process. Coding was performed by identifying the recurring words, ideas, or patterns from the data. Codes were then placed into a logical category describing data segments that are explicit or clear. Categories were then converted to themes that represents the major findings of the study. After these were carried out, interpretation and making meaning of the data was done.

### Ethical Considerations
This study followed the appropriate ethical guidelines as prescribed by the research ethics committee of the university. An inform consent form will be sought before commencing the interview.

## Results and Discussion

After the analysis of the data has been made, the following are the results of the study:

| Research Question 1 and 2: What are the different practices that promotes multi-cultural environment that can be observed in ESSU?<br><br>What are the practices that best cultivate positive environment in ESSU? | | |
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| | Theme 1: | Fostering Positive Values Towards Diversity Appreciation Practices |
| | Meaning: | Employees of ESSU are aware and engaged in nurturing diversity within the educational organization. |
| | Discussion: | The participants of the study enumerated activities/practices that promote multiculturalism in their own community or office. These practices are evident in the responses made by the participants. As participant (1) stated:<br><br>*"Considered different cultural    communication        styles."*<br><br>As members of an organization coming from different backgrounds, using varied ways to communicate is vital to foster understanding among themselves and produces outputs of superior quality. Multicultural communication is essential for the expansion of businesses and maximization of profits by better managing staff and understanding the needs of the stakeholders (*P.Reeta Percy Malathi*, 2020).<br><br>Participant (2) noted that open communication is very much appreciated and is always practiced to provide an avenue for correcting misleading statements and allow individuals to express his/her sentiments on arising issues and concerns.<br>*"Dialogue between members of the organization is always done to show considerations to others."* |

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| | | This practice is consistent with the findings of Breso, 2008 when she said that open and honest communication between the leader and the other members in an educational organization is extremely relevant to especially in reporting problems, difficulties or obstacles that one or more members may be having in performing their tasks. Dialogues maybe considered key factors that can greatly influence the achievements of any educational organization. |
| | | Likewise, other participants also expressed that working together and letting others be involved in the different activities smoothens working relationships within the group. <br> *"...encourages collaboration and communication within the organization..."* |
| | | In an educational organization like ESSU, collaboration is a common undertaking to ensure that everybody has a role to play in performing its mandated functions. This practice is best performed as everyone is empowered and have a sense of common goal. As stated by Murphy, 2019 in a multicultural environment, finding common "ways of doing" and keep doing them, nurture commonality which will lead to effective collaboration. Focusing on a common goal, shared decision and well defined roles, people involved can make it work. |
| | | In addition, building constructive and harmonious relationships is reflected in the different attitudes and activities among members in the department. This practice is being expressed by participant when she said: |
| | | *"There is harmonious relationship between one another, positive relationship between colleagues that supports each other."* |
| | | Another participant echoed: <br> *"Good relationships in the department creates comfortable work environment."* |
| | | These statements are consistent with the article published by Cori and Railback, 2003 when they acknowledged that relationships among teachers and heads are important indicator of schools readiness for reform and its ability to sustain it. Similarly, collegial relationships and a shared vision for change can characterize trust among school members. Likewise, Pravamayee, 2014 articulated in her study that better relationships at work, the happier and more productive employees become. This creates a pool of creative and innovative employees that ultimately influence growth in an organization, as well as economics. |
| | Theme 2: | Institutionalized-Based Practices |
| | Meaning: | These refers to automatic exercises being performed by the different colleges/departments within the institution that embraces the ideas of multiculturalism. |
| | Discussion: | It is evident from the responses of the participants that most of the institutionalized activities conducted are all geared towards multiculturalism. These activities are part of the academic calendar being prepared by the VPAA of the institution. Each activity/program shows inclusivity of all members of the organization regardless of sex preference, religious affiliation, and cultural background. A participant who comes from a big college mentioned: <br> *"Collaboration of different activities like ASEAN, Teachers' Day, BuwanngWika etc."* <br><br> The cohesion of multiculturalism in the activities of the institution inspires mutual understanding among different groups. It allows people to be engage proactively and raise respect from one another. Aydin, 2013 stressed that organization of the school and school activities allows members (especially students) to experience differences in a safe setting resulting in learning and appreciation of one another. <br><br> Curriculum courses are also sensitive to the different interests of individuals. Sarino, 2012 mentioned the upsurge in the student mobility contributes to the change that has greatly affects the teaching and learning environment. The program head/participant excitedly said that: <br> *"Ethical dance are part in their PE subjects."* <br><br> Insertion of ethical dance in most PE courses are important avenues for the development of positive attitudes toward cultural diversity Choi and Chepyator-Thomson, 2011. Similarly, Sarino 2012 expressed that institutional activities that adhere multiculturalism embodies the dreams of those who fought for equality and respect. Since many forms of oppression are still existent in various societies, multicultural educational events continues to receive support from education sectors in many free countries. Abulencia et. al, 2015 highlights an advocacy that supports multiculturalism that upholds sense of awareness in finding ways to actualize and realize the ideals of multicultural organization. |
| | Theme 3: | Administrative-Based Practices |
| | Meaning: | These refers to the different practices between employees and employer. |
| | Discussion: | Some respondents have also mentioned that there are also administrative practices and policies given by the support members in an educational organization. They signify habits that promotes multiculturalism and positive environment. Some participants articulated that: <br> *"Recruitment and selection process of employees is not biased to sex, religion, affiliation etc."* <br><br> *"There is involvement of all employees from planning, implementation, and monitoring of activities that allow them to think they are part of the organization."* <br><br> Statements made by the participants are complimentary to the level of awareness and implementation of policies that supports multiculturalism within the institution. |
| Research Question 3: | Theme: | Encouraging habits and attitudes towards the organization |
| | Meaning: | The different ways of doing things that boosts positive organizational climate |
| How do these practices influence or help in creating a positive organizational climate? | Discussion: | Service quality and service outcomes are both indicators of a positive educational climate (Glisson & Hemmelgam, 1998). Service is one of the core values of the institution. Employees are urge to perform work that serves to help, use and show attitude of the benefit of being glad to be of service to others. With these values being instilled in every employee in the institution the participants echoed practices that greatly impact in creating a positive organizational climate. A participant from CAS mentioned that: <br> *"I think having systems and processes that supports collaboration, communication, and equal* |

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*opportunities to participate in organizational affairs create such positive climate."*

Employees are looking for a good coordination scheme that would allow a systematic process of teamwork to ensure decent service to the community. Similarly, involvement of all employees from the planning, implementing, and monitoring of different tasks and activities permits them to think that they are part of the organization.

Another participant from CBMA said that:
 *"…with constant reminders, ESSU employees practices professionalism on work related activities…"*

In an increasingly time-pressured educational organizational society, an effective management of temporal strategies; that is giving of reminders is important to ensure sustained employee well-being as well as the quality of products in terms of creative solutions (Gevers and Demerourti, 2014).
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## Conclusion

The Eastern Samar State University (ESSU) main campus embraces multiculturalism. It has practices that indorses diversity among members of the organizations. These practices can cultivate positive environment through the inclusion and implementations of policies that emboldens ideas that cares for the welfare of everyone in the organization. The result showed that there is adherence to cultural diversityin the different educational organizations at ESSU Main Campus.

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