Can Use of Technologies help Reduce Biases in Academic Recruitment?

Kashmira DAVE
University of New England
kdave3@@une.edu.au

Abstract: The benefits of a diversified workforce are undeniable. This research aims to contest the conceptualisation of inclusion and the impact of biases in academic appointments. It is argued that the semantics of inclusion is significantly framed [during recruitment] by the selection panel members' and technology biases around the candidate's identity. Individuals use questionable arguments to justify implicit biases around race, gender, ethnicity and religion. This research has examined how the biases impact peoples' self-perception, predominantly in the minority in universities' recruitment process. This study is positioned to inform prospective academics in understanding the recruiter's preferences while also stimulating change in the higher education academic recruitment process and thereby demonstrate universities' genuine commitment to cultural diversity and inclusivity among academic staff and students. In the workshop, the preliminary findings of the study will be discussed in relation to actions needed to be taken to reduce the biases generated by recruitment systems and technologies.

Keywords: Recruitment biases, marginalised groups, academic selection process

Introduction

ICCE showcases papers about educational initiatives addressing the diverse needs, characteristics, and circumstances of learners. By designing technologies to accommodate both formal and informal learning environments, high- and under-resourced universities, and a wide breadth of learner types, our community hopes to spread the benefits of these interventions, contributing to greater equity. However, not much is known/said about the diversity of teachers, and what this might mean for encouraging and supporting student diversity. If the teaching population is not diverse, this may be at odds with equity goals. A more diverse teaching population not only broadens perspectives around teaching but provides important student role models and encourages more inclusive educational/workplace cultures. Recruitment bias can be broad and can include bias in recruitment systems and technologies.

The advantages of a diversified workforce are well-established. Campbell (2000) contends that educating a culturally diverse society necessitates a culturally diverse teaching team. This research seeks to examine the concept of inclusion and the influence of biases (Norton et al., 2004) in academic appointments. Studies indicate that the personal and organisational characteristics of decision-makers can affect the screening process for immigrant professionals during recruitment and selection (Fernando et al., 2016). Research into racial and cultural stereotyping suggests that such stereotypes can heighten threat among marginalised groups (Clance and Imes, 1978; Cokley et al., 2017), leading to underperformance, as these groups may struggle to connect with the mainstream (Miyake et al., 2010; Spencer et al., 1999; Steele and Aronson, 1995).

Methods of Evaluative Data Collection and Analysis

Participants will include university employees from various gender, cultural, and racial backgrounds, as well as people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQA+ community, who have either been interviewed for academic positions or served on selection panels. The study will employ a mixed-methods approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews and surveys.

Data analysis will follow a thematic approach based on Chi (1997) eight-step verbal data analysis protocol.

Evidence of Outcomes and Effectiveness

A comprehensive literature review revealed a lack of studies on racial and cultural biases in the academic selection process. Data were collected through surveys and interviews. This workshop will highlight findings from interviews with panel members, providing insights into their perceptions of inclusion and its role as an opportunity in education and society to identify and challenge discrimination and exclusion at both local and national levels. Examples of technology-driven biases such as pre-screening video interviews and CV/resume will be presented while utilising platforms such as Padlet to involve participation of workshop attendees.

References

Campbell, A. 2000. Cultural Diversity: Practising what we preach in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education,* 5**,** 373-384.

Chi, M. 1997. Quantifying qualitative analyses of verbal data: A practical guide. *Journal of the Learning Sciences,* 6**,** 271-315.

Clance, P. R. & Imes, S. A. 1978. The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice,* 15**,** 241-247.

Cokley, K., Smith, L., Bernard, D., Hurst, A., Jackson, S., Stone, S., Awosogba, O., Saucer, C., Bailey, M. & Roberts, D. 2017. Impostor feelings as a moderator and mediator of the relationship between perceived discrimination and mental health among racial/ethnic minority college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology,* 64**,** 141-154.

Fernando, M., Almeida, S. & Dharmage, S. C. 2016. Employer perceptions of migrant candidates' suitability: The influence of decision-maker and organisational characteristics. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources,* 54**,** 445-464.

Miyake, A., Kost-Smith, L. E., Finkelstein, N. D., Pollock, S. J., Cohen, G. L. & Ito, T. A. 2010. Reducing the gender achievement gap in college science: a classroom study of values affirmation. *Science,* 330**,** 1234–1237.

Norton, M., Vandello, J. & Darley, J. 2004. Casuistry and Social Category Bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 87**,** 817-831.

Spencer, S. J., Steele, C. M. & Quinn, D. M. 1999. Stereotype Threat and Women's Math Performance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 35**,** 4-28.

Steele, C. M. & Aronson, J. 1995. Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 69**,** 797–811.