Exploring the practice of cultural intelligence through the Vice-Chancellor's office at a South African University

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Declaration

I, Nkosinathi Tom, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Business Administration in the Faculty of Economics and Management Science at the North-West University, is my own original work and has not been submitted to any institution of Higher Education. All the sources used for this study are cited and referenced in the reference list

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Date: 30 November 2022

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Dedication

As special dedication to the Lord all mighty, my wife Dr Lesego Molale-Tom, my Mother Pakisho Revonia Sedumedi, my two Daughters Mikhulu and Zibele Tom - thank you for believing in me and walking this path with me.

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My deepest gratitude to the Lord Almighty for His endless mercies and favour upon my life. Several people have contributed to this study through their support, encouragement, and contribution, without which this study would not have been possible. A special thank you to my wife, Dr Lesego Molale-Tom and daughters Zibele and Mikhulu for their encouragement, love, sacrifice and patience throughout my studies. My dearest wife, thank you for all the laughter, in between prayers and late-night coffees even in times when I would not have the drive to continue, you are a God-sent Angel. Thank you to my family the Toms especially my mother, siblings and nephew; thank you to my in-laws (Bo RraMolale) and our house manager (Aunty Kedibone Flathela) for all the love and support. Prof Yvonne Du Plessis, my second mother, thank you for your never-ending support, guidance, and patience throughout my studies and your "go-go-go" encouraging messages. I could not have asked for a better supervisor. Thank you also to my employer (the North-West University) for paying for my tuition, my current and former line managers and colleagues for their continued support and words of encouragement. Thank you to the Kasteel Ladies Residence's ladies for always cheering for me in all my cultural intelligence, inclusion and diversity talks in various institutional platforms. Thank you also to the Botha family for the support and encouragement. Thank you to all my friends who have positively contributed to my MBA journey, especially group Dexty, Musa, DK, Lizyben and Raki. Last, thank you to myself for not giving up on this long-standing dream; as Zechariah 4:10 reads: "*Do not* despise these small beginnings", there is certainly power in small beginnings. This vision was set for an appointed time.

ABSTRACT

Cultural intelligence is an individual's ability to function within multicultural settings. This construct was recently coined in 2003 and is still being explored by researchers as to how it plays a role in managing diverse groups of stakeholders. South Africa is known to be a Rainbow Nation as it has a diverse community profile based on *inter alia*, gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, language, and age. Similarly, various sectors including the higher education sector in South Africa comprised of persons from various cultures, backgrounds, nationalities and with different preferences. It is in this regard that cultural intelligence could be used as a competency to enhance and harness functional relations with multicultural stakeholders, including strategic alliances. In a diverse work environment where individuals do not know of and understand practice intelligence, this could potentially strain relations with stakeholders. The primary objective of this study was to explore the level at which cultural intelligence is practised at a multicultural university, using the office of the vice-chancellor as a case study. The focus was specifically on what, why and how cultural intelligence practices are perceived by participants based on their experience and ways in which these practices can be enhanced and rolled out. A literature review providing an overview of the practice of cultural intelligence and why it should be practised in organisations was compiled using a variety of scholarly sources, including books, articles, and internet sources. The four CQ dimensions, namely, cognitive, behavioural, metacognitive, and motivational CQ were explored and how they influence an individual's practice of cultural intelligence. A total of 12 participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, where they shared their lived experiences on the construct CQ. Subsequent to the data collection an inductive thematic analysis was conducted using the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Based on the findings of this study, cultural intelligence is practised more at senior management level than at lower levels. This is due to the level of exposure and engagement emanating from continuous robust engagements.

Keywords: Cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, multicultural settings, higher education sector and stakeholders.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CQ Cultural intelligence

EQ Emotional intelligence

IPA Interpretative phenomenological analysis

VC Vice-chancellor

SAHO South African History Online

CHAPTER ONE:

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction to the study

Technological advancement and globalisation have led modern day organisations, including those in the higher education sector to operate under multicultural environments characterised by individuals and organisation stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds. Consequently, employees find themselves in environments where competency in cultural intelligence (CQ) becomes pivotal in getting work done (Rüth & Netzer 2020:4-5). Cultural intelligence defines an individual's ability to function optimally in an environment with individuals from diverse cultures, encompassing different nationalities, races, tribes, ethnic groups, and beliefs (Earley & Ang, 2003:59).

It has been proved that culturally intelligent people have greater work success when working in diverse cultural contexts (Ang *et al*., 2007:336). There is, therefore, a need for employees who engage with diverse stakeholders, as part of their job requirements, to be able to adapt to multicultural contexts in order to effectively contribute to their organisational goals. Acquiring CQ competence may however require organisational interventions, including training and mentoring. This may involve learning other people's cultural requisites in order to engage and build positive relationships. Although people with higher CQ are generally not better in their work or in doing business, differences have been reported when having to engage with stakeholders from a different culture, with CQ competent employees exceeding expectations in comparison to those who do not have it (Ng *et al*., 2012:49).

1.2 Motivation for the Study

This study will contribute to the knowledge on the significance of CQ implementation within the higher education sector of South Africa. This will include crucial data on CQ practice among employees in higher education institutions (HEIs) and strategies that may be required to build and maintain good relations as well as ensuring inclusivity with multicultural stakeholders. The University of interest is a multicultural public institution functioning within a developing country and provincial context and is surrounded by rural

villages, mines, and agricultural sites. This is in an institution striving to live a culture of inclusivity at all levels of the institution serving the vision of unity. This study also supports the United Nations' Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals, calling for equality and inclusion in Africa.

Studies on CQ in HEIs within the South African context are very limited as shown by findings from search engines including Google Scholar, SAGE, BASE, Microsoft Academic and Boloka, (Du Plessis, 2011; Harunavamwe & Palmer, 2020; Nel *et al*., 2015; Solomon & Steyn, 2011; Van den Bergh, 2008). In addition, advances in communication technology, in particular the use of virtual services has accelerated collaborations between institutions from different countries across the world. This makes CQ one of the key competency skills required to ensure smooth interactions, especially when engaging with dignitaries or strategic alliances from diverse cultures.

1.3 Background to the Case Study

This study explored the practice of cultural intelligence (CQ) at a South African institution of higher learning with individuals from diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Staff and students at this institution operate in multicultural settings and are potentially faced with challenges when engaging with different stakeholders from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The historical apartheid system, practiced in the South African system for over 50 years, had policies centred in the segregation and exclusion of non-whites or persons of colour (History.Com; Editors, 2020). Minimal contact was allowed between different South African racial groups, which deprived them enough exposure to function in diverse settings. Although the racial groupings were few, there existed diverse subcultures and ethnic subgroups, with limited opportunities for cultural integration. The South African population lived under this environment from the beginning of 1948, until it was revoked by the former President F.W. de Klerk in 1991.

To nullify the former regime and move into a new dispensation of a non-discriminatory society, a provisional constitution was introduced through various deliberations between different political parties (SAHO, 2019). It was through the successful election in 1994 that a democratic government was formed, where the constitution emphasised on the

importance of eradication of exclusion and providing equal opportunities and access to all South Africans irrespective of their differences. The democratic system also encouraged the importance of transformation, social justice, and the promotion of a more cohesive society. Le Roux (1991:242) in his paper makes a profound statement that the future which South Africa wished to create in the early 90s deliberation would either praise or damn the nation. He further uses Karl Marx's words echoed from his 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte of 1852 that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." (Le Roux, 1991:242; The Guardian, 2011). In the South African context and other parts of the world, current generations may be grappling and striving to revolutionise and reinvent themselves, however, traditions of the forefathers may still pose surmountable challenges. Future generations inherently carry the responsibility of mimicking traditions and practices of those who lived before them. The question would be, in the current epochs of revolution where multinationalism and multiculturalism is prominent, how do we create something that has never existed before or perhaps an integrated culture?

The higher education sector in South Africa is not isolated from challenges experienced from the former regime and challenges currently experienced in the democratic system. The institution investigated in this study is a result of a merger of three different former South African Universities, which had different dynamics where the two were mainly black institutions and the one a predominantly white university (Anon, 2021). This merger reflected a symbol of a unified institution with strong emphasis on reconciliation and national building. However, moving from a federal to a unitary model entailed that all individuals from different cultures and backgrounds were compelled to work together and have a sense of belonging. Furthermore, managers had to manage diverse groups with different ways of doing things.

This institution had to implement a strategy that would translate it into an excelling organisation with optimal commitment to social justice. The latter is a reflection that social, cultural, and political experiences by the South African nation affect institutions of higher learning. The 2019 university feedback report postulated the institution's success model to be achieved through values such as ethics, trust, and care; in addition to activities which have dedication to high quality performance, a communicative, transformational,

and inclusive environment. These planned achievements will not be easily attained, given the diversity, multicultural and multinational nature of the environment, as reflected in the student, staff and stakeholder component. Within the current strategy, the institution emphasises commitment to harness an environment with equity of provision, access, redress and positioning themselves as an institution that is globally recognised.

The institution's strategy to harness a more inclusive culture is challenged by its inherent diversity and the high number of faculties and departments. This is something which would require an intentional approach, in ensuring that people treat each other in a mindful manner and that each one of them can have a voice. The dream statement of this institution states that they want to be an internationally recognised university in Africa and globally (Anon, 2021). They have students from 66 nationalities enrolling for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and including international postdoctoral fellows and staff members (Anon, 2022). Furthermore, through their global engagement unit the institution has strategic alliances with international collaborators in other African countries and across the globe. Hence, it becomes imperative to strive for excellence in teaching-learning, research and innovation and community engagement. Graduates from the institution have the opportunity to function in multicultural and multinational settings which creates cultural sensitivity and intelligence and equips them to be highly competitive and employable across the world.

This study examines the construct of CQ through exploration of views, perceptions and lived experiences of a selected sample group of individual employees. Four dimensions were explored, namely, motivational, cognitive, metacognitive and behavioural cultural intelligence. Semi-structured questions were used to ensure that the set-out research questions were properly answered including individual experiences expressed by research participants. Research participants included Senior Management and Vice-Chancellor’s office staff members. The rationale behind focusing on these specific participants is to source insightful data from individuals with extensive experience and knowledge of the environment and continuously engage with people at different layers of the institution. The phenomenological and qualitative research approach was undertaken as it enabled the researcher to get in-depth insight on the construct being investigated.

1.4 Problem statement

Most studies on emotional intelligence (EQ) have provided irrefutable evidence on the importance of cultural intelligence (CQ) for employees in a workplace (Llopis, 2011). However, research on the understanding and practice of CQ among senior management particularly at institutions of higher learning has been scanty despite the multicultural nature of academic environments (Gelfand, 2007:498; Ng *et al*. 2012:47; Nosratabadi *et al*. 2020). Cultural intelligence is not a well-known construct in higher education institutions. Most universities have their focus on programmes and interventions related to diversity targets and not necessarily on inclusion behaviours within their respective organisations (Nosratabadi *et al*. 2020). Based on Thomas and Inkson (2004) cited by the Yitman (2013:7) cultural intelligence refers to a competency that is multidimensional, consisting of cultural inclination and practice that is mindful and inclusive of a range of considerable behavioural skills. The latter refers to the ability of individuals and organisations to behave in a skilful and flexible manner when engaging with other individuals, groups, or organisations, taking into consideration their culture-based values and mannerisms.

A number of studies have reported the current global workplace to be experiencing challenges in maintaining a diverse workforce, citing limited synch with rapidly changing trends on the construct of CQ (Ang and Van Dyne, 2015:1). It has been argued that poor cognisance of the importance of CQ could possibly temper with organisational capability to lead culturally diverse teams. Various CQ practices which individuals and companies could be mindful, in navigating across cultural boundaries more effectively include the development of one's curious mind about other people's cultures, self-awareness of one's behaviour towards others, eliminating a subjective mind-set by having an objective mind and avoiding stereotyping others at all costs (Fries, 2020).

The research gap on the construct of CQ in organisations was reported by Gelfand *et al* (2008:382) as cited by Lima *et al* (2016:10) concluding that EQ is a multi-layered phenomenon which needs to be explored at an individual, group, organisational as well as national levels. Furthermore, various organisations are faced with difficulties in managing diversity, especially in globalised organisations where multicultural stakeholders are required to engage for business collaborations. This is due to the

challenge of treating diversity as an individual and isolated practice, instead of having it forming an integral part of the overall organisational strategy (Chen *et al*., 2012:93). Lima *et al* (2016:23) point out a pivotal role that organisations need to play in striving to position themselves as being culturally intelligent through training and development opportunities for all employees, including management members.

There is a general increase in people's diversity within the business world making CQ a core prerequisite competence which could yield a competitive advantage if employees and organisations develop their CQ (Du Plessis, 2011:35-36). It is particularly important that the individuals in leadership positions be inclined to know the cultural profiles of their employees or subordinates, an aspect currently lacking in many organisations (Solomon and Steyn, 2017:145). In the context of this research the practice of CQ within the office of the vice-chancellor (VC) in a South African University was explored at individual, group, and institutional levels. The question remains, are higher education institutions in South Africa equipped to act with CQ, as this is of strategic importance in building and maintaining good interpersonal relations with multi-cultural stakeholders? Findings from previous studies have reported little or no effort by human resource directorates of various organisations in upskilling executives beyond their general knowledge of what CQ culture entails (Koohang, Paliszkiewicz & Goluchowski, 2017:1 cited by Solomon & Steyn; 2017:145). In the research of Harunavamwe and Palmer (2020:25), they concluded that South African leaders in various work environments have an existing need to gain insight on the practice and theory for high cultural intelligence and its contribution to cross-cultural leadership in South African businesses.

Thus, there is limited information available on CQ in the higher education sector in South Africa. As a result, this study aims to explore the practice of CQ in a Vice-Chancellor's office at a South African University.

1.5 Research objectives

The objective of this study was to explore the extent to which cultural intelligence (CQ) is practised at a specific multicultural university in South Africa, using the Vice-Chancellor's office as a case study. The study focused on the *what, why and how* CQ practices are perceived and ways it can be enhanced and rolled out.

1.5.1 Main objective

The main objective of this study was to explore the practice of cultural intelligence through the office of the vice-chancellor at a multicultural higher education institution in South Africa.

1.5.1.1 Sub-objectives

Sub-objectives of this study were to:

- Explore the views of employees and groups in the VC's office on the practice and importance of CQ in their institution based on their previous experiences.
- Explore the practice of the four CQ dimensions, namely, cognitive, behavioural, metacognitive, and motivational as experienced in the office of the VC.
- Explore how individuals in the office of the VC perceive and experience current cultural intelligence practices in creating and maintaining sound interpersonal relations with multicultural stakeholders.
- Explore why it is important for the office of the VC to practise CQ.
- Identify and describe the CQ development opportunities and how CQ can be used as one of the key strategic initiatives in the organisation.

1.6 Research questions

1.6.1 Main question

Main research question: How do employees perceive and experience the practice of cultural intelligence through the office of the vice-chancellor at a multicultural South African university?

1.6.1.1 Sub-questions

- What are the views of employees and groups in the vice-chancellor's office on the practice and importance of cultural intelligence in their institution based on their experience/s?

- What are the experience and perceptions of employees and groups on the four CQ dimensions, namely, cognitive, behavioural, metacognitive, and motivational cultural intelligence?
- How do individuals in the office of the VC perceive and experience their current cultural intelligence in maintaining sound interpersonal relations with multicultural stakeholders.
- Why is it important for the office of the VC to practise CQ?
- What are the CQ development opportunities in their institution and how can it be used as one of the key strategic initiatives in the organisation?

1.6.2 Research Methodology

In this paper, a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach was employed, where participants were requested to share their lived experiences on the construct investigated. In order to get insightful views, in-depth interviews were conducted using an interview guide with open-ended questions as a data collection instrument.

The sampling strategy adopted is a non-probability purposive sampling method, where a specific population was deliberately targeted (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:85; Statistics Solutions, 2020). The chosen sample was composed of 12 participants, who voluntarily participated in the study. It should be noted that the initial plan was to have 21 participants, however, data saturation was reached after 12 participants were interviewed. The participants were a group of executives and staff members linked to the vice-chancellor's office at a selected university in South Africa.

The researcher used ATLAS-ti data analysis software (22.0) as a tool to do a thematic analysis and draw themes and sub-themes from the collected data.

1.7 Limitations of the study

- Participants take a long time to avail themselves due to the nature of their work.
- Possible delays due to rescheduling of engagements due to busy diaries of senior management members.
- Participants quitting and/or having second thoughts during the course of the research.

- Biased information from some participants due to fears of being exposed.

Limitations as a result of the selected design (qualitative research design), are that it is time-consuming, and the subjective data collected from participants are difficult to analyse compared.

1.8 Ethical considerations (ethics clearance attached as Appendix C)

The researcher will ensure that the research will not cause any form of harm to any of the participants, be it physical, psychological, social, or financial. Furthermore, there should be no harm as far as invasion of privacy for participants is concerned. The research obtained informed consent from the participants and assurance was given that their information will be kept confidential. In addition, the researcher ensured that the research was conducted in a non-deceptive way to the participants. The researcher explained the purpose of the research and avoided any controversial practices that could lead to distrust or harm participants. Participants were informed about their right and option to withdraw from the research at any given time. Thus, interviews were conducted in settings conducive for all participants. In addition, objectiveness was maintained at all times and no attempt was made in trying to lead participants in their answers. Participants were not made to feel pressured or uncomfortable in trying to get them to respond or answer. The following information of permission and informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were derived from the book by Bryman *et al* (2018:120-128).

1.8.1 Permission and informed consent

Participants envisaged to partake in this study, were given permission to be part of the research. Furthermore, the researcher informed participants what the collected data was going to be used for and obtained their consent. A consent ***(refer to Appendix B)*** form developed by the researcher was used as a tool to ensure that potential participants read and understand contents of the form, then sign the form before they could partake in the study.

1.8.2 Anonymity

The researcher assured participants of their anonymity when participating in this study prior to the research process.

1.8.3 Confidentiality

One of the fundamental rules when conducting research is that all participants should not be harmed, be it their rights to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. Therefore, confidentiality was maintained throughout the course of this study. Furthermore, participants were made aware of limitations pertaining to privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity prior to their participation in the research process. The data were stored on Microsoft Teams as it is a double encrypted and secured platform and was backed up in a P-Drive platform which is also encrypted.

STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Overview of the study. This chapter sets the tone for the paper by giving introduction to the study. It further provides some background and motivation as to why the study is conducted. A problem statement is also formulated and objectives as well as research questions are also outlined.

Chapter 2: Literature review. This chapter serves as a review of existing literature on practice of the construct cultural intelligence, its four dimensions namely, motivational cultural intelligence, cognitive cultural intelligence, meta-cognitive cultural intelligence and behavioural cultural intelligence.

Chapter 3: Research methodology. This chapter focused on methods and processes to be followed to realise set out objectives in the study. These processes were inclusive of the research paradigm, research approach, research design, demarcation of the study and method as well as the data collection.

Chapter 4: Data analysis, presentation of results and discussion of findings. This chapter provides a description of how the collected data was analysed. An interpretative phenomenological analysis is employed, which is qualitative in nature. Thereafter, results and findings are presented, including the contribution of the research with the substantiation to results found.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, managerial implications and recommendations. This chapter of the research provides a summary of the study; thereafter provides suggestions which could be undertaken in the future.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Cultural Intelligence requires individuals to be open-minded in seeking to understand other cultures through active interactions (Thomas & Inkson, 2003:5-9 cited by Du Plessis, 2011:35). Experiences from interactions could possibly shape an individual's character to adapt their actions to become more empathetic and considerate to people from diverse cultures. The current increase in diversity within organisations has made CQ to become a core prerequisite competence, which could give competitive advantages for businesses with individuals having some level of CQ (Du Plessis, 2011:35-36). There is a need for organisations to provide a macro perspective of cultural intelligence on how international strategic alliances can be built and secured in various industries (Yitmen, 2013:21).

Individuals with high CQ are crucial for organisations if they are to build successful businesses through effective management of people from different backgrounds and cultures. Communication platforms with clear decision-making processes are critical within multicultural organisations as all participants will be judged with no form prejudice or unconscious bias. Organisations that are composed of culturally diverse team members normally have interactional challenges and these need to be managed as they can easily become detrimental to organisation wellbeing (Livermore & Van Dyne, 2015:19). However, if well-handled multicultural groups produce innovative ideas, leading to effective communication and good organisational performance.

Figure 2.1: Graphical representation of the four cultural intelligence dimensions.

2.2 Cultural intelligence defined

The world market requires employees with cultural intelligence to meet the needs of an evolving customer base (Llopis, 2011). This is to ensure that there is proper relatedness between employees and various stakeholders within various institutions. Employees who are unwilling to adapt to complex and ambiguous situations arising from differences in cultures may lead to poor stakeholder relations or loss of business. Cultural intelligence is a multidimensional construct which measures an individual's ability to effectively adapt and function within new or diverse cultural settings (Ang *et al.,* 2007: 336). According to Ang and Van Dyne (2008a) cited by Yari *et al*. (2020: 211), cultural intelligence (CQ) can be perceived as "the ability to succeed in cross-cultural environments and comprises several dimensions, including cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural dimensions (Ott & Michailova, 2007:132; Van Dyne *et al*., 2010:134). It is inclusive of race, ethnicity, nationality and organisations, in addition to sociological, individual and cross-cultural aspects (Van Dyne *et al*., 2010: 132). In general, cultural intelligence consists of cultural knowledge, mindfulness and behavioural skills (Ang *et al*., 2007:335; Thomas & Inkson, 2008:66; Van Dyne *et a*l., 2010:134). Cultural intelligence, within the

context of this study, is defined as an individual and/or organisation's ability to adapt and function within diverse and multicultural environments.

2.3 Motivational cultural intelligence

Van Dyne *et al*. (2010:138) explain motivational cultural intelligence as a factor that provides individuals the drive and self-confidence to seek and understand other cultures. Furthermore, motivational cultural intelligence is also defined as the mental ability to observe and keep track of the intercultural environment in a problem-solving situation (Ang *et al*., 2007:338). According to Kanfer and Heggestad (1997:39), motivational cultural intelligence facilitates goal accomplishment. Individuals with high motivational cultural intelligence focus their energy on their intrinsic interests in order to achieve goals (Ang *et al*., 2007:338). These individuals are highly motivated to experience a variety of new cultures and are positive about intercultural interactions (Earley & Ang, 2003: 138). In addition, these individuals are open to experiencing new situations including work situations (Earley & Ang, 2003:138).

The above literature shows the importance of employees who are in positions that require human interaction to find a manner to adapt to various cultural experiences. This also requires individuals to seek to understand people from other cultures, backgrounds and with different views. A positive outlook towards these experiences and a mindful approach also enhances how one can actually interact and engage with various stakeholders focusing on the internal drive. Thus, the theory shows the need that various constituencies should create a platform for their employees, especially with the emerging global market which requires one to be agile and highly motivated in interactions. In the context of this research study, this could for example be seen in set instances where international collaborators visit the vice-chancellors' offices and executives have to receive them. If executives do not have the motivational cultural intelligence, this could send a message that the respective institution has no care for its stakeholders. Thus, it might be prudent to conscientize employees to seek to understand different views of various cultures and be open to new situations within their respective work environment. In cases where they do not understand, they can ask, to show the willingness to understand and interest to know about the other culture.

2.4 Cognitive cultural intelligence

Cognitive cultural intelligence focuses on the knowledge dimension of cultural intelligence and cultural differences (Van Dyne *et al*., 2010:135). Cognitive cultural intelligence questions and aims to understand why the behaviour and interactions of individuals across different cultural environments differ (Ang *et al*., 2007:278).

In complex and ambiguous environments such as in offices of vice-chancellors where various executives, internal and external stakeholders, students, and staff members at large make visitations, some form of cognitive cultural intelligence is of paramount importance. Being stuck in old ways of doing things could impede on improving good relations with other people. If an individual is confined to one space and disregards other's views or way of thinking, engagement and relatedness with others will be impeded on. For example, in some cultures dignitaries are not greeted or do not shake hands by ordinary employees or citizens. For someone who lacks cognitive cultural intelligence, that might be a serious offense, or they may think they have been disregarded by the other parties.

2.5 Metacognitive cultural intelligence

Metacognitive cultural intelligence refers to the processes and ability of individuals to obtain and evaluate cultural knowledge (Ang *et al*., 2007:338). Individuals with elevated metacognitive cultural intelligence display characteristics of being consciously aware of other people's cultural preferences during and post interactions (Ang *et al*., 2007:338). In addition, the culture of these individuals influences how they behave in intercultural situations (Triandis, 2006:21). These individuals usually undergo a self-regulated mental process which involves planning of interactions with others, monitoring the contribution of self and others during interactions and revising personal mental models (Ang *et al*., 2007:338; Van Dyne *et al*., 2010:136). According to Van Dyne *et al*. (2010:137) metacognitive cultural intelligence requires individuals to constantly analyse their own thought processes and of those they are interacting with in order to be more effective.

Working in the vice-chancellors' office where various stakeholders visit the office, including dignitaries from all over the world, cultural adaptability and agility are required. Employees are often required or expected to receive guests. Based on the literature

above, the proper interaction will occur if one plans prior to the time of visitation of stakeholders. This is to ensure that they acquaint themselves with the necessary knowledge in seeking to understand what the next person would want. Even in a case where interaction is taking place, self-awareness and regulation might play a role in helping the individual to effectively interact.

2.6 Behavioural cultural intelligence

Behavioural cultural intelligence measures the level of verbal and non-verbal actions portrayed by individuals from different cultural settings (Ang *et al.*, 2007: 338). Individuals with high behavioural cultural intelligence are able to adjust their behaviours to be suitable for different cultural contexts (Ang e*t al*., 2007: 338). Ang *et al.* (2007:338) further explains that when the behaviour or individual is flexible, they are less offensive to other people and adapt better and easily fit into various cultural settings. According to Van Dyne (2010:138), behavioural cultural intelligence provides individuals the ability to engage effectively in flexible leadership cross-culturally.

The above discussion alludes to the importance of improving and enhancing one's cultural intelligence in ensuring that any form of animosity within professional and social setups are avoided. In cases where one has limited cultural intelligence, lack of flexibility could be shown either through conversations or actions without the person noticing. This could be a case where visiting stakeholders could leave with more dissatisfaction without hosting parties being aware, as they may not be inclined to different cultural contexts.

Measures need to be put in place to ensure that constituencies have processes where various cultures have some form of belonging and therefore employees of constituencies need to foster their corporate actions (Lee & Krammer, 2016:199). Due to the globalised world with individuals from diverse backgrounds', there needs to be practices that welcome and allow diverse individuals, this could form corporate processes, marketing platforms during visitations and documents thereof (Embrick, 2011 as cited by Thomas *et al.,* 2014:20). These will ensure that various stakeholders engaging with companies have a sense of belonging as they feel recognised in the processes. It is in this sense that a culture of openness will be strengthened making the workplace environment more welcoming as it embraces differences (Eagly & Chin, 2010:216).

When looking at the history of South Africa and all the cultures found within the country, institutions of higher learning are bound to have individuals from different backgrounds. More investigation could be done in exploring diverse cultures found within the local context and not mostly consider international stakeholders. It is in this sense that relations and engagements with primary clients and fellow colleagues at different levels could be explored on how cultural intelligence could be used as an enabler. In constituencies where there are minorities who may not have a sense of belonging within institutional set up, more could be investigated on how marginalisation could be eliminated (Woodson, 2020). Demographics could be a fracture in the willingness to strengthen cultural intelligence, especially when one belongs to the majority group within their respective constituency. This could be a big contributing negative factor, particularly to those whose cultures may not necessarily be embraced. It is in this sense that more research needs to be conducted on how cultural intelligence could function as a tool or a measure to strengthen stakeholder relations. This will have significant influence in respective institutions as offices of vice-chancellors tend to set a tone for the management cascading down to all internal stakeholders. In case of external stakeholder engagement, vice-chancellors' offices are the ones that carry the image of respective institutions to the outside world. The question would be how cultural intelligence can be utilised to win stakeholders for the respective institutions to gain trust from stakeholders.

Based on Gotsis and Grimanie's (2016:987) statement, if more cultural awareness strategies are effectively employed in an organisation, the performance quality is strengthened. This could further be done when the cultural aspects within the institution are integrated to form a culturally aware constituency, which is critical in achieving organisational strategic goals. This integration will not necessarily happen on its own but there needs to be attitude changes where individuals can seek to understand people from diverse backgrounds (Lee & Kramer, 2016:1). It is therefore imperative for companies to promote more of an engaged culture amongst people from different backgrounds to increase the level of understanding (Hill, 2015:64). Hill (2015:64) further indicates that attitudes of company employees should be in such a way that they bring satisfaction to organisation stakeholders. This will obviously need some form of competency and skills from employees in ensuring that stakeholder demands are effectively communicated and met. Looking at the latter, one could ask if cultural intelligence can play a role in this

regard. The more there is better cultural inclination, the better the understanding of role players and this may yield good results in strengthening stakeholder relations.

According to Klarsfeld *et al.* (2016:2), there are concepts that directly or indirectly have an effect on a culture that embraces diversity. The diversity management paradigm mentioned in Klarsfeld's *et al.* paper, aims to embrace individual employees based on their inborn differences considering various aspects such as age, race, disability, gender, and origin just to mention a few. However, there are other aspects of diversity that go beyond the above-mentioned, employment equity focusing on the importance of equal employment opportunities.

The human resources departments need to assist employees who engage with various stakeholders to be sensitive to people from different cultural backgrounds (Van der Westhuizen, 2016:336). Employees with intrinsic barriers need to be supported so that they do not implement a blanket approach when engaging various stakeholders but should rather seek to understand and embrace different stakeholders for who they are. This could help in effective elimination of individuals who become oblivious to differences existing among an organisations' stakeholders but rather embrace them to optimally achieve strategic goals (Karsfeld *et al*., 2016:2).

Based on the literature above, it is evident that cultural intelligence and its four dimension are a key competency needed for anyone, including managers as leaders within multi-cultural environments, to effectively engage and build sound relations impacting performance. Due to the globalised environment CQ is even more important to maintain quality relationships between organisations and its stakeholders. It is therefore important that managers as individuals in organisations be mindful and cognisant of their thinking process which translates to behaviour towards others. After looking at previous studies conducted on CQ, particularly within the Higher Education sector in South Africa, it is evident that more research needs to be done in this domain. There is currently limited papers published on the construct of cultural intelligence as mentioned in section 1.2 of this paper.

2.7 Summary

In support of the research questions, the literature from seminal authors on the topic of cultural intelligence were explored. It was found that cultural intelligence comprises four dimensions which were used as the base of interpretation and explanation of findings.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The section will explain the research methodology and methods employed in this study.

3.2 Paradigm

The paradigm or philosophy employed in this study was interpretivism, which is a philosophical paradigm that allows individuals to express their experiences (Maree *et al*., 2016:22). This paradigm focused on subjective facts on lived experiences of participants in their individual and organisational capacity and assisted in understanding their context on the phenomenon. Due to the qualitative nature of the approach employed in this study, an interpretivist paradigm managed to enable the researcher to seek to know experiences, understand views and perceptions of participants through their real-life experiences instead of depending on statistical figures (Thanh & Thanh, 2015:24). In addition, the interpretive research paradigm has its focus on understanding the real world as per the subjective views and perceptions of participants and it strives to explain within the context of participants instead of relying on objective views of observers.

3.3 Research approach

This study's research approach was qualitative in nature. The chosen approach assisted in ensuring that participants of the study provide insightful information on their lived experiences on the phenomenon of cultural intelligence in a workplace (Bryman & Bell, 2018:42). Based on Nieuwenhuis (2016:53) qualitative research has its focus on more open and exploratory questions which assist in comprehending the phenomena directly from participants' experiences. Furthermore, this approach uses strategies which strengthen the accuracy in the credibility of the design and analysis of data. This approach has its focus on an inductive style where individuals are allowed to express their meaning on the experience of the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2009:4). It is

important to note that a phenomenological approach helps the researcher to effectively contextualise, interpret and translate described lived experiences of participants on the phenomenon.

3.4 Research design

The research design used in this study was an exploratory qualitative single case study, which enabled the researcher to unfold an emerging phenomenon with no single set of outcomes (Yin, 1984:21 cited by Zainal, 2007:5). Yin (2014:10) postulates that a case study design is often utilised when research has its focus on answering questions such as what, why and/or how. The 'what' had its focus approach on subjective required explanations. The researcher was able to gain theoretical insight which assisted with the production of new theoretical ideas and a supposition of limited evidence for further investigation. Approaching a research study from an objective point of view; allows it to be exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory enabling a researcher to put the phenomenon into context (Kumar, 2011:10). This design was instrumental in exploring the construct of cultural intelligence in full context through a single data collection method, one-on-one interviews. Relevant organisation documents were also utilised in some cases during the research period. As trustworthiness of the qualitative research design is normally in question, trustworthiness in this study was verified by paying attention to accurate information of the sampling method and descriptions received from participants (Elo *et al*., 2014:8). Due to the richness of the data obtained through the research design used in this study, the researcher had to ensure accuracy and representation of the data received from participants to avoid any form of misrepresentation.

3.5 Demarcation of study

This study explored the practice of the 'cultural intelligence' construct in a selected higher education institution, focusing on the vice-chancellor's office. The study included all core staff members in the vice-chancellor's office and an extension of senior executives linked to the vice-chancellor's office at a selected university in South Africa. Thus, all who are in the leading office, providing direction and guidance on strategic matters. The study did not expose any individual and/or the institution as the office is the only organisational link as a business study. The latter was done by not mentioning any names, positions, and any form of identification. All participants were recognised by a code number. In cases

where organisation documents related to this study were used, there were minimal risks or reluctance as those documents were readily available, i.e institutional strategy, policies and reports on the culture and inclusivity projects, just to mention a few. Permission was requested from university gatekeepers and was granted. This was to ensure that the process of conducting this study complied with the relevant ethical parameters.

3.6 Research method

3.6.1 Population

The population of this study consisted of 12 participants which was inclusive of senior management and staff members in the vice-chancellor's office. The population involved was from multicultural backgrounds and individuals of different ages with different beliefs. The unit of analysis was the office of the vice-chancellor as a whole and the extension of the office of executives reporting to the vice-chancellor. These individuals are entrusted to create and maintain sustainable relations with multicultural and multinational internal and external stakeholders. The office of the VC itself is responsible for modelling how employees and groups within the organisation are expected to engage with multicultural stakeholders or groups. This study was intended to take place during the 2021 academic year.

3.6.2 Sample technique and sample size

A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was employed in this study (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:85). Purposive sampling technique is often used by qualitative researchers to find participants who are able to give in-depth and insightful information on the phenomenon (in this study CQ) being investigated (Statistics Solutions, 2020). This particularly important research focuses on a phenomenon with the specific purpose of exploring it through participants who already have lived experience (Maree and Pietersen, 2016:198). This strategy was instrumental in assisting the researcher to explore the essence of the phenomenon from views and lived experiences of participants. In this sampling strategy, not only knowledge and experience were important but also the availability and willingness of participants to participate and effectively communicate their experiences as well as views in an articulated and reflective manner (Bernard, 2002 & Spradley,1979 cited by Palinkas *et al*., 2015:535). As this was

a small group of participants, they were all approached for voluntary participation and saturation was observed post the interview with the 12th participant.

3.6.3 Data collection instruments

3.6.3.1 Data collection tool

An interview guide with open-ended questions was utilised by the researcher (Appendix X), to align with the context of CQ (Bryman *et al*., 2018:191-192). Participants' details were obtained directly after requesting for individual permission.

3.6.3.2 Development of data collection tool

The data collection tool used in the study was an interview guide with open-ended questions (Bryman *et al*., 2018:191-192). Open-ended questions permitted the participants to express their lived experiences and perceptions on CQ in their own terms. Moreover, existing organisation documents were also used as tools to collect data and ensure its sufficiency in answering set out research questions in this study (Yin, 2014).

3.6.3.3 Data collection/fieldwork

Data were collected through face-to-face online interviews on Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Physical face-to-face interviews could not be conducted owing to Covid-19 challenges and geographical distance between researcher and some participants. The interviews focussed on first hand encounters, perceptions, meanings, and interpretations of participants on CQ (Creswell, 2012). Telephonic follow–ups were also conducted where there was a need to clarify points or views which needed more elaborations from participants prior to the data analyses. Data were collected by the researcher through open-ended question interviews, where the researcher had a number of questions on a specific phenomenon in order to answer the study research questions (Bryman *et al*., 2018:225). Interviews were stopped when data were deemed enough by the investigator. In research, data are deemed enough when the researcher feels he has gathered sufficient information and further probing would not enhance and change findings (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1408; Denscomber, 2010:10).

The university in which the single case-study was conducted, comprises 8 606 members, including both academic and support staff. 4077 of these employees are permanent staff members and 4529 are appointed on a temporary basis. However, in this study only a number of staff members working in the vice-chancellor's office and some of the senior management members participated in the research study.

All participants envisaged to participate in this study will receive a written invitation/consent form to ensure ethical compliance and voluntary participation (refer to the attached consent form, Appendix B) (Bryman *et al*., 2018:120).

3.6.4 Data coding and analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim as per question in the Interview Guide. The primary goal of an interpretative analysis is to provide researchers with participants' insight on their perceptions on the world around them and their lived experiences (Creswell, 2012:76; Murray & Holmes, 2013:17). These authors further suggest that interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) equip researchers with tools to derive and make sense of similar meanings from various participants on their lived experiences and further explore the investigated phenomenon. Alase (2017:9) alludes that, although the qualitative methodology gives researchers the freedom to execute their interpersonal and subjective skills; interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA) has more advantageous elements. IPA allows researchers an opportunity to have sufficient insight on the participants' profound and deep-seated deliberation of their lived experiences on the phenomenon. The IPA approach takes into consideration actions such as revisiting and re-questioning of the data provided by participants to a point where its complexity and ambiguity are fully understood, and justice is done to the text (Griffin & May, 2012:450).

The data analysis used in this study is the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) which follows a specific process of three levels (Teike & Sneed, 2018:11) as further explained below. This analysis was done inductively in order to have the data, which emerge from a process which explores, penetrate and gain insightful views and narratives on participant's lived experiences. The latter entail that the researcher is required not to

conduct the research with preconceived ideas but should rather get the data and context directly from participants on their lived experiences on the phenomenon investigated.

3.6.4.1 First level (Practise Epoché)

The researcher will focus on the raw data collected without tempering with it and will have no form of bias. The research will then read through the transcribed text rfrom f participants' interviews. See example of transcription in snippet 1 including initial coding.

Transcription snippet 1

Participant 4: Yeah, **I think we need to have uncomfortable and difficult conversations**. Um, we need to… but first and foremost, you… culture just without the intelligence elements, just **culture itself is influenced by people**. So, as long as we don't have diverse teams, we won't go far yeah. So, we need to make sure that our teams are as diverse as it comes. And in fact, I will argue that our teams must reflect the country. You see there is this. I think we, we, we're compromising a whole lot. When we talk diversity within our environment, we always Uh, sounds like we are talking **50/50**, uh, and in actual fact, this is my, we must **be brutal**. We must look at it at th**e population dynamics**. You know, so ideally, uh, for me, that's, that's how we'll start the. From an, a, just the compromised position. Let's just have diverse teams, not, not, not 70/30 or 80/20 but just let's make sure that we have diversity. But then you see our, **our, um, reward system doesn't touch on this** because, and I think it's because **we don't yet appreciate the value that diversity brings**. Uh, we just do it as a, um, **legal requirement** or, you know, it's about numbers, but if we believe that diverse team's function better, let's reward teams that are diverse and have **embraced Cultural, uh, intelligence, emotional intelligence, uh, ethic of care as their principles**. Not, not necessarily. In my view, **I wouldn't focus more on the individuals** in terms of available structures, and **I'll focus on the teams and reward those teams** that are doing something, or they are demonstrating something **tangible**, this is what we are doing. Um, **whereas in terms of individuals coming into the university, I will start it from the recruitment space where we can have a program.** Of course, when one of the, uh, uh, **competencies and all of that, when we, we do our, our, our, uh, assessments could be that, you know, emotional intelligence, Cultural intelligence, teamwork as competencies that we look at in individuals, but that alone won't be sufficient. I will say we must have a program, a three to six months program that will in a way, um, form part of the boarding process**. You know, **onboarding process** where we, uh, drilled into this, of course **it may not be a one-day everyday thing**, but there must be something that I conclude.

3.6.4.2 Second Level (Phenomenological reduction)

This level contains coding (bracketing), clustering codes into themes and describing these themes. The researcher will go through the transcribed interviews, sentence by sentence, with the intention to separate the text into sub-themes and themes. The researcher will give all participants' statements equivalent value and remove repetitive statements. Third step (Imaginative variation)

At this stage, the raw data from participants' lived experiences and perspectives will be interpreted and brought into context

3.7 Summary

In this chapter the methodology and methods were discussed pertaining to answer the research questions. The following chapter will indicate the data analysis, data interpretation and findings.

CHAPTER FOUR:

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and presents findings from the collected data. Initially 21 participants were targeted, however only 12 were interviewed as the researcher had noted saturation from consistencies in responses and it was concluded that pursuing more participants would not yield new information (Dwarkin, 2012; Dworkin, 2012:1319). The concept of data saturation in qualitative studies is more important than sample size as compared to quantitative approaches (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1413). It, therefore, can be concluded that sufficient data to provide valid findings were gathered in this study. The results of the research are presented in the sections that follow.

4.2 Presentation of finding

This chapter primarily presents selected data from participants clustered under several thematic areas that emerged during data analysis. The data provide insight into the perceptions of cultural intelligence among senior management in the vice chancellors office at the selected university.

The findings will be presented in relation to the research questions as follows:

1 What are the views of employees and groups in the vice-chancellor's office on the practice and importance of cultural intelligence in their institution based on their experience/s?
2 What is the experience and perceptions of employees and groups on the four CQ dimensions namely, cognitive, behavioural, metacognitive, and motivational cultural intelligence?
3 How do individuals in the office of the VC perceive and experience their current cultural intelligence in maintaining sound interpersonal relations with multicultural stakeholders.
4 Why is it important for the office of the VC to practise CQ?
5 What are the CQ development opportunities in at their institution and how can it be used as one of the key strategic initiatives in the organisation?

These five research questions were asked to all the participants in this study and served as a guide to any further probing (see Appendix A). The presentation of findings begins with a tabulation of the demographic details of participants who were interviewed. This is followed by a presentation of information the extent to which participants understood the meaning of cultural intelligence, the experiences of participants with respects to the four detentions (cognitive, behavioural, metacognitive and motivational) of cultural intelligence, the perception of CQ as practised in the VC's office in maintaining relationships with multicultural stakeholders and why it is important, and the strategies that can be used in developing CQ in the organisation.

Data from verbal interviews were transcribed by the researcher into text. Participants' responses were evaluated based on a thematic approach by grouping them into specific participants per research question and were presented as such for discussion. Anonymity of participants was achieved by providing pseudonyms instead of their actual names (Table 4.1). In presenting the findings participants' voices were maintained by use of quotations. This enables the provision of authentic and original feedback echoed by participants from their lived experiences on the construct of cultural intelligence.

4.3 Biographical information

Most participants in this study had been employed at the institution for at least 3 years and a maximum over 15 years. A long period of employment is necessary for in-depth understanding of cultural intelligence within the environment as it guarantees enough time to have lived experiences through exposure to interactions and relationships within the institution and with stakeholders. 8 of the 12 participants were males and five were females. Most of the participants belonged to senior management, while one was in middle management and two were professionals. All senior management members as indicated in table 1 below were older than 50 years and two were older than 60 with one professional between 20 and 29 years and the other between 30 and 39 years. The youngest participants were all females, showing progress on diversity in the VC's office. However, the dominance of males in the older than 50 years category is indicative of the history of the higher education institutions in South Africa where there was significant gender imbalance in senior positions.

Table 1: Biographical information of participants

Participant	Pseudonym	Position level	Gender	Age group
1	P1	Senior Management	Female	60-69 years
2	P2	Senior Management	Female	50-59 years
3	P3	Senior Management	Male	60-69 years
4	P4	Professional	Female	20-29 years
5	P5	Senior Management	Male	50-59 years
6	P6	Middle Management	Male	50-59 years
7	P7	Senior Management	Male	50-59 years
8	P8	Senior Management	Male	60-69 years
9	P9	Senior Management	Male	50-59 years
10	P10	Senior Management	Male	50-59 years
11	P11	Senior Management	Female	50-59 years
12	P12	Professional	Female	30-39 years

In the following sections the discussion of the analysis and findings will be articulated inclusive of evidence quotes from the data transcripts.

4.4 Understanding of cultural intelligence among senior management

The understanding of what cultural intelligence is, was relatively uniform among nine of the twelve participants. These acknowledged it being an individuals' awareness or sensitivity when engaging with people from different cultures. These participants provided evidence as to the definition constructs indicated in figure 4.1 below.

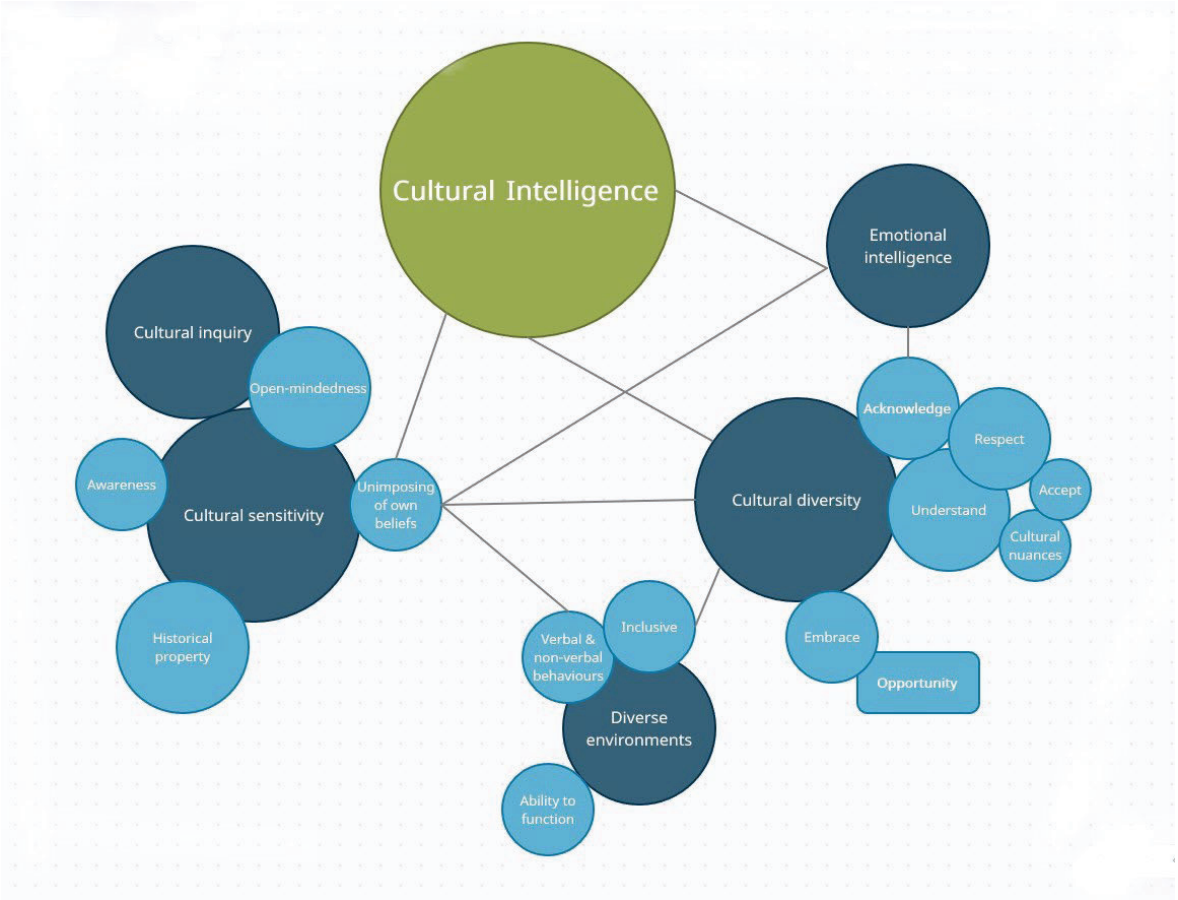


Figure 4.1: Bubble graph illustrating cultural intelligence understanding with themes and sub-themes

P1 "I think it's your ability to work and relate to people from different groups''.

P2 "I think cultural intelligence means cultural sensitivity, i.e. recognition of different cultures and the understanding of how different cultures influence people to view situations differently."

P3 "it's an individual's ability to optimally function in a multicultural setup where diverse people are involved"

P4 "it's the ability of an individual or individuals to work or engage with people from diverse groups, or cultural backgrounds, and orientation".

P5 "I think cultural intelligence means, cultural sensitivity, or the recognition and understanding of how the different cultures influence how people view different situations"

P6 “It's the ability to be able to relate to people, no matter which culture they're from, for you to be able to communicate with them without any boundaries”.

P7 “The awareness that one is functioning within a diverse environment with people of various cultures. In particular, how one takes note of what is –and- what is not - acceptable in each person’s culture and acts in a manner which is respectful to their colleagues.

P8 “Cultural intelligence has a lot to do with sensitivity, to cultural differences and to diversity, and requires pre-existing knowledge about cultural differences”

The four participants P9, P10, P11 and P12 did not correctly define what cultural intelligence is. Participant P9 resorted to defining what informs cultural intelligence and focussing one's upbringing environment including the family and community. participant P10 defined cultural intelligence as organisational culture focussing on the understanding of how organisational diversity, and integration is likely to be affected, whereas P11 defined it as one’s acknowledgement of people’s different cultural backgrounds and P12 could not distinguish cultural intelligence from emotional intelligence. These participants had this to say

P9 “this is not my field, but my understanding is that everyone has belief rights and beliefs are acquired, as you grow as an individual, because culture in a multicultural society is something that is embedded within a family and the community. It informs the do's and the don'ts, as part of that community, how you behave, and how you relate to elders, how you relate to the world, how you relate to other cultures, as well. So, all these things are constructed as part of your interaction in the community”.

P10 “Cultural intelligence is about all those things that underpin the ethos of an environment, it is about how savvy we are and how knowledgeable we are about what is going on in the environment, how we understand issues that are likely to affect the culture of the organisation like the diversity, and integration, are people able to work effectively in groups, what are our values, what do we embed in our values, what are our belief systems?” What styles of communication do we use? How are we able to culturally adapt to challenges to changing circumstances?

P11 "Cultural intelligence is to know that we have diverse backgrounds and varied histories like in this country"

P12 "it is emotional intelligence, and then what do you understand by emotional intelligence? -- to me, it would appear as if it's having the skills, --- to be able to work in an environment with diverse situations.

Thus, by their definition twelve participants had an in-depth understanding of what cultural intelligence with participant 3 describing it best.

Figure 4.1 is a bubble map illustrating the main themes and sub-themes emanating from the participants' lived experiences on the understanding of the construct of cultural intelligence. Briefly, the main themes identified were emotional intelligence (EQ), cultural diversity, diverse environment, cultural sensitivity, and cultural inquiry. Briefly, the first identified theme was cultural diversity with the sub themes acknowledgment, understanding, cultural nuances, respect, acceptance and embracing. Most participants mentioned that when one embraces cultural diversity, there is an opportunity to develop and improve the practice of cultural intelligence of an organisation. Others went further to highlight that a symbiotic relationship exists between cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence. Although EQ has no subtheme, a number of participants associated it to CQ. This association has been reported by various similar studies (Abdeldayem *et al.*, 2022:927; Gabel *et al.,* 2005:379; Moon, 2010:87). However, to date, a paucity of data exist regarding the role of EQ in cross-cultural contexts, thus making it difficult to conclude a strong correlation between the two constructs (Lin *et al.,* 2012:542).

Nonetheless, Lin *et al.* (2012:549), highlights that individuals with high CQ and EQ are able to better adjust in cross-cultural contexts. Furthermore, in the current study, EQ was associated with the sub themes (Acknowledge, understand, respect, cultural nuances and accept) under the cultural diversity main theme (figure 4.1). This is in agreement with the findings of Kilduff and Cormican (2022:826) who note that individuals with high EQ tend to be able to acknowledge and identify their own weaknesses relating to cultural knowledge and awareness. Thus, the latter is reflective of the CQ behavioural dimension.

In addition, various sub themes related to the main theme of diverse environments, were inclusivity, ability to function and verbal and non-verbal behaviour. It is worth noting that

the theme diverse environments were also linked to a subtheme (unimposing one's own beliefs) belonging to another theme (cultural sensitivity).

Within the main theme of cultural sensitivity, a few sub-themes emerged, including historical property, unimposing of own beliefs, awareness, and open-mindedness. In dealing with cultural sensitivities, several participants were of the view that when dealing with cultural sensitivities, individuals have the responsibility to inquire on cultural preferences in an open-minded manner. However, they are of the view that the latter can only be done if one has a certain level of awareness on cultural-related issues and approaches people open-mindedly and with no preconceived ideas. According to NG *et al.* (2009:513), continual learning and open-mindedness is crucial for individuals functioning in uncertain and complex culturally diverse environments. In addition, an inquiry learning model has been shown to have a positive impact on metacognitive awareness and knowledge (Asy'ari & Ikhsan, 2019:463). This suggests that learning about cultural differences through inquiry increases an individual's metacognition awareness. Secondly, Göl and Erkin (2012:486), highlight that CQ fosters and enhances cultural sensitivity which makes them independent variables. Also, the latter study illustrated that a positive correlation exists between CQ and cultural sensitivity (Göl & Erkin, 2012:490). Thus, when the intercultural sensitivity of individuals increases, this inevitably increases the CQ of individuals.

4.5 Culturally intelligent leadership/management

The participant's understanding on the conduct of a leader deemed culturally intelligent was evaluated by asking the question;

"What do you understand when we refer to someone (a leader/ manager) as being culturally intelligent (Cognitive CQ)?"

The participants considered a culturally intelligent leader as a person who understands that diverse groups of people have different approaches because of cultural backgrounds and does not impose their own culture or their own beliefs on other people but is prepared to learn from others while accepting that he/she does not know everything. The application of the definition was demonstrated in the example given by. Participant P1 who cited the situation at site 3, where some of the Setswana colleagues by nature of their culture are very hesitant to disagree or speak their mind with someone in a

management position. In this situation a culturally intelligent leader would create a conducive environment where the people feel free. This requires respect and trust that one just wants to do what's right for the faculty or the university. Under these circumstances, cultural difference barriers become fluid as it will be a matter of the relationship between work colleagues. Another example was provided participant P2 and P5 who commented that:

P2 "for somebody who organises an event, cultural intelligence means providing for those with specific dietary requirements, and if it includes traditional leaders as was in the cases of the business school meeting with the traditional leaders, it's important to do a bit of homework to understand the personal context of the individuals. In this case for example how one becomes a traditional leader? And what does it mean to be the king of the Royal Bafokeng?"

P10 "A culturally intelligent leader, … in a toxic environment, is aware of the toxicity in the environment, provides active stewardship by creatively and positively influencing stuff, in an inclusive leadership style, that doesn't alienate anyone, irrespective of sexual orientation, race, gender; whichever campus, whether they are new to the organization, or not.

However, respondent P2 was also of the notion that "the more diverse your team, the more embedded intelligence you have in that team as different people see things from different angles?" An individual's emotional intelligence is defined by the extent one understands self and being mindful of the lens used in looking at things, including being mindful of one's biases on others backgrounds, and interpretation of things.

The South African context, due to the wide diversity of cultures and languages has a number of challenges in practising cultural intelligence. This was alluded to by participant P6 who had this to say:

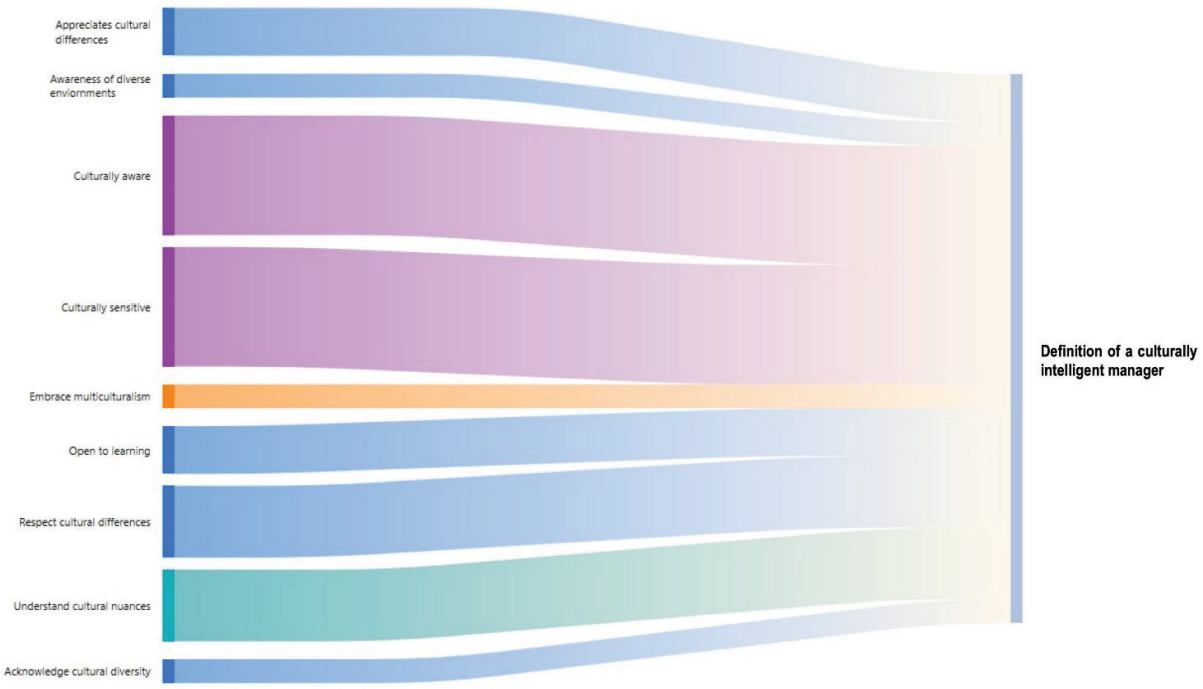
P6 … in this country …, there's a lot of sensitivity around culture and it is very really easy to offend someone unknowingly. Just because you are not aware of the beliefs and the values and the background that they come from culturally speaking. only. So, …it's being able to have almost like a seventh sense, lets me have a sixth sense for emotions…, knowing when you have crossed the line, even though it's your opinion,.."

Factors that influence practising cultural intelligence within the institution were highlighted by participant P8 and P12 who noted cultural diversity and language barriers; these had this to say:

P8 "… cultural intelligence is derived from your ability to manage differences in cultural terms … not just race, and ethnicity, but institutional cultures also. , the North-West has a dominant Sesotho - Setswana culture and an Afrikaans culture, … which heavily influence the work ethic. But there I don't find a healthy discussion or a healthy exchange between these cultures … I see dominance by one over the other and a lack of openness on the part of one to engage the other. And it's much more than language, as language … is a medium of cultural expression".

P12 "…a person might be Afrikaans, and then their mother language is Afrikaans. if it's translated to English, some things may mean different things to them than to you, This has to do, with background, whether its previously disadvantaged groups, different upbringing, countries of whether it's African or international, staff, or international students.

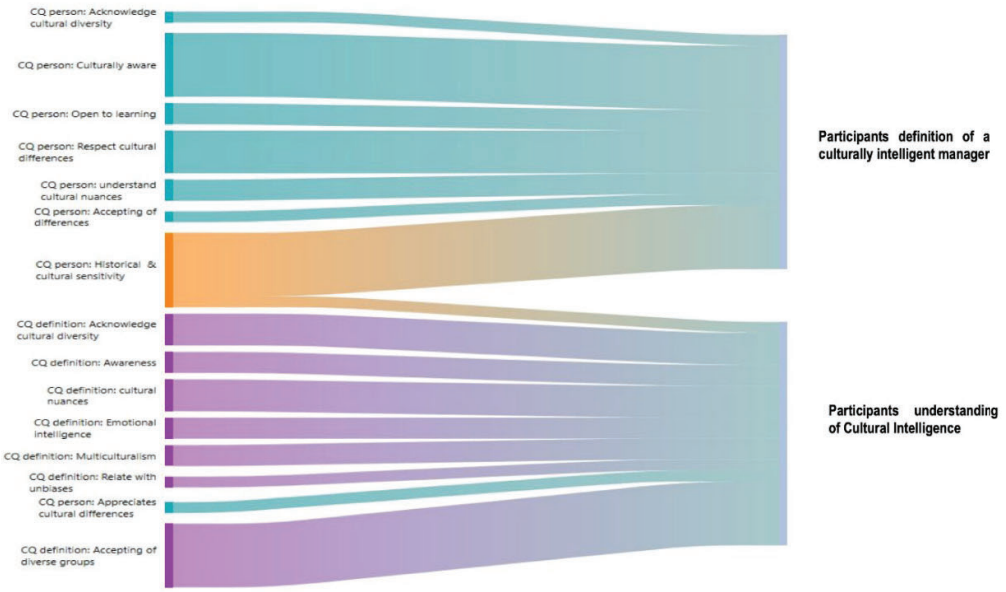
Figure 4.2, reflects responses and perceptions given by participants in this study in defining a culturally intelligent person. The majority of these participants expressed that a culturally intelligent leader must be culturally aware and culturally sensitive. These results are similar to those of Abdeldayem *et al.* (2022:928), where participants noted cultural awareness as a critical skill when engaging with individuals from different cultures. According to Kienzle and Husar (2007:82), culturally aware individuals are good for an organisation as they always ensure they do not offend fellow employees, stakeholders, customers, business partners as well as the community within which the organisation is located. Furthermore, several participants further highlighted that individuals functioning in diverse environments have to respect cultural differences and strive to have a clear understanding of nuances which exist within different cultures. While some were of the view that one needs to be open to learning. Some believe that this can be done if one is able to acknowledge cultural diversity. Lastly, individuals need to be aware of diverse environments and embrace multiculturalism.



Acknowledge cultural diversity	5,80%
Appreciates cultural differences	4,59%
Awareness of diverse enviornments	2,90%
Culturally aware	24,88%
Culturally sensitive	36,96%
Embrace multiculturalism	0,97%
Open to learning	7,73%
Respect cultural differences	9,42%
Understand cultural nuances	6,76%

Figure 4.2: Sankey graph illustrating the participant's definition of a culturally intelligent person.

Figure 4.3 below is intended to illustrate characteristics of a culturally intelligent person as suggested by the participants. It is worth noting that there are some overlaps between key themes appearing on figure 4.2 and those which are featured in figure 4.3, this will be corroborated later in the text.



CQ definition: Accepting of diverse groups	6	28,57%	
CQ definition: Acknowledge cultural diversity	3	14,29%	
CQ definition: Awareness	2	9,52%	
CQ definition: cultural nuances	3	14,29%	
CQ definition: Emotional intelligence	2	9,52%	
CQ definition: Multiculturalism	2	9,52%	
CQ definition: Relate with unbiases	1	4,76%	
CQ person: Accepting of differences	1		4,55%
CQ person: Acknowledge cultural diversity	1		4,55%
CQ person: Appreciates cultural differences	1	4,76%	
CQ person: Culturally aware	6		27,27%
CQ person: Deep/complex intelligence	0		
CQ person: Emotionally sensitive	0		
CQ person: Historical & cultural sensitivity	7	4,76%	27,27%
CQ person: Open to learning	2		9,09%
CQ person: Respect cultural differences	4		18,18%
CQ person: understand cultural nuances	2		9,09%
Totals		100,00%	100,00%

Figure 4.3: Sankey graph illustrating how participants describe the main characteristics of cultural intelligent

As per Figure 4.3, the two prominent characteristics of an CQ individual include those who are culturally aware and can accept the existence of diverse groups appears to be important and prominent for the many of the participants. A notable overlap between the definition of and characteristics of a culturally intelligent individual was identified for historical and cultural sensitivities. Furthermore, most of the participants alluded that the CQ or acumen of many South Africans is largely shaped by historical and cultural sensitivities. This entails that the approach of South Africans will tend to be more sensitive

to these cultural differences. Some participants further reiterate that an individual with CQ will tend to respect cultural differences and relate to people belonging to other cultures in an unbiased manner. There are a few participants who mentioned that one needs to appreciate differences to be regarded as culturally sensitive. Last, it is worth noting that participants view emotional intelligence as one of the key factors required for one to be regarded to be culturally intelligent. The characteristics identified in this study can be categorised into the three main characteristics listed by Thomas and Inkson (2008:16): requiring and acquiring knowledge about different cultures, being mindful during cross-cultural settings, and developing cross-cultural skills thus being able to display and carry out appropriate behaviours during varying intercultural setups. Nonetheless, more characteristics are suggested in this study. Contrastingly, Stoain (2020:101) identified two other characteristics of culturally intelligent people: The ability to anticipate differences and carry out direct and indirect cordial communication.

4.6 Perception and practice of cultural intelligence in the vice chancellor's office

The extent to which cultural intelligence is practised in the vice chancellors office was evaluated based on the question.

"What is your perception of the current practice of cultural intelligence in the office of the VC, your directorate and in this institution? and to what extent is it practised. (Probe on Why?) (Behavioural CQ)"

The extent to which cultural intelligence is practised by directors and the deputy Deans was noted to be quite above average by all participants. Staff in the VCs office were reported to engage with various stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and try to respect the various behavioural mannerisms required of them (P7). The general diversity within the university is composed of people coming from different countries, in Africa, including, the Anglophone, Francophone, French speaking African people, especially at a Site 3s. Site 2, has many people of European descent, the Germans, Dutch, the Afrikaans speaking people, and then the 11 black tribes of South Africa, consequently there is consciousness of all these different groups, The university as an institution has put in place a system that makes it inevitable for managers to become competent in cultural *intelligence as corroborated by Participant P1 who had this to say;*

P1 “I had no option than to become competent in cultural intelligence since “the one faculty one Dean”, policy change implemented at the end of 2017. As a result of the program management had to visit different campuses every three months. In these visits managers had touched base meetings meeting people with no agenda but just talk to them.?

Before then it appears other campuses were alienated in terms of visits by some senior management as commented by participant P! who had this to say

P1 “like somebody said to me in 2019. This is the first time I've ever been on the site 3 of which has most of black staff members.. That is someone with a very senior position at the university. So if you were culturally intelligent, you would have many, many times reached out to the people…”.

The consciousness on cultural intelligence was however deemed to not be mature as yet by Participant P10 who noted the dependence of cultural intelligence amongst the leaders, to depending on level of leadership with the executive level being very mature, and had this to say;

P10 “I don't think we are all at that same level of maturity, where we want to be, we are still in the forming and storming stage of our journey towards cultural intelligence”.

It was noted that the institution had not as yet formulated a leadership philosophy on which to firmly embed cultural intelligence. A lot of work on the cultural diversity, inclusion and cultural sensitivity assessments has been done at the institution, including awareness and understanding of how individuals are different in terms of their responses and philosophy to life and their ability to adapt culturally. However, the findings were not formulated into the institution’s leadership philosophy. Consequently, the way cultural intelligence manifests are based on how cultural savvy of each individual is, rather than having it as overall community conduct. Consequently, management is currently implementing the culture project and the organisational citizenship behaviour project in trying to make sure that all members understand what the values driven culture of the university means.

Good examples, and bad examples on CQ in the office of the VC were cited for example, Participant P4 acknowledged the need for cultural intelligence on the management committee, of which the administration has gone through a phase, getting to know and trust one another, to have better discussions. On the contrary the impact of covid on physically meeting and discussing with people mostly working remotely had a negative impact. However, observations seen with participants attending the research development and research support program strongly suggest a number of university employees are not culturally sensitive. A Typical example was cited by participant 3 with regards to a racist situation and had this to say:

P3 "There was a racist incident a while ago and I was quite surprised the VC's openness to say, well, I have space almost full of all kinds of intolerance if the person is growing and I can work with him. that person will reach a point of changing."

The role of training in developing CQ mentioned by P1 was further supported by P6 who noted that management was aware of the direction to take with regards to cultural intelligence and what needs to be done and had this to say.

P6 "I think it's going to take time because it's something that they need to find a way to learn. Challenges will however come in terms of how we go about teaching people this skill"

Although senior management can be deemed competent in practising cultural intelligence, they represent a small proportion of the university employee as commented by participant P2 who had this to say

P2 "if you think there are 69 people, or 70 people at Senate, out of 4000 people working at the university, and then we have deep discussions at Senate about what does transformation mean? And how must we look at governance. … one can get the feeling that there is a lot of cultural intelligence, but then one forgets that there is more than 4000 staff members that are not exposed to those discussions. … so the cultural intelligence at certain levels is more developed because of exposure, -- academics in particular have an opportunity. And some might have more diverse classes than others. ---can you have cultural intelligence --If you're not exposed to a lot of different cultures?

Although cultural intelligence at the institution may be located in various paradigms, its lack was cited mostly with regards to language. At site 3, the Setswana culture and norms and values are dominant similar to Afrikaans at site 2, due to the historical context. However, participant P4 was of the view that there is imposing of dominant languages on minorities and had this to say;

P4 "… many of our colleagues in that space, … even after they know that you are not Setswana speaking, where they still speak in Setswana to you. And I believe that is done to make, you know, that you are a visitor, not one of us. I believe when you have a colleague complaining about foreign nationals as an example. Um, when foreign nationals leave, they will now complain about people from Kwazulu Natal, people from Eastern Cape, people from Limpopo and stuff, because it makes them uncomfortable. then you come to site 2 … most of the colleagues in site 2 cannot even greet you in any native African language.

The respondent further linked power dynamics emanating from apartheid and colonialism scenarios in which most interaction between blacks and whites occurred in the servant-master relationship, with blacks learning their language and it wasn't reciprocal.

While there may be awareness that one doesn't speak Afrikaans in some meetings, especially at the junior level, some managers still impose their language on junior staff, particularly young black professionals. This was further cited by the respondent as one of the reasons the site 2is unable to retain or attract young black professionals. The hiring of people who learnt at the institution was also of concern by participants as cited by participant P4 and P8 who had this to say;

P4 "I won't say we have reached a stage where we can even begin to celebrate. … It will change when you have a middle management layer balanced with black people. Particularly those from outside the university. While growing our own timber is a good concept, it has shortcomings because people who have been given opportunities generally find it difficult to challenge benefactors.

P8 "there's a lack of intent to break out of the cultural modes we find ourselves in. …you see, the people who work here are people who've been here for a long time. And they

almost get married to the jobs. … I don't think we do ourselves a great service. I think our geographical isolation hurts us as well."

In addition, Participant P2 noted that the value of diverse cultures appears not to be appreciated enough. Citing that "If it were, we would not be having the discussions we have now in council and Senate and faculty votes about representativity, All the time. On every single meeting almost at that level."

The situation at the university was cited to be not so different from other organizations by participant 4 , and there is a need to improve awareness on cultural diversity. The institution doesn't seem to take a strong stance on certain national issues. Most probably the selected university itself is still going through the transformation phase because of the diversity of cultures. There appears to be three distinct cultures, the site 3 campus culture, site 2, and site 1 culture. Given the situation on cultural intelligence, it seems the university impact is campus oriented. Site 2 seems to be quite silent on a number of issues, while site 3, and site 1 are quite different, making the situation highly politicised

4.7 Motivation and Drivers of cultural intelligence

The participant's perception of the level of motivation and drivers to practice cultural intelligence was evaluated by asking the question.

"How would you describe the level of motivation and drive to practise CQ at the Office of the VC within your directorate (Motivational CQ)?"

There was a general agreement by participants that from a policy perspective there is a high acknowledgement of the need to promote cultural intelligence particularly by the VC as mentioned by participant P3 and P10 who had this to say.

P3 "I think the drive is also very high because we, like I said, the stance of the vice chancellor, which must be reflected by the offices. The Doors are open for all groups, whether they be stakeholders or service delivery"

P10 "culture at the institution is driven by values which are clearly espoused, at senior management level, as was shown in an ethics survey recently conducted. At senior management level, there's a very strong motivation to adhere to institutional values and,

infusing a positive culture, although in some areas there may be discontent emanating from cultural practices by some staff members.

However, there is no uniformity in driving the practice of cultural intelligence with evident pockets of excellence. The Leadership role appears to be lacking particularly, with regards to visibility as cited by Participant P2 who had this to say;

P2; "it's a contradictory situation, I think got to do with the leadership. if the top doesn't drive that, then it's very difficult. --- if you're managers and the leaders of the institution, one has to make time per campus and this is important, those who never visited never get the chance to make people feel appreciated. and on another hand, if I have to write a script immediately it becomes a difficult issue.

This was further corroborated by participant P4 and P8 who noted that the people were not interested in breaking out of the comfort zone, and had this to say;

P4 "If we were ready and highly motivated, we wouldn't be having this pushback, attempts. So the reason that we employ people who look like us, who sound like us is because we are comfortable. There is awareness in terms of, trying to address issues, but its mostly been about compliance, malicious compliance. But if we have. strategic leadership positions at the top of the organisation, who embody these issues, it will happen naturally. But its not there, for example, in a senior management meeting there have been executive deans who pull in parallel directions, and it doesn't help.

P8 " site 2 is a fairly an insulated community with people stuck in their comfort zone. So, I think academically it shows as well … because the level of engagement with other institutions, in partnerships, relationships with colleagues abroad is somewhat limited compared to the urban universities like Wits and UJ, … .

A typical example was sited by one participant with regards to the situation at site 2 where some leaders were reported to keep to themselves only being seen in meetings and when in trouble. While there may be lack of motivation and drive, to embrace cultural intelligence, at the local level. The opposite was observed with respect to faculties looking for collaborations and from the institutional point of view, or at least from the VCs office and participant 12 had this to say;

P12 "… there's not much cultural intelligence practice motivation, really, for example, people coming to South Africa, either as postdocs, or even a student really, struggle to be assisted through the embassy offices. Of course, there is the Global office that plays that role. However, assistance of incoming foreigners is mostly left to the junior staff members of the Global office, and people really struggle at times taking over a year to get paperwork done."

Faculties are driven by the desire to benefit from a better international stature whereas in the VCs office it appears not much is done other than just the awareness.

The need to know each other as individuals and teams was cited by participant one who had this to say;

P1 "People must touch base with each other's sides because if you don't have the knowledge, you can't respect. inclusivity can be done in very small ways."

It was further noted that people from other campuses were not always inclusive when dealing with stakeholders. This was particularly concerning with regards to immediate community stakeholders and participant P1 had this to say';

P1 "I think that community engagement is a bit of a stepchild, I don't think it's really getting a lot of attention because there's no money." T

This may be a result of the diversity of stakeholders business, industry and the community and the geographical distances between campuses. The lack of diversity in university organised programmes was further cited by participant 8 who had this to say;

P8 "I have been to business dinners, alumni meetings, convocation events, with low attendance and I didn't see the level of diversity I would like to see. We talk a lot about diversity, but I'm not seeing great strides."

Figure 4.4 is a network graph illustrating the perceptions, views, and experiences of participants on the practice of CQ at their institution. Four participants in the study perceived the practice of CQ to be varied at different levels of the institution. According to these participants the senior levels of management are more culturally aware due to various interventions such as the culture project. As a result, they carry a view that power

dynamics influence the practice of CQ. Furthermore, these participants are of the view that progress has been made due to an active and continuous inclusivity drive within the institution. Four of the other participants felt that the practice of CQ is high owing to the inclusivity drive and that there is a deliberate intent from the senior management of the university.

Nonetheless, the remaining four participants noted that the practice of CQ is still low due to several factors, including but not limited to low maturity which stems from exclusionary related factors. These exclusionary factors include, diversity discomforts, language usage, acceptance of different cultures and assumptions - to name a few. It is worth noting that these participants perceive these factors as behavioural patterns which lead to non-reciprocal relationships amongst colleagues within the institution. Some of the participants exclaimed that the immobility and lack of attraction of new staff members results in a lack of cultural maturity within the university of interest. Furthermore, participant 1 highlighted that the understanding of cultural intelligence is more at individual level than at communication level, as a result it is not practised by the entire university population.

All participants admit that acceleration on the practice of CQ is required due to low practice and that there is a greater need to empower those who are culturally lacking.

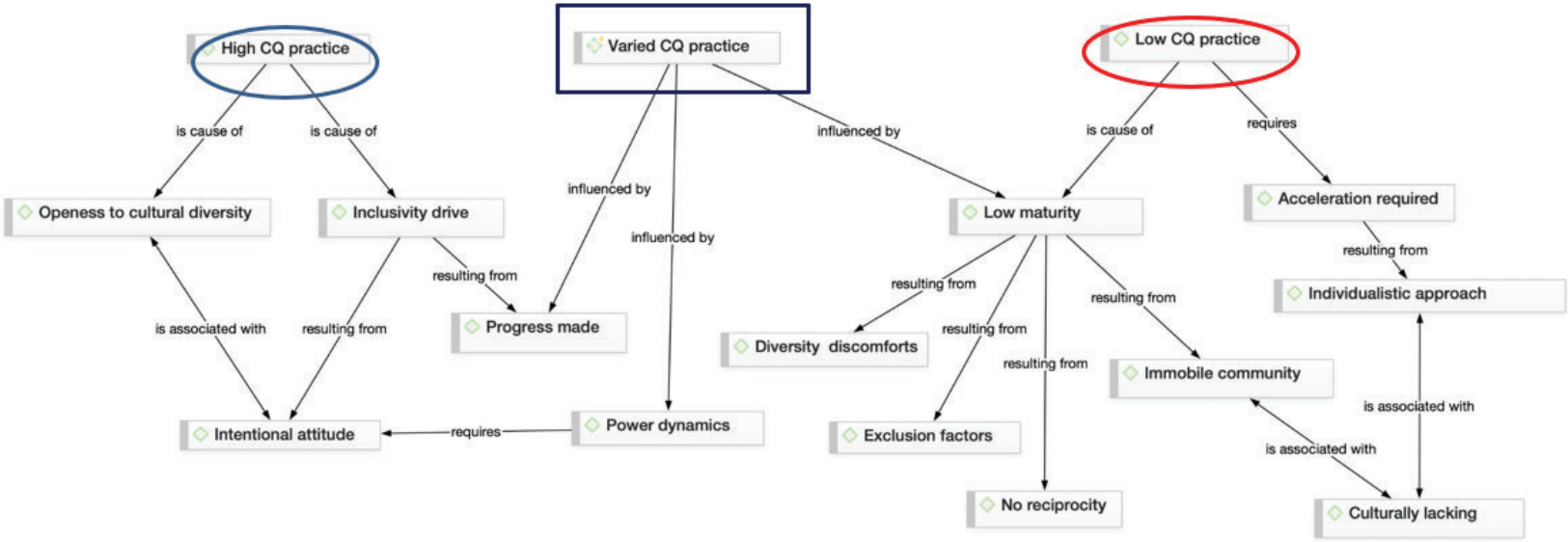


Figure 4.4: Participants' perceptions and views on the practice of cultural intelligence (CQ) in the higher education institution of interest.

4.8 Cultural intelligence challenges and opportunities

The participant's understanding of challenges and opportunities associated with practising cultural intelligence were evaluated by asking the question.

"*What cultural intelligence challenges and benefits have you come across at local and international set up?"*

One of the main challenges associated with cultural intelligence arose from the tendency of people to aggregate, and make friends based on origin, religion and language because they feel safer, understood and protected. Those are the people that can protect them. Participant P12 had this to say

Participant P12 "If somebody is a Christian, they would want to aggregate with those who are Christians. And if you're not a Christian, they look at you in a different way. We have some people who are Rastafarians within, our university community, but you can feel and sense and see that when people look at them, they just don't understand, their culture"

Internationally, just by one's accent people can choose not to associate with you because they may feel this is not the way we speak here. Participant P12 went on to highlight their experience in England and had this to say

Participant P12 "… there's a time that it was only two of us black students in a classroom in England. So, you have to prove that you are on par or equal. So, it helped me because I ended up performing better than all these white students, because for me, there was just too much pressure. So yes, internationally, there is racism, even in places where you don't expect, you have institutionalised racism.

However, similar challenges at the institution are also experienced as is the case at site 3 where there is a perception there are too many foreign nationals than South Africans. Consequently, the administration has stopped giving full time employment to foreign nationals but five-year contracts. However, in some disciplines, there are no South Africans and unfortunately the only way to survive is by getting international people on board to assist and have to convert some contract positions to become full time. Participant 12 was of the perception was that some foreign nationals in his department

who had been refused we almost leaving before their position were converted to permanent and had this to say;

P12 "… those staff members are so happy and got NRF rated, and they are publishing in high impact journals, and that was very good for them now. They are committed to stay. And so, yes, we do have quite a few challenges.

The recognition of foreign nationals and giving them permanent positions brought several advantages particularly when creating international networks as these are more likely exposed to the worldwide community. Participant 12 had this to say;

P12 "they're motivated, to do more, because they see that we rewarded them, because we said, we're going to assess you, and look at your performance. So now, we said, okay, we recognized your performance. So now we are giving you a full-time employment, now you can work for the university with all the benefits that are due to everyone. And now through those people have access to other countries, if I want to go to Ethiopia, the first thing I do I go to Professor Radebe. So, i say Professor, Radebe, can you help me identify a university like this? Do you know anyone there in Ethiopia, and you know, so we already get networks, through this, we already have access, to other places, other countries"

Some of the challenge appear to be Xenophobia although the participant (P12) did not want to call it that but went on to say *"there is something those lines, where some people maybe feel that here are people who are taking over our jobs, and these jobs should have been given to us."So that can be a challenge."*

The lack of cultural intelligence is what is preventing the selected university from achieving or fully implementing its strategy. The university is being held back by an unfavourable disposition that both staff and students here are entertained as far as appreciating the dignity difference in addition Participant P8 had this to say.

Participant P8 "… I just had a meeting with Mr Murphy who was assaulted, beaten up in 2009 because he was black, and had sat in a space that the white settlers put up for themselves and his own life is being affected. Yes, he suffered immensely from this, and he received no compensation."

However members of staff who are culturally intelligent and good at practising it are not caught up in the challenges between the different grouping as cited by participant P6 Who had this to say;

P6 ‘’I manoeuvre so easily between the different groups when there is a situation of adversity however, its proves for either one of the groups to understand how I am in a position to associate with both and still be in a position where I can say, I am not getting involved in that adversity that's happening right now because I understand both and there is no need for me to choose one above the other because I don't see the need to do so. And also, at times when there is that adversity for me because I am able to pull myself out of the situation. But the issue that these two groups have at this particular moment, isn't really one that is big enough to cause friction or cause division within an institution or whatsoever.”

“*Another example For me, was during the protest to have the Totius statue removed on campus. I was really in a position where I felt that I have no opinion because I understand what you guys are saying but also since I'm here what other side is saying? So, can I just remove myself from the situation and for me at the end of the day, whichever decision that is taken by management will be fine by me because I hear both sides. And I understand both sides of the of the issue. However, I felt like at that time, neither one of the two sides actually wanted to hear each other out. And there was a communication where they were just talking past each other, it was just a matter of I am right and you're right. I'm also right. And so, there is no common ground where we can meet that we, if things had been done differently, or conversations had been had differently on a platform with both parties went in with the intent of understanding each other. Maybe things would have gone differently. We wouldn't have had to sit out at night on campus, guarding statutes, it was fun though.”*

The impact of the efforts of the VC’s office in improving the cultural intelligence situation at the institution was captured by Participant P1 and P5 who had this to say;

P2 “I don't know if I'm cultural intelligent or not, but I have learned, through the VC to desire to understand better. When I deal with students, I want to talk to them outside informally to understand them better, the same with staff members, I can still recall when, for example, Prim cuckoo, was the director Student Life in the previous structure. She

was willing to tell me and I was willing to listen. So I learned a lot about all their religious events and what it means, and where does it come from? And what food do they eat at certain events? And what type of festivals do they have.. I'm not considering to become a Hindu, and neither she a Christian, and we will never trying to convince one another of that. But it's really interesting to have an understanding.---, one can talk to another person, when you got a basic understanding and appreciation and mindfulness. in the end, it creates a welcoming culture. But myself, I always have to learn more on personality. So won't call myself cultural intelligence but I guess one can never get to a point because like you said, people change."

P5 "Myself? I don't know if I'm cultural, intelligent, or not, Nkosinathi, but I think that's something I have learned also, through the VC is to have the desire to understand better. So, when I deal with students, I want to talk to them outside formally engagements to understand them better, because when you understand them better, and you go into a formal engagement, it's easier to engage with them. And the same with the staff members, I think we were based under site 1 because we are a small community so that we, and there is a lot of diversity. But it's, it's more than that I can still recall when for example, Prem cuckoo, was the Director of Student Life in the previous structure. She was willing to tell me, and I was willing to listen. So, I learned a lot about all the religious events and what it means, and where does it come from? And what food do they eat at certain events? And what type of festivals do there, and I mean, I'm not considering becoming a Hindu, and neither she a Christian. And we were never trying to convince one another of that. But it's interesting to have an understanding. So, now we need another person's festival, one can talk to that person, because you have got that basic understanding and appreciation and mindfulness that period for the person. So, in the end, I think it creates a welcoming culture. Yeah. But myself, I think I always must learn more"

P5 further showed maturity in cultural intelligence when they cited "how s/he wished s/he could speak more languages and had this to say;

P5 "I think the biggest benefit a person can have today is really to speak three or more languages. Because there's a lot of cultural richness in language and in expressions from people in different languages. So, I think that's a barrier for me. However, I try to learn

words and phrases. But I also have people who can explain to me. So again, I think one must be open to be willing to learn and to understand."

Figure 4.5 below focuses on the responses received from participants on how CQ is currently being used to manage interpersonal and strategic relationships in their organisations. During the data analysis process, eminent themes emerged including, enabling environment, inclusion, appropriate behaviour discernment, effective relation, common goal as well as embracing stakeholders.

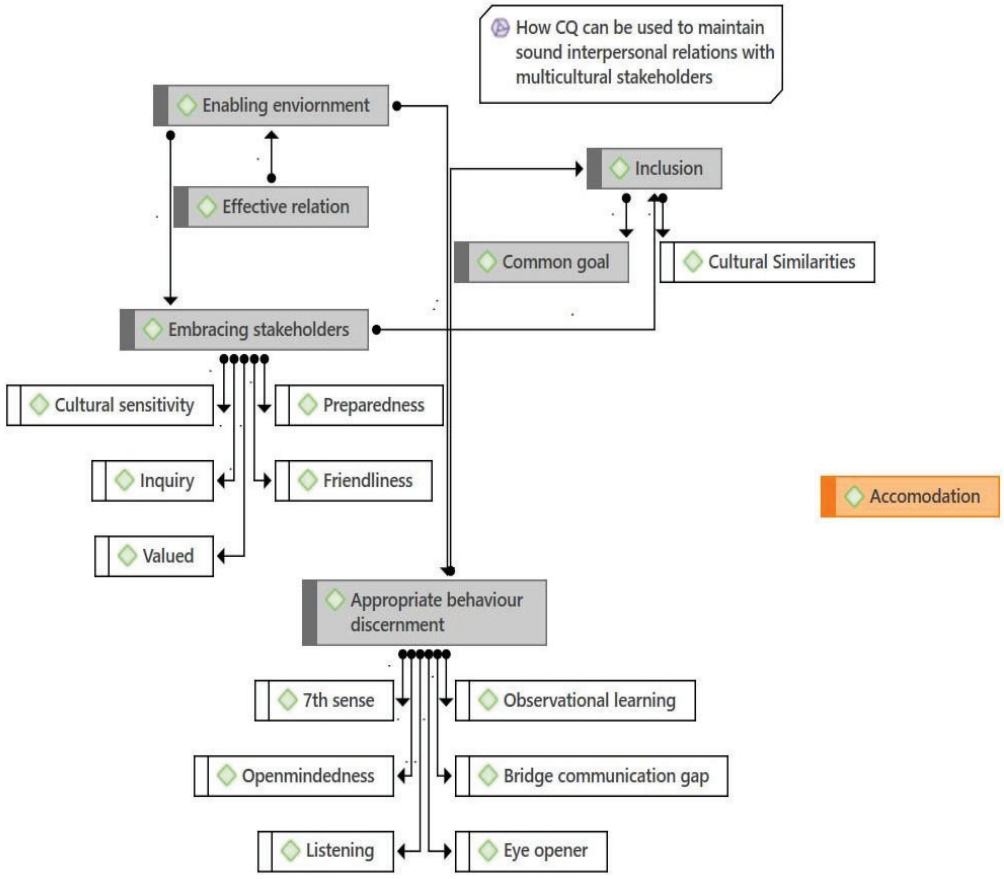


Figure 4.5: Illustrating how CQ is being used as a tool to manage interpersonal and strategic relationships with multicultural stakeholders

Based on the responses received from participants, when an individual is culturally intelligent, they are able to maintain effective relations. Furthermore, these effective relations harness an enabling environment, which on the one hand, translates into a person embracing their stakeholders through appropriate behaviour discernment. Various participants highlighted different types of behaviours which are examples of what it means to embrace stakeholders. These include, for example, being culturally sensitive in your verbal and non-verbal behaviours, inquiring about other's culturally informed preferences or appropriateness, preparing prior to engagements, and maintaining a friendly demeanour. The biggest output and benefit embracing stakeholders is that they feel valued. Furthermore, For one to have an appropriate behaviour discernment one needs to be open-minded, listen more and learn from observing, instead of assuming. Further, one needs to pay attention to their 7th sense by knowing when they have behaved inappropriately or offended the other party. The latter will function as an eye opener and bridge any communication gap which might exist. The latter strategies are descriptive of the four factor model of CQ: cognitive, meta-cognitive, behavioural and motivational CQ. Also, these strategies are in alignment with the five stages of CQ development suggested by Thomas (2006:91). These are a result of individuals reacting appropriately to their external environment through "*recognition of other cultural norms and motivation to learn more about them; accommodation of other cultural norms and rules in one's own mind; assimilation of diverse cultural norms into alternate behaviours; proactivity in cultural behaviour based on recognition of changing cues that others do not perceive*" (Yu & Mills, 2021:443).

Nonetheless, two participants highlighted that In engaging within multicultural settings, it is important to not only focus on differences but there should be an appreciation of cultural similarities. This will assist in working towards having a common goal and ensuring inclusion, where each part feels acknowledged and not accommodated. It is worth noting that participants in this study are of the view that cultural intelligence speaks more to inclusion and not accommodation. This view is similar to that of Richard-Eaglin (2021:90) who highlighted that organisations that harness and create an inclusive environment, instil a feeling of a true sense of belonging in employees which in turn shapes and creates the culture of the organisation.

Leadership practices should include creating an environment that emits not only a sense of inclusivity, but also a true sense of belonging for everyone. This is how a “culture” is created.

According to Weiss (2013) and Berry and Sam (2013:153) Inclusion needs to come from the hearts and minds of those around to enable the affected to break down any form of prejudices and ensure that social connections are built accordingly. This means including those who may be different in every aspect which also relates to social participation which is enjoyed by the wider community. Based on Weiss (2013) Accommodation has a legislative element where there are modifications within an environment to give reasonable individual access to equal opportunities, benefits, and opportunities as others.

4.9 Cultural intelligence as a strategic initiative?

4.9.1 Strategies as per research participants’ responses

The participant’s understanding and perception on strategies that can be employed to practise cultural intelligence was evaluated by asking the question.
“What strategies can be employed or implemented in the Vice-Chancellor's office and the sector at large, particularly in public universities?”

The strategic initiative at the institution was summarised by participant P2 who noted that the VC’s office had put a lot of effort in implementing strategies to improve CQ but there were challenges as a result of COVID. The efforts included business dinners and alumni generous engagements, because engagements create platforms necessary to encourage the practice of cultural intelligence. In these engagements space is created to share ideas and views, and through that one gets a better understanding of others.

P2 “I think you must start at the bottom, our students, need to be sensitive to code, they need to be culturally sensitive, but then they need to get over us and understanding or not understand appreciation of the different cultures and appreciation of the value of having different cultures. Then we can get to the classroom, actually the electoral must make sure that you have a diverse group I mean, what's the value of group work? If, if there is not this learning curve of bringing cultural intelligence into you, I think there is many opportunities in residences inside and outside the classroom where we must promote diversity.”

A definitive clear strategic direction, as far as culture is concerned is necessary, because while culture is dynamic and one can acquire, and unlearn behaviours, it's challenging to unlearn things from one's own culture, and it requires a lot of effort and sacrifice. As an institution the community counts on it on many things including leadership, new initiatives, and standing for them on particular issues. To achieve this consultation is required as part of change management. A strategic direction can be defined in terms of the culture that the institution aspires to cultivate and provide consultation. While total agreement with all stakeholders will be challenging at least there will be people who are prepared to lead the change. The champions of change, that people will identify with, are needed if one wants to change the way people do things,

It was suggested that there should be a diversity plan which should identify concrete measures to be put in place to help celebrate the plurality of cultures. Staff and students' exposure should be improved. The international office was identified as the engine room to achieve diversity but currently it was not positioned to do so and participant P8 had this to say;

Participant P8 "… at this university the international office is more [sig insignificant]. And there are different reasons for that. I don't want to point a finger to any individual. But strategically, we say we want to be internationally recognised. But I don't see us taking concrete measures to achieve that."

4.9.2 Strategies interpretation and application

There is a need for a specific strategy to achieve certain goals and to answer a number of questions including what steps the institution needs to take, to achieve strong international presence and what are the indicators?

The institution before COVID had embarked on a culture project, which was rolled out to all members of staff. Although some of the findings from the culture survey conducted were unpleasant, management accepted the reality that it was what the staff felt. However, plans to overhaul the institution's cultural intelligence were aborted with the advent of COVID. This was because the strategies were mostly based on staff engagement.

The institution has an obligation both from a student and **staff value proposition** to have a strategy towards the embracing of cultural intelligence values. It will be advisable to make Cultural intelligence a ***part of the curriculum or the co-curriculum and should include sufficient incentives to drive it.*** This will provide the much needed cultural intelligence competence among graduates who are able to fit into the culturally diverse environment typical of the South Africa economy.

The institution could set up a once per annual event to celebrate the cultural diversity, for example, a cultural week whereby people can either dress in their cultural costume or bring traditional food. A special budget can be set by the VCs office to support the initiative. Activities could also be planned in such a way that per semester a particular language is promoted and people will get to understand the culture, history, and games associated with the language.

The VC's office can set up a Vice Chancellors' international dialogue, say once or twice a year, whereby a scholar from say Jamaica, comes to talk to us about whatever topic of diversity, say, unconscious bias, you know. The office could also sponsor one or two students, who would have excelled in something to an institution with a different culture for say two weeks and will write a report of their experiences pertaining to cultural intelligence. Generally, the people who work in this office of the VC should not be able to speak multiple languages.

Figure 4.6, is a network analysis presenting the various strategies and opportunities which could be explored in having CQ as one of the key imperatives as suggested by the participants.

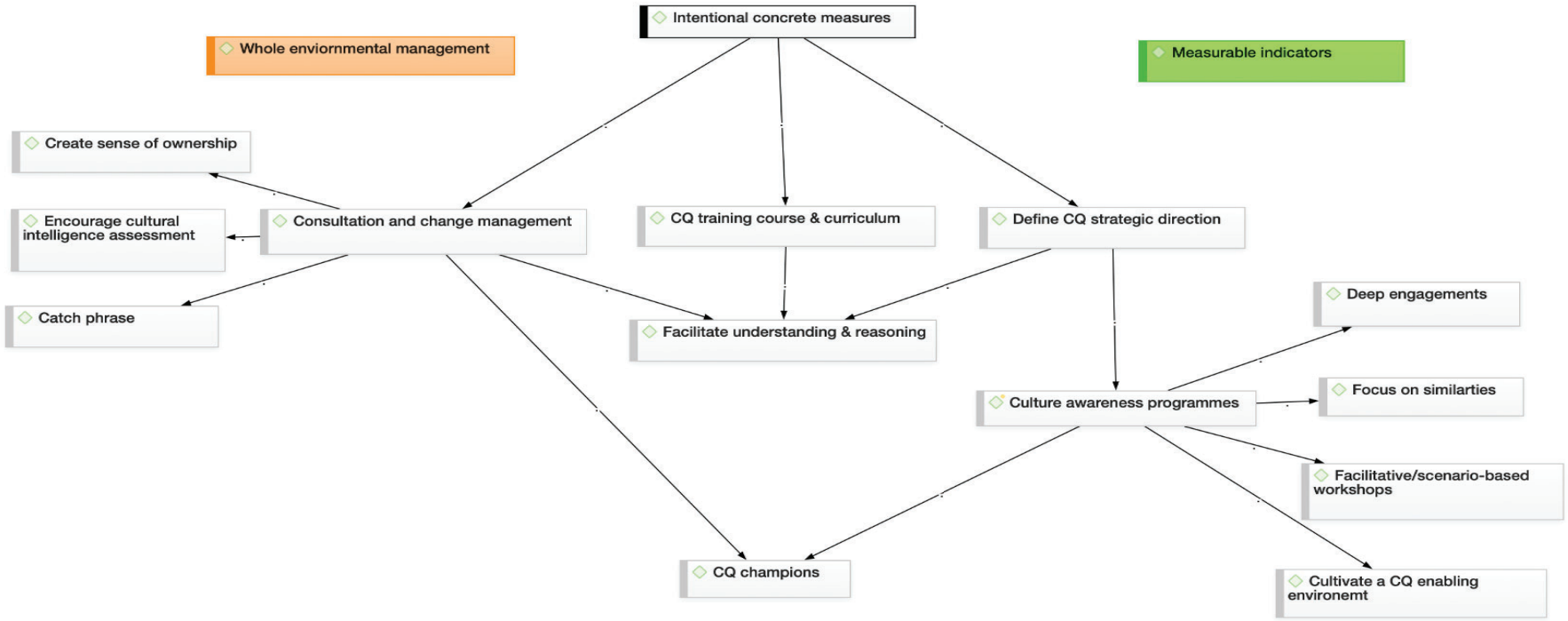


Figure 4.6: Cultural intelligence as an institutional strategic initiative and opportunities

As depicted in figure 4.6, various strategies and opportunities which could be explored in having CQ as one of the key imperatives are suggested by the participants. The one theme which emerged to be prominent in the illustration above is the one on intentional concrete measures. In other words, exploring and executing tangible opportunities within the institution that create an enabling environment for the practice of CQ. A practical theme that came out strong is ensuring that the progress of measures put in place which is tracked and accounted for through the development of measurable indicators. These measures could also be used later to see if set outcomes have been achieved. One of the participants (1) made a proposal that the institution could develop a catch phrase as part of a campaign to create an environment where individuals' cultures feel like they have a place.

Participants 11 and 12 pointed to the importance of defining the CQ strategic direction, which should facilitate clear understanding and reasoning. This in other words, to share a frame of mind of what is to be shaped. Some participants are convinced that consultation and change management is the way to go. In doing so they believe that there will be a sense of ownership, which will for example encourage individuals to take cultural assessments and use catch phrases in some instances. As part of the change management, it might be prudent to CQ champions as mentioned earlier in the text, especially for awareness programmes. This awareness programmes could include deep engagements and/or facilitative workshops are convened to strive towards cultivating an enabling environment. Perhaps, the focus of these conversations could focus more on similarities within various cultures. Streimikiene *et al.* (2021:484), organisational culture can shape and direct the behaviour of individuals within the organisation.

4.10 Summary

This chapter reflected responses received from participants in this experiential research paper. This occurred after interviews were conducted with all the participants and data collected data was transcribed verbatim in an organised manner. Thematic analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti as per responses of participants and further arranged in terms of suitable figures/diagram. Results were discussed in alignment with the research questions with an incorporation of existing scientific literature on the construct and its

practise thereof. Reflecting on the responses received, it is evident that more can be done to build the awareness on the practise of CQ which can later translate into practise.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to explore the practice of cultural intelligence (CQ) at a selected South African university, through the Vice-Chancellor's office. The chosen participants were individuals with lived experiences and insight as to how CQ is practised at their institution and how important it is in managing strategic relationships with key stakeholders and interpersonal relationships. The main themes and subthemes which emerged from participants' responses provided some insight on what characterises a culturally intelligent individual, how CQ needs to be practised and how it can be utilised to give the organisation a competitive advantage. Input was given on how the practice of CQ can continuously be improved in organisations, through deliberation and intentional interventions.

5.1 Conclusion on findings

Based on the results from participants' responses, it is evident that there is a general level of awareness at this South African university on the practice of cultural intelligence (CQ). The advantage of having this awareness is reflected in Gotsis and Grimanie's (2016:987) paper, that, when organisations effectively employ awareness strategies on cultural intelligence their performance tends to improve. It is in this regard that individuals will develop the drive and motivation to understand and function in a multicultural environment. This further require people to develop a cognitive cultural intelligence, in acknowledging and recognising differences during interactions. However, there are participants who carry the view that there is a lack of drive at lower levels of the institution to practise CQ. They point out various factors which presuppose this lack of openness and willingness to practise CQ. These factors include lack of continuous initiatives on CQ, a number of institutional members who are set in their certain ways of doing things, superficial initiatives which have previously misrepresented cultural practices and mannerism within specific and respective groups. Furthermore, some indicate that there is huge drive and willingness from the Senior Management level of the university and they believe that this could potentially set a tone for the whole institution if practised consciously with no form of biasness or superficial activities. Ang *et al.* (2007:338) allude

that the latter can be achieved when one has motivational cultural intelligence by having the energy to want to learn or experience different multicultural interactions.

There were views from some of the participants that if defined well, CQ could be adopted as a strategic initiative to promote a more inclusive and integrated environment, where all people belong irrespective of their background. They further allude that CQ is already complementary to the university strategy and its dream statement.

Others clearly mentioned that more support could be provided from the Vice-Chancellor's and other office bearers' offices by funding continuous engagements which promote cultural diversity and encourage multicultural setups. Organisations need to develop corporate actions which should be reflected in the behaviour of employee, in training them to effectively show flexibility in cross-cultural interactions (Van Dyne, 2010: 138; Lee & Krammer, 2016: 199).

Almost all the candidates indicate that the practice of CQ will not happen on its own but would require open-mindedness from both parties engaging. There is further an indication that one of the participants indicated that if the institution values and is intentional to practise CQ, more action and sustainable solutions should be employed. The proposal is that in the student set up, cultural intelligence could be included as part of the curriculum to create awareness at an elementary stage of joining a university environment. Furthermore, more cross campus initiatives could be introduced to allow cross-pollination within the student populace of all campuses at this university. This could ignite a new culture which is unified and the resetting of cultural mind-set. As the university is a microcosm of society, there is a need to improve cultural diversity and avoid being aloof on national issues. As mentioned in section 2.5 of this paper, individuals need to continuously strive to analyse their thinking process, before it translates into actions (Van Dyne *et al*., 2010:137) . This will help them to develop a clear understanding of others' cultural preferences.

5.2 Managerial Implication

Universities globally and in South Africa are a microcosm of society and therefore cannot function in isolation from their communities. Furthermore, the multicultural demographics

reflected in profiles of institutions are a mirror of the composition of the society in which they operate.

Managerial implications from this study are:

- promote a culture which embraces diversity and harnesses inclusivity,
- training and awareness programmes should be put in place to empower employees on strategies that could be employed to manage multicultural settings, with the highest level of sensitivity,
- Cultural intelligence (CQ) could also be incorporated to form part of the strategy in ensuring that all stakeholders of the organisation understand the importance of practice of CQ.

Although these interventions and/or strategies can be developed to strengthen the CQ practice; all stakeholders will need to be encouraged to approach the learning process in an open minded and intentional manner. In concretising measures, the practice of CQ can be incorporated into the performance management system (PMS) of the organisation, although it might be difficult to measure; employees' behaviour and interactions (verbal and non-verbal) in multicultural setups where various layers of stakeholders can be observed and monitored where possible. The cultural awareness and behavioural expectations should be reflected at the top management level to champion the behaviour and ensure that it is cascaded down to all lower levels. In other words, it should form part of the organization's culture by reflecting on its values and strategic intent. Through the latter an enabling environment will be created which promotes inclusion and a culture of embracing multicultural stakeholders. As noted earlier in the text, particularly in figure 4.5, institutions need to be mindful to clearly define the difference between inclusion and accommodation, and not apply them interchangeably.

5.3 Limitations of this research

This is a qualitative study and thus the findings cannot be generalised. It was very difficult to interview executives as they are very busy and thus a limitation can be that due to time constraints some data might not have been captured. It is vital when doing research with executives to ensure availability and follow up.

5.4 Recommendations for further research

This study focused mainly on the practise of cultural intelligence from a perspective of the senior management level based on their lived experiences. It is hereby recommended that further research be conducted on the practise of this construct, focusing on lower levels to get a clear and holistic insight. Furthermore, more research could be done on how cultural intelligence can be used as strategic initiative and not a nice to have in organisations, especially to maintain key stakeholders globally.

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APPENDIX A
DATA COLLECTION TOOL

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CQ PARTICIPANTS in OFFICE OF VC in HEI

Date of interview: _____ Participant CODE:

A. Interview Protocol

1. Can I please your consent to continue with the interview but also to record.
2. Welcome and introducing the study to the participant- state the purpose:

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the practice of cultural intelligence through the Vice-Chancellor's office at a South African University.

3. Thank you for agreeing to voluntary participate in the study.
4. Spell out participants' rights regarding voluntary participation, confidentiality, locked in an encrypted platform, risk- NWU Ethical process and rules.
5. Get consent on Consent Form from each participant.
6. Agree on process and recording of interview- explain the process and timeline will not be for more than 60 minutes.
7. Will you be available for a follow, should the need arise?
8. Sign the consent form and send same to me so that I can have as part of my evidence that you indeed give consent to participate in this study.

SECTION: Research-specific questions

Open ended questions

Prof, just before we get to the prepared open-ended questions, I just want to ask what your understanding is of the construct cultural intelligence?

Cultural intelligence is a term coined by Earley and Ang (2003:59) which refers to an individual's ability to optimally function in multicultural environments where diverse stakeholders are involved.

Yitman (2013:7) cultural intelligence refers to a competency that is multidimensional comprising of cultural inclination and practice that is mindful and contacting a range of considerable behavioural skills.

1. What do you understand when we refer to someone (a leader/ manager) as being culturally intelligent (Cognitive CQ)?
2. How would you describe the level of cultural intelligence in the Office of the VC (Cognitive CQ)? (Probe by asking why)
3. What is your perception of the current practice of Cultural Intelligence in the office of the VC, your directorate and in this institution? (Probe on Why?) (Behavioural CQ)
4. How would you describe the level of motivation and drive to practice CQ at the Office of the VC within your directorate (Motivational CQ)?
5. Why do you think it is important for one to adjust behaviour in multi-cultural interactions (Metacognitive CQ)? Examples?
6. How can cultural intelligence enhance inclusion and stakeholder relations in HEI and at this institution? (Behavioural CQ)
7. How is CQ practiced in the VCs office? Provide examples of the CQ behaviours/actions that are being practiced in the VCs office (Behavioural CQ) How did you previously prepare for this? How do you infiltrate this in your division?
8. What strategies can be employed or implemented in Vice-Chancellor's office and the sector at large, particularly in public universities.
9. What cultural intelligence challenges and benefits have you come across at local and international set up?
10. How can CQ as a competence be enhanced at your institution? (Probe on what to do as management)
11. Just for interest sake, are there any embarrassing moments that you can recall? And how did you deal with these?
12. Is there anything you would like to add in terms of CQ in the higher education sector?

Where necessary: Obtain permission in writing to take photos of CQ initiatives/projects and company documents for use in research.

AGREE ON FOLLOW-UP IF NECESSARY- MEMBER CHECKING

THANK PARTICIPANTS

Date:

APPENDIX B

ETHICS INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant

This **Informed Consent Statement** serves to confirm the following information as it relates to the officially **approved MBA research project,** with EMS-REC ethical number…… and Gatekeeper approval at the North-West University, on "***Exploring the practice of cultural intelligence through the Vice-Chancellor's office at a South African University.***"

The sole purpose of this study is to obtain information from yourself as an important participant in this study, due to your close involvement in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor.

1. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. You may also decide not to answer specific questions.
2. The research approach is qualitative, which entails detail online interviews (observing Covid-19 protocol) that will take no longer than 60 minutes of your time to complete.
3. Confidentiality of the data is guaranteed and only the combined results will be used for research and publication purposes.
4. The data gathered from the interviews will be recorded and only be used for research purposes and academic publications. The data will be stored on Microsoft Teams as it is a double encrypted and secured platform or ZOOM and will be backed up in a P-Drive platform which is also encrypted.
5. Please note that no participant will be identifiable as a pseudo name/number will be used in the study.
6. Also note that this study does not have a preferred answer to any of the questions as it will explore your experiences and perceptions on the phenomenon of CQ and its practice.
7. The results and findings of this study will be available on request.

If you have any questions you can contact the research supervisor: Prof Yvonne du Plessis at yvonne.duplessis@nwu.ac.za or the researcher Nkosinathi Tom at nkosinathi.tom@nwu.ac.za, 072 358 1061/018 299 1146

Please indicate your consent- Sign with a personal code:……

I hereby give my consent after having read the above information that I volunteer to participate and my data may be used as stated above.	**YES**	**NO**

Thank you

Nkosinathi Tom

APPENDIX C (Ethical Clearance)

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

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Economic and Management Sciences Research
Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)

28 June 2021

Prof Yvonne du Plessis
Per e-mail
Dear Prof du Plessis,

EMS-REC FEEDBACK: 25062021
Student: Tom, N (20823991)(NWU-00894-21-A4)
Applicant: Prof Y du Plessis - MBA

Your ethics application on, ***Exploring the practice of cultural intelligence through the Vice-Chancellor's office at a South African University,*** which served 25 June 2021, refers.

Outcome:

Approved as a minimal risk study. A number **NWU-00894-21-A4** is given for one year of ethics clearance.

Please note that the ethics approval of this application is subject to the Covid-19 protocols.

Kind regards,

Mark Rathbone

Digitally signed by Mark Rathbone
DN: cn=Mark Rathbone, o=North-West University, ou=Business management, email=mark.rathbone@nwu.ac.za, c=ZA
Date: 2021.06.30 06:23:17 +02'00'

Prof Mark Rathbone
Chairperson: Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)

APPENDIX D (turnit in summary report)

20823991:2022.11.30_N.Tom_Mini-Dissertation_20823991_.docx

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APPENDIX E (Language editing confirmation letter)

Olivier Language Practitioner

Editing and Translation Service

Date: 30 November 2022

Letter of confirmation of professional proofreading

Title: Exploring the practice of cultural intelligence through the vice-chancellor's office at a South African university

Author: Nkosinathi Tom

Student number: 20823991

Editor: Willemien Olivier

This paper was proofread
by
a proofreader

LETTER OF CONFIRMATION OF ENGLISH EDITING

This is to confirm that the paper with the provisional title, Exploring the practice of cultural intelligence through the vice-chancellor's office at a South African university, to be submitted by Nkosinathi Tom of North-West University, has been edited for language by Olivier Language Practitioner, Willemien Olivier. The document needed only a few amendments. Neither the research content nor the author's intentions were altered in any way during the editing process.

The editor guarantees the quality of the English language in this paper, provided the editor's changes are accepted and further changes made to the paper are checked by the editor.

Willemien Olivier

Honours Degree Translation Studies (2017) UNISA
Editing and Translation Service: Olivier Language Practitioner since 2008

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