ASSESSMENTS ON THE ROLE BELIEFS PLAY ON THE SELF-CONCEPT AND BEHAVIOUR OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS IN SOUTH AFRICA TOWARDS DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

Recognition of diversity awareness initiatives and problems' relating to diversity were not acknowledged and diagnosed in many local authorities in South Africa. Adequate research with regard to the problem of managing diversity has been slow making it difficult for managers working within local authorities to identify which positive behaviour is acceptable in acknowledging and managing diversity. Also, the introduction of a diversity awareness climate in local authorities has not been encouraged. There has not been an unfreezing, changing or moving and refreezing process for behavioural change in many local authorities. Diversity and the management of diversity is not something new to managers working for local government in South Africa. Diversity has become one of the most frequently used words of our time and a word almost never defined. Diversity has been used in discussions ranging from politics to entertainment. Diversity is also used in so many different ways in so many contexts that it seems to mean all things to all people". To prosper in the future it is important to understand and make better use of diversity in business, education, government, and in society in general. The solution to South Africa's racial problems will not only be solved by managing diversity, managing change and affirmative action programmes, but by the recognition and acceptance of the diversity of others and by acknowledging and valuing the same.

1. Introduction

The installation of a new democratically elected government in 1994 brought about a severing with the past, placing South Africa on the threshold of having to deal with its diversity within its local governments. Although the newly elected democratic local governments incorporated the variables for change in the workplace, namely structure, technology and task, insufficient

attention has, however, been given to the people approach component with regard to diversity. The different local governments neglected to ensure the following organisational development arrangements as depicted by Greiner (in Pekeur, 2002:4), namely, it did not apply sufficient pressure from the top to change the behavioural outlook of high ranking officials towards diversity and also neglected to take sufficient action to discourage negative behaviour towards diversity. The latter happened because no intervention and re-orientation of local government managers to change their thinking on diversity has taken place.

2. Research Context: Background

Diversity has been seen as part of the sweeping changes in the structure, culture and management of local government. Johnson and Redmond (2000:1) state that for most organisations, the business case for managing diversity is compelling. As a moral imperative, diversity is carrying a lot of weight, owing to the elements of discrimination, racism, sexism or homophobia that are present. South Africa is facing many political, social and economic changes. A major one is the challenge of a diverse workforce, which needs to be recognised and properly managed in order to be able to utilise the public's demands for a greater variety of government services. Neither the former Colonial nor the National Party government made an effort to promote an understanding of diversity within the different local authorities. Their focus was neither on creating a diversity awareness climate nor to encourage public officials to learn more about other cultures in the workplace. Both governments contributed to the creation of a believe system and behavioural pattern that focused more on people's outward appearance than on their value as a vital resource for local governments. In fact, no pride was taken in outward appearance, which further resulted in people losing their true identity, which was at great expense to their positive attitude and job productivity.

3. The Research Problem

The core problem, which this study addresses, revolves around the different belief windows and the effect these have on the managers' perception and self-concept of managing diversity in local government.

A belief window refers to an invisible window through which an individual views the world. According to Hanks, Pulsipher and Pulsipher (1997:11) it is called a "belief window", because beliefs are the things that filter our view of the world. It influences the way we perceive others, the way we read situations, the feelings we have about ourselves. And if there is information we do not wish to "see", we use our window as a shield to keep it away from us. A belief window also reflects the way we think. Munroe (2001:23) states: "The way a person thinks about himself is a key to how he will think about others and to his general outlook on life." In other words, what is viewed is the way diversity is seen not in terms of visual sense of sight, but in terms of perceiving, understanding (thinking) and interpreting (behaviour). One way to understand the influence of beliefs on the self-concept and behaviour of local government managers regarding diversity is through the Johari window, depicted in Figure 1. The Johari window represents a filter of how managers in the local government sector view diversity.

The **first quadrant** represents the open self, which refers to information that is known to one person and to others. According to Pearson and Nelson (in Pekeur, 2002:6), this quadrant refers

to aspects like one's name, nickname, gender, age, religious affiliation or membership. With regard to a behavioural outlook on diversity, the above quadrant refers to a local government manager who is aware of his/ her own biases and prejudices, but persists in behaviour which reinforces and rewards bigotry. The colleagues of this type of local government manager will also be aware of the behaviour. Grote (1991:5) refers to a person possessing this type of behaviour as a perpetuator

FIGURE1. JOHARI WINDOW ON DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE (in Pekeur 2002:6)

	KNOWN TO SELF	**UNKNOWN TO SELF**
KNOWN TO OTHERS	OPEN SELF (PUBLIC)	BLIND SELF
UNKNOWN TO OTHERS	HIDDEN SELF (PRIVATE)	UNKNOWN TO SELF

.
The **second quadrant**, the blind self (not known to self), represents information that is not known to oneself but is known to others. Included here would be behaviours in which one engages of which one is unaware; for example, local government managers who are unaware that they, through their behaviour, are discriminating against, judging or isolating people (from diverse backgrounds) who work with them. Grote (1991:5) classifies such a person as a naïve offender. Naïve people are not aware of their biases and prejudices and the impact, pain and damage they cause.
The **third quadrant**, the hidden self, refers to information that one is aware of about oneself but which one has not shared with others; for example, an individual local government manager who is aware of bias behaviours that may discriminate against, judge or isolate people from diverse backgrounds but still tolerates them. Such a person is an avoider (Grote, 1991:5). Avoiders are silent supporters (aware of biases) of unjust behaviours.
The **fourth quadrant**, the unknown self, refers to information that is unknown to the self and unknown to others. According to Hersey and Blanchard (1988:277), in Freudian psychology this refers to the subconscious or unconscious. McGraw (1999:47) states that a bias about which someone else is unaware can be potentially even more dangerous than if they were partial and knew about it. Levy (in Bayat & Meyer, 1994:194) refers to a practice that subconsciously and unconsciously impacts on people from diverse backgrounds in the workplace. According to Levy, indirect apartheid is a form of systematic discrimination that is insidious. Treating people in exactly the same way does not necessarily avoid discrimination or achieve equality of opportunity. Indirect discrimination can occur even when people are treated the same. Too often, unnecessary job requirements restrict the proportion of women or of one racial group, which is unable to comply with these (inflated) requirements. Sometimes these job requirements

may be necessary to perform the job effectively, but more often than not they are used because they are convenient or give the appearance of change, but things effectively remain the same.

4.   Brief literature review

According to Bongiwe (2010:100) when workforce diversity is not understood or well managed, it carries with it grave disadvantages for individuals, work teams and the business. Hanks and Pulsipher (1997:11) states whether "a belief is small or big it affects the way we see". Belief Windows also define our limits and set our capabilities. "Beliefs do not just magically appear on our windows. We write them there ourselves. Each of us is responsible for our own Belief Window for selecting the things which will be written, although we may not always be aware of what we are writing." According to Perry (1993:59-71), beliefs shape our culture, our culture shapes the people, and the people shape their lives. The powerful influence of beliefs will affect factors such as:

- The way people think.
- How they approach problem solving.
- How they raise their children.
- How they view their spouse and how children view their parents.
- How they communicate.
- How they worship.
- Their sense of humour.
- Their diet.
- Their values.
- Their standards of beauty.
- Their laws and household policies.
- How they view others.

Smith (1994:167) and Covey (1989:2) state that changing incorrect beliefs or changing people's roles by shifting paradigms can correct negative behaviours. In short, the way diversity was perceived (belief windows), affected the self-concept of local government managers, which was mirrored in their behaviour towards diversity in the workplace, producing results that were not conducive to ensuring, for example, integration in the workplace. According to Gaub (2000:1), one needs to understand that wrong thinking does not produce right results. The following examples by Londen and Rosener (1991:12-13) illustrate the results of how belief windows and paradigms on diversity management can influence the belief of local government managers towards diversity in the workplace:

- A high turnover of workers from other groups, which in turn will contribute to high recruiting and retraining costs.
- An increase in discrimination complaints owing to the mismanagement of diverse employees.
- A flare-up of everyday conflicts over a comment, gesture or joke, perhaps delivered without malice, but perceived as an insult, will create tension between co-workers.
- Deliberate acts of sabotage, aimed at making co-workers who are different look bad in corporate turf battles between members of different ethnic and racial groups, which in turn could lead to a waste of time and money.
- Absenteeism, associated with psychological stress owing to poor communication and

misunderstanding between diverse employees, could result in an enormous amount of personal energy and creativity being wasted on active resistance to change.

- Increased frustration among diverse workers which could lead to low productivity and morale as well as a lack of motivation.
- Diverse workers could feel that they are being devalued owing to the discrimination against them. They may react with cynicism, caution or guarded optimism when changes unfold. This in turn could contribute to a loss of commitment and loyalty, increased disrespect for authority, lack of teamwork and esprit de corps, lack or total absence of respect for and recognition of differences, and the growing perception that no opportunities exist in the workplace for advancement of people from diverse backgrounds.
- Stereotyping and labelling of people from diverse backgrounds which will lead to misunderstanding on various issues, for example, why certain employees are promoted.
- Workers could feel threatened and concerned about the possible effects of current and future change on their jobs and career goals. They could also feel that they are being unfairly treated when certain people such as expatriates are promoted (when diversity is eventually recognised by management) (Jamieson, 1991:8).

Hellbriegel and Slocum (1991:476) state: "Unlike traits, behaviours can be seen and learned. If behaviours can be learned, then individuals can be trained to lead more effectively." The local government manager's behavioural approach and leadership style, therefore, plays an important role in the managing of diversity in the workplace. The following four behavioural models with regard to diversity management will be discussed. The four behavioural models are:

4.1   Naïve offender behaviour
Local government managers with the above behaviour are not aware of their biases and prejudices towards people from diverse backgrounds. They are not even aware of the impact of their behaviour on themselves and the departments they work in. They can even be unaware of the pain and damage they cause through their behaviour. The problem with this type of behaviour is that a local government manager who is unaware of his or her own biases and prejudices can potentially be more dangerous than one who is partial and aware of it.

4.2   Perpetuator behavioural model
A local government manager with this type of behavioural pattern is aware that his behaviour is offensive to other colleagues in the workplace. Perpetuators are aware that they are biased and prejudiced towards diversity in the workplace. They make derogatory comments about co-workers from diverse backgrounds. According to Grote (1991:5), people with perpetuator behavioural patterns are "in danger of being sued or fired". Perpetuators who wish to change their behaviour must do it by breaking away from old habits that encourage them to be perpetuators. Johnson and Redmond (2000:3) state "it is important for directors and senior managers to face their prejudice, which each one developed during their upbringing. According to them, the extent to which one is prejudiced against people of another country, another race, another religion or whatever depends very much on one's social conditioning. This is very difficult to recognise at times, and even when one has recognised it, it is difficult to handle".

4.3   Avoider behaviour

Local government managers falling into the avoider behavioural pattern are aware of their own and others' bias towards diversity in the workplace. Despite working on their own prejudices, avoiders are reluctant to point out or address inappropriate behaviour by colleagues or the management cadre. In this regard, inappropriate behaviour refers to discrimination (gender or racial) or the encouragement of bias or prejudicial behaviour towards people from diverse backgrounds. Avoiders think by playing it safe, or by keeping quiet, nothing will happen to them. The avoider type of behaviour is often also perceived as acceptance. According to Grote (1991:5), "avoiders are sometimes thought of as silent supporters".

4.4   Change agent behaviour

Local government managers who have the change agent behavioural pattern are aware of their own biases and prejudices and also those of their co-workers and/or management cadre. Change agents differ from avoiders in that they confront co-workers or the management cadre who have biased or prejudiced behaviour. Change agents are fully aware of the consequences and negative impact of acting with bias or prejudice.

4.5   Fighter behaviour

Local government managers with a fighter behavioural pattern are aware of any behaviour which seems to be biased or prejudiced. They are called fighters because they usually confront co-workers or management who show biased or prejudiced behaviour. Fighters will go out of their way to help people from diverse backgrounds to succeed in the workplace. For them the utilisation of potential is important. They don't see diverse co-workers as a threat in the workplace. Fighters often pay a price for their behaviour. According to Grote (1991:6), "fighters may get a reputation for fighting, and after a while people may begin to discount what they are saying and even avoid them". They should examine their behaviour carefully to determine areas that might indicate those which are too sensitive when no discrimination or bias has actually taken place".

5.   Research Methodology

According to Brynard and Hanekom (in Pekeur 2002:1997:28) ones research methodology incorporates the methods of collecting data and is also a reflection on the planning, structuring and execution of the research."   The research approach was quantitative in approach and descriptive in method and was conducted in the natural work environment of local government managers. According to Bongwe (2010:100), empirical studies is of great advantage and of real benefits that accrue to individuals and businesses when diversity is understood, valued, respected utilised and well managed.

6.   Research findings

The following variables were created for the purpose of analysing the overall response data, namely dependent and independent variables. For the purpose of this study, the *dependent variables* were determined as the attitudinal or behavioural responses of the respondents to the diversity awareness questionnaire.

The *independent variables* of the questionnaire determined the gender, age, marital status, highest educational qualification, home language, religion, job position and the period the respondent had been working for his current employer.

The analysis of the response showed that:

- The majority of the respondents almost never challenge others on derogatory racial/ethnic/sexual comments.
- The majority of respondents speak up when someone was humiliating another or acting inappropriately.

- The majority of the respondents are sensitive about their actions. This explains why they think about the impact of their comments and actions before they speak or act and refuse to participate in jokes that are derogatory or show bias to any group. They refrain from repeating statements or rumours which reinforce prejudice or hate, and check the past before repeating or believing rumours or assumptions about anyone.
- They recognize and challenge the bias affecting their own thinking and avoid using language which reinforces negative stereotypes.
- The majority of the respondents acknowledge that protected-class members are just as skilled and competent as they are.
- The majority of the respondents are willing to get to know people from different cultures and groups as individuals, and are aware that people from other cultures also need to socialize.
- The majority of the respondents accept that not everyone has to act or look a certain way to be successful and valuable to an organisation.
- The majority of the respondents take responsibility for helping new people in their organisation. This includes making woman and people of different cultures, ages and sizes feel welcome and accepted.
- The majority of the respondents include disadvantaged members and white women in informal networks and social events.
- The majority of the respondents' state that they learn about the richness of other cultures, appreciate them and respected their holidays and events.
- The majority of the respondents ask for and plan social events in which everyone at work is able to participate.
- The majority of the respondents encourage protected-class members to speak out on their own issues and concerns and treat those issues as valid.
- The majority of the respondents will allow people from diverse backgrounds to take risks.
- The majority of the respondents encourage unity in the workplace by allowing people from different backgrounds to speak about issues and concerns both in group meetings and one-on-one.
- The majority of the respondents use participative management: by including diverse groups in decision-making; handing over responsibility to them; providing feedback on their work performance, disregarding physical characteristics when interacting with others and when making decisions about competence or ability; keeping everybody informed (both formally and informally); and by sharing the written and unwritten rules of the organisation.
- The majority of the respondents state that they disregard physical characteristics when interacting with others and when making decisions about competence or ability.
- The majority of the respondents want to make their organisations more pro-active in respect of affirmative action and equal opportunity guidelines and state that those who violate those policies should be confronted. They say that everyone (including diverse groups) should have equal opportunities and equal access to top positions in their organisations. They will also confront organisational policies and procedures that lead to the exclusion of anyone.
- The majority of the respondents state that they keep everyone informed, both formal and informal.

- The majority of the respondents state that they do help in providing all employees with ample training and education to succeed and to grow in their jobs.
- The majority of the respondents are willing to assist in providing all employees with ample training and education as well as being mentors, enabling them to grow and "learn the ropes".
- The majority of the respondents do encourage others in behaviour that supports cultural diversity.
- The majority of the respondents state that they do help to create a work environment in which all employees are respected and valued.
- The majority of the respondents do make an extra effort to educate themselves about other cultures.
- The majority of the respondents never call, write, or in any way protest when a book, newspaper, television show or some branch of the media perpetuate or reinforce bias or prejudice.
- The majority of the respondents refuse to join or remain a member of associations or groups which allow or reinforce values or practices that are racist, biased or prejudiced.
- The majority of the respondents do make an extra effort to get to know individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- The majority of the respondents do make an extra effort to indicate when something is inappropriate that could lead to prejudice.
- The majority of the respondents who took part in the survey were from junior management, followed by middle management.
- The majority of the respondents who took part had worked for more than eleven years for their current employers.

From the response it was clear that the respondents were aware of diversity in the workplace. This unfortunately does not mean that they valued, accepted or were able to manage diversity. For example, why did the respondents state that they almost never challenged others on derogatory racial/ethnic/ sexual comments but at the same time stated that they would speak up when someone was humiliating another person? Was this fear, or just another way of avoiding talk about such issues? Had the local government managers really faced their fears? It leaves the impression that public managers are not yet willing to openly challenge bias or prejudiced behaviour

According to Kossek and Zonia (1993:62), "the perceptions towards diversity efforts held by members of specific identity and organisational groups are critical to successful implementation of these largely voluntary initiatives. Members' resistance to change often hampers efforts to modify recruitment, promotion, and other policies to foster a multi-cultural work environment". From this study, it is clear that the majority of the respondents' behavioural reactions were directed at being change agents and fighters for diversity awareness in the workplace. It is also clear from the behavioural reactions that the respondents believe that they will benefit from diversity.

A concern still exists for those local governments who indicated a behavioural reaction of being avoiders, because, according to Kossek and Zonia (1993:62), "reaction to diversity initiatives is also embedded in an organisational context". What it means is that the organisational culture/environment influences the behavioural reaction of managers towards diversity in the workplace. An organisational culture which is supportive of the behavioural reactions of

avoiders and perpetuators can be very detrimental for local governments, especially in the building of positive working relations among diverse groups in the workplace. Although the purpose and aim of the survey were not to focus on the organisational culture in which respondents are working, thus does however provide other research opportunities.

7. Recommendations

In conclusion, and emerging from the results of the research, the following recommendations are made:

- Local government managers should acknowledge value and appreciate the full spectrum of diversity and should see it as a vital resource in the workplace. They should adjust themselves to a mind-set of multiculturalism in the workplace, at the same time keeping in mind the fact that diversity awareness and managing diversity are about people who are not like them and who do not aspire to be like them.
- Local government managers should acknowledge that diversity goes beyond physical differences, including differences in geographical area, communication styles, cultural leadership, problem-solving, professional experience, functional experience, management level, training and education, and work ethics.
- Local government managers should focus on obtaining commitment not only from individuals or the organisation, but also from everyone in the workplace. In so doing, they should themselves refrain from judging people who are different from them by perhaps analysing their own biases and prejudice, and by being sensitive to cultural differences.
- Local government managers should change their attitudes and perceptions towards diversity by talking openly about racial and ethnic differences (these open discussions should, however, not be used by the local government manager to pry into the employees' personal lives). They could become intercultural ambassadors by learning the home language of someone from a cross-cultural background, and by just being aware of cultural differences pertaining to verbal and non-verbal signs.
- Local government managers should approach diversity from three levels simultaneously, namely individually, interpersonally and organisationally. They could address diversity through participative management, especially through work-related decisions, building an atmosphere of trust, and thereby encouraging commitment to work to their fullest potential and performance beyond expectations. This would lead to interpersonal and organisational fulfilments. Local government managers and local authorities in general should adopt a long-term commitment towards diversity management in the workplace.
- Local government managers should recognise that with a diverse workforce it is preferable having a management style which focuses on working with people rather than for people.
- Local government managers should be aware that managing a diverse workforce is not an easy task because of people's humanistic nature.

The following recommendations are made with regard to **organisational and departmental arrangements** in local governments concerning diversity and the behavioural change of local government managers in the workplace.

- Managing the successful implementation of diversity requires support right down from

top management to worker level.

- Top management should encourage and commit themselves to the creation of a diversity awareness climate in the workplace. This can be done by creating a work environment in which all employees are respected and valued, encouraging public managers to participate in community activities which are change-agent efforts, and encouraging public service managers to make an effort to get to know individuals from diverse backgrounds. According to Dubrin (2007:436) for organizations to value diversity, top management must be committed to diversity management initiatives. James and Porras (in Van der Westhuizen, 2008:20) concurs that "You can't just put something on an overhead transparency slide that says "vision" and expect to inspire people, unless you really mean it, believe in it, live it". According to Van der Westhuizen (2008:7) it is imperative that

management implement a diversity management process, which aims to address managing diversity at all levels in the organisation.
- Senior, middle and junior local government management should encourage diversity awareness initiatives in the workplace.
- Top management should also discourage negative behavioural patterns and reward desired behavioural patterns towards diversity by intervention and re-orientation of public officials to change their thinking on diversity, and by encouraging behaviour that supports cultural diversity. Punishment should also be handled with care.
- Top management should also in conjunction with other role players (middle management, staff associations and trade unions), identify the contingencies; in other words, what positive behaviour is acceptable in acknowledging and managing diversity in the workplace.
- Top management including the council should commit themselves to the bringing about of specific changes through the development of new values, attitudes and behaviours.
- Top management including the council should also recognise and accept the new behaviour pattern which forms the new norm of behaviour with regard to diversity in the workplace.
- Women should get more recognition at all three levels of management (senior, middle and junior) in order to reflect the demographic composition of the country in the workplace.
- Personnel policies and practices regarding the management of diverse people need to be integrated with the total process of management within the organisation.
- The leadership and motivation of diverse employees is the responsibility of all local government managers, not just a task for the human resource specialist.
- Managing diversity training programmes should first focus on the human *being* and then on the *doing* and *having* side of diversity training. In other words, focus on who the person is, before moving on to what the person should do and should be (the changes the person should implement).

8. Conclusion

Local Government is an important political and social institution in South Africa, and often provides administrative and symbolic reference points in terms of national unity, social continuity and national development goals. Local Government in South Africa are under constant pressure to change in accordance with service delivery demands originating from their external and internal environments. These changes embody several dimensions such as transformation, substitution, adaptation, alteration, managing innovation, renewal and reformation. Local government tends to be the most complex organisational system in any country, and when a country undertakes to reform its local authorities, it is also taking its biggest organisational transformation challenge as it reflect the acceptance or rejection of the diversities that exist within its communities and in its own structures. Managing diversity in the workplace is but one of the elements that accompanied the changes in local government. To prosper in the future it is important to understand and make better use of diversity in business, education, government, and in society in general. The solution to South Africa's racial problems will not only be solved by managing diversity, managing change and affirmative action programmes, but by the recognition and acceptance of the diversity of others and by acknowledging and valuing the same. Finally according to Bongwe (2010:189), "what truly matters is the recognition of the humanity of all humans and how they behave towards one another, and how they respect one another's individuality and dignity. That's what really matters."

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