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# Chapter 15

## Fostering an Inclusive Religious and Spiritual Working Environment in Higher Education Institutions

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### ABSTRACT

*With globalisation and internationalisation, there has been a continuous increase in the diversity of students and staff in higher education institutions globally. Therefore, it has become increasingly important to foster inclusive working environments that cater to the diverse religious and spiritual needs of staff. This chapter explores the differences between the concepts of religiosity and spirituality and argues that focusing on religion only may provide a rather limited perspective. Hence, the chapter provides a persuasive discussion of the need to consider spiritual inclusion for higher education institutions to address religious and spiritual inclusivity. Some examples drawn from Western countries such as the UK are provided to demonstrate some practical approaches that higher education institutions can adopt to develop inclusive religious and spiritual working environments. In addition, the chapter explores the benefits and challenges of ensuring religious and spiritual inclusivity and the link between religious and spiritual inclusivity and organisational performance.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Many countries across the world now realise that educational institutions should play an important role in advancing social justice and the recognition of rights for all groups of people in society. There is an increased awareness of the urgent need to foster equality, diversity and inclusion in the Higher Education sector. Several initiatives have been deployed to ensure the development of inclusive environments for staff within the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). For example, in the UK, the guidance provided by Advance HE to universities clearly articulates that all institutions should strive to create a work environment that supports individuals to thrive by getting rid of barriers and providing equal opportunities. The Equality Act 2010 advocates for the protection of people who have a characteristic including: disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Understandably, religion and beliefs are among the nine protected characteristics.

Religion and beliefs contribute to the identities of the people (Stevenson, 2014). Several religious groups exist in today's societies, and these include, among others, commonly known faith groups such as Christians, Moslems, Hinduists, Buddhists, and some smaller religions including Shintoism and Jainism. Closed minds have a hostile attitude towards other religions, and view others as alien, inferior, separate with no values in common, whereas open minds view people of other beliefs as different but equal with shared values and show respect and desire to form partnerships to solve shared problems (Kelly, 2003). The habits of mind are the roots of prejudice, discrimination and abuse (Kelly, 2003). Arguably, there is an urgent need for people to have open minds in order to achieve equal recognition of different religions and form partnerships and integration.

In the meantime, HEIs have seen the internationalisation of the higher education sector manifested in the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of university education (Knight, 2004). These institutions have been implementing internationalisation in different ways, for instance, recruiting staff from different countries and incorporating intercultural learning within the curriculum. One of the important structural indicators of internationalisation in Higher Education (HE) is the number of international staff within the universities. Taking the wide spectrum of staff background, it is essential for the HEIs to develop inclusive approaches to create a conducive working environment for their staff with different religious beliefs (including those who do not have any religion).

In the same vein, Karakas (2010, p.101) asserts that:

*In the twenty-first Century, organizations need to incorporate a set of humanistic and spiritual values into workplaces to enable human hearts, spirits, and souls to grow and flourish. Employees and managers increasingly need to reflect on the ways of incorporating spirituality, wisdom, reflection, inspiration, creativity, and compassion into work.*

This chapter explores the necessity of developing an inclusive working environment and draws attention to the diversity of students and staff in the higher education sector, in particular, their religious and spiritual needs. It discusses the importance of inclusive strategies and practices for organisational performance, with a closer look into practices of inclusion on religion and beliefs in the higher education sector, drawing some examples from the UK and other countries. One significant contribution of this chapter is the exploration of the concept of spirituality which helps to widen the discussion around inclusion given that spirituality goes beyond the identification of institutionalised religions (Karakas

2010). It points out the related benefits and challenges and/or barriers to effective implementation of spiritual inclusivity in HEIs. This chapter argues that spiritual inclusive practices are fundamentally important for enhancing organisational productivity.

The rest of the chapter is organised by firstly providing the context of globalisation and a growing diverse society as the rationale for inclusion as an imperative subject. Then, it offers definitions of some key constructs such as religion, belief, faith, and spirituality to clarify the meaning of these concepts. It follows a discussion on the role of spiritual inclusion for organisational performance, then zooming into an examination of some of the approaches being used by HEIs to develop inclusive working environments. The chapter concludes with reflections on the current practices and thoughts for a way forward to build a spiritually inclusive environment in the HE sector.

## **INCLUSIVITY: AN IMPERATIVE MANDATE**

The contemporary society has been increasingly more mobile and diverse. The global movement of people through legal, illegal, and forced immigration has changed many mono-cultural countries to be comprised of people from multi-cultural backgrounds and brought to light the subject of diversity. In the meantime, the development of information technology has made the world smaller and offered a greater opportunity for individuals and organisations to interact cost effectively. The increasing levels of interaction between different groups of people across borders urge the need to learn about diversity and develop a more inclusive society. Embracing diversity is of central importance for governments, organisations, and society.

While there are a range of definitions of diversity, all the definitions concur that the essence of the definition lie in the context of ‘differences’ in people or groups of people. Diversity in an organisational context refers to identity differences among individuals in a workplace setting (Chemers et al., 1995). The differences in individuals can arise in a range of aspects such as ethnicity, age, race, culture, gender, spiritual and religious orientations (Robbins & Coulter, 2017). Chemers et al. (1995) identify three possible types of diversity namely surface, deep and hidden diversity. Surface diversity refers to visible traits that differentiate individuals in an organisation setting such as ethnicity and race, while deeper level diversity refers to unobservable characteristics such as attitudes, values, spiritual, and religious beliefs. Hidden diversity represents attributes that individuals mask or hide or voluntarily reveal by choice.

Organisations such as HEIs are able to collect a lot of information on its diversity, for example, the number of students and staff based on descriptive traits such as gender, age, and ethnicity. In other words, diversity has been recognised on surface level in most organisations. However, understanding diversity at a deep level is more challenging as it refers to the less observable traits that employees have the option of sharing or not divulging this information. For example, people may not declare their spiritual or religious identity. When the information is shared at the discretion of the employee, organisations may have more challenges to capture the true representation of the deeper level diversity data and to obtain a fuller picture of the diverse staff body. Over the years, human resources practices in HEIs and other organisations in general have progressively evolved to become more inclusive on a range of diversity issues including gender, culture and ethnicity. The rationale for organisations adopting a progressive approach for inclusivity is a mix of self-interest, corporate social responsibility, and changing expectations of society relating to diversity issues.

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Diversity is pertinent in both academic and corporate contexts. In the corporate world, globalisation and internationalisation has meant that business organisations are now having to interact with diverse groups of customers and employees routinely. To enable successful engagement with diverse groups of stakeholders, organisations must face and handle the matter of diversity and inclusivity for successful management and operations of the business. Contrary to the perceptions of diversity as a peripheral issue for organisations in the past, an increasing number of organisations have been taking a more proactive approach, developing policies to recognise diversity and adopting inclusive practices to manage diversity. Like the business sector, HEIs have a rich history in the matter of diversity. For instance, HEIs in the UK have had international students and staff from a wide range of cultural backgrounds even from early days. It could be suggested that the HE sector is one of the earliest to face diverse stakeholders.

Globalisation, the knowledge economy and advances in technology have influenced and intensified the internationalisation of higher education (Altbach et al., 2009). Over the past years, the number of international staff has been increasing in universities across the world. It is worth noting that this phenomenon is more visible in the western countries compared to the less developed countries. For instance, in the UK universities, increasing numbers of staff from different countries are working in the country. In terms of staff numbers, in 2018/19 academic year: HESA (2021) reported that 439,955 staff were employed in the HE sector showing an increase of 2% from 429,560 in 2017/18. Of these, 18%, or 38,080 of the academic staff with a known nationality had an EU (non-UK) nationality and 14% had a non-EU nationality. In the same vein, for the non-academic staff with known nationality, 7% had an EU (excluding the UK) nationality, and 4% had a non-EU nationality. Similar trends may also be observed in some developed countries around the world. Globalisation and internationalisation have accelerated the growing diverse body of staff in the HE sector.

The international body of staff from different backgrounds urges HEIs to be sensitive to different cultural identities. Hofstede (2011) defines culture as: “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others [...] societal cultures reside in values, in the sense of broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others” (p.1). Although culture is not genetically inherited, it is a lifestyle that is shared by members of a particular group in society. Religion constitutes an integral part of culture (Stevenson, 2014). Religious affiliation is an essential part of people’s cultural background and their self-identity (Advance HE, 2018). The staff joining HEIs in the UK and other countries across the world, bring with them diverse religious beliefs and spiritual practices. At the same time, there are different religious affiliations and practices among the local people in the host countries. Issues of religion can impact on staff’s engagement with institutions in the host countries. Therefore, staff from diverse cultural backgrounds in the higher education sector require a system that is sensitive to their needs. It is imperative for institutions to create working environments that are conducive for the diverse staff to thrive. In order to expand the discussion on fostering inclusive working environment in the HE sector, we will look at some related key definitions in the following section.

## **RELIGION, BELIEFS, FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY**

According to the United Nations (2015, p.38):

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change [their] religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest [their] religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

It can be gleaned from the above excerpt of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that religious beliefs are an essential human right, however, what constitutes religious beliefs is hard to define and interpret precisely (Cash et al., 2000). Advance HE (2018, p.76) mirrors the language of the Equality Act 2010 and defines belief as “any religious or philosophical belief, and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief”. Another related term is ‘faith’ which has multiple meanings and understandings, and sometimes it is used interchangeably as religion or being religious. ‘Religious’ is referred to “both having a faith and undertaking some form of action related to that faith” (Stevenson, 2014, p. 53). As ‘religious’ is considered to be a multi-dimensional concept, Advance HE (2018) stresses the importance of avoiding a prescriptive list of religions which might exclude less known or more recent ones. Advance HE (2018) advocates that a plurality of religions, philosophical beliefs, and ‘no belief’ should be supported.

In addition, the concept of spirituality has sometimes been used as an alternative term reflecting the same meaning for religiosity (Schnell, 2012; Warsah & Imron, 2019). Although these two concepts are both multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and have some overlapping meaning they are distinctly different (Achour et al., 2015; Cohen et al., 2012; Gay & Lynxwiler, 2013; Warsah & Imron, 2019). Cohen et al. (2012) provide a clear distinction between religiosity and spirituality in order to avoid the conflation of these concepts:

*Religiosity refers to membership and participation in the organizational structures, beliefs, rituals, and other activities related to a religious faith, while spirituality [...] has a more existential and experiential focus upon an individual’s internalized faith, values, and beliefs along with their consequences in daily behaviour. Religion may be defined as a specific set of beliefs and practices, usually within an organized group. Spirituality may be defined as an individual’s sense of peace, purpose, and connection to others, and beliefs about the meaning of life.*

In other words, spirituality and religiousness are subtly distinct but share some overlapping characteristics implying they are closely related but not the same. Spirituality is personalised perspective of the individual’s internalized faith, values, and beliefs along with their consequences in daily behaviour in comparison to the institutionalised religious practices and affiliations (Cohen et al., 2012). However, religiosity may be viewed as an approach to attain spirituality (Warsah & Imron 2019). Although spirituality is different from religion, practices such as prayer, meditation, reading scriptures and communication with God are included in the definition of spirituality “as the journey to find a sustainable, authentic, meaningful, holistic, and profound understanding of the existential self and its relationship/interconnectedness with the sacred and the transcendent” (Karakas, 2010, p. 91). Moreover, spiritual value such as harmony, peace, goodness, purpose, self-acceptance and relatedness aligned with the values that major

religions advocate on honouring God and loving one another as well as sharing a common purpose of serving humanity and helping the disadvantaged (Atlaf & Awan, 2011; Mohamed-Saleem, 2016).

The authors of this chapter raise the question: “which of the two concepts (i.e. religiosity and spirituality) would be more appropriate for HEIs when considering the issue of inclusivity in organisations?” The concept of religion is often viewed as institutionalized and sometimes with even negative and divisive connotations (Rao, 2012; Karakas, 2010). Despite the good intention of building an inclusive environment in the HEIs, the use of constructs such as ‘religion’ and ‘belief’ has its own limitation which may hinder the intended practices and outcomes of widening participation, inclusive and equality strategies. In light of the limitations of religion, academics endorse the broader construct of ‘spirituality’ which is characterized as “a private, inclusive, non-denominational, universal human feeling” (Karakas, 2010, p. 91). A clear understanding of the concepts of religiosity and spirituality is crucial for informing considerations about inclusivity.

## **SPIRITUAL INCLUSIVITY AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

A myriad of benefits is posited for workplace settings with recognition and adoption of inclusivity strategies and practices. Spiritual inclusivity has a threefold contribution to organisational performance (a) enhances employee well-being and quality of life, (b) provides employees’ a sense of purpose and meaning at work and (c) provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community (Karakas, 2010).

Firstly, contemporary life means that employees spend a significant part of their time in the workplace. Workplace stress can contribute positively to productivity gains; however, stresses beyond a threshold has the reverse negative effect on productivity. Increasing levels of stress contributes to both physical and mental burnout. Many studies on burnout and workplace shows the negative consequences of burnout and stress are on the rise (Jeanguenat and Dror, 2018). For a long time, there has been some evidence that negative effects of workplace stress exist in the higher education context (Tytherleigh et al., 2005). Beyond the HEIs, many studies have shown the importance of employee well-being for organisational performance and its significant implications for organisations’ costs related to illness, absenteeism and turnover (Pawar, 2016). If the work environment does not offer effective support environments for employees’ physical and mental well-being, this would have a detrimental effect on employees’ long-term motivation, reduced productivity, lower commitment, and increased costs to the organisation. The negative effects on employee well-being and consequent productivity losses are well recognised (Leiter & Maslach 2001; Carr et al., 2011). At the same time, there is a global decline of employee engagement (Roof, 2015), the anxiety and fear of job losses, the lack of work-life balance and a feeling of the loss of control have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Srivastave & Gupta, 2021).

Spirituality provides an antidote to employee disengagement “through offering employees healthy, purposeful, meaningful, and dignified work environments” (Roof, 2015, p. 596). Many companies, for instance, Coca-Cola, Intel, the Body Shop, have included spirituality in their workplace and organisational culture (Karakas, 2010). More practically, organisations have incorporated the spiritual dimension and encouraged spiritual practices in their workplace, such as meditation sessions, yoga practices, Bible/ Quran/Torah study groups, and interfaith dialogue groups (Karakas, 2010). Cash et al. (2000) provided a model for accommodating religion and spirituality at work, which includes observance requests outside the workplace (e.g. religious holidays, ritual or event to attend), and manifestation requests in the workplace (e.g. individuals’ desire to express themselves via wearing religious dress and symbols). Those

practices such as clothing might appear as minor issues but have religious values rooted underneath (Rao, 2012). Thus, it is crucial to unearth practices at the surface level and develop an appreciation and understanding of core values and cultural assumptions at a deeper level (Rao, 2012).

The positive effect of spiritual and religious inclusivity on employee well-being arises through reduced stresses and boosted motivation at the workplace to bring about an improved work-life balance. In addition, there is empirical support to show the relationship between satisfied employees and the positive effects for the interactions between employees and customers. In other words, well-being benefits translate into enhanced productivity gains in the workplace. Spiritual and religious inclusivity would contribute to improved customer service gains by supporting employees' work-life balance and contributing to the staff well-being (Hurley, 1998).

However, wellbeing is a complex construct with four dimensions, namely, "emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being" (Pawar 2016, p. 975). Emotional well-being refers to positive feelings exceeding negative ones; psychological well-being is related to self-acceptance, realisation and fulfilment of one's potential; social well-being covers one's equitable and beneficial involvement in the society; spiritual well-being meets the need for transcendence (Pawar, 2016). More nuanced understanding is required on how equality and inclusivity impact on staff well-being in all four domains in the higher education sector, perhaps this is a potential area of study in future.

Secondly, spiritual inclusion provides employees with an improved sense of focus and dedication at the workplace (Karakas, 2010). Organisations that implemented spiritual inclusivity show that employees have improved creativity, teamwork, ethical behaviour, greater levels of engagement and a clearer sense of purpose of work. Several theories have discussed the importance of addressing human needs, for example, Maslow's hierarchical theory identified safety and physiological needs as the basic lower order of human needs, and esteem and self-actualisation as higher levels of human needs (Maslow, 1970). Spirituality can be considered as one of the basic human needs, hence, the significance of ensuring spiritual inclusivity in workplaces. Employers should find out how to motivate their staff by addressing both their needs. Herzberg (1968) distinguished intrinsic and extrinsic motivations according to whether or not the factors are inherently interesting to a person or expected as an external reward. The self-determination theory identifies three factors necessary for human flourishing, namely, competence (the need to have skills to succeed and feel effective), autonomy (the need to feel self-determined), and relatedness (the need to belong and connect with others) (Ryan et al., 1996). In general, human beings have the desire to be treated morally well, such as to receive respect, approval and recognition, which is defined as moral extrinsic motivation. At the same time, people have "the desire to acquire moral good while acting" and "the desire to give moral good to others" which is referred to as the moral intrinsic motivation and the moral transitive motivation respectively (Guillén et al., 2015, pp. 808-809). As employees are searching for meaning in the workplace (Cash et al., 2000), understanding employees' motivations and incorporating spiritual values into workplaces enables people to grow and flourish (Karakas, 2010). It is crucial to consider the spiritual motivations in the workplace, this is an important ingredient to the organisation's productivity as will be discussed later in this chapter. Guillén et al. (2015) expanded the classification of motivations identifying several spiritual motivations in the workplace. These include the spiritual extrinsic motivation which involves the desire to receive spiritual good from outside; the spiritual intrinsic motivation, that is, the desire to develop spiritual good while engaging in some human actions; and lastly but not least, the spiritual transitive motivation, which focuses on the desire to give spiritual good to others. Understanding employees' needs, motivations and different dimensions

of being human is essential to fostering human flourishing in the workplace and crucial to achieving organisational objectives (Guillén et al., 2015).

However, with increasing levels of competition and increasing demand on meeting targets, many organisations in the past have mainly focussed on financial or quantitative measures to capture organisational and employee performance. The overemphasis on objective or financial measures of performance has the potential to adversely affect employee well-being as well as raising question marks on their sense of purpose of working in an organisation whose sole focus is on the measurable returns. The higher education industry has not been an exception with the increased number of education institutions worldwide and the desire for revenue generation (Parker, 2012). The changing business approach of higher education institutions suggests that the HE sector may just be affected similarly with impairment on employee well-being and a lost sense of direction. Kaplan and Norton (2005) put forward the balance scorecard framework whereby organisations can broaden the range of performance metrics that goes beyond traditional measures of performance. Empirical findings positively support using non-financial outcomes to measure organisation performance in a private university setting (Ali, 2015). A recent study explored including spirituality and religiosity as a non-financial measure for performance (Al-Hosaini & Sofian, 2015). Implementation of alternative approaches for measuring performance is worth further exploring and may offer opportunities for providing employees with a sense of direction and purpose and enhancing employees' well-being.

Thirdly, organisational strategies with spiritual inclusivity provide employees with a sense of interconnectedness, community and support organisational performance (Karakas, 2010). This suggests that workplaces are not merely transactional but present relational opportunities for employees. Employees spend a significant amount of time in an organisation and the interactions between employees generate a sense of community. The incorporation of spiritual initiatives within the organisation may help create a positive 'sticky' environment where employees are drawn to remain committed and loyal to the organisation. When organisations are able to attract and retain capable staff, the organisation would be able to develop a competitive advantages vis a vis its competitors.

Organisations might be determined to ensure that every employee is supported to enjoy a meaningful, purposeful and relationally connected experience, however, there exist several challenges and pitfalls of including spirituality in workplaces that cannot be ignored. For instance, there is a potential risk of spirituality being used as a management tool to manipulate or coerce employees, the danger of proselytizing other people from different backgrounds and views, the issue of privacy invasion and incompatible with certain organisational culture and philosophy (Karakas, 2010). Thus, to truly embrace and incorporate spirituality in the workplace is not a simple task. A series of questions are worth asking such as "will overall employee relations suffer?", "will people's safety be jeopardized"? when accommodating spirituality in the workplace and building an open, value-expressive work environment (Cash et al., 2000). Organisations such as HEIs need to accommodate employees' spiritual requests, respect for diversity, openness and freedom of expression and acknowledgment of employees as whole persons (Karakas, 2010).

## **SPIRITUAL INCLUSIVITY: THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS CONTEXT**

Inclusivity refers to how the identity differences shared by individual, or groups of people are recognised and are treated fairly in a workplace setting (Daft, 2010). Spiritual and religious inclusion is considered beneficial for appreciating alternative perspectives, enhancing inter-cultural dialogue, developing global citizenship and internationalising HEIs (Stevenson, 2014). In the UK, Advance HE (2018) provides a series of comprehensive guidance with case studies from institutions for achieving equality and inclusion relevant to religion in the light of the prevalence and diversity of beliefs in the student and staff body. For example, HEIs in the UK have provided not only space for prayers and worship, but also wellbeing activities such as mindfulness sessions for a better engagement and retention of staff (Advance HE, 2018). In addition to staff support, special attention and support have also been provided to look after students' wellbeing when they practise fasting during examination periods. For instance, guidelines such as 'How to stay healthy during Ramadan' are published via university social media accounts as well as on university Examinations Office webpages. At the same time, religious inclusion has been recognized as important for recruitment and retention of staff in the HEIs. For example, in advertising and recruitment of staff, Advance HE (2018) suggests transparency in the support and accommodation available for different religious beliefs, sensitivity to identity check for people with a partial or full-face covering. In addition, Advance HE (2018) provides guidance for line managers and team leaders on amending working hours to accommodate staff's religion and have inclusive timing and catering for meetings and team events.

The benefits of having inclusive strategies and practices confer competitive advantages for organisations. The advantages of inclusive practices include cost advantages, ability to attract, hire and retain higher quality staffing, reputational and brand identity, thinking outside of the box and avoiding group-thinking, improved problem-solving, enhanced creativity (Chemers et al., 1995). These benefits are equally generalisable to the higher education context. For example, cost advantage of inclusivity is accrued to the higher levels of staff loyalty, lower attrition of staff and lower costs in terms of litigation. Retention of good staff would not only lower costs but also provides competitive advantage for the organisation as it contributes to keeping experienced staff who are a source of intangible resource for the organisation. In addition, organisations can create perceived brand identity and gain reputation advantages by adopting progressive inclusive strategies which may attract both customers and staff who want to be part of a progressive organisation. Moreover, with inclusive strategies, the organisation can obtain employees with a wide range of mind-sets which enables thinking outside of the box and avoid group-thinking. The access to a rich body of staffing provides improved problem-solving capabilities as well as enhanced creative thinking capabilities for the organisation.

The theoretical advantage for the inclusive practices is compelling for organisations seeking competitive advantages. Implementing inclusive strategies aligns to both the higher education context and the corporate sector. A caveat to the competitive advantages arising from practicing inclusive strategies, if inclusive strategies are not implemented effectively there is potential for lower level of staff loyalty, increased litigation for unfair practices as well as reputational damage (Daft 2010). However, while acknowledging the potential drawback of poor implementation of inclusion, this should not deter organisations from embracing inclusive approaches if they are well thought through and implemented equitably across the organisation.

## **DISCUSSION**

Social inclusion is often narrowly regarded as access and equity in the higher education sector which is underpinned by neoliberalism (Gidley et al., 2010). However, social justice ideology interprets social inclusion more broadly as engagement, and the human potential ideology further embraces social inclusion as success through empowerment (Gidley et al., 2010). It advocates that social inclusion should go far beyond equitable access and equal rights for all, but instead to empower everyone, value the richness of individual difference and embrace cultural diversity and transformation.

Spirituality is “a legitimate category of human needs and desire” (Guillén et al., 2015, p. 812). Spirituality in the workplace increases employees’ commitment and productivity as well as decreasing their stress and burnout, hence, it enhances employees’ wellbeing overall (Karakas, 2010). For every individual to flourish, there is need to create an inclusive working environment. As argued by Guillén et al. (2015, p. 814), “human flourishing requires a frequent examination of individual motives of conduct in order to develop the noblest potentialities of each. The workplace is indeed the ‘place’ where motivations (material, psychological, moral, and spiritual), through actions, have the ability to transform ‘work’ into a noble human activity, even the dreariest task.”

The current practices supporting staff of different religious and spiritual backgrounds in the Higher Education sector is very much focused on the equitable access, for example, the recruitment process has paid attention to the timing of the interview to avoid the key religious dates (Advance HE, 2018). A certain degree of engagement has also taken place in some of the HEIs, for instance, interfaith networks, forums and events have been established to facilitate dialogue and promote good relationships between different groups. However, there are different levels of social inclusion in a spectrum of equitable access, participatory engagement and empowered success. Equitable access can be considered as the very first step of social inclusion, hence, a further development through participatory engagement and empowered success is needed to form an integrated solid foundation for social inclusion (Gidley et al., 2010).

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter discusses the role of religious and spiritual inclusion in workplaces with a focus on the higher education sector. The authors have pointed out that religious diversity can be exclusive as some staff would not identify with any religious group but still maintain a very spiritual lifestyle. If organisations opt to adopt or implement religious inclusivity in a narrow context, an organisation might inadvertently exclude some groups of employees and hence the organisation’s efforts for inclusivity would be a partial success. It argues that HEIs should go beyond catering for staff’s religious needs and explore ways of developing inclusive spiritual working environments. This chapter commends that ‘spirituality’ may be a more helpful construct than ‘religion’ to be employed in fostering an inclusive environment in the higher education sector. Focusing on spirituality aligns with the deeper level diversity. It is significantly important to ensure that religious and spiritual inclusivity is implemented effectively in the HEIs as this has an impact on staff’s well-being as well as the organisational performance. Arguably, there is much more space for improvement to understand, value and empower individuals’ religious and spiritual needs in the workplace for the flourishing of employees and the sustainable and healthy development of organisations.

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