

# WORK GROUP DYNAMICS AND DIVERSITY



## STUDY UNIT 1

Conceptualising Work group dynamics and Diversity

# Diversity Concepts

- Systems psychodynamics:
  - Allows for the study and interpretation of collective, interdependent unconscious and conscious individual, group and intergroup processes
  - It uses observed human behaviour to explore underlying individual and group psychodynamics to understand conscious behaviour
  - It allows us to explore certain structures, boundaries, roles and tasks in organisational context

# Diversity Concepts

- Individual psychodynamics:
  - Refers to the study of unconscious processes which operates within the individual
  - The individual has developed an intra-psychic reality operating on the unconscious level
  - The assumption is that the individual is motivated by anxiety
  - In cases of anxiety the individual employs defence mechanisms to feel more at ease
  - Defence mechanisms include splitting, introjection, projection, introjective identification and projective identification

# Diversity Concepts

- Group psychodynamics:
  - Refers to the study of unconscious group processes
  - The assumption is that the individual is motivated by anxiety
  - In cases of anxiety the individual employs defence mechanisms to feel more at ease
  - Defence mechanisms include splitting, introjection, projection, introjective identification and projective identification

# Diversity Concepts

- Diversity:
  - Diversity can be defined as any mixture of items characterized by differences and similarities between individuals and groups, that contribute to distinct social identities
  - The primary dimensions refer to core individual attributes that do not change, such as age, gender, race, physical appearance or traits and sexual orientation.
  - The secondary dimensions are changeable and include communication style, education, relationship / marital / parental status, religious beliefs, work experience and income.
  - These dimensions normally add complexity to the individual's self-image. The interaction between the primary and secondary dimensions shapes the individual's values, priorities and perceptions.

# Diversity Concepts

## Workforce Diversity:

- Work force diversity is seen as an indisputable fact and a catalyst of organisational change, and as a composite of the multicultural.
- As such it becomes a human resource goal, a business objective and a learning opportunity.
- Workforce diversity represents relationships between people and with the organisation in the context of ongoing culture.

# Diversity Concepts

## Diversity management:

- Defined as the behavioural science research, theory and methods used to manage organisational change that support diversity in organisations
- When operationalised, diversity management becomes an organisational strategy towards work force diversity development, organisational culture change and empowerment of the work force.
- Diversity management aims to establish organisational cultural change through strategic diversity initiatives.
- Diversity management is a long-term process designed to create a multicultural organisation
- Multicultural organisations are entities genuinely committed to diverse representation throughout the organisation at all levels.
- It is a pragmatic approach in which participants anticipate and plan for change, do not fear human differences or perceive them as a threat, and view the workplace as a forum for individuals' growth and change in skills and performance, with direct cost benefits to the organisation.

# Diversity Concepts

- Diversity Psychodynamics:

The two main assumptions informing our understanding of diversity psychodynamics are that:

- diversity is a relational phenomenon through which individuals across differences and similarities make certain assumptions about others and then behave in a particular way towards them.
- observed human behaviour across differences and similarities towards others occurs on the conscious and unconscious level.



# Diversity Concepts

- Diversity Psychodynamics:

Based on the work of Pretorius (2003) diversity psychodynamics as a relational phenomenon focuses on:

- the similarities and differences, based on primary and secondary dimensions, between individuals and groups; and
- the manner in which individuals on a conscious and unconscious level perceive, interpret and act upon these similarities and differences.
- By exploring observed human behaviour in the context of diversity, we are able to understand the unconscious processes that drive our behaviour towards those who are different to us.
- This will inform the way in which we deal with diversity and implement diversity management in organisations.