

I was involved in a meaningful process in this journey of the course, “Social and Cultural Diversity”, that prompted me to reflect and learn about new perspectives, which widened my insights about human nature and the various factors at play. The self-assessments, discussions, and readings have assisted me in reflecting upon my personal beliefs, cultural background, and my position in society with a critical and empathetic lens. Before engaging in this course, I believed that diversity was a broad concept that included inclusion and respect. However, with structured self-assessments, I have come to understand the various elements like implicit bias, communication styles, and cultural awareness, which have left a deep impact on my personal opinions and my perception of the identity of people. In this important assignment in week eight, I will reflect upon the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities provided by the self-assessments throughout the course. Then, I will summarize the overall learning experience and how it has contributed to my professional and personal growth.

Strengths

The major strength that I have garnered from the self-assessments is my curiosity to learn from others and then explore cultural differences without any judgment. I scored high on the assessment of cultural competence based on the scores, which highlighted my openness to new cultures and empathy towards individuals from different cultural groups. This resonated with my interactions with others in daily life conversations with people from various cultural backgrounds.

Empathy was one of my main strengths in this course, because the discussions and the assignments prompted me to think differently from my previous assumptions. I had to critically analyse a situation or a question through different lenses. For instance, while analysing the cross-cultural communication styles, I had learnt that directness and indirectness are not merely

based on one's personality. Rather, it is influenced by one's cultural norms and the way an individual grows under the threshold of the cultural traditions and beliefs. Recognizing these traits in others helped me to become more aware, flexible, and patient while conversing with others because the communication preferences of others might differ from mine.

Another strength that I have become aware of is self-awareness in relation to privilege and intersectionality. The assessment in week two about my cultural identity made me aware of the interplay of various factors that form my distinct identity and the way I perceive people. This self-assessment, along with the diagram, also showed my inherent biases and the way they affect me while I communicate with others. This demonstrated how gender, race, and socioeconomic status influence the way I explore the world and communicate with others. This intersection of various cultural elements accentuated the fact that identities do not thrive in isolation; they exist in ways that give rise to privilege or oppress them. This awareness is crucial to working with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, as this awareness helps in fostering humility, an important step in the journey of self-improvement.

Weaknesses: Biases and Communication Barriers

Although the self-assessments helped to identify many of the positive attributes, the assessments also revealed negative sides. This includes implicit biases and obstacles in cross-cultural communication. The Implicit Test by Harvard University also made me aware about equality and inclusion. The realization from the test made me uncomfortable at first, because it made me realize my weaknesses. Although I have made sure that I have an inclusive and respectful attitude, there was bias. For example, I highlighted my preference towards people of my own cultural and racial background. It made me uncomfortable about this awareness;

however, this marked an important chapter in the learning process. We all have “implicit biases,” and this does not make a person “bad.” These biases are influenced by cultural factors.

Another weakness that I have is hesitancy, which makes it difficult to engage in conversations relating to race, gender, and inequality. At my workplace, I have the tendency to keep quiet because I fear that I might say something insensitive. Even though this behaviour is out of respect, this does not permit me to fully engage in a discussion.

I also realized that my exposure to other cultures is limited because it mainly leads to false narratives or a general overview. When others tell me about a specific culture or experience, I am unable to vividly explain due to the lack of experience. I need to communicate more with various kinds of people. I believe that true cultural awareness arises from communicating with people of different cultures without any judgment or previous perception.

Opportunities Provided by the Course

The weaknesses that I have identified through the self-assessments pave the path with growth opportunities, both personally and professionally. One of the opportunities that helped me most was the development of cultural humility and a process of evaluation and learning. Cultural humility is much more than awareness, because it denotes that one can never be truly “competent” with cultures of other people; however, one must indulge in the process of lifelong learning and reflection.

From the professional perspective, this course has opened opportunities through which I can apply this awareness to work with diverse team members. This will make sure that there is a collaborative environment and there is empathy where individuals are able to thrive and do work

efficiently, which will promote the overall well-being of the organization. I can use this privilege to give prominence to the voice of everyone in the workplace.

Another opportunity presented by the course made me aware of the importance of advocacy and being an ally. This course prompted me to think about how I can use my position to raise my voice for the marginalized. It may be through volunteering, mentoring, or speaking against offensive behaviour. The self-assessments enabled me to contribute to a culture of inclusion. Overall, it can be said that the course is one of the fundamental pillars for embarking on the journey of a human service professional.