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Course of Global Management and Politics

Bridging Cultures, Strengthening Organizations: HRM Strategies for Multinational Companies

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ACADEMIC YEAR

2024/2025

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Introduction:

In the evolving landscape of the twenty-first century, the composition of corporate workforces has undergone a profound transformation. Traditional organizational models, once based on cultural uniformity and strong territorial identity, have been replaced by more fluid, global, and multicultural structures. Companies are now composed of individuals from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, each bringing with them their own perspectives, needs, and expectations. These demographic changes are not just superficial; they represent a fundamental shift in how organizations must think about communication, collaboration, and leadership.

Managing such diversity is both a challenge and an opportunity. On one hand, companies must contend with potential cultural misunderstandings, different communication styles, and varying expectations around hierarchy, teamwork, and leadership. On the other hand, this same diversity can become a powerful driver of creativity, innovation, and resilience — if managed intentionally. It is no longer sufficient to tolerate difference; organizations must actively embrace it as a strategic resource. A diverse team, when supported by inclusive policies, is more likely to identify opportunities, solve problems creatively, and serve a broader and more complex global market.

In this context, the management of human capital must be guided by structured, forward-thinking strategies that promote both efficiency and inclusion. Recruiting, onboarding, training, and performance evaluation must all be aligned not only with technical competencies but also with the recognition and appreciation of individual differences. HR departments are increasingly expected to play a transformative role by creating work environments where employees feel seen, respected, and empowered to contribute. A shared sense of purpose, rooted in inclusivity, has become essential for building trust and cohesion in multicultural teams.

The shift toward remote work, international teams, and digital collaboration platforms further amplifies the need for intercultural awareness. As boundaries between countries blur, companies must cultivate a truly global mindset. This involves not only adapting internal practices but also revisiting the organization's values and identity. Flexible schedules, continuous professional development, and well-being initiatives are no longer optional; they are core tools for ensuring long-term engagement and sustainability.

Recent research highlights these trends. Studies show that inclusive leadership fosters psychological safety and improves group performance in complex, diverse environments (Li & Tang, 2022, pp. 2–3). Similarly, aligning talent strategies with diversity goals has been linked to stronger innovation capacity and market adaptability (Samira, 2024, p. 64).

In this rapidly changing scenario, the role of HR managers is evolving. They must anticipate trends, understand global dynamics, and guide the organization through cultural complexity with confidence and integrity. This paper explores how multiculturalism, inclusive management practices, and a strong organizational culture can serve as strategic assets in driving innovation, cohesion, and sustainable success in today's interconnected world.

Chapter I

Strategic Responses to Cultural Diversity in Global Organizations

1.1 Integration Policies

Diversity and inclusion in the workplace represent two key frontiers of the business world that has emerged in the wake of globalization — a world for which corporate management was not adequately prepared. These are frontiers that corporate management was not adequately prepared to face, both because academic training remained tied to frameworks based on early twentieth-century economic theories, and because the prevailing humanistic culture appeared disconnected from the complex issues introduced by globalization and by the waves of forced migration that intensified at the end of the twentieth century.

Nowadays, the term “diversity” is increasingly used to encapsulate the differences between groups and individuals, portraying people as distinct identities, each characterized by unique features such as ethnicity, age, communication style, gender, personality, religious beliefs, and both sexual and emotional orientation. In contrast, the term “inclusion” refers to the deliberate effort to recognize and enhance these differences as valuable resources, to be embraced within a physical and social environment that is equitable, welcoming, and conducive to individual professional growth and to the overall improvement of organizational performance.

However, although the phenomenon of migration has entered the corporate world with great force and has become an unavoidable part of modern organizational life, many companies continue to struggle to understand how to respond to it appropriately. They still lack targeted negotiation processes, clear and well-defined policies, and standardized procedures that would allow them to attribute real value to “difference.” Furthermore, organizations often fail to dismantle unconscious biases or to overcome the structural and cultural barriers that prevent the correct recognition of diversity, the full protection of human rights, and the inclusion of both migrants and people with disabilities into the corporate fabric.

In light of these persistent difficulties, it becomes useful to recall the definition of "Diversity and Inclusion Management (D&IM)," which refers to "the set of strategies voluntarily and intentionally implemented by an organization to change its own characteristics through the recruitment, inclusion, and promotion of individuals who represent the multiple diversities present in society, and through interventions that affect the organization of work" (Buemi, Guazzo, & Conte, 2015, p. 18). The core pillars of this framework are equality, the valorization of human resources, the development of an inclusive internal culture, and the creation of long-term value for the enterprise.

Equality, therefore, must be understood as the fundamental precondition for the realization of a fairer world for all. Preventing workplace discrimination and ensuring equality is, first and foremost, an ethical obligation for companies. It is a matter of fairness — a concept that implies a process of guaranteeing that business strategies and operational programs are impartial, equitable, and capable of ensuring the same opportunities and outcomes for everyone, in full respect of the idea that inclusion and non-discrimination are not only economic and social imperatives, but above all, human rights issues.

On this crucial point, Arsel, Crockett, and Scott (2021) argue that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) cannot be reduced to slogans or surface-level efforts. They must instead be framed within a broader and deeper reflection on social justice and the structural power dynamics that shape the world of work. These scholars highlight the necessity of recognizing the intersections between race, gender, religion, and economic status within organizational practices. Failing to do so leads to merely symbolic inclusion strategies that may appear progressive but do not truly address inequality or transform the organizational culture (pp. 920–921).

In line with this vision, the United Nations Human Rights Council, following its approval on June 16, 2011, published the "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in the Framework of Protect, Respect and Remedy," specifically addressed to multinational corporations. These guidelines set out a series of principles intended to guide the actions of businesses operating across borders. Among the most important principles is the duty to respect international human rights norms, to refrain from behavior that might lead to violations of those rights, and to proactively manage any negative consequences generated by corporate investments and business activities (remedy).

Accordingly, companies are expected to conduct comprehensive risk assessments that consider not only the internal implications of their actions, but also their potential impact along the supply chain, as well as their effects on the human rights of external stakeholders, partner organizations, and even the states in which they operate. This broad, transnational commitment has the potential to generate a truly virtuous circle — one that may, in some cases, prove more effective than any internal inclusion program alone.

Indeed, the business world can and must play a fundamental role by adapting and reconfiguring its strategies and practices in ways that allow it to welcome and integrate those who are often excluded from society. Ketemaw et al. (2024) support this idea, demonstrating that the strategic value of multiculturalism is no longer limited to ethical or reputational gains, but is now closely tied to measurable business outcomes. Companies that promote a genuinely inclusive environment tend to exhibit higher levels of operational efficiency and a stronger ability to manage internal conflicts constructively (p. 5). Similarly, Samira (2024) emphasizes that inclusive practices, when embedded into the organizational structure, directly contribute to increased productivity, better decision-making, and long-term competitive positioning (p. 64).

Social discrimination and structural barriers to employment access continue to produce serious distortions in labor markets, threatening not only individual rights but also broader societal cohesion.

In this context, it becomes evident that inclusive workplace policies and environments where diversity is actively respected and embraced can make individuals feel truly essential to the success of the organization. When people feel appreciated, welcomed, and genuinely part of an organization, they are more likely to work with commitment, passion, and a shared sense of purpose aligned with corporate goals.

Therefore, building inclusive policies and eliminating behaviors that generate exclusion must be understood as fundamental steps toward the creation of a truly effective working and social environment. In this regard, concrete action is required: companies must act decisively to reshape workplace dynamics, close existing gaps, eliminate distortions, and establish clear and actionable diversity and inclusion policies. These efforts should be based on transparent dialogue with key stakeholders, both internal and external.

The starting point for all of this must be a foundational inclusive corporate culture. This culture should be nurtured through internal surveys that encourage employee participation in dedicated working groups on diversity and inclusion. These groups should not be temporary initiatives, but rather stable and structured spaces where employees can reflect, contribute ideas, and develop insights that may inform recruitment, training, and career development practices. As Li & Tang (2022) argue, such inclusive cultures generate a sense of psychological safety and belonging, which are essential conditions for innovation, collaboration, and sustainable engagement within diverse teams (p. 2).

Ketemaw et al. (2024) further suggest that inclusive corporate cultures also facilitate more effective knowledge management. Employees from different cultural and personal backgrounds bring unique cognitive perspectives and mental frameworks that, if properly recognized and leveraged, can enrich the organization’s decision-making processes and enhance innovation capacity (pp. 6–7).

When implemented with genuine commitment, diversity management strategies can also produce tangible operational benefits. These include significant reductions in absenteeism, lower turnover rates, and a working environment more conducive to the identification and development of individual talent. Furthermore, such environments tend to promote healthier work-life balance, which in turn contributes to employee satisfaction and long-term retention.

In addition, inclusive strategies enable companies to better understand the needs and behaviors of an increasingly complex and diverse client base. As a result, businesses can respond to market demands more effectively and strengthen their competitive position. These factors, taken together, contribute not only to the company's performance but also to the consolidation of its long-term reputation and trustworthiness in the public eye.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the implementation of such policies does not come without its challenges. As Cuomo and Mapelli (2007, p. 55) highlight in their work Diversity Management, there are numerous "entry barriers" — that is, all the obstacles and structural resistances that hinder the adoption of a new organizational model. Cultural transformation requires time, commitment, and a medium- to long-term vision to be internalized and to produce concrete, long-lasting results. These efforts also entail financial costs, which must be anticipated, planned, and gradually absorbed over time by the company.

1.2 Diversity Management

Diversity Management (or DM) began to develop in the United States starting in the 1960s, when the civil rights movement brought the issues of diversity and equality to the forefront of American public debate, giving rise to policies known as "Affirmative Action" (Buemi, Guazzo, & Conte, 2015, pp. 6–11). In 1963, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy promoted the Equal Pay Act, aimed at combating gender-based pay discrimination. The following year saw the enactment of Affirmative Action as a political tool designed to increase the participation of minority or underrepresented social groups in various areas of public and professional life. With the Civil Rights Act, a milestone of American legal history, racial segregation was made illegal in many spheres of public life.

However, the concepts of inclusion and integration have often been conflated, a confusion that has led many to overlook a crucial distinction: inclusion is not assimilation. Jürgen Habermas (1998) stated that "inclusion does not mean assimilative absorption, nor closure against the different. Inclusion of the other means rather that the boundaries of the community are open to all: including, and especially, to those who are mutually unfamiliar and who wish to remain so" (p. 10). This idea was later expanded upon in the work of Arsel, Crockett, and Scott (2021), who observe that DEI practices require not only welcoming difference, but also a critical reflection on the power relations that regulate participation and representation in organizational settings (p. 922).

Paradoxically, an overly rigid interpretation of universalism in the struggle for inclusion can sometimes flatten diversity rather than enhance it. In the 1980s, diversity policies came under scrutiny, and new theoretical frameworks emerged — among them, the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), which sought to analyze how different forms of discrimination intersect and overlap within the social and professional fabric. At the same time, the neoliberal policies of President Ronald Reagan led to a rollback of prior social gains, pushing many affirmative action professionals into the private sector, where they began to frame diversity not only as a social cause, but also as a strategic asset and competitive advantage within the corporate marketplace.

Simultaneously, several factors contributed to increasing the heterogeneity of the U.S. labor market: rising immigration toward North America, the shift to a post-Fordist productive model, the growing influence of finance on the broader economy, and the increasing feminization of the workforce (Buemi et al., 2015). The concept of "Diversity Management" emerged in 1987 within a landmark study on future labor market trends in the United States. Johnston and Packer, in their book *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century*, predicted that the economic and social transformations of the late twentieth century would irreversibly reshape the nature of work and the labor force (Kandola & Fullerton, 2004).

This transition finds direct expression today in the modern concept of global talent management. According to Tarique and Schuler (2010), diversity can no longer be treated as a peripheral concern but must be integrated into the core strategies of international HRM, as it contributes directly to attracting, developing, and retaining high-potential talent in globalized organizational contexts (p. 124). Diversity management, in fact, is now recognized as one of the most effective tools to increase the agility of multinational organizations, as well as to enhance employee engagement and overall competitiveness (Tarique & Schuler, 2010, p. 126).

Many companies have begun to implement concrete strategies to leverage diversity, drawing on the varied backgrounds and experiences of their employees and formalizing diversity management policies. This trend has been supported by numerous academic studies highlighting the economic benefits of employing individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds — including stimulating innovation, adapting effectively to a broad and diverse customer base, increasing employee engagement, and creating a more harmonious and collaborative work environment. Recent empirical work by Samira (2024) confirms that organizations that embrace strategic diversity initiatives report stronger financial outcomes and a greater ability to innovate across departments (p. 67).

Ketemaw et al. (2024) confirm that, when embedded into organizational processes, effective diversity management is closely linked to the quality of internal collaboration and to overall corporate performance. Their research highlights how well-managed multicultural teams demonstrate stronger creativity and problem-solving capabilities, whereas organizations that overlook these dynamics are more prone to dysfunctions and internal conflict (pp. 6–7).

Li & Tang (2022) further elaborate on this link by showing how inclusive HR policies, when combined with emotionally intelligent leadership, foster psychological safety and increase knowledge-sharing across diverse teams — ultimately enhancing organizational resilience (pp. 3–4).

Diversity Management therefore stems from the idea that promoting diversity not only creates a healthier and more inclusive corporate environment — one that enhances competitiveness, efficiency, and profitability — but also allows companies to align their business objectives with broader principles of social equity, inclusion, and empowerment (Buemi et al., 2015). In Europe, diversity management began to take shape in the 1990s, although with characteristics different from the American experience. Initially, these practices were confined to a small number of large enterprises and generated interest primarily within academic research. However, during the 2000s, they began to spread more broadly, as the result of an intersection of social, political, and economic forces (Ravazzani et al., 2021).

At the forefront of this evolution were social movements and activist groups that publicly exposed ethnic and racial inequalities in the workplace. At the same time, the European Commission recognized the importance of fair and inclusive work environments, actively promoting anti-discrimination policies and a regulatory framework that encouraged companies to adopt new human resource management practices. Multinational corporations acted as bridges between the American experience and the European context, importing best practices and adapting them to local realities. Their leadership set off a domino effect that gradually influenced smaller companies as well.

This convergence of forces created fertile ground for the growth of diversity management in Europe, progressively transforming the business landscape toward greater inclusivity and appreciation of differences. Two legislative milestones in this direction are the European Council Directives 2000/78/EC and 2000/43/EC, which serve as key legal pillars. However, as Arsel et al. (2021) also emphasize, the mere existence of a regulatory framework is not enough: companies must engage in critical reflection on how their HR practices may either promote or hinder access, representation, and dignity for disadvantaged groups (pp. 925–926).

Building on these developments, many scholars have attempted to classify the different managerial approaches to diversity and inclusion. While these classifications have contributed to the academic debate, they also present notable limitations. Firstly, many of the proposed typologies fail to consider contextual factors, particularly the country in which an organization operates. Secondly, they tend to assume — erroneously — that all organizations evolve according to linear and predictable models. Lastly, they often lack sufficiently detailed practical indicators that can guide action.

To overcome these limitations, Mazzei and Ravazzani (2021) propose a tripartite model: (1) assimilation of minorities; (2) integration of diversity; (3) leveraging variety. This model frames diversity management not merely as an ethical choice, but as a structural lever for competence development and sustainable organizational growth.

1.3 **New Organizational Frameworks**

After defining what diversity and diversity management are, it becomes essential to address the models used to manage diversity within organizations (Daft, 2017). One particularly interesting model identifies four core elements, each of which is connected in a circular and interdependent relationship:

1. Driving forces
2. Types of strategies
3. Effects on personnel
4. Results on personnel

The starting point of the model is the understanding that without a strong impetus, no diversity management process can be initiated. In other words, the model assumes that companies do not spontaneously adopt diversified personnel management models but instead tend to naturally favor a standardized and uniform approach. Therefore, significant internal or external pressure is necessary to trigger meaningful change.

From a global perspective, Tarique and Schuler (2010) emphasize that the growing pressure toward embracing diversity within organizations stems from two main sources: on the one hand, exogenous factors such as globalization, demographic changes, and the international demand for talent; and on the other, endogenous factors such as strategic alliances and the need for intercultural competencies that support adaptation in foreign markets (pp. 125–126). The convergence of these internal and external drivers makes it increasingly necessary for organizations to adopt new structures capable of accommodating cultural and managerial variety.

This model translates into the implementation of differentiated management strategies aimed at providing specific responses to the distinct needs emerging from the identity groups that make up the company workforce. The adoption of these differentiated strategies leads to numerous consequences, the most significant of which involve the development of human resources policies designed to build managerial models tailored to the unique characteristics of each identity group. The ultimate result of these initiatives—essentially defining a company's diversity management model—is an impact on overall business performance, not only in terms of competitive success, but also in terms of employee satisfaction and reduced internal conflict.

However, the process does not end with the achievement of certain outcomes in diversity management policies. Instead, it restarts in a systemic cycle: the results achieved generate new impulses that drive further strategic diversity interventions, thereby restarting the model in a continuous and evolving feedback loop.

A closer analysis of the four elements allows for a clearer understanding of the model:

Driving Forces. These are the various factors that compel the actors within a system to adopt diversity management policies. They can originate from:

- internal pressures,
- managerial choices,
- external pressures.

Internal pressures from the workforce arise when the composition of employees becomes so heterogeneous that managing everyone according to a single model becomes unfeasible. These pressures are linked to the characteristics of identity groups in terms of personality traits, internal and external diversity, and organizational differences. The strength of these internal pressures depends on the depth and breadth of the distinctions between the different groups.

The second driving force lies in the initiative of management itself, which may choose to introduce diversity principles independently and voluntarily. Typically, this factor is influenced by whether management includes individuals from minority groups and by their prior experience with identity group dynamics. Despite being based on volition, this factor carries considerable weight, as the will of top management plays a pivotal role in shaping company culture and management practices.

Finally, there are external pressures, which emerge from environmental factors such as: market demands in highly differentiated contexts, expectations from a parent company overseeing multinational subsidiaries, or compliance with local and international regulations. Together, these three factors determine how strongly an organization is motivated to implement diversity management policies.

Types of Strategies. The policies a company may adopt in the field of diversity are manifold. For the sake of clarity, they can be grouped into four fundamental strategic approaches:

- exclusion,
- assimilation,
- separation and pluralism,
- mediation and integration.

Exclusion is not truly a strategy aimed at promoting diversity; rather, it addresses the issue by eliminating all individuals who do not conform. The clear limitation of this strategy is its inability to recognize and leverage difference as a potential competitive advantage.

Similar in outcome, but entirely different in approach, is the strategy of assimilation, which does not expel diverse individuals but instead seeks to align them with dominant cultural norms through standardization.

By contrast, the separation and pluralism strategy differ significantly. It acknowledges diversity without seeking integration, instead allowing each identity group to evolve independently within the organization, without merging or harmonizing with others.

Lastly, mediation and integration strategies embody the fullest realization of diversity as a corporate principle. These policies accept the presence of diverse identity groups and actively work to integrate them into the organization's objectives, fostering cooperation and alignment.

Ketemaw et al. (2024) add that the most effective strategies for multicultural integration are those that operate simultaneously at the level of leadership and organizational culture. Specifically, fostering collaborative and participatory environments—where differences are transformed into cognitive assets—enhances productivity and mitigates the risks of communication breakdowns and intercultural conflict (p. 6).

Samira (2024) also emphasizes that multicultural integration cannot occur solely through top-down mandates. Their study suggests that empowering grassroots-level teams to co-create inclusive practices generates greater buy-in and sustainable organizational change (p. 71).

Effects on Personnel. Each strategy generates direct effects on personnel, which then translate into broader organizational outcomes. These effects can be classified into two primary categories:

- affective effects
- cognitive effects

Affective effects include a sense of belonging, identification with the company, and employee engagement with corporate goals. These benefits are particularly pronounced among employees who belong to minority groups.

Cognitive effects, on the other hand, are reflected in increased creativity and innovation during decision-making processes, traits that are commonly observed in diversity-oriented companies.

Moreover, symbolic effects should not be underestimated. A well-implemented diversity policy contributes to a corporate culture where difference is perceived as an opportunity rather than a threat. This perceptual shift significantly facilitates the integration of diverse internal populations within the organization.

As confirmed by Bhat et al. (2023), organizations that offer flexible working conditions—such as telecommuting options, customized schedules, and wellness spaces—succeed in strengthening the sense of belonging and reducing professional burnout. Their studies show that work-life balance is no longer merely a supportive policy but has become a core component of engagement and inclusion strategies (pp. 10–13).

Li & Tang (2022) reinforce this by illustrating how hybrid work structures, when combined with inclusive communication norms, reduce presenteeism-related stress while improving psychological commitment to team goals (pp. 4–5).

Results. The outcomes of diversity management processes must be evaluated on multiple levels. The first level is that of individual performance, in terms of personal satisfaction and work output: customized management enhances the motivation of minority groups and thereby supports greater productivity. The second level concerns group performance, particularly in terms of reduced interpersonal and intergroup conflict.

Lastly, one must not overlook the outcomes related to overall organizational performance, which can be assessed by looking at the development of more innovative products and services, cost reduction, higher productivity, and so forth.

In any case, the final goal of any diversity management process must be to generate a competitive advantage for the organization. Tarique and Schuler (2010) assert that only those organizations that succeed in systematically integrating inclusive practices—aligning them with their business strategy—can achieve sustainable competitive benefits over the long term (p. 128).

Chapter II

Modern Challenges of Multicultural HRM: Discrimination, National Approaches, and Digital Tools

2.1 Recruitment and Discrimination in a Multicultural Context

Recruitment is a fundamental process in shaping the workforce of any organization. In multicultural contexts, however, it becomes far more than a simple administrative procedure — it represents a test of the organization's actual commitment to fairness, equity, and inclusion. Numerous studies have shown that bias, both implicit and structural, often infiltrates recruitment practices, affecting the selection and integration of candidates from diverse backgrounds (Boateng, 2021; Mokhtech et al., 2022).

Discrimination in recruitment rarely presents itself in overt or explicit ways. It more often takes subtle forms that are difficult to detect but have significant impact. As Tajfel (1971) demonstrated through the Minimal Group Paradigm, the mere act of categorizing individuals into groups is enough to provoke in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination. This principle helps explain why recruiters may unconsciously prefer candidates who resemble themselves culturally or socially. Sherif et al. (1961) further emphasized that perceptions of intergroup threat can exacerbate such tendencies, especially in competitive job markets.

Name bias is a striking example of these unconscious dynamics. Kline, Rose, and Walters (2024) demonstrated that candidates with ethnically marked names were systematically less likely to receive interview invitations, even when their qualifications were equal to those of other applicants. The study reveals how deep-rooted and normalized these patterns have become — often without recruiters' conscious awareness.

Mokhtech et al. (2022) argue that merely recognizing implicit bias is not enough. While awareness-raising initiatives may increase knowledge, they are rarely sufficient to produce meaningful behavioral change unless paired with systemic interventions. These include anonymized CV screening, structured interviews, and diversity-focused performance indicators in recruitment teams.

The challenges are further intensified in international and multicultural organizations. As Tarique and Schuler (2010) highlight in their work on Global Talent Management, companies operating across borders must be particularly sensitive to cultural differences in communication style, interpersonal expectations, and perceptions of authority. A standardized recruitment model, while seemingly fair, may inadvertently disadvantage candidates from collectivist or high-context cultures who express themselves differently from the dominant norm.

Ketemaw et al. (2024) reinforce this view, noting that recruiters often confuse cultural difference with lack of competence. Their research demonstrates that applicants who do not conform to dominant behavioral codes — such as assertiveness or direct eye contact — may be judged as less capable, despite having equivalent qualifications. This misalignment between recruiters' expectations and applicants' presentation styles leads to the systematic exclusion of talented individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Another layer of complexity is added by gender dynamics. Mokhtech et al. (2022) found that male recruiters tended to judge male candidates more favorably, especially for leadership roles. At the same time, when male candidates were perceived as too similar or competitive, recruiters displayed more critical attitudes, highlighting how bias is not linear but shaped by a mixture of social expectations and interpersonal perceptions.

The cumulative impact of these forms of bias is not only ethical but strategic. Boateng (2021) emphasizes that discriminatory recruitment practices result in the loss of valuable human capital, reduced innovation capacity, and reputational damage. Organizations that fail to diversify their workforce miss out on the competitive advantages associated with multicultural teams — such as broader perspectives, enhanced problem-solving, and improved adaptability in global markets.

On the other hand, inclusive recruitment practices — when sincerely implemented — can produce measurable benefits. Arsel, Crockett, and Scott (2021) point out that culturally diverse teams foster more creative solutions and are more responsive to diverse customer needs. However, they also caution that inclusion must go beyond numbers or symbolic hires. If diverse employees are recruited but then marginalized within the organization, the long-term effects can be counterproductive.

To address these risks, a growing number of organizations are adopting hybrid recruitment models. These combine AI-based screening tools with human oversight, aiming to reduce bias while preserving contextual judgment (Raghavan et al., 2020). For instance, anonymized application review software can eliminate name and gender bias in the early phases, while structured behavioral interviews ensure that all candidates are evaluated using the same criteria. Nonetheless, Boateng (2021) warns that algorithms themselves are not immune to bias; if they are trained on historically biased data, they may replicate and even reinforce discrimination.

From a strategic perspective, Tarique and Schuler (2010) argue that inclusive recruitment is not just a moral imperative but a business necessity. In today's interconnected markets, the ability to attract and retain diverse talent directly contributes to innovation, reputation, and competitiveness. Yet this potential is only realized when organizations move beyond superficial measures and embed inclusion into the very architecture of their recruitment processes.

Still, achieving this balance is not without challenges. Inclusive strategies may encounter resistance from internal stakeholders who view them as a deviation from meritocratic principles. Others may perceive diversity goals as a threat to organizational cohesion. As Ketemaw et al. (2024) note, the success of such initiatives often depends on leadership's ability to communicate their value clearly and consistently, reinforcing that inclusion and excellence are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing.

In summary, recruitment in multicultural contexts brings both promise and peril. On one hand, it offers the opportunity to build dynamic, innovative, and resilient teams. On the other, it exposes organizations to the risk of perpetuating structural inequities through seemingly neutral practices. The literature underscores that bias can manifest at multiple stages — from resume screening to final interviews — and that mitigating its effects requires not only technical solutions but also cultural transformation.

Organizations that succeed in this endeavor tend to share three characteristics: they adopt evidence-based tools to monitor bias; they involve diverse stakeholders in designing recruitment strategies; and they invest in continuous training and feedback mechanisms. As the workforce becomes increasingly global, these practices will no longer be optional — they will be essential to attracting and retaining top talent.

Ultimately, recruitment should not be viewed as a gatekeeping exercise but as a strategic opportunity to shape the future of the organization. By confronting bias head-on and embedding inclusion into every stage of the process, companies can unlock the full potential of multicultural talent — not only improving fairness, but also enhancing performance, creativity, and long-term sustainability.

2.2 Organizational Policies and Intercultural Relations

In contemporary multinational organizations, the intersection between organizational policies and intercultural interactions has become a focal point for both strategic development and operational challenges. With workforces becoming increasingly diverse across dimensions such as ethnicity, language, nationality, and values, companies must go beyond symbolic diversity initiatives and implement practices that foster genuine inclusion (Erfan, 2024). This requires moving from merely formalized policies toward embedded intercultural strategies that influence everyday interactions, leadership styles, communication, and team dynamics.

Organizational policies around diversity and inclusion (D&I) often begin as top-down initiatives aimed at improving representation and compliance with legal or reputational expectations. However, Tarique and Schuler (2010) argue that global talent management can only be effective if D&I is fully integrated into the strategic core of HRM. Superficial efforts that simply aim to "diversify" employee demographics without addressing systemic barriers frequently fall short of their goals. As Bhat et al. (2023) observe, inclusion initiatives must be evaluated not only by participation rates or quotas but also by how they shape internal collaboration, innovation, and trust.

Intercultural interactions are especially delicate in global teams where power asymmetries and unspoken cultural norms can marginalize individuals who do not align with dominant behavioral expectations. Ketemaw et al. (2024) demonstrate that leadership style plays a crucial role in mediating these tensions: inclusive leadership, which recognizes and values difference, correlates with higher psychological safety and performance. However, leaders lacking intercultural awareness may unintentionally suppress cultural expression, promoting conformity over authenticity.

Policy implementation is further complicated by the existence of informal organizational cultures that may contradict official diversity statements. Arsel, Crockett, and Scott (2021) argue that in many cases, exclusion operates through subtle codes: shared assumptions, insider language, or informal networking structures that systematically exclude those from different cultural backgrounds. Such exclusion is not always intentional, but it is structurally embedded in workplace routines and communication practices.

One key advantage of well-designed organizational policies is that they can proactively structure environments where inclusion becomes the default rather than the exception. Erfan (2024) provides evidence that when companies build intercultural training into performance management, onboarding, and leadership development, they significantly improve collaboration across teams. The result is not only better teamwork but also increased global competitiveness, as diverse perspectives enable companies to respond more effectively to international markets.

A practical example is offered by Schneider Electric Finland, which partnered with Inklusiiv to localize its global DEI strategy. Through targeted leadership training, employee engagement surveys, and transparent communication, Schneider Electric was able to implement measurable changes at the local level. As a result, employees reported stronger feelings of inclusion and engagement, especially among underrepresented groups (Inklusiiv, 2023). This case illustrates how D&I policies, when adapted contextually and supported by committed leadership, can positively transform intercultural dynamics within organizations.

Yet, the existence of policies alone does not guarantee equitable interactions. A significant risk is what Shore et al. (2018) define as “token inclusion”: the hiring of diverse candidates without creating the structural conditions for their voices to be heard or valued. When inclusion is perceived as symbolic or politically motivated, it can lead to cynicism, disengagement, or even turnover among minority employees.

Another risk lies in the misunderstanding of “equality” as “sameness.” Organizations may promote uniform rules or team practices in the name of fairness but inadvertently erase cultural difference. This can result in employees feeling pressured to assimilate, diminishing the very diversity the organization claims to value (Erfan, 2024). In this sense, inclusion policies must balance standardization with cultural sensitivity, allowing space for diverse expressions of professionalism and leadership.

Furthermore, a tension often arises between global D&I principles and local cultural norms. While corporate headquarters may promote inclusive values, regional offices may operate in social contexts where inclusion is not prioritized or may even be contested. Bhat et al. (2023) emphasize that intercultural training must be tailored to specific environments to avoid resistance or superficial compliance. Without local buy-in, policies risk becoming irrelevant or performative.

Despite these challenges, organizations that invest in authentic and well-articulated D&I strategies stand to gain substantially. Ketemaw et al. (2024) found that inclusive teams outperform homogeneous ones in areas such as problem-solving, creativity, and adaptability—especially in times of crisis or rapid change. Moreover, when employees perceive that their identities are respected and their contributions valued, organizational commitment and retention increase.

However, for these benefits to be realized, organizations must approach D&I not as an isolated initiative but as a system-wide transformation. As Arsel et al. (2021) suggest, this means aligning recruitment, training, evaluation, and communication practices with intercultural values. Leadership plays a key role in modeling inclusive behavior, holding others accountable, and continuously reflecting on how power operates in day-to-day decisions.

In conclusion, the interaction between organizational policies and intercultural dynamics is complex and consequential. Effective D&I strategies offer clear advantages: improved innovation, stronger employee engagement, and enhanced adaptability. However, without critical awareness and local adaptation, they may produce unintended consequences such as symbolic inclusion, cultural erasure, or resistance. Real inclusion requires not only policy but also practice intentional leadership, inclusive communication, and continuous feedback loops that make cultural diversity a source of strength rather than division. Organizations that embrace this challenge are more likely to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and pluralistic world.

2.3 Artificial Intelligence as a Tool for HR and Organizational Innovation

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly emerged as a transformative force in Human Resource Management (HRM). From automated resume screening to predictive performance analytics and AI-led video interviews, organizations are increasingly adopting intelligent systems to improve efficiency, objectivity, and scalability in recruitment and talent development. However, in the context of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I), the rise of AI introduces both unprecedented opportunities and significant risks. This section explores how AI affects fairness in HR practices, with a focus on its impact on inclusive hiring, equity, and organizational justice.

The promise of AI in HR lies in its potential to eliminate human biases and standardize decision-making processes. According to Binns et al. (2018), when designed and implemented responsibly, machine learning models can support fairness by applying consistent criteria across all applicants. AI-driven tools can also widen applicant pools by screening hundreds or thousands of candidates in seconds, identifying patterns that human recruiters might overlook. This scalability is particularly valuable for large organizations or those seeking to diversify their workforce across geographies and backgrounds.

Moreover, some recent studies suggest that AI systems may be perceived as more neutral and objective than human recruiters. For instance, research by Leibbrandt and List (2024) shows that female candidates are more likely to apply for roles when the initial screening is known to be managed by AI, perceiving it as less susceptible to gender-based bias compared to human gatekeepers. This perceived neutrality, when supported by well-designed algorithms, can reinforce trust in the selection process and reduce self-exclusion among underrepresented groups.

Despite these advantages, evidence increasingly shows that AI systems are not immune to bias — in fact, they can reflect, perpetuate, and even amplify existing social inequalities. Raghavan et al. (2020) argue that most AI recruitment tools are trained on historical hiring data, which often contains embedded biases. If past hiring practices favored certain profiles — typically white, male, or from elite institutions — then the algorithm will learn to replicate those patterns, even when explicitly programmed to be neutral.

One of the most well-known examples of such bias is the case of Amazon's AI recruitment tool, which was abandoned in 2018 after it was found to systematically downgrade resumes that included terms like "women's" or were associated with female colleges (Heater, 2018). Although not intentional, the outcome revealed how biased training data could lead to discriminatory outcomes at scale. Rather than promoting inclusion, such tools may create barriers for marginalized candidates while giving the illusion of objectivity.

Similarly, the AI interview platform HireVue has faced criticism for using facial recognition and micro-expression analysis to evaluate candidate suitability. Critics argue that such tools may disadvantage candidates with disabilities, neurodivergence, or those from cultures with different norms of eye contact and expression (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Binns et al., 2018). These concerns have prompted some organizations and regulators to call for greater transparency and the right to explanation in AI-driven decisions.

More recently, the HR software giant Workday was named in a 2024 lawsuit alleging that its AI tools discriminated against job seekers based on race, age, and disability (Moss, 2024). While Workday denied the allegations, the case highlights the growing legal and ethical scrutiny facing companies that deploy opaque algorithmic systems in personnel management. If AI becomes a "black box" — producing decisions without clear justification — it undermines the very principles of fairness and accountability that D&I initiatives seek to uphold.

On the other hand, companies that adopt a responsible and transparent approach to AI integration have shown positive outcomes. For example, the Australian Department of Industry conducted a study in 2025 showing that AI-based systems can improve access for candidates with nontraditional educational backgrounds when the algorithms are trained to value diverse career paths (Johnson & Ng, 2025). Likewise, organizations like Unilever have implemented AI in early stage hiring while ensuring that final decisions are reviewed by human recruiters trained in inclusive evaluation, thus combining scalability with ethical oversight.

The balance between automation and inclusion, however, is delicate. While AI can streamline HR functions and reduce some forms of bias, it can also introduce new forms of exclusion if not carefully audited. Boateng (2021) warns that relying on AI without understanding its limitations can lead to systemic discrimination masked by technological efficiency. In worst-case scenarios, organizations may unknowingly institutionalize injustice under the guise of innovation.

A key advantage of AI systems is their capacity to generate real-time analytics that inform D&I strategies. For example, AI can detect bottlenecks in hiring pipelines where minority candidates are disproportionately eliminated or assess pay equity by identifying patterns in compensation decisions (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). When combined with diversity dashboards and bias alerts, these tools offer HR professionals powerful instruments to monitor and improve inclusion metrics continuously.

However, the same systems can raise concerns about employee surveillance, data privacy, and the misuse of sensitive information. Binns et al. (2018) caution that predictive analytics, while useful, must not become tools of overreach that erode employee autonomy or reduce individuals to data points. Transparency, informed consent, and clear communication about how AI is used are essential to maintaining trust.

To mitigate these risks, many experts recommend a framework of “human-in-the-loop” governance. This means that while AI can support decisions, human judgment — ideally informed by cultural intelligence and D&I awareness — must remain central. Raghavan et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of continuous auditing, interdisciplinary design teams, and accountability protocols that ensure algorithms evolve alongside ethical standards and societal expectations.

In terms of policy implications, organizations should consider implementing AI ethics committees, employee feedback loops, and third-party audits to ensure that AI systems align with their inclusion goals. Public disclosures and stakeholder engagement can further enhance legitimacy and reduce the reputational risks associated with algorithmic decision-making.

Ultimately, the integration of AI into HR functions is not inherently positive or negative — it depends on how it is implemented, monitored, and aligned with broader organizational values. As Erfan (2024) asserts, the most effective HR strategies are those that embed technology into a human-centered framework, where innovation serves inclusion rather than undermining it.

In conclusion, AI offers both significant promise and considerable peril for D&I in HRM. When designed thoughtfully, it can support fairer, faster, and more inclusive decision-making. But if left unchecked, it may reinforce existing inequalities and compromise organizational ethics. Organizations must therefore approach AI adoption not as a technical upgrade, but as a strategic and ethical choice — one that requires vigilance, reflection, and an unwavering commitment to equity.

Chapter III

Case in Point: Eni's Multicultural Approach to HR, Rights and Integrity

3.1 **Example: Eni**

Eni's Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) strategy is officially outlined in its policy approved by the Board of Directors on 26 October 2023. The document represents a consolidated institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion, applicable to all internal personnel and external partners. The company affirms: "Eni recognises the importance of promoting and valuing people's diversity in all its forms and expressions and is committed to creating an inclusive working environment based on equal opportunities." D&I is considered a core principle of Eni's corporate identity: "Diversity and Inclusion are fundamental principles of Eni's corporate identity, reflected in the company's strategies and embedded in the organisational processes, culture, and business practices."

The policy applies universally: "The Policy applies to all Eni people and business partners with whom the company interacts in the performance of its activities, and defines the values, principles and commitments undertaken by the company to promote and enhance Diversity & Inclusion." Eni highlights the functional role of D&I in supporting growth and innovation, stating that "an inclusive work environment allows people to express their full potential and contributes to improving performance and strengthening innovation."

From a strategic perspective, Eni commits to "promoting a culture of inclusion, dialogue, listening, and mutual respect, which values the uniqueness of people and supports the development of talent regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation and identity, culture, ethnicity, nationality, religious belief, political orientation, social background, different abilities, and any other personal or group characteristic." The company further declares that "D&I principles are integrated into its strategic and operational decisions" and "concrete objectives" guide their implementation. These efforts are framed as part of "Eni's broader sustainability strategy," supported through "policies, projects, and initiatives aimed at ensuring the well-being of people, fostering inclusive leadership, and promoting equal treatment and opportunity."

3.2 Industrial relations in a multicultural context

Internally, Eni promotes inclusive behaviour and accountability among all personnel: "All people in Eni are responsible for contributing to the implementation of D&I policies within their areas of competence and are encouraged to adopt inclusive behaviour in daily work activities." Managers are specifically responsible for embedding inclusive principles in team management and evaluation: "Managers have a specific role in promoting a diverse and inclusive work environment by ensuring that D&I principles are considered in team management, evaluation, and development processes." In this sense, inclusion becomes a shared responsibility throughout the hierarchy.

The company also encourages a structured approach to internal governance, declaring that "Eni defines appropriate governance mechanisms and internal control systems to monitor the application of D&I policies and to ensure compliance with internal and external regulations." In terms of recruitment, Eni states: "The company adopts selection and recruitment processes that are fair, impartial, and based on merit, and that guarantee equal opportunities for all candidates." Equally, learning and development paths are designed "to support the growth of all people, taking into account their individual characteristics, potential, and aspirations."

Eni invests in "inclusive leadership by providing managers with tools and training to recognize and overcome bias and to effectively manage diverse teams." Promotion and advancement criteria are aligned with the same principles: "Career advancement is based on transparent and equitable criteria that consider the value brought by diversity and the contribution of each person." These statements highlight the company's intent to institutionalise fairness across professional trajectories.

The company further affirms its commitment to employee well-being, explicitly encouraging "work-life balance through flexible working arrangements and welfare tools that support people's different needs." It also prioritises safety and respect, stating: "The company fosters a safe and respectful work environment, free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse." Specific attention is given to employees with disabilities: "Specific initiatives are adopted to support the inclusion of people with disabilities and to remove physical and cultural barriers." Eni monitors inclusion via employee feedback and assessment tools: "Eni periodically monitors employee engagement and satisfaction to improve organisational well-being and inclusion practices."

3.3 Human Rights, Integrity, and Inclusion in Eni's Corporate Culture

Eni promotes its values beyond the company perimeter, engaging its broader business network and society. It states: "Eni promotes D&I principles throughout its value chain, encouraging suppliers and partners to adopt inclusive practices." The company also works in partnership with civil society: "The company collaborates with institutions, associations, and civil society organisations to promote D&I in the broader community." Transparency and stakeholder dialogue are considered key to long-term credibility: "Transparency and dialogue with stakeholders are fundamental to the implementation and continuous improvement of D&I policies."

From a regulatory point of view, Eni's approach aligns with numerous international and national standards. According to the policy, "this Policy is aligned with international principles and standards, including the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ILO Conventions (nos. 100, 111, 156, and 190), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises." On the national level, it complies with "Law no. 68/1999 and Law no. 162/2021," and adheres to "the UNI ISO 30415:2021 standard and the UNI PdR 125:2022 guideline on gender equality."

These legal and institutional references provide a clear framework for action but also reinforce ENI's accountability and public positioning on inclusion and ethical governance. Rather than generic alignment, the policy specifies "key performance indicators and periodic reporting mechanisms" as means of evaluation. Eni confirms that "results are reported transparently in Eni's non-financial disclosures, such as the Sustainability Report and Integrated Annual Report," thereby linking policy and performance reporting.

3.4 Zero Tolerance Policy Against Violence and Harassment

Eni adopts a zero-tolerance approach to harassment and violence in the workplace. It emphasises a strong cultural and procedural framework aimed at prevention, stating that "the company fosters a safe and respectful work environment, free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse." This principle is not only applied within the company but extended to its ecosystem: "Eni encourages suppliers and partners to share its commitment to human rights and to promote similar standards of integrity and inclusion."

A concrete example of how Eni translates this policy into practice is the "Inclusion Development Partnership," introduced in its 2023 Sustainability Performance report. As stated: "In line with its policy commitments, Eni has implemented the 'Inclusion Development Partnership', aimed at enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) characteristics in supplier lists." The programme "identifies and promotes the presence of companies with ownership and/or organisational structures characterised by typically underrepresented categories, as well as companies that promote excellence initiatives dedicated to diversity and inclusion." This illustrates how Eni's zero-tolerance and integrity policies are linked to concrete procurement practices, reinforcing the company's values through both internal and external stakeholder engagement.

3.5 Future Developments in Diversity and Inclusion Strategies

In recent years, Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) has moved from being a compliance-driven agenda to a central pillar of organizational sustainability. As organizations navigate new challenges, several emerging trends are reshaping how D&I strategies are designed and implemented. Among these, the integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria into corporate evaluation frameworks has elevated the strategic importance of inclusion policies. According to BCG (2023), investors are increasingly scrutinizing companies not only on environmental practices but also on their performance in social dimensions such as workforce diversity, pay equity, and inclusive leadership representation.

Another key development concerns the globalization of D&I frameworks. Traditionally shaped by Western perspectives, contemporary inclusion strategies are now being adapted to regional contexts across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, reflecting different cultural understandings of equity and group identity. As Erfan (2024) notes, organizations operating in non-Western contexts must reconcile global D&I standards with local norms and values, often navigating tensions between universal principles and cultural particularities.

Technology also plays a growing role. While much attention has been given to AI in recruitment, the next frontier involves the use of AI-powered learning platforms to personalize diversity training and monitor inclusion in real time. IBM's 2024 HR Outlook Report identifies AI-supported sentiment analysis, micro-learning modules, and diversity dashboards as promising tools for embedding inclusive behaviors into everyday work life. These tools allow for dynamic and context-sensitive adaptation of D&I practices across departments and geographies.

However, this technological evolution also raises new questions around data ethics, privacy, and employee autonomy. As highlighted by Barocas, Hardt, and Narayanan (2023), the deployment of algorithmic tools in sensitive HR areas must be accompanied by transparent governance structures and safeguards against misuse. Organizations are thus called to strike a balance between innovation and accountability, ensuring that inclusion remains a human-centered priority.

Finally, the post-pandemic workplace has reshaped employee expectations around belonging and psychological safety. Hybrid work models, while offering flexibility, risk isolating marginalized voices. Bhat et al. (2023) emphasize that future D&I strategies will need to ensure that remote and hybrid employees — especially those from underrepresented groups — remain connected, visible, and engaged.

Taken together, these developments suggest that the future of D&I will be both more global and more digital, requiring organizations to combine ethical rigor, cultural adaptability, and technological innovation.

Conclusion

The global shift towards multiculturalism and inclusion in the workplace is not only a reflection of demographic transformations but also a necessary strategic adaptation in a world where competitiveness increasingly depends on innovation, collaboration, and ethical integrity. This thesis has aimed to demonstrate how Human Resource Management (HRM) can act as both a facilitator and a catalyst for these changes, if it embraces a model of organizational development that is not only efficient but also inclusive, adaptive, and culturally intelligent.

In tracing the evolution of D&I strategies within multinational companies, the research has underlined how diversity alone is not sufficient to produce value. Without a deliberate and systemic effort to integrate and empower individuals from different cultural, social, and personal backgrounds, diversity may give rise to misunderstanding, marginalization, or even exclusion. Inclusion, therefore, is not a passive state but an active organizational process — one that must be continuously nurtured through policies, leadership, and daily practices that recognize and celebrate difference.

The chapters have illustrated, from both a theoretical and empirical perspective, that inclusive practices correlate strongly with performance indicators such as innovation, employee satisfaction, talent retention, and customer responsiveness. Yet this positive impact is contingent upon the authenticity and consistency of the organizational commitment. Superficial measures, such as symbolic diversity statements or isolated training programs, are unlikely to generate the kind of structural transformation required for lasting change. True inclusion involves rethinking the very foundations of how organizations define leadership, evaluate talent, and design their internal culture.

This necessity becomes particularly clear when examining the design and implementation of recruitment processes. In multicultural contexts, recruiting is not merely an administrative or technical function — it reflects an organization's values, priorities, and understanding of fairness. Research cited in this thesis, including studies by Kline, Rose, Walters, Mokhtech, and others, demonstrates that even well-intentioned recruiters are often influenced by unconscious biases that penalize candidates with minority backgrounds. These include name bias, cultural stereotyping, and misinterpretations of non-dominant communication styles. As such, the effort to build truly inclusive teams begins long before candidates join the organization; it starts with how job profiles are written, how CVs are assessed, and how interviews are conducted.

A promising yet controversial solution to this problem has been the use of Artificial Intelligence in HR functions. As shown in the relevant chapter, AI holds both the promise of impartiality and the danger of institutionalizing discrimination at scale. The example of Amazon's failed recruitment algorithm, the scrutiny faced by platforms like HireVue, and the lawsuit involving Workday in 2024 are clear indications that technology is not immune to the social dynamics and biases embedded in the data it is trained on. If implemented carelessly, AI can reinforce existing inequalities while providing a false sense of objectivity.

At the same time, the thesis has shown that AI can support D&I goals when it is used thoughtfully and responsibly. The key lies in human oversight, ethical design, transparency, and the continuous auditing of algorithmic processes. Organizations like Unilever and public sector bodies in Australia have begun to develop models that integrate AI into HR while safeguarding equity and inclusion. These examples demonstrate that innovation and ethics can — and must — coexist. Technology should never replace judgment; instead, it should serve as a tool to extend and enhance inclusive decision-making, not to undermine it.

The ENI case study offered a concrete and updated example of how a multinational company can approach inclusion as a core element of its strategic vision. The 2023 policy adopted by ENI goes beyond aspirational language. It articulates measurable goals, clear responsibilities, and a governance framework that integrates D&I into all levels of decision-making. Particularly notable is the emphasis on internal leadership, cross-functional engagement, and supplier diversity, which expands the scope of inclusion to the entire business ecosystem. The alignment with international standards — including UN and ILO conventions — positions ENI not just as a corporate actor, but as a responsible global stakeholder.

Nonetheless, the implementation of such policies is never without friction. As with many large organizations, there remains a gap between policy and practice. Ensuring that inclusive values permeate daily operations requires more than top-down directives: it demands a cultural shift in which all employees, from executives to frontline staff, are empowered and incentivized to act inclusively. This transformation also calls for robust monitoring mechanisms, ongoing training, and a willingness to listen to feedback from employees, especially those belonging to underrepresented or marginalized groups.

Considering the trends highlighted in the previous section, the future of D&I will be even more complex, interconnected, and ethically demanding. The integration of D&I into ESG frameworks — as already underway in many organizations — reinforces the strategic value of inclusion, not just internally but in terms of external reputation and investor confidence. At the same time, the ethical use of AI, the design of inclusive remote work cultures, and the rise of intersectional approaches all indicate that inclusion is expanding in scope and sophistication. Organizations will need to rethink not only what inclusion means, but how it is measured, monitored, and translated into everyday practice across diverse cultural and digital environments.

This evolution suggests that D&I is no longer a niche concern of HR departments but a structural dimension of corporate governance. From ethical procurement to algorithmic transparency, from inclusive leadership pipelines to AI ethics committees, future-ready organizations will need to embed inclusion into their very architecture. Moreover, the emergence of global-local tensions in D&I implementation — balancing universal rights with cultural sensitivity — will require organizational actors to develop new forms of intercultural literacy, humility, and adaptability.

Yet beyond the technical and strategic adjustments, this thesis has underscored the importance of retaining the human core of inclusion. While data dashboards and predictive analytics may improve efficiency and accountability, they must never replace empathy, dialogue, and the daily effort to build workplaces where people feel safe, seen, and valued. Inclusion is not a box to check or a trend to follow — it is a long-term commitment to fairness, dignity, and co-existence in all dimensions of organizational life.

Overcoming the persistent barriers to inclusion — such as tokenism, unconscious bias, and structural inequality — will not be easy. Some stakeholders will continue to resist D&I initiatives, seeing them as a threat to established norms or meritocratic ideals. Others may adopt inclusion superficially, driven by branding rather than belief. To navigate these tensions, companies must move from performative inclusion to transformative inclusion — from diversity as a statistic to diversity as a strength embedded in culture, systems, and leadership.

In this sense, HR professionals play a vital role not only in implementing inclusion strategies but in shaping the broader cultural and strategic direction of the organization. The future of HR is no longer confined to administrative tasks or compliance — it is about becoming a strategic partner in building organizations that are resilient, innovative, and socially responsible. As the world of work continues to evolve — with increasing reliance on digital technologies, hybrid work models, and global talent flows — the ability to manage and embrace diversity will become a defining feature of organizational success.

Moreover, inclusion must be understood as a continuous process — never static, never complete. It requires constant reassessment, feedback, and organizational learning. Cultures must remain open to critique, and leadership must model the behaviors it expects from others. Inclusion must be institutionalized without becoming bureaucratized; it must be structured without being stripped of its human meaning.

In conclusion, the findings of this thesis suggest that inclusion is no longer optional — it is indispensable. It is indispensable not only for attracting and retaining talent, but for building legitimacy, trust, and resilience in a complex and interdependent world. It requires courage, resources, and long-term vision. But above all, it requires a shift in mindset: from viewing difference as something to manage, to embracing it as something to celebrate and learn from.

Organizations that rise to this challenge will not only achieve better results; they will help shape a more just and equitable society. In doing so, they will move beyond metrics, beyond slogans, and beyond compliance — toward a future where inclusion is not just a value, but a transformative practice woven into every decision, every structure, and every relationship. That, ultimately, is the vision to which this thesis aspires to contribute.

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Desidero esprimere la mia più sincera gratitudine a tutte le persone che, in modi diversi, hanno contribuito a rendere possibile il completamento di questo percorso di studi.
In primo luogo, un ringraziamento speciale va ai miei genitori. Il cammino che mi ha portato fin qui non è stato sempre semplice: è stato un percorso tortuoso, fatto di ostacoli, dubbi e momenti in cui ho faticato a credere in me stesso. Loro, però, hanno sempre creduto in me, anche quando io stesso facevo fatica a farlo. Mi sono stati accanto in ogni difficoltà, offrendomi supporto concreto e incondizionato, e facendomi sentire ogni giorno che non ero solo.
Un sentito grazie va anche a tutti i miei compagni di università. A quelli della triennale, che hanno segnato l'inizio di questa avventura e con cui ho condiviso i primi passi fondamentali del mio percorso accademico – persone con cui, ancora oggi, mantengo un legame sincero e affettuoso. Ai compagni del master, che mi hanno aiutato a crescere non solo dal punto di vista professionale, ma anche umano. E ai compagni della magistrale, con cui ho costruito un rapporto autentico e profondo: abbiamo affrontato insieme sfide e successi, maturando giorno dopo giorno, fino ad arrivare fin qui.
Ringrazio di cuore anche tutti i miei amici, che mi hanno sempre sostenuto con affetto e presenza, anche nei momenti più impegnativi.
Infine, un pensiero speciale va alle mie due sorelle, e in particolare a Martina. Essendo la maggiore, è sempre stata per me un punto di riferimento: mi ha saputo consigliare con saggezza, guidare nelle scelte importanti e aiutare anche negli aspetti più tecnici, dove ha dimostrato una competenza che ammiro profondamente.
A tutti voi: grazie. Questa tesi è anche vostra.