

Dimensions of Workforce Diversity: A Conceptual Study

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Abstract: Workforce is defined as a group of people who work for a particular organization or business and today diversity has been identified as one of the key factor for sustaining competitive advantage. Organizations are experiencing success through diversified work culture by identifying innovated ways of problem solving and facing challenges. Management practices usually refer to the working methods and innovations that managers use to improve the effectiveness of work systems. Common management practices include: empowering staff, training staff, introducing schemes for improving quality, and introducing various forms of new technology. It is an entity of instruments to support implementation of concepts and ideas at all levels of conceptualization and realization of concepts, ultimately aiming to support organizational processes. In general, workforce diversity includes gender, age, religion, race, education or it is heterogeneity with mix of people, where every person is different from another. In this era of globalization, the organizations are far more varied in its composition than ever before. So dimensions like gender, age, religion, race, are not enough to study workforce diversity management. Several other dimensions are added like sexual orientation, disability (mental or physical), beliefs, attitudes, values, emotions, personality, lifestyle, family background, caste, economic class, work style and many more in different researches. It is also observed that a well managed diverse organization can easily sustain, on the other hand an unmanaged and chaotic organization is not able to sustain in competitive environment. The organizations must involve the best practices to manage workforce diversity, e.g. top leadership commitment, diversity linked to performance, measurement (qualitative and quantitative), accountability, succession planning, diversity training etc. The purpose of this study to understand different dimensions of workforce diversity as it is in form of visible and invisible.

Keywords: Workforce Diversity, Competitive Advantage, Human Resources Management, Accountability, Succession Planning, Diversity Training etc

1. Review of literature

(Loden & Rosener, 1991) defined diversity as which differentiates one group of people from another. They divided diversity into two dimensions: primary and secondary dimension. According to the researchers Primary dimensions are, those which play an important role in influencing the identity and personality of an individual and secondary dimension are, those which though are less visible, exert a more variable influence on personal identity and add a more subtle richness to the primary dimensions of diversity.

The center of the wheel represents internal dimensions that are usually most permanent or visible. The outside of the wheel represents dimensions that are acquired and change over the course of a lifetime. The combinations of all of these dimensions influence our values, beliefs, behaviors, experiences and expectations and make us all unique as individuals.

Gardenswartz and Rowe (1998) built upon the primary and secondary dimensions and added two more layers to the diversity wheel. According to them, diversity consists of four layers. The core of the wheel is the personality of a person and it has all those aspects which constitute the personal style of the person. Internal dimensions and external dimensions are similar to the primary and secondary dimensions explained by Loden and Rosener. The outermost layer is of the organizational dimensions. These are corporate or institutional affiliations and are associated with past and present experiences.



Figure 1.1 Diversity Wheel

Source:

http://web.jhu.edu/dlc/resources/diversity_wheel/index.html

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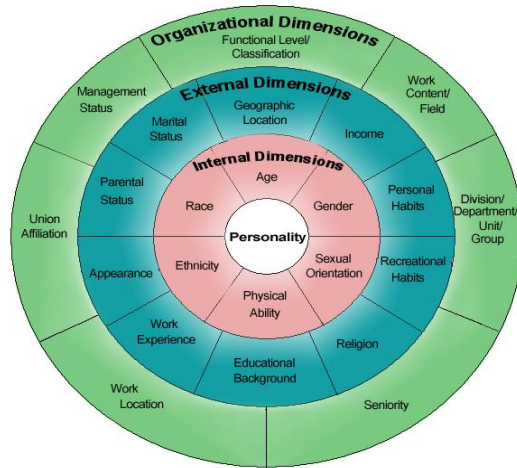


Figure 1.2: Four layers of Diversity

Source: <https://www.umassmed.edu/dio/about/layers/>

According to (Bhadury, Mighty, & Damar, 2000) many social, economic and political factors have contributed to the increasing diversity of today's workforce. They assumed that the population comes partitioned into 'families' with a high degree of intra-familial similarity and inter-familial dissimilarity. The way of dealing with this heterogeneity is to make people of different backgrounds work on common projects so as to facilitate understanding and communication between them.

(Lorbiecki & Jack, Criticle Turns in the Evolution of Diversity Management, 2000) identified four overlapping turns in the evolution of diversity management : demographic, political, economic, and critical turns in humanities and social sciences. According to the authors diversity management programs have been introduced into a wide range of public and private sectors in UK. They have been introduced increasing rate of women and minorities' participation, improving career opportunities but their success rate is still fragmentary. They argued that diversity management initiatives can be seen to perpetuate rather than combat inequalities in the workplace, diminish the legacy of discrimination against historically repressed minorities in the workplace.

(Rijamampianina & Carmichael, 2005) indicated that diversity has many dimensions. The dimensions interact with and influence one another, and emerge or are displayed differently in different contexts, environments and circumstances, making analysis and management complex. As an analogy to the iceberg, these dimensions have three facets. Above the water line are the most visible dimensions or the primary dimensions (race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability). Just below the surface, lie the secondary dimensions (religion, culture, sexual orientation, thinking style, geographic orientation, family status, lifestyle, economic condition, political orientation, work experience, education etc) which are revealed with time, and the tertiary dimensions (beliefs, assumption, perceptions, attitudes, feelings, values, group norms) lie much below the surface. The following diagram shows all three dimensions in diversity iceberg:

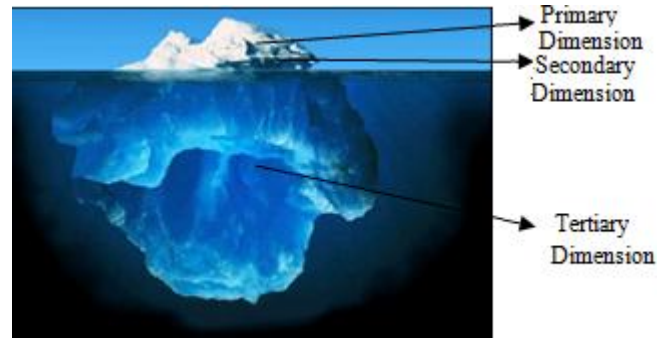


Figure 1.3 Diversity Iceberg

Primary Dimension: race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability

Secondary Dimension: religion, culture, sexual orientation, thinking style, geographic orientation, family status, lifestyle, economic condition, political orientation, work experience, education

Tertiary dimensions: beliefs, assumption, perceptions, attitudes, feelings, values, group norms

(Maier, 2005) argued that previous researches on diversity have focused on limited dimensions and out of these, a few, such as ethnicity, race and gender, are over-emphasized. According to him, an individual can be modeled by a kaleidoscope. Just as a kaleidoscope contains certain amounts of particles of various shapes and colors, an individual is a composition of various diverse attributes.

The following diagram shows the kaleidoscope perspective of individual:

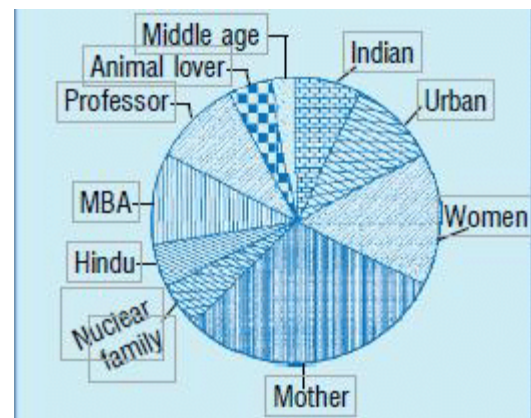


Figure 1.4 Kaleidoscope Perspective of the Individual

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Example-of-Kaleidoscope-compositions-of-an-individual-Source-Diversity-at-Workplace-HRM_fig1_320267611

(Shore, et al., 2009) studied the dimensions of diversity to describe common themes across dimensions and developed an integrative model of diversity. They examined following six dimensions of diversity:

- Race and Ethnicity Diversity
- Gender Diversity
- Age Diversity
- Disability Diversity
- Social Orientation Diversity

• Cultural and National Origin Diversity

According to (Beechler & Woodward, 2009) Because of rapid global demographic forces, the mobility of people and organizations has been increased immensely and hence, organizations are becoming more complex, diverse and demanding. There is much wider diversity in culture, gender, modes of employment, working generations than ever before.

(Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart, & Singh, 2011) argued that management researchers have only recently focused on inclusion. As a result, the inclusion literature is still under development, with limited agreement on the conceptual underpinnings of this construct. They use Brewer's optimal distinctiveness theory to develop a definition of employee inclusion in the workforce as involving the satisfaction of the needs of both belongingness and uniqueness.

(Cui, Jo, & Velasquez, 2013) conducted a study on IBM to examine diversity of people. This study shows that In 1995, IBM commissioned eight Executive Task Forces — Asian, Black, Hispanic, Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT), Men, Native American, people with disabilities, and women. IBM has established the Diversity Network Groups, also known as volunteer employee groups work for IBM's success through meeting, teaming, networking, guiding, and coaching. They have also worked for recruiting and welcoming new employees.

Employees of IBM work in an environment where diversity — including diversity of thought — is the norm, which requires commitment to creating client innovation in every part of the business. In the U.S., IBM's own diversity recruitment program that offers candidates a unique opportunity for IBM career opportunities nationally. IBM's Virtual Recruiting Sessions are open to all candidates, including women, people with disabilities, and minorities. Virtual Sessions are conducted through IBM's Cloud-based Web meeting platform.

2. Conclusion

An extensive research as has been done on the different dimensions of Workforce Diversity but still there much undiscovered areas are there which can be included in it. workforce diversity is a multidimensional concept. Generally dimensions of diversity depend on the location of industry or organization. If diversity is well managed it can improve organizational effectiveness but if it is not very well managed, it can go against productivity and effectiveness.

India is the most diversified country in the world. So it is quite challenging to manage diversity because of its diverse culture, geographical factors, religions, legislations etc. The other reason why India is facing diversity issue, because of more and more global companies are showing their interest in locating their operations and business in India. Some leading Indian companies like Infosys, TATA, Wipro, HCL Technologies are focusing on dimension physical disability, gender diversity, Gender, disability, nationality, cultural sensitivity, under privileged employees

and Gender diversity respectively. Initiatives like 'ASCEND', 'Stepping Stones', 'iBelieve HCL Women Connect', 'Feminspiration', 'BlogHer, WoW(for gender diversity), CREATE (For disabled employees), NGOs/Foundations LEAD and MOSAIC etc are taken by these companies. But it is observed that in India, people are still stick to the old beliefs and still not focusing on diversity management as a critical factor in success of businesses.

Managing diversity in multinational companies is becoming a strategic issue but diversity at international level has not been studied effectively. It is observed that some of the MNC's are using cloud based web meeting platform to diminish any kind of discrimination regarding to the diversity issue.

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