

WHETHER DIFFERENCES MAKE DIFFERENCES? A NEW PARADIGM ON WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

D. RAMADEVI
RESEARCH SCHOLAR
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT
PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY – KARAİKAL CAMPUS
KARAİKAL

DR. S. A. SENTHIL KUMAR
READER
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT
PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY – KARAİKAL CAMPUS
KARAİKAL

ABSTRACT

Growth in workforce diversity has been a serious discussion in India on account of the gap between the employees and the employers. In the organization diversity has to be taken in the goodwill, but they often end up with full of tensions and misunderstanding. This paper focuses on how does the management make differences in celebrating the differences effectively in workplace, is differences make difference in adopting the new environment in the workplace which includes the demographic factors such as age, gender, experience, family background, etc. Since, Success in the business were depends on the greater part, which is very predominant factor on the smooth relationships among employees and their clients. This paper explores the importance of workforce diversity in an organization, to understand the differences and to create and enhance the conditions that foster the benefit of the organization for achieving towards their goals and objectives.

KEYWORDS

Information Technology, Making Differences Effectiveness, Workforce Diversity, Working Environment.

INTRODUCTION

"[I]t's not where you're from or what you like; It's how much you care and how good you are at your job."

Hugo Parades

DIVERSITY in the workforce has become a top priority in corporate sector. Beyond HR challenges, managing employees with diverse workforce has become a prominent topic in the society over the past decade. In today's fiercely competitive world with a diverse workforce, competence counts more. Diversity is an issue of paramount importance to individuals, organizations, government and society. A primary source of diversity in organizations is the increasing globalization of organizations and management. Globally economic changes have increased the pressures on organizations and managers need to recognize that employees from different backgrounds are similar in some respects and different in others. Diversity in the workforce has the greater potential to develop the team as well as the organizational performance. In India, business and the workforce in organizations are becoming increasingly global and diverse. These developments affect our lives as workers and managers and pose numerous challenges in order to achieve the corporate goals.

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY & DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT - DEFINED

The workforce diversity focuses on the similarities and differences among the potential employees in particular characteristics such as age, gender, ethnic heritage, physical abilities and disabilities, race, sexual orientation, country of origin, level of education, family status, personal ambition, wealth needed for retirement, and corporate loyalty. More broadly, the term refers to a mixture of items, objects or people that are characterized by similarities and differences. The similarities can be as important as the differences. Before getting into the implement process of diverse workforce, managers need to have a lot of knowledge about diversity management and the change of the organizational thinking in handling the similarities and differences that exist among the people in the organization.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

India is the world's largest democratic country and home for more than a billion populations. Due to the exponential growth of the information technology and information technology enabled services India is the fast emerging as a leader in the field of software and web – knowledge based services. Though in the competitive economy growth, sustaining a firm is more complicated for a longer period. In addition, workforce diversity is the major component in the changing business environment which made the management of diversity as an important issue in the business concern. The importance of the workforce diversity is to meet the competitive pressures that the organizations currently face. Hence there is a need for evaluating the role of workforce diversity on Information Technology sector for its sustainable growth and success.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is to identify the reason about the role of workforce diversity on promoting the business profitably in Information Technology sector. In a shaky economy, information technology is the fastest growing sector among the other industries. Demographic factors have been given primary importance because demographic changes coupled with typical work pressure pertaining to a position in a particular organization makes achievement of workforce diversity a critical issue to be attended with vital interest. Especially, the organizations recruit the knowledge workers to establish their firm globally, whether or not diversity is a business advantage, where managers need to make it priority focus towards the firms' growth. In the working environment there may be differences among one another. It may be the differences of knowledge, culture, age, experience, socio-cultural, religion, level of education, family status, personal ambition, wealth needed for retirement, corporate loyalty, etc. Thus in an industry where the differences take place, there exists diversity.

In this context, the following questions were raised:

1. How far the demographic/socio-economic factors influence the workforce diversity in IT sector?
2. How far they are satisfied with the existing workplace diversity?
3. What steps are taken to overcome the workforce diversity?

OBJECTIVES FOR THE STUDY

- To study whether the demographic factors influencing the workforce diversity.
- To understand the impact of workforce diversity on achieving the goals and objectives.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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HYPOTHESIS

- There is a significant relationship influencing on age and workforce culture.
- There is a significant relationship influencing on gender and workforce culture.
- There is a significant relationship influencing on experience and workforce culture.

METHODOLOGY

The study is used to find out the behavior and attitude of the employees towards workforce diversity in the organization. The sample selected for the survey comprised of 50 male and female employees who were in different categories such as experience, age, education, language, etc. The questionnaire included ten questions, with a selection of pre-formulated answers. The response to each answer was expressed in a scale from one to five, with one indicating 'highly agree' and five indicating 'disagree'. The aim of the questionnaire was to put the respondent in the hypothetical situation of finding the influence of workforce diversity in the Information Technology sector. The answers were received in January 2012; the results and analysis are presented in the Appendix (Tables 1-4).

RELATED LITERATURE

In all of the above studies surveyed, one thing is common is that the studies were conducted at the aggregate level. In examining how diversity may help or hinder organizations, Researchers have proposed that the type of diversity can determine whether or not diversity will be useful or harmful to an organization (Jehn, et.al (2001)¹. Richard and Johnson (2001)² address the theoretical abyss in their study entitled "Understanding the impact of Human Resource Diversity Practices on Firm performance". This article develops a model that illustrates the complexities of diversity initiative in the strategic human resource management. Finally, the researcher developed a framework for examining diversity with internal and external contingencies. Kochan, et al. (2003)³ uses a model which suggests the relationship between race and gender diversity and business performance may depend on the organizational context in which work takes place. In this study entitled "The Effects of Diversity on Business Performance: Report of the Diversity Research Network" focuses on few positive and negative direct effects of diversity on performance relationships. Pitts and Wise (2009)⁴ in their study entitled "Workforce Diversity in the New Millennium: Prospects for Research" highlighted the management challenges that stem from workforce diversity. The empirical work on diversity and insufficient attention to empirical connections between diversity and organizational results shows that the control of human resource policies or practicing managers is less useful to the practitioners. Mousumi and Nilanjan (2011)⁵ in their study entitled "HRM for Sustainable Workforce" highlighted the need for sustainable workforce diversity through human resource management. This article makes an attempt by the researcher to discuss about the rapid technological advancement, globalization and competitive demands from customers issues and practices adopted by the **Indian companies**.

HUMAN RESOURCE CHALLENGES

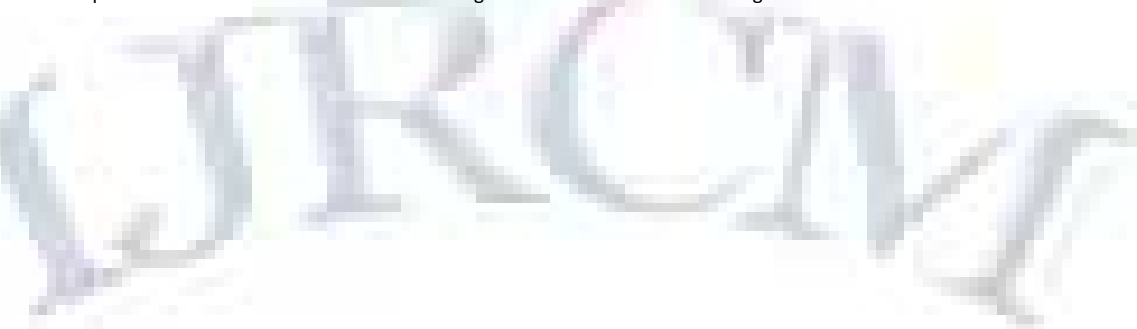
Today, the growth of the company depends upon two major things: How it innovates to the changing times, and how the company thinks faster than others. This is the fact that challenges before for the Human Resource professionals. Beyond the Human Resource challenges, managing with diverse workforce is not an easy task. Thus a HR manager needs to be thoughtful and make use of "Think global, act local" approach in most circumstances. In fact, the effectiveness of workforce diversity management depends on the skillful balancing act of the HR manager⁶ and still some organizations are lacking in overcoming the workforce diversity. The leaders of the organization should embrace diversity more strategically in order to help their companies to grow.

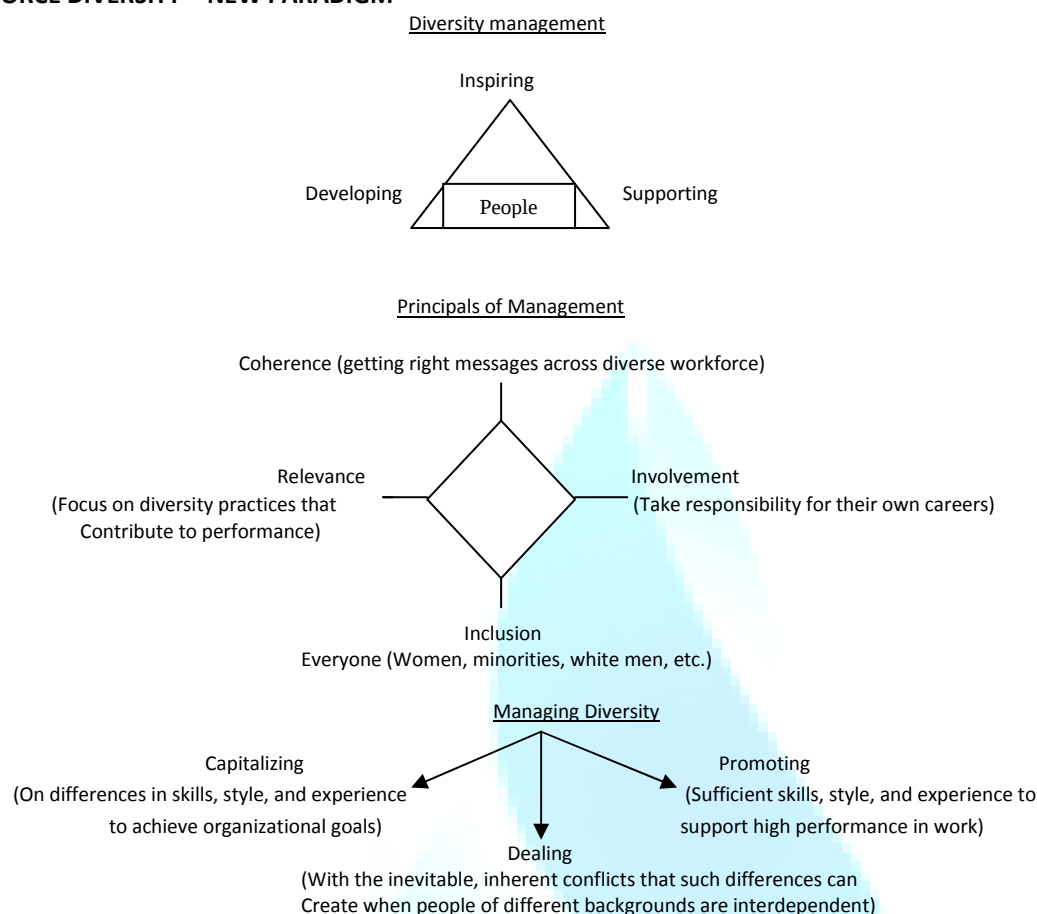
IMPACT OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Indian firms have globally diverse workforce. It is obvious that a diverse workforce can generate diverse, and may be superior, ideas for competitive advantage. An increasingly significant factor that companies face in today's environment is the increased globalization of industries – the blurring of country boundaries in business activities. Many companies are actively competing on an international level setting up the production or service facilities in other countries or establishing international joint ventures and partnerships. Companies that still operate primarily in domestic markets often find themselves competing with international companies. Globalization and outsourcing expand a company's options for finding workers but also potentially expand the competition for the organization. Companies expand and contract their workforces more often and more readily, thereby churning the labor pool. To some extent, all companies operate in a global arena, which creates challenges and opportunities in terms of managing employees with workforce diversity. "Now **Indian companies** started to believe in diversity of workforce especially in the field of Information technology and information technology enabled services such as Wipro Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, Mphasis, KPMG groups' etc"⁷. The scope of diversity in the company includes not just as gender but also extends to persons with disabilities, nationality and people from various backgrounds, different cultures, and different generations and so on. Today women were getting into the workforce into a wider industry wide policy of diversity in keeping global standards. "Today in terms of gender, the industry is doing well with about 35% of the BPO industry comprising of women and 22% of the IT industry," says senior director of Nasscom Sucharita Eashwar⁸.

IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

An important reason to control over the demographic factors such as age, gender, experience which has more influence on workforce diversity and also to find out the factor which has to be implement for the betterment of the business growth and success to attain its goals.





Source: Computed from Primary Data

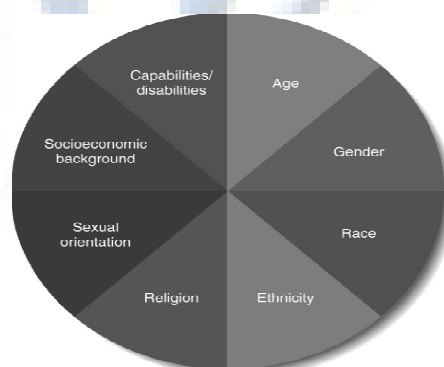
THE ROLE OF DIVERSITY - AS A GROWTH PROMOTER

Aiming towards future, the organizations should better understand about the diversity management of its roles, responsibilities and functions to promote the business a success. Today Information Technology is considered as a profit centered sector among the other organizations. As Glover notes, “Diversity is a critical leadership success factor at IBM. Globally diverse leaders are maximizing the effectiveness of our teams. IBM has recognized the importance of building teams across the company from different countries. It’s not just about leadership, but capability. Diversity is fundamentally focused on talent! Those differences create real opportunities for those who learn to master them and a disaster for those who do not.”⁹

BENEFITS OF MANAGING DIVERSITY

Diversity as a tool used in the business to increase the competitiveness and organizational effectiveness by innovating talent and creating a friendly workplace in the working environment. Diversity management is a strategy to promote the business growth and maintain a positive workplace environment. An effective diversity increases the profit level, market share, horizontal relationship among employees, employers and clients, enhance recruitment and retention, smooth transitions in mergers and acquisitions, improve morale and productivity, and compete globally, etc.

DIMENSIONS OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY



Primary and Secondary Dimensions of workforce diversity

Source: Adapted from M.Loden, *Implementing Diversity* (Chicago: Irwin, 1996); S.Bradford, “Fourteen Dimensions of Diversity: Understanding and Appreciating Differences in the workplace,” in J.W. Pfeiffer (Ed.), 1996 Annual: Volume @ Consulting (SanDiego: Pfeiffer and Associates, 1996), pp.9-17.

TABLE 1: SHOWING THAT AGE, GENDER AND EXPERIENCE INFLUENCING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Age Wise Classification of Respondents			
Serial No:	Age	No of Respondents	Percentage %
1	Below 30	15	30
2	30-40	13	26
3	40-50	12	24
4	Above 50	10	20
	Total	50	100
Gender wise classification of Respondents			
Serial No:	Gender	No of Respondents	Percentage %
1	Female	24	48
2	Male	26	52
	Total	50	100
Experience of Respondents			
Serial No:	Experience	No of Respondents	Percentage %
1	Less than 4 years	10	20
2	4-6 years	15	30
3	7-9 years	12	24
4.	Above 10 years	13	26
	Total	50	100

Source: Computed from primary data

TABLE – 2: SHOWING INFLUENCE OF GENDER ON WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Groups	Disagree	Neutral	Agree		Total
	10-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	
Male	4	8	20	2	34
Female	3	7	5	1	16
Total	7	15	25	3	50

Source: Computed from primary data

From the above table the calculated value of (χ^2) is 10.08, Degree of freedom =1, which is higher than the table value 3.83 at the significant level of 5%. Thus H_0 is rejected. Hence there is an association between gender and workforce diversity.

TABLE – 3: SHOWING INFLUENCE ON AGE AND WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Groups	Disagree	Neutral	Agree		Total
	10-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	
Below 30	1	3	9	2	15
30-40	2	3	8	0	13
40-50	2	4	6	0	12
Above 50	5	3	2	0	10
Total	10	13	25	2	50

Source: Computed from primary data

From the above table the calculated value of (χ^2) is 13.81, Degree of freedom =3, which is higher than the table value 7.81 at the significant level of 5%. Thus H_0 is rejected. Hence there is an association between age and workforce diversity.

TABLE – 3: SHOWING INFLUENCE ON EXPERIENCE AND DIVERSITY

Groups	Disagree	Neutral	Agree		Total
	10-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	
Less than 4 yrs	2	5	3	0	10
4 – 6 years	2	6	5	2	15
7 – 9 years	4	3	4	1	12
Above 10 years	2	6	3	2	13
Total	10	20	15	5	50

Source: Computed from primary data

From the above table the calculated value of (χ^2) is 6.78, Degree of freedom =3, which is less than the table value 7.81 at the significant level of 5%. Thus H_0 is accepted. Hence we can conclude that the distribution is made between the experience of respondents and the level of diversity has an agreement in the expectation.

SOME STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL CHANGE

- o Improving job security and need training to overcome diversity.
- o Motivation for workplace flexibility
- o Make the workplace should be fun and should treat that all are equal in policies and provisions.
- o Giving importance for their values and expectations.
- o Considering that there is no difference from one another and creating an environment that is open to people to share their views, ideas and thoughts, etc.
- o Supportive work environment
- o Rewards and Recognition
- o Celebrate success
- o Continuing Effective Communication and Development
- o Hiring diversity practices

CONCLUSION

This paper has set out to find out the level of workforce diversity which has influence in the Information Technology sector. The impact of workforce diversity depends on the effectiveness of misunderstanding, non cooperation, openness, etc. From the table it is seen that, the difference exists among the experience and the fresher's in the organization. Where the difference exists, there the businesses will affect the organization and it lacks in promoting its growth. Thus in the era of globalization, the organization should focus on promoting the workforce diversity and ultimately, what is needed is implementing and developing the skills will generate diverse culture and it laid a platform for its successful growth in the present and its future.

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ANNEXURE**QUESTIONNAIRE****DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS**

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. Age | : | ☐ 21 – 30 | ☐ 31 – 40 | ☐ 41 – 50 | ☐ > 50 |
| 2. Gender | : | ☐ Male | ☐ Female | | |
| 3. Educational Level | : | ☐ Diploma | ☐ Graduate | ☐ Post Graduate | ☐ Others |
| 4. Length of service | : | ☐ upto 5 yrs | ☐ 6 - 10 yrs | ☐ 11 - 15 yrs. | ☐ 16 - 20yrs ☐ > 20yrs |

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

- Does experience has influence on the work environment?
☐ Highly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Highly Disagree
- Have your organization implement the diversity programs in the workplace?
☐ Highly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Highly Disagree
- Does any of your co-workers has mistreated to you in the workplace?
☐ Highly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Highly Disagree
- Does your organization employ a diverse range of people?
☐ Highly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Highly Disagree
- Have your organization allow celebrating the holidays/ festivals, etc.
☐ Highly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Highly Disagree
- Have your organization provide equal opportunities to all the employees?
☐ Highly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Highly Disagree
- Does your organization treat all the employees equally?
☐ Highly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Highly Disagree
- Does your organization treat the one kind / quality of the person?
☐ Highly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Highly Disagree
- Does age is the factor which influence on diversity in the workplace?
☐ Highly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Highly Disagree

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