Challenges and Strategies of Managing Diversity

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Abstract:
Diversity refers to differences in individual in respect of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social background, economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, attitude, values, morals, and lifestyle. Workforce diversity refers to diversity in the organization and reflects the changing world and market needs. It benefit the workplace by creating a competitive edge over the competitor’s and increasing work productivity. This research paper tries to describe the challenges associated with managing diversity and the strategies that should be adopted to overcome the challenges arising due to diversity. Globalization have had a huge impact in facilitating diversity by bringing together people of different culture, countries, places to work together. Moreover, diversity will increase significantly in the coming years because of world’s economies going global as such it becomes vital for the managers to understand the challenges posed by diversity and also the ways and tools they should adopt to overcome the challenges while working with diverse workforce. In the coming time, only those organizations will be successful that understand, recognize and respect diversity well in the dynamic environment and are ready and willing to spend resources for managing diversity in the workplace to bring high value to organizations.

Keywords: Diversity, Diversity in workplace, Diversity Management, discrimination and stereotypes, challenges, strategies.

Introduction
Globalization has changed the way we work, we think, we react and most importantly the way we do business. The impact of globalization on business has been quite intense as it affects almost all the aspects of business. One such impact has been in context of diversity that has been the result of integration of a country’s economy with the world’s economy. Diversity in business can arise because of many issues like change in gender, age, language, family background, social background, difference in ethical values, religious values, attitude, belief etc.

The concept of diversity is based on understanding the fact that each individual is unique and different from each other. Individual can be different in respect of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social background, economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, attitude, values, morals, lifestyle. Understanding diversity aims at understanding and recognizing the individual differences.

By managing diversity in the workplace we try to recognize the importance of the differences that exist among individuals and how we can utilize that difference fruitfully in the workplace.

Managing diversity in the workplace has become important during the last decade because if diversity is not managed properly it can lead to discrimination.

Managing Diversity
Managing diversity is defined as “Planning and implementing organizational systems and practices to manage people so that the potential advantages of diversity are maximized while its potential disadvantages are minimized” according to Taylor Cox in "Cultural Diversity in Organizations."

Workplace diversity refers to differences between individuals in an organization due to difference in race, gender, ethnics, age, personality, education, social-background, family background, status and more. Globalization plays a major role in facilitating diversity as it brings together people of different culture, countries, places to work together. Each individual plays a significant role in contributing to the success of the organization as such it can become difficult to work in an organization consisting of
individuals belonging to diverse background. Diversity will increase significantly in the coming years as such it becomes vital for the managers to understand the challenges posed by diversity and also the ways and tools they should adopt to overcome the challenges while working with diverse workforce. In the coming time, only those organizations will be successful that are able to understand, recognize and respect diversity and at the same time are ready and willing to spend resources on managing diversity in the workplace.

**Benefits of Managing Workforce Diversity**

Managing workforce diversity is crucial for all the organizations. Some of the most crucial factors which make it important to manage the workforce diversity are:-

1. **Results in innovation and creativity in the organization.**
   Innovation and creativity are two important traits required for the success of every organization. Diversity leads to people of different background in terms of family, education, society working together. These people belonging to diverse backgrounds bring with them the much required innovation and creativity in the organization.

2. **Leads to better ideas, products, services indirectly promoting organization’s success.**
   Globalization has made it important for the organization to believe in the saying of “THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL”. The market of one country is directly linked with the market of other country’s economy. When the system in which the country’s operate today has gone global the organizations have to deal with suppliers, customers, clients and partners from different countries. So, by making use of diverse collection of skills and experiences in the workplace the organizations can gain confidence of these groups through increased understanding.

3. **Brings synergy effect to the organization.**
   Individual working together bring with them more expertise required to handle a job. And when you talk about diverse teams, the results can be better because of synergy effect. Synergy basically means 2+2=5. The whole idea of synergy is based on the fact that output is more when the people are working in group and not individually. Diverse teams, therefore, are believed to produce better results, have better problem ability, increased creativity and more innovation.

4. **Better working environment to improve employee’s performance and productivity.**
   Managing diversity helps in creating an environment in which differences among individual are respected and acknowledged in a matter to to improve performance and productivity. Management of diversity creates a working environment in which people feel comfortable and effective.

5. **Reduces Conflicts in the organization.**
   Discrimination might cost money directly due to legal penalties. If people belong to different background, it may become difficult to take a final decision which may lead to conflict. But if managed properly than conflicts will be reduced in the organization.

6 **Increased adaptability in global environment**
   Organizations employing a diverse workforce offer increased adaptability towards the turbulent global financial environment by promoting different viewpoints of individuals. Employees from diverse backgrounds (social, family, ethical) bring with them talent, innovation, energy and experiences to adapt to dynamic environment, markets and customers and clients.

7. **Better decision making resulting in effective execution**
Companies with people working from diverse backgrounds have better decision making ability because of experience in different fields that result in higher productivity, profit, and customer satisfaction.

Need of Managing Workforce Diversity
Managing diversity at the workplace is very important as it can promote inefficiency and lack of effectiveness, if not managed properly. As discussed earlier, managing diversity is also important as it can lead to discrimination. Incorporating diverse perspectives while working as a team is very crucial for every manager. However, there are certain reasons which make it important to manage workforce diversity.

- If the diversity is managed properly, it can lead to innovation in the organization which can benefit the organization in the long run.
- Diversity if not managed can result in different viewpoints, conflicts and clashed in the organization. It may also affect the performance, limiting employees’ contributions because of different attitude to same problem.
- Diversity brings many benefits, such as better decision making through interaction between people of diverse background and improved problem solving abilities among the group because of people of diverse background having knowledge about different issues.
- Diversity can also help achieve better marketing of product to different types of customers because of people having understanding about diverse background
- Diversity improve the organizations ability to compete in global markets as people coming from different background brings with them more opportunities to trade at global level.
- Managing diversity also reduces the chances of being misunderstood in an interaction because of stereotypes. Stereotypes can influence the attitude of people towards a particular group. The managers should try to combat stereotypes by creating teams of diverse people, monitoring the team progress, and taking corrective actions if required.

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES TO MANAGING DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE
Individual working in an organization can be different in respect of race, age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social background, economic status, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, attitude, values, morals, and lifestyle.

I. Challenges of Managing Diversity in The Workplace
Understanding diversity aims at understanding and recognizing the individual differences which is not an easy task. But understanding diversity is not easy for anyone as it involves understanding individuals of diverse background. There are many challenges associated with understanding and managing diversity that range from the interpersonal and organizational challenges involved in managing diversity.

i) Lack of effective Communication
Effective Communication is crucial for the success of any organization but diversity can create barriers in communication due to cultural and language differences. These differences can make it very difficult for the employee to communicative effectively and can results in chaos, misunderstanding, lack of teamwork, and loss of productivity.

ii) Resistance to change attitude and behavior
There are employees who don’t want to modify their attitudes with the changing environment of the organization making it difficult will refuse to implement new ideas in the organization that are required to adapt to market needs.

iii) Implementation of diversity in the workplace policies
There may also be problems creating workforce policies that meet the need of all the individuals working in the organization. This happens because all the employees in the organization may not be in favor of a particular plan or policies because of the differences in culture, ethics, age, race, caste etc.
II. Strategies for Managing Diversity In The Workplace

Ignoring diversity can cost time, money, and efficiency to the organization. Diversity if not handled properly can lead to tension, loss of productivity, conflict, decreased efficiency, difficulty in retaining employees. Therefore, proper strategies should be adopted to use diversity for the benefit of organization. Some strategies that should be carefully adopted in an organization are:-

- Specify the skills needed to perform a particular task while recruitment to select employees who can work effectively in a diverse global environment and ensure that efforts are being made to select the best employee who can work in diversity while selecting from the pool of applicant belonging to diverse background.

- Clearly understand the requirements of a particular job and skills required to perform that job before conducting the interview. While interviewing the candidate assess experience of the candidate and candidate’s skills and competencies (such as analytical, organizational, interpersonal, and conceptual) that can benefit the organization and the employees.

- Chose a panel while conducting the interview that is diverse so that the panel can represent different perspectives towards candidates and eliminate any kind of bias during selection. Avoid any kind of stereotypes.

- After selecting a particular employee, diversity training can be provided to manage diversity in the workplace to increase cultural awareness, knowledge, skill and competencies of the selected employee.

- Involve every employee while formulating policies involving diversity in your workplace to overcome resistance and while doing so encourage employees to express their ideas and opinions freely to come up with policies that are acceptable by all.

- Diversity should be promoted at managerial level by the organization as researches shows that an organization having individuals of diverse background leads to more transparency in the workplace. A voluntary attempt should therefore be made to promote transparency in the workplace so that it leads to higher efficiency and productivity among the employees.

- Promote Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) in the organization. EEO promotes transparency, fair policy, higher productivity, increased efficiency in the organization by removing obstacles to ensure that all employees are given equal opportunities and are considered for the employment of their choice and are provided with the opportunity to perform to their maximum potential. It ensures that the employees are hired on the basis of their skills, talents, expertise and knowledge and are provided equal opportunities for career development and promotions.

- In case of any conflict try to address the issue as early as possible and try to resolve the issue with open mind without any kind of stereotyping involved. While resolving the diversity related issues, try to understand individual’s need and behavior by learning the professional aspirations of all team members.

- Never support inappropriate and disrespectful behavior of one individual towards other as it can increase the level of chaos. Always evaluate performance objectively by consider individual needs while formulating company’s policies involving issues related to diversity.

- Create examples to the employees working in the organization by adopting the modified behavior yourself. Set examples to them by acting with respect towards all the workers. Show a positive and balanced attitude towards diversity both within their team and as part of group.

- Continuously assess and evaluate the diversity process as an integral part of the management system. Help your management teams determine the challenges and obstacles related to diversity present in your workplace and formulate policies according. Involve management cooperation and participation at every level to create a culture that accommodates diversity and is conducive to the success of your organization.

Special Concerns of The Diverse Groups Arising Due To Their Diverse Attributes.

The table shows the data collected by a report of disabled Persons in India by National Sample Survey Organization; Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. It describes the special concern of the diverse groups due to diversity.
### Diversity attribute

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Illustrative special concerns of this group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Gender diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Over half a billion Indians are less than 25 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City and hinterland</td>
<td>Rapid urbanisation and growing rural economy Over 800-million people spending more than $425 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography and religion</td>
<td>India is geographically and culturally diverse. Buying patterns are different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP distribution</td>
<td>Agriculture share is reducing, industrial share is around 30%, services over 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically challenged</td>
<td>Disabled persons constitute about 2% of the total population in India**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Single parents, widow(er), divorced, live-in couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>Here, most of the world is still in the wilderness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Not a significant area yet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Report: Disabled Persons in India by National Sample Survey Organisation; Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India

### CONCLUSION

Diversity should be recognized, understood and respected in today’s time as with change in global scenario it has become vital to learn to work with diverse workforce. At present, the success and competitiveness of an organization depends upon its ability to mould itself according to the diversity arising from individuals belonging to diverse background. It is also imperative for an organization to understand that diversity has both positive and negative impact on the organization. The positive impact of diversity is that it can improve employee’s performance and productivity level because of better ideas. Synergy effects can also be seen because of diversity that leads to better output and organizational results. The most important factor of diversity is that it leads to better ideas, products, services and process indirectly promoting organization’s success. Managing diversity at the workplace is very important as it can promote inefficiency and lack of effectiveness, if not managed properly.

### REFERENCES


