



CULTURAL DIVERSITIES IN REAL STATE INDUSTRIES OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The rationale behind this research is to examine the different ways of dealing with work place diversity as well as to provide management with the necessary guidelines for effective diversity management in real estate companies in order to show the reader how to build effective workplace diversity by applying different diversity management tools.

Today's workforce is truly mixture of different races, ages, genders, ethnic groups, religions and lifestyles (Mor-Barak, 2005). It is the job of the management of the organisation to fit together different pieces of mosaic in a harmonious, coordinated way and utilising the abilities and talents of each employee to its maximum. If skilfully managed, diversity can bring a competitive advantage to an organisation.

Key -Words: HRM, Cross Culture diversity.

INTRODUCTION

Today's workforce is made up of many types of people. Organisations can no longer assume that every employee has similar beliefs or expectations. Organizations exist to serve human needs. An organisation is only effective as the people who operate it. People are considered the most important resource in any organisation (Mor-Barak, 2005). They are the basic foundation of an organization and the basic unit of change within organisation. The human resource approach focuses on the interaction between people and the organization. If communication between employees is poor, organisation will suffer. When coordination and interaction within the organisation is good, both employees and business will benefit.

Cultural Diversity

Culture is an important dimension of group diversity that influences communication. Culture is the integrated system of beliefs, values, behaviours and communication patterns that are shared by those socialized within the same social group. Cultural diversity is the variety of human societies or cultures in a specific region, or in the world as a whole. It is also referred to multiculturalism within an organization (Konard et al. 2006). Obvious cultural differences exist

between people, such as language, dress and traditions, there are also significant variations in the way societies organize themselves, in their shared conception of morality, and in the ways they interact with their environment (Henderson, 2001).

Diversity in the Workplace:

Workplace diversity refers to the division of the workforce into distinction categories that have a perceived commonality within a given cultural or national context and that impact potentially harmful or beneficial employment outcomes such as job opportunities, treatment in the workplace and promotion prospects, irrespective of job related skills and qualifications (Stockdale and Crosby, 2004). Diversity can be defined differently by different cultures and organisations. A view of business, organisation and human resource literature produced three types of definitions of diversity: Narrow category-based definition (e.g. gender, racial or ethnic differences); broad category-based definition (e.g. a long list of categories including such variables as marital status and education); and conceptual rule definition that is based on variety of perspectives, differences in perceptions and actions (Thiederman, 2008). Some of the distinction categories may either have a positive or negative impact on employment and job prospects in different countries (Albrecht, 2001). Against the backdrop of broad definitions, on the one hand, and the narrow ones on the other, generating a definition of workplace diversity that will be relevant and applicable in different cultures proves to be a challenge. Workplace diversity focused on the similarities and differences of the people that they bring to an organization. It is usually defined broadly to include dimensions which influence the identities and perspectives that employees have such as profession, education and geographic location. As a concept, diversity is considered to be inclusive of everyone (Albrecht, 2001). Diversity initiatives create the workplace environment and organizational culture by making differences work. It is about teaching and learning from others who are different, it is about dignity and respect for all, and about creating workplace environments and practices that encourage learning from others and capture the advantage of diverse perspectives. Most scholars agree that diversity in the workplace utilizes employee skills to the fullest and contributes to the overall growth and prosperity of the organisation. It is based on the idea identities should not be discarded or ignored, but instead, should be maintained and valued (Henderson, 2001).

Managing Diversity

Increasing cultural diversity is forcing organisations to learn and motivate people with a broader range of value systems. To succeed in managing workforce that is increasingly diverse and multinational, managers need knowledge about cultural differences and similarities among people from different backgrounds (Golembiewski, 2000). They also need to be sensitive to these differences that can contribute to their effectiveness in cross cultural communication. In today's global business world, a manager has to understand cultural differences and their meanings in business relations. The manager who manages diversity should understand that

diversity includes every employee. It is a challenge to successfully apply skills, energy, and commitment of employees to make an organization better. It is of primary importance that the manager understands the cultural beliefs and values of the organisation for effectively managing diversity (Golembiewski, 2000).

Categories and Elements of Diversity

Workforce Diversity

- Gender
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Sexual Orientation
- Physical Ability
- Age
- Family Status
- Economic Background & Status
- Geographical Background & Status
- Market Demographics

Behavioral Diversity

- Work Styles
- Thinking Styles
- Learning Styles
- Communication Styles
- Aspirations
- Beliefs/Value Systems
- Changes in Attitudes
- Expectations of Employees

Impacts of diversity on workplace environment

Workplace diversity provides strengths as well as offer challenges to the organisation. Cultural diversity is meaningful. It helps employees to learn from each other, to understand each other's differences (Griffin and Hirsch, 1998). Cultural diversity affects the businesses in many ways including the staff recruitment/retention, management styles and decision-making processes, and relationships within organizations. Cultural diversity often improves and develops workplace by helping as learning experiences for employers as well as employees. When an organisation embrace diversity and realize its benefits, it can succeed and compete more effectively (Henderson, 2001). When it actively assess the handling of workplace diversity issues, develop and implement diversity plans, it can increase its adaptability. Different employees bring individual talents and experiences and suggest suggesting flexible ideas in adapting to ever changing markets. An organisation can globally provide service with a diverse collection of skills and experiences. Organisations that encourage workplace diversity in inspire all of their employees to perform to their highest ability. Different strategies are then executed; resulting in higher productivity, profit, and return on investment (Konard et al. 2006).

On the other hand, diversity issues costs money, time and efficiency. If not managed properly it can create problems. Some of the consequences can include unhealthy tensions between employees or with management; loss of business performance and productivity because of increased conflict; inability to attract and retain talented people of all kinds; complaints and legal actions; and inability to retain valuable employees, resulting in lost investments in recruitment and training (Stockdale and Crosby, 2004). Taking full advantage of the benefits of diversity in the workplace is not without its challenges. Perceptual, cultural and language barriers need to be overcome for diversity programs to succeed. Ineffective communication of key objectives results in confusion, lack of teamwork, and low morale. There are always employees who will refuse to accept the fact that the social and cultural makeup of their workplace is changing. The "we've always done it this way" mentality silences new ideas and inhibits progress (Albrecht, 2001).

Although cultural diversity presents a challenge, organisations should view it as an opportunity rather than a limitation. When managed properly, cultural diversity can provide competitive advantages for an organisation. An organisation that manages diversity properly can develop cost advantages over other organisations and are in much better position to attract the best personnel. Proper guidance and management of diversity can improve the level of creativity in an organisation (Henderson, 2001).

Intercultural communication:

Diversity in the workplace is strategic force influencing communication (Samovar et al. 2008). Communication in its most basic form is defined as the use of symbols to convey meanings. Culture is the integrated system of beliefs, values, behaviours and communication patterns that are shared by those socialized within the same social group. When persons socialized in different cultures and co-cultures look from the same point in same direction, they often see different things, and these different perceptions shape their communication (Samovar et al. 2008). Being different from others in an organisation can adversely affect communication and coordination. People from different cultures bring different set of assumptions about appropriate ways to coordinate and communicate in an organisation. Understanding how to communicate effectively with people from other cultures has become integral to the work environment of many organisations (Samovar et al. 2009). Managers who manage diversity need to be sensitive to cultural differences that can contribute to the effectiveness in cross cultural communication. Cross cultural communication involves several potential barriers to communication that are related to the use of verbal and non-verbal methods to convey meanings that may or may not be the same in the cultures of origin of the participants (Samovar et al. 2008). Often the message that is communicated, maybe different from the one that was intended because of cultural barriers. The use of different languages often creates barrier to communication because one or both sides are not articulate as they could be in their native tongue. Linguistic diversity is an important aspect of global diversity. Managing a workforce that does not share a common

language can present a major challenge to both employees and management (Cragon and Wright, 2008).

	Total Workforce % & ranking	Junior Levels % & ranking	Middle Levels % & ranking	Senior Levels % & ranking
REGIONAL AVERAGE	47.5%	56.3%	39.0%	24.3%
China	56.7 (2)	64.9 (1)	49.6 (2)	35.6 (1)
Hong Kong	50.9 (3)	57.5 (5)	45.7 (3)	29.4 (3)
India	26.6 (6)	30.3 (6)	16.4 (6)	10.6 (6)
Japan	42.6 (5)	59.2 (3)	28.4 (5)	11.0 (5)
Malaysia	58.1 (1)	63.0 (2)	50.3 (1)	34.0 (2)
Singapore	48.2 (4)	56.5 (4)	40.6 (4)	23.7 (4)

Factors Effecting Communication:

Cultural diversity can have a powerful effect on communication within the organisation. Problems occur between people of different cultures primarily because people tend to assume that their own cultural norms are the right ways to do things. They wrongly believe that the specific patterns of behaviour desired in their own culture are universally valued. They have stereotypes about other cultures that interfere with communication when people interact. Workplace diversity can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications, but it also poses opportunities to improve both workers and organisations. Managers must be prepared to communicate effectively with workers of different cultural backgrounds. A diverse workforce poses various communication challenges to an organisation.

Misunderstandings, inaccuracies, inefficiencies and slowness are typical communication problems experienced by diverse groups. Communication breakdowns occur when members often assume that the other party understands the message when in fact they do not. People interpret information differently even when the same language is used. Therefore, the message sent is not always the message received. Differences in communication styles and non verbal communication can create problems. Communication problems due to diversity may become magnified because people are afraid or otherwise unwilling to discuss openly about the issues. Trust is an important factor that plays a significant role in intercultural, interracial and inter-gender communication. A lack of trust can result in miscommunication. Accent is another factor creating problems in communication as some people react negatively to different accents. It is even considered rude if someone does not speak in the official language. People make judgements and mental picture (stereotypes) about others based on the kinds of expression they use because of the region (regional jargon) from which they come. The fact that people have

different experiences accounts for many of the problems that occur when they try to interact cross culturally. These experiences directly relate to ability to communicate.

Main Objective of the Research Work

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. Identifying different dimensions of cultural diversity.
2. Devising a model or framework to manage cultural diversity.
3. Explain benefits and limitations of workplace diversity.
4. Explore the required tools for managing workplace diversity.
5. Study the views of various Real estate companies regarding the choice and implementation of workplace diversity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE (Present and Past Status):

Saini & Cooke (2010) [1] the authors study explored the societal context of managing diversity at workplaces in India. It assessed how the notion is understood and operationalized in a number of leading business organizations across different ownership forms and industrial sectors. Their findings revealed that majority of the organisation have not adopted a strategic approach to diversity management to enhance their performance. Their study further found that younger and knowledge- intensive multinational operations are more likely to take a comparatively more proactive approach to DM to leverage competitive advantage than long-established, domestic firms in traditional industrial sectors. The latter firms are more likely to implement DM policy as legal compliance and less likely to adopt DM initiatives as HR interventions because of their relatively low level of awareness of strategic HRM.

Som (2007); Venkata Ratnam Chandra (1996) [2,3] suggests that India must address a range of diversity issues including age, education, religion, caste, socially disadvantaged (e.g. scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other depressed classes), gender, language, regional, background, ethnicity, economic well being and lifestyle (e.g. vegetarian vs. Non- vegetarian).

Kundu (2003) [4] India is a multi religious country with Hinduism being the dominant religion practiced by 81% by the population (so in addition managers and other categories of employees especially those belonging to the higher castes, recent reservation policies and concessions through which socially disadvantaged people may enter organizations).

Budhwar (2003) [5] India is a large country comprising 29 states and 6 union territories. Linguistically speaking it has a variety of language, dialects and cultures. The cultural diversity is the hallmark of Indian society vary few other countries in the world might be as diverse as India. The constitution recognises sixteen languages including hindi & English that are the two official languages. India has one of the largest English speaking populations in the Asia pacific

region. One of the key hurdles in the way of managing diversity is plural India is strong feeling for regionalism, casteism & stereotypes based on these beliefs. Managing in the new scenario therefore involves taking strategic direction as well as planning and implementing a performance improvement agenda through more effective management of systems, process and people.

Kundu (2007) [6] in his research study the author explored reactions and perceptions of male and female employees about workforce diversity status in Indian Organizations. The research includes survey of 1,083 employees from eighty companies from different sectors in India. The study reveals the prevalence of gender and racial discrimination in Indian organizations. Male employees rated female employees less qualified, less competent and less productive than females rated themselves. Female employees believed that they had less chance of receiving work facilities, promotions, salary increases than male employees.

Vidu Soni (2000) [7] According to an article on the reception of diversity in public sector he says that concept of diversity management suffers from similar disagreements. The advantage of managing diversity has been met with considerable backlash. He further added that staffs do not have the clear understanding of diversity initiative programs or activities that enhances the diversity. Different groups have different perception about diversity. Also, organisation understands the importance of diverse workforce. More competition and output has been seen in result of workplace diversity. As far as programme or initiatives to enhance the diversity management is concern it is closely link with rules, regulations and companies policies.

Dhillon (2009) [8] suggested that diversity is about getting the right mix of people with the right set of skills and competencies. Making sure the mix of people we have works best for the organization, members feeling a sense of belonging, respected, valued and accepted for whom they are and the way they are welcomed into the organization.

Singh and Point (2004) [9] opines that globalisation was the key driver for multinational companies. The ability to work and learn trans culturally was seen important for all sectors and levels. They further suggested that communicating on diversity has a positive effect on employees and employers, being proactive would offer some benefits. However, even though there are serious reasons to strongly communicate about diversity it often defaults. In addition, the author answers the questions of what to communicate on diversity. The first aspect to consider while communicating about diversity is to define the concept itself because of the complexity of the concept. Such advises make sense when it is known that only 30% of the companies asked in a report from the society for human resource management have an official definition of diversity. Secondary, he advises to gather the stakeholders around the concept is narrowly focused on only one stakeholder group, the employees and recommends extending it to other stakeholders such as suppliers and shareholders. Since communicating on diversity has positive effect on employees and employers being proactive would offer some benefits.

Saini & Wooderd (2005) [10] their comparative study on diversity management in USA & Indian organizations found that through diversity management, discourse in India is at the stage of equal opportunity their lies a gap between the legal promise and actual implementation. Authors identified that in India position of women's right is not clearly defined. They also quoted forms of unfavourable discrimination from society, employers and superiors towards women. Scholars in their study identified strong masculine and patriarchal male dominated workplace culture in organizations of India.

Joshi & Jackson (2004) [11] based on their research a positive relationship was found between team gender diversity and intra team cooperation but only within regions that was relatively diverse in terms of gender. Their study about multi attribute, multi level analysis of team diversity and sales performance demonstrate that an improved understanding of the relationship between team diversity and team performance can be reached by considering the combined effects of team diversity and demographic social context.

Jonathan, David and Aparna (2004) [12] authors stated that the past research on workplace diversity suggests that diversity can be either detrimental or beneficial for workgroup performance. For instance, workgroup diversity is positively associated with creativity and problem- solving skills and negatively related with cohesiveness and cooperation.

Radha Mohan Chebolu, (2007) [13] author suggests that having culturally diversified workforce is really competent but to manage such talent effectively is a bigger challenge which requires a leader that has an organizational vision and an attitude to manage it productively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information gathered and the responses given by various companies with regards to the interview questions, the Researcher noticed certain areas where all the companies are lacking and needs some improvement. These aspects consist of:

- The inability of some managers to effectively manage diversity due to the nature of the company and its activities.
- Some of the managers do not have enough knowledge about how to manage their workforce effectively.
- There is lack of open communication between managers and employee. Due to the means manager use to communicate to its workers.
- The Employee Resource Groups that are created by the big companies to guide the employees are not enough to eradicate diversity management challenges.

Cultural mentoring is one of the proven ways to orient manager and employees both new and old to cope with the working environment and their responsibilities. So many benefits are derived from a mentor of whom some are as follow:

- The mentor could give counselling about personal problems as well as job related ones.

- The mentor could provide opinions or suggestions to the company when things go wrong.
- Managers or employees tend to perform very well by developing more self-confidence when they are being mentored.

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