

# Diversity Management and Human Resource Development—A Study of Indian Organizations

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Inclusion of diversity, what started as an initiative to provide equal employment across the world has today translated into a wider industry wide policy of diversity. It is gaining a strong foothold within India Inc. demonstrating inherent benefits for both employees and employers. The paper attempts to throw light on the practices and strategies being adopted by companies which are honored by recognized bodies for their unwavering commitment to diversity & inclusion. More specifically, the study approaches this through exploration of HRM activities in managing diversity in these organizations by developing a framework from literature of HRM and diversity management (DM). The practices of these organizations have been traced from newspaper articles, surveys, diversity reports of companies, public websites of the companies, and interviews of company heads available in print and in electronic sources. The various practices, and strategies that are adopted by Indian organizations to leverage diversity, have major concentration on women and people with disability.

**Keywords:** Indian corporate, Diversity, Inclusion practices.

## Introduction

The concept of diversity which originated in U.S in the late 1980's has seeped into countries across the world. In the last two decades; it has been embraced by the organizations by realizing the strong linkages between the inclusion of diversity and business competitive advantage (Fluery, 1999). The concept that started as an initiative to provide equal employment has today translated into a wider industry wide policy of diversity.

## Diversity

Diversity can be defined as a mixture of people with different group identities within the same social system (Fluery, 1999). Diversity includes factors such as race, gender, age, colour, physical disability, ethnicity, etc. (Kundu and Turan, 1999). Companies have decided to incorporate diversity and consider it as essential part of their business strategy (Hayes and Mandez, 1997; Palich and Gomez, 1999) for keeping and gaining market share, reducing costs, increasing productivity and improving quality of management (Morrison, 1992) etc. as business case.

## Diversity Management

This inclination towards increasing diversity provides an impetus to recognize the need for “diversity management” in the organization. Diversity management (DM) 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” (Cox, 1993).

Further, Cox and Blake (1991) posits that to implement these

practices effectively, there is a need to align these practices with organization systems. Moreover organizations are recognized as social system and according to principle of system theory, when a change is brought in the organization, it requires to change all the major components. People process factor, a major component of organization, which encompasses practices designed to manage the acquisition of human talent and their employment outcomes, is to be reviewed in presence of changes in organization demographics of workforce. Thus managing growth in workforce diversity and increasing the representation of minorities throughout the organization is critical strategic human resource (HR) management issue for most organizations.

Various initiatives are taken by organizations operating in India, to include diversity in the set of human management practices, guaranteeing an alignment between the strategies of human resource and diversity management goals. Diversity inclusion is gaining a strong foothold within India Inc. demonstrating inherent benefits for both employees and employers'. The statement draws support from a study (“Mercer's Asia Pacific Diversity and Inclusion Study”, 2012) which reports that 60% of the participating companies in India reported having diversity and inclusion strategy at the global and regional level of which around 14.5% had a diversity strategy at country level. Among the 40% companies, who do not have diversity strategies at their organization, are looking into establishing it soon. Further, the reports states that the top three drivers behind an Indian organization's diversity and inclusion strategy found were recruitment of talent (70%) employer brand (61.3%) and access to untapped talent pool (60%).

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The paper explores how organizations manage diversity through their HR practices and strategies taking into consideration those operating in India which were honored by NASSCOM and other bodies, for their appreciative efforts of inclusion of diversity at their workplace. An attempt is made to throw light on the practices, policies and strategies being adopted by these companies. The research method is based on secondary data collected from newspaper articles, surveys, diversity reports of companies, company public websites and interviews of company heads available in print and from electronic sources. More specifically, the study approaches this through exploration of HRM activities in managing diversity in these organizations by developing a framework from literature of HRM and diversity management (DM). The paper attempts to identify various initiatives and categorize them as soft and hard approaches of HR to understand their mechanism in achieving the strategy of diversity management. Initiatives under each approach are further categorized based on their concentration on specific dimension of diversity (gender, culture, disability, sexual orientation and age) and HR practices. The paper provides an overview of strategies under each HR practices undertaken to embrace and manage diversity. This paper is an effort in this direction, hoping it contributes to understanding of diversity and inclusion practices of Indian corporate.

### Theoretical Framework for integrating Human resource development and diversity management

According to diversity management literature, the approach of diversity initiatives can be distinguished as managing diversity and valuing diversity, based on their purpose (Walter and Cookie, 2001). In order to integrate these approaches of diversity initiatives with HRM activities, Storey's (1989) concept of hard and soft approaches of HRM is considered constructive.

The hard approach emphasizes that people are important resources through which organization achieve competitive advantage. These resources have to be acquired, developed and deployed in ways that will benefit organization. It is a philosophy that appeals to management, who are striving to increase competitive advantage by challenging existing organizational or institutional policies and employment practices to bring meaningful change. (Armstrong, 2008) This approach emphasizes the implementation of more appropriate Managing diversity is to create equality in the workplace and to ensure the fairness of the practices used in the workplace by changing facets of organizational structure, policies, and practices of the organization. The ultimate goal of managing diversity is to change the institutions themselves from the inside out so that they provide true equality of opportunity (Walter and Cookie, 2001).

Both of these approaches are oriented towards changing existing practices. As diversity is considered as source of competitive advantage to organizations, HR practices such as

recruitment and selective, promotion rewards and performance management systems etc, can be reinforce to get desired behavior, which aim at equality and fairness at workplace to enhance diversity inclusion and utilize it efficiently to attain the business case.

The soft approach of HRM traces its roots to the human-relations school; it emphasizes communication, motivation and leadership. The soft approach to HRM stresses the need to gain the commitment –the hearts and minds-of employees through involvement, communication and other methods of developing high –commitment towards organization (Armstrong, 2008). Similarly valuing diversity is concerned more with creating a more positive inter-group relations climate by articulating the values of the corporation (Walter and Cookie, 2001).

Therefore soft approach and valuing diversity can be aligned, emphasizing on raising consciousness or awareness about diversity and practices by change individual attitudes and values, in the expectation that this will create better understanding and tolerance among people from different societal, cultural and economic backgrounds and build capacity. Educative workshops, mentoring, diversity training etc. are specifically designed HR practices to improve intergroup relations such that the difference in workforce is valued and organizational goals are achieved.

Based on this framework, Fig (a) shows the alignment HR approaches and DM initiatives, by way of their similarity in purpose and approach and Fig (b) identifies the HR practices which can reviewed to attain the objective of managing diversity and valuing diversity.

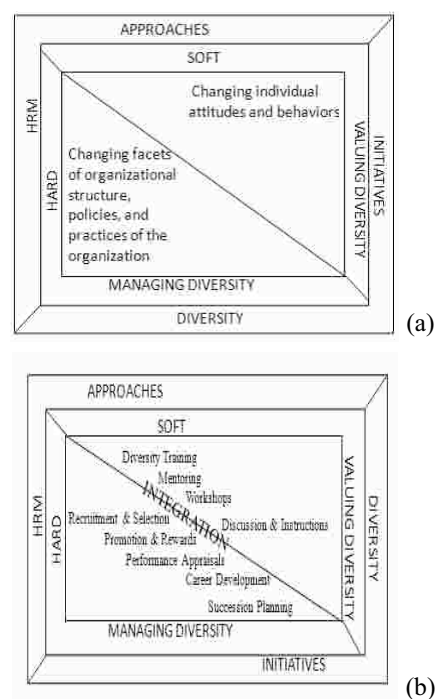


Fig. (a) Aligning HR and DM; ( b) Identifying practices by Integrating HRM and DM

The reminder paper explores the various HR practices-those that explicitly address the diversity inclusion and management and presents the initiatives of organizations in India. These organizations have realized the benefits of diversity and are making their workplace amicable to diverse population by linking their HR practices with organization strategy of diversity inclusion.

### **Human resource management practices and workforce diversity**

Diverse workforce is seen as competitive advantage to the organization as it brings diverse capabilities. But to achieve maximum benefit of this diversity, it needs to manage well. HRM is seen to gain competitive advantage through a well managed committed and capable workforce. It manages the diverse workforce striving to increase effectiveness by either changing organization practices or attitude of people.

### **Hard approaches to diversity management**

These approaches bring equality and fairness in organization by reviewing the existing practices.

### **Recruitment**

Managing diversity promotes competitive edge by recruiting the best people for the job, regardless of ethnicity, age, gender or other individual characteristics (Cornelius, 1999).

Realizing this benefit India Inc. continues the endeavor of recognizing, increasing and bringing inclusivity alive in the organization by recruiting women, physically disabled and from other groups.

Many organizations have taken initiatives to recruit women and made it an integral part of their policy making. For instance Broadridge India believes that gender inclusivity in the work place enhances its creativity, productivity, and ability to manage change. Supporting this, Mr. M. Laxminath, managing director, broadridge India, said "At Broadridge, we believe in developing a strong and inclusive work culture for all our associates and gender inclusivity is very close to our hearts" (Broadridge Financial Solutions, 2011). Similarly Anthelio is also actively recruiting women at senior level positions, who are committed to providing unmatched client service and unique offerings to the healthcare IT industry Mr. Harjeet Khanduja, Head Human Resources said Inclusivity at Anthelio is not just a choice for us, it is a business imperative" (Anthelio wins NASSCOM corporate, 2011).

Genpact has also come a long way in realizing the importance of a diverse workforce from a gender standpoint. Women constitute 35 percent of the Indian and 40 percent of the global headcount. Further, their target is to ensure that 50% of all AVP+ hires are to be women (Joshi, 2012). At Dr. Reddy's almost 13% of total recruits and 31% of campus hires were women in FY 10 (Sustainability report 2010-Dr Reddy's). SAP LAB India Ltd. has recruited 42% women in 2012; as compared to 34% in 2011 and 31% in year 2010 of its total

campus hires (Vrishi, 2012).

PepsiCo India, over the last two years has increased the percentage of women on its payroll from 5% in 2006 to 20% in 2008, making it an employer of choice for women. Currently women account for 33% of the top management and 15% of the rest of the workforce at PepsiCo. Speaking about their initiative, Mr. Pavan Bhatia, Executive Director HR PepsiCo India said, "Through this initiative PepsiCo India aims to provide job opportunities to women at different stages like those who have opted out of the regular talent reserve due to various reasons and wish to re-enter the corporate world. PepsiCo will not only offer these career-oriented women salaries that are at par with industry standards but will also undertake various workshops to help them adapt to their new role and balance their personal and professional lives." (PepsiCo ties up with Job Street, 2008).

IT & ITES sector playing a leading role in making the workforce even more inclusive through tapping different segments such as people with physical disabilities and those from economically and socially challenged. IBM hired its first person with disability in 1914. Wipro has employed over 300 people with disability and this year it enrolled disabled students into the Wipro Academy for Software Excellence. Further Wipro offered jobs to 6 deaf students on Feb 2, 2012, National Institute of Speech & Hearing (Nair, 2012). Mphasis has hired up to 400 people by 2012 as compared to 56 in 2007 (Aparna, 2012). PepsiCo has also provided employment opportunities to individuals with Learning Disability, Orthopedic disability, Visual Impairment and Women Orthopedic disability (PepsiCo ties up with Job Street, 2008).

Further PepsiCo India Company has made efforts to create a level playing field for HIV infected individuals as well by providing them equal job opportunities as any normal individual. Through the project Healing Touch, the company is also providing employment opportunities to the Ex-Servicemen of Indian Armed Forces to help them earn their own livelihood. For its outstanding contribution in employing people with disability and varied background PepsiCo India was awarded the NCPEDP-Shell Helen Keller Award in 2007 (PepsiCo ties up with Job Street, 2008).

There has been found a change in mindset happening among Indian companies as well which are now gearing up towards putting in place firm diversity policies on issues ranging from gender and disability to those including sexual minorities such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) categories. Infosys gay-lesbian employees and YOU (IGLU) creates a safe and respectful work environment from the LGBT community (Infosys-Diversity, 2012). IBM India has also recognized LGBT population, to ensure an equally inclusive environment for all (India benchmarking report-catalyst, 2010).

### Sources of recruitment

To attract employees from various backgrounds, there is need to concentrate on the sources that can supply diverse people to them. Selecting media that can reach target audience increases the likelihood of diverse workforce (Tipper, 2004).

PepsiCo has tied-up with IndiWo—a women centric website by Network 18 for the initiative to attract women for its new initiative 'breaks into beginnings' for women wanting to make a come back to the corporate world after their early breaks (PepsiCo ties up with Job Street, 2008).

Similarly IBM has empanelled NGOs who are working to supply them with qualified PwD candidates. Mphasis has also entered into partnership with NOIDA deaf society, wherein they support English literacy of 250 deaf youth and also training them in skills that would lead to their becoming employable (Aparna, 2012).

### Selection Process and Job description

For the effective management of diversity, the companies realize that it is imperative to recognize that the selection process and the job description should comply and support the group being recruited (Kandola and Fullerton, 1994).

Mphasis provides necessary accommodation during interview for the disabled, each employee with disability is given accommodation according to his or her need. Further it designs job description in line with the disability. It hires people with hearing disabilities in non-voice jobs where interaction with clients is through email and chat (Aparna, 2012).

### Career Development

Diverse employees often feel neglected and do not perceive any career paths. Employee development programs can address this problem, by preparing employees for future promotions. Determining the personal development needs of each minority group and creating a development and progressive plan (Wentling and Palma-Rivas, 2000) would help them to advance through their career.

Women's Leadership Forum (WLF) is a Broadbridge initiative that recognizes the need for a women's initiative based on feedback from their associates, their Board of Directors, and their clients. By better understanding the experiences of women, actions are taken to remove barriers for women's advancement (Broadbridge Financial Solutions, 2011). A forum of Conjoin, Women @ ConJoin organizes various events and focus group meetings for discussing issues at work regarding women and provide counseling and help in times of stress, emotional upheaval, pressure and conflict at work, etc (Diversity and Inclusivity-Conjoin, 2010). Under the development arena, Genpact has a suite of initiatives—a global affinity group for women—Genpact Women's International Network (GenWIN), whose mission is to foster the professional development of our women workforce (Joshi, 2012). Similarly Women of Wipro (WoW) an initiative of

Wipro and Women's Leadership Council (IWLC) of IBM enhances the technical, professional and personal development of women.

Indian organizations are strongly focused on disability as part of their strategy. They have included development programmes specific to people with disabilities. IBM India has undertaken several initiatives to increase visibility and access of PwDs at the workplace. In addition to providing accessibility products for PwDs, they have initiated Roundtable meetings with PwD employees to understand and address their unique concerns. They have established a voluntary PwD Network - EnABLERS at IBM- which is a great forum in which PwD joiners can participate, especially when they are new to IBM. Similarly Infyability at Infosys creates a sensitive and inclusive workplace for differently abled employees and help them in developing by regular accessibility audits are conducted to ensure that their infrastructure is accessible to differently abled employees (Infosys-Diversity, 2012).

### Equal opportunity for performance

Furthermore, for the socially adequate management of a workforce organizations have policies to provide equal opportunity to all the employees and reward based on their performance. These policies based on the principles of respect, transparency, honesty, privacy, and freedom (Jabbour and Santos, 2008), all of which can provide more safety in the workplace, improve the Quality of life and help qualified candidates in advancing upward in the organizations.

IBM is committed to creating a workplace culture and environment where employees can balance their responsibilities to work, family, education and other personal needs. They have a long standing commitment to creating a flexible work environment that gives employees more flexibility and control over where, when and how work is done in order to achieve business objectives and meet personal needs. work-from-home, part-time work, extended maternity leaves, crèche facility, education and training, onsite medical check-ups, security guards in transport, an Ombudsperson process and concierge have been implemented by Genpact to create a favorable work-life environment for women. WoW of Wipro also include, flexible policies to enable work life balance including crèches across locations.

Further Wipro help differently abled individuals to leverage their talent and build their careers at Wipro. Wipro has adapted IS applications to connect with typical software used in the organization so that IT resources and information are made easily available to the physically challenged. Similarly IBM India has provided facilities to enable employees to work more independently and productively. Examples include physical improvements such as ramps, Braille signage in elevators, lowered water fountains and wide doors and also provide individual people with disabilities the technology tools in the workplace and in the marketplace, such as voice recognition software and Homepage reader.

## Compensation and Rewards

A good remuneration system ensures that there is direct relationship between efforts and rewards. Performance -based pay would be effective in producing desirable results. Paying senior management on the based on their performance in diversity recruiting and retention would enhance diversity initiatives (Tipper, 2004). Moreover, diversity put as a key result area for the business leaders would become a yardstick for their assessment. This helps organizations increase accountability for diversity outcomes and ensure that diversity objective is a priority (Carter et al., 2001)

For instance, Microsoft India chairman Bhaskar Pramanik; Avinash Vashistha, Accenture India country managing director; Shantanu Khosla, P&G India M.D; Shanker Anna Swamy, IBM M.D and their leadership team have diversity on their performance scorecard. In a similar context Roopa Kudva, MD and CEO of CRISIL said “The word diversity was not in the vocabulary of companies when I started out 25 years ago. Today it is on the agenda of management and boards” (Bhattacharya, 2012).

## Soft approaches for diversity management

Arnold (1997) has list some initiatives that would raise awareness about diversity and change attitude of people to tolerate differences.

- a) Multicultural workshops- designed to improve understanding and communication between groups.
- b) “Core groups” which meet regularly to confront stereotypes and personal biases.
- c) Support groups , mentoring ,relationship networks for minorities
- d) Training

Many organizations are implementing such practices to promote inclusive and safe workplace for their diverse employees with the focus on gender, physically disabled, culture, sexual orientation and generation.

## Training

Effective management of workforce diversity involves not just recruiting diverse employees but also retaining them. One way of increasing retention rates is by providing adequate training and development opportunities to employees.

In the case of multicultural employees, training may also assist in understanding different cultures and values. Training would maximize the benefits of diversity while minimizing potential conflict by developing respect and value for differences and understanding style and behavior of other cultures (Coleman, 1994). TCS launched 'Culture Meter' in 2008 on its intranet that profiles different countries in a lively way. Culture Meter talks about the country, its culture, dos and don'ts, and TCS's business information about that country. And there are corners

on their homepage on their intranet where senior leaders write about their experiences in different countries. And also constantly provides “Cultural Sensitization” and “Relocation training” to the employees are assigned to work outside their home countries (Rao, 2012).

Conjoin hosts a series of training programmes, including new-hire induction, which is values-based. Induction, film-based "Values" training and Team-building are mandatory training programmes. To ensure 'boundary-less behavior', they form cross-functional project where people from different groups can come together (Diversity and Inclusivity-Conjoin, 2010).

IBM recognizes cultural difference on the basis of ethnic background and offers a variety of education in the field of Diversity including Diversity and Inclusive Leadership, Culture and Business, Culture and Globalization, Culture Shock: Working Internationally, Going Global, Networking, People with Disabilities, Remote and Mobile Management, Sexual Harassment and Valuing Diversity. Methods of study range from e-learning (on-line self education) to learning labs (face to face classes).

Language training becomes significant in the companies with multilingual employees. TCS has a Foreign Language Initiatives (FLI) group which focuses on cultural integration and language training. Some examples are cultural workshops, English-language teaching programm for its non-English-speaking employees, and programm for expatriates to learn the local languages (Rao, 2012).

## Mentoring

Mentoring can help minority employees cope with job stresses and challenges (Morrison, 1992). Dreshner & Ash (1990) states that protégés who have received mentoring, have been found to receive more promotions and higher income. Further mentoring has a strong influence on career attitudes such as commitment, job satisfaction, and intension to turnover. (Ragnis et al., 2000)

A formal mentoring program involves matching senior executives with female and minority protégés. In similar vein, a formal mentoring program (WeMentor) at GENPACT, pair's high-potential middle-management women with experienced leaders in the company to assist and guide them on various professional fronts (Joshi, 2012).

## Workshops, Networks, Core groups and other programmes

These initiatives build support and professional connections to the minority, helping them feel secure in the organization.

## Women

SAP LAB IndiaLtd (female to male ratio: 1:2.13) conduct 'Experience Express Sessions' for women which aims at giving employees to meet and interact with popular women (Vrishi, 2012). This attention paid to the provision of work-life balance and concern towards their employees contributes to its

admired work culture. Accenture (Female to Male ratio: 1: 2.36) conducts DHPW (Developing High Performing Women) program, which include virtual workshops to recognize diverse skills and capabilities that women employees and developing to fit into leadership positions in the future. In addition to this, they organize "Vaahini" - a formal women's networking group in Accenture, which supports networking amongst the women employee on efforts and initiatives related to mentoring, communication and counseling (Vrishi, 2012). Similarly, Women of Wipro (WoW) an initiative launched, as part of the Wipro Diversity Council, in 2008S conducts self defense workshops and 'Fit for Life' sessions for the health and safety of women (Diversity-Wipro, 2011). Dr. Reddy's conducted its first ever Women professional meet on Oct 14, 2011 at Hyderabad, a platform to discuss the career issues of women (Sustainability-Dr Reddy's, 2010).

### Culture, disabled and LGBT

Infosys has a program 'Employee Resource Groups' which highlights and educates employees about cultural values and ethos. The program employs innovative approaches and communication campaigns channeled through live events, intranet, corporate TV channel and posters. Further they celebrate 'World disability day' on all their campuses and conduct awareness programs and exclusive events to create awareness and foster inclusion of Gays and lesbians (Infosys-Diversity, 2012).

### Age

Taking into consideration the increasing generational diversity esp. in IT/BPO sector, firms are designing programs to promote connect and harmony among various age groups. At IBM for instance, employees go through several learning and sensitization programs with real life scenarios to help employees understand and respect the thinking of others. In line with learning's, some companies are taking it forward and working towards what is called generational competitiveness, which includes mentoring and story telling by the older generations and reverse mentoring and sharing social media tips by Gen-Y (Bhattacharya, 2012).

Sodexo India also implements mandatory diversity training, work-life effectiveness programs, formal and web-based mentoring and employee network groups. It was recognized at the Asia's Best Employer Brand Awards 2012 in July 2012, in the category of Diversity Impact (Sodexo wins Diversity, 2012).

### Conclusion

Indian companies are quick to realize and value diversity and are continuously focused on creating a truly inclusive workplace to accommodate labor from diverse background. The Indian organizations are found to be making mark on the issue of respecting diversity and are going much beyond lip-service or tokenism by reviewing their HR practices to derive the maximum from their workforce. They are managing and

valuing the diversity by both the soft and hard approaches of HR and various programmes, policies and strategies are adopted to leverage diversity, with major concentration on women and people with disability.

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