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# A Study on the Role of HR Managers in Handling a Diverse Workforce

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** *The author in this paper aims to show the significant impact of a diverse workforce on the results of the company. The workplace is becoming increasingly more global. Research has shown that diversity translates into a competitive advantage for companies who embrace it. It also allows those companies to find and leverage untapped opportunities. However, due to the increase in diversified workforce in some or the other way, people are facing lot many problems at the workplace. The diversified workforce may experience less cooperation from some of their colleagues at work, but in order to achieve organization goals, it is imperative for the organization to be effective in terms of its functioning, HR managers have a critical part to play in this scenario, to manage effectively, bridge differences and use difference to one's advantage.*

**Research Implications:** *This paper provides a preliminary understanding of the role of HR managers in managing workforce diversity, its significance and scope. It also highlights ways how HR can manage the diversified workforce to bring quality results. Hence, future research should use alternative methods, to verify the findings and methods of the current research.*

**Originality/Value:** *The paper highlights the significance and importance of workforce diversity and the competitive advantage it brings to the company. Further it also lays down suggestions to enhance the workplace diversity in a company.*

**Keywords:** *Workforce diversity, competitive advantage, globalization, productivity, profit.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Workforce diversity means similarities and differences among employees in terms of age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. No two humans are alike. People are different in not only gender, culture, race, social and psychological characteristics but also in their perspectives and prejudices. Society had discriminated on these aspects for centuries. Diversity makes the work force heterogeneous. In current scenario, employing diversified workforce is a necessity for every

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organization but to manage such diversified workforce is also a big challenge for management especially the HR. This paper critically analyses the workforce diversity and its impact on productivity of an organization. The author after examining the literature from various research papers, concluded that workforce diversity is strength for any organization and not a disadvantage. In fact, diversity is directly proportional to increase in productivity.

**(A) Workforce diversity and organizational goals:**

The world has become a global village and the world economy is increasingly becoming interdependent. Competition has become cutthroat and to survive, organizations have to hire an effective and efficient workforce that can handle such competitive environment. Employing diversified workforce is a very essence of every organization<sup>2</sup>. Human resource is an important asset of any organization. Capital and physical resources by themselves cannot improve efficiency or contribute to an increased rate of return on investment and that's how managing them becomes even more important. In the current scenario organization's that employ quality and competitive workforce regardless of their age, attitude, language, gender, religion, caste can only compete at the marketplace.

**(B) Role of HR:**

Human resource management is concerned with managing 'human aspect' of the organization in such a way that organizational objectives are achieved along with employee development and satisfaction. When the organizations employ human resource having different age, gender, perception, attitude, caste, religion, region then it will be very difficult for the management as well as for the employees to manage and adjust with that environment. To manage diversified workforce is a big challenge for any organization. Each individual is different from each other because of their different religion, educational background to which they belong, age and the perception. When different types of people in terms of thinking, perception, generation come together to work at the same place then definitely a situation may come where all these different types of people may not agree at the same point. At that point, of time it is going to affect the interpersonal relationship among people. Workforce diversity has an impact on employees working in the same organisation which in turn has an impact on the productivity of an organization. All this demands a robust HR force which can manage the situation effectively and efficiently. HR should manage the diversified workforce in such a way that people can easily work with the diversified workforce and can bring quality results altogether.

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<sup>2</sup> Stewart, T.A. (1992), "The Search for the Organisation of the Tomorrow", *Fortune*. Pp. 92-98.

**(C) Advantages of a diversified workforce:**

An organization's success and competitiveness depend upon its ability to embrace diversity and realize the benefits. When organizations actively assess their handling of workplace diversity issues, develop and implement diversity plans, several benefits are reported such as:

1. Increase in innovation and productivity created from world class culture that can outperform the competition.
2. It is seen that a multicultural organization is better suited to serve a diverse external clientele in a more increasingly global market
3. In research-oriented and hi-tech industries, the broad base of talents generated by a gender-and ethnic diverse organization becomes a priceless advantage. It is a known fact that Creativity thrives on diversity.
4. Multicultural organizations are found to be better at problem solving, have better ability to extract expanded meanings, and are more likely to display multiple perspectives and interpretations in dealing with complex issues.
5. Organizations employing a diverse workforce often supply a greater variety of solutions to problems in service, sourcing, and allocation of resources.
6. Employees from diverse backgrounds bring individual talents and experiences in suggesting ideas that are flexible in adapting to fluctuating markets and customer demands.
7. A diverse collection of skills and experiences (e.g. languages, cultural understanding) allows a company to provide service to customers on a global basis.
8. A diverse workforce that feels comfortable communicating varying points of view provides a larger pool of ideas and experiences.

**(D) Impact of diverse workforce on productivity:**

Due to the increased rate of globalization, privatization and liberalization we can view the change at our workplace also, gone were the days where the people of same age, same professional qualification, same experience and same religion come together to work in an organization. Now day's females are also working in the equal ratio with males. Therefore, the researcher is focusing over these critical aspects of diversified workforce that affects the working of employees. Next aspect that affects the work climate is language. People may speak different languages at workplace because of different geographical region to which they belong. Due to which the people may find some problem. Employees coming from various

geographical regions with their different mindset create contradiction among employees. Gender discrimination is also a major problem at Indian workplace. Cordial interpersonal relationship among the employees is one of the major ingredients for smooth functioning of an organization. Organization is a network of people who work together to achieve some common objective and if this network has some loopholes then it would be very difficult for any organization to achieve those objectives effectively<sup>3</sup>. On the basis of above statement, researcher has prepared the following model.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To study the new role of HR Managers
2. To highlight role of HR Managers in managing a diverse workforce.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

**Kailash (2000)**<sup>4</sup> In the research paper writes that the HR managers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has a very challenging task to accomplish as changes are taking place in business environments, global competition is increasing, problem of downsizing workforce, technological advances, are going around. Social-cultural and workplace environments are facing a dynamic shift. The author noted that issues and priorities must be carefully reviewed and explored by HR managers if they want themselves to be a strategic partner in the organizational growth and development.

**Ashok Chanda Dec (2006)**<sup>5</sup> In this article the author says that workforce diversity is a hot and burning issue in every organization of current scenario. Every human resource manager has to take care in managing this diversity and finally he concluded that there is a lack of awareness towards diversity management approach, the manager doesn't have sufficient knowledge and competency to manage diversified workforce.

**Emiko Magoshi a, et. all (2008)**<sup>6</sup> In this paper the authors said that diversity management is an important issue in current scenario due to increasing globalization. In order to make these diversified employees as competitive resources the organizations have to manage them effectively. Further the authors have concluded by saying that if the organizations will focus

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<sup>3</sup> Sharbari Saha, Dewpha Mukherjee Patra, (2008) "Cross-cultural Issues Intricacies and Ignorance" HRM Review ICFAI University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Kailash B. L. Srivastava, (April, 2000) "Rethinking HR: Role of HR Professionals in a Changing Business Environment" Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 35, No. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ashok Chanda, (Dec 2006) "Driving Diversity Management in India: HR's Alienation" HRD News Letter Issue 9.

<sup>6</sup> Emiko Magoshi a, Eunmi Chang, "Diversity management and the effects on employees' organizational commitment: Evidence from Japan and Korea" (2008).

over managing the diversified employees then the employees will become more committed.

**Asmita Jha (2009)**<sup>7</sup> In this article the author said that the most important asset of any organization is diversified workforce because the diversified workforce is good at problem solving as they provide different and creative ideas and gives competitive advantage to the organization. Further the author focused over making the workforce happier by proper understanding of the expectations and needs of everyone.

## **II. SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE**

It is through the combined and concerted efforts of people that monetary or material resources are harnessed to achieve organizational goals. But these attitudes, efforts and skills have to be sharpened from time to time to optimize the effectiveness of human resources and to enable them to meet greater challenges<sup>8</sup>. Without employees, the organization cannot move an inch. Therefore, the management of this resource is also an important issue.

### **Limitations of the study:**

The study is based only on secondary data from books, journals, newspaper articles, websites etc which may work as a limitation of the study.

## **III. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS**

After critically examining the literature and various research papers from different authors related with workforce diversity and its impact on productivity, it has been found that: An organization's major objective is to earn profit and to enhance its productivity, no doubt that almost all the authors are saying that employing diversified workforce is the very essence in today's scenario but to manage such a diversified workforce is a big challenge in front of the management<sup>9</sup>. Hiring diversified workforce will definitely leads to improved productivity, but may prove to disaster if not managed properly because not only the management but employees are also feeling some problems like language problem (which is acceptable and is not due to thoughts of the employees), attitude clashes, and difference in perceptions, which is directly related to human behavior which ultimately affects the productivity of any organization. However, this problem can be solved by adopting various policies like:

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<sup>7</sup> Asmita Jha, (2009) "Need for Cross- Cultural Management" HRM Review ICFAI University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor H. Cox, (Aug1991) "Managing cultural diversity: implications for organizational competitiveness" The Academy of Management Executive Vol.5 No.3 pp.45-56.

<sup>9</sup> Janice R.W. Joplin and Catherine S. Daus (Aug 1997) "Challenges of leading a diverse workforce" The Academy of Management Executive Vol.11 No.3.

1. Encouraging the use of common language in the organization among the employees.
2. By conducting various motivational and mentorship programs.
3. By keeping the channels of communication open among the employees and employers.
4. By encouraging employee participation.
5. Further one should accept the fact it is not the matter of culture in fact it is the matter of quality. Therefore, for improving productivity, quality has to be maintained and not thrown out.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION:**

Managing workplace diversity is the need of the hour. Organizations are economic institutions which can only survive by competing in this cutthroat competition world by increasing their share of profits. There are many benefits that stem from a diversified employee portfolio; however, the management of such diversified workforce is the only matter of concern. Organizations can bring multifold financial success by making use of a diverse workforce, difference is to be admired and not the other way round. Although, it will be more of a challenge at first, but in the near future, it will surely reap the benefit of having a diverse workforce creating value for the organization.

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