

MANAGING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN INDIA

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to explain the reasons for the diversity in workforce and how this diversity can be advantageous to a business firm. Managing and using diversity is a herculean task but it is also true that before finding solution to any problem it is very important to ascertain the real reasons behind it. The concept of managing diversity initially starts from the school level where the children from the different backgrounds study together. There are different forms of diversity and each should be handled with different approach and at granular level.

This paper covers all the vital issues of the workforce diversity and possible solutions to it. Better the management of workforce diversity better will be the organisation performance. Management of diversity will not only benefit the company but also to the Nation.

The secondary data has been collected from various books of reputed authors, online journals, websites and blogs.

KEYWORDS:

DIVERSITY, MANAGING DIVERSITY, ORGANISATION.

INTRODUCTION

India is a land with variety of flora and fauna. It has various cultures, religions, communities and rituals. Here, People are communised on the basis of their religion such as Sikh, Christian, Muslim and Hindu. Every religion has its own beliefs and rituals, people from different religions and cultures have divergent thoughts. Differences in two individuals are not just because of religion or social background but also in respect of a person's physique, emotions, mental health and language etc.

In India, there are different states and each state has its own mother tongue and culture. For example – Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Andaman & Nicobar Island has Tamil as a regional language. In southern states the languages spoken are Tamil and Telugu etc. whereas in Northern states the languages spoken are Punjabi, Kashmiri and Hindi etc.

“Workforce diversity is concerned with the similarities and differences in such characteristics as age, gender, ethnic heritage, physical abilities and disabilities, race, and sexual orientation, among the employees of organizations”

-Moorhead and Griffin

When somebody is humiliated or restricted to work on the grounds of difference in age, gender, race and caste etc. is called discrimination. Discrimination in any form makes the working environment uncongenial.

Can we think of people from different states and different backgrounds, culture to work at one place harmoniously, when the views and beliefs are different, how these different people can work as a team?

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The answer to this is that “Yes, we can manage Diversity”. India is known for its unity and strength i.e. unity of so many cultures, religions and languages at one place. So when different states with different cultures can constitute as a whole country then why can't the people from these states work together. One only needs to integrate the ideas and views of these people.

MANAGING DIVERSITY means establishing a heterogeneous workforce to perform potentially in an equitable work milieu where no member (or group of members) has an advantage or disadvantage. (*T.N Chabba and B.P Singh, 2005*)

With the Globalisation, companies have expanded their businesses across the world. Commencing and Operating business in other countries is an uphill task as it requires understanding of the cultures and lifestyle of other countries. Thus it is very important that the company having people from different states and countries can help in identifying, researching, exploring the needs and preferences of different people.

Why it is important to manage diversity?

Diversity is boon for an organisation as it can help in improving workforce quality. But managing this diversity and making efficient utilisation out of it is of immense importance. Every individual has unique talent, skill, ability and thinking capability. Thus with different minds, different ideas generate and organisations can reap the benefits out of it. To design and plan the different and innovative product, programme etc. we need different opinions, thoughts, and views etc.

PROBLEM OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN INDIA

Managing Diversity is essential for the survival and growth of any firm. It is not possible to promote the product or service without identifying the needs and wants of different individuals. There are many problems because of Diversity in India and few of them are listed below:

LANGUAGE BARRIER is the enormous problem that hinders the communication between two or more individuals. Every country has its own National language and within each country there are many regional languages. It is not pragmatic to assume that each and every individual will know numerous languages. Thus, because of language the communication gap emerges which affects the working environment of firm or organization.

RELIGION AND CULTURE is another important problem that needs to be addressed. In India people from Sikh, Muslim, Christian and Hindu etc. communities live together. Different religions have different beliefs, cultures, eating habits and dressing sense etc. and thus it becomes very difficult to make individuals work as a team harmoniously. An individual belonging to a particular religion tries to befriend only those who are of his religion which causes intricacy in uniting the people of different religion. The conflict, because of any reason might affect the functioning of the company. Any incident of fight between Hindu and Sikh in Punjab will automatically affect the relationship between Hindu and Sikh of Delhi region.

GENDER DISCRIMINATION is not a new concept. Discrimination on the basis of gender was there even before the independence of the Nation. Women have always been considered as a weak sex. Men do not want their ego to be hurt that women can perform much better than them. Many women have good business skills but they do not want to work with male workers because there is a sense of insecurity among women in working with men. There is no encouragement and appreciation from male dominant society to women. Instead, Men think that women have taken up their jobs because of which unemployment among the men has increased. Glass ceiling is one of the major problems that women face in a company, Women are equally talented but because of the gender discrimination they are not able to show up their skills efficiently.

Also the Homosexuals, bisexuals, gays, lesbians are not considered as a part of society. People hesitate in talking to them and there is no place for them in service sector and thus we are losing some great talents.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND is another problem that affects the relationship of two individuals. Everyone tries proving himself superior to others and social economic background plays an important role in it. An individual from an elite family thinks of luxury and an individual from lower income group thinks of fulfilling his basic needs. A more educated individual tries to convince and impose his ideas

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on others. This divergent thinking and behaviour may raise the feeling of disgust and competition among individuals. When individuals start working for their own interest to show themselves as superior then they might neglect the interest of the organisation.

CASTE SYSTEM has been there in our country before independence and it still prevails in our country. Discrimination on the basis of the caste doesn't allow talented and ambitious youth to contribute their ideas and skills towards the betterment of nation. Because of the reservation given to SC/ST/OBC, other people have developed hatered temperament towards them. People do not even talk properly if they get to know that a person belongs to lower caste. There is resentment from other category people. Employees who are recruited through reservation face discrimination from others and hence their skills are not utilized efficiently. In fact some people feel that physically handicapped individuals are unfit for working in an organisation. Labour turnover and absenteeism are the consequences of the discrimination that an individual faces.

INDIVIDUALISTIC VIEW – In every country there are different views and beliefs. Like in USA people are more concerned about their individualistic growth rather than family. They give less importance to family and give supreme importance to themselves, but in India, Family is given supreme importance. All the decisions are taken while keeping the family in confidence.

The above reasons were major but there are more minor reasons that make management of diversity difficult.

SOLUTION TO MANAGING DIVERSITY

Human resource department should be there in each firm as per the size of the firm. If the firm is very large then each department should have a Human resource manager. HR managers can better understand the issues and resolve conflicts among the individuals as they are professionals in this area. HR manager should explicate the consequences of any offensive or unacceptable behaviour. Employees should be able to contact the HR manager whenever they perceive any difficulty in performing their job.

Training is the best solution for managing diversity in an organisation. Whenever a new employee joins the firm, a training session/lecture session should be held in which all the rules and the regulations of the company should be intimated to him/her.

When the IT companies like IGATE, HCL etc. recruit students through campus placement they keep a training session for all new comers. In such sessions they are provided opportunity to interact with individuals of another background to understand their culture and views.

In initial years of appointment, the HR manager should make ensure that each individual is comfortable with the other individual and there is no resentment of any kind among the employees.

Equal opportunity should be provided to all employees. There shouldn't be discrimination on any basis. Each individual should be given opportunity to lead the group. It will help the HR manager to know the strength and weakness of each individual. Which work is more suitable for an individual can be decided only after analysing his/her performance in previous assigned tasks. Women shall be given equal opportunity as to men. It is very important that the employees are taught to respect each other irrespective of gender.

Equitable remuneration policy should be followed. There shall be no discrimination in payment of wages. Also, bonus and incentives should be paid only to those who perform well so that it can motivate others to work hard.

Common language system should be followed so that problem of communication gap could be minimised. Nowadays usage of English language for official purpose is increasing. Therefore, English should be kept as the medium of communication.

Games, competition and holiday trips etc. should be organised so that employees can spend more time with each other and understand each other well. Various activities should be organised from time to time so that the working environment do not remain enervated.

Annual functions, seminars etc. shall be organised at national and international level so that employees and managers get an opportunity to communicate and learn from each other. Many organisations hold awards distribution ceremony to appreciate the employees for their performance on yearly basis. Recently in March 2014 'Media agility' company organised annual function in Gurgaon and distributed awards to its employees for working as "good team member". It is true that if the team work is appreciated then the employees will be motivated to work in a group.

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It is not impossible to manage diversity effectively. It involves little time and cost in training employees to work together with concord. But such cost fades away when positive and good results are harvested.

CONCLUSION

Variety is the spice of life. India is a land of talented and skilled people but this talent is crumbled across the country and has become unproductive. Only divergent thinking can lead to generation of innovative ideas. To expand business one needs to research on the different cultures, lifestyles and food habits etc. but mere research will not help unless a company works with individuals from different backgrounds. After research, when plan is actually implemented many problems come on the way. To grapple with uninvited problems we need to have variety of ideas which can only be provided by individuals belonging to different age, gender, caste, religion and culture etc. A male will always think like a male and not like a woman. So it is important for an organization to recruit diverse workforce in order to attain the efficacious results.

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