Diversity Management at Workplace: Aspects, Challenges, and Strategies

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"Strength lies in differences, not in similarities." – Steven R. Covey

Abstract: Traditionally, diversity was regarded as gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, disability or employment equity. It was treated as meeting certain quotas in employee race or gender categories. But in today's world, diversity encompasses a wider range of differences and similarities in the workplace. It includes different work styles, religion, clothing, sexual orientation, generation gaps, family status, language, opinions etc. When defined precisely, diversity is a universal phenomenon which can be applied to any set of differences, similarities or challenges in the midst of any collective mixture. It is widely regarded as a dynamic contributor to the organization's vision and a key business imperative which needs to be incorporated into every global organization's strategy. A diverse workforce helps heterogeneous groups to deliver better solutions by evaluating critically, quality products and services and lead to increased productivity and satisfied customers. Barriers do exist, but the organizations need to take up the challenges and deal with them appropriately. Successful diversity management helps to unleash the rich and diverse potential of an entire workforce. This study basically reflects the diversity management strategies implemented by four top global companies viz., Google, Infosys, IBM, and Deloitte. The data used for the study is primarily secondary data. Hence, this paper focuses on the aspects of diversity, its challenges and diversity and inclusive policies implemented by select four global companies. The paper is concluded with the suggestions regarding the strategies that can be implemented to manage diversity in the global companies for sustaining and enhancing the performance.

Keywords: Diversity management, Aspects, Challenges, strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, diversity has become a key business priority as the world economy has become globalized since the 1990s and organizations are operating in more than hundred countries with lakhs of employees. Globalization requires more interaction among people from diverse backgrounds and a diverse workforce is a reflection of a changing world and marketplace. People no longer live and work in an insular environment; they are now part of a worldwide economy competing within a global framework. For this reason, profit and non-profit organizations need to become more diversified to remain competitive in the global market.

Meaning of diversity

Workplace Diversity refers to the similarities and differences between individuals accounting for all aspects of one's personality and individual identity in an organization. It means understanding that each individual is

unique, recognizing the individual differences and exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. The inclusion of diverse individuals fosters a rich exchange of new ideas among employees and helps an organization leverage the unique character of its workforce.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management, diversity means valuing the characteristics that make a person unique, such as age, ethnicity, education level and family background. Diversity can be defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, and valuing differences among people with respect to age, class, race, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, etc. (Esty et al. 1995).

Aspects of Diversity

The aspects of diversity typically include, but are not limited to the following: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, age, colour, national origin, geographic background, language, lifestyle, life experiences, organization function and level, physical characteristics, religion and spirituality, sexual orientation, veteran status, greater adaptability and flexibility in a rapidly changing marketplace etc.. In the most basic of terms *Diversity is equal Revenue*.
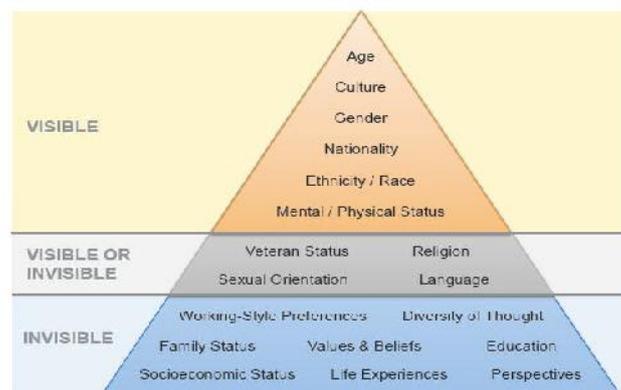
Fig 1: Bersin by Deloitte expansive definition of diversity

Basically, companies are diverse because of supplier diversity, CEOs actively engaged in diversity efforts, the technology used as a diversity tool to facilitate diversity and mentoring programs, Affinity groups/ business resource groups for workers that fit into a variety of categories and Flexible working environment.

Respecting individual differences will benefit the workplace by creating a competitive edge and increasing work productivity. For a wide assortment of employees to function effectively as an organization, human resource professionals need to deal effectively with issues such as communication, adaptability, and change. Managing diversity is a comprehensive managerial process and is a significant organizational challenge. Hence, maximizing and capitalizing on workplace diversity is an important issue for management in the present economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is a descriptive study and secondary sources are used to understand the diversity challenges, diversity and inclusion policies in select four global companies viz., Google, Infosys, IBM and Deloitte and suggest strategies accordingly.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study and analyse diversity and inclusive policies implemented by four top global companies viz., Google, Infosys, IBM and Deloitte.
2. To study the benefits and challenges of diversity management
3. To suggest the strategies that can be implemented by the global companies for sustaining and enhancing the performance.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to SHRM survey 1995, companies need to embrace diversity and look for ways to become inclusive organizations because diversity has the potential to yield greater work productivity and competitive advantages. Results indicated that as long as the team members had similar ability levels, the heterogeneous teams were more creative than the homogeneous ones (Cox & Blake, 1991). Stephen Butler, the co-chair of the Business-Higher Education Forum, believes diversity is an invaluable competitive asset (Robinson 2002). Companies can succeed at diversity if the initiative to create, manage and value the diverse workforce has the full support of the top management (Hayes, 1999; Jack- son et al., 1992). Simlin (2006) found that as the age increases, the perception of diversity openness decreases, and hence it is important to orient the older employees also about the presence and need of diversity openness in organizations through training, workshops, group discussions, and so on. Managing diversity is a key component of effective people management in the workplace (Black Enterprise 2001).

According to Deloitte report 2017, Women are still largely under-represented on corporate boards globally, despite continued efforts to improve boardroom gender diversity. Globally, women now occupy 15% of all board seats, up from 12% in 2015. Women hold only 4 percent of CEO and board chair positions globally. According to Deloitte's 2017 Global Human Capital Trends report, two-thirds of executives rate diversity and inclusion as an important issue (and that number is up from 59% in 2014). Equally important, the same report notes that 78% of respondents believe diversity and inclusion is a competitive advantage.

2.1 CASE STUDIES OF MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

Four Multinational companies viz. International Business Machines, Infosys, Deloitte and Google's diversity and inclusive policies are presented below:

1. INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES (IBM)

IBM, an American multinational technology company, is the result of the merger of three companies Global Technology Services, Global Business Services, Software and Systems Hardware and global Financing headquartered in Armonk, New York, United States and founded on June 16, 1911. In 2016, IBM employed around 380,000 people, not including less-than-wholly owned subsidiary employees or complementary employees. IBM has always been a leader in diversity management. IBM diversity and inclusion policies focus on the advancement of women, people with disability, cultural diversity, generation diversity and lesbian gay bisexual transgender. IBM's first written equal opportunity policy called for equity in hiring "regardless of race, colour, or creed was signed in 1953. IBM recognizes the unique value and skills every individual brings to the workplace and believes that Innovation comes from seeking out and inspiring diversity in all its dimensions. Rather than attempt to eliminate discrimination by deliberately ignoring differences among employees, in 1995, IBM commissioned eight Executive Task Forces - Asian, Black, Hispanic, Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT), Men, Native American, People with Disabilities, and Women that became a cornerstone of IBM's HR strategy.

IBM was ranked 1 by Diversity Inc in 2015. However, it does not appear in the list of 2017. IBM was regarded by Forbes survey 2017 as 8th World's Best Employers. The factors that can be attributed are the following:

⟩ IBM creates an environment that visibly encourages and values the contributions and differences of employees from various backgrounds.

⟩ More than 24 percent of IBM's global executive population is made up of women. It also Mentors women globally via Web-based mentoring, job shadowing, and group mentoring.

⟩ Encourages women workforce: About two-thirds of IBM's women executives across the world are working mothers, demonstrating that women can pursue a career and motherhood at the company.

⟩ In IBM, 72 Diversity councils, groups of employees across diverse constituencies, were created specifically to address local or unique diversity issues.

⟩ The task forces support and maximize the productivity of the partnership, influence the buying decisions, and develop a relationship with external organizations.

⟩ It increases employee awareness and also management sensitivity to use optimally diverse workforce.

⟩ IBM's strong support from company leaders and maximum Employee engagement.

⟩ Management practices are integrated and aligned with the effort, and a strong and well-articulated business case for action.

⟩ IBM has more than 266 Business Resource Groups chapters registered in 46 countries supporting 13 constituencies or focus areas: Asian, Black, Cross-cultural, Cross-generational, Hispanics, LGBT, Men, Native Americans, New hires, People with disabilities, Veterans, Women, Work/life integration.

Still, IBM needs to overcome the following Diversity issues in the workplace to sustain and enhance their performance:

⟩ Low level of diversity in the senior ranks of the company

⟩ Untapped talent pool especially pertaining to talented minorities

⟩ Limited minority representation in areas such as computer sciences and engineering

2. INFOSYS

Infosys is the first Indian IT company founded in 1981 (with currently 2,00,364 employees) to set up a dedicated office for diversity and inclusion. Infosys values diversity and inclusion and is committed to the principles of equal employment opportunity. Global employee count stands at 1,94,044 as on March 31, 2016, and covers over 129 nationalities with 35.6% women employees.

They comply with all applicable laws prohibiting discrimination or harassment against any applicant or employee that includes, without limitation, discrimination based on age, race, colour, gender, national origin, religion, creed, disability, covered veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, marital status, citizenship status, ancestry, amnesty, and any other personal characteristic protected by applicable law. This policy applies to all personnel actions, including but not limited to recruitment, hiring, placement, promotion, transfer, separation, compensation, benefits, training, and education. Many resource groups and initiatives were created to offer equal opportunities to our employees from 34 countries.

The disability inclusion initiative (physical disability, visual, speech and hearing impairment and cerebral palsy) is an integral part of the Diversity & Inclusion Policy and comprises the following elements:

1. Policies and guidelines:

⟩ Focuses on disability and aims to work towards creating an accessible and inclusive workplace

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〕 Special Loan policy for employees with special abilities working in India location to purchase assistive devices

〕 A Practice Guideline for building an inclusive workplace.

2. Accessibility for all:

〕 Providing an accessible workplace both in terms of physical (infrastructure) and digital communication.

〕 Reasonable Accommodations.

〕 The employees with orthopaedic disabilities and hearing impairment are placed in all roles. Employees with visual impairment are mostly placed in support functions and business roles.

3. Communication/Education:

〕 These include awareness sessions on 'Disability in the Workplace', promoting inspiring stories of employees with disability, information booklets; celebrating International Day for Persons with Disability to laud accomplishments of persons with disability and efforts to build a disability-friendly ecosystem.

〕 Internal social media campaigns to promote learning on inclusion at the workplace and sensitize employees on aspects of disability inclusion at the workplace.

4. Employee Resource Group:

〕 Infyability is an Employee Resource Group (ERG) for Infosys employees with disability. Some of the employee's groups created are Infosys Women's Inclusivity Network (IWIN), Infosys Gay Lesbian Employees and You (IGLU), Infosys Multicultural ERG (IMG).

5. Collaboration:

〕 With Business Disability International (BDI), a unique global business consortium.

Indians comprise 89% of the employees, 3.8% Asia Pacific employees, 42.8% Americans and 2.9% Europe, Middle-East and Africa employees. Most of the employees work as full-time, permanent employees. (Source: https://www.infosys.com/investors/reports-filings/annual-report/annual/Documents/ AR-2016/enhancing-employee.html).

As listed by Forbes 2017, Infosys is ranked 46 among Top Multinational Performers. Some of the factors that are attributed can be:

〕 Clear, transparent diversity and inclusive policy

〕 35.6% women employees

〕 Employee resource groups representing diverse backgrounds, affinities and skills facilitate community participation, networking, cultural enrichment and support, based on gender, affinity, ability and sexual orientation

〕 They recognize the right to freedom of association through collective bargaining agreements in accordance with the laws of the land

〕 Believe that providing a flexible work culture helps retain talent and keeps employees motivated and engaged

〕 Committed to providing a work environment that is free from discrimination and harassment for all our employees

〕 The Company is an equal opportunity employer and makes employment decisions based on merit and business needs.

However, experts unanimously say that the number mainly reflects women in the junior- to middle-level positions, and there are very few woman leaders in the industry. Infosys has to still diversify the workforce and have more effective diversity strategies to optimally use its diverse workforce and perform still better to achieve good position/rank.

3. DELOITTE

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, commonly referred to as Deloitte, is a UK-incorporated multinational professional services network founded in 1845 in London Presently its headquarters are located in New York City. Deloitte is one of the largest professional services firms and is included in the 'big four' along with Price Waterhouse Coopers, Ernst & Young and KPMG.

Deloitte ranked first out of the big four accounting firms in 2017. It is ranked 12 by Diversity Inc in 2017. Deloitte employed 263,900 members of staff globally in 2016. Diversity and inclusion are core parts of Deloitte's network's business strategy and one of the key values. Deloitte believes in fostering an inclusive culture and unleashes the power of the diversity. Gender and Diversity management at Deloitte addresses the needs of a diverse workforce in regards to gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, ethnicity and national origin by offering programs to that specifically support these groups both internally and externally.

Deloitte has created a national Diversity council which meets ten times a year to set goals and assesses the progress of current policies and practices at the firm. One of Deloitte's most recognized and progressive steps towards diversity management have been the appointment of their Chief Diversity Officer. Some key diversity practices within the firm include; the creation of people networks, diversity calendar, the Diversity Matters blog, their Diversity Roundtable, a bias awareness toolkit as well as corporate sponsorship and partnerships. Deloitte's people networks aim to connect like-minded people within the firm to act as mentors and support networks. The creation of the Diversity Calendar was a part of a firm-wide communications campaign to communicate the diversity visions and goals for the year. For Women: Deloitte supports female employees through Women's Initiative Network (Win), for Parents: Deloitte's parental leave guide, for those with Disabilities: Deloitte is partnered with the Progress Place community organization and for Aboriginals: Deloitte is a member of the Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council. Deloitte has created a guidebook for employers on hiring immigrants.

Deloitte is recognized as best management consulting firm and 295 America's Best Employers by Forbes survey 2017. Deloitte still need to go a long way in diversity management as men still make up 80% of the pool of senior employees. Presently Deloitte is planning to phase out groups like the Women's Initiative (WIN) and LGBT group Globe and replace them with "inclusion councils" that include people who used to be a part of single-identity groups. They also will include white men.

4.GOOGLE

Google LLC is an American multinational technology company that specializes in Internet-related services and products founded on 4 September 1998, Menlo Park, California, United States. In 2016, the American multinational internet company, headquartered in Mountain View, California, had 72,053 full-time employees. The diversity of employees comprises 69% percent of its employees' male, while 31% are female, Women hold 24% of leadership positions in the company and 19% of Google's technical roles occupied by women. That is Women hold one in four leadership roles at the company. 59% of Google employees are white, while 32% are Asian, 3% are Hispanic, and 2% are black. 70% percent of Google leadership roles and 57% of tech positions are held by white employees. (Source: http://time.com/4391031/google-diversity-statistics-2016/).

Google diversity and inclusion policies include:

⟩ Empowering Googlers to address unconscious bias and continue to invest in unbiasing training.

⟩ Providing benefits that serve the diverse needs of Googlers

⟩ Ensuring equity in people processes

⟩ Encouraging Googlers to celebrate diversity and inclusion

Google is ranked 2 among World's Most Valuable Brands and ranked 2 as America's Best Employers. Google's latest diversity statistics reveal the company is making steady but slow progress towards its goal of a more inclusive workplace, though white males still account for the overwhelming majority of its employees. It has to improve its diversity statistics.

2.2 BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY

An organization's success and competitiveness depend upon its ability to embrace diversity and realize the benefits. The research reveals following benefits:

⟩ McKinsey's research shows that gender-diverse companies are 15% more likely to outperform their peers and ethnically-diverse companies are 35% more likely to do the same.

⟩ Catalyst research shows that companies with more women on the board statistically outperform their peers over a long period of time. Studies also suggested that top management teams with a high representation of women had better financial performance than teams with fewer women.

⟩ Deloitte Australia research shows that inclusive teams outperform their peers by 80% in team-based assessments.

⟩ Companies reporting highest levels of racial diversity in their organizations bring in nearly 15 times more sales revenue than those with lowest levels of racial diversity. (American Sociological Review)

⟩ 57% of employees think their companies should be more diverse. (Glassdoor)

⟩ Research by Cedric Herring at the University of Chicago (one of the most exhaustive studies) proved that "Diversity yields superior outcomes over homogeneity because progress and innovation depend on less on lone thinkers with high intelligence than on diverse groups working together and capitalizing on their individuality." His statistical research found that diverse teams drive 6% greater revenue, 15% more customer wins, and create the significantly higher market share. These teams work better together, innovate more, and come up with superior customer solutions.

⟩ Studies also stated that companies with diversity practices collectively generated 18% greater productivity than U.S economy overall.

III CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Taking full advantage of the benefits of diversity in the workplace is not without its challenges. The challenges are:

⟩ **Communication** - 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.

⟩ **Resistance to change** - There are always employees who will refuse to accept the fact that the social and cultural makeup of their workplace is changing. If the company doesn't handle opposition properly, workplace diversity initiatives may not provide the intended benefits to the company.

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⟩ **Increased Tension:** People from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds can have very different views concerning lifestyle, religion, and politics that can lead to tension and conflict when these concepts are introduced into a work environment.

⟩ **Learning Curve:** Businesses that have difficulty adapting to a more diverse culture may require diversity training.

⟩ **Implementation of diversity in the workplace policies** - This can be the overriding challenge to all diversity advocates. Armed with the results of employee assessments and research data, they must build and implement a customized strategy to maximize the effects of diversity in the workplace for their particular organization.

⟩ **Fairness:** One of the key challenges in dealing with diversity is ensuring each worker is treated fairly. This does not mean we can treat everyone the same, as different individuals have different needs.

⟩ **Inclusion:** Inclusion of all employees is often a challenging part of diversity management. People often segregate themselves into groups in which they are comfortable. It is the job of the manager to help workers integrate so that the company and its individuals profit through associations.

⟩ **Internal Obstacles**

⟩ Difficulty in changing the existing culture of the organization

⟩ Lack of internal expertise or experience

⟩ Lack of understanding of the business benefits of a diverse workforce

⟩ Difficulty in quantifying the benefit to sustain investment

⟩ **External Obstacles**

⟩ Legal restrictions on holding sensitive data

⟩ Historic gaps in anti-discrimination legislation

⟩ Differences in national social attitudes and cultural values

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Business may need to build a diverse organization —one that is inclusive of varying groups and lifestyles, promoting an attitude of acceptance internally to the employees and externally as a brand. Global companies need to implement effective diversity management strategies to enhance their effectiveness in the market.

The following guidelines can be implemented in the global organizations to increase the impact of diversity in a positive direction.

1. Companies need to clearly **define "diversity"** and the workforce should reflect the community it serves.

2. **Be realistic in setting goals** (set short and long-term quantifiable goals), embed diversity goals in talent management and manage expectations of employees. Should Link diversity goals to business goals and Engage employees as partners.

3. **Build in metrics** to measure them – Use multiple sourcing tactics and create and maintain a diverse culture. Companies need to make assessing and evaluating the diversity process an integral part of their management system by conducting a customizable employee satisfaction survey and the impact of diversity on the performance.

4. **Plan and organize resources** to achieve your goals and arrange talent acquisition to attract the best talent from a diverse pool of resources.

5. **Educate and train** the managers to take diversity initiatives. Regardless of the role or title employees need to commit to eliminating barriers in the workplace. Cross-cultural training needs to give on a regular basis by assessing the need in the organizations.

6. **Senior executives to Demonstrate leadership support** to implement it successfully. To ward off change resistance with an inclusion by involving every employee possible in formulating and executing diversity initiatives in the workplace.

7. **Make diversity a part of branding** and let the world know that the company embraces and welcomes all.

The following strategies can be implemented to optimally utilize the diverse workforce.

- **Integrating diversity and inclusion strategies** with all the management practices like recruitment, performance management, leadership assessment, and training. For example, Building diversity that is Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines into the hiring process.

- **Creating an internal and externally visible scorecard** to measure progress in all areas. Such scorecards include metrics for recruiting, promotion rates, compensation levels, participation in coaching programs, turnover, participation in ERGs, supplier diversity, and much more and assess their impact on the performance and productivity of the organization.

- **Policy Review:** To embrace a more diverse workplace, companies must review policies on holidays, time off and employee communication.

- **Foster an attitude of openness** in an organization by encouraging employees to express their ideas and opinions and attribute a sense of equal value to all.

- **Creating a top-level focus and strategy** at the CEO/COO/CHRO level and promote diversity in leadership positions. Creating behavioural standards, diversity metrics, and holding leaders accountable for results.

- **To build tools and training** to remove bias, measure diversity openly, and make sure everyone is evaluated based on performance and results, not position or tenure. Make the process more transparent, data-driven, and fair. Hold quarterly training for the entire staff on the benefits of diversity in the workplace.

- **Respect:** Mandate that all workers treat their peers respectfully and announce that any rude behaviour will subject the offender to disciplinary measures. Conduct staff meetings to address how employees should show respect for their fellow workers. Encourage discussions at these meetings on how the company can better manage workplace diversity.

- **Promote collaboration** between diverse individuals so the participants can learn to relate to one another.

- **Translate differences into uniqueness.** More multi-culturalism that attempts to spread a broad understanding of many cultures/ lifestyle, or which helps diverse people get grounded in their own diverse cultures, not as superior to others, but as intensely valid and their own.

- **Connect differences to create synergy** to deal with strengths and weaknesses and use differences to increase understanding of complex issues and resolve the conflict for social benefit.

- **Communicate the Diversity Plan:** Once the diversity plan is in place, it is to be communicated to its desired marketplace.

- **Establish Open Door Policy**: Inform the employees that the top management is available to discuss diversity and workplace issues, productivity concerns and relevant issues. Allowing employees to express their concerns when they need to will result in happier, more productive individuals.

Hence, the organisations need to recognise the value of differences by developing Diversity Competence in the four areas viz: **Awareness**: Recognize differences and similarities, **Knowledge:** Learn factual information about other cultures and groups with different backgrounds, **Skills:** Take personal responsibility to respond to difference and **Action or Behaviour**: Develop a mentoring relationship with someone from a different culture or identity group.

Building a diverse organization requires a significant amount of effort and commitment. Leaders should be prepared to put a continuous focus on diversity for the long haul and reap the benefits—both financially and ethically, by creating an organization representative of the customers it serves.

V.CONCLUSION

Sourcing and recruiting diverse candidates is not an easy task, but at the same time, it is proven to increase talent pool, performance and employees' satisfaction. It is not just enough to understand the importance of diversity but companies need to put efforts to implement it as part of their culture. Organizations should design and support an organizational culture that maximizes the benefits of diversity and use that culture to manage various groups of organizational members, project teams, business start-up teams, customer service response teams, and top management. There is no one-size-fits-all solution and hence, diversity needs to be defined for every organization and accordingly implemented.

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