An Integrated approach to Diversity Management

and inclusive culture for a Viksit Bharat@2047

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Abstract

Diversity and Inclusion are the most important dimensions of the sustainable and successful organizations. These concepts would be a game changer to transform our country into a Viksit Bharat 2047.The issues of diversity; equity and inclusion are as old as history. Ever since the humans started living together in a civilization framework, the challenges related to gender differences, inequity in rights and privileges and other minor issues started to crop up.In an increasingly male dominated societies the social norms were decided and driven according to the whims and fancies of males. The impact of this practice was so deep that we can feel it even now after so many years from the start of human civilization. Gender equality is still one of the most sought after concern for almost all the organizations world over.

However slowly and gradually the things have started to change and we can see the modern organizations being extremely sensitive and focused towards practicing nondiscrimination and equality as an integral part of the organizational DNA.In India the diversity issues are mostly restricted to the inclusion of larger proportion of women in the workforce. The diversity management ecosystem in India is still at the preliminary stage as compared to the other countries. However the things are changing as reflected from the progressive approach adopted by the companies like Infosys who are setting the benchmark in diversity Management and inclusion. The current research focuses on understanding the diversity management practices in few major companies and suggests an integrated approach and dimensions to manage and implement diversity. The general perception is that the diversity is restricted to increasing the numbers gender wise in the workforce. However it is a very narrow approach towards managing diversity. There is plenty of theories and concepts of diversity; however the real challenge lies in implementation. The present research aims to help the Managers and practitioners in the field of diversity to understand the dimensions which will create a base to establish and implement Diversity policies and systems in the organizations.

Key words-Diversity, Inclusion, Diversity Management,Viksit Bharat@2047

1. Introduction and Literature Review

Diversity is known to positively affect the performance of the firms. As per a study conducted by NASSCOM India leads the way when it comes to women in technology where the women make up 34% of the workforce. There are various compelling reasons why the increase in women employees in the workforce makes such a huge difference. Women employees have good networking skills and are better multi-taskers.They are gracious and generous in interpersonal relations. Their house management skills help them to hold the business together. On the contrary lack of diversity is known to inhibit long term growth of the firm and undermine its strategic thinking capabilities.

Ricco(2012) defines Diversity Management as an organizational approach to improve organizational performance by creating an inclusive workplace in which people's qualities and needs are handled in diverse and effective manner.

To create a culture of inclusion in an organization, a thorough audit and diagnosis of its structure, culture, systems, strategies, and practices should be undertaken. Once this is done, the change process can start to move the organization toward more inclusion. Inclusive leadership training is an important aspect of this process, but it is not enough. More often than not this also requires a revision of all management systems. (Bernardo M. Ferdman, 2014)

The approach of diversity in organizations has historically emphasized understanding and intervening in workplaces to reduce or eliminate bias and discrimination, maximizing the inclusion and contributions of individuals, increasing social justice and equity, and providing for greater organizational success. While the definitions of diversity varies, Mor Barak (2011) distinguishes three types of definitions: (a) ''narrow category-based,'' focusing on group-based dimensions typically related to discrimination (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age); (b) ''broad category-based,'' focusing on many kinds of differences or grouping such differences into larger categories (e.g., visible/invisible, deep/surface); and (c) ''definitions based on a conceptual rule,'' providing abstract conceptualizations not necessarily grounded in specific categories.

Konrad (2003) proposed four major arguments for the business case for diversity: First, the war for talents requires an increasingly diverse pool of workers; second, a diverse workforce can better understand and anticipate diverse customer needs and thus lead to an increased marketshare; third, diversity leads to a greater range of perspectives, which fosters innovation and problem solving through greater creativity; last, given the importance of cultural diversity and changing demographics, diversity management is the only right thing to do. (DIVERSITY BRANDING:A FIVE-COUNTRY COMPARISON OF CORPORATE WEBSITES, 2016)

Diversity can be of different types:

- Gender Diversity
- Linguistic Diversity
- Cultural Diversity
- Age Diversity
- Race and Ethnicity Diversity
- Disability Diversity
- Sexual Orientation Diversity

Pillars of Diversity

Organizational Culture-It is the most important foundation for implementing and managing the diversity in the organizations. An organizational culture with right integration values is crucial when it comes to implementing diversity management.

The integration values defined by Cox and Pless and Maak are as follows:

1. Recognition (made up of)

a. Emotional recognition
b. Legal and Political Recognition
c. Solidarity

2. Reciprocal Understanding

3. Standpoint Plurality and mutual enabling

4. Trust

5. Integrity

Inclusion-In general terms the inclusive organizations are diverse places where people are heard, valued and supported according to the Bain and Company report titled –the Fabric of Belonging Inclusion Framework

	Low Belongingness	High Belongingness
Low value in Uniqueness	Exclusion Individual is not treated as an organizational insider with unique value in the work group but there are other employees or groups who are insiders.	Assimilation Individual is treated as an insider in the work group when they conform to organizational/dominant culture norms and downplay uniqueness.
High Value in Uniqueness	Differentiation Individual is not treated as an organizational insider in the work group but their unique characteristics are seen as valuable and required for group/ organization success.	Inclusion Individual is treated as an insider and also allowed/encouraged to retain uniqueness within the work group.

Adapted from (Lynn M. Shore, 2011)

A atmosphere of inclusion ensures equal treatment of all social groups ,with a focus on historically marginalized groups.(Lynn M Shore,2011)

How to weave an inclusive culture?

A policy of inclusion creates lot of direct advantages for the organizations:

1. Inclusive organizations find it easy to attract talent across the demographics.
2. An inclusive environment is critical for employee retention.
3. Inclusive organizations are known to encourage higher level of innovation and creativity amongst the employees compared to non-inclusive organizations.

2. Research Objectives and Methodology

Research Questions

1. How organizations are framing and implementing Diversity and Inclusion(D&I) policy currently?
2. What needs to be changed in terms of outlook and understanding for effective implementation and ensure success of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)?
3. How to develop an integrated model to guide the framing of Diversity & Inclusion policy for organizations?

Research Objectives

1. To understand the Concept of Diversity and Inclusion and its application in the modern organizations.
2. To develop the holistic understanding of Diversity and Inclusion along with the challenges and problems.
3. To propose an integrated model of dimensions for Diversity Management to guide the development of Diversity Management Policy, processes and Systems for modern Organizations.

The literature review for the research paper was conducted from the databases of Google scholar and Elsevier Open Access documents. The research is conceptual in nature and is based on secondary research. Author has used the literature to build an integrated model for the organizations to adopt and utilize to frame their Diversity and Inclusion Policies. The articles and research papers were carefully selected based on the relevance, impact and the quality.

3. Diversity –An Overview
Diversity Management practices
Diversity is not just about increasing the number of identity groups on the payroll. It is a more holistic concept where the employees bond, contribute and bring their true self to the organizations. Where the acceptance is natural and adaptability is hassle free.
According to Gitzi and Kollen (2006) diversity management practices can be divided into following categories.
1.Work and Personal Life balance
2.Establishing network of diverse communities
3.Customized coaching and mentoring to address the underrepresented population
4.Formulating strong organization policies which handles inequality.
5.Forming cultures that facilitate diversity through training and empowerment.
6.Encouraging integration and inclusion through suitable benefits at work place.

In India the companies like Infosys shows their commitment as an inclusive workplace for the members of LGBTQIA+ Community by signing a UN LGBTI charter for Business.

Some of the DEI initiatives at Infosys are:

➢ Enhanced health insurance plan which covers partners (same sex, domestic, civil) as dependents in India.
➢ This insurance gives coverage for surrogacy, egg freezing procedures and mental health therapy.
➢ Pride month celebration in June every year to recognize the impact LGBTQIA+ people have on the world.
➢ Learning and Sensitization
➢ Infosys conducts "Ally for Change" a three part learning program which includes self-reflection exercises, personal stories and practices from across the world.
• Zomato gives a controversial period leave to all women and transgender employees facing discomfort because of menstruation.

- Tech Mahindra has various programs like Colors, mentoring tables, Role model series which gives women an opportunity to develop their careers.
- At Sanofi, an integrated global healthcare leader, D&I is emphasized across multiple stakeholders, both internal and external, Jones notes: ''Diversity and inclusion is critical not only to our employee population, but also to our patients, customers, payers and other stakeholders. We have to be effective in our ability to understand and reach our diverse customers.' (Derven, 2014)

Benefits of Diversity

- Diversity drives new innovation and ideas by promoting healthy exchange of ideas and new insights that otherwise would not occur.

- Diversity creates a strong brand image of the company.

- Diversity approach helps adapt to the customer needs more effectively.

- D&I initiatives can also improve decision-making and problem-solving within organizations.

- Research has shown that diverse teams are more likely to develop new products and services, enter new markets, and adapt to changing business environments .Diverse teams are more capable of solving complex issues using diverse perspectives, leading to better decisions. (Chinenye Gbemisola Okatta1, 2024)

- McKinsey & Company concluded that organizations with diverse workforces enjoy higher financial returns compared to industry medians. Deloitte discovered that inclusive teams are more likely to achieve or surpass financial targets.

- Embracing diversity and inclusion can help firms establish a competitive edge and achieve long-term success in a changing business climate.

- By embracing diversity and inclusion, organizations can create a more resilient and competitive workforce that is better equipped to navigate the challenges of today's business environment. (Chinenye Gbemisola Okatta1, 2024)

Diversity paradigms
Till recently the diversity initiatives are guided by the following paradigms:
1. Discrimination and Fairness paradigm
2. Access and Legitimacy paradigm
Discrimination and Fairness paradigm
The companies using this paradigm view diversity as focusing on equal opportunity, fair treatment, recruitment and compliance with equal employment opportunity requirements. The diversity progress in this paradigm is measured in terms of recruitment and retention goals. The focus is more on having diverse staff on paper rather than having any holistic orientation.
This paradigm though has been successful in increasing demographic diversity in the organizations and promoting fair treatment. However it does not count on the benefits of differences and their potential which can add high value to the organizations. Even it has been observed that the organizations start looking all the organizational problems from the lens of

Discrimination and fairness paradigm which starts creating a wrong narrative in the minds of the onlookers. Organizations should understand that not every problem is diversity related and cannot be given racial colours.

The Access and Legitimacy Paradigm

As the discrimination and fairness paradigm suffers with idealized assimilation and color and gender blind conformism, the Access and Legitimacy paradigm started being used to accept and celebrate differences. This paradigm uses the approach of matching the diverse consumer segments and the markets with the matching diverse managerial positions to gain competitive advantage and increase the sales and profitability by penetrating the segments deeper. Alternatively it can be said that the organization seems to use this paradigm to gain access and short term benefits in culturally different segments and markets without understanding the real problems and appropriate solutions which can help them to gain a strong foothold across geographies. Hiring people for international assignments as a part of this paradigm is infact akin to exploiting those people for business gains. This approach may lead to insecurity amongst the staff as they may start feeling that during bad times they will be the first to go as a part of downsizing exercise. Apart from this the staff hired under this approach will most likely feel alienated from other parts of the organization.

**Learning and Effectiveness paradigm-the new approach**

This paradigm is centred around the notion that we are here as team not because of our differences but despite of it, We value diversity not just in numbers but also respect the value it brings on the table in the form of new ideas, values and a different perspective of market, customer and strategies. It is focused on internalizing the differences and learning and growing together as an organization. It intends to increase the organizational effectiveness in true sense using the policy of inclusiveness and diversity and making it an integral part of the organizational culture. (Dan Van Knippenberg, 2004)

4. Integrated approach to diversity as a building block of successful organizations

Need for the Integrated Model and Strategy

The key challenge for HRM in modern organizations is the integrated strategy to facilitate management of Diversity and inclusion. Organizations cannot keep on adopting a tokenistic approach by adhering to the requirements of the legislation. Reshaped strategies are required to transform D&I requires redefined strategies for transformation to convery it into a great employee experience and competitive advantage.Organizations should include D&I as an integral part of the company strategy . (Christina Morfaki1, 2022)

I propose this integrated diversity management model which has the following dimensions:
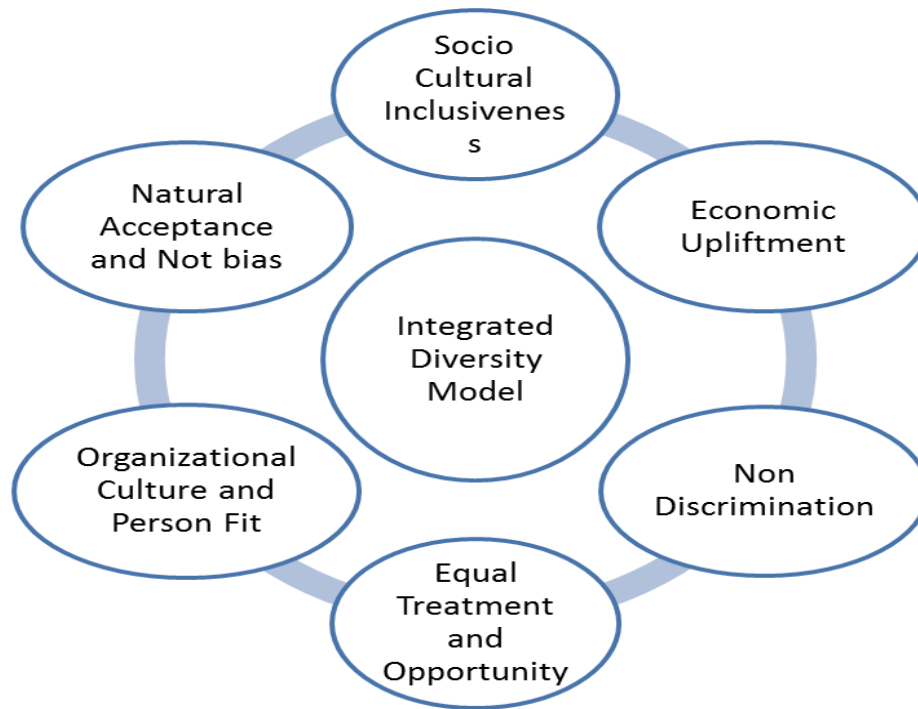
1) Socio-cultural inclusiveness
2) 2. Economic upliftment
3) Non-discrimination
4) Equal treatment and opportunity
5) Organizational culture and person fit
6) Natural acceptance and not-bias

- The social cultural inclusiveness would essentially mean that there is an assimilation of social structures and cultural ethos when it comes to the composition of the employees in the organizations.

Organizations should promote socio cultural inclusiveness in the organizations. It should be one of the dimensions in the Diversity and Inclusion Policy besides being an integral part of the HR policies, processes and systems within the organization.

Some of the suggestions for application of Socio Cultural Inclusiveness are:

(a)Review and making amendments to the law and drafting legislations that removes discrimination.

(b) Establish public policies covering health. Education, employment, housing, poverty reduction, food security and access to justice to bring LGBT issues to the mainstream.

(c) Participation of LGBT community in politics should be increased for all decisions concerning them.

7

(d)Wider and easy access to justice and fighting human rights abuses in all forms.

(e) Nurture partnerships with and between non-State actors.

(f) Increasing the representations of LGBT persons in mainstream affairs through increased public awareness, sensitizing the communities and creating a culture of changed perception and outlook towards the community.

- The Economic upliftment approach would mean that the organizations would strive to enhance the economic status while building diversity.
- Nondiscrimination would take care of the broader approach of emphasizing fairness, justice and equality in building diversity across the organization. It will be a part of the organizational DNA.
  Language-based discrimination which is common in MNC's can act as a gatekeeping mechanism in situations where legislation prohibits discrimination based on protected characteristics, such as race, religion, or country of origin (Piller, 2021). This can occur during recruitment (Cocchiara et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2013). and advancement (Iheduru-Anderson, 2020).So an element of Non-Discrimination would really help to eliminate any sort of discrimination and promote diversity.
- Equal treatment and opportunity has been the essence of all diversity related activities across the organizations. Considering the entire workforce equally and giving them equal opportunities for career growth and showcase their talent has been one of the primary factor on which the diversity culture was built.
- Organizational culture and person fit in diversity terms would mean that while building diversity the focus would be on finding a fit between the organizational culture and person. This would be the primary driver in building diversity across the organization.
- Natural acceptance and non-bias would mean that the Diversity has to be built on the foundation of natural acceptance to people along with their differences whatsoever without any connotation of favour or bias in any form. Natural acceptance means accepting everybody as it is in spite of their differences and disabilities. It also means that we all have been created by God with a purpose and we all have equal rights when it comes to opportunities and growth.

Value addition of the model
The integrated model with its dimensions will help the organizations build and nurture an inclusive culture. This culture will be driven by organizational leaders under the guidance of an all-inclusive diversity policy. This policy has to be a well thought out affair and structured in line with the organizational philosophy. The overall organizational culture has to incorporate all the dimensions of diversity and inclusiveness to ensure a long lasting impact. The whole idea is that we as organizations accept the differences wholeheartedly and respect them. We know that each one of us are different and this is not a weakness but a point of strength which will make our organization more effective in the long run. Hence diversity and inclusion is in fact our core competitiveness rather than an element of employer branding. This is going to help us to earn better profits and revenues.

Conclusion

There are various studies conducted on the topic of diversity however there are few concrete models available on creating an inclusive culture and diversity. The current study aims to create an integrated model of diversity. Diversity is not an isolated phenomenon. It is a part of the overall structure and vision of the organization. If the organizations only consider diversity as something to increase their brand identity than it is not going to serve the purpose. If we really want the diversity and its benefits in true sense both for the organizations and society at large than we need to go beyond our narrow outlook of diversity. It's time that we broaden our perspective and consider diversity as an integrated approach where the purpose is not just to have more diverse employees but create a culture of fair and equitable treatment irrespective of gender ,caste, creed and religion. It essentially means that when you recruit a person from the LGBTQ community the person should feel at ease to work like any other normal employee. Natural acceptance should drive your diversity efforts and focus should be on organization culture and person fit and socio cultural inclusiveness while formulating Diversity policy and framework. It should be a part of the vision and mission and overall DNA of the organization. It's not that the companies are not working on the diversity front and do not have this element in their policies. The problem lies in understanding the element as just another one which advocates gender equality and non-discrimination. Whereas it has got some other dimensions too. The outlook has to be broader and should not be limited to equality. It should be extended to embracing the whole world along with its diversity. It is finding beauty in all forms of diversity and sees the things as they are without any prejudices, biases and assumptions. If organizations are able to work on this seriously than only we can expect the right outcomes in the long run. This is not an impossible feat. However it will require consistent perseverance and paradigm shift in thinking across the organizations.

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