

## WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND ITS IMPACT ON WORK CULTURE OF INDIAN ORGANISATIONS

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*"Within the cultures of our civilizations, there is a universal micro culture of work and that is changing worldwide as well"*

- Ignacio J. Vazquez -

### Abstract

*Innovation leads to economic growth, profitability, competitive advantage etc... of any organisation, and for that innovation to happen there must be people who can think differently and find new solutions for overcoming the challenges and the competition from the other counterparts. That is why most of the corporate bodies today are focusing much on employing people from diversified backgrounds, who always can find new ways of solving problems. But, most of the employers are in dilemma that, what kind of influence the diversity will have on their organisation's work environment & culture and in what way it results in? In fact, the work culture can be influenced with the changes in the internal and external environments of an organisation. Diversity and diversified work culture will bring competitive advantages to those organisations, over the other companies which does not possess people from different backgrounds and will stand as High Performing Organisations (HPOs). Due to globalisation of the economy, there is a transformation of work culture in many Indian organisations too. In this context, this paper concentrates on influence of diversity on the organisational work culture, and the behaviour of Indian organisations towards work culture and diversity had been discussed in this paper.*

**Key Words:** Culture, Diversity, Globalisation, High Performing Organisations, Work Culture, Workforce.

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### INTRODUCTION

The global work culture is best characterised by two words, "change and diversity". As the globe is becoming a small village and the distance between the countries were narrowing down day-by-day, the organisations are expanding their business operations to various countries. They are carrying their workforce, management practices, work culture etc... to the other countries. Though they have to adapt to the host country's work culture and environment, they are reflecting their own culture as a basis for engaging with other cultures. In both the situations, these organisations were trying to gain some competency over the other organisations. Competencies in cross-cultural organisations are crucial to understand how to serve and retain a customer(s) or an employee(s), who are now much more diverse and demanding than in past. Before, going through the diversity and its influence on the organisational work culture, even though they were not new for us, let us first understand - What is a culture, What is work culture and What is diversity?

Culture is the learned beliefs, attitudes, values, customs and traditions that are common to a group of people. It is dynamic and transmitted to others and it is the shared qualities of a group that make them unique. It exists at various levels like - national level, regional level, gender level, generation level, social class level, and also at organisational, departmental, corporate levels.

Work culture may be defined as the rules/regulations, traditions/rituals, policies, practices and values/beliefs of an organisation. It can be seen in the way of life of a group of people at workplace. In organisations, we find three types of cultures namely, culture of differentiation, culture of unity, and culture of integration. It is because; the organisational workforce is the composed with the people having all the above said differences. It is nothing but, "Diversity".

Diversity refers to the co-existence of employees from various socio-cultural

backgrounds within an organisation. The workplace is evolving to reflect the diversities within the society. It includes differences in employees such as race, gender, age, colour, physical ability, ethnicity, etc. The broader definition of diversity include national origin, religion, sexual orientation, values, income, education, language, life style, beliefs, personal habits physical appearance, work location, union affiliation, geographical location, seniority, economic status, etc... These can be classified into Organisational, External and Internal Dimensions. Hence, for the success of any organisation, differentiation, unity and integration should be a part of their organisational/work culture.

### **Diversity and Work Culture**

A healthy organisation is one in which an obvious effort is made to get people with different backgrounds, skills, and abilities to work together towards the achievement of goals or purposes of the organisation. Despite the fact that the industrial revolution began in the 18<sup>th</sup>, until the early 1900s, the studies on work / work cultures and environment are consistently overlooked the interests of workers. Indeed, until the 1950s, the workforce composition was not recognized as a key factor in organisational studies. Since then, a number of studies and researches were took place on the composition of workforce in many organisations across the world. A diverse workplace makes excellent business sense by attracting employees from a wide range of possible backgrounds, so that the talented and quality workforce can be select by the organisations, which enable them to grow personally and make the most of their role in the organisation. Inturn, the diversity is turning as a competitive advantage for them. But, to achieve this, the organisations must avoid discrimination against the various sections of the workforce by making policies. Diverse perspectives enrich quality idea generation, creativity and strong business performance. It creates a positive work culture by establishing an environment that supports and nurtures the two-way and up-and-down communication and creates a diverse workplace that values both similarities and differences. Diversity ultimately translates to

higher performance at the workplace, as a result of motivated individuals who are enthusiastic and committed to work. So, by having a diversified workforce the organisations can grow and stand as HPOs.

Diversity influences the work culture to that extent to which it brings quick transform into the organisational work setup. But, changing a culture will never easy. Some of the key organisational practices such as; defining and promoting professional standards, encouraging teamwork and understanding between employees will make the workplace more pleasant, efficient and inclusive. These practices have the potential to promote a safe work environment and culture by engendering greater cooperativeness between all the employees. It can be happened through diversity in workforce. Employers should assist new employees to adapt to the workplace diversity and culture; otherwise it will be a great problem. The organisation's values, vision, mission, policies, procedures, and norms should constitute a culture that is manifested in multiple perspectives and adaptability to varying values, beliefs, communication styles etc... Diversity acknowledges and uses inherent differences to drive innovation as a way of creating better organisational performance and competitive advantage. The diversity culture in the organisations bring numerous changes in how the external and internal people look at it, which could affect the goodwill of the organisation in terms of customers and .employee loyalty, suppliers, competitors etc... Majority of the organisations agreed that the diversity is important for them, as it gives various advantages and benefits. A few advantages were listed below.

- Diversity brings different styles of working, experience and expertise to the workplace, thereby enhancing work practices and productivity.
- Diversity can enhances innovation, creativity and problem solving abilities of the workforce, by bringing together various perspectives and ideas.
- Diversity makes good sense for profitability by promoting inclusiveness.

- Diverse teams make it possible to enhance flexibility and rapid response & adaptability to change.

Besides, the above benefits of diversity, it influences the work culture in many other ways. It brings a positive change in the mind set of the employees & management and also promotes friendly atmosphere at workplace, reduces conflicts and facilitates co-operation among employees of different backgrounds, which leads to increases in the productivity. When an organisation promotes this type of diversified work culture, it receives appreciation from the external world, and tends to attract people who are looking for it. It motivates employees, reduces employee turn over and encourages employee engagement. But, the organisations must take utmost care while recruiting people from diverse backgrounds because they have different skills and abilities which many times may not be directly useful for the organisations, they are needed to convert them in favour of the organisations through diversified training programs.

Today, the organisations have begun to lay greater emphasis on teamwork; because they want their employees to be effective in groups besides being efficient individually. Diversity often helps in forming of a worthwhile teams for achieving of organisational goals by ensuring greater transparency of operations and facilitates easier communication among various people working in the same as well as in different locations. This promotes a feeling of oneness and eliminates physical barriers. Many employers think that the homogenous work groups can only have team spirit as they all possess similar qualities and contributes to the organisational success, but it is not always true, even the heterogeneous work groups have good understanding and co-operate each other for achieving of both individual and organisational goals with well established team work and spirit. Thus, diversity fosters a "We" spirit and can often contribute to the synergy which in turn can make the organisation more productive. The diversified workforce will have a major impact on various workplace aspects which will influence the work culture of the organisations. Some of the following

change can be seen in the organisational work culture due to diversity in workforce.

- Enhanced morale, job satisfaction and productivity by recognising of the individuals' skills and abilities.
- Increased innovation, creativity and share ideas by having an effective communication system.
- Friendly and supportive work environment and promotes team spirit.
- Potential to enhance emotional intelligence and create a more balanced workforce.
- Increasing automation at the workplace and flexibility in working hours.

It should be noted that, the diversity brings both opportunities as well as challenges, as it changes the work culture drastically. So, in order to grab the opportunities they have to overcome various challenges like conflicts between employees and employees, employees and management etc... Thus, the diversity in the organisation must be properly managed by the HR managers. Managing diversity means enabling the diverse workforce to perform at its full potential in an equitable work environment, where no one group has an advantage or disadvantage. Effective diversity management ensures that all factors are in place to provide for and to encourage the continuous development of a diverse workforce by melding the actual and perceived differences among the workers to achieve maximum productivity. It refers to a model of inclusion of all the employees in both formal company programs and informal networks to avoid discrimination against any one particular class of employees in the total workforce. It accepts the need to value the contribution of employees from diverse backgrounds, who can increase productivity, international competitiveness and so on. It also facilitates balance in recruitment of workforce by following the laws of equal employment opportunities for avoiding discrimination against persons with disabilities, women, age old persons, people from different races, castes etc.... It was intended to correct the imbalance induced by decades of social injustice.

### **Indian Organisations and Diversity Culture**

The Indian civilization is one of the oldest and richest with a great deal of diversity in thoughts, beliefs, creeds, and deep appreciation of values. The diversity is an important feature of India. It contains more diversity as a continent does, So, it is called as sub-continent. As the organisations draw the workforce from the society, there will be changes the work culture and profile of the organisation accordingly and the work culture is rooted deeply in their societal culture. The Indian work and management culture had acknowledged the differences in size, ownership and branch characteristics of the organisation. In spite of availability of diversified workforce the Indian organisations and in the Indian society, some organisations are not in a position to tap the advantages from it. It is because of, some discrimination shown with respect to age, gender, disabilities etc... and due to this; the talented workforce has been often neglected. Further, rapid industrial and economy growth in India, and due to liberalization, globalization and privatization policy, most of the foreign industrialists were started entering into the country, paving way for even more diversified work culture and diversity in Indian society. Now, it is becoming a great challenge for both the Indian as well as the foreign organisations to deal with diversity. The foreign organisations are striving hard for understanding the socio-cultural aspects of the Indian work culture and management practices for improving their effectiveness. The entry of the foreign organisations' affected the work culture / environment of the Indian organisations' too in many ways, especially in Indian private sector. Some of the major areas affected are like - working hours (people working more in night shifts and in flexible timings), five working days in a week, increase of women and aged people employment, organisational structures, pay structures, composition of workforce, work from home, and so on. Slowly, both the Indian as well as foreign companies were started adopting the work culture of each other. It is making a balance between Indian and foreign work cultures. Even, it is forcing the government to make changes in the labour legislations accordingly for inclusion of more diversified workforce and culture. As the change is

essence of life, the organisational work culture is also changing, but importantly it is sending good signals for those organisations which are valuing diversity.

## CONCLUSION

Globalisation had opened the doors of opportunity for many business men around the world to do business in other countries. The places where they are operating have different cultures, traditions and values that are important to the people who live there and they should never intent to overrun those cultures. To the extent possible they have to try and manage their practices in a way that they respect the core principles of the given country or organisation or culture. It is also very important to have a proper diversity management mechanism in the organisations for avoiding the discrimination. Today, diversity has been identified as one of the key drivers for sustaining competitive advantage. At the same time, it is also a big challenge for the organisations, so, they should train and educate their managers and supervisors on valuing and managing diversity. Thus, the diversified workforce will bring both opportunities as well as challenges to the organisations, if not properly managed. It will have both positive and negative impacts on work culture. Most of the organisations experienced success through diversified work culture by identifying innovated ways of problem solving and facing challenges.

### THAT'S WHY DIVERSITY POWERS INNOVATION

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