

**WORKPLACE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT: A CORPORATE PERFORMANCE DRIVER**

**Fapohunda, Tinuke. M.**  
Department of Industrial Relations and Personnel Management  
Lagos State University Ojo, Nigeria  
E mail: [tkfap@yahoo.com](mailto:tkfap@yahoo.com)

**Abstract**

Diversity is now a significant human resources management topic due to numerous dynamics producing aspirations of added diversity in people management. Organization management must value the advantages of diversity and this demands noticeable endeavour and understanding merited by both the employees and the organization. It could emphasise several actions that truly value and breathe diversity throughout. This paper puts forth some possibilities including: valuing diversity, achieving people commitment, encouraging inclusion, assistance in family spirit, augmenting people empowerment, unique recruitment and selection schemes, excellent orientation programmes, trainers and mentors with elevated compassionate and social abilities, internal training of human capital, clear performance management plans, career development, instant correction of non performance based workforce assessments, organization strategies that incorporate diversity and diverse top management. Except organization management is concerned with employees' best interests, effective diversity management becomes impossible therefore, they must somewhat wheel their focus increasingly to provide for organization members.

**Keywords:** Workplace, Diversity, Management, Corporate, Performance, Driver

## **1. Introduction**

Diversity is a topic that could be extremely compelling and poignant for all stakeholders. It concerns subjects of being diverse and similar, motivation and perspiration, grief and happiness, advantage and disadvantage, culture and religion, tolerance and justice, revulsion and hostility. The challenges and prospects of diversity affect all countries globally one way or the other. At present, subjects of cultural recognition, religious safeguard, racial superiority, domination of minority groups, and inequitable reward to diverse groups of people arising from their marginal positions or gender, and other such crucial problems affect different countries globally.

Both in the society and the workforce differences have and will always subsist. It is now increasing at a rising rate. Every person has an ethical responsibility to be conscious of these disparities and to value every individual as a distinctive person. Consequently, valuing diversity and developing into diversity supporters entail every individual accepting, esteeming, appreciating disparities and studying or investigating them to maximize workforce efficiency and achieve organizational competitiveness.

Kossek and Lobel (1996) affirms that the human resource management (HRM) perspective of workforce diversity involves the advancement and execution of organizational schemes that: augment the numerical representation of traditionally eliminated clusters; authorize a varied workforce to contribute completely to organizational management and guarantee the inclusion of an assorted workforce in all facets of organizational life. Yakura (1996) observes that the business case for human resource diversity approach connects recruitment, selection, development and retention of a diverse workforce to business objectives, labour market modifications, globalization and competitive advantage. The significance of diversity management arises from the fact that workplace diversity is a subject of apprehension across organizations since it portends possible advantages or tests to them, and consequently openly manipulates their performances.

This paper aims to emphasize the significance of organization management exhibiting more concern regarding accepting differences in organization members in order to enhance the management of retention of the good persons and attracting additional fresh ones in as much as their lasting achievements depends on it, above their economic resources and operating capabilities.

## **2. Diversity Management**

The concept of diversity management originated in business management and depicts the heterogeneity of workers and recognizes methods of taking advantage of it to the benefit of everybody involved and the success of the business. In contemporary times, organizations are now openly executing diversity management as part of their human resource management strategies.

Stotz and Wedel (2009) asserts that diversity management is the planning and execution of organizational schemes and procedures aimed at managing people in order that the prospective benefits of social diversity in a working milieu are maximized and its prospective weaknesses are reduced. Diversity management in addition to valuing the personality assortment of employees also emphasizes its respect for all parties concerned.

Worman (2005) indicates that at the workplace, people are diverse in their sensitivities, ambitions and motivations; consequently, they react differently to the incentives of their superiors in directing their performance. Worman (2005) grouped the diversity constituents in three categories: social diversity (age, ethics, gender etc); value diversity (emotional divergences in personality and attitude) and informational diversity (education, serviceable term in the organization). The European Commission (2005) observes that diversity is a comprehensive expression founded on identifying all sorts of divergences. It involves appreciating everybody as entities and distinguishing that individuals from diverse environments can bring new thoughts and insights that have the potential to ensure more proficient products, services and better work done. It entails a broad idea that envelops all sorts of disparities that exceed the conventional understanding of equal opportunity.

Diversity management implies recognizing individual's dissimilarities and distinguishing them as precious; it boosts good management practices by stopping discrimination and encouraging inclusiveness. Non-diversity at the organization level eliminates segments of the population with threats of social gaps, stereotyping and fundamentalism leading to civil unrest and political confrontations. Globally, thriving businesses foresee and exploit the speedily growing percentage of minority groups. Diversity goes beyond ethnicity, race and gender; it is otherness, or those human attributes that are unlike our own and outside the group to which we belong but are present in other individuals and groups.

### **3. Factors Responsible for Increased Workplace Diversity**

One major antecedent of the rise of workplace diversity is globalization which has brought about the elimination of hurdles between markets allowing a free flow of products, services,

skills and ideas. Bellini (2005) observes that with globalization, several organizations are faced by the demands of new competitors, new consumers and diverse human resources.

Next is women's work. Arising from the swell in the number of active women, the family structure including the duties of members, size, education and consumption models have been transformed. Previously male dominated occupations now have females joining and there is the initiation of fresh regulations and process alterations.

In addition there is the migration factor. A combination of two developments - the push from developing countries and the pull from developed countries - make the global workforce increasingly diverse. Dass and Parker (2006) affirms that developed countries of the world like America and Western Europe are faced by low birth rates, reducing the groups of young people, and reducing proportions of workers to retirees. These countries require importation of immigrants to work in order to maintain their existing heights of economic activities. Cox (1993) asserts that in contrast, developing countries are witnessing a totally reverse trend, with unparalleled escalation in the numbers of young people arising from elevated birth rates, enhanced medical situations, and reduced infant mortality. This generates very large groups of young unemployed people who require emigration to find jobs for themselves and to support their families, since their countries are unable to sustain them. Moreover, organizations are now further accepting conventionally barred workers because of global progress in equal rights legislations.

Political diversity also constitutes a factor in diversity. Kochan et al (2003) contends that workers in most organizations have diverse political ideas, and ultimately attachments which originate disagreements among them, particularly when they are obliged to make decisions on vital national actions. Next is status diversity which has to do with expatriates against locals. Kirton and Greene (2005) notes that business growth at the international level added to the mobility of human resources bring about the presence of expatriate and local staff members working alongside with all the diverse working conditions and promotion outlooks that may result in aggravations and altercations.

Furthermore, work settings are now being adjusted to include older workers and senior profiles. Productivity targets and career plans are being reassessed. This is because of the aging population and the improvements in health care which is adding to the number of older people staying active. Besides, Page (2007) indicates that there are corporate structure changes like outsourcing and global operations increasing workforce diversity. Because of the demands of competition, many organizations are moving their production facilities to

developing countries in order to benefit from cheaper labour or proximity to raw material sources.

#### **4. Diversity as a Prospect for Organizations**

During the 19th century, most philosophies (fascism, communism, national socialism etc.) attempted to repress diversity and centred on a general aim arising from the apprehension that countries and their cohesions grow weaker with the particular problems of diverse groups.

Coleman (2009) notes that arising from the supposition that divergences imply limitations and homogeneity results in strong attachments they employed domination, brutality and even annihilation to circumvent diversity but were unsuccessful in enforcing universal benchmarks and expunging the divergences. Pelled (1996) suggests that at the organization level, opposition to diversity generally emanates from the overriding group aspiring to maintain its supremacy and by management because of the additional expenditures diversity typically generates for training, conflict resolution and process adjustment.

Diversity management is no longer a choice rather it is an obligation compelled on organizations that must tackle it and employ it stylishly to boost originality, reciprocated understanding of divergences and capability to enlarge its operations to new markets. Managing diversity centres on exploiting the workers' aptitude to add to organizational goals. Diversity management in general involves taking practical actions relating to organization climates that can reduce the intimidations of diversity and increase the exploitation of its prospects. Therefore Thompson and Gooler (2010) affirms that it obliges the recognition that while diversity denotes divergences, it includes resemblances. With contemporary trends towards team work constantly rising, driving people to work more and better together would be mutually beneficial to organizations and the people since every employee would manage teams better gaining from the pluses of the team and improving its minuses.

Naturally, this necessitates exploiting divergences among the people and the team evading being driven by members' dissimilarities. Without correct management, workplace diversity may offer a wider syndicate of proficiencies but reduce team cohesion and radiate internal conflicts. Organizations that successfully manage diversity would: better manage people recruitment and retention; acquire improved interpersonal communication between its human resources; enhance originality and innovation and enhance people performance for the contentment of all stakeholders.

Diversity constitutes a developing certainty that organizations must tackle openly. It should be recognized, accepted and handled as a means of prosperity, originality and cross cultural acknowledgment since organizations usually have heterogeneous human resources, profile of consumers and suppliers. Ciroma (2010) suggests that managing diversity rather than being simply a social, moral or conscience matter openly influences organization performances and results.

Kandola and Fullerton (1994) conveys that diversity management rests on the principle that exploiting the divergences generates a dynamic milieu where each person feels respected, their capacities are totally exploited, and organizational objectives are achieved.

Fajana (2000) affirms that diversity management appreciates the advantages to be achieved from dissimilarities and is separate from equal opportunity, which not only aspires to legislate against discrimination but presupposes that individuals should be incorporated into the organization, and frequently depends on affirmative action.

Not valuing diversity results in futile marketing efforts, damaged relationships, and disagreements, lost talents, misinterpretations, loss of time, money, and efficiency. Some of the corollaries can comprise harmful tensions between people of diverse gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, abilities, etc. loss of output due to enhanced conflict; failure to attract and retain talented human resources of all types; grievances and legal actions resulting in misplaced outlays in recruitment and training.

In sum, diversity management in economic terms implies tapping prospects. In terms of markets: it means customers and their requirements have become critical and are seen with respect to proffering products and services; without which misplaced market opportunities and delayed identification of fresh consumer requirements become more numerous. As regards talents and performance of own staff: (which is the most important organization resource) it ultimately involves its own people with their resourcefulness, vigour, driving force, zeal and contacts which will often imply reflecting on the extraordinary. Organizations will resultantly be unable to avoid familiarizing its management and staff with the imminent transformations.

## **5. Effective Diversity Management**

Several researchers have dealt with the subject of diversity management from diverse positions. Kandola and Fullerton (1998) affirms that the fundamental notion of managing diversity admits that the workforce comprises a varied population of individuals. The variety

involves discernible and non-discernible distinctions. It is based on the principle that connecting these dissimilarities will generate a fruitful setting where everyone feels valued, their abilities are completely employed and organizational goals are achieved. Diversity management involves guaranteeing that everyone exploits their prospects and their inputs to the organization. It denotes valuing individual differences and the diverse attributes they bring to their jobs which bring about the growth of a more compensating and fruitful environment.

Kandola and Fullerton contend that many organizations practising flourishing diversity policies implement schemes that among others : initiate equal rights and benefits for both part-time and fulltime workers; permit flexibility in dress prerequisites; tolerate time off to care for dependants beyond legal requirements; offer assistance to employees' partners; acquire specialized equipment, e.g. braille keyboards; engage helpers or signers for those requiring them; train trainers in equal opportunities; eradicate age criterion from selection decisions; offer child care support and permit career breaks for staff.

In the same vein, the Economic Commission (2005) depicts the features of a diversity oriented organization to include: **strong and positive mission** and values where efficient flourishing diversity management is a compulsory long-term goal; existence of **objective and fair procedures** in the organization which are frequently reviewed to guarantee that power does not sit within informal arrangements, and no single group of workers controls at whichever stage; **experienced workforce** know of the results of biases and prejudices on their decision making, and managers handle the diversity efficiently while emphasizing superiority in personal and group performance; **active flexibility** which implies that the diversity-oriented organization will demonstrate augmented flexibility, both in its working moulds and its practices, rules and modus operandi; **individual focus** which implies the need for organizations to resist averaging out cluster disparities or parallels by forming separated groups; **culture** which empowers and is attained through sincerity, stimulating trust between all individuals through a lack of bigotry and favouritism.

Fink, Pastore and Riemer (2003) anticipated a framework of managing diversity that differentiates between non-compliant organizations at its smallest end, and pro-active ones at its utmost end, with the - compliant and - reactive ones in between. The framework suggests that diversity would go from a liability to an asset for organizations that move their diversity management from non-accommodating to pro-active. The non-accommodating organizations would eventually face the threats imposed by diversity, while for the pro-active ones many

employees at various levels are involved in decision- making. The pro-active organizations are those that will profit from their management of diversity and mature their opportunities. The framework does not suggest however, that the different diversity management practices are mutually exclusive.

Diversity management strategies in addition to discerning the existence of disparities among employees also realize that with correct management the disparities will facilitate more proficient and efficient work performances. It focuses on identifying the dissimilarities between people rather than centring wholly on questions of prejudice.

Thomas and Ely (2001) observes that several organisations have begun the ground works for progressively more varied markets and their work forces and management are symbolized by a considerably superior mental attachment and identification with the organizations; organization cultures are typified by an environment of trust and open dialogues where issues of supremacy and subordination are honestly tackled resulting in growth in earnings rates.

Thomas and Ely categorized three stages which organisations usually navigate ranging from anti-discrimination, to legitimization and then learning and effectiveness. The Anti-discrimination stage involves affirmative action which is founded on an ethical command for increased diversity and reasonableness. It however did not entail that the diversity or uniformity would alter the method of doing things but rather the insentient anticipation of integration to existing organisational culture. The limitation of integration was the restraint and subsequent suffering of organisation capability and drive for innovation for conflict resolution and learning. It is also frequently deficient of a foundation for constructing persuasive arguments from the standpoint of the organisation.

The legitimization stage exemplified the supposition of sameness and organization expanded approaches to recognize diverse market sectors. The segmentation strategy was weakened by the propensity of the whole organisation not actually gaining greatly from the various ways of thinking and performance. In these segments many organization members employ their own approaches and while the disparities are pleasant; the dilemma was that the fresh knowledge was not fabricated into a system that methodically intervenes in entrusting the knowledge to successors. There is therefore, the risk of knowledge being excessively fragmented and not totally incorporated resulting in over simplifications and labelling.

The learning and effectiveness stage indicates a foremost paradigm transformation. Increasingly organisations are beginning to view diversity as a main resource and therefore deliberately and openly employing persons of dissimilar characteristics and conditions.



Consequently, the growth of market schemes are being founded on exhaustive analysis of the different understandings and knowledge of diverse organization members. Their proficiencies and capabilities are employed to the fullest in policy making on latest products and services, procedures and methods of structuring and functioning etc.

Moreover, they are persuaded to divulge distinctive, private and professional experiences in an ambience of trust, approval and admiration thereby gradually developing a learning organisation. Organisations internalise disparities among employees with a view to achieving learning and development.

There is massive untapped prospect in turning diversity into a resource, especially in view of the observed economic and social stagnation in Nigeria. The long-standing competitive drawbacks for organizations who fail to embrace the new prospects and make subsequent internal modifications will include loss of customers to those that not only produce high standard products and services at good prices but project characteristics that genuinely esteem all potential disparities and similarities including religion and gender. It implies a profound transformation in organisational culture which may involve changes in the benchmark upon which prospects, endorsements, promotions and acknowledgments are based: a benchmark based on which decisions are made founded on the knowledge and competence of employees and autonomous of gender, religion, etc.

## **6. Towards Improved Diversity Management**

Broadly speaking, diversity management necessitates realizing one or both of recognizing and exploiting individuals' differences and unifying people. Bearing in mind the constancy of individual differences organization would endeavour to unify its people. Therefore the majority of its diversity management activities must explore assistance to organization members, observation and acknowledgment of their differences, added to exploitation of these differences. To perk up on diversity management, organization management may emphasise several actions which in truth value and breathe diversity all through. This paper puts forth a few possibilities:

One is Valuing Diversity which entails devotion of both time and efforts and can be facilitated by: employing diverse individuals; searching for mutual positions; promoting open expression of differences; acceptance of risks taking; tolerance and institution of reciprocated sustenance among organization members. Next is Achievement of People Commitment. Commitment facilitates performance. Rijamampiana and Carmichael (2005) opine that there

are three levels of employee commitment namely: obligation, belonging and ownership. They suggest that organizations are required to first and foremost build a mind-set of ownership among the employees by agreeing not only to split both the positive and negative organization results with them but to do same in a clear and just manner.

Another is dedication to diversity management which can be achieved principally by seeking the common good of every one, rather than organization good alone through: promotion of reciprocal acclimatization of organization members to realize their mutual interests by exploiting change; accepting indistinctness and clarifying diversity; enduring diversity and assisting organization members in acknowledging it as a reality of life.

Added to these is encouragement of inclusion. The cultivation of reciprocal admiration requires endorsing inclusion and belongingness amongst employees which entails having the right to speak out and to sponsor individual claims. Organization management must have great assurance of the capacity of all their members to adjust to transformations and be integrated in the group.

Moreover there is assistance in family spirit. This is achievable through the establishment of an ambience of sharing proficiency and promoting trust; assistance in building trust among organization members; elucidating and making organization vision and objectives clear and also aiding communication.

Similarly organizations can augment people empowerment by designating down the chain of command, additional tasks and powers, and boosting the employees chances of learning and developing the autonomy amongst them.

Added to the foregoing is a careful analysis of prospective markets followed by building a unique recruitment and selection scheme that embraces fresh sales pitches, interview techniques and evaluation centres aimed at expanding the understanding and consciousness required for the selection procedures, to possess the capability for identifying talented and unique individuals. The selection panels must be diverse and skilled in diversity appreciation and talent identification. The evaluation centre should be methodically re-described to reflect the diverse cultural and life perspectives on the other side of the recruitment line.

This must be trailed by the growth and sustenance of an excellent orientation programme for new employees. This is a vulnerable procedure and must be tackled with care because handling organization identity is a similarly insightful subject which is frequently intensely rooted in the subliminal. Because good talent can be lost promptly due to unintended errors, it becomes imperative to engage and instruct trainers and mentors who have elevated

compassionate and social abilities added to a broad range of life know-how in the area of diversity.

Moreover, where it becomes difficult for instance to fill certain positions due to an important scarcity of diverse groups (like women) who fail to meet the prerequisites, organizations could invest in training their own human capital. The recruitment could involve seeking applicants from uncommon locations, recruiting uncommon persons and training them in extraordinary ways to achieve expectantly uncommon organizations of the future. It goes beyond the simple issue of obtainable talent, to the construction of systems and associations.

Furthermore, a tremendously transparent performance management scheme built in consultation with diverse aspects and opinions in the organization is necessary for superior diversity management. Career development is also quite important. It encompasses a combination of organization actions aimed at further growing employees' careers in the organization and actions aimed at avoiding jeopardizing the careers.

Moreover, the particular diversity assemblages of departments and teams in the organization as well as the diverse capabilities, talents, experiences, personal characteristics and occupations must be regularly and carefully measured so as to assist in the possible formation of inventive ideas especially in the area of customer and client relations. In addition, once there is any recognition of workforce assessment that is not performance based but based on prejudice or depreciation arising from personal attributes, it must be tackled and corrected instantly.

Furthermore plainly devised organization strategy which incorporates diversity is critical and similarly significant to the expansion and sustenance of a well-built organization culture. More so, to prove that diversity fulfils organization requirements and constitutes a fundamental component of its distinctiveness, the top management team must be developed with authentic exemplar performance and the team itself must be really diverse rather than simply having a few token from the minority groups.

Besides, a fundamental organization goal should be to sustain a communication and behaviour approach in an environment of genuineness, indicating obvious attempts at diversity and inclusion founded on performance. Moreover, organizations must address the attitude issue. Organization change must be stimulated by the desire for and recognition of the necessity for change with the intention of seizing those forthcoming prospects in a progressively more diverse market place.

## **7. Diversity Management in the Future of Human Resources Management**

Diversity has progressively developed into an important topic in human resources management. Organizations that aim to be actual international players cannot circumvent the incorporation of diverse expertise into their management teams. The subsequent developmental stages of the global economy will usher in better public consciousness of the notion of globalisation and its effects. Arising from the current stage of cost management, downsizing and staff cuts, the issue of management recruiting will be tracked more intensively in the nearest future. Before long, human resources managers will once again boast superior requirements for highly capable managerial staff, irrespective of disparities in their nationality, sex and culture etc.

Again, organizations that effectively manage diversity tend to be more attractive to new employs and in addition diversity goes well with positive public relations work since the concept is founded on the fundamental principles of value, equal treatment, fairness and justice. Organizations that discriminate will in future lose money, competitive edge and advantage since organizations must now compulsorily function only with careful consideration of social interests. Organizations require all employees to display optimum performance in the workplace for its long term success. Consequently, they have no choice but to locate means of respecting all employees in their own merits, despite their disparities with the others. In addition, diversity seems innate to the younger generation and these days, the trademarks of international organizations principally include multi-cultural messages. This development in communications will increase since in future diversity will be even easier to sell and organizations will be able to utilize diversity management in projecting themselves as contemporary and progressive both internally and externally.

## **8. Conclusion**

This paper concludes that diversity develops into a burden for organizations when it is obligatory and synchronized; whereas where it is managed appropriately it constitutes an important benefit. This serves as a challenge for positive organization management, particularly in a country like Nigeria with its diverse peoples, cultures, ethnicities, languages, religions etc. Organization management must value the resultant advantages of diversity rather than merely enduring and managing it and this necessitates a great deal of endeavour and understanding which both the employees and the organizations merit. Except organization management is concerned with the best interest of the employees, effective diversity management becomes impossible. Therefore, they must to some extent glide their

spotlight more and more to provide for organization members. This they can do by showing better visibility and accessibility; being more worried by employee requirements, concerns and desires more than their own; accommodating and assisting employee success and being closer to the action. Invariably, irrespective of disparities all organization members are on the same team.

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