WORKFORCE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGES IN CHENNAI CITY – A TEACHING FACULTY'S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT:

In today's experiential 21st century, the growth of a country is highly dependent on its higher education capabilities. A crucial segment of Higher Education Institutions is Arts and Science. Colleges which are prone to rapid changes in the recent years. Traditional academic cultures and relationships are being challenged due to increase in diversity and differentiation in the workforce within institutions. This article attempts to shed light on the significance of workforce diversity management with respect to teaching faculty in Arts and Science colleges. This exploratory study investigated the following dimensions of diversity, namely gender, age, marital status, income, experience, qualification, institution's type, institution's source of funding, nationality and language were considered as they were viewed as being more common in Arts and Science colleges. A sample of 527 teaching faculty from Self-financing, Government-aided and Government colleges were responded in this study. A combination of the use of secondary data and primary data was adopted. A structured questionnaire that used a 5-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used for data collection. Multivariate factor analysis and One-way ANOVA have conducted to analyze the data collected. The study identified four factors namely Values Articulation, Collegiality Promotion, Equal Opportunities and Informal Mentoring that lead to better workforce diversity management. The perceived benefits of diversity management were found to be Engagement of faculty, Empowerment of students and the Effectiveness of the institution.

Key words: Diversity inclusion, Diversity management practices and Perceived organizational outcomes.

1.1 Introduction:

The rapid growth in global economy brings the people belong to the heterogeneous group in the world come closer, may it be business or service organizations. Arts and Science Colleges in the higher education system are prone to rapid changes in the recent years. Traditional academic cultures and relationships are being challenged due to increase in diversity and differentiation in the workforce within institutions. Diversity inclusion and managing diversity have become strategic issues as they greatly influence the strength, productivity and intellectual personality of any institution. Though diversity appears to increase the opportunity for creativity and diversified competencies, it has been a challenging task for any institution to manage the workforce with individual differences, not only because of their gender, age and other demographic categories, but also because of their values, abilities, organizational function, tenure and personality. In order to understand the dynamics of a heterogeneous workforce, the multi-dimensional diversity management in an educational institution has to be addressed.

1.2 Literature Review:

Diversity is defined as the collective amount of differences among members within a social unit (Harrison & Sim, 2006). In the social context, diversity relates to variations and differences in individual backgrounds, personal identities, intellect approaches, and demographics (class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, etc.) (Brinson et al, 2010).

Managing diversity can be defined as an ongoing process that creates an inclusive environment where talents and competences, which derive from the diverse population, are valued (Rosado 2006). If employees feel discriminated, they will leave the company or just stay away from work. The so called "Diversity management" policies and tools may represent a good opportunity to develop pleasant and respectful workplaces, where different cultures and religions are appreciated, equal opportunities and right policies are really developed and differently abled people are not taken as an obstacle to professional development. Diversity of gender, age, income, experience, qualification, religion, language, physical ability, institution's type and many other attributes contribute to the richness of the working environment for teaching and service. Diversity carry an even higher importance in the education setting, where knowledge creation and transfer are the essence of the institution (Miller et al., 2008). Though increasing diversity lead to less cohesiveness, less effective communication, increased anxiety and greater discomfort, well-management of these social differences and inequalities will reap many benefits for the institution.

1.3 Objectives of the study:
- To identify the key motivators for diversity management in Arts and Science colleges.
- To examine the level of understanding of diversity by faculty members.
- Establish perceived benefits of diversity management in Arts and Science colleges.

1.4 Research Methodology:
- Sampling method: Stratified proportionate random sampling
- Sample size: 527 teaching faculty in Arts & Science colleges (Workforce).
- Data collection: Primary data – Questionnaire; Secondary data - Books and Articles**.**
- Likert's 5 point scale - Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

2.1 FACTORS OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

A KMO value of 0.944 was obtained suggesting excellent sampling adequacy. Bartlett's test of Sphericity with approximate Chi-square value of 7455.536 is statistically significant @ 5% level. This indicates that all the 18 variables are reduced into 4 predominant factors with meaningful approach. The factors are:

Factor 1 is named as "**Values Articulation**" as it involves 6 items that describes the most common values proposed by teaching faculty of various colleges are Openness to innovation/creativity, Democratic attitude, Being fair and justice at work, Respect for the differences, Equality, Trust, Responsibility, Team spirit/Integration, Openness to criticism, Courage/Challenge, Participation, Autonomy and Optimism. They feel that these values greatly promote unity in diversity and has to be lived by from the first person by the institution to the last person on daily practices at the workplace. The values of the institution should reflect in vision and mission statements, and should be articulated in such a way that give psychological safety to express their negative views and do not restrict their scope excessively. Policies and strategies in Arts and Science colleges need to be widely communicated to all stakeholders. Institutions should ensure that everybody from upper to lower echelons of the institutions understands the diversity goals and objectives of their institutions to more positively and effectively contribute to the success of the institution.

Factor 2, termed "**Collegiality Promotion",** consists of 5 items relating to the management's initiative to promote positive attitude among faculty members towards their work and each other nurture the culture mutually respectful community of colleagues, genuine connection, help each other to solve problems, good cooperative spirit, concerned about their overall well-being and knowledge-sharing among colleagues. Collegiality can be considered in terms of relationships with fellow academics or management for guidance, information, friendship, and support irrespective of individual differences among them. Faculty with individual differences should be put in a group for any committee in the institution to invest their diversified competencies, contribute various views and to improve relationships. Pooling of talent of the diverse workforce often results in better decision making, better task performance work motivation and knowledge sharing among teaching faculty.

Factor 3, named "**Equal Opportunities",** encompasses 4 items that describe how far the working environment is growth oriented, encouraging and rewarding for the faculty members in carrying out teaching, research, mentoring and service activities properly. Irrespective of the individual differences, the institution should create a culture where equal opportunity is lived and anchored in the mindset of people by aligning the equal opportunity goals with the strategic ones. These gains may include higher salaries, improved job opportunities, resource allocation strategies and improved well-being. Top management should hire qualified individuals who are differently-abled to improve diversified competencies within the institution. In departmental and professional committees, management should ensure that workforce is diverse in respect of age, gender, experience, etc. and everyone has an equal chance to voice opinions, concerns or questions.

Factor 4, called "**Informal Mentoring",** contains 3 items that Visibility, communication and accountability are key to achieving a competitive diverse workforce. Let there be effective, communication with the entire institution regarding diversity as a business strategy. The needs of diverse groups should be met. Cultural days respecting different cultures should be marked on the calendar and be celebrated. Management should follow a democratic leadership and pursue a meaningful discussion where they actively listen to the problems and concerns of faculty and counseling them to overcome the problems and find a balance between work and personal life and to resolve conflicts in the workplace.

2.2 ONE WAY ANOVA

In order to study the perception of teaching faculty in Diversity management, ANOVA was performed in SPSS and the results are presented in the below table. The last column shows the mean values which is derived through descriptive statistics for each factor. The items from three constructs of diversity, namely Demographic diversity, Organizational Diversity and Socio-cognitive diversity of faculty
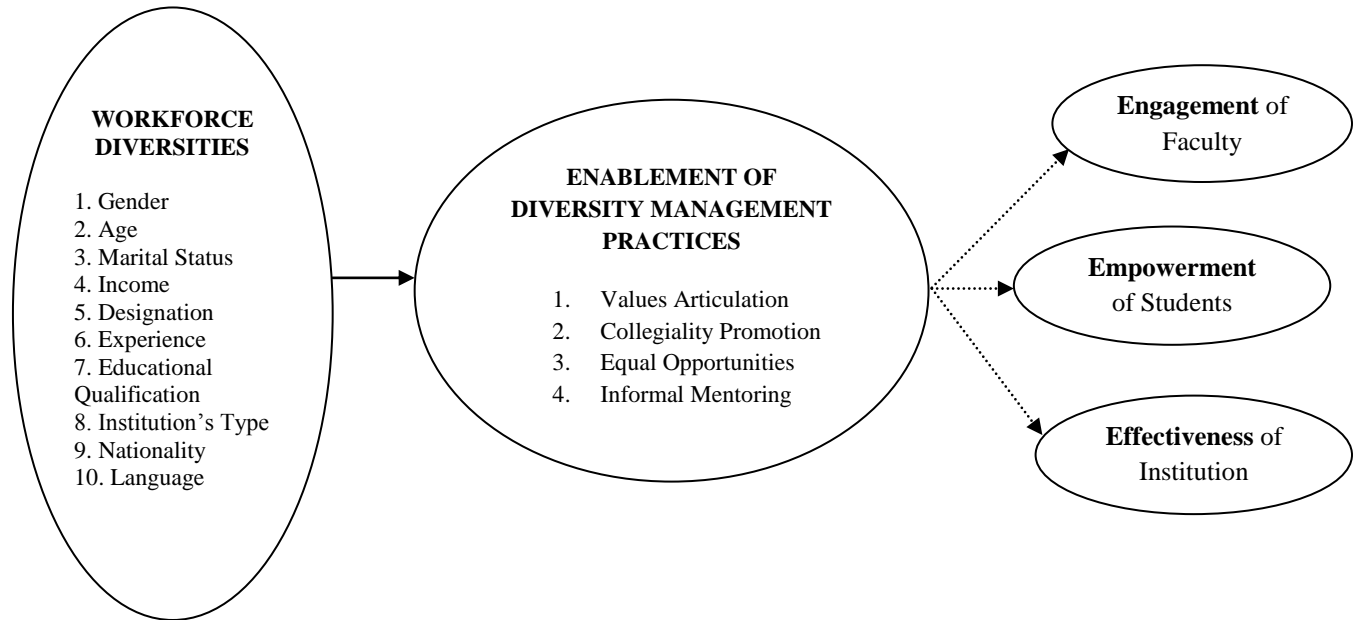
taken into this study and they include Gender, Educational Qualification, Age, Language, Nationality, Marital status, Designation, Institution's type, Institution's source of funding, Income and Experience respectively. Due to the nature of sensitivity, two diversities namely Religion and Disability are ignored in this study.

PERCEPTION OF TEACHING FACULTY TOWARDS WORKFORCE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Factors of Diversity Management	F	SIG.	Diversity Types	Mean Values
Collegiality Promotion	14.340	.000	Gender	Male (4.2462)
Values Articulation	12.163	.001	Gender	Female (4.1043)
Informal Mentoring	9.417	.000	Marital Status	Married (4.2819)
Values Articulation	6.247	.000	Educational Qualification	Masters Degree alone (4.3603)
Informal Mentoring	4.103	.003	Educational Qualification	Masters Degree with M. Phil (4.1543)
Equal Opportunities	6.224	.000	Age	31 to 40 years (4.8982)
Collegiality Promotion	8.424	.000	Institution's Type	Co-education (4.1158)
Values Articulation	8.405	.000	Designation	Associate Professors (4.2124)
Collegiality Promotion	3.405	.034	Institution's source of funding	Government (4.1409)
Equal Opportunities	4.100	.007	Income	Between INR 75,001 and INR 1,00,000 (4.0722)
Informal Mentoring	4.028	.008	Experience	Below 5 years (4.2821)
Values Articulation	4.871	.002	Experience	Above 15 years (4.2453)

2.3 FINDINGS:

It is found that Gender, Designation, Institution's type, Institution's source of funding, Income, Age, Qualification, Marital status and Experience are statistically significant at 5% level of significance and influence the Diversity management, except for Language and Nationality. Language and Nationality do not bring any change in the way faculty works in Arts and Science colleges. Values Articulation, Collegiality Promotion, Equal Opportunities and Informal Mentoring are the best diversity management practices to be enabled in Arts and Science colleges in Chennai city. The perceived benefits are engaged faculty, empowered students and effective institution.

MODEL OFWORKFORCE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AND ITS PERCEIVED BENEFITS:

WORKFORCE DIVERSITIES

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Marital Status
4. Income
5. Designation
6. Experience
7. Educational Qualification
8. Institution's Type
9. Nationality
10. Language

ENABLEMENT OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

1. Values Articulation
2. Collegiality Promotion
3. Equal Opportunities
4. Informal Mentoring

Engagement of Faculty

Empowerment of Students

Effectiveness of Institution

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Research shows that diverse working groups are more productive, creative and innovative than homogeneous groups. In order to reap the benefits and minimize the challenges of diversified workforce, the management needs to learn how to understand value and appreciate differences. Diversity is a means of achieving the educational and institutional goals. Merely adding a diverse people to homogeneous environment does not go to benefit the institution. Diversity management does not only involve senior management, it concerns everybody working in the organization. Long-term efforts, engagement and substantial attention are essential for realizing the benefits of a diversified workforce in Arts and Science colleges. Management should understand that diversity does not mean classification of it as a negative phenomenon, rather an opportunity for further improvement of the educational environment and effort to use the full potential of the existing diversity in the faculty body.

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