Equal Opportunities in Diversity: Implications for Human Work Organizations in Nigeria

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Abstract

Legislation, voluntary codes of practice and equality initiatives have resulted in some progress towards equality of treatment for minorities, but there remains inescaple evidence of continuing discrimination. More recent approaches under the banner of management of diversity include the economic and business case for equality, the valuing and managing of diversity in organizations, culture change and the mainstreaming of equality initiatives. These approaches are partly a response to the insufficient progress made so far, yet there is only limited evidence that they have made a difference. They offer some useful perspectives and practices, although the underlying concepts also raise some issues and concerns. For the purpose of this work, we considered the experiences of five socially defined minority groups: women, racial/ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual. Review of past studies was employed to gather information concerning the issues of equal

opportunities and diversity in this present research. The study revealed that legislation can have only a limited effect in achieving equality, and does not change attitudes, beliefs, and cultures and structures. The study recommended among others that the essence of equality should be to avoid unfair discrimination in Nigerian organizations.

Key Words: Equality, Opportunities, Diversity, Discrimination, Organizaiton, Employment, Employees.

Introduction

Equality at work is basically about fair treatment for the individual. Equal opportunity, in particular, is about enabling individuals, to have fair access to job opportunities, promotion, training and other employee services (Davidson and Cooper, 1993). It also encompasses equal pay for work of equal value. Achieving equality of opportunity at work is not as it sounds, primarily because, for any one opportunity that arises, there will almost certainly be competition among employees to be considered for it. Managers, therefore, have to decide, that is, discriminate between individuals. Where, then, is the problem? It has to be found in the manner in which a manager discriminates in favour of one individual, and the therefore against the others (McDaougall and Briley, 1993). If a manager, man or woman, selects a man for a promotion primarily because he or she is against the idea of working wives, that is, prima facie committing an unfair act. If an interviewing manager ignores, let us say, the presently better qualifications and experienced accountant over a less well qualified candidate, and appoints the latter, that is also likely to be unfair discrimination (Davidson and Cooper, 1993).

To a real extent, demographic changes and globalization are rendering moot the motives that drove equal employment legislation. In other words, employers now have little choice but to willingly push for more diversity. In this context, diversity refers to the variety or multiplicity of demographic features that characterize a company's workforce, particularly in terms of race, sex, culture, national origin, handicap, age, and religion (Richard, 2001). As companies do more and more business around the world, diversity is not simply a matter of doing, what is fair or good public relations. It is not a business imperative (Carol, 2005). Thus, managing diversity means maximizing diversity's potential benefits, for instance, greater cultural awareness, and broader language skill, while minimizing the potential barriers such as prejudices and bias, that can undermine the company's performance (Brain and Bart, 2006). The diversity management programme itself typically starts with the company assessing the current state of affairs with respect to diversity. In particular, how diverse are we, and are there any diversity – related issues we need to address? Common tools here include equal employment hiring and retention metrics,

employee attitude surveys, management and employee evaluations, and focus groups (Richard, 2004). Thus, equal employment opportunity aims to ensure that anyone, regardless of race, colour, disability, sex, religion, national origin, or age, has an equal opportunity based on his or her qualifications. It should also be noted that CIPD (2003) provide a much broader definition of diversity, going beyond social category diversity, to include informational diversity, that is, differences in terms of education, tenure and functional background and value diversity, which includes differences in personality and attitudes.

Employment Experiences of Socially Defined Minority Groups

1. **Women:** If participation in the labour force is an indication of decreasing discrimination then recent figures are encouraging. From 1971 to 2001, the female participation rate in employment increased from 56.8 percent to 72 percent, compared with the male participation rate which is slowly falling, and now at 84 percent (Equal Opportunity Review, 2002). These trends are predicted to continue. Much of this increase has been due to the replacement of full-time jobs. Indeed, Hakin (1993) put forward the strong argument, based on an alternative analysis of the census and employment data, that the increasing participation of women in employment between the 1950s and the late 1980s is a myth, although a real increase does appear to have taken place since the late 1980s. Her analysis shows that the much trumpeted rise in women's employment consisted entirely of the substitution of part-time for full-time jobs from 1951 to the late 1980s. Hakin concludes from the research that only an increase in full-time employment is likely to have a wider impact on women's opportunities at work and elsewhere.

Some of the more obvious signs of discrimination such as in recruitment advertising, may have disappeared and there is some evidence to suggest that women are beginning to enter some previously male-dominated occupations. For example, women have now been ordained as priests in Church of England but not without deep and continuing debate. Similarly, men are beginning to enter some previously female only occupations such as midwifery. However, there remains a high degree of subtle, for example in access to training and support for development and promotion, and not so-subtle discrimination, as in the continued gender segregation in terms of both type and level of work undertaken. There are still few women in higher levels of management and not many men secretaries. There are several possible actions that organizations can take to provide a fairer framework of working conditions. These are more likely to succeed, that is, to be fully accepted by both sexes, if they are open both to men and women, thus avoiding possible charges either of favouring men or of patronizing women. They include the following:

1. Increasing part-time opportunities for permanent staff, and thus freeing individuals to attend to domestic and family responsibilities, whilst in a permanent/career job.
2. Permitting flexible working hours, where this approach can be accommodated within the usual demands of the job.
3. Making job-sharing more widely available, if this is practicable, given the demands of the job.
4. Enhancing training opportunities for potential managers, especially in such skills as leadership, assertiveness and time management, whilst encouraging women, in particular, to apply for such training.
5. Providing personal development opportunities in form of secondments, special projects and other opportunities to undertake new challenges and extend experience in managerial roles.
6. Developing senior management's awareness of (a) the benefits of more women managers appointed on their merits, and (b) the potential loss to the organization if well-qualified women candidates are not appointed to more senior role.
7. Introducing career breaks for those who wish to take time out to focus on family responsibilities.
8. Providing, or paying for, crèche facilities for employees with family responsibilities.
9. Ensuring that individuals accrued rights e.g. to pensions, holidays, etc are not disadvantaged merely because the jobholder is a part-time employee or has had gaps in his service with the organization.

2. **Racial and Ethnic Groups:** In spite of the legislation evidence of discrimination continues to exist. The EOR (2003) reports that the level of unemployment for black and Asian communities is 12 percent compared with that for the white population of 5 percent. This picture of comparative level of unemployment has barely changed over the last 18 years, and the gap appears to be widening rather than narrowing, although there are differences between the different ethnic groups. In addition, there is continued segregation in the labour market, with ethnic minority male employees being employed in the hotel, catering and repairs and distribution sectors, and manufacturing industry, to a much greater extent than their white counterparts. But for construction the reverse is true. Segregation also occurs vertically. Using Labour Force Survey data, the Trades Union Congress (2000) reports that 30.4 percent of white people were classified as managers compared with 24.7 percent of black people. Again the gap appears to be widening rather than narrowing. Other evidence of vertical segregation has been found by the Runnymede Trust (2000) when surveying the FTSE 100 companies. They found that 5.4 percent of

employees were from ethnic minority groups, compared with the representation of ethnic minorities in the general population of 6.4 percent, but that this proportion fell sharply at higher grades, with 3.2 percent of junior managers from ethnic minorities and 1 percent of senior managers. Yet all of these companies believed that they did not unfairly discriminate. Rana (2003) reported on a project designed to understand why ethnic minority managers are under-represented in senior levels of local government. The researcher found that in 360 – degree feedback results, the line managers' assessment of ethnic minority employees were less favourable for each individual than all other assessments, which were generally similar. This discrepancy did not occur when considering the ratings of white employees. In terms of pay, non-white workers are also comparatively disadvantaged.

3. **Disabled People:** Woodhams and Danieli (2000), point out that people who have a disability face common barriers to full integration into society and yet are a very varied group, in that impairments can vary in severity, stability and type. People with disability are more likely to be unemployed than able-bodied counterparts, and once unemployed they are likely to remain so for a longer period (EOR, 2003). The economic activity rate for disabled people is 53 percent compared with 84 percent for non-disabled people, and 49 percent of disabled people are in employment compared with 81 percent of non-disabled people (EOR, 2003). Hammond (2002) opined that the media have a particular poor reputation for employing disabled people. This is particularly unfortunate as this is a missed opportunity to create visible and influential role models.

Choice of job is often restricted for people with a disability, and where they do find work it is likely to be in low paid, less attractive jobs. People with a disability are over-represented in plant and machine operative jobs and in the personal and protective services, and are under-represented in professional and managerial jobs (Skills and Enterprise Network, 2000). Periods of high general unemployment exacerbate these problems.

Employers traditionally have had a wide range of concerns regarding the employment of disabled people, including worries about general standards of attendance and health, safety at work, eligibility for pension schemes, and possible requirements for alteration to premises and equipment. The two ticks disability symbol is a government initiative and can be used by employers to demonstrate their commitment to employing disabled people. Employers who use the symbol make five commitments to action: (1) a guaranteed job interview for disabled applicants, (2) regular consultation with disabled employees, (3) retaining employees if they become disabled during their employment, (4) improving

knowledge about disability for key employees, and (5) reviewing these commitments and planning ahead. However, Dibben, James and Cunningham (2001) posit that the symbol appeared to have only a limited effect on support for disabled employees or potential employees.

(4) **Age:** While advertisements are generally less obviously discriminatory in respect of age, EOR (1998) found that employers still used coded language to indicate that they were looking for a specific age group, and found phrases such as "young", "articulate youngsters", "second jobber", and "young dynamic environment". There continue to be cultures that discriminate against older, and young people. There is frequently discrimination at both the short-listing and interview stage, with the line managers having negative perceptions of older workers, seeing them as less able to cope with change, training, or technology and less interested in their careers. Higginbottom and Robert (2002), noted on a MORI poll of 2000 adults, found that they viewed age discrimination as the prime cause of discrimination at work. Philpott (2003) asserted that in a survey of 600 retired people, two-fifths believe they had suffered discrimination in some way, age discrimination being the most frequent form. He further argued that there are fever older people in the workforce, not because they prefer to retire, but because they feel they have been discriminated against. Snape and Redman (2003) found partial support for this. Platman (2002) reports on National Opinion Poll (NOP) research funded by the Department for Work and Pensions which included people between the ages of 50 and 60, a quarter of whom believe that they were discriminated against when looking for a job. Nearly half the organizations in the survey had no staff aged 60 or over. Line managers said they were age friendly, although they appeared to be ignorant of the guidelines. Given that by many years coming, almost 40 percent of the working population will be over 45 (Higginbottom, 2002), and the current shortage of many skills, this presents a critical problem for organizations. Older workers are seen to be more loyal and conscientious, to have better interpersonal skills, to be more efficient in the job and their experience in the job counteracts any age-related factors lowering productivity; older workers are generally more satisfied with their jobs and have fewer accidents and a better absence record; and in any case there is considerable variation within individuals. Older workers also have lower turn-over rates which saves the organization money.

On the basis of their research Snape and Redman (2003) argued that discrimination for being too young is at least as common as that for being too old. Both forms of discrimination adversely affected commitment, and hence, it could be argued, performance.

In the next few years it is likely that many people over the present retiring age will have to work to keep the economy going as well as to provide for themselves. As the proportion of young people in the economy continues to fall, so there will be fewer workers to pay for the key services of health, education and social welfare (Davidson and Cooper 1993). Nevertheless, at the present time many employing organizations are discriminating against would be job applicants on the grounds that they are too old, at the same as they are telling others that they are too young.

In a survey carried out for the CIPD (2000), it was found that whereas 75 percent of those aged 45-54 were in paid employment, only 39 percent of those aged 55-64 were employed. By comparison, at the other end of the age – range, 65 percent of 16 – 24 year – olds were in employment. A question relating to early retirements showed that 18 percent of 55 – 64 year – olds had taken early retirement, as against 9 percent in the 45 – 54 group, and 1 percent in the 35 – 44 group. Although most respondents over 55 wanted to retire completely by the state pension age, it was significant that one in five wanted to work either full or part-time after this age, mainly because they found their work enjoyable. Most age groups reported that they had been discouraged from applying for jobs in the previous twelve months because of age restrictions in job advertisements. Surprisingly, these restrictions were felt across the spectrum – 13 percent of 16 – 24 age range, and 35 – 44 age – range, and 9 percent 55 – 64-year – olds. Ageism is not just confined to recruitment practices, but even more so in subsequent employment. Nearly one quarter of all respondents thought that their industry was not interested in employing or promoting people over the age of 40 years.

5. **Sexuality:** Lesbian, gay, and bisexual discrimination is the most difficult to identify due to the fact that group membership is more easily concealed, usually due to the anticipation of discrimination. It is therefore, difficult to quantify the extent to which these groups experience active discrimination. The protection now given to transsexuals means that they are not forced to offer historical information on their gender, but transsexuals in transition clearly cannot keep this confidential, and will need support and protection from harassment (Higginbottom, 2002). Most employers have been slow to include sexual orientation in their diversity management initiatives (Ward, 2003). Wilson (2000) in an article reporting three case studies found that in two of the three organizations sexuality other than the heterosexual norm was not considered acceptable in the culture. In one engineering company, the researcher was told that you would have to be very discrete if you were gay, and that one gay person, who had not come out, had left the organization. In the second, a professional partnership, the researcher was told that sexuality was under wraps. Only in the third, a media organization, were different sexual

orientations considered acceptable. In a TUC survey carried out at the end of 1998 (EOR, 1996), 44 percent of the 440 gay lesbian and bisexual respondents said they had experienced discrimination at work due to their sexuality. Forms of discrimination reported ranged from verbal abuse to dismissal. Even in jobs where employees feel sufficiently comfortable to disclose their sexuality, there is considerable discrimination in the terms and benefits they receive.

In summary, although some of the more blatant aspects of discrimination have been significantly improved, there remain considerable discrimination and inequality in respect of minority group in the workplace. To some extent we are only just beginning to understand the causes and nature of more subtle forms of discrimination which are the root of inequality.

Different Approaches to Equality

The labels "equal opportunities" and "management of diversity" are used inconsistently, and to complicate this there are different perspectives on the meaning of managing diversity. So we shell draw out the key differences which typify each of these approaches, and offer some critique of their conceptual foundations and efficacy.

Equal Opportunities Approach

The equal opportunities approach seeks to influence behaviour through legislation, so that discrimination is prevented. It has been characterized by a moral and ethical stance promoting the rights of all members of society. The approach, sometimes referred to as the liberal tradition (Jewson and Mason, 1986), concentrates on the equality of opportunity rather than the equality of outcome found in more radical approaches. The approach is based on the understanding that some individuals are discriminated against, for example in the selection process, due to irrelevant criteria. These irrelevant criteria arise from assumptions based on the stereotypical characteristics attributed to them as members of a socially defined group, for example that women will not be prepared to work away from home due to family commitments; that a person with disability will have more time off sick. As these assumptions are not supported by any evidence, in respect of any individual, they are regarded as irrelevant, job-based criteria are used that is using job descriptions and person specifications, rather than irrelevant assumptions. The equal opportunities legislation provides a foundation for this formalization of procedures, and hence procedural justice. Liff (1999) averred that, the use of systematic rules in employment matters which can be monitored for compliance is felt fair ". In line with the moral argument and emphasis on systematic procedures, equal opportunities is often characterized as a responsibility of the human resource department. The rationale,

therefore, is to provide a level playing field "on which all can compete on equal terms. Positive action, not positive discrimination, is allowable in order that some may reach the level at which they can compete equally.

Equal opportunities approaches stress disadvantaged groups, and the need, for example, to set targets for those groups to ensure that their representation in the workplace reflects their representation in wider society in occupations where they are under-represented, such as the small numbers of ethnic minorities employed as police offers, military officers, paramilitary officers or the small numbers of women in senior management roles. These targets are not enforceable by legislation, as in Nigeria, but organizations have been encouraged to commit themselves voluntarily to improvement goals, and to support this by putting in place measures to support disadvantaged groups such as special training courses and flexible employment policies (Okere 2013). Differences between socially defined groups are glossed over, and the approach is generally regarded as one of sameness. That is, members of disadvantaged groups should be treated in the same way as the traditional employees, and not treated differently due to their group membership, unless for the purpose of providing the "level playing field".

There is an assumption in the equal opportunities approach that equality of outcome will be achieved if fair procedures are used and monitored. In other words, this will enable any minority groups to achieve a fair share of what employment has to offer. Once such minority groups become full participating members in employment, the old stereotypical attitudes on which discrimination against particular social groups is based will gradually change, as the stereotypes will be shown to be unhelpful.

The assumption that fair procedures or procedural justice will lead to fair outcomes has not been borne out in practice. In addition there has been criticism of the assumption that once members of minority groups have demonstrated their ability to perform in the organization this will change attitudes and belief in the organization. This is a naïve assumption, and the approach has been regarded as simplistic. Liff (1999) posit that attitudes and beliefs have been left untouched. Other criticisms point out that the legislation does not protect all minority groups although it is gradually being extended, and there is a general lack of support within the organization partly because equality objectives are not linked to business objectives (Shapiro and Austin, 1996). Shapiro and Austin, among others, argued that equal opportunities has been the concern of the Human Resource function, and Kirton and Greene (2003) argued that a weak Human Resource function has not helped. The focus of equal opportunities is on formal processes and yet it is not possible to formalize everything in the organization. Research suggests that this

approach alienated large sections of the workforce, that is, those not identified as disadvantaged groups, who felt that there was no benefit for themselves, and indeed that their opportunities were damaged. Others felt that equal opportunities initiatives had resulted in the lowering of entry standards, as in the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority (EOR, 1996). Shapiro and Austin (1996) argued that this creates division in the workforce. It is also the individual who is expected to adjust to the organization, and traditional equal opportunities strategies encourage a view that women, and other groups, have a problem and need help (Liff, 1999). Okere (2013) observed that, the equal opportunities approach is considered simplistic and to be attempting to treat the symptoms rather than the causes of unfair discrimination.

Management of Diversity Approach

Legislatures and courts determine the nature and scope of many diversity management programmes. For example, legally compulsory actions employers must take to minimize employment discrimination. The problem is that while compulsory actions can reduce some blatant diversity barriers, taking a diverse workforce and blending it into a close-knit and productive one requires more effort. A diversity management programme to achieve this kind of blending usually starts at the top and includes strong leadership, assess the situation, providing diversity training and education, change culture and management systems, and evaluating the diversity management programme.

Kandola and Fullerton (1994) revealed that, management of diversity approach concentrates on individuals rather than groups, and include the improvement of opportunities for all individuals and not just those in minority groups. Hence, managing diversity involves everyone and benefits everyone, which is an attractive message to employers and employees alike. Managing diversity highlights the importance of culture. The roots of discrimination go very deep, and in relation to women. Simmons (1989) talks about challenging a system of institutional discrimination and anti-female conditioning in the prevailing culture, and the Macpherson Report (1999) identifies institutional racism as a root cause of discrimination in the police-force. Culture is important in two ways in managing diversity: First, organizational culture is one determinant of the way that organizations manage diversity and treat individuals from different groups. Equal opportunity approaches tend to concentrate on behaviour and, to a small extent, attitudes, whereas management of diversity approaches recognize a need to go beneath this. So changing the culture to one which treats individuals as individuals and supports them in developing their potential is critical, although the difficulties of culture change make this a very difficult task. Second, depending on the approach to the management of diversity, the culture of different groups within the organization comes into play. Recognizing that

men and women present different cultures at work and that is, this diversity needs to be managed, is key to promoting a positive environment of equal opportunity, which goes beyond merely fulfilling the demands of the statutory codes.

Masreliez – Steen (1989) explains how men and women have different perceptions, interpretations of reality, languages and ways of solving problems, which, if properly used, can be a benefit to the whole organization, as they are complementary. She described women as having a collectivist culture where they form groups, avoid the spotlight, see rank as unimportant and have few but close contacts. Alternatively, men are described as having an individualistic culture, where they form teams, develop a profile, enjoy competition and have many superficial contacts. The result is that men and women behave in different ways, often fail to understand each other and experience culture clash. However, the difference is about how things are done and not about what is achieved. However, we must be aware that here we have another stereotypical view which simplifies reality.
Finally, managing diversity is considered to be a more integrated approach to implementing equality. Whereas, equal opportunities approaches were driven by the Human Resource function, managing diversity is seen to be the responsibility of all managers. And, as there are business reasons for managing diversity it is argued that equality should not be dealt with as a separate issue, as with equal opportunities approaches, but integrated strategically into every aspect of what the organization does; this is often called mainstreaming.

Apart from this there are some fundamental problems with the management of diversity approach. First of these is the complexity, as there are differing interpretations, which we have so far ignored, and which focus on the prominence of groups or individuals. Miller (1996) highlights two different approaches to the management of diversity. The first is where individual differences are identified and celebrated, and where prejudices are exposed and challenged via training. The second, more orthodox, approach is where the organization seeks to develop the capacity of all. Also, it has been pointed out by Kirton and Greene (2003) that only a small number of organizations are ever quoted as management of diversity exemplars, and EOR (1999b) notes that even organizations which claim to be managing diversity do not appear to have a more diverse workforce than others, and neither have they employed more minority groups over the past years.

Equal Opportunities and Managing Diversity

Are equal opportunities and managing diversity completely different things. If so, is one approach preferable to the other? For the sake of clarity, we characterized a distinct

approach to managing diversity which suggests that it is different from equal opportunities. Miller (1996) identifies a parallel move from the collective to the individual in the changing emphasize in personnel management as opposed to Human Resource Management. However, managing diversity covers a range of approaches and emphases, some closer to equal opportunities, some very different. Much of the management of diversity suggests that it is superior to and not compatible with the equal opportunities approach (Kandoha, Fullerton and Mulroney, 1996). There is however, much support for equal opportunities and managing diversity to be viewed as mutually supportive and for this interaction to be seen as necessary for progress (Ford, 1996), although Newman and Williams (1995) argued that we are some way from a model which can incorporate difference and diversity in its individualized and collective sense. To see equal opportunities and management of diversity as alternative threatens to sever the link between organizational strategy and the realities of internal and external labour market disadvantage.

Implications for Human Work Originations in Nigeria

Conceptual Models of Organizational Responses to Equal Opportunities and Managing Diversity

A conceptual model of organizational responses to achieving equality of opportunity and managing diversity has been developed by LaFasto (1992). This is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Diversity



Reacting to the pressure not the problem, let alone the opportunity Compliance and obligation Keep the 'Law' out of our business Situational ethics Avoid legal consequences	Diversity is important as a competitive business practice and we are here to run a business We need to attract the best people Job stability/continuity is important to success Turnover costs money	Individual self-esteem is important to performance People who feel comfortable in their work environment are more likely to feel confident in their ability to contribute Business, social and moral values are one and the same Job is part of life, not vice versa The more productive people are those who feel valued for who they are Productive people = a high performance organization

Source: F. LaFasto (1992) 'Baxter Healthcare Organization', in B. W. Jackson, F. LaFasto, H. G. Schuiltz and D. Kelly, 'Diversity', Human Resource Management, Vol. 31, Nos. 1 and 2 Spring/Summer, p. 23.

An alternative framework is proposed by Jackson, LaFasto, Schultz and Kelly (1993) who concentrating on culture identify a series of stages and levels that organizations go through in becoming a multicultural organizations:

Level 1: Stage 1: The Exclusionary Organization
The exclusionary organization maintains the power of dominant groups in the organization, and excludes others.

Level 1: Stage 2: The Club
The club still excludes people but in a less explicit way. Some members of minority groups are allowed to join as long as they conform to predefined norms.

Level 2: Stage 3: The Compliance Organization
The compliance organization recognizes that there are other perspectives, but does not want to do anything to rock the boat. It may actively recruit minority groups at the bottom of the organization and make some token appointments.

Level 2: Stage 4: The Affirmative Act Organization
The affirmative action organization is committed to eliminating discrimination and

encourages employers to examine their attitudes and think differently. There is strong support for the development of new employees from minority groups.

Level 3: Stage 5: The Redefining Organization

The redefining organization is not satisfied with being anti-racist and so examines all it does and its culture to see the impact of these on its diverse multicultural workforce. It develops and implements policies to distribute power among all groups.

Level 3: Stage 6: The Multicultural Organization

The multicultural organization reflects the contribution and interests of all its diverse members in everything it does and expouses. All members are fully participants of the organization and there is recognition of a broader social responsibility, that is, to educate others outside the organization and to have an impact on external oppression.

A Process for Managing Diversity

Ross and Schneider (1992) advocate a strategic approach to managing diversity that is based on their conception of the difference between seeking equal opportunity and managing diversity. The difference, as they see it, is that diversity approaches are:

1. Internally driven, not externally imposed;
2. Focused on individuals rather than groups;
3. Focused on the total culture of the organization rather than just the systems used;
4. The responsibility of all in the organization and not just the Human Resource functions.

Their process involves the following steps:

1. Diagnosis of the current situation in terms of statistics, policy and culture, and looking at both issues and causes.
2. Setting aims which involves the business case for equal opportunities, identifying the critical role of commitment from the top of the organization, and a vision of what the organization would look like if it successfully managed diversity.
3. Spreading the ownership. This is a critical stage in which awareness needs to be raised, via a process of encouraging people to question their attitudes and preconceptions. Awareness needs to be raised in all employees at all levels, especially managers, and it needs to be clear that diversity is not something owned by the personnel function.
4. Policy development comes after awareness raising as it enables a contribution to be made from all in the organization, that is, new systems need to be changed via involvement and not through imposition on the unwilling.

5. Managing the transition needs to involve a range of training initiatives. Positive action programmes, specifically designed for minority groups, may be used to help them understand the culture of the organization and acquire essential skills; policy implementation programmes, particularly focusing on selection, appraisal, development and coaching; further awareness training and training to identify cultural, diversity and manage different cultures and across different cultures.
6. Managing the programmes to sustain momentum. This involves a champion, not necessarily from the Human Resource function, but someone who continues in their previous organization role in addition. Also, the continued involvement of senior managers is important, together with trade unions. Harnessing initiatives that come up through departments and organizing support networks for disadvantaged groups are key at this stage. Ross and Schneider (1992) also recommended measuring achievements in terms of business benefit, that is better relationships with customers, improvements in productivity and profitability for example, which need to be communicated to all employees.

Ellis and Sonnenfield (1994) make the point that training for diversity needs to be far more than a one – day event. They recommend a series of workshops which allow time for individuals to think, check their assumptions and reassess between training sessions. Key issues that need tackling in arranging training are ensuring that the facilitator has the appropriate skills; carefully considering participant mix; deciding whether the training should be voluntary or mandatory; being prepared to cope with any blacklash from previously advantaged groups who now feel threatened; and being prepared for the fact that training may reinforce stereotypes. Ellis and Sonnenfield (1994) argued that training has enormous potential benefits, but that there are risks involved.

Equal Opportunities Policies

Many employing organizations have introduced equal opportunities policies in order to guide employment practices. Such policies spell out what constitutes unfair discrimination, e.g. on grounds of ethnicity or sex and what the organization hopes to achieve through the policy. Some employers have appointed an Equal Opportunities Officer/Manager to implement the policy. This person is usually a woman, and may be a member of an ethnic minority. An important aspect of any Equal Opportunities policy is mentoring. The employer needs to ascertain how many employees fall into the categories concerned and where they work, what jobs they do and what training and career development they might have received. This information can provide the basis for assessing whether arbitrary discrimination may be occurring.

A postal survey which was sent out in July-August, 1999 (EOR, 1999b) showing that 95 percent of respondents organizations had an equal opportunities policy or statement, but Cully, Woodland, O'Reilly and Dix (1999) found that 66 percent of organizations in the Workplace Employee Relations (WER) survey had policies or a statement. Itzin and Phillipson (1993) also found that three – quarter of the 221 employers which responded to their questionnaire had an equal opportunities policy. Thus, clearly the existence of policy or statement depends on the nature of organization surveyed. It would also be a mistake to assume that all policies cover all potentially disadvantaged groups (EOR, 1996b). It is interesting that EOR reported that organizations tended to have equal opportunities policies rather than managing diversity policies, and equal opportunities and managing diversity appeared to be viewed as complementary means of achieving equality rather than different concepts. However, some organizations appear to move from one approach to the other. Maxwell, Blair, and McDougall (2001), for example, express the difficulty of transition from an equal opportunities policy to a diversity policy. They explained the need to avoid the impression that the equal opportunities approach was inadequate or that those who promoted it were ill informed or mistaken. However, despite the prevalence of policies there is always the concern that having a policy is more about projecting the right image than about reflecting how the organizations operates. For example, Hoque and Noon (1999) found that having an equal opportunities statement made no difference to the treatment of speculative applications from individuals who were either white or from an ethnic minority group and that companies with ethnic minority statements were more likely to discriminate against the ethnic minority applicant.

Conclusions

In the final analysis, equal opportunities at human work boils down to two key issues: Firstly; changing people's attitudes so that they become more objective and less fixed in their ideas about people who are different from themselves; and Secondly, making the fullest use of the organization's human resources. The best thing about equal opportunities policies is that they have the potential to bring out the best in the workforce. In this task personnel and human resource managers have a key role to play. It is also observed that legislation can have only a limited effect in achieving equality, and does not change attitudes, beliefs, and cultures and structures. Organizations and their cultures, processes and structures are founded on the needs of the majority group and individuals from other groups are expected to adapt to this norm. This explains why progress towards equality of opportunity has been very slow. Equal opportunities approaches highlight the moral argument for equal treatment, whereas managing diversity highlights the business case. Actual changes in practice relating to equalizing opportunity are taking place very slowly, and only long-term organizational transformation is likely to support equality. Therefore,

equal opportunities approaches and the management of diversity are best viewed, not as alternatives, but as complementary approaches which need to be interrelated.

Recommendations

This study recommends the following:

1. The essence of equality should be to avoid unfair discrimination. Thus, equality at work should be basically about fair treatment for the individual.
2. Discrimination should be permitted on grounds of genuine occupational qualifications.
3. Employers of more than twenty employees should employ a quota of disabled persons up to three percent of the total staff.
4. Employing organizations should introduce equal opportunities policies in order to guide employment practices. Such policies should spell out what constitutes unfair discrimination.
5. An important aspect of any employment opportunity should be monitoring. The employer needs to ascertain how many employees fall into the categories concerned, and where they work, what jobs they do and what training and career development they might have received.
6. Sex Discrimination Act should not permit employers to discriminate in favour of individuals of a particular sex or ethnic group.
7. All positive action programmes need to be carefully thought out if they are not to be counter-productive.
8. Organizations should appoint Equal Opportunities Officer/Manager who will be responsible in implementing the policy. Preferably a women member of an ethnic minority.
9. Managing diversity should focus on the total culture of the organization. Also, it should focus on individuals rather than groups.
10. There should be training for diversity management, which should be fur more than a one – day event. A series of workshops which allow time for individuals to think, check their assumptions and reassess between training sessions should be adapted.
11. Positive action programmes, specifically designed for minority groups, may be used to help them understand the culture of the organization and acquire essential skills.
12. Policy development should come after awareness raising as it enables a contribution to be made from all in the organization.
13. The difficulty of transition from an equal opportunities policy to a diversity policy should be bridged and removed.

14. Multicultural organizations should reflect the contribution and interests of all its diverse members in everything they do.
15. Affirmative action organization should be committed to eliminating discrimination and encourage employees to examine their attitudes and think differently.
16. Managing diversity should be the responsibility of all managers.
17. The fact that women have a different culture, with different strengths and weaknesses, means that women need managing and developing in a different way, need different forms of support and coaching.

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