Diversity Management Practices in Select Firms in India: A Critical Analysis

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There has been increasing awareness on the benefits of a diversified workforce and diversity and inclusion are being recognised as strategic components of business.This paper critically examines the diversity management practices being followed by three leading IT organizations of India as they all are Indian multinationals having their operations in different parts of the world. Analysis of the diversity management practices in these organizations revealed that global operation, dynamic business environment, dependence on knowledge and talent shortage are some of the key reasons behind focusing on diversity. Gender diversity and diversity of nationality have received greater attention than other issues like diversity of the differently abled, underprivileged, race, ethnicity and age-group.

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Diversity Management: What & Why

Diversity and inclusion are being increasingly recognised as strategic components of business, and the need to deal with these issues in an appropriate manner is being felt widely around the world. The thinking is driven by the assumption that a diverse workforce with an inclusive culture makes organizations "more innovative, agile, and attuned to the need of the customers" (Cox & Blake, 1991). It is usually believed that a heterogeneous workforce is a rich seedbed for ideas (Johansson, 2005).The need for diversity is also being driven by factors such as "talent non-availability, changing demographics, customer expectation, globalization of business, sustainability and an imperative for innovation" (NASSCOM, 2011) which stem from the dynamics of the changing business environment around the world.

One of the largest under-represented groups that organizations have tapped in recent years has been women. However, the approach underwent a change in the light of increas-

ing talent complexity. Rather than focusing on women alone, today, organizations are aiming at taking optimum advantage of the complete talent pool available to them which includes people from multiple generations, PwDs (people with disability) and smaller groups of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) (Saikia, 2012). Business leaders are now emphasizing on diversity and aiming at boosting organizational effectiveness through a diverse workforce (Thomas & Ely, 1996). They are seeking to build a diversity-sensitive workforce which would be comfortable with diversity tensions. It is being increasingly felt that it is not just enough for leaders to possess these capabilities themselves; they must also develop them throughout the organization (Goldsmith, 2010) and thus they are encouraging their employees to understand each other and be sensitive towards each other's needs and capabilities. The ability of a diverse group of people to build strength and unity through their diversity is the power that propels organizations towards new dimensions of performance.

> **The real challenge, therefore, is to make employees develop an accommodative attitude towards people from different backgrounds.**

However, the challenge of managing diversity is immense. Employees do not usually set aside their cultural values, lifestyle preferences and differences when they come to work. The real challenge, therefore, is to make employees develop an accommodative attitude to-

wards people from different backgrounds by addressing their diverse lifestyles, needs, aspirations, interests, capabilities and work styles (Robins et al, 2009). There is also an additional issue of impact of diversity on human resource management practices, which have to accommodate all demographic and social factors. The issue of cross cultural communication is important too while dealing with diversity.

Diversity Management Practices of Indian Organizations

Cultural diversity is the hallmark of Indian society and very few countries in the world are as diverse as India. At the governmental level, there have been affirmative efforts (in the shape of caste and region based reservations) right since independence to strike a balance in terms of different castes and communities in the governmental workforce. This had often led to accusations of trumping merit in the name of balanced social development. Therefore, in the private business houses there has been a conventional distaste for ensuring diversity through affirmative action. Diversity initiatives within the private organizations thus largely imitate global practices to ensure a diverse workforce.

Business houses in India turned their attention towards diversity management initiatives only during the last decade. Various organizations have now started linking 'diversity' with their strategic objectives. Especially, the issue of gender diversity, which is narrowly defined as more women participating in the

workforce, has been a new trend with organizations going overseas and looking for global reach. As statistics show, over 400 million women are employed in different sectors in India. Women constitute thirty percent of the workforce in the IT sector. Moreover, socially disadvantaged classes (scheduled castes/tribes, etc.) have also entered organizations through affirmative policies of the government. The number of older employees has grown because of improved medical and healthcare facilities. IT Industries like Infosys, TCS and Wipro are actively recruiting foreign nationals and women, by both choice and design. Bharti Enterprise, for example, has mandated its recruitment agencies to ensure 25-30 percent of women candidates at the interview stage.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To study the diversity management policies and practices of the select leading IT- BPO companies of India.

- To critically analyze their diversity management initiatives.

Methodology

Organizations in the service sector are well-known for their human resource practices in India. The rapidly growing IT- BPO sector, which faces talent crunch to a great extent, has especially set the trend in case of many HR initiatives to attract, develop and retain talent. During the last two decades this sec-

tor has grown many folds in terms of business and manpower. Hence, this study has chosen to examine the diversity management practices in three leading Indian IT organizations— Infosys, HCL, and Wipro. These are Indian multinational companies having their operations in different parts of the country. They hire manpower across the country and globe and have diverse workforce with them. The human resource challenges they face are more or less similar. Hence it is important to understand what kind of diversity management practices they have. This research is mostly based on the published data made available by these organizations.

WIPRO

Registered in 1956 as a company and headquartered in Bangalore, India, Wipro Limited has 87 subsidiaries of which 7 are Indian companies and the remaining 80 are registered outside India. It has operations in over 50 countries with a predominant presence in the Americas, Europe and India. Its IT businesses consisting of Wipro Technologies (WT), Wipro Infotech and Wipro BPO seek to deliver expert solutions to its clients.

Nature & Purpose of Diversity & Inclusion: WIPRO has an employee base of about 120,000, including people from 74 nationalities, spread across 54 countries. WT is committed to "leveraging diversity through effective leadership, engagement and accountability", which, as it claims, has improved its performance. It has been striving to attract and retain the best talent from a globally diverse tal-

ent pool which helps it better serve its customers and provides a strong competitive edge in the global market place.

> **WT aims at turning it into "a truly global employer with a local touch, gaining worldwide acceptance and penetration".**

Diversity of Nationality: The diversity and inclusiveness initiative at WT aims at turning it into "a truly global employer with a local touch, gaining worldwide acceptance and penetration". The initiative's three main goals are: (i) to attract and recruit top talent primarily from the local population, (ii) to encourage employees to be diversity sensitive and work together as global teams, and (iii) to develop their capabilities to partner effectively with clients from diverse nationalities. At WT, there has been an increase in global recruitment in recent years. It has about 122,000 personnel from 69 nationalities (Sustainability Report, 2010-11: 61). Out of its total workforce overseas, 38 percent are locally hired. It attracts local top talent and 19 percent of its IT workforce are non-Indian.[1] WT promotes an inclusive environment and recognizes the differences in backgrounds, knowledge, experiences and potential of people from various cultures. Wipro recognizes that a diverse corporate culture "stimulates produc-

tive creativity and innovation" and "enables talent transformation".

Gender Diversity: WT launched its Women of Wipro (WoW) initiative, as part of the Wipro Diversity Council, in 2008. It is an umbrella program with the primary aim of making the workplace more engaging, suitable and friendly for women. The objectives of WoW are "to reduce the attrition of women employees, facilitate increased numbers of women managers at a senior level, and develop Wipro as an equal opportunity employer with world-class practices to nurture women employees" (The Imperative of Hope, Wipro Sustainability Report 2010-11: 72-73). It aims at bringing together women executives across business units and locations and making them work together for better causes and common goals". The main purpose is to develop faith in the capabilities of the women. Because of these initiatives the percentage of women representation has increased from 17 in 2009 to 29 in 2011. It aims to touch 33 percent in future.

Diversity due to Disabilities: As part of Wipro's diversity and inclusion strategy, people with disabilities (PwD) are being recruited with the definite purpose to help differently abled individuals to leverage their talent and build their careers at Wipro. In 2012, there were 260 people with disabilities in the workforce, up from 55 in 2011. The initiatives taken at Wipro to encourage and enable this specific workforce are[2]: (i)

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[1] In 2010-11, 19% of the IT Businesses workforce is non-Indian as against 7% in 2009-10 and 5% in 2008-09 and 7.6% of WIPRO recruitment were non Indians across 43 nationalities(The Imperative of Hope, Wipro Sustainability Report 2010-11).

[2] "Sustainability: People with Disabilities", at http://www.wipro.org/sustainability/people_with_disabilities.htm

build accessible physical infrastructure, develop people-oriented policies (communicate relevant information), develop talent transformation measures to assimilate PwD, and have in place a continuing talent acquisition process.

Affirmative Action for the Unprivileged[3]: Wipro has launched a program called REACH to increase employment and to improve employability of the unprivileged youth by assisting them in their education and acquiring employment in areas that match their talent. It is also connecting itself to several colleges to identify and recruit capable youngsters. Wipro Centre for Employment (WCE) is also providing training to students to make them employable in a range of industries through courses which are geared to improve their behavioral skills, functional knowledge and competencies.

Recognitions & Awards Received: Wipro won the NASSCOM Corporate Award for excellence in gender inclusivity in 2010 and won the NASSCOM Diversity Award in 2011. It was ranked 2nd by the Association of Diversity Council, USA in 2010. Its 'Diversity Council' which is formed with the objective of creating a dynamic and powerful "socio-business network" has been ranked second in the list of Top 25 US diversity councils by The Association of Diversity Councils, a practice group of diversity and inclusion consulting and training firm PRISM International, Inc..

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[3] See "Sustainability: Underprivileged", at http://www.wipro.org/sustainability/underprivileged.htm

INFOSYS

Infosys Limited was originally named as Infosys Technologies Limited and founded in the year 1981. It is an Indian provider of business consulting, technology, engineering and outsourcing services. Headquartered in Bangalore, today, Infosys is a global leader in the "next generation" of IT and consulting with revenues of US$ 6.994 billion (2011-2012).

> **It has employees from 85 countries, with the widest possible variety of nationalities, cultures, gender identities, employment histories, and levels of physical ability.**

Nature & Purpose of Diversity & Inclusion: As a global company, Infosys tries to promote diversity within the organization. In fact, it is the first Indian IT company to establish a separate office for diversity and inclusivity. The composition of its workforce reflects this—it has employees from 85 countries, with the widest possible variety of nationalities, cultures, gender identities, employment histories, and levels of physical ability. It actively fosters inclusivity across business units and company offices. It recognizes that diverse people bring to the workplace multiplicity of contrasting opinions and worldviews, which helps them in developing "new ideas, methods and perspectives". Infosys has also developed "methods and system for generating an inclusivity index of an organization"[4] and it has also registered a patent.

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[4] For details see http://www.freepatentsonline.com/y2011/0178829.html

Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Approach: In the process of embracing diversity, Infosys seeks to ensure that the unique advantage of every minority becomes a part of the Infosys core values— C-LIFE (Customer Delight, Leadership by Example, Integrity, Fairness and Pursuit of Excellence).

Managing differences: At Infosys, international teams are working together in different parts of the world to develop solutions for their customers. There is an understanding within Infosys that in order to attract and retain global talent they have to offer the best diversity opportunities. Thus, there is a latent recognition of the necessity to deemphasize the differences and celebrate the commonalities.

Diversity of Nationality: With manpower of 149,994 from 85 countries, Infosys has offices in almost all the continents in 30 countries and development centres in India, US, China, Austra-

lia, UK, Canada, Japan and many other countries. The diversity team at Infosys focuses on propagating and promoting diversity and inclusivity among employees through a program called AC-TION,[5] to foster inclusivity, Infosys encourages employees to participate and contribute their view through focused affinity networks. This D&I approach is incremental and business driven.

Gender Diversity: Infosys has taken measures to increase the percentage of women employees across different national regions. Women constitute more than 33 percent of the Infosys workforce. Tables 1 and 2 de-

Table 1 Employee Distribution across Region in 2009, 2010 & 2011 (as on March 31, 2011)

Region	2009	2010	2011
India	98,409	106,112	120,878
Asia Pacific (APAC)	3,434	2970	3972
Americans	2032	2836	3686
Europe	975	1878	2284
Total	104.850	113,796	130,820

Source: Infosys Sustainability Report 2010-11

Table 2 Male Female Ratio in Different National Region 2009, 2010 & 2011

Region	Male 2009	Female	Male 2010	Female	Male 2011	Female
India	65,757	32,652	71,039	35,073	80,320	40,558
APAC	1750	1684	1650	1320	2322	1650
America	1705	327	2194	642	2810	876
Europe	638	337	907	971	1152	1132
Total	69,850	35,000	75,790	38,006	86,604	44,216

Source: Infosys Sustainability Report 2010-11

pict the percentage of women across different national regions and role-wise distribution of male and female workers during 2009-2011.

[5] ACTION stands for— Audit inclusivity & diversity levels; Create change agents; Train the manager; Initiate and implement alternative work models; Organize and assist affinity groups; and, Network with external bodies to bench-mark practices)

Table 3 Role wise Distribution of Male-Female Professionals 2009, 2010 & 2011

Role	2009 Male	Female	2010 Male	Female	2011 Male	Female
Top	249	29	291	21	377	21
Senior	13,603	2121	13,065	1959	14,148	2095
Middle	16,704	6301	22,961	9198	30290	12,860
Associate	39,292	26,558	39,473	26831	41,789	29240
Total	69,850	35,000	75,790	38,006	86,604	44,216

Source: Infosys Sustainability Report 2010-11

Some of the well-known programs introduced by Infosys to enhance gender diversity are: Infosys Women's Inclusivity Network (IWIN), Family Matters Network and Mentoring Program for Women. IWIN, launched in 2003, addresses work-life issues and developmental needs of the women employees and recognizes the unique aspirations and needs of women. It provides avenues for vocational, personal and psychological counsel to enable professional and personal development. The Family Matters Network provides support to employees on parenting matters. These networks partner with major gender networks and across the globe to benchmark their own practices in inclusivity and publish research papers. The special Mentoring Program for Women, launched in 2008, believes in supporting and recognizing employee's voluntarism. Infosys also claims to support career advancement of its women employees through several initiatives. One of these is the 'Infosys Women Institute of Leadership', which is designed to provide training and build necessary competency for leadership development, particularly for women.

Diversity Due to Disability: As per the Infosys document titled Infosys Diversity and Inclusion Approach: Creating Common Ground (2009), since 2006 Infosys has made conscious efforts to support employees with physical disabilities through its 'Equal Opportunities team'. Focused interventions like training and campaign are deployed. Infosys celebrates 'World Disability Day' to sensitize employees and allow them to share their thoughts on creating an inclusive work environment.

Table 4 No of Employees with Disabilities 2009, 2010, 2011

Employee Details	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
New Employees with Disability	36	11	4
Total No of employees with disability	180	165	139

Source: Infosys Sustainability Report 2010-11

Generational Diversity: Employees of different generations work at Infosys. Most of the employees (75%) fall in the less than 30 years category, and a significant percentage of employees (24%) are in the age group of 30-49. People in the 49-plus age-group constitute only one percent. Though Infosys

does not mention the measures taken to integrate different generations at work, maintaining of data and sharing it is a reflection of the fact that it is trying to create awareness with regard to generational diversity.

Table 5 No of Employees in Different Age group

Age	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Less than 30 years	84,370	92,429	98,910
30-49 years	20,171	20,941	31,298
Greater than or equal to 50	309	426	612
Total	104,850	113,796	130,820

Source: Infosys Sustainability Report 2010-11

Recognitions & Awards Received: Infosys BPO received the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) *"Excellence in Practice Award"* for its diversity hiring initiatives in 2009. Infosys BPO is the only company from India to be honored under this category. Infosys also won the first NASSCOM-India Today Woman Corporate Award for excellence in gender inclusivity at the NASSCOM-IT Women Leadership Summit 2007 at Bangalore. Infosys BPO won the prestigious Helen Keller award for the path-breaking initiative to create an inclusive workforce through equal opportunities to people who are differently-able.

HCL

HCL is a $6 billion leading global technology and IT enterprise comprising two companies listed in India— HCL Technologies and HCL Infosystems. Founded in 1976, HCL is one of India's first IT companies. A pioneer of modern computing, HCL is a global transformational enterprise today. Its range of offerings includes product engineering, custom and package applications, BPO, IT infrastructure services, IT hardware, systems integration, and distribution of information and communications technology (ICT) products.

Nature & Purpose of Diversity & Inclusion: HCL's Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) vision is to reinforce the "Employee First" philosophy by building an inclusive organization that fosters respect for individuals and celebrates differences among them. HCL makes a conscious effort to support and promote non-discriminatory practices for people from diverse background to participate, contribute and develop equitably.

HCL's Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) vision is to reinforce the "Employee First" philosophy by building an inclusive organization.

HCL Infosystems believes that diversity has a positive impact on business and the company promises to continually take steps to create equal employment opportunities without any discrimination, and not to take employment away from applicants belonging to disadvantaged sec-

tions of society if they possess competitive skills and right job credentials.

Inclusion & Diversity Approach: HCL's diversity approach focuses on sustaining an inclusive culture. There is a continuing effort at HCL to connect with communities and help them leverage diversity. HCL recruits people from different genders, cultures, ethnicities, work experiences, and abilities, and focuses on creating and sustaining a nurturing environment for employees with diverse backgrounds. HCL has its "Affinity networks" and "Employee First Councils" to reach out to its employees from diverse backgrounds. These networks ensure that diverse perspectives are included in all its business operations. It also focuses on creating support systems and policies to facilitate work-life balance and continuity. HCL has a focused community intervention program which helps employees reach out to rural areas, engage and enable people (specifically women and girl children), to lead a dignified life. The Campus Force Team at HCL provides focused skill building interventions to nurture the less privileged students in India.

Diversity of Nationality: HCL employs over 90,000 professionals of diverse nationalities, operating from 31 countries. It has global partnerships with several leading 'Fortune 1000' firms, including several IT and Technology majors. HCL Global Systems has established a number of initiatives to promote and integrate diversity at every level within the organization, and to demonstrate this commitment locally, nationally, and globally.

Gender Diversity: HCL has various mentoring programs and initiatives aimed at engaging, developing and retaining women employees. Diversity and Sustainability Office conducts regular workshops and panel discussions on the importance of diversity and gender balance for a sustainable tomorrow. Under the guiding philosophy of "Employees First, Customers Second", HCL's Diversity and Sustainability Office has introduced various policies to make the workplace more gender sensitive and help enable women as business transformers.[6]

HCL has a 'Women Empowered People Action Team' focusing on building HCL as an employer of choice for women employees. Through this initiative, women employees are provided coaching, mentoring, and support network within the organization. It also has a Women First Council, "by the women, of the women, for the women", which provides an organized platform to address unique and special needs of the women.

Affirmative Action for Socially Disadvantaged: HCL Infosystems also supports the idea of taking affirmative action for social equity for the disadvantaged sections of the society (particularly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) in the workplace. As part of this initiative, HCL Infosystems is taking steps towards increasing employability among those who are socially and economically disadvantaged by providing them training, voluntary coaching and mentoring. It is making efforts for up-

[6] Detailed literature can be accessed at http://www.hcltech.com/careers/diversity-hcl/

skilling and continual training of employees from socially disadvantaged sections to enhance their capabilities and competitive skills.

Table 6 Percentage of Manpower from the Socially Disadvantaged (OBC, SC, ST) at HCL Infosystems

	Disadvantaged Manpower	Total Manpower	Percentage
As on June 2011 as per voluntary disclosure	1130	7231	15.63%
As on January 2010 as per voluntary disclosure	815	6444	12.88%

HCL Learning announced Scholarship Scheme for the Technical Training for economically & socially disadvantaged. HCL Infosystems partners with Prajwala, a NGO for providing skill development training. HCL Infosystems partners with Sukarya, an NGO for regular sale of products to employees at office premises. HCL Infosystems visits approximately 350 diploma institutes in rural and semi urban areas and in 2010-2011, it recruited 600 diploma engineers with a high percentage from economic and socially backward sections. HCL Infosystems also partners with 'Ability Foundation' for employing people with disability.

Critical Analysis

Indian IT-BPO industry has been among the first to recognize the business imperative of 'Diversity and Inclusion'. It has so far set up high standards in this field. Recognizing the need to leverage the globally available talent pool and "demographic dividend" in some countries, the industry is gearing up to develop a diverse and inclusive workforce. From the literature produced by the three IT-BPO Companies (WIPRO, Infosys & HC) covered in this study it becomes clear that they are well aware of the significance of the diversity management practices and they have well laid-out policies in terms of managing diversity. Some of the reasons could be:

1. All the three are global companies having their operations in various counties. Infosys operates in 83 countries, HCL in 31 and WIPRO in 54 and they have deliberately encouraged a highly diverse workforce. For these companies, therefore, managing a diverse workforce is no longer a choice but an imperative. These organizations have successfully made efforts to increase their demographic diversity. Such companies almost always "operate in a business environment in which there is increased diversity among customers, clients, or the labor pool— and therefore, a clear opportunity or an imminent threat to the company" (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

2. The Indian IT-BPO companies operate in a highly competitive and dynamic environment. Talent acquisition and retention is a key challenge for companies in this industry. In addition to this they are among the largest employment providers in the country. The average attrition rate for

this industry varies from 30% to 35% (Sharma, 2004). With the changing workforce trends and an increasingly competitive market environment, developing and sustaining a healthy talent mix is an important business imperative. In this context, the twin areas of diversity and inclusion have gained immense attention in these IT-BPO companies.

3. This industry is a knowledge-based sector where there is dependency on innovation. There is a general belief that innovation is driven by diversity. All these companies recognize and promote diversity.

Diversity & Inclusion Approach

The agenda for gender diversity is now well-established with the industry having invested considerable time and effort to sustain and build on it. The overall objective has been to create a culture that fosters diversity and builds an environment conducive for growth. In this regard, some organizations are taking a mandated and number-based target approach, while there are others who emphasize on building a supportive culture with strong processes and are averse to targets. Irrespective of the approach adopted, structured sensitization programmes are becoming the norm with time and energy being spent on communication.

Gender Diversity: Recognizing the growing influence of women power, IT-BPO organizations have been gearing up to catalyze their growth and provide women with rewarding careers. This in-

dustry has taken a lead in adopting best practices in HR to attract women employees and emerge as a preferred career destination for these professionals. The main focus of Diversity efforts is on hiring and promoting women. The major reason for this is that women, who make up 50 percent of the population, represent a large, untapped (or under-tapped) resource. NASSCOM's role in this direction is commendable. It has instituted "Gender Inclusivity Awards" for companies that promote women leadership and development. Infosys Technologies has been one of the eminent winners of this award in recent years.

> **Although women are better represented in the IT- BPO sector, they have not yet assumed significant role and status.**

The flip side of the story is that although women are better represented in the IT- BPO sector, they have not yet assumed significant role and status. Most of them have been concentrated in the lower strata of job categories such as coding and programming; and only a minor percentage is presented in the development part of IT. An ILO report in 2001 clearly indicated that the high-end firms that undertake software products, R&D, turnkey solutions and strategic technical alliances prefer to employ more men than women (Suriya & Nagarajan, 2004: 74). In 2011, women constituted 29 percent of the workforce in WIPRO; 34 percent in Infosys and 24.5 percent in HCL. But their percentage in the senior and top management positions in these

organizations was rather low. The Infosys Sustainability Report 2010-11 revealed that out of a total of 44,216 women professionals, only 21 were at the top managerial level and 2095 at the senior management level which constituted only 4.8 percent of the total women workforce. Similarly in HCL about 80 percent of women were at the entry level, 15-18 percent at first or second level and the rest were at senior levels (Chatterjee, 2011). This reveals that in spite of providing gender inclusive work environment, there is no significant change in the numbers at the top level. So for all the three organizations 'developing women leaders' must be a key focus area. A study by Catalyst (2007) states that companies with more Women Board Directors have higher Return on Equity (53%), Return on Sales (42%) and Return on Invested Capital (66%) than those with minimal representation of women on board. Arguably, it makes business sense to develop women into leadership positions within organizations.

Diversity with Disabilities: It is really noteworthy that the organizations under study here are trying to recruit more number of people with disabilities and are committed to provide an inclusive work-environment to accommodate them. All these organizations are providing the necessary physical infrastructure and have undertaken measures to ensure work-place diversity. However, there have been mixed results. In Wipro there were 260 people with disabilities in 2012 as compared to 55 in 2011, whereas in the case of Infosys, the number dropped to 139 in 2010-11 from 180 in 2008-09.

In the case of HCL detailed information on this aspect of diversity was not available. This is indicative of the fact that organizations need to give more attention to this aspect of diversity and sharing data about them is the first step forward in the right direction.

Companies must understand that the market for products and services for people with disabilities is over $200 billion. Hence getting PwD employees could be a unique window or perspective on marketing for this customer base. Moreover the PwD recruits often have a great motivation to succeed. The area of concern here is how to help the differently able people to be employable. Organizations recruiting them need to take necessary measures for skill enhancement.

Generational Diversity: Generational diversity is an important source of diversity especially in India. In the selected companies though a large percentage of the work force belongs to the young generation one also finds the existence of a significant middle and higher age group. Interactions between different generations of workers may sometime be very rewarding and serve as avenues for sharing of experience and knowledge. It seems that the organizations under study do not take any special measures to ensure generational diversity. It is often natural that these companies would have a larger number of younger employee population because of the demographic dividend one finds in India where the employable population is mostly from the below 30-year range. However, without retaining experienced

workforce at the top, it is difficult on the part of the organizations to inculcate and nurture the right organizational values

Diversity of the Underprivileged: India is a country of enormous diversity, and divisions within social categories make such diversity quite complex. Age-long social discrimination as well as economic disparity often leads to the formation of the social underclass, the members of which find it difficult to join the social and economic mainstream. This is an India-specific phenomenon, and it calls for affirmative action and positive discrimination— in terms of either enabling them through targeted education and training before recruitment, or through reservations in recruitment for special categories, and then enhancing their skills through in-job training.

While all the three IT-BPO organizations have adopted diversity and inclusion as guiding principles for recruitment, this typical Indian phenomenon of a permanent underprivileged class requiring special measures for inclusion has drawn sufficient attention although HCL and Wipro have taken some rudimentary steps in the right direction. Therefore, the Indian IT-BPO organizations may have to work on this India-specific issue and include diversity of the underprivileged as an issue of concern.

Conclusion

Workforce diversity is a rather new trend being adapted by Indian organizations and especially the larger employers with global reach. Gender di-versity has received greater attention than other issues like diversity of the differently able, underprivileged, race, ethnicity and age-group. As Indian business comes of age, it is probable that there will be a significant change in the existing trends of diversity in the coming years. People from different age groups and diverse backgrounds are fast becoming part of a single workforce. Thus, organizations will have to revise and customize their HR strategies to address the issue of di-versity– age, gender, capability, caste, ethnicity, and other such important categories that may require progressive inclusion. This will also enable organizations to identify and harness diverse talent across multiple social categories, and contribute to organizational effectiveness.

Organizations that want to thrive in the prevailing business environment will need to have managers and employees, who are aware of the advantages of diversity and inclusion, and have the necessary skills to deal with such important issues. To compete globally and benefit from the demographic dividend that India offers today in the shape of an untapped talent pool, Indian business leaders must continue to create a work-place that respects diversity and taps diverse talent effectively by building a harmonious eco-system which leverages diversity rather than being constrained by it. The Indian IT and BPO industry, by taking the plunge ahead of others, can show the way for others in India in the field of diversity and inclusion.

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