Promotion of Diversity in Employment and an Inclusive Workplace Culture

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Paper focus

Focus of paper:

- *Concepts*

- Empirical *findings*

- Possible public administration *policies* to improve workplace culture

Diversity versus Inclusion

- *Diversity* – both visible and invisible differences among people that shape their perspectives.

- *Inclusion* – where people consciously adapt their behaviours and practices to include others rather than expecting them to fit into the prevailing culture.

The giraffe and the zebra

Noah's Ark Analogy

The giraffe looks at the zebra and thinks that kind of animal is funny looking. He doesn't look like me – foolishly short neck, silly black and white stripes and eats what looks like garbage. Not like me with elegant long neck, beautiful brown and white spots and eats only the finest leaves.....

(Deloitte 2011:17)

Corporate Noah's Ark

- 'this is what happens when you create the corporate version of Noah's Arc and such clashes will happen indefinitely until leaders and companies come up with a plan for integrating these groups, and benefiting from the stripes the spots and the horns rather than waiting for company-wide conformity'

(Deloitte 2011:17)

Unconscious Bias

- Where perceptions or our hidden beliefs influence individual behaviour, without the individual's conscious knowledge:

    - e.g. cloning in recruitment; assumptions about family responsibilities and job performance

Why the Concern?

- *Under-representation* of minority groups.
- Fairness and *basic human rights*
- *'Smart Economics'*: Lack of diversity and inclusion hinders capability,productivity and performance, especially in leadership teams.

    (Deloitte 2011; McKinsey 2015)

A salutory case study: EPA

- Despite best intentions, diversity management program failed.
- Because staff did not understand why diversity strategy was being used - so a backlash.
- Lesson: need first to understand existing attitudes and the 'diversity climate' to see extent of 'organisational readiness'.
(Soni 2000)

Cultural Audit: findings

- Explored cultural factors *perceived* to affect career progress of senior women and people with disability

    - across several government agencies

- Big differences between minority and more dominant groups

- Much unconscious bias related to employment and career progression

Main Cultural Barriers

- unconscious bias in language, behaviours and preconceptions of capabilities;

- exclusive culture : often due to lack of knowledge and awareness including in HR;

- also some lack of committed leadership.

Main Organisational Barriers

- unclear management roles and responsibilities;

- absence of senior role models;

- limited HR experience, compliance oriented;

- impact of resource constraints;

- gap between policies and implementation.

Main Individual Barriers

- lack of empowerment leading to low confidence;

- work not matching capability;

- inability to access flexible work arrangements;

- uninformed performance reviews.

Six Policy Domains

(1) Committed, inclusive leadership

(2) Support and Development

(3) Talent Management and succession planning

(4) Workplace flexibilities

(5) Attraction, recruitment and selection

(6) Governance and Infrastructure

Concluding considerations

- Start with a cultural audit to assess organisational readiness

- Anticipate backlash and reverse discrimination
  - build awareness of performance benefits from inclusive culture first.

- Reframe discussion toward valuing diversity as a resource/capability.

Concluding considerations (cont.)

- Counter belief that the concept of merit-based assessment already exists.

- Provide workplace champions

- Integrate diversity initiatives in HRM systems as well as business strategy

- with inclusiveness and trust, brings 'disclosure'.

- Get to the heart as well as to the brain!

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