

# The D & I Philosophy: A Business Imperative for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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**Abstract** The Paper aims to discover whether the D & I (Diversity and Inclusiveness) Philosophy as a Business Imperative impacts upon organizational growth and corporate profits; as well as acts as a powerful employee-motivator for forward-looking organizations. Consequently, the purpose of the Paper is to show that it is imperative for organizational top management to put in place a workplace philosophy that respects, values, and harnesses the fruitfulness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives of a diverse workforce. This is because managing diversity seems to be an imperative for corporate profitability and increased turnovers. The methodology employed in this Paper is the qualitative, research-based approach, whereby the researcher traces the history of progress in various fields of human endeavors which seems to indicate that developmental ideals have often come from non-conformists - “the peacocks”- who do not accept the status quo. Research outcomes thus seem to suggest that geniuses often challenged popular views, and revolutionized human thoughts and ideas. Clearly therefore findings from a wide variety of successful and enduring business organizations have indicated that of the five types of birds that exist in an organization, viz., the Penguins, the Peacocks, the Pigeons, the Sparrows, and the Ostriches, it is the non-conformist peacocks that lead the way. Further, findings indicate that negative assumptions, “stereo-types” and beliefs about other races, ethnic groups, nationalities, religions, age, genders, and skills impair organizational development and corporate profitability. Finally, findings indicate that diversity is now an issue because the contemporary world is a global village in which customers and markets that organisations serve are becoming more and more diverse.

**Keywords** Business Imperative, Diversity, Iceberg of Differences, Inclusiveness, Profitability

## 1. Introduction

The concept of Diversity in the work-place is becoming an important issue with respect to organizational functionality and effectiveness. Thus, Mead and Andrews (2011) argue that a diverse organization has a much better ability to compete in the international market than an organization whose work-force is mainly made up of one nationality. The world has become a global village (Ball et al, 2009) such that the modern tools of ICT (information and communication technology) have exposed skilled personnel from nations across the world to information about employment opportunities anywhere in the world (Jagdish, 2009). The implication is that the multi-national conglomerate must tap into this pool of diverse skills across the globe (Williamson, 2004; Rugman and Hodgetts, 2013; Unah, 2016).

Consequently, because of the on-going and inevitable globalization of the work-place through a diverse work-force, forward-looking management has found the concept of inclusiveness a very useful tool for human resource management (Shockley-Zalabak, 2004; Yulk, 2004; Northouse, 2010; Messick and Kramer, 2010; Unah, 2016). What is Inclusiveness? Inclusiveness is the deliberate willingness for top management to embrace diverse views into its’ corporate mission, vision, goals and objectives (Howell, 2007; Bassi and McMurrer, 2009; Forsyth, 2010; Alipour et al, 2012; Unah, 2016).

Consequently, the authors uphold the thesis that diversity and inclusiveness are critical management function for the 21<sup>st</sup> century organization, a view supported by a number of contemporary scholars and researchers on international management (Shockley-Zalabak, 2004; Ulrich, 2006; Howell, 2007; William et al, 2008; Appleby, 2009; Hit et al, 2009; Katou, 2009; Mead and Andrews, 2011; Rugman and Hodgetts, 2013). Together, the two (2) concepts of diversity and inclusiveness are known as the “D & I Philosophy”. Thus, we ask questions: (a) What is Diversity? (b) What is Inclusiveness? (c) Why is the D & I (Diversity and Inclusiveness) Philosophy a Business

Imperative for the forward-looking corporate organization, MNCs (multi-national corporations), and business conglomerates in the contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century? (d) Why should the HR (human resource) organizational conceive the D & I philosophy an important input to the recruitment process?

### 1.1. Diversity

We introduce this Session by asking the question: What is Diversity? Diversity can be defined as all the ways in which individuals differ from each other. Therefore, diversity implies that no two individuals are likely to resemble each other in all ways (Maduabum and Gayya, 2004; Howell, 2007; Neo and Chen, 2007; Kopelman, 2010; Armstrong, 2011; Unah, 2016). When an investigator randomly selects any two (2) persons and studies these two individuals, the investigator is likely to discover that the individuals are likely to differ in one way or the other. For example, the first individual, Jackson, might be a man, while the second individual, Irene, might be a woman.

If perchance, the two randomly selected individuals are of the same gender (e.g., both of them are males), then the investigator might still discover differences between the subjects selected. Subject “A”, i.e., Jackson, might be an introvert, while Subject “B”, Henderson, person might be ebullient.

Consequently, with respect to the HR/Management concept of diversity, the theory of diversity indicates that individuals differ from each other in various ways - at the social, academic, and family setting, as well as in the work-place (Gibson et al, 2003; Howell, 2007; Marimuthu et al, 2009; Coulter, 2010; Ensher and Murphy, 2010; Unah, 2016). Individuals at all levels and settings of inter-personal relationships are diverse from each other in both visible and invisible ways. In effect, diversity is a broad concept that cut across:

- i. The Visible Differences such as Age, Gender, Ethnicity, and Physical Appearance; and
- ii. The Underlying (i.e., the Invisible) Differences such as out Thought-Styles, Orientations, Religion, Nationality, and Education.

The HR/Management Theory of Diversity states that at the workplace, diversity means that top management and HR leaders must respect, value, and harness the fruitfulness of the diverse ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives of all workers - all of which are expected to result in a new source of creativity for the organization (Legge, 2004; Miles and Snow, 2004; Thompson et al, 2008; Appleby 2009; Hit et al, 2009; Alipour, 2011; Unah, 2016). The practical implication of this theory is that while colleagues should respect and value fellow colleagues’ diversities, it is imperative that management takes advantage of the benefits of diversities by harnessing the fruitfulness of diversity for organizational benefits (Steiner, 2007; Charles and Jones, 2007; Carroll and Vogel, 2008; Bassi

and McMurrer, 2009; Unah, 2016).

### 1.2. Inclusiveness

The authors introduce this Session by asking the question: What is Inclusiveness? Inclusiveness can be defined as the conscious creation of a work-place by management (assisted and facilitated by HR leaders) in which diversity is valued, and every employee has the opportunity to develop skills and talents that are consistent with organizational values and business objectives. The objective of the concept of Inclusiveness is the creation of an organization in which individuals are valued, all are respected, and involved; as well as being consciously supported, and connected by both top management and HR functions (Ball et al, 2009; Northouse, 2010; Mead and Andrews, 2011; Alipour, 2012; Rugman and Hodgetts, 2013; Unah, 2016).

## 2. The Iceberg of Difference

The authors posit that the D & I philosophy is inextricably linked with the development of the concept of the “iceberg” of inter-personal relationship. According to the iceberg metaphor of inter-personal relationship, when we, an investigator, or any person comes across, or meets an individual for the first time, the obvious questions that would occupy the inquirer’s mind, would be “what are the traits that I, the investigator, see, about this individual? What are the “things” about this individual that are visible to me, or any other objective inquirer, observer, or investigator?

Accordingly, the concept of the “iceberg” of inter-personal relationship would indicate to the investigator that (a) those traits that we, the inquirer, the investigator, or any other objective observer, can see about the accosted individual and (b) the things about the individual that are plainly visible to us would collectively constitute the Waterline of Visibility of the Iceberg of Differences – among individuals (Howell, 2007; Northouse, 2010; Mead and Andrews, 2011).

To the objective inquirer, would it not be obvious that the following traits and visible “objects” would sum up this *Waterline of Visibility of the Iceberg of Differences?*

- (a) Gender – she, the accosted individual, is a woman,
- (b) Physical Abilities – she, the accosted individual, wears a pair of glasses (indicating myopia perhaps), she limps, she walks fast, her gait has a swagger to it, etc.,
- (c) Race – she, the accosted individual, is Mongoloid, or she, the accosted individual, is Negroid,
- (d) Age – she, the accosted individual, is in her mid-twenties (based on her overall physical features, etc.), and
- (e) Language – she, the accosted individual, speaks the

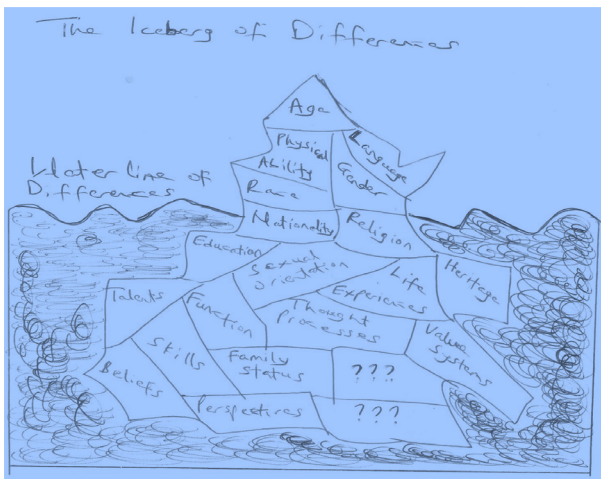
Efik language (a Nigerian language), because we, the inquirer hears her using that language to communicate to her friend.

Perhaps the accosted individual's:

- (f) Nationality would cut across the Waterline of Visibility into the Waterline of Invisibility based on the fact that a Nigerian, or a Ghanaian, or a Cameroonian does not look different from each other facially, structurally, and physiologically – likewise, a German, an Englishman, and a Dutch do not apparently look different from each other physiologically, facially, and structurally. What the authors are positing here is that most individuals; nationalities (or ethnic backgrounds) are not as visible a trait as the five (5) earlier listed visible traits of (a) gender, (b) physical abilities, (c) race, (d) age, and (e) language.

### 2.1. Waterline of Visibility- the Tip of the Iceberg

Find below the graphical illustration of the iceberg concept of differences and the waterline of visibility:



According to this illustration, there would be far more traits about the accosted woman that are below the Waterline of Visibility, than those traits that are below. Therefore, we submit that for any accosted individual person “A”, an investigator can only access very few about five and a half (5½) traits of that individual personage as opposed to the many other traits that are “buried” in the iceberg - below the Waterline of Visibility. We express this proposition (or finding) thus:

$$“\forall x(Ax \rightarrow Fx)”$$

that is, “for every accosted individual (male, female, negroid, mongoloid, tall, short, fat, etc.), visible traits are few in number”

The logical implication of this discovery is that the invisible and evidently inaccessible traits of any accosted individual form the bulk of the Iceberg – but they are

hidden under the ocean. The logical relation informs the investigator that an entire person’s traits would be signified by the “iceberg”. However, the tip of the iceberg is what is easily accessible to the inquirer on accosting the personage. Therefore, the bulk of an accosted personage is unknown and hidden from sight. Because there are far more traits inside the iceberg that are hidden below the “ocean” in the waterline of visibility, then far more of the personage’s traits are unknown to the investigator or inquirer.

The implication is that, as a business imperative, the D & I Philosophy posits that in order for the contemporary MNC, and business organization to attain business success, the HR functions and top management must consciously seek to identify, acknowledge, and effectively manage all those traits of their individual employee that are below the waterline of visibility (Miles and Snow, 2004; Shockley-Zalabak, 2004; Mead and Andrews, 2011; Rugman and Hodgetts, 2013). As the research paper would show, the (a) identification, (b) acknowledgement, and (c) management of these traits that inhere deep inside the iceberg - below the waterline of visibility - are critical to business success of the contemporary MNC, business organization, and cross-national conglomerate (Yulk, 2004; Rugman and Hodgetts, 2013).

The bulk of a person’s (any “x”) traits simply inhere inside the waterline because for any iceberg, the bulk of the iceberg is always inside the ocean. Thus, it is far more crucial for an organization’s management to consciously seek to know their individual employee’s real personality as indicated in the traits that are below the waterline of visibility. As indicated in the iceberg illustration, among such crucial and defining traits are:

- (g) Thought Processes,
- (h) Talents,
- (i) Skills,
- (j) Education,
- (k) Value Systems,
- (l) Religion,
- (m) Life Experiences,
- (n) Sexual Orientation,
- (o) Family Status,
- (p) Heritage,
- (q) Beliefs,
- (r) Function,
- (s) Perspectives, etc.

### 3. Managing Diversity

The authors posit that in any randomly chosen organization that is truly fair and just in orientation, the probability that the work-force would most likely exhibit wide varieties of diversities with respect to their dispositions, thought processes, skills, talents, traits, and behavioral tendencies the work-force would most likely exhibit wide varieties of diversities in their dispositions,

thought processes, skills, talents, value systems, heritage, beliefs (and all the other traits that are below the waterline) would be very high – tending towards “1”, certainly. Thus, we submit that the probability function would range between 0.7 and 0.9 (i.e.,  $p = 0.78$ , or  $p = 0.82$ , or  $p = 0.91$ , etc.).

The consequence of this finding and discovery is that in order to attain desired organizational results and goals, then management and the HR functions must deliberately seek to **lower the Water-line** further and further so as to bring all the benefits of inclusiveness to the organization (Mead and Andrews, 2011; Unah, 2016). Individual employee’s wide varieties of diversities must be identified, acknowledge, appreciated and harnessed towards the creation of a multi-skilled organization. Simply put, management must recognise that managing diversity is an imperative for corporate profitability and increased turnovers. The implication is that management must address all those factors of differences which have an impact upon work-place performance. The authors submit that top management and organizational HR functions should fully utilize the potentials and contributions of every individual employee in order to bring all the benefits of inclusiveness to the organization.

We are of the opinion that top management must therefore seek reduce and ultimately eliminate all the barriers that stand in the way of inclusion and full participation - by every employee (Shockley-Zalabak, 2004; Northouse, 2010; Unah, 2016). Therefore, we submit that no single employee must be discriminated against because of her “minority status” in the organization (e.g., “a single mother”, “a Muslim” in a Christian-dominated organization, “a Fulani woman” in an Igbo-dominated organization, etc.). Another finding from this research is that managing diversity implies that management must consciously seek to unleash the creativity that comes from different ideas and backgrounds of workforce (Williamson, 2004; Rugman and Hodgetts, 2013).

In order to be forward-looking and engender productivity, top management must deliberately promote an organizational culture that is premised on the building of relationships, which demonstrates respect and fairness in interactions with employees and external stakeholders.

#### 4. D & I and Employee Development

With respect to the concept of employee development in the organization, organizational management must view and utilize the D & I Philosophy as a Business Imperative as an organizational programme that reflects great commitments to individual employees. We are of the view that as a Business Imperative, the D & I Philosophy must create a work environment that welcomes cultural dynamism among employees, and brings about a structured culture of “birds of different feathers working together in

harmony”. Often-times, it is the individual with a different background that brings about progress.

The history of mankind shows that progress in various fields of human endeavors have come mostly from the non-conformists - “the peacocks”– who do not accept the status quo. Examples of such geniuses have included Galileo Galilei, the Italian physicist and astronomer, who revolutionized science by challenging contemporary and popular views, Nicolaus Copernicus, the Polish astronomer who successfully fought against “Aristotle’s astronomy”, and Albert Einstein, American-German-Jew, who revolutionized modern physics.

These are daring men and women who can “dream dreams”, who believe that “men can fly”, who dare to think that television transmission is possible, that computer and telecommunications can be merged technologically, who believe that men can ride on water.

#### 5. The Birds in the Organization

Still building on the “bird metaphor”, we submit that there are six (6) types of employees that work in an organization. These are:

- a. **The Penguins:** These birds are the conformists who seek to bring about stability in the workplace with respect to inter-personal relationships and interpretation of how work and job responsibilities should be carried out.
- b. **The Peacocks:** These birds are the non-conformists, and they always seek for new and colorful ways to doing things in the organizations. The peacocks provide varieties and new ideas in the organization.
- c. **The Pigeons:** These birds are the stabilizers. The pigeons seek for a peaceful environment among colleagues. Thus, these birds engender peace and harmony in the work environment.
- d. **The Sparrows:** These birds are the “low profilers” who seek to stay neutral in all issues and debates that might arise in the organization with respect to how organizational goals should be defined and achieved.
- e. **The Ostriches:** These birds “bury their heads in the sand”. These birds simply do not want to get involved in anything, but their “pay cheek” at the end of the month or week. These birds pretend that there are no issues, differences, divergence of opinions, arguments and problems in their organization.
- f. **The Eagle:** There is also the eagle which actually is the bird at the Control Tower. The eagle glides from very high, as a result of which the eagle would then act as the Board of Directors, able to curtail the excesses of the peacock whose cockiness and daring ways can sometimes create problems for the organization in the long-run, though the peacock as

such a time achieves tremendous short-term successes for the organization.

There is thus the need for some form of mentoring, guidance, the right orientation, and direction by the eagle for the enterprising and daring peacock in the organization in order to blend the peacock's daring dreams with long-term and progressive organizational goals.

The eagle, as management, must engender diversity among the workforce in the organization and respect diverse views that might at the initial stage sound "weird" and outrageous, and tend to come outside the box of conventional modes and mores (Northouse, 2010; Mead and Andrews, 2011; Rugman and Hodgetts, 2013).

employees' contributions are valued – regardless of their rank, or age, background, gender, race, sexual orientation, or any other difference.

Diversity is an issue because of the ongoing and ceaseless globalization of everything in the contemporary era. The whole world continues to behave like a global village where customers and markets that organizations serve are becoming more and more diverse. As a matter of corporate survival, the contemporary organization will need to serve an increasingly diverse customer base – consequent upon which corporate growth would be dependent upon the organization's ability to translate customer needs into products and services effectively and efficiently. **A diverse employee-base would engender this mission.**

## 6. Why is Diversity an Issue?

Diversity is an issue because organizational success is dependent upon the ability to attract, retain and fully utilize a wide range of talents and skills that are inherent in a diverse workforce – because heterogeneity enhances the creative problem solving process. Therefore, effectively managed, diversity would increase productivity. Diversity is a motivator to the employee because of the fact that an organization which manages differences treats all employees with respect and dignity, ensures that

## 7. The Internal and External Drivers

We are of the view that there are both an external and an internal drive that demand for an action with respect to the formulation and adoption of a D & I philosophy in an organization. This convergence of the external and internal drive towards a diverse "globe" (the world as a global village) is depicted below:



## 8. Recommendations

On the basis of the analysis of the D & I philosophy as a business imperative for the 21<sup>st</sup> century business organization, we hereby make the following sets of recommendations.

### 8.1. The Employee Level:

Thus, at the personal level, each employee must be encouraged to:

- a) appreciate, encourage, and support fellow employees,
- b) avoid the desire to control and manipulate what other colleagues do,
- c) ask questions, rather than providing biased views,
- d) seek to listen to, and understand others,
- e) challenge assumptions and behaviours that exclude and limit,
- f) perceive and understand personal strengths and weaknesses,
- g) view mistakes by others (especially those who are outside her personality-type with respect to race, gender, ethnicity, thought-processes, skills-orientation, etc.) as learning experiences,
- h) celebrating the successes of the whole, as well as the successes of individuals,
- i) value everyone equally.

### 8.2. The Management Level

At the organizational level, top management and HR functions must:

- j) develop a diversity plan for the organization,
- k) build tools, processes and systems that engender inclusiveness,
- l) model desired behaviours towards wholesomeness (inclusiveness),
- m) provide resources for all – especially, the “peacocks”, and
- n) completely lower the water-line so that the whole iceberg becomes fully visible.

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