
Editorial

Chaunda L. Scott

Department of Human Resource Development,
School of Education and Human Services,
Oakland University,
Rochester, Michigan, USA
E-mail: cscott@oakland.edu

Over the past decade, the strategy of leveraging workplace diversity has been used by many organisations to:

- 1 initiate and manage aspects of cultural change
- 2 improve the culture and climate of an organisation
- 3 promote full inclusion of all employee stakeholders
- 4 enhance the bottom line, for the purpose of impacting organisational effectiveness and gaining a competitive advantage.

The concept of leveraging workplace diversity is also viewed by many scholars and practitioners as a popular and important strategy that continues to evolve. Today, many organisations from a variety of settings are embracing and linking workplace diversity to their strategic goals and objective, as one way to improve organisational effectiveness. At the same time, these organisations are holding the areas of human resource development (HRD), and management accountable for their workplace diversity measurable results. In the future the areas of HRD and management will continue to play key roles in leveraging workplace diversity to create and empower an organisational culture that fosters a respectful, inclusive and knowledge-based environment where each employee has the opportunity to learn, grow and meaningfully contribute to the organisation's success.

The purpose of this special issue is to serve as a forum for scholars and practitioners globally to highlight current concerns, strategies and theoretical perspectives that have been used or could be used to:

- 1 further initiate and manage aspects of cultural change
- 2 further improve the culture and climate of an organisation
- 3 further promote full inclusion of all employee stakeholders
- 4 further enhance the bottom line and impact organisational effectiveness by gaining a competitive advantage
- 5 further build upon the practice of leveraging workplace diversity globally.

In the first article entitled 'Leveraging diversity through faculty perception of their power to influence diversity', by authors Clareth Hughes, Lynesia Preyan and Marta Collier measured faculty perceptions of their power to influence a southern university's diversity

initiative goals. The implications of their study highlighted that all stakeholders including HRD and management professionals should be actively involved in the development of diversity initiatives within the university community. Understanding the perception of all stakeholders directly involved in the development of a diversity initiative is essential to the success of diversity program. The results of this study highlight that stakeholders who are expected to execute diversity program goals and strategies should be engaged as much as possible in the designing of goals and objectives in order for a program to be successfully implemented and valued. The extent to which stakeholder perceive they have the power to influence goals and objectives may impact the extent to which they are actively involved.

In the second study entitled titled 'Leveraging diversity through career development: social and cultural capital among African-American managers', authors Trammell L. Bristol and Elizabeth J. Tisdell found that leveraging diversity involves organisations drawing upon the diversity of its members to not only benefit the organisation in terms of its profit margins, but also for the individual's career experiences. The primary purpose of this article was to explore this concept further. The authors conducted a qualitative research study utilising a sample of 13 African-American managers who were employed in Fortune 500 companies. In-depth, structured interviews were held with these managers about their career development experiences. The findings revealed that cultural and social capital positively impacted the career development experiences of these participants. However, even with this capital, there were structures within the organisations, which negatively affected the career opportunities afforded to African-American managers.

The third article entitled 'Leveraging diversity by exploring intraracial discrimination in the workplace' uses grounded theory to examine the impact of skin tone bias, a form of interracial discrimination among African-American in the workplace. Author Cynthia Sims finding suggest that there is a silencing of issues of race, power and privilege in organisations. A critical HRD perspective is recommended in order to explore and address the systems of privilege that perpetuate inequities in the workplace.

The fourth article by authors Chetsada Noknoi and Phayat Wutthirong provides a global perspective on examining sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace in Thailand. Their article entitled 'Leveraging diversity through raising awareness: sexual orientation discrimination in the Thailand workforce: implications for human resource management', suggests that a cornerstone of the homosexual rights movement and equality in the workplace has been a pivotal struggle for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community. Presently, in Thailand, non-heterosexual behaviours are more disclosed now than in the past. As a result of this, LGBT individuals are slowly becoming more accepted by the Thai community. However, in both public and private organisations, sexual orientation discrimination still persists. The authors conclude their article by suggesting that the Thai business community can prevent this kind of discrimination among LGBT employees by aligning human resource strategies in both short- and long-term that value the diversity that the LGBT organisational strategies in order to make LGBT a sustainable competitive advantage.

The fifth article entitled 'Leveraging diversity through employee resource groups in the USA: implications for HRD practitioners in South Africa', author Chaunda L. Scott highlights that indigenous empirical data examining the role employee resource groups (ERGs) could play in South African organisations as a useful workplace diversity initiative is scant. This article will define the US concept of ERGs, highlight the need for

ERGs in South African organisations and examine the history of ERGs and the role ERGs play in several US organisations, along with their perceived benefits to those organisations. Implications for HRD practitioners in South Africa are offered.

The sixth and final article entitled 'Leveraging diversity through a psychological perspective on managing innovation in a diverse workplace', Joost Miedema states that management and facilitation of innovation processes in diverse work groups may be better achieved by paying the necessary attention to issues of organisational citizenship behaviour, uncertainty, work related attitudes, values and perceived fairness. This article concludes by highlighting that when striving for sustainable innovation, attitudes, values, fairness and justice based evaluations, identity issues also need to be considered.

Overall, these articles bring to light that there is a need for global organisations of the 21st century to draw upon the strategy of leveraging workforce diversity for the purposes of improving the culture and climate of the organisation, promoting full inclusion of all employee stakeholders and leveraging difference to "gain greater insight, innovation and performance outcomes" [Maltbia and Power, (2009), p.5]. It is the editor's hope that these articles will encourage further research and dialogue on the topic of leveraging workforce diversity to sustain this much needed organisational practice.

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References

Maltbia, T.E. and Power, A. (2009) *A Leader's Guide to Leveraging Diversity: Strategic Learning Capabilities for Breakthrough Performance*, Elsevier, Inc., Burlington, MA.