

Contemporary HRM

Diversity

Session objectives

- To critically examine how equality at work may be pursued – equal opportunities/ diversity approaches
- To outline some of the key debates and issues surrounding diversity



Why is it important to manage equality and diversity within the workplace?

The Big Picture at Work:

- Findings from the 2013 WERS– *Equality and Diversity Section*
- *51% of employees are female*
- *Workers aged 50 or over account for 24% of employees up 20% from 2004 WERS*
- *Disabled workers account for 2% of all employees up 1%*
- *Workers belonging to non-white ethnic group comprise 9% of all employees*
- *10% of employees are non-UK nationals*
- *Men earn more than women (£578 per week v. £480 per week) gap is reducing..slowly*



Different Approaches to Equality

1. Equal Opportunities or Liberal approach or Equal Treatment approach

This approach supports legislative action. Legal framework, if used effectively, is sufficient for alleviating discrimination. Positive action

2. Managing Diversity approaches

Legislation is not enough. Attempt to change attitudes, preconceptions and eradicate stereotypes and prejudice. People are valued as *individuals*.

3. Radical approach or Equal Outcomes approach

Positive or reverse discrimination necessary - need to create level playing field. Lawful in US but unlawful in the UK

Equal Opportunities and Managing Diversity... Complementary Concepts?

- **Equal Opportunities:**
- Driven by external forces.
- Legally driven (reactive).
- concentrates on issues of discrimination (problem focused).
- is seen as an issue for minority groups – race, gender, disability.
- Quantitative focus... numbers of X and Y in organisations.
- Is seen as being a ‘personnel issue’ (operational).

Direct Discrimination

- Direct Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (see Perceptive Discrimination below), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see Associative Discrimination below).

Associative Discrimination

- This already applies to Race, Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation. It is now extended to cover Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment and Sex. This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perceptive Discrimination

- This already applies to Age, Race, Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation. It is now extended to cover Disability, Gender Reassignment and Sex. This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess the characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination

- This already applies to Age, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation and Marriage and Civil Partnership. It is now extended to cover Disability and Gender Reassignment.
- Indirect Discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in your organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment

- Harassment is "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual".
- Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association.

Third Party Harassment

- This already applies to Sex. It is now expected to cover Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation.
- The Equality Act makes you potentially liable for harassment of your employees by people (third parties) who are not employees of your company, such as customers or clients.

Victimisation

- Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. The Equality Act amends the definition 'victimisation', so that no longer needs to point to a comparator.

Equality at Work – Organisational responsibilities...

- Developing & implementing **policy** statements
- Carrying out **audits** to ensure that a policy works
- **Reviewing current H.R. policies** to ensure they are free of bias
- Developing a **programme of necessary corrective action** followed by the application of appropriate **monitoring** procedures



What should be in an Equal Opportunities policy?

- Definitions
 - Statement of the organisation's commitment to equal opportunities
 - Name(s) of the employee responsible for policy
 - Details of structure for implementing the policy
 - An obligation upon employees to respect and act in accordance with the policy
 - Procedures for dealing with complaints of discrimination
 - Examples of unlawful practices
 - Details of monitoring and review procedures
 - A commitment to remove barriers to equal opportunity
- (EOC April, 2005)***

Diversity

- Managing diversity – ‘ a broad term referring to the systematic and planned commitment on the part of organisations to recruit and retain employees from diverse demographic backgrounds’, Thomas (1992), cited in Redman and Wilkinson (2009:343).
- Builds on the idea that differences between groups should be recognised and valued
- Development of diversity located within the context of shifting demographic trends

Development of diversity

- Disillusionment about the progress of equal opportunities laws and policies
- Equal opportunities (EO) needed to be business driven
- EO seen to be negative and compliance driven
- Diversity – positive approach not focused on disadvantage groups, but whole of workforce – an inclusive approach
- Diversity focuses on the business case for EO

Managing Diversity – a ‘new’ label for equality?

Definition

The CIPD argues that the management of diversity:

*‘...**develops & complements** established approaches to equal opportunities. It offers an opportunity for organisations to develop a workforce to **meet their business goals & to improve approaches to customer care...** it builds on the understanding of the need for equal opportunity policies. Because of its **systematic approach**, it fits well with initiatives such as ‘Investors in People’ & ‘total quality.’*

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- **Managing Diversity:**

- Driven by Internal forces.
- is seen as concentrating on meeting business objectives (strategic).
- is seen as ensuring **ALL** employees maximise their potential & contribution (proactive).
- is seen as being the concern of **ALL** employees especially line mgrs.
- Qualitative focus...improving the environment (culture) in organisations.

Drivers for Diversity Management?

- **Legal pressures – 68%** (top-ranked)
- To recruit and retain best talent – 64%
- Corporate Social Responsibility - 62%
- To be an employer of choice- 62%
- **Because it makes business sense – 60%**
(but only 17% ranked ‘most important’)
- Because it is morally right – 60%
- **To improve business performance – 48%**
(CIPD, 2006)



Key drivers in terms of business benefits?

- To recruit and retain the best talent – 64%
- Because it makes business sense – 60%
- To improve business performance – 48%

- Many companies are failing to consider the different ways in which diversity can add value to business...
- e.g. creativity and innovation; improve products and services; reach diverse markets; improve corporate branding; respond to competition etc.



Key dimensions of managing diversity in Practice (Maxwell, 2003:187)

- **Organisational Inputs:**
 - cultural awareness and sensitivity training programmes
 - Knowledge expansion vs behavioural change
- **Organisational Outcomes:**
 - Efficacious recruitment and improved retention
 - Cost reduction in turnover and absence costs
 - Creativity and flexibility
 - Enhanced customer service and sales to minority groups
 - Competitive advantage
 - Corporate image
 - Organisational survival
- **Organisational Culture:**
 - Essential to managing Diversity
 - MD is “*a complete organisational cultural change designed to foster appreciation of demographic ethnic and individual differences*” (Gilbert et al, 1999; p61)

General Concerns about the **Managing Diversity approach**



- ‘difference’ may only be valued so long as it contributes to **profit** or organisational objectives (a tool of **management control**? – Kirkby and Harter, 2001)
- the **persistence** of the ‘white’, heterosexual, non-disabled, male norm
- with shift in emphasis from social groups to a focus on individuals, MD does not have collective force of disadvantaged groups behind it – commodification of people for business gain! (Kirkby and Harter, 2001)
- all ‘differences’ could potentially be viewed on the same terms
- people may wish to be treated both the ‘same’ and ‘differently’
- the dominant group know you are different and continue to treat you as different, but if you yourself specify your difference, your claim to equality will be null

(Cockburn, 1991; Liff, 1996; Webb, 1997)

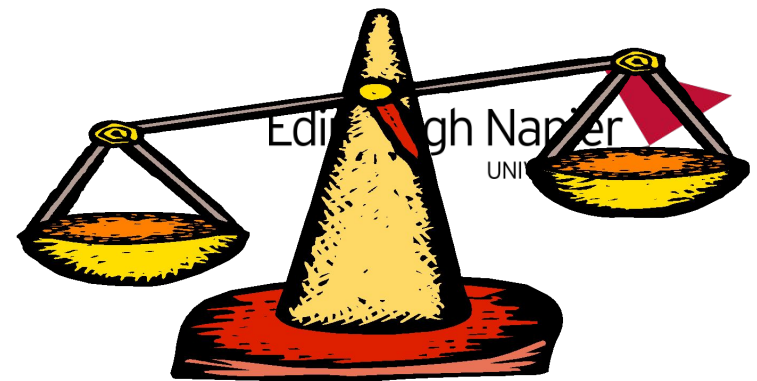
EO & MD

Some general conclusions

- The essence of equality at work is to avoid **unfair** discrimination
- EO emphasises the **moral** argument for equal treatment whereas MD highlights the **business case**
- **unfair** discrimination often results from **group stereotyping** rather than **individual assessment**
- **legislation** can have only a limited effect in reducing the level of unfair discrimination
- changes in practice relating to equalising opportunity are happening **very slowly**
- EO approaches & MD may be viewed not as alternatives but as **complementary** approaches
- There is a need to **monitor and measure** equality/diversity outcomes in organisations.

Torrington et al (2017)

Work-life balance



- Balance: suggests the search for equilibrium between work and life
- Problem: equilibrium suggests that work and non-work life are separate – argued they are entwined and if there is an imbalance in one potentially there will be stress and ill-health experienced by an individual

“WLB is about individuals being able to run their working lives and non-work lives without pressure from one detracting from the other”
(Noon and Blyton, 2007; cited in Beardwell and Claydon, 2010:149)

Drivers for Work-life balance

- ❖ Work intensification and down-shifting
- ❖ Changing nature demographic of labour markets – increase of females, ageing population
- ❖ Developing information and communication technologies
- ❖ 24/7 consumer culture
- ❖ Legislation
- ❖ Retention of talented staff

Source: Redman and Wilkinson (2009)

Barriers for Work-life balance

- ❖ Increase in flexible working arrangements could cause trouble for core work requirements
- ❖ Blurring of boundaries between work and personal life due to increased communication/technology
- ❖ Appraisal systems and individual incentives that blur the lines between work and home life

Work-life balance and flexibility

*“...today, most firms face environments characterized by increasing dynamism and competition. In such a case, **sustainable fit** can be achieved only by developing a flexible organisation. Thus, **strategic HRM** must increasingly promote organizational flexibility in order for the firm to achieve a **dynamic fit**” (Schuler & Jackson, 1999)*

*“The ability of the organisation to adapt the size, composition, responsiveness and cost of the people inputs required to achieve **organisational objectives**” (Pilbeam and Corbridge, 2006)*

Developing a well trained & flexible workforce thus contributing to the organisation’s ability to adapt to an uncertain & changing environment; improving the utilisation of people by introducing more flexible systems of work (Armstrong, 2001)

Attempts to Categorise Flexibility

Blyton (1996) identified 4 types of flexibility:

1. **Numerical**: a firm's ability to adjust the level of labour inputs to meet fluctuations in output
2. **Functional**: a firm's ability to adjust & deploy the skills of its employees to match the tasks required by its changing workforce, production methods and/or technology
3. **Temporal**: Allows adjustments to time – i.e. working day or working year
4. **Financial**: support for the achievement of flexibility through the firm's pay & reward structures

There are others, see Pilbeam and Corbridge (2013), e.g.

- **Distancing**: Achieved through better use of technology

Options for achieving WLB

- Part-time
- Flexitime
- Compressed week
- Annual hour
- Term-time w
- Job share
- Self-rostering
- Shift swapping
- Unpaid leave
- Unpaid sabbaticals
- Working from home
- Informal flexibility



Benefits of Work-life balance

Employer's perspective

- Reduced absence
- Raise morale and motivation
- Increase levels of satisfaction
- Improve productivity and performance
- Retain talented staff who would have left – reduce turnover
- Attract staff to the organisation (employer branding)

Employee's perspective

- Enhanced commitment to the organisation
- Motivation and engagement levels increased due to effective balance between work-life priorities
- Feeling valued by their organisation

Adapted from Torrington *et al.* (2008) and Wilton (2013)

Drawbacks of Work-life balance

Employer's perspective

- Cost
- Line managers inconsistency of approaches
- Inconsistency in relying on employees (especially if they are working more/less than required)
- High work loads can make it impossible

Employee's perspective

- Damage to career progression
- Part-time workers – working more hours than contracted
- Seen as a lack of commitment to the organisation
- Individual needs to find flexible solutions when requesting the right to flexible working

Some conclusions

- Business case exists – particularly in relation to flexibility
- Uptake of work-life balance predominantly among female workers
- Organisational cultures can work against the adoption of flexible working
- Line manager support is crucial