APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONAL RESOURCING AND RECRUITMENT – THE NEED TO ATTRACT A MORE DIVERSE WORKFORCE: A CASE STUDY ON HEWLETT-PACKARD

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Abstract

Globalization has irreversible implications for international businesses. The companies need to embrace diversity in order to meet customers' demands. The purpose of this paper is to critically discuss whether the diversity in a workforce contributes to the improvement of the company's performance and whether Human Resource Management is a crucial aspect in managing a company with a more diverse workforce. Hewlett-Packard, one of the world's largest information technologies companies operating globally, is an example that will be examined in this case-study. Hewlett-Packard operates in a highly competitive environment requiring a good strategy to maintain gained position on the market. Hewlett-Packard, with more than 325,000 employees around the world, acknowledged business case for a diverse workforce and is rather proactive than reactive in terms of achieving diversity in a workforce.

As Hewlett-Packard has grown and expanded throughout the world, its work force has become more diverse. They are accomplishing goals from various human resource management approaches through its recruitment and selection processes. Their strengths lie in the people development program, which can be tailored to an individual as well as suitable for groups. Both individual and group training are critically important in formulating one's philosophy and immersing into company's culture. Furthermore, their effort to gain feedback from employees is very strong. The data they pursue from the annual survey are valuable not only to know whether their employees are satisfied but also for the possible improvements for the company.

Key words: diversity, diverse workforce, human resource management, Hewlett-Packard

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1. Introduction

The need for a more diverse workforce in terms of strategic management has been increasing for several reasons. Firstly, one of the consequences of globalization is customers with more diverse preferences. The organisations embrace diversity in order to meet the customers' needs *(Jackson & Alvarez, 1992)*. Moreover, the pool of labour force has changed. The available workforce is evolving from homogeneous to heterogeneous. Therefore, organizations need to adjust their HR approaches to foster workforce heterogeneity *(Kossek & Lobel, 2000)*.

Furthermore, women's role in the labour market has changed. High technology enables women to spend less time in households and organize tasks more efficiently. Many women decided to join the labour force compared to 50 years ago *(Jackson & Alvarez, 1992)*. Additionally, labour force is ageing *(Fullerton, 1999)*. If the companies do not acknowledge all these facts and ignore the need for a more diverse workforce, they may be outperformed by their competitors. Some organizations are well aware that diversity plays a crucial role in the labour force. In spite of growing evidence that diversity is related to the firm's performance *(Kossek & Lobel, 2000)*, many organizations do not consider diversity as their main objective. The term *diversity* could be simply defined as 'avoidance of monoculture' *(Clements & Jones, 2006)* considering equality in employment in terms of gender, age and race.

Henderson *(2008)* finds three arguments why the diversity in workforce should not be overlooked by companies: morality, antidiscrimination legislation and business perspective.

This paper will focus predominantly on business perspective whilst giving consideration to antidiscrimination law.

The aim of this paper is to critically discuss whether the diversity in a workforce contributes to the improvement of the company's performance and that Human Resource Management (HRM) is a crucial aspect in managing a company with a more diverse workforce. It is precisely HRM which implements the strategies and enables companies to achieve such diversity. Hewlett-Packard (HP) is an example that will be examined in this case-study.

Hewlett-Packard is one of the world's largest information technologies companies operating globally. It provides products, technologies, software and services to individual consumers, as well as large enterprises. HP's objectives have led the company since 1957 when they were chosen by inventors of HP, Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard. One of the today's objectives is employee commitment in which HP claims that 'a diverse workforce gives us a competitive advantage' *(Hewlett-Packard Development Company, 2011)*.

2. Literature review

There is evidence that the anti-discrimination law is needed. For example, Duncan and Loretto *(2004)* claim that older and younger employees were likely to experience negative age discrimination when their perception was measured. The majority of domestic work is carried out by women. Women's work force accounts for more than 70 per cent of total time of unpaid work *(Wajcman, 1996)*. Thus men do not have so many duties during the day and as a result they can commit more time to the organisation they work for *(Dickens, 1998)*.

The implementation of law that covers equality has been applied, such as Race Relations Act 2000 and Disability Discrimination Act 1995 or Affirmative Action to name few. Furthermore, Commission of Equality and Human Rights appears to embrace the concept of diversity *(Kirtin & Greene, 2005)*. In spite of legislation, companies will implement diversity approaches only if they see the benefits from a more diverse workforce.

2.1. More diverse workforce – is it beneficial for employers?

From the business perspective, conformity between employees (disadvantaged groups) and profit-seeking-employers can't be taken for granted *(Cockburn, 1989)*. However, if there is a link between company's performance and diversity in workforce, diversity could be the reason for better performance. One research showed that certain percentage of the representation of woman managers in giant companies in the USA indicated a positive association between women's leadership and the performance of the companies in terms of return on equity *(Konrad et al. 2006)*. However, the measurement method is not clear. It is not clear as well whether the correlation was caused by women's influence or skills they possessed.

On the one hand, research found that heterogeneous groups generally performed more efficiently, especially in brainstorming tasks when compared to homogeneous groups. Heterogeneous groups also demonstrated a greater level of cooperative behaviour *(Konrad, 2006)*. Jackson *(in Guzzo & Dickson, 1996)* suggests that there is a link between diversity and team effectiveness in terms of problem-solving and decision-making. However, Guzzo & Dickson *(1996)* point out that this connection is a complicated matter. On the other hand, the diverse groups consist of people with different cultures and languages. In order to perform effectively, the groups need the common language and not everyone can speak the same languages. Consequently, misunderstandings between members may occur *(Jackson & Ruderman, 1999)*. Consistent with them, Steiner's model shows that actual group productivity equals to potential productivity minus process losses caused by, for example, communication

problems *(Steiner, 1972)*. What is more, according to Watson et al. *(1993)* heterogeneous groups performed worse during the early task periods.

Cox and Blake *(1991)* state that organisations which value people from diverse cultural backgrounds have a higher possibility to gain competitive advantages in creativity, managing tasks and flexible adaptation to change. The same mechanism applies when people, particularly women and ethnic groups, may prefer to work for an employer who honours diversity; they probably also prefer being a customer for such organisations.

2.2. HRM approaches to diversity

Human resource practitioners are committed to successfully managing diversity issues to enhance positive outcomes *(Hitt et al. 2012)*. Overall, studies indicate a positive correlation between application of HRM strategies and diversity in the labour force *(Konrad et al. 2006)*.

Companies need to attract the most talented people. They have a better chance when people have a feeling that they are valued by company. One of the recommendations is to challenge inappropriate behaviour by not tolerating any form of sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination *(Bagshaw & Smith, 2004)*. Additionally, companies may apply the 'open door policies' in order to solve any problems promptly and to recognize business issues as they arise. Consequently, the absenteeism should be reduced and turnover considerably decreased. This leads to a better performance of the company *(Konrad et al., 2006)*.

The flexibility is necessary not only in terms of organization but also employees. This means that for example, flexible working hours are a necessity and it will have a positive impact on company's performance. One of the advantages of flexible working hours is that workforce can adapt and respond to changes in production *(Kirton & Greene, 2005)*. Lobel and Kossek *(2000)* state that there are three stages of implementing work/family policy. First stage includes approaches responding to family needs, second stage includes flexible benefits plans and the company reaches the third stage when it becomes truly family-friendly. If the company wants to be effective in spreading a message of diversity, it may need to convince their employees to believe in values they claim are important for the company. The need for support from senior management is stressed by Klarsfeld *(2010)*. According to Kossek and Lobel *(2000),* only the well managed diversity will lead to benefits for the companies. This means to enable every employee to perform up to his/her potential (*Yakura, 2000*).

Another HRM objective is to have policies and programs that are responsive to the changing demographic profile of employees. The organization is able to respond more effectively, if it is provided with the feedback from the employees and when employees have feedback on their performance *(Konrad et al., 2006)*. A 360-feedback is used in mentoring programs. The feedback comes not only from managers, but also from peers in the organization *(Kram & Hall, 2000)*. However, the question arises as to who should have access to the evaluation, whether it be only the employee or everyone who participated in the program. Chen and DiTomaso *(2000)* suggest that more research should be carried out in this area.

3. Case study – managing diversity at Hewlett-Packard

Next section describes how the diversity awareness developed in HP. Goals connected to diversity will also be presented in this section. HR approaches to those goals will be explained in a more detail. Moreover, it will evaluate the progress and results made by those approaches. Finally, it will highlight recommendations and conclusions of HR approaches.

The awareness of diversity in HP became one of the company's concerns when Lew Platt was elected as a CEO in 1992. There was a belief that corporate culture 'the HP Way'

was no longer effective. This philosophy included values such as trust, teamwork, respect for the individual, flexibility and innovation *(Albrecht, 2002)*. Generally, corporate culture is alive when employees believe in the same values that company promotes. As a result, HP changed its culture into 'Our People'. The awareness of the reasons caused that the implementation of diversity became one of the corporate objectives and was highly valued *(Schneider & Barsoux, 2003)*.

In 1990s HP management decided to implement diversity by creating Diversity Leadership Council in 1996. This council started collecting and analysing data to discover how to take a proper action. They were recognized by the public when HP was awarded the prize Optimas Awards by Personnel Journal in General Excellence category for demonstrating excellence in Human Resource Management and strategy *(Albrecht, 2002)*. Since then they have obtained number of awards related to diversity, the latest one was awarded in 2009 *(Hewlett-Packard, 2009)*.

3.1. HRM policies and practices supporting diversity

Hewlett-Packard believes that the company will benefit from employees who have diverse experiences, ideas, culture, bringing them together results in ingenuity and inspiration. They claim that well managed diverse workforce is the key issue which was also stated by Kossek and Lobel *(2000)* in the literature review. HP also stresses out that diverse workforce is a tool to remain in a sustainable growth and dominate the marketplace *(Hewlett-Packard, 2009)*. Affirmative action is a natural part of the HP's philosophy and was implemented many years ago.

3.1.1. Recruitment process – HRM approach

One of the highly valued HP policies is non-discriminatory policy. It provides discrimination-free environment for every employee regardless of 'gender, colour, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, pregnancy, covered veteran status, protected genetic information and political affiliation' *(Hewlett-Packard, 2011)*. This HRM approach was also recommended by Bagshaw and Smith *(2004)* in the literature review.

When companies recruit people, potential employees face 'barriers to entry' into the company's environment. According to Heneman et al. *(2000)* one of the possible barriers to entry is segregated social network which means that it is important to have social relationships when applying for a job. Those relationships lead to information about job openings. In order to prevent applying candidates from such barriers, HP developed electronic job posting which ensures that information about free positions is transparently disclosed to a public.

Furthermore, HP pursue on 'open door policy' explaining that 'openness is essential to quickly resolve customer concerns, to recognize business issues as they arise, and to address the changing needs of our diverse and global workforce.' Additionally, they arranged 24-hour guideline for employees to report any ethic concerns. This is another example of HRM approaches implementation discussed also by Konrad et al. *(2006)*. Moreover, they attract workforce through various career fairs. HP is a member of many organizations such as National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) and The Society of Women Engineers (SWE) *(Hewlett-Packard, 2011)*.

3.1.2. Work/life balance - flexible working hours

Work/life balance is one of the areas which include a diversity issue. HP introduced flexible working hours in West Germany in 1967, then in the USE in 1972 *(Albrecht, 2002)*.

In comparison, their biggest competitor IBM only recognizes work/life challenges since the 1980s *(IBM, 2011)*. HP's approach is consistent with Kirton and Greene *(2005)*.

According to HP's survey in 2011, one of the most important priorities for employees is flexible working hours. There are several ways how employees can arrange their working time. Apart from choosing when their work starts, there is also a possibility to work part time. Another option regarding flexibility is the opportunity to choose benefits by employees, as it was also suggested by Kossek and Lobel *(2000)*.

HP is concerned about the wellbeing of employees in terms of work/life-balance. They provide their workforce with the right skills through different tutorials and resources. Their philosophy is that when an employee is relaxed, the performance will be improved. This kind of support for employees is called Employee Assistance Program. There is also a possibility to arrange cheaper holidays through HP company.

Additionally, employees can share their experience and can post them onto the special network created for HP's employees. It seems that HP follows the guidelines how to implement a more diverse workforce as discussed in the literature review.

3.1.3. Employee feedback

HP asks employees for feedback through the annual Voice of the Workforce global survey. It appears that communication is highly valued at this company. This is testified by the program 'Top of Mind' where employees discuss frequently asked questions with top leaders *(Hewlett-Packard, 2011)*. In 2010, HP president and chief executive officer, Léo Apotheker visited HP's employees on Global Listening Tour around the world to hear employees' insights, and listen to their ideas on how to strengthen HP. Feedback is very important and it reflects employees' satisfaction as Konrad et al. *(2006)* stated.

3.1.4. People development – diversity inclusion

HP is working with several diversity organizations, one of them called *Catalyst*. This organization conducts researches mostly on women as business leaders who make positive difference to the corporate bottom line *(Catalyst, 2011)*. It also helps develop 'the right' HRM approach in the organization.

Secondly, HP has been a sponsor of Out & Equal Workplace Advocates Summit for many years. With another non-profit organization, HP propagates workplace equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. HP participates in summits where it presents workshops, demonstrates its products and offers job opportunities *(Out & Equal Workplace Advocates, 2011)*. HP offers developmental programs such as job rotations, coaching, mentoring, face-to-face training programs and live virtual training which totals for more than 10,000 active courses. HP's strategy is to enable an individual to fulfil his potential by hands-on experience is consistent with Yakura *(2000)*.

At the same time HP encourages diverse groups to connect with mentors. In 2010 more than 4,000 employees participated in the mentoring program *(Hewlett-Packard, 2011)*.

Finally, HP also participates in a global supplier diversity program**.** They highlight the benefits of a diverse supply chain by encouraging joining events they organize whether the owner of the business is a woman, veteran, lesbian, bisexual, gay, or transgender. The idea behind this is that such supply chains are innovative and it also helps strengthen economic situation of those communities. They want to create direct opportunities for small businesses and expand the program beyond USA *(Hewlett-Packard, 2011)*.

3.2. Measuring progress

When an organization has its goal (diversity) and chooses HRM approaches, after the implementation, the assessment of what has changed is needed so the organization knows what the results are. When defining the progress, the most basic approach is to measure the proportion of women managers to estimate the main trends in the company *(Ford and Fisher, 2000)*.

Comparing the achievements between the years 1994, when the proportion of female managers accounted for 2.5% and 1996 when women rate achieved 5% *(Albrecht, 2002)*, the tangible progress can be seen. Table 1 illustrates progress during the last five years. Globally, the rate increased by 5%. In 2010 there was almost 10 times more female managers employed in HP than it was in 1994.

Table 1. Worldwide gender diversity, managers (woman as a % total) during 2006-2010 in %

Areas/Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Americas	26.0	25.3	25.2	28.3	27.8
Europe, Middle East, and Africa	17.0	17.6	18.5	20.0	19.8
Asia Pacific and Japan	18.4	18.6	20.2	21.2	21.8
Global rate	21.7	21.5	22.0	24.3	24.1

Source: Hewlett-Packard, 2011

Another progress can be seen in terms of how many women are hired in the company as a % of overall new hires. Table 2 shows that this percentage grew between 2006 and 2009, whilst the progress was slightly reduced in 2010.

Table 2. Global new hires by gender (% of total) in %

Gender/Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Female	31.9	31.8	34.9	35.6	35.2
Male	68.1	68.2	65.1	64.4	64.8

Source: Hewlett-Packard, 2011

As it can be seen in Table 3, HP labour force is becoming more heterogeneous. There is evidence that year by year there are more people from minorities, including black employees. This trend suggests that the company is ambitious in achieving their goals and is actually achieving them. Sum of „White" and „All minorities" in Table 3 does not equal 100% and the sum of „Black", „Hispanic", „Asian", and „Native American" does not equal the total for „All minorities" due to people who do not declare or who do not fall into these categories.

Table 3. U.S. new hires by ethnicity (% of total) in %

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
White	70.0	69.0	67.2	65.0	61.7
All minorities	30.1	30.1	32.4	34.5	34.8
Black	6.8	6.8	8.1	11.2	14.5

Hispanic	6.3	6.3	6.9	7.1	7.1
Asian	16.5	16.5	15.7	12.5	10.5
Native American	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.3

Source: Hewlett-Packard, 2011

As the company states, the future goals are to continue to achieve 30% female participation in the employee leadership development programs, which has been already fulfilled. Secondly, another future goal is to maintain 20% non-white participation in the development programs in the United States. This goal has been reached as well.

4.   Conclusions and recommendations

Hewlett-Packard operates in a highly competitive environment requiring a good strategy to maintain gained position on the market. HP, with more than 325,000 employees around the world, acknowledged all the previously stated reasons and therefore is rather proactive than reactive in terms of achieving diversity in a workforce.

As HP has grown and expanded throughout the world, its work force has become more diverse. They are accomplishing goals from various HRM approaches through its recruitment and selection processes. Their strengths lie in the people development program, which can be tailored to an individual as well as suitable for groups. Both individual and group training are critically important in formulating one's philosophy and immersing into company's culture.

Furthermore, their effort to gain feedback from employees is very strong. The data they pursue from the annual survey are valuable not only to know whether their employees are satisfied but also for the possible improvements for the company.

Generally, HP is able to meet the needs and challenges of the more diverse workforce. They are committed to various HRM approaches which are consistent with academics; for example Konrad et al. *(2006)*, Kirton and Green *(2005)* and Kossek and Lobel *(2000)*. They also share thought that diverse workforce needs to be managed well to gain the potential benefit, known as competitive advantage *(Kossek & Lobel, 2000)*. Once a competitive advantage is gained, it needs to be nurtured; otherwise rivals will take over it. However, without high standards and future plans, the company will not improve their approaches. Based on the achievements, it is quite clear that HP was able to meet the goals they set. A crucial question to be asked is how HP which is supportive of multiculturalism will operate differently in the future. There is a lack of further improvements, which could be as following.

Firstly, feedback is a key factor when evaluating either organization or individual's progress. Therefore, as Kram and Hall *(2000)* stated, 360-feedback could help employees to find out how they can do better not only from the managers' but also from the peers' perspective.

Secondly, the results of implementing HRM approaches sometimes take long time to reflect organization's effort *(Arvey et al., 2000)*. Consequently, the potential benefits may not have been recognized yet. When implementing new policies, the organization should bear in mind this fact and be patient.

Finally, regarding recruitment and selection, it is known that big companies such as HP obtain every year thousands of applications. As a result of this fact, companies select their employees according to their policy. Many times potential diverse workforce is rejected *(Heneman et al., 2000)*. It would help applicants if they were given a feedback and guidance on how to improve their chances next time.

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