Discrimination and Equality at work

Breaking down the invisible boundaries

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Discrimination and Equality at work

- Primarily UK perspective
- From my personal experience
- Emphasis on ethnicity and race at work
- Some blockages
- Challenges in overcoming them
- Suggestions

My first challenge

- Mental barriers:
  - Fear – identity issues
  - Ethnocentrism
  - In-group; out-group
  - Perceptual Set

A tendency to hold on to a selective view of the world

What do you see?

My first Challenge
A waste of time - Troublesome

Fun, exciting, dynamic

What constitutes Discrimination at work?

➢ Special pleading from women and minorities

➢ Political correctness

➢ Natural selection and survival of the fittest

➢ Poor performance

➢ Bleating of sad, negative people

What constitutes Discrimination at work?

➢ Direct and Indirect Discrimination

➢ Prejudices

➢ Biased Assumptions

➢ Stereotyping

➢ Perceptions

➢ Classifications

Indirect Discrimination

- Indirect and Institutional discrimination are two highly contested concepts
- "I did not intend to discriminate."
- "You should learn to be less sensitive."
- "Can't you take a joke?"
- "That is how we have always done things around here."

What is Indirect Discrimination

- Conditions through applied equally to all – having a disproportionately adverse effect on one or more groups; and

- Cannot be justified as necessary for the safe and effective performance of the job.

Indirect Discrimination

➤ Resides in systems rather than in the head

➤ Lies in requirements, conditions and criteria

Institutional Discrimination

➢ The way in which social structures and culture create and reinforce inequality.

➢ It is likely that institutional discrimination may be at work in an organisation when there are no minorities in any position of power.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination has 3 significant implications for policy making:

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination has 3 significant implications for policy making:

➢ Perceiving the dominant group as the norm

➢ Recognizing and addressing Institutional Discrimination

➢ Statistics can be a crude method for measuring indirect discrimination

Equality at work

- What do we mean by equality at work?
- Two important questions are often left unaddressed:
  - Equality of what? and
  - Equality for whom?

Three models of Equality

➤ McCrudden's (2002) typology:

➤ The procedural or individual justice model
  – based on merit

➤ The group justice model – social justice
  (positive action)

➤ Equality as recognition of diversity – the
  transformative agenda

➤ All three are important.

Implications for managers

- Value respect for the individual
- Value teamwork
- Involve their staff
- Actively listen
- Counsel and coach
- Try new and flexible ways to achieve organisational goals and objectives
- Awareness of diversity within their market

The transformative agenda

A two stage equality agenda:

1. Accommodate specific needs and improve representation

2. Workplace and culture transformed through greater participation of heterogeneous workforce
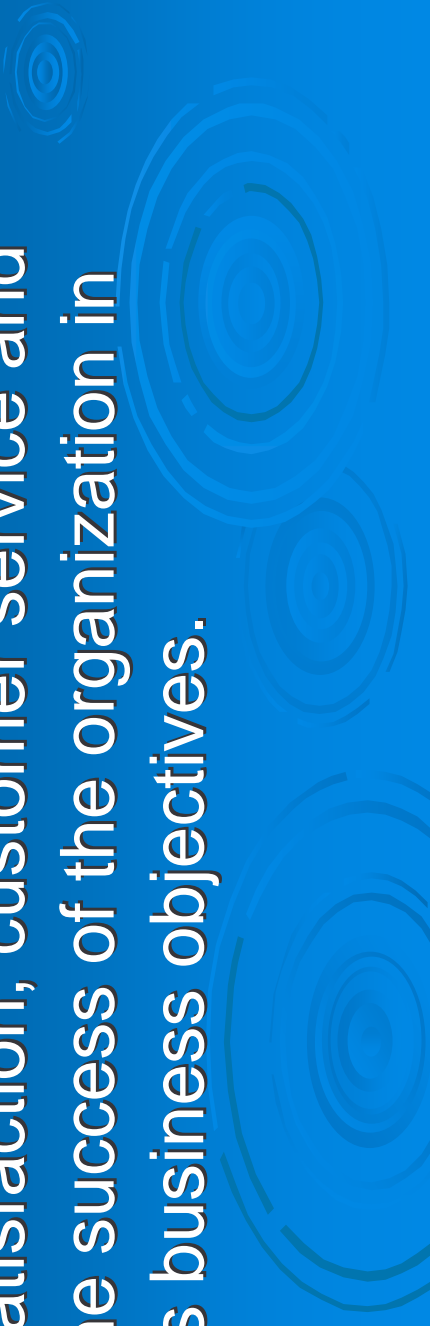
Accommodate and improve representation

➢ Attract and retain heterogeneous staff:
  ➢ Outreach
  ➢ Community involvement

➢ Make adaptations for special needs:
  ➢ Consultation and dialogue

Transform workplace and culture

➢ Dignity at work policy

➢ Encourage dialogue and debate across differences

➢ Increase representation in policy formulation and development

➢ Celebrate achievements

➢ Be proactive

Diversity at work: the business case

- Some companies are motivated by:

- external compliance

- a social obligation to address past injustices

- a business case for diversity that brings bottom line benefits

- a significant impact on employee productivity, employee satisfaction, customer service and ultimately the success of the organization in achieving its business objectives.

Wider Issues

- Assign value to human beings that is more than their place in the market
- Multi-culturalism
- Religious fundamentalism
- Political correctness
- Social capital
- Moral impulses

Complexity and Diversity

➢ Complexity is of the essence

➢ Human societies are ordered complexity; this makes them creative and unpredictable

➢ Continued self-analysis and self-correction is necessary.