

SESSION 6 DIVERSITY AT THE WORKPLACE

What is Diversity?

- A variety of demographic, cultural, and personal differences among the people.

TWO BROAD CATEGORIES OF DIVERSITY

- Surface-level diversity – differences such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, and physical disabilities that are observable, typically unchangeable and easy to measure.
- Deep-level diversity – differences communicated through verbal and nonverbal behaviours, such as personality and attitudes, that are learned only through extended interaction with others.

DIVERSITY ISSUES AT THE WORKPLACE

- Gender, age, ethnicity, religion, education, disability, nationality, personality, values, work styles, perspectives, etc.
- Diversity management is not confined to just understanding and managing the conflicts or differences between diverse groups. It is also about paying attention to the needs and interests of certain groups.

WHY SHOULD ORGANISATIONS PAY ATTENTION TO DIVERSITY?

- Globalisation inevitably leads to a diversified workforce
- Knowledge-based economy means competition for talents regardless of diversities
- Using diversity as part of business strategy; meeting customers' needs
- Create better work relationships among employees
- Enhance social responsibility
- Address legal concerns
- etc

CHALLENGES TO MANAGING DIVERSITY

- Tendency to view diversity in terms of duality & oppositionality (see next slide)
- Biases
- Discrimination
- Ethnocentrism
- Xenophobia
- Emotional reactions
- etc

CHALLENGES TO MANAGING DIVERSITY

- “In other words, we define ourselves, our identity, in opposition to, or as distinct from, others. I know who I am because I am not you.
- This self-definition through oppositionality can be problematic as it sets up a chain reaction – my sense of self is built upon my ability to distinguish myself from you; therefore I value the ways in which I am different from you; and therefore I begin to devalue the traits that make you distinct from me.”

Mary Gentile

A MODEL FOR REFRAMING DIVERSITY

- Multiple Identities
 - *We all have multiple identities, one or another of which we may identify with more strongly at different moments in our lives and in different contexts.*
- Salience
 - *We often experience contradictory urges or needs for a sense of belonging or "fitting in" on the one hand, and for a feeling of uniqueness or "specialness" on the other. Thus, in a particular situation, one of our multiple identities may feel more salient to us than others.*
- Costs and benefits
 - *Some identities exact a higher and/or different costs (or provide greater and/or different benefits) for the bearer in a particular societal, historical, or even situational context than others.*

A MODEL FOR REFRAMING DIVERSITY

- Choice
 - *Sometimes individuals have a choice of becoming recognised as members of a particular identity group in a particular setting, and that choice brings certain costs and benefits, as well.*
- Redefinitions and change
 - *Our individual identities are always developing, we are continually negotiating, defining, and redefining the internal coherence of our original values, our new experiences, and our multiple identities.*
- Shared goals
 - *Identity differences do not preclude the development and pursuit of shared goals among and across identities.*

A MODEL FOR REFRAMING DIVERSITY -KEY SUMMARY

- Encourage exploration of all perspectives, both between and within each party to the decision.
- Avoid denying/suppressing aspects of each party.
- Address and balance the different costs/benefits associated with the identities of each party.
- Maximize choice for all parties.
- Allow change within each party.
- Identify and pursue shared goals among all parties.

VIDEO-BASED LEARNING

- Watch the video, 'A Peacock in the Land of Penguin' and reflect on the following:
 - What do you see in the video that reminds you of the human world?