Lecture 6: Diverse workforce, inclusive mindset- 1

Hello all! Welcome back to the course on Organizational Behavior, Individual Dynamics in Organization.

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So, we move to the Module 2 of the course. If you recollect in the Module 1, we looked closely into what organizational behavior, OBM, Organizational Behavior Management is specifically. We looked into how OB has emerged as a discipline. We tried to understand what specifically do you mean by organization, what do you mean by behavior. We tried to understand what are the different approaches in OB from the scientific management approach to evidence-based management approach to the systematic approach and even intuition. We also looked into the emergence of organizational behavior as a discipline, the contribution of different fields like anthropology, psychology, sociology to the common body of knowledge which is organizational behavior.

Now, we try to address the first elephant in the room which is diversity. Diversity and inclusion in organization. Diverse workforce, inclusive mindset.

Chapter 1. So, this is what I start today with. Differences are critical for divergent and critical solutions, creative solutions. You must have seen that organizations who are into creative outputs, who are into functionally creative outputs, they bring out different perspectives. They bring out people from different diversities, different backgrounds, different setups, different predispositions, different perspectives. So that, they get to create something which is quite beautiful, something which is quite creative and this is what differences yield. So, differences in the sense it is, we are stepping above the individual differences, we are looking into the diversity. The diversity within an organization.

Now let us understand deeply what do you mean by diversity. Workforce diversity means similarities and differences among employees in terms of age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities which I would like to box in race, religion, gender and sexual orientation. Now, this is what a definition from Saxena 2014 research paper is. Now, it is quite evident that I have boxed out the disability part. I have tried to include the age. There are people from different age group. There are people who belong to different age pattern.

Even in your early days of your organization within the initial experience of your organization you must have seen people who are quite old even getting into the organization for the first place. You might be quite senior during that time. But differences in age is a critical factor. There are differences in culture, cultural background which people represent, cultural predispositions that they bring in to the plate. There are physical abilities. Physical abilities means the way they can perform the task. Some might be good in terms of the analytical abilities. Some might be good if you recollect the mental abilities, the logical, the problem solving, the thinking abilities might be far superior than others. I am not looking into disabilities because we are not here to consider and acknowledge. We are living in a world we tend to appreciate the abilities. Even people with disabilities have more divergent abilities that have to be appreciated.

We look into race, differences in religion, differences in gender which is also becoming very fluid these days and obviously sexual orientation also that is becoming very fluid these days. So, these are some of the relevant aspects which could be understood in terms of workplace diversity. Now when you are looking into gender, when you are looking into culture, race, social and psychological characters, they are not only in the way in which people are different but also in the perspectives and prejudices. Now this is critical. Every now and then we tend to see that we are prejudiced towards something, we have some preconceived notions, we tend to, let's look into a case of Simran who is having a different look out towards a set of people. Simran always tried to stereotype a set of people, a segment of people. Now let's understand what is that psyche or what is that psychological reasoning why Simran is stereotyping or in other words let's look into and dissect and see why people stereotype.

Now if you look into the basic or the entire foundation of stereotyping, it is their convenience. It is a convenience that they are looking in. For example, if you have, very crude example, you have 100 units of energy. These 100 units of energy need to be channelized for a particular task. Now if you have only 100 units of energy at your disposal and you feel that you need to account for your selection in terms of people, you need to account for the planning process, you need to account for your organizing process, your costing, budgeting, etc. You also have to now account for the differences

they bring in. So, I don't want to take that chunk of that energy of that 100 units from that. So, to make my life easier, to make my existence easier and to make my task easier, I stereotype. Now this is a very bad thing, but this is good for somebody who wants to conserve energy. But when you stereotype and you tend to associate a negative element or negative feature to a particular set of people, it becomes very much detrimental to the entire organization. This is what becomes very critical and dangerous to the organization.

So I repeat, stereotyping is an outcome whereby you tend to conserve your energy. But stereotyping in other way, preconceived notions don't allow you to grow, don't allow you to appreciate, the differences that people can bring in, don't allow you to appreciate the divergent thought process that they can bring in. It does not give you the right time and space to appreciate the way they carry out themselves. You might have learned or you might have a lot to learn from such individuals and this specifically takes out that learning opportunity. So, diversity makes the workforce more heterogeneous, no doubt about it.

You tend to work in or you like to work in a more homogeneous environment or heterogeneous environment. The choice is yours. But in a heterogeneous environment you are more productive. You are challenged every day because somebody is excelling you, somebody is making you sweat for the money, somebody is making you to do the things to your maximum potentialities which is not the case in a homogeneous environment where you are more in your comfort zone, where you are hardly looking or breaking to go beyond your boundaries, where you don't try to break your boundaries, where sky is not the limit for you. You just tend to be as lethargic, as common as normal within the organization.

Now let's look into diversity in workplace from a certain pre angle and the post angle, in a historic way and the present-day scenario. Recent trends and the past trends. Past view of diversity is that, diversity was mainly acknowledged as a legal issue. There are people coming from different background. There are individuals who ought to be from different background. So, they are complex. There are complexities that are going to arise. So, it has been directly against the law to discriminate against anyone on any basis. So there has to be some legal compliance. Compliance was the factor. Compliance was the buzzword during the past era of organization where diversity was more confined to the legal requirement.

There are people, the complexities are there but you cannot discriminate with the complexities coming in, with the different perspectives coming in, with the different opinion coming in. But the present view is more inclusive. The present view is more generous. Now organizations are beginning to realize that diversity is not just something

to deal with rather a reality to build or to make a stronger and more competitive enterprise. So, if you are having a diverse structure, if your organization is stronger, robust, it should have a diverse platform or a diverse engine pushing you or a diverse work culture pulling you. This is what the new viewpoint or new thought process with respect to diversity is.

Organizations are understanding and acknowledging the relevance of diversity rather than restricting it as a mere compliance issue and they are trying to build diversity and to incorporate and encapsulate that as a more stronger lookout or a stronger organization or organizational network or organizational setup. So, in that case I will say that diversity must be recognized and nurtured as the organization's greatest asset. So, if you think that it was a weakness, it was essentially considered, let's look into the earlier scenario. Past view was the legal compliance. Before that diversity was considered as a burden but, nowhere it is a burden now. It is more of a strength; it is more of an asset and the ability to attract and work with diverse talent must be seen as a critical competitive advantage. This competitive advantage is something that gives you an edge over other organization. This competitive advantage is a critical factor which enables you to work ahead or be ahead of other organizations or your counterparts or your competitors. So, this is what diversity has been, this is what diversity is now. So, this drastic change in the lookout from more of a compliance to acknowledging and appreciating it as an asset has given diversity the front seat.

Now, let's look into the effective diversity management very quickly. The first and foremost thing is to create a work environment or culture that allows everyone to contribute all that they can to the organization. Sometimes we venture into the organization, we feel that I can do it, I can do that, but it need not be done because nobody is asking me. I am not going to take a voluntary initiative. It is not happening that I will bring out the citizenship behavior within me and I will try to pitch in where nobody is trying to help or nobody is trying to pitch in. This is not the consideration. Rather when you are giving or creating a work environment or culture that allows everyone to contribute irrespective of their diverse background, irrespective of from where they come from, what their predispositions are in terms of the gender, race, sexual orientation, etc. You are creating, giving more than what you can to the organization. This is what it is or what the diversity management has to happen in the first place.

Second is leveraging the differences and similarities in the workforce for strategic advantage of the organization. Now interestingly many a time you see diversity management classes tend to talk about managing the differences. This is vital, no doubt about it. Managing the difference is a need for the hour. We have totally tried to establish and underscore that in our previous lecture but equally important is to manage the similarities. Many a time you tend to get people coming from the same background with

same skills, same intellectual capacity which is above average. How do you manage those type of individuals as well?

So, where the situation is demanding you to work in differences, work in acknowledging the difference and to move ahead, you have to organize and train your organization in such a way. In some situations, you want like-minded individuals to put their sweat and the blood together, you need to have situations to be created in such a way that organizations excel in that way. So, this is the second most aspect in terms of diversity management. The first obviously being to create a work environment.

The third is enhancing the ability of the people from different backgrounds to work effectively together. Sometimes you tend to feel that there are individual capacities that every single individual has and these individual capacities seldom are realized. And there are organizations which tend to realize these individual capacities also. But when you are in the right environment at the right time what happens is that these individual capacities are synchronized with the individual capacities of other individuals from the different backgrounds and you tend to work together. This synergy is what would take the organization from this orbit to the next one. This synergy is what would make the organization give the necessary competitive advantage which other organizations do not have. So, this is yet again another important aspect of managing diversity.

Now major reasons for increasing diversity if you look into in today's organization specifically, the first and the foremost aspect is to the recognition and desire of diverse viewpoints. Now there are situations where organizations have diverse people. There are people coming from different backgrounds, different cultural and different language, different religious setups etc. And they tend to see the problem in with a different angle. That is good and that gives a different solution. But the thing is sometimes the top management is not receptive to different viewpoints. So, this is the first and the foremost thing that the organization is giving the recognition and desire for diverse viewpoints. If you are in a position to actually acknowledge and appreciate the diversity within the organization to take in the different viewpoints, if you want to always say or hear "yes", it is always better to have a dog. It is generally said like that. So, similarly if you want to have an organization with a successful foundation, then you need to be open to different and divergent ideas and diversity is the way to go forward.

Changing workforce, you can look into people. There are people who are coming from different age, gender, ethnicity and education. If you are open to such setup, then this is because of diversity. You are, this is creating diversity or this is facilitating diversity. We are having the natural inclination. We are having the natural inclination to increase the diversity because of that reason.

Legislation and lawsuits which I have already mentioned which was the previous view. But time and again we have also seen that we have not left totally that compliance angle. There are certain compliance issues. If you would like to work in a particular region, you have to employ these many people from these many places. There are still compliance issues like that, there are still legislation or there are certain laws which actually restrict your organization or dictate your organization to work like that. This also could be a vital reason in establishing or increasing the diversity within the organization. Rapidly growing increase in international business, you are going to establish your foothold in other countries in US, Europe, Australia, Oceania, everywhere, everywhere across the globe. As you move, as you diversify, as you go across the globe, it is only natural that you have to take the workforce also from different places. You have to bring people also from the different places. That is yet again another reason in rapidly growing diversity, in inculcating a culture of diversity.

Competitive pressures, you have companies that are competing with you in terms of creative solutions. As I have already mentioned and established unequivocally that, you need to give or you need to get diverse or creative solutions to the problems, you need to have modern solutions, then you have to have a lot of creative inputs and these creative inputs cannot be monotonous. The creative inputs cannot come without diversity. You have to see a problem from different angles. The moment you see a problem from different angles, that is the spot when you tend to get to a creative solution. For that you need to bring in diversity. You need to breed diversity; you need to acknowledge diversity in the first place. You tend to create an environment which is facilitating diversity, which is accepting diversity and appreciating diversity and their outcome and their results and their contribution. So, this is what are the reasons which I can think of for increasing diversity.

Now let us look into developing a multicultural organization. Multicultural organization is one which reflects the contributions and interest of diverse cultural and social groups in mission, operations and product or service. It acts on a commitment to eradicate the social oppression in all forms within the organization. If you look into members of diverse cultural and social groups as let us, say full participants, especially in the decisions to shape the organization.

So, when you are establishing a multicultural organization, it is not for name's sake. You are trying to bring people from different culture backgrounds, you are trying to give them the say, the decision-making power within the organization from top to bottom. You have equal good representation of individuals from different cultural setups, cultural backgrounds. This gives you a viewpoint that is quite different from a very monotonous organization otherwise. This gives you a refined understanding of what the worldview is from different cultural contexts.

It follows through on border external social responsibilities including support of other institutional efforts to eliminate all social oppression. So, basically you tend to bring in the diverse element. When you are looking into operating in a multicultural setup, you tend to bring in all the different cultural contexts together and try to make a better organization by coexistence and cohesion.

Now let us look into the stages leading up to a multicultural organization and it is vital to understand these stages when you are actually dealing with the diversity as such. Diversity in the first and the foremost stage would be exclusionary organization. Exclusionary organization is when you have to bring up an organization which is not only in terms of just set cultural context, you are also trying to look others or imbibe other viewpoints or are ready to accept others. You are looking into club organizations; you are looking into compliance organization and finally you are redefining the organization and finally it comes as multicultural organization.

So, these are the stages from exclusionary to a set amount of people who are your likes or your people whom you affiliate to, whom the people you enjoy working with or the hand-picked ones forms a club organization. Then comes a more number of people, there are certain diversity included mainly if you focus in the previous angle of compliance, the legal compliance so you tend to have an organization where there should be a representation from this minority group, from this group, this segment of the people, this particular set of people. So, these will bring one by one as a mere understanding, as a mere organizational structure for the requirement of legal compliance or the compliance which they are bound to follow.

Then comes the redefining organization where the number is increasing and it is increasing above the compliance figures. It is not for compliance now, it is that you are venturing into different country, you are venturing into different organization, organizational paradigm, you are venturing into different organizational culture. So, there you will have a lot of requirements of people from different backgrounds, different cultural setups, you might, let's say you are an Indian company who is going to a setup in somewhere in Zurich, so you might have Europeans working there, you might have the Americans working there, Australians working there, so it is a conglomeration of the entire set of people coming together from the globe, across the globe coming together and setting up their shop there. So, it is a redefining organization and finally the final stage is a multicultural organization, it is in true sense where all these individuals from different cultural backgrounds, from different aspects, from different spheres, they all come together, set up an organization and come as a part of organization, there are different viewpoints that are coming together, but in a very harmonic way, there are different understanding of the problem, there are different result oriented discussions, there are different debates which are constructive, there are different arguments which are critical,

but again constructive, all these elements synchronized together forms the multicultural organization.

So, if you are looking into the stages that lead to a multicultural organization, initially there was an organization which does not consider any single individual from different culture, you are not open to any particular individual from a different culture, you established an organization, there are lots of examples. I don't want to go to those examples, for the simple reason that the exclusionary organizations do not make any sense, any sense in the present-day world. When you look into other organizations from the exclusionary, you tend to take a little more, a number of people who are more affiliated, somewhat different from your predisposition, so club organization, then comes the actual requirement in terms of the legal angle, you end up making a compliance organization. From this segment of people, you have this much of representation that was there in the paper, so you wanted it, you made it in an organization, but effectively somewhere you were not so inclusive, then comes redefining the organization. You are essentially walking above or performing above the compliance spirit, above the compliance organization where you are bringing everyone together, you are bringing everyone together in a sense that everyone is key to the organization, that decision matters, the importance is underlined and also finally it leads to a multicultural organization where every single individual is critical, every single individual is important.

Now if you look into the individual approaches in managing diversity, the first is learning and second is empathy. Learning obviously is those who may not think that they need to learn about diversity must work especially hard to learn and experience as much as they can about developing appropriate behavior. So, the heart of this learning process is communication, they think that they don't want to work with somebody who is from a different background. These are the people who should actually learn that working with other culture, working with individuals from diverse background is the key in establishing a successful organization, is the key in bringing out creative solutions to different difficult and complex problems, is the key in differentiating and dissecting the humongous or herculean task and making it into easy and doable task.

Then comes empathy, the ability to put oneself in another's place and see things from that person's point of view. This could be the key approach. Learning could be something which is forced, could be induced but the moment you are able to understand and acknowledge, put yourself in others position and see from where they come from, you are trying to understand what their cultural predisposition is, what their individual mindset is, how much they have struggled to achieve, how much they have struggled to come to here, you might be really rewarded, you might be really happy that you are here, you might be really privileged to be here but they have fought so hard, they have done and they have overcome so much of difficulties to be here. This empathy could be yet again

another important approach in managing diversity. Members of diverse group often feel that they only can truly understand the challenges of problems they are facing. So, this empathy could be more succinct and more critical.

So organizational approach to managing diversity would be, one would be testing where you avoid culturally biased selection and evaluation test. You are properly inclusive or you are properly including all the effective parameters which can bring in diversity. You are not pertain to or you are not restricting yourself to only individualistic or a set of people only. You are actually using job specific test rather than general aptitude. When there is a reasoning or general aptitude test, it could be a reason to bring in a lot of people who are not specific from different diverse background. So, it could be a reason to actually negate diversity. So better you always go for job specific test in those scenarios.

There could be approaches of training. When you are looking into training specifically, diverse group can be trained for entry level skill or how to more effectively do their existing job. When you are looking or providing training to managers and other employees who work with diverse employees or diverse workforce should be the critical thing. So, one thing would be to restrict any sort of anti diversity movement in terms of testing.

The second would be to give focus training for individuals to succeed and work together in terms of diversity. And the third could be mentoring. Members are obviously the guides, the advisors, the workforce which you can actually support and rely on. So, mentoring helps support members of diverse work group in their jobs, socialize them in cultural values of organization and pragmatically help towards their advancement. This is yet another stage of approach and finally work family programs that have recently received considerable attention especially in research and practice.

Alternative work schedule arrangements. You are actually bringing in people from different cultural backgrounds. You are actually bringing in people from different backgrounds which educational backgrounds which different intellectual capacity, different social viewpoints etc. So, you might not have everybody in the same page at the initial level. So, you could give them an alternate work schedule arrangement like flex time, compressed work week. Some might not be able to actually work the entire stretch of week. Some might obviously need Saturday, Sunday. Some might even need a four-day week. So, try to accompany, acknowledge and facilitate what they require. There could be job sharing, there should be telecommunicating. All those aspects which you can actually give or facilitate towards your work diversity should be maintained and should be facilitated.

So this note, I will try to conclude my initial session on diversity.

Before concluding I like to mention that diversity is always critical and crucial for any organization. If you are not taking diversity seriously as you have seen in the stages of development, if you are more into the club organizations, if you are more into the exclusionary organization, you will not survive during the present modern issues or present era where the problems are complex, the issues are complex, there are different solutions that have to be brought about. So, let me tell you one thing. Organizations when they require complex problem-solving skills you need to look into diverse workforces. If you are trying to ignore diversity in the workforce you are about to not succeed and about to peril.

You are not going to succeed in the organization. The organization itself will go down. The organization itself will not achieve what it is meant to. Diverse backgrounds as I have already mentioned could bring in diverse inputs. They could see the problem from diverse angles. They could see the issues from critical viewpoints which others would definitely miss out. that will give you the creative solution.

Thank you for listening to me patiently. See you in the next class. Namaskar.