United Nations Expert Group Meeting on
Managing Diversity in the Civil Service
United Nations Headquarters, New York, 3 - 4 May 2001

Managing Diversity in Civil Service:
A Conceptual Framework for Public Organizations

Sonia Ospina
Associate Professor
New York University
Robert F. Wagner Graduate
School of Public Service

Introduction

The new century has been marked by a generalized sense that traditional work arrangements are inadequate to address the challenges organizations encounter today. The shifts from an industrial to an information-based society, and from a manufacturing to a service economy, compounded by the forces of globalization, have propelled revolutionary changes on work place arrangements. These trends have affected work not only in industrialized societies, but in all nations. Many assumptions about how to best organize tasks and people – as well as the solutions to organizational problems based on those assumptions – do not seem to make sense any more. A paradigmatic shift is taking place in how we think about contemporary organizations and their governance.

Public organizations are not exempt from this reality. From a managerial perspective, the Nation-state is a large and complex supra-organization. To effectively accomplish its mission in today's turbulent environment, it must engage in similar challenges as any other large corporation. In the same way, a professional civil service system is just one version of another contemporary personnel system based on the merit principle (Ospina, 1996a). Public service, of course, represents a particular type of employment relationship that, by its very nature, is different from private employment. Nevertheless, from the point of view of organizational theory, a national public bureaucracy, its conditions of employment, and its employees, are all equally subject to the tremendous pressures shaping the fate of any complex organization today. It is in this context that the challenge of managing diversity in the civil service becomes an urgent and important agenda.

Workforce diversity has, indeed, become an imperative for organizational competitiveness and effectiveness (Cox, 1993; Gentile, 1996; Jackson and Schuler, 2000) and diversity management is increasingly becoming a principle of human resources management (Mathews, 1998). Forces like globalization and the internationalization of public issues contribute to expand the flow of labor across national boundaries and facilitate the constant exchange of materials, as well as symbolic and human resources. To remain competitive, organizations must adapt to and manage these environmental forces. As a result, firms and public agencies search for different work arrangements, leaders propose flatter organizational structures designed around teams and networks, and boundaries become permeable to facilitate intra and inter-organizational cooperation. The new complexity of work operations demands more diverse functions and the use of more diverse talents. As the need for employee diversity increases, so do demands like the need for effective interaction among diverse employees, the potential for conflict among them and the urgency to manage, not just attain, the required diversity (Schneider and Northcraft, 1999).

Diversity poses tough challenges for managers in both public and private organizations. These are compounded in the public sector by pressures creating additional dilemmas for the civil service system. Public sector organizations in most countries, rich and poor, experience an environment characterized by greater scarcity of resources. Competition, pressures to reduce the production role of the State, and taxpayer demands for higher efficiency and cost-effectiveness mark the new work place realities. In this context, incentives to invest in human capital to adjust to the new demands will be minimal. Public officials and managers must respond to competing

demands as they design and implement programs that both increase flexibility and address the requirements for a more diverse workforce effectively (Berman et al, 2001).

Finally, the functional requirement for diversity takes place in a climate that questions the traditional institution of civil service itself, as the appropriate way to regulate contemporary public employment. Two arguments of this debate are particularly relevant for a discussion of workplace diversity. First, traditional civil service systems, implemented to address issues of equity, transparency, accountability and rationality in public employment, are viewed by many as a source of inefficiency, and as an obstacle to attaining the very flexibility required for organizational adaptation. Second, some argue that many systems have fallen short of the expectation that they would address problems of social exclusion, political favoritism and lack of social representativeness in public service (Ospina, 1996a). While there is no consensus around these claims, there is a generalized call for reforming employment institutions to ensure they accomplish their role in a democratic society (Klinger and Lynn, 1997; Kettle et al, 1996; Van Wart, 1999).

In this paper I explore the managerial challenges posed by diversity in addressing traditional and new requirements for effective performance in public organizations. I survey the core dimensions, concepts and approaches to diversity in reference to organizations dependent of civil service as their core employment system. In doing so, I expect to show that the mandate to manage diversity in the civil service cannot be based on a one-size-fits-all strategy (Mor Barak, 2000). Designing and implementing this agenda requires a deliberate and methodical managerial strategy that starts with a diagnosis of how diversity affects organizational performance. It continues with an analysis of the extent to which civil service rules and regulations, its practices and the underlying managerial philosophies about people promote or inhibit public agencies to advance through what scholars call 'the diversity continuum' (Minors, 1996; Ospina, 1996), from exclusionary to multicultural workplaces (Cox, 1993). Only considering the degree of diversity and the historical, political, cultural and economic contexts of public employment in a given jurisdiction, can a tailored diversity agenda work.

The paper is structured as follows. First, focusing on the conceptual foundations of the diversity agenda, I use organization and management theory to explore what is diversity and why it is an imperative for all organizations. In a transitional section, I then discuss the implications of '*what*' and '*why*', for the agenda of managing diversity. Third, moving into the world of practice, I provide an overview of diversity approaches and strategies, highlighting the benefits of systemic, proactive strategies to diversity management in contemporary public organizations. I return in the conclusion to the implications of the approaches presented for managing diversity in civil service.

Foundations: what is diversity and why must it be managed?

Some may argue that managing diversity is a luxury for the civil service leaders of a few countries who have already addressed more urgent tasks in public service. This argument will resonate for leaders of poor countries or where the civil service system is struggling with problems such as corruption or patronage. This shortsighted perspective, however, only postpones confronting a reality that clearly affects employee and organizational performance.

Indeed, diversity is often is intertwined with the chronic problems mentioned above. Consider for a moment the following vignettes:

- Two ethnic groups dominate the population of a small country. One descended from African slaves and the other from Indian indentured immigrants. There are additional relative small groups of mixed-races, European and Chinese inhabitants. The two ethnic groups account for approximately the same proportion of the population, which together constitute about four fifths of the society. Political mobilization has been along ethnic lines since the pre-independence period. The two distinct electoral groups coincide with urban and rural constituencies respectively. In the long years of African political domination the opposition parties complained consistently that employment in the public sector was biased against Indians and allegations of racial discrimination in public sector agencies were common. In their struggle to get to power the Indian based parties promised anti-discrimination legislation and establishing an Equal Opportunity Commission. Once they attainted power these strategies were consistently delayed and the African based parties now argue that there is an unspoken policy of "ethnic cleansing" in the public service (Brown, 1999).

- The Civil Service Act of 1975 is the legal basis for public service practices in the national government of an eastern Nation. No clauses or provisions discriminate against women. Based on the written rules and regulations, gender discrimination does not exist in this country's civil service. However, analysis of the data collected for a study of promotion in the service fifteen years later reveals that, despite some progress, there is bias in the higher levels, where jobs are mostly filled with men. The study indicates that personal characteristics receive more emphasis in promotion to higher levels. While at the lowest levels the emphasis is on written examinations, at one point it changes to interviews, leading to more subjective judgments of what is required for effective performance. For managerial jobs, the degree of assertiveness, decisiveness and calmness, attributes that are gender-related and clearly associated with maleness in eastern societies, seem to strongly influence promotion (Col, 1991).

- As part of a government wide re-engineering effort, a governmental agency of a large industrialized country characterized by a relatively balanced representative bureaucracy is rethinking its structures and programs to improve service quality and efficiency. Part of this effort has produced a series of changes that increase the power and responsibilities of regional managers and imply a shift in their role from decision-making and control to facilitation of participatory processes in field agencies and the communities they serve. Freshly minted graduates from organization development and management schools have been hired to fill several of these positions, replacing competitive examinations with higher educational credentials. These new managers, however, have encountered negative attitudes from older and more traditional employees in the field, who resent being managed by individuals who are younger and less experienced than they are on the agency's work.[1]

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[1] This is a fictional case based on situations observed by the author in the past.

These situations illustrate the scope and variety of diversity challenges faced by public managers in civil service systems. In all three cases, an aspect of the social identity of individuals is heightened in the context of performance dilemmas, connecting diversity to organizational effectiveness. In all cases, unless addressed, the consequences of these situations will reduce the managers' ability to mobilize employees toward effective performance, thus diminishing opportunities to accomplish the agency's mission and to promote excellence in public service.

For managers who choose excellence, leaving the situation unchanged or the issues unresolved are not options – the organizational climate will only deteriorate, employee energy will deviate away from performance toward issues of organizational justice, attitudes and behaviors will negatively affect the organizational climate and, where possible, legal liabilities might ensue. These cases reflect undesirable organizational consequences of discrimination and social exclusion as they manifest in public service. In the worst scenario, the negative consequences may spill over into society, reducing the legitimacy of public service and citizen's trust for government, and potentially feeding into broader social conflicts that threaten stability and democracy, as in the case of the first vignette. How these situations are resolved depends greatly on factors such as:

- The capacity of the civil service system to change structural and cultural patterns of exclusion;

- The willingness of the affected employees to voice their concern and how they do so;

- The degree of sensitivity of the managers involved and leadership that rewards functional and social diversity;

- The presence or absence of an articulated diversity approach in the system and in the agencies it regulates; and

- The extent to which personnel and program managers work together to address the issues as they surface.

There are many potential gains associated with successfully addressing these situations. Elsewhere I have summarized the most cited benefits of addressing diversity challenges. I classified them according to the ethical, legal, public policy, human resources (HR) management, and organizational gains they provide (Ospina, 1996). Ethical benefits are that diversity contributes to promote fairness and justice in the work place, helps create economic opportunity and reduces social inequality. Legal and public policy benefits include greater compliance with HR legal requirements; increased representation and responsiveness in the bureaucracy; and increased grassroots support for agency programs and policies.

HR management benefits include increased competitiveness in personnel acquisition by enhancing the agency's reputation and ability to attract and keep the best employees, and promoting creative approaches to work. Organizational benefits include increased internal capabilities, greater ability to address change, greater flexibility in organizational design, decreased discrimination litigation (where possible) and increased organizational legitimacy due to enhanced reputation and higher effectiveness.

Similarly, the costs of not attending to workforce diversity are both material and symbolic, as equity and fairness issues are not disconnected from the organization's bottom line (Ospina, 1996a). Unresolved diversity problems can produce consequences such as:

- Losing good employees and having to defray additional expenses to identify and recruit their replacements;

- Managing conflict among diverse groups or dealing with resultant low employee morale; and

- Creating a reputation that the organization is not a good place to work;

- Diverting scarce financial and human resources to deal with litigation or to pay punitive damages (Ospina and O'Sullivan, forthcoming).

Given how high the stakes are, having a thorough understanding of the concepts and practices to manage diversity in civil service is not a luxury. It is instead, a functional requirement of effective managerial work in public service. To address the conceptual foundations of this requirement, in the next sections I explore what is diversity, why it is an imperative for all organizations, and what does it mean to manage diversity.

What is diversity?

A simple dictionary definition of diversity is "to make different, to give variety". Applied to organizational life, there are at least three categories of diversity related to performance and strategy. These are structural or functional diversity (differences based on organizational functions and tasks such as administrative vs. operational), business diversity (differences in markets, products and services), and workforce diversity (different types of employees) (DeLucca and McDowell, 1992; Gentile, 1996).

There is not one common usage of the concept of diversity in the organizational literature (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998; Schneider and Northcraft, 1999). Nevertheless, in the context of employment issues, it is typically discussed in reference to the benefits of variety in work force attributes (Jackson, Stone and Alvarez, 1993; Schneider and Northcraft, 1999). Workforce attributes range from those that are directly related to work or tasks such as differences in skills, to those that are social in nature and –in theory – only indirectly related to work, such as gender. A critical question from a managerial perspective is which attributes become the markers of the dynamics of workplace diversity. Another issue refers to how these attributes affect the experience and opportunities of employees who have them.

For example, occupational diversity encompasses the range of occupations related to the organization's mission (e.g. paramedics vs. nurses). Professional diversity addresses training and credential requirements to ensure effective performance of diverse tasks (e.g. engineers vs. nurses). And social diversity refers to variations in the characteristics that identify a person with a social category (e.g. male vs. female engineers). Furthermore, there are interdependencies among types of workforce diversity (e.g. the experience of a male engineer is different from that of a female engineer or a male nurse). Any systematic effort to manage diversity in civil service

systems must address these differences and the consequences of their interdependencies. The specific configuration of diversity categories to be addressed in an agency, however, is workplace specific.

Research suggests that what makes certain attributes salient is constructed in particular social and historical contexts (Ethier and Deaux, 1994; Ospina, 1996a; Williams and O'Really, 1998). The mix of salient attributes may vary from organization to organization and from society to society. But social categories appear to greatly influence employment contexts in most societies. Social markers include gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, age, and family, economic, educational and geographic backgrounds and status. Some scholars distinguish visible from invisible social dimensions and highlight implications for managing diversity (Mor Barak, 2000). Others also include behavioral attributes such as differences in learning, communication and work styles (Loden and Rosener, 1991).

Primary and secondary social attributes combined produce the "social types" that make up an organization's workforce (Ospina, 1996), and determine its particular diversity challenges. But the reality of social diversity is even more complicated. Each employee in an organization fits into several potential social categories and, furthermore, many identities occur simultaneously. For example, a "typical" black employee may be a member of a certain religion, could be gay or straight, or may have a disability not readily apparent to the naked eye (Ospina and O'Sullivan, forthcoming). In addition, social diversity involves both self-definition and attributes perceived by others (Cox, 1993; Zuckerman & Simons, 1996). Categorizing individuals on the base of a single identity attribute may therefore produce equivocal judgment calls. Tough diversity dilemmas emerge from these social dynamics and the interactions between social and other types of functionally related identities (such as occupation or position in the organization). Given the competing problems for managerial attention, the next question to answer is then, why engage such a difficult agenda?

Why is workforce diversity an organizational imperative?

The literature on workforce diversity has grown exponentially in the last decade in most industrialized nations. An industry of consultants offers diagnostic and training tools to address the challenge in public and private organizations. Practice has debunked the early argument that diversity was a "managerial fad". Work place diversity is a central issue of HR management in the organization of the 21st century[2].

A book published on "Designing and implementing Successful Diversity Programs" (Baytos, 1995) provides an inventory of approximately two hundred and fifty diversity activities. They range from "pure" diversity initiatives such as sensitivity training for managers and employees, to more generic activities such as work and family initiatives operating with or independent of broader diversity efforts. The US federal government has lead by example, with programs that foster both more representation in the bureaucracy, and a more welcoming environment for the new comers. (US Merit Systems Protection Board, 1993). This trend is not unique to the US. To

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[2] For example, in the private sector, in the US, by 1995, 75% of the fifty largest companies had diversity directors or managers.

different degrees, most public and private organizations in developing and industrialized countries are struggling with the diversity challenge.

External and internal pressures have produced the momentum for diversity to become a central issue for managers, and it is very likely that these pressures will continue. The motivations most relevant to start public service initiatives include: legal and regulatory pressures, changes in labor market demographics, and a diversifying client base. External social pressure may also be a critical motivator. For example, groups and coalitions may object to particular products, services or ways in which these are offered to particular populations and clients, or may put pressure to ensure more representation of certain groups in the workforce. Internal employee pressures may also generate interest in diversity efforts, as employees will defend their rights or respond to perceptions of unfairness, discrimination or harassment. They may file complaints and/or enact behaviors such as turnover, absenteeism, conflict, lower productivity and even sabotage, or request new policies and procedures that respond to their particular needs, such as flexible schedule and benefit policies. Finally, the personal commitment of individual leaders and managers may motivate them to champion efforts to ensure fairness and employee well-being in the work place (Gentile, 1996; Ospina and O'Sullivan, forthcoming).

Two broad demands affect contemporary civil service employment in particular. They are a function of globalization, the shifts toward an information society and a service economy, and of course, they also relate to citizen and employee responses to these trends in the contested terrain of democracy. One is the demand for increased performance, where-by diversity becomes a performance requirement; the other is a legitimization demand, where-by diversity stems from political and ethical mandates for representative bureaucracy in a democratic context. Combined, these two demands produce a strong incentive to pursue diversity and to manage it effectively.

Diversity as a performance requirement

Increasing complexity of work operations in a globalized economy, emerging organizational and governance structures in the work place and the changing nature of work call for more flexibility. They also demand a wider range of skills to attend a broader set of functions and more creativity and innovation in problem-solving. Public organizations are not exempt to these demands. For example, Bergman et al (2001) describe the government environment in the US as follows: a changing workforce, declining confidence in government, declining budgets, patterns of downsizing at the federal level, higher demands for productivity within a cost-effective climate and the proposal of alternative approaches to public service, including contracting out and privatization. A review of New Public Management practices suggests these trends are common through out the world (Kettl, 2000).

As in the private sector, these demands call for functional diversity, that is, diversity in characteristics relevant to performance, such as differences in knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), values, beliefs and attitudes (VBAs), and personality, cognitive style and behavioral style (PCBs). Functional diversity ensures the possibility of specialized divisions of labor if needed, and the likelihood that demanded skills will be represented and accessible somewhere in the workforce to respond rapidly to environmental pressure (Schneider and Northcraft, 1999).

Highlighting the benefits of functional diversity, Schneider and Northcraft argue that groups with a broader set of attributes will increase the number of opportunities to find errors, discover key information, and propose alternative solutions. More important than the larger number of persons examining a problem, these authors claim, is the synergy of people using different talents and perspectives. This increases the chance to find adequate solutions and new opportunities for innovation, renewal and creativity. Functional diversity also increases diversity in perspectives, access to external networks and thus offers broader sources of information to solve problems.

Schneider and Northcraft further argue that an efficient way to enhance functional diversity is by enhancing social diversity, given the "law of large numbers" underlying probability theory. They claim, for example, that resistance to social diversity limits opportunities to hire the most qualified applicants by reducing the labor pool. Hence, constraining social diversity *de facto* constrains functional diversity, and promoting social diversity may promote functional diversity. Therefore, there is a pragmatic reason to promote social diversity in the workforce. Finally, these authors argue that social diversity broadens the probability for an organization to be selected as an employer or service provider by a broader pool, via access to the external networks provided by a diverse workforce. This is yet another way social diversity contributes to address the demand for functional diversity in today's turbulent environment.

These requirements are reinforced in public organizations through contemporary trends in public management theory and practice (e.g. the New Public Management and managerialism). The impetus to modernize the state and its public administration, in the context of rethinking the role of government in the solution of collective problems, adds a new layer of complexity. Efforts to re-engineer, flattened hierarchies, introduction of modern management systems that increase accountability, are all practices that augment the demand for functional, and thus social diversity in public organizations.

Diversity as a political and ethical mandate of representative bureaucracy

Another incentive to promote diversity in public organizations is rooted in the public administration values of responsiveness and representation in democratic societies. Indeed, public agencies must strive to represent in their workforce a wide variety of citizens, as well as consider the plurality of values, concerns and voices of the larger population. Striving for a socially diverse work force will help attain this mandate.

The dynamics of modernization, democratization and decentralization accompanying reform processes in developing countries and in most nations in transition further reinforce the need for diversity. For example, efforts to decentralize finances, services and programs from national to local jurisdictions demand not only functional, but more specifically social diversity in the workforce. Maintaining effective intergovernmental relationships requires that employees at the national level mirror the composition of the regional and local levels of government, both in terms of employees and the population they serve.

Anything short of that would reduce trust and legitimacy in the eyes of both local officials and the public. This, of course, does not require that national officials or public agency clients can only relate to local employees who "look" like them. Instead, in a diverse bureaucracy, local counterparts and clients will see people who look like them serving in all capacities in the

agency's work, and at all levels of the hierarchy (Ospina and O'Sullivan, forthcoming). In the case of societies in transition, the challenge must consider the goal of unifying national identities and the consequent need to give representation to the various ethnic groups who are part of the same nation. Leaders in these nations have a great opportunity to create civil service systems that are, from the start, more sensitive to the conflicting demands of efficiency, equity, transparency, accountability and diversity in public service.

The call for workforce diversity results, in part, from the rise of social movements that challenge traditional patterns of exclusion in the most important institutions of society, including work institutions and public employment. Organized groups have, in many societies, promoted changes in legislation, as well as changes in social values and roles in the work place. Civil rights movements, indigenous movements, women's movements, the gay movement, people with disabilities and many others have, to a greater or lesser degree, put pressure to broaden the composition of the labor force. This way, they have contributed to open opportunities for groups that had been previously excluded from access to societal resources and opportunities.

These social forces have also demanded diversity in public bureaucracies. Civil service systems were designed in part to ensure equity and professionalism in employment. In theory, position management was intended to ensure that individuals would be judged on the basis of their merits rather than their social attributes, thus contributing to professionalize the service and make it more inclusive. Indeed, civil service has helped open up the doors to many groups who were previously discriminated against. However, the patterns of exclusion found in the mature civil service systems of industrial societies suggest that this function has not been entirely fulfilled by the system. As people have entered the system, they have continued to encounter new obstacles in moving up or attaining organizational rewards on equal terms. Issues of organizational justice and fairness have thus become important in the conversations about workforce diversity in public agencies.

The pressure will not be reduced in the foreseeable future. Increased globalization has reinforced the importance of local identities and many identity groups are demanding a role in governance (McMichael, 2000). While protagonists may change over time, the fight for social inclusion will continue, thus putting direct pressure on governments to address this plea. Public employment is an arena where societal resources are disputed and distributed. Hence it is particularly susceptible to continued pressures associated with this trend.

As new types of employees claim their right to enter the workplace on equal terms, the diversification of the once homogeneous workforce, and the changing composition of the workforce, will continue to require changes in HR practices and organizational cultures so that bureaucracies truly welcome the newcomers. This represents an important argument to suggest that just diversifying the workforce is not sufficient. There is a need for strategies to ensure diversity helps enhance organizational performance. In addition to pursuing it, organizational leaders must also manage diversity. This is the subject of the next section of this paper.

Implications for managing diversity

Increased diversity in the workplace generates interpersonal and organizational challenges that require direct managerial attention. Some employees must learn to interact with members of new

groups and managers may have to mediate conflicts. Managers must monitor the extent to which organizational and managerial practices are adapted to address the demographic changes. For example, incorporating more women in the workforce requires wider consideration of family-friendly policies and flexible schedules. Having more individuals from a particular ethnic group may require adjusting the dress code and language policies to ensure respect for the life style demands of their religious background or their language traditions. Managing interpersonal dynamics and new policies and practices introduced to adjust the workplace will guarantee that the organization's primary resource – its people – feel welcome as individuals and as organizational citizens.

The interpersonal challenges of diversity

Williams and O'Reilly's review (1998) of research on the effect of diversity on group performance provides compelling arguments for a need to consciously manage the interpersonal dimensions of diversity. Based on empirical evidence from studies in the past 40 years, these authors conclude that variations on group composition can have important effects on group functioning. Williams and O'Reilly argue that "diversity appears to be a double-edge sword" (p. 79). On the one hand, it increases the opportunity for creativity and the quality of the product of group work. On the other hand, it also increases the likelihood of group conflict, member dissatisfaction, turnover and failure in the implementation of ideas. They conclude that "diversity is a mixed blessing and requires careful and sustained attention to be a positive force in enhancing performance" (p. 120).

The challenges of managing functional diversity are complicated by the fact that social identities play a critical role in human interaction. Identity theory suggests that managers and their employees tend to experience organizational life and its working dilemmas along identity lines. (Schneider and Northcraft, 1999) For example, empirical studies suggest that employees tend to use both demographic characteristics (such as gender or ethnicity), and functional attributes (such as occupation or organizational position), as salient instruments to categorize themselves and others. Furthermore, employees often use membership in social groups as a proxy of effectiveness in functional performance (e.g. the false claim that women are more effective nurses compared to men). Employees outside a social group also tend to attribute similar values and interests to those inside the group, while they tend to assume easier communication, more trust and higher reciprocity with members of their same identity group.

As a result of these and other dynamics, sharing a social identity may highlight perceived differences between social groups. This may lead employees and managers to assume that there are irreconcilable conflict of interests, values and preferences between individuals with different social identities, when in fact this may not be the case (Schneider and Northcraft, 1999). These authors conclude that diversity initiatives in organizations often fail because they do not challenge the generalized assumption that "the needs, desires, values and perspectives of members of different social groups are mutually exclusive". Managers must find ways to show that these can be "congruent or complementary" (p. 1449). They must help diverse individuals find common ground, and this can happen around the goal of organizational effectiveness.

The organizational challenges of diversity

Theories of organizational stratification further shed light on the social psychology dynamics that need to be managed at work. Documentation of patterns of exclusion from society's resources along social identity lines is too large to cite here. Many organizational studies report findings about these patterns for women and minorities in the work place. (Guy, 1992; Ospina, 1996).

Examples include the existence in organizations of clusters of jobs occupied by individuals with similar social traits often unrelated to the job, what experts call job segregation, or clusters of persons in occupations and professions who belong to the same identity group, what experts call occupational segregation (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993). These realities produce differential opportunity in processes and outcomes for members of different identity groups and thus reproduce inequality. For example jobs with large proportions of men tend to have better salaries compared to those with large proportions of women, and so on. Furthermore, studies show that work place inequality has a direct impact on the way employees perceive themselves and others, how they assess the employment relationship and react to their jobs (Ospina, 1996a).

Hence, attributes associated with social identities cannot be entirely separated from attributes associated with functional requirements for effective performance. The former directly and indirectly affect perceptions and realities about merit and performance in the work place. The challenge of managing diversity in organizations includes the important exercise of addressing issues of social inclusion and exclusion as they affect the experience of work. Organizational and HR mechanisms must be put in place to redress exclusionary practices that may affect the opportunities of diverse individuals. All aspects of the employment relationship, from recruitment and selection to promotion and compensation must be scrutinized carefully (Ospina, 1996a; Mor Barak, 2000). This must be accompanied by a strong culture that embraces functional and social diversity as organizational values. After all, research shows that if persons believe that their values and norms are not supported and appreciated, their sense of well being, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and task effectiveness will decrease. Indeed, effective management of diversity calls for some degree of reciprocity between organizational and individual cultural systems (Mor Barak, 2000).

Addressing these organizational and interpersonal dilemmas requires managerial will and appropriate organizational mechanisms to translate it into action. The following questions may help managers generate ideas about how to do this systematically:

- How to minimize the negative effects of diversity on the ability of groups to meet member needs and to function effectively?

- How to, at the same time, maximize the positive effects of diversity on creativity, organizational justice, better decision-making and increased participation in organizational governance?

- How to downplay differences across social identity groups interacting in the workplace and highlight common interests, while valuing and appreciating the contributions that stem from social diversity? and

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- How to ensure sufficient and prompt organizational adaptation of policies and practices, so that the work place becomes a welcoming place to employees who may have been excluded in the past?

Answering these questions can help managers develop a diversity management agenda for their organization.

Developing an agenda for diversity management

While civil service systems can provide general guidelines to ensure diversity, the specifics of diversity management fall within the purview of each agency because every organization is unique. Labor force and other environmental pressures affect agencies differently. Organizations' workforces have become more diverse at different paces and to different degrees. Each organization's structure and culture has adapted to the broader societal changes at its own pace and with its own idiosyncrasies. Strategies must therefore be carefully crafted to fit the specific characteristics of the agency and its environment.

Independent of the paths taken, the common goal of managing workforce diversity is to create an organizational climate and a human resources management system where employee diversity becomes a "normal" condition of organizational life. Thomas (1992) describes this goal in terms of "a comprehensive managerial approach aimed at creating an organizational environment that works naturally – without special effort, consideration, or programs – for all employees, regardless of how different they might be. This approach helps managers inspire employees to give their best to an organization" (p.94). Ultimately, effectively managing diversity would bring together HR specialists and program managers in a partnership to pursue the vision of a workplace where:

- Members of the community can see themselves reflected and represented in the workforce that serves them. This implies that the workforce adequately mirrors the demographic composition of the larger society.

- Opportunities in hiring, compensation, promotion, personal development, as well as access to information and networks, are available to all employees across jobs and levels, rather than monopolized by a few. This implies that traditional segregation among job classifications, such as women in clerical and people of color in maintenance positions is avoided or re-dressed where it exists.

- Every employee feels he or she is treated as a unique individual whose multiple identities and abilities are respected and appreciated for their potential contributions to the organization. In turn, employees see each other and themselves as valuable members of a working community, rather than as members of particular identity groups, but they are also comfortable with and proud of their identities, thus enjoying "being who they are" in the workplace.

- The right policies, systems and processes exist to ensure the agency's ability to attract, retain and develop employees with diverse backgrounds and qualifications to maximize their contributions in achieving the mission and to enhance organizational performance.

These conditions define what is called, in the diversity literature, a multicultural organization (Cox, 1993).This ideal type represents the extreme side of a diversity continuum. At the opposite side, lies the homogeneous or exclusive organization. Achieving "diversity success" means transforming the organization into a multicultural organization. While this vision is optimistic, aspiring to it will help managers move their organization in the right direction (Baytos, 1995).

Cox (1993) has developed a helpful typology to assess an organization's distance from achieving diversity success. His organizational types include "the monolithic organization", where most employees are similar in their primary and secondary characteristics, and the culture rewards only those who conform to the norms of the dominant group. Illustrations of practices in this type of organization include alienating a gay employee for not complying with the dominant heterosexual lifestyle or penalizing a person with a language accent for not using mainstream language codes. Another example is the polarized case of the country where the two dominant groups excluded each other from public employment when in power, as described in one of the vignettes earlier.

Next, "the plural organization" has a mixed group of employees, but the systems and culture are still highly influenced by the values of one dominant group. A good illustration is the case in the country where women have made progress in the bureaucracy but still the promotions are curtailed at the higher levels, in part because predominantly masculine features such as assertiveness and decisiveness continue to be the dominant values for success. In all monolithic and some plural organizations, informal communications, networks and key decision-making bodies are closed to non-dominant employees (Loden and Rosener, 1991). Typically, these organizations will block deserving employees from moving sidewise to better positions or upward to positions of prestige and responsibility. The reproduction of sexist, ageist and homophobic attitudes may also result in work environments experienced as hostile by those who do not happen to be part of the dominant group.

Cox's third organizational type is the multicultural organization, in which the systems and culture foster, value and reward differences. These are viewed as potential organizational assets. In these organizations inclusion and fairness are important values and this is reflected in the demographic composition of the workforce at all levels of the organization. The multicultural organization best represents the vision of diversity success described above. This is the vision managers want to strive for, rather than being a reality in today's society.

A monolithic organization is by nature discriminatory, while the organization striving to be multicultural will introduce mechanisms to interrupt discrimination or any form of exclusion. The case in the vignette where older and more traditional employees resented the younger credentialed managers represents an instance where managers can help pursue multiculturalism rather than difference. This will happen if they help employees address the conflict in ways that highlight common goals rather than different social attributes.

Organizations vary according to the degree to which they are inclusive or reflect broader exclusionary patterns and the traditional employment practices that reproduce them. These variations are evidenced in the distribution of different social types in different types of jobs, as

well as in how the organization's culture, structures, policies, systems, human resource practices and overall HR philosophy fit the requirements of its diverse employees. Only by knowing where an organization *is* in terms of its diversity can its managers develop strategies to work to move forward in the diversity agenda (Ospina and O'Sullivan, forthcoming).

Approaches and strategies to diversity management: an overview

From a pragmatic point of view, managerial commitment to diversity is rooted less on a moral mandate toward equity and justice and more on an expedient desire to address environmental pressures and produce effective results. Managerial responses to these pressures range from reluctant compliance to the law, to creative approaches that address diversity as an organizational strategy. In fact, strategic managers do not wait until pressures affect them directly. In a proactive rather than a reactive way, they anticipate the changes and address the issues to help position the organization within its competitive environment. For them, diversity represents a strategic mandate. Rather than an isolated task, managing diversity becomes in these cases a managerial principle and a human resources function embedded in all organizational processes.

Approaches to diversity management have evolved over time in those countries where workforce diversity has become an important managerial concern. In early initiatives, affirmative action and equal opportunity employment policies helped increase the representation of minorities and women and reduced discriminatory practices in employment. As work places diversified, in part as a result of those efforts, diversity initiatives started to focus on changing the workplace culture and employment practices. Organizations instituted awareness courses and celebrations of diverse characteristics (i.e. "Black History Month") in a strategy broadly known as 'valuing diversity.' However, these activities often stayed isolated from organizational strategy or work requirements.

Today, most initiatives are based on a new approach, known as "diversity management". It directly links changes in work practices and the acceptance of different methods to accomplish organizational goals to workforce diversity (Thomas, 1991). Gilbert et al, (1999) define diversity management as a managerial principle used to make HR decisions and implement practices that create greater inclusion of all individuals into formal programs and informal social networks. This principle is rooted in the beliefs that inequality is embedded in our cultural patterns and therefore in organizational systems, and that existing systems can be redesigned by changing concrete practices that reflect biases (Meyerson and Fletcher, 1999). While respecting legal requirements, this approach to diversity is not implemented just for compliance or to avoid lawsuits (SHRM Home Page, 2000).

Meyerson and Fletcher further describe this approach to diversity as a "persistent campaign of incremental changes that discover and destroy the deeply embedded roots of discrimination" (p. 131). Because diversity management links equity to effectiveness, diversity initiatives and programs are viewed as constructive organizational efforts that have a positive effect on all members of the organization, not just on those whose exclusion or discrimination is being addressed. Diversity management represents the state of the art in the theory and practice of workforce diversity. But there is a great difference between espoused theories and current work practices. Even though many organizations have some type of diversity initiative today, I would argue that diversity management is not yet the preferred approach yet.

Approaches to the diversity challenge

Depending on the type of response to environmental pressures, organizational efforts to address diversity may be classified as episodic, freestanding or systemic (Dass and Parker, 1999). *Episodic* diversity initiatives are put into place in an isolated and disjointed manner, usually not integrated into core organizational activities, and often appearing in response to a single threat or incident. In contrast, *freestanding* diversity efforts are formalized and regularly offered activities. But they are still not integrated to the organization's core and they do not add up to a coherent strategy. Freestanding efforts often stem from moderate pressures that motivate managers to see diversity as important but not strategic. Finally, *systemic* diversity efforts are linked to existing systems and core organizational activities to form a coherent whole. In these efforts, responsibility for diversity is assigned to both line and HR managers. This approach suggests a view of diversity as a strategic issue requiring a proactive decision to undergo long-term organizational change.

In his review of private sector efforts, Baytos (1995) classifies organizations according to the degree of awareness and types of actions in their diversity initiatives. The *Unaware* are organizations whose leadership is not fully aware of the issues; in the *Timid or Preoccupied* organizations, managers recognize the need for new approaches but do not know how to move forward or are stuck in survival mode; the *Action Oriented* organizations move into action before determining a comprehensive strategy and hence do not produce the expected impact; and organizations *Seeking a Leadership Position* represent a small group whose managers are involved in what Dass and Parker call 'systemic' efforts.

Developing a more sophisticated argument, Thomas and Ely (1996) differentiate existing approaches to diversity according to the underlying philosophy of the managers involved. Some efforts are based in a diversity philosophy that aims to achieve proportional representation. In this case managers expect all employees to assimilate to the dominant culture (the authors call this the *discrimination and fairness* paradigm). In this approach, deviations from the norm are viewed at least as a nuisance. These efforts, I would argue, tend to reproduce the conditions that sustain monolithic and plural organizations.

Other efforts acknowledge the strategic function of diversity to target minority consumer groups. In this approach, diverse employees are not allowed to integrate their unique features to the larger organization, but instead are often pigeonholed and valued only because of their potential to interact effectively with clients of similar backgrounds (Thomas and Ely call this the *access and legitimacy* paradigm). Efforts of this type will not help the organization move forward and embrace multiculturalism.

Lastly, some managers have moved to what Thomas and Ely call the *learning and efficiency* diversity paradigm. In organizations where this diversity philosophy is espoused, employees are not pegged to market niches, they are encouraged to use their diverse backgrounds to enhance productivity, to create new opportunities and to develop new systems and strategies. Furthermore, these organizations value innovation, creativity and diversity in perspectives to problem solving and decision-making. In these organizations, diversity initiatives represent hopeful efforts in the path toward developing a multicultural organization.

Just as each organization must determine the overall strategy to accomplish its mission, each organization must also determine and tailor its diversity agenda accordingly. Key questions to consider in this path are:

- How can managers help move the agency to higher levels of diversity and how can the learning and efficiency paradigm inform their strategies? and

- How can managers make sure that their efforts are proactive, systemic and strategic enough to generate the desired impact?

These are hard questions and their scope may feel intimidating. Yet if done one step at a time, the agenda becomes quite do-able.

Putting diversity management into practice: a developmental approach

Because the diversity continuum suggests a developmental path (Cox, 1993, Baytos, 1995; Jackson and Hardiman, 1990; Ospina, 1996), episodic or random strategies will not help an organization move forward. Diversity programs and strategies must grow from an understanding of the organization's stage in the "diversity continuum", (between discriminatory and non-discriminatory, from monolithic, to plural, to multicultural). Locating the organization along this continuum will help managers identify methods to champion their diversity vision. Implementing that vision will require a well thought out plan, and specific managerial strategies that respect the developmental nature of organizational stages. In this context, a careful diagnosis based on the organization's demographic profile and the review of the effect of policies and practices on members of different social groups represent important steps of a proactive agenda. Similarly, reviewing identified performance problems to explore whether they are related to diversity represents a desirable managerial practice. Once the diagnosis is completed, the question is what to do next.

Elsewhere I propose a managerial framework that builds on the developmental and contingent nature of the diversity challenge (Ospina, 1996). Along a progressive movement, I propose to differentiate among four consecutive managerial tasks: *considering, pursuing, managing and maximizing* diversity, depending on the organization's place in the diversity continuum. Managers in a monolithic organization must start by *considering* diversity. In this case, organizational stakeholders get involved in tasks that help them become aware of the benefits of increased diversity (and recognize the costs of the monolithic nature of the organization). Once there is some motivation and awareness, in *pursuing* diversity, managers look for strategies to create a diverse workforce (and try to move from the monolithic to the plural stage). In this context, affirmative action strategies (where permitted by law) and equal employment opportunity initiatives represent the place to start. Once the organization opens up to a diverse workforce, becoming more plural in nature, leaders find ways to support the now diverse workforce by *managing* diversity. Finally, managers use the workforce strategically to add value to the organization strategic goals by supporting the unique contributions each organizational member brings, independent of their background, thus *maximizing* diversity.

The first two tasks (*considering* and *pursuing* diversity) contribute to create the right mix required to implement the next two tasks. As an organization achieves multiculturalism, diversity

management also requires looping constantly among these tasks over time, as the diversity challenge never stops. Each of these tasks – *considering, pursuing, managing and maximizing* diversity – requires a creative combination of strategies and tools. Examples of strategies to *consider* diversity include: performing a diversity audit, conducting exit interviews and convening core groups of managers to meet regularly to talk about diversity. Strategies to *pursue* diversity include: conducting periodic voluntary employee surveys to identify barriers, creating task forces to propose innovative plans to attract diverse employees, focusing on EEO techniques and doing cultural assessments.

Strategies to *manage* diversity include: promoting networks, support groups and internal advocacy groups; doing compensation equity analysis, creating mentoring programs and designing career development programs as well as job rotation programs to open up opportunities. Examples of *maximizing* diversity include: creating diverse teams throughout the organization, including diversity in managers' performance evaluation, goal ratings and promotion decisions; addressing particular HR needs of sub-populations of employees by adding new benefits and new choices within the existing ones to encompass a broader range of employee options; developing managerial succession plans; and continuously introducing new policies as new issues are identified.

Managers in organizations with fairly good levels of diversity must work on the four tasks simultaneously. For example, managers in an already diverse work force must still monitor demographic changes in the labor market and evaluate their strategies to pursue further diversity. However, an organization with a homogeneous workforce has no diversity to manage, so it must first pursue strategies to become diverse. Organizations in early stages have the opportunity to create policies and systems that, from the beginning, help prevent some of the problems documented in older plural organizations.

Finally, a discussion of diversity management would be incomplete if it did not include the relationship between ethics, diversity and effectiveness. Diversity scholars have downplayed the notion that diversity is an ethical imperative, to highlight instead the fact that diversity simply makes good business sense. Public sector scholars, including myself, have followed this lead under the assumption that managers tend to take pragmatic arguments more seriously than ethical arguments. Yet there is a compelling argument to stress this side of the diversity agenda in the context of public service.

Gilbert *et al* (1999) highlight the ethical underpinnings of diversity by reviewing three ethical principles that support successful diversity initiatives. The first principle is the *Golden Rule*: if you want to be treated fairly, treat others fairly. The second is the *Disclosure Rule*: you must be comfortable with decisions after asking whether you would mind if others became aware of them. The third is the *Rights Approach*, which assumes that people should have the ability to freely choose what they will do with their lives. Abiding by the first rule, successful diversity programs are inclusive and provide fair treatment to all employees. The openness needed to administer diversity programs responds to the second rule. Diversity management addresses the third rule by allowing people to reach their fullest potential in choosing opportunities according to their interests and abilities. If these diversity principles are removed, the authors argue, diversity initiatives will collapse. Hence even if the motivation to address the diversity challenge is not necessarily ethical, ethical principles must be utilized for successful implementation.

A final consideration of particular relevance to civil service systems is where diversity initiatives should be placed and who should administer them. There is no consensus in the literature (Baytos, 1995; Jackson and Schuller, 2000). Locating diversity efforts in the human resource department risks marginalizing them or alienating program managers from them. But if diversity initiatives and programs are not centrally organized, they will get lost within the demands of production and service delivery. The developmental and contingent nature of diversity suggest that the decision about institutional location depends on criteria such as the degree of diversity of the overall workforce in public service, the level of each agency's attainment of diversity to date, and the extent to which other HR functions are decentralized. Depending on these criteria, diversity initiatives may be organized in a separate function when much remains to be done and become more integrated as managers become more sophisticated and sensitive to diversity, and as the organization advances toward the multicultural stage. Be that as it may, the agenda of moving toward maximizing diversity and to multicultural organizations is too relevant to be faced alone by either those responsible for formal personnel policies or by those addressing the organization's mission. Indeed, an organization seeking to maximize diversity needs to harness the creative and functional capacities of both human resource professionals and program managers (Ospina and O'Sullivan, forthcoming).

Conclusion

Even though the administration of the program must have an organizational home, workforce diversity management represents an important HRM responsibility that is shared by both personnel specialists and program managers (Jackson and Schuler, 2000). The latter are responsible for embracing the diversity philosophy and effectively developing and implementing organization policy. Personnel managers, in turn, are responsible for the design and maintenance of HRM systems that will support the successful execution of policies and programs that sustain the philosophy. Personnel and program managers therefore work in partnership to ensure that the diversity challenge is woven into the organizational strategic goals, its systems and functions, and overall managerial decisions. The goal is that eventually diversity becomes embedded in all practices and routines of the organization (Ospina and O'Sullivan, forthcoming).

Ultimately, diversity management in civil service, as managing diversity in any other organizational context, is a complex and multidimensional challenge that requires permanent and focused managerial attention. If strategies must be adapted to the degree of diversity of any given organization, in the context of civil service, strategies and approaches may also vary according to system features and the societal forces that affect it. For example, it is not the same to address diversity challenges in the context of public employment in transitional societies, where new civil services are only now being created, than to address them in the context of industrialized societies with mature civil service systems. In the former, managers can design features to avoid the contradictions that plague more traditional civil services, thus trying to make the system more sensitive to diversity issues from the very start. In the latter, diversity approaches would have to work simultaneously on re-dressing equity problems and maximizing the potential of the existing work force by creating more flexibility in the system.

In the same way, the challenges may vary between developing societies. Some have established civil services that do not function well (e.g. where patronage and corruption still predominate in spite of the system) while in others the system is functional but has produced exclusionary

practices and outcomes. More over, in most developing societies, diversity issues may complicate the managerial requirements to balance the contradictory pressures for employee protection and stability (required for professionalizing public employment) and the new demands for accountability and transparency to make public service more efficient.

In the context of civil service, a thorough diagnosis to assess work force diversity problems includes an analysis of the system as a whole, as well as audits of each agency the system regulates. The analysis focuses on the linkages between the agencies and the system. Relevant questions to keep in mind include:

- To what extent does the civil service system promote both effectiveness and multiculturalism?

- How diverse is the workforce in the entire jurisdiction and how diverse are the agencies that constitute the jurisdiction?

- Is diversity equally distributed across agencies or are there differences across them?

- What are the trade-offs associated with introducing system-wide strategies to promote multiculturalism versus introducing incremental changes to address specific diversity problems at the agency level?

In paying attention to both system and organization, it may be important to assess whether performance problems associated with diversity are organizational or system related. It is equally critical to look for patterns across agencies, because those will require designing systemic solutions.

Despite the complexity of the agenda presented in this overview, workforce diversity is not just a problem to be managed away. It is instead an opportunity and a requirement to enhance personal and organizational effectiveness. Considering, pursuing, managing and maximizing workforce diversity are tasks that will help realize the benefits of this required condition for organizational effectiveness. Yet this cannot happen without organizational leadership, vision and commitment. All members of the organization must choose to meet the challenges and all the managers – senior, departmental, and HR –must assume the responsibility to achieve diversity success by embracing diversity management as the preferred organizational paradigm.

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