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Recommended Citation

Olorunshola, J. A. (2011). Managing diversity and inclusion in the Central Bank of Nigeria: prospects and challenges. CBN Bullion, 35(4), 47-52.

MANAGING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES*

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INTRODUCTION

In every facet of life, especially in the workplace, diversity is inevitable. In particular, legislation, changing labour market demographics and external stakeholder demands require organisations to build diverse and inclusive workforces. Besides, the globalization of business means that managers must be able to deal effectively with people from other countries. It is equally important to be able to relate well with different cultural groups within one's own country and company. Therefore, both the international and domestic workforces are diverse. In this context, diversity refers to a mixture of people with different group identities within the same work environment.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), by its statutory set up, does not have foreigners in its full-time workforce. However, as the Bank draws its employees from across the country, it has to cope with various facets of diversity:

physically challenged group, demographic and cultural diversity. Demographic diversity refers to the mix of group characteristics of the organization's workforce, including such factors as age, sex, religion, physical status, etc. Cultural diversity refers to the mix of cultures and subcultures to which the organization's workforce belongs. Also, in recent times the Bank started to incorporate pockets of those that are physically challenged into its workforce. Therefore, diversity and inclusion have become a critical priority in the CBN.

This paper discusses key issues in managing diversity and inclusion in the CBN for organisational effectiveness. The paper is organized into five sections. Section Two, following the Introduction, provides some theoretical background while section Three x-rays evidence of diversity and inclusion the CBN. Section Four discusses the key challenges and the way forward in diversity and inclusion management in the Bank. The last section concludes the paper.

II. CONCEPTS AND PERSPECTIVES ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

2.1. Definitions

Diversity has been described variously in the literature. According to the Corporate Leadership Council (CLC) Human Resources, diversity is defined as "the collective mixture of differences and similarities that includes, for example, individual and organizational characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds,

preferences and behaviours." Thus, dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, race, age, gender, ancestry, sexual orientation, physical abilities/qualities, geographic origin, parental, religious beliefs, income, marital status, education, social background, and work experience.

Inclusion is recognizing the universal oneness and interdependence of members of a group. Inclusion is recognizing that we are one even though we are not the same. According to CLC Human Resources, inclusion is "the achievement of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources and can contribute fully to the organization's success." The act of inclusion means fighting against exclusion and all of the social ills exclusion gives rise to i.e. racism, handicap-tagging, sexism, etc. Fighting for inclusion also involves assuming that all support systems are available to those who need such support. Providing such support system is civic responsibility, not a favour.

Diversity and inclusion as a concept focuses on a broader set of qualities than race and gender. In the context of the workplace, valuing diversity means creating a workplace that respects and includes differences, recognizing the unique contributions that individuals with many types of differences can make, and creating a work environment that maximizes the potential of all employees.

Managing diversity is defined as

"planning and implementing organizational systems and practices to manage people so that the potential advantages of diversity are maximized while its potential disadvantages are minimized," according to Taylor Cox in "Cultural Diversity in Organizations."

The management of diversity involves the implementation of strategies through which a network of varied individuals is knitted together into a dynamic workforce. Managing diversity, therefore, is essentially harnessing employees' differences, creating a productive environment in which everyone feels valued, where talents are fully utilized and in which organizational goals are met. To appreciate diversity, a person must go beyond tolerating and treating people from different racial and ethnic groups fairly. Valuing diversity means to respect and enjoy a wide range of cultural and individual differences.

2.2 The Competitive Advantage and Potential Problems of Diversity

It is generally accepted that encouraging diversity within an organization helps an organization achieve social responsibility goals. Also, diversity brings a competitive advantage to a firm. However, before diversity can offer a competitive advantage to a firm, it must be woven into the fabric of the organization and become part of organizational strategy. This stands in contrast to simply having a "diversity program" offered on rare occasions by the human resources department. Organisations can reap substantial benefits by building a diverse workforce and creating an inclusive work environment. The potential competitive benefits of workplace diversity, as revealed by research and observations, include the following:

Diverse and inclusive workforces drive employee productivity and

retention
Diversity and inclusion impact on employee discretionary efforts and intent to stay.

Managing diversity well offers a marketing advantage, including increased sales and profits.

A representational workforce facilitates reaching a multicultural market. Enhanced outreach generates increased transaction and, consequently, boosts income.

Effective management of diversity can reduce costs.

More effective management of diversity may increase job satisfaction of diverse groups, thus decreasing turnover and absenteeism and their associated costs. A diverse organization that welcomes and fosters the growth of a wide variety of employees will retain more of its minority and multicultural employees.

Companies with a favourable record in managing diversity are at a distinct advantage in recruiting talented people.

Those companies with a favourable reputation for welcoming diversity attract the strongest job candidates among women and racial and ethnic minorities. A shortage of workers gives extra impetus to diversity. During a tight labour market, companies cannot afford to be seen as not welcoming any particular group.

Workforce heterogeneity may also offer a company a creativity advantage.
Creative solutions to problems are more likely when a diverse group attacks a problem due to the variety of perspectives that contribute to creative alternatives. For example, if a company is going to launch products that fit the needs of young people, it is best to include young people in generating ideas

for these products.

The implication for managers is that diversity initiatives should be explained in terms of tangible business purposes to achieve the best results. Yet managers must also recognize that diversity within the organization can also create problems.

In addition to understanding the competitive advantages of diversity within an organization, a brief look at some of the potential problems is also helpful. Cultural diversity initiatives are usually successful in assembling heterogeneous groups, but the group members do not necessarily work harmoniously. The potential for conflict is high. In general, if the demographically different work group members are supportive toward each other, the benefits of group diversity, such as more creative problem solving, will be forthcoming. Group members must also share knowledge with each other for the heterogeneous groups to be successful. Another problem is that diverse groups may be less cohesive than those with less diverse composition.

2.3 Organizational Practices to Encourage Diversity

In the literature, a number of combined forces of representative practices that enhance diversity management have been underscored. These include: (1) corporate policies about diversity, (2) the establishment of employee network groups, and (3) diversity training.

Diversity Policies

Many organizations have found it most essential to formulate policies that encourage and foster diversity. A typical policy statement in this direction could be: "We are committed to recruiting, selecting, training, and promoting individuals based solely on their capabilities and

performance. To accomplish this goal, we value all differences among our workforce". To create a culturally and demographically diverse organization, some companies monitor recruitment and promotions to assure that diverse people are promoted into key jobs. After they are promoted, the minority group members are eligible to be coached by an external consultant in terms of becoming a successful leader – as is frequently done with majority group members (DuBrin, 2009).

Employee Network Groups

A country approach to recognizing cultural differences is to permit and encourage employees to form employee network groups. The network group is composed of employees throughout the company who affiliate on the basis of group characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or physical ability status. Group members typically have similar interest, and look to groups as a way of sharing information about succeeding in the organization. Although some human resource specialists are concerned that network groups can lead to divisiveness, others believe they play a positive role.

Diversity Training

Diversity training is an attempt to bring about workplace harmony by teaching people how to get along better with diverse work associates. Quite often, the programme is aimed at minimizing open expressions of racism and sexism. All forms of diversity training centre on increasing people's awareness of and empathy for people who are different from themselves. Diversity training sessions focus on the ways that men and women, or people of different races, reflect different values, attitudes, and cultural background. These sessions can vary from several hours to several days.

III. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE CBN

The CBN is fairly a diverse organization both in terms of workforce composition and geographical spread of its employees. It is also instructive to note that diversity and inclusion issues are dated and had been evolving with the Bank. This can be seen readily in the current gender, generational and geopolitical spread of its employees.

3.1 Women Employment

When the Bank commenced operations in 1959 with some 104 employees, they were mostly men, employed as professionals. The first set of female employees between 1960 and 1961 were largely support staff, namely secretaries, stenographers, telephone operators, note counters, cleaners, library assistants, nursing and dispensing assistants (in the staff clinic). The first female graduates were employed in 1969 (Oladunni, 2004), 10 years after the Bank came into existence. The early 1980s, however, witnessed the recruitment of more female graduates/professionals into the CBN, but were restricted to the Research Department. This was an attempt to shield them from being posted outside the Head Office as the Department was the only one among the very old Departments without outstations until 1986 when the then zonal Research Units were established.

TABLE I: EMPLOYMENT BY GENDER (MARCH, 2012)

Female	Male	Total
1378	4510	5888

Source: HR Service Centre

Over the years, the absolute intake of women in the Bank has increased. From only 2 in 1959 the number of female staff grew to about 269, out of approximately 4,000 employees in 1979 (Phillips, 1979). Furthermore, available records, as at the first quarter of 2012, show that the number of female staff has increased to 1,378 (or 23.5%) of the total staff strength of 5,888 (Table I).

3.2 Age Distribution

The age distribution of CBN workforce, as at the end of March 2012 (from Table II), is fairly mixed given that some 44 per cent is above 45 years while about 39 per cent fall below age 45. The average age is about 34 years while the modal group falls between age 46 and 55. Thus, there is great need for diversity management so as to be able to integrate the workforce and overcome generational differences for effective performance.

3.3 Geographical Distribution

Table III below shows that the Bank's workforce reflects the nation's six geopolitical zones. This implies that the various practices and cultural differences in the country must be accommodated in managing workplace diversity and inclusion for the Bank's effectiveness.

TABLE II: EMPLOYMENT BY GENERATIONAL SPREAD (MARCH, 2012)

Bracket	No. of Employees
21-35	1699
36-45	1603
46-55	2249
56+	336
Grand Total	5887*

*The figure excludes one staff that is less than 21 years of age.

Source: HR Service Centre

TABLE III: STAFF BY GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN (MARCH, 2012)

GEO/ZONE	21-35	36-45	46-55	56+	TOTAL
North Central	319	359	425	45	1,148
North East	241	220	241	18	720
North West	314	228	276	13	831
South East	256	219	394	89	958
South South	280*	279	472	84	1,115
South West	290	298	441	87	1,116
TOTAL	1,700	1,603	2,249	336	5,888

*The figure excludes one staff that is less than 21 years of age.
Source: HR Service Centre

3.4 Opportunity for the Physically-Challenged

There is great room for physically-challenged persons in the CBN as the number currently employed is infinitesimal. As a matter of fact, it is only of recent that conscious efforts appeared to be geared towards accommodating this category of staff in the Bank's recruitment drive.

IV. CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

4.1 Key Challenges

Implementing diversity and inclusion in the Bank is not without some critical constraints. The bottlenecks, though daunting, are, however, surmountable. Some of the key challenges are:

(i) Paradigm Shift

Diversity and inclusion is nothing but a radical change and a paradigm shift from the status quo. It is a truism that all changes will be resisted either because of parochial self-interest or the fear of the unknown by the main actors/actresses. It is therefore to be expected that diversity management in the Bank would always meet with some pockets of resistance from some sections of staff.

(ii) Infrastructural Inadequacy

Most of the existing conventional office spaces and other facilities were designed with little or no cognizance or reference to diversity in the workplace. Consequently, accessibility to and fro the Bank's premises constitute serious challenges for the current and prospective physically-challenged employees. This requires urgent attention.

(iii)   Policy Rigidity

Many of the Bank's existing policies as enshrined in the Human Resources Policy and Procedure Manual (HRPPM) were crafted to ensure strict compliance with little or no room for flexibility to accommodate diversity and inclusion. In particular, our policies barely tolerate the peculiarities of female employees and, therefore, are less gender sensitive.

4.2 The Way Forward

One of the critical success factors of an effective diversity and inclusion management is top-management support. This appears to be in place in our setting, judging from recent pronouncements of Management. However, some ground work and remedial actions must be taken if diversity and inclusion management will achieve the desired objectives in the Bank. Among such critical measures are the following:

(i) Diversity and Inclusion Policy

A concisely written diversity policy must be compiled, using the broad changes required and diversity goals to be pursued. The policy should include:
• a definition of diversity;
• reason why it is important;
• the goals of the diversity management programme; and
• the ways in which the goals will be achieved.

Also, the policy must be effectively communicated to employees and all stakeholders. It should also be included in the staff manual, and on the organization's intranet (Banknet).

(ii)   Process Changes

Changes must be effected in some areas, including:
• HR Processes - e.g. revising recruitment procedure to accommodate diverse groups;
•· Working arrangement - e.g. introducing flextime, childcare facilities, or time off for family duties;
·   Attitudes – e.g. confronting inter-cultural prejudices and improving inter-cultural communication;
·   Physical environment – e.g. creating better access for disabled employees and customers, or rethinking the office layout, including the Learning Centre facilities, etc.
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(iii)   Diversity Training

As diversity management is essentially the implementation of strategies that knit a network of varied individuals together into a dynamic workforce, there is need for Management through HR to:

- make business and social cases for diversity initiative management in the Bank;
- conduct high-level diversity awareness training to develop the commitment of higher Management and staff; and
- commit significant resources to diversity and inclusion training. This will, undoubtedly, improve the perceived value of an inclusive work environment in the Bank.

(iv) Setting Diversity and Inclusion Targets

What the diversity management programme sets to achieve must be established and goals set accordingly. This can be done through consultation, brainstorming, benchmarking or literature reviews to establish goals which should be specific, measurable and achievable. For instance, the goals, in line with best practice, should include:
- To increase the proportion of women in the workforce to 50%;
- To enable parents to take time off to care for sick children;
- To draw from a wider geographical area in recruitment; The goals must also be related to the organization's vision and mission statements and any other corporate initiatives and Staff support for diversity management goals must be elicited through

Bank-wide sensitization.

(v) Institutionalizing Diversity and Inclusion

It is imperative to make sure that diversity and inclusion remain high-profile issues in the Bank and necessary steps must be taken towards its internalization within the organization. In this regard, the organization's focus must be shifted from mere compliance with millennium development goals or covert support for affirmative action agenda to embedding diversity and inclusion in the Bank's broader business strategy.

3.0 CONCLUSION

An increasing number of modern-day and dynamic organizations have identify diversity and inclusion as a critical issue to address in order to better achieve their corporate goals and objectives. In working around diversities, organizations will need to develop appropriate framework for inclusion, which will clearly spell out the policy, process and procedures for identifying and harnessing the potentials of all divergences. When this is properly done, organizations are put at vantage positions to impact positively on their respective core

mandates or the bottom line.

While diversity has been a key priority for several decades in many establishments, it is taking on new urgency due to pending legislation in a number of countries, increasing population and customer diversity. Most companies operate inclusion programmes, but few treat diversity as a strategic priority.

In order to succeed, diversity and inclusion management must be effectively communicated and should be all-involving. Top management, employees, customers, shareholders and other stakeholders' support is critical for the success of the programme.

Finally, diversity and inclusion, undoubtedly, is the spirit of the times. Therefore, valuing diversity and inclusion in the workplace is a shift from the norm and embracing change which is inevitable. Though the rewards are many and that is why increasing number of organizations are leveraging on them, ignoring diversity issues carry enormous costs in terms of time, money and efficiency which progressive and forward-looking enterprises like the CBN can ill-afford.

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