

International Migration and Managing Labour Diversity in 21st Century: A Concern for Managers in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

International migration continues to play a crucial role in the world demographic change. It has affected the very fabric of the receiving societies and seen as fundamentally challenging to liberal states like United Kingdom's (UK) labour structure. Women and minority ethnic groups are gaining grounds in the labour market. Diversity is a positive thing that brings ideas and useful information from one economy to another with its integration and eventual labour force restructuring. Various approaches have been employed to manage the resulting diversity of the labour force, but these have not been very effective. An emerging third approach which is combination of the existing two i.e. discrimination & fairness and access and legitimacy, fits into the ad-hoc nature of managing diversity. This is called connecting diversity to work perspective. This allows for various aspects of the two above mentioned approaches to be used when the need arises. British Airways manage diverse labour force effectively through the use of very aspects of the third approach and constant research about the staff and the markets it operates. Labour diversity will continue to part of the UK's labour structure for years to come, and with increasing globalisation different cultures are been understood and gaining recognition. Hence diversity management will continue to receive much research attention in the quest for a better and alternative ways of dealing with issues that emanate from labour diversity.

Introduction

International migration dates back to history. It has always been a crucial part of world demographic change though it was only in the 1980s that it was accorded high level and systematic attention it required (Castle & Miller, 2003). Nonetheless, it has never been as

invasive or as socio-economically and politically indispensable as it is in today's world. Never before has migration received such priority in political programmes of countries nor has seemed so pertinent to national security and connected to conflict and disorder on global scale than recent times. Its main characteristic feature is that it is global in outlook as it affects more and more countries and its linkages with complex processes affecting the entire world either directly or indirectly. The global character of international migration results in the inter-mingling and cohabitation of people from increasingly diverse physical and cultural settings (Castle & Miller, 2003). As important aspect of purported tendencies towards globalisation and pluralization, recent immigration waves and the resulting presences of culturally different ethnic minorities are often seen as fundamentally challenging liberal state especially its labour structure (Joppke, 1996). In the United Kingdom, for the past 50 years there have been tremendous changes in the economy, employment structure and labour market. These paradigm shifts stem from migration, free trade, welfare provision, the promotion of flexibility at work and antipathy to trade unions (Datta et al, 2006). These have gone a long way to reshape the labour market and its associated diversity. Diversity is a positive thing that brings ideas and experiences into an organisation for it to have an added advantage in specific segment of global market and technological developments, hence the need to explore international migration and managing labour diversity in the UK.

Trends of Migration

The principal causes of migration are complex as it ranges from individual decision, through households to macro-structural factors (Datta et al, 2006). The search for conceptual frameworks to explain these complexities have dominated decades of research on migration. Much of these researches have been based on the agency of migrants and potential migrants in the face of economic conditions, while others consider structural conditions of local and global labour market or a combination of the two (Castle & Miller, 2003; Skeldon, 1997). More recent works considers the household strategies approach which emphasis on the role of families (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992) and social networks approach which involves family, kin and community (Hagan, 1998; Datta et al, 2006). Today migration continues in even new forms, i.e. the transnationalism and transmigration approach. This emphasis on the interconnections and networks established between migrant groups and potential migrants at the source and destination (Portes, 2003; Datta et al, 2006.).

One path of migration very common in recent times is from poorer to richer countries. This pattern is found within the 'developing' world and also between the 'developing' and 'developed' nations. This contemporary migratory paths and policies are often profoundly influenced by historical precedence, even though it has grown in volume and slightly changed in character since the end of the World War II (Castle & Miller, 2003). The more recently terrorists' events of September 11, 2001 have rekindled countries attentions to international migration and its associated problems especially in the receiving countries. In spite of all these, control over capital flow and trade have diminished around that same period, yet still there are vast international disparities in

wealth between and among countries which create economic incentives for potential migrants to migrate (Money, 1998). Some areas that attract thousands of migrants lately are the Oil rich nations of the Middle East and rapidly expanding economies of Asia. Yet the advanced market economies like the Britain represent a continuing attraction due, in part, to liberal nature of these states, which provide a large array of legal and social guarantees for immigrants regarding their treatment (Money, 1998, Hollifield, 1992).

Moreover, the high unemployment in many advanced market economies no longer deters potential migrants. This phenomenon is due in part to the structural demand for low cost labour in specific sectors of the economy, despite overall high unemployment rates (Corenllus, 1996, Money, 1998). There is a high tendency for more countries to be crucially affected by migratory movements as migrants' numbers continue to get higher even in the wake of September 11, 2001 terrorists' events. This has a fairly negligible impact on migration management worldwide. The flow and stock of aliens are fuelling debates revolving around internal and external security issues particularly in the United States and the other industrialised world (World Migration, 2003). Recent events in the Balkans, Central Africa, Guatemala and Indonesia shows that multiculturalism has become a global or local theatre in which the current problem of social transformation and contradictions are performed (Siebers, 2004).

International Migration and Cultural Diversity

International migration continues to be an important factor helping to shape labour market patterns as well as the increasing level of labour diversity (OECD, 2005). This has made most of the developed countries become more culturally diverse than they were even a generation ago. Although the world population remains sedentary, the globalisation of migration flows continues to produce extra ordinary diversification altering the bilateral nature of the flow (World Migration, 2003). In the UK like many European countries the major remaining channel of legal immigration is to seek political asylum, a gate through which increasing numbers are attempting to pass (Money, 1998). The effects of growing cultural diversity on the society of immigration such as the UK have become central to immigration issues. In fact, no government has ever set out to build an ethnically diverse society through immigration, yet labour recruitment policies often lead to the formation of ethnic minorities, with far reaching consequences for social relations, public policies, national identity and international relation. But the social meaning of ethnic diversity depends to a large extent on significance attached to it by the receiving countries (Castle & Miller, 2003). It is not always the case that international migration creates diversity. Some migrants such as Britons in Australia or Austrians in Germany are virtually not disguisable from the receiving countries. Apart from the above-mentioned factors there is other which contributes to increasing diversity in the labour force in the UK.

Other Causes of Cultural Diversity in the UK

In recent years there has been a remarkable generational change in women's employment in the UK (Dale et al, 2006). This is due in part to the increasing number of women with

higher educational qualification. The number is reduced during the family formation period. But at this period is mostly the uneducated or the lower educated that are likely to leave their jobs. Though the literature is grey on ethnic minority groups' employment levels, there is every reason to expect that there is generational difference and variation between and among the ethnic groups. Dale et al, 2006, also indicated that there has been a rapid increase in the in take up of higher education amongst young south Asian women, though it is not clear how the high in take influence labour market especially when children are present. According to Thewlis et al, 2004, 86 percent of the educated women are economically active compared to 52percent of the lower educated or uneducated. In terms of population there are more females than males. Available statistics from National Statistics, it is estimated that there 25.1 million females and 23.5 million males age 15years and over. Recently, more boys than girls are born in UK for every 105 boys born there is 100 girls. But the opposite is true for migrants for whom every 115 females come with 100 males; couple with high expectancy of women there are bound to be more women entering in the job market in UK.

There is also the issue of differential fertility among the various ethnic groups found in the UK which is aggravating the level of labour diversity. According to the office of National Statistics, the 2001 UK census the percentage of the various ethnic groups are as follows:

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|---------|------------------------------|
| White | 92.1% (54.85 million people) |
| Asian | 4% (2.38 million people) |
| Black | 2% (1.19 million people) |
| Mixed | 1.2% (0.71 million people) |
| Chinese | 0.4% (0.24 million people) |
| Other | 0.3% (0.18 million people) |

Source: 2001 UK Census

Immigration projection estimates that the racial proportion of 92% whites will likely remain unchanged as British government in March 2006, decided to restrict the entry to the UK for the people from non-EU countries to advance technical and language skills (CIA-World Fact Book, 2005). The key impact in terms of aggravating the already diverse workforce, might come from inter marriages which is being experienced in recent time. All these are happening and simultaneously reshaping the labour market in Britain. Much of the diverse workforce is located in London which has become an important node in movement of capital, goods and information (Datta et al, 2006). It is seen as the home of many businesses such as the Banks, Trans-National Corporations to mention a few, with growing number of skilled, unskilled, and professional workers of different culture. Most of these diverse workforces come from the global south and post-socialist states of Eastern Europe.

Labour diversity as witnessed today did not spring up over night. It has been a long process over along period. The world has become a much smaller place in the 21st century as communication and transportation advancement has been dramatic. Technological advancement has been a key factor. For instance railway rapidly increase

speed from 20mph in the early days of its development up to 60mph and eventually to 100mph achieved in the UK in 1904 (Cartwright, 2002). This could transport hundreds of people at a time, unlike the stagecoach. The major trickle down effects of the railways development was mass transfer to other parts of the world especially Europe as well as the technology involved. These developed alongside other things such as telegraph and Internet. Land transport also revolutionised around the globe at the same period (Cartwright, 2002). These developments set the tone for what is being witnessed today. In Europe at that time there was war and famine which led to mass emigration into North America and across Europe. These were also followed by migration and partly marking the beginning of massive multiculturalism and its associated benefits and problems. Even though globalisation shrinks the world, but by no means standardises the diverse behaviour of its cultures and individuals (European Union, 2006). The level of diversity in the UK labour market cannot be overestimated.

Diversity

In simple terms diversity refers to any mixture of items characterized by differences and similarities. It is a social condition which dates back to history. This definition looks enough on the surface but with a deeper meaning (Thomas, 1990). In a broader sense it is blending one into another rather like the visible colour across the ultra violet (Cartwright, 2002). It is the rich mix of customs, beliefs, languages and experiences. It is the otherness or those human qualities that are different from our own and outside the group, to which we belong, yet present in other individuals and groups. Dimensions of diversity include, but not limited to: age, ethnicity, ancestry, gender, physical abilities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, religious beliefs, parental status, and work experience (Loden and Rosener, 1991). Employees like other human beings are social animals with origins within a tribal configuration and therefore need diversity in order to function in a correct psychological manner (Nicholson, 2000). Diversity requires a new management ideas and dynamic skills in order to realise the full potential in an organisation hence managing diversity is a crucial integral part of most management set ups.

Managing diversity

Managing diversity implies identifying people's differences and recognising these differences as valuable. It focuses on maximising the ability of all the employees to contribute to organisational goals. In essence managing diversity is about using all of the talents available to the organisation without resorting to ethnocentricity and stereotype (Cartwright, 2002). It is also the planning and implementing organisational systems and practices to manage people so that the potential advantage of diversity are maximised while its disadvantages are minimised. (Cox, 1994). Managing diversity is interdisciplinary subject which contains ideas from management, psychology and anthropology (Cartwright, 2002). With the aforementioned factors and increasing cross border human traffic, it is meant that companies no longer just deal with the same group of people but diverse group with varying backgrounds. The effective management of

company's human resource is becoming more recognised as the key to companies' success. Most of the global companies are able to manage diverse workforce well and hence enjoy a distinct advantage in the era when flexibility and creativity are keys to competitiveness.

Approaches to Managing diversity

Diversity at work places has been studied in detail and considered with a great deal of enthusiasm but in most cases it ends up fuelling tension. In addressing this issue of diversity various approaches and methods have been used over the years, but all come under two broad approaches and a third one which recently emerged. The work of Thomas and Ely (2002), clearly give a deeper understanding of the three approaches. The approaches include discrimination-and-fairness paradigm, the access-and-legitimacy paradigm and learning-and-effectiveness paradigm.

The discrimination-and-fairness paradigm is based on the fact that discrimination of any form at work places is wrong both morally and legally. It is measured by an organisation's ability to achieve its recruitment and retention goal. This idealises the assimilation and colour-and-gender conformism. It more often increases demographic diversity at work places. It is the most widely used of the three and a dominant way of understanding diversity (Thomas and Ely, 2002). The proponents of this approach focus on equal opportunity, fair treatment and recruitment. This reasons along the same line as the affirmative action just that this goes beyond numbers. Companies that adopt this strategy enhance career development and run training programmes for people of colour and women. Such companies are bureaucratic in structure as they use top-down directive approach.

The access-and-legitimacy paradigm celebrates differences of people in an organisation and seeks more clientele, matching their demographic staff set up to their targeted customers (Thomas and Ely, 2002). This is predicated on acceptance and celebration of differences. It tends to emphasize the role of cultural differences in a company without necessarily looking at the impact it has on its products. Companies which adopt this approach operate in a highly diversified environment with diverse clients, customers or the labour pool which can be a threat or an advantage to the companies. This is very useful for emergencies and often crisis oriented needs for access and legitimacy. The danger here is that some employees may feel exploited after some time, as workers are specialised and limited to a segment of the market or customers (Thomas and Ely, 2002).

A third approach is the combination of the two discussed above in a beneficial learning base on the cultural experiences for creative ideas. It is often referred to as a situation of connecting diversity to work perspectives. This is more of a contingency approach as how it is applied depends on the purpose the company it to achieve. Under this employees are encouraged to fight all forms of dominance and subordination at work places. This model internalises differences among employees so that it learns and grows because of them (Thomas and Ely, 2002). There are eight preconditions in adopting this third approach. These are listed below, as presented in Thomas and Ely work, 2002.

- The leadership must understand that a diverse workforce will embody different perspectives and approaches to work, and must truly value variety of opinion and insight.
- The leadership must recognise both the learning opportunities and the challenges that the expression of different perspectives presents for an organisation.
- The organisational culture must create an expectation of high standard of performance from everyone.
- The organisational culture must stimulate personal development.
- The organisational culture must encourage openness.
- The organisational culture must make workers feel valued to ensure commitment and empowerment to boost their confidence level.
- The organisational must have a well articulated and understood mission.
- The organisational must have a relatively egalitarian, non bureaucratic structure so as to welcome constructive challenges and promote exchange of ideas.

Advantages of managing diversity

Managing diverse work force deals with increasing corporate profit through creating a supportive climate for all employees to participate and contribute with high degree of efficiency and innovation to corporate objectives. It further focuses on harmonising the profession and personal life of all people i.e. the human capital of public and private organisation. It increases the trust and alignment of clients and other stakeholders of the external environment through the implementation of social policies. It also has the added advantage as organisations develop a reputation as an employer of choice. Not only will it have ability to attract the best talents from shrinking labour pool but also saves time and money in recruitment and turnover cost. It also enhances good management practices by preventing discrimination and promoting inclusiveness by acknowledging peoples differences and recognising these differences as valuable. It also has the advantage of enhancing the ability of an organisation to adjust rapidly and successfully to market changes (Thomas and Ely, 2002). This depends on the method use in managing diversity as well as the nature of top managing group. The top bosses should dynamic with a broader understanding of diversity at work places.

There is a clear danger of ignoring diversity. Ignoring diversity issues costs time when a problem arises and needs a perfect and prompt attention, money in administering it and efficiency to solve the problem once and for all. Some of the consequences can include unhealthy tensions between people of differing gender, race, ethnicity and abilities to mention a few. It can also lead to loss of productivity because of increased conflict. It can also affect the ability to attract and retain talented people of all kinds. It can further lead to complaints and legal action. Finally, ignoring diversity make companies' unable to retain women and people of colour there by resulting in lost of investments in recruitment and training.

In spite of the mixed pros and cons of diverse workforce, the former far outweighs the latter hence the need and zeal for companies to pursue the management of it. Most companies in the UK have adopted one form or another in managing their diverse work force over the years. There is no blue print for carrying out this. For this reason and other

inherent ones, some companies end-up concentrating on few ethnic groups to the disadvantage of the other groups. Some therefore end up recruiting from one group. A company the has successful applied some of the principles of managing diversity to achieve great results in the British Airways.

According to a case study by Cartwright 2002, the British Airways (BA) was set up as a nationalised airline by merger in 1974 of British European Airways (BEA) and the British Overseas Airways Corporation with over 58,000 staff worldwide. It was subsequently privatised in February 1987 as part of the conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's concept of a share-owning democracy. It was determined to become a customer-centred player in the global airline market. In order to provide a first class service, BA has had to manage a diverse staff base across the world. It has a substantial number of locally-based staff both on the ground as check-in staff, cabin crew and flight attendants who usually fly to-and-fro their own countries. The unique quality of BA is that all the BA livery and employees wear BA uniforms. This is very crucial for customer care issues as the services provided every where in the world should be identical to the standard BA products.

In order to maintain this high standard BA place much emphasis on initial training on continuous professional development (CPD). BA in partnership with a consortium from Oxford in the UK and in a close consultation with the BA training staff in London has develop a program suitable for staff from any part of the world. The program is updated and re-launch in various parts of the world. This program takes the staff through various aspects of management lead to certificate in management studies awarded by UK Universities Cartwright 2002, British airways website). This training is easy to get to and pertinent to any member of staff. The assessment is done with cultural understanding. Seminar time is taken up with an exploration of the balance between the cultural requirements of a particular region and the need to meet the BA culture especially in respect of customer care standards. Then again they go through team building processes bearing in mind that they are working in multi-disciplinary and multicultural teams. All these are aim at achieving the best out of the employees for the satisfaction of the numerous customers. This partly explains why BA is for years now stands out as one of the best airlines in the industry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, United Kingdom, likes other liberal European countries, having accepted significant numbers of immigrations at one point or more in the post-war period, had to put up with the multicultural transformation of their societies (Joppke, 1996) and hence its labour force. In prospect, a key driver in the demand for international migrants over the next two decades will be slowing growth, and then declining, of the labour force in high income countries (Global Economic Perspective, 2006). International migration will continue to play its part in reshaping the labour market in UK. The situation is aggravated by the rapid re-grouping of Europe countries under the name European Union as people from not so rich and underdeveloped economies will move permanently or temporary to advanced economies among the Union. Hence multiculturalism will not come to an end.

Multiculturalism in its entity is not just an empirical description of cultural diverse societies, but also a normative claim that cultural difference is to be publicly recognised and instituted. It is partly the reason why the UK has stopped short of instituting “colour conscious” minority policies, but under the name “equal opportunities” quasi-affirmative action is formally practiced in the provision of public employment among other things. Even though managing labour diversity is not automatic various aspects of the approaches outlined above would be very useful depending on the level of diversity of it staff, product as well as it market size and nature. The future of managing diversity is bright as the world is increasingly becoming closer through globalisation of ideas and information; different cultures are being understood and accepted among countries and continents.

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