

Legislation, voluntary codes of practice and equality initiatives have resulted in some progress towards equality of treatment for minority groups, but there remains inescapable evidence of continuing discrimination. More recent approaches under the banner of management of diversity include the economic and business case for equality, the valuing and managing of diversity in organisations, culture change and the mainstreaming of equality initiatives. These approaches are partly a response to the insufficient progress made so far, yet there is only limited evidence that they have made a difference. They offer some useful perspectives and practices, although the underlying concepts also raise some issues and concerns.

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES OF SOCIALLY DEFINED MINORITY GROUPS

For the purposes of this section we will consider the experiences of five socially defined minority groups: women, racial/ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual. In choosing these groups we have followed, broadly, Kirton and Greene (2003), although others, such as British Telecom, have identified as many as 12 aspects of difference between employees (Liff 1999). As identified in the previous chapter there are a larger number of other minority groups for whom legal protection against discrimination is available, and we have therefore been selective in the groups we have chosen to discuss in this chapter. At the time of writing there is no legal protection against age discrimination as this will not be in place until 2006.

It should also be noted that CIPD (2003) provides a much broader definition of diversity, going beyond social category diversity, as above, to include informational diversity (differences in terms of education, tenure and functional background) and value diversity (which includes differences in personality and attitudes).

Women

If **participation** in the labour force is an indication of decreasing discrimination then recent figures are encouraging. From 1971 to 2001 the female participation rate in employment increased from 56.8 per cent to 72 per cent, compared with the male participation rate which is slowly falling, and now at 84 per cent (Equal Opportunities Review (EOR) 2002). These trends are predicted to continue. Much of this increase has been due to the replacement of full-time jobs with part-time jobs. Indeed Hakim (1993) puts forward the strong argument, based on an alternative analysis of the census and employment data, that the increasing participation of women in employment between the 1950s and the late 1980s is a myth, although a real increase does appear to have taken place since the late 1980s. Her analysis shows that 'the much trumpeted rise in women's employment in Britain consisted entirely of the substitution of part-time for full-time jobs from 1951 to the late 1980s' (p. 102). Hakim concludes from the research that only an increase in full-time employment is likely to have a wider impact on women's opportunities at work and elsewhere.

Some of the more obvious signs of discrimination, such as in recruitment advertising, may have disappeared, and there is some evidence to suggest that women are beginning to enter some previously male-dominated occupations. For example, women have now been ordained as priests in the Church of England but not without

deep and continuing debate. Similarly men are beginning to enter some previously female-only occupations, such as midwifery. However, there remains a high degree of subtle, for example in access to training and support for development and promotion, and not-so-subtle discrimination, as in the continued **gender segregation** in terms of both type and level of work undertaken. There are still few women in higher levels of management and not many male secretaries. People Management (2002) reports research undertaken by Cranfield which finds a 50 per cent increase over the previous year in women is executive directors in the FTSE 100 companies. However, even after the increase the percentage of executive directors who are women is still only 15 per cent. In the same year Higginbottom and Roberts (2002) report that the EOC found only 28 per cent of elected councillors, 12 per cent of elected council leaders, and 10 per cent of local authority chiefs were women. The majority of managers and administrators are men and most women remain in three occupational groups: clerical and secretarial, personal and protective services such as catering, caring, cleaning and selling occupations (Thair and Ridsen 1999). These occupations are often characterised by part-time work, and poor pay, and are in a mainly narrow range of industrial sectors. Part-time workers are often described as part of the secondary labour market with pay, conditions and employment rights being vastly inferior to those of full-time permanent workers, although legislation now provides for some equalisation.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE

Gender segregation at Deloitte Touche

McCracken (2000) reports how Deloitte Touche were good at recruiting women and felt they had achieved equal opportunities, but they were finding that women were leaving at a much higher rate than men and few women were made partners. On investigating the situation they found that women were leaving, not for domestic reasons as they had anticipated, but due to the male-dominated culture. Men were assigned high-visibility assignments in manufacturing, financial services, acquisitions and mergers, whereas women were offered non-profit organisations, healthcare and retail. They also found that women were genuinely assessed on their performance levels, but that men were also assessed on their potential, which women missed out on.

Deloitte Touche made efforts to change these practical features of working life and also tried to promote work-life balance. Having identified the real problems in achieving equality they found that more women partners were coming through and that money was being saved as they were losing fewer talented women.

Summarised from: D. McCracken (2000) 'Winning the talent war for women: sometimes it takes a revolution', *Harvard Business Review*, November–December, pp. 159–65.

Pay differentials between men and women have narrowed very little except for a hike of women's pay upwards when the Equal Pay Act 1970 came into force in 1975.

Table 24.1 Barriers to the achievement of gender-based equal pay

Starting pay is frequently individually negotiated	As men usually have higher previous earnings this means they can negotiate a higher starting rate
Length of service	Men generally have longer service and fewer career breaks, and while this may result in greater experience early in a career it is less of a performance-influencing factor as general length of service increases
Broadbanding	There is a lack of transparency in such systems and there is a lack of structured progression, managers are likely to have high levels of discretion and may be unaware of biases
Lack of equal access to bonus payments	There is evidence that appraisal ratings and assessments discriminate unfairly against minority groups
Market allowances not evenly distributed	Such allowances are more likely to be given to men
Different pay structures and negotiating bodies	As some jobs are done primarily by women and some primarily by men, direct comparisons are harder to make
Job evaluation	Such schemes often perpetuate old values and may be subject to managerial manipulation

Source: Based primarily on material in IDS (2004) 'Employers move on equal pay', *IDS Report No. 897*, January, pp. 10–18.

The 2003 New Earnings Survey reports that women's full-time average weekly pay without overtime was 18 per cent less than that for full-time men (IDS 2004), having increased from around 30 per cent lower prior to the Equal Pay Act. However, if overtime is included the current gap widens as men work a greater number of hours. The same survey shows that the hourly rate of part-time women is 40 per cent less than that for full-time men, with overtime excluded. While some progress has been made towards equal pay, these factors still remain as barriers to be overcome. The abolition of the Wages Councils has not helped in this respect, but the minimum wage has provided some limited support. IDS (2004) identify a range of unintentional consequences of pay systems which prove to be a barrier to achieving equal pay, and these are shown in Table 24.1.

Racial and ethnic groups

In spite of the legislation evidence of discrimination continues to exist. The EOR (2003) reports that the level of unemployment for black and Asian communities is 12 per cent compared with that for the white population of 5 per cent. This picture of **comparative level of unemployment** has barely changed over the last 18 years, and the gap appears to be widening rather than narrowing, although there are differences between the different ethnic groups. In addition, there is continued **segregation in the labour market**, with ethnic minority male employees being employed in the hotel, catering and repairs and distribution sectors, and manufacturing industry, to a much greater extent than their white counterparts. But for construction the reverse is true. Segregation also occurs vertically. Using Labour Force Survey data, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) (2000) reports that 30.4 per cent of white people were

classified as managers compared with 24.7 per cent of black people. Again the gap appears to be widening rather than narrowing. Other evidence of vertical segregation has been found by the Runnymede Trust (2000) when surveying the FTSE 100 companies. They found that 5.4 per cent of employees were from ethnic minority groups, compared with the representation of ethnic minorities in the general population of 6.4 per cent, but that this proportion fell sharply at higher grades, with 3.2 per cent of junior managers from ethnic minorities and 1 per cent of senior managers. Yet all of these companies believed that they did not unfairly discriminate. Samir Sharma OBE, Chair of the Runnymede Trust, commented that 'there is still a sea of white faces in the boardrooms of Europe' (EOR 2000). Racial discrimination may also happen less blatantly. Rana (2003) reports on a project designed to understand why ethnic minority managers are underrepresented in senior levels of local government. The researchers found that in 360-degree feedback results the line managers' assessments of ethnic minority employees were less favourable for each individual than all other assessments, which were generally similar. This discrepancy did not occur when considering the ratings of white employees. In terms of **pay**, non-white workers are also comparatively disadvantaged.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE

The *Guardian* (4 November 2000) contained the following report:

The IT industry is often considered to be one which is more open to the employment of different racial groups. But while the workforce may look more diverse the top jobs are still mostly filled by white people. The article goes on to report the experiences of two non-white IT directors. The first, Rene Carayol, is Chief Executive of an e-business consultancy, and comments that he is shocked by the racial prejudice that he encounters. For example, when Rene and the team are visiting new offices, people who have not met them before look around the team for the white faces to work out who is the boss. He comments that it takes some time for people to get used to working with him, and feels that it took him longer to rise to his present position due to his race.

The second, Sarabjit Ubhey, Head of Operational Control at BUPA, identifies the glass ceiling above which there are few senior non-white IT people. She feels that the fundamental problem is awareness, pointing out, for example, that when social/networking events are held at a pub Muslims cannot be present. This, in addition to making them feel excluded, hinders their career progression.

Source: Adapted from R. Woolnough (2000) 'Racism reinforces the glass ceiling', *Guardian*, 4 November, p. 31.

Disabled people

Woodhams and Danieli (2000) point out that people who have a disability face common barriers to full integration into society and yet are a very varied group in that impairments can vary in severity, stability and type. There are 6.7 million people in

the UK who have a current long-term health problem or disability which has a substantial adverse impact on their day-to-day activities and affects the work they can do (Bruyere 2000). People with a disability are more likely to be unemployed than their able-bodied counterparts, and once unemployed they are likely to remain so for a longer period (EOR 2003). The economic activity rate for disabled people is 53 per cent compared with 84 per cent for non-disabled people, and 49 per cent of disabled people are in employment compared with 81 per cent of non-disabled people (EOR 2003). Hammond (2002) notes that the media have a particularly poor reputation for employing disabled people. This is particularly unfortunate as this is a missed opportunity to create visible and influential role models.

Choice of job is often restricted for people with a disability, and where they do find work it is likely to be in low-paid, less attractive jobs. People with a disability are overrepresented in plant and machine operative jobs and in the personal and protective services, and are underrepresented in professional and managerial jobs (Skills and Enterprise Network 2000). Periods of high general unemployment exacerbate these problems.

Employers traditionally have had a wide range of concerns regarding the employment of disabled people, including worries about general standards of attendance and health, safety at work, eligibility for pension schemes and possible requirements for alterations to premises and equipment. The two ticks disability symbol is a government initiative and can be used by employers to demonstrate their commitment to employing disabled people. Employers who use the symbol make five commitments to action: a guaranteed job interview for disabled applicants, regular consultation with disabled employees, retaining employees if they become disabled during their employment, improving knowledge about disability for key employees, reviewing these commitments and planning ahead. However Dibben *et al.* (2001) note that the symbol appeared to have only a limited effect on support for disabled employees or potential employees.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE

The case of Val Milnes

Glover reports the experiences of Val Milnes in seeking employment after recovering from a skiing accident, which left her paralysed from the chest down. After being dismissed by her current employer six months after the accident, she began to look for work when she had been through a rehabilitation process. Her experiences of seeking employment are salutary. Little support was made in most organisations to enable her to compete on a 'level playing field', and she comments that HR professionals did not help. In terms of finding locations and carrying out interviews Val was constantly put at a disadvantage. She felt that on many occasions she was interviewed as a matter of procedure and as a way of complying with the two ticks symbol; and that there was no intention to consider her for employment. She suggests some very practical steps that employers could take to make people with a disability feel more welcome.

Source: Summarised from C. Glover (2003) 'Ticked off', *People Management*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 24 January, pp. 38–9.

Age

While advertisements are generally less obviously discriminatory in respect of age the EOR (1998) found that employers still used coded language to indicate that they were looking for a specific age group, and found phrases such as 'young', 'articulate youngsters', 'second jobber', and 'young dynamic environment'. There continue to be cultures that discriminate against older, and younger, people. There is frequently discrimination at both the shortlisting and interview stage, with line managers having negative perceptions of older workers, seeing them as less able to cope with change, training or technology and less interested in their careers. Higginbottom and Roberts (2002), reporting on a MORI poll of 2000 adults, found that they viewed age discrimination as the prime cause of discrimination at work. Philpott (2003) reports that in a survey of 600 retired people, two-fifths believe they had suffered discrimination in some way, age discrimination being the most frequent form. He goes on to argue that there are fewer older people in the workforce, not because they prefer to retire, but because they feel they have been discriminated against. Snape and Redman (2003) found partial support for this. Platman (2002) reports on National Opinion Poll (NOP) research funded by the Department for Work and Pensions which included people between the ages of 50 and 60, a quarter of whom believe that they were discriminated against when looking for a job. Nearly half the organisations in the survey had no staff aged 60 or over. Line managers said they were age friendly, although they appeared to be ignorant of the guidelines.

Given that by 2010 almost 40 per cent of the working population will be over 45 (Higginbottom 2002) and the current shortage of many skills, this presents a critical problem for organisations. Older workers are seen to be more loyal and conscientious, to have better interpersonal skills, to be more efficient in the job and their experience in the job counteracts any age-related factors lowering productivity; older workers are generally more satisfied with their jobs and have fewer accidents and a better absence record; and in any case there is considerable variation within individuals. Older workers also have lower turnover rates which saves the organisation money.

On the basis of their research Snape and Redman (2003) argue that discrimination for being too young is at least as common as that for being too old. Both forms of discrimination adversely affected commitment to the organisation, and hence, it could be argued, performance.

Sexuality

Lesbian, gay and bisexual discrimination is the most difficult to identify due to the fact that group membership is more easily concealed, usually due to the anticipation of discrimination. It is therefore difficult to quantify the extent to which these groups experience active discrimination. The protection now given to transsexuals means that they are not forced to offer historical information on their gender, but transsexuals in transition clearly cannot keep this confidential, and will need support and protection from harassment (Higginbottom 2002). Most employers have been slow to include sexual orientation in their diversity management initiatives (Ward 2003).

Wilson (2000) in an article reporting three case studies found that in two of the three organisations sexuality other than the heterosexual norm was not considered acceptable in the culture. In one engineering company, the researcher was told that

you would have to be very discreet if you were gay, and that one gay person, who had not ‘come out’, had left the organisation. In the second, a professional partnership, the researcher was told that sexuality was ‘under wraps’. Only in the third, a media organisation, were different sexual orientations considered acceptable.

In a TUC survey carried out at the end of 1998 (EOR 1999b), 44 per cent of the 440 gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents said they had experienced discrimination at work due to their sexuality. Forms of discrimination reported ranged from verbal abuse to dismissal. Even in jobs where employees feel sufficiently comfortable to disclose their sexuality, there is considerable discrimination in the terms and benefits they receive, although legislation is beginning to change this situation.

In summary

Although some of the more blatant aspects of discrimination have been significantly improved, there remain considerable discrimination and inequality in respect of minority groups in the workplace. To some extent we are only just beginning to understand the causes and nature of more subtle forms of discrimination which are the root of inequality. We now turn to the theoretical debate which underpins different organisational approaches to tackling discrimination.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO EQUALITY

There has been a continuing debate concerning the action that should be taken to alleviate the disadvantages that minority groups encounter. One school of thought supports legislative action, which we considered in detail in the previous chapter, and this approach is generally referred to as the equal opportunities, or liberal approach. The other argues that this will not be effective and that the only way to change fundamentally is to alter the attitudes and preconceptions that are held about these groups. This second perspective is embodied in the managing diversity approaches. The initial emphasis on legislative action was adopted in the hope that this would eventually affect attitudes. A third, more extreme, radical approach, which enjoys less support, comes from those who advocate legislation to promote positive or reverse discrimination to compensate for a history of discrimination against specified groups and to redress the balance more immediately. The arguments for and against such an approach are fully discussed by Singer (1993). In the UK legislation provides for positive action, such as special support and encouragement, for disadvantaged groups, but not positive or reverse discrimination (discriminating in their favour), although positive discrimination is legal in the USA. For a comparison of UK and US approaches to equality *see* Ford (1996).

The labels ‘equal opportunities’ and ‘management of diversity’ are used inconsistently, and to complicate this there are different perspectives on the meaning of managing diversity, so we shall draw out the key differences which typify each of these approaches, and offer some critique of their conceptual foundations and efficacy.

The equal opportunities approach

The equal opportunities approach seeks to influence behaviour through legislation so that discrimination is prevented. It has been characterised by a moral and ethical

stance promoting the rights of *all* members of society. The approach, sometimes referred to as the liberal tradition (Jewson and Mason 1986), concentrates on the equality of opportunity rather than the equality of outcome found in more radical approaches. The approach is based on the understanding that some individuals are discriminated against, for example in the selection process, due to irrelevant criteria. These irrelevant criteria arise from assumptions based on the stereotypical characteristics attributed to them as members of a socially defined group, for example that women will not be prepared to work away from home due to family commitments; that a person with a disability will have more time off sick. As these assumptions are not supported by any evidence, in respect of any individual, they are regarded as irrelevant. The equal opportunities approach therefore seeks to formalise procedures so that relevant, job-based criteria are used (using job descriptions and person specifications), rather than irrelevant assumptions. The equal opportunities legislation provides a foundation for this formalisation of procedures, and hence procedural justice. As Liff (1999) points out, the use of systematic rules in employment matters which can be monitored for compliance is 'felt fair'. In line with the moral argument, and emphasis on systematic procedures, equal opportunities is often characterised as a responsibility of the HR department.

The rationale, therefore, is to provide a 'level playing field' on which all can compete on equal terms. Positive action, not positive discrimination, is allowable in order that some may reach the level at which they can compete equally. For example British Rail has given members of minority groups extra coaching and practice in a selection test for train drivers, as test taking was not part of their culture so that, when required to take a test, they were at a disadvantage.

Equal opportunities approaches stress disadvantaged groups, and the need, for example, to set targets for those groups to ensure that their representation in the workplace reflects their representation in wider society in occupations where they are underrepresented, such as the small numbers of ethnic minorities employed as firefighters and police officers, or the small numbers of women in senior management roles. These targets are not enforceable by legislation, as in the United States, but organisations have been encouraged to commit themselves voluntarily to improvement goals, and to support this by putting in place measures to support disadvantaged groups such as special training courses and flexible employment policies.

Differences between socially defined groups are glossed over, and the approach is generally regarded as one of 'sameness'. That is, members of disadvantaged groups should be treated in the same way as the traditional employee (white, male, young, able-bodied and heterosexual), and not treated differently due to their group membership, unless for the purpose of providing the 'level playing field'.

Problems with the equal opportunities approach

There is an assumption in the equal opportunities approach that equality of outcome will be achieved if fair procedures are used and monitored. In other words this will enable any minority groups to achieve a fair share of what employment has to offer. Once such minority groups become full participating members in employment, the old stereotypical attitudes on which discrimination against particular social groups is based will gradually change, as the stereotypes will be shown to be unhelpful.

The assumption that fair procedures or procedural justice will lead to fair outcomes has not been borne out in practice, as we have shown. In addition there has

been criticism of the assumption that once members of minority groups have demonstrated their ability to perform in the organisation this will change attitudes and beliefs in the organisation. This is a naïve assumption, and the approach has been regarded as simplistic. Liff (1999) argues that attitudes and beliefs have been left untouched. Other criticisms point out that the legislation does not protect all minority groups (although it is gradually being extended); and there is a general lack of support within the organisation, partly because equality objectives are not linked to business objectives (Shapiro and Austin 1996). Shapiro and Austin, among others, argue that equal opportunities has often been the concern of the HR function, and Kirton and Greene (2003) argue that a weak HR function has not helped. The focus of equal opportunities is on formal processes and yet it is not possible to formalise everything in the organisation. Recent research suggests that this approach alienated large sections of the workforce (those not identified as disadvantaged groups) who felt that there was no benefit for themselves, and indeed that their opportunities were damaged. Others felt that equal opportunities initiatives had resulted in the lowering of entry standards, as in the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority (EOR 1996). Shapiro and Austin argue that this creates divisions in the workforce. Lastly, it is the individual who is expected to adjust to the organisation, and ‘traditional equal opportunities strategies encourage a view that women (and other groups) have a problem and need help’ (Liff 1999, p. 70).

In summary the equal opportunities approach is considered simplistic and to be attempting to treat the symptoms rather than the causes of unfair discrimination.

The management of diversity approach

The management of diversity approach concentrates on individuals rather than groups, and includes the improvement of opportunities for *all* individuals and not just those in minority groups. Hence managing diversity involves everyone and benefits everyone, which is an attractive message to employers and employees alike. Thus separate groups are not singled out for specific treatment. Kandola and Fullerton (1994, p. 47), who are generally regarded as the main UK supporters of a managing diversity approach, express it this way:

Managing diversity is about the realisation of the potential of all employees . . . certain group based equal opportunities policies need to be seriously questioned, in particular positive action and targets.

In the second edition of their book (1998, p. 11) they contest, in addition, that:

if managing diversity is about an individual and their contribution . . . rather than about groups it is contradictory to provide training and other opportunities based solely on people’s perceived group membership.

Further differences from an equal opportunities approach are highlighted in the following definition from the USA, where managing diversity is described as:

the challenge of meeting the needs of a culturally diverse workforce and of sensitising workers and managers to differences associated with gender, race, age and nationality in an attempt to maximise the potential productivity of all employees.

(Ellis and Sonnenfeld 1994, p. 82)

Ignoring for a moment the fact that some groups are specifically excluded from this definition, we will focus, among other themes, on two key issues that this quotation raises: recognition of difference and culture. Recognition of difference is also demonstrated by the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD, now CIPD) (1997) when they say that 'people have different abilities to contribute to organizational goals and performance' (pp. 1–2). Whereas the equal opportunities approach minimised difference, the managing diversity approach treats difference as a positive asset. Liff (1996), for example, notes that from this perspective organisations should recognise rather than dilute differences, as differences are positive rather than negative.

This brings us to a further difference between the equal opportunities approach and the managing diversity approach which is that the managing diversity approach is based on the economic and business case for recognising and valuing difference, rather than the moral case for treating people equally. Rather than being purely a cost, equal treatment offers benefits and advantages for the employer if it invests in ensuring that everyone in the organisation is valued and given the opportunities to develop their potential and make a maximum contribution. The practical arguments supporting the equalisation of employment opportunities are thus highlighted. Thompson and DiTomaso (reported by Ellis and Sonnenfeld 1994) put it very well:

[A] [m]ulticultural management perspective fosters more innovative and creative decision making, satisfying work environments, and better products because all people who have a contribution to make are encouraged to be involved in a meaningful way . . . More information, more points of view, more ideas and reservations are better than fewer.

A company that discriminates, directly or indirectly, against older or disabled people, women, ethnic minorities or people with different sexual orientations will be curtailing the potential of available talent, and employers are not well known for their complaints about the surplus of talent. The financial benefits of retaining staff who might otherwise leave due to lack of career development or due to the desire to combine a career with family are stressed, as is the image of the organisation as a 'good' employer and hence its attractiveness to all members of society as its customers. A relationship between a positive diversity climate and job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation has also been found (Hicks-Clarke and Iles 2000). Although the impact on performance is more difficult to assess, it is reasonable to assume that more satisfied and committed employees will lead to reduced absence and turnover levels. In addition, the value of different employee perspectives and different types of contribution is seen as providing added value to the organisation, particularly when organisational members increasingly reflect the diverse customer base of the organisation. This provides a way in which organisations can better understand, and therefore meet, their customer needs. The business case argument is

likely to have more support from managers as it is less likely to threaten the bottom line. Policies that do pose such a threat can be unpopular with managers (Humphries and Rubery 1995).

Managing diversity highlights the importance of culture. The roots of discrimination go very deep, and in relation to women Simmons (1989) talks about challenging a system of institutional discrimination and anti-female conditioning in the prevailing culture, and the Macpherson Report (1999) identifies institutional racism as a root cause of discrimination in the police force. Culture is important in two ways in managing diversity: first, organisational culture is one determinant of the way that organisations manage diversity and treat individuals from different groups. Equal opportunity approaches tended to concentrate on behaviour and, to a small extent, attitudes, whereas management of diversity approaches recognise a need to go beneath this. So changing the culture to one which treats individuals as individuals and supports them in developing their potential is critical, although the difficulties of culture change make this a very difficult task.

Second, depending on the approach to the management of diversity, the culture of different groups within the organisation comes into play. Recognising that men and women present different cultures at work and that this diversity needs to be managed, is key to promoting a positive environment of equal opportunity, which goes beyond merely fulfilling the demands of the statutory codes. Masreliez-Steen (1989) explains how men and women have different perceptions, interpretations of reality, languages and ways of solving problems, which, if properly used, can be a benefit to the whole organisation, as they are complementary. She describes women as having a collectivist culture where they form groups, avoid the spotlight, see rank as unimportant and have few but close contacts. Alternatively, men are described as having an individualistic culture, where they form teams, 'develop a profile', enjoy competition and have many superficial contacts. The result is that men and women behave in different ways, often fail to understand each other and experience 'culture clash'. However, the difference is about how things are done and not about what is achieved. However, we must be aware that here we have another stereotypical view which simplifies reality.

The fact that women have a different culture, with different strengths and weaknesses, means that women need managing and developing in a different way, needing different forms of support and coaching. Women more often need help to understand the value of making wider contacts and how to make them. In order to manage such diversity, key management competencies for the future would be: concern with image, process awareness, interpersonal awareness/sensitivity, developing subordinates and gaining commitment. Attending to the organisation's culture suggests a move away from seeing the individual as the problem, and requiring that the individual needs to change because they do not fit the culture. Rather, it is the organisation that needs to change so that traditional assumptions of how jobs are constructed and how they should be carried out are questioned, and looked at afresh. As Liff (1999) comments, the sociology of work literature shows how structure, cultures and practices of organisations advantage those from the dominant group by adapting to their skills and lifestyles. This is the very heart of institutional discrimination, and so difficult to address as these are matters which are taken for granted and largely unconscious. The trick, as Thomas (1992) spells out, is to identify 'requirements as opposed to preferences, conveniences or traditions'. This view of organisational transformation rather than individual transformation is similar to Cockburn's

Table 24.2

Major differences between 'equal opportunities' approaches and 'management of diversity' approaches

Aspect	Equal opportunities	Managing diversity
Purpose	Reduce discrimination	Utilise employee potential to maximum advantage
Case argued	Moral and ethical	Business case – improve profitability
Whose responsibility	HR/personnel department	All managers
Focuses on	Groups	Individuals
Perspective	Dealing with different needs of different groups	Integrated
Benefits for employees	Opportunities improved for disadvantaged groups, primarily through setting targets	Opportunities improved for all employees
Focus on management activity	Recruitment	Managing
Remedies	Changing systems and practices	Changing the culture

(1989) 'long agenda' for equality, as she discusses changing cultures, systems and structures.

Finally, managing diversity is considered to be a more integrated approach to implementing equality. Whereas equal opportunities approaches were driven by the HR function, managing diversity is seen to be the responsibility of all managers. And, as there are business reasons for managing diversity it is argued that equality should not be dealt with as a separate issue, as with equal opportunities approaches, but integrated strategically into every aspect of what the organisation does; this is often called mainstreaming.

Table 24.2 summarises the key differences between equal opportunities and managing diversity.

Problems with the managing diversity approach

While the management of diversity approach was seen by many as revitalising the equal opportunities agenda, and as a strategy for making more progress on the equality front, this progress has been slow to materialise. In reality, there remains the question of the extent to which approaches have really changed in organisations. Redefining equal opportunities in the language of the enterprise culture (Miller 1996) may just be a way of making it more palatable in today's climate, and Liff (1996) suggests that retitling may be used to revitalise the equal opportunities agenda.

It has been pointed out by Kirton and Greene (2003) that only a small number of organisations are ever quoted as management of diversity exemplars, and EOR (1999b) notes that even organisations which claim to be managing diversity do not appear to have a more diverse workforce than others, and neither have they employed more minority groups over the past five years.

Apart from this there are some fundamental problems with the management of diversity approach. The first of these is its complexity, as there are differing interpretations, which we have so far ignored, and which focus on the prominence of groups or individuals. Miller (1996) highlights two different approaches to the management of diversity. The first is where individual differences are identified and celebrated,

and where prejudices are exposed and challenged via training. The second, more orthodox, approach is where the organisation seeks to develop the capacity of all. This debate between group and individual identity is a fundamental issue:

Can people's achievements be explained by their individual talents or are they better explained as an outcome of their gender, ethnicity, class and age? Can anything meaningful be said about the collective experience of all women or are any generalisations undermined by other cross-cutting ideas? (Liff 1997, p. 11)

The most common approach to the management of diversity is based on individual contribution, as we have explained above, rather than group identity, although Liff (1997) identifies different approaches with different emphases. The *individualism* approach is based on dissolving differences. In other words, differences are not seen as being distributed systematically according to membership of a social group, but rather as random differences. Groups are not highlighted, but all should be treated fairly and encouraged to develop their potential. The advantage of this approach is that it is inclusive and involves all members of the organisation. An alternative emphasis in the management of diversity is that of *valuing differences* based on the membership of different social groups. Following this approach would mean recognising and highlighting differences, and being prepared to give special training to groups who may be disadvantaged and lack self-confidence, so that all in the organisation feel comfortable. Two further emphases are *accommodating* and *utilising* differences, which she argues are most similar to equal opportunity approaches where specific initiatives are available to aid identified groups, but also where these are also genuinely open for all other members of the organisation. In these approaches talent is recognised and used in spite of social differences, and this is done, for example, by recognising different patterns of qualifications and different roles in and out of paid work. Liff's conclusion is that group differences cannot be ignored, because it is these very differences which hold people back.

There is a further argument that if concentration on the individual is the key feature, then this may reduce our awareness of social-group-based disadvantage (Liff 1999) and may also weaken the argument for affirmative action (Liff 1996). The attractive idea of business advantage and benefits for all may divert attention from disadvantaged groups and result in no change to the status quo (*see*, for example, Ouseley 1996). Young (1990) argues that if differences are not recognised, then the norms and standards of the dominant group are not questioned.

On the other hand, a management of diversity approach may reinforce group-based stereotypes, when group-based characteristics are identified and used as a source of advantage to the organisation. For example, it has been argued, in respect of women, that as these differences were treated previously as a form of disadvantage, women may be uncomfortable using them to argue the basis for equality. Others argue that a greater recognition of perceived differences will continue to provide a rationale for disadvantageous treatment.

In addition to this dilemma within managing diversity approaches, the literature provides a strong criticism of the business case argument, which has been identified as contingent and variable (Dickens 1999). Thus the business case is unreliable because it will only work in certain contexts. For example, where skills are easily

available there is less pressure on the organisation to promote and encourage the employment of minority groups. Not every employee interacts with customers so if image and customer contact are part of the business case this will only apply to some jobs and not others. Also some groups may be excluded. For example, there is no systematic evidence to suggest that disabled customers are attracted by an organisation which employs disabled people. UK managers are also driven by short-term budgets and the economic benefits of equality may only be reaped in the longer term. Indeed as Kirton and Greene (2000) conclude, the business case is potentially detrimental to equality, when, for example, a cost–benefit analysis indicates that pursuing equality is not an economic benefit.

The CIPD (2003) argues that the jury is still out in respect of the business case for diversity; in other words, the evidence of performance improvements resulting from diversity is scanty. It also points to the importance of a conducive environment in gaining benefits. Furthermore it recites problems which can result from a more diverse workforce which include increased conflict, often resulting in difficulties in coming up with solutions, and poorer internal communication, with increased management costs due to these issues.

In addition there are concerns about whether diversity management, which originated in the USA, will travel effectively to the UK where the context is different, especially in terms of the demographics and the history of equality initiatives. Furthermore, there are concerns about whether diversity can be managed at all, as Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) note:

the belief that diversity management is do-able rests on a fantasy that it is possible to imagine a clean slate on which memories of privilege and subordination leave no mark. (p. 528)

and they go on to say that the theories do not take account of existing power differentials.

Lastly, managing diversity can be seen as introspective as it deals with people already in the organisation, rather than with getting people into the organisation – managing rather than expanding diversity (Donaldson 1993). Because of this Thomas (1990) suggests that it is not possible to *manage* diversity until you actually have it.

Equal opportunities or managing diversity?

Are equal opportunities and managing diversity completely different things? If so, is one approach preferable to the other? For the sake of clarity, earlier in this chapter we characterised a distinct approach to managing diversity which suggests that it is different from equal opportunities. Miller (1996) identifies a parallel move from the collective to the individual in the changing emphasis in personnel management as opposed to HRM. However, as we have seen, managing diversity covers a range of approaches and emphases, some closer to equal opportunities, some very different.

Much of the management of diversity suggests that it is superior to and not compatible with the equal opportunities approach (see Kandola *et al.* 1996). There is, however, much support for equal opportunities and managing diversity to be viewed

as mutually supportive and for this interaction to be seen as necessary for progress (see Ford 1996), although Newman and Williams (1995) argue that we are some way from a model which can incorporate difference and diversity in its individualised and collective sense. To see equal opportunities and management of diversity as *alternatives* threatens to sever the link between organisational strategy and the realities of internal and external labour market disadvantage.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS

Conceptual models of organisational responses to equal opportunities and managing diversity

A conceptual model of organisational responses to achieving equality, concentrating on perceived rationale and the differing contributions of equality of opportunity and managing diversity has been developed by LaFasto (1992). This is shown in Figure 24.1.

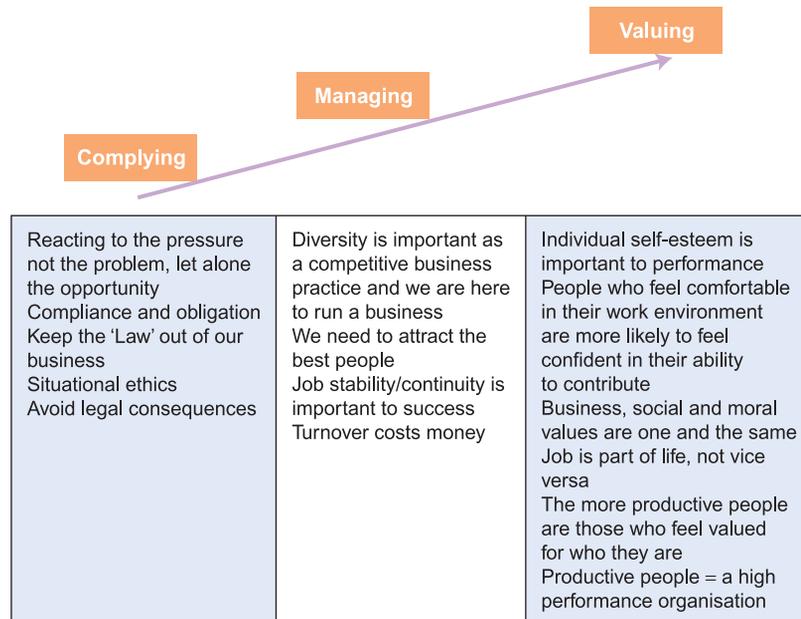


Figure 24.1 Conceptual model of diversity (Source: F. LaFasto (1992) 'Baxter Healthcare Organisation', in B.W. Jackson, F. LaFasto, H.G. Schultz and D. Kelly, 'Diversity', *Human Resource Management*, Vol. 31, Nos 1 and 2, Spring/Summer, p. 28. Reproduced with permission of John Wiley and Sons, Inc. Copyright © 1992 John Wiley and Sons, Inc.)

An alternative framework is proposed by Jackson *et al.* (1992) who, concentrating on culture, identify a series of stages and levels that organisations go through in becoming a multicultural organisation:

Level 1, stage 1: the exclusionary organisation

The exclusionary organisation maintains the power of dominant groups in the organisation, and excludes others.

Level 1, stage 2: the club

The club still excludes people but in a less explicit way. Some members of minority groups are allowed to join as long as they conform to predefined norms.

Level 2, stage 3: the compliance organisation

The compliance organisation recognises that there are other perspectives, but does not want to do anything to 'rock the boat'. It may actively recruit minority groups at the bottom of the organisation and make some token appointments.

Level 2, stage 4: the affirmative action organisation

The affirmative action organisation is committed to eliminating discrimination and encourages employees to examine their attitudes and think differently. There is strong support for the development of new employees from minority groups.

Level 3, stage 5: the redefining organisation

The redefining organisation is not satisfied with being anti-racist and so examines all it does and its culture to see the impact of these on its diverse multicultural workforce. It develops and implements policies to distribute power among all groups.

Level 3, stage 6: the multicultural organisation

The multicultural organisation reflects the contribution and interests of all its diverse members in everything it does and espouses. All members are full participants of the organisation and there is recognition of a broader social responsibility – to educate others outside the organisation and to have an impact on external oppression.

ACTIVITY 24.1

Think of five organisations that you know or have read about and plot where they are on each of the two frameworks we have reviewed. Explain the evidence and examples you have used in order to support where you have located them in the frameworks.



Equal opportunities and managing diversity: strategies, policies and plans

While the use of equal opportunities policies has grown very slowly such policies are now a feature of most organisations. Our research in 1984 indicated that such policies were only produced by 60 per cent of organisations, and that on the whole they were not seen as very useful. Indeed, a large number of organisations saw their policy as irrelevant. However, in 1994, using a similar sample, we found that 89 per cent of organisations had equal opportunities policies. Itzin and Phillipson (1993) also found that three-quarters of the 221 employers which responded to their questionnaire had an equal opportunities policy. A postal survey which was sent out in July–August

1999 (EOR 1999b) showed that 95 per cent of respondent organisations had an equal opportunities policy or statement, but Cully *et al.* (1999) found that 66 per cent of organisations in the Workplace Employee Relations (WER) Survey had policies or a statement. Clearly the existence of policy or statement depends on the nature of organisations surveyed. It would also be a mistake to assume that all policies cover all potentially disadvantaged groups (*see*, for example, EOR 1999b).

It is interesting that EOR reported that organisations tended to have equal opportunities policies rather than managing diversity policies, and equal opportunities and managing diversity appeared to be viewed as complementary means of achieving equality rather than different concepts. However, some organisations appear to move from one approach to the other. Maxwell *et al.* (2001), for example, express the difficulty of transition from an equal opportunities policy to a diversity policy. They explain the need to avoid the impression that the equal opportunities approach was inadequate or that those who promoted it were ill informed or mistaken.

However, despite the prevalence of policies there is always the concern that having a policy is more about projecting the right image than about reflecting how the organisation operates. For example, Hoque and Noon (1999) found that having an equal opportunities statement made no difference to the treatment of speculative applications from individuals who were either white or from an ethnic minority group and that 'companies with ethnic minority statements were more likely to discriminate *against* the ethnic minority applicant'. The Runnymede Trust (2000) in a survey on racial equality found that the way managers explained their equal opportunities policy was different from employee views about what happened in practice. Creegan *et al.* (2003) investigated the implementation of a race equality action plan and found a stark difference between paper and practice. Line managers who were responsible for implementing the plan were operating in a devolved HR environment and so had to pay for advice, training and support from HR. The consequence of this was that in order to protect their budgets they were reluctant to seek help. Employees felt that there was no ownership of the strategy or the plan within the organisation by senior or middle managers. In respect of women there is evidence that women in senior positions are not very supportive of equal opportunities policies which help other women get on in the organisation (Ng and Chiu, 2001).

ACTIVITY 24.2

Consider the equal opportunities policy in your own organisation, or another with which you are familiar.

- 1 To what extent does practice match policy?
- 2 Explore the reasons for the achievement of a match or mismatch.

A process for managing diversity

Ross and Schneider (1992) advocate a strategic approach to managing diversity that is based on their conception of the difference between seeking equal opportunity and managing diversity. The difference, as they see it, is that diversity approaches are:



- internally driven, not externally imposed;
- focused on individuals rather than groups;
- focused on the total culture of the organisation rather than just the systems used;
- the responsibility of all in the organisation and not just the HR function.

Their process involves the following steps:

- 1 Diagnosis of the current situation in terms of statistics, policy and culture, and looking at both issues and causes.
- 2 Setting aims which involve the business case for equal opportunities, identifying the critical role of commitment from the top of the organisation, and a vision of what the organisation would look like if it successfully managed diversity.
- 3 Spreading the ownership. This is a critical stage in which awareness needs to be raised, via a process of encouraging people to question their attitudes and pre-conceptions. Awareness needs to be raised in all employees at all levels, especially managers, and it needs to be clear that diversity is not something owned by the personnel function.
- 4 Policy development comes after awareness raising as it enables a contribution to be made from all in the organisation – new systems need to be changed via involvement and not through imposition on the unwilling.
- 5 Managing the transition needs to involve a range of training initiatives. Positive action programmes, specifically designed for minority groups, may be used to help them understand the culture of the organisation and acquire essential skills; policy implementation programmes, particularly focusing on selection, appraisal, development and coaching; further awareness training and training to identify cultural diversity and manage different cultures and across different cultures.
- 6 Managing the programme to sustain momentum. This involves a champion, not necessarily from the HR function, but someone who continues in their previous organisation role in addition. Also the continued involvement of senior managers is important, together with trade unions. Harnessing initiatives that come up through departments and organising support networks for disadvantaged groups are key at this stage. Ross and Schneider also recommend measuring achievements in terms of business benefit – better relationships with customers, improvements in productivity and profitability, for example – which need to be communicated to all employees.

Ellis and Sonnenfeld (1994) make the point that training for diversity needs to be far more than a one-day event. They recommend a series of workshops which allow time for individuals to think, check their assumptions and reassess between training sessions. Key issues that need tackling in arranging training are ensuring that the facilitator has the appropriate skills; carefully considering participant mix; deciding whether the training should be voluntary or mandatory; being prepared to cope with any backlash from previously advantaged groups who now feel threatened; and being prepared for the fact that the training may reinforce stereotypes. They argue that training has enormous potential benefits, but that there are risks involved.

While the ideal may be for organisations to work on all aspects of diversity in an integrated manner, the reality is often that organisations will target specific issues or groups at different times. Case 24.1 on the website is focused on improving diversity practice for people with disabilities.



WINDOW ON PRACTICE**Age equality at Derby City Council**

Platman reports that in Derby City Council potential applicants would phone to find out if there was any point in applying for a particular job, expecting that their older age would rule them out. The Council felt that age discrimination restricted the pool of applicants and that they had to get rid of signals that age was not valued. They now have a code of practice which centres on dignity at work, and this applies to both councillors and employees. The aim of the code is to ensure that ageist behaviour, attitudes and language are avoided. The intention is to put across the message that the Council values the experience of older employees, and older employees are now specifically encouraged to apply for further training and promotions.

Source: Summarised from K. Platman (2002) 'Matured Assets', *People Management*, Vol. 8, No. 24, 5 December, pp. 40–2.

Changing culture is clearly a key part of any process for managing diversity. In 1995 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) stressed the business case for diversity in the police force. The police force, over a number of years, has made considerable efforts to increase the recruitment and promotion of members of ethnic minorities (*see*, for example, EOR 1997). It began to tackle the issues of why individuals from different ethnic backgrounds would not even apply to the police for a career (for example, they may be seen, within some ethnic groups, as traitors for doing so). Some progress was made but the McPherson Report highlighted the issue of institutional racism, and further efforts were made to reduce discrimination. However, in 2004 there is still clear evidence of discriminatory cultures and attitudes, as evidenced by the television programme about the racist attitudes of new recruits into Manchester police. On Radio 4 on 20 January 2004 the Ali Desai case was discussed and it was argued that the metropolitan police service were racist in the way that they applied discipline to officers, picking up on smaller issues for racial minority groups than for white officers. The changes required to manage diversity effectively should not be underestimated.



Case 24.2 on the website considers the achievement of an ethnic mix on some MBA courses.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE**BT – Championing women in a man's world**

BT is often used as an exemplar of an organisation which has taken significant steps to encouraging women in a male-dominated engineering environment and Equal Opportunities Review (1999a) reports on how BT has gone about this.

First, BT has top-level strategic support to increase the proportion of women at all levels in the organisation, and also has identified the need for line managers to be convinced of the economic value of such policies.

The initiatives introduced involve the appointment of a gender champion, assessing the HR director, partly on objectives relating to gender issues, and running a one-day workshop for all 5,000 managers to stress the business case and attempt to change attitudes.

In terms of access to employment BT has targeted universities with a higher proportion of women students, revised job titles and specifications and considered ways of developing eligibility criteria for jobs. BT has set improvement targets and encouraged 'take your daughters to work' days.

In respect of existing employees BT has: produced a women's development portfolio and a women's management development programme, developed strategic skills for senior women managers, a women's network and website and raised the issues of life-work balance and childcare.

Source: Summarised from EOR (1999a) 'BT: Championing women in a man's world', *Equal Opportunities Review*, No. 84, March–April, pp. 14–20.

ACTIVITY 24.3

Prepare a strategy for managing diversity which would be appropriate for your organisation, or one with which you are familiar.



SUMMARY PROPOSITIONS

- 24.1** The essence of much HR work is to discriminate between individuals. The essence of equality is to avoid unfair discrimination. Unfair discrimination often results from people being treated on the basis of limited and prejudiced understanding of the groups to which they belong rather than on the basis of an assessment of them as individuals. People are not always aware when they are discriminating unfairly.
- 24.2** Legislation can have only a limited effect in achieving equality, and does not change attitudes, beliefs and cultures and structures. Organisations and their cultures, processes and structures are founded on the needs of the majority group and individuals from other groups are expected to adapt to this norm. This explains why progress towards equality of opportunity has been very slow.
- 24.3** Equal opportunities approaches highlight the moral argument for equal treatment, whereas managing diversity highlights the business case.

- 24.4** Actual changes in practice relating to equalising opportunity are taking place very slowly, and only long-term organisational transformation is likely to support equality.
- 24.5** Equal opportunities approaches and the management of diversity are best viewed, not as alternatives, but as complementary approaches which need to be interrelated.

GENERAL DISCUSSION TOPICS

- 1 Discuss Liff's (1997) question:
 'Can people's achievements be explained by their individual talents or are they better explained as an outcome of their gender, ethnicity, class and age? Can anything meaningful be said about the collective experience of all women or are any generalisations undermined by other cross-cutting ideas.' (p. 11)
- 2 Which is preferable – the UK approach or the US approach to equal opportunities? What are the implications of each for all members of the organisation?

FURTHER READING

Benschop, Y. (2001) 'Pride, prejudice and performance: relations between HRM, diversity and performance', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 12, No. 7, pp. 1166–81

This is a very illuminative article which presents the experience of the impact of workforce diversity in two case study organisations. The findings indicate that an organisation's strategy for diversity influences how employees perceive and understand diversity and the impact that it has on performance.

Mattis, M. (2001) 'Advancing women in business organisations', *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 371–88

This article examines the role of key players such as middle and first line managers in supporting gender diversity initiatives. A wide range of case examples are used and the article provides a range of practical activities to support gender diversity.

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An extensive range of additional materials, including multiple choice questions, answers to questions and links to useful websites can be found on the Human Resource Management Companion Website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/torrington.

