Diversity is all the ways in which we differ.

– VR Hayles

Understanding the dimensions of diversity is a key step for organizations to define what diversity means to them and to become conscious of the attributes that are important for them. While developing diversity initiative, organizations strive to address these dimensions. Recognizing these dimensions also helps individuals and organizations to appreciate how different attributes put together make a person. Overall, becoming familiar with the dimensions of diversity helps one to become aware of, appreciate and value diversity.

The Background of Diversity Dimensions

Major researches carried out in this field have been presented below. Apart from the illustrated models, there are several minute modifications made over the years to the list of diversity dimensions. Researchers have mostly added a few dimensions, which they consider significant and worth addressing, while managing diversity.

Diversity Wheel

The pioneering research in this field was carried out by Marilyn Loden and Judy Rosener1 (1991). They define diversity as that “which differentiates one group of people from another along primary and secondary dimensions…” Primary dimensions according to the researchers are, “Those which exert primary influences on ones identity” and secondary dimensions are, “Those which though are less visible, exert a more variable influence on personal identity and add a more subtle richness to the primary dimensions of diversity.” The dimensions given by them can be represented as (Figure 1):

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Four Layers of Diversity
Gardenswartz and Rowe\(^2\) (1998) built upon the primary and secondary dimensions and added two more layers to the diversity wheel. According to them, diversity consists of four layers, i.e., four concentric circles (Figure 2). Personality of a person is at the core of the wheel and it covers all those aspects which constitute the personal style of the person. Internal dimensions and external dimensions are similar to the primary and secondary dimensions explained by Loden and Rosener. The outermost layer is of the organizational dimensions. These are corporate or institutional affiliations and are associated with past and present experiences.

Diversity Iceberg
Rijamampianina and Carmichael\(^3\) (2005) propose that diversity be re-defined as, “The collective, all-encompassing mix of human differences and similarities along any given dimension.” With so many dimensions in existence, they came out with the iceberg model to depict the diversity dimensions. As an analogy to the iceberg, these dimensions have three facets. Above the water line are the most visible dimensions or the primary dimensions. Just below the surface, lie the secondary dimensions which are revealed with time, and the tertiary dimensions lie much below the surface. These are the core dimensions and provide the real essence of diversity. This model is represented in Figure 3. The model is illustrative, with only a few possible dimensions depicted in the figure.

Kaleidoscope Perspective of the Individual
Maier\(^4\) (2005) argued that previous researches on diversity have focused on limited dimensions and out of these, a few, such as ethnicity, race and gender, are over-emphasized. According to him, an individual can be modeled by a kaleidoscope. Just as a kaleidoscope contains certain amounts of particles of various shapes and colors, an individual is a composition of various diverse attributes. The individual kaleidoscope can be represented as a multi-colored pie chart, with each pie depicting a unique attribute, and size of the pie illustrating the importance that an individual gives to a particular attribute. On the basis of this perspective, Maier defines diversity as, “the variety of kaleidoscope.” Figure 4 illustrates the kaleidoscope perspective of diversity.

What Dimensions Have Global Organizations Adopted?
Organizations which support diversity have either adopted one of these models or have developed their own. Here are a few examples of the dimensions which global organizations consider as important.

International Business Machines Corporation

IBM has adopted the diversity wheel of Loden and Rosener. It acknowledges the importance of these dimensions on culture and values the diversity in its workforce.

General Motors

GM has also incorporated the Loden and Rosener diversity model. This model was also used to assist the development of the General Motors Diversity Logo. GM’s diversity logo is illustrated in Figure 5.

Sun Microsystems

The three dimensions of global inclusion which Sun has adopted are Human, Cultural and Workplace. The human dimension includes attributes which are visible to others. This resembles the primary dimensions given by Loden and Rosener. The elements of cultural dimension are less visible and comprise those elements, which help define an individual and influence the way he or she functions. These are similar to the secondary dimension. The workplace dimension is similar to the Gardenswartz and Rowe’s organizational dimension.

Daimler

Daimler has introduced a ‘42 dimensions’ program to enable a better understanding of comprehensive diversity. The figure of ‘42’ is arbitrary and represents several diversity attributes of an individual. As a German automobile manufacturer, it follows the German Equal Opportunities Act (AGG) and pays special attention to a few personal dimensions of diversity. These are: race and ethnic origin, gender, religion and worldview, age, and sexual identity. The ‘42 dimensions’ model in a way resembles Maier’s kaleidoscope perspective of an individual, as it suggests that an individual is made up of a combination of varied attributes (Figure 6). The 42 dimensions are given in Table.

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5 http://www-01.ibm.com/software/globalization/topics/diversity/diversity.jsp
6 http://www.gm.com/corporate/responsibility/diversity/employee_diversity.jsp
7 http://www.sun.com/aboutsun/globalinclusion/dimensions.html
8 http://www.sun.com/aboutsun/globalinclusion/dimensions.html
9 http://www.daimler.com/dccom/0-5-1096059-1-1098886-1-0-1161462-0-0-135-876574-0-0-0-0-0-0.html
Raytheon\textsuperscript{11}:

Raytheon has developed its own diversity wheel which represents equal importance being given to demographic, as well as non-demographic attributes of a person (Figure 7). The diversity wheel illustrates those traits which are identified as important in order to make the company’s culture strong and unique.

UBS\textsuperscript{12}

At UBS, diversity is defined across a continuum, ranging from the more visible aspects, like gender and ethnicity, to the less visible aspects, like function and thought. The visibility continuum is illustrated in Figure 8:

India – A Mosaic of Diversity

Being one of the oldest civilizations in the world, the concept of diversity in India has been existing since ages. Its people are culturally diverse and religion plays an important role in the life of the country. Scholars estimate that only the continent of Africa exceeds the linguistic, cultural, and genetic diversity of India.\textsuperscript{13} With the country boasting of such diverse population, the Indian workplace also reflects this diversity and constitutes people from varied backgrounds, cultures, status, etc. The diversity dimensions which are most significant in an Indian organization are discussed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table: Diversity at Daimler – The 42 Dimensions of Diversity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Addiction</td>
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<td>2. Age</td>
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<td>3. Authority handling</td>
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<td>4. Character</td>
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<td>5. Clothing</td>
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<td>6. Communication style</td>
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<td>8. Culture</td>
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<td>9. Definition of quality</td>
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<td>10. Disability</td>
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<td>11. Eating habits</td>
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<td>12. Education</td>
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<td>13. Employment</td>
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<td>29. Mentality</td>
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<td>31. Nationality</td>
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<td>33. Power</td>
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<td>35. Religion</td>
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<td>37. Stress handling</td>
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<td>39. Time handling</td>
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<td>41. Weight</td>
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Source: www.daimler.com

Diversity Dynamics in the Indian Workplace

There are certain dimensions which have shaped India’s present workplace environment. These are: language, regional origin, religion, socioeconomic status, ethnicity and food habits. Each dimension is explained in brief below:

- **Language**: According to India’s national census, 114 languages and 216 dialects are spoken in the country. Eighteen Indian languages and English, have been given official status by the central or state governments.\textsuperscript{14}
- **Regional Origin**: Differences in the way people live and work also stems from the regional origin. People from the northern part of India are referred to as North Indians and people from the southern states are referred to as South Indians. Apart from this, people are also associated with their state of birth or where their ancestors belong to. For example, Gujaratis are ‘North Indians’ from the state of Gujarat.
- **Religion**: Around 80.5% of the people in India practice Hinduism, a religion that originated here. Another 13.4% are Muslims, and other religious groups include Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jews and Jains.\textsuperscript{15}
- **Socioeconomic Status**: This dimension is predominantly based

\textsuperscript{11}http://www.raytheon.com/diversity/approach/
\textsuperscript{12}UBS diversity brochure. Available at: http://www.ubs.com/1/ShowMedia/about/diversity?contentId=160533&name=UBS_Diversity.pdf
\textsuperscript{14}http://encarta.msn.com/text_761575362_0/india.html
\textsuperscript{15}http://encarta.msn.com/text_761575362_0/india.html
on one’s caste. The caste system in India is more than 3,000 years old and conceived as a division of labor based on ability. There are four main castes in the Hindu religion, which are further broken down to thousands of smaller caste groups. Today’s workforce comprises of diverse people, irrespective of their caste.

▶ Gender: 48.3% of India’s population constitutes women and their numbers are gradually increasing in the urban workforce. Especially, the service-based industries are witnessing an increase in the proportion of women employees over the years. For example, Information Technology and Information Technology Enabled Services sectors employ nearly 30% women in their workforce.

▶ Ethnicity: Most of the Indians are either Indo-Aryans or Dravidians. Generally, the ‘North Indians’ are Indo-Aryans and the ‘South Indians’ are Dravidians. A few groups, especially in the north-eastern states, are Austro-Asiatic; a few are Sino-Tibetans and various other smaller ethnic groups also exist across the country.

▶ Food Habits: India is one those few countries where a large number of populations is non-meat consuming or ‘vegetarians’. The food habits are mostly guided by one’s religion and caste, but with the younger generation, this practice is not as ‘strict’ as it was earlier. Interestingly, the food habits are also influenced by one’s region as climate is a major deciding factor on the availability of a particular type of crop.

**Conclusion**

Scholars have presented comprehensive, all-attribute-encompassing models of diversity dimensions. Any organization which truly understands the importance of diversity in its workforce can adopt any of the models to understand the dimensions. Most importantly, in order to build a culture of diversity, the key is to respect the sensitivities of local traditions and norms, understand the ‘hidden’ dimensions, and combine them with global organizational values.