

# Diversity at Workplace

**Understanding the dimensions of diversity help organizations become aware of, appreciate, and value diversity. Four main models emerge from the research carried out in the area of diversity dimensions in the workplace. These are: diversity wheel, four layers of diversity, diversity iceberg, and the kaleidoscope perspective of the individual. The diversity dimensions which are most significant in an Indian organization are language, regional origin, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and food habits. Irrespective of whichever country or company one belongs to, in order to build a culture of diversity, the key is to respect the sensitivities of the local traditions and norms, understand the 'hidden' dimensions, and combine them with global organizational values.**

*Diversity is all the ways in which we differ.*

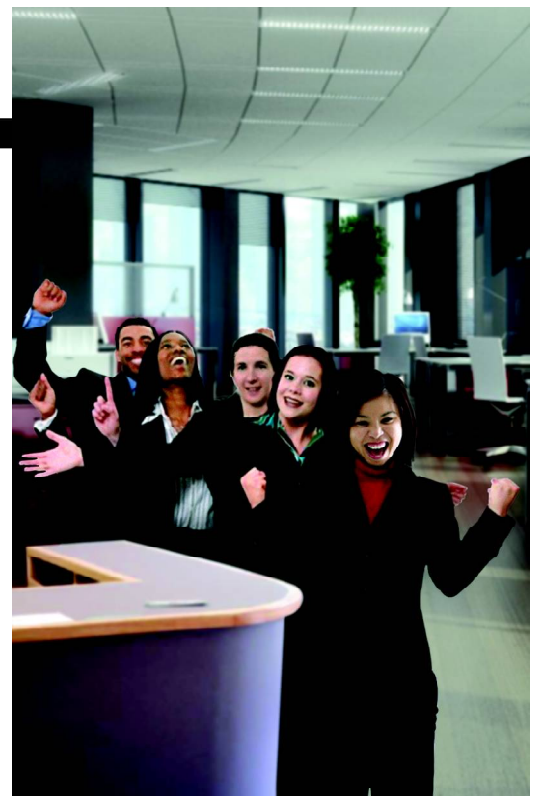
– VR Hayles

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 Rosener<sup>1</sup> (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 one’s 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):

<sup>1</sup> Loden Marilyn and Rosener Judy B (1991), *Workforce America! Managing Employee Diversity as a Vital Resource*, McGraw-Hill.

### Four Layers of Diversity

Gardenswartz and Rowe<sup>2</sup> (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<sup>3</sup> (2005) propose that diversity be re-

### Saumya Goyal

HR Researcher, Hyderabad.  
The author can be reached at  
saumya.goyal@gmail.com

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.

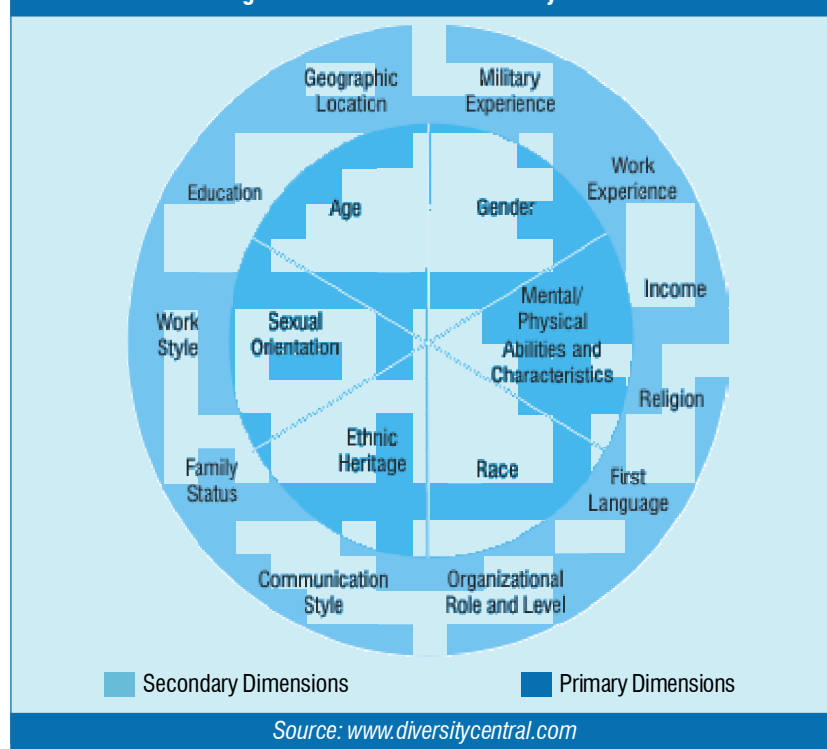
### Kaleidoscope Perspective of the Individual

Maier<sup>4</sup> (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.

Figure 1: Dimensions of Diversity Wheel

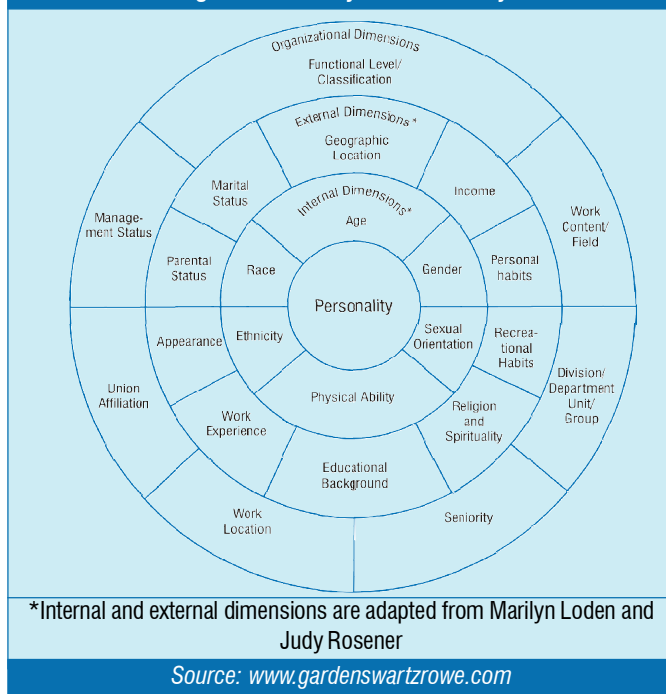


<sup>2</sup> Gardenswartz Lee and Rowe Anita (1998), "Managing Diversity: A Complete Desk Reference & Planning Guide", McGraw-Hill.

<sup>3</sup> Rijamampianina Rasoava and Carmichael Teresa (January 2005), "A Pragmatic and Holistic Approach to Managing Diversity", *Problems and Perspectives in Management*.

<sup>4</sup> Maier Christoph (2005), "A Conceptual Framework for Leading Diversity", *Int. J. Human Resources Development and Management*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 412-424.

**Figure 2: Four Layers of Diversity**



### International Business Machines Corporation<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>6,7</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>

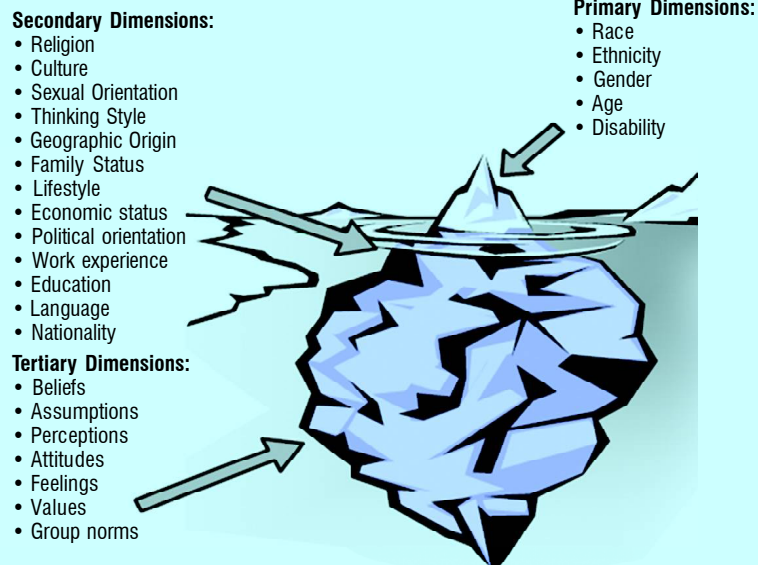
The three dimensions of global inclusion which Sun has adopted are Human, Cultural and Workplace. The human dimension includes attributes which are visible to others. This resembles the primary dimensions given by Loden and Rosener. The elements of cultural dimension are less visible and comprise those

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<sup>9,10</sup>

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.

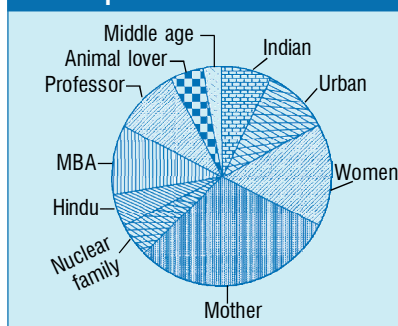
**Figure 3: Diversity Iceberg**



Source: *A Pragmatic and Holistic Approach to Managing Diversity, Rijamampianina Rasoava and Carmichael Teresa*

<sup>5</sup> <http://www-01.ibm.com/software/globalization/topics/diversity/diversity.jsp>  
<sup>6</sup> [http://www.gm.com/corporate/responsibility/diversity/employee\\_diversity.jsp](http://www.gm.com/corporate/responsibility/diversity/employee_diversity.jsp)  
<sup>7</sup> [http://www.gm.com/corporate/responsibility/diversity/diversity\\_initiatives.jsp](http://www.gm.com/corporate/responsibility/diversity/diversity_initiatives.jsp)  
<sup>8</sup> <http://www.sun.com/aboutsun/globalinclusion/dimensions.html>  
<sup>9</sup> <http://www.daimler.com/dccom/0-5-1096059-1-1098886-1-0-0-1161462-0-0-135-876574-0-0-0-0-0-0.html>  
<sup>10</sup> [http://www.daimler.com/Projects/c2c/channel/documents/1652464\\_daimler\\_sust\\_2008\\_reports\\_sustainabilityreport2008diversity\\_en.pdf](http://www.daimler.com/Projects/c2c/channel/documents/1652464_daimler_sust_2008_reports_sustainabilityreport2008diversity_en.pdf)

**Figure 4: Example of Kaleidoscope Compositions of an Individual**



#### Raytheon<sup>11</sup>:

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<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup> 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: Diversity at Daimler – The 42 Dimensions of Diversity**

1. Addiction	15. Ethnic background	29. Mentality
2. Age	16. Experience	30. Morale
3. Authority handling	17. Family	31. Nationality
4. Character	18. Family status	32. Physical ability
5. Clothing	19. Gender	33. Power
6. Communication style	20. Hierarchy	34. Professional style
7. Courage	21. History	35. Religion
8. Culture	22. Humor	36. Sexual identity
9. Definition of quality	23. Intelligence	37. Stress handling
10. Disability	24. Interests	38. Subject matter competence
11. Eating habits	25. Language	39. Time handling
12. Education	26. Language proficiency	40. Values
13. Employment	27. Law	41. Weight
14. Ethics	28. Leadership style	42. Work-life balance

Source: [www.daimler.com](http://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.<sup>14</sup>
- ❖ **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.<sup>15</sup>
- ❖ **Socioeconomic Status:** This dimension is predominantly based

**Figure 5: GM's Diversity Logo**



<sup>11</sup> <http://www.raytheon.com/diversity/approach/>

<sup>12</sup> UBS diversity brochure. Available at: [http://www.ubs.com/1/ShowMedia/about/diversity?contentId=160533&name=UBS\\_Diversity.pdf](http://www.ubs.com/1/ShowMedia/about/diversity?contentId=160533&name=UBS_Diversity.pdf)

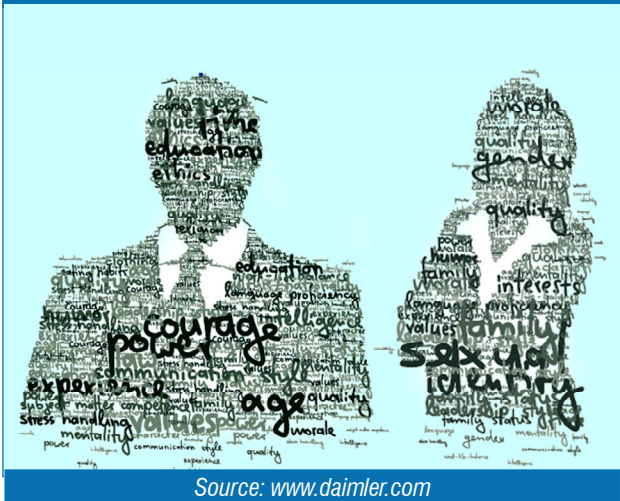
<sup>13</sup> United States Library of Congress, Note on Ethnic groups (2004), "India, a Country Study", Available on <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/India.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [http://encarta.msn.com/text\\_761557562\\_0/india.html](http://encarta.msn.com/text_761557562_0/india.html)

<sup>15</sup> [http://encarta.msn.com/text\\_761557562\\_0/india.html](http://encarta.msn.com/text_761557562_0/india.html)



**Figure 6: Illustration of Various Diversity Attributes That Constitute an Individual**



**Figure 7: Raytheon Diversity Wheel**



Figure 8: UBS Diversity Visibility Continuum					
Visible					Invisible
UBS Diversity Commitment	UBS Diversity Strategy	UBS Diversity Policy	UBS Diversity Framework	UBS Diversity Principles	UBS Diversity Values



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 of 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.  

Reference # 12M-2009-08-06-01