Chapter 91
Reframing Diversity in Management:
Diversity and Human Resource Management

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ABSTRACT

The development of new corporate governance codes calls for boardroom and top management diversity. Nonetheless, a lack of diversity in organisations is a worldwide situation that may vary from one country to another. This suggests that rather than relying upon established economies as a guideline, a more rounded understanding may emerge from studies that also explore a wider range of countries. This chapter examines the varieties of top management diversities, particularly the barriers and challenges women faces in management positions. It considers the grounds for an integrated approach to under-representation of women in upper rank positions, and explicates concerted efforts to improve board room diversity.

INTRODUCTION

Whilst early research on women in top management has focused on the under-representation of women in upper rank levels (Burson-Maersteller, 1977; Kanter, 1977), others have addressed this issue based on the barriers women faced and their different roles in society (Burke, 1994; Burke and Mattis, 2000; Catalyst, 2000). Nonetheless, a body of research carried out to analyse female representation in upper rank levels reveals that lack of equality remains a reality in many countries showing the persistence

effect of these invisible barriers (Pomeroy, 2007; Pichler*et al, 2008;* Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). Therefore, many researchers have continued to monitor this issue worldwide (Burke and Mattis, 2000; Catalyst, 2012; Davidson & Burke, 2011), and through the foundation of organisations such as Catalyst, statistics and numerical data is frequently presented to monitor the advance of gender diversity amongst large companies. These studies clearly acknowledge that boardrooms remain dominated by men. Regardless, the participation of women has slightly increased over the past 15 years.Women hold 16% of board seats and only 4.2% are appointed as CEO (Catalyst, 2013). Yet, existing data (Vinnicome *et al*, 2008; Burke, 2000; Davidson & Burke, 2011; Daily *et al*, 2000; Zelechwoski & Bilimoria, 2004; Vinnicome *et al,* 2000) are focusing on larger economies in developed countries and little has been written about developing countries in this context.

As a result of recent increases in studies on this topic, researchers have shifted their investigative perspective towards the influence of women in the organisation; the differences in leading styles; how these women have been able to shatter the "glass ceiling"; and how the organisation's idea towards the management capabilities of women have changed over time. (Moore & Buttner, 1997; Kelly & Duerst-Lahti, 1995; Offerman & Beil, 1992; Jamieson, 1995; Rosener, 1995; Eyring& Stead, 1998) Eyring and Stead (1998) conducted a project in an effort to understand and analyse the first organisations that created programmes to increase female participation in senior positions. The participants who successfully managed to integrate women into leading positions stated that their organisations were benefitting from a variety of management skills, and concluded that if an organisation wants to increase female participation, they need to focus on transforming their corporate culture, human resources practices, the development of succession programmes, training and development programmes, and flexible schedule practices. Eyring and Stead's (1998) findings align with others who agree that the *glass ceiling* is developed within corporate culture, and the only way to shatter it is through a transformation in top management perspectives. If top managers have a closed vision (thinking that only men are capable to leading), a culture of inequality is created and a corporate culture may begin, albeit passively to encourage gender discrimination. Similarly, Tharr-Whelan (2009) argues that all biological differences had in fact become key strengths amongst women and their inherent 'soft-skills' allow them to perceive and approach corporate situations differently, combining a people and task oriented culture with risk awareness to contribute to long-term success and competitive advantage. (Helgensen, 1990; Rosener, 1990; Cassell, 1997) However, much like the research based on female underrepresentation in upper rank positions, studies on the influence of women in organisations are limited to developed countries.

Nonetheless, a lack of diversity in organisations is a worldwide situation that may vary from one country to another. This suggests that rather than relying upon established economies as a guideline, a more rounded understanding may emerge from studies that also explore a wider range of countries. In Latin America's case, Brazil (the seventh largest economy in the world) has provided a predominant focus for gender-diversity research. However, general diversity in boardrooms and executive suites is a worldwide necessity and is accepted by some a mixed group of talented executives working together will enhance the organisation's competency by harnessing skills across the top positions of the company. This can have a direct influence on the corporation's performance. Furthermore, in light of the recent financial crisis bankruptcy of organisations like World.com and Enron were attributed to a lack of management in boardrooms and a failure to augment diversity (Arfken, et al., 2004). Moreover, recent changes to corporate governance codes have created an opportunity for women to be seen differently. Lars Thunell,

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