Chapter 18
Diversity in the Workplace:
How to Achieve Gender Diversity in the Workplace

Carola Hieker
Richmond, The American University in London, UK

Maia Rushby
Diversity-in-Leadership, UK

ABSTRACT

The 'diversity in the workforce' chapter looks at the current status of gender diversity in the workplace and describes initiatives that are commonly designed and implemented by organizations for their female workforce and their senior leaders in pursuit of gender parity. It is emphasized that one or two interventions in isolation will not guarantee gender parity but that a combination of interventions is necessary, depending on the size and complexity of the organization. Furthermore, it is underlined that if these interventions are perceived as attractive by senior leaders then the senior leaders should be encouraged to invest time and resources in pursuing them. It will raise their commitment to become diversity champions, which is key for sustainable change. Examples from finance and professional service firms illustrate how some of the described interventions are used to enhance diversity.

INTRODUCTION: GENDER DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

There is much extant literature regarding the struggle to achieve gender diversity in the workplace such as publications, websites, blogs, and organizations all with a point of view and ideas on why current initiatives on gender diversity are difficult to achieve (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016) and what could be done to make a change (Hewlett, Marshall, & Sherbin, 2011). However, this chapter aims to give a structured overview of commonly used interventions in business with a specific look at gender diversity in leadership roles. A critical overview is offered of current literature as well as analysis on trends based on formal and informal interviews with HR professionals and senior leaders (both male and female) in private organizations.

Current Status of Gender Diversity

In 2014, the World Economic Forum predicted it would be 80 years before gender parity could be achieved, according to economic, educational, health-based and political indicators. However, in 2015 the forecast increased to 117 years (World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, 2015). From the same report, it can be seen that no countries are at gender parity in their workforce (see Figure 1).

Further reviewing the workforce detail in America (Figure 2), a total of 57% of women participate in the labor force compared with 69.2% of men. And of this working population, twice the percentage of women are working part time (26% of women versus 13% of men), which means the majority of the full-time workforce is male and the majority of the part-time population is female. (US Department for Labor, 2014).

A closer look at seniority in the workplace regarding the average representation of women in Financial Services in 20 global markets shows that 60% of total employees are women; however, only 25% of middle managers are women reducing to only 19% of senior level leaders who are women (PwC, 2013). The situation is similar in S&P 500 companies where 45% of the labor force are women of which 37% of middle managers are female and 19% of the board seats are held by women (only 4% of CEOs of S&P 500 companies are women) (Catalyst, 2015).

One of the key messages from these statistics is that diversity (more specifically gender diversity) in the workplace has been measured for years, and while small incremental improvements have occurred in some areas, organizations still struggle to see significant shifts in female representation in the workplace, especially at the most senior levels. With the demand to improve gender diversity across most global organizations, many different terms are used. The term 'gender intelligence' (Gray & Annis, 2013) is a more recent term used in organizations to understand the different approach of men and women to

Figure 1. Gender Parity in the Workplace (World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, 2015)
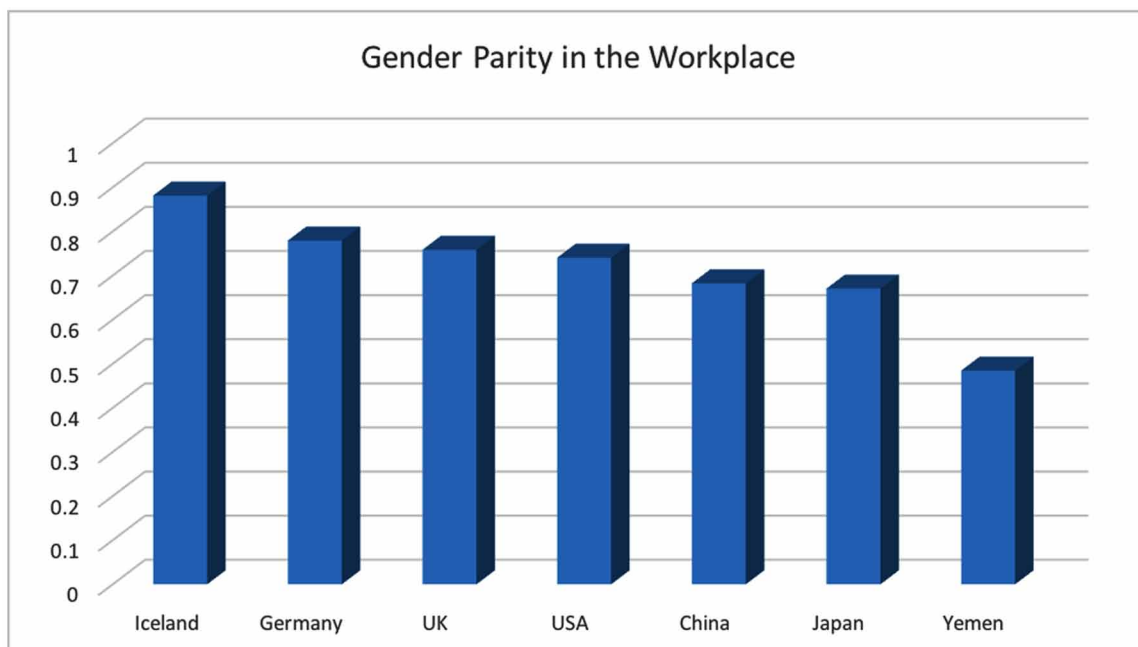
23 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/diversity-in-the-workplace/208985

Related Content

Reconceptualising Higher Education: Critical Challenges in Australia
Xianlin Songand Greg McCarthy (2016). *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education (pp. 82-95).*
www.irma-international.org/article/reconceptualising-higher-education/156500

1997-2017: Twenty Years of Innovation and Research about Awakening to Languages-Evlang Heritage
Michel Candelierand Martine Kervran (2018). *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education (pp. 10-21).*
www.irma-international.org/article/1997-2017/193674

Minority STEM Students' Perspectives on Their Persistence in College
Stacey A. Williams-Watson (2020). *Accessibility and Diversity in the 21st Century University (pp. 198-217).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/minority-stem-students-perspectives-on-their-persistence-in-college/253589

Leading During a Crisis
Kimarie Engerman (2021). *Women and Leadership in Higher Education During Global Crises (pp. 80-90).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/leading-during-a-crisis/277297

The Use of Digital Technologies for Enhancing Female-Owned Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises in Southern Nigeria
Ernest Etim (2021). *Overcoming Challenges and Barriers for Women in Business and Education: Socioeconomic Issues and Strategies for the Future (pp. 45-64).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-use-of-digital-technologies-for-enhancing-female-owned-small-and-medium-scale-enterprises-in-southern-nigeria/280594