Research review for

50:50 Future Ltd

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50:50 Future Ltd

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Executive Summary

This report gives an overview of the key themes which emerged from a review of research literature looking into the benefits of inclusion and diversity on company performance. Although there is no definitive quantitative answer, the clear trend within the literature indicates increased performance for more diverse teams. Although it is unclear if, or to what extent this is causal, or whether, as a result of better performance, successful companies grow and attract a more diverse workforce. For example companies which have better performance are usually more alert to the needs of their customers and seen as better places to work. One key aspect highlighted by the research is the need to embed inclusion. Without inclusion diversity programmes can be seen as tokenistic and encounter resistance and often increased turnover of the very staff employed to bring diversity into the workforce.

It is also important to note that, for maximum benefit, diversity in the workplace is not simply a question of gender balance and equality, but rather it needs to include all aspects of diversity, including ethnic, cultural and social diversity.

There are also questions of diversity for example in majority ethnic owned business where a lack of diversity is reflected by a uniformity at senior and board level of a particular non-white ethnicity.

Background

50:50 Future Ltd is a Newcastle upon Tyne company which provides support to companies in the area or workplace diversity and inclusion. There are two key aspects to the company's activities: corporate support to raise awareness of, and benefits from, diversity and inclusion and providing support for companies to put in place programmes to promote and embed diversity and inclusion.

The company wishes to ensure that the advice and help it provides to its customers is based on current research thinking and best practice. In order to assist the company this report has been written following a broad review of scientific papers, commercial 'white papers' and reports, primarily in the field of diversity and gender equality on company performance, to provide a general guidance on best practice.

Report methodology

The starting point for the literature searches, which form the basis of this report, was a series of searches, mainly through Google scholar, using keywords related to diversity and inclusion. From this the study prioritised recent review papers as a first read through the literature.

From the initial literature reviews the search parameters were made more specific, these were also parsed as recent, for reviews and meta-analysis papers, to ensure complete coverage of the literature and number of citations and to identify key papers. Notes and key quotes from relevant papers were recorded on a word document during reading for later use. Both of these files were subsequently used in clustering relevant papers around the themes reported here.

The following report highlights the themes emerging from this study. Each section begins with an overview of the theme followed by selected excerpts from key papers as illustration. In order to make reading and referencing easier full titles have been included for most papers referred to in the report, rather than the more conventional name + year format.

Current Scientific Thinking – literature reviews

Many of the published studies are limited in size. Attempts to overcome this have been made through the use of meta-analysis of multiple studies, however inconsistencies and differences in data collected across studies often makes a comprehensive meta-analysis difficult. In addition the nature of social science research tends to produce nuanced rather than absolute definitive results. This is discussed by Eagly (2016, When Passionate Advocates Meet Research on Diversity, Does the Honest Broker Stand a Chance?) who looked at the effects of boardroom gender diversity on company performance and the effect of diversity on workgroups to understand how research data was used and interpreted by diversity advocates. Eagly noted that "In diversity research, as in many other areas of social science, research literatures are often much more extensive than anticipated by most advocates, who may fix on particular studies that support their favoured policy positions, with little concern for how typical, generalizable, or scientifically valid their findings are". When specifically looking at the effect of women in the boardroom Eagly found that "when aggregated across studies, an extensive research literature on group performance has shown no overall advantage for demographically diverse groups, with a small tendency toward disadvantage, especially on subjective measures of performance"

Some more recent papers serve as review papers rather than presenting new data. As a result there is a possibility that the concentration of publications by a limited number of connected researchers may give undue weighting to their findings and conclusions. This can be seen in review and meta-analysis papers where the initial studies found are parsed down to a core set of papers or with excluded papers not included due to not being in the native language of the researchers. However recent review papers do present an opportunity to gain a rapid overview of the field and identify key researchers and seminal papers. With this in mind the following papers are recommended as review papers :

Suharnomo et al 2017 A Systematic literature review of managing workplace diversity for sustaining organizational competitive advantage

Ayega and Muathe 2018 Critical Review of Literature on cultural diversity in the workplace and organizational performance

Baker et al 2020 A bibliometric analysis of board diversity Current status development and future research directions

Ranasinghe 2019 Board gender diversity and firm perfomance A review of recent literature and future research perspectives

Non-Academic Data, Whitepapers and Reports

The research field, in many respects, lags current data from commercial sources. Often large consulting firms have broader and deeper access to commercial organisations than have academic researchers. Furthermore the data generated by these companies does not need to pass through peer review process and delays of academic publishing and therefore can present very recent data. Hence current statistics and trends can be found in commercial and white paper reports such as those listed below: Many of these also provide a rich source of case studies and specific examples of diversity programmes:

 McKinsey 2015 Why diversity matters

McKinsey and company Delivering-Through-Diversity

BCG-Getting-the-Most-from-Your-Diversity-Dollars-June-2017

190318_Innergise-White-Paper_Diversity_v1.1

Forbes Insights Fostering Innovation Through a Diverse Workforce

Hays 2017 the-balancing-act-creating-a-diverse-workforce

Modern_Families_Index_2020_Summary-Report_FINAL

d&i Leaders Gender at Work Summit 2019 report

Bitc-gender-report-equal lives parenting caring workforce-April 2019

A wide selection of case studies can be found online at:

https://www.diversityinc.com/the-2020-top-50-diversityinc/

These reports contain up to date quantified evidence of the benefits of diversity and inclusion, and frequently include case studies and discuss best practice. The reports are publicly available and copies will be forwarded to 50:50 Future with this report for further reference. Of particular use are: Hays (2017), Boston Consulting group (BCG 2017) and McKinsey (Delivering through Diversity).

Themes

In the following sections general themes common throughout the literature review have been highlighted. The first paragraph/s give an overview of the findings. This is followed by selected extracts from key papers to illustrate specific points

Benefits of Diversity

The quantitative benefits of diversity are discussed by Suharnomo et al (2017 A Systematic literature review of managing workplace diversity for sustaining organizational competitive advantage): in a recent review of workplace diversity literature they noted that "Diversity provides many benefits to an organization in several ways. Firstly, recruitment of diverse employees increases supply of employees and potential applicants that can result greater choice, higher quality and lower cost. Secondly, the diversity of labor encourages individual performance, increasing productivity and job satisfaction in the company, reducing turnover, recruitment and training costs. Third, higher job satisfaction of diverse employees improves the quality of interaction between employees and customers. Fourth, diverse workforce provides comprehensive access to new networks and expands resources. Fifth, the idea of diverse produces creativity and innovation at group level, and the sixth, better cultural appropriateness between service personnel and the customer is able to enhance experience and customer satisfaction".

In their review paper Cletus et al (2018 Prospects and Challenges of Workplace Diversity in Modern Day Organizations A Critical Review) outline the benefits of workplace diversity (better critical thinking and problem solving, better employee development, unification of diverse strengths, promotes corporate image and attractiveness, fosters innovation); the authors also consider challenges presented by workplace diversity, such as gender and lifestyle choices, cultural differences producing poor team cohesion, workplace communication and the challenges of generation gaps., in addition to gender diversity they include a discussion on LGBT diversity which touches on the acceptance challenges this may invoke, which are perhaps less explicit in other regions (the authors of this paper are from Malaysia and Nigeria). The authors also reflect increased globalisation noting that "for example, if an American company employs people whose lingua franca is not English, other employees and managers will experience communication problems"

Finally the authors also highlight generation diversity

Wilton et al (2019 In Good Company When gender diversity boosts a company's reputation) looked specifically at the question of organisational reputation from the perspective of white men and found that "White men expected a company to have a more broadminded and tolerant climate when the company noted it was gender diverse" (in corporate brochures), although the authors also noted this effect was more prominent for depictions of white women.

Van der Walt and Ingley (2018 Board Dynamics and the influence of professional background Gender and Ethnic diversity of directors) discuss the nature and role of the board of directors in companies, they note the governance and stewardship roles of boards and look at reasons for appointing

minority members onto boards, concluding that "While boards need to be reflective of their ownership and the wider social environment, diversity per se is insufficient in building effective corporate boards. The boards of today's companies need to focus foremost on merit criteria for director selection and, ideally, to comprise qualified individuals reflecting in the mix – gender and a range of expertise, experience and ethnicity". This is, perhaps, in contrast to some of the benefits cited for a diverse workforce.

Gender Diversity

Studies into gender diversity within firms can be broadly grouped into board level analysis and managerial level impacts. The presence of women at board room and C suite level is often the result of metrics the company has undertaken and may be seen in some quarters as virtue signalling rather than true diversity and inclusion. Ranasinghe (2019) notes that "most of the organizations today are focused on increasing the presence of females in their organizations with the sole purpose of complying to the rules, regulations and gender quotas enforced by policy makers. Thus, in such an event, the quality of the added female directors in terms of their ability, skills, expertise, etc. might be limited, which in result affect negatively on their potential to contribute to the firm's performance"

 Looking at the impact of women in the boardroom Ranasinghe (2019) also highlights that "the impact of board gender diversity on various outcomes of the organizations such as, financial performance, quality of the financial reporting, corporate social responsibility, environmental performance, etc. has been widely addressed...However, despite these developments, the specific relationship between board gender diversity and the firm's economic performance is still lacking in conclusive evidence. For instance, some researchers find a positive association between board gender diversity and firm performance (e.g. Conyon and He 2017), while some other researchers find evidence for a negative association. Similarly, there are even studies which argue for no significant relationship between board gender diversity and firm performance (e.g. Garcia-Meca et al. 2015) compared to other factors."

In their review Ranasinghe mention that Wiley & Monllor-Tormos (2018) propose that "board gender diversity exerts a significant non-linear effect on the firm performance. More specifically, they find this effect to be U-shaped, where the female presence on board exerts a negative influence on firm's financial performance when the diversity is below a certain threshold, and exerts a positive influence as the diversity reaches above the given specific threshold. Further according to their analysis, Wiley & Monllor-Tormos (2018) identify this threshold which is also known as the critical mass to be 30%."

A separate strand of research considers the career paths of women within companies to understand the inherent barriers which result in women being represented as a significant part of the workforce at entry and functional levels but being under represented at higher levels of management, the so called glass ceiling effect.

 In their paper Hoobler et al (2009 Bosses perceptions of family work conflict and women's promotability Glass ceiling effects) report that "Our results indicate that managers tend to view women as less promotable, poorer performers with poorer fit with their jobs and organizations, because the managers perceive women as experiencing greater family work conflict than men" " simply naming these types of subtle, entrenched discrimination has a remarkable effect on rooting them out and improving opportunities for women"

Wille et al (2018 personality characteristics of male and female executives Distinct pathways to success) in their paper looked at the characteristics of male and female leaders at senior and functional levels. Their research showed that "male and female C-level executives represent similar populations with a common profile of characteristic agentic, strategic personality traits. Ongoing research and practice should acknowledge that gender similarity, not difference, characterizes leader personality and potential" at C-suite level. The authors also found that "the pattern of hierarchical level differences was much more strongly pronounced among women than men, which may suggest that women in particular face pressure to adopt masculine interpersonal styles in order to be judged (by themselves or others) as qualified for leadership... As women rise in the hierarchy, they become increasingly scarce, making them more visible and subject to greater scrutiny. Organizations, therefore, must ensure that current and rising female leaders are given adequate resources, support, and mentoring to foster development and success"

Itty et al (2019 Breaking the Glass ceiling Philosophy and reality) considered that "in the business world, women who are aggressive, assertive, and confident but who can turn these traits on and off depending on the circumstances, get more promotions. Females should be able to express their femininity and have equal opportunities even while doing so. In order to glean managerial interest, females often have to act more masculine, which is extremely unfortunate considering that it may lead to internal turmoil and cognitive dissonance. This change in behavior should not be necessary for women to climb the corporate ladder; women should be provided with the same equal opportunity that men receive in the business world". The advice these authors give includes that "In order to help women, advance themselves into higher positions, there are several steps that an organization and women themselves might be able to take. First, women need to work on internal transformation by developing confidence in themselves; this will allow them to overcome limiting beliefs such as "imposter syndrome" and various fears (fear of failure or success, fear of ridicule). Women can also work on external transformation as well, through self-branding to "lean in" and positively project themselves, since confidence and assertiveness can improve one's external appearance."

The concept of 'Lean in" was further explored by Chrobot-Mason et al (2019 Lean in versus the literature an evidence based examination). The paper is a literature based critique of the successful 2013 book Lean In, by Sheryl Sandberg, the COO of Facebook. In this paper the authors look at the key proposals Sandberg makes though the lens of published research literature. In some case they find agreement with Sandberg but in other they find the arguments are not supported by the literature, including that "There is little evidence to support the assertions that women are holding themselves back or that they leave before they leave. What we did find, though, is that others may explicitly or implicitly hold women back by making assumptions about the extent to which they are interested in or would be committed to certain leadership roles".

In their paper Budworth and Mann (2010 Becoming a leader the challenge of modesty for women) look at the issue of female modesty as a factor in holding back promotion of women to more senior positions. The authors note that "women who are modest are more likely to suffer in terms of remuneration and career progression, leadership development programs for women could include training in self-promotion. The training would need to specifically address the socialized concerns of likeability and gender appropriateness in order to assist trainees in overcoming persistent and ingrained social barriers". Along a similar theme Lindeman et al (2019, Women and self promotion A test of three theories) looked at three theoretical mechanisms for the reluctance of women to self promote and concluded that the key reason was avoidance of backlash "It seems that women's self-

promotion is limited by fear of how other people might perceive and react to them when they self-promote".

Brands and Fernandez-Mateo (2016, leaning out how negative recruitment experiences shape women's decisions to compete for executive roles) suggest that women who have applied for more senior roles and failed to get the position are less likely to apply for a senior role again with that company – leading, over time and career paths, to fewer and fewer female applicants for increasingly senior roles. As a result the increase in women at board and senior level can 'peter out' over time (See Hampton Alexander review 2019 Improving gender balance in FTSE Leadership). This has lead to debate over the use of quotas to accelerate reaching gender diversity. As Goyal et al (2018 Achieving gender balance on British boards with the soft-law approach: Directors' perspective) noted that "Scholars agree that despite natural vested interest to keep a status quo, regulatory authorities are obliged to intervene if gender diversity on boards does not improve".

Wider Definitions for Diversity.

In their paper Suharnomo et al. cite a report recommending that diversity metrics "Should not just measure company financial performance "Bell (Bell, M.P., Diversity in Organizations, Second Edition2012, South-Western: Cengage Learning) stated that inequality and poverty in the community are often experienced by minority groups and women, where the exception of minorities and women in the organization lead to moral and social issues. Therefore, reducing discrimination, poverty, and inequality will provide benefits that can be experienced not only in the organization but also in overall society." The authors expanded further on the development and broadening of diversity as an issue over time noting that "Diversity as a concept basically refers to minority and female workers in 1970, but over time it has changed quite extensively in the next decade, which includes diversity of age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, social class, education, national origin, and language"

Showunmi et al (2016 Ethnic gender and class intersections in British women's leadership experiences) published a paper based on qualitative research and looking at intersectionality, that is to say how combinations of factors effect discrimination, adding a further layer of understanding on barriers to diversity. The paper contains some interesting and insightful quotes from white and minority ethnic women revealing differences in internal barriers and approaches to leadership. The authors noted that "white women described historical gender and class barriers to enacting leadership, while minority ethnic women described current barriers linked to ethnic and religious identities". Furthermore "most of the white women appeared to struggle to provide specific examples of challenges. They hesitated and often paused, possibly indicating effort in recalling past memories. In contrast, in response to questions about challenges to leader development and enactment, the minority ethnic women laughed and asked questions like 'Where do I start?'". The authors concluded that "there may be merit in tailoring leadership development programmes not just to women or professionals of colour, but potentially for women of colour as one cohort."

Barriers to Diversity/Resistance to change

Research has looked into some of the barriers to diversity and the sources of resistance to change, both organisationally and by individuals with the workplace.

Suharnomo et al 2017 reported that "Employee diversity not only offers many benefits to the organization, but also establishes new challenges for managers. Some of these challenges are:

(1) right to appreciate the diversity of employees;

(2) balancing the individual needs of people and group justice;

(3) dealing with resistance to change;

(4) ensuring group cohesiveness and open communication;

(5) avoiding resentment and backlash of employees;

(6) maintaining respect for the performers; and

(7) maximizing opportunities to grow for all members of organization"

Amiset al (2020: The-organizational-reproduction-of-inequality discusses institutionally led inequality), argue that unconscious bias and internal structures can inherently block diversity. The authors argue that institutions can pay lip service to diversity whilst still maintaining inequality through internal biases, for example in recruitment, promotion and remuneration. For example by citing meritocracy without addressing internal unconscious bias which precludes fully open recruitment panels. This is a lengthy and detailed paper and literature review but with interesting and useful insights into internalised structures and behaviours that maintain and reinforce inequalities within companies that purport to embrace equality.

Leslie (2019 Diversity initiative effectiveness A typological theory of unintended consequences) proposes four types of unintended consequence: Negative spillover (decreased engagement for non-target employees) , Backfire (resistance leading to negative progress), false progress (improved metric but without true change) and finally, on a more positive note, positive spill over, where the program improves non- targeted ethical behaviours.

In another recent paper Dover et al (2020 Mixed signals the unintended effects of Diversity initiatives) looked at the "signalling consequences of diversity initiatives". They proposed that diversity initiatives may unintentionally give counterproductive signals to the workforce "(1) leading people to assume an organization is less discriminatory against minority groups and more discriminatory against majority groups, (2) leading to perceptions of exclusion among members of advantaged groups that can prompt backlash, and (3) leading to biased assumptions about the competency of members of disadvantaged groups". The authors conclude that "Despite a strong need for effective diversity management within organizations, an accumulating body of research provides little evidence that diversity initiatives as widely practiced create more fair or diverse workplaces. Moreover, as reviewed here, the mere presence of diversity initiatives can send unintended signals that can ironically undermine their primary goals".

The paper discusses ways of framing diversity training to reduce these unintended side effects for example "effective diversity training would emphasize group commonalities as well as group differences, reduce negative emotions and foster positive emotions such as empathy, and avoid discussing group stereotypes".

Chang et al (2019, The mixed effects of online diversity training) noted the difference between attitude change and behaviour change following diversity training. Although attitudes showed improvement this was not necessarily translated into behavioural change; indeed the authors noted that "because we measured attitudes via surveys at the end of training, it is possible that our results

on attitude change are driven in part by demand effects or social desirability", i.e. the participants reported better attitudes simply because this was both fresh in their minds and 'expected' of them.

From their research Chang et al. concluded that "the results suggest that the one-off diversity trainings that are commonplace in organizations are unlikely to be stand-alone solutions for promoting equality in the workplace, particularly given their limited efficacy among those groups whose behaviors policymakers are most eager to influence...It may be too much to expect short one-off diversity trainings to have robust enduring effects on behavior."

In their paper Caleo and Heilman (2019 What could go wrong Some unintended consequences of gender bias interventions) come to much the same conclusions for gender bias awareness training.

Inclusion

A key argument in the failure of diversity training discussed above is that it may increase a sense of 'us and them'. This occurs when diversity is not coupled with inclusion. Indeed inclusion maybe the greater indicator of a successfully diverse company. Whilst metrics for recruitment may show that diversity targets are being reached a more useful metric would be to look at turnover rates and internal promotions within diversity groupings. If minority staff leaving rates are higher than average this will be a strong indication of poor inclusivity and career prospects reduced within a company and render diversity recruitment targets meaningless.

 Itty et al (2019 Breaking the Glass Ceiling Philosophy and Reality) noted that "A simple skill that managers and employees can learn to promote diversity is to build and encourage inclusivity in the workplace."

Chen and Tang 2017 observed that "Managers and organizations should learn that the ultimate aim of inclusion feelings is not merely providing fair treatment and resources for employees but creating employee attachment to the organization and to work-related roles".

In a useful editorial article Mor Barak (2015 Inclusion is the Key to Diversity Management, but What is Inclusion?) summarised much of the research thinking around inclusion, noting the following insights:

"Although diversity and inclusion are sometimes used interchangeably, they are separate and distinct constructs. Diversity refers to demographic differences among members, including both observable (e.g., gender, race, age) and nonobservable (e.g., culture, cognition, education) attributes, and is considered a characteristic of a workgroup or organization. Inclusion, in contrast, refers to employee perceptions that their unique contribution to the organization is appreciated and their full participation is encouraged"

 "One of the most significant problems facing today's diverse workforce is that of exclusion—both the reality experienced by many and the perception of even more employees that they are not viewed by top management as an integral part of the organization

"To feel included in a workgroup, an individual must have two complementing needs satisfied: belongingness and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011). Fostering a sense of belonging is essential, but if the "price of admission" is that employees have to give up their unique characteristics, then they are not experiencing true inclusion"

In a more recent paper Shore et al. (2018 Inclusive workplaces a review and model) review the literature on inclusion "The focus on inclusive environments reflects an increasing recognition in

organizations that diversity brings potential problems such as conflict and turnover that need to be addressed at a broader organizational level". Shore also notes the distinction between recruitment and retention of happy and motivated staff: "The combination of antidiscrimination laws and affirmative action programs have helped more women, members of ethnic and racial minorities, gays and lesbians, older workers, the differently abled, and members of other marginalized groups become part of the labor force. Despite progress in increasing the representation of diverse groups in work organization, it is the exclusion of these groups from circles of influence in the organization that keeps them from fully contributing to, and benefiting from, their involvement in the workplace"

Nishii (2013, The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups) notes: "The focus on inclusion reflects the recognition that for organizations to reduce problems associated with demographic diversity - such as high levels of conflict and turnover - organizations need to proactively create inclusive environments that make it possible to leverage diversity's potential benefits."

In inclusive environments, individuals of all backgrounds - not just members of historically powerful identity groups - are fairly treated, valued for who they are, and included in core decision making

Best Practice

Suharnomo et al 2017 reported that "When Kalev et al. (2006) examined the different approaches to manage diversity, they found that building responsibility for diversity (e.g., position of diversity officer, committee of diversity, affirmative action plan) is most effective to increase minority managers. The study shows the effectiveness of the diversity practices in improving the representation of women and minorities in the workplace, especially in senior management level. It should be noted that the organizations which voluntarily pursue diversity management, they do it when business objectives coincide with the needs of women and minorities, for example increase profitability and customer base".

Further, in their paper Kalev et al (2006 Best practices or best guesses? Assessing the efficacy of corporate affirmative action and diversity policies) found that diversity awareness programs had the least effect and concluded that "Efforts to moderate managerial bias through diversity training and diversity evaluations are least effective at increasing the share of white women, black women, and black men in management. Efforts to attack social isolation through mentoring and networking show modest effects. Efforts to establish responsibility for diversity lead to the broadest increases in managerial diversity. Moreover, organizations that establish responsibility see better effects from diversity training and evaluations, networking, and mentoring".

In a highly recommended review paper for Deloitte, Bourke and Dillon (2018 The Diversity and Inclusion revolution) neatly sum up the importance of inclusion "Deloitte's research identifies a very basic formula:

Diversity + inclusion = better business outcomes.

Simply put diversity without inclusion is worth less than when the two are combined".

Conclusions

A review of the literature yields information regarding modes of change and areas in which diversity and inclusion training needs to be focussed. Perhaps the most key message is that simple 'one-off' diversity awareness training is not particularly effective. Although achieving short term improvement in metrics it does not engender a longer term culture change. In order to achieve this a more

profound longer term, strategic program is required reaching into the management structure and culture of an organisation. Furthermore, the presence of increased diversity at board level, whilst looking good for industry metrics and PR does not necessarily indicate better diversity and inclusion within an organisation. Therefore, Board diversity and workplace diversity merit separate considerations by organisations. The latter being especially important to close gaps in middle and upper management and ensure diversity across all levels of organisations.

Finally, there seems to be early movement to shift emphasis away from diversity alone and to consider the impact of inclusion on company performance. This is a relatively recent and little researched area compared the larger body of diversity literature but it is a field of growing importance. Inclusion is required to overcome unconscious bias in the majority workforce, to reduce resistance to diversity and overcome arguments of 'meritocracy above diversity' or backlash against perceived special treatment. Therefore increasing awareness of inclusion and supporting inclusion initiatives is an area 50 50 Future Ltd should further develop as an offering.

Reference list

Note this list includes additional papers to those specifically referred to in the body of the report.

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