Preface

At present, a plethora of research exists emphasizing the importance of workforce diversity as it relates to valuing the similarities, differences, and talents of employees at all ranks. For example, these categories include, but are not limited to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, language, religious beliefs, ethnicity, world view, height, weight, life experiences, cultural customs, economic status, educational level, job title, and years of work experience. Yet, there remains a need for more research that shows how corporate, nonprofit, government, educational, and health care institutions are actually drawing upon the value of workforce diversity in order to obtain competitive advantages.

One emerging paradigm being utilized in the 21st century to demonstrate the value of workforce diversity in its many forms is called leveraging diversity. The concept of leveraging diversity can be best understood as a set of transformational strategies that have been utilized to assist organizations in: 1) adapting to and managing cultural change due to demographic shifts in the workplace and society; 2) enhancing an organizational cultural and climate that is now more diverse culturally, ethnically, linguistically, intellectually, creatively, physically, and spiritually than ever before; 3) advocating for and developing policies and practices that support the total inclusion of all employees at all work levels; and 4) increasing organizational efficiency and profits to obtain a global and competitive edge (Scott, 2010).

The objectives of this handbook are threefold. First, it serves as a cutting edge resource for scholars, researchers, organizational leaders, practitioners, and graduate students who want to enhance their understanding of leveraging diversity in the workforce. Second, it serves to highlight innovative research in the areas of higher education, leadership, and technology along with theoretical frameworks, strategies, and initiatives that are currently being used to guide the practice of leveraging diversity in multiple organizational settings. Last, the aim of this handbook serves to provide insights on future workforce diversity trends.

In soliciting authors for this volume, the call for chapters was sent to several professional organizations, universities, consultants, academicians, and graduate programs that attracted vast interest in addressing and responding to leveraging workforce diversity issues and trends. After a rigorous blind review process, 30 chapters were selected for this first IGI handbook focused on the topic of workforce diversity.

The five sections highlighted in this handbook are as follows: leveraging workforce diversity in higher education, leveraging workforce diversity and leadership, strategies for leveraging workforce diversity, initiatives for leveraging workforce diversity, and leveraging workforce diversity through theoretical frameworks and technology. Below, the focus of each section is highlighted.

Section 1: Leveraging Workforce Diversity in Higher Education. Section 1 will explore numerous current teaching and program practices in higher education (as well as emerging ones) that seek to prepare students with the knowledge and skills needed to leverage workforce diversity in a global society.
Section 2: Leveraging Workforce Diversity and Leadership. Section 2 will explore leadership’s responsibility, commitment, mission, vision, and action strategies used to leverage workforce diversity in a global society today and beyond.

Section 3: Strategies for Leveraging Workforce Diversity. Section 3 will explore a myriad of current strategies (as well as emerging ones) that are being put into practice to leverage workforce diversity in a global society.

Section 4: Initiatives for Leveraging Workforce Diversity. Section 4 will explore a number of current initiatives (as well as emerging ones) that are being put into practice to leverage workforce diversity in a global society.

Section 5: Leveraging Workforce Diversity through Theoretical Frameworks and Technology. Section 5 will explore varieties of current theoretical frameworks (as well as emerging ones) that are being used to leverage workforce diversity in a global society. This section will also highlight current and emerging workforce diversity technological trends.

The target audience of this handbook is composed of scholars, researchers, organizational leaders, practitioners, and graduate students working in a variety of global settings and professional fields that include but are not limited to the following: human resource development, management, organizational psychology, organizational leadership, business administration, communication, counseling, criminal justice, social work, military education/training, workforce education and development, higher education, adult education, public administration, government relations, and health care.

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REFERENCE