**Interrogating the management of ethnic diversity in the United Arab Emirates**

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**Abstract**

The term diversity has been extensively used in the American and English human resource management literature. Nevertheless, there is a dearth in term of empirical evidence that provides a specific and contextualized understanding of diversity in organizations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In the UAE, more than 75% of the workforce consists of expatriates from diverse ethnicities. In such a context, managing ethnic diversity is of major importance for organizations. This paper fills a knowledge gap by investigating the management of ethnic diversity in the context of the UAE. The study is based on qualitative interviews conducted in 2011 with Emirati top and middle managers. Participants worked in some of the most significant business sectors in the UAE including gas, oil, banking, human resource management and development, among many others. The study points to serious dysfunctions in terms of the employment of expatriates in the UAE. Findings show that there is a high level of stereotyping regarding particular citizenships and their place in organizations in the UAE. Western citizenships (such as Americans and West Europeans) were repeatedly perceived as being superior. This leads to appointing them in top managerial positions mainly because of their citizenships. In the contrary, Asian workers (such as Indians and Pakistanis) were repeatedly perceived and stereotyped as inferior to workers with other Western citizenships and therefore not suitable for top management positions. Emirati workers were perceived as benefiting from extra rights as compared to expatriates. The paper is among the first management studies to provide empirical evidence of ethnic inequalities in the management of expatriates in the UAE. It contributes to the HRM literature by offering a unique and contextualized understanding of managing ethnic diversity in an under-researched country.