Abstract

Equal opportunities policies have been adopted by most countries in an effort to introduce transparency and to promote equality in the workplace. However, in practice, despite various anti-discrimination measures, unequal treatment persists in many aspects of employment. In recruitment, research has shown that utilising personal contacts and networks is often a common route to employment. For example in their work on migrant workers, Tuckman and Harris (2009) have shown that word of mouth is often preferable to employers. Recruitment discrimination also occurs in cases where recruitment agencies are involved. A recent study by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission found evidence that employers asked recruitment agencies to discriminate on their behalf (Broughton et al, 2016: 9). Recruitment discrimination is also prevalent on multiple grounds. For example, Moore (2007) found that older women experience many barriers when looking for a job, regardless of their personal circumstances.

Trade unions have a long tradition of fighting discrimination and prejudice in the workplace and the wider community. By the 2000s, and following the introduction of the two anti-discrimination Directives, most European trade unions had adopted policies aimed at combating discrimination and encouraging equality. Being Europe’s largest civil society organisations, it is important to understand the impact of trade union policies. Nevertheless, recruitment processes can become very complex when offshoring is involved and in the absence of an active trade union it can be argued that safeguards against discriminatory practices are limited. To this extent some argue that organised trade unions provide a legitimate framework to the employees for voicing their grievances, which leads to a more dignified workplace with freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining (Bisht, 2010).

This paper focuses on the importance of equality and diversity in recruitment practices and the role of the trade unions. The discussion will show the complexity of recruitment by focusing on a specific case study of IT offshoring to India, assessing the role of moderators in order to identify the underlying factors contributing to discrimination in recruitment in the IT industry that continues to shun trade unionism. The paper consists of two different research projects: a pan European mapping study conducted between 2009 and 2010 of trade unions and their anti-discrimination practices in 34 European countries; the other, a research project undertaken between 2012-2014 that focused on high-end IT offshoring from Sweden to India. Both research projects provide insights into hiring discrimination across countries, in advanced and emerging economies. In this respect, findings from the two projects aim to:

a. Highlight multiple aspects of the hiring process that can create recruitment barriers for some people

b. Explore various anti-discrimination policies developed by trade unions, and

c. Discuss hiring processes within a labour market landscape where trade unions are absent.

Both studies used innovative research methods for their fieldwork and the analysis of their findings. What is most innovative in this paper, however, is combing the two different research projects in order to achieve a wider perspective, conceptually and geographically, of equality practices in recruitment.

References

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