

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Pio, E. (2008). Threads of Constraint: Ethnic Minority Migrant Women and Employment, *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 16(2), 25-40.

Threads of Constraint: Ethnic Minority Migrant Women and Employment

Edwina Pio

ABSTRACT

Nations, organisations and ethnic minority migrants are compelled to deal with issues emerging from the perceptions and politicisation of ethnicity. Issues of ethnicity are often fore grounded in the zone of work where the complexities of migration, ethnicity, gender and employment intersect. This paper highlights the perceptions of university business students in a New Zealand university with reference to ethnic minority women and employment. Through a study of various databases and the construction of parables on ethnic minority women in New Zealand, the experiences of recruitment and selection, diversity management and career progression emerge as themes in the perceived employment experiences of ethnic minority migrant women. The paper argues for the need to highlight narratives of ethnic minority women through creative pedagogy in order to sensitise business students and future managers to the consequences of migration and a need for the intelligent utilisation of human resources in a world that is increasingly multicultural.

INTRODUCTION

Historically New Zealand (NZ) is a country of immigrants though these immigrants in the 19th and early 20th century were primarily Caucasians from Anglo Saxon countries. However, in the 19th century, there were a few migrants from China who came to NZ to work in the gold mines of Otago, as well as Indians who found employment as scrub cutters, fruit and vegetable hawkers in various parts of NZ and as servants of wealthy British settlers (Pio 2008). Census records of Indians in NZ show their increasing numbers thus: in 1881, six were recorded, in 1991 there were 30,609, and in 2006 there were 104, 583 Indians (Census 2006, Pio 2008). Similarly, Asians, (who include for example Indians and Chinese) show a growth in numbers in NZ as evidenced by census records: three per cent of the population in 1991, five per cent in 1996, 6.6 per cent in 2001, and 9.2 per cent in 2006. In the early and mid twentieth century, those ethnic minority women who worked primarily did so in family businesses such as market gardens and corner stores (Pio 2008). Nevertheless, in the current century, employed ethnic minority women in employment include: bank workers, call centre operators, care givers, check out operators in supermarkets, doctors, librarians, nurses, pharmacists, teachers and teaching aides.

Globally, women in the workforce have been increasing over the last few decades with part time and contractual work, flexible timings and dual career households. In a similar fashion the numbers of ethnic minority women in the workforce have soared, yet their employment experiences are frequently quite different from those of white women or women of the majority culture (Pio 2008). Many ethnic minority women face the prospect of being differentiated on the basis of their visible diversity discriminators such as skin colour and physiological appearance making it a challenge to secure work in line with their skills and qualifications (Pio 2005, 2008).

Employment is an important site where individuals encounter the wider society. With growing numbers of ethnic minority migrants globally, both for higher education as well as job prospects, there is a continuing need to understand the perceptions of these women and the complexities encountered by them in employment. Carr (2004) graphically notes that the zone of work through which migrants realise their aspirations in the host country is likely to be the place where migration promises are most likely to be broken.

This paper engages with the perceptions of national and international Master of Business Administration (MBA) students in a NZ University through the construction of parables on ethnic minority women and their employment experiences in NZ. While there is an abundance of literature on ethnic minority women in countries such as the USA and the UK, there is a dearth of research on the employment experiences of ethnic minority migrant women in NZ. This article seeks to add a multifaceted layer to the burgeoning interest in ethnic minorities through highlighting the need for a more intelligent use of the skills, qualifications and experiences which ethnic minority migrant women bring to the host country. This paper is structured as follows; first the theoretical scaffolding on ethnic minority women and employment is explored, and this is followed by the methodology section. Next the results are discussed. The conclusion deals with implications for HRM practitioners, researchers and educators along with some concluding comments.

THEORETICAL SCAFFOLDING

Numerous studies relate to how the careers of ethnic minority women are affected by their ethnic categorisation, as well as various forms of discrimination (Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Wormley 1990, Ross 2004, Goldman, Gutek, Stein & Lewis 2006). For example, in the UK ethnic minority women tend to face higher unemployment rates than white women with Black African women and Pakistani women experiencing the highest rates of unemployment (Kelly 2004). While countries tend to have legislation to prevent discrimination on various grounds including employment, regulation alone does not necessarily ensure fair opportunity (Barnum, Liden & Ditomaso 1995), and ethnic minority women tend to be disadvantaged not only by gender, but also by race (Bagilhole & Stephens 1999). Other influential factors impacting the employment of ethnic minority women are: birth in the host country, the timing of their settlement and the demographic and family structures of different ethnic groups (Lindley, Dale & Dex 2004). These factors tend to interact with employment patterns in complex ways, as for example, an ethnic minority woman born in the host country tends to develop the accent of the majority culture, and this increases employment opportunities in contrast to an accent from the sending country, such as India (Pio 2008).

A number of studies focus on the cognitive barriers which ethnic minority women face in their careers primarily due to their lower self efficacy which is recurrently due to the messages they receive and take into their systems as part of their employment experiences (Hackett & Byars 1996, Betz 2000, Luzzo & McWhirter 2001). Thus, ethnic minorities "...may internalize the racist beliefs of the dominant culture which might then lead to a lowered sense of self-efficacy, or their confidence in their ability to perform the tasks necessary to attain a satisfying career..." (Flores & Heppner 2002: 198). In fact prejudices and stereotypes of ethnic minorities can principally be seen as emanating "...from the environments within which the organisations are embedded rather than from the organisations themselves..." (Brief, Butz & Deitch 2005: 133).

Career detrimental stereotypes prevail for ethnic minority women in organisations as they struggle to fit into white Western organisations (Kamenou & Fearfull 2006), where there is a stalling of women and minorities in management (Corsun & Costen 2001). And despite the model minority image, Asian immigrants in the USA "...have severe labour market disadvantages compared to white Americans..." (Min & Kim 2000: 739). In the UK, even with higher level qualifications, women from Pakistan and Bangladesh experience high levels of unemployment and face considerable barriers (Dale, Shaheen, Fieldhouse & Kalra 2002). Research indicates that in the area of recruitment and selection, adequate minority representation can be achieved by carefully choosing the message and the media to attract sufficient numbers, which can include the presence of successful minority employees, to create positive organisational images among minorities (Arthur & Doverspike 2005, Ng & Burke 2005). It is also important to alter the behaviour of majority group employees, including the conduct of the interview, which could functionally operate "...like an orally administered and scored objective test... [and]... organisations should strive to maximize the perceived fairness and validity of selection systems..." (Arthur & Doverspike 2005: 313-314).

Cox (1993) writes that careers as well as job involvement can be affected when individuals feel that they are not valued due to their race or gender. Women of colour are habitually underemployed and overused by departments and institutions and they are often assigned services to meet institutional needs, but for which there is no institutional reward system (Turner 2002). Moreover, retention of women of colour is positively related to the kind of supportive behaviour experienced from their supervisors, but they are at a disadvantage as they have to negotiate stereotypes in their work environments and have less access to influential others or mentors, and hence, are less optimistic about advancement prospects (Giscombe & Mattis 2002, Cocchiara, Bell & Berry 2006, Fearfull & Kamenou 2006).

Dipboye and Colella (2005) suggest that "...discrimination results from the interrelationships among many factors in a dynamic, complex system, which can become self-perpetuating and in which the victim can become an unwitting contributor to his or her own plight..." (Dipboye & Colella 2005: 426). While open bigotry is hardly seen, other subtle forms of discrimination exist for "...laws and rules can deal with blatant racism and sexism, but what can be done to deal with exclusion from informal networks, ambivalent feelings, joking, and negative nonverbal behaviour?" (p. 426). In some instances, minority women benefit from their double jeopardy or status, but this is strongly linked to their higher performance evaluations (Hurley & Giannantonio 1999), and the way they access their bicultural life structure to develop strategies to maintain successful careers (Alfred 2001). In managing diversity and career progression it is important to provide training programmes, as well as reduce the within

occupation earnings discrimination for ethnic minority women who experience increasing inequality in workplace power, in different degrees and through different mechanisms (Howland & Sakellariou 1993, Elliott & Smith 2004).

Research by Pio (2006, 2007a, 2008) on ethnic minority women in New Zealand indicates that these women take approximately 18 to 24 months to find work somewhat equivalent to their skills and qualifications. In their initial job search these women go through frustration in being repeatedly rejected, and thus, take entry level jobs in order to contribute to the family income. Research from the NZ's Department of Labour (DOL) shows that while migrants' employment rates improved between six to 18 months after arrival, people from the UK, South Africa and North America did better in the job market than those from Asia (Dunstan, Boyd & Crichton 2004). Highly skilled immigrants struggle to find jobs because they come across a wall of discrimination from both recruitment consultants and potential employers, where immigrants cite skin colour, accents, overseas qualifications, prejudice, a lack of cultural understanding, language skills and a conservative attitude of New Zealanders in employing people who were different, as barriers to employment (NZPA 2008).

Education helps prepare students to transform their world through developing students as critical thinkers and social agents who actively participate in stepping out of intellectual traditions and monocultures through self reflection, self directedness and creativity. The utilisation of parables was an attempt to establish conditions of learning which enable students to locate themselves in history and to interrogate the adequacy of that location as a pedagogical, social and business question.

This paper reports on a study where the work experiences of ethnic minority migrant women were explored through the construction of parables in an HRM paper by MBA University students in a NZ University. The educational philosophy of the university focuses on the belief that knowledge and understanding are constructed by the learner, and there is need to foster excellence, equity and ethics in learning, teaching, research and scholarship, and in so doing serve regional, national and international communities. The MBA at this NZ University is a generalist post graduate degree, providing a tool box of models and techniques for the core functions of management. The target group for the MBA is students aspiring to general/ divisional management or CEO positions.

The research approach is qualitative and the core building block is that reality is socially constructed, and hence, requires various forms of inquiry that could involve a micro macro analysis to explore the lived in and lived through employment experiences of ethnic minority migrant women. Furthermore, "...it is the array of epistemological, theoretical, and methodological choices made by qualitative researchers that sets qualitative research apart as a particular and fruitful way of understanding social phenomena..." (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2004:1). The next section describes the site of the study, the participants, procedures and analysis used.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 30 students from seven countries who were registered at the MBA paper in HRM in a university in NZ. Table 1 shows the participant/student profile. Seventeen of the participants were male and thirteen were female. The maximum number of students was from India. There was one student each from Taiwan and Thailand, five each from New Zealand and China, with two each from Malaysia and Pakistan. The student participants gave their approval to participate in this research.

Table 1 Participant/student profile

Country of origin	Gender	
	Males	Females
China	3	2
India	8	6
Malaysia	2	0
New Zealand	2	3
Pakistan	2	0

Gender

Country of origin	Males	Females
Taiwan	0	1
Thailand	0	1

Site

NZ is the geographical site of this study. In entering the labour market, ethnic minority women present challenges of ethnicity and power in the host society as they compete for employment. The NZ Federation of Ethnic Council's 2001 Conference declaration "...accepts that employment is the key to successful integration into, and participation in all aspects of NZ life...and acknowledges the significance of business community commitment to recognising the skills of migrants and providing meaningful work for them." (Carter 2002 p.40). NZ is also a party to major international human rights instruments through which the government is obliged to ensure that the rights of individuals are safeguarded through gender, colour, race, ethnic and national origin blindness, through for example New Zealand's Race Relations Act 1971, Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

The DOL observes that as a nation NZ is getting older and more ethnically diverse and a critical challenge for NZ businesses will be to find good staff (DOL 2004). In fact one in five people in NZ are overseas born and NZ has one of the highest overseas born populations in the OECD (DOL 2006a). Pacific Peoples arrived in large numbers in the 1960s and 1970s due to severe labour shortages in NZ and in the last two decades migration from the following countries has increased: Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Somalia, South America, Taiwan and Zimbabwe (Pio 2007a). In the NZ 2006 census, the population is recorded as: Europeans 67.6 per cent, Maori 14.6 per cent, Pacific peoples 6.9 per cent, Asian 9.2 per cent, MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American/African) 0.9 per cent, and New Zealander 11.1 per cent (Census NZ 2006). In NZ, since people can choose to identify with more than one ethnic group, therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100 (Census NZ 2006). Yet, despite immigration, NZ will continue to have a small population and with approximately 600 New Zealanders going overseas every week for long term work, the future of the country will be determined in large part by the quality and level of workforce and the strategic decisions made with reference to employment (Future of Work 2006, Pio 2007b).

While NZ was the first country in the world to give women suffrage in 1893, currently women receive incomes equivalent to 82 per cent of their male counterparts (Focusing on Women 2005). In NZ, the lowest median annual income is for Asian women (\$8900), followed by Pacific women (or women from the islands around NZ such as Samoa and Tonga) (\$13,000), Maori women (indigenous people) (\$13,200) and for European women (New Zealanders of European descent also referred to as Pamela and NZ European) (\$15,000) (Focusing on Women 2005). Regarding unemployment, Europeans have the lowest rate at 6 per cent, Asians 13 per cent, 18 per cent for Maori and Pacific women, and for those from other ethnic groups it is 21 per cent (Focusing on Women 2005). Jayne (2005) writes that while there is sense of dynamism and a breath of fresh air with ethnic minority women entering the management ranks, yet many talented new migrants are clobbered with the need to have the Kiwi (a term that is synonymous with NZ) experience, despite the fact that they have just entered the country and very few minority women have broken through both the racial roof and glass ceiling. However, younger ethnic minority women tend to fare better than their mothers in the employment market (Pio 2004), and it may be possible that non ethnic minority migrant daughters do better than their mothers in employment, but this area requires further research.

Procedure

Parables as an assessment form were used as part of the HRM course at the MBA. HRM, a mandatory/ core paper for the MBA, gives an overview of theory and practice at strategic and operational level. Topics include recruitment and selection, retention, managing performance, developing human wealth and contemporary issues within HRM. In view of the topics embedded within HRM, this study sought to create learning experiences as an arena to open doors for the negotiation of working with multiple cultures through a dialogue between cultures. Pio and Haigh (2007) write that parables are characterised by layers of meanings and are similar to short stories about human beings and their behaviour, but with an ethical dimension and a searching interpretive process. Thus, parables can be viewed as contextual application and location of curriculum deliberations through an HRM assessment as a site for exploring multicultural contexts and preparing students to think and perform in a multicultural context.

In an attempt to engage students in a thought provoking assignment in the area of HRM and diversity, the author-researcher, who is a scholar of colour and sees herself as a passionate engaged and committed agent for change, formulated an assessment which required students to construct parables based on their academic database research and their own experiences. Ethical approval from the university ethics committee was sought and granted. Students were informed at the start of the course about the research, and were given a copy of the ethical consent form. The students were also told that this form would only be requested once the assignments had been marked and given back to the students. This action was to ensure that the students did not feel compelled to take part in the research.

The task was a group assignment and students formed their own groups. The task instructions were provided in the following order.

- Your group will develop a booklet of inspirational parables on ethnic minority women in the NZ workplace. The booklet (approximately 2500 words) will contain the following:
- Two parables constructed by your group based on your research
- The reason for your choice of parables in the context of an HR Manager who seeks to understand diversity management in NZ. This must include at least 10 references which are sourced from scholarly peer reviewed articles and academic / research oriented publications.
- You are welcome to display your creativity in the size, layout and formatting of your booklet.
- Due date: The booklet is to be submitted in Week 4 in the first 10 minutes of your HRM class.
- Each group will make a presentation of ten minutes during which they will narrate their two parables to the class. Your creativity will be welcomed in this presentation.
- Group presentations will be scheduled in Week 4, during the break midway between the three hour HRM classes. However, depending on the number of groups, it may be necessary to have some presentations in Week 5, again scheduled during the break.
- It is important that all group members participate in the presentation.
- The booklet will have a weighting of 25 per cent and the group presentations five per cent. Hence a total of 30 per cent is the total possible score.
- All students in a particular group will receive the same mark.

The Marking guide, which is shown as Table 2, gave students an indication of how their assignment would be assessed. The assessment involved a database search for relevant literature on ethnic minority women, reflections on the issues which emerged followed by the construction of parables which had to be handed in to the instructor as both a hard and soft copy. Each group also had to orally present the parable/s to the class.

Table 2 Marking guide	
Total	30
Content of the parables	15
Relevance to New Zealand	
Focus on diversity	
Inspirational	
References	5
Relevant	
Academic / Scholarly	
Current	
APA format	
Format and presentation of booklet	5
Creative	

Spelling and grammar

Cohesion and logical flow

General organisation of the presentation 5

Time management (10 minutes)

Clarity of speech

Minimal use of notes

Creativity

Interest and enthusiasm

Use of presentation media

A total of 25 marks were awarded for the hard copy of the parables. This document included creativity in the format and presentation of the parable booklet, with the maximum weightage being given to the content of the parables with specific reference to their relevance to NZ, a focus on diversity and the inspirational aspect of the parables. Five marks were awarded for the general organisation of the oral presentation, which was for ten minutes and included aspects such as creativity, enthusiasm, time management, and use of presentation media.

Analysis

Sixteen parables pertaining to women from nine countries were constructed by eight groups of students. The group size varied from two to five students. The data were analysed by searching for themes (Denzin 2004) pertaining to employment in each parable. The coding categories related to recruitment and selection, diversity management and career progression. Next, a comparison between the sixteen parables was made in order to surface emergent themes and the lessons learned from each parable. The analysis, interpretation and writing of the data from this study involved "... immersion in the text until themes, concepts, or dimensions of concepts emerged from the data..." (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2004: 411). Such data analysis facilitated careful interpretation and served as a passageway for the message that each of the parables sought to articulate in the voices of the ethnic minority migrant women. Thus, parable pedagogy (Pio & Haigh 2007) functioned as a methodology to explore the employment experiences of minority individuals through the eyes of a group of international students many of whom were ethnic minority individuals themselves.

RESULTS

The parables constructed by the groups of students revealed the various intricacies that are a part and parcel of the employment experiences of ethnic minority women in NZ. It is pertinent to mention here that while all the students had to ensure that they went through academic databases based on which they created their parables, a number of students shared their own personal experiences, or those of their family members and close friends. The emergent research findings are discussed as three broad themes: firstly recruitment and selection, secondly diversity management, and thirdly career progression. Relevant extracts from the parables are presented in order to illustrate the research findings. Appendix 1 is a parable, that has been selected as an exemplar, from a parable, that was constructed by a group of students. This group consisted of one NZ European and three Chinese. The parable is titled 'The Dragon and the Phoenix' and the take away lesson deals with the need to break stereotypes.

Table 3 displays the parable data showing the ethnicity/country of origin of the student, the parable title, the country of origin/ethnicity of the woman in the parable, and the take away lesson based on data analysis of the parable. This table succinctly summarises the parable data with information on the student ethnicity/country of origin, the parable title, the country/ethnicity of origin of the woman in the parable constructed by the students, and finally the take away lesson for each parable. The take away lessons provide valuable information on the issues which ethnic minority women tend to face in the world of work in NZ.

Table 3 Parable Data

Student ethnicity	Parable title	Country of origin	Take-away lesson
3 Chinese (European)	Dragon and the Phoenix	Chinese	Break stereotypes.
1 NZ	The journey of 1000 miles	Chinese	Overcame fears and reach out/step out.
2 Indian	Keeping the hopes high	India	Keep hoping.
	The un responsive ladder to success	India	Change perception and focus on this within one's span of control.
5 Indian	The Parable of Sheela Sharma	India	Uphold EEO. Equality is a right, but is it a fact?
	The Parable of Sandra Nasa	Jordan	The first impression is the last impression.
1 Chinese (from the Pacific Islands)	Lillian's Story	Samoa	Work hard, be professional and ethical
1 NZ	Susan's Story	China born) (NZ	Work hard, be professional and ethical.
2 Indian (Maori)	Mirage	India (Muslim)	Proactive hard work. Manager's support for cultural beliefs.
1 Chinese 1 NZ	Searching solutions	for Ethiopia (Christian)	Migrants can misjudge the host country's perception of them.
2 Pakistani 1 Indian	Tania	Morocco (Muslim)	Re qualify, keep your self respect.
	Sushma	India	Post immigration training and linkages between various departments in NZ such as immigration, department of labour, business and industry.
	Nikki	India	Agonising to find contracts breached despite good faith and fairness.
4 Indian 1 Malaysian	The preferred candidate	India (Muslim)	Anglo-Saxon name helps to get an interview for Muslim woman of traditional garb. Importance of the HR Manager.
1 Malaysian (European)	Providing courage	the India	Importance of the HR Manager. Enlist help and development relationships among co workers.
1 NZ 1 Taiwan 1 Thailand	Sticks and stones	Venezuela	Lean the language and reach your goals.

Interestingly and tellingly 80 per cent of the parables constructed noted that the women did not walk directly into a job suitable to their skills and qualifications. Rather these parables have examples of challenges in recruitment and selection that the women encountered. As 'The parable of Sheela Sharma' succinctly notes: "...when you belong to a minority, you have to be better in order to have the right to be equal...". For example: Victoria from Venezuela is married to a New Zealander whom she met when he was on business in her country. She found it difficult to get a job and "...although she has not been directly subjected to racism or sexism, she has been told that her qualifications are not up to standard - even though it is recognised by the NZ Qualifications Authority, and that her English ability is not good enough...Victoria found this situation made her feel as though she was in some way unworthy and that she is being viewed as an ethnic woman who is a housewife and who, therefore, could not

possibly cope in a fast paced commercial environment.”. Victoria enrolls in an English language course and “... knows that her task will not be easy but she is determined that it will not be long before she has that dream job.”.

Another parable is about a doctor who could not get work. After listening to her accent they said the position was filled or that she was overqualified. But finally, she managed to get employment as a security officer in a hospital. One day she tried to stop a Maori woman from entering the ward after visiting hours and was told by the Maori woman “...you are the visitor, I am not and I belong to this soil and this is our country.”. This made her ponder about her sense of deprivation and her self respect and she re qualified and is now employed as a doctor in the same hospital where she initially was a security officer. These parable extracts point to the challenges faced by ethnic minority women in employment, similar to the issues of discrimination in recruitment and selection raised by previous studies (Corsun & Costen 2001, Dale, et al. 2002, Kamenou & Fearfull 2006, Pio 2006)

In the area of recruitment some of the parables noted that “...sometimes the dress code gives mental agony...” and this would frequently be the case when the women chose to wear ethnic clothing. The parable of ‘The preferred candidate’ illustrates how the best candidate based on a telephonic interview and CV was called for a face-to-face interview, and the organisation was rather surprised that she was an ethnic minority women. A number of the women struggled because of language skills. Others had the requisite language skills and qualifications, but “... despite being praised and appreciated during the interview she would not hear from them.”. For a number of women in the parables not being able to get work after trying repeatedly lead to conflict at home and a deterioration of personal relationships with the family as they were under stress and on edge.

In many instances both recruitment and selection were interwoven in the employment experiences. For example, Sushma who had a job but was disturbed as her earnings did not match her qualifications and despite applying to many places could not get work that appropriately recognised her skills and qualifications, though in many instances she was offered volunteer work with no paid wages. Many employers were not willing to take risks and give minorities a chance, despite legislation to prevent discrimination (Barnum, et al. 1995, Bagilhole & Stephens 1999). Some parables pointed to the need for migrant women to overcome their own prejudices and also suggested that the women could consider changing their original names so that their name was more Anglo-Saxon or Caucasian. Perceived stereotyping and a glass wall were also other areas that emerged in the parables based on dressing style as a factor influencing recruitment and selection, particularly for women with a head scarf/veil who were treated with suspicion.

With regard to diversity management, the parable on ‘Providing the Courage’ is about an Indian girl. Yasmin, who “...felt uncomfortable and unworthy through racial remarks and sexist jokes...” and demonstrates the situation faced by ethnic minority women and their HRM managers. Yasmin was wrongly accused of stealing, and though found innocent became fearful about going to work. However, through the good offices of the HRM manager who organised a mediation session, “...new workplace ground rules have been established stating the company’s policy against racial discrimination, sexual and verbal abuse.”. Another example is that of Fatima a Muslim woman from India. Her manager Steve “...was compassionate and understanding...” and who complimented her for “...her excellent team work attitude and love for work.”. This extract underscores the significance of access to influential others and the need for supportive behaviour from superiors (Cox 1993, Giscombe & Mattis 2002, Cocchiara, et al., 2006, Fearfull & Kamenou 2006).

In ‘Searching for Solutions’ the parable shows how Mariam a Christian Ethiopian Refugee woman had misjudged her superior. Actually, the superior was quite understanding about different religious and cultural customs and Mariam was relieved by her superior’s compassionate approach. A number of the parables which portrayed Muslim women described the problems encountered by these woman from their colleagues particularly due to the effect of the 9/11 bombings in New York. However, some of the women were delighted in their more or less equal treatment as women in New Zealand, which was unlike their experiences in their country of origin, though their ethnicity continued to be a challenge. Some women choose to “...replace the burkha (traditional head scarf and long gown worn by some Islamic/Muslim women) with exclusive business suits...” and cover their hair with a scarf, while still retaining their values and roots. In some parables, when the colleagues of ethnic minority woman support her, this usually leads to a rethinking by management of their treatment of the ethnic minority woman. Other women stayed in the job despite problems with co workers because they wanted their families to be proud of them as in the parable ‘Lilian’s Story’ and ‘Susan’s Story’. Here it is probable that the women sought to derive strength from their families as well as their own sense of self (Alfred 2001). The parables noted that diversity management was enhanced when there were support networks coupled with superiors who spent time in listening and trying to understand a different culture.

In the area of career progression, the parables indicate that it is the sheer grit and determination of the women who manage to get over their tears, depression and lowered self esteem which makes them gradually advance in their careers. Many women went back to study, and pursued language classes, university or professional qualifications and this helped them to progress in their careers. In some of the parables the persistent belief of the ethnic minority woman that she cannot let herself be beaten down ensures that she slowly, but surely climbs up the rungs of the career ladder. Some of the women based on their employment experiences chose to give up work and started their own business. In ‘The unresponsive ladder to success’ the parable graphically illustrates how the woman stood out because of her skin colour and accent and despite being proud of her achievements and well qualified, she had “...

the stress of being ostracised and ignored on a personal and professional level...” and her hard work and accomplishments were not recognised, and though “...she got some of the things she aspired for, but they came with a terrible price...”. She gradually decides to closely examine herself and learnt to make some changes for “...she couldn’t change the world and what happened in it, but she could change how it affected her or how she perceived the situation. This did not make the problems go away, but gave her a way to cope and change situations to her benefit...and so began the climb up the next rung of the ladder.”. This extract elucidates the ambivalent feelings, the exclusion from networks and the ongoing subtle discrimination (Hurley & Giannantonio 1999, Dipboye & Colella 2005), which makes ethnic minority women go through much reflection and change in their perceptions and abilities to cope over a period of time (Dunstan, et al. 2004, Pio 2005, 2008).

In more than 90 per cent of the parables, it was the HRM Manager or a superior who was crucial in facilitating the acceptance and career progression of the ethnic minority woman. Where neither the HRM Manager nor the superior was helpful, it was the coworkers who made a difference by supporting the ethnic minority woman. However, where none of these three constituencies choose to support the ethnic minority woman, she felt quite alone and despite her hard work, skills and qualifications found work in NZ extremely challenging and a consequence of these challenges, in a number of instances, led to conflicts within the home.

Overall, the parables stressed that migrant women can do a number of things with reference to better their employment prospects in the host country. These actions can include such processes as taking a lower job, but learning the English language; reflecting on employment experiences, but not giving up hope; continuing studying if necessary, and not jeopardising the chances of getting permanent residency in the host country; and trying to make friends with host country individuals in order to learn from them. Finally, to acknowledge that change takes time, so the ethnic minority woman must not quit, but continue to work hard, as with time there is the potential for a better career along with appreciation.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented the use of parable construction as a novel way of approaching the issue of diversity in an HRM paper in a New Zealand university. In seeking to engage students with aspects of diversity management in an HRM paper in a NZ University, parables as an assessment form were used to uncover and surface issues pertaining to employment in the lived in and lived through experiences of ethnic minority women in NZ. Student groups shared their own life experiences and accessed academic databases in order to research the literature on ethnic minority women and employment to facilitate the construction of their parables. From the parable perspective on ethnic minority women at least conclusions for salient can be tendered.

- Acceptance of skills, qualifications and experiences, irrespective of visible diversity discriminators.
- Inclusion in workplace activities and appreciation of hard work and contribution where relevant, with programmes on diversity management for adaptation and change among both ethnic minority women and host country members.
- Provision for feedback, mentors, networking and support for career progression and acknowledging that ethnic minority women desire career opportunities and learning.
- Importance of the HRM Manager as a crucial resource who plays a vital role in the employment experiences of ethnic minority women.

In a very real sense, considering NZ’s population and skills shortages it would be foolhardy not to appropriately utilise the skills, experiences and qualifications of ethnic minority migrants. Obviously, and there is a compelling need to investigate the topic of Can NZ afford to dilute its cache of migrants? There is no easy answer. A recent study by DOL (2006b) on employer perspectives on skilled migrants brought into NZ through the Skilled Migrant category, and the long term skill shortage list and talent work to residence policies, indicates that these migrants positively benefit employers. These migrants according to their employers contribute to the organisational knowledge; possess skills that NZ residents did not have, raised their organisation’s level of expertise and contributed to organizational growth and innovative practices. Twenty-six per cent of the migrants under study came from Asia and nine per cent from the Pacific countries. Such reports hold promise and need wide publicity to urgently change the implementation of HRM policies and practices for ethnic minority women. Furthermore, over one third of NZ’s foreign trade is with Asia, Asian visitors generate one third of all tourism revenues and Asian students account for 80 per cent of the international education sector in NZ, and significantly, one in fifteen New Zealanders is of Asian descent (Asia NZ 2004).

For practitioners in HRM relevant parables can be used for training programmes in order to sensitise HRM personnel to issues faced by ethnic minority women and develop solutions for the same. The issues and solutions could encompass recruitment and selection, diversity and career management. Such parables may also serve to make participants in a training programme aware of their own mindsets and possible prejudices when encountering ethnic minority women. The other side of the coin would be to facilitate ethnic minority women to explore their perceptions of the majority ethnic group within their own organisation.

These are also research implications. Potential lines of enquiry might involve the comparison of parables constructed by HRM personnel and those constructed by ethnic minority women in organisations and the possibility of making procedural changes in organisations based on some of the learning emerging from such parables. Also individuals from the majority host culture can share their own encounters with ethnic minority women and the advantages and disadvantages of employing such women. Future research might explore some of the following issues: To what extent does the organisational environment sustain the advantages of employing ethnic minority women; what creates disadvantages in the employment experiences of ethnic minority women and how can these issues be remedied; and how can recruiters and recruitment panels be trained to identify job related competencies with a minimum of bias towards ethnic minority applicants. The pedagogical implications for educators would be to approach relevant, but sensitive issues pertaining to the employment of ethnic minority women through the many layers inherent in parable construction. Learned knowledge has potential to give students the choice to explore various levels of depth linked to HRM. Through parables, the learning experience is not only about covering multiple cultures, but also about working through a dialogue between cultures, as evidenced through examples presented in this paper. Hence innovative educators, employers and HRM managers can be the frontrunners in implementing changes to enhance the employment experiences of ethnic minority women. Thus, productive intercultural encounters can be facilitated to create an arc of possibilities in educating potential HRM personnel for the future, to ensure that the threads of constraint experienced by ethnic minority women are minimised.

With increasing population mobility workplaces of the future will be more multiethnic and multicultural. Furthermore, the challenge for organisations and nations will be a balancing act which acknowledges not only gender equity but increasing ethnic equity. Hence the touchstone for employment will reside in 'relevant' skills and qualifications, rather than accent dress and skin colour. Such relevancies will of necessity need to be foregrounded if organisations in the 21st century are to remain competitive and survive in a volatile and often 'cut throat' world of globalisation, wars and terrorism. It is with the reality of such scenarios in the 21st century, that creative pedagogy such as parables are an insightful way forward to sensitise business students and future HRM managers to the consequences of migration in an increasingly multicultural world.

AUTHOR

Dr. Edwina Pio (PhD, MA, BEd, BA, MNZAC) is Associate Professor and Equity Coordinator at AUT University New Zealand, and Visiting Professor Boston College USA. Embodying her passion for interdisciplinary scholarship, her current emphasis is on diversity management and ethnic minority women in employment and entrepreneurship. She has published in internationally ranked peer reviewed journals such as *Human Relations* and *Journal of Management Inquiry*. Her accolades include the Duke of Edinburgh Fellowship, Research Fellowships at Boston College USA, Jonkoping International Business School Sweden, Visiting Academic at Cambridge University UK and winner of the outstanding field report paper at the Academy of Management, 2006.

E-mail: edwina.pio@aut.ac.nz

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

An earlier version of this paper titled "Diluting the Cache? Employment Experiences of Ethnic Minority Migrant Women" was awarded Best Paper at the 10th International Conference of Global Business and Economic Development, Kyoto Japan, August 2007.

The author would like to thank Cecil Pearson and Alan Nankervis for their detailed and meticulous feedback which has made the publication of this paper possible.

REFERENCES

Alfred, M. V. (2001). Expanding theories of career development: Adding the voices of African American women in the white academy. *American Association for Adult and Continuing Education*. 51(2), 108-127.

Arthur, W., & Doverspike, D. (2005). Achieving diversity and reducing discrimination in the workplace through HRM practices: Implications of research and theory for staffing, training and rewarding performance. In R. Dipboye, & A. Colella, (Eds.), *Discrimination at work: The psychological and organizational basis* (305-327). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Asia NZ. (2004). Seriously Asia. Retrieved on 11th April 2007 from http://www.asianz.org.nz/files/seriouslyasia_finalreport.pdf

- Bagillhole, B., & Stephens, M. (1999). Management responses to equal opportunity for ethnic minority women within an NHS hospital trust. *Journal of Social Policy*, 28(2), 235-248.
- Barnum, P., Liden, R., & Ditomaso, N. (1995). Double Jeopardy for women and minorities: Pay differences with age. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 38(3), 863-880.
- Cocchiara, F., Bell, M. P., & Berry, D. P. (2006). Latinas and black women: Key factors for a growing proportion of the US workforce. *Equal Opportunities International*, 25(4), 272-284.
- Brief, A., Butz, R., & Deitch, E. (2005). Organisations as reflections of their environment: The case of race composition. In R. Dipboye & A. Colella (Eds.), *Discrimination at work: The psychological and organizational bases*. (119-148). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate Publishers.
- Carr, S.C. (2004). *Globalization and culture at work: Exploring their combined glocality*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Carter, C. (2002). *Ethnic perspectives in policy*. Wellington: Office of Ethnic Affairs.
- Census NZ. (2006). Cultural diversity. Retrieved on 8th April 2007 from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/census-outputs/quickstats/snapshotplace2.htm?type=re...>
- Corsun, D., & Costen, W. (2001). Is the glass ceiling unbreakable? Habitus, fields and the stalling of women and minorities in management. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 10(1), 16-25.
- Cox, T. (1993). *Cultural diversity in organisations: Theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Barret-Kohler.
- Dale, A., Fieldhouse E., Shaheen, N., & Kalra, V. (2002). The Labour market prospects for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. *Work, Employment & Society*, 16(1), 5-25.
- Denzin, N. (2004). The art and politics of interpretation. In S. Hesse-Biber, & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research* (447-472). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dipboye, R., & Colella, A. (2005). The dilemmas of workplace discrimination. In R. Dipboye, & A. Colella (Eds.), *Discrimination at work: The psychological and organizational bases* (425-462). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate Publishers.
- DOL. (2004). *People power*. Wellington: Department of Labour.
- DOL. (2006a). *Future of work: Where do we come from?* Wellington: Department of Labour.
- DOL. (2006b). *Skilled migrants in NZ: Employer's perspectives*. Wellington: DOL.
- Dunstan, S., Boyd, S., & Crichton, S. (2004). *Migrant's experiences of New Zealand*. Wellington: New Zealand Immigration Service.
- Elliott, J., & Smith, R. (2004). Race, gender and workplace power. *American Sociological Review*, 69(3), 365-386.
- Fearfull, A., & Kamenou, N. (2006). How do you account for it? A critical exploration of career opportunities for and experiences of ethnic minority women. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 17(7), 883-901.
- Focusing on women (2005). Retrieved on 30th November from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres?FCIBDDF4-F4OF-4BO5-BOUC-104AC9D38D78/o/FocussingOnWomen2005.pdf>
- Future of work (2006). Retrieved on 21st March 2007 from <http://www.dol.govt.nz/futureofwork/worktrends.asp>
- Giscombe, K., & Mattis, M. C. (2002). Levelling the playing field for women of colour in corporate management: Is the business case enough? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 37(1), 102-119.
- Goldman, B. M., Gutek, B. A., Stein, J. H., & Lewis, K. (2006). Employment discrimination in organisations: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Management*, 32(6), 786-830.
- Greenhaus, J. H., Parasuraman, S., & Wormley, W. M. (1990). Effects of race on organizational experiences, job performance evaluations, and career outcomes. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 33(1), 64-86.

- Hacket, G., & Byars, A. (1996). Social cognitive theory and the career development of African-American women. *Career Development Quarterly*, 44(4), 322-351.
- Hesse-Biber, S. & Leavy, P. (2004). *Approaches to qualitative research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Howland, J., & Sakellariou, C. (1993). Wage discrimination, occupational segregation and visible minorities in Canada. *Applied Economics*, 25, 1413-1422.
- Hurley, A., & Giannantonio, C. (1999). Career attainment for women and minorities: The interactive effects of age, gender and race. *Women in Management Review*, 14(1), 4-13.
- Jayne, V. (2005). Minority Managers: Going through the racial roof? *Management MW Women*, July, 10-12.
- Kamenou, N., & Fearfull, A. (2006). Ethnic minority women: A lost voice in HRM. *Human Resources Management Journal*, 16(2), 154-172.
- Kelly, L. (2004). EQUAL projects and national initiatives on employment in the UK. In J. Blaschke, & B. Vollmer. (Eds.), *Employment strategies for immigrants in the European Union* (625-678). Berlin: Parabolis.
- Lindley, J., Dale, A., & Dex, S. (2004). Ethnic differences in women's demographic, family characteristics and economic activity profiles, 1992-2002. *Labour Market Trends*, April, 153-165.
- Luzzo, D., & McWhirter, E. (2001). Sex and ethnic differences in the perception of educational and career related barriers and levels of coping efficacy. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 79(1), 66-17.
- Min, P., & Kim, R. (2000). Formation of ethnic and racial identities: Narratives by young Asian American professionals. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23(4), 735-760.
- Ng, E., & Burke, R. J. (2005). Person - organisation fit and the war for talent: Does diversity management make for a difference? *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16(7), 1195-1210.
- NZPA (2008). Professional Migrants face discrimination in NZ - study. Retrieved on 5 April 2008 from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/1/story.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10502032&ref=emailfriend
- Pio, E. (2004). Harder for us easier for them: Work experiences of immigrant women and their daughters. *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 4, 43-52.
- Pio, E. (2005). Knotted strands: Working lives of Indian women migrants in New Zealand. *Human Relations*, 58(10), 1277-1299.
- Pio, E. (2006). The borderland of Solo songs and symphonies: Ethnic minority women entrepreneurs in New Zealand. *Journal of Enterprising Culture*, 14(3), 155-176.
- Pio, E. (2007a). Diversity management. In L. Gill, & E. Pio. (Eds.). *Organisation & Management* (235-254). Auckland, NZ: Pearson.
- Pio, E. (2007b). International Briefing 17: Training and development in New Zealand. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 11(1), 71-83.
- Pio, E. (2008). *Sari: Indian women at work in New Zealand*. Wellington: Dunmore.
- Pio, E., & Haigh, N. (2007). Towards a pedagogy of inspirational Parables. *Education and Training*, 49(2), 77-90.
- Ross, C. (2004). Ethnic minority personnel careers: Hindrances and hopes. *Personnel Review*, 33(4), 468-484.
- Turner, C. (2002). Women of colour in academe. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(1), 74-93.

APPENDIX 1

The Dragon and the Phoenix

(By C. Crisan, X. Guo, A. Wong & Y. Xing)

John Price sighed when he reviewed the latest applicant's details. Not only was the applicant a female, she was Chinese. John, as the Project Manager of one of New Zealand's power line companies, knows that the high-tension cable business is still very much a man's world. But Melanie An Ziao Lian's qualifications were impeccable, having graduated with high marks from a local university in the electrical field. Company protocol states that he at least interview her based on that alone. However, he has very serious doubts about her ability to fit into the company's culture, particularly amongst the more rough and tumble linesmen.

His first impression of Melanie An only deepened his doubts. To say that the young Chinese woman was petite is an understatement. She could not be more than 5 feet tall and probably weighed only ninety pounds soaking wet. John simply could not envision her climbing a pylon with the full gear needed to repair and maintain the power-lines. When she spoke however, John Price was handed his first surprise of the day. Melanie An spoke flawless English, with only a hint of an accent from her native China. As the interview continued, John Price asked her point blank about her views on her ability to do the job and to fit into the culture of the company. He explained his reservations about her capacity to do either. Melanie was silent for a while and then said, "There is an ancient Chinese story of a master swordsman named Hsien Tjen who fell in love with the daughter of a Japanese envoy to the Chinese Emperor's court. They were married and for a while, their lives were happy. Then, as was usual in those days, conflict loomed, a rebellion against the Emperor. Tsien Tjen, being the Emperor's champion, was sent to put down that rebellion.

As he was getting ready to go to war, his wife, Tomiko, requested that she accompany him. In ancient China, this was not a done thing, and so he refused. They quarrelled, but he prevailed. He left her with ill feelings between them. It was something that he felt could be patched up later, when things were more peaceful.

But things did not go as planned. The rebellion was larger than they had realised and the small force the Emperor assigned to him was not enough. What was supposed to be a quick victory turned into a long retreat for the Emperor's forces. On this retreat, Tsien Tjen was cut off from his troops and had to take refuge in an abandoned farmhouse. There, despite all his skill, he was eventually surrounded by a group of rebels.

As one of the rebels raised his spear for the deathblow, he stiffened and fell to one side. The man was obviously dead. Another and then a third dropped, and the superstitious rebels fled, crying out about foul magic and evil spirits. Tsien Tjen examined the first rebel and found a needle in the man's neck. When he looked up again, a familiar figure was standing quietly by his side.

"In your society, women do not fight," Tomiko said quietly. "But in my society women are as deadly as men."

John Price sat in his office after Melanie had departed. The young woman had given him a lot to think about.