"Workforce Diversity" is a key word for organizations and leaders of today’s organizations and has become crucial concept in global workplaces. Diversity encompasses within itself a vast reference to all facets of mankind, be it gender, language, culture, race, religion or creed. With shrinking horizons and ever expanding business complexities, this word portrays the face of 21st century organization. Workforce diversity is a multi-faceted concept that will continue to evolve as more corporate companies move towards a global marketplace. Workforce diversity refers to organizations that are becoming more heterogeneous people groups in terms of culture, gender, age, race, and education background (Robbins, 2009). A diverse workforce for instance, includes heterogeneous mixture of culture, gender, age, ethnicity, and education background. According to Robbins (2009), workforce diversity has important implications towards management practices and policies. Any business that intends to be successful must have a borderless view and an underlying commitment, ensuring that, workforce diversity is part of its day-today business conduct. The world's increasing globalization requires more interaction among people from diverse cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds than ever before. People no longer live and work in an insular marketplace; they are now part of a worldwide economy with competition coming from nearly every part of the continent. Since diversity remains a significant organizational challenge, employers and employees must learn the skills needed in a multicultural work environment.

Diversity includes all groups of people at all levels in the company. Diversity requires a type of organizational culture in which each employee can pursue his or her career aspirations without being inhibited by gender, race, nationality, religion, or other factors that are irrelevant to performance (Bryan, 1999). Managing diversity means enabling diverse workforce to perform its full potential in an equitable work environment where no one group has an advantage or disadvantage (Torres and Bruxelles, 1992).

Organizational members must be prepared to teach oneself and others within their organizations to value multicultural differences in both associates and customers so that
everyone is treated with dignity. With the advent of globalization in India, having a workforce that closely mirrors the marketplace enables organizations to better understand and serve the needs of an increasingly diverse customer base. A diverse workforce also allows a broader view of the world and to identify issues that truly matter. And the unique perspectives that diverse employees bring to the organization enable creative approaches and innovative solutions for its customers and communities besides helping themselves. Acceptance of diversity is generally implied as acknowledging, understanding, valuing, and celebrating differences and similarities among people (Esty, et al., 1995). If employees do not accept and value differences, and do not recognize the importance of diversity management initiatives, the diversity management practices are likely to have very low probability of success. As the perceptions differ amongst employee groups, management should understand variations in accepting diversity among different diverse groups in workforce and the knowledge about the influence of diversity obstacles and diversity practices on the acceptance of diversity (Vidhu, 2001; Kundu, 2003; Gaze, 2010).

**Workforce diversity in India:** Today, India stands tall with its diverse culture, considerably huge population, and economic disparity. This is one of the fastest growing developing nations in the world. It is a country, with the largest English speaking population and the world’s largest base of middle class that has led the spur of growth. Indian work organizations respect and exhibit vast diversity through its employees, wherein, every organization in itself represents a mini India with its cultural flavours as people from varied religion, ethnic group, caste and language working together for a common organizational goal (Rangnekar et al 2009; Sinha et al 1990, 1997). Modern industries in India, including IT industry have been influenced by the global trend, are essentially incorporating diversity in several dimensions. Though Indian law doesn’t necessitate a formal diversity policy, organizations are initiating several diversity management programs and policies to build a positive diversity climate. The Information Technology (IT) sector has become one of the most significant growth catalysts for the Indian economy and it is one of the industries, which have pronounced the incorporation of workforce diversity in organizational level. In addition to fuelling India’s economy, this industry is also positively influencing the lives of several Indians through direct and indirect contribution to various socio-economic parameters such as employment, standard of living and diversity among others. The industry has played a significant role in
transforming India’s image from a slow moving bureaucratic economy to a land of innovative entrepreneurs and a global player in providing world class technology solutions and business services. Bangalore, today, has the largest concentration of Information Technology industries in India.

The present research focuses on the study of workforce diversity with respect to two important dimensions, i.e. cultural diversity and gender diversity. Cultural diversity is observed by the inclusion of employees from different nations, languages, regional groups, religion groups and heterogeneous cultural identity groups in the workplace. Another aspect of workforce diversity studied in the research is gender diversity. Gender diversity means the inclusion of female employees in addition to the normal roles of male employees in the workplace. By promoting and employing gender diversity, the workplace earns not only professional acclaim but also, employee and customer loyalty. Hence, employers of organizations are focusing on successful diversity management programs and practices to get positive diversity climate, where differences and similarities of workforce is valued, accepted and celebrated.

The sample consisted of 600 IT employees from Bangalore city, covering IT services and ITES services companies. The findings and outcome of this research will be beneficial to the IT organizations in India. This research work identifies the differences in perceptions about accepting diversity among different categories of respondents, which provides useful direction to employers and managers in framing various diversity polices and initiatives. The study will bring in sharp focus about the need of diversity programs and practices to enhance the acceptance of diversity among employees, and provides elaborated ideas about various obstacles to diversity in industry. The work examines the influence of diversity programs and obstacles on the acceptance of cultural and gender diversity in IT organizations.

Outline of the study: The research comprises five chapters.

- First chapter deals with brief explanation about introduction to the study, background of workforce diversity in world and India, workforce diversity concepts in IT sector, overview of Information Technology sector in India and diversity management initiatives taken by prominent Indian IT companies in Bangalore. The chapter narrates
the importance of workforce diversity and diversity management initiatives, which are inevitable to the multinational organizations, operating in the globalized scenario. The scope and significance of the study, need for the study are the other parts of the chapter.

• **Second chapter** is the review of related literature. The review of studies on workforce diversity, diversity management, diversity obstacles, acceptance of diversity and difference in perceptions among demographic variables, relationship of diversity management practices and performance, and impact on diversity acceptance climate and employee effectiveness are focused. The chapter provides direction for present research by giving insights from various researches conducted in India and abroad at different sectors across the world, and also provides a base for the present research, considering the gaps exist in the area of workforce diversity and management.

• **Third chapter** describes the methodology of the study. Objectives, research design, statement of the problem, operational definitions of the variables under investigation, research objectives, sample size, sampling technique, and tools adopted for the study, description of the statistical tools, pilot study and reliability of the instruments have been discussed in the chapter. The chapter also provides details about administration of the questionnaire, limitations of the research work.

• **Fourth chapter** focuses on analysis and interpretation of the data. With the help of framed hypotheses, the study substantiates the proposed research objectives. For the data analysis, the statistical package SPSS, version 6, has been used and the results are discussed in detail.

• **Fifth chapter** has been arranged with the description findings and discussions of the study, implications of the research for academics, policy makers and for HR managers. The chapter also provides avenue for further researches and points out some tentative suggestions in the domain and conclusion part of the study.