3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PLAN

3.1. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research is to find answers to the research questions posed in page no: 15. To achieve this exploratory design research is employed. Exploratory research design explores the research topic with varying levels of depth and can come in two forms: either a new topic or a new angle “Exploratory research tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been done” (Brown, 2006).

- One of the primary objectives of this study is to trace the evolution and significance of workforce diversity dimensions- Gender, Disability, Nationality, Sexual orientation, Religion and Caste in the context of Indian environment, to explore the influence of the environment in shaping the work force diversity and in turn examine the manifestations of these diversity dimensions in Indian IT and ITES. It also involved providing an ‘as is’ portrayal of the current status of inclusivity in Indian IT and ITES industry in terms of the diversity dimensions under study. Looking closer at the dimensions under study, there have been research studies on the gender diversity dimension aspect. These studies mainly concentrate on statistics and organizational initiatives than delving deep to understand the efficacy of the initiatives. In regards to disability, sexual orientation, nationality and caste, these dimensions are not much explored. Also a comprehensive approach to study these dimensions in the context of the environment has not been seen. All these reasons made exploratory research design the most suitable approach to use in attaining the objectives.

Exploratory research utilises inductive reasoning. In inductive reasoning, we begin with specific observations and measures, begin to detect patterns and regularities and finally end up developing general conclusions. The objective of exploratory research is to identify key issues and key variables. The exploration of phenomena in this way may help the researcher’s need for better understanding, may test the feasibility of a more extensive study, or determine the best methods to be used in a subsequent study. Also another prerequisite of exploratory research, is that the objectives needs to be defined.
Thus this research explores the role and impact the society, culture, laws in the environment the industry operate, inherent characteristics of the industry and the role of third party associations in shaping and influencing workforce diversity. It also aims to provide a current status of the IT and ITES sector in terms of the diversity dimensions – Gender, Disability, Nationality, Sexual Orientation and Religion and Race along with identifying the variables that influences it. Keeping this in mind the research questions and objectives are defined to provide structure and direction to the research.

3.2. Data collection Methods

Quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection are used in this research. Combination of both the methods are often employed in support of each other as both these research methods compliments each other.

3.2.1. Qualitative Research

- To gain an understanding of underlying reasons and motivations
- To provide insights into the setting of a problem, generating ideas and/or hypotheses for later quantitative research
- To uncover prevalent trends in thought and opinion

3.2.2. Quantitative Research

- To quantify data and generalize results from a sample to the population of interest
- To measure the incidence of various views and opinions in a chosen sample
- Sometimes followed by qualitative research which is used to explore some findings further

3.3. Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary sources are used in research. The first stage of research was investigative in nature. It involved collecting and analysing information to understand and interpret the role of societal elements. This entailed

- An extensive literature review on the concepts and practices of diversity was done prior to delving into the core matter of research. This helped in obtaining a comprehensive
knowledge in the subject area. An analysis of the existing literature helped in understanding the concepts, perspectives and providing the background necessary for the research.

- Review and analysis of major international treaties, landmark judgments, constitutional provisions, relevant workplace legislations in India and collecting information from sources like newspapers, internet, Journals and Magazines, Books, Reference materials, Journals, Electronic databases, Government publications to interpret the role of environment – Social, legal, political and cultural in the evolution of diversity dimensions under study was done. Every effort is done to authenticate the secondary sources.
- In-depth interviews and discussions with experts helped in understanding the dynamics of diversity.

To collect data pertinent to the diversity dimensions - Gender, Disability, Nationality, Sexual Orientation, Caste, Religion in IT and ITES the following methodologies was used.

- Organizational Survey

To facilitate the survey a questionnaire was prepared. The questionnaire focuses on workforce diversity policies and initiatives of organizations in Indian IT and ITES sector. The questionnaire was sent to the organizations in IT and ITES sector and the collective results were tabulated under the respective headings. There was reluctance on the part of many organizations to which the questionnaire was sent to part with diversity specific data. Out of the 60 questionnaire sent 20 responses were received. Out of these responses 40% has missing data.

Due to this, to supplement, the research strategy was revised to analyse information from secondary sources which mainly included company websites and published information by the organizations. The questions in the formulated questionnaire formed the basis for collection of data regarding the diversity and the dimensions in organizations. In total, workforce diversity practices and inclusivity endeavours of fifty organizations were analysed.

- Focus group interviews of IT& ITES employees. Focus group interviews were sessions which lasted approximately 40 minutes. The purpose of the focus interviews was to attain the employee perspective in regards to diversity. A total of 10 focus group interviews
were done. Focus of interviews was diversity policies and inclusivity practices in their organization. All the responses were recorded and analysed. The number of participants ranged from 7 to 10.

- Review of EEO and diversity policies of IT and ITES companies
- Structured interviews with HR professionals. The questions in the questionnaire served as format for the interviews with HR professionals. The focus of the interview was to understand the extent and focus of the diversity initiatives in their organization and collect their views on current and future inclusivity patterns in IT and ITES industry. The interview sessions lasted 30 to 45 minutes.
- In-depth Interviews with Researchers, Experts and people belonging to particular group of diversity dimension in the study – Totally 12 in-depth interviews were done. Two interviews with experts, five interviews were done with researchers, four interviews with employees who had disability, one interview in regards to sexual orientation.

Thus by employing multiple methods of data collection a composite picture which collates the points of view of organization, employees and experts and related third parties was evolved.