

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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MANAGING DIVERSITY AND MULTICULTURALISM FOR ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

The concept of multiculturalism and diversity embodies a new orientation towards the management of human resources. It is a multifaceted concept and has become a demographical reality across the globe due to expansion of domestic firms into global organizations. Firms that are moving in the direction of creating diversity at workplace can break upon a wide range of skills together with perhaps those which it may never have to use, but are likely to security it out when its highest probability assumption about future fail to deliver results. This paper explains the concept of multiculturalism, diversity and total quality diversity model. The aims of the paper are to give details of multiculturalism and diversity with the help of structural change and its implication for business and managers to understand how to manage multiculturalism and diversity issue at workplace. The paper conclude by bringing the light on the guidelines of the diversity management that tracks the various areas of diversity issues that need to be taken care in organizations.

KEYWORDS

Diversity, Globalization, Multiculturalism, Total quality management, Workforce.

INTRODUCTION

In an age of cultural pluralism, multiculturalism is needed to manage diversity efficiently. In essence, then, multiculturalism is the art of managing diversity in a total quality manner. It is the only option open to educators, leaders and administrators in an ever-increasing culturally pluralistic environment. In the business world the process of multiculturalism is best maintained through managing diversity it is an approach to business and human relations that acknowledge and respects the contributions which the diverse racial and ethnic groups, as well as women, have made to society, and incorporates these offerings in an overall program of human resources management which meets the needs of an ever-changing society and its demands on business, and is sensitive to the personal and social development of all entities concerned.

Diversity offers benefits like creativity, resistance against lawsuits, political favourers, better decisions, and better knowledge of markets. The cross border reach on corporations has been growing rapidly for the past two decades. It has now become the order of the day. These developments have given rise to new organization that brings together individuals and groups from different national and organizational cultures. Employees need to be prepare to be able to effectively handle inter cultural tasks. Wederspahn M Garry (2002).

Multicultural, multinational, multilingual communities emerged due to rapid expansion of comprehensive economy, worldwide opportunities and advancement in communications. Organizations concerned with the bottom line the maximizing of profit, whether material or nonmaterial are recognizing this new direction is the best way to manage their human resources across the globe. Workforce diversity refers to the composition of work units in terms of the cultural or demographic characteristics that are salient and symbolically meaningful in the relationships among group members. Although generally thought of as the purview of management research, the topic of workforce diversity draws from and is relevant to research from sociology and psychology Manish K Singh and Dutta Andrew (2003).

The art of managing diversity is of great concern to all persons charged with the responsibility of overseeing the work of others. Organizations, however, that try to force today's reality into yesterday's management styles will seriously lay on the line the viability of their enterprise. Beyond the challenge of creating a humane working environment where management and staff of diverse backgrounds and experiences learn to appreciate each other, brings additional one of changing the structural arrangements.

THE CONCEPT OF MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism is the cultural diversity of communities and the policies that promote this diversity. As a descriptive term, multiculturalism is the simple fact of cultural diversity and the demographic make-up of a specific place, sometimes at the organizational level, schools, businesses, neighbourhoods, cities, or nations. As a prescriptive term, multiculturalism encourages ideologies and policies that promote this diversity or its institutionalization. Kevin Bloor (2010).

Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within a complete cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.

One also needs to understand that there are number of factors which determine the issues of managing multiculturalism especially in relation to organizations. Specific cultural traits which individuals develop as a result of socialization process embedded in their own country's culture is one such factor. Managing cultural diversity in organization perhaps lies in understanding and unleashing the moral commitment on these different subcultures that are consistent with those of the organization. A research by the well-known theorist Geert Hofstede has concluded with the help of Geert Hofstede Model (1990) that societies may differ along four major cultural dimensions: Power distance is the degree to which society accepts inequalities in organizational relationship. The concept assumes that ethical or unethical behaviour in organizations is learnt through the process of interacting with peers rather than the superior. The practical implications stemming from the results of the application of this concept is that, in cultures where the degree of power distance is low or moderate, individual look more to their peers than to their superiors for guidance in terms of ethical conduct.

Uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which Individuals in a society feel threatened by situations that is unstructured, unclear or unpredictable. Due to differential norms and conducts of behaviour or the absences of formalized codes of conduct in a given culture, individuals may experience ambiguity in organizations when faced with different culture and value system. It has been found that individual from high uncertainty avoidance cultures are more likely to consider organizational code of ethics when forming their own de-ontological norms than those hailing from low uncertainty avoidance cultures.

Individualism is the extent to which individuals in a society view themselves as individuals or a part of a large group. The concept assumes that ethical or unethical behaviour in organizations is sometimes determined by the extent to which individual consider the group as being more important than themselves or vice-versa. Hence employees from individualistic culture propelled by their own self interest will tend to be influenced less organizational code of ethics. Masculinity is the extent to which a society's dominant values stress assertiveness and materialism versus concern for people and quality of life. The concept

assumes that individuals from highly masculine cultures may be less likely than those from highly feminine cultures to be influenced by organizational codes of ethics.

STEPS TO MANAGE MULTICULTURALISM

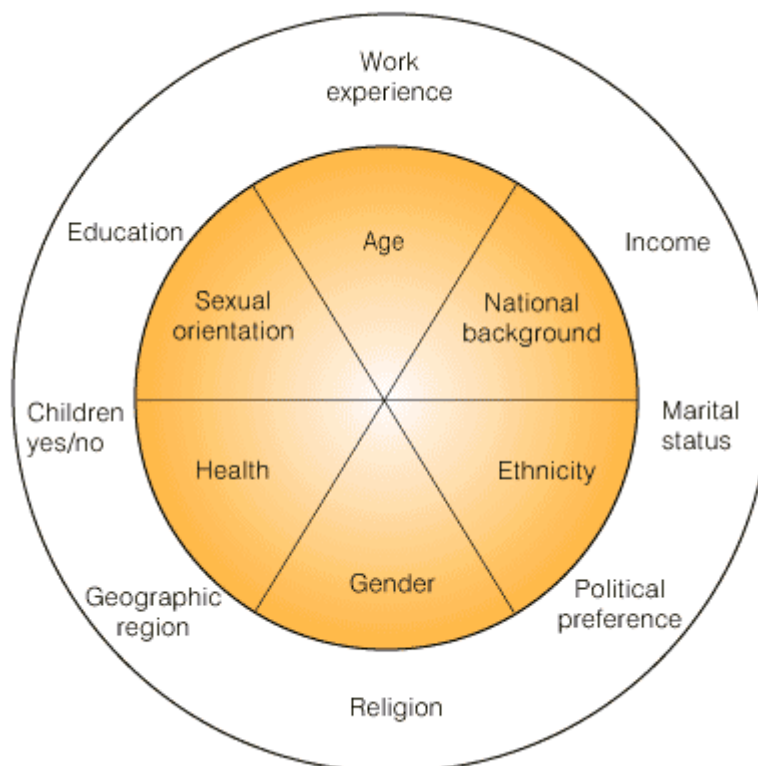
1. Recruitment and selection must be performance based
2. Training and development on cross-cultural differences
3. Developing group harmony
4. Distribute power according to each person's ability to contribute to the task
5. Reduce ethnic stereotypes
6. Empower group decision making

Today's employment pool is dramatically different than in the past. A sole uniform group no longer dominates that. People now devastatingly represent the labour force pool from a vast array of background and life experiences. It has become now a resource vital for companies to have a diversified pool of talent. That's why Organizations are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality.

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

Merriam Webster (2010) defines diversity as the inclusion of a variety of individuals differing in race, gender, or culture in a group or organization. Variety constitutes some inherent degree of uniqueness; a noticeable difference from others, which allows for new, potentially unconventional problem evaluation, constructive disagreement, and the deriving of new solutions and approaches to persistent challenges. Workforce Diversity has changed in recent year's .Not long ago, diversity referred to a person's gender or ethnic group. Diversity today encompasses age, tenure in an organization, educational background, sexual orientation or preference, physical abilities or qualities and social status, economic status, lifestyle, ethnicity and gender among many other characteristics.

FIG. 1



Source: <http://www.sqaki.com/3/DiversityDimensions/screenshot.gif>

Usually speaking, the term "employees Diversity" refers to policies and practices that seek to include people within workers who are considered to be, in some way, different from those in the prevailing constituency. While most organizations will acknowledge the importance of diversity in business considerations, the full potential of a diverse workforce appears to have not yet been leveraged and exploited. Such suboptimal use may branch from organization's general level of uncertainty of how to best quantify diversity related reward within the circumstance of typical business oriented key performance indicators, such as turnover, innovation and product development.

Organizations that manage their miscellaneous workforce can augment their productivity considerably through many ways. Cultural diversity describes a social system comprising people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance (Amaram, 2007). Organizations that manage their diverse workforce can amplify their output through Social Responsibility, Legal Requirement, marketing Strategy, and Improved Management Quality.

Kochan and colleagues (2002) found that, the predominant psychological concepts behind diversity initiatives revolve around two main principles. The first centres on recognizing, understanding, and overcoming in-group-out-group dynamics, while the second aims to improve attribution and the resulting attitudinal behavioural linkages of the majority group. Workplace related in group dynamics occurs whenever the cohesion of an existing group is challenged by the arrival of some type of foreign, outside influence.

With possibly only limited exposure to diverse employees and their individual idiosyncrasies, majority group members may trust in, and provide more attention to their in-kind colleagues, which thus forms the in-group. Such dynamics carry the high potential for discrimination and suboptimal utilization of group member's diverse knowledge, skills, and abilities (Tesluk & Mathieu, 1999) Dass and Parker (1999) outline the three most common strategic responses; each of them ultimately rooted in the particular organizational culture and the resultant values, beliefs, and behaviour.

Leveraging diversity's benefits therefore seems to require a group's commitment to collectively (rather than individual-competitively) achieve optimal results, a principled leadership, and the flexibility to re evaluate, revise, and implement decisions based on newly discovered alternatives (Bassett-Jones, 2005).

As showcased by Bassett-Jones (2005) diversity effects on group cohesion and concert are influenced by an organization's inherent strategic negotiation between continuous innovation, and maintaining its social identity.

MANAGING DIVERSITY

As Robinson and Dechant (1997) state, organizational performance is directly related to team and subsequently to individual performance, as the sum of both ultimately defines the long-term financial standing and operational success. The first dimension of total quality dimension, focused on the individual, is the horizontal dimension concerned with embracing and valuing differences. This area is of tremendous importance, since staff and administration that do not get along, nor understand each other, are not able to maximize their greatest potential for optimal excellence. Here is where workshops on prejudice, cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication and conflict resolution are most helpful.

Second dimension, focused on the institution, is the vertical dimension fretful with harnessing and empowering diversity, the area that deals not only with corporate culture and construction, the way tasks are divided to accomplish the mission of the company, but also with thinking systems. This dimension holds the key to effecting the greatest change in a company, for it is here where exclusion finds it most comfortable home.

But change must be more than merely surface, such as totalling diverse looking inhabitants to the business. It must also examine in what ways the vision, values; mission and corporate structure of the corporation contribute or undermine effective utilization of the assets all persons bring to a work environment. Change at both of these dimensions results in Cultural Inclusion at the centre, where "living diversity" takes place. Wright, Ferris, Hiller, and Kroll (1995) compared companies with exemplary diversity management to those that had to pay legal damages to settle discrimination lawsuits.

This holistic model of managing diversity is called total quality diversity. Sketch the essential idea of quality from W. Edward Deming, who popularized the idea of quality, total quality management, the model goes beyond Deming, in that diversity was never an aspect of his model, largely because he worked for many years in Japan, a most homogeneous society. The total quality diversity model shows how prohibiting, as the model of the past, has been replaced by inclusion, the coming together at the centre of the vision-values-mission of the organization in Cultural enclosure. Dr. W. Edwards Deming taught that by adopting appropriate principles of management, organizations can increase quality and simultaneously reduce costs (by reducing waste, rework, staff attrition and litigation while increasing customer value). The key is to practice continual improvement and think of manufacturing as a system, not as bits and pieces.

CONCLUSION

Managing multiculturalism and diversity is an challenging aspect as well as innovative process. For whichever of these reasons that motivates them, it is clear that companies that diversify their workforces will have a distinct competitive advantage over other companies. Further, it is clear that the greatest benefits of workforce diversity will be experienced, not by the companies that have learned to employ people *in spite of* their differences, but by the companies that have learned to employ people because of knowledge and experiences in diverse areas. Integrating philosophy of total quality management into management of multiculturalism and diversity adds advantage to understand the employee's values, beliefs and ethical approaches. In Short management philosophies and practices are ethnically conditioned; it stands to the reason that there is much to be gained by including cultural studies in all executive or professional development. Diversity training must be provided for all employees in organization to deal with cultural, ethnic and knowledge diversity.

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