

Managing Workplace Diversity through Motivation and Leadership

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Abstract-Culture is an important dimension while managing diverse workforce. Understanding and valuing cultural differences helps the organization to frame sound workforce management strategy and in developing positive workplace outcomes. Many cross-cultural studies reflected that understanding of cross-cultural leadership and motivation helps international managers to get succeed in their efforts while working with diverse workforce. Managers working in global arena have to take cultural differences and values into the main consideration while formulating an effective motivation and leadership strategy. This paper is a conceptual paper highlighting the concept and few challenges of workforce diversity, application of motivation and leadership practices in cross- cultural context and also discusses the real life diversity management examples taken from leading IT companies. This gives idea to management policy makers for designing a culturally oriented motivational and leadership strategy for managing diversified workforce.

Key words- Diversity, Cross-culture, Motivation, Leadership

I. INTRODUCTION

Culture has a significant impact on any organization especially multinational corporations consisting of expatriates, which makes it inevitable to managing the changing nature of workforce. This changing nature of workforce is because of LPG (Liberalization, privatization and globalization) model. The globalization assimilates the economies of world and facilitates in conducting business in various ways as technology is also advancing (Pleissir, 2009). People play a critical role in the success or failure of any organization. Efficacy of the business depends upon the sound management policies, human resource development strategy, greater motivation, commitment of people, and optimization of all resources and in current global context, organizations' willingness to manage diverse workforce through effective human resource management strategies.

In the international context, considering culture is a hot topic of discussion today, thus it becomes crucial for the today's organizations to recognize cultural challenges and formulate policies and practices which help in meeting global competitiveness, flexibility, and in building learning capabilities (Higgs, 1996).

Understanding cultural dimensions helps in formulation of effective HR strategies and better management of people performance. This study aims to convey the readers about the significance of cultural dimensions while motivating and leading diversified workforce.

1.1 Conceptualizing workplace diversity

Workplace diversity in a global context is defined as perceived common characteristics within a given cultural context, and differences between the people on the basis of race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, education, social background and more. Few research studies classified diversity into two parts including tangible or visible diversity, like- gender, race and physical disability and intangible or invisible diversity like- religion, culture, education, tenure with an organization. (Mor-Barak, Michàlle E., 2005). Diversity management is understanding of differences among employees and management of these differences as a strategy for performing organizational works effectively.

According to Ruffino (1999), “The mixture of benefits from managing diversity includes procurement and retention of best talent, expanding organizational flexibility, increased market share, reducing cost, better innovations, effective resolution of problems, high productivity and organizational profit.”

1.2. Challenges of diversity at the workplace

To take full advantage of workplace diversity, organization has to face many challenges such as communication barriers due to difference in perception, cultural background, and language differences that lead to lack of team spirit and reduced morale. Resistance to adapt change is due to changing social and cultural composition of workplace that pose the most important challenge before the organizational leaders as how to motivate and lead the diversified employees, coming from different cultural backgrounds carrying within them different expectations, different behavioral pattern, attitudinal differences and semantic barriers . Understanding and studying this challenge became essential due to rising number of mergers, joint ventures and strategic alliances in recent years. This present paper highlights some of motivational and leadership practices used in dealing with diversified workforce in global context.

II. MOTIVATING AND LEADING DIVERSIFIED WORKFORCE

Managing people is always a challenging issue for managers working with diversified workforce. While they start managing people of different cultural orientations, two practices are most desirable, i.e., motivating and leading people to succeed in international and global projects. That said how to motivate employees remains a frustrating and difficult process for many managers and adding cross-cultural issues to the mix make the question of employee motivation more complex. For example motivation of employees and their responses to feedback may differ significantly depending on cultural factors, all the talk about “globalization” and value convergence notwithstanding (Communal and Senior, 1999). In fact cultural values such as the value given to hard work and thrift may influence employee motivation in ways that can help to explain diverse economic development rates across nations (Granato, Inglehart and Leblang, 1996). Cultural values may influence what kind of psychological contract employees have with their employers.

2.1 Motivation theories and their application in diverse cultures

It is essential to find out the ways to motivate employees for leading the higher productivity and better attitudes especially while dealing with diverse workforce. Managers working in global context are advised to consider the differences of personalities, age, gender and races of employees while attempting to motivate workforce (Puryear, 2018) as shown in figure 1. It is also advisable to understand the application of various motivation theories while managing and leading diverse workforce in cross-cultural context.

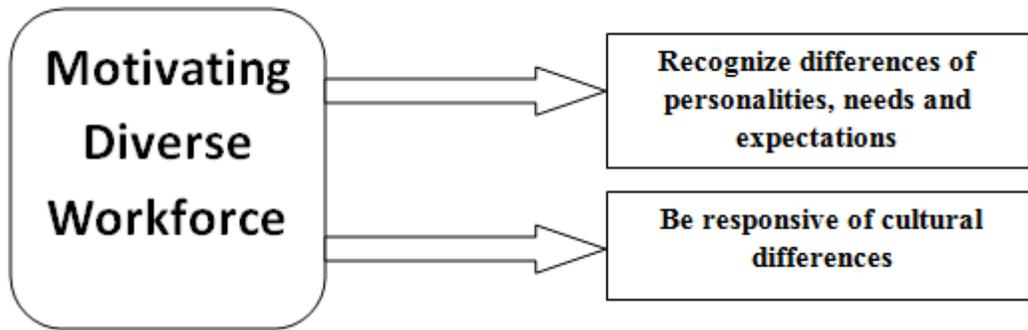


Figure 1: Motivating diversified workforce,
Source: <http://slideplayer.com/slide/9165844/>

2.2 Applying Maslow's need hierarchy theory

Maslow said that people have five needs that are triggered in a hierarchical fashion (Maslow, 1970). Employee's motivation to follow higher order needs is very strong in highly industrialized countries, with lower order survival needs more significant in less developed countries. Many workers in poor countries may not have the luxury of pursuing self actualization if their survival of safety is in question (Bhagat and Quaid, 1982; Sweeney and McFarlin, 2008). Some experts feel that Maslow's hierarchy is a philosophy that reflects American values. Its emphasis on higher order growth needs is especially popular in the United States because American culture strongly values individualism and risk taking.

2.3 Applying Herzberg's two factor approach

One study found workers in Zambia generally matched Herzberg two factor approach with growth needs and other intrinsic factor associated with high motivation and poor relationships and bad working conditions associated with dissatisfaction (Sweeney and McFarlin, 2008). In another study British managers were more interested in responsibility and autonomy than their French counterparts.

The French on the other hand were more interested in security, fringe benefits and good working conditions than their British colleagues. Generally speaking these results imply that job enrichment efforts will be easier to implement in Britain than in France. Herzberg motivators may be viewed as a way to enhance individual achievement. Managers in multinational firms should take care to learn about the local cultural environment in depth before attempting any motivational and job enrichment effort (Sweeney and McFarlin, 2008).

2.4 Applying Equity theory

Equity theory contends that when employees perceive that they have not been treated fairly they are motivated to bring back a sense of equality (Adams, 1965). This occur when employees compare themselves with other employees in terms of job outcomes (e.g. pay, benefits) and job inputs (e.g. effort, skill). When the outcomes to inputs are in equilibrium employee automatically start feeling satisfaction. If it is not employees often try to bring back the balance in some way (McFarlin and Frone, 1990; Sweeney and McFarlin, 2008).

Applying equity concepts in different cultures that said how different cultures define, interpret and assess fairness can vary considerably often in ways that are poorly understood (Morris and leung, 2000). Nevertheless, at the risk of generalizing existing cultures that value individualism tend to embrace equity concepts. In such cultures individual performance is vital (inputs) and must be rewarded based on deservingness (outcomes). In collectivist cultures rewards are distributed equally regardless of performance to protect harmony and cohesiveness among group members (Hofstede, 1984; Sweeney and McFarlin, 2008). Another study illustrates how social changes may affect reward distribution preferences. In recent years many Americans have become more concerned with cooperation and less concerned with wealth. The opposite trend is happening in china as it moves away from traditional egalitarian practices (Sweeney and McFarlin, 2008).

Overall it can be suggested that international managers should explicitly take cultural dimensions into consideration when crafting and implementing motivation strategies abroad (Gomez-Mejia and Welbourne, 1991). International managers may not recognize how their own values and biases affect the motivation strategies they use (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003). Researchers embrace the idea that whatever motivational strategy is adopted, it should be culturally synergistic.

2.5 Key leadership issues in multinationals

Leader must take cultural values into account to be effective. In fact some American, European and Japanese multinationals have created comprehensive leadership programs to develop more effective international managers. General electric, Unilever, Nokia, and Sony corporation are just such examples (Ayman ,Kreicker and Masztal, 1994).

Other multinational want to substitute their corporate values for the local values that they encounter in various countries. These multinational believe that by emphasizing corporate values, a more homogeneous international work force can be created. This would allow managers to use similar leadership strategies everywhere even if the multinational operate in dozens of countries and have thousands of foreign employees. Research suggested the best option for multinational may be training and career development programs aimed at developing leadership skills throughout the corporation (Alder and Bartholomew, 1992). But that's just of the story. Companies need to recognize their aspirant international managers before time, using valid and trustworthy methods (Spreitzer, McCall and Mahoney, 1997) and once that happens, it will take managers time to acquire the skills for being effective cross cultural leaders.

An effective global leader is one who understands and value differences among people, shows dynamism, good in global business acumen, having intercultural and language competence, has a good idea of values and ideals, and can guide and motivate team members for developing cross-cultural sensitivity and making adjustment with diverse groups as shown in figure 2.



Figure 2: Global Leader

Source: <https://www.berlitz.com.sg/g/glt-menu/global-leadership-training>

Culture can impact how employee perceives leader style and behavior. Leaders also must express their behavior in culturally specific ways to be effective. In essence, leadership style must be defined in terms of its core structure and its particular appearance in specific culture. For example, American and Japanese leaders may agree that being kind and supportive is essential for success. In the individualistic United States, a manager as a good leader might express concern by demonstrating respect for subordinate's idea. In collectivistic Japan, however a manager can express support by sparing good time with subordinates in group (Doktor, 1990).

III. MANAGING DIVERSITY-CORPORATE PERSPECTIVE

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), one of known top IT services, consulting and business solutions organization, has been presented with the 'Top Workforce' award at the third annual Diversity and Inclusion (DANDI) Awards organized in New York on December 1, 2014. TCS offered this award for making efforts in leading diverse workforce in its industry, employing workforce from more than hundred ethnic groups, of which more than 100,000 are female. TCS has also contributed for support of education, motivation and mentoring of women and deprived groups.

Wipro Technologies is having an employee base of about one Lac, including people from seventy four nationalities, spread across fifty four countries, is dedicated to leveraging diversity through valuable leadership, commitment and accountability which advance the company's show and also improves innovation. Wipro strives to catch the attention of and retain the best talent from a globally diverse talent pool which helps for better client services and gives a strong competitive frame in the global market place. Wipro's diversity program is fabricated on four important pillars including gender, nationality and people with disabilities and deprived.

In current competitive context, IBM also follows a principle of creating diversity at the workplace. It believes that promoting diversity not only help in creating good performances but also gives competitive advantage and build a bridge between the workplace and the marketplace.

IV. DISCUSSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Today it is globalized era that is characterized by diversified workforce and all individuals carry their own mindset and working style because of different socio-cultural background. Thus, it becomes imperative not just to procure and develop but also to motivate and lead workforce in a globalized way.

A successful leader is expected to have a better knowledge of behavioral, attitudinal and cultural differences among people for handling them and keeping all as a part of one team. International managers as influential leaders need to have good idea of varying cross-cultural characteristics for understanding differences of people behavior, habits, expectations and core beliefs. These understandings will guide them as effective leaders for managing and motivating people, channelizing their efforts constructively and aligning them with organizational vision.

This paper is useful for all managers working with international and multinational firms and gives them little bit idea of various managerial tactics for handling diversified workforce. Developing understanding with culturally oriented management practices can help managers to handle diverse workforce more smartly resulting into high workplace productivity. Future researchers are advised to make use of various other techniques for empirically testing the impact of culture on employees and organizational outcomes.

One should Remember "Creating and managing a diverse workforce is a process, not a destination".
R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr.

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