LEADERS WITH MANAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND COMMUNICATION[*]

*Nayika Kamales and Helena Knorr

Point Park University, USA

*Email: nk361@Kent.ac.uk

Abstract

This research has an objective. To study cultural diversity is an interesting topic to study because it could bring a lot of benefits comes to the workplace such as creativity, innovation, higher performance, a lower rate of turn over (retention) and decreasing conflicts between people. As a result, people would be happy to work together with understanding every cultures or difference. Therefore, as a leader, leadership skill is very important tools to manage and can cause a lot of advantages. In this research paper would present the importance of diversity and the obstacles for diversity in the workplace. It also includes the recognizing of cultural differences to increase more understanding in all cultures.

Keywords: Diversity; Leadership; Cultural

---

[*] Fist Paper The 5th Greater Mekong Sub region International Conference (GMSIC) 2018

Introduction

What is diversity? This is a simple question now for everyone. Many people think diversity has only one dimension and only refer to race or ethnicity but actually it is more broaden. De Janasz et.al (2012) stated that diversity could be explained as attribute relevant from each person and can create a perception that this person differs from other people. In addition, it is not only one dimension because De Janasz continued explain about some differentiating attributes which means social-category differences (including race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, mental and physical abilities), differences in knowledge or skills, differences in values or belief, personality differences, organizational or community status differences and differences in social and network ties. Therefore, managing diversity is a very important issue for the organization to concern, especially as you are a manager. Managing diversity is related to supervising, coordinating and directing the differences in the organization. Hence, if a manager would like to succeed in managing diversity, communication skill is a significant tool that could facilitate a strategy to support and achieve the goal.

One of the most strength today is increasingly diverse in the workplace because diversity could bring innovation, new perspective and including fresh creative problem-solving in the workplace. In this paper, I would like to focus on cultural diversity in the workplace because it is really challenging for me to deal with many people who come from different countries or even in the same countries we have a variety of culture. Thus, culture is one of the most challenging issues that we should learn and understand because it could bring the employee to create an environment to support their work with potential and to ensure that organization goal are effective and being met. Furthermore, managing diversity could push everyone to learn and support one another each other to accomplish their work with respect.

Research Objective

This research intends to prove that the correct support to diversity will improve leadership, which in turn will motivate or inspire learning, broaden organization's market into global reach and cross-cultural expertise, including the development of the good relationship. Today, it is really important to understand the differences in many cultures

in the workplace and how these differences can support communication being effective between people among diverse cultures. Language and cultural differences are significant problems, which leads to miscommunication and conflicts occur in the workplace. Therefore, managers should concern about these points and try to improve the ability to understand cultural differences.

Benefits to be Received

There are a lot of benefits of this research, of which usually happen when the organization promotes and support diversity which is following this; the organization could improve their corporate culture because the diversity can cause innovation and increasing productivity. As a result, this point could motivate or inspire learning to occur within the organization. In addition, the organization could broaden their market and to be stable including developing a good relationship with clients and building stronger alliances with suppliers too. The more important things are to keep our employees to work with the company because they are happy here and feel free to work together due to the fact that the company understands them all and prevent a cultural sensitivity conflicts here. The last advantage is to expand the global reach and cross-cultural expertise of the organization.

Diverse teams are one of the significant strategies for managing diversity in the workplace because Diverse teams have a lot of advantages, especially in an open organizational culture because they are full of thoughts, encourages, continuous learning and changes that leads to innovation and exploration of new opportunities in the organization including reach the potential of their performance. Therefore, it is really crucial for the manager to put a special effort to support a diverse team and should reduce problems in any process to facilitate the team. In addition, making sure that everyone voices including minority group are heard and equality. Finally, the leader should ensure that team culture is in the same direction as organizational culture.

Literature Review

Many peoples still experienced in personal barriers fo accepting diversity, which prevents the diversity attitude from happening in the organization, including their own lives. There are some important obstacles that preventing people from accepting diversities the following;

Ethnocentrism

According to Dr. Martina C. (Executive Coach, Author, Leadership Skills & Organizational Coaching), Ethnocentrism is one of the most problems of accepting diversity because it means a tendency to regard one's own group, nation, and culture. As a consequence, people believe in their group attitude or opinion that they are right and against other people's beliefs. (linkedin.com, 2013) Therefore, conflicts could happen easier in the workplace because employees would not like to open themselves to diversity. Thus, the leader should not let it become to be an organizational culture.

Stereotypes

De Janasz et.al (2012) stated that stereotypes are the set of beliefs for a specific group and become to apply for universal for such as most of the poor people are uneducated or most of the Asian people cannot speak English well. According to Dr. Steele (Social psychologist and the dean at Stanford University School of Education), the phenomenon of stereotype threat is the main obstacle holding back the achievement of women, Blacks, and other underrepresented groups and this is a negative stereotype or the fear to do anything. (diversityinc.com, 2013) Therefore, to overcome stereotype is a significant key to getting rid of obstacles to succeed in the diversity policy in the workplace.

Discrimination and Prejudice

According to Kokemuller (2011), discrimination is an unfair treatment of someone because of distinguishing traits, especially if the diversity is based on distinguishing traits among workers. As a result, without a strategic plan for diversity policy would let increasing more discrimination in the workplace. This problem related to prejudice because prejudice is a negative attitude or beliefs toward a person based on their particular group. Thus, we can say prejudice could lead to discrimination problem too.

Backlash

De Janasz et.al (2012**)** claims that backlash is a negative reaction of underrepresented groups in the past that already gained and has a lot of power to influence others. As a consequence, the backlash could lead to fear, resentment and reverse discrimination.

Research Methodology

This paper is research mainly through document review. According to Connerley (2005), effective leaders could have the ability to shape the multicultural in the workplace to be accepting of individuals from genders, races, ethnicities, and religions without misunderstanding and conflicts. Thus, if managers would like to be effective in managing cultural diversity, they should start from them by asking themselves that how much they understand any cultures and how well they could managing multicultural in the workplace. Therefore, A self-assessment of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skill is an important tool to audit their own abilities to demonstrate cultural awareness, knowledge, and skill because the questions allow people to self-assess about three dimensions. To do this assessment, in any question if people think they could provide excellent answers, they should give themselves "A", for generally good give "B", for acceptable but not as good give "C" and unable to answer give "F". After finish this test, computer "grade point average" by counting A for 3 points, B for 2 points, C for 1 point and F for 0 point. Lastly, dividing the number of points you received by the number of items to calculate GPA. Then, people would know about their real ability to multicultural understanding, including realizing what are their strength and weakness that they need to improve. Furthermore, this is beneficial for the workplace to create a direction of managing cultural diversity policy and establish the training to support.

Self-awareness is really crucial and needs to concern because as long as you understand your own culture and the biases that could happen with other cultures, you could manage and keep a positive relationship with cultural diversity in the workplace. Moreover, having knowledge in other cultures is very important too because we have more understanding of values and beliefs in the similarity and differences. (byu.edu)

Research results

This research agrees with Richard T. Alpert, Ph.D. (President of Diversity Resource Inc.) that cultural diversity competence is the most crucial skill for the globalization of business to create more effective work performance in the 21st century. (diversityresources.com) Therefore, developing and improving cultural diversity competence, the scope of training should focus on these dimensions;

Research Discussion

From this research and according to Kesee (2011), to respect other people in cultural differences is very important issues. As a result, we should have the training to increase awareness due to the fact that cultural diversity is key to business achievement. There are several concerns for cultural diversity training, which are following this;

Essential of Cultural Diversity

There are a lot of benefits for cultural diversity such as different perspective, increasing in problem-solving skill and causing of innovation and creativity. Therefore, recognizing and respecting cultural differences is essential for the workplace. Training could help people in different backgrounds understand and respect each other. Another advantage is to be a key to support collaboration and succeed in mission, vision, and goals.

Diversity Issues

Among various nationalities and ethnic groups, it is easier to have conflicts in any sensitive issues such as difference pay, unfair treatment, glass ceiling problem, and sexism. All of these lead to a discrimination problem in the workplace. Emphasizing awareness and promoting sensitivity to cultural differences should be included in training because employees should display their recognition in the value of all workers.

Employee relations

According to cultural differences, this is not only related to ethnicity and race but it also includes religious, views, genders and differences in geographical of the people upbringing's location. Leaders should create training in which to increase employee's ability to interact with others by concerning these sensitivity issues.

Prevention and Education

The workplace should create diversity training for leaders to develop their learning process to ensure that they all could manage in with diversity issue effectively. In addition, leaders should align governing employment discrimination and the importance of cultural diversity, including employment practices with federal guidelines. Thus, from this point, it provides a benefit to leaders because they could handle conflicts from cultural differences. A better understanding of cultural diversity could be key to employee relations and retention.

Workplace Discrimination Laws

The workplace should get along with federal laws, which relates to the equal treatment regardless of race, ethnicity, religious views and individual traits. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission prohibits companies from discrimination against employees. Hence, leaders should include this information in training to let employees know and understand the details that they have a law to protect.

Recommendation from Research

Multicultural leadership strategies

All managers should have a leadership skill to manage cultural diversity in the workplace and they are a crucial part to create strategies to support this issue. Furthermore, multicultural leadership involves deep immersion within different cultures to understand their values and specific context. The important thing is to have the potential to navigate both opportunities and challenges of a more connected world. Soo (2012) stated that managers should create multicultural leadership strategies to support cultural diversity in the workplace, which are the following;

Focusing on recruitment efforts

Multicultural or diverse candidates are really important. Leaders should create a new job description to make more diverse and using more diverse talent sources. It also includes developing selection criteria by giving the reward to multicultural experience and leadership capability.

Career path and performance evaluation

This strategy is to support multicultural experiences and remind employees that multicultural skill is really important. Thus, all employees must concern and develop themselves because it affects their career path and performance evaluation.

Management Training Programs

Leaders should create and set up a multicultural training program because it is really important for all employees to work together and understand one another each other. Moreover, leaders should develop new materials too support and adjust the existing curricula too.

Structured mobility programs

Releasing these programs to develop manager competence in cultural diversity management by letting them work in different cultures, geographies, short-term projects and rotation in medium-term. This is called "talent management process".

Business decisions and strategy

Leaders should integrate multicultural insights into business strategies, including their decision-making.

Leader with Communication

According to Barrett (2011), leaders should know the best way to communicate and connect to all audiences in different cultures. It also includes the ability to deliver messages effectively and appropriately. There are many approaches for leaders to use. Firstly, leaders should open and respect all cultures and concern about the social customs in different cultures to avoid misunderstanding or mistakes. Secondly, they learn should more about cultures, history or even languages to broaden near knowledge and understanding. It also includes having a coach or mentor from a different culture to help them. Thirdly, they should avoid being rushed of time and more flexible because building the relationship with high-context cultures wards time. The last approach is to make a sense of humor and to keep language simple and avoid jargon.

Conclusion and Final Reflection

Doing the research in cultural diversity, I obtained a lot of information and totally broadened my knowledge. In addition, I could increase my cultural awareness with other

people and I could bring it in to use in my real life. I realize that skills to challenge and support individuals in a manner that maximizes multicultural sensitivity and develop appropriate interventions, rooted in multicultural awareness and knowledge. This is totally influencing the organizational performance and achieves to reach potential. Moreover, I could develop my insight to improve my multicultural competency. Furthermore, it makes me realize that leadership skill and communication skill are very important for leaders to manage cultural diversity because diversity brings many advantages to the workplace such as innovation or creativity, a new perspective, increasing problem-solving styles. Therefore, without appropriate management would let the workplace go down in performance and unitability due to the fact that human is a significant factor for company achievement. Hence, to get rid of the conflicts from cultural differences is really crucial.

In addition, I learn many things from my classroom at Point Park University and participated in many events and seminars, which are really beneficial for me. Some of the events, I could share a discussion on racism, sexism, discrimination and cultural differences. Furthermore, I learn to increase my leadership skill from all of my classes and through my assignments. I have been really lucky and happy that I have a great group of friends and professors who are absolutely open their mind to listen to me and give me great opportunities to share an opinion and to be a good support. Finally, I could say they push me to continue my journey with more confidence and to be proud that I choose to study in the U.S. at Point Park University.

References

Alpert, R. T. (2012). *Managing cultural diversity in the workplace, Part 2*. Retrieved April 12, 2014, from http://diversityresources.com/managing-cultural-diversity-in-the-workplace.htm

Barrett, D. J. (2011). *Cross-Cultural Literacy and Communication*. *Leadership Communication.* (3rd ed.). New York, 10020: McGraw-Hill Irwin. (Original work published)

Connerley, M. L., & Pedersen, P. B. (2005). *Leadership in a Diverse and Multicultural Environment: Developing Awareness, Knowledge and skills*. Thousand Oaks, California 91320: Sage Publication. (Original work published)

De Janasz, S. C., Dowd, K. O., & Schneider, B. Z. (2012). Understanding and Working with Diverse others. *Interpersonal Skills in Organizations*. New York, 10020: McGraw-Hill Irwin. (Original work published)

Hofstede, G. (1993). Cultural constraints in management theories. *The Academy of Management Perspectives,* 7(1), 81-81. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/ docview/210520806?accountid=10267

Kesee, C. (2011). *Cultural Diversity Training in the Workplace*. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from http://smallbusiness.chron.com/cultural-diversity-training-workplace-43290.html

Learning Your Own Biases and Becoming Aware of other cultures. (2010). *BYU Education*. Retrieved April 12, 2014, from http://education.byu.edu/diversity/ competency.html

Kokemuller, N. (2011). *Negative Effects of Diversity in the Workplace*. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from http://smallbusiness.chron.com/negative-effects-diversity-workplace-18443.html

Martina, C. (2013). *Barriers to Accepting Diversity. Ethnocentrism*. Retrieved April 13, 2014, from http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Barriers-Accepting-Diversity-Ethnocentrism-4753190.S.197471569

Mclaughlln, H. (2011). Intercultural competence training. *Benefits*. Retrieved April 12, 2014, from http://www.culturalawareness.org.uk/page5.html

Mesmerizes, C. (2013). *The Stereotype Threat to Workplace Diversity: Dr. Claude Steele Mesmerizes Audience*. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from http://www.diversityinc.com/diversity-events/the-stereotype-threat-dr-claude-steele-mesmerizes-audience-video/

Soo, J. (2012). *Multicultural Leadership Starts from Withi*. Retrieved April 12, 2014, from http://blogs.hbr.org/2012/01/multicultural-leadership-starts-fr/