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Managing Diversity at Workplace: A Challenge Determining Organisation's Success

Management

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ABSTRACT

Diversity management intends to create positive work environment for getting competitive edge and creating advantages in today's business world because of globalisation. There are various factors contributing to the organisations success and effective management of human resource is one amongst them. How organisation embraces diversity is the key to success in today's extremely competitive global market. The organisations which fail to eliminate the discrimination and injustice will adversely affect both its employees and its customers. This paper is an attempt to examine the issues regarding management of diversity at workplace and factors enhancing workplace diversity and inclusiveness. The study concludes that efficiently managing diversity can lead to committed and satisfied employees resulting into an organisation with unity of diverse strength.

Introduction

Incorporating diverse workforce has become an essential concern for every organisation. The globalisation has led to heterogeneousness amongst employees within workplace and thus challenge to manage diverse employees has increased and an imperative that organisations can't ignore. Organisations managing diversity are more recipients to committed, satisfied, motivated and better performing employees. Diversity adds values to an organisation in form of tangible and intangible benefits although management of certain issues and costs are involved in it.

Empirical studies on managing diversity within an organisation has been conducted stating diversity in relation to culture and performance, as creativity and an affirmative action and defining the new perspectives and various strategies for managing diversity. Diversity requires organisational culture where employees can pursue career aspirations and prospects without being subjected to the dimensions of race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, colour, social status, religious belief or other ideologies.

Dynamic organisations aspire for diverse people as the composition of diverse talents, interests, expertise, knowledge, abilities may help in fostering the organisations success. The companies which fail to manage diversity effectively and efficiently and turn out to be incompetent to eliminate injustice and discrimination in work environment of diverse workforce will adversely impact employees and customers both. Organisation must involve holistic approach that considers broader human resource issues and provide value to diverse workforce.

Organisations should enhance the working environment that makes possible the integration of viewpoints , understand and appreciate the interdependence of culture and humanity; initialize respect for qualities, work behaviour and experiences that are somewhat different from our own; understanding that diversity encompasses each of the individual is different and unique in not only ways of being but also in ways of knowing; recognizing that personal, cultural, and socio economic discrimination creates privileges for some while sustains disadvantages for others in an organisation; and building alliances for differences so that all can work together to remove all forms of discrimination and ambiguity.

Diversity will increase more significantly in the coming years, and successful companies will recognize the requirement for immediate action and are willing and ready to use resources on managing diversity in the workplaces. It is in this context that the present study has been conducted to explore and identify the dimension of diversity in the Indian context.

Scope and Coverage

This research paper focuses on understanding the concept of diversity and reflects around the perspectives comprising it, and also relates to the meanings and interpretations involved in it.

- What does diversity exactly mean?
- What influences diversity and research regarding it?
- How to manage diversity at workplace?
- To identify frequently encountered barriers for accepting workplace diversity?

Concept of Diversity

The concept of diversity includes respect and acceptance. It means that each individual is is unique and is different from other which can be along the dimensions of physical abilities, race, gender, ethnicity, socio economic status, sexual orientation, age, religious beliefs, political ideologies, or other beliefs. Diversity is the exploration of these differences in a positive, safe, and fostering environment. It is giving importance to each other and moving and thinking beyond tolerance to embrace and celebrate the rich dimensions of diversity within each individual.

Diversity is often used to describe set of conscious practices involving composition of work group that distinguishes individual from each other and demographic differences such as race, gender , age or non-observable characteristics such as socio economic status or education etc. ; appreciating interdependence cultures and the natural environment; extending mutual respect for experiences and qualities that are different and building equality across differences to work together and to remove all forms of discrimination and differences.
Diversity not only means how individuals perceive themselves but also how they perceive other individuals. And these perceptions about others affect their interactions with each other. For a wide level employees to work effectively as an organization, human resource management professionals need to deal efficiently with issues such as adaptability, change and communication to embrace diversity and realize the benefits and to create a positive work environment where the individuals are valued irrespective of their similarities and differences so that all could reach their potential ability and maximize their contributions to an organization's goals and objectives.

Definition of Diversity: There are many definitions of diversity. Some of the most common definitions include: "The mixture of attributes within a workforce that in significant ways affect how people think, feel, and behave at work, and their acceptance, work performance, satisfaction, or progress in the organization". Diversity is also been described as "the varied perspectives and approaches to work members of different identity groups bring".

Dimensions of Diversity

1.Primary Dimensions	2. Secondary Dimensions	3. Tertiary Dimensions
• Race • Age • Disability • Ethnicity • Gender	• Religion • Culture • Political Orientation • Work Experience • Sexual Orientation • Family Status • Thinking Style • Geographic Origin • Life Style • Economic Status	• Belief • Assumption • Feeling • Values • Perception • Attitude • Group Norms

Various Perspectives on Diversity:

As per the proposed perspectives the view on diversity vary from diversity as a resistance to diversity being a positive approach such as-

Discrimination and fairness perspective (differences problematized): Involves focus on justice and the fair treatment of all members, as a moral imperative.

Access and legitimacy perspective (where differences are thought to create opportunities such as access to new markets or consumers): Based on the recognition that the organization's markets and constituencies are culturally diverse and therefore matching the organization's own workforce is a way of gaining access and legitimacy to those markets.

Learning and integration perspective (seen as offering opportunities and providing sustained benefits in the long run): Premised on the belief that the skills, experiences and insights of diverse employees is a potentially valuable resource for learning and change, and is valued in the workgroup for attainment of its goals

How to Manage Diversity in a Workplace

Advancement in communication technology has made the marketplace a global concept. In order to sustain, an organisation should be able to manage and utilize its diverse workforce effectively. Managing diversity should be a part of the culture and concern of the entire organization.

1. It should be confirmed that all personnel policies from hiring to promotions and maintenance are based on performance of employee. Tenure, ethnic background or any other kind of category in human resources policies should be avoided. Managing a diverse workforce begins with strong policies of equality within the company. Once these policies are made, the company begin implementing diversity measures at all the levels of organization.

2. The qualifications of the candidate and the quality of his experience should be used, not age or any other category, when hiring. When diverse and qualified workforce hired, it is a positive sign to manage the diversity in company.

3.The diversity should be encouraged while creating teams and special work task within the company. So that specialization can be awarded .

4. The complaints of favouritism or discrimination should be treated seriously. Encourage employees to communicate all instances and cases of discriminatory behaviour, and conducting proper investigation while dealing with these issues.

5. The quarterly trainings for the entire employees on the benefits of diversity in the workplace should be conducted and encourage discussions at the meetings on how the company can better manage workplace diversity.

Advantages of Workplace Diversity

An organization's success and competitiveness depends upon its potential to embrace the diversity and realize benefits. Managing Diversity can provide successful advantage to the organisation. When organizations actively handle workplace diversity issues, develop and precisely implement diversity plans, many benefits can be reported such as:

Increased Adaptability: Companies employing diverse employees can provide a greater variety of solutions to issues in service, performance and allocation of resources. Employees from diverse backgrounds suggest ideas that are flexible in adapting to dynamic markets and customer demands.

Broader Service Range: A diverse pool of skills, talents and experiences allows a company to provide services to customers on a global scale.

Variety of Opinions and Perspective: A diverse workforce helps in providing a larger pool of ideas and experiences. The organization can analyse them and choose to meet competitively with business strategy needs and the needs of customers more effectively

More effective Execution: Companies that actively encourages diversity in the work environment inspire their employees to perform to their potential resulting in satisfied employeesproviding higher productivity, profit, and return on investment.

Challenges of Diversity at Workplace

There are certain barriers for adopting diversity at workplace. Some of them challenges are:

Communication: Ineffective communication of key objectives results in confusion, low morale and lack of teamwork. Language, perceptual and cultural barriers need to be overcome for the success of diversity programmes.

Resistance to change: There are always employees who refuse to accept the change. They prefer what has been going on and thinks themselves to be right which mentality silences innovative ideas and progress.

Implementation of diversity in the Organisation policies : The policies of an organisation should be such that involves customized strategy to achieve the effects of diversity in the workplace for the organization.

Successful Management of Diversity in the Organisation : Diversity training alone is not enough for the organization's diversity management plan. A competitive course of action must be planned and implemented to create a culture of following diversity that permeates in every department and function of the organization.

CONCLUSIONS:

Organizations that efficiently manage diversity can lead to more committed and satisfied employees resulting into an organisation with unity of diverse strength. Organisation with diverse employees can better serve customers in an increasingly global and these have better understanding of the requirements of the legal, social, political, economic, and cultural environments.

Diversity requires employees to feel included and valued by an organization. It demands for simultaneously recognizing differences and overcoming them, by valuing differences in and across people in organizations. Central to the discourse on diversity it is the principle of fairness and justice. Individuals have a need to belong, to be appreciated, to be treated fairly, and to be acknowledged from whatever source or basis they derive their identity from. Arguably, when organizations invest in diversity, they stand to gain, in both apparent and economic ways but also in other subtle forms of stronger allegiance, greater well-being and respect that they command in the process.

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