

Effectiveness of solving problems at mcdonalds management essay



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This section gives a description of various management studies that have been designed for a multicultural working environment to run smoothly. It starts off by introducing the concept of culture, its need and effects on people. The management thinking styles are then briefly described, followed by the importance of training the management and a review of few problems faced due to cultural diversity. There are numerous problems faced by the managers due to cultural diversity, but this study is an in-depth research focussing only on communication and conflict as the key problems. It concludes by providing few frameworks designed for effective management of multicultural teams.

The concept of culture:

The culture of a person is the individual characteristics that attribute to his/her behaviour (Parekh, 2006). The national culture of a person greatly influences these attributes. An understanding of the national culture helps to manage them better (Huang & Vilert, 2003). The mindset, standards and ideas of a particular culture are usually inconspicuous. To understand this culture it is very important to understand the intensity of the values. The extent to which these qualities of a person can be changed depends on how deep they are imbibed in him. Rijamampianina & Maxwell (2002) have designed a model the shows an relationship between the visibility and the depth of the values imbibed in a person.

The cultural values that are visible can be easily changed but it is the ones that are imbibed to the core that actually matter. Because the values that are imbibed deep will be strong and largely determine the behaviour of a person. In order to make the employees feel he belongingness, the

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managers need to make a small effort to understand the morals that are not visible.

The need for culturally diverse work force:

With increasing globalization, the cultural diversity at work place is increasing largely (Stevens, Plaut, & Sanchez-Burks, 2008). There are numerous reasons behind employing culturally diverse workforce. These reasons vary with the organization. The organizations have their own reasons behind cultural diversity of its employees. For example, some American companies recruit immigrants to replace the older people who might retire soon. They feel that the immigrants serve them for a longer period than the locals and can work equally well as their experienced staff. They think that the advantages of employing immigrants surmount the disadvantages caused due to cultural diversity of the workforce (Nguyen, 2008). The reasons behind employing diverse workforce might differ between companies. But the advantages that they provide generally are an increase in customer satisfaction, improvement in customer base, longer service periods (Broughton & Strebler, 2008) thus a reduction in training costs, innovation and a conglomeration of more ideas (Spiers, 2008). These are some of the advantages provided by a culturally diverse workforce that trigger the organizations to employ people of varied cultures.

The approach of management plays a pivotal role in managing a multicultural workforce. Canen & Canen (2002) have differentiated the approaches towards multicultural management. They say a multicultural environment could be managed by a non-critical or critical approach. The non-critical approach is the one in which the diversity of the employees is

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observed as an advantage and appropriately used. The critical approach is the one in which everyone is treated equally, and their views are also taken into consideration. The critical approach could be divided into the equal opportunities and the intercultural perspective. The decisions made are greatly influenced by the approach adapted by the management.

Attitudes and perceptions:

Culture can change the perception of a person (Theotokas & Progoulaki, 2007). An appropriate training can however change the attitude of a person towards work and also other cultural groups (Strauss, Sawyerr, & Oke, 2008). Providing interaction between culturally diverse groups will largely help in changing the attitudes towards other groups. The employees of different cultures tend to behave in different ways, for example, Chinese employees have lower managerial capabilities when compared to the Indian employees (Post, DiTomaso, Farris, & Cordero, 2009). Interesting results were found by Fock, Yim, & Rodriguez (2009) in a research on meaning of work. They found that eastern cultures rely on a collective approach while the western cultures adopt the individual approach.

Training the leaders for a multicultural team

Training a manager might or might not be essential depending on the ability of the person to use his intuition and creativity to manage his workforce (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). Managers of a multicultural team are trained because, it is very difficult for a person to properly understand and estimate the behaviour of people from other cultures because of the enormous diversity in the patterns of behaviour and thinking (Gilbert & Ivancevich, 1999). The emphasis on the concept of multiculturalism has increased
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tremendously since the 1900s, prior to that the managers only had to deal with people with different attitudes and ages who usually belonged to the same culture (Collins & Holton III, 2004). But the concept of multiculturalism is not entirely new, it has existed ever since man has started travelling and exploring.

Many researchers have designed ways to train the the managers of cross-cultural organizations. Terry (2007) has suggested some key steps to train the managers to extract the resources from a multicultural work force. He suggests 7 steps for managers to follow in order to improve the working environment. The steps are improving the knowledge about the cultural differences to deal with the problems productively. The second step is to transform the approach. With changing time, it is important to change the training programs of the managers (Robinson, 2007). The 3rd step is to improve the communication between employees and manager.

Communication is a very important aspect, because if a communication gap develops between the employee and manager it might cause a reduction in potential (Leland, 2009). The 4th step is to train them in improving their leadership qualities. It is important for managers to develop global leadership potential to sustain the changing environment (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2009). The 5th and 6th steps are to build trust and encourage responsibility. These steps instigate a feeling of belongingness in the employees and indirectly improves their performance (Williams, 2008). The last step is to initiate the managers to encourage the employees to have fun at work. The employees should like the work so that they can enjoy what they are doing. This makes it easy for the mangers to achieve their targets

(Jouriles, 2008). According to Terry (2007), these steps should be included in the training for a manager. The first 4 steps are most important for a manager tackling a multicultural team.

Is training always advantageous?

Training is not always advantageous for an organization. Most of the organizations today are greatly emphasizing on training the managers to reap the benefits of a diverse workforce. Large amounts of money is being spent on this training. The fact that the process might not give positive results is being overlooked (Chavez & Weisinger, 2008).

Even though they are aware of the fact that a training might not essentially be successful, it is essential for a multicultural organization to train its managers to make sure that the diversity available to them is used productively. They train the managers in spite of this fact because if the training is successful, the results it might produce will overcome the costs incurred.

Problems faced by managers due to cultural diversity

Even after the training it is natural that the managers face a large number of problems with the multicultural work force. This is because most of the training programs lack a practical approach. Managers usually face many ethical dilemmas because of the problems caused to cultural diversity.

Conflict:

Conflict may be defined as a disagreement or a clash of opinion (Worchel, 2005). People from different cultures and brought up largely vary in their

scholls of thought and principles. When these people come together to work under a common roof, it is natural for a disagreement or a collision of opinion to occur. Thus the conflict has become a characteristic of a cross-cultural environment (Koc, 2009).

Initiation of a conflict:

Appelbaum, Shapiro, & Elbaz (1998) identify 'conflict' as one of the major issues being faced by managers of a multicultural environment. A conflict is a phenomenon that takes place as an after effect of stacking of few or many unfavourable circumstances. Appelbaum et. Al. (1998) have proposed 2 models of conflict. The process model and the structural model. The process model mostly identifies the internal factors that trigger the conflict. On the other hand, the structural process emphasizes particularly on the external factors that provoke a conflict. The internal factors could be frustration, behaviour or interaction. While the external factors could be like social pressure, organizational culture or rules & procedures.

Drawbacks of Appelbaum's framework:

This model need not necessarily be appropriate in all circumstances. Sometimes the conflict could be a result of the combined effect. In a cross-cultural organization, the it is very likely that the internal factors provoke the conflict and the structural factors amplify the effect.

Solving the conflict:

It is very important to understand the origin of a conflict in order to solve it.

The management has to take proper steps of action to solve the conflict,
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failing which the employees might feel repellant to the management and work. This might inturn lead to a reduction of productivity. Shetach (2009) has designed a 4 dimensional tool to mange conflicts effectively. The 4th dimension of this tool is to understand the person's resolution style, which can be possible only if the manager is able to understand the cultural background as it is usually the origin for the behaviour. There is a difference between the ways in which the people from different cultures solve a conflict (McKenna, 1995). An indian manager need not essentially tackle a conflict the same way as a britisher does.

Kazan (1997) has designed 3 models to manage conflicts that rise due a cultural variation. 3 models of conflict management are: confrontational model; harmony model; regulative model. People who belong to different cultures tend to adopt different models. There is no one way of solving conflicts used by all the managers.

Confrontational model:

This model bases on compromise and mutual understanding among the 2 parties. The manager keeps the circumstance and the situation in mind before judging the conflict. It usually ends up in a settlement by the manager. But this model might prove to be dangerous if either of the party agrees to the manager only because of their respect for his power.

Harmony model:

Managers who try to solve the conflicts using this model, usually try to reduce the possiblity of the conflict to rise. And if the conflict takes place, the

solution is obtained by keeping the rules of the organization in mind. It focuses on spreading the positive energy at work place and mitigate the negative energy. The East-Asian managers usually adopt this model to manage their staff (Leung, Lu & Koch, 2002). But if the employee working for this manager does not belong to the same ethnicity then he might find it difficult to adapt himself to the manager's way of decision making. If the employee belongs to one of the western countries, then he might express his disagreement to the solution. This might further invigorate the feelings in the employee.

Regulative model:

In this model, the solution of a conflict with a total consultation to the rules, regulations and principles of the organization. Most of the European organization shelter this approach. Some of them also use an approach that is a conglomeration of the regulative model and the universal approach. But it is not necessary for people from all ethnicities to agree to this approach.

People who belong to the East-Asian countries

Employee response to the solution:

The employees might respond to the solution given by the manager in different ways. And these responses could be based on many reasons like: the ethnicity of the manager and the employee, the dominance of the ethnicity to which they belong or the relation between the manager and the employee (Dalton & Chrobot-Mason, 2007). Culture plays a critical role in conflict management, and this role is generally invisible which makes it even difficult for the managers to take appropriate decisions and tackle the issue.

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In the process of taking a decision, they tend to face innumerable ethical dilemmas.

Ethical dilemmas faced by managers due to conflict:

The major issue faced by managers of a multicultural organization is the conflict that rises due to varied cultural backgrounds of the employees. The reasons that trigger a conflict could be numerous as discussed above. The ethical dilemmas faced by managers due to these conflicts varies with the reason that arouse the conflict.

People belonging to some cultures tend to avoid conflicts while some other cultures think it is a part of daily routine. When people of these cultures come together the managers find themselves in troubled waters.

If the employees do not accept the solution given by the manager, it could indirectly have many ill-effects. Some of the parameters that are effected by non-acceptance by the employees are group performance, job satisfiation, absence at work, commitment to work and most importantly trust and thus the productivity (Ayoko & Hartel, 2006).

This is not the only problem faced by the managers, communication and interaction could be a problem for the managers. If this problem is not dealt with at the budding stage, then it might initiate a conflict. In order to avoid such a circumstance, it is important for the managers to resolve this problem at the beginning itself.

Communication and interaction:

The process of exchanging and expressing one's thoughts and feelings can be described as interaction, and the process of perceiving these thoughts can be called communication. Language plays the role of a bridge in carrying these expressions from one person to the other. In a multicultural environment, where people belong to different nationalities and speak different languages, the bridge (language) between people becomes weak. The reason behind this is the ineffectiveness of the process of interaction and their perceptions. People from different cultures could interpret the same thing in different ways (Zaidman & Holmes, 2009). This might result in a gap between people from different cultures (Grobler, Moloi, Loock, Bisschoff, & Mestry, 2006). People of same culture tend to stay together and share the ideas to themselves (Kelly, 2009). Language is a serious issue that is a part of most multicultural environments today (Correspondent, 2008).

The Americans have realized that multilingualism might prove beneficial for them in 2005 (Haws, 2005), while the Europeans have just started promoting multilingualism in 2009. The culture society of Europe is largely promoting multilingualism and has put forward a proposal to encourage people to learn atleast one language in addition to their mother tongue (State News Service, 2009).

There is not much reasearch performed in this area, but it is very important to understand the effect of language in a multicultural environment because of the role it plays in building trust and improving team performance (Henderson, 2005).

Problems due to language diversity:

Handerson (2005) has segregated the problems that rise due to language diversity into the 'visible' and the 'invisible' problems. The visible problems come up taking into account, the language competence of a person, while the invisible problems rise due to a misinterpretation by the receiver.

Visible problems:

People who belong to different ethnicities have different accents and dialects (Hernández-Campoy, 2005). Due to this, it might be difficult for people originating from diverse ethnicities to understand each other. The non local people might feel inferiority complex build up in them. This could further cause a lack of communication because people with inferiority complex will hesitate to put their point through. And the other might find a difficulty in understanding them. Locals on the other hand might face a difficulty in accepting other languages (Macias, 1997).

People of same ethnicity tend to communicate among themselves (Zenger & Lawrence, 1989). The reason behind it could be varied. Thus diversity can greatly hinder the process of knowledge sharing among the employees (Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). Some people try to avoid talking with people of other cultures or races because they do not know how to communicate with people of other cultures (Forman, 2008). This could be one of the reasons behind formation of groups among the employees who speak a common language (Mäkelä, Kalla, & Piekkari, 2007). In this case the managers might find themselves in a situation where they do not have a right

solution. Because they can not ask their employees to not talk to people of their own kind.

Due to these problems, the involvement of the employee might reduce to a great extent. They might find it very difficult to express themselves.

Invisible problems:

Some people by nature might tend not like to communicate and mingle with their colleagues much (Lauring, 2009). But the it might be percieved differently by their colleagues depending on his/her culture. If the companies policies include an evaluation from the colleagues and managers, that person might lose some points due to a lack of interaction. An ethical dilemma for a manager is inevitable in this situation.

The communication style of a person might be an outcome of the culture to which he/she belongs. The communication style implies the body language, facial expressions, way of expressing things and the language (Rau, Li& Li, 2009). Sometimes people from a different culture might find it offensive due to certain communication styles. This is another ethical dilemma that most managers of a multicultural organization face.

Same thing might have different meaning to different people (Gudykunst, 1998). With the culture, a prejudice develops in a person as to how a manager should be. When a manager assigns some task to an employee, the perception and reaction of the employee greatly varies with his culture. For example, a Thai employee would never disobey his manager even if he cannot perform the task assigned to him while a British will just

communicate the difficulty to the manager. In the case of Thai employee a communication gap is related between the employee and the manager. To avoid circumstances like this, it is very important for managers to encourage his employees to communicate and speak their mind.

Bridging the communication gap:

To bridge the gap built up due to a difference in perceptions and communication gap, the management and the employees have to work in collaboration. The managers should reassure the employees and emphasize more on pushing them towards an open communication system. The employees must learn to enhance their communication skills and make oneself heard rightly.

Ethics and Ethical decision making:

The definition of ethics varies with place, people and the circumstances.

People of different cultures might define ethics in their own ways. Due to this, solving conflicts caused due to cultural diversity is very difficult.

Sensitivity to attitudes of other culture is necessary to solve the conflicts caused due to a diversity in culture (Franke & Nadler, 2008). Ethical decision making is a very complicated process, especially if more than one culture is involved in it (Hamilton, Knouse, & Hill, 2009). Husted & Allen (2008) have suggested that ethical decision making is a combination of a worthy problem, right reasoning and attitude.

It is not necessary that what is right for someone is right for everyone else; the circumstance, consequence of action and the personal ethics play a vital

role in deciding what is ethical and what is not ethical (Wassenhove, 2009).

There are different views on ethics:

Utilitarianism: according to this theory, an action is judged depending on its consequences. Utility and are the key concepts of this theory (Magill, 2006). Western organizations have started using this approach to ethics (Gagliardi, 2005). But it is difficult for the employees from the East to get adjusted to this approach.

Deontology: in this approach, the consequences of an action are not taken into consideration, general rules followed by all organizations is followed irrespective of the consequence. Duty plays a pivotal role in this theory.

Virtual ethics: virtue ethics considers not only the deeds but also the effects of the good (or bad) deeds (Jost, 2009). It is the ideal approach, but not really practicable.

Global ethics or cultural relativism:

With increasing globalisation, there is an increase in emphasis on the global ethics (Buller, 1991) because the customs and moral standards are different in different countries. The way people look at things and perceive them also varies (Leung, 1988).

The solution to a problem depends on how the manager views things and the appropriateness of the way in which the situation has been communicated to the manager.

Dealing with diverse workforce

A managers should develop a competency to understand the cultural diversity and deal with it. Psychological maturity and Self-awareness are 2 competencies that a manager has to essentially develop to face the circumstances in the present environment (Harris & Kumra, 2000). Many researchers have suggested ways in which a culturally diverse workforce should be dealt. Conejo (2001) has suggested steps to dealing with problems faced by managers due to culturally diverse workforce. They are to determine the diversity, explore the patterns, identify the characteristics, establish a sequence of action & share the ideas.

Rijamampianina & Maxwell (2002) have designed a little more sophisticated 4 step process to manage a culturally diverse work force. The steps are motivational process, interaction process, visioning process and learning process.

Toledo's (2008) rules to solve a conflict without allowing the cultural disparity to come into the frame of action are to solve the problems as quickly as possible, avoid taking emotional decisions, talk only to people who are involved, listen, plan & do not give charge to anyone else; Solve it yourself. But there are quite a few backlashes to this kind of approach though it might look very promising. Sometimes if the conflict is very aggressive, it should be given some cool down time; an attempt to solve it as soon as possible might only aggravate it. Sometimes line managers tend to take the decisions by themselves without furthering the issue to the higher authority, and they often take wrong decision due to a lack of understanding of the cultural background.

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Providing an intercultural training to the managers can be very useful for managers to solve the problems due to cultural diversity (Holtbrugge & Schillo, 2008). Cross cultural competencies are very important to manage a business today (Antal & Friedman, 2008), it is not only important for the managers but also for everyone working in a multicultural environment. To completely understand the fundamental reason behind the cultural disparity is very difficult (King et. Al., 2008); it could rather be said not possible.

The best way to deal with the issues that come up with diversity is to mitigate them way before they start creating trouble (Worchel, 2005).

It is not possible to define a particular way to manage a cross-cultural team. If a management technique has worked in an organization, it might not necessarily be the right way for every organization (Trompenaars, 2000). This makes it even more difficult for the management to deal with a multi-cultural team. So for a manager to be able to deal with the multicultural workforce effectively, he should have both management education and experience (Bendixen & Burger, 1998).

The future challenges that might come up

It is expected that by 2016 about 15% of the British population would be people who belong to the ethnic minority groups, it was about 7.9% in 2001 (Roberts, 2009). So the challenges faced due to cultural differences in the future are very likely to increase. Selecting people who can accept the diversity well can help.

Findings from the literature review

A multicultural environment can be optimistically viewed as a place that provides an opportunity to learn. It helps one to understand the diversity, varied principles and attitudes (Kulik & Roberson, 2008). A multicultural environment poses numerous problems to the managers who manage it. The ethical dilemmas faced by managers due to these problems are large. The key issues faced by managers due to cultural diversity are due to the language barrier and the conflict that rises. These problems are interlinked; often inability to understand the opposite person is the ignition to a conflict.

The process of ethical decision making is a very difficult process given the sensitive situation that rise due to cultural diversity. What is ethical to one person might not be ethical to the other, so it is not necessary that the employees are satisfied with the solution given by the manager. To deal with these issues many researchers have provided steps to solve these issues effectively. But each situation is different; there is not one right way to deal with the issues. The manager should be able to deal with the issues in a matured way depending on the circumstance. An understanding of the culture might help in this kind of situations.