Cultural diversity in the workplace

Art & Culture, Cultural Diversity

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CONCLUSIONS ABOUT DIVERSITY AND SIMILARITY 14. RECOMMENDATION 15. REFERENCES OVERVIEW Managing diversity is defined as " planning and implementing organizational systems and practices to manage people so that the potential advantages of diversity are maximized while its potential disadvantages are minimized," according to Taylor Cox in " Cultural Diversity in Organizations. " Cultural diversity is the variety of human societies or cultures in a specific region, or in the world as a whole. The term is also sometimes used to refer to multiculturalism within an organization. This article does not currently cover that alternative meaning.) There is a general consensus among mainstream anthropologists that humans first emerged in Africa about two million years ago. Since then they have spread throughout

the world, successfully adapting to widely differing conditions and to periodic cataclysmic changes in local and global climate.

The many separate societies that emerged around the globe differed markedly from each other, and many of these differences persist to this day. As well as the more obvious cultural differences that exist between people, such as language, dress and traditions, there are also significant variations in the way societies organize themselves, in their shared conception of morality, and in the ways they interact with theirenvironment. DIVERSITY IN THE WORLD

By analogy with biodiversity, which is thought to be essential to the long-term survival of life on earth, it can be argued that cultural diversity may be vital for the long-term survival of humanity; and that the conservation of indigenous cultures may be as important to humankind as the conservation of species and ecosystems is to life in general. The General Conference of UNESCO took this position in 2001, asserting in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity that "... cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature] This position is rejected by some people, however, on several grounds.

Firstly, like most evolutionary accounts of human nature, the importance of cultural diversity for survival may be an un-testable hypothesis, which can neither be proved nor disproved. Secondly, it can be argued that it is unethical deliberately to conserve " less developed" societies, because this will deny people within those societies the benefits of technological and medical advances enjoyed by those of us in the " developed" world. In the

same way it is unethical to promotepovertyin underdeveloped nations as cultural diversity it is also unethical to promote all religious practices simply because they contribute to cultural diversity.

Particularly, there are some practices that are recognized by the WHO and UN as unethical: Female Genital Mutilation, Sati (burning the widow on the husbands burial pyre), polygamy, child brides, human sacrifice, etc. Cultural diversity is tricky to quantify, but a good indication is thought to be a count of the number of languages spoken in a region or in the world as a whole. By this measure, there are signs that we may be going through a period of precipitous decline in the world's cultural diversity.

Research carried out in the 1990s by David Crystal (Honorary Professor of Linguistics at the University of Wales, Bangor) suggested that at that time, on average, one language was falling into disuse every two weeks. He calculated that if that rate of language death were to continue, then by the year 2100 more than 90% of the languages currently spoken in the world will have gone extinct. Overpopulation, immigrationandimperialism(of both the militaristic and cultural kind) are reasons that have been suggested to explain any such decline. CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Universal Declaration of UNESCO on Cultural Diversity of 2001 is regarded as a legal instrument recognizing for the first time, cultural diversity as " common heritage of humanity" and considers its safeguarding to be a concrete and ethical imperative inseparable fromrespectfor human dignity. There is also the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage ratified in June 20, 2007 by 78 States which said: " The

intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and ives them a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. " Cultural diversity was also promoted by the Montreal Declaration of 2007, and by the European Union. The idea of a global multi-cultural heritage covers several ideas, which are not exclusive. See multiculturalism. In addition to language, diversity can also include religious or traditional practice. DEFENSE OR PROMOTION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The " defense of cultural diversity" can take several meanings: * A balance to be achieved: thus, the idea of defense of cultural diversity through the promotion of actions in favor of " cultural minorities" said to be disadvantaged; * Preservation of " cultural minorities" thought to be endangered; * In other cases, one speaks of " cultural protection", which refers to the concept of " cultural exception", which is mainly used in France under the title " French exception". This makes the link between the social vision ofcultureand the vision inherent in its commercialization.

The cultural exception highlights the specificity of cultural products and services, including special recognition by the European Union in its Declaration on Cultural Diversity. In this context, the objective is to defend against what is seen as a " commodification" - considered harmful to a " disadvantaged" culture - supporting its development through grants, promotion operations, etc. , also known as " cultural protectionism". * This defense may also refer to incorporating " cultural rights" provisions,

conducted unsuccessfully in the early 1990s in Europe, into a layer of human rights. DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Diversity is a reality in today's workforce. Diversity is a difference between people, for example, in race, age, gender, disability, geographic origin, familystatus, education, orpersonalitythat can affect workplace relationships and achievement. Diversity management aims to value these differences and encourage each person to fulfill his or her potential in terms of organizational objectives. The approach goes beyond equal opportunities, which stresses the rights of particular disadvantaged groups rather than those of the individual. Cultural diversity in the workplace provides strengths as well as challenges to businesses today.

The United States is often thought of as the great melting pot where anyone from any background can assimilate into a single society. A more realistic and appropriate " Ideal" is one of multi-culturalism (cultural diversity). Multi-culturalism is based on the idea that cultural identities should not be discarded or ignored, but instead, should be maintained and valued. The importance of cultural diversity in the workplace has been, for the most part, accepted in international business. The World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development is a United Nations–sanctioned international holiday for the promotion of diversity issues.

It is currently held on May 21. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed this holiday due to UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in November 2001. It was proclaimed by UN Resolution 57/249. Diversity Day, officially known as " The World Day for Cultural Diversity for

Dialogue and Development", is an opportunity to help communities understand the value of cultural diversity and learn how to live together in harmony. It was adopted in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. CASE STUDY OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

COCA COLA COMPANY _AN EXAMPLE IN CULTURAL DIVERSITY " The Coca-Cola Company is a model employer for diversity and inclusion within its own work force and as a member of the larger business community. Itsleadershipon lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgenderequalityin the workplace is not only reflected in its long-standing achievement of 100 percent on the Corporate Equality Index, but in its principled support of anti-discriminationlegislation that would protect every worker in the United States from being judged on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Joe Solmonese President, Human Rights Campaign STATEMENT FROM THE COCA COAL COMPANY We believe that associates who are inspired and valued create superior results. We strive to be a great place to work for all of our 92, 400 associates globally by fostering safe, open, inclusive and healthy work. We want to ensure that our Company is as diverse and inclusive as our brands and our business. Our inclusive culture is defined by our seven core values: leadership, passion, integrity, collaboration, diversity, quality, andaccountability.

Our 2020 Vision is the roadmap that guides every aspect of our business. An unwavering focus on people is essential to our achieving sustainable, quality growth. Our People goal is to " Be a great place to work where people are inspired to be the best they can be. " This is supported by our efforts to

create a winning culture that defines the attitudes and behaviors that will be required of us to make our 2020 Vision a reality. WORKPLACE ISSUES AND INTERVENTIONS Diversity issues change over time, depending on local historical and dynamic conditions.

Diversity issues relate to race, gender, age, disabilities, religion, job title, physical appearance, sexual orientation, nationality, multiculturism, competency, training, experience, and personal habits are explored here, the bias is toward valuing diversity. There are challenges to managing a diverse work population. Managing diversity is more than simply acknowledging differences in people. Many organizational theorists have suggested reasons that work-teams highly diverse in work-relevant characteristics can be difficult to motivate and manage.

Miscommunication There are many challenges which face culturally diverse workplaces, and a major challenge is miscommunication within an organization. In an article entitled Developing Receiver-CenteredCommunicationin Diverse Organizations, written by Judi Brownell, she explains that meanings of messages can never be completely shared because no two individuals experience events in exactly the same way. Even when native and non-native speakers are exposed to the same messages, they may interpret the information differently.

It is necessary for employees who are less familiar with the primary language spoken within the organization to receive special attention in meeting their communication requirements. " In high context cultures, communicators share an experiential base that can be used to assign meanings to

messages. Low context cultures, on the other hand, provide little information on which to base common understandings and so communicators must be explicit". Because of this fact, it is better to view all diverse organizational environments as low-context cultures.

Cultural bias Cultural bias is an additional factor which challenges culturally diverse work environments. Cultural bias includes both prejudice and discrimination. " Prejudice refers to negative attitudes toward an organization member based on his/her culture group identity, and discrimination refers to observable adverse behavior for the same reason". Assimilation Another challenge faced by culturally diverse organizational environments is assimilation. According to the journal Cultural Diversity in the Workplace: The State of the Field, Marlene G.

Fine explains that " Assimilation into the dominant organizational culture is a strategy that has had serious negative consequences for individuals in organizations and the organizations themselves. Those who assimilate are denied the ability to express their genuine selves in the workplace; they are forced to repress significant parts of their lives within a social context that frames a large part of their daily encounters with other people. " She goes on to mention that " People who spend significant amounts of energy coping with an alien environment have less energy left to do their jobs.

Assimilation does not just create a situation in which people who are different are likely to fail, it also decreases the productivity of organizations". BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE Diversity is beneficial to both the organization and the members and brings substantial potential benefits:

Managing diversity well provides a distinct advantage in an era when flexibility and creativity are keys to competitiveness. An organization needs to be flexible and adaptable to meet new customer needs.

Heterogeneity promotes creativity and heterogeneous groups have been shown to produce better solutions to problems and a higher level of critical analysis. This can be a vital asset at a time when the campus is undergoing tremendous change and self-examination to find new and more effective ways to operate. With effective management of diversity, the corporate develops a reputation as an employer of choice. Not only will you have the ability to attract the best talent from a shrinking labor pool, you can save time andmoneyin recruitment and turnover costs.

Better decision making and improved problem solving, greater creativity and innovation This leads to enhanced product development, and more successful marketing to different types of customers. Simply recognizing diversity in a corporation helps link the variety of talents within the organization. The act of recognizing diversity also allows for those employees with these talents to feel needed and have a sense of belonging, which in turn increases their commitment to the company and allows each of them to contribute in a unique way.

Ability to compete in global markets Diversity also provides organizations with the ability to compete in global markets. Diverse organizations will be successful as long as there is a sufficient amount of communication within them. Because people from different cultures perceive messages in different ways, communication is vital to the performance of an organization.

Miscommunication within a diverse workplace will lead to a great deal of challenges.

Diversity is not only about preventing unfair discrimination and improving equality but also valuing differences and inclusion, pning such areas as ethnicity, age, race, culture, sexual orientation, physical disability and religious belief. Scott Page's (2007) mathematical modeling research of team work supports this view. He demonstrated that heterogeneous teams consistently out-performed homogeneous teams on a variety of tasks. Page points out that diversity in teamwork is not so simple in the messy real world. Too often the cultural differences create problems.

The goal is to manage diversity to take full advantage of it. MAKING DIVERSITY A BUSINESS ADVANTAGE Diversity is being touted as the most important source of competitive strength in the global markets. Rather than merely observing minority representations within a rank, companies are now dwelling into their employee's backgrounds, perspectives, styles to gain better understanding and using them to leverage business advantages. Companies are attaching importance to diversity and how it could benefit the bottom-line. By adopting a few practices, companies can create a diversity strategy.

Ask relevant questions such as which diverse populations is your company serving, how can the diversity of your company reach them, how can your company better leverage diversity. Answering these questions will give you an insight into your diversity strategy. Building a strong infrastructure is also an important practice while creating diversity strategy. Merely appointing a

diversity officer is not enough, involvement of all senior management is important. By doing so, your diversity strategy isn't isolated. Create different groups that will focus on different identity groups.

These teams will help to spot market opportunities upon which companies can act and gain profit. Like in any other corporate initiatives, involve every employee in diversity efforts and hold them accountable. Inclusion of different employees will boost them to put greater efforts in diversity strategy. Diversity strategies are being viewed as the latest effort to gain competitive edge over rival companies and to grow and strive in the global market. Serving are the three main steps that can be followed to generate higher leadership qualities.

If we want to develop effective working relationships with diverse people at work, we need to start with similarities, not differences, among people when you build relationships. Diversity in the workplace adds a special richness, but also special challenges. As a human resources professional, manager, supervisor, coworker, staff member or business owner, effective diverse work relationships are critical for your success. Emphasis is on honoring and appreciating the diverse needs, skills, talents, and contributions of people in recent years. While this is critical, don't let the pendulum swing too far in this direction.

We are in danger of forgetting to honor and appreciate our similarities. By acknowledging the similarities and likenesses, we create a starting point for understanding and appreciating diversity in the work place. A strong example emerges in The Human Capital Edge: 21 People Management

Practices Your Company Must Implement (or Avoid) to Maximize Shareholder Value (Compare Prices), by Bruce N. Pfau and Ira T. Kay, executives with Watson Wyatt Worldwide. In Watson Wyatt's Work USA research, they asked 7500 workers at all job levels across diverse industries to respond to 130 statements about their workplaces.

Watson Wyatt broke down the responses to look for diversity patterns across demographics including whites versus minorities, men versus women, and people over and under 30 years old. They found more similarities than differences, especially in the categories respondents rated as most important to them. People agreed about what inspires their commitment to a particular employer. People cited the following factors as important. * They supported their company's business plan, * They had a chance to use their skills on the job, * Their reward package was competitive, and The company acted on employee suggestions. People also agreed on what organizations need to improve: employee input and promoting the best performers while helping the worst performers get better. Additionally, the employees want to know how their job affects internal and external customers. They want to understand how their job contributes to the accomplishment of company businessgoals. They want a safe work environment and highly rated products and services. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DIVERSE WORKPLACE SUCCESS Managing diversity tools

Managing diversity goes far beyond the limits of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action. High performing diversity managers recognize that specialized skills are necessary for creating a productive,

diverse workforce. They seek out continuous learning opportunities and some go as far as acquiring certification. Managers must be willing to work towards changing the organization in order to create a culture of diversity and inclusion. Assessment skills and diversity education are key elements of culture change. However, the leadership's support of the change cannot be understated.

Creating the Multicultural Organization " The key to managing a diverse workforce is increasing individual awareness of and sensitivity to differences of race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, and age". There are several ways to go about creating the multicultural organization that performs extremely well. The " business case for diversity", theorizes that in a global marketplace, a company that employs a diverse workforce (both men and women, people of many generations, people from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds etc. is better able to understand the demographics of the marketplace it serves and is thus better equipped to thrive in that marketplace than a company that has a more limited range of employee demographics. An additional corollary suggests that a company that supports the diversity of its workforce can also improve employee satisfaction, productivity and retention. This portion of the business case, often referred to as inclusion, relates to how an organization utilizes its various relevant diversities.

If a workforce is diverse, but the employer takes little or no advantage of that breadth of that experience, then it cannot monetize whatever benefits background diversity might offer. In most cases, US employers are prohibited

by federal and state laws from giving race or ethnicity any consideration in hiring or assigning employees. However, the US Supreme Court has upheld the use of limited preferences based on race, ethnicity, and sex, when there is a " manifest imbalance" in a " traditionally segregated job category. "

In response to the research, Pfau and Key recommend that organizations concentrate on four areas with their employees. * Keep your company effective, winning, and on the right track. * Help people, supplied with needed resources; use their talents and skills to contribute to the overall accomplishment of organization objectives. * Respect and value people and recognize and act on their contributions. * Create an environment in which people have interesting work and enjoy their coworkers. On the Interpersonal Level Take a look at your coworkers or reporting staff with new eyes.

Think about the factors that you share in common with them. You'll find: * You're all human beings with complex emotions, needs, interests, outlooks, viewpoints anddreams. Share something about yourself to create an environment in which your coworker wants to share information with you. Listen and don't pry. Polite and continuing interest in your coworkers contributes to workplace harmony. * You have family and other interests outside of work. Hear what your coworkers tell you about their personal lives. Remember the highlights to demonstrate respect and interest. You have similar needs from work as demonstrated above in The Human Capital Edge. Acknowledge this and note the commonalities. Work is more exciting when you feel as if you are accomplishing mutual goals. Act as if you are part of a winning team. Emphasize, with coworkers, your common interest in your

success and the success of the organization. You'll get to know people as people if you participate in any fun or team building events your organization sponsors. Better yet, join the team that plans them. Implementation Diversity issues change over time, depending on local historical and dynamic conditions.

Overt " diversity programs" are usually limited to large employers, government agencies and businesses facing rapid demographic changes in their local labor pool and help people work and understand each other. The implementation of diversity is often limited to the Human resources department] when there is also a good economic case for UK companies to use it as a tool to reach new market shares. Legal frameworks US anti-discrimination laws prohibit employers giving any consideration to customers' preferences for being served by employees of a given gender, ethnic group, or color.

In general, the laws also prevent consideration based on religion, although the law allows major exceptions of this provision for religious organizations. Many countries are also introducing anti-discrimination laws (for example the DDA in the UK) forcing companies to be more aware of diversity. The law student organization Building a Better Legal Profession generated significant controversy in October 2007 for reporting data suggesting that most private law firms themselves lacked demographic diversity. CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING DIVERSITY Ignoring diversity issues costs time, money, and efficiency.

Some of the consequences can include unhealthy tensions; loss of productivity because of increased conflict; inability to attract and retain talented people of all kinds; complaints and legal actions; and inability to retain valuable employees, resulting in lost investments in recruitment and training. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT DIVERSITY AND SIMILARITY If you start by recognizing the ways in which you are similar to your coworkers, you'll build a base of understanding and acceptance that will withstand the sometimes stormy times when your differences come to the forefront.

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