

Maslow`s hierarchy of needs: overview

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Critically evaluate Maslow's hierarchy of needs as way of understanding employee motivation in contemporary Chinese business. Because of the great developing and consume potentials in China, more and more multinationals are attracted. Companies who had rich successful experiences in west have difficulties to manage in this unfamiliar emerging market (in Alas, 2008). To define the way of understanding employee in China, needs and motivations of Chinese employees should be considered first. Maslow's hierarchy of needs as one of the most discussed theories which related to people motivations should be included.

According to Maslow's model, individuals have the same order of needs all over the world. Some criticisms pointed out that needs would change under different cultures. Furthermore, following the great changes of China, employee motivations between new China and contemporary China changed as well. Due to the reform in China, Chinese people have more chance to communicate with western which gave a important impact on Chinese employees' work values and motivations. This essay will evaluate Maslow's hierarchy of needs as way of understanding employee motivation in contemporary Chinese business.

From Maslow's perspective (in Geren, 2011), human needs are the same worldwide. It indicated that the hierarchy of needs which developing based on U. S. society can be applied all over the world. Whereas the research of Hofsted (2001) reported that people under different cultures have diverse values which have a motivational influence on life choices and behaviors (in Alas, 2008). Compared with the individualism culture in U. S. , China exists as

a collectivist society due to its long history of traditional culture and the dominant position of imperial power.

Individuals in the individualistic society are concerned more about self-success, but for Chinese people, maintain harmony within their social environment is more significant. According to Kirkman and Shapiro (in Alas, 2008), there are some crucial links between cultural values and job attitudes which can be the approach to study employee motivations between U. S. and China deeply. A diagram about the hierarchy of needs of the People's Republic of China by Nevis (in Gambrel and Cianci, 2003) showed that the order of needs of Chinese people and employees are: social belonging, physiological, safety and self-actualization. Employees in China tend to emphasize social needs more over individualistic needs which means the status and identity were concerned more in a society, while employees in more individualistic society such as America stress more on individualistic needs. A famous case was at Lenovo when Chinese and American employees worked as a group, Chinese employee considered the team as the key for company's successful. However, The Americans were trying to identify individual high performers (Gallo, 2008).

The hierarchy of needs model seems not appropriate for understanding the employee motivations in China business. However, an ambitious reform program was launched in China. Instead of a relatively closed system previously, an open, market-driven system had been set up. A series of actions including entering the WTO, opening the western region of China and building up an information network have given dynamic to support the system and take the way to develop. As a result of these great changes of

China, employee motivations and work values between new China and contemporary China changed as well.

According to studies by Ralston et al. (in Jaw, 2007), Work values of contemporary Chinese leaders who get a higher score on individualism differ from those older generation of the past. It indicated that new generation of Chinese manager characterized more individualistic. Furthermore, because of the experiences to western thought and management practices, Chinese employees who ever had under western cultural influence are more aggressive (in Jaw, 2007). It stated that work values are different between Chinese employees who have western cultural experiences and those who have not.

Chinese employees who have western cultural exposure experiences focus more on individual values, especially self-esteem and self-actualization which can be applied in Maslow`s model. As the number of those employees increasing, this tendency will become more obviously. For those Chinese employees who do not have a western background, they put more emphasis on the material standard of living and work conditions which can be seen as the first level of Maslow`s model. For example, high wages have been seen as one of the most significant factors to attract employees in contemporary Chinese business.

In order to motivate employees more effectively, Google`s office in China not only provide fresh fruit and high quality food, but also create relax and comfortable working environment (Marre, 2011). The ANOVA test of work values in 4 areas showed that Chinese respondents pay more attention to the provision of welfare than employees in the other areas (in Alas, 2008) .

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When employees' age is old enough to retire, they need the welfare to support daily life without working. It reflected the importance of the security of their work.

The reasons behind their needs were attributed to the different developments in the economy after experiencing a centrally planned economy in China and low material standards of living (in Jaw, 2007). Although China has been seen as the emerging market with full of power, the country had experienced a socialist regime which have considerable less wealth than traditional capitalist countries and started to develop only around 30 years. That caused most of Chinese employees still strive for the lowest need and also explain the rationality of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in China. To sum up, as the representer of U.

S. middle class values during the period of individual achievements were stressed, Maslow's model is not applied across all cultures (in Jaw, 2007). However, as a result of the reform in China in 1978, links between China and the world connected. By the influence of western culture, Chinese manager and employee who had a background in foreign countries shown more aggressive and ambitious which closer the stage of self-esteem and self-actualization among Maslow's theory. On the other hand, general employees focus more on income, work environment and welfare which explain Maslow's model in a practical way.

Although Maslow's model is not apply in a collectivistic society, it becomes more proper to express Chinese employees motivations after 30 years' development. Word count: 1004 References: Alas, R. (2008) Attitudes and values in Chinese manufacturing companies: A Comparison with Japanese, <https://assignbuster.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-overview/>

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