

Diversity and equality in workplace commerce essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

According to the Yearbook of Statistics Singapore 2012, the main ethnic group in Singapore - consisting of Singapore Residents and Permanent Residents - are Chinese, Malays, Indians and Others.

Figure Statistics for Ethnic Groups in Singapore (June 2011)

Under Part IV, Act 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore, stated that

" 12.-(1) All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law.

(2) Except as expressly authorised by this Constitution, there shall be no discrimination against citizens of Singapore on the ground only of religion, race, descent or place of birth in any law or in the appointment to any office or employment under a public authority or in the administration of any law relating to the acquisition, holding or disposition of property or the establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment."

Diversity and equality in workplace are important to maintain a safe and comfortable working environment for all.

Diversity

Diversity is generally defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and public assistance status (Esty, et al., 1995). Each individual person comes with the visible and non-visible differences and

<https://assignbuster.com/diversity-and-equality-in-workplace-commerce-essay/>

through respecting the dissimilarities would make each of them feel valued for their efforts which is valuable not only for the individual but for the organization.

Equality

Equality can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups both in employment, and to goods and services; the basis of which is supported and protected by legislation. Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly states that " All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

Some other definitions of Equality are:

" Equality is simply a quest for sameness in all aspects of social life."

(Dunleavy, 1989)

" Equally talented people have an equal chance of attaining them - 'fair equality of opportunity'" (Sachs, 2011)

However, due to the fact that there is no correct or one specific definition of equality, there are many limitations to the policies being implemented. Equality can cover over a broad area such as gender rights, age, race, culture, religion, beliefs and etc.

Importance

Importance of Diversity

Diversity in the workplace can reduce lawsuits and increase marketing opportunities, recruitment, creativity, and business image (Esty, et al., 1995) However, when an organization focuses only on results and ignoring the importance of having a diverse team, communication and trust can break down, resulting in lower performance.

Importance of Equality

It is important to have equality policies enforce in workplace to ensure that all employees have the same rights as each other regardless of any differences in gender, age, religion, language and disability. Equality will also create a more favorable environment by promoting a ... as they are given equal opportunities to improve themselves.

Limitations

Limitations towards diversity policies

According to (Mayhew, Demand Media), the challenges related to receptiveness to training and prioritizing hiring decisions based on diversity can transform those challenges into disadvantages. Negative behaviors and attitudes can be barriers to organizational diversity because they can damage working relationships and bring down morale and work productivity (Esty, et al., 1995).

Workplace diversity creates opportunities for organizations to get a wider perspective on business situations and to improve global reach, but it does

often create some negative impacts in the company (Kokemuller, Demand Media).

Common negative impacts arise are:

Unresolved Conflict

Staff that comes from different cultural and backgrounds have dissimilar perspectives and opinions in handling issues or concerns that emerges. An incapability to observe where the other person is arriving from can forbid effective resolution of conflicts. When employees feel that they cannot reach to an agreement in conflict, the tendency to give up and simply let ill feelings fester can create a pessimistic behaviour.

Poor Communication

If an organization has employees from different backgrounds with different languages, communication can prove to be difficult. However, a number of filters can forbid meaningful and clear communication between staff and employees. It is vital that organizations educate employees on cultural differences in the attempt to encourage them to freely converse their diverse viewpoints on things as opposed to generating conflict.

Turnover

A considerable bottom line result of poor management of diversity is the case of high turnover as they are displeased with the working environment. The replacing of employees lost to feelings of discontent is expensive as the organization has to pay to hire and teach replacements. Businesses will risks losing top talents to rivals unless the organization makes available a safe

and inspiring culture where employees from diverse backgrounds are treated fairly.

Limitations towards equality differences

Although having equality among employees, the organization may still find it difficult to establish a perfect equality workplace for all. There are limitations in having equal opportunities due to internal and external factors.

Poor Implementation

Lack of awareness of the laws being executed can lead to poor implementation by organization and the managers. Poor implementation can also be attributed to the presences of " deeply ingrained negative attitudes and gender stereotypes, which cannot be uprooted through legislation alone." (Spehar, 2011) Limited implementation can happen due to the development of bureaucratic responses that focus only to comply with the duty rather than removing the inequality in question.

Lack of support

Managing equality in the Organization cannot be carried out by the Organization and managers alone. In addition, with the lack of support from the Government, weak equal treatment bodies, shortcomings in judiciary together with the lack of support from the Organization itself, where there are no consensus, no single position being defended or attacked; it is difficult for equality policies to be carried out.

Lack of clarity

The lack of clarity can lead to confusion among the employee. If the Organization does not successfully and clearly communicate their equality policies or the definitions of equality, and without the proper identification of what kind of equality is desirable, equality of whom - all of humanity or members of particular political society - it can bring the whole equality agenda into disrepute. The lack of general agreement of equality can cause employee to be uninterested in equality within their communities.

Religion and Beliefs

Many religion and beliefs exist in an Organization for e. g. Christianity, Buddhist, Jewish, Communism, Marxism, and Socialism. Although some may understand religion in a more communal and cultural way, there are others that are not particularly agreeable to the idea of equality. Some religion might be hostile to equality on grounds of sex and sexual orientations, believing that men should enjoy headship over women, homosexuality is sinful. (Vickers, 2011) This can be problematic as well. Discrimination or disadvantage can be experienced regardless of individual beliefs, because of group identity¹⁸. (Vickers, 2011)

Different values in equality

S. Temkin (2011) stated that " many argue for equality - and in so doing think of themselves as opposing non-egalitarianism - because they favour significant redistribution from the better- to worst off. The reasons they have for favouring such redistribution vary markedly, and may have nothing to do with a concern for equality itself." Managers can get confused with the

meaning of equality and therefore think that the action they carry out will be beneficial to the employees where in actual fact, they might be doing the wrong thing.

Lack of proper training

The types of training method taught will affect the way managers react in situations. They might be unaware of the complexity of the issue and are uncertain on how to deal with it as they may not be trained using a variety of situations.

Population Size

The size of the population affected by the policy of equality matters due to the fact that more parties involve means more attention needs to be given to each individual. A complete equality is difficult to attain in a society that is marked by diversity is that people in such a society come attached to groups. This can result in difficulty to maintain both individual equality and group equality. (Kukathas, 2002)

Lack of positive messages from senior level within the authority

Even if the Organization has a policy on equality, it would be deemed useless if there is no positive influence from the senior management with positive commitment to equality in practice.

Culture of Organization

Different Organization has different cultures. These cultures will affect how equality is being implemented internally. Is the Organization culture a heavily masculine workplace culture or feminine collaboration culture? This <https://assignbuster.com/diversity-and-equality-in-workplace-commerce-essay/>

can have an effect on some managers that are genuinely interested in becoming more equal with the other groups in society, but are hampered by its very nature of 'cultural structure'.

Presence of Diversity

Diversity presents a serious problem for equality. The existence of diversity is not only inescapable, but also reflective of the fact that people pursue the good life collectively but in different ways, not all of which value equality in the same way, or at all. If diversity is to be accepted, then equality must be abandoned as the situation might become too complex. (Kukathas, 2002)

Obstacles

Obstacles resulting from diversity policies

For policies to be effectual in promoting the acceptance of workforce diversity by the company it is required to understand the obstacles to its implementation for diversity. CESS (2003) suggests that, with the other forms of investment into new human resource policies, there will be two groups of implementations to workforce diversity policies:

Internal obstacles - they are distinct to individual organizations and developed from attitudinal, institutional, cultural, and historic elements within individual enterprises. In spite of this, many groups of organizations may face the same types of obstacles. It's been identified that there are some internal obstacles which have the possibility to prevent the implementations of diversity policies within individual organizations

Awareness - among managers there may be some who lacks the knowledge of the business advantages of a diversity workforce and the implementation to make changes to be effective.

Attitudes - within some organizations there may have negative behaviors towards the emergence of a diverse workforce in the midst of significant groups of staff or managers. This may reflect on a wider resistance to all major changes in the context of HR processes and policies. Additionally, there may be already well-established work cultures that create indirect discrimination and which employees are unwilling to change.

Economics - there may be apparent economic reasons that affects why some businesses are unwilling to invest in the establishment of a diversity workforce. On the other hand, furthermore disadvantage of investing in diversity programs is that intangibles are significantly more difficult to manage than tangible assets. Thus, these obstacles make it difficult to measure benefits and therefore to undertake traditional investment evaluation processes.

Resources - some organizations lacks the key resources necessary to implement changes required to emerge a diversity workforce. Such resources include monetary cash, management time, managerial experiences, external advices, and the leadership and competence of senior managers.

External obstacles - these are developed from regional or national factors, such as the institutional networks, attitudes/culture, and regulatory components. They affect large groups of organizations in similar ways.
<https://assignbuster.com/diversity-and-equality-in-workplace-commerce-essay/>

The implementation of diversity workforce policies by organizations may serve complications to accomplish because of wider and broad attitudinal and cultural factors in certain countries or regions. Potential causes include national cultures that concentrate on the incorporation of ethnic groups rather than on the acceptance of multi-culturalism.

3. 2 Obstacles resulting from diversity policies

(Maybe can put in point form like Ben and add a few more points?)

There are a few obstacles leading from the implementation of equality policies. Firstly, the Organization may feel obligated to hire someone of different race and gender even though their skills or talent may not be ideal for the Organization. This is to ensure an equal number of individuals from each race or ethnicity. Secondly, due to the fact that there are many equality laws or policies being passed, employees might feel that the Government or Organization is trying to intrude in their working lives to ensure workplace equality.

What is to be done?

Diversity

An application to provide support to the process of implementation of diversity management in organizations is by adopting the diversity management setup (diversityatwork. net). It provides support in two main ways:

- It details a 5 phase procedure on how to implement a diversity management program in the organization;

- the setup support for each of the action to carry out during the implementation of a diversity management program in the organization.

It is best to regard the development of diversity management policy in the organization as an assignment or project. It is vital to establish support for the project, analyze the requirements and opportunities, developing own solutions and then implement the project as it progresses. The setup provides the organization with a set of methods, information and skills which have been created to simplify the process of a diversity management implementation.

- Phase 1 - Given the lack of awareness of diversity management, it is fundamental that the diversity management project is inserted into the mainstream of the organizational activities as smooth as possible.

Additionally, setting up the procedure should include using the best practices from project management skills. These approaches are demonstrated in the four activities of this phase - Campaigning support and determining potential stakeholders, examine the degree of the problem, establishing diversity management structures and attaining agreement on taking place with the process.

- Phase 2 - This phase is essential to the diversity management project as it establishes the current practices and the problems and opportunities in the organization for managing diversity. The success of this phase depends on factors, which most important of these is the participation of employees. To ensure participation, they need to be well briefed about the project and its

actions, the reason that it is being undertaken and how will they stand to benefit from it.

- Phase 3 - In this phase, solutions are being generated to tackle problems and opportunities known in the previous phase. The objectives of this phase is to evaluate the problems and needs that has been identified and to use creative skills to suggest a set of solutions which are then prioritized and established into a diversity management plan.

- Phase 4 - This phase manages issues that are related to implementing diversity management activities in the organization. With the diversity management program plan developed in the previous phase, the team is required to decide which activities to be financed and to start developing during the initial year of the implementation program. It should be clear what the aims and objectives are and how to meet them, who is going to do what, when and how. Encouraging employees for participation and to deal with possible resistance during implementation must also be put into consideration.

- Phase 5 - The activities undertaken during this phase - the monitoring and evaluation of the diversity management project - provides the foundation for assessing the overall value of the project and for making necessary recommendations for changes in the future. Monitoring the phases would allow the user to moderate how well the activities worked in that phase, while results from the evaluation exercise are helpful in providing feedbacks to employees and management on the difficulties and successes faced in the project.

Alternative Approaches

Another approach towards implementation of diversity management is the transformative approach (Cockburn, 1991) which is required to challenge organisational structures, therefore enabling diverse perspectives to influence organisational activity (Bendick et al., 2001). This will resemble an effective and learning approach where both the differentiation and integration of individuals is acknowledged (Thomas and Ely, 1996), thus identifying value in bringing differences together to generate continuous development.

However, diversity literature puts slight emphasis on the distinction between legislative knowledge and the knowledge of putting legislations into practice. Briefly, knowledge that is easily quantifiable and can be stored is regularly termed as hard knowledge and the knowledge which is less quantifiable and cannot be easily stored is referred as soft knowledge (Hildreth and Kimble, 2002). One of the possibilities highlighted as being a method through which the diverse perspectives and soft knowledge in the workforce can be coupled is by the use of informal staff networking, which generates interactions and provides the organisation with a mechanism within which to generate improvements as well as new initiatives and ideas (Kandola, 2004).

CASE STUDY

NTUC FairPrice

Food and Service

How FairPrice have been successful in implementing diversity and equality policies in workplace.

CASE STUDY 1: NTUC FAIRPRICE (Food and Service)

From a single supermarket in Toa Payoh, FairPrice has grown to become one of Singapore's leading retailers, with more than 100 supermarkets, 7000 employees and 2.8 million customers per week.

FairPrice also operate in 6 different store formats (FairPrice Supermarkets, FairPrice Finest, FairPrice Xtra, FairPrice Xpress, Cheers and FairPrice Online), a Fresh Food Distribution Centre and a centralised warehousing and distribution company, Global Logistics of Singapore Pte Ltd. Beyond Singapore, FairPrice has also recently entered into a joint venture to open a hypermarket chain in Vietnam.

Workplace Equality

A number of commitments shape a Great Workplace agenda. Looking into one of the commitment where FairPrice promotes workplace equality:

" Promoting an open communications culture to support a tolerant workplace free from discrimination with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disabilities, age, marital status and social background"

As one of the leading supermarkets in Singapore, FairPrice wants to be the 'Best Place to Shop' and the 'Best Place to Work'. This commitment stated shows that FairPrice values workplace equality and wants their staff to be aware that they will not allow any discrimination.

And by doing so, they can achieve a harmonious working environment.

FairPrice believes that if they work in a desirable environment, their employees will be motivated and inspired, leading them to deliver professionalism and teamwork when working, and most importantly creating a customer focus team.

With the commitments kept in mind, FairPrice proved themselves by achieving the most number of awards at the National Excellent Service Award (EXSA)[1]for 3 years straight (2009-2011). This can only be possible when FairPrice creates an excellent working environment and treating each employee equally. This will inspire more employees to aim for the best when they work.

Workplace Diversity

FairPrice believe that their stores should reflect the communities they serve, and that included the people who work there. The diversity policy that FairPrice enforced in their workplace strives their employee to work hard. The management looks into recruitment, language training and flexible working practices in particular, to ensure that all employees have the same opportunity to succeed with us regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disabilities, age, marital status or social background.

Shown in the diagrams below are ways in which FairPrice manage diversity in their company:

FairPrice hires staff from all four major ethnic groups from Singapore and kept a balance of full-timers and part-timer in their company. Moreover, 90%

of the workforce consist of Singaporeans, leaving 10% opportunity open to foreign workers and the company also emphasizes on gender equality.

Active Aging project

Of particular note is FairPrice effort in recruiting seniors aged 60 and above as Customer Relations Officers (CROs) at some of the stores in conjunction of its newly launched Active Aging Project.

By launching this project, FairPrice aims to promote a more active lifestyle for those aged over 60. These CRO's main role is to assist customers with their needs or enquiries, or simply chat with the customers to gather feedback and suggestions.

Seah Kian Peng, chief executive of FairPrice, believes that seniors have very good skills, and by staying active they are able to use their time meaningfully and added that older workers are ideal employees because they offer stability and experience.

This project that FairPrice launched, shows that they are willing to accept employee regardless of age and promotes diversity and equal working opportunities for everyone.

CASE STUDY

anf

Retail

Abercrombie & Fitch failure to manage diversity well within the organization.

<https://assignbuster.com/diversity-and-equality-in-workplace-commerce-essay/>

Case Study 2: Abercrombie & Fitch (Retail Industry)

Abercrombie & Fitch, an American clothing retailer which focuses on casual wear targets mainly consumers aged 18-22 has more than 700 stores in the States and has been expanding its market internationally.

The management team responsible for the implementation of the diversity policy to ensure that equal treatments are being addressed in the organization only focus on employing a diverse workforce but pay little attention when coming to the application of the diversity policy. Below are 2 examples of Abercrombie & Fitch incapability of diversity management.

Example 1

In 2009, Riam Dean, a 22 year old who was born without a left forearm sued Abercrombie & Fitch for disability discrimination after being told not work on the shop floor unless she took off the cardigan as she was breaking the firm's "look policy". Being excluded from her main job role which requires her to be on the shop floor due to her disability simply shows discrimination from the company towards Riam.

The tribunal has found in Riam's favour on Abercrombie and Fitch harassment and failure to make reasonable adjustments towards her. Riam won the disability claim of £8, 013 against the company for loss of earnings and wrongful dismissal.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/woman-with-prosthetic-arm-forced-to-work-out-of-sight-in-storeroom-1718041.html>

<https://assignbuster.com/diversity-and-equality-in-workplace-commerce-essay/>

Example 2

In a 2004 lawsuit *González v. Abercrombie & Fitch*, the company was accused of discriminating against African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and women by preferentially offering floor sales positions and store management positions to the whites and men.

Abercrombie & Fitch agreed to the settlement of the class case suit which not only requires the company to pay up to \$40 million and also to set up a range of policies and actions required to promote diversity among its workforce and to prevent discrimination based on race, gender, nationality or physical disability.

Below are some of the initiatives that Abercrombie & Fitch have to comply to promote diversity within the company;

Abercrombie marketing materials will reflect diversity by including members of minority racial and ethnic groups.

Advertising of available positions in publications targeting minorities of both genders.

" Benchmarks" for hiring and promotion of women, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans. These benchmarks are goals, rather than quotas, and Abercrombie will be required to report on its progress toward these goals at regular intervals.

A new Office and Vice President of Diversity, responsible for reporting to the CEO on Abercrombie's progress toward fair employment practices.

Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Training for all employees with hiring authority

<http://www.afjustice.com/index.htm>

Abercrombie & Fitch's legal cases of discrimination had resulted in unfair treatment in the workplace and requirement process. The cases dictate that people with same qualification do not get the job at Abercrombie & Fitch because of their physical outlooks, race or gender and this may hinder the company's competitive advantage over its competitors as talents of the diverse population are not being utilised due to the lack of enforcement on diversity management. However, since the start of the initiative, Abercrombie & Fitch has made significant focus on diversity and inclusion; "Diversity and inclusion are key to our organization's success. We are determined to have a diverse culture, throughout our organization, that benefits from the perspective of each individual."

As of April 30th, 2010, vase improvement in the diversity of the in-store staff can be seen;

The in-store workforce, as a whole is 50. 22% people of color,

The in-store models are 48. 44% people of color,

The in-store managers-in-training are 41. 04% people of color.

<http://sg.abercrombie.com/anf/careers/diversity.html>

People in general has very broad range of differences in their needs and an interest that needs to be managed well hence treating everyone the same

<https://assignbuster.com/diversity-and-equality-in-workplace-commerce-essay/>

way may not work to avoid the conflict. Therefore it is important that the management not only needs to be aware of what diversity is about but also managing diversity and equality well in an organization in order help to tackle the issue on the fair treatments and discrimination at work place. Lastly, organizations that are able to manage the workforce diversity well will have a competitive edge as they are able to maximize the potential of the team through their diverse talent and background. As stated by Terence Swee, the chief executive of Muvee Technologies; " You need to be made of the world to sell to the world".

Terence Swee, Chief executive officer of Muvee Technologies (Singapore-based Software Company) : <http://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/Pages/WDM.aspx>

(DONT KNOW IF THIS PART IS RELEVANT, IF ITS NOT JUST REMOVE K THANKS) (:

What can be done by companies to ensure that diversity and equality is not only being preach but also practice at the workplace?

Management needs to put in place necessary channels to enable employees to raise any concerns regarding unfair treatments or discrimination so that necessary actions towards unfair treatment can be rectify.

Support from management to implement the right practices.

Reduce workplace tension that arises from the different demographics of employees by not limiting benefits to any one particular group.

<https://assignbuster.com/diversity-and-equality-in-workplace-commerce-essay/>

Ensure that management role has a clear understanding on what managing diversity is about in order to promote equality in the workplace.

Diversity and equality must be lodged in the heart of any organization serious about implementing the policy. As Ng and Burke (2005) states that the best educated and most able are attracted to an environment that embodies diversity and equality. Therefore, company should implement and follow-thru the diversity and equality policies in order to ensure that equal opportunity exists for everyone.

Diversity and equality training and education play an important role in avoiding potential failure of diversity initiatives, Wentling (2004).

REFERENCING

Anderson and Metcalfe. (2005). Managing diversity: linking theory and practice to business performance. Available: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/research/managing-diversity-business-performance.aspx> Last accessed 7th Aug 2012.

Badici, Emil. (2011). Standards of Equality and Hume's View of Geometry. Pacific Philosophy Quarterly . 92 (1), p448-467.

Bendick, M. Jr, Egan, M. L. and Lofhjelm, S. M. (2001), " Workforce diversity training: from anti-discrimination compliance to organizational development", Human Resource Planning, Vol. 24 No. 2, pp. 10-25.

Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services . (2003). Methods and Indicators to Measure the CostEffectiveness of Diversity Policies in Enterprises. Available:

<https://assignbuster.com/diversity-and-equality-in-workplace-commerce-essay/>

http://edz.bib.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-ath/gdem/03/cbfullrep_en.pdf

Last accessed 8 Aug 2012.

Cockburn, C. (1991), *In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sexual Equality in Organizations*, Macmillan, London.

Dunleavy, Patrick. (1989). The Concept of Equality in Policy Analysis. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*. 1 (2), p213-248.

Hildreth, P. M. and Kimble, C. (2002), "The duality of knowledge",

Information Research, Vol. 8 No. 1, paper No. 142, available at:

<http://InformationR.net/ir/8-1/paper142.html> (accessed 28 May 2010)

Lawsuit González v. Abercrombie & Fitch (2004)

<http://www.afjustice.com/index.htm>

Kandola, B. (2004), "Skills development: the missing link in increasing diversity in leadership", *Industrial & Commercial Training*, Vol. 36 No. 4, pp. 143-7.

Kukathas, Chandran. (2002). Equality and diversity. *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*. 1 (2), p185-212.

Ng, E. S. W. and Burke, R. J. (2005), "Person-organization fit and the war for talent: does diversity management make a difference?", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 16 No. 7, pp. 1195-211.

Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press

<https://assignbuster.com/diversity-and-equality-in-workplace-commerce-essay/>

Riam Dean (2009) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/woman-with-prosthetic-arm-forced-to-work-out-of-sight-in-storeroom-1718041.html>

uk/news/uk/home-news/woman-with-prosthetic-arm-forced-to-work-out-of-sight-in-storeroom-1718041.html

S. Temkin, Larry. (2001). Inequality: A Complex, Individualistic, and Comparative Notion. *Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*. 13 (11), p327-353.

Sabrina Zolkifi. (2011). NTUC FairPrice Keeps Older Workers Active. Available: <http://www.marketing-interactive.com/news/24824>. Last accessed 15th Sept 2012.

Singapore Government. (1965). CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE. Available: <http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/aol/search/display/v>