

A study to determine how managers and leaders can motivate a multicultural staff

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Cox and Beale (1997 cited Harvey and Allard 2005) define diversity as a group of people in a social system that has different group ties. On the other hand, Thomas (1999 cited Harvey and Allard 2005: p3) defines diversity including not only differences but also similarities, indicating that diversity is “ individuals who are different in some ways and similar in others”.

As it was mentioned before, diversity in a workforce includes employees with a variety of backgrounds in terms of race, gender, education, sexual orientation among others. This study will be focused on the understanding of a cultural diverse workforce with the aim of examining its influences on management styles.

For this, it is necessary to point out some important definitions and topics that are relevant to management style in an international and heterogeneous business environment to motivate employees. Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hall & Hall are three of the most important and significant contributors in what culture and workplace differences regard (Mullins, 2005).

General Overview and History of the Topic

The term managing diversity is nowadays becoming more important to organisations, not only because they are interested in diverse groups or they are up to date with the Equal Opportunities legislation and policies, but because they are facing important challenges related to the management and development within a diverse workforce in order to survive in today's global marketplace (Edwards, 1991 cited Henderson 1994).

Ten years ago, the majority of organisations did not think about diversity in the workplace with the intention of having benefit from it. Today, a vast

percentage of organisations take advantage of diversity initiatives to enhance organisational performance and most important, they are committed to it (Berrios, 2003 cited Liberman, 2003).

According to Mor Barak (2005), managing diversity is basically to bring together employees from different backgrounds. However, this definition does not take into account the influence that it might have on management behaviours.

According to Harvey and Allard (2005), diversity can affect people's interactions in the workplace since it requires changes not only in the way people interact within each other, but also changes in the functionality of the organization, hence in the business' performance.

Rationale For The Study

Managing diversity is a reality that all Multinationals and International companies are facing. Most organisations nowadays are adapting programmes to manage a culturally diverse workforce in order to fulfil their objectives and gain place in the global competitive marketplace, making the most of its employees potential.

Globalisation is one of the reasons workers are moving across borders, increasing the heterogeneity of organisations and development of cross-cultural interaction in order to enhance alliances that go beyond differences such as race, gender, and others (Harris et al, 2004).

Not going much further, the European Union is the most important phenomenon of cultural diversity that has happened in the last 20 years. With 25 different countries as members where all of them has different cultures, <https://assignbuster.com/a-study-to-determine-how-managers-and-leaders-can-motivate-a-multicultural-staff/>

the EU has faced the challenges that globalisation has brought in order to reach common objectives such as encouraging innovation and business investment through Union identity and national diversity (European Union, 2006).

In the early 21st century, organisations have been through important changes related to this trend of globalisation where not only factors such as international competitive pressure and business activities have taken place, but also the diversity of human capital from all around the world where cross-cultural interaction has been in expansion (Mullins, 2005).

Therefore, it is important that these companies identify their strategies when managing cultural differences in order to have the right opportunities to gain competitive advantage (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003).

Nevertheless, there are also some risks than can bring difference of cultures in the workplace or business activities; consequently, it is vital that organisations understand that different cultures execute procedures differently (Pooley, 2005; Adler, 1983 cited Miroshnik, 2002).

Furthermore, and being more specific, the management of these ethnically diverse workforce has been on the spot of many authors. As Tayeb (1996; p180-181) says “ the first step in the management of a diverse workforce is to recognise and value such diversity”, then he argues that “ once the diversity is recognised, the next step is to ensure that it is effectively utilised and handled”.

In this case, utilising those differences contributes to an effective management, thus to bring opportunities for organisational learning and

innovation creating competitive advantage in the global marketplace (Schneider and Bardoux, 2003; Mor Barak, 2005).

To gain this, managers must have the needed skills to manage a multicultural workforce, this includes, having the ability to recognise and accept cultural differences between their workers as well as coordination, cooperation and communications (Lane et al, 1997; Ravlin et al cited Earley and Singh, 2000).

Significance and the Importance of the Study

Managing culturally diverse workforce is nowadays a challenge for international managers. On one hand, diversity represents both differences and similarities that exists on individuals and which make them be unique from one to another (Buelens et al, 2002); and on the other hand Parekh (2000) defines culture as “ a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives”.

Thus, cultural diversity is a variety of cultural differences that requires awareness, understanding and acceptance of those differences by managers, making the most of them in order to gain positive outcomes (Scarborough, 2001; Littrell, 2002; Harris et al, 2004; Smith and Peterson, 2005).

Cultural differences might have some influences in the way managers manage and motivate their culturally diverse team, and those ways or styles that are carried out in one culture are difficult to be implemented in another

due to the difference of traditions, ways of doing things and values of that culture (Hofstede cited Evans et al cited Jackson, 1995).

Therefore, further investigation is recommended to be developed to minimise cultural shock in management which could affect business performance. However, this study has been done to offer an up-to-date source of information about multicultural workforce and its influences on management style to motivate employees, which is going to be executed through secondary research.

Hence, factors such as cultural diversity and management style should be analyzed in-depth in order to comprehend what may constrain managers of any multinational organisation to adjust strategies to maintain the business addressed to its objectives.

In this case, there have been other studies more related to the influence or impact of organisational and national culture on management styles and although managing diversity is a topic that has been researched for various authors, it can be said that managing and motivating a culturally diverse workforce is a relative new approach.

Therefore, the purpose is to do academic research by studying the related existing literature reviews to analyse and understand the influence of a multicultural workforce in the management styles.

Finally, a secondary aim of this research is to encourage people to take similar investigation so as to offer useful up-to-date sources that can help both organisations and researchers to acknowledge what is happening in

international business and what forces are influencing the changes within organisations.