IMPROVING CULTURALLY DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT IN ORGANISATIONS

MAKRAIOVA, J[ana]; CAGANOVA, D[agmar] & CAMBAL, M[ilos]

Abstract: Through the acceleration of globalisation processes that are becoming ubiquitous and concerning every business subject, multicultural teams are of a rarity no more and leaders of such teams must understand that acquiring cultural awareness and diversity management skills is one of the premises for gaining competitive advantage and satisfying the goɤnq{gguÏ"pggf"hqt"uqekcn"eqjgukqp00"The concept presented in this paper goes beyond standard understanding of what cultural diversity management means, as it is not perceived as a set of activities that a business as a whole should be responsible for, but encourage every leader and every person to take responsibility for its own awareness firstly. Only then, chvgt" ectghwn" cpf" ukpegtg" gzcokpcvkqp" qh" qpgøu" qyp" ewnvural preconceptions and biases and understanding that cross-cultural competence is a lifelong learning process it is possible vq" uvctv" tgeqipkukpi" qpgøu" qyp" ewnvwtcn" okpfugv" dghqtg" attempting to recognise those of people from other cultures. At this point it is a right time to spread the experience amongst other team members or associates. Various training programs addressing the cultural diversity issues are valuable facilitators and can be considered as an integral part of a successful cultural diversity action plan.
Keywords: culture, diversity, management

1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid market and economical changes that took place in the past 20 years have brought a significant effect not only into international trade but have also influenced everyday life, resulting in different cultures interactions and requiring specific managerial competences. These dramatic changes bring both opportunities and difficulties, but all of them are particularly challenges for a companies´ management. As workplaces in Slovakia have become more diverse, multicultural management and intercultural management competencies have gained increased prominence. This importance stems from the fact that the world is not a homogenous monoculture and organisations increasingly face two simultaneously evolving issues as the challenges presented when companies move to new, often culturally different locations and increased labour mobility resulting in diverse workplaces where people from different cultural backgrounds share their work experience [1]. Multicultural aspects are largely associated with human capital and people at work are the most important asset and a bearer of all those important functions and values, therefore it is of great importance to reinforce such managerial competences that will help to develop understanding and tolerance towards cultural diversity and gain another competitive advantage in the form of staff satisfaction and high performance of employees.

The aim of this paper is neither to describe all those key multicultural managerial competencies, this has already been done within prior survey and will be referred to later, nor to categorise different cultures by type, but offer a basic instruction how to cope with cultural diversity within business. Cultural encounters can appear within the higher level positions, when for instance a parent company sends its expatriates to another country to help start or run another branches or subsidiaries, but are also represented in recruiting and hiring production workers from other countries. Steps to provide better adaptation management of production workers must be initiated precisely by company management. The staff, which will be in everyday contact with those people coming from other countries, must undergo training in order to manage working with them. They must be available to help the newcomers to adapt to all new aspects of the work positions and new culture, bearing in mind the fact that they might have low or no knowledge of the official language spoken in new country. But the language barrier is only the top of the iceberg, the most visible one, but not the only one. When managing and leading people with diverse cultural stereotypes, supervisors have to meet much higher demands, therefore it is recommended for them to gain knowledge and initiate or take part in training to support the development of multicultural understanding. The sooner they understand and accept cultural diversity in a workplace and see it as an advantage, the sooner they can start to pass the skills and knowledge. Supervisors should place focus on this matter. The aim of every business is nothing more than to keep employees satisfied, regardless of their cultural background. But it is necessary to bear in mind all those specific conditions these people must overcome and handle. And be prepared in advance the variety of possible situations to be encountered.

2. WHO IS A MULTICULTURAL LEADER?

There are specifically a few main possible ways how a manager can be assigned the status of "multicultural". In general every organisation that is involved in international business can be considered "multicultural" given the multicultural customer or contractor base or in other words operating in international market space or negotiating space. But the truly "multicultural" managers or leaders are engaged to a greater extent. They must either work with a team of culturally diverse people or be an expatriate to another country. Whatever the case is,

Every stage from psychological point of view is represented with specific perceptions, emotions and behaviours. In multicultural workplaces, everyone is either directly experiencing these emotions and displaying the behaviours described in the schema, or is affected to some extent by another team members adapting to a new environment. Understanding the behaviours and feelings can help to understand why people act a certain way in certain situations and therefore being able to recognise that these expressions are just a result of adaptation process is one of the important skills of those who deal with cultural diversity.

All these steps, starting with understanding one's own culture dimensions, continuing with traits and learning about other cultural ending with passing the acquired knowledge further onto team members can be realised with the support of trainings and workshops or with minimum effort searching for basic multicultural guidance or useful self-study materials directly on the internet. Various training programs can help in guiding leaders and diversity involved employees through every step on the road to recognising and exploring multicultural issues. Some authors and researchers believe that completing cross-cultural training should be mandatory for all diversity involved employees, if not for the whole organisations and therefore they predict an increasing demand for cultural diversity training.

5. EVALUATION

The concept builds upon the belief that every person who wants to succeed within a business environment must take responsibility for their own learning and improving and not only passively wait for actions to be offered from the side of a company. It is about building an individual action plan, which could be helpful particularly for those acting as managers in organisations. They are increasingly responsible for minimising the disadvantages and maximising the advantages of workforce diversity to ensure social cohesion as an essential component of organisational effectiveness. It has been mentioned several times that accomplishing goals for managing diversity brings benefits on both sides, personal and business as well. Successfully managing cultural diversity of the workforce contributes to gaining sustainable competitive advantage, that is to say something that is better than of competitors, valuable to customers and all employees, rare in the industry and finally difficult to acquire or imitate [4]. Gaining diversity based competitive advantage reflects itself in many areas, starting in organisational development, continuing in people and knowledge management, ending with customer services. Enterprises using diversity management strategies to address the concerns of specific cultural groups can benefit from:

- Reducing workforce turnover and absenteeism.
- Increasing effectiveness in recruiting and retaining international qualified employees.
- Increasing cultural adaptability of expatriates.
- Improving team performance, flexibility, cohesion.
- Avoiding stressful and unproductive conflicts.
- Improving the environment for learning and sharing.
- Enhancing competition internationally.

The competitive advantage lies in a fact that working teams with diverse sets of experiences, mental models, thinking styles and interpretations produce more options and more creative solutions to problems and challenges than homogeneous groups [4].

6. CONCLUSION

It is important that industrial businesses acknowledge the economic and social contribution of a culturally diverse workforce and with this regard develop the most possible effort to manage diversity on every level. More importantly, an organisation cannot be a leader in diversity if its employees´ minds are not on the same level. Corporations can facilitate the best diversity and inclusion programs, but if the managers and employees do not do their part, disagree with underlying principles, or undermine the program's basic philosophy and goals, the diversity efforts are meaningless. A diversity-driven corporate culture must be inclusive of diversity-driven people [5]. The aim of this paper was to enable people, either leaders or individuals who deal with cultural diversity on everyday basis or occasionally, to better understand the importance and value of diverse workforce and learn how to improve workplace performance and environment. It was identified that the paper findings are limited by a lack of a primary research and instead only focus on existing secondary research. The findings will be developed further by conducting a primary research study and the subsequent findings will then be used as a basis to formulate the research direction of the dissertation thesis. This will focus on establishing the correlation between the performance of working teams and the extent of the multicultural climate.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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