IS IT EASY FOR MANAGERS TO MANAGE GLOBAL WORKFORCE DIVERSITY?

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Abstract
Workforce diversity is a concept which is kept on the backburner in the realms of the academic world. Is it easy to manage? The answer is easy - "NO"? It sounds like a simple solution, but hard to comprehend. Normally, such topics are brushed off as figment of imagination. No attempt has been seriously made to dwell deeper into this subtle but significantly important topic in era of globalization. Diversity though relevant in every frame, necessitate critical enquiry as the world strives to become a global village. In current times, managers are facing challenges which adds to their problem of uncertainties and unpredictability. This is hampering them in managing their functions of planning, leadership, organizing and control as the diversity spreads. During pandemic, serious diversity issues have emerged raising concern about prevailing fault lines in management. It raises questions on ethics, social corporate responsibility, decision-making and leadership areas functions. The research explains management concepts supported by secondary research and empirical evidence in depth. The research supports triangulation method to validate the underlying hypothesis. The primary aim is to upscale functional capabilities of managerial thinking. The speed of globalization is threatening managerial thinking to manage change and disruptions. For example, Climate change, Covid situation, Afghanistan crisis, Ukraine war etc. could have been mitigated if political managers were trained to manage diversity in the context of globalization. This is an initial research initiative with the hope that it will enhance the curiosity in others for deeper investigation and collaborative research.
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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of diversity in global context could be gaining traction stealthily. It is something many managers may not be considering in their day-to-day decision-making process. This could be due to lack of awareness or inadequate training rather than an issue of good or bad intentions. The organizations may not be aware that this could become a sensitive matter of ethical compromise or a matter of good governance failure. Since it in the context of globalization, the core areas of leadership, human resources and attracting core competency skills could be the fallout issue here. The strategic aim of competitive advantage could be hit in the eye with devastating outcomes. In the recent pandemic, management area has been put to test for its abilities to prevent and mitigate the impacts of crisis. However, it may not be working due to several reasons including lack of "diversity intelligence" at all levels of management. This

study will mainly focus on the core management area of diversity, leadership, ethics, and good governance at global level. The research will involve integrating the management concepts, empirical evidence and in-depth investigation to reduce gap between changing ground reality and management thinking. This would probably add value to the role of managerial function in solving problems. The systemic shift from localization to globalization and more recently to regionalization has witnessed widening gap between technology and management in managing diversity. This investigation will dwell into these key areas and will report it findings.

2.   RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis of this investigation is that diversity management will lead to better management of business within global context leading to sustainable competitive advantage.

3.   PURPOSE AND AIM

The main purpose of this investigation is to address and bring into focus the issue of diversity so that organizations can equip managers to mitigate problems faced during globalization process. This will lead to better solution to globalization problems in future preventing major failures.

4.   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical concepts are the seeds which provides scarification opportunity for research to build on for better results. They will provide wider choice for the best option. Some of the relevant concepts considered for this research are defined, explained, and analyzed in the following section.

The first and foremost concept suitable for this study is the concept of workforce diversity. It is the term which simply means people of similar and different background working in an organization. It includes variables such as age, culture, race religion among many other factors (Saxena, 2014). The workforce diversity started gaining prominence due to liberalization and globalization of the markets prompting organizations to expand globally for its inherent advantages (Henry & Evans, 2007).

Another concept relevant to this research is leadership in global environment. Leadership plays a crucial role in diversity matters. It means that the leader provides a role of been a torchbearer in giving direction and guidance. It is easier for employees to emulate, when the

leader supports diversity in an organization (Raham, 2019). Every leader has responsibility to make best choices but in an ethical manner. The concept of ethics is explained below.

Ethics in the context of workplace diversity can be explained as a set of moral values and rules which guides managers and their team to make better decision (Tamunomiebi & Ehior, 2019). In relation to workplace diversity the global management consulting firm McKinsey & Company ethnic diversity helps firm to achieve competitive advantage. PwC has gone further to add that ethnic diversity stirs the flames of innovation drive and growth (Byars et al, 2018).

This brings us to the doorsteps of good governance. The concept of good governance is simply defined as a principles, practices, and processes by which an organization is managed, directed and controlled (Financial Markets Authority, 2018). As diversity is coming into limelight in a global context, the concept of good governance cannot be left behind as the two concepts go hand in hand.

Every problem-solving depends on the blending of skill, maturity, and investigation capabilities. The collation of information process is needed to generate greater alternatives so that quality outcomes are available to make the best choice. In conceptual context, better managerial process understanding would mean greater chance to solve diversity problems. In complex situation of diversified human relationship in global markets, inadequate managerial skills could prove costly within a strategic timeframe.

In reality most managers due to lack of managerial process training and under pressure to perform, adopt rule of thumb and common-sense approach. This could hurt the reputation and goodwill of the organization and impact competitive advantage. Therefore, it becomes essential to explore the newer developments in the area of global diversity through secondary research.

5. SECONDARY RESEARCH

The investigation relies on quality research through secondary sources to validate the outcome. Since, diversity concept for global workforce is being investigated, the scope of research covers data from around the world within the context of the key concepts explained above. The outcome of the research and findings are analyzed and explained below:

In an interesting article it has been observed how managers from around the world will compromise workforce diversity in different areas due to lack of training. In Europe, for example, managers fail to include participation of older workforce or ethnic minorities. In the US, the

diversity problem exists in the area of gender and ethnic inclusion to CEO positions for e.g. Of 1.5 million CEO's just one quarter are women and one in ten are from ethnic group. Another example from Asia shows lack of diversity management in area of disabilities. The two countries which have the worst situation in this area are China and Indonesia. When it comes to gender diversity, Japan and Korea has dismal record of lowest proportion of women in their workforce (Kharroubi, 2021). This reflects the workforce diversity problem is spread around the world and needs to be addressed at a global scale. The upscaling of managerial skills needs to include understanding of workforce diversity and its connection to ethics and good governance to improve effective leadership skills.

Another glaring example of complexities in implementing global workforce diversity by manager's comes in the area of religion and sexual orientation. A law in Hongkong does provide legal protection on grounds of religion but in India castes based on religion is a protected category (Collins, 2014). A manager in Hong Kong dealing with India or vice versa could face frustrating situation blaming one another of unethical practices though they may be effective leaders. A proper workforce diversity training would have gone a long way to build a sustainable global business relationship.

The interesting research conducted by McKinsey suggest that in the midst of Covid pandemic, companies having leadership skills in diversity outperformed others on profits. However, the need for skilled leadership gets prominently essential. During pandemic the problems are getting amplified according to the report. For example, women are more prone to working for sectors facing higher unemployment. There has been higher vulnerability of a black worker losing job compared to their counterpart. Further the study found, the sectors such as leisure, hospitality and retail trade had the largest fall in GDP. These vulnerable sectors had workforce which constituted 65 percent from Hispanics and Latinos ethnicity (Ellingrud & Krishnan, 2000). Thus, workforce diversity problem in the context of globalization is facing ethical and good governance issues.

However, it will be wrong to say that global scenario is infected with diversity problems. There are bright spots on the horizon. For instance, the support by Nike to campaigner Colin Kaepernick, a quarterback American is a shining example. Nike stood with Colin in his fight against racism and intolerance. Another example is of Proctor & Gamble which boasts of having

45% of its managers and one-third of its board to be women. It strongly supports work equality which is a good step to promote globalization (Eswaran, 2019).

6. EMPIRICAL OBSERVATION

Empirical evidence is a good way for validating secondary research. The triangulation with empirical observation complements the validation process of the overall research.

In my personal experience, the world has been undergoing a systemic shift over last ten decades. The process of change has picked up traction and transformed into a disruptive force. The political leaders at a macroeconomics level have realized that no one region is self-sufficient. The way to move forward is to accept the planet as an interdependent entity.

This realization of interdependence has not percolated well into the corporate and social leadership space. The spiritual leaders have shown strong resistance to the concept of globalization. The bigger objective of global prosperity and peace has fragmented the planet as a place of persecution and exploitation. The global workforce diversity has been a great idea waiting to be executed in a professional manner.

I have been one of the victims of the financial crisis of 1999 (also known as the Asian crisis). It uprooted my skills, experience, and career into a tailspin. The only way forward was to look for fresh pasture. After lot of struggles, I was forced to migrate to another country which was not an easy solution. It was a scary adventure in the unknown territory to nowhere. I got openings in two countries of which I selected one which was relatively safer for my family. It was like a second chance into paradise.

In the short-term the struggle was unprecedented with too many job application rejects, social isolation, corporate exploitation to the point of breaking one's spirits down. I did survive but many migrants along the way were not very lucky.

In my viewpoint, every global crisis in the past was shifting the world towards interdependence. The political bigwigs were gung-ho as they realized that the move to welcome migrants filled the cracks in their economies. This message failed to sieve through the social and corporate mesh. It has resulted in systemic discrimination at a global scale. The University of Manchester in one of their short films have brought out the impact of emotional and psychological wellbeing due to global diversity problem quiet well. The feedback from wide spectrum of workforce has been startling. One participant describes "It is dehumanizing and makes one feel lesser". Some

remarks from participants have been a wake-up call, for example, "I felt targeted. I did not feel comfortable anymore", "I was called names and told to go back to where I came. Though I am here since when I was three months old", "Why I have this body. It has made me feel alienated", "You feel left out and not wanted" (The University of Manchester, 2015).

7. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Globalization is irreversible and rightly so. Every region on this planet is bestowed with comparative advantages and disadvantages. Due to this, the force of nature drives all humanity to promote integration through interdependence. The more managers resist or ignore the significance of the global workforce diversity, the more will be the conflicts, pandemics, and crisis. According to CEO and Chairman Larry Fink of Black Rock, the biggest Asset Management company, the Russian-Ukraine conflict has put an end to globalization efforts of mankind over last three decades (Klebnikov, 2022). This is a clear indication of futility of insurmountable efforts going down the drain if leaders and managers fail to realise the significance of global diversity. The superficial cause of conflict may appear to be over NATO or resources, but the important aspect of human conflict cannot be ignored. Such an ignorance will prove quite costly for mankind survival.

Globalization and workforce diversity is an important component of sustainable planet. Integration between political, corporate, social, and spiritual leadership is not an option or a choice but an unavoidable necessity for planet sustainability. This cannot happen unless the leadership and managerial skills are toned to include workforce diversity skills in short-term and long-term decision-making.

The Managers of organizations operating globally promote diversity in their organizations by encouraging use of common language, conducting diversity workshops, emphasizing the importance of diversity and quality (Saxena, 2014). Some organizations create support systems, have training and development programs to encourage diverse culture, promote intercultural participation (Henry & Evans, 2007). A new trend which is emerging in many countries is to enact laws for practicing positive discrimination for e.g. The Equality Act of 2010 in UK allows employers to take positive action for promoting workplace equality. In India the constitution has "reservation" programs for backward unrepresented groups Some positive trends in multinational

companies include measures such as Gender quotas on the corporate boards, Equality regulations for pay, Sexual and harassment policies and so (Collins, 2014).

8. CONCLUSION

To summarize, the investigation reveals a stark truth about the fault lines lurking underneath the globalization efforts. In the fast-changing complex world of globalization, managers are groping in unnecessary trivialities ignoring the core issues. It is clear from discussion that technology has outpaced the managerial skills. Managers could be making profound decisions of global ramification more on thumb rule. The world may be edging on a path to self-destruction for an accident to happen. There seems to be an urgent need to fill the cracks between the runaway technology and managerial capabilities in areas of human relationships in a global context. Training is a way forward provided top leaders and managers realize the problem and willing to commit for a solution. The solutions are available, but the focus on the problems is the missing link.

This research is a small attempt to bring into focus the global diversity problem on the management platform. Further research may be hopefully undertaken to build momentum to expedite mitigation of the problem. Finally, it can be concluded that global workforce diversity is a significant driver in the managers armoury to benefit from globalization.

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