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MANAGING DIVERSITY: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER IN A WORKPLACE BY INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Today there is no First World , Second World or Third World just Smart World or Fast World. Now a days, many workplaces contain employees of varying ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. In such situations miscommunication is almost inevitable, but if it happens a lot you might want to examine whether the underlying cause is a lack of understanding or even intolerance. Poor communication may be the effect rather than the cause, and an underlying prejudice may be the real issue. The point is when you hear poor communication cited as the cause of a problem, you would do well to probe a little deeper before deciding how to respond – communication issues are seldom ever just skin-deep. Is ‘poor communication’ becoming a scapegoat that allows us to ignore the real problems plaguing the workplace? How often do organisations mistake ‘poor communication’ as the real problem when in actual fact it is merely a symptom? In order to create a true environment of inclusiveness, however, training is not enough – it is merely the beginning. Soft skills training, including communication, interpersonal skills and leadership skills, is also essential. These are the skills that foster the kind of inclusion where everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from, feels they are an integral member of the organization and encouraged to fully participate. The soft skills training that I find most desired and has the biggest impact on diversity is leadership training for leaders of all levels. In order to truly create and maintain an inclusive environment that speaks to all employees, soft skills are essential. The most important soft skill for fostering inclusion, and thus diversity, is leadership that can surely be obtained from Interpersonal Communication.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Interpersonal Skills, Work Culture.

INTRODUCTION

Having a diverse workplace can help improve productivity and create a synergetic environment. The combination of different cultures, experiences and ideas can enhance the workplace environment and help drive creativity. Unfortunately, the downside of a diverse workplace is the possibility of culture clashes and misunderstandings due to disparate thinking. Management must adopt creative strategies to effectively handle workplace diversity. Effective management is the key to unlocking the synergy that a diverse workplace provides. It's not sufficient to simply put up a few posters regarding diversity in the workplace or to update the employee manual. An effective strategy incorporates diversity training in the workplace. Before starting training, however, managers should meet and decide on key

areas to focus on and discuss what they expect to achieve. There are many companies that provide speakers and corporate presentations on diversity, so businesses don't have to rely on their in-house Human Resources departments. Of course, training is just a part of the overall strategy, and points covered during the training should be reinforced in office policies and procedures. Mission statements and core values should also reflect a company's diversity strategies. As we move toward a more global economy the need for workplace diversity grows. In the future diversity in the workplace may be required for companies that want to be competitive, because diverse ideas help create new solutions to help overcome obstacles. To take advantage of the synergy that diversity brings to the workplace, companies must develop long term goals and

strategies. A long term strategy acknowledges differences and embraces them to encourage free thinking among employees. By incorporating diversity as an asset, companies can better prepare themselves to face the future. As their customers become more diverse, so should their workforce. Diversity in the workplace means bringing together people of different ethnic backgrounds, religions and age groups into a cohesive and productive unit. Advances in communication technology, such as the Internet and cellular phones, have made the marketplace a more global concept. In order to survive, a company needs to be able to manage and utilize its diverse workplace effectively. Managing diversity in the workplace should be a part of the culture of the entire organization. Over the years, the world has produced a large number of influential leaders unique in their own right. Leaders, as we all perceive, are the torchbearers of new ideas. Their work does not end with the creation of a new idea as they need to inspire their followers to continue on the path traced by them. I have always pondered over this question – What “special” qualities did an Abraham Lincoln or a Martin Luther King possess to

make them exponents in their own field and remain immortal in the hearts of their billions of followers.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to examine the definitions offered within the literature on diversity at work place and to explore the various constructions of diversity that are extant. It will consider how interpersonal communication offered in the literature help or impede the formation of effective organizational innovation if applied. This paper uses a selection of case studies using a small number of previously published papers to address achieve these purposes. Ultimately, the goal of this paper is to identify where areas of improvement could be made in the existing workplace regarding the discussion of diversity in order to improve its impact on the expected organizational outcomes. This study is undertaken to examine the main idea of workforce diversity and how it can be related to Organizational performance. A survey on literature throws light about the relationship of workforce, its motivation ,needs concerning organizational performance.

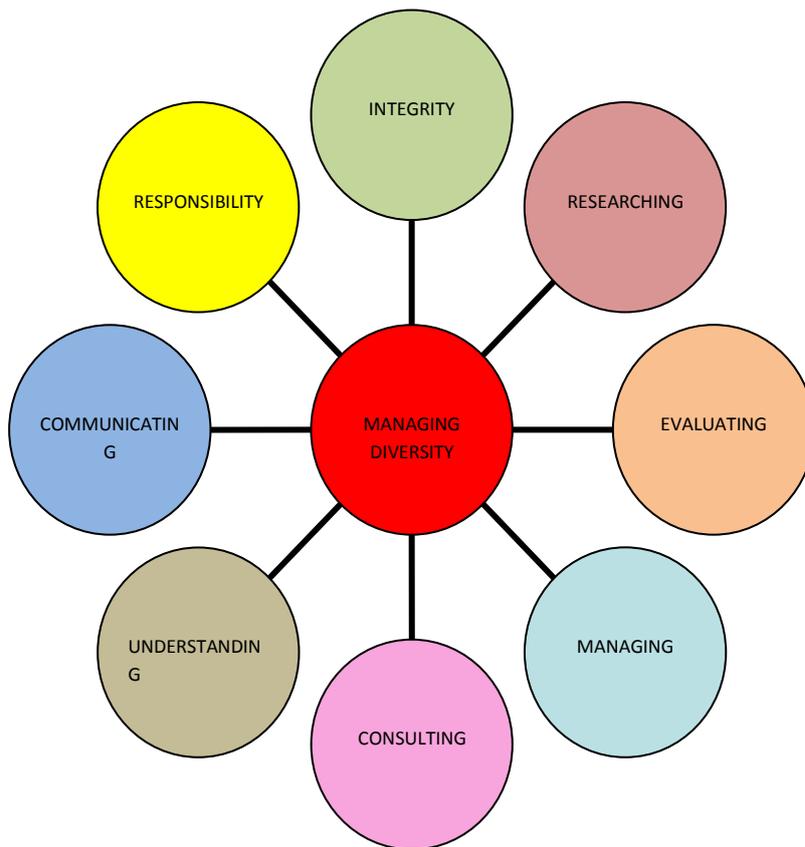


Figure : 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

As new technology continues to improve and increase the opportunities for communication within organizations, studies are reinforcing the role that immediate managers play in keeping employees

informed and connected to the company’s business strategy (Williams & Dong, 1999; Larkin & Larkin, 1994; Therkelsen & Fiebich, 2003; Smith & Mazin, 2004; Whitworth & Riccomini, 2005). The results of a study reported by Whitworth and Riccomini (2005)

indicate that managerial communication effectiveness correlates to employee job performance. While many other channels can convey information to employees, the manager can provide both information content and context for the employee. Context includes a sense of perspective on how the unit's work contributes to the organization's success. Managerial communication includes "taking big picture issues and discussing how they affect the immediate work group and individual employees. It means engaging in a dialogue with employees to make sure that there's common understanding" (p. 20). A unique characteristic of small business is the strong interpersonal relationships between employees and owners (Carland & Carland, 1990; Matlay, 1999; Therkelsen & Fiebich, 2003). Managerial communication includes interpersonal communications to exchange information regarding defining tasks, articulating satisfaction with employee performance, sharing praise and criticism to improve productivity, and listening to employees with genuine interest and within an environment that is open and encouraging (Carland & Carland, 1990). According to Matlay (1999), "The critical role that owner/managers [of micro-businesses] usually played in the day-to-day operation of their firms brought them into direct contact with most, if not all, of their employees" (p. 294) and reflected in the successful operation of the business. Managers are leaders within companies who have the ability to guide, instruct, motivate and encourage employees. They are encouraged to practice enthusiasm, welcome staff inquiries, be attentive listeners, maintain an open door policy, recognize individualism and support independent decision making (Burstiner, 1998). Managers have the ability to shape organizational culture through their articulation of overall business strategy, sharing the culture through communication with staff and measuring performance (McAleese & Hargie, 2004). Small business owners need to be well-versed in the principles of personnel management to improve employee retention, employee engagement, productivity, morale and satisfaction (Balderson, 2000; Burstiner, 1998). Effective managerial communication practices help reduce the incidence of misunderstandings and mistrust as well as provide the foundation for conflict resolution. The manager-employee communication process begins with the first few days: Orientation activities as well as the delegation of a coach to assist the new employee in his or her transition improve employee satisfaction and employee engagement (Siegel, 1978; Burstiner, 1998; Smith & Mazin, 2004). The orientation period should familiarize the employee with company rules and regulations and all aspects of the job and the company. Communication must be reciprocal to ensure comprehension and engagement in the business. Literature Review 30 Managerial communication is one of many channels on which to build a broader employee

communication or internal communication program. According to Whitworth and Riccomini (2005), after the manager, the three most credible sources of organizational information are the company intranet, the business executive and external mass media. A comprehensive employee communication program includes a plan to measure how employee communication activities affect the company's business goals. Inherent in creating a culture of communication and knowledge sharing is an environment for feedback. Elements of such a culture include: 4 Leaders who listen, respect employee contributions and engage employees in problem solving. Literature Review 33 4 Employees who work well in teams, have strong interpersonal communication as well as technical skills and who are trained in problem solving. 4 Information flow systems that ensure open communication in all directions, value feedback and have high levels of interaction between employees (Shuler, 1999). Employee feedback, surveys, grievance procedures and suggestion boxes are a few means for exchanging information, measuring employee satisfaction and developing an environment of trust (Smith & Mazin, 2004). Employee focus groups and employee advisory committees can be useful forums for testing messages and getting feedback on campaigns during the development phase as well as in the summative measurement phase of an employee communication program (Lawson, 2004). Surveys and regular monitoring of employee attitudes keep potential grievances in check by ensuring continued dialogue with employees. Surveys also demonstrate management's concern and interest in the opinions and ideas of staff. Immediate follow-up ensures positive relations, and respondent anonymity promotes trust and honesty

CLASSIFICATION OF SKILLS FOR MANAGING DIVERSITY AT WORKPLACE

Well, interpersonal skills may have been quintessential to the making of these leaders. A leader, by dint of his interpersonal skills captivates the minds of his followers. As a leader, you also need to possess these skills which will help you become effective at the workplace. Take a look at each of these basic interpersonal skills and how they contribute to the making of an effective leader.

Communication skills: Many leaders possess the gift of the gab which makes them eloquent speakers. It is all about articulating their ideas in a meaningful way, both written and verbal.

Communication skills:

- Help communicate the vision statement to gain support and accomplish goals
- Increase the credibility of the leader and instructions become easier to follow

An example would be that, when you converse with your client, your subordinates, or even your fellow

employees, you need to clearly convey your thoughts because what you say is a significant way of getting our message across and you might not want to convey something unintentional. Also, having good communication skills allows you to work more effectively in groups and teams.

Facilitating skills: Liaise with team-members and arrive at the best possible solution. There could be diverse ideas and perspectives for any single agenda, but an effective leader will work towards reaching a consensus. These skills:

- Ensure that discussions take place in a structured manner without losing sight of the outcome
- Act as an icebreaker by engaging followers and keeping up the momentum

Leadership skills: Inspire others to accomplish the planned goals with commitment and dedication. It also means leading followers with a clear-cut direction.

- Leaders are not born, they are made. Leadership skills include the entire gamut of individual skills taken as a whole.
- They help build trust in the minds of the followers.
- Leadership skills can create a self-motivated team, making them aware of the purpose and thus streamlining the process in order to accomplish goals.

For instance, a senior employee can guide and motivate his team to achieve the target given to them.

Mentoring skills: It involves providing constructive guidance wisely as and when required. This helps followers recover from any glitches or stumbling blocks.

- It gives the chance to know the other person well.
- It gives a fair idea of where to draw the line.

As a senior employee in the organization, you can mentor training programs and focus on guiding new hires by sharing skills, knowledge, and insights to help them develop their careers. This helps employees feel more confident and self-supporting.

Negotiation skills: Resolve any conflicts by agreeing to terms acceptable to both parties. Think of a win-win situation, create and maintain a cordial relationship with others. Having good negotiation skills helps in understanding the client better and convincing him for a win-win situation.

Negotiation skills:

- Teach one to comprehend what others are saying
- Inculcate the perspective of mutual gain
- Prepare one to deal with a given situation logically

Many of us might have faced such situations at the workplace where a disagreement arises due to

differing needs. Especially, when you are convincing your client and do not want him to get disheartened, you try to negotiate and create a win-win situation for both of you. This is where you try to negotiate and reach to conclusion without affecting future agreements.

Influence and Motivation skills: It is a conglomeration of both communication and leadership skills. While, through good communication one can influence and persuade others, through leadership skills one can demonstrate his/her motivational skills which boost the spirits of the followers. Motivate employees depending on individual personalities.

- Motivational skills in still confidence in the minds of the followers.
- They help inspire followers, instead of commanding them.

As an example when a newly hired employee joins the organization, he/she might initially feel a bit nervous and apprehensive of coping up with the work. In such a situation, you should guide and provide all the support to make him feel confident that he can perform well.

Decision-making skills: A leader has to make countless decisions. A wrong decision may prove costly while a right decision at the crucial time may bring favourable results.

- Tackle issues as and when required without conflict.
- Steer the dynamics of the team “to the next level”.

As a leader, you need to be a strong decision-maker, keeping in mind all the scheduled work, meetings, etc. Decision-making involves choosing between possible solutions to a problem. Some factors such as not having proper information, too many people involved, or lacking interest in the subject can affect the decision-making process.

Planning: Planning involves taking certain strategic decisions about the future. Planning includes the list of activities and the contingency plan that needs to be carried forward.

- Proper planning is like choosing the right track to get onto.
- With the correct direction in mind, you can move towards the fulfilment of the goal.
- It also helps a leader organize his/her agenda by arranging “first things first”.

As a leader, you need to plan effectively. For instance, plan the project budget for developing a project, determine the overall profits, etc.

Integrity: A leader builds trust and this fosters collaboration and facilitates sharing of information. This way, he creates a solid team that supports each other’s views.

- Integrity means honesty, fairness, and creating good relationships. It is about

personal values that cannot be compromised.

- Integrity speaks volumes about emotional intelligence.

Team work: It involves co-operating with fellow members while nurturing their aspirations. Through team work, a leader develops a sense of collaboration while working with his peers and subordinates.

- It teaches the art of delegating work among fellow members.
- It derives the support of others by emphasizing their good qualities.

You always should aim to work as one team with collaboration and if there are any misunderstandings or issues in your team, you should be the guide and help them solve the problems so that the team feels motivated by your support.

Stress management: A leader manages stress effectively.

- It teaches a leader to develop the ability to bounce back from setbacks without dwelling on negative thoughts.

- It also develops the habit of being patient in any situation.
- One of the best ways to avoid stress is by control and prevention. It can't always be controlled or prevented and in such cases, you should be patient enough to hold on and let all things come under control, without letting the negative factors affect you. Are leaders born or made? The debate is ongoing. As for me, I feel leaders learn through experience, through a lot of trial and error in their own lives. Hence, I think leadership is not something mystical but something to be acquired with experience. Diversity and HR Challenges. There are many questions which comes to our mind. How can employees respect differences? How can an organization attract and retain a diverse workforce? How is diversity successfully managed? How are affirmative action programs linked to employee diversity programs?

VARIOUS CHALLENGES IN MANAGING DIVERSITY

- Individual versus Group Fairness
- Resistance to Change
- Resentment
- Group Cohesiveness
- Interpersonal Conflict
- Segmented Networks
- Backlash
- Income
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Religious Belief
- Geographic Location
- Parental Status
- Personality Type
- Race
- Gender
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Marital Status
- Retention
- Competition for Opportunities
- Homosexuals
- People with Disabilities
- Older Workers
- Women
- Others

CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING DIVERSITY

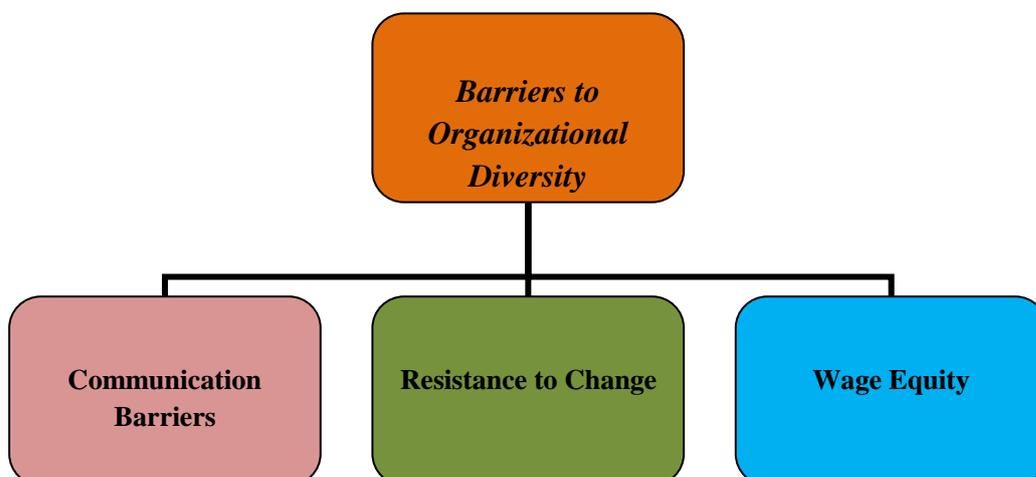


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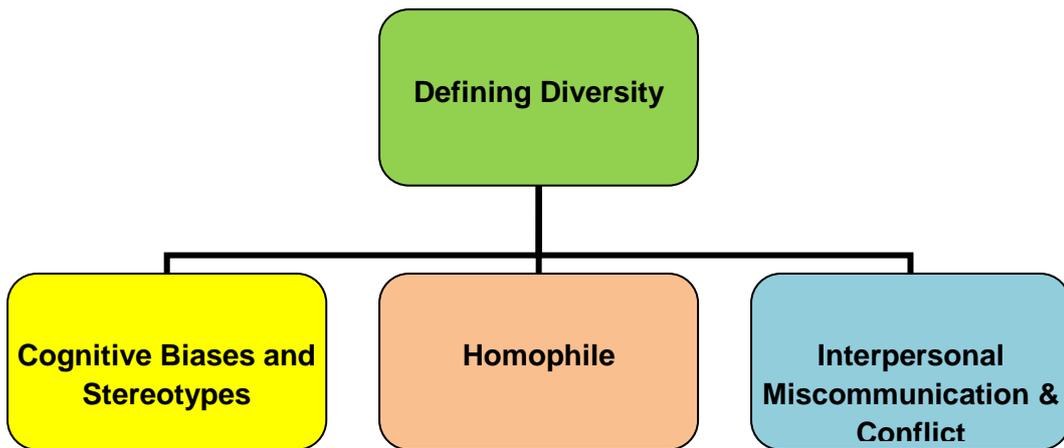


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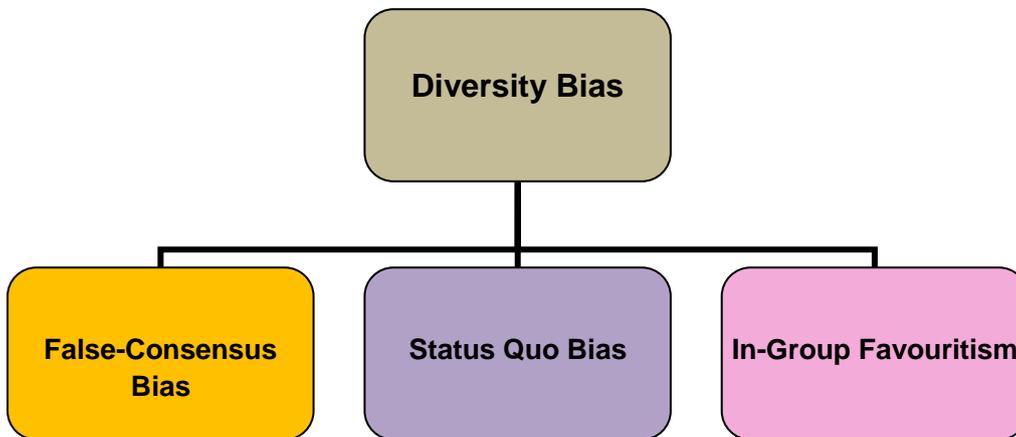


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Interpersonal communication in recent years has been consistently placed high as an important requirement for conducting successful job performance in the organizations. It looks reasonable to determine that one of the most impeding forces to organizational effectiveness is a privation of effective communication. Moreover, good interpersonal communication skills are very important to employees for making a successful organization. Effective communication and interpersonal skills are not only important for growth of an organization but also for the very survival of the entity. There has to be proper coordination between managers and employees to understand the requirement of the client and to serve them better and thereby grow in their careers as well. Effective communication and listening is a need of hour in today's multi-cultural corporate environment which involves stakeholders from around the globe.

Role of interpersonal communication in an organization can be marked out into the following:

- To understand the organizational goal and need to achieve it through collective efforts.

- Understand the client's and stakeholder requirements and balance their demands.
- Identify new opportunities in the market and formulate strategies to achieve business goals.
- To improve collaboration with in teams to achieve project's vision and mission.

IMPACT OF INTERPERSONAL CHALLENGES FOR LEADERS

The leaders and a few higher authorities and employees are confronting difficulties from weight of workload working with groups and with distinctive types of people. The principle effect of this is because of absence of these communication to the organization is lower proficiency, diminished advancement. These results and effects will leads have a more drawn out effect of their future in their specific fields for the people in the organization.

Impact of solving the inter-personal challenges to the leaders can be emphasized in below key points:

- Continuous communication of organizational goals and objectives to the employees effectively.
- Mentoring the employees in tough times and help them out in their challenges.

- Resolution of conflicts between the employees and diffuse stressful environments and hostile situations.
- Helps leaders to efficiently train the employees on both technical and soft skills to get the job done.
- Enables business leaders to develop the business through sales, acquisitions by effectively communicating to stakeholders, customer, employees and colleagues.
- Managers can improve and build trust at work place and cooperation from employees through effective inter-personal and communication skills.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

As we all know the importance of communication and interpersonal skills in an organization, below are the methods to improve interpersonal skills within an organization:

- **Workshops/ Training Sessions :**

Communication and interpersonal skills in an organization can be enhanced through specialized workshops in which team leads, managers and top-level management will be trained. External trainers can also be employed to train the crucial stakeholders of a company on the said aspects.

- **Team Outings or Creating Survey Teams:**

Want your employees to improve their skills with a load of fun??? Team outings are the best way to improve bonding between employees in a team. Taking some time off work with co-workers not only enables to improve one's interpersonal skills but also helps them to understand the organizational goal and work together to achieve it.

- **Cultural Trainings:**

Today's Corporate is an open global market where people of different nationalities and races come together and work. Employees are expected to be culture sensitive. Cultural trainings are to be conducted in an organization where in employees are encouraged to take part in and know about cultural differences and how to deal with people of different cultures. Such trainings are useful in improving the interpersonal skills and communications skills of employees as well.

- **Periodic Meetings with top Management:**

Periodic meeting with the top-level management of an organization not only makes the employees aware of the organizational goal and plans to achieve it but also enable them to formulate new plans for organizational development.

- **To think out of the box:**

Employees are to be encouraged to formulate new business plans, out-of-box ideas to improve business and client satisfaction in an organization. Best and feasible ideas are to be implemented and rewarded

which encourages employees to work in teams to formulate them.

Ideology:

Developing the inter-personal and communication skills is not only important for an organization but also for an Individual's career. Result of the application of above mentioned interpersonal strategies can be discussed as below.

- Improves relationships with clients, stakeholders and help to work successfully with the team .
- To garner various ideas and strategies which lead to organizational and career development and implement them .
- To understand the demands and needs of stakeholders in a better way to serve them better.
- Improves the technical expertise.

FINDINGS & SUGGESTIONS

After critically examining the literature and various research papers from different authors related with workforce diversity and its effect on production, it has been found that: An organization's major objective is to earn profit and to enhance its productivity, no doubt that almost all the authors are saying that employing diversified workforce is the very essence in today's scenario but to manage such a diversified workforce is a big challenge in front of the management. Hiring diversified workforce will definitely lead to improved productivity, but may prove to disaster if not managed properly because not only the management but employees are also facing some problems like language problem (which is acceptable and is not due to thoughts of the employees), conflict of attitude and difference in looking at things, which is directly related to human behaviour which ultimately affects the productivity of every organization. After considering all the findings in the research it becomes a compulsion for the researchers to suggest, the ways to handle the shortcomings found during the survey. It is really a big matter of concern for all HR professionals as one side we say that we should include new trends in HR policies and on the other hand, the latest trend like workforce diversity is treated as a problem. However, this problem can be solved by adopting different policies like:

- Encouraging the use of language which is common and simple in the organization among the employees.
- By conducting various motivational , inspirational and mentorship programs.
- By keeping the channels of communication open and transparent among the employees and employers.
- By encouraging employee participation into various activities.
- Further one should accept the fact that it is not the matter of culture rather it is the

matter of quality. Therefore, for improving productivity, quality has to be maintained and not weeded out.

CONCLUSION

The importance of workforce diversity on organizational performance is very critical for the success of an organization. Workforce diversity has been identified to lead to improved organizational performance as a result of the broad based nature and the specialization it brings on board. Also, encouraging workers on educational pursuits and training implied that workforce diversity could make them strive to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Similarly, corporate profitability is a function of performance tied to the synergy of the similarities and differences of the employees that could make for increased revenue over cost.

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