Managing Diversity at Work: Key to Organisational Survival

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Abstract
The indispensible nature of diversity management as a concept is no longer contestable, because it has become a major requirement for any organisation that wants to optimize the productivity of its workforce. Organisations are now faced with intense competition arising from a globalized workforce that necessitates the application of diversified management principles, culture and managerial thinking. One of the effects of a globalized workforce is that it places a high expectation on organisational managers on the need to achieve a higher premium on effective management of diversified workforce. Globalization in this 21st century has brought with it a higher than normal requirement to strike a balance between mono-cultural and multicultural workforce. This is caused by heterogeneous background in terms of our biological and physical characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, educational, political and religious beliefs, just to mention a few. It is on the basis of the above, that public and private organisations need to develop a culture that is compatible with diversification of workforce in order to remain relevant in a fast changing and globalized economy. This paper aims at evaluating the various ways in which diversity in organisations can be managed to ensure the survivability of global organisations in fulfilling the need of both the local market and the world market at large. Managing diversity effectively will unfold how to plan and develop a good diversity audit in an organisation with a view to developing a robust program for your needs as well as creating an organisational culture that encourages diversity in order maximize the productivity of your workforce, build an all embracing multicultural work teams, design interesting meetings that work for everyone, and recruit, select, motivate, and promote a diverse workforce. Furthermore, managing diversity in organisations involves maintaining work-life balance; diversity sensitivity training; improved management information system on diversity; mentoring as part of staff development; and attitude change.
Keywords: diversity; organisational survival; cultural diversity; mono-culture; multi-culture

1. Introduction
According to the UNESCO universal declaration on cultural diversity, which was unanimously consented to by the 31st session of the General Conference of UNESCO on the 2nd of November, 2001, Article 2 states that "in our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together" (Walden, 2011, p.1).

Multiculturalism is not a new concept in the management literature. Its implication in the management of people at work is also not new to management scholars and practitioners. A study of the historical development of some organisations shows that some organisations have adapted the mono-cultural approach to the management of their organisations and were able to achieve some of their goals without the influence of cultural interference. However, this has not yielded much of their desired result and expectations.

Some scholars and professionals have studied the impact of organisational culture on employee performance (Zheng, Baiyin, McClean, 2010), and none that I know have failed to recognize the fact that there is a positive relationship between positive organisational culture and performance. Even in the medical field for instance, the culture of an organisation has been found to play a significant role in ensuring and sustaining the provision of quality health services in nursing, patient attention, staff wellbeing, job satisfaction and staff turnover (Randsley de Moura, Dominic, Retter, Sigridur, & Kaori, 2009). Diversity arises as a result of differences among people, which can be traced to cultural dichotomy. In other words, diversity is a product of differences in individual characteristics, arising from the way people behave, think and perceive things within their immediate environment. Recognizing and valuing individual differences among a group of people is not an easy task, that is why a lot of behavioural adjustments is needed in this area. To be able to manage different cultures, it must involve individuals seeing things from different perspectives or from a different frame of reference.

Against this backdrop, this paper will give a comprehensive definition of diversity management and evaluate the various ways of managing multi-cultural diversity at workplace.

2. Definition of Concepts
To be able to discuss this topic, we must first and foremost go back to the basis, which is culture. What is culture?

Culture is the "set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (UNESCO, 2002). According to McLean and Marshall (1993) culture refers to the collection of traditions, values, believes, policies and attitudes that constitute a pervasive context for everything we do and think in an organisation" (as cited in Mullins, 2007, p. 721). In Schein (2010) conceptualization, culture is a compilation of mental acceptance of a claim, guiding principles, attitudinal dispositions, and assumptions shared by group of people.

According to Spencer- Oatey, "culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves"(as cited in Odor, 2018, p. 32).

Schein (2004) went further to suggest a perception of organisational culture based on three distinguishing characteristics of depth, ranging from the shallowest to the deepest:

Artifacts; values and basic assumptions. Artifacts refer to the most visible aspect of culture and it includes physical space and layout, the technology, written and spoken language and the overt behaviour of teams. Basic assumptions are the beliefs and behaviors so deeply embedded that they can sometimes go unnoticed (Burkus, 2014). Espoused culture relates to how individuals use their original values to deal with new task and new problems. Culture does a lot of things, ranging from boundary defining roles, creating a sense of identity, enhancing the stability of social order, and facilitating the generation of commitment to something bigger than one individual self interest (Mullins, 2007).

The culture of an organisation is, therefore conceptualized as the personality of an organization. It comprises the assumptions, values, norms and tangible signs (artifacts) of organization's members and their behaviours.

2.1 Meaning of Diversity

Workplace diversity is the process of developing an inclusive environment in which the different skills, cultural perspectives, and backgrounds of individuals are valued. A variety of characteristics, including age, ethnicity, gender, disability, language, religious beliefs, gender identity, intersex status, life stages, education, and sexual preferences are responsible for shaping the diverse perspectives of individuals (Commonwealth Ombudsman, 2015).

Diversity management is the systematic and designed obligation on the part of an organisation, to recruits, select, reward, promotes and retains a diverse mix of employees at any particular point in time, with the aim of combining and utilizing the blend of the uniqueness of each culture. Workforce diversity management, as a concept has received greater attention than most management concept, to the extent that many organizations have taken it as a source of competitive advantage. The concept appears to be simple when we look at it as a theory, but it becomes complicated when we start the process of implementation. Many organisations place a high premium on workforce diversity management without a corresponding benefit in terms of the positive outcome of diversity management (Bushardt, Lambert, & Duhon, 2007).

Diversity management may be cumbersome to handle because inability to manage diversity appropriately can adversely affect the wellbeing of an organization. Inability to manage diversity effectively can be a source of job dissatisfaction, and a reduction of individual and group performance (McArthur, 2010). This is because when individuals feel discriminated, either on the basis of gender, race, against, their performance will, under normal circumstances, be reduced.

Furthermore, some organisations have discovered different means of making sure that they maintain cordial working relations among their workforce by encouraging diversity at workplace. In fact, Code (2007) posit that many companies are beginning to promote diversity enhancing behaviours and articulating model behaviors that give a deep inspection and guidance to workforces on how to go about diversity management.

According to Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman (2001) diversity can be classified into primary and secondary category. Primary category has to do with the genetic features that influences a person's self image and socialization, in which the individual has little or no control over, for example, age, sex, race, gender, physical abilities etc. Although technology has made it possible for individual to change their gender, it is still classified as a primary diversity, since we are considering natural characteristics of individuals.

The secondary category has to do with the learned characteristics that an individual has acquired, which the individual has some measure of control over, example education, religious beliefs etc

2.2 Benefit of Diversity

According to European Commission (2003) good implementation of diversity policies helps to enhance the capacity of human capital by gaining knowledge that is shared by divergent people with difference cultural orientations. The following are the key importance of diversity management:

- Diversity helps to boost employer-employee relationship in a cost effective manner
- Diversity helps to build and develop effective customer relations.
- Diversity facilitates innovation, creativity and flexibility in the functioning of an organisation.
- Diversity helps to stabilize sustainable organisational development and competitive advantage of an organisation.

Any organisation that is desirous of meeting up with the global competitive advantage need to accept diversity as an organisational formula and must fashion out ways of becoming an inclusive organization because diversity management is positively related to higher return on investment (SHRM, 1995). Cox, Lobel, and McLeod also posit that cultural diversity, when properly managed, can be synergistic and creative (as cited in Edewor, & Aluko, 2007).

Some researchers have been able to document the possibility of an organisation to convert the potential challenges emanating from the management of a culturally diverse organisation into an enduring competitive advantage (Georgiadou, & Jasonos, 2014). The main reasons, according to Kinyanjui (2013) for managing diversity at workplace is to improve productivity and remain competitive; to form better work linkages between individuals and teams ; to improve social responsibility; and to address legal concerns. However, not paying adequate attention to workplace diversity management will lead to organisational conflicts which are favourable to individual, groups and organisational performance (p.28).

Academicians and organisational culture professionals have been able to link diversity management with characteristics of the individual's assumed role or manner of behaviour. For example, based on the 5- factor model, Homan, Knippenberg, Van Kleef, and De Dreu (2007), using the five factor model of diversity management, indicate that the groups that score high on open to experience, working together on a specific task or assignment tends to outperform other teams that are not open to experience. The reason for this is quite obvious, synergy.

3. Challenges of Cultural Diversity at Work

It is a generally known proposition that at work, or other social settings, people arc most comfortable with those who share the same values, norms and assumptions with them. To such people, emphasizing diversity may undermine that comfort level (Edewor, & Aluko, 2007). Multi-cultures tend to disrupt the status quo of organisational functioning and create a kind of fear among organisational founders. That is why some workers are not comfortable when it comes to diversified workforce.

Although diversity is a recent jargon in management theory "many of us have little or no understanding of how our differences relating to age, race or gender within organizations influence our attitudes and behaviour toward one another and the organization as a whole" (Tsui, & Gutek, 1999).

Multicultural teams have more different dynamics than monoculture teams (Williams, & O'Reilly, 1998), since they have both more opportunities and challenges: Multicultural teams more often than not, experience ineffective communication that will result in organisational conflict (Shaw, 198I; Tsui, Egan, and Xin, 1995).

One of the major challenges facing diversity management and inclusion arises in the process of implementation. Diversity management seems just right when decisions have been concluded on paper and at several board meetings. Many companies face a great deal of challenges when attempting to implement the changes. To overcome this challenge therefore, employers must develop effective and workable strategies for implementation, and monitor the result on a continuous basis if they are to meet organisational needs andaspirations..

Another challenge of managing diversity is in the aspect of differing individual characteristics. This influences the way we think, perceive and feel. This is a major influence because it determines how individuals behave in their organisation. Therefore, the diversity in individual's characteristics requires a careful, rational analysis to be able to manage them effectively.

Diversity bias is based on three assumptions (Wambui, Wangombe, Muthura, Kamau, & Jackson, 2013)

*Superiority***:** This assumption is triggered when there is a conviction in an individual that he or she is better than the other person. It could be on the basis of religion, where one believes that his or her religion is better than other people religions. It could also be on the basis of colour where for instance, a Whiteman will consider himself a better specie than every other race.

Correctness: This happens when an individual believes that the things he does and the process he applies to do those things are the best. This type of person will try to re-do whatever the other person has done because he feels that he is the only person that know what to do and how to do it. This result in duplication of effort; brings about decrease in employee morale and causes job dissatisfaction.

Universality This assumption is a deviation from both superiority and the assumption of correctness. It applies where everyone believes that everybody is equal (that means everybody is the same). Despite its good intentions, this assumption of universality may cause gross insubordination on the part of the junior staff, which invariably will negatively affect the overall performance of the organisation (Leonard, Levine, and Joshi, 2004).

Factors to Consider is Adopting a Diverse Workforce

The practice of diversity management has no universality. In other words, it differs from organisations to organisations. It may be on the basis of the stipulated guidelines and policies that have been established by organisational founders to give meanings to the philosophies that it was set to achieve. An organisation would employ a diverse workforce if and only if, it hopes to achieve a greater return on investment, through an enhancement of innovativeness. The following factors need to be considered when considering adopting a diverse workforce:

- Type of organisation: Diversity is more favourable to large organisations. Smaller organisations can afford to survive without a diverse workforce. That means that the larger an organisation becomes, the more it desires to a diverse organisation (Tsui, & Gutek, 1999).
- Culture of the organisation: According to Schein, "culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has created, revealed, or developed in learning to handle its problems of adjusting to the external environment as well as trying to make one be fully involved in the internal functioning of the group to which he belongs, and that have been adjudged as effective, relevant and justifiable, to be shared with new members as the best way to see things, think, and respond to stimuli in dealing with issues (as cited in Odor, 2018, p.31). Some organisational culture supports the divergent management philosophy, while some other cultures support the traditional mono-cultural practices. Every culture is unique and distinct from any other cultures; therefore any decision made by an organisation about workplace diversity is based on the company's beliefs and norms, and must therefore reflect on that company philosophy (Coleman, 2013).
- **Company location**
  Company location influences the decision of an organisation whether or not to employ a diverse workforce. Multinational companies with locations in several other countries around the globe will not see multicultural diversity as an option. They should as a matter of necessity make it a part of their policy. However, some organisations that operate only locally may decide to use a mono-cultural approach. Be that as it may, even a local organisation, sometime faces a form of diverse workforce challenge especially when the country has a multicultural background, for instance Nigeria. In Nigeria, organisations face some challenges managing diverse workplace because in Nigeria there are about 250 ethnic nationalities, each striving to ensure that people of his ethnic origin are employed even when they are not the most qualified for the job. That is why there is no objectivity in managing employee relations in most Nigerian organisations, especially the government own.

Criticisms and Limitations of Managing Diversity

Many criticisms have been leveled against the concept of diversity management in spite of the numerous potential benefits arising there from. First and foremost, some authors claim that too much effort and attention is being given dueling only on the advantages that accrue to business organisation instead of looking at the moral or ethical issues (Mullins, 2007).

There are a lot of concerns having to do with government laws and legislation targeted to further the advancement of equal opportunities for the teaming global workforce.

Also, diversity management requires a great time and effort and the cost implication may be more compared to the benefit that will be derived.

Furthermore, there is also a belief that a badly handled diversity management issue will be counterproductive. Managing diversity requires an organisation-wide philosophy and engagement, a clear organisation support and a change in the norms, beliefs and values of the organisation (Mullins, 2007).

According to the Chartered Management Institute CIPD (2005), the following are the disadvantages of diversity management:

1. It may break the right to privacy of employees if it is not handled professionally
2. The cost implication is very high compared to the potential benefits
3. It may lead to tension on the part of the employees due to deep seated forms of prejudices.

A poorly handled diversity management may lead to organisational conflict and ill feeling by a segment of the workforce

5. Conclusion

Managing diversity effectively is surly a win win situation for any organization that intends to grow and compete across borders. The differences in age, gender and race are not the only factor that account for cultural diversity at work. Therefore the ability of an organization to effectively manage its diversified workforce directly influences the quality of its creativity and innovation in terms of new product planning and development. Diversity helps to bridge the gaps in cultural deficiencies because people are gifted differently.

A company who embraces diversity will attract a wider range of candidates to their vacancies, as it will be

viewed as more progressive organisation and will appeal to individuals from all walks of life. One particular culture might be very good in technical skill but may not be good at human skill. So it is essential to play on each individual's strengths and collaborate with others in the team. So, a good blend of cultural diversity will create a good synergy for effective organizational effectiveness.

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