Strategy of Managing Cultural Diversity to Develop Creativity in a Learning Organization

Estrategia de gestionar la diversidad cultural para desarrollar la creatividad en una organización de aprendizaje

S SETOUTAH
https://ordcid.org/0000-0002-8122-5484
samira_malek21@yahoo.fr
Badji Mokhtar Annaba University, Algeria

R JELJELI
https://ordcid.org/0000-0003-2379-1207
Riadh.jeljeli@aau.ac.ae
Al-Ain University, United Arab Emirates

RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene como objetivo identificar estrategias para gestionar la diversidad cultural y desarrollar la creatividad en "Fertial Company" en Argelia, luego de una asociación con un socio español que causó problemas de comunicación intercultural entre competencias multiculturales. Como solución, los gerentes han trabajado en métodos de gestión de la diversidad cultural para soportar las presiones externas derivadas del entorno externo y las presiones internas relacionadas con la combinación funcional de los fondos culturales. El estudio encuentra que el multiculturalismo mejora el capital humano y organizacional, conduce a la flexibilidad organizacional y conduce a la creatividad, múltiples opciones, alternativas creativas y resuelve problemas de manera eficiente.

Palabras clave: Competencias, Diversidad, Comunicación Intercultural, Organizacional.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify strategies to manage cultural diversity and develop creativity at "Fertial Company" in Algeria, following a partnership with a Spanish partner that caused intercultural communication problems among multicultural competencies. As a solution, managers have worked on cultural diversity management methods to support external pressures arising from the external environment and internal pressures related to the functional combination of Cultural backgrounds. The study finds that multiculturalism enhances human and organizational capital, leads to organizational flexibility, and leads to creativity, multiple options, creative alternatives, and solves problems efficiently.

Keywords: Competencies, Diversity, Intercultural Communication, Organizational.

INTRODUCTION

The world has witnessed developments and transformations in various fields, including human society. The most prominent of these is the scientific development in the field of management and organization by taking an interest in human behaviour. The process of Internationalization and labour movement has boosted employment opportunities in the context of intercultural differences and created the phenomenon of cultural diversity within organizations with which the nature of jobs and professions, skills and experience needed for performance have changed and introduced new challenges primarily the adaptation to cultural differences and diversity.

This situation has imposed on organizations, regardless of their nature public or private, the gradual transformation into multicultural entities, reflecting the cultural characteristics of their constituent members. Logically, cultural diversity constitutes a major challenge for these organizations, especially since the management of intercultural working groups requires communication and interaction between individuals with different beliefs and values, and dealing with different national cultures to achieve coexistence, cooperation, and working within the framework of the organization's guidelines (Klyukanov: 2020).

In return for this, cultural diversity offers a real competitive advantage for the organization, allowing it to gain a better understanding and knowledge of its markets, and enables it to present a local aspect to its customers. The intercultural reality also offers an opportunity to exchange ideas and analysis and to bring new hypotheses based on distinct knowledge emanating from different cultural contexts. Cultural differences give administrators a wide range of alternatives to solve complex problems, explore new pathways, and stimulate innovation and creativity among the actors.

Therefore, the practice of management strategies in organizations with monoculture contexts does not pose many problems, but it turns into a strategic challenge in multicultural contexts. The presence of individuals belonging to different cultures interacting within the general framework of the organization puts us in front of an intercultural contact, which requires the organization to provide its employees with some competences and qualifications for the success of intercultural interaction and realizing common understanding (Georgescu: 2016, pp. 67-76; Villalobos: 2019, pp. 65-77).

The strategies are integrated into the learning process from the intercultural perspective based on intercultural coexistence, and it is not aimed at the total elimination or fusion of the individual or the group culture; however, it creates desire and conviction and fosters will and conscious voluntary commitment and seeks to take advantage of the inter-cultural commonalities and shared links. It builds trust between cultures to make all of its members share the organization's cultural identity and feel that they belong to it in spirit, values, principles, ethics, and behaviour, as cultural diversity represents a tool that reflects the organization image and the aspirations and ambitions of parties with different cultural affiliations so as work within the organization would reflect the pride of cultural diversity and the strength of attracting talent and distinctive competencies.

Objectives of the study

-Identifying the cultural differences within multicultural organizations in Algeria and the extent of their understanding and management of this variable.
-Identifying the relationship between cultural diversity and organizational values that are directed to the creative process in Fertial Company.
-Studying the learning process within a multicultural environment based on intercultural communication.

The importance of the study

-This study is based on a topic of great importance to organizations, which is cultural differences. Researchers have been increasingly interested in this subject in recent years because understanding and managing these differences and dealing with them correctly is a competitive advantage for organizations.

-This study is based on the Hofstede model to explain the dimensions of cultural difference, which is considered as one of the important models on which the researchers are currently relying on and which is currently under development and renewal.

-This study shows the cultural aspect of the organizations as one of the important elements in the open format in which the organization is active and attracts from the human resource, which is the capital of modern organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ting-Toomey's definition of intercultural communication focuses on three elements:

1) Two people / two groups, 2) of different cultures, 3) in interaction (Zakaria: 2017, pp. 350-366; Samovar et al.: 2017).

Chaplier (2012) defines cultural communication metaphorically using the metaphor of the "iceberg", which is often used to talk about culture to highlight the difference between its visible part and the invisible part, which is more important. This image becomes more eloquent if we talk about intercultural communication, "as communication between two icebergs" (Coldwell: 2019, p. 84; North & Kumta: 2018).

KhosraviNik considers that:

Intercultural communication can be defined as a state of interaction between individuals belonging to different national cultures. Intercultural communication refers to the idea of interaction between individuals from different languages, and it also involves the conduct of thought patterns (assumptions, principles, values) as well as forms of nonverbal communication (body language, visual communication ...) (KhosraviNik: 2019).

Sitaram defines intercultural communication as "the interaction between members of different cultures, no matter small or large, and these differences are and usually involves a communicator from a culture and a recipient of another culture." (Huang: 2020a, pp. 9-26; Huang: 2020b; Rosell: 2020, pp. 792-818).

According to Barmeyer, C. "Intercultural communication is related to interactions and relationships between individuals, as opposed to the cultural comparison, which deals with the variables and characteristics of cultures." Intercultural communication with the current and international perspective analyzes the transmission of a culture essentially through communication and works on decryption through synchronic-diachronic analysis of previous models (Barmeyer: 2016).

Whereas Barmeyer considers: "Intercultural communication is an interpersonal interaction between members of different groups at the level of knowledge, expressions forms and symbolic action. These differences may exist among groups of a particular society or within the nation or state" (Barmeyer, 2004, pp. 577-594).

The concept of intercultural management

Barmeyer argues that:

Intercultural management means the cultural differences and common points of members of different societies, which appear within the framework of interaction within internationally active organizations. These differences and common points may relate to the internal level of the organization (organization, human resources management) and can also be related to its external level (Distribution, marketing), which are manifested in conceptual models, patterns of thinking, and working methods. Cultural differences can have a positive effect through promoting the concept of collaboration, and in the opposite case, they may lead to the cultural misunderstanding that leads to serious consequences (Barmeyer: 2004, pp. 577-594).

The concept of creativity

Wilson explained the process of creativity through three basic stages aimed at introducing changes in the organization:

- Perceiving change
- Suggesting change
- Adopting change and applying it.
- Assuming that the creativity level in these three stages is different due to several factors, including:
- The complexity of tasks (bureaucracy).
- Multiple tasks; the more non-routine tasks increase, the easier it becomes to realize collective creativity
- Incentives have a positive impact on generating proposals and increasing the contribution of most organization members.

A distinction can be made between three levels of creativity in the organization:

- Individual Creativity
- Group Creativity
- Organization creativity

These three levels complement and reinforce each other, all of which are essential for learning organizations.

The theoretical framework of research

Individual versus group learning as a strategy to develop creativity in a multicultural organization: Creativity in contemporary in various forms of organizations is no longer a luxury act, but it has become necessary, inevitable, and indispensable if the organization wishes to survive.

METHODS

1. Spatial field: The study was carried out at Fertial Company Annaba; an institution specialized in the production of fertilizers and organic fertilizers, incorporated under a partnership contract between the Villar Mir Group and Asmidal Group concluded on 4th August 2005. The Spanish partner owns 66% of the capital share, equivalent to $ 160 million, which entitles it to management whereas Yang contributes by 34% in the company's share capital (Yang: 2019).

2. Temporal Field: The study started in December 2017 and extended to January 2018.

3. The Study Population: The study population included all 50 managers of Fertial Company, 15 managers from the General Directorate, and 35 managers from Annaba Factory. Due to the limited size of the study population, we chose the comprehensive survey method. We chose the category of managers because of their constant contact with foreign managers.

4. Methodology: This study uses the interpretive Description method, which the most appropriate for the study subject, it aims to describe the relationship between the variable of cultural diversity and the variable of organizational learning and then explain the synchronic relationship between them. The descriptive dimension is shown by describing the facts and collecting, classifying and quantifying data, using frequencies and percentages, and presenting them in tables and figures, whereas the explanatory dimension, used for getting a thorough knowledge of qualitative data, is reflected in the comment on quantitative data, its analysis and the attempt to relate between the empirical indicators, which reflect the study variables dimensions, to reach field conclusions.

5. Data collection tools: The questionnaire was the main tool on which data collection was based. Through the theoretical data and the field survey, we constructed the general structure of the questionnaire according to the study questions whose variables were decomposed into basic dimensions; we tried to approach them on the field through indicators translated into questions, to ensure that all aspects of the subject are covered. The questionnaire method was applied in the interview to ensure that all questions are answered, and the questions are clarified to respondents. The total number of adopted questionnaires was 52.

RESULTS

Answers to the research questions have been obtained through analysis of the data, and they are presented below:

Study population Characteristics:

Findings reveal that the study population consists of 50 managers; men represent 96% of this population, while women represent only 4%. This is due to the nature of the labour force in the organization, as the female component represents 9.28% of the total number of employees in the organization, and this perhaps due to the specificity of the organization's activity. According to the age variable, 64% of the study population belongs to the youth group, their ages ranged between 25-35 and 35-45, and they represent respectively 34% and 30% in the study population. The age group 45-55 represents 24%. The percentage of workers between 55 and 65 years old is estimated at 12% of the total study population.

All respondents attended university graduates, 24% of them hold bachelor's degrees, 56% are engineers, and 20% are master's degree holders. This is because of the nature of the position held by members of the study population (manager), which requires a range of qualifications and experience to perform the administrative tasks entrusted to them. As mentioned above, the respondents are from General Directorate and the factory, 30%, and 70% respectively. The employees in the factory outnumber those in the Directorate General due to a large number of departments and sections of the factory

Intercultural Interaction in the Company:

All respondents confirmed that they interact with members of other nationalities, and their answers reveal that 11.49% of the total managers 'responses stated that they work with foreigners because of their positions at work as some of the managers are in direct contact with the Spanish officials in the company, while 17.24% of the responses stated that they work with foreigners in the context of completing a study. According to the respondents' answers, the senior management involves Algerian workers in company problem solving, the fact that is indicated by 13.79% of the responses. The managers also participate with foreign specialists in completing the projects that the company sets for its growth and expansion with 6.9% of the responses. Also, Fertial Company sends missions to Fertiberia Company (Spain) of the Group Villar Mir, the factor that represents the highest rate of 44% of the total responses. These missions, from which the managers benefit predominantly, aim at training and benefiting from modern technology in production and bringing the two companies closer together.

By reading the obtained data, it appears that intercultural interaction is realized in the company; whether through the performance of tasks related to the job position or through cooperation with foreigners in solving problems or completing projects and studies established by senior company management, or also through training missions and visits organized by the company to the branches of the Villar Mir Group in Spain. The three conditions for intercultural communication are realized in the company context, and specifically with the study population (managers), namely: 1) two individuals or two groups / 2) of two different cultures/ 3) in interaction. The following dimensions will illustrate the existence of obstacles to intercultural interaction in the company, which prevent effective intercultural communication.

After Cultural Shock:

Adaptation to cultural differences:

The study reveals that 76% of respondents confirm that they felt uncomfortable when they started working with foreigners, while 24% say that they could adapt to the new context and they were able to deal with other cultures from the beginning.

This can be considered as an indicator of the cultural shock, reflected in the sense of uncertainty and unease felt by workers when they deal with a new, unfamiliar culture due to their belief that others unimaginably differ from them. At first, workers see that they abandon their traditions and customs or part of them when they get integrated into a multicultural context. The cultural shock is due to the narrow view of some people when they interpret the behaviour of others. They believe that there is an ideal and only way to behave and act, in addition to believing that their way of life is the ideal way. But the cultural shock hurts the company, which requires attention and developing plans and strategies to manage it, to achieve worker's adaptation to cultural differences and integration in the context of cultural diversity to be an active and effective member seeks to achieve its objectives.

Conflict of values:

The findings reveal that 80% of the respondents said that there was a conflict between their values and the values of the foreign managers, while 20% of them confirmed that there is value consensus with the Spanish leaders. The percentage is shown in the figure above reinforces the results of the previous one, which confirms that the majority of the employees in the company felt uncomfortable when they began to work with individuals who were culturally different from them. This proves that the majority of the study population experienced "cultural shock" when they started working under the supervision of Spanish managers

Conflict of values factors:

Results indicate that 38.46% of the responses attribute the conflict of values with the foreign managers in the company to the difference in religion, while 32.69% of the responses attribute it to customs and traditions. 17.31% consider the language as a factor for values conflict. The management methods recorded the lowest percentage of all responses with 11.54%.The employees of the company went through a cultural shock when they started dealing with the foreigners in the company. Its indicators were specifically manifested in the feeling of value conflict, which is mainly due to differences in religion, customs, traditions, and language.

After stereotypes:

The Algerian Workers' View towards the Company:

The findings of this study, reveal that 62% of the respondents believe that Fertial Company is an international organization, while 24% think it is Spanish, and it is an Algerian one for 14%. Also, 43.5% of the respondents consider that Fertial is an Algerian company because of the partnership with the Algerian Asmidal group in its capital. 37.5% of their responses attributed this to the fact that the majority of the employees are Algerians as the partnership contract between the Algerian Asmidal and Villar Mir Group stipulated maintaining the Algerian labour. The number of Spanish who work in the company is seven (7), but they hold senior positions. 12.5% of responses consider the name of the company, "Fertial, Company of Algerian Fertilizers ", makes it look Algerian for them. While the lowest percentage, 6.25 % of responses attributes their view that Fertial is Algerian to the logo of the company.

As for the respondents who consider Fertial is a Spanish company, 31.43% of them attribute their view to the fact that Villar Mir Group owns 66% of the share capital, which entitles it to management. 28.57% of the respondents consider Spanish management of the company another reason making of Fertial a Spanish company. While 22.86% of respondents said that the arrangement of the offices and the public space in the company gives the impression that the company is Spanish. The firm adopts a non-insulating glass office style that allows workers to communicate visually and reflect greater transparency. The company's logo was not

considered by the respondents as a strong reason to consider Fertial as a Spanish company, representing only 5.71% of the total responses which confirmed the Spanish nature of the company.

As for the majority of the respondents who consider Fertial as an international company, 40.3% of their responses attribute this to the company's leadership in the production and export of fertilizers at the Mediterranean level and is ranked the second in the Arab world. The following percentage justified its opinion by the joint ownership of the company under the Algerian-Spanish partnership. 28.36% of the respondents said that the company's international character could be attributed to the international quality standards certificates obtained by the company. Fertial is a leading company in the field of nitrogenous and phosphate fertilizers thanks to the great efforts exerted by the company to provide the best quality products at the national and international level and to improve its overall performance; the Corporation has achieved many ISO specifications over the years: ISO 9001, ISO 14000, OHSAS 18001.

The respondents' view towards the Spanish managers:

All respondents confirmed that their view of the Spanish managers was positive. The findings reveal that 70% of the managers said that their positive view towards the Spanish manager is mainly attributable to the latter's ability to improve the working conditions in the company through providing an occupational safety and security system which has reduced the number of incidents and the company now aspires to reach (0) incident, in addition to the rise in employees' wages since the arrival of the Spanish partner. While 20% of the respondents consider the Spanish managers, as human capital, a strategic resource for the company, the fact that has created a positive impression. 6% justify their positive view towards the Spanish managers by the appreciation that they show to the Algerian competencies that the company is proud of, only 4% of the respondents consider the leadership style a determining factor for the positive view towards Spanish management.

The Spanish managers' view towards the Algerian worker:

In contrast to the positive attitude of the Algerian workers towards Spanish leaders, the same respondents believe that the foreign partner has a positive impression of the Algerian worker. 62.5% of respondents say that the Spanish managers consider the Algerian worker to be efficient, while 37.5% of them see that the Spanish administration considers the Algerian employee is a dedicated worker.

The employees of the company are aware of its international nature, which is manifested in its leadership in the production of fertilizers at the Mediterranean level. This success is due to the appreciation of the human resource and the improvement of the working conditions, which was reflected in the positive image that the Algerian worker has for the foreign managers, and the same is true for the Spanish mangers, which would be a factor in reducing cultural differences in the company.

Cultural change and the resistance to change within Fertial Company:

Accepting the foreigners' values at work:

The study reveals that 78% of the research population members say that they do not oppose the management values adopted by foreigners at work, while 22% of them do not accept these values. This may be due to the convergence of the administrative values between the Algerian managers and their Spanish counterparts as most of Fertial Company managers received training abroad, and thus they are experienced in dealing with foreigners at work, even before the arrival of the Spanish partner.

Accepting decisions issued by senior management:

The findings reveal that all members of the research population say that they accept the decisions of the company senior management, which is composed of foreign partner managers. Perhaps, this dimension reflects the positive view exchanged between the parties. On the one hand, the foreign partner contributed to the development of the company and the improvement in the human resource status and working conditions.

On the other hand, the Algerian worker is dedicated to his work, and he is keen to implement the decisions of the senior management to achieve the company's objectives, which ultimately benefit both parties.

Cultural Change within the Company:

Findings indicate that as with any foreign partnership process, the change in the culture of the organization is possible, which is confirmed in the organization covered by the study through the data shown in the graph above. The total number of respondents confirmed the emergence of new values within the company which was not strongly present before, such as the value of quality which represented 39% of the respondents' answers, manifested in the several international standards of quality certifications (ISO 9001, ISO 14000 and OHSAS 18001) obtained by the company since the Spanish partner undertook its management.

As well as the value of the time, representing 33% of all responses, reflected in the discipline within the organization, which we have noticed throughout our presence in the company. In addition to the value of the security, which represented 24% of respondents' answers, the senior management has given great importance to security considering the nature of the company's activity in which the risk rates increases due to the chemicals materials and gases the workers are exposed to. It has enacted several rules of protection like the provision of the necessary safety equipment (helmet, glasses, gas mask, special shoe ...), as well as the adoption of monthly rewards systems if the worker has not been subject to any work accident. The percentage of occupational accidents in the company has been significantly reduced since the foreign partnership was introduced, and the Corporation aspires to reach a rate of zero accidents. While the value of competition represented only 4% of the respondents' answers which is the lowest.

The majority of the respondents stressed the absence of the spirit of patriotism in the company which represents 68% of the responses; perhaps this is due to the historical value of the company as it was a part of the Sonatrach company, the industrial pole from which most of the Algerian economic institutions emerged, known for its socialism nature for a long period. Moreover, the Villar Mir Group owns 66% of the company's share capital and monopolizes its management. All of these factors have made sense of patriotism spirit decline against the logic of profitability and economic benefit imposed by economic globalization, which affected the value of loyalty to the organization, where 27% of the responses stress its absence within the company. In addition to the human dimension, which was expressed by only 5% of the total responses of the study population.

Although Algerian workers experienced cultural shock when the foreign partner joined the company, and despite the existence of differences between the Spanish and Algerian cultures, this conflict did not extend to administrative values, which was translated into the acceptance of the senior management decisions issued by the foreign partner, the fact that enhances the employees' awareness of the international nature of the institution. Although there is a change in the culture of the organization, it can be considered a positive one in its entirety that has led the organization to generate new innovative ideas.

Manifestations of benefiting from cultural diversity in the Company:

Fertial Company is keen to benefit from the advantages of cultural diversity, which appears in several aspects: 37.5% of respondents' answers, while 32.81% of them consider that the company benefits from cultural diversity through holding mixed meetings, Which is reflected in the "Fertial Executives Meeting" organized by the company at the end of each year to evaluate the achievements of the strategies and to address the future projects for growth and development. 21.88 % highlighted the fact of involving Algerian managers and their Spanish officials in solving the problems facing the company, considering their knowledge of the company's local context and their ability to diagnose problems related to the Algerian economic, social and cultural environment. The respondents said that problem solving is one of the manifestations of intercultural interaction in the organization. It should be noted in this context that the company experienced many problems at the beginning of the partnership, especially after organizing the labour force and rejecting the temporary workers' contracts, the fact that provoked protests among these workers who considered the decision to be arbitrary and demanded their right to maintain their positions, a group of managers contributed

significantly at that time to solve the problem. Participation in decision-making in the company accounted for 7.81% of respondents' responses.

Management practice and valuing cultural diversity:

The study reveals that 90% of the study sample members confirm that they can express their ideas within the company, while the other 10% said that the company does not provide them with the opportunity to express their ideas and suggestions.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that the sample members of managers agreed that Fertial Company has been able to invest the cultural diversity of its resources, which endowed it with a local aspect contributed to improving its image internally and externally. According to 25.45% of the respondents, such investment has been reflected in the concern of the company in its environmental responsibility, and for 19.09% in the various charitable activities, while 17.27% believe that it is reflected in the company's attempts to establish good relations with the local authorities whose representatives attend events organized by the company. 15.45% of the respondents highlighted their social role in providing jobs for young people, while 11.81% mentioned the presence in the events related to its area of specialization. 10.91% of the respondents cited the support and sponsorship it provides for the scientific and sports associations. The Company invests cultural diversity data in adapting itself to the local Algerian context, and it enhances its citizenship through various social, environmental charitable activities as well as through participation in national events to create a climate of confidence between the company and its employees and to gain a local aspect that makes the public have a positive impression on it.

CONCLUSION

The challenges imposed by the intercultural communication on Arab organizations, like all other organizations in the world, necessitate the adoption of effective management strategies to deal with the cultural diversity that characterizes their human resources. These organizations shall benefit from the positive side and the opportunities offered by the intercultural reality. They shall also strive as far as possible to avoid the various problems caused by cultural differences. Through overcoming these internal challenges, the organizations can move on to face other external ones, related mainly to marketing strategies targeting global markets in which consumers' tastes and cultural affiliations differ. The intercultural dimension then appears to be a renewed challenge for the organization's external communication.

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BIODATA

S SETOUTAH: Dr Samira Setoutah is an associate professor in public relations and advertising. She holds a PhD degree in sciences of information and communication in 2009 from Badji Mokhtar Annaba University (Algeria). Her research interests concern public relations, advertising, and organizational communication.

R JELJELI: Dr Riadh Jeljeli is an assistant professor at the College of Communication and Media, Al Ain University (UAE). He holds a PhD degree in sciences of information and communication in 2014 from the University of Aix-In-Provence (France). Among his research interests are social media use, PR, innovation, organizational communication, and knowledge management.