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Global workforce diversity and it's impact on organizational performance

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by

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ABSTRACT

The subject matter of this research paper is a globally diverse workforce. This research is conducted to explore how companies manage workforce diversity to gain sustainable competitive advantages and how they deal with challenges that come with employees from different cultural backgrounds. This research study answers the question 'How can managers increase managing efficiency of global diverse workforce'. In addition to race, gender, and physical disabilities, the boarder definition of diversity covers a wide range of human attributes and qualities. As a result, this research is limited to the advantages and disadvantages of a diverse workforce and useful methods for managing workforce diversity. Four organizations have been studied in order to answer the research question mentioned before. To gather the required data and information, the author has reviewed and used the existing material about Human Resource Management studies as well as a diverse workforce. Qualitative research method including literature review and case study has been adopted to collect and analyze the data on the organizations. The author interviewed on key individuals at four organizations and gathered information on the internet to obtain practical and necessary data about each organization. The result of the research conveys that workforce diversity does play a significant and influential role in many organizations. However, inadequate strategies and inappropriate management methods may run contrary to the implement of workforce diversity. Therefore, regular improvements in methods to manage a diverse workforce are still necessary and essential in today's society.

Keywords: *Diversity, Workforce, Organizations, Advantages and Disadvantages*

INTRODUCTION

Diversity can generally be defined as recognizing, comprehending and accepting individual differences irrespective of their race, gender, physical ability, age, sexual orientation, economic status, religion and so on (Dike, 2013). Generally speaking, diversity usually is segmented into two dimensions by researchers. The primary dimension includes age, gender, race and so on, and exhibits the main differences between various individuals. These main differences usually have the most impact on initial encounters and can be easily noticed. The secondary dimension, including religion, education, lifestyle, economic status, etc., contains the qualities and human attributes that are not noticeable in the first encounter and can even change. These qualities and attributes of various individuals can only be observed or realized after some interactions occur between individuals (Ashton, 2010).

Because of the increasing rapid foreign investment and globalization trend, lots of multinational companies now have workforces with a complex blend of cultures and nationalities, spread across continents and countries (Rosenzweig, 1998). The trend of globalization has led to more interaction between individuals from different cultures and backgrounds than before. As a consequence, people tend to be more open-minded in the marketplace with global market competition (Dike, 2013).

Approximately, 95 % of Fortune 1000 companies have focused on diversity management and implemented diversity training programs for companies' benefits (Chavez & Weisinger, 2008). Lots of organizations, from their point of view, think that adopting workforce diversity can make them more creative and flexible to changes (Dike, 2013).

Managers find it difficult to find out the factors that contribute to effective workforce diversity management or the exact leadership tasks that can be achieved to efficiently deal

with issues related to workforce diversity (Dike, 2013). Managers desire to learn managerial skills needed in a multicultural working environment and prepare themselves to teach other employees to value cultural differences. However, managing workforce diversity remains a challenge in organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW – BACKGROUND

It points out that countless research studies have been conducted on workforce diversity. An increasing number of popular material on the value of inclusive workforce diversity, the end of homogeneity in the workplace, and the methods to manage diversity have poured off the printing press (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). However, most of these works are based on short case histories that are single snapshots without meaningful research methodology in collecting, analyzing and reporting information on workforce diversity management (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). This study is propelled by the gap left unfilled by a substantial number of researches on workforce diversity and its significant impact on an organization.

Advantages and Challenges of Workforce Diversity

Workforce diversity is usually regarded alike as a ‘double-edged sword’ by researchers and business people, because it can become a source of competitive advantages or undesirable disadvantages based on how to manage it (Shen, Chanda, D’Netto, & Monga, 2009).

Managing workforce diversity effectively is the only way to maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of workforce diversity (Beauregard, 2008). In particular, managing workforce diversity is becoming a norm to make an influence on organizational outcomes, such as high performance, innovation, and employee engagement (Lauring, 2013).

It is extremely significant to realize the promise of diversity before try to seize benefits from it. Although it’s widely acknowledged that workforce diversity could help companies increase productivity, make better decisions, and exploit the market, challenges of

workforce diversity must be overcome before realizing these goals (Davis, 2010). Many companies make efforts to address the issue of diversity in their workforce, whether hiring a diversity lead or making their diversity numbers public (Brodock & Massam, 2016). Before undertaking workforce diversity, careful diagnosis of the organization's current stage is necessary (Joplin & Daus, 1997). Without a proper diagnosis, it is inevitable that currently popular management tools and techniques will be misapplied, thus causing more damage to the organization than it may be able to sustain (Joplin & Daus, 1997).

The Need for Diverse Workforce Management

Diversity management can generally be defined as a set of organizational policies and practices (Syed & Tariq, 2017). These policies and practices focus on recruiting, retaining, and managing employees of diverse backgrounds and identities in order to create a culture in which everybody can equally perform and achieve organizational objectives and personal development (Syed & Tariq, 2017).

Due to increasing globalization and its impact on demographics of societies, markets, and workers, understanding and managing workforce diversity has become a necessity for organizations, particularly for multinational corporations (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, & Monga, 2009). It is a fact of life that the globalization of the workplace has become a substantial segment of companies. Besides, the diversity of the workforce brings a dramatic expansion of the scope and depth of workforce management and a whole host of new organizational challenges (Roberts, Kossek, & Ozeki, 1998).

Diversity management has now become a strategic business issue for organizations worldwide, as rapid globalization has increased workforce diversity and enhanced the significance of diversity management (Shen et al., 2009; Wilson & Iles, 1999). Successful management of today's increasingly diverse workforce becomes one of the most important

globally challenges faced by corporate leaders, human resource managers, and management consultants (Barak, 2016).

Useful Methods for Managing Workforce Diversity

According to Davis's Link Diversity to Business Goals for Best Results (2010), several useful approaches to achieve better management goals in a global diverse workplace have been stated. A short conclusion contains the following points.

Responding to recruitment, Davis (2010) presents three recommendations as follows. Seek and recruit a diverse workforce with a concerted effort. Recent college graduates or capable employees at other companies should be taken into consideration. Notice that people from different cultures do not all communicate in the same way when organizations do personnel recruitment. Therefore, the interview process must also be adjusted for cultural or background differences.

As for execution, several methods are proposed by Davis (2010). Implement a well-considered development program including not only continuous training but also feedback, since feedback is a significant element. Integrate business unit or line managers into the diversity initiatives and ensure the competent person is leading the organization's diversity efforts. Due to global circumstances, managers need to prepare well for national variation when they implement workforce diversity and inclusion programs.

Managers may adopt an appropriate system, which can help them measure the effectiveness of the organization's workforce diversity. Gathering complete and consistent data throughout the process is another method to measure diversity initiatives (Davis, 2010).

At the same time, another research study conducted by Dike (2013) which puts forward several suggestions on managers based on information and response given by five companies with regards to the interview questions. Managers should effectively manage workforce diversity with a view to the nature of the company. Having enough knowledge

about how to manage the workforce effectively is a crucial point. Open communication between managers and employees is extremely necessary, as well, methods managers use to communicate to employees (Dike, 2013). The problems of managing today's diverse workforce do not stem from the heterogeneity of the workforce itself. Indeed, the inability of managers to thoroughly comprehend diverse workforce dynamics, divest themselves of their prejudicial attitudes, and creatively unleash the potential embedded in a multicultural workforce makes the problems unsolved (Barak, 2016).

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH QUESTION

Research can be defined as conducting an investigation to obtain additional knowledge or ideas according to previous understanding and knowledge of a particular area (Myers, 2019). The basic purpose of this research is to examine the different ways of dealing with workforce diversity as well as to provide the necessary guidelines or tools for effective diversity management (Dike, 2013).

Research Question (RQ):

How can managers increase managing efficiency of a global diverse workforce?

METHODOLOGY

Literature review-Qualitative Method

Literature review-the qualitative method was adopted in this research. Literature review contributes a lot to research progress and could provide a historical perspective of the related research area (Mentzer & Kahn, 1995). A combination of research, synthesis, and analysis has been involved in the process of this study. Besides, the research work is implemented

based on primary and secondary sources of information (Dike, 2013). Well-referenced and organized findings were put forward, after reading dozens of articles, journals, and research related to workforce diversity, such as the advantages of a globally diverse workforce, diverse workforce management, and diversity-related challenges.

Case Study- Qualitative Method

Case study research is always criticized by some researchers as a weak method to test hypotheses since generalizing from a particular case is a difficult thing (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The reason why some researchers show concerns about case study method's weakness is that making an original contribution is the main goal for researchers. Nevertheless, without quantitative data or hypothesis tests, an original contribution can still be achieved through case study research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Quantitative research is appropriate to answer "what" questions, on the contrary, qualitative research tends to answer questions about "why" and about "how" (Noor, 2008).

Yin insists that the case study will be considered a separate and compatible method with its unique research design and now case study has been widely accepted by researchers as a research method (Hollweck, 2016). Using a multiple or collective case study methodology, a researcher can analyze within each situation and across situations as well as understand the similarities and differences between the cases through investigating several cases (Yin, 2017). When a process has been given careful attention, the potential result is the production of a high-quality case study (Yin, 2017).

Based on Robert K. Yin's Case Study Research Design and Methods, four expert individuals who are familiar with diverse workforce management are interviewed to gather useful and necessary information. Researchers must access to public and private organizations to conduct meaningful and informative research so that workforce diversity management can be properly and rigorously evaluated (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). Finally,

a thoroughly conclusion and comparison about how to manage a globally diverse workforce will be presented.

In-depth interviews with some identified participants can provide some insights, from which qualitative data is derived (Patton, 2014). For the validity and accuracy of this research work, four organizations have been focused on to acquire their opinions about workforce diversity and their strategies used to manage diversity. These four organizations are Sichuan No.2 Electric Power Construction Company, Wenzhou-Kean University, Robert Bosch Korea Ltd. and EDT Diecasting Technology (Suzhou) Co. Ltd. The basic information and general introduction gathered about four organizations are based on online sources such as their official websites that are available to the public.

Sichuan No.2 Electric Power Construction Company (SCEPCCNo.2) was founded in 1958. It is affiliated to China Electric Power Construction Group Co., Ltd. therefore, it is a state-owned enterprise. SCEPCCNo.2 has management systems of quality, occupational health and safety, and the environment as well as the qualification of national power engineering construction general contractor. The company has about 620 employees with a technical secondary school diploma or above, including 41 first-level project managers. It was awarded “Top 20 Comprehensive Strength of State-Owned Construction Enterprises” by Sichuan Province in 2000.

Wenzhou-Kean University is an international college that is jointly established by China and the United States. In 2011, the application for establishing Wenzhou-Kean University was approved by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China. The progressive ideology and administration system are adopted by Wenzhou-Kean University to manage faculty from all over the world. A sophisticated appointment system is also used to attract and recruit high-level professors in compliance with world-class

standards. It has about 100 full-time foreign professors, lots of whom have an international teaching background and doctor degree (“Wenzhou-Kean University,” n.d.).

Robert Bosch Korea Ltd. was established in 1989 and is affiliated to Robert Bosch GmbH or Bosch. Bosch is a German multinational engineering and technology company headquartered in Gerlingen, Germany. The company was founded by Robert Bosch in Stuttgart in 1886. Just two years later after the establishment of Bosch Korea Ltd., in 1991, Bosch opened the Application Engineering Center, providing a local development site for its regional customers. In later years, Bosch founded numerous joint ventures with Korean partners, most of which are now run as part of Robert Bosch Korea Ltd.

EDT Diecasting Technology (Suzhou) Co. Ltd. was founded in 2005. The company's line of business includes the manufacturing of die-castings of aluminum. EDT Diecasting Technology is located in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. EDT is a WFOE (Wholly Foreign-Owned Enterprise), owned by 3 Italian companies. The company's mission is providing diecast engineering components and assembled mechanical devices with high quality, competitive price and on-time delivery.

ANALYSIS / RESULTS

In the following section, the interview responses of four organizations regarding the interview questions were categorized and summarized. Based on the responses, these four organizations present and convey their opinions about workforce diversity and how they attempt to manage workforce diversity effectively. The responses revealed that organizations can explore workforce diversity successfully as long as they consider the idea in diversity management.

Question 1: Does your organization have a diverse workforce and promote its implementation (Dike,2013)?	Organizations	Answer from the Manager of each organization
	Sichuan No.2 Electric Power Construction Company	Yes, we do have a workforce diversity in our company. Our company opens available positions to competent candidates from different countries with different backgrounds and apportion them to certain positions appropriately in order to utilize their advantages.
	Wenzhou-Kean University	In Wenzhou-Kean University, we implement global recruitment for every available job position. As long as the applicant meets the requirements, he or she would become one of the qualified candidates. Besides, we don't preset nationality, gender, and other restrictions on any candidate. And the person who is the best-qualified candidate will get the job.
	Robert Bosch Korea Ltd.	Yes, we do have employees from different countries. Usually, I work for the Koreans, but my customers are the Japanese, Germans, Americans, Singaporeans, Malaysians, and Chinese. However, I have suppliers from Japan, Germany, Bulgaria, China, and Korea.
	EDT Diecasting Technology (Suzhou) Co. Ltd.	The question here is how do you define "diverse"? We have men, women, different levels of education and people from different provinces working for us. Does this make it a diverse workforce? I doubt that. Having said I encourage women to take over leading positions as they are usually more empathic which helps foster a better company culture. I believe your question would be better asked for somebody running a business in HK or Singapore, where you will find more ethnicities, religions, etc.

Table 1: Responses from four organizations for question 1

Table 1 shows the responses from four organizations for the first question: Does your organization have a diverse workforce and promote its implementation (Dike,2013). Three of four organizations think they do have a diverse workforce since they have employees who come from different countries or they do business internationally. However, general manager from EDT Diecasting Technology thinks different ethnicities and religions are more representative factors for workforce diversity. As mentioned before, workforce diversity has a broadly ambiguous definition.

Question 2: What kinds of experiences have you had working with others with different backgrounds than your own (Dike, 2013)?	Organizations	Answer from the Manager of each organization
	Sichuan No.2 Electric Power Construction Company	Absolutely. For example, I used to work with some Saudi Arabian colleagues during one important engineering project. As it is known, Muslims have to give their prayers in every day's routine because of their special religious beliefs. However, it bothered us a lot because when the Saudi Arabian colleagues give their prayers, they stop any other works and concentrate only on praying, which can easily break the project discipline then influence other team members. In order to respect their special beliefs and to improve the efficiency, the managers decided to allocate the work which should have be finished by Saudi Arabian employees during their praying time to other Chinese employees.
	Wenzhou-Kean University	It is very common for me to work with other people from all over the world. Differences always exist between people from different backgrounds and cultures. I have lived in the U.S. for many years and accepted Americanized education. I tend to have an American way of thinking, but I can transform thinking mode into the Chinese way of thinking when it is preferred.
	Robert Bosch Korea Ltd.	When I was in the Bosch, once there was a big conflict between the Korean managers and the German managers because something happened in the executive board meeting. One Korean manager talked, and after that a German manager, the younger one, said, what a stupid question. It was quite a rude situation for the older Korean manager. However, because that the young German manager did not criticize the person but just the question itself, so it was not an inappropriate expression in German culture. It is obvious that there is a big difference between German culture and Korean culture. Unfortunately, the huge culture difference has been causing a lot of conflicts, debates, and misunderstandings in the following work period, for many years. Though, this was not only because of culture difference also political reasons. The managers from different countries may have a totally different background, moreover, they were playing the political game.
	EDT Diecasting Technology (Suzhou) Co. Ltd.	It was always an enriching experience. Working with people from different cultural backgrounds, it helped me to understand myself better. Besides in a globalized world, answers can only be given from a global perspective which requires the ability to put yourself in somebody else's shoes. Experiences are challenging and itself not always.

Table 2: Responses from four organizations for question 2

Table 2 shows the responses from four organizations for the second question: What kinds of experiences have you had working with others with different backgrounds than your own (Dike, 2013). All four organizations' representatives state that they have lots of experience of

dealing with people with different cultural backgrounds. Cultural differences always bring some problems in organizations.

Question 3: What do you see as the advantages of working with employees from a different cultural background (Dike, 2013)?	Organizations	Answer from the Manager of each organization
	Sichuan No.2 Electric Power Construction Company	Enrich enterprise culture, increase labor productivity and stimulate employees' loyalty. For individuals, one can absorb advantages from employees with different cultural backgrounds, to improve one's own competitiveness and team consciousness. Also, one can learn different solutions to solve difficulties and methods approaching to different goals, in order to improve work ability and efficiency.
	Wenzhou-Kean University	Students at Wenzhou-Kean University get access to diverse cultures because we have a large number of professors who come from all over the world. Chinese students can comprehend, embrace and even absorb exotic cultures. Students who study in such a diversified environment, tend to have different ways of thinking about problem-solving in their future. Moreover, various teaching ideas and teaching styles can facilitate academic diversity. Cultural exchange is a mutual process, foreign professors can also learn more about Chinese cultures.
	Robert Bosch Korea Ltd.	We learned a lot. For example, with the Germans, we learned a lot about how the Koreans can work faster, and how to make the work function. On the other hand, we learned a lot from American culture on how to gain more profit. Also, we learned a lot from the Chinese about the supply chain management and efficient cost reduction process. When talking about the Hungarian engineer, we learned his abundant experience. So, like this, when we have a very diversified workforce, diversified advantages from different cultures can be absorbed by us.
	EDT Diecasting Technology (Suzhou) Co. Ltd.	Gaining fresh perspectives and have a more interactive environment.

Table 3: Responses from four organizations for question 3

Table 3 shows the responses from four organizations for the third question: What do you see as the advantages of working with employees from a different cultural background (Dike, 2013). There are lots of advantages brought about by workforce diversity such as enriching

the organization's culture, building a more interactive environment, and learning from others.

Both employees and the organization can gain benefits from workforce diversity.

Question 4: What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse workforce? And what steps have you taken to meet these challenges (Dike, 2019)?	Organizations	Answer from the Manager of each organization
	Sichuan No.2 Electric Power Construction Company	<p>The biggest challenge is that each employee cultivated from different cultural backgrounds will have different ideas in terms of processing work, which may lead to conflicts and collisions in the process of work cooperation or handover.</p> <p>The methods I would like to adopt are as follows: Try to communicate – together learn more about both sides' cultural background and discuss respective principles of handling – in order to understand each other so as to find acceptable ways to work together and solve problems.</p>
	Wenzhou-Kean University	<p>The most challenging aspect is the employee turnover. There are many reasons and factors behind the high employee turnover issue. Many professors show concern about their children's education, their spouses' employment status, language problem and so on. Income tax is also a key factor since foreign professors get three years of exemption from income tax in China, after it, they need to pay high tax. Moreover, Wenzhou is not an international city like Shanghai city. As a result, many professors feel it is hard to integrate into Chinese society.</p> <p>We try to provide better research conditions and facilities such as a science laboratory for some professors' academic career development. More interesting and meaningful activities are held to make professors integrate into the community and expand the friend cycle. Enriching professors' life and enhancing sense of collective identity are important to strengthen employee stability.</p>
	Robert Bosch Korea Ltd.	<p>When we have a very diverse workforce, it is not quite easy to make a consensus between them. In order to put forward the goal, we made a fundamental agreement that everyone should ally himself with the goal. However, since we all have a totally different background, we need to make more effort to coordinate that kind of differences. Not only for the personal differences, but also for the cultural differences, religious differences, and political differences. However, when we developed to clarify our goals, we found a lot of obstacles because different individuals hold different goals. As a manager, to manage the most diversified team, the fundamental thing must be setting an ultimate clear goal that can be agreed upon by all members. Diversity is not the problem; the problem is how the team can set a proper goal.</p>
	EDT Diecasting Technology (Suzhou) Co. Ltd.	<p>As said in the beginning the workforce in China is not super diverse, but I understand that for example in the company canteen we have to take into consideration different tastes (heavy vs light, spicy vs not spicy) due to different regional background. In America or for example Germany the workforce would be much more diverse which would lead to challenges of diet, planning events etc. Language can be a barrier.</p>

Table 4: Responses from four organizations for question 4

Table 4 shows the responses from four organizations for the fourth question: What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse workforce and what steps have you taken to meet these challenges (Dike, 2019). Challenges do exist when organizations have a diverse workforce, but challenging aspects of workforce diversity depend on the organization's status. Language and different thinking methods are always mentioned as barriers. Sometimes, it is more difficult to make an agreement between people who have various cultures.

Question 5: Has there ever been a situation where an employee was not accepting other employees' diversity? (Yes / NO) If yes, how have you handled a situation when a colleague was not accepting of others' diversity (Dike, 2019)?	Organizations	Answer from the Manager of each organization
	Sichuan No.2 Electric Power Construction Company	Yes, it's normal for some employees not to accept diversity of workforce at the early stage. I tend to inspect for the reasons that employees reject or resist diversified labor force, and then face to face communication and coordinate with that employee according to different attempts. For example, I will adopt the way of empathy to make this employee empathize and understand the situation of foreign employees. After that, he will be first arranged to participate in the work involving foreign employees with familiar employees, followed by gradually increased the time of working with other foreign employees with adaptation and understanding. Also, it is important to pay attention to the changes they make as they work together, such as their relationship patterns, their moods, and their productivity and task completion. Finally, adjust and help the employee to cooperate with foreign colleagues based on the results of observation and analysis, so as to achieve the purpose of integration.
	Wenzhou-Kean University	No, I have never met such a situation at Wenzhou-Kean University. Professors in WKU are sensitive about diversity because everyone is a small part of diversity.
	Robert Bosch Korea Ltd.	Yes, it is quite natural to have this situation. There might be some arrogant guys who would not easily accept that we have a very diversified workplace and every individual must be respected which may not be easy sometimes. As a result, as a coordinator or as an organizational leader, we should better facilitate the kind of differences throughout clarifying the oracles: no matter what your background, demographics, or culture, the only goal for everyone is the same. (help the team members to understand that every action they take will contribute to the company – let the company work)
	EDT Diecasting Technology (Suzhou) Co. Ltd.	I have luckily never experienced such situation.

Table 5: Responses from four organizations for question 5

Table 5 shows the responses from four organizations for the fifth question: Has there ever been a situation where an employee was not accepting other employees' diversity? (Yes / NO) If yes, how have you handled a situation when a colleague was not accepting of others' diversity (Dike, 2019). Two organizations did not meet such a situation and one reason is that employees already realized and comprehended workforce diversity. The other two organizations encountered some problems, but fortunately they used effective ways to solve the problems.

Question 6: What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges? What were the positives and negatives (Dike, 2019)?	Organizations	Answer from the Manager of each organization
	Sichuan No.2 Electric Power Construction Company	I suggest increasing the intensity and improve the quality of employee training along with constantly emphasizing the corporate culture to employees and strengthening performance management. Employee training helps employees adapt to their jobs responsibility as soon as possible, improve their work ability, and strengthen their sense of cooperation, so as to quickly eliminate the differences caused by cultural differences. The disadvantage would be the higher costs. Strengthening performance management can utilize the pressure of supervision to stimulate employees then they may adapt to the multi-member position sooner. To be more specific, as a result of including the comprehensive quality of employees in the scope of performance evaluation, employees can learn various experiences in different fields. However, the disadvantage is that it can increase the difficulty of the company's assessment, in other words, increase human factors in the evaluation process so that weaken the fairness of the assessment.
	Wenzhou-Kean University	No particular strategy was used, only those steps or methods mentioned before.
	Robert Bosch Korea Ltd.	I used to use general business problem-solving techniques like facilitation techniques, coordination techniques, and other techniques. There are somehow negatives as concerning the old guys, the old managers, who are not that familiar with these kinds of technologies. They are somehow reluctant to take it. Assume that I applied to use the new techniques to facilitate the diversity workforce and the whole team has reached the agreement for giving me the executive authority, however, the old managers tried to force me to proceed in their way. Thus, this is the biggest problem that the managers may face while applying the general techniques.
	EDT Diecasting Technology (Suzhou) Co. Ltd.	I don't think some specific strategies are used to address diversity challenges.

Table 6: Responses from four organizations for question 6

Table 6 shows the responses from four organizations for the sixth question: What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges and what were the positives and negatives (Dike, 2019). Half of the four organizations had no particular strategies to handle workforce diversity challenges. The other two organizations had some useful strategies to address challenges and they indicated the advantages and disadvantages of these adopted strategies.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research is to arouse people's awareness of workforce diversity as well as diversity management. Based on certain organizations, the impact on the organizations made by workforce diversity can be ascertained. The advantages and disadvantages of workforce diversity are present in this research. Besides, this research has a primary objective which is to inspect different ways of managing workforce diversity and put forward some significant guidelines. Although there are many available diversity management tools, sometimes organizations neglect these useful tools or don't know how to implement them. Workforce diversity management should take the factors within an organizational framework into account as well as external influential trends.

In order to build and maintain a beneficial working environment in an organization, workforce diversity management must be decided deliberately. Since a healthy working environment is extremely necessary for employees to understand and handle diversity properly.

According to the result of the research, workforce diversity plays a significant and influential role in many organizations. However, inadequate strategies and inappropriate management methods may run contrary to the implement of workforce diversity.

The organizations' responses to the interview questions provide insights into the research question: How can managers increase managing efficiency of a global diverse

workforce. Companies continuously expedient ways to effectively manage employees with different backgrounds. Based on the gathered information and collected interview responses, it is noticed that all the four organizations have short comes existing and improvement needed. These pieces include:

- The incapacity of some managers to effectively manage diversity because of the company's framework and activity.
- The lack of sufficient knowledge of some managers to efficiently manage their workforce.
- The lack of free communication between managers and employees. The inappropriate ways the managers utilized to communicate with their employees.
- The lack of tools which can be used to manage workforce diversity effectively.

Cultural mentoring is proposed to be one of the proven ways to get managers and employees into new environment orientation and help them accept their responsibilities more rapidly. A mentor could stimulate managers and employees to develop self-confidence.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Some clear limitations exist in this research study. It is noteworthy that there has not been much conclusive research concerning manage workforce diversity. Therefore, previous research has been evaluated and some quotes from previous studies were present in this research paper. However, some quoted theories probably were used in not such appropriate situations. Besides, a qualitative multiple case study only requires a small number of samples, which could be a significant limitation of this study (Yin, 2017). In this situation, the findings tend to reflect the involved four organizations' perceptions and may not be suitable to all companies. After evaluating this research, managers still need to use their discretion to make a management decision based on a particular situation.

In the future, it might be worthwhile to extend the research scope to some interesting research areas such as how to measure the results of workforce diversity to prove their value to organizations.

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APPENDIX

Responses from EDT Diecasting Technology (Suzhou) Co. Ltd.

- Does your company have a diverse workforce and promote its implementation?

The question here is how do you define “diverse”? We have men, women, different levels of education and people from different provinces working for us. Does this make it a diverse workforce? I doubt that. Having said I encourage women to take over leading positions as they are usually more empathic which helps foster a better company culture. I believe your question would be better asked for somebody running a business in HK or Singapore, where you will find more ethnicities, religions, etc.

- What kinds of experiences have you had working with others with different backgrounds than your own?

It was always an enriching experience. Working with people from different cultural backgrounds, it helped me to understand myself better. Besides in a globalized world, answers can only be given from a global perspective which requires the ability to put yourself in somebody else’s shoes. Experiences are challenging and itself not always.

- What do you see as the advantages of working with employees from a different cultural background?

Gaining fresh perspectives and have a more interactive environment.

- What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse workforce? And what steps have you taken to meet these challenges?

As said in the beginning the workforce in China is not super diverse, but I understand that for example in the company canteen we have to take into consideration different tastes (heavy vs light, spicy vs not spicy) due to different regional background. In America or for example Germany the workforce would be much more diverse which would lead to challenges of diet, planning events etc. Language can be a barrier.

- Has there ever been a situation where an employee was not accepting other employees’ diversity? (Yes / NO) If yes, how have you handled a situation when a colleague was not accepting of others’ diversity?

I have luckily never experienced such a situation.

- What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges? What were the positives and negatives?

I don’t think some specific strategies are used to address diversity challenges.

Responses from Sichuan No.2 Electric Power Construction Company

- Does your company have a diverse workforce and promote its implementation?

Yes, we do have a workforce diversity in our company. Our company opens available positions to competent candidates from different countries with different backgrounds and apportion them to certain positions appropriately in order to utilize their advantages.

- What kinds of experiences have you had working with others with different backgrounds than your own?

Absolutely. For example, I used to work with some Saudi Arabian colleagues during one important engineering project. As it is known, Muslims have to give their prayers in every day's routine because of their special religious beliefs.

However, it bothered us a lot because when the Saudi Arabian colleagues give their prayers, they stop any other works and concentrate only on praying, which can easily break the project discipline then influence other team members. In order to respect their special beliefs and to improve the efficiency, the managers decided to allocate the work which should have been finished by Saudi Arabian employees during their praying time to other Chinese employees.

- What do you see as the advantages of working with employees from a different cultural background?

Enrich enterprise culture, increase labor productivity and stimulate employees' loyalty. For individuals, one can absorb advantages from employees with different cultural backgrounds, to improve one's own competitiveness and team consciousness. Also, one can learn different solutions to solve difficulties and methods approaching to different goals, in order to improve work ability and efficiency.

- What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse workforce? And what steps have you taken to meet these challenges?

The biggest challenge is that each employee cultivated from different cultural backgrounds will have different ideas in terms of processing work, which may lead to conflicts and collisions in the process of work cooperation or handover.

The methods I would like to adopt are as follows:

Try to communicate – together learn more about both sides' cultural background and discuss respective principles of handling – in order to understand each other so as to find acceptable ways to work together and solve problems.

- Has there ever been a situation where an employee was not accepting other employees' diversity? (Yes / NO) If yes, how have you handled a situation when a colleague was not accepting of others' diversity?

Yes, it's normal for some employees not to accept diversity of workforce at the early stage. I tend to inspect for the reasons that employees reject or resist diversified labor force, and then face to face communication and coordinate with that employee

according to different attempts. For example, I will adopt the way of empathy to make this employee empathize and understand the situation of foreign employees. After that, he will be first arranged to participate in the work involving foreign employees with familiar employees, followed by gradually increased the time of working with other foreign employees with adaptation and understanding. Also, it is important to pay attention to the changes they make as they work together, such as their relationship patterns, their moods, and their productivity and task completion. Finally, adjust and help the employee to cooperate with foreign colleagues based on the results of observation and analysis, so as to achieve the purpose of integration.

- What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges? What were the positives and negatives?

I suggest increasing the intensity and improve the quality of employee training along with constantly emphasizing the corporate culture to employees and strengthening performance management.

Employee training helps employees adapt to their jobs responsibility as soon as possible, improve their work ability, and strengthen their sense of cooperation, so as to quickly eliminate the differences caused by cultural differences. The disadvantage would be the higher costs.

Strengthening performance management can utilize the pressure of supervision to stimulate employees then they may adapt to the multi-member position sooner. To be more specific, as a result of including comprehensive quality of employees in the scope of performance evaluation, employees can learn various experiences in different fields. However, the disadvantage is that it can increase the difficulty of company's assessment, in other words, increase human factors in evaluation process so that weaken the fairness of assessment.

Responses from Wenzhou-Kean University

- Does your company have a diverse workforce and promote its implementation?

In Wenzhou-Kean University, we implement global recruitment for every available job position. As long as the applicant meets the requirements, he or she would become one of the qualified candidates. Besides, we don't preset nationality, gender, and other restrictions on any candidate. And the person who is the best-qualified candidate will get the job.

- What kinds of experiences have you had working with others with different backgrounds than your own?

It is very common for me to work with other people from all over the world. Differences always exist between people from different backgrounds and cultures. I have lived in the U.S. for many years and accepted Americanized education. I tend to have an American way of thinking, but I can transform thinking mode into the Chinese way of thinking when it is preferred.

- What do you see as the advantages of working with employees from a different cultural background?

Students at Wenzhou-Kean University get access to diverse cultures because we have a large number of professors who come from all over the world. Chinese students can comprehend, embrace and even absorb exotic cultures. Students who study in such a diversified environment, tend to have different ways of thinking about problem-solving in their future. Moreover, various teaching ideas and teaching styles can facilitate academic diversity. Cultural exchange is a mutual process, foreign professors can also learn more about Chinese cultures.

- What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse workforce? And what steps have you taken to meet these challenges?

The most challenging aspect is the employee turnover. There are many reasons and factors behind the high employee turnover issue. Many professors show concern about their children's education, their spouses' employment status, language problem and so on. Income tax is also a key factor since foreign professors get three years of exemption from income tax in China, after it, they need to pay high tax. Moreover, Wenzhou is not an international city like Shanghai city. As a result, many professors feel it is hard to integrate into Chinese society.

We try to provide better research conditions and facilities such as a science laboratory for some professors' academic career development. More interesting and meaningful activities are held to make professors integrate into the community and expand the friend circle. Enriching professors' life and enhancing sense of collective identity are important to strengthen employee stability.

- Has there ever been a situation where an employee was not accepting other employee's diversity? (Yes / NO) If yes, how have you handled a situation when a colleague was not accepting of others' diversity?

No, I have never met such a situation at Wenzhou-Kean University. Professors in WKU are sensitive about diversity because everyone is a small part of diversity.

- What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges? What were the positives and negatives?

No particular strategy was used, only those steps or methods mentioned before.

Responses from Robert Bosch Korea Ltd.

- Does your company have a diverse workforce and promote its implementation?

Yes, we do have employees from different countries. Usually, I work for the Koreans, but my customers are the Japanese, Germans, Americans, Singaporeans, Malaysians, and Chinese. However, I have suppliers from Japan, Germany, Bulgaria, China, and Korea.

- What kinds of experiences have you had working with others with different backgrounds than your own?

When I was in the Bosch, once there was a big conflict between the Korean managers and the German managers because something happened in the executive board meeting. One Korean manager talked, and after that a German manager, the younger one, said, what a stupid question. It was quite a rude situation for the older Korean manager. However, because that the young German manager did not criticize the person but just the question itself, so it was not an inappropriate expression in German culture. It is obvious that there is a big difference between German culture and Korean culture. Unfortunately, the huge culture difference has been causing a lot of conflicts, debates, and misunderstandings in the following work period, for many years. Later, a German headquarter sent many experts to reorganize and coordinate that kind of conflict, as well, sent a few numbers of trainers and professionals to teach about the multinational exercise and cultural diversity to help the global employees to understand different cultures. We spent a lot of money on that. After one and a half years, we tried to understand but there still had many conflicts. Though, this was not only because of culture difference also political reasons. The managers from different countries may have a totally different background, moreover, they were playing the political game.

- What do you see as the advantages of working with employees from a different cultural background?

We learned a lot. For example, with the Germans, we learned a lot about how the Koreans can work faster, and how to make the work function. On the other hand, we learned a lot from American culture on how to gain more profit. Also, we learned a lot from the Chinese about the supply chain management and efficient cost reduction process. When talking about the Hungarian engineer, we learned his abundant experience. So, like this, when we have a very diversified workforce, diversified advantages from different cultures can be absorbed by us.

- What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse workforce? And what steps have you taken to meet these challenges?

When we have a very diverse workforce, it is not quite easy to make a consensus between them. In order to put forward the goal, we made a fundamental agreement that everyone should ally himself with the goal. However, since we all have a totally different background, we need to make more effort to coordinate that kind of differences. Not only for the personal differences, but also for the cultural differences, religious differences, and political differences. However, when we developed to clarify our goals, we found a lot of obstacles because different individuals hold different goals. As a manager, to manage the most diversified team, the fundamental thing must be setting an ultimate clear goal that can be agreed upon by all members. Diversity is not the problem, the problem is how the team can set a proper goal.

- Has there ever been a situation where an employee was not accepting other employees' diversity? (Yes / NO) If yes, how have you handled a situation when a colleague was not accepting of others' diversity?

Yes, it is quite natural to have this situation. There might be some arrogant guys who would not easily accept that we have a very diversified workplace and every individual must be respected which may not be easy sometimes. As a result, as a coordinator or as an organizational leader, we should better facilitate the kind of differences throughout clarifying the oracles: no matter what your background, demographics, or culture, the only goal for everyone is the same. (help the team members to understand that every action they take will contribute to the company – let the company work)

- What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges? What were the positives and negatives?

I used to use general business problem-solving techniques like facilitation techniques, coordination techniques, and other techniques.

There are somehow negatives as concerning the old guys, the old managers, who are not that familiar with these kinds of technologies. They are somehow reluctant to take it.

Assume that I applied to use the new techniques to facilitate the diversity workforce and the whole team has reached the agreement for giving me the executive authority, however, the old managers tried to force me to proceed in their way. Thus, this is the biggest problem that the managers may face while applying the general techniques.