Cross-Cultural Team Management

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Abstract
In this evolving global world, there are various cultures and organizations embrace different cultures, focusing on talent as a priority. Cross-cultural teams are task oriented groups that consist of people of two or more cultures (Ting-Toomey, 2012). Cultural and territorial factors influence communication, responsiveness and conflict in cross cultural teams, therefore managing a cross-cultural team may require a different approach than a regular team, (Gatlin-Watts, R. et al, 2007). In managing a cross-cultural team, strong leadership and good communication skills are advantageous to the team's success (Hunsaker, 2008). Bergiel, et al (2008) discusses various communication styles and behaviors and how they vary based on individual culture. Team management style may vary due to the cultural dynamics of the team. As individuals exhibit skill sets that may be based on various cultures, a team is made up of various skills enriching the team and the organization as a whole. Companies can benefit from such diversified human resource that can enhance the business and boost its financial stance.

1.1 Cross-cultural teams

With the need to reduce costs, and the desire for companies to maximize funds while making profit in a slow economy, companies are adopting virtualization where applicable. Virtualization not only reduces costs it allows organizations to recruit field experts that may not have been recruited due to location barriers. Most virtual teams are made up of people of different cultures, working together towards mutual goals (Kulesza, 2015). Virtualization encourages cross-cultures as the opportunity attracts people of different ethnic backgrounds irrespective of their location but lays emphasis on the individual's ability to perform the job functions efficiently.

The ability to manage cross-culture teams requires not only good and effective communication, but also understanding of the various cultures in the group, respect for one another, setting clear and defined goals and boundaries, recognizing and acknowledging each individual's skill, and willingness to create a bond with team members to build trust (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2015). Cultural composition of a cross-cultural team can impact the economic and political model of the enterprise. Due to the nature of virtual teams and barriers arising from cultural and territorial factors, which include communication, responsiveness, time zones, and conflict resolution, the dynamics of managing such teams definitely has a different approach than traditional teams (Gatlin-Watts, R. et al 2007). Considering that leaders of cross-cultural teams may be of other cultures other than the American culture, it is important that the leaders maintain ethical behavior in their leadership and management of team affairs. Organizations should provide training for cultural intelligence to attain ethical leadership and development (Hamilton, et al 2009).

2 Management of cross-cultural teams
2.1 Communication

Communication is essential in teams of diverse cultures. Effective communication is the tool required for leaders to communicate the goals, norms, boundaries, model, team strategy and the best way to develop trust in teams (Chhay & Kleiner, 2013). Effective communication enhances strong

team performance as it encourages team participation, work coordination and outcomes (Hunsaker, 2008). Leaders should provide clarity in roles and expectations, encouragement and open channels of communication, effective and regular communication for team members (Hunsaker, 2008). Good communication and positive interaction among team members develops trust (Novak & Bocarnea, 2009). Effective communication can enhance productivity when businesses are experiencing a down cycle (Jonasson & Lauring, 2012). As discussed by Daim et al. (2012), a breakdown in communication arising from cultural divide and misunderstanding can result in lower productivity. Daim et al.'s research revealed five significant factors that could be barriers to team communication. These factors include interpersonal relations among team members, cultural differences, leadership styles, trust, and use of technology to communicate effectively.

Leaders of cross-cultural teams should communicate effectively, resolve conflicts arising from cultural difference, and ensure a conducive and productive atmosphere in the workplace (Kittler et al., 2011). The ability to communicate effectively alleviates assumptions and helps individuals communicate properly (Xie et al., 2009). Effective communication enhances change strategies and overcomes barriers that make job functions more complex (Guo, 2009). Communication styles may differ per cultural background. The study of the effect of national culture on communication and productivity is important because the topic receives little attention (Cagliano et al., 2011). The lack thereof could lead to cross-cultural communication challenges among team members and eventually affect team performance (Mattson, 2009). Empathic listening skills are useful in communication (Bednarz et al., 2010). Guo (2009) emphasized the importance of listening, voice tone, and body language for effective communication. According to Guo, developing and improving effective communication skills builds trust, confidence, and a bond among team members, thereby increasing effectiveness and productivity.

2.2 Conflict management in cross cultural teams

Leaders of cross-cultural teams should effectively manage processes for conflict management and resolution (Bergiel, et al, 2008). Where individuals with different values and norms work together, their personality, cultural traits and perceptions may result in conflict. The ability of the leader to effectively manage personality or cultural conflict would encourage growth and team bonding.

"Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." Prof. G. Hofstede, Emeritus Professor as cited in Kvedaraviciene & Boguslauskas (2015, p. 189)

Researchers found that individual differences could influence working relationships significantly (Ward, Wilson, & Fischer, 2011). Okoro and Washington (2012) found that diverse teams experience workplace conflicts due to ineffective communication that could reduce human performance and productivity. Managers of cross-cultural teams should ensure that communication is effective to mitigate cultural conflicts, build trust among team members, encourage organizational loyalty, and increase work efficiency (Zeffane et al., 2011). Managers should develop conflict resolution strategies in cross-cultural teams to resolve conflicts and improve organizational competency (Hong, 2010). Barriers do exist in communication because of different cultural values, awareness, and experiences (Bednarz et al., 2010). Management should explore developing cultural competence and excellence for professional practice, which entails personal cultural capacity building (Bednarz et al., 2010). Personal capacity building necessitates knowing oneself, thinking globally, problem-solving, listening, and learning (Bednarz et al., 2010).

Ng, Dyne, and Ang (2009) introduced the experiential learning for global leaders' approach, promoting individuals to work together while freely expressing their contributions in an effort to improve team activity. This approach allows different cultures to coexist comfortably while adopting goals based on common interests (Ng et al., 2009). Though cultural differences may influence perception, the authors revealed team goals, creativity, suppress team member's full

participation or contribution, adopting the experiential learning strategy could lead to efficacy in leadership and positive attitude toward other cultures (Ng et al., 2009). Cultural differences could result in lost opportunities, non-fulfillment of goals and restriction to the predominant culture that may be less creative and at a lower performance level (Ochieng & Price, 2009). Diversity and cultural differences, could be an asset to any cross-cultural organization due to the varied skills (Stahl et al., 2010).

2.3   Decision-making

The management of teams, ethical decision-making, and conflict resolution skills are imperative for organizations to grow. Leaders should be equip with the necessary resources to be effective in a cross cultural or cross-cultural environment (Lin, 2009). Cross-cultural experiences influence individual thoughts and moral development. Culture has been shown as contributory to decision making. The concept of ethics varies per culture and value of individuals so should be studied (Fritzsche, 2007). The necessity to consider the cultural values of individuals, understand, and respect such values in a conflict situation exist (Aviega, Valverde, Jaselskis, & Strong, 2011). Aviega, et al. (2011) suggested differentiating intercultural from intracultural differences and providing training to resolve conflicts arising from cultural difference. Smith and Joseph (2010) presented a discussion about interunit conflict and the effect on organizations. When an organization divides into units or departments with specific tasks, conflict may occur due to incompetence in the skill required (Smith & Joseph, 2010).

Some factors that may contribute to inter-unit conflict include subculture differences that affect perception and effective communication. Smith and Joseph examined goal incompatibility and communication obstacles. In the event cross-culture conflict occurs, management should adopt the cultural conformity approach as differences in conflict management styles may be apparent based on orientation, training, and values (Smith & Joseph, 2010). Determining the ethical standards to adhere to for an organization with multiple cultures may be a challenge. Leaders ought to therefore be familiar with regulations and laws governing ethics and codes of conduct in their industry (Lin, 2009).

2.4   Team performance

Performance in cross-cultural teams may be measured by reviewing strong member skills, teams' goals, member commitment, work environment, defined roles and responsibility, cultural sensitivity, technology advancement, motivation from leaders, effective communication and team spirit (Matveev & Milter, 2004). Success of organizations with multinationals can be attributed to how well team members understand other cultures, handle complexities, accept and respond to differences in culture particularly culture of team managers (Kvedaraviciene & Boguslauskas, 2015). Effective communication as reiterated by Hunsaker is the key to strong team performance (Hunsaker, 2008). The lack of effective communication would affect trust, team participation, work coordination and work outcome (Hunsaker, 2008).

3.   Conclusion

Continuous mass immigration for economic and societal development is greatly responsible for the influx of different cultures in the United States. This has created a need to understand and manage people of other cultures both socially and professionally. Managers need to be trained to develop processes that enable them manage cross-cultural teams, handle conflicts in the event that it arises, cultivate human capital and organizational effectiveness (Bergiel, et al, 2008). It is also observed that not enough research has been done on the economic and political impact of culture in cross-cultural and cross-cultural teams. Specific affiliation may have been made in terms of economic advantage of cross-cultural skills but the political implication and global economic impact has not been satisfactorily researched.

The process of incorporating multiculturalism to one culture organizations needs to be

further researched. Alongside conflict resolution is emotional tension. This could arise in international negotiations or with multinational organizations. The anxiety of expectations, outcomes and perceptions could create an uncomfortable atmosphere for business. Further research, providing suggestions from case studies should address how such tensions could be avoided and better managed (Gibbs, J., 2009). Diversity and team trust needs to be reiterated through research. Trust is an important factor in establishing and building teams. In order to establish this point, extensive research across different industries, levels of management and investigation in cross-cultural environments would be required. Literature available is restricted to particular industries and groups, mainly students (Garrison, et al, 2010).

Multiculturalism is a part of the United States as the foundation of the country was based on immigration. Therefore, it is important to integrate cultural understanding to decision making processes in organizations taking into consideration already established ethical standards. The importance of knowledge representation, influence of culture in cross-cultural organizations in the United States has advance business relations in organizations particularly in globalized markets (Beghtol, C., 2005). Cultural intelligence enables organizations to appreciate the significance of cultural values, ethical behaviors and the leader's role in decision making and personal judgment (Morris, 2010). Ability to succeed in cross-cultural organizations can be attributed to the ability of managers and employees to deal with the complexities and intricacies of cultures, ability to assimilate and manage the differences associated with the cultures. To benefit from cultural differences, three things are worthy to note, namely: increase awareness of cultural difference(s); respect and appreciate the differences; reconcile the differences by developing a shared understanding, assist team/group in adopting, show empathy, and share cultural knowledge. When team players appreciate themselves, develop a greater appreciation for each other's views, use differences to solve problems, team success is enhanced.

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