

Socially Responsible Diversity Management: Collaborative Leadership as a Management Strategy

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Abstract

This review attempts to shed light on diversity management in academic organizations and concludes that organizations need to embrace a relational, inclusive, and collaborative framework of leadership whose focus is on effectively managing a culturally diverse workforce in educational institutions. The paper argues that it is only possible to integrate a new culturally diverse workforce effectively is through inclusion. The recommendations offered in this study would be helpful to construct a warranted action plan and provide a brand-new perspective to analyze research approaches.

Keywords: collaborative leadership, diversity management, inclusion social justice, socially responsible

Introduction

The purpose of this research note is to provide insights into socially responsible diversity management in educational institutions through collaborative leadership practices. Traditional approaches to affirmative action have been unsuccessful in achieving the objectives of equitable educational environments. It is unclear that diversity management programs have contributed to positive outcomes either as the majority of currently available programs focus on prescriptive approaches where the information is transmitted directly by the educator. This paper argues that academic institutions can achieve better educational and equity outcomes by adopting a relational, interactive, and collaborative framework which embraces and empowers diversity through inclusion. The desired social justice outcomes of affirmative action programs and the educational benefits of diversity management programs can also be accomplished by the engagement of people at all levels (Bebenroth & Kanai, 2010; Egitim, 2017). Such a framework provides for the creation of what is called socially responsible diversity management.

Socially Responsible Diversity Management

Socially responsible diversity management involves legal and social obligations to achieve higher levels of organizational performance with an emphasis on equal conditions for everyone in workplaces (Bendick et al., 2010). It is based on the notion that we view social justice and business performance as compatible and complementary. The current research looks into the effect of socially responsible diversity management from the perspective of workforce diversity as a business rationale and moral imperative (Syed & Kramar, 2009). However, certain groups still remain disadvantaged and disempowered in academic institutions in comparison to their male peers. This was evident in lack of involvement of women and people of color in managerial positions as well as wage disparities between men and women (Dozier, 2005). Previous research suggests that issues of diversity and discrimination, such as those related to ethnic minorities' integration and social cohesion, are complex, shaped as they are by a range of historical, political, and socio-economic structures (Syed & Kramar, 2009). The issues of diversity and discrimination in the workplace is also reflective of the state of nation-wide diversity management (Köllen, 2019).

Studies show that diversity can have both positive and negative impacts on people working in multicultural environments. Diverse teams can help performance because they are more likely to come up with creative solutions and produce effective results than homogeneous groups. In addition, they are more likely to determine and address the needs of customers. At the same time, diversity may reduce group cohesiveness, and make communication between different groups a complex phenomenon. Perhaps, watching the long stagnation of Japanese institutions following the bubble economy in the late 90's can give us an idea of lack of diversity and its impact on organizational productivity. As the descendancy of Japanese institutions continued, there remains so much to learn from Japanese businesses and their decay. Thus, looking into diversity management in Japanese context can offer a valuable resource for researchers exploring the underlying mechanisms at play in deteriorated firms and for practitioners who intend to revamp their institutions.

Collaborative Leadership in Diversity Management

Japanese academic institutions tend to focus on maintaining an internal consensus within the organization rather than adapting to their external environment. Even if changes happen on the surface, deep inside, organizational culture remains the same (Homma, 2012). This inward-oriented organizational culture eventually results in top-down leadership practices which embraces power-distance and hierarchy (Inaba, 2020; Numagami et al., 2010). However, adopting an outward approach is no easy task for any organization. Pure adoption of western approaches may not provide answers to the pressing issues either. The change movement needs to be addressed to deep-rooted organizational culture. In this regard, leadership plays a significant role. Egitim (2020) emphasizes the role of inclusive and collective leadership practices which can make an impact on all facades of an organization. Collaborative leadership happens when a group of people work towards a shared mission and objectives. Working towards shared mission and objectives is a motivating factor for all parties involved. This style of leadership recognizes diverse perspectives and contributions. It allows for a holding environment for everyone to take leadership roles (Egitim, 2020). Thus, its application could allow for diversity management in a socially responsible way. The shared responsibility, decision-making, and accountability promotes authentic engagement among team members regardless of their gender, age, and ethnic background. The key is what the group accomplishes depends on the leadership within the entire group rather than individual talent and expertise (Jäppinen, 2017). Therefore, this leadership practice may be adopted as an effective model for Japanese academic institutions who embraces harmony, homogeneity, and strong group values (Bebenroth & Kanai, 2010; Egitim & Garcia, 2021; Inaba, 2020).

Conclusion

This paper investigated diversity management in organizations and concludes that organizations may need to adopt relational, inclusive, and collaborative framework of management approaches to build a mechanism to effectively manage culturally diverse work force in educational institutions. Given Japanese academic institutions' struggle with the integration of its new culturally diverse work force, the recommendations offered in this study would be of helpful to construct a warranted action plan and provide a brand-new perspective to analyze research approaches. The authors argued that the benefits of diversity are likely to be realized if diversity is examined and tackled at multiple levels. This also means that leaders need to focus on both macro and micro level diversity management. They'll need to work with people of all levels to successfully initiate adaptation measures and continue their efforts to engage members of their workforce in decision-making and leadership action.

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