PROJECT DESCRIPTION

TITLE: THE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT ON ORGANIZATION PERFORMANCE

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between workforce diversity and performance in two institutions of higher education in Kuwait and USA through quantitative study. We particularly investigate equality and diversity, cultural diversity and multicultural diversity and their impact on employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, compensation, retention, turnover, absenteeism and complaints/grievances as indicator of performance trying to reconcile inconsistent findings by proposing a conceptual model that determines how diversity can lead to positive rather than negative performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A growing number of organizations have begun efforts toward managing workforce diversity that has dramatically increased in the workplaces (Ragins & Gonzalez, 2003). However, and before launching into the empirical findings on the effect of diversity on organizational performance, it is important to understand how organizations define diversity (Jane & Dipboye, 2004). Many researchers (Jackson ,1992;Triandis, Kurowski, & Gelfand ,1994; Williams & O'Reilly ,1998; Van Knippenberg, De dreu, & Homan, 2004) have defined diversity as " any differences between individuals on any attributes that may lead to the perception that another person is different from the self". This broad definition of diversity adopts an individual focus by referring to diversity as the perceived differences from the self (Roberge & Van Dick, 2010). At a conceptual group level, diversity has been defined as "the collective amount of differences among members within a social unit" (Harrison & Sin, 2005). Two perspectives have been used to categorize diversity: the social categorization perspective and the information/decision making perspective (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). According to Hamdani and Buckley (2011). Researchers have also classified diversity into three main conceptual categories: task-related diversity (educational and professional background); traits and value diversity (personality

values and perceptions of organizational mission); and demographic diversity (gender, age, race, and ethnic differences).

Researches providing evidence for diversity yielding increased performance are rare. According to Kwak (2003), diversity can either help or hinder firm performance, depending on the organization's culture, its strategies, and its human resource practices. Jayne and Dipboye (2004) noted that research examining the impact of demographic heterogeneity on workgroup performance as well as overall organizational performance has produced mixed results at best. On the other hand, several studies examining the impact of diversity on individual level have found that when compared to similar individuals, people who are different have less attraction and trust in peers, less frequent communication, lower group commitment, lower task contributions, lower perceptions of organizational fairness and inclusiveness, lower performance level (Chatopadhyay, 1999; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989; Tsui, Egan O'Reilly, 1992Kirchmeyer, 1993; Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1992; Mor-Barak, Cherin, & berkman, 1998, Roberge & Van Dick, 2010).Many other researchers (Joshi, Liao, & Jackson, 2006; Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Stevens, 2005) seeking to understand demographic indicators, personality, values, or attitudes, have shown that diversity may indeed lead to positive outcomes.

In this context, we attempt to highlight the importance of workforce diversity in today's higher educational industry that becomes a primary challenge. Educational institutions are striving to manage and use diversity to a learning advantage. Workforce diversity has become important to the progress of any educational institutions in recent years since it is growing faster than we can address its concomitant issues.

Universities are challenged to be an attractive location of work and maintain an atmosphere of education that is characterized through openness and respect (Leicht-Sholten, Weheliye and Wolffram, 2009).The growth of knowledge societies, the effect of globalization, individualization, demographic change and the changing markets exposed universities to some difficulties in managing a diverse workforce which may affect productivity and performance (Dalton & Chrobot-Mason, 2007).In this context, universities should not only act as institutions of higher education but also as corporations or change agent in order to stay competitive as they produce and consume knowledge (Iber and Virbauer, 2008). They can use diversity as part of their social and educational mission (Ahmad and Swan, 2006).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study draws on a survey among faculties in two different universities: the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) and the University of Missouri St Louis (UMSL). Data was already collected electronically and a commercial web survey package was used to administer the questionnaire. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. 140 academics from GUST and 988 from UMSL were invited to participate in the survey and eventually 85 and 216 responses were received consecutively generating a rate of response of 60.71% and 22%.

ANTICIPATED RESEARCH OUTCOMES:

we expect to find positive relations between the different components of diversity and performance. However, the relational framework that we are going to propose in this paper is generic. Its design permits the simultaneous taking into account of the specific context and content of diversity management. **While the conventional concepts and practices of diversity management are valuable, their transference into non-US context, into non-Western contexts in particular requires that specific macro-national and micro-individual factors be taken into account.**

Using a contextual approach to study the impact of diversity management on performance in two different universities is vital to overcoming the traditional criticism of local non-compatibility and cultural imperialism, which are generally associated with the Anglo-Western notion of diversity management in asian and other non-Western contexts.

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