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The Impact of Culture and Generation Gap in Taiwan Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Research has clearly established that culture has a great impact on the workplace practises. The purpose of this study was to find out if the generation gap and cultural differences which are a focused issue of many organizations have an effect on Taiwan's workplaces. There are a number of cultural aspects that influence the way we interact with people in our workplace such as clients, colleagues, management. Corporate culture comprises of the national culture, gender culture, and various communication styles. This influences the way we conduct work, solve problems and conflicts. This research demonstrated that there are certain generational differences and the impact of culture is in specific departments. There are various customs of Taiwan workplace which can create problems for foreigners to cope up and adapt to new traditions. They may experience culture shock. The research noted the required changes and transformations that occurred drastically in Taiwan workplace. And also, the changes in the decision-making of the two generations are studied and interpretations are drawn according to the research conducted. Culture influences management practises and the methods of working in an organisation. Generation gap may create conflicts among the employees as well as between management and the employees due to a different point of views about the task performed and the rewards are given. This creates a problem in the working and development of workplace. These problems are deeply studied and conclusions are made to help solve the problems and study this topic further. Lastly, the research has covered the important issues regarding differential characteristics.

Keyword: Culture, Work Characteristics, the Generation gap, Taiwan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The difference between generations causes problems due to the difference in the opinions of the younger generation from the older generation. Until the 20th century, the differences were not witnessed, but now with the growing use of television and media, young people are exposed to a variety of things. The areas of differences are work ethics, moral values, political views, religious beliefs and attitude towards different races and groups. The culture differences occur due to the individualistic and collectivist culture of different people working in the organization. Individualistic culture focusses more on individual goals, individual rights. Many Taiwanese looks towards the ground as a sign of respect. Moreover, handshakes are a most common form of greetings in the workplace. Most greetings among the colleagues include a rhetorical question such as 'Have you eaten? At the time of the first meeting, the person's name should be addressed by his academic, professional title. These cultural differences among the locals and the foreigners create some problems which are investigated through this study.

Working culture in Taiwan is mild as compared to other countries. They have short-working hours. After work, people prefer going to their homes and spending time with their families. The culture is very family-oriented. Moreover, the diversity of workplaces is changing drastically in places like Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Singapore.

The official language of Taiwan is Mandarin Chinese. There are many problems faced by organizations as Chinese is a must for everyone. Taiwan is a close market in terms of business, but it has many similarities with China. Based on this reason, the Chinese language is very important in workplaces.

Taiwan has achieved rapid economic growth due to industrialization and westernization. These transformations have resulted in a change in culture and economic structures. MNC's have started investing in Taiwan had has created a challenging environment for western as well as Taiwanese managers based on the management practises and have also contributed to changing the local social culture.

Taiwanese work characteristics have been challenged by the entry of young generation. Attributes such as modesty, helping the weak is eradicated with the arrival of young employees. They emphasize more on competition and performance.

2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the research is to understand the organisations in Taiwan and find out if there is a significant difference in the working and the ideologies of different generations and how the culture of Taiwan is affecting the functioning of organisations in Taiwan.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

John Benson, (2007) in his article says that there are a number of inter-generational differences that exist among workers and these differences provide challenges to managers. This paper gives an insight into the difference job satisfaction, organisational commitment and the willingness to quit by the two different generations i.e., baby boomers and generation X. By conducting a large scale survey of the employees of the large public sector research organisation they came to a conclusion that the boomers have higher job satisfaction and a lower willingness to quit compared to the generation X employees.

Hui Chun, Yu, Peter Miller, (2005) found that generational groups in the manufacturing industry have different work characteristics and they prefer different leadership styles. Older people tend to have a different perspective about the way an organization works or is supposed to work. This research investigated that the western culture and research equally applies to the generational groups in Taiwan's workplaces, specifically the manufacturing industries. The result of this study increases the scope of the further study from manufacturing to the different organizational sectors. It concluded that the leaders should be able to recognize the differences in the generation gaps and the work characteristics that affect it so that there is a positive contribution towards employee motivation. (Hui- Chun, 2005)

Hui chun Yu and Peter Miller(2003) in their research in which their objective was to find out western research on generation gap applies to generation groups in Taiwan found that there is significant difference between Xers and Baby boomers in the Taiwan manufacturing industry in all variables that comprise the work characteristic construct in the Taiwan manufacturing industry. However, the generation differences do not apply to the workers in the education industry in Taiwan.

4. CONCLUSION

One of the main factors contributing to the differences in the workplace is value system. Taiwan workplace culture is greatly influenced by Japanese well as American culture. The changes are also caused due to changes in political, economic, technological conditions.

The research found that the reason for the difference is due to the different nature of the organizations. They differ in goals, management, individual rewards. Work characteristics are based on the perceptions of people.

The research also noted the impact of culture due to changes in the organizational environment. The younger generation focuses more on recognition and their status in the organization. They are competitive in nature whereas elder generation focuses more on completing work with dignity. Overall, there are no differences in terms of the power of the two generations. They seem to have less importance in Taiwan workplaces. There are certain limitations in the research as the concept of certain characteristics does not provide proper information about the reactions of the two generations.

Nevertheless, research provides further scope for the topic and gives an insight into the changing cultural aspects of Taiwan and the different attributes of workplace culture.

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