Cultural Differences: Literature Review

Introduction

Cultural differences between John and Ahmad are a source of conflict between the two parties; the misunderstanding arises from the individual perspectives on their culture. Based on the case study, the ability of John and Ahmad to apologize to each other yields the bargaining power between the parties involved, and enable them to come to an agreement. Appreciating the cultural diversity between John and Ahmad yields the influence that settles the disputes that ensue. John is senior to Ahmad in the company; he uses his influence as the finance manager to settle the difference between him and the fellow employees. John argues that despite his position, he has no authority to underestimate fellow employees. Ahmad, on the other hand, after appreciating John’s apology, he comes to terms with John, and they become friends. Therefore, the cultural diversity between John and Ahmad brought disagreements, which yielded the influence to bring the parties together. In other words, appreciation between the conflicting parties acted as a bargaining power to establish a feasible relationship in the workplace.

*Literature review*

In the wake of the globalization age, organizations are employing people from different cultures. Gelfand, Erez and Aycan (2007) assert that the importance of foreigners in the corporate world is increasing; in addition to that, people are traveling to find jobs in other countries. Of course, this trend will force that different cultures will have to connect and meet organizational objectives. Certainly, an organization should develop structures to embrace cultural diversity by encouraging its employees to embrace sensitivity towards one another. In a cross-cultural environment, leadership is significant in realizing logic among the employees. This raises a strong organizational behavior by instilling cultural sensitivity among the employees (Gelfand, Erez and Aycan, 2007). In reference to the case study, John moves from Germany to the UAE for employment purposes. The culture at home is different from the culture in the UAE, thus he has to adjust to the organizational culture of the new environment. This emphasizes the point that different countries have different cultural trends.

Based on the case study, it is true that Ahmad does not appreciate John’s insensitive nature to the culture of the UAE. As a devoted Muslim, Ahmad expected John to respect the month of Ramadan and follow its rules because it is a significant religious practice in the UAE. Ahmad appears to uphold his cultural standards more than the professional standard, bearing in mind that John is his senior in the organization. Obviously, cultural differences have the capacity to influence the organizational behavior in an institution.

Organizational behavior in a cross-cultural environment requires the individual and group responses from the employees. It is evident that cultural diversity can have an immense influence in the organizational culture of organizations. Fischer et al. (2005) posit that without effective management of cultural differences in an organization, it is certain that employees cannot develop feasible relationships to attain organizational goals and objectives. Fostering efficient relationships in a cross-cultural environment calls for employees and the leadership to enact cultural sensitive structures of adapting to the cultural diversity (Obinna and Farkas, 2011). Cultural intelligence is a significant element of embracing cultural diversity. Through cultural intelligence, an organization is able to appreciate the diverse cultural features in it, and work towards developing viable relationships aimed at achieving results. At the individual level, employees should develop emotional intelligence in order to embrace and realize the beauty in cultural diversity. Valuing the cultural differences of fellow employees is important in encouraging a vibrant organizational behavior in a cross-cultural environment.

The information above is true in relation to the case study. After realizing that he had violated the cultural rules of the UAE, John responded well by apologizing to Ahmad. Moreover, Ahmad also apologized to John for being rude and for not considering that he was from a different cultural background. The effective communication that ensued was vital in establishing a good relationship between John and the other employees. Cultural sensitivity was instrumental in developing efficient relationships in the organization.

Cultural diversity is important in bringing different ideas and perspectives in an organization. Euwema, Wendt and Emmerik (2007) argue that multinational corporations are increasingly employing people from different cultural backgrounds in order to have a dynamic organizational culture. Bringing different competencies together helps an organization to enhance its competitiveness in the industry. The ability of companies to outsource employees from diverse cultural backgrounds has played a huge role in the growth of the international markets, since companies have a vast experience in dealing with different corporate environments (Euwema, Wendt and Emmerik, 2007). Based on the case study, John is a source of foreign expertise in the UAE. The amalgamation between the German culture and the culture of the UAE brings the much needed competence mix in the multinational company. In order for the company to achieve the desired organizational goals, it is important for the cultures present in the company to work cohesively and avoid cultural conflicts. However, as presented in the case, the cultural differences between John and the employees from the host nation brings sharp differences that threaten to destroy the professional relationship among them. As Schermerhorn, Osborn and Hunt (2005) put it, conflicts are inevitable in cross-cultural organizations because of the diverse representation of cultures.

According to Schermerhorn, Osborn and Hunt (2005), solving conflicts arising from cultural differences is extremely important for the success of an organization. Without feasible resolution strategies, cultural conflicts jeopardize the capacity of an organization to grow (Schermerhorn, Osborn and Hunt, 2005). As evidenced in the case, John and Ahmad were able to put their cultural differences aside, and foster a meaningful relationship that was beneficial to the company. The deliberate efforts by the conflicting parties to appreciate each other were significant in creating a viable environment for the employees to thrive in their jurisdictions. According to Euwema, Wendt and Emmerik (2007), solving organizational conflicts calls for the most feasible organizational leadership depending on the organizational behavior advanced by an organization.

References

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