The Need for Intercultural Communication Skills in the Multicultural Settings

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Abstract

Intercultural knowledge is highly vital to deal with globalization and manage a diverse workforce in organizations. To manage the diverse workforce as it delivers business worth and helps to eradicate any possible risk, effective communication skills the workstation is a crucial skill for an employee in an organization. Communication is an emblematic procedure by which people emphasize common significances. Similarly, diversity in communication happens when people with different cultural perspectives and morals generates shared resources. It helps to build trust with each other and develop associations with novel customers that transmit important fiscal importance for employers. It is vital to a sustainable relationship. Nevertheless, it plays a prime role in the success and failure of organizations.

This paper has been put together to discuss the intercultural communication in the multinational settings in general and analyze when it becomes the root cause for emerging issues, how it can be transformed as an opportunity for creativity.

Keywords: *Communication, Intercultural Communication, Culture, Organizations, Human Resources Management*

INTRODUCTION

'The essence of effective cross-cultural communication has more to do with releasing the right responses than with sending the "right" message.'

– Edward T. Hall

Ageneric tradition of opinions and viewpoints develop culture. People from various cultures amalgamate, they carry different viewpoints, tactics, philosophies, and prospects, which can make communication difficult and as well interesting as well (Feignbaum, 2016). It is the feature and understanding of a collection of individuals different by background, religion, race, social factors, language, religion, habits, and food. The word 'culture' prompts from a French term, which in turn develops from the Latin 'colère', means refinement and develop (Zimmermann, 2015; De Rossi, an anthropologist). The cultural definitions prompted by society are crucial for the system of values of a community or obscure or even remove any links among people and language (De Rossi, an anthropologist, 2015).

Explaining culture itself is a very hard task as it is almost impossible to define precisely in this diverse world. Culture contains morals, morals, and expectations about life that are extensively shared among individuals and that lead particular behaviors (Brislin, 1993). It is not noticeable until it is carried out by communicating and interacting with others. Nevertheless, it is a human phenomenon and it is the way it should be, both physically and mentally.

'Culture is a human phenomenon: it is the way we are, both physically and mentally. It is both a state in which each of us exists and a process which changes constantly according to the individual, the time and the place. This combined state and process called culture affect us all as we respond to others, to events and to the environment (p. 14).'

– McLaren, 1998

It is the way in which each of us learns and changes constantly as it depends on personal experiences, time and the place. However, it differs from person to person.

'Culture is a set of guidelines (both explicit and implicit) that individuals inherit as members of a particular society, and that tell them how to view the worlds, how to experience it emotionally, and how to behave in it in relation to other people, to supernatural forces or gods and to the natural environment (p. 2).'

– Helman, 2001

Nevertheless, culture is a method of life and people in a community share that tactic. People acquire the way of life including the faith and morals believed by a community, through socializing. These beliefs and values have an impact on persons' behavior and perceptions of firm actions in the sequence of their lives. As people move on with their lives, culture could be shaped and transformed with the individual life experience.

'To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.'

– Anthony Robbins, Brainy Quotes

As stated earlier, the cultural definitions prompted by society are crucial for the system of values of the community. In a twofold scheme, that is what is well-read and what

is typical, the cultural influence reveals its multiple denotations. As culture is a guarantee of behavior, the success of an organization profoundly depends on the communication among employees as well as the link between executive choices and its corresponding exercise.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The descriptive research is subject to some limitations like in the other fields of research. The study was done based on the personal experience of the researcher in the field focusing multicultural organizations. It is explored from the perception of international employees irrespective of gender, location, functional level, and nationality. The result may not be fit for national organizations due to demographic characteristics and organizational culture.

SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant because the given insights have been provided for the employers and employees to understand the level of importance of communication skills in their workplace. This study attempts to explain employers, the need for essential communication skills of their employees. Assessing and understanding of the importance in the organizations, as well as investigating the existence of possible communication barriers in the multicultural settings would be a distinctive impact of this study. This study would contribute and act as an eye-opener to the multicultural organizations to understand the possible existence of barriers and to encourage to formulate suitable strategies to enhance the process of internal communication more effectively and efficiently.

CULTURAL INFLUENCE AND COMMUNICATION

Both culture and communication are so tangled that it is normal to consider that culture is communication and communication is culture. Intercultural encounters bring upon to recognize the impact of communication necessary to society. No doubt that in certain scenarios culture impacts communication. The study of intercultural communication identifies how culture encompasses the mode we are, perform, ponder, talk and listen apart from using languages and signs. Every culture has prospects, morals, modalities, bents, actions, and instructions. Culture is like a kaleidoscope with parallel shapes but diverse colors, or at times with different shapes but similar colors. Intercultural communication is communication between two people where their cultural visions and symbol schemes are distinct enough to alter the communication actions. It involves the impact of culture, personal communicative style, and relational qualities as it disturbs intercultural communication and insight of alteration (Lourie, 1989).

Culture influences communication which touches each part of human life. As quoted by Keating, an Associate Professor of Psychology:

> 'Communication is powerful: It brings companions to our side or scatters our rivals, reassure of alerts children, and forges consensus or battle line between us.'

Intercultural communication is the communication between two individuals whose culture is completely different enough to change the communication directions and dialects. Its' style refers to stances, expressions, rites, and communication imposes for different occasions in a culture. Therefore, communication is a central part of the culture.

Moreover, beyond the use of language, the research of intercultural communication states how culture covers what we are, how we behave, how we reflect, and how we talk and listen. As Richard W. Brislin (1993) highlights,

'not only are we socialized into a cultural context but culture continues to influence our interaction, our work, our gender expectation, and even our health.'

When cultural variances play a main part in the communication process, the result is intercultural communication that includes ease relations, barrier breakdowns, and the creation of foundations for new ideas. The diversity in communication includes evident attitudes toward groups and their corresponding relationships. Optimistic intercultural approaches lead to adaptive, hands-on consequences such as relationship, amity, focused understanding, and lasting ties. The insolences and supplementary communication actions emerge as openness, declaration, interrogative, supporting, attending, contribution reaction, declaring, and proposing.

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

'Like the United Nations, there is something inspirational about New York as a great melting pot of different cultures and traditions. And if this is the city that never sleeps, the United Nations works tirelessly, around the clock around the world.'

– Ban Ki-moon, *The Director-General of the United Nations*

International organizations (IOs) with a global mandate face the challenges of managing a culturally diverse workforce. Needle (2004) says, organizational culture means the shared morals, views, and values of organizational members and is a formation of factors such as antiquity, invention, market and policy, kind of employees, organizational elegance, and nationwide culture. It includes the vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, assumptions, beliefs, and ways of an organization. However, not all cultures suits to all environment. Each organization would need a different way of existence to manage their business well. An organization should know what it has been worth it and what has functioned earlier to shape its culture well. That could be identified by its history, rites, politics, significances, standards and, language and the method things ended. Obviously, culture therefore, gives a sense of identity to an organization to exist in the world and to represent who they are, what they stand for and what they do for the society. Nevertheless, organizational culture incorporates standards and behaviors that give to the common and psychological setting of an Institution. Thus, it touches the way of interaction with each other, with clients, and with stakeholders (Mallinger et al., 2009).

The IOs, effective cross-cultural communication enables businesses to run more effectively and positively. In this era, communication is vital for the effective act of manoeuvres daily. Understanding cultural variances and disabling language barriers are some of the reflections that workers of the organization should have while trade with people of numerous cultures. Often, business promises are failures because the parties involved either failed to learn about each other's cultures or they are short of time to comprehend and interrelate. Nonetheless, employer-employee/employee-employee

relationships can directly influence important organizational results such as revenue, commitment, and performance (Ganapathi and Panchanatham, 2014).

Efficient workplace communication in multicultural settings could be useful for:

(a) Stimulate inspiration
(b) Benefit in policymaking
(c) Amend the individual's approach
(d) Help in engaging
(e) Regulate one's behavior

Culture is the context operated by people. Miscommunication can evolve due to diversity in perceptions. However, thoughtful cultural breaks and changes can facilitate to eradicate miscommunication (Ganapathi and Panchanatham, 2014) in the organizational settings.

In the workplace, the notion of culture involves various characteristics of commerce. Culture has noticeable work in the way that a business operates but it really embellishes in the approach of employees to reach out goals and also in the business communication values to clients. No doubt, employer-employee/employee-employee relationships can directly influence important organizational results such as revenue, commitment, and performance. The achievement of an organization depends on the flow of clear communication among employees, the network between managerial decisions and their practice apart from understanding that the organizational culture is a guarantee of the functional behavior of employees. Nevertheless, effective cross-cultural communication facilitates businesses to run more efficiently and positively in international organizations. Failing to understand cultural gaps and differences leads to miscommunication. Culture and organizational structure nevertheless impact

each other although it is difficult to define which comes first as when the organization starts to develop it would take its unique characteristics. This can be clearly seen in the holding of hierarchies and levels of bureaucracy.

In today's modest world, communication is necessary for the successful approach of manoeuvres. Accommodating differences in culture and restricting barriers in languages are some of the thoughts that employees of the organization should have in mind while communicating with others from many cultures.

At the diverse workplace, efficient communication skills is a useful skill for employees to acquire. It proposes to congeal business relationship and in turn, helps to rule out a possible risk. Communication is a representational process by which people create shared senses. Similarly, intercultural communication happens when people with different cultural viewpoints and morals develop to bring shared resources. Nevertheless, it helps to shape trust with each other and progress relationships with new clients that transmit important financial value for employers.

CONCLUSION

An organization has its own unique culture. Organizational culture is an artefact of all structures of the organization. It imitates the former and contours the future. The success strategy is through selecting the right track that best fits the culture of the organization (Ganapathi and Panchanatham 2013).

Workplace diversity is highly essential for organizational growth and stability. Diverse employees bring diverse views, outlook,

and values. Thereby evoking alternative solutions and approaches when an issue evolves. Alternatively, employees sited to experience more personal development in an environment when various cultures, views, and thoughts introduced. As well, diversity opens up a chance to bind specific strengths for the profit of the organization by way of greater performance and productivity. Nevertheless, in this global era, diversity in the working group can optimize the ability of the organization to meet the goals of the organization to compete. From the organizational perspective, when an organization emphases to bring a more diverse group with socio-economic background, ethnicity, it is more likely to attract a diverse range of donors and stakeholders. However, it could be noticed that often there is a clash between organizational culture and employee insolence that disturbs the evolution of organizations. Clashes ascend mostly because of differences like personal aim versus

organizational aim, personal morals versus organizational morals, and rights versus duties.

The British Council research studies on the culture at work highlights the value of intercultural skills by sector in business (Fig. 1). Undeniably, workers with intercultural skills bring an optimistic effect on brand and status and also add the worth of competence in appealing new clients. However, due to diversified nature in cultural thinking, it is possible that it could lead to misapprehension. So, understanding that there remain cultural gaps could help to eliminate miscommunication and wrong perceptions. It is obvious when employees have poor intercultural skills such as miscommunication and conflict within teams, the management could face a real risk to reach its objective. The real risk factors could be loss of employees' morale, work backlog, damage to brand and
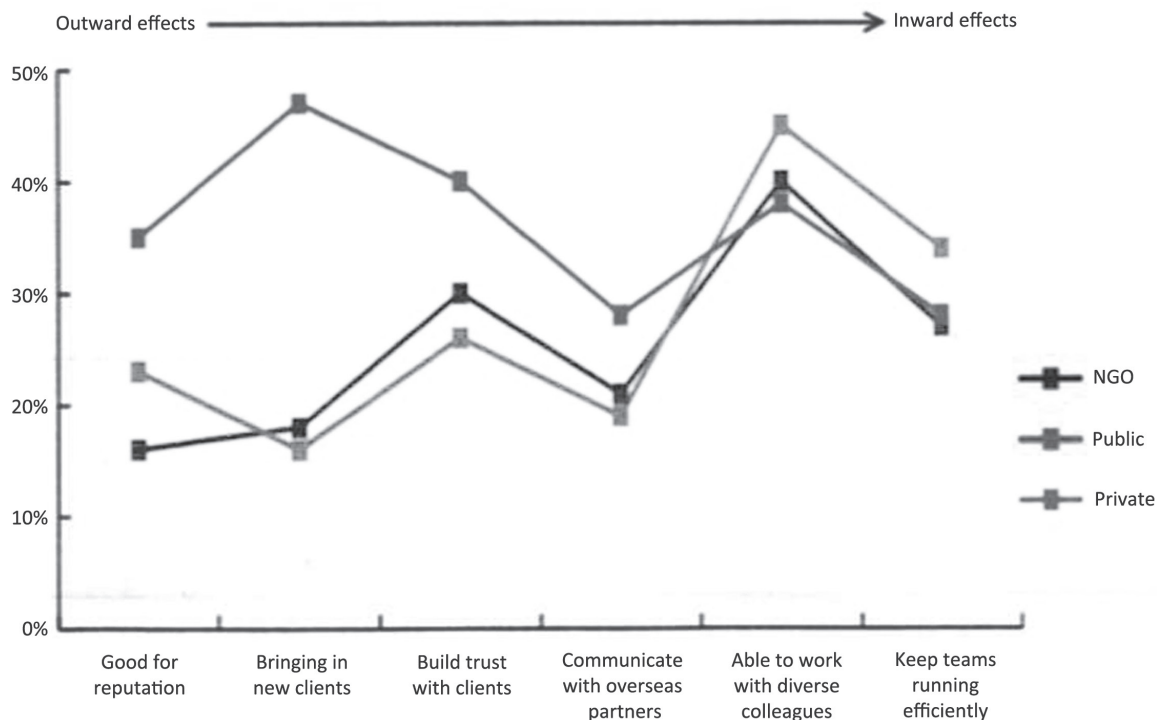

Figure 1: The Employees with Intercultural Skills – Business Benefits (by sector)
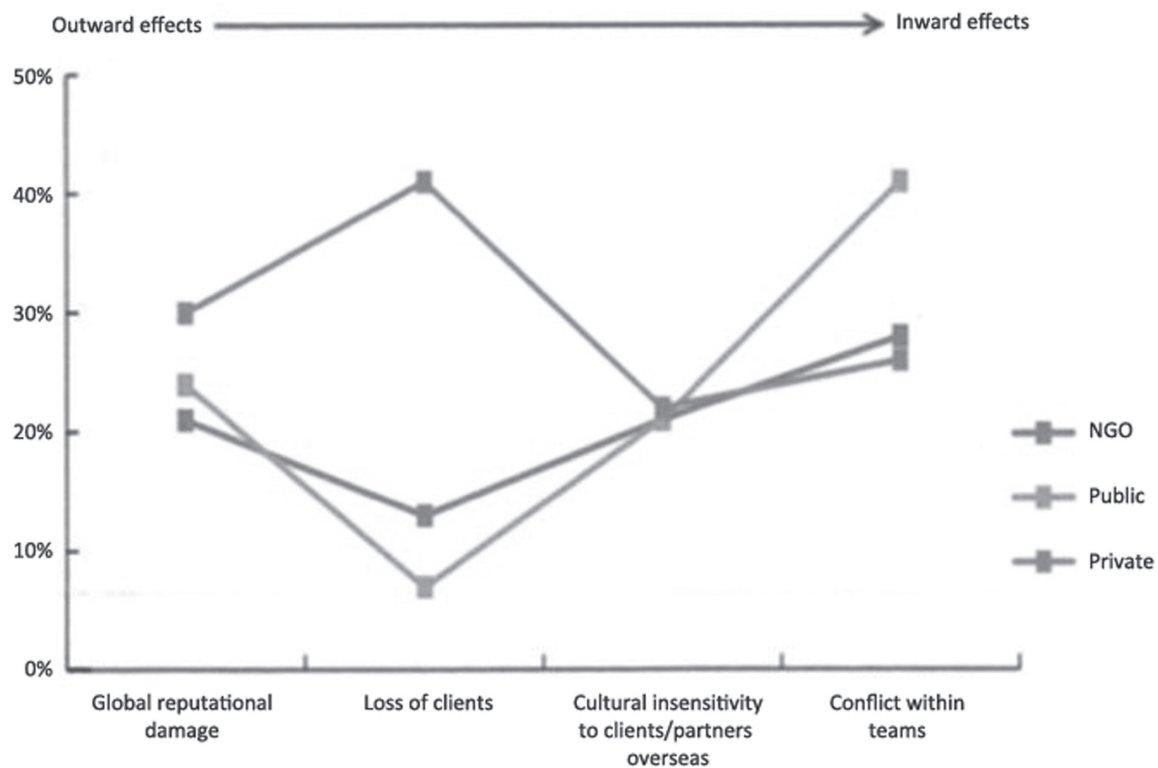
Figure 2: The Employees without Intercultural Skills – Business Risks (by sector)

thus it is necessary to mitigate the risk factors for a successful business. Figure 2 shows the employers' perceptions of business risks of not having intercultural skills in the workplace.

When learned to build cultural bridges of core values of other cultures, the application of communication skills becomes successful. Culture is a basis of awareness, certainty, skill, morals, customs, religion, language or customs learned of a specific community. Cultural literacy is highly useful to understand and accept the variances in other people. Cultural literacy helps to easily eliminate cultural gaps at work, to offer more resourceful productivity in the workplace. Communication plays a role to be a part of the success in today's new economic reality. As the managerial process is a critical activity, it is important to understand the reality in the cultural differences and the importance of communication to manage the

diverse team. In the present era of business processes, communication has become more substantial and unavoidable.

The business setting of the present century is increasing to comprise people from various cultures and countries across the world. The courteous and respectful behavior of employees helps to set up a good foundation for effective communication. People feel comfortable when they know that they have respect. This makes them act frankly and at ease to raise questions when there is a need for clarification. Also when people are comfortable by default they become good listeners.

The work culture in the globalized world of work, efficient communication skills are inseparable. While interaction and working, cultural differences among people

may cause embarrassing communication problems, which would be a hindrance to the development personally and obviously it could affect the stability of organizations. Unless the cross-culture environment is clearly understood, it is difficult to eradicate completely. It is perhaps most important for the organization to make employees realize that a basic understanding of cultural diversity is the key to effective cross-cultural communication which is an inevitable tool. Also to reach out to personal development and that enhances the success of the organization. By providing and encouraging periodic diversity training to employees of the organizations not only helps to increase the productivity on but also avoid getting into conflict modes. If unattended, it can lead to malfunctions and business turbulence. Internal business communication could be disturbed or misinterpreted if workers omit to share similar acceptance of goals, outlooks, and procedures. Before efforts breakdown, realizing culture can support to adopt new policies and processes by successfully eliminate challenges.

In conclusion, IOs working across globe should have in mind to give intercultural training for its people to make sure for them to understand the implications of cultural difference, to communicate effectively, to understand how their counterparts see them, how to build cross-cultural relationships successfully and finally to help the organization have a practical advantage in the international market. This way, an improved corporate reputation and long-term relationships with international counterparts sustained successfully. Thus by applying effective communication tools, the multicultural environment could be transformed as an opportunity for creativity and not a threat.

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