Multicultural Education

Cross cultural differences can and do impede upon from diplomatic relations among countries to important revenue making marketing communication of business organizations and even interpersonal relationships in personal and professional lives.

In the business world, managers occasionally or daily interact with various cultures in doing their basic work and may experience cultural differences mostly as challenges in communication and interpersonal relationships. Members from different cultures are supposed to cooperate and are expected to make high results. Managing others cross-culturally could be enhanced by learning to become more aware of "different rules of the game" or different cultural frameworks. The aim is to promote how to easier build the bridge between different cultural "rules" in order to build better communication and better relationships.

In the business world this occurs daily, where people from different cultures interact and are expected to perform and make decisions. Multicultural education aims to develop awareness between people where a common cultural framework does not exist in order to promote clear lines of communication and better relationships.

Multicultural education has many benefits to be gained by both participants and businesses. For participants in cross cultural training, the 10 main benefits are that it helps:

People Learn About Themselves: Through multicultural education, people are exposed to facts and information about their own cultures, preconceptions, mentalities and worldviews that they may otherwise not have contemplated. Multicultural education also helps people learn more about themselves through learning about others.

Heighten tolerance and decrease prejudice: We get more open to different norms and rules of the games and we accept that different is not something bad/ negative. Through learning about other cultures, barriers are demystified, permitting for more open relationships and dialogue.

Break Down Barriers: All of us have certain barriers such as preconceptions, prejudices and stereotypes that obstruct our understanding of other people. Multicultural education demystifies other cultures through presenting them under an objective light. Through learning about other cultures, barriers are slowly chipped away thus allowing for more open relationships and dialogue.

Encourage Confidence: Multicultural education \promotes self-confidence in individuals and teams through empowering them with a sense of control over previously difficult challenges in the workplace.

Build Trust: When people's barriers are lowered, mutual understanding ensues, which results in greater trust. Once trust is established altruistic tendencies naturally manifest allowing for greater co-operation and a more productive workplace.

Motivate: One of the outcomes of Multicultural education is that people begin to see their roles within the workplace more clearly. Through self-analysis people begin to recognise areas in which they need to improve and become motivated to develop and progress.

Open Horizons: Multicultural education addresses problems in the workplace at a very different angle to traditional methods. Its innovative, alternative and motivating way of analysing and resolving problems helps people to adopt a similarly creative strategy when approaching challenges in their work or personal lives.

Develop Interpersonal Skills: Through Multicultural education participants develop great 'people skills' that can be applied in all walks of life. By learning about the influence of culture, i.e. the hidden factors upon people's behaviours, those who undertake Multicultural education begin to deal with people with a sensitivity and understanding that may have previously been lacking.

Develop Listening Skills: Listening is an integral element of effective and productive communication. Multicultural education helps people to understand how to listen, what to listen for and how to interpret what they hear within a much broader framework of understanding. By becoming good listeners, people naturally become good communicators.

People Use Common Ground: In the workplace people have a tendency to focus on differences. When cross cultural communication problems arise the natural inclination is to withdraw to opposing sides and to highlight the negative aspects of the other. Multicultural education assists in developing a sense of mutual understanding between people by highlighting common ground. Once spaces of mutual understanding are established, people begin to use them to overcome culturally challenging situations.

The above benefits are but a few of the many ways in which cross cultural education positively affects countries, governments and businesses through staff training and development.

Multicultural education is a set of strategies and materials in education that were developed to assist teachers when responding to the many issues created by the rapidly changing demographics of their students. It provides students with knowledge about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups; it assumes that the future society is pluralistic. It draws on insights from a number of different fields, including ethnic studies and women studies, but also reinterprets content from related academic disciplines.

Multicultural education enhances people's skills and therefore future employment opportunities in most sectors as well as to enhance entrepreneurship skills in today's global village. Having multicultural awareness gives people a competitive edge over others especially when applying for positions in international companies with a large multi-cultural staff base.

Multicultural education, also viewed as a way of teaching, promotes principles such as inclusion, diversity, democracy, skill acquisition, inquiry, critical thought, value of

perspectives, and self-reflection. It encourages students to bring aspects of their cultures into the classroom and thus, allows teachers to support the child's intellectual and social/emotional growth.

Multicultural education was found to be effective in promoting educational achievements among immigrants students. Thus, it is also attributed to the reform movement behind the transformation of schools. Transformation in this context requires all variables of the school to be changed, including policies, teachers' attitudes, instructional materials, assessment methods, counseling, and teaching styles. Multicultural education is also concerned with the contribution of students towards effective social action.

Recognising multicultural diversity is the aim of any democratic education system. As such, the diverse cultures in a nation should be reflected in the education system of a country. Education Acts have been promulgated to include all cultures and so do all people driven constitutions of progressive nations. Notwithstanding this assertion, there have been concerns about the degree and level of preparedness on the part of educators to incorporate multiculturalism in their day to day teaching-learning processes.

From the researches by the researchers and scholars across the world and their findings, it can be concluded that:

- The majority of primary school teachers around the world had scanty knowledge about what multicultural education was by definition.
- While the majority of teachers across all nations were unable to provide a comprehensive definition of multicultural education, evidence of the ground suggested that there was multiculturalism being practised in a significant number of schools.
- The majority of teachers in most countries could point out to some aspects of multicultural education being practised in schools.
- There was also general belief among many that multicultural education was beneficial in a number of ways.
- The majority of teachers cited the promotion of inclusion in schools and enrolment of learners from diverse backgrounds as benefits of multicultural education.
- Not much was emphasised in tertiary curricula on multiculturalism thus teachers graduated with little or no knowledge about the concept.
- Lack of resources like computers in developing and less developed nations for children to access different cultures expertise in the form of teachers and heads, high teacher-pupil ratio and negative attitudes by teachers and heads were some of the factors that adversely affected the full implementation of multicultural education in schools

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