MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AT GENERAL MOTORS EAST AFRICA LTD

BY

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MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PROJECT IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

2011
DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for academic purposes in the University of Nairobi or any other University.

Sign............................................. Date 21/11/2011

Sammy Motanya

D61/75223/2009

This research project has been submitted with my approval as the University Supervisor.

Signed: ...................................... Date 21/11/2011

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Nairobi University
DEDICATION

To my beloved parents: Committed dad, David Ombuki and Loving mum, Jemimmah Nyabate, for their wonderful support and love of studies. I do love you all too!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my supervisor Dr. Jackson Maalu for being there for me whenever I requested for clarification and for his wise counsel. I am also indebted to Prof. Yaabs for guiding me in correcting my proposal and towards completing my research project.

Special thanks to all the staff of business school department for giving me the opportunity to pursue the Masters program. Last but not least, I deeply appreciate my colleagues and group members at the university.
ABSTRACT

Due to globalization, most of the companies have expanded their markets to other countries of diverse magnitude. There is a wide interaction of different cultures and the employees sent to the outside assignment at first experience cultural shock. One of such companies is the General Motors East Africa in which it has various branches across East and Central Africa. The objectives of this study were to establish the cultural diversity management practices at General Motors East Africa and to determine the factors affecting effective management of cultural diversity at GMEA. A case study research design was used to carry out this study with the respondents being selected from different departments of General Motors East Africa.

Data was collected using interview guide schedules which were self administered. Data analysis was done using content analysis which was summarized according to common themes. From the study it was observed that managing diversity in GMEA succeed because top managers clearly support diversity management by providing cultural competence training to staff, relevant language courses and a policy for diverse recruitment and most important availing funds. Among the factors which affect the management of cultural diversity in GMEA was discrimination, which came in many forms, ranging from subtle preferential treatment of the people from other ethnic background to an overtly hostile workplace environment.

Due to the impressive performance of General motors company, it can also be concluded that diverse management styles achieve the same results as traditional methods, but cultural diversity in the workplace can also help improve the company’s competitive position in the marketplace. The study recommends that in order to create working environment that is based on respect, appreciation and acceptance, staff and management at General Motors Company should do more than just tolerating people from different background. The management needs to let everyone know they are valued. Since managing diversity focuses on maximizing the ability of all employees to contribute to organizational goals and affirmative action focuses on specific groups because of historical discrimination, further research should be conducted to correlate the two.
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<td>GM-</td>
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<td>CEO-</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background of the study, statement of the problem, the study objectives and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Today's businesses are more and more expanding into other countries and thus becoming global. Operating outside the country origin means adapting to local and national aspects. Therefore it is evident that companies, factories and offices consist of different people with various attitudes and backgrounds. Doubtlessly it has become normal that people of different countries and needless to say of many different cultures are working together. Managers are faced with different challenges in harmonization of these differences. Conflict in such situations is predictable but understanding the diversity issue can help keep conflict at a minimum and to take full advantage of the many benefits which such diversity brings to an organization. Conflicts arose due to the melting pot approach to manage the diversities. The stronger one was the one who survived and a rebellion could arise.

In the last two decades there has been a tremendous improvement in the management of cultural diversities in the workplace. The management have appreciated the cultural differences among various people. This changing accent on accepting differences and diversity has led to a new and emerging school of thought on how to manage people and organization for effective performance in a globally competitive business environment. This requires crafting management concepts and application techniques posed by an increasingly diversity group affiliations of cultural significance” (Cox, 1993). The managers have the responsibility to embrace good management skills in order to capitalize on the positive attributes of cultural diversity while avoiding its downsides. Research makes several suggestions in effective and successful management of cultural diversity. Top management support and commitment must be evident. CEO’s must also be willing to submit to diversity training to appreciate organizational barriers that impede full contributions from all members. Successful diversity management requires managers to “unlearn practices rooted in an old
mind set, change the ways organizations operate, shift organizational culture, restore policies, create new structures, and redesign human resource systems" (Cox, 1993).

1.1.1 Management of Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity includes the range of ways in which people experience a unique group identity, which includes gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity and age. Modern organizations have quite a number of people who have different background and therefore managers are faced with many challenges in harmonization of those differences. In order to overcome these challenges, one should understand the differences between one’s own culture and another’s. The most basic skill that international managers must cultivate is in intercultural communications. To facilitate our interactions with persons who do not share our values, assumptions, or learned ways of behaving require new competences and sensitivities, so that the very cultural differences become resources.

With a multinational manager operating in diverse cultures and circumstances, for example the very differences require appropriate adaptation of corporate objectives and procedures(Dyer, 1985). Similarly, such managers should review their personal and personnel aims in multicultural settings. Culture is dynamic concept that changes and therefore, cosmopolitan managers continuously revise their images of self, role and organization, so that attitudes and behavior are modified accordingly.

Since all management is culturally conditioned, it stands to reason that there is much to be gained by including culture studies in all management or professional development. Culturally-skilled leaders are essential for the effective management of emerging global corporation such as General motors. In these undertakings, promotion of culture synergy by those who are truly global managers will help us to capitalize upon the differences in people, while ensuring their collaborative action.

1.1.2 Overview of General Motors East Africa Limited

General Motors East Africa is located in Nairobi, Kenya and serves the Eastern Africa region covering the countries of Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. General Motors East Africa limited operates as a subsidiary of General Motors Company. It is certified to ISO 9001:2008 (quality management
system) and ISO 14001:2004(environment management system), the best known testimonials to world class quality and environmental standards respectively. GM East Africa also meets Isuzu Japan manufacturing system quality certification and complies with GM corporation (USA) corporate Audit requirements. The vehicle manufacturing plant in Nairobi assembles a wide range of Isuzu trucks and buses. It is the largest manufacturer of commercial vehicles in the Eastern Africa region with more than fifteen models. GM East Africa also retails fully built Chevrolet and Opel brands. GMEA is an exporter of fully assembled and specialized vehicles to Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Mozambique, and Malawi.

GM East Africa has over 25 years experience in local assembly and service. Vehicles are engineered to suit local operating conditions with up to 50% local content on some models. GM East Africa continues to develop and modify designs to customer requirements. This has led to its products being popular in the Eastern Africa region. General Motors East Africa will increase its regional sales volumes by 50 per cent with the full implementation of the East Africa Community (EAC) customs Union. However, lack of commitment from individual countries to honour the requirements of the EAC common External Tariff (CET) might derail the realization.

1.2 Statement of research Problem

To develop an organization’s capability to learn and to create new knowledge means to focus on the quality of interaction among organizational members and sub units. A number of factors may affect the quality of interaction process: Common language, shared experience, willingness to share information, mutual trust and opportunity to observe innovative behavior e.t.c. For global firms, this is a complex managerial task (Kosek, 1996), increasing integration of organizations across business and national borders demand that a modern manager be able to operate multi-culturally.

In comparing cultures of different countries, cross-cultural researchers have concentrated effort on an examination of a set of cultural value dimensions as developed by Hofstede. Dominant value systems of different countries can be ordered along Hofstede’s set of cultural value dimensions (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede and Bond, 1988). People’s dominant value
systems have been crystallized in the institutions these people have built together: their family structures, educational structures, religious organizations, associations, forms of government, work organizations, law, literature, settlement patterns, and buildings.

Due to globalization, most of the companies have expanded their markets to other countries of diverse magnitude. There is a wide interaction of different cultures and the employees sent to the outside assignment at first experience cultural shock. One of such companies is the General Motors East Africa in which it has various branches across East and Central Africa. Whereas the value systems affect human thinking, feeling, action, and the behavior of organizations and institutions in predictable ways, the value dimensions reflect basic problems that any society has to cope with but for which solutions differ from country to country. Cultural knowledge and a global focus are crucial to survive, and to thrive, within today's business environment. At GMEA, having its branches in more than one country they have to embrace good management skills in order to capitalize on the positive attributes of cultural diversity.

It's against this background that the study focuses its attention on as an example of global firm with various diverse backgrounds. However, the same literature does not give a global focus that is commensurate with the global reality of business. Research by Sonja and Phillips, (2004) shows that managers in today's multicultural global business community frequently encounter cultural differences, which can interfere with management practices in organizations. Also according to the research finding by Damodaran and Olphert, (2000) cultural factors are the most important inhibitors of knowledge management systems in a multinational corporation environment. The willingness of local contributors to share their knowledge is dependent on the geographic and cultural distance (Li and Scallion, 2006) (Child et al. 2002).

Despite all these studies, there has been a wide gap in knowledge as to the effects, challenges faced by globalism which has not been extensively researched on. Most research findings have been focused on specific developed countries and developing countries have been given little attention hence the gap to be addressed in this study. The purpose of this project therefore is to determine the management of cultural diversity practices at General Motors East Africa. It also addresses the effects of cultural diversity on global business with GMEA as a case study.
1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were;

i. To establish the cultural diversity management practices at General Motors East Africa.

ii. To determine the factors affecting effective management of cultural diversity at GMEA.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Cultural diversity is a useful concept for improving the employees' performance hence higher productivity. This study is important in assessing the effectiveness of the cultural diversity management programmes at GMEA. It is also intended to help improve the relations between the employees and their supervisors when carrying out cultural diversity programmes and setting targets. In addition, this study is aimed at being useful to scholars in bridging the gap in cultural diversity management and identifying areas for further research and adding to the pool of knowledge in the subject area.

For any organization, and any organizational change, the central purpose is to create a thriving and institutionalized diversity culture that is well anchored into the people, systems, and structures (Cummings & Worley 2005, p.490). Knowledge of various cultural orientations and concepts such as collectivism/individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and femininity/masculinity can add value in creating distinctive competencies.

This study is important in assessing the factors affecting effective cultural diversity management initiatives, implementation in organizations. Business Development consultants, HRM consultants, strategic managers, product development specialists are set to benefit from the findings of the study since it applies relevant tools and management models that can be used in the transformation of any organizational processes. The study will help International business managers internalize best practices and orientations in implementing global business strategies (ethnocentrism, egocentrism and polycentrism) and market entry modes in a manner that resistance and conflicts from employee and geographic business units is minimized.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses past studies on causes of cultural diversity in the workplace and theories on cultural diversity.

2.1 Cultural Diversity in the Work Place

Diversity is a subjective phenomenon, created by group members themselves who on the basis of their different social identities categorize others as or dissimilar: "A group is diverse if it is composed of individuals who differ on a characteristic on which they base their own social identity" (O'Reilly, Williams, & Barsade 1998.).

Loden & Rosener (2001) define diversity as that which differentiates one group of people from another along primary and secondary dimensions. Primary dimensions are gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age and mental or physical abilities and characteristics. The primary dimensions shape basic self-image as well as our fundamental world views. Additionally, they have the most impact on groups in the workplace and society.

Secondary dimensions of diversity are less visible, exert a more variable influence on personal identity and add a more subtle richness to the primary dimensions of diversity. They include: educational background, geographic location, religion, first language, family status, work style, work experience, military experience, organizational role and level, income and communication style. The secondary dimensions impact our self-esteem and self-definition. (Maier, C., 2002).

There is a definite trend towards definitions of a multiplicity of diversity dimensions; Arredondo (2004) adds culture, social class and language to the primary dimensions and healthcare beliefs and recreational interests to the secondary dimensions. She further adds a tertiary dimension, which encompasses historical moments experienced. Maier (2002) lists 38 possible diversity dimensions, and further suggests that his item "character traits" is "infinitely expandable", He illustrates this multi-dimensionality by reference to the individual as a kaleidoscope. The analogy of an iceberg comes to mind in the face of these potentially endless dimensions; the obvious characteristics of race, ethnicity, gender, age and disability
relate to the small, visible portion of the iceberg, and are the basis of much anti-discrimination legislation around the world.

Other dimensions such as religion, culture and political orientation are less obvious, and could be said to constitute the secondary dimensions lying just below the surface, which may be revealed with time. The tertiary dimensions are often the core of individual identity and lie deeper below the surface. It is the vast array of qualities that lie beneath the surface that provides the real essence of diversity to be tapped into, and these have not until recently been acknowledged. It should be noted that only some of the possible dimensions are shown in

Cultural diversity is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group (nation) from another. (Hofstede, 2001). A few studies point to the possibility that the cultural characteristics of nations might lead to different outcomes of its use in different organizations. Watson et al. (2004) indicates that there is evidence that cultural diversity has a significant effect on the relative levels of satisfaction and consensus across organizations.

Becoming aware of the cultural characteristics of countries helps understand how people from different countries may think, feel, and behave differently when faced with problems (Hofstede, 2003). The empirical investigation of cultural diversity in virtual teams might provide us with measures for improving team performance.

The cultural diversity of a group of decision makers might be a source of psychological pressures such as discomfort and weak feelings of belonging to the group. In the case of a virtual team, cultural diversity might lead to feelings of rivalry among members causing them to stay away from a collaborative spirit in favor of a more competitive, less conciliatory approach to conflict resolution.

In a fast transforming world, company and organizational leadership often lags the reality of their client-base. And Cultural diversity in the workplace is as critical as religious, gender and language diversity. The gap between their clients and is often superficially bridged at the image level by advertising, sales teams and marketing. Advertising agencies manage at times to put on a face of a culturally-aware organization; sales teams are reasonably representative of their client base and marketing is occasionally targeted on the right market groups. But back at the office many decisions are made in the old traditional ways.
An individually-focused organization (IFO) will motivate its teams on their individual performances. Everything will be "Key Performance Indicator" (KPI) driven and individual success, at the expense of the less visible, will be encouraged whereas a community-focused organization (CFO) will be focused on community and its all about us together as a community. They will often limit praise for individual successes and highlight group/community successes.

In both IFOs and CFOs there will be inter-level, inter-team and inter-personal challenges, resulting in workplace conflict. When the issues of uniqueness, culture, religion, race, beliefs, gender, age, ability, generations, qualifications and historical experience are added to the picture then workplace conflict is a given. These problems will be born of prejudice, jealousy, ignorance and the suppression of individual and workplace community aspirations and ideas.

Much of the challenge will emanate from the lack of representation at the highest level. This can be alleviated through transformation of the senior leadership. In such change come all of the challenges of diversity in the boardroom.

According to Lurey, J. S., and Raisinghani (2001), some of the challenges in a multicultural organization are: "Rightness" in conflict. Judgments are made from our upbringing, our history, circumstances and our religion, race, beliefs and cultural alignment, the stresses in traditional "Workplace Diversity Management, diversity of values, the varying interpretations of the key words, used to define values and principles and the normal conflicts, gossiping and backbiting that occur soon after people come together in groups and or teams.

Aguado, T. & Mali (2001), indicates that developing an understanding, and acceptance, of diversity lets the team experience harmony and teamwork in a transformational team-building environment he further notes that developing a common understanding of who we are, why we are together and how relevant our "work" is to society, the organisation, to family, to community and of course to the individual.

According to Watson et al. (2004) Other solutions are to manage cultural diversity are; developing a common name and a team-based mission, regular meetings to clear past individual challenges, face-to-face, developing a short list of positive and mutually understood and agreed values/behaviors, that must be adhered to by all members of the team,
and developing a list of negative and destructive behaviors/ values that must be eliminated from the team's interactions.

Getting an agreement and sign a commitment also ensures commitment to equality at the level of respect which includes management and leadership. Another issue is putting in place a peer-driven and managed monthly meeting structure to manage all aspects of the agreement and the behaviors of team members. Other important aspects are regularly rotating the chair and the scribe to prevent a power-base from forming and ensuring that the process is caring, motivational and empowering whilst developing understanding and maintaining discipline. (Watson et al. 2004)

The outcome through diversity training, team-building and clearing conflict is a powerful peer-driven workplace management system, led by the diverse team that it seeks to guide.

Workplace diversity conflict is reduced through peer-agreement and management, reduced management stress and wasted time, spent in work-place conflict resolution, far less expenditure on labour dispute mechanisms and labour lawyers. Workplace teams that is involved, professional, committed and communicating. And Better relationships with clients, family and community.

Leaders who choose to lead their culturally diverse work-teams, to great success, will involve each and every team member in the day to day processes of workplace diversity management. Ultimately, through the new diversity team unity and participation, they will be able to grow their services into burgeoning and exciting new markets.

2.2 Theoretical orientation

2.2.1 Self categorization theory

Self categorization theory was formulated by Pelled et al. 1999. This theory suggests that diversity is associated with negative performance outcomes. Within culturally homogeneous groups, members will have a tendency to communicate with each another more often and in a greater variety of ways, perhaps because they share worldviews and a unified culture resulting from in-group attachments and shared perceptions (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000).
Chatman and Barsade (1995) examined matches between personal dispositions and cultural values to explain differences in cooperative behavior which will lead to improved performance. They found that people who were more dispositionally cooperative were more responsive to situational norms for cooperation than those who were less cooperative.

There are some studies which do conflict with the theory though a study conducted by Earley, (2004) found out that members who uphold strong cultural values are rewarded with their colleagues’ acceptance; those who deviate from such values are rejected. The extent to which organizations or groups emphasize independence or interdependence is central to characterizing how work is conducted. Those emphasizing independence, or individualism, place a high priority on pursuing and maximizing individuals’ goals; members are rewarded for and derive satisfaction from performance based on their own achievements.

Staff members emphasizing interdependence, or collectivism, place a high priority on collective goals and action; members are rewarded for and derive satisfaction from collective accomplishments and cooperative behavior (Ohayv. & Sanders, 2000).

2.2.2 Social identity theory

According to social identity theory, cultural homogeneity in management groups may thus increase the level of satisfaction and cooperation and decrease emotional conflict [Williams & O’Reilly 1998]. Since homogeneous groups do not have significant cultural barriers to social intercourse, positive social associations and in-group social contacts are fostered [Blau 2007]. This formulation suggests that deleterious social identity and self-categorization processes will not inhibit an organization with a culturally homogeneous management group.

As cultural diversity increases, however, social comparison and categorization processes occur, and in-groups/out-groups and cognitive biases may occur, creating barriers to social intercourse (Blau 2007). Therefore, as heterogeneity in management groups reaches moderate levels, the psychological processes associated with social identity theory and self-categorization processes may be more likely to emerge. These processes generate individual behaviors such as solidarity with others in a race- or gender-based group, conformity to the norms of one’s group, and discrimination towards out-groups (Tajfel & Turner 2005).
In a situation where multiple subcultures existing in a moderately heterogeneous group, conflict is potentially maximized (Earley & Mosakowski 2000), and inter-group interaction and communication may be blocked (Alexander, Nuchols, Bloom, & Lee 2005). For example, Earley and Mosakowski (2000) found that moderately heterogeneous groups exhibited relationship conflict, communication problems, and low identification of members with an overall work group.

Within management groups, the difficulties associated with moderate levels of heterogeneity may lead to negative performance outcomes for an organization. Although moderate levels of cultural heterogeneity may create barriers to effective social intercourse, high levels of heterogeneity could actually weaken these barriers (Blau 2007), since group members will be more evenly diffused over the categories of cultural diversity, and in-group/outgroup identities will be reduced (Alexander et al. 2005).

In groups with high levels of cultural heterogeneity, everyday social contacts and communication are more likely to involve members of different racial/gender groups. Further, the in-group pressures that inhibit social interaction with out-group members should be weakened (Blau 2007). In management groups with high heterogeneity, out-group discrimination is thus less likely to exist. In fact, few common bases for subgroup formation and social identity are likely to exist in management groups with relatively high levels of diversity (Earley & Mosakowski 2000). In addition, the processes associated with the value-indiversity paradigm are fully realized within highly diverse management a group, which further enhances performance [Cox et al. 2001].

An organization with high levels of cultural heterogeneity in management may not be inhibited by social identity processes because organization members have many out-group contacts and may, instead, distinctly benefit from a diverse pool of resources.

2.2.3 Double Diversity Effects Theory

This theory was formulated by Cox, Lobel and MacLeod in 1991. It states that in keeping with diversity might have positive and negative contributions to organizational functioning depending on its level.
Multicultural organizations have an advantage in attracting and retaining the best talent. The capabilities of women and minorities offer a wider labour pool. Organizations that are able to attract and retain qualified minority group members and keep faith with them through fair and equitable career advancement treatments, gain competitive advantage and derive high quality human resources dividends. Second, a multicultural organization is better suited to serve a diverse external clientele in a more increasingly global market. Such organizations have a better understanding of the requirements of the legal, political, social, economic and cultural environments of foreign nations [Adler 1991].

In research-oriented and hi-tech industries, the broad base of talents generated by a gender- and ethnic-diverse organization becomes a priceless advantage. “Creativity thrives on diversity” [Morgan 2009]. Multicultural organizations are found to be better at problem solving, possess better ability to extract expanded meanings, and are more likely to display multiple perspectives and interpretations in dealing with complex issues. Such organizations are less susceptible to “groupthink.”

Multicultural organizations tend to possess more organizational flexibility, and are better able to adapt to changes. Women, for instance, are said to have higher tolerance for ambiguity than men [Rotter & O’Connell 1982]. Diversity has some drawbacks which moderate its significant advantages. In problem-solving situations, extraordinary costs in time and financial resources Cultural Diversity in Organizational Theory and Practice can negate the benefits of synergy, and can even degenerate into dysfunctional conflicts. Diversity does not fare as well under conditions of uncertainty and complexity which may lead to confusion and frustration.

Diversity can make it harder to arrive at an agreement on a particular course of action, and can result in negative dynamics and cultural clashes that can create work disadvantages for women and minorities. Traditionally, cultural conflicts between majority and minority group members are usually resolved in favor of the majority groups. This, in turn, creates significant barriers to full participation by minority members in potentially conflict situations. In an analysis of 151 work groups, Tsui, Egan and O’Reilly [1992] found diversity to be associated with lower levels of psychological identification with group members which would tend to detract from overall performance and result in adverse effects on organizational measures of productivity, absenteeism and turnover.
Homogenous groups have been reported to outperform culturally diverse groups especially where there are serious communication issues which make it more difficult for everybody to make optimal contributions to the group effort. Higher turnover and absenteeism are special problems identified with multi-cultural organizations. Several research studies since the 1960’s have found women and other minorities to be consistently higher on absenteeism and turnover than their majority-member counterparts.

Milliken and Martins [2006] argued that diversity can affect an organization’s functioning through four types of mediating variables. First, diversity can have “affective consequences”, such as lower organizational commitment or lower satisfaction, because people prefer interactions with similar others. Second, “cognitive outcomes” refer to an increase in creativity and innovation. Diversity can enhance a group’s ability to gather and process information and therefore it could result in a greater creativity. Third, a diverse organizational workforce is a symbol of equality. These “symbolic effects” are important for an organization’s reputation. And last, diversity also has clear implications on the communication process within a group or organization, i.e. “communication effects”.
3.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the research design, the target population and sample frame, data collection instrument and procedures and data analysis methods.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a Case study research design. According to Yin (2004), a case study excels at bringing an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. This design is chosen because it provides insights into and comprehension of an issue or situation. The design will be useful in describing the characteristics of the firm and determining the frequency of key attributes of the study.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Research Instrument

The main tools of data collection for this study were interview guide schedules. Interview guide were used for data collection because it standardises the order in which questions are asked of survey respondents, so the questions are always answered within the same context. This is important for minimising the impact of context effects, where the answers given to a survey question can depend on the nature of preceding questions.

3.3.2 Data Collection Procedure

This study used primary data only this enabled the researcher to collect first hand information from the respondents. The researcher used interview schedules to collect the primary data from various categories of personnel. The primary data was useful to the research because it is reliable and accurate.
3.4 Data Analysis

Once data was collected it was analyzed using content analysis method. Bernard Berelson (2001) defined Content Analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communications". Content analysis is a research tool focused on the actual content and internal features of responses. It is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts or sets of texts and to quantify this presence in an objective manner.

This study utilized a relational content analysis which examined the relationships among concepts in a text as answered by the respondents.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data interpretation and analysis as obtained from the field. The data is interpreted and summarized according to the common themes. Since the research design used was a case study, responses obtained are analyzed using content analysis.

4.2 Profile of General Motors East Africa

4.2.1 Staff Population size

There are 678 staff at GMEA who come from all over the world, more especially the east Africa countries. With the different countries interacting, the organization has many different cultures who work together and therefore the management have faced with task of managing this cultural diversities.

The following is the distribution of the whole staff in the organization including the distribution of the different countries in the various departments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departments</th>
<th>Kenyan Staffs</th>
<th>Staff from other countries</th>
<th>Number of staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource and Administration</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations and Technical Services</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate affairs</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Human Resources department (GMEA 2011)
4.2.2 Management of organization Culture

Modern organizations are faced with many organizational challenges and in trying to cope up with the stiff competition they have to know how to manage the different cultures. At General Motors East Africa, there are different cultures who work together. The Management have managed to put together these different cultures by spreading embracing good cultural diversity management skills.

4.3 Cultural Diversity Management Practices at GMEA

There is increasing engagement through research on managing diverse groups of employees in GMEA. Also they have managed to create awareness that well developed global diversity programmes and policies provide many benefits in terms of equality management and cross-cultural management. Therefore, the following are the cultural management practices exercised by the management:

4.3.1 Gender Equality

There have been changes in cultural attitude towards the role of women and men in GMEA. Despite the strong element of gender bias in certain aspects of employment: they have managed to curb this element giving equal opportunities to all.

4.3.2 Ethnicity, Religion and Disability Diversity

GMEA has been promoting ethnic equality irrespective of the ethnic background. The issue on religious beliefs has been taken care of by respecting each and everyone religious practices and learning to accommodate them. Also they have protected the rights and interests of disabled people. Equal opportunities are given to them by showing that “disability is not inability”.

4.3.3 Cultural Competence Training

The top managers clearly give support to the training needs on cultural awareness and given the staff competence training. Funds have been put in places on the language courses to those who are interested at an affordable fee. Others are given sponsorships on merit to study the various foreign languages or cultures.
4.4 Factors Affecting Effective Management of Cultural Diversity at GMEA

Based on the data analysis, the following were some of the factors which affect the effective management of cultural diversity at GMEA:

4.4.1 Unavailability of a structured Cross-Cultural Training Program

There was no clear documented introductory training program to the expatriates with regard to the various cultures. They were only taken through their job specifications rather than their culture-orientations.

4.4.2 Customs and Religion

There were difficulties in understanding on the different religious issues. For example on the dress codes. Islamic religious restrictions become a part of the practices and norms. Actions made at the work place or non work place could result to conflicts due to matters touching on sensitive issues. Therefore, implementing an effective cultural management programs was a task.

4.4.3 High Level of Bureaucracy hinder Job implementation

According to a number of respondents interviewed, the level of bureaucracy in the organization was high. The people of the high hierarchical positions acquire strong control over issues at the work place. Decision making processes and duration of task completion takes longer than expected.

4.4.4 Difficulty in complying with the working pace

In the highly industrialized nation whereby the people are used to living in the fast lane and having more efficient services for the public, the pace of working is high than their fellow counterparts. Therefore, the management find it difficult to integrate the two cultures because of their backgrounds.
4.5 Data interpretation on the Communication challenges

4.5.1 Audience consideration

In order to assess the respondent's audience consideration before they communicated, the respondents were asked to give an example on how they considered their audience along side the factors that influence their communication. Being a multi ethnic company, most of the respondents indicated that they considered the race and the rank of the audience or the person they were communicating to before they communicated.

The main factors which influenced their communication were the ability of the individual to send & receive messages, perceptions of sender & receiver personal space/proxemics, territoriality, roles and relationships, time, environment, attitudes, emotions and self-Esteem. The respondents kept more emphasis on personal space and self-esteem exhibited by the people from the western countries and the junior staff respectively.

4.5.2 Written/face to face communication

The respondents were asked to indicate the best time they considered to use written or face to face communication. Most respondents indicated that they used written communication when they wanted to prevent misunderstandings, for historical purposes in an attempt to share knowledge and when they wanted to deal with negative feelings.

On the other hand respondents indicated that words, facial expression, gestures, body language, tone of voice, room temperature, room noise, and other people in the room that might be present were the motivating factors to use face to face communication. They indicated that if there is something missing in the person's words, there are other cues that will complement the message, if they are congruent with the words.

4.5.3 Communication skills and an angry person

All the respondents agreed that once a time they have had an encounter with an angry colleague, they indicated that dealing with an angry person was sometimes tricky. The respondents indicated that they used the tools of effective listening to help defuse the anger.
To effectively defuse anger, the respondents indicated that they kept in mind the needs of the angry speaker: among the factors considered were to vent whereby the angry person needs to let off steam and release the anger that may have been brewing for a long time and to get the listener's attention as the angry person wants to know that you are paying attention.

The respondents indicated that an angry person wants someone to appreciate how he/she feels, thus the best approach was to try to empathize with her experience so that she feels you understand the situation, and acknowledge his/her right to feel the way she does. The most frequent skills applied by the respondents were being attentive and patient, being sincere and calm.

4.5.4 Effective listening skills

All the respondents indicated that at some time their effective listening skills helped them in a problematic situation. Most of the respondents indicated that since the company had people from various cultures, sometimes confusions arise. They indicated that when they were confused and did not understand what a colleague was saying or implying, they accepted their misunderstanding and requested the colleague to address the issue in another way, or used their best guess (which sometimes would cost them a lot). This was sometimes effective for if they were incorrect, the person would realize it and would likely attempt to correct their misunderstanding.

The respondents also indicated that active listening is a very effective first response when the other person is angry, hurt or expressing difficult feelings toward them, especially in office relationships that are important to the success of the company and the respondents.

4.5.5 Not listening audience

All the respondents indicated that they felt bad especially when they thought that another person was not listening to them. This was different with some people from different cultures more so the western cultures who indicated that they sought for clarification using words such as ‘do you understand’ frequently within the conversations.
4.5.6 Presentation preparation

The respondents indicated that they prepared for by first of all writing their key talking points, estimating the time to start and stop giving allowances for questions before writing the script. Some respondents though indicated that being a multicultural company, they ensured that they did not get hung up on specific words. They formulated a speaking style since some people are ultra-enthusiastic and some are much calmer.

Since it is a multicultural company, the respondents pointed out a possibility of disruptions from people who are not well acquainted to the language. To counter this they practiced their presentation using hand gestures in case they encountered disruptions.

4.5.7 Communication barriers

When dealing with a multi cultural company, the likelihood of encountering communication barriers is very high. Respondents indicated that there are instances when they had to deal with these barriers was when there was a new staff from non English speaking country or during the company exchange programs.

The respondents indicated that among the skills they applied to purge communication barriers were the elimination of differences in perception, use of simple language, reduction of noise levels, encouraging active Listening, effective use of body language, and avoidance of information overload.

4.5.8 Failed support from corporation

Most of the respondents indicated that once during their career, they failed to get support from the corporation, among the factors that prompted the situation were, seeking for leave during the peak seasons, failure to meet deadlines and in a situation when the respondents were accused for starting a conflict with a colleague.

The respondents indicated that when they felt overburdened they spoke up. Although it required some guts, it helped to save their faces later on. The respondents indicated that if they didn't say something when they were initially assigned work, they request a private meeting with their boss to explain their feelings about having to meet such tight deadlines.
In the case of accusation, the respondents indicated that they avoided taking sides. And in case of a conflict, they involved their supervisor by telling them how the problems within the team affected their productivity and morale.

4.5.9 Dealing with different people from different cultural backgrounds

Some of the cultural differences observed by respondents in their workplace include; "cognitive constraints." (These are world views that provide backdrop information of a culture), "behavior constraints." this was observed since each culture has its own rules about proper behavior which affect verbal and nonverbal communication. They include; whether one looks the other person in the eye-or not; whether one says what he/she means openly or talks around the issue and how close the people stand to each other when they are talking.

The other differences are the "emotional constraints." The respondents indicated that different cultures regulated the display of emotion differently. Responses obtained indicated that some cultures get very emotional when they are debating an issue. They yelled, cried, and exhibited their anger, fear, frustration, and other feelings openly whereas other cultures try to keep their emotions hidden, exhibiting or sharing only the "rational" or factual aspects of the situation.

The most used tool by the respondents was diversity training- this is a situation when the respondents made sure that they become aware of the cultural diversity of the company. They ensured this by trying to understand all its dimensions and seek the commitment of those involved to nurture cultural diversity. The respondents also tried to address the myths, stereotypes and cultural differences that interfere with the full contribution of those colleagues.

4.5.10 Policy decision implementation

The respondents indicated that they were sometimes faced with implementation of a policy decision which lied outside their personal comfort levels conflicting with their values. Some of the policies were coming to work during the holidays and church days especially during the company peak season.
The respondents indicated that sometimes they had to change their values in a situation when there was no otherwise. Most decision came along when the respondents found out that their values would not enable them enjoy the "best" possible life for in the future for instance if they lost their job.

Some respondents however indicated that values are just a measure of the current direction they were headed to. And in most cases these two things are incongruent, meaning that their current values are not aligned with the course of their best life. Making them break at any time it was for their benefit.

4.5.11 Cultural differences as a barrier

Most respondents indicated that there were some instances that they wanted to do something but came forth some cultural barriers. The respondents indicated that sometimes they were embarrassed and this affected their morale. The common barriers exhibited by the respondents included dress modes which greatly affected the female respondents as some cultures did not appreciate clothes such as mini skirts or trousers. Some men also indicated that there are some cultural practices exhibited such as the shaking of female hands which changed their perception at first towards a colleague who refused to shake hands.

Other respondents indicated that there exists some times when they had misinterpreted some non-verbal behavior such as eye contact, facial expressions, hand gestures leading them to avoid the colleagues. The respondents indicated that after they were taken through a cultural diversity course, they understood the other cultures better and this has since improved the work place relationships.

4.6 Response from the management

4.6.1 Staff Motivation

When the management was asked to indicate the techniques they used to motivate their staff, they indicated that they often invite employees from diverse backgrounds with individual talents and experiences to showcase their rich cultures and to work together in creating a flexible and innovative environment which enhances productivity.
The management also indicated that it advocates and encourages team spirit by organizing team building activities and workplace incentives since they enhance employee motivation. The management also indicated that it considered non-monetary incentives. The other motivation factor that the management used was flexible work schedules that give employees more time to develop social relationships, advancement opportunities, and job customization. These incentives allow individuals to further their self-development, enhance job satisfaction and relieve stress.

4.6.2 Dealing with staffing problems

The management indicated that they regularly had to deal with staff problems. Among the techniques the management employed was to create an opportunity for feedback. The management indicated that they had to create an opportunity to have a one on one conversation with the staff which was part of a regular weekly update to catch up with their team and progress.

The management also indicated that before giving feedback, they had to be aware of circumstances that may be impacting on a team member’s performance. For instance someone may be struggling to cope with the demands of the job, require some training, and have conflict with one of the team players or maybe experiencing some serious personal problems at home. Ideally the management indicated that they had to know of that information before giving feedback.

The other technique the management used was to give the feedback with facts as opposed to an opinion they have formed based on someone's behavior.

Once they had feedback of facts, they requested a change, the management indicated that they requested in a friendly but farm manner for instance "can you please ensure that you are diplomatic and professional with other team members - and in particular ensure that you are pleasant and polite when in view of customers at all times".

The management also indicated that alongside getting feedback, they also asked the staff what support they wanted from them. This encouraged the staff to be genuine, honest and fair so that they can adjust and get the job satisfaction of doing a job well.
4.6.3 Information diffusion

The management indicated that the main source of information was through phone calls and e-mails. All the staff had emails and had access to a computer which had internet. If the management had some issue they wanted to pass across, they could send an e-mail to each of the staff.

In spite of the increase in electronic communication, the management indicated that it sometimes sends messages on paper in form of memos or just a message passed across. This is because sometimes a hard copy is required to meet audit or legal requirements or because the recipient prefers to read from paper than from a screen.

The management also indicated that they used video conferencing which uses phone lines to transmit video as well as sound, between two or more parties. Because cameras, microphones, audio playback, special software and high-bandwidth network cabling are required, the management indicated that video conferencing was used infrequently and on specially-provided workstations.

4.6.4 Merging people from different cultures

The management was asked to indicate how they ensured that people from different cultures worked together. They indicated that sometimes it may be tricky as people got emotional and over reacted to some of the issues they regard outside their values. The management indicated that in such a situation, they planed ahead by giving thought to the cultural ramifications of the staffs as result of different corporate cultures. The first decision they made was to hire professionals to assist with the integration hence the company has a corporate culture department.

The management also indicated that they involved the employees in the process of merging by creating cross-functional post-integration teams that consist of employees from different cultures to work on logistical details. This strategy not only gives the employees some ownership of the process, but it helps the cultures begin to figure out how to work with each other.
The management indicated that the most effective way to solve cultural merge problem is to communicate frequently with all parties in the organization. This helps identify problems as they arise, which are shared along with proposed solutions, with the employees, and then keeping them updated on the progress on a regular basis.

They also indicated that they exploited any opportunity to bring the cultures together such as making judicious use of seminars, retreats and small group functions to get the cultures talking and knowing each other. The other important way of making people work together is to retain the best practices, policies and systems of all the cultures, rather than keeping company's policies and abolishing cultures.

4.6.5 Change management

The management admitted that is often difficult to sell new ideas to staff who often feel threatened by the idea of change hence as a result the management announces change in a manner that people from all the cultures are aware that change is coming.

Another strategy applied by the management to manage change is giving people ample time to become informed about whatever they feel they need to be informed about (particularly if they need to take action or make decisions as a result of the change or the need for the full acceptance is critical). And then they make sure there is a mechanism in place for them to get their questions answered and make good decisions based on information they have had time to digest.

To ensure that the change is accepted, the management indicated that they related their measures to their strategic advantage and clearly spelled out a numeric expectation for every job/process in the organization. They did this by charting a few key behaviors that indicate progress in using the vision and posted them graphically in high-visibility area.

To ensure that change is not rejected, the management indicated that they got people to think and act like owners. This was done by empowering the people by rewarding the 'right' behavior - using their vision, formal and informal, monetary and non-monetary, group and individual.
4.6.6 Staff performance evaluation

In staff performance evaluation, the management indicated that they evaluated the staff based on his/her understanding of job duties and responsibilities. Possession of sufficient skill and knowledge to perform all parts of the job effectively, efficiently and promotion of department mission and values, makes an active effort to stay current with new developments.

Other performance evaluations indicated by the management were the employee's ability to prioritize workload, manage information flow (including internal, volunteer, and external communication, and filing/documentation). On quality the management evaluated the attentiveness to detail and accuracy, thoroughness demonstration, completeness and matters of dependability/Reliability.

The management evaluated the staff's punctuality and regularity in attendance, completeness of tasks satisfactorily, meeting commitments, working independently, and change handling techniques and staying focused under pressure.

The management also indicated that communications skills were a strong part of the performance evaluation of the staff. The skills evaluated include listens effectively and clear response and interacting with others in a helpful and informative manner. Since general motors is a culturally diverse company, professionalism is highly regarded and it is measured using the ability of a staff to promote and treat peers with mutual respect, to demonstrate integrity and dealing well with ethical and confidential issues and showing commitment to the company's stated missions and goals.
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, as regards to the main objectives of the study. Based on these findings the conclusions were drawn and some recommendation on the way forward made. The objectives of the study were to establish the cultural diversity management practices at General Motors East Africa and to determine the factors affecting effective management of cultural diversity at GMEA.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

5.1.1 Cultural Diversity Management Practices in GMEA

From the study it was observed that managing diversity in respect to staff and customers in GMEA succeed because top managers clearly support diversity management by providing cultural competence training to staff, relevant language courses and a policy for diverse recruitment most important availing funds.

The other strategy that GM uses to address cultural diversity is by ensuring that all the people are trained. This is because the complexity of cultures existing side by side is a genuine benefit for the organization, as the general enhancement of flexibility will be an improvement for all employees.

An important way which GMEA manages diversity is by valuing its employees. They reorganize the fact that each individual, irrespective of background and context, wants to be valued for what they can bring to the organisation. They agree to the fact that being valued creates self-respect, psychological well-being and enhanced performance. This has enhanced performance as employees exhibit creativity, innovation and rapport with clients.
5.1.2 Factors affecting effective management of cultural diversity in the workplace

One of the main factors which affect the management of cultural diversity in GMEA was discrimination, which came in many forms, ranging from subtle preferential treatment of the people from other ethnic background to an overtly hostile workplace environment.

Though the company has a very diverse workforce in numbers, it still has an impenetrable glass Ceiling. This means that most of the top managers come from the same ethnic background hence reaching the top management position is sometimes impossible. This leads to an unhealthy corporate culture where employees know the company’s policy for determining promotions is not merit-based, and result in some of the best people leaving.

The company doesn’t have a corporate diversity program which is intended to increase cultural diversity in the workplace. Most of these programs represent a sincere effort to improve corporate culture, many of them are nothing more than a public relations ploy to deflect past controversies or bolster a company’s image as a "good corporate citizen".

The other factor that affects effective management of cultural diversity is affirmative action. While these programs typically achieve their intended goals, there is a common misconception that they create a quota system that results in the hiring of unqualified minorities over qualified non-minorities hence greatly influencing management of cultural diversity.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

Most of the respondents were not willing to give some information they perceived confidential for the fear of falling victims of harassment from the management. To counter the respondents fear the study assure the respondents that the information provided will be of strict confidence and will be used for study purposes only.

5.3 Conclusion

From the responses obtained from the study, it can be concluded that different cultural groups have different values, styles, and personalities, each of which may have a substantial effect on the way they do business.
Due to the impressive performance of General motors company, it can also be concluded that diverse management styles achieve the same results as traditional methods, but cultural diversity in the workplace can also help improve the company's competitive position in the marketplace.

The study also concludes that diverse groups of people can generate more creative ideas and contribute to a better organization to work for since diversity goes beyond skin color and nationality. Other things considered are are education, professional background, linguistic background and even the job role they are in.

Cultural competences of staff, defined as adaptability to different cultures and intercultural communication skills, are needed to improve the goals of the organization. Managing diversity in a company require change management on an organizational level. The organization needs to use a diversity of human resources to meet the goal of giving better services.

5.4 Recommendations

In order to ensure that the respondents are happy satisfied in the work place and feel more satisfied with their appraisal systems available at GMC, they should be given a chance to talk freely and discuss their performance as this will ensure that such employees will be better able to meet future performance goals.

Being a multi cultural company, the management should avoid "destructive criticism" - which is vague, ill-informed, and unfair or harshly presented as this will lead to problems such as anger, resentment, tension and workplace conflict, as well as increased resistance to improvement, denial of problems, and poorer performance. On the other hand employees should recognize that negative appraisal feedback is provided with a constructive intention. Employees who are less anxious about criticism are more likely to find it useful, when they believe that the appraiser's intentions are helpful and constructive.

The company should set specific goals as goals can stimulate employee effort, focus attention, increase persistence, and encourage employees to find new and better ways to work.
The management of general motors company should create a balance of respect and understanding in the workplace to have happy and optimally productive workers. In addition, it is important that they should ensure that their employees are aware of the importance of respecting diversity when dealing with their clients.

The company management need to go above and beyond their comfort level to develop their knowledge about cultural difference and a sensitivity to diversity issues. The management should also address prejudice in themselves and their employees by examining their prejudgments, which are usually based on cultural values, stereotypes and life experiences.

In order to create working environment that is based on respect, appreciation and acceptance, staff and management at General motors company should do more than just tolerating people from different background. They need to be welcomed and give them a sense of belonging. Focus on the positives of each individual. The management also needs to let everyone know they are valued. A good way is to involve them in projects, rather than waiting for them to ask.

5.5 Suggestion For Further Research

Since managing diversity focuses on maximizing the ability of all employees to contribute to organizational goals and Affirmative action focuses on specific groups because of historical discrimination, further research should be conducted to correlate the two.

Further research should be done to ascertain the consequences of ignoring diversity issues focusing on variables such as time, money, and efficiency, unhealthy tensions; loss of productivity because of increased conflict and the inability to attract and retain talented staff.

Further research can be done on the organizational changes to be made to meet the needs of a diverse workforce as well as to maximize the potential of all workers.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Respondent,

RE: RESEARCH STUDY

My name is SAMMY MOTANYA. I Am a Masters student at the University of Nairobi. I am presently carrying out a study on the topic ‘MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AT GENERAL MOTORS EAST AFRICA LTD

As part of this exercise I would be grateful if could spare fifteen minutes of your time to respond to the questions attached herein. Please be assured that the response from this survey will be treated with utmost confidentiality and be used for academic purposes only.

Thanking you in advance for taking the time to participate in this study

Yours Sincerely,

Sammy Motanya
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR MANAGEMENT

1. What techniques do you use to motivate staff? Give a recent example, with the results.
2. Have you ever had to deal with a difficult staffing problem? If so, what was the problem, how did you go about resolving it and what was the outcome?
3. How do you keep your employees informed of what is going on in the organisation? How frequently do you do this? What do you do in preparation?
4. What recent problems have you had in which you included people from different cultural backgrounds in arriving at solutions or approaches? What approach did you take to get them to accomplish the task?
5. It is often difficult to sell new ideas to staff who often feel threatened by the idea of change. How do you personally handle change and how do you help your staff to adjust?
6. What procedures do you use for evaluation of staff performance?
7. There are times when we are all faced with implementing a policy decision, which might lie outside our personal comfort levels or might be in conflict with our values. Please describe a time when this has happened to you, how did you handle it and what, with hindsight, would you do differently?
8. It seems there is a great deal of difference between working for people from different cultural backgrounds and working with them. Can you tell us about those differences? Did they present problems for you? How did you overcome these problems?
9. Tell us about some situations in which you have had to adjust quickly to changes in organisational priorities? What was the impact of the change on you?
10. Describe a situation in which your initial attempts to gain someone’s support or cooperation failed. Did you try again? What approach did you use the second time?
11. When do you think it is best to communicate in writing? When do you think it and when do you handle it face-to-face?
12. Give an example of how you carefully consider your audience prior to communicating with them. What factors influence your communication?