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Author(s)	安西, 潔
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Description	Supervisor: 寺本 義也, 知識科学研究科, 修士

Managing Cultural Diversity through Multicultural Team; A Case Study of Foreign-affiliated firms in Japan

Kiyoshi Anzai

School of Knowledge Science,
Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology
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It is certain that the 21st Century will be the time of globalization. Especially the company, which asked for speed and efficiency, is remarkable. Then the opportunity is going to increase where the employees who had the different cultural background get along with. The global company is faced with actuality, that is, friction, misunderstanding and so on.

In the field of international management, managing cultural diversity has been a popular subject within human resource management particular. In the argument in recent years, the subject about cultural diversity has been focused to observe positive effect. Moran and Harris(1981) describe that cultural diversity is able to use for problem solving and manage its influence by using the concept of cultural synergy. Moreover, Adler(1991) describes utilizing cultural diversity as resource for a design and development of either organization or group, and Yasumuro(1992) also supporting that that utilizing the cultural synergy effectively carries out the growth of company. Indeed, cultural diversity would cause not only the team member's attitude, but also the way teams are managed.

The purpose of the study were to carry out the factor of success in the management of cultural diversity focusing on the knowledge which include an idea, alternative thinking and problem solving is created by managing the cultural diversity. Cox(1996) saw diversity as "a mixture of people with different group identities within the same social system" and I agree with that idea.

Originalities and Merits of the study is the optimistic view of cultural diversity and showed new concept.

In order to analyze the process in which cultural diversity produce performance as a team, the framework was shown considering interaction, visioning and learning processes in a multicultural team. The goal is to maximize the potential benefits of diversity while minimizing the potential drawbacks (Cox, 1991).

Case Study was conducted by the foreign-affiliated companies that develop emerging business in Japan and belong to the different industries each other. Also the rate of foreign worker is much higher among those companies. The company like General Motors, Lucent Technologies and Goldman Sachs were chosen for this case study because these companies have multicultural team that has two or more different cultural background. To see the process of multicultural management, case study was focused on the Service Parts Division in General Motors, Bell Lab in Lucent Technologies and Merchant Banking Division in Goldman Sachs. In order to have insights of these teams, interviews were conducted so that the improvements advanced by cultural diversity in management, and the approach that would promote and develop the benefits.

Result of analysis support the hypothesis that it is possible to raise effective performance by managing multicultural team, and also that performance comes from the vision sharing, interaction and learning processes by connected each other. The result suggests that different approach to manage cultural diversity in three companies have clear characteristics by each industry. Results also show when cultural diversity was managed in a team, it has influenced with corporate culture as an external factor and multicultural manager as an internal factor. In the successful company, managers see diversity as a tool for their team.

In addition, the difference between the types of industry such as a car, finance and technology-based service cause the efficiency and merit of diversity.

From that result, a concept called creative collaboration team was shown, and the indicator turned to formation of the team that utilized cultural diversity in the multicultural team.

The results suggest that to clear carry out the linkage of processes, knowledge creating by Nonaka (1991) irrelevant to the conversion from tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge needs to be examined in a team level.