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Creating the global learning organization (GLO)

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Abstract

Creating the Global Learning Organization is an action research model to assist US-based corporations in creating an organizational culture that is globally inclusive in theory and practice at all levels. It is based on the principles of organization development (including learning organizations), human resource management, and change theory to move the corporation from an ethnocentric to a geocentric corporate worldview in all its business and people practices, policies, procedures, and technologies. The model is envisioned as a viable and ethical approach to the challenges of globalization.

There are a number of challenges to the implementation of the model, including the difficulties in dealing with the ambiguities of a process that is not concrete and fully specified. Further, a truly global model will be applicable across cultures. There is no existing evidence of the application of the model in cultural contexts other than the US. As a result, in addition to exploring some human resource development implications of the model, the article also suggests several areas for future research. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

With the fast-paced global changes facing the corporate sector and increased competition in the marketplace, globalization and diversity issues are ever more crucial to the survival and success of business organizations. Many US businesses are just beginning to understand the importance of these global challenges. However, few have truly embraced globalization to the extent of creating a corporate-wide culture that is globally inclusive in practice and theory at all levels.

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2. Problem statement

Only 43% of service companies responding to a survey conducted by A. T. Kearney Executive Search indicated that they have a formal globalization/diversity process in place, while 32% indicated that they had no immediate plans to initiate such a process (Jarvis, 1997). The roots of corporate culture are so deeply embedded in many US-based companies that promoting change on global issues is difficult and often resented or challenged by well-meaning employees.

The business research question is, How does a US-based business create an organizational culture that is globally inclusive in theory and practice at all levels? One of the greatest challenges for US transnational corporations is shifting a long-time corporate paradigm from an ethnocentric worldview to a geocentric one (Heenan & Perlmutter, 1979) (see Fig. 1).

3. Global learning organization

Lodge (1995) described globalization as a process that is both technological and human. Global information and communication foster the linkage of global agents—multinational corporations—while the globalization process is pulled by customer desires and pushed by talented corporate managers with global managing skills.

Friedman (2000) provided this definition:

Globalization...is the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before—in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before, and in a way that is enabling the world to reach into individuals, corporations and nation-states farther, faster, deeper, cheaper than ever before. (p. 9)

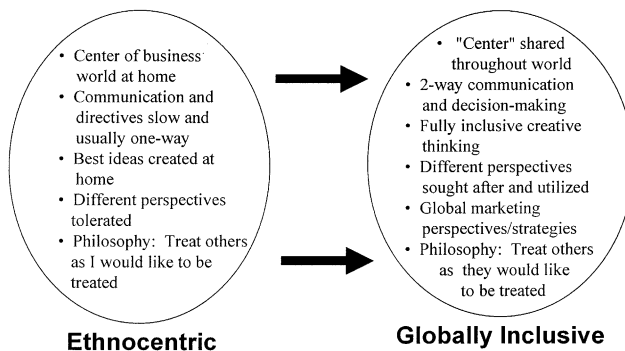


Fig. 1. Corporate world view.

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