INCLUSIVE TRAINING AT WORKPLACE THROUGH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Information technology plays an important role in the training process. It plays an important role in the day to day life of the employee. At present IT is the driving force behind each and everything. In case of training IT has replaced the traditional way of training. Inclusive training tries to address the individual training as per the requirement of the employees. Through this paper the authors have tried to understand the concept and creation of workplace training. In this regard secondary data has been collected and the objective is to understand the concept of inclusive training and the importance of information technology in this direction.

Key words- training, inclusive training, employee, information technology

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1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Employee training is one of the core areas of organizations, which help to achieve organizational sustainability. A trained manpower is always the need of the hour. Human resources are an essential part of the organization and they are often termed as the persons who have creative abilities, significant knowledge about the work that they are supposed to do and should have adequate skills to handle an unforeseen event, which may affect the organizational productivity. Thus, there is a genuine need for manpower. With the increasing development in information technology and machine based production activities, the role of employees is also
becoming more and more complex. The changing nature of business environment also makes the work more demanding. Today most of the organizations are working in a dynamic environment where competition among the players is significantly high. Organizations need to follow stipulated norms to do the business in any country. Environmental analysis often gives them the idea about market conditions and consumer buying behaviour. It is the demand of the consumers and market conditions which forces the organizations to provide value added products and services best suitable in a specific market conditions. This has raised the demand for skilled manpower which most of the organizations are looking for. If we look at the labour demand and supply then it can be seen that ample supply is there so is the demand for manpower. Therefore, employment is not a problem. The real problem lies with the employability. Manpower availability is not skilled enough which can be absorbed in the existing workforce. On the other hand, existing labour force also needs continuous upgradation due to the change in business dynamics as well as changing technology. This is the main reason, which describes the need of effective employee training in the organization.

Effective training helps to improve the morale of the employees as well as improves the productivity. It also increases the organizational commitment and this helps the organization to retain the talented employees. It is a big challenge for most of the organizations to retain the employees who have requisite skills. Often rival organizations attract best talents in the industry, which indirectly affects the growing need of the skilled manpower. The company that lost the employees also lost the cost incurred to develop and train the employees. Effective training creates an environment where employees feel that organizations are investing for the betterment of the manpower, this helps to create a long-term impact on the organizational growth, and employee commitment towards organizational development will increase. On the contrary if the employees have a belief that organization is not very much willing to invest for manpower development in the form of training then this may create a negative feeling towards the place of work and they may look for other opportunities.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
- To understand the concept of inclusive training.
- To study the impact of inclusive workplace through Information Technology

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY
The present study is based on secondary data.

3.1. Concept of Inclusive Training at Workplace
The concept of inclusive training at workplace is relatively new in countries like India. Traditional training method always plays an important role to improve the performance of the workers. It is understood that there is a genuine requirement to implement the workforce training in most of the organization due to changing business environment. Workers also need to improve the skills, as it will affect the productivity in the end. However, the existing system of workforce training is not sufficient to fulfill the market demand. Today market is more dynamic so are the customers. To meet the expectations, it is important to make necessary changes in the organizational policies as well as its workforce training. Creation of inclusive workplace is one small step that is being realized by most of the organizations in the world. Inclusive training is part of that process. Before implementing inclusive training programmes there is a genuine need to understand whether the organization is equipped enough to adopt the changes that they are willing to make to train their employees. Therefore, before going into the
details of inclusive training programme it is important to understand the concept of inclusive workplace.

What is inclusive workplace? This is a genuine question, which needs to be addressed at the beginning. According to Equity & Human Rights Commission (1) “An environment where everyone is treated as with dignity and respect, where the talents and skills of different groups are valued and where productivity and customer service improves because the workforce is happier, more motivated.” This definition is clear enough to understand the meaning of inclusive workplace. In one of his work Miller (2) defined inclusion as the process through which every employee are allowed to participate in every single decision making process and contribute in the organizational development. Holvino, Ferdman, and Merrill-Sands (3) defined inclusion as active participation of both group and individual members with equality. Roberson (4) mentioned that inclusion is removal of all the obstacles, which the employees are facing in their day-to-day organizational activities.

Most of the new age organizations understand the importance of inclusive workplace and the value that they are supposed to get from this diverse workforce. There are certain benefits that the organization is getting by promoting workforce inclusion concept. Among the major benefits that the organization is getting is that it is able to attract new talent, retain productive and committed staff, creation of larger customer base that are not familiar with the company or its products and is able to create a new work culture, which can accommodate employees and customers of diverse groups. Most of the organizations are having problem of attracting and retaining talents in the workforce. If the work is not challenging enough or it suffers from lack of innovation, then there is a chance that some of the employees may look for better options. If the workplace is inclusive, then employees from diverse background can share their knowledge and expertise. Since, they are coming from diverse socio economic background this will also help to understand the consumer market. This strategy becomes helpful for multinational companies when they are operating in different countries. Understanding local demand or localization of global business is an important criterion to remain competitive in the market. If the employees of diverse background have the understanding and knowledge about the market, then it becomes much easier to understand the local market and adapt the local market conditions.

3.2. The impact of inclusive workplace through Information Technology

Computer-based or e-learning trainings are new age methodology. Computer-based training (CBT) encompasses any type of training that takes place on a computer. E-learning training is hosted online via a website or an app. These digital trainings displaying visual content on screen. These include resources like videos and reading material to facilitate the training at workplace. Modern employers adopt the above style of training. Many American companies offer same kind of online training as a professional development tool. Many companies choose CBT or e-learning courses. Quick learners who are more easily bored can move through the training methodology more rapidly. Many companies choose to leverage existing e-learning platforms to train their employees. It also reduces the costs associated with designing a customized curriculum and building a web or software tool for the employees. Over the past few years, video has emerged as a game-changing media for training process. Through animation and simulation through computer generated data bases, employees can be trained more effectively as it is best for explaining complex topics that don’t have an easily-recorded visual. Through Information Technology training can be more effective and it helps to improve the morale of the employees as well as improves the productivity. It also increases the organizational commitment and this helps the organization to retain the talented employees.
It is a common phenomenon that most of the younger workforce are always trying to switch jobs. A recent Deloitte report suggests that around 32% of the executives believe that inclusion strategy is important to retain best talent of the industry and 69% of the executives agreed with the fact that diversity and inclusion are important part of organizational growth. Most of the organizations are spending billions of dollars for employee training. They often ignored the diversity in management policy. These often increase the investment on employee training and development. It is not that the organizations are not investing for employee development but the method is not working as it was used to. Unless and until the real problem is identified the existing problem will increase the problems related to employee retention. They result also indicates that the present workforce are more aware about inclusive work culture and its importance. The diagrammatic representation of the result can give us the hint about the changing nature of employee behavior.

Figure 1.1 Importance of Inclusion

Source: Unleashing the power of inclusion | Attracting and engaging the evolving workforce, Deloitte Report, 2017, pp 7

The survey categorized three groups of employees, viz. millennials, Gen – X and Boomers. Almost all the three groups of employees have more preference for organizations with inclusive work culture. Approximately 80% of the respondents believe that inclusion is an important part of the organization and they would like to go for those organizations where inclusion policy is already implemented. Around 39% of the respondents would like to shift their job for a better inclusive organization and 23% already left the job. This is an indication, which shows that if the culture is not incorporated then most of the organization will lose their employees simply because of this reason no matter whatever other facilities are being offered to them. In the same study the survey result also indicates that the work environment, a work environment that provides a sense of purpose and work flexibility are the three important criteria while opting for any organization. However, this study was conducted in USA, but it can be generalized in other parts of the world where organizations are facing more or less similar types of problems related to their workforce.

However, it is not the inclusive workplace, which can solve the employee related problem, as workforce diversity is another area, which needs to give attention. Generally, the term
diversity refers to composition of workforce (8) The employees can be grouped under various categories. Vohra & Chari (9) grouped the employees under two categories, viz. observable group and non-observable group. Observable variables are like age, gender, race, ethnicity and non-observable variables are like education, income, socio economic status, standard of living etc. The need for workforce diversity is to some extent linking to creation of inclusive workplace. Nair and Vohra(10) mentioned that traditionally the meaning of diversity was confined to gender and skin color of the people but over the years it has started incorporating certain demographic forms such as religion, race etc. Not only that it was also started including other invisible form like educational background, functional specialties, working style, personality traits as well.(11) If the workforce is a mixture of different communities, race, gender and may come from different socio economic background, then it will be bound to create difference of opinion. This will create cultural gaps in the organization itself. Traditionally every group would like to maintain their own group norms and identity. The difference in mindset should be abolished and a conducive working environment needs to be created to reduce the cultural gaps. If we go by the definition of inclusive workforce as given by various authors, then it can be seen that it has the ability to manage diverse workforce by implementing the inclusive work culture. Therefore, a combination of diverse and inclusive organization should be created to handle the new generation workforce and to retain the best talent in the industry.

3.3. Creation of Inclusive Workplace

Creation of inclusive workplace is not that easy as it is described in most of the literatures. Merely adopting certain norms, which satisfy the gender equity, equal wage, equal rights to all employees etc. are not sufficient to create or maintain an inclusive workplace.(12) Workers who are adaptive have full understanding about the inclusive workplace, so there is a need to have extra bit of attention while implementing a new business strategy beneficial for the employees. Vohra and Chari (13) mentioned that creation of some affinity group within the organization might prove to be giving positive result towards creation of inclusive workplace. These groups will help to create an atmosphere for the employees joined recently. The groups may be a combination of top leaders to members of the representative groups. Research also focused on organizational climate as the main factor responsible for successful implementation of inclusive workplace.(14) If the organizational climate is favourable and diverse then employees are able to share the information important for the growth of the organization(15)

Leadership style is vital for inclusive workplace.(16)(17) If the leaders are going to encourage people in their job and encourage open door policy only then they are going to open up and speak both positive as well as negative things related to jobs. Diverse workforce will get the much-needed support for doing the work in his or her own style. It is the responsibility of the top management to judge the potential between the existing workforce and how they can be motivated to do the job allotted to them. The understanding about the job and organizational climate also greatly influence the work culture. It is not possible for one employee to change the culture of the organization on his or her own. If at all, any changes are to be made it should be through the top management while keeping the employees in the loop. Country wise, leadership style may vary. Due to different socio economic upbringing of the workforce, their way of doing a particular job may vary. Since, consumer sentiment, values, attachment with the product or company varies; these factors should be taken into consideration while making any strategic changes in the workforce or work style.

Though diversity and inclusion are important part of the organization, still it is not well developed in most of the developing countries like India (18) In some of the research, a critical
incidence method was applied to find the categories, which were needed for an inclusive organization (19) These are shown in the table below:

Table 1.2. Factors Important for Inclusive workforce (19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Self – Awareness*</td>
<td>Active Listening*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of Differences</td>
<td>Building Healthy Coalitions</td>
<td>Empathy*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to New Ideas</td>
<td>Awareness of Relevant Laws</td>
<td>Self – Monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Macro – View point</td>
<td>Appropriate Communication</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Tact</td>
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<td>Ability to Relate</td>
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<td>Persuasion</td>
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These are the factors, which describes the requirement from the perspective of top, middle and lower level employees for effective implementation of inclusive workplace. Some of the factors like, self – awareness, active listening and empathy are important irrespective of the employee groups. Therefore, any organization while going for inclusive work culture for its diverse workforce, these should be in line with these factors so that the real benefit can be achieved in the end.

4. CONCLUSION

The concept of Inclusive training needs to be introduced in different kind of organization. The Information and Technology plays a vital role in this regard. Without using Information technology the changing demand of manpower cannot be met. The new skill sets will definitely address the change in the marketing environment as well. Training through information technology will help to improve competency level of employees and subsequently will help the organizations to do lucrative business. Technology will help to bring dynamic changes among the employees’ performance which will lead to create a balancing environment and sustainability. To achieve the goal through information technology in inclusive training, it requires an effort and positive attitude from both Management and its employees.

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