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MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURALISM PHILOSOPHY AS A STRATEGIC TOOL FOR ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the phenomenon of globalization, internationalization, migration and the Fourth Industrial Revolution Era require cooperation and partnerships with the diverse population of the world for the organization to survive. Multilingual and multiculturalism philosophy ensures that organizations gain positions of enduring superiority over competitors. International trade depends on the organization's effective communication skills and how it embraces cultures across the globe. Business environments are dynamic, consumers mobile in search of opportunities and better livelihoods and thus in this global village, investment numerous languages implies embracing all types customer. The philosophy must be fused into business policy as a well of embodying the universalism and international outlook. Organizations such as passenger airlines, road passenger transport, rail passenger and hotels require employees who are able to converse in numerous languages with a clear understanding of other people's way of life. Multilingual and multiculturalism philosophy are a key to global peace, and organizational success story. This was a case study of passenger transport organizations in Zimbabwe, whose target population was three hundred companies. A sample size of one hundred was randomly selected for representativeness. Both qualitative and quantitative instrumentation were used. The study found out that 90% of the respondents had no employees who were able to speak more than one other foreign languages other than English and their vernacular. This affected contract agreements with other international companies and had to rely on hired interpreters or translators who charged exorbitant fees which affected their profit margins.

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The study recommends capacity building of all employees for them to embrace new business phenomena.

Keywords: Multilingual and multiculturalism, Globalization, Internationalization, Organizational competitiveness

INTRODUCTION

This paper argues that the phenomenon of globalization, internationalization, migration and the Fourth Industrial Revolution Era require cooperation and partnerships with the diverse population of the world for the organization to survive. Multilingual and multiculturalism philosophy ensures that organizations gain positions of enduring superiority over competitors. International trade depends on the organization's effective communication skills and how it embraces cultures across the globe. Formal passenger transport in Zimbabwe has been in existence for several decades now and the mobility index has been slowly rising for captive or essential journeys that are to be made such as going to school or work; journeys of conventional necessity, e.g. visiting relatives or pilgrimages, and in some cases optional trips. The reasons to embark on all these are determined by a number of factors such as income, language, previous experience, safety, protection and security, gender, group size, access to technology and accessibility to destination points. The country is a hub of numerous economic and tourist attraction sites with so many visitors coming in for leisure activities. Besides creating employment, generating revenue for the government and the transport operator themselves, passenger transport provides place utility in terms of education, healthcare, shopping, pilgrimages, social visits, tourism and leisure. Many nationalities resident inside the country or from other countries may also desire to access places of interest and would expect a caring organization that values multilingualism and multiculturalism values so that they might feel at home.

The Objective of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine if the multilingualism and multiculturalism philosophy is in existence in passenger transport in Zimbabwe and how that affects organizational competitiveness. The following form specific objectives of this study:

- i. To establish the benefits of adopting a multilingualism and multiculturalism philosophy in a passenger transport entity.

- ii. To establish the relationship between multilingualism and multiculturalism philosophy and organizational effectiveness.
- iii. To explore how passenger transport can adopt and leverage on the multilingualism and multiculturalism philosophy to gain competitive edge in business.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Business environments are dynamic, consumers mobile in search of opportunities and better livelihoods and thus in this global village, investment numerous languages implies embracing all types customer. The philosophy must be fused into business policy as a well of embodying the universalism and international outlook. Organizations such as passenger airlines, road passenger transport, rail passenger and hotels require employees who are able to converse in numerous languages with a clear understanding of other people's way of life. Multilingual and multiculturalism philosophy are a key to global peace, and organizational success story.

1.1 Globalization and Internationalization

Yeates (2001), cited in Yalcin (2018:1), defines globalization as an "extensive network of economic, cultural, social and political interconnections and processes which goes beyond national boundaries". This integrative process is not a new thing development as such, but rather a gradual human interactive process through all stages of human development as argued by Hebron and Stack (2013) that globalization is "the further development of the process initiated over many centuries, reflected in the trade expansion, exploration, colonization and technological advancement. Contacts among states, societies and people from Stone Age till now have knitted the world in the shape of interdependent patterns which attenuated and intensified overtime". The simplistic assumption of globalization is that the entire globe has been reduced geographically into a "single market" with some form of converge in other areas but still countries maintaining their nationalities, boundaries, languages, cultures and values which make make them distinct from each other. As applied in this study, internationalization entails assimilation of best practice management in search of quality, uniformity in product or service development and delivery, embracing global values that trigger a much needed trade-off in balancing cost, service levels and value for money for customers. The implication of internationalization is that there out to be planning for improvement

always and designing of strategies that provide a wholesome approach to embracing global diversity and aspirations of travellers across the globe. In movement of people, operators are required to understand the uniqueness of individual or group travellers in their strategy formulation with the intent to factor in demographic and social changes, understand the influence of geography and market segmentation within and across national boundaries. Thus in order to foster a high mobility index in movement of people the concept of multiculturalism and multilingualism have to be well understood in order to competitive in business education, planning and execution of strategy. Globalization and internationalization remind strategic thinkers and planners in passenger transport to encompass universal principles of rights and liabilities of travellers across the globe in their operations for uniformity of systems and treating all travellers the same.

1.2 Multilingual and Multiculturalism

Aronin (2018:8) posit that, "multilingualism is an inherent human trait. It denotes both the ability of humans to use three and more languages, and social situations where such capacity is utilized. The use of multiple languages accompanying human activities is behaviour unique to humans...Current multilingualism is a global phenomenon, intermixed within the main globalization processes, and plays a central role in maintaining and advancing contemporary civilization". In another study, The European Commission (2007:6) define multilingualism as the "abilities of societies, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives". The phenomenon, is characterized by distinct features such as fluidity, complexity, extreme diversity, mobility of migrants (Li and Moyer, 2008). Cenoz,(2013:4) points out that several "factors have contributed to the current visibility of multiculturalism such as globalization, transnational mobility and the spread of new technologies". A point to note from the above discussion is that multilingualism leads to effective communication and spirituality in noting other people's cultures, values and beliefs which increase the chances of any business, social, technological or political relationships. Passenger transport is nested in the above relationships and its overall success depends on whether employees a versatile in switching to different languages for effective communication with different nationalities who might physical request for information, or who might send their specific needs in their mother languages via the internet. It may be an issue of transiting via another nationality's territory, there is

need for communication to understand each other or pass on useful information such fares structures, travel timetables and service levels.

Even though wars are still raging on the academic corridors on the definition of multiculturalism, this study adopts two distinct definitions to explore the main research area. This first one is by The Canadian Heritage Leaflet, (2008), cited in Moawad and El Shoura, (2017:3), which states that multiculturalism is "the belief that all citizens are equal. Cultural differences make a large contribution to unity and multiculturalism celebrates that contribution. Multiculturalism also ensures that all citizens can maintain their identities, take pride in their ancestry, and have a sense of belonging". The second definition is by Rosado (1997), who defines multiculturalism as "a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their sociocultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society". The above two definitions portray a clear understanding that the idea of multiculturalism is more to do with bridging diverse cultures and peoples so as to make them enjoy the same privileges or opportunities in society. It implies that there is need to respect minority or ethnic groups in society so that they do not lose their identity, language, cultures, beliefs and value systems in a much tolerant and accommodative manner. This helps in integrating business values and policies for members of society. Grisheava (2012:920) summarizes this as follows: "Multiculturalism as a whole presumes that individuals and groups are entirely incorporated into society without neither losing their national identity nor being restricted in their rights. Multiculturalism is a conceptual foundation of non-conflict coexistence of multiple heterogeneous cultural groups in one environment. As a result, a growing diversity leads to outlining multicultural values, such as an idea of mutual commitment and freedom of choice".

Thus, globally, internationalization of migration has entailed relocation of people to different parts of the world either driven by the desire for greener pastures or voluntarily seeking new climates or places to temporarily or permanently reside in order to enjoy or live their lives. Some may be pushed by wars to seek refuge in other parts of the world, hence there is movement to some space which influences the need for being multilingual and at the same time with a strong orientation in multiculturalism.

1.3 Multilingual, Multiculturalism and Organizational Competitiveness.

Migration and The Fourth Industrial Revolution Era (4IR) have created a global landscape that is characterized high traffic in terms of passenger movements across the globe and flow of big data via the internet or various digital technologies platforms. Human movements can be in solitary or group form, thereby bearing a need to maintain a distinct culture and language which should be appreciated across all nationalities. At the same time, being able to surf through high volumes of big data created by 4IR, gives an organization some competitive edge in defining the sort business or products or services or market it wants to serve. According to Chiweshe, (2019:2), the 4IR "describes a fusion of advances in simulated intelligence or AI, automation, the Internet of Things, 3D printing, genetic engineering, quantum computing and other technologies" and these bring in new capabilities for people in terms of accessing information and their behaviour as well as increased productivity of goods and services. As people migrate, they interface with new technologies, new ways of doing things which in a way affect their relationship with an organization as they can comparatively analyse whether the transport operator's values uphold who they are or it is a scenario of just wanting money from them. Claude (2018:3), citing several other scholars, maintains that organization competitiveness refers to "its ability to create more economic value than other competing firms". The concept covers an array of competencies such as ability to design, produce and strategically market its products or services in a dynamic, flexible and versatile way. Research and innovation are two key pillars in organizational competitiveness. Knowledge generation and use which emanate from application of multilingualism and multiculturalism philosophy help to design services in accordance with the specific needs of a particular group of people in terms of quality, language, cultural and religious relevance. Through careful study of human experience, it is possible for the organization to redefine its leadership value, market orientation, customer strategy, financial resources and human capital in order to come up with diversified strategies to embrace all customers across all nationalities so as to maximize on profits. Also central to organizational competitiveness is a set of communication skills that transcend the ordinary communication for the capturing of the exact message and meaning from all peoples as this makes a strong relationship with the business world a reality.

METHODOLOGY

This was a case study of road passenger transport organizations in Zimbabwe, whose target population was three hundred companies. A sample size of one hundred was randomly selected for representativeness using the surveysystem.com, with a Confidence level of 95% and Confidence Level of 8.02. The researchers generated a questionnaire instrument that was tested through Cronbach's Alpha Test for representativeness. Ninety questionnaires were emailed to respondents and seventy-one were responded to. Out of the ten scheduled telephonic interviews, only six were conducted after reaching saturation point. The reason for using the two strategies for data collection was for triangulation that is achieved by engaging qualitative techniques to gain deeper understanding of the phenomenon understudy from human experiences as well as descriptive numerical empirical evidence. through a quantitative instrumentation to eliminate biases in favour of objectivity. Response rate was 77%, making it a successful project. Data was analyzed using the tables and verbatim approaches based on the threes study objectives identified earlier on.

2.1 Results and Discussions

Response rate by Gender

Table 1 below shows response rate by Gender

Aspect	Number of Respondents	Percentage%
Female	28	36.36
Male	49	63.64
Total	77	100%

The above descriptive statistics shows that the study was gender sensitive as both female and male subjects participated in the study thereby making it possible for generalizability of the findings to other scenarios and also helping to come up with gender sensitive policies in society. Multilingualism and multiculturalism survive in a society that respects both women and men, thereby promoting objective interactions and understanding of the needs of each ethnic individual or group or nationality. That also help in building trust and confidence in policy and systems that govern the operations of a business.

2.2 Benefits of adopting a Multilingualism and Multiculturalism Philosophy in Road Passenger Transport

The following Table 2 shows the perceived benefits of a multilingualism and multiculturalism philosophy in road passenger transport.

Aspect	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Less conflict between organization and travellers	13	16.88
Easier to do business within and across borders	25	32.47
Promotes a higher degree of tolerance among travellers as they appreciate other people's beliefs and values	37	48.05
Critical in reducing terrorism and cyber-security threats	2	2.59
Total	77	100%

The above Table summarizes what respondents felt were the benefits of multilingualism and multiculturalism in passenger transport. Passengers are human beings with their own unique identity and requires a cosmopolitan element to handle travellers' needs. Thus a cosmopolitan employee team has some experiences of people and things from different parts of the world, hence is able to greet, communicate with or give instructions to whoever and whenever is necessary without offending them.

Interview 1 echoed the same sentiments by saying that: *multilingualism and multiculturalism creates a mind that acknowledges diversity of human races across the world with the intent to build an international outlook that embraces the value systems of other people.*

It follows then that there is no doubt that multilingualism and multiculturalism philosophy has benefits if it leads to integrating business policies and systems with the overall needs of the travellers using buses, kombis and taxis or somewhat hired facilities.

2.3 Multilingualism and multiculturalism philosophy and organizational effectiveness.

The Table 3 below shows views of respondents on the above theme:

Aspect	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Increased market share	37	48.05
Gives Opportunities for diversification of business portfolios	9	11.69
Better understanding of market needs	31	40.26
Total	77	100%

In addition to the views raised above on how multilingualism and multiculturalism enhance organizational competitiveness, Interview 3 pointed out that : *the two help in coming up with innovations, strategies and technologies that exactly make the travellers safe through well crafted systems. It also helps in having sound travellers' insurance schemes and a security system that is globally accepted by all travellers. This makes the organization more competitive on the listed companies that provide the passenger services. Also that also helps in meal planning for your travellers always. However, almost over 90% of our employees just speak either Shona/Ndebele and English, few have other foreign languages. This creates challenges in our business.*

2.4 Adopting and leveraging on the multilingualism and multiculturalism philosophy to gain competitive edge in business.

Interviewee 5 has this to say: *When it comes to multilingualism and multiculturalism adoption, the first responsibility of the company is that of imparting the needed education through training and development programs. A budget for training and development must be in place. The second duty is to completely recruit employees with the right attitude followed by adoption of state of the art technologies. Lastly language teaching for all employees to promote a cross-cultural philosophy.*

Such measures as highlighted above help in creating a flexible organization which values competitiveness in this dynamic business environment.

Interviewee 6 also indicated that: *As much as possible, multilingualism and multiculturalism form the basis for a sound business culture that is able to forge strategic partnerships and alliances with other entities across the globe. It also helps in training and development to meet the future needs of the organization, determine future demand, succession planning, team building and innovation for competitiveness.*

This points to the need to meet customer needs through embracing human diversity in business as well as technological requirements.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found out that 90% of the respondents had no employees who were able to speak more than one other foreign languages other than English and their vernacular. This affected contract agreements with other international companies and had to rely on hired interpreters or translators who charged exorbitant fees which affected their profit margins.

Recommendations

The study recommends capacity building of all employees for them to embrace new business phenomena.

Area for further Research

There is need to establish the cost implications of not adopting a multilingualism and Multiculturalism philosophy in a business.

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