

Chapter 15

Business Education across Regions: The Case of the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

The competences (knowledge, skills, and values) required to work in different regions of the world are different to a greater extent. The cases of failures of expatriate managers in foreign assignments and corporate alliances are found in abundance in the existing literature on international business and management. This demands that the business schools offer educational programs that are regionally focused and culturally inclusive. Even though such student-centered and culturally focused programs may cost the institutions in the short term, such strategic actions may be a source of competitive advantage for many of them. In this chapter, the human resource management culture in the Middle East is discussed to exemplify how national and corporate cultures vary from region to region and thus influence the management competences to work in a particular region, nation, or culture.

INTRODUCTION

The tendency of business schools receiving and educating students from diverse cultural background has been increasing steadily during the last several decades. Especially, students from developing nations of the world interested in higher studies (i.e., postgraduate programs, advanced certificate programs) travel to developed nations (Europe, Australia, North America). In recent years, interestingly business schools in developing nations (Latin America, Asia, and Middle

East) have also started receiving students from different regions of the world. This has happened through various forms of collaborative alliances (i.e., international student exchange programs) among business schools. The need for and the purpose of such alliances varies from institution to institution. In general, such alliances are needed to attract students, qualified faculty, retrieve external fund from government or other funding agencies and in most cases to meet the demands of national and international accreditation agencies. Although, students' population is diverse in

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-6449-4.ch015

many business schools, nonetheless, it is found that the academic programs offered by these business schools are very much standardized. That is to say graduate profile, pedagogical methods used and competencies to develop are common across the board. Simply put business schools do not take into considerations the peculiar learning styles and habits of its students with diverse cultural background and competences they need to develop in order to be able to function properly in their home country. One has to pay attention to the emerging management studies in Islamic Finance, Islamic Banking, or Islamic MBAs offered by universities in the Middle East. And take advantage of the financial support provided to the foreign students to study in an Islamic country. Middle East is a growing economic and political force and there is a potential that this region will become the next superpower of the world because of its strong physical infrastructure, modern universities, diverse human talents, strong family and social bonds and most importantly because of the binding force of the religion Islam. Business schools from the west are aware of such differences and developments but they definitely should learn and do more to understand the need of evolving global village of diverse in nature and essence.

THE BASICS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Though contemporary theories (i.e. Heathfield, 2014), to explain HRM, include names like human capital management, human talent management and social capital management, however, the conventional term “HRM” still remains dominant in the existing literature on management. HRM has also been looked at as national or international HRM. While national HRM looks a national cultural variables (language, politics, economics, law, society, custom and traditions) when designing strategies, practices, policies and procedures, whereas international HRM consider such vari-

ables in an international context. For example, international HRM considers issues like differences in national cultures while developing training programs for its staff (host national and home national) and expatriate workers. International HRM therefore, is more complex than national HRM. Other terms like international HRM, transnational HRM, global HRM and multinational HRM have also been used interchangeably in the existing literature on management. Regardless of the name or term used, HRM is one of the major functions of management including planning, organization, direction, production, finance, marketing, human resource management, distribution, supplies for example. Human resource management is the key for the success of any organization regardless of its size, origin, nature of business and history etc. HRM is simply about:

- Human resource planning for the future.
- Recruitment and selection process.
- Orientation, training and development programs.
- Incentives and compensation packages.
- Performance evaluation and promotion systems.
- Labor union relationship management approaches.
- Career and life planning.
- Overall organizational development.

Human resource management is also about creating a corporate culture which is people oriented. A corporate culture which considers safety and well-being of employees as fundamental to the organizational development; organizational resources (benefits) should be distributed equally. Employees should remain happy, motivated and feel part of the organization. A proper and effective approach to lead human resources at workplace can enable organizations to achieve their objectives. If the problem of the people is solved than there is no problem in the organization, as the saying goes.

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