How To Manage Cultural Diversity For Organizational Knowledge Sharing

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Abstract

The concepts of international and globalisation of business have increased the importance and involvement of workforce diversity in organizations. Especially after some empirical studies, which proved workforce diversity, being effective for superior organizational performance in terms of acquisition of diversified talents, skills, perspectives and knowledge bases of the culturally heterogeneous employees, the interest of organizations in employing diversified workforce and researchers in understanding the salient features of diversified workforce has increased multi-fold. This is due to a number of complications, problems and issues of cultural diversity to organizational knowledge sharing as being reported by the participants in the studies on knowledge sharing. Hence, there is ample need to suggest the firms how to manage their cultural diversity in order to mitigate its detrimental effects and make it a contributory factor for organizational knowledge sharing. Hence, this article is an effort to suggest the firms how to manage their culturally diversified force especially for fostering knowledge sharing. This is hoped that this research article will help managers and practitioners to manage their workforce diversity well and capitalize on the diverse knowledge resources of their human capital.

Key Words: Knowledge Sharing, Cultural Diversity, Management of Cultural Diversity, Organizational Culture, Trust, Openness to Diversity, Informal Communication Channels and Organizational Management.

Introduction

The slogans in the favour of adopting cultural diversity in work force have been heard over the last two decades. The importance of diversified work force has further increased after the UNESCO's declaration that diversity of culture is as[1] essential for human beings as biological diversity is necessary for nature and that economic development and acceptable moral, intellectual and emotional existence is rooted in cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2009). These kinds of statements posit the view that business firms as well as society can gain in a number of ways from employing culturally diversified employees (e.g. Du Toit & Steyn 2011; Kruger & Johnson 2009; Thomas & Ely, 1996; Cox & Blake, 1991). However, this is highly noticeable that only the presence of the diversified workforce in terms of different colours, languages and appearances is not guaranty of gaining competitive lead, but, actually it is the diversified knowledge, talents, skills and perspectives that lead to enhanced organizational performance. In other words, the possibility of reaping the fruits of cultural diversity; lies in the capability of the firms to actually access and leverage the diverse knowledge resources of their employees and the same lies in the efficient and effective of management of cultural diversity (Lauring, 2009). According to Vecchio and Appelbaum,

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(1995), work-related diversity refers to a workforce "characterized by people with different human qualities who belong to different cultural groups. From the perspective of an individual, diversity means including people who are different from ourselves in age, ethnicity, gender or race" (p. 696). Diversity based research studies show that the organisations that make the most of their diverse knowledge resources and expertise, outperform other firms in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and creativity and customer satisfaction (Lauring & Slemer, 2012; Du Toit & Steyn 2011; Kruger & Johnson 2009; Finestone & Snyman 2005), while the ones which fail to effectively capitalize on diverse expertise of their employees fail to optimize their human capital for their organizational functioning (Boone & Hendriks 2009; Harrison & Klein 2007). However, achieving the benefits of knowledge sharing in a diversified work place is not that easy, due to depth and breadth of diversity in terms of ethnicities, languages, belief systems and work ethics (Du Toit & Steyn 2011; Finestone & Snyman 2005). The true fruits of diversity with respect to knowledge sharing are not generally reaped by majority of organizations due to differences of cultural values, knowledge sharing behaviours, in-group out-group biases and like (Ford & Chan, 2002; Lau, et al., 1998). Existing literature already warns that sharing of knowledge is a challenging task and especially challenging when it is seen from multi-cultural perspective (Hutching & Micalilova, 2004; Edwards, & Kidd, 2003). Cultural dissimilarities and heterogeneous value systems of diversified employees may create confusions, misconceptions, misunderstandings, and apprehensions (Ocholla 2002). Racial variation in terms of ethnicity, cast and colour may create feelings of strangeness and reduce social attachment; (Lauring & Selmer 2012; Lauring, 2009); communication, language and accent differences may create fears and difficulties in interaction (Shachaf, 2008) and demographic characteristics like, age and gender may engender fault lines blocking the interaction (Lau & Murnighan 1998). According to researchers, the variance of thinking styles, communicational modes and knowledge sharing trends of individuals being shaped under their particular cultural identities, impinge the process of knowledge sharing, making it ineffective and full of problems, complications and frustration. That is why, except few cases (e.g., Fong et al., 2013; Lauring & Selmer 2012), existing research studies on the analysis of knowledge sharing in multi-cultural teams produce discouraging findings. Over the last many years, a lot has been written on the interrelated important facets of organizational knowledge sharing in cross-cultural spectrum, but no study so far has been conducted to suggest the firms as to how they should manage their cultural diversity to avoid the negative effects of culturally diversified work-force and to make cultural diversity a helping tool in real sense as it is portrayed in the literature. Hence, this research paper is written in the light of the problems, issues, complications and complaints of the respondents in the research studies analysing the knowledge sharing in multi-cultural work-settings. Therefore, the main objective of this research paper is to suggest some practical recommendations to managers and practitioners regarding the management of cultural diversity in their organizations.

An analysis of the Studies on the Influence of Cultural Diversity on Knowledge Transfer

Keeping in view the increasing emphasis of scholars on the employment of diversified workforce, it creates a feeling that the findings of the studies on the analysis of the effect of workforce diversity would be positive and encouraging. However, regardless of the effect of cultural diversity on the MNCs overall performance, the case is not that simple when it applies to knowledge sharing. A number of research studies have identified cultural diversity as a disturbing and disconcerting element for knowledge sharing. Based on the complaints and problems shared by the respondents in the findings of the studies on the impact of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing, it give the impression as if in the existing literature, the role of workforce diversity has been over-amplified. This is because of the fact that the findings of the cross-cultural research studies on knowledge sharing do not provide such encouraging results as being presented and boasted in the available literature.

For example, Dube & Ngulube, (2012), at the end of their cross-cultural study conducted in South African context commented, "The results from the interviews cast doubt over the perceived benefits of multiculturalism. Instead, they illuminated the ingrained influence of behaviours that were modelled on political and other social persuasions. The plurality of knowledge that tends to benefit organisations did not seem to benefit the multicultural Department of Information Science at all. It is evident that multiculturalism did not act as a catalyst to sharing knowledge as informed by various cultural frameworks. Sharing of knowledge across cultures was very rare as many informants revealed. Staff members tended to share knowledge within their racial groups and with those elements that championed values and behaviours similar to theirs. One informant summed up the situation prevailing in the Department in the following words: You must bear in mind that knowledge sharing is voluntary. How can one be expected to share quality, critical and valuable knowledge with the others dissimilar to one against a current background of scepticism and antagonism" (Dube & Ngulube, 2012, p. 72). Lauring (2009) compiled similar kinds of findings in a multicultural study in a Danish MNC NewPhadk Marketing International, as presented by the researcher, "Despite the many initiatives to create a constructive culturally diverse environment, the department was not overly successful in sharing knowledge. Interaction seemed too fragmented to support much cross-cultural development of knowledge resources. The problem was not lack of knowledge; the problem was knowing where the knowledge was located and bringing it to bear concretely in daily activities" (Lauring, 2009, p.391). Lauring further comments, "While some initiatives were installed to promote intercultural interaction, other forces countered their effect. It could thus be argued that a number of different identities and related discourses competed to influence the working environment, while none of them actually succeeded in changing the dominant practices. Cultural diversity was supported with the aim of internationalizing the department and making knowledge resources more available. However, the local practices regarding family-life with shorter hectic working days hampered close interaction and the actual use of knowledge resources" (Lauring, 2009, p.391).

Peltokorpi (2006), in a multi-cultural study between Nordic managers and Japanese subsidiaries found discouraging influence of cultural issues on knowledge sharing and while discussing the findings of his study commented, "The interviews show firstly, in parallel with a growing body of research, that knowledge sharing in a cross-cultural context is a more complicated process than indicated in discussions that overlook cultural diversity (see e.g., Brown & Duguid, 1991; Nonaka, 1994; Grant, 1996; Tsoukas & Vladimirou, 2001). Instead of assuming cognitive diversity to be the only factor to be taken into account, interviews show, in parallel with previous research, that cultural and linguistic differences influence the act of making knowledge available to others in a cross-cultural context" (Peltokorpi, 2006 p.146). For example, one expatriate narrated the problems while commenting on the trends of knowledge sharing: "Employees are too narrowly focused to see the whole picture. I would say that departments are operating in isolation. They have some competition when we are talking about who is making money [y] we have problems with horizontal interaction" (Peltokorpi, 2006 p.144). Siakask et al (2010) in a study of European cross-cultural project based teams, found numerous problems in knowledge sharing within multi-cultural teams. They explained that cultural diversity created "Misunderstanding between members due to cultural differences, language barriers, lack of trust, arrogant and self-centred staff and inability of people to cooperate and work in teams etc." (Siakask, et al. 2010, p. 385). Sackmann and Friezl (2007) in their study could not find positive impact of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing in their study and they commented, "The data suggest that one of the central issues that may give rise to culturally based problems in knowledge sharing behaviour originates from group identity (P1-P3). The confrontation with experts from other groups shifts salience to the group's boundaries that seem to be questioned and to the intra-group identity that is reinforced by the outside threat. These processes foster in-group knowledge sharing and hinder or even block the exchange of ideas with experts coming from the outside or a different place" (149). They

further noted that the variation of cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, gender, function and national culture creates cultural intricacy, which can negatively affect knowledge transfer. Their findings suggested that the team members' different identities had a significant impact on the team working as they could trigger feelings of adversarial stereotyping (Sackmann & Friezl, 2007). Dulaimi (2007) also found unwelcoming impact of cultural diversity in his study in four construction based joint venture-based organizations in Singapore within Japanese, German and Singaporeans. For example, in the following extract of the study, the frustration of a Singaporean manager resulting from lack of sharing knowledge from their Japanese colleagues is quite visible: "It depends on the area of work, we are doing. We learn to a certain extent. In technical meetings, we propose to them some construction methods; they will say what the difficulty is, and suggest methods to resolve it. When it comes to tunnelling, it is completely chopped up. They will not even tell you the method. They will not disclose. They discuss themselves" (p. 145). Wilkesmann et al (2009) in their cross-cultural study found similar kinds of problems and complications in the sharing of knowledge between Japanese and Germans, due to their cultural differences. They commented that a lot of frustration was reported by Germans owing to the fact that their Japanese colleagues mostly did not share required information with them; because of the fear of the upper managers who used to control the flow of knowledge and in the views of Germans, Japanese were not allowed by their management to share the knowledge or think independently (Wilkesmann et al., 2009, p.471). In the study of Finstone and Snyman (2005 p.40) some respondents posited multiculturalism as a big challenge for knowledge sharing, because of the lack of trust, especially within the employees of different levels of organization i.e., white and blacks. Upper management posts were held by white which created frustration among Black workers. Language barriers also created problems. Even the study of Fong et al. (2013) which has apparently came up some positive conclusion about the impact of cultural multiplicity on knowledge exchange, commented that, "Scholars examining diversity in MNC have primarily focused on the consequences of demographic diversity (E.g., Gender, Age, or Race) or cultural diversity (e.g., language, value) for processes such as communication, conflict, or social integration (Cummings, 2004). This study provides further evidence that demographic or cultural diversity will likely not increase knowledge transfer unless employee can embrace and effectively leverage the differing views"(p.40). Voelpel and Han (2005) in their cross-cultural study conducted in Chinese context, noted that the knowledge sharing severely suffered due to "in-group vs outgroup discrimination" and the factor of "face saving". In Chinese culture, while "relationships tend to be very supportive and intimate within [in] group, there is little trust and often hostility toward outgroup members" (Triandis, 1989, p. 516). Chinese were observed to be less trusting their foreign colleagues and shared the knowledge with their Chinese colleagues only except some mandatory sharing. Second main hurdle was that of "face saving"; since Chinese people tend to be sensitive with regard to saving their face (Ho, 1976) and because of this, they mostly avoided sharing their knowledge with their foreign counterparts, mainly due to fear of making some mistakes in speaking or witting English. They looked concerned that spelling and grammatical mistakes can negatively affect their "face" among the colleagues (Voelpel & Han, 2005, p.59).

Rosendaal's study (2009) is not different than above discussed studies on cultural diversity's influence on knowledge sharing, as he declares in the findings, "However, as in the several studies that have been explored, the outcome of our study shows that a diverse composition of teams can be a barrier to cooperation and extra role behaviour like knowledge sharing (Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998; Van der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005). Gibson & Gibbs (2006) with their finding of a negative relationship between national diversity, innovativeness, and Cummings (2004) on intra-group learning and diversity in location and function found comparable outcomes. More specifically, value diversity is found to have a negative impact on work performance and group efficiency, while a larger similarity in values enhances interpersonal relations" (Rosendaal, 2009, p. 11-12).

In the study of Ford and Chan (2002), on the analysis of the influence of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing between Japanese and Americans, knowledge sharing suffered at the hands of cultural diversity due to multiple factors; as the authors mention, "The cross-cultural differences affected many different blocks or flows of knowledge transfer within this organization. These were likely due to the several languages, heterogeneity versus homogeneity of national cultures, and culturally acceptable advice seeking behaviours. The first and most obvious effect of a cross-cultural difference was the knowledge block between the Japanese and the English employees (including middle/upper management) due to language. While some knowledge was transferred between these two groups, either directly (i.e., knowledge holder to recipient) or through a bilingual individual, a lot of knowledge was lost in translation or due to the inability to articulate the knowledge in the second language. These results support previous theory, since language as a knowledge block has been cited as a common point of friction for the transfer of knowledge" (Ford & Chan, 2002, p. 22-23). These findings of the studies plainly portray cultural diversity

How to Manage Cultural Diversity for organizational Knowledge Sharing?

After making a thorough analysis of the findings of the above mentioned research studies, it looks as if cultural diversity is a barrier towards knowledge management and it impedes the process of smooth and effective sharing of knowledge and apparently creates a bleak picture. However, neither there is need of being disappointed nor negligent of managing cultural diversity for knowledge sharing. The extant literature gives hope that if managed efficiently, cultural diversity can be a great asset for organizations and also a very important source of creating new knowledge due to mixing of multiple thoughts, ideas and viewpoints (Rosendaal, 2009; Bogenrieder & Nooteboom, 2004; Applebaum et al,1998; Abbasi & Hollman, 1991). Hence, instead of being hopeless and ignorant, organizations need to plan accordingly, to manage their cultural diversity for knowledge sharing. The research also tells that members of diversified teams initially may not perform well due to the presence of strangeness and lack of understanding about the work-values, habits and temperaments etc. however, with the passage of time, when they start knowing about each other, it naturally reduces the feelings of weirdness from among teammates and they start performing well. This is empirically found in a 17 weeks' study of Watson et al (1993), based on the analysis of two teams: one being homogeneous and second being heterogeneous. The results showed that during the initial weeks, the performance of homogeneous group was better; but, as the time passed, the performance of heterogeneous group also improved and during last weeks the performance gap reduced to zero and in the final week, the performance of the heterogeneous group was better than homogeneous group in certain aspects (Watson, et al., 1993). This research of Watson et al (1993) gives a big hope to organizations to seek inspiration from; that cultural diversity initially might hinder knowledge sharing, but, with the passage of time, with some training and organizational backing, the detrimental aspects of cultural diversity can be reduced and it can be made a supportive and facilitating factor for knowledge sharing. In the following pages we are going to suggest some very important and valuable tips to manage cultural diversity for organizational knowledge sharing.

Openness to Diversity

The first and foremost important thing is the organization and its employees' openness to cultural diversity (Fong et al., 2013). Openness to diversity means accepting and welcoming the diversity in organizations and in the words of Lauring and Slemer (2012), eliminating the obstacles that impede employees from utilizing their full expertise and talents. In the process of acceptance, it has been suggested to accept the differences that are meaningful and functional or can be helpful towards the completion of organizational tasks compared to the dissimilarities that are less functional or less productive (Webber and Donahue, 2001; Martins et al., 2003). From organizational perspective, existing literature

has recognised openness to diversity as a critical element for sharing of knowledge and collaboration within firms (Mitchell, Nicholas & Boyle, 2009; Hobman, Bordia & Gallois 2004; Hartel & Fujimoto 2000). Openness to diversity is important not only to organizations but also to organizational members; since existing literature maintains that individuals who tend to possess a positive stance toward openness to cultural diversity, they quickly mix up with others, involve in work and learn much effectively from their colleagues belonging to different cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Ambos and Ambos, 2009; Appelbaum et al., 1998). This has been observed that the organizations which remain open to diversity and inculcate the same thinking within their employees, tend to enjoy the benefits of diversity and vice versa. Hence, organizations need to create a sense of openness to cultural diversity especially the employees belonging to host culture to accept and assimilate the culturally diversified colleagues and develop healthy and cooperative working relationship with them in order to learn from mutual knowledge resources and work insights. Openness to diversity is opposite to homogeneity. Homan et al (2008) have linked openness to experience with openness to team diversity and actually, it is the first step towards openness to cultural diversity. Openness to experience according to McCrae (1987) refers to eagerness of an individual to explore, accept and tolerate novel and unique ideas and experiences. Individuals scoring high on openness to experience, are found to be less inflexible in their thoughts, more inclined to value opposing ideas, more exposed to differing situations, and less prone to discard conflicts as compared to those possessing low score on openness to experience (LePine, 2003; Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae, 1987). These features of openness to experience tend to be directly linked with the spirit of working in diverse teams, since diverse team members possess dissimilar ideas, attitudes and viewpoints than those of the members of homogeneous teams (van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Cox et al., 1991). Therefore, organizations should try to inculcate the attitude of openness to experience and openness to cultural diversity within the organizational members. As Fong et al (2013), after the conclusion of their study on the impact of multi-culturalism on knowledge sharing recommend, "Openness to cultural diversity is essential for knowledge sharing. Instead of becoming overly concerned about the differences in the national cultures, managers should develop a good mechanism that can leverage diverse views and perspectives, help employees to be open to diversity, and view it as an advantage. They should inculcate openness to diversity as a key aspect of the corporate culture, regardless of the differences in the national culture of their foreign subsidiaries" (p.41).

Cultivation of Trust
Without the mentioning of trust, it is also almost impossible to discuss knowledge sharing (Riege, 2005; McAllister, 1995); since it plays a tremendous role in the development of a conducive environment for sharing knowledge within culturally diversified organizations (Sackmann & Friesl, 2007). In majority cases without the feelings of trust, people seem less willing to share knowledge. Trust in the sense that others will not misuse their shared knowledge and that their shared knowledge is credible and accurate. Sharing of knowledge is a voluntary activity (Stauffer, 1999) and people in most of the situations avoid sharing the same, thinking that knowledge is a source of power and organizational influence; now in this case they will share the knowledge with only those individuals who are dear and near to them or simply those whom they trust. Knowledge exchange initiatives neither can be controlled nor coerced for (Riege, 2005); but there is one thing that can let it happen voluntarily and that is the presence of a high level of trust and mutual cooperation within organization members and organization and its units (De Long and Fahey, 2000; McAllister, 1995). In the extant research (e.g., Renzl, 2008), trust is reckoned as an integral emotional factor in connection to knowledge exchange. Although in normal homogeneous working environment the importance of trust is well recognized and acknowledged, for knowledge sharing, but its importance in multi-cultural environment increases many times, due to already existing feelings of lack of trust and oddness within culturally diverse teams. That is why; almost all of the cross-cultural studies on the impact of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing have discussed the factor of trust; as one of the most important factor

of fostering knowledge sharing in culturally diversified organizations (e.g., Pinjani & Palvia, 2013; Fong et al. 2013; Lauring & Slemer, 2012). Others have mentioned as a key pre-requisite for mitigating the detrimental effects like feelings of incongruity and hostility or biased thinking towards the colleagues belonging to other nationalities, regarding the sharing of knowledge (Sackman & Friezl, 2007; Ford & Chan, 2002; Finestone & Snayman, 2005; Voelpel & Han, 2005). This is because trust is one of the phenomena of our society, which reduces the feelings of strangeness and creates the sense of belongingness; lessens the differences and begets convergence and instead of competition, creates a sense of collaboration. In cross-cultural working environment, trust plays a double-edged role both in terms of facilitating as well blocking the sharing of knowledge. Kane et al. (2005) for example, note that within-group individuals, due to presence of the feelings of trustworthiness, honesty and loyalty, tend to be more advantageous than outsiders, which might foster knowledge sharing among them and at the same time might hamper the same when it comes to sharing with outer group members. Cultural heterogeneity leads to the feelings of prejudice, negative stereotyping, hostility and consequently low levels of trust; making the knowledge sharing problematic. In such kinds of situations, the remedy is none other than creating trust among the team members, since without the presence of the feelings of trust; it is very hard to imagine effective and meaningful sharing of knowledge between diversified teammates (Sackmann & Friesl, 2007). This is because the research findings suggest that in the presence of trust between two very opposing parties, effective knowledge exchange can take place, regardless of the differences of culture, history and other similar attributes between the two parties (Fong et al., 2013). Organizations moreover, not only need to cultivate interpersonal trust among the organizational members through interpersonal interactions; but they need to cultivate the institutional-based trust also; since without that cultivation of individualized trust knowledge sharing might not be shared freely (Duan et al., 2010).

Organizational culture
Organizational culture can play decisive role in the management of cultural diversity for fostering knowledge sharing within culturally diversified organizations. Cultural differences, misunderstandings, complications, hoarding trends, in group and outgroup biases, feelings of prejudice and strangeness can be addressed only by a rigorous organizational strategy and thoughtful planning. It is due to this drastic effect of organizational culture on knowledge transfer that McDermott & O'Dell, (2000, p.77) note, "Culture does play an important role in the success of a knowledge management effort. We found many examples where well designed knowledge management tools and processes failed because people believed they were already sharing well enough, that senior managers did not really support it, or that, like other programs, it too would blow over. In fact, our central finding is that, however strong your commitment and approach to knowledge management, your culture is stronger. Companies that successfully implement knowledge management do not try to change their culture to fit their knowledge management approach. They build their knowledge management approach to fit their culture. As a result, there is not one right way to get people to share, but many different ways depending on the values and style of the organization".

Several research investigations have noted that the designing of efficient knowledge systems is not sufficient and that organizations need to found their knowledge management strategy on solid grounds, backed by all key enablers to mitigate the barriers to knowledge sharing: such as intercultural conflicts, inappropriate organisational structures, hostility-based trends in knowledge sharing or tendencies of hoarding (e.g., Tissen et al., 1998; Davenport & Prusak 1998). Organizations needs to provide a conducive organizational culture of learning and collaboration and promote the ethos and values of convergence instead of divergence, cooperation instead of conflict and unity of direction instead of groupism. For achieving these goals, it is important to create a sense of common goals, shared vision and focus on collective achievements instead of individualized or group-

based ones (Dube & Ngulube, 2012). Organisational culture refers to basic shared values, practices, norms and ethos which are possessed by the organizational members of an organization and tend to be reflected in the mission, vision and values (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). These values which organizational members learn over the time, form the unique culture of any organization, reflect organisations' identity both in tangible and intangible form. The tangible facet of organizational culture is manifested through its written code of values, goals and strategies, buildings, dress codes, languages etc.; whereas intangible facet relates to organizational members' thoughts, beliefs, and fundamental convictions that channelize individuals' actions and perceptions within organisations (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001).

The insights about the importance of organizational culture in the successful flow of knowledge among culturally diversified organizational members can be sought from the available studies based on the analysis of knowledge sharing trends and issues; problems and complications and positive and negative aspects of sharing knowledge sharing in culturally heterogeneous teams. For instance, in culturally diversified organizations wherever and whenever knowledge sharing was better and successful, additional to some other factors, (e.g., presence of trust, a sense of social identification among groupmates and collaborative stance etc); organizational support and organizational culture was a critical factor of the successful knowledge sharing despite lots of cultural and language differences (e.g., Fong et al., 2013; Lauring & Slemer; 2012; McDermott & O'Dell, 2000). On the contrary, the available empirical studies found that when knowledge sharing problematic, ineffective and unsuccessful in culturally diversified organizations; additional to other factors like, lack of trust, racial differences and biases; lack of managerial support and absence of a learning orientation and organizational focus was one of the main reasons of the problematic knowledge sharing (e.g., Dube & Ngulube, 2012; Lauring, 2009; Wilkesmann et al., 2009; Dulaimi, 2007; Finestone & Snyman, 2005). For example, one respondent in the study of Dube & Ngulube (2012) reported that "The importance of knowledge sharing is unknown in this Department, and one wonders why people should get from others that which they learnt for themselves overtime. Why should it be made easy for new entrants?" most of the respondents gave negative remarks regarding organizational focus on knowledge sharing by saying that there were no institutionalized strategies aimed at knowledge sharing (Dube & Ngulube, 2012, p.73). Hence, organizations need to make serious planning to effectively manage cultural diversity for knowledge sharing. A number of initiatives and measures can be taken in order to lessen the detrimental effects of diversity on knowledge sharing and to convert into an opportunity as compared to a problem.

Creating a Sense of Social Identification

Creating and exchanging knowledge is fundamentally a social process, rooted in social relations and this mechanism is exceedingly nurtured by social capital (Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998). Social capital refers to a network of interpersonal relations that establish valuable resources for exchange of knowledge. Social identification is perceived as a crucial element in teams branded by diversity and interdependence, when it applies to sharing knowledge. According to existing research, multiple social, cultural and ethnic identities have been identified as significant barriers for knowledge sharing (Child & Rodrigues, 1996). That is why, according to Rosendaal, (2009), impact of social identification and task interdependence on knowledge sharing within culturally diversified organizations is an important area of research.

The concept of social identification is especially important for seeking cooperation within hybrid teams (Fiol & O'Connor, 2005), since without a feeling of social identification with the team, it is less likely to feel a sense of cooperation and sharing of knowledge with team members (Rosendaal, 2009). Exchange of knowledge entails the readiness of individuals to accomplish toward team's success. Not to surprise, social identification can be a building

block for mediating complex relationship between knowledge sharing and cultural diversity. Likewise, task interdependence among group members working in diversified teams, is expected to upkeep cohesion-seeking process. Interdependence compels the colleagues to communicate and collaborate, by virtue of their tasks being organized in a way that can't perform their duties without seeking each other's help and cooperation. This forced communication and cooperation seeking reduces the weird feelings and helps toward rapport building and later on, emerges as a foundation of effective teamwork and conflict management (Rosendaal, 2009). Task interdependence has been found to be effective and helpful toward conflict resolution (Van der Vegt & Van de Vliert, 2002). The research findings of Rosendaal (2009) corroborate the findings of Ellemers et al (2004) that knowledge sharing tends to be weaken by value diversity and is improved through social identification and task interdependence. As Rosendall notes, "The question to what extent social identity neutralises the problematic relation between diversity and knowledge sharing has received a differentiated answer. Our results bear the inconvenient message that value diversity has a negative effect on knowledge sharing. The good news, however, is that support has been found for the second hypothesis: the partial mediation of social identification means that a potential negative influence from value diversity can be reduced by the positive effect of social identification on knowledge sharing". He further comments: "Clear evidence is found for the hypothesis that the more team members identify themselves with their team, the more they are inclined to share their knowledge with other team members" (Rosendaal, 2009, p.12).

Creation of Informal Groups and Informal Channels of Communication
Grouping is one of the most irritating and disturbing factors of cross-cultural knowledge sharing. Due to the feelings of group identity, sense of belongingness and mental security, individuals generally tend to remain within the company of their cultural groupmates, that naturally creates a kind of blockage to interaction and mingling with culturally dissimilar group members, and the same negatively affects knowledge sharing (Sackmann & Friezl, 2007). Based on this, organizations need to think about all those possible ways and means which can bring the diversified employees closer. One important way to reduce the feelings of strangeness and create the feelings of acquaintance and belongingness among culturally diversified groups is to create informal work groups among them and manage their work in such a way that it may increase interaction with them, because existing research suggests that task interdependence reduces mutual biases and creates a sense of mutual cooperation (Rosendall, 2009). The possibility of interaction among diversified groups might be increased through informal gatherings, picnic parties, games, organizational functions, musical concerts and like. For example, in a European Union based research on project teams conducted by Siakas et al (2010) in a cross-cultural working environment, the respondents emphatically recommended cross-cultural gatherings and interactions among the employees to enhance interpersonal communication and interaction within employees working together and belonging to different cultural groups. The respondents frequently used the terms like "visits in sites of other team members to get better practical touch in their circumstances", "at least some face-to-face meetings" which throw light on the need of cross-cultural informal gathering among the workers of different cultural backgrounds. Tange and Lauring (2009) for example, while emphasising this informal interaction among diversified employees suggest that "Managers will therefore have to increase the visibility of alternative groupings such as professional networks or communities of practice, which typically transcend linguistic boundaries. This could involve a re-organisation of labour, relying more consistently on multicultural teamwork, cross-organisational workshops, and strategic cooperation which will bring together experts from different speech communities. The weakness of this strategy is that it fuels the practice of thin communication, which must be addressed simultaneously" (Tange & Lauring, 2009, p.229).

Numerous research studies on the analysis of cultural diversity on knowledge exchange have found the employees of one ethnic group using both formal and informal channels of

communications while communicating with their in-group members; whereas using only formal communication channels while interacting with the colleagues out of their cultural group (e.g., Ford & Chan 2002; Chow et al., 2000). Hence, this is also imperative to encourage informal communication channels as Ford and Chan (2002, p.27) emphasise in their recommendations of a cross-cultural study, "It was apparent in this study that the type of knowledge that flows through these networks is inherently different from the type of knowledge that flows through formal lines of communication. The knowledge that flows through informal networks tended to be more creative and personal, and resulted in a sense of belonging, stress reduction, and even strategic thinking". From these comments of Ford and Chan (2002), this is evident that the facilitation and increasing of informal communications channels not only creates a sense of affiliation and belongingness among heterogeneous colleagues, but is can also result in the creation of a better and refined knowledge (Li, 2010). In fact, these kinds of informal channels of communication are the secret of the knowledge creation and innovativeness of Japanese companies (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Moreover, the facilitation of informal communication channels not only create new knowledge, but can also make it easy for the cross-cultural employees to increase their social knowledge i.e. knowing about the behavioural dimensions of their colleagues, belonging to different cultural backgrounds and ethnic communities. Consequently, being more conversant about the cultural and behavioural traits of the fellow workers creates the sense of social identification, which is supportive in minimizing the group-based biases and differences from among the diversified employees. Dube & Ngulube, (2012) in their study conducted in cross-cultural South African context, suggested informal channels of knowledge sharing networks including communities of practice to foster knowledge sharing among the members.

Training and Development
Management of cultural diversity cannot be possible without effective and meaningful training and development provided by the organizations. That is why a numerous researchers have emphasised on employee training and training for managing cultural diversity (e.g., Fong et al, 2013; Tange & Lauring, 2009; Freely & Harzing, 2003). Training can include a number of facets and types; areas and disciplines: For example, orientation about the similarities and dissimilarities of cultural values, historical background, work ethics, ethos and corporate culture of the employees working together. Cultural orientation can also encompass national heroes, religious values, important calendar days and other sensitivities of the cultural groups working together. This training can also include language classes, communicational differences (Shachaf, 2008; Ford & Chan, 2002) translation issues and social knowledge (Rosendaal, 2009) (protocols about meeting, greeting, talking, responding and reacting etc.) of the employees working together. The knowledge managers' role is critical in this connection. They need to create a sense of respecting other colleagues culture (Applebaum et al,1998; Abbassi and Hollman (1991); since this is human psychology that respecting others' cultural values creates a sense of respect and likeness in others hearts and on the contrary, disrespect and negligence about others cultures especially those who are your colleagues and teammates, creates feelings of disliking and farness. Training programs are very effective for management of cultural diversity in the sense that they offer platforms for employee career development, and also provide opportunities for building contact within broader organizational networks (Piekkari et al., 1999). Training programs not only teach the employees regarding specific areas, but also offer possibilities of gaining information about the people working in other departments of organization, matching their cultural values and speaking their languages and this can lead to creating socialization among the organizational members. For example, in a cultural study conducted by (Bengoa, et al., 2007, p.146) in Russian and European context respondents recommend organizationally initiated and sponsored interaction among the employees of different nationalities to foster knowledge sharing among them. As the researchers noted, "Methodologies related to active and mutual learning were welcomed by the respondents, for example, respondent 5, supported by respondent 6, said that Knowledge, knowledge

without practice, theory without practice, knowledge without common work cannot be so useful, common work with other people from other countries. Confirming this respondent 4. suggested collective training, and encouraging knowledge sharing. We did last year some collective learning related to organisational issues with some British and it was quite effective. They were sharing experiences and this was useful. Learning by doing, more practical orientated activities" (Bengoa, et al., 2007, p.146). In order to make training and development effective and productive, it is very important that "the focus should be on building everyone's repertoire of behaviours. This can help newcomers learn to acculturate while assisting 'old-timers' (established employees) to be open, sensitive and non-judgmental. The climate should be such where being genuine is valued and the maintenance of integrity is the norm where differences can be discussed in a low stakes productive way, an inch at a time" (Gardenswarlz & Rowe, 1993, p.131). For managing cultural diversity, it is important to understand the underlying cultural differences that motivate people working in organizations (Applebaum et al., 1998). It should be the responsibility of the managers to discover and work with the differences that hamper productivity. For this purpose, some formal and informal procedures can be used like asking employees or their colleagues (Adler, 1991). For example, a formal method can be the use of worksheets containing Norms/Values of the employees working together (Gardenswarlz & Rowe, 1993). These worksheets can provide a valuable information regarding cultural values of different employees working in organizations (Applebaum et al., 1998).

Role of Organizational Management
Organizational support is very important for managing cultural diversity and without adequate managerial support; the goal of the management of cultural diversity cannot be achieved (McDermott & O'Dell, 2000). Organizational mangers need to adopt a cautious, responsible and sensitive stance in this connection (Finestone & Snyman, 2005; Applebaum et al,1998). Abbassi and Hollman (1991) have recommended some valuable suggestions for executives of trans-cultural firms. For example, they suggest that "Managers should recognize and acknowledge that people from various backgrounds and ethnic groups with different values and unorthodox attitudes make up corporate life. They should communicate and show respect for the culture and values of others. They should listen to the views of minority workers and make sure that they are included in their formal and informal networks and should avoid stereotyping anyone from any culture. Provide workers with a sense of psychological safety; assist them when needed in the acculturation process. Managers should be empathetic, but be themselves; they should not try to be one of them. In addition, they should avoid projecting or imposing their own culture and value system onto others. Finally, managers should trust their instincts in dealing with foreign employees" (Abbassi and Hollman, 1991, p.7-11). This has been a generally observed fact that in cross-cultural work settings some cultural groups tend to dominate others by virtue of belonging to majority group (Lauring, 2009), being part of the parent organization (Piekkari, et al., 1999) or speakers of the central organizational language etc. (Welch & Welch, 2008; Henderson, 2005) creating a number of problems and blockages to organizational knowledge sharing. Respondents in some research studies (e.g., Lauring et al., 2009; Dulaimi, 2007; Peltokorpi, 2006) have reported these trends of group dominance. Here again the role of managers is very important to keep a very vigilant eye on this matter and don't let any cultural group to dominate other groups from any point of view and close all the possibilities and loopholes which can leave any room for the creation of dominance of any group.

Managerial Implications
Although the major portion of this paper is based on the recommendations for mangers to suggest them how to manage the cultural diversity for knowledge sharing, but, at the end, the managerial implications are briefly discussed. This research paper offers a number of useful and practical implications for managers and practitioners. After presenting a thorough but seemingly discouraging analysis of the effects of cultural diversity on

knowledge sharing, it invites the managers and practitioners that they are not supposed to be worried of the apparent complicating and challenging properties of cultural diversity towards knowledge exchange. The research builds up the confidence and motivation of the practitioners that rather than being confused, they should think about the ways and means, procedures and techniques, policies and programs to manage the cultural diversity to reduce its detrimental effects on knowledge management and to make it strength as compared to a weakness or hurdle for organizational knowledge sharing. The paper provides a very meaningful and effective roadmap to manage the cultural diversity for knowledge sharing in the light of the existing literature and empirical evidence. The paper calls upon the managers and especially HR managers to create such kind of culture within the organizations that may foster knowledge sharing among diversified employees by giving them proper training and inculcating the values of trust, cooperation respect of others cultures, sense of unity and common goals and common vision (Finestone & Snyman, 2005; McDermott & O'Dell, 2000; Applebaum et al,1998). The role of organizational managers is extremely important, since without their serious focus and involvement, the objective of the management of cultural diversity cannot be achieved. It is the duty of the managers and especially HR managers to understand the various factors that positively or negatively affect the knowledge sharing within a multi-cultural environment. They need to eliminate or reduce the negative aspects cultural diversity such as hoarding knowledge and sharing only with in-group colleagues, which hampers the healthy and effective sharing of knowledge. This has been noticed in cross-cultural studies that some cultural groups try to dominate other cultural groups by virtue of speaking the company language like German in case of Siemens and Japanese in case of Sony. These kinds of group-based dominances can be very much detrimental for organizations and need to be properly addressed (e.g., Lauring et al., 2009; Dulaimi, 2007; Peltokorpi, 2006). Organizational managers need to be very much vigilant in this connection and they should try to create respect for other cultural groups in the hearts and minds of the employees. They need to give proper support and confidence to employees especially those who belong to minority cultural groups within the organizations (Abbassi and Hollman, 1991). The management needs to foster the culture of interpersonal trust and cooperation among the organizational members (Riege, 2005; McAllister, 1995). Organizational leadership should try to create a sense of social identity and belongingness among the diversified employees, through introducing and encouraging informal channels of communication and workgroups (Siakas et al, 2010; Rosendall, 2009; Sackmann & Friezl, 2007). Fun oriented intercultural informal gathering like dinners, informal discussions and picnic parties can be very much helpful in this connection. Managers need to be open to cultural diversity and promote the same. They should indoctrinate their employees that instead of perceiving cultural diversity as a hurdle, they should perceive it as an opportunity of gaining the diverse insights and experiences from their colleagues belonging to various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Management can take the help of training and development for the achievement of the goal of the effective management of cultural diversity (Fong et al, 2013; Tange & Lauring, 2009; Freely & Harzing, 2003).

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