Chapter 2
Examining the Diversity Curriculum of Leading Executive MBA Programs in the United States

Mariya Gavrilova Aguilar
University of North Texas, USA

Pamela Bracey
University of North Texas, USA

Jeff Allen
University of North Texas, USA

ABSTRACT

Properly managed diversity practices enable organizations to maximize human capital, create a sustainable competitive advantage, attract more customers, and become more profitable. Many organizations conduct diversity training to address workplace diversity issues. Top management communicates the value of and commitment to diversity, whereas managers facilitate an environment that embraces diversity. Diversity management has emerged as a prominent strategy to handle diversity issues. This chapter examines diversity curriculum of leading Executive MBA (EMBA) programs in the United States and highlights the current state of the educational environment in addition to explaining how curriculum supports diversity and inclusion reforms at the organizational level. Through content analysis, the authors summarized the diversity topics featured in 20 leading EMBA programs in the United States. None of the reviewed programs explicitly utilized the word "diversity" in any of their core or elective course titles, and only three (3) explicitly mentioned the words "diverse" or "diversity" within course descriptions. Nevertheless, the data suggest that programs do seek to offer some form of experiences which have the potential and intent to enhance cultural awareness. The majority of programs under study require students to travel to a foreign country to participate in global travel exploration. The authors provide recommendations for future research related to effectively implementing diversity practices and curriculum so that leaders become better equipped to address the challenges of diversity for their organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The change in workforce demographics, increase of jobs in the service economy, continuing growth of globalization, and requirements for effective teamwork have emerged as significant forces in the business environment that drive the importance of diversity (Hitt, Miller, & Colella, 2006). Vecchio and Bullis (2001) stipulated that "as workplace diversity increases and supervisory ranks are staffed by a broader range of individuals, it becomes increasingly more common to be supervised by someone who is, in historical terms, an atypical supervisor" (p. 884). Having a multicultural workforce allows organizations to enhance marketing efforts, team building, problem solving, organizational flexibility, creativity, and innovation (Cox, 1993). Nevertheless, employees work in a workplace environment where diversity issues surface daily. Despite the US Census predictions of a more diverse US population, Buttner, Lowe, and Billings-Harris (2009) claimed that minority groups will still be underrepresented in professional occupations because of leader racial insensitivity, discrimination, (un)equal opportunity theory, and low organizational diversity strategic priorities. To some, this may be surprising provided that the first anti-discrimination legislation in the United States was introduced over 50 years ago. Currently, not only are US organizations witnessing inefficient diversity efforts but they are also facing a more significant challenge: lack of inclusion. "Diversity without inclusion does not work" (Miller & Katz, 2002, p. 17). Roberson (2004) explained diversity as emphasizing organizational demography and inclusion as being concerned with eliminating barriers to the integration of employees within the organization. How can we strive for inclusion if we are still struggling for diversity? Ultimately, the goal is to move away from compliance in the form of diversity quotas and mandatory training, and embrace integration within the organizational culture in the form of inclusion, which results in

a more committed workforce. McMahon (2006) discussed various diversity aspects depending on the desired goals of the organization: regulatory compliance; social justice; departmental responsibility (i.e., HR department), strategic planning outcome; or a community-focused activity. For the purposes of this chapter, the authors explored diversity from a strategic planning outcome perspective focusing on the roles of managers and leaders in leveraging diversity. Pursuing systemic and planned organizational change is one of the multi-faceted outcomes of diversity (Kreitz, 2008). This chapter examines the course curriculum and content areas emphasizing and promoting the importance of workforce diversity incorporated into 20 leading Executive MBA (EMBA) programs in the United States. The chapter also highlights the current state of the educational environment and how it supports diversity and inclusion reforms at the organizational level.

BACKGROUND

Business Case for Diversity

Effective diversity practices help organizations attract and retain human talent, enhance marketing efforts, increase creativity and innovation, improve problem solving, and develop flexibility (Cox, 1993). Loden and Rosener (1991) claimed that the primary dimensions of diversity such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, physical ability, and sexual orientation can create more tension at the workplace than secondary dimensions such as educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, parental status, and religion. Negative racial attitudes unfavorably affect human capital and can create a stressful environment for minorities (Brief, Dietz, Cohen, Pugh, & Vaslow, 2000; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999). Properly managed diversity develops a better reputation as a minority employer and ability to respond to a more diverse market

18 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/examining-diversity-curriculum-leading-executive/67049

Related Content

Re-Theorizing Human Resource Management and Human Resource Management in Context
Margitta B. Beil-Hildebrand (2011). *Human Resources in Healthcare, Health Informatics and Healthcare Systems (pp. 21-46).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/theorizing-human-resource-management-human/43262

Applicability Assessment of Semantic Web Technologies in Human Resources Domain
Valentina Janevand Sanja Vraneš (2012). *Human Resources Management: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 470-485).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/applicability-assessment-semantic-web-technologies/67171

Enterprise Alignment and the Challenge for Organization Development
Brian H. Cameronand Shaun C. Knight (2009). *Encyclopedia of Human Resources Information Systems: Challenges in e-HRM (pp. 350-356).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/enterprise-alignment-challenge-organization-development/13252

Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence Systems in the Context of E-HRM
Martin Burgardand Franca Piazza (2009). *Encyclopedia of Human Resources Information Systems: Challenges in e-HRM (pp. 223-229).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/data-warehouse-business-intelligence-systems/13234

Utility Analysis of HRM Effectiveness
José M. Carretero-Gómez (2009). *Encyclopedia of Human Resources Information Systems: Challenges in e-HRM (pp. 898-909).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/utility-analysis-hrm-effectiveness/13332