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INTERNAL RESEARCH

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
IN THE RECRUITMENT POLICY TOWARD
THE MINORITY ETHNICS IN AUSTRALIA**



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Introduction

The issue of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) was started to be a legal issue since 1975, when the federal Discrimination Act introduced in the state of South Australia (Strachan & Jamieson, 1999). The focus of the Act at that time is gender equality, as women workers in 1970s-1980s often received disadvantages over their male counterparts (Strachan & Burgess, 1997). However, the relevance of EEO is much broader than women discrimination. The concern of EEO includes minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, staff with family responsibilities, and part-time workers (Gleeson, 1998). In the HR area, EEO Application influences different HR functions, from recruitment, training, performance assessment, remuneration, etc.

This essay discusses the recruitment policy, as an application of EEO, toward minority ethnic groups in Australia. As a multicultural country, Australia faces a diversity of workforce entering its employment system. Therefore, recruitment policy is important as the main gate to enter the employment structure. The minority groups in this case are immigrants with non-English speaking backgrounds, including Aborigines, as the indigenous people of Australia. To begin with, this essay presents literature reviews toward EEO and recruitment policy in Australia, regarding its formulation, implementation, and evaluation practices. In the next part, this essay analyzes cultural, organizational, and interpersonal factors that influence the recruitment policy development.

Description

The reason behind EEO issue is an effort to overcome discriminations. Discrimination is an act of providing unfair treatment over individuals because they are different (Tse, 2004). Australia, as a multicultural country, faces a lot of discrimination problems. Most of them emphasize on

discrimination toward women in the workplace (Burdett, 1994; Hammond & Harbridge, 1995; HREOC, 1998). However, several studies also suggest discrimination toward certain ethnic groups in either employment activities or social behaviors. A study upon discrimination over Aborigines reveals several racism behaviors, such as verbal racism, hurtful comments, intimidation, behavioral racism, and other discrimination attitudes (Mellor, 2003). The perceived stereotype of Aborigines is freely carried on public media and individuals. Additionally, a research upon Vietnamese workers in Australia suggests some difficulties for them in entering the employment systems just because of their lack of English proficiency (Cregan, 2002).

Within the EEO influence, recruitment policy emerges in order to promote equality among workers in entering the workplace, regardless their gender, ethnic, and other social backgrounds. The ideal concept of EEO offers a universal equality, which should benefit all society groups without any exception. However, this model of universal equality is confronted with cultural pluralism, which positions an ethnic diversity as a political identity (Jayasuriya, 2003a). Australian multiculturalism is acknowledged as a positive characteristic of the country. Therefore, the government attempts to resolve the conflict by legitimating a common understanding of citizenship through the new Charter of Australia multiculturalism (Miller, 1995). The term 'citizenship' positions diversified groups of society under uniformity of regulations and policies regarding the employment system.

From social theorists' point of view, citizens possess a social contract with the country, providing mutual relationships, with a balance between rights and duties (Jayasuriya, 2003b). This theory implies a similar relationship between workers and employers. However, some authors argue that human rights are supposed to be earned regardless the duties and responsibilities (Freedon, 1991; McCloskey, 1985). In other words, human beings should be equally treated regardless their roles in the society. This second approach leads to different

discrimination toward women in the workplace (Burdett, 1994; Hammond & Harbridge, 1995; HREOC, 1998). However, several studies also suggest discrimination toward certain ethnic groups in either employment activities or social behaviors. A study upon discrimination over Aborigines reveals several racism behaviors, such as verbal racism, hurtful comments, intimidation, behavioral racism, and other discrimination attitudes (Mellor, 2003). The perceived stereotype of Aborigines is freely carried on public media and individuals. Additionally, a research upon Vietnamese workers in Australia suggests some difficulties for them in entering the employment systems just because of their lack of English proficiency (Cregan, 2002).

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classification of rights for employee recruitments. The comparatives between rights and duties are applied within recruitment qualifications. A transactional relationship is happened as the employer provides a job by asking for qualification. On the other hand, basic rights related with human existence needs to be promoted in the recruitment policy, regardless their qualification, such as respects, equal treatments and behaviors in the recruitment processes. For example, a job candidate might not meet the minimum qualification, but has a right to be treated equally with others.

Formulation

The issues regarding employment policies are related with the role of HRM within the organization, which accommodates the shared goals between employers and workers in order to gain competitive advantages (Bratton & Gold, 2004). The HRM decisions influence overall employees' behaviors and responses. In the context of soft HRM, employees are organizations' assets and sources of competencies (Druker, White, Hegewisch, & Mayne, 1996). Therefore, failures in promoting EEO within recruitment policies might result in negative responses from either existing employees or employee candidates.

The EEO-based recruitment policy is formulated in order to achieve three outcomes. First, organizations acquire a diversity of potential new talents. Through negotiation of diverse skills, organizations' inventory of knowledge, skills, and creativity are increase, so that synergies can be created (Cope & Kalantzis, 1997). Second, employees' acknowledgement toward EEO in the workplace promotes self-actualization fulfillments among employees, which is the highest need level in Maslow's Theory that can lead to a higher performance (Maslow, 1943). Third, employees' diversity represents the workforce's diversity. Thus, it promotes community's perceived value toward the organization's image and reputation as a good corporate citizen (Gillespie, 1999).

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Additional influences toward the policy formulation come from technology, legislation, and unions. In the current technology development, internet becomes a crucial tool in business activities, including recruitment processes. Electronic based recruitments enhance the application of EEO, as subjective assessments from recruiters regarding the applicants' appearances can be diminished. From the legislation factor, the AWA promotes an equal opportunity for employee candidates in negotiating their position in the organization. While, unionized organization suggests equal rights for diverse employees based on a collective bargaining power.

Implementation

In general, recruitment is one of important HR functions in the organization. Recruitment plans and processes are often determined as running the business (Borwick, 1993). Therefore, the implementation of the recruitment policy needs to consider its alignment with the organization's strategy. Espoused policy from the organization level can be different with operational policy in the business level, in order to adjust with organization or business strategies. Generic strategies like cost leadership and differentiation become the basic of business initiatives, including the implementation of the recruitment policy. For example, organizations with differentiation strategy might consider employees' diversity in the recruitment policy in order to increase the perceived quality of the organization within its community. On the other hand, cost leadership strategy might promote EEO by introducing group performance rate pay in their recruitment policy.

The implementation of the recruitment policy might encounter several potential barriers. First, the resistance comes from individual behaviors of internal employees that contradict with organizations' policy. It is difficult to control the policy implementation in the individual level. Second, the EEO implementation in the recruitment policy depends on the objectivity of the

recruiters. The definition of EEO needs to be clearly identified and understood by both recruiters and candidates. Another problem might come from the employee candidates. Negative personal assessments from applicants tend to affect the overall perceived quality from the environments. In addition, the implementation can be enhanced by introducing reinforcement methods toward the policy's stakeholders, according to the reinforcement theory (Powell, 1998).

Evaluation

In order to guarantee the success of the policy implementation, continuous evaluation procedures are required. The evaluation is necessary in order to promote organizational changes, assess the cost of the policy implementation, determine the accomplishment of the policy objectives, and enhance HR position in the organization as a competitive advantage. Besides, recruitment evaluations provide organizations with control over their recruitment information, which is useful in legitimating the application of the future policy (Feldman & March, 1981).

In order to evaluate the recruitment policy, several methods can be conducted. Firstly, the percentage of employees from minority ethnic groups is expected to increase. Secondly, the number of claims and complains toward EEO issues is expected to decrease. Thirdly, the evaluation is conducted as surveys targeting both employees and customers. Lastly, the evaluation comes from the job applicants themselves, as the main stakeholder in recruitment practices. Their perceived quality of the recruitment policy applied in the organization is the best measures toward the success of the policy implementation. The initiatives of the policy evaluation come from the HRD, either as the same recruitment function or a separate function. The information from the evaluation needs to be reported to the management level in order to set the future policy formation and implementation.

Australian cultural factors

The original idea of EEO-based recruitment policy is influenced by three external factors. They are cultural factors in Australia, organizational factors, and interpersonal factors. The Australian history began with groups of European convicts who came to the land of Down Under and took over the land from Indigenous people. Differences between their science and technology advancements result in superiority attitudes toward Aboriginal people, which further become the source of discrimination actions. However, today's society claims the right of Aborigines to preserve their cultural heritage and existence in the community, even more than immigrant ethnic groups (Jayasuriya, 2003a; Kymlicka, 1996). This force, along with humanitarian development encourages the presence of EEO.

The policy initiative also considers the condition of current Australian workforce. Because of the low level of fertility rate in Australia, almost 50% of the population growth since 1976 comes from immigrations (McDonald & Kippen, 1999; Winkelmann, 2000). Immigrants are required to possess certain skills upon obtaining a permanent resident in Australia, which can be contributed to the economic development of the country (DIMIA, 2004). This fact reveals a high level of cultural diversity in Australian workforce, with a vast amount of potential talent and skills that can be utilized through recruitments.

Organizational factors

Within the globalization era, business activities are no longer bounded by space and location. Organizations' decisions are no longer isolated from influences by communities' values, as well as technology developments. The equality issues in the society leads to an HR role as employees' champion in organizations, to facilitate employees for increasing their trust, loyalty, and morale (Ulrich, 1998). Besides, the presence of e-commerce demands organizations to be flexible upon their HR practices, including electronic-based recruitment processes. In addition,

today's industrial practices focus more on service activities instead of manufactures. This information suggests a demand toward organizations to be flexible with their services' targets.

Within the multinational companies, it is impossible to formulate policies without considering EEO. EEO in the recruitment policies suggests not only opportunity for job applicants, but also opportunity for organizations in possessing a broader recruitment pool. Broader pool means a wider variety of potential new talents and more opportunity for increasing organizations' performance. The importance of recruitment policies also come from the fact that all other HR practices begin with recruitment. Without a proper recruitment policy, other policies might not exist, such as remuneration, performance management, training, etc.

Interpersonal factors

The influence of interpersonal factors comes from the relationship between different ethnic groups, both in Australia and world-wide. The race relationships are based on historical background, economic condition, cultures, behaviors, and psychology condition of the groups (Shelton, 2000). These inter-race differences lead to racial discrimination perspectives and racism behaviors.

Discrimination attitudes in Australia, especially toward Aborigines, can be explain with similar cases happened between White and Black in America. A study reveals that White are more likely to give negative responses toward Black and positive responses toward White counterparts (J. Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997). Another study in the recruitment activity proposes a subjective judgement toward Black when the qualification is less obvious (J. F. Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002).

Through out the society development, there are more and more pressures toward discriminations, such as from religious and humanist groups. Therefore, equality issue becomes popular and more acceptable, and leads to the emergence of EEO and its applications in the HR field.

Conclusion

In conclusion, EEO is currently became a popular and demanding issue in organizations' developments. EEO often becomes the basic of organizational policies' formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Within the recruitment policy, the implication of EEO leads to equality behaviors toward employee candidates, in order to acquire a variety of new talents and promote workforce diversity. The policy implementation needs to be adjusted with organizational strategy and continuously evaluated in order to guarantee its successful results.

Further analysis toward EEO-based recruitment policy reveals several influences from cultural, organizational, and interpersonal factors. Cultural factors come from the nature of Australian multiculturalism and workforce diversity. Organizational factors are drawn by an evolving nature of organizations' practices. Interpersonal factors are based on subjectivity, historical background, and psychological behaviors of different groups. Further studies need to be conducted in the policy adoption within a particular organization, regarding the organization's strategy, past HR practices, and environmental conditions.

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