Abstract: The topic of intercultural education has gained prominence as a result of global corporations employing a diverse workforce and operating in countries with diverse culture. The transnational corporations provide training to their employees in handling people from diverse cultures. However, there is no formal educational programme offered by universities that meets the needs of these corporations. The research paper is a review paper and focuses on the cultural gaps in managing a diverse workforce. It also highlights how universities can take initiatives to design formal education programmes focused on managing workforce diversity. The paper is written with secondary data taken from prominent publications in the field of intercultural studies. The paper provides a trigger to transnational corporations and educational universities to collaborate in designing and delivering intercultural educational programmes.

Keywords: Academia collaboration, intercultural education

Purpose of Research

Intercultural education is defined as an education programme which takes into account more than one language and cultural tradition (Aikman, 1999). According to World Investment Report, 2014 there are atleast 550 transnational corporations from both developed and developing countries. These corporations have more than 15,000 foreign affiliates and account for 11% of global FDI flows. (UNCTAD, 2014). Transnational corporations are made up of parent enterprise and their foreign affiliates. The parent enterprise controls the assets of foreign affiliates by owning certain equity capital stake (UNCTAD). There are several challenges faced by the corporations such as communication, gender issues, behaviour, adaptation and decision making (Adler & Gundersen, 2007; Tzeng., 2006; Charles., & Marschan-Piekari , 2002 ; Parker & McEvoy, 1993 ; Dörrenbächer & Geppert, 2011). The transnational corporations have adopted several strategies counter intercultural issues when dealing with foreign affiliates. This includes multi-cultural discourses (Fine, 1996), workshops (Human, 1996) and training programmes (Zakaria, 2000). This has realized the need for having an intercultural education programmes at university level (Coulby, 2006).

From the perspective of business education several steps have been taken by universities for delivering education from a global perspective (Beamish and Calof, 1989). But universities do not offer comprehensive programmes on intercultural education which can equip students with intercultural skills. This will also reduce the cost of intercultural programmes run by corporations as they can employ workforce who are capable of handling intercultural issues. Though attempts have been made by several institutions by introducing project work and multi-cultural student teams (Gordon and Newbury, 2007), there are many problems in curriculum design due to lack of clarity on what should be included (Dunne, 2011). This has emphasized the need to do further research in this area by gathering inputs for design and delivery of inter-cultural programmes.

Review of Literature

The need for intercultural competence has been recognized by transnational corporations and educators (Sercu, 2004). Coulby (2006) has emphasized on the importance of intercultural education to deal with multi-cultural environment. Black and Mendenhall (1990) have shown that performance in an overseas assignment is related to cross cultural training. A study by researchers (Black and Duhon, 2006) revealed that study abroad programmes create an intercultural awareness and enhance personality of the students. Qiang (2003) has explained that internationalization of education has played an important role in developing intercultural competence. The researcher has specified different approaches to achieving this : (1) The activity approach : This includes student and faculty exchange programmes, having international students and curriculum. The researcher call this a fragmented and uncoordinated approach. (2) The competency approach : This approach is related to designing curricula and programmes to enhance knowledge and intercultural skills. However, the researcher mentions that this is a problem solving approach and more research is needed for making students into successful international citizens.

A study by Blasco (2009) on students of Scandinavian business schools revealed that
theoretical knowledge and its application in the form of assignments was not sufficient to make them competent on intercultural issues. Additional readings dealing with business activities was required. A research (James, 2005) on international education has mentioned that international curricula of many universities lacks the creation of international mindset. It is only focused on understanding the cultural differences based on nationality and religion. The researcher emphasizes that curricula should be focused on creation of mutual understanding, tolerance, respecting differences, focus on care, empathy and appreciation of diversity.

Perry and Southwell have found out that measuring the effectiveness of intercultural programmes is an important aspect of designing. Their research has shown that though universities have education programmes, effectively determining the success of these programmes is still an issue and more research needs to be done in this area. Their findings match the findings of Mandenhall et al (2004).

Researchers (Davis and Cho, 2005) created a virtual intercultural learning environment for development of intercultural competencies. They created an online community of research students, faculty and staff across six different transnational universities across Europe and United states. The community interacted on various platforms such as emails, video and text conferencing for collaborations. The intercultural engagement of various platforms helped understand and respect each other’s cultural differences. This was followed by physical interaction through an interactive programme in one of the partner universities.

Evaluation of the programme was done through email and face to face interviews. Results revealed that most benefits came from physical interaction with people of other cultures.

Greenholtz (2000) in his paper has mentioned that an intercultural programme cannot be designed unless it meets the needs of clients. Hence, there is a need to thoroughly understand client expectations with respect to intercultural competence.

Based on the review of literature, it was found that the existing intercultural programmes do not completely address the needs business organizations as they do not create an international mindset from both business and human perspective. There is also a need to develop tools to determine the effectiveness of such programmes.

**Research Methodology**

The research paper is a review paper. The research is based on secondary data related to inter – cultural education programmes in India and abroad. The data or research information has been taken from top journals in the area of higher education and cultural. Some of the prominent journals referred are Academy of Management Learning and Education, Journal of International Education, Journal of Business Communication, Handbook of inter-cultural training, international journal of manpower, Academy of Management Review, etc. Various articles such as those published in various prominent publications such as Cambridge University Press were also considered.

**Implications**

The research will benefit the transnational corporations as inputs provided by them will help in designing programmes on intercultural management that will equip the prospective workforce (students) with intercultural skills and thereby reduce cost, time and efforts of transnational corporations in training their workforce on managing such issues.

The research will also benefit universities in design and delivery of effective intercultural education programmes. Such a programme would also attract students as it would add value to their skills. Employers would recruit students of such universities to benefit their organizations.

**References**


