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Assessment 1

Managing People(LCBB5004)

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Introduction

The main purpose of this report is to critically understand about the business environment in which professional employees work and will also help in analysis of the ways in which management of resourcing of the organization can be influenced by the external as well as the internal factors. As a Human Resources Manager for ASDA which is a popular retail company in UK, the report would provide the detailed analysis of the effect that flexible working practices would have on the organization and employees. The report would address about the flexible working practices related to diversity and inclusion at work and also thoroughly analyze about the role of human resources in promotion of diversity and inclusion by flexible working. Moreover, the ways in which flexible working practices can lead to inequality at work would also be evaluated with the analysis of role of human resources for addressing the inequality concerns having the chances of arising from the flexible working conditions.

Analysis of the role of human resources in promotion of diversity and inclusion through flexible working

After coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, it is evident from the survey done by ACAS that almost half of the employers of UK feel that there would be greater demand of flexible working forms from the employees. ASDA which is a British supermarket chain operating in the retail sector serves about 633 locations and employs about 165000 employees in different locations of the supermarket outlets. As compared to the times before pandemic outbreak, the employers and decision makers of ASDA are feeling that the flexible working practices demand by the employees would be greater significantly. According to the opinion of Jeffrey et al (2018), flexible working practices at work can definitely help the businesses in employing diverse range of workforce along with huge gains in productivity as well as better retention of the talents in the organization. If ASDA allows the employees to work flexibly, it can be definite that their chances of getting the benefits of diverse employee pool creation can be fulfilled and aid every member of the organization to have the feeling of being included, heard and valued in the company (Galinsky et al, 2021). The pool of applicants can be opened up with flexible working arrangements in ASDA and also flexible working can support provision of proper work life balance to the employees of ASDA by which the individual lives of the employees outside work can be acknowledged and thus can help in attracting and retaining

talents from diverse background. It must be a well-known fact for the employer of ASDA that each of the employees of the company is unique and coming from different background having different ethnicity, age, language, personality etc (Kirton, 2020). Human resources play an important role in giving value and recognizing the differences which the individuals can bring to work and also it is strategically important to the organization. ASDA must have proper employment practices which would help in allowing everyone to have equal opportunity which is considered to be moral and ethical for the organization. Diverse workforce can help in improving the retention of employees and allowing for better recruitment with high level of bringing satisfaction for the employees with increased productivity (Roberson, 2016). It is definitely the duty of senior level managers and the line managers of ASDA to manage diversity and inclusion at work with raising awareness about diversity, having positive action in recruitment as well as having arrangements with which employees can work in a flexible manner. The HR leaders of the company must be aware about the fact that the recent outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on the employees to a great extent and even after coming out of the pandemic, it is expected that the employees would want to work from home either for some days in a week or for all the working days of the week. As evident from the study of Michielsens et al (2014), having flexible workplaces can help in providing mutual benefit to a company along with the employees and can also help in achievement of gender parity. Flexible working practices is known to have a positive impact on the human resources as they were able to spend increased time with the family members and were known to have better wellbeing with improved productivity during the lockdown period of Covid-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, there has been a cultural shift in terms of working from home and the employees definitely felt more trusted with the increased support of the HR managers and line managers during the period. There are many personnel who previously did not want to work from home but now after the pandemic lockdown period they are now willing to change and work from the comfort of their home. It is the major role of the HR leaders and managers of ASDA to bring improvement in the decision making process with the help of devising proper ways with which biasness in workplace can be addressed and promotion of inclusive environment can be done so that all the employees of ASDA can get equal opportunities. There should be constant monitoring and commitment of the managers to provide flexible working opportunities to everyone equally (Lewis and Humbert, 2016). The individual employee's unique needs of flexible working must be identified and

supported actively by the managers in each of the stage of the journey of employment. In case of recruitment in ASDA, the respective managers must ensure that the tactics can engage candidates coming from diverse networks and there must be blind reviews of the applications for recruitment so as to remove the biasness wherever possible. Beyond hiring, the working policies must be expanded and the managers must arrange for diversity training and opportunities of learning about inclusion for all the employees so that there would be an environment in workplace supporting diversity. It is the role of the leaders of the organization to leverage the flexibility for creation of newer opportunities for the individual employees. The employees must be provided with flexibility in working location with scheduling of open job opportunities must be provided to wide talent pool irrespective of their physical health disabilities or health problems. The flexible working ways can allow the disabled employees or employees with health issues to work from home and not even become isolated as there is availability of wide range of tools which can help in virtual collaboration of the employees for having an increased accessibility in every respect (Kelliher and Anderson, 2018). With the help of supporting flexible working practices, if there is very rare requirement of employees to come to the office, people from any part of the world can be hired which would help in meeting with the diversity goals and also expansion of the customer bases with the help of having representatives from other part of the world. Since the flexible working pattern of working from home needs the employees to spend lesser time in the physical office, and the employees can simply do their work without any extra labor of changing behavior or appearance or speech for fitting into any culture, it is easier for the employees to feel more sense of belonging and feeling equal and fair treatment by everyone at work. It must be monitored by the HR team about the progress of diversity by conducting regular audits for measuring the progress of the supporting diversity and inclusion through flexible working. It has often been seen that even by allowing for flexible working, the employees opting to work out of the office which include mainly women or working parents etc are harmed by proximity biasness or treating preferably the people working together physically in a better way (McNall et al, 2019). In this regard, it is the role of the HR manager to ensure that the employees choosing flexible working options are not missing out on any opportunity of networking or scope of career advancements and promotion in any way. The HR managers must put equal emphasis on the remotely working employees and it is important to make flexible working as a norm in companies like ASDA with proper training of the managers for leading

distributed teams in a proper way with trust. The managers must be transparent enough in measuring the performance of the employees opting for flexible working choices. According to the opinion of Timms et al (2020), in many organizations it can be seen that due to no such flexible working options, they lose creative, highly competent and skilled talents in the organization. Retail organizations like ASDA needs the input from diverse talent pool and also needs to develop innovative customer service and experience strategies for satisfying their needs which can only be ideated from the diverse and inclusive talent pool. Therefore, the HR managers must recruit from diverse background without any exclusion and also provide them with flexible working options so that the creative and unique talents can be retained for a long period of time in the organization in a successful way.

Analysis of the role of human resources in addressing the concerns of inequality that may arise from flexible working

By introducing flexible working operations by the popular retail organization ASDA after coming out of the pandemic, it is possible that there would be a risk of ingraining of office culture to a great extent that the following of hybrid working arrangements can end up to introduction of inequalities in between the people who would work on site and also those who would work remotely. This would necessarily lead to jeopardizing of the scope which hybrid working could have brought to so many diverse talents especially the parents, disabled employees who have otherwise been benefited from the flexible working after the pandemic situation. It is often seen that the female workers, parents or disabled employees might have to face serious challenges while choosing the flexible working option of working from home because of being isolated from the office and thus missing out on the scope they would have otherwise got for their own learning and development. According to the opinion of Smithson and Stokoe (2015), the attitudes of the managers related to flexible working might be stuck as it was prior to the pandemic period rather than being able to grab the all new scope of the hybrid working model which can cause inequality in the workplace. It might also be possible that flexible working might lead for many workers to work for longer time period and harder thus having the tendency of the work to encroach on the family life. In flexible working options, there is freedom provided to the workers to control regarding the time and place of work which might result into the workers working for long time period as in the present culture of work-life

balance, working beyond that of contracted time is stated to be ideal productive working practice (Hegewisch, 2019). The norms that are on parenting and gender roles urges the women to use themselves at their home with spending more time on housework and childcare thus giving rise to inequality. The employees choosing to work from home might have to work beyond working hours which the employees working from office need not to do and thus being potentially exploited by some of the managers. The flexible working employees can also face missed scope for collaboration which would have otherwise helped in the career growth (Smithson et al, 2014).

In this respect, it must be ensured that the flexible working policy introduced by the company is very much inclusive. It is the duty of the line managers and HR managers to consider the new reality of the workers who would want to choose flexible working and support the employees like that it is done for the in-office employees and also make it sure that the workers working flexibly are not disadvantaged in any way mainly considering the increased competition for grabbing best talents from the talent pool that is usually faced by the employers. It must be acknowledged by the managers that greater flexibility at work during the pandemic has led to greater productivity amongst the employees and there has been better work-life balance of the employees coupled with their greater safety and wellbeing (Michailidis et al, 2012). It is the role of the HR management to engage more with the employees for understanding them and then apply the working practices that would be the best suitable for them so that the line managers can have an overall loyal and more productive teams in the organization. The HR managers must try to properly tackle the culture of being always on work with proper communication with the workers and stating them that having proper resting time with proper mental and physical detachment from the work can actually help in boosting up the productivity level of the employees to a great extent. There must be proper HR policies introduced by the management which would help the fathers to get more involved in childcare and household chores like paid paternity leaves can help in addressing the concern of gender role inequality to make sure that flexible working practices are not responsible for increasing gender inequalities at the workplace. The HR managers must ensure that the company follows what is announced by the UK government in the review of the right to flexible working so that the flexible working can be reality for all employees without any instances of inequality in the workplace. The HR policies must be designed in such a way that they must follow properly the Equality Act 2010 guidelines so that the chances of inequality arising as a result of flexible working options can be totally

opted out and the employees working from home or working from office both can be treated in an equal way. It must be always be ensured by the HR managers that there is no such gender pay gap and the women are getting the same payment as according to the men (Guest, 2017). All the employees irrespective of any discriminatory factors who are working flexibly must be given rewards for performing so that they can also be highly engaged in work and experience increased motivation to work to the best of their capability. The working parents and employees having disability are mostly seen to choose the flexible working options and it must be ensured by the training and development team that the employees working remotely are also getting the same training and development opportunities as that of the employees who are working from office. It is the role of the HR manager to ensure that all the important information of the company and objectives are communicated properly to those working flexibly and must be ensured that there is no communication gap remaining (Shen et al, 2019). In this way, by undertaking and performing all these roles, the inequality concerns in the workplace can be tackled in a proper way with the effective performance of the HR managers.

Conclusion

It can be inferred from the report that after coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, most of the employers are expecting the change in working practices of working from home staffs either in part of the week or for whole of the week. Flexible working is very much favorable in supporting diversity and inclusion at work and the Human Resources play a vital role in promotion of diversity and inclusion by implementing such policies right from the recruitment for which the staffs can be retained for a long time period. Flexible working can also cause inequality at work but with the effective performance of the human resources, the concerns of inequality can be addressed successfully in this respect.

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