

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AS A CRUCIAL ISSUE OF MANAGEMENT IN 21st CENTURY

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Dear Readers and Writers!

Another issue of the magazine Problems of Management in 21st century has found its way into your hands. We often hear people saying that human resources are the most important and most valuable source in an organization. Is it really true or is it just another buzzword? Our magazine deals with the issues of human resources in the context of various possible views and approaches.

As a result of the growing internationalism and globalization of the labour market but also as a result of dynamic changes in the society in general the concept of diversity management is ever more important. The basis of the concept of diversity management is the nature of diversity itself and this phenomenon has always existed in the human society, be it age, gender, race, ethnicity, mental and physical abilities, sex orientation or any other qualities (Hubbard, 2004, Eger, 2009). It is necessary to realize that the topics connected with diversity exist today and will exist in the future and if any organization strives to survive in the highly competitive surroundings, it has to deal with issues like that.

The concept of diversity management is crucial for the economic success and competitiveness of the organization. It should, therefore, be perceived by organizations as a strategic concept, as one of the ways not only to respect diversity but make good use of it too. The dissimilarity of the individual members of the organization should not only be perceived as necessary, it should even be considered as a competitive advantage as it can make better use of the potential of each individual.

Diversity management is currently becoming a challenge and an opportunity for managers, representatives of governmental institutions, non-profit organizations but also for representatives of educational institutions. It is a challenge bringing organizations a significant competitive advantage.

The issues of diversity management belong to the top priorities of the European Union because this institution, when supporting equal opportunities, uses both legislative tools and also non-legislative methods by means of financial and institutional support (e.g. Education and Training, 2010, 2008, Continuing the Diversity Journey, 2008).

Even though the concept dates back to the 1980s, its significant use in the field of theory and practice of management can only be seen now. The beginnings of diversity management can be found in the USA where it developed as a response to the demographic situation on the local labour market but since the 1990s it has gradually found its way to Europe but its more significant development in the field of business practice can only be traced over the past few years (Süß, Kleiner, 2008, Eger, 2009).

In theory and in practice it is a relatively new phenomenon and a new field of management. The theoretical basis of this concept can be found especially in the theory of personnel management and in other theories dealing with management of human resources.

At present we can find various specifications and interpretations of the concept. If we look at diversity as a mixture of similarities and dissimilarities that are used by management to meet their organizational purposes then we can define it as “a process of planning, organizing, and supporting these collective mixtures in a way that adds a measurable difference to organizational performance.” (Hubbard, 2004, p. 27). At the same time it can be defined as a systematic procedure focused on using diversity with the aim of accomplishing the mission of the organization and meeting the objectives of the organization and bringing the organization a competitive advantage (Bedrnová, Nový et al. 2007).

Diversity management is an integral and important part of personnel management and the strategy of the development of human resources. Any organizations that want to be efficient and successful will have to make sure they create and develop heterogeneous teams in which employees are represented regardless of their personality differences and with respect to the rules concerning equal employment opportunities.

The current development shows that the issues of diversity management in the context of its application in the business practice do not concern only the fields of personnel management and personnel development but that diversity and heterogeneity penetrate and significantly affect other fields in the organization, such as the development of products and services, the relationship to the market and to customers, and also factors like visions, strategies, company culture or communication support. Therefore it is not only a sub discipline focusing on the issues of human resources or the activities of personnel management arising from the legislation in the way it is sometimes closely understood in practice.

Diversity management requires diversity to be approached on the individual, interpersonal and organizational level simultaneously. Unlike the traditional approach that focused primarily on the individual and interpersonal aspects the current approach perceives diversity as a matter concerning all the organization, as a business strategy focused on using the potential of all members of the organization with the aim of gaining a competitive advantage. In this sense the application of the concept of diversity management is closely linked to the process of accomplishing the vision and mission of the organization, to its strategic management as well as to human resources management as these all support diversity of the human capital within the organization.

Understanding the concept of diversity management is necessary for the decision making processes, for the management of companies but also for the educational institutions preparing future managers or providing educational activities in a given field. It is obvious that introducing diversity management, even though some organizations still oppose this idea strongly, will become necessary in the conditions of the current globalizing environment and effective global competing.

In connection with the above it is also necessary to realize that the concept of diversity management is not omnipotent and that its successful and effective application assumes creating such an organizational structure that is based on mutual respect and openness towards diversity because only like this it may be used for the benefit of all.

Applying the concept of diversity management, recognizing and using diverse ideas, knowledge and perspectives of the members of organizations, those are all factors that contribute to the wealth of any organization significantly and create a real competitive advantage, which, in its final form, can be considered a highly positive and constructive tool for solving the current all-society phenomena in the context of the development of the civic society.

Let me express my belief that our magazine will, both in this issue and in the issues to come, contribute to clarifying and solving the concept of diversity management in the broadest sense of the word.

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