CENTRAL EUROPEAN REVIEW
OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

ISSN 2543-9472; eISSN 2544-0365

Vol. 1, No. 2, 133-149, June 2017

www.cerem-review.eu
www.ojs.wsb.wroclaw.pl

Diversity management in Polish firms – a review of studies

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Abstract:

Aim: The aim of the paper is to present the state and possible future directions of the research on diversity management in Polish firms.

Design / Research methods: The author selected 20 state-of-the-art articles in the field of diversity management in Polish firms. Analysis of these articles allowed for identifying a starting point as well as possible directions for future research in this field.

Conclusions / findings: The author argues that even though scholars find the issue of diversity management important and still valid, there also exist clear gaps in the research. Some areas (e.g. management of groups diverse in terms of age or gender) are preferred, while others appear to be neglected (e.g. management of people of a different sexual orientation). Scholars clearly tend to choose a specific group and research methodology.

Originality / value of the article: The author conducted a review of existing studies on diversity management in Polish companies, and presented the state and directions of possible further research. The paper could inspire others to start further and more in-depth studies on diversity; a greater number of explorations in this area may yield interesting findings from the point of view of the diversity concept. Taking into account the directions proposed by the author may contribute to enriching the theory of management diversity, as well as provide practical recommendations for business managers.

Key words: diversity management, desk research

JEL classification codes: J80, M12, M14, M50

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Received: 26-02-2017, Revised: 24-05-2017, Accepted: 25-05-2017

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„Every person we meet along the road and across the world is in a way a twofold. First there is a person like the rest of us, who has his joys and sorrows, does not like to be hungry or…cold, feels pain as as suffering and good fortune as satisfying and fulfilling. Now there is the second person, who overlaps with the first. He is a bearer of racial features and a culture, beliefs, conviction. These two entities coexist and incessantly interact."

R.Kapuściński

1. Introduction

„Varietas occurrit satietati – diversity prevents satiety" (a Latin maxim)

Diversity management in a workplace assumes that there exists a balance between the characteristics of employees and the needs of employers (Rawluszko 2007: 28). The latter ones are putting an increasing emphasis on the professionalization of management which takes into account a wider range of human traits. Moreover, international integration, globalization, and what follows, a growing labor mobility make the importance, role and awareness of diversity while managing it increase (Rakowska 2014: 353). A similar observation could be made with respect to science, particularly to the management theory, as, from the scientific point of view, it is a topic that is as much popular as it is inspiring and complex, demanding a particular sensitivity and an open mind.

The paper encompasses the findings of over a dozen studies devoted to diversity management in Polish companies. Despite it being an important and current research topic, so far, there has not been a publication analyzing diversity in Polish companies on the basis of available literature and research. Such an analysis provides this paper, which might be a voice in the discussion on the determinants fostering the acceptance of differences perceived as a potential for business growth. Also, it can help managers and employees understand the essence of diversity and the importance of an informed diversity management, while for scholars – research awareness.

2. Diversity and diversity management in the workplace (diversity management)

Intuitively, diversity can refer to accounting in management for issues relating, among other things, to gender, age, culture, health, disability, religious convictions or belief – so it is also likely to be defined through the prism of the following dimensions: primary, secondary and organizational (Table 1).

Table 1. Diversity dimensions

Diversity dimension	Primary	Secondary	Organizational
Examples of traits	Gender	Place of residence	Additional privileges for employees
	Age	Material status and income	Place and hierarchy in the organizational structure
	Physical fitness	Education	Decision-making powers assigned
	Sexual orientation	Work experience	Membership in an organization in the workplace
	Nationality	Habits, hobbies, interests	Job seniority
	Character traits	children	Prestige of the position held
	(Dis)ability	Marital status	Inclination to sharing knowledge with others

Source: Author's own study based on Stankiewicz (2013: 488); Kubicka (2010: 61) and Gajek (2014: 128-129).

Diversity in the primary dimension concentrates on the immanent characteristics of an individual. Those will include psychophysical characteristics, propriety and the way of thinking, which all are formed mainly in the family or during the education process. Diversity in secondary and organizational dimension relates to the position of an individual in social hierarchy: his/her role in both family and society. Among those three, the organizational identity is shaped to the greatest extent by factors stemming from the organizational culture of the workplace: motivation and reward schemes, human resources management strategy or values espoused by managers.

Diversity in organizational dimension is a derivative of the place in the organization, as well as the outcome of decisions made by those in charge of shaping the strategy of human resources management.

The factors differentiating people can also be defined as (Gajdzik 2015: 100):

- basic (e.g. race, gender) and secondary (e.g. work experience, beliefs),
- visible (e.g. race, gender) and invisible (e.g. religion, illnesses),
- noticeable (e.g. race, gender) and unnoticeable (e.g. habits, ways of communication),
- demographic (e.g. gender, age) and non-demographic (e.g. attitudes, values).

Diversity can also be defined from the point of view of paradigms. Not noticing differences, the need of harmony and uniformity determine the assimilation paradigm (fairness paradigm). Diversity paradigm (access-and-legitimacy paradigm) denotes acceptance and diversity promotion[1], the integration paradigm (learning-and-productivity paradigm) promotes equal opportunities while at the same time noticing the differences thanks to which an organization has a chance to grow (Durska 2009: 11). Of all the paradigms mentioned, the integration paradigm internalizes diverse values to the highest extent.

Diversity, regardless of the approach presented with respect to the definition, refers to aspects in relation to which people are similar or different from one other. This includes all inborn, acquired, visible, invisible aspects making people different or similar to one another (Rawluszko 2007: 28). These characteristics are either visible (gender, age) or not (position at work). These differences will be found to a varying degree in every workplace where people are employed. Not every company will see them as significant and a source of competitive advantage[2]. This may have the effect that the company will not pay attention to diversity management.

One[3] of the definitions of diversity management says that it is the process of management and communication, which involves noticing differences between

[1] M. Durska (2009) calls it "*celebrating diversity*".
[2] The analysis of the available online data disseminated by Diversity Charter signatories suggests that the perception of diversity management and values, organizational culture and competitive advantage varies. See more in Gajek (2014).
[3] For a review of approaches to diversity management, see Kupczyk, Oleszkiewicz, Kubicka (2014).

people. Further to that, it is an informed development of strategies, programs and policies seeking to create the climate where differences are respected (Brdulak 2009: 1-2). The goal of the diversity management is an informed use of diverse potential of all workforce combined with making opportunities more equal, in the first place by creating a friendly workplace, which also poses an ever greater challenge for the management of companies.

Diversity management emerged in the 1980' (Rakowska 2014: 353) and has developed mainly because of:

* increased globalization
* reduced national and trade barriers,
* aging population,
* increased migration,
* change of family roles,
* women's increased professional aspirations

Management diversity brings advantages, yet it also puts barriers and challenges for managers. Practicing diversity in management improves communication effectiveness, increases mutual understanding thus influencing open attitudes, better atmosphere and increased job satisfaction (Borowska 2008: 332-338). In addition, better team work performance in the short perspective is the organizational outcome of diversity management (Łukasiewicz 2014: 236-237). Adjusting company's procedures to the implementation of a diversity management program, building awareness among managers and employees are among some of the challenges. The efficiency and productivity of diversity management will depend on the proper structure of solutions facilitating it. Furthermore, the process of diversity management will have to be monitored on an ongoing basis (Kopeć 2014: 183). Building an atmosphere where diversity is respected seems to be the most difficult, since that might prove demanding particularly in Polish organizational cultures (e.g. stereotypical thinking). We should bear in mind that the implementation of diversity management programs often generates costs. This barrier may prove to be impossible to overcome for smaller companies, struggling everyday with financial difficulties.

3. Research procedure

Before starting the review of the literature, certain assumptions were adopted which provided the focus and a specific structure to the study. First of all, the decision was to carry out an analysis of the texts concerned with companies from the private sector, which have a greater freedom in shaping the strategies, policies and procedures than public entities. Both Polish companies and international companies' branches based in our country were taken into consideration – the latter ones have the right to take up and pursuit a business across Poland's territory, with the same rules applying to them as is the case for the Polish entrepreneurs. The line of business of the companies was of no significance to the study.

With a view to find articles written by Polish scholars which would be interesting from the point of view of the aim set, the following two databases were used: "bibliotekanauki.ceon.pl" (based on yadda platform) and worldcat (the world's largest library catalog). These are catalog collections of various scope, reflecting a range of scientific publication volumes. A key word, "diversity management" (both in Polish and English) was used for each of the databases (in Poland, some people use the English phrase). The study concentrated on placing these phrases in the papers' titles, their key words and also in their content. Also, a time limit was set: only publications released after the year 2000[4] were taken into account.

The entire research process involved two stages. During the first stage, a 100 papers in total on diversity management in the workplace were found. Only these papers were selected to the second stage in which scholars presented their quantitative and qualitative results. Moreover, those papers were taken into account in which the authors defined closely the group under study (Polish entrepreneurs/employees/management staff). This approach allowed a certain picture to be obtained of the state of the Polish research on diversity management in Polish enterprises.

Overall 20 items were included. Their analysis was carried out at a later stage at three information planes. The first one comprised the group under study: enterprises

[4] Before, it was referred to as e.g. equal opportunities policy or equalization measures rather than the concept of diversity management.

from the SME sector[5] or big organizations[6]; the second: the diversity dimension (primary, secondary and/or organizational), it being the subject of the study, and as the third plane, the type of a study (quantitative and qualitative) was used.

4. Analysis results of the papers' content

The analysis of the content of the papers selected to the second stage was conducted according to three criteria of analysis:

1) the group of companies under study
2) diversity type,
3) type of studies conducted

Considering the first information area we notice that the texts analyzed referred to companies varying in size (measured by the number of employees), thus including micro, small and medium enterprises (jointly defined as the SME's sector) and large companies to which the majority of papers (total of 10) was devoted. Only few studies were concerned solely with diversity management in SMEs (merely 2 papers). 8 analyzed articles focused on both groups (i.e. the group under study covered entities from the SME sector and large firms).

The type of diversity was another aspect of the analysis. On the basis of the review, the conclusion drawn is that most studies have been devoted to the management of workforce diverse in terms of age, culture and gender. Within the primary dimension, the types of diversity most likely to be examined include age (Baran 2015; Berłowski 2012; Radzka, Trochimiuk 2014), gender (Gajdzik 2016), cultural identity (Mazur 2011) and disability (Guryn 2012). The majority of studies are made up of those which do not concentrate on a selected diversity aspect, being rather concerned with describing the diversity policy adopted in the company (Brdulak 2009; Rogozińska-Pawełczyk 2016; Klimek-Michno 2013; Wawer 2014; Kupczyk, Kubicka 2014; Michalak 2014).

[5] The sector of micro-, small- and middle-sized enterprises; this sector is sometimes also defined as MSME.

[6] The papers did not state the classification criteria for micro, small and medium enterprises, or they were based only on the employment criterion.

The last analysis criterion was the type of research employed by the authors of the selected papers. In the second stage of the analysis there were 6 quantitative and 14 qualitative studies. Among the latter ones one of the method employed to collect information was an interview (mainly a structured one) which was used in the studies outlined in three publications (Mazur 2011; Baran 2015; Radzka, Trochimiuk 2014). With respect to the other papers, as many as 11 referred to a study where the perspective of description was a case study (almost 80% in total of the texts analyzed).One of the cases analyzed and to which two papers were devoted was ArcelorMittal Poland, a company engaged in steel industry. The objective of the first paper was to analyze actions undertaken by this organization in terms of diversity (Gajdzik 2015: 91-106), the second publication presented what practical measures could be deployed for women (gender diversity management) (Gajdzik 2016: 110-111). Likewise, age management was what another analysis was concerned with, aiming at describing the management of age diverse workforce in the company Universal McCann (Berłowski 2012: 36-39). Moreover, the analysis of good practices in terms of cultural diversity was presented on the example of the IBM company (Wiśniewska 2016: 9-24). Other studies show mentoring as the method of diversity management (Wawer 2014). In yet another study a question was posed, „*Does the management of work engagement requires that the workforce diversity be taken into consideration?*" (Michalak 2014).

Some of the texts were dedicated to a specific industry (Lesiewicz 2015) or targeted respondents living in specific region (Lower Silesia, Podlasie). The aim of those last papers was to check whether companies based within Podlasie area were aware of the benefits arising from diverse human resources (Mazur 2011). Meanwhile, the state of diversity management implementation was evaluated in Lower Silesia (Kupczyk, Oleszkiewicz, Kubicka 2014).

5. Conclusions based on the analysis of the papers

The analysis shows that the research on diversity in Polish enterprises is mainly concerned with large rather than small businesses. Also, the studies are most likely to concentrate on the primary dimension of diversity. Thirdly, researchers predominantly focus on studies of qualitative nature, with case study being the main perspective of description. The synthetic overview presented below (Table 2) includes data on the papers analyzed, referring to the three information planes already mentioned.

Table 2. Review of studies – detailed data

Group under study	**Number**	**Share [%]**
SME sector	2	10
Large firms	10	50
Large firms and SME sector	8	40
Total	20	100
Diversity dimension	**Number**	**Share [%]**
Primary	8	40
Secondary	0	0
Organizational	0	0
Mixed (or not indicated directly, or encompassing a range of diversity aspects)	12	60
Total	20	100
Research type	**Number**	**Share [%]**
Quantitative	6	30
Qualitative	14	70
Total	20	100

Source: Author's own study based on the analysis conducted.

In view of the criterion referring to the group under study, the conclusion to be made is that too few studies have been conducted on diversity management with the SME sector as a group under study. It is the author's opinion that diversity management is a particularly difficult challenge for this sector, especially given its numerous problems and barriers, which, in addition to that, are increased on account

of the specificity of their management. On the other hand, clear contacts between employees and a high flexibility of operations can help in managing diversity in the SMEs. The companies from this sector should open up to diversity; the diversity which will help to utilize the differences present in labor market or among customers. Hence, it seems worthwhile for the research to use this very group as its target, especially in light of the fact that relatively many publications are devoted to SMEs, with their main focus being the specificity of their management.

There could be some doubts about whether a relatively great number of studies focusing on a mixed group is appropriate. The "mixed" group thus constructed could distort the research findings (different conditions in terms of the functioning of both groups of enterprises, management approach, possibilities, etc).

What the papers are lacking is focusing on other diversity aspects, above all on the organizational and secondary ones. Although relatively numerous publications are devoted to the primary diversity, still some areas are clearly preferred in this respect (age, gender) while others are notoriously neglected (e.g. sexual orientation and LGBT persons[7]). One should not confine oneself only to some aspects of diversity management, even though certain aspects of the diversity concept may be less relevant (e.g. cultural diversity management in family business).

The last analysis criterion was the type of research employed by the authors of the selected papers. Most of the studies focused on gaining insight into good practices of the enterprises, while failing to mention the bad ones[8]. On the one hand, that could suggest (at the same time coming as a surprise) that the companies' conduct in terms of management diversity is always proper. On the other hand, no company will admit to failing from time to time to apply the rules involved in diversity management. Describing bad cases based on facts, yet without the company's knowledge may lead to the researcher's facing a moral conflict. The only solution for being able to describe real cases of bad practices is to use information provided by whistleblowers. However, it is likely that people speaking out about bad

[7] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender.

[8] Likewise, business good practices taking into account the diversity factor in management are discussed at the time of a variety of conferences, as e.g. "Diversity Management – Basis for Building Human Capital" or a regular conference, "Diversity Congress".

practices in their company may not be willing to talk about abuses taking place in terms of diversity management. The issues relating to bad practices are awkward and sensitive, often being a taboo topic in organizations. Employees are afraid to talk about these situations because they might later be subject to mobbing, which has a bearing on the studies conducted in this field.

None of the studies analyzed was conducted from the perspective of data description using the grounded theory method. Owing to its procedures, researchers can discover phenomena which they did not look for while starting their research. This kind of approach allows new phenomena to be explored, of which diversity management is certainly one. Likewise, there were no studies where the authors would use the methodological triangulation of studies.

The analysis findings suggest that there are "favorable" subjects within diversity. The empirical studies are largely conducted as a qualitative study. This proportion is at 2:1 to the benefit of the qualitative studies. The main perspective of description employed by these is a case study, largely demonstrated as examples of good practices. In terms of the group under study, in the majority of cases diversity refers to large enterprises, with the SME sector making up only 10% of all the research analyzed. In Poland, diversity is mostly examined from the point of view of the primary diversity or in a way that is more general, i.e. the perception, how diversity is viewed, or a reference is made to the solutions applied in the diversity policy. The other method adopted was viewing diversity through the prism of another phenomenon (e.g. communication).

The analysis suggests that the SME sector, encompassing micro, small and medium enterprises, should be examined from the perspective of diversity management more frequently. In the future it would be worth conducting studies using the grounded theory methodology, and also to illustrate the cases of bad practices, whose analysis could provide useful findings and information. The reason why researchers eschew some topics within diversity management may be their fearing their illusiveness, or their *a priori* assumption that they are not interesting. However, the analysis conducted found no evidence that would make these hypotheses probable. The author believes that the future comprehensive studies on

diversity will enable one to gain a thorough and in-depth insight into the management process of this phenomenon.

6. Concluding remarks

Diversity emerged mainly as the result of the increased awareness of the social and demographic changes, complexity of the economic processes, and growing importance of human capital. Diversity management is often associated with countering discrimination, which, in line with the provisions of law, is the objective of the policy of equal opportunities (Burzyńska, Kłos 2015: 5). Diversity management is inextricably linked to building the awareness of the diversity that exists in organizations. The effect are actions undertaken to allow for these differences to be used to the benefit of organizations.

The aim of the paper was realized based on reviewing the scientific research concerned with diversity management in Polish enterprises, and suggesting further directions of studies within this field. The analysis indicated that it was necessary to conduct further research in which different diversity dimensions would be treated equally.

In attempting to suggest further research directions, it is worth reflecting on the state of research within this area in Poland. Despite numerous publications on the subject of diversity management, the number of challenges for research is not getting any smaller, which may be due to researchers taking little interest in some of the diversity dimensions. It is also worth considering the need to carry out interdisciplinary studies (e.g. management – finances; management – sociology), as they would allow for certain nuances of diversity management to be grasped, especially given that the previous studies focusing on this issue have failed to dispel all the dilemmas and doubts.

In summing up, the review of the literature confirms scholars' ongoing interest in diversity management. It is very likely that this interest will not wane in the upcoming years. Diversity is worth promoting and not only in the workplace but also as a field of research. Such research should not be seen as a "curiosity" but a

response to the real needs arising from the ever growing importance of diversity management in Polish companies. Managing diversity, although costly, allows for an informative use of the potential of all employees, designing modern solutions and creating a level playing field for all employees. Thus, it is worth promoting, especially considering that human resources management, which also involves managing diversity, appears to be gaining in importance (as the result, among other things, of seeing human resources as business partner).

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Zarządzanie różnorodnością w polskich przedsiębiorstwach– przegląd badań

Streszczenie

Cel: Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie stanu oraz możliwych przyszłych kierunków badań nad zarządzaniem różnorodnością w polskich przedsiębiorstwach.

Metodyka badań: Zgodnie z przyjętą wcześniej procedurą badawczą autorka do analizy wybrała w sumie 20 artykułów z zakresu zarządzania różnorodnością w polskich przedsiębiorstwach. Przyjęta procedura badawcza zapewnia zrozumienie dotychczasowych badań i stwarza solidny punkt wyjścia dla dalszych badań w tym kierunku. Ostatecznie została ona wybrana, aby zidentyfikować kierunki badań nad zarządzaniem różnorodnością w Polsce.

Wnioski: Autorka wykazuje, że choć tematyka zarządzania różnorodnością jest ważna dla badaczy i wciąż aktualna, występują także wyraźne luki badawcze. Pewne obszary (np. zarządzanie grupami zróżnicowanymi pod względem wieku czy płci) są preferowane, inne zaś wydają się być zaniedbywane (np. zarządzanie osobami o odmiennej orientacji seksualnej). Badacze mają wyraźną skłonność do wybierania określonej grupy i metodyki badawczej.

Wartość artykułu: Autorka dokonała przeglądu istniejących badań nad zarządzaniem różnorodnością w polskich przedsiębiorstwach oraz przedstawiła stan i kierunki możliwych dalszych badań. Artykuł może stać się inspiracją do podjęcia dalszych, pogłębionych badań nad różnorodnością więcej badań w tym obszarze może przynieść ciekawe wyniki z punktu widzenia koncepcji *diversity*. Uwzględnienie kierunków proponowanych przez autorkę może przyczynić się do wzbogacenia teorii zarządzania różnorodnością, a także dostarczyć praktycznych rekomendacji dla zarządów firm.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie różnorodnością, analiza danych zastanych

JEL: J80, M12, M14, M50