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Managing Diversity – Introduction

Modern Western societies are progressively diverse. Economic theory starts to acknowledge that meanwhile the workforce consists of people from different national backgrounds, of more and more women, or of persons with individualized time-schedule interests. The old model in the social sciences of the male, full-time working, the-only-breadwinner-in-the-family employee may still be somewhat persistent in the public opinion and even be visible in some industrial or constructional settings. But it is no longer dominant for the society in general. We already explored what consequences this may have for trade unions in two recent volumes of the *managemen*t *revue* (issues 1 and 4/2012).

In this issue we want to look at the question of what can we expect from such changes in the context of employment and adult education? To add higher education is useful since in more and more countries the majority of an age cohort goes to college and the chances and access barriers herein shape the later career opportunities (OECD, 2014).

For many authors increased diversity is strictly positive since it goes hand-in-hand with an interesting living and working environment. The more colorful and less homogenous a region is seemingly makes it more attractive for the innovative people who are the backbone of future economic development. The paradigmatic author for this approach is the much cited Richard Florida who even advocates the invention of a new sociological category: the 'creative class' (Florida, 2002). And indeed, empirical studies confirmed the principal usability of this concept on a global level, although many questions still remain in the 'black box' (Mellander & Florida, 2014).

The first contribution by *Doreen Richter* deals with some of those black box-uncertainties. The title 'Demographic change and innovation' clips two relevant dimensions firmly together. How does the changing age structure of the workforce in many Western countries affect the economic outcome in the future, especially in regard to the critical dimension of innovation? Richter's literature review deals both with the micro- and the macro-dimension. The micro-approach looks at the situation of teams or firms. Many sub-sciences, most prominently from psychology and business administration – have been dealing for nearly half a century with the question if and why similarity or heterogeneity in groups are more productive for innovation processes. Unfortunately, there seems to be no clear-cut answer.

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management revue, 25(3), 163-165
ISSN (print) 0935-9915, ISSN (internet) 1861-9908 © Rainer Hampp Verlag, www.Hampp-Verlag.de

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2014-3-163 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

For the macro-side the picture looks somewhat more promising. Studies based on regional measures of diversity did usually find a positive influence, and more so, of considerable strength. Mostly, ethnic/cultural diversity have been researched here, but there are also contributions about the age dispersion. As a general result, however, the author concludes that the number of empirical works is still small, that quite often the institutional settings are not adequately integrated and, that the focus on ethnic diversity excludes the also relevant shift in the gender composition of the work-force.

The paper by *Stefanie Seifert* and *Eva Schlenker* deals explicitly with the gender dimension. Using a comprehensive German dataset which combines information on employees and employers the authors take a closer look at the segregation dimension. In order to do this, first, a dissimilarity index is constructed. Secondly, different regressions are run to explain the index. Besides the more usual findings of an influence of firm size or industry, one interesting conclusion is that both the number of women and of part-timers are relevant, and that the relationship to the dissimilarity dimension is non-linear. Again non-linearity is observed when recruitment procedures and the share of women in management positions are reviewed. So, there is space for explicit non-discrimination policies but it is not a one-size-fits-all-situation.

Marlene Langholz broadens the perspective again by looking at a general 'Diversity Management', albeit in special institutions: universities. By comparing Germany with the United States, both a trend-setter and a trend-follower are covered. The US is a leader in this respect due to a long history of affirmative action policies, dating back as far as the 60/70s of the last century and fuelled by the Civil Rights movement. The literature review shows that not only the legal discussion was intensive but that meanwhile also a considerable body of social science studies exist, concerning e.g. the effect on learning outcomes or on the campus climate on (non-)discrimination. Although a lot of formal agencies/programs are quite often found who are dealing with diversity management at US universities, the outcome may still be seen as wanting.

In contrast, in Germany the situation is not only structurally lagging behind, but it also seems to be more diffuse. The increase of the student population, especially from non-academic families, the acceptance of a migration background of many of those or the rising share of women form an amalgam of new challenges to both faculty and administration. Therefore, universities are in this case at an experimental stage, more re-active than pro-active.

The higher education system in Germany is also the focus of *René Kremkow* and *Ruth Klamm*'s contribution. The authors are concerned with the hitherto diversity-blind finance system of public institutions, which may result in an inefficient allocation of funds. Since meanwhile every state ('Bundesland') in Germany has a performance-based funding system structural differences in the student body may be critical. If, for example, completion rates are different between distinguishable social groups the reliability of such a - widely used - indicator for the purpose of funding would be misleading. The authors therefore strongly advocate a closer look at the, in Europe not very well-known, Australian model which includes an adjustment of the funding according to several dimensions of the students' composition. The question for every replicating country remains: what are the relevant criteria here which should be taken into account?

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As already documented in earlier cases this issue of the *management revue* results from a workshop at the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik in the spring of 2013. As usual, we asked for inter-disciplinary contributions to deal with the multi-facetted dimensions of diversity. The response to the 'Call for Papers' was so manifold and touched so many areas, that we decided do split the publication. In addition to this issue there is a book in the making, enriched by additional papers from another workshop at the German/Danish border, where predominantly questions of *culture* are discussed (Gaitanides & Grözinger, in print).

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