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How to Realize Diversity in the Workplace? The Business Model Point of View

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Summary. Human beings have been moving through the earth globe since the dawn of history, and as a consequence, each community is heterogenic, which means that inhabitants from one place are different from inhabitants from another place not only in terms of gender or age, but also in terms of personal history, education and style of life, etc. Nowadays everyone agrees that the issue of diversity is becoming more and more important, from the point of view of growing migration of people for example. Therefore modern entrepreneurs cannot ignore the presence of diverse clients, as well as diverse employees, and have to adapt their business model to the new circumstances. That is why the purpose of this paper is to show the process of diversity implementation from a business model perspective. This text includes discussion of business models, and indicates main advantages and disadvantages of a diversity management-based model. The article is theoretical in nature.

Introduction

When someone is looking for sources of diversity, they should point to migration, which was beyond doubt the root of diversity. People have been moving around since the dawn of history, and their main motives were either business, warfare, colonization, or geographic discoveries. Migration is also observed nowadays – people leave their homelands primarily in search of work. As Y. Zografova

(2013, pp. 93–100) writes, new forms of intergroup behaviour and relationships appear especially in European countries as a result of integration, open labour market and tourism development. This is connected to four freedoms specific to the Single European Market: the free movement of capital, people, goods and services (Simionescu, 2018, pp. 23–34). The existing law, which grants free will of movement, definitely contributes to the diversity formation too.

As it is known, an organization is understood as a social system, where people use an obtainable intellectual and material resources to accomplish their ideas (Sudoł, 2007). In the midst of them, human resources (HR) play a vital role; therefore, special interest should be paid to the management of people in terms of motivation, stimulation of their originality and imagination, and common relations (Czermiński, Grzybowski, Ficoń, 1999). Human resources give an area for other management activities as well, such as: time management, culture management, customer relations management, conflict management, stress management, emotion management, and – as a final point – diversity management (Holck, Muhr, Villesèche, 2016, pp. 48–69).

A crucial part of any business is seeking competitive predominance by distinguishing itself from other participants of market game (van Ewijk, 2011, pp. 680–694). One way to attain this predominance is to choose HR based on the diversity idea. Nowadays everyone agrees that the issue of diversity is becoming more and more important, from the point of view of growing migration of people for example. Therefore modern entrepreneurs, especially in Central and Eastern Europe and other developing regions, cannot ignore the presence of diverse clients, as well as diverse employees, and have to adapt their business model to the new circumstances (Hernik, Minguez Vera, 2016, pp. 57–63). So, the purpose of this paper is to show the process of diversity implementation from a business model perspective. Very often international migration, which has been growing significantly, and has changed demographic structures of societies, is discussed from social and economic problems in negative light (Mikalauskiene, Streimikiene, Mazutaityte-Cepanoniene, 2017, pp. 25–45). Here we want to underline first of all the advantages of migrations and diversity in society. This article is theoretical in nature.

Research method

The purpose of this work was reached by an analysis of publications on HRM, as well as organizational diversity management from the positive and negative perspectives. Discussion on conceptions is shown, and the advantages and disadvantages of diversity management-based model were summarized. The article was written using documentary research and critical analysis method.

Business model in the literature

The expression ‘business model’ has been analyzed in the management system for more than fifty years; for the first time it was used in 1957 by Richard Bellman and Charles E. Clark (2009) in the work entitled ‘On the Construction of Multi-Stage, Multi-Person Business Game’. Then, the term occurred irregularly, while in the early 1990s it began to stir broader importance (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Frequency of appearance of the term “business model” in English-language business literature

Source: https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=business+model&year_start=1850&year_end=2015&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Cbusiness%20model%3B%2Cc0 (10.06.2018).

At the end of the 20th century, problems related to the creation and operation of business models began to be visible in the literature more frequently, which was most likely due to the rising role of the Internet and its pressure on the functioning of the market. The Internet has changed the method businesses function, and the idea of business model was principally applied to those businesses which used new technological solutions. Regardless of many works, it is not easy to define this term precisely. Nevertheless, it is vital to write down that most definitions centre on creating worth and flows, as shown in the following examples.

1. “A business model is a description of how your business makes money. It’s an explanation of how you deliver value to your customers at an appropriate cost” (Parsons, 2018).
2. “A business model is nothing else than a representation of how an organization makes, or intends to make, money” (Osterwalder, 2018).
3. “The essence of a business model is in defining the manner by which the enterprise delivers value to customers, entices customers to pay for value and converts those payments to profit. In essence, a business model embodies nothing less than the organizational and financial ‘architecture’ of a business” (Teece, 2010).

It may be said that a good business paradigm answers Peter Drucker's questions, "Who is the customer? And what does the customer value?" It also answers the vital questions every executive must ask: How do we make money in this business? What is the underlying economic reason that explains how we can relocate value to customers at an appropriate cost? (Ovans, 2015). As an outcome, several main elements of each business model may be identified: venture position in the distribution chain, value (together with products) offered to customers, assets/competencies, sources of income, expenditures, partnerships, and economical strategies (Bis, 2013). The business model may be described as a manner of market activity, but also as a tool which helps the business get bigger and raise.

There is a number of model structure types. Lecocq and Demil (2010) mention three main components: resources and competencies; organizational configuration; and value scheme offered to customers. In turn, Johnson, Christensen and Kagermann (2008) suggest four characteristics: customer value proposition; income recipe; main resources; and key procedures (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Example of model composition

Source: own work based on Johnson, Christensen, Kagermann, 2008, pp. 50–59.

It is essential that all business models refer to resources, which obviously include HR. There seems to be an agreement that HR are a vital part of every business model. However, an issue arises of how these resources should be shaped, and this will be a background for reflection in further parts.

Diversity and HRM

Along with the worldwide expansion of social migration phenomena traditional human resources management (HRM) is not enough. What does it mean in practice? It means diversity management. Diversity more and more often is discussed

in terms of organizations and their workforce, which became the focus of research as early as in the 1960s (Rakowska, 2014; Holck, Muhr, Villesèche, 2016, pp. 48–69). According to B. Jamka, “diversity can encompass every, i.e. visible, natural and acquired, employee characteristic which determines similarities and differences between employees” (Jamka, 2011). Kossek, Lobel and Brown (2006) identify diversity in a slightly broader style: “diversity of the workforce includes a range of factors which differentiate employees, such as age, gender, marital status, social situation, disability, gender orientation, faith, personality, moral values, culture (beliefs, values, perception of the world)”. It should be noted, however, that the evaluation of organization diversity may also be related to its objectives, structure, strategy, culture and resources; what is more, the scope of the concept depends on the mission of an enterprise. From a worker perspective, diversity may be understood as a respect for differences in the workplace (except for behaviours that are generally unacceptable), and also as a system promoting coexistence and co-operation of different people in the company, with respect for human dignity and labour standards (Wawer, 2014; van Ewijk, 2011, pp. 680–694).

Based on this employee-focused definition of diversity, some elements may be identified, namely: primary identity (gender, age, race, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, [dis]ability); secondary identity (place of residence, level of education, family status); as well as the organizational identity (length of service in a company, job position, etc.). According to Roberson and Stevens (2006), differences may be visible and unobservable. In these authors’ opinion, observable features are those that are covered by anti-discrimination laws in many developed countries (for example: gender, age, race, ethnic origin or physical disability). The non-observable differences constitute the second aspect of diversity, which refers to the conviction of person’s identity in relation to other groups of employees. This includes, for instance, education, seniority in the organization, professional experience, as well as life attitudes or everyday life preferences. Anchored in the aforementioned categorization, A. Wziętek-Staśko (2012) attempted to create a construct of leading diversity determinants in modern organizations, and proposed yet an added partition of diversity aspects: into “predictable” and “unpredictable”. As the author mentions, qualities such as gender, age, education, culture, or disability may be effortlessly identified and therefore go to the “predictable” group. Verifying passions, sexual orientation, religious relationship or values is not that uncomplicated, which makes them “unpredictable”. All this involves building an organization model taking human resources as a starting point.

HRM concepts (or models) provide an analytical framework for identifying and better understanding of important factors that shape human resources as a crucial asset of the enterprise (Holck, Muhr, Villesèche, 2016, pp. 48–69).

Fombrun, Harvard, Guest and Warwick's models are the most popularly mentioned concepts. The original model of HRM was the concept developed by Charles J. Fombrun, Noel M. Ticha and Mary A. Devanna (1984), which included four functions and their interrelationships, that is: selection, evaluation, development, and rewards. That method was criticized because it did not consider any outer factors, so innovative models were developed. One of the best-recognized concepts is the Harvard model, which presumes that effectual human resources management should contain stakeholders' interests, current factors, HR strategy and outcomes, long-term results, and reaction (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. The Harvard model of HRM

Source: own work based on Price, 2011.

The core of this concept is the involvement of numerous interested groups (Price, 2011). The Harvard model emphasizes that – from the HRM perspective – the most vital actions are those that shape the organization vs. employee relationship. Effectual management is only achievable when the manager is involved in the growth of the employee, while the employees themselves are seen as special resources, requiring different approach from the rest of the organization's resources (Mazur, 2014, pp. 113–130). Additionally, the social and cultural context of management plays an important role (Natale, Fenton, 1997).

The previously mentioned Wawrick model is an enlargement of the Harvard model, as it is created on the basis of market strategy, while Harvard model focuses on the current circumstances, not the strategic ones. Furthermore, Wawrick model divides main aspects of HRM into: outside (such as culture) and inner (strategy).

Another model was developed in 1997 by David Guest, who stated that when managing human resources, the manager must use certain tools to achieve the desired results. That model assumed that management was based on HR strategy, HR practices, results of resources and behavioural outcomes, performance results and financial consequences. In other words, financial results depended on

the effects produced by the staff, which in turn was the result of their commitment and focus on action. What is more, employees' actions were related to commitment, quality and flexibility, which were all influenced by HR practices. Regardless of the model, it is obvious that HRs need to be managed (Mazur, 2011, pp. 533–543). Both the Harvard and Wawrick models make it evident that the specifics of human resources need to be taken into account and managed in a dissimilar way than any other resources. Moreover, they assume that fundamental elements of the HRM approach, as commitment for example, have a direct relationship with business consequences.

The process of diversity implementation

How to achieve diversity in a workplace is a primary question in this work. So, first of all, one should understand that always it involves a series of complex actions which an enterprise should take as part of the company strategy (Hernik, Minguez Vera, 2016, pp. 57–63). The implementation of diversity management may be divided into six stages: creating a diversity project team; developing scenarios for the future; vision and strategy; conducting diversity audits; corporate goals; and implementing diversity management (Kubica, 2014, p. 200). At the beginning the problem is that most organizations are monocultural, which poses a risk that the environmental analysis may be conducted in a conservative manner. In order to broaden the perspectives, the management may set up a Diversity Project Team (DPT), which will consist of people of different cultural backgrounds. The team should have appropriate skills and clearly defined tasks. But it means also, however, that the manager must know employees better and identify their visible and invisible features. DPT in the initial stage should build and implement the so-called “Scenario-building workshop”. Three different scenarios for what the world will look like in 10–20 years (what its external and internal business shape will be) should be developed, with an emphasis on diversity. Finally, one scenario should be selected as an actionable base for the company. It is good to have this exercise done with external help, such as a moderator.

Usually companies already have their missions and visions of action, but at this moment the vision and mission should be reformulated (Hernik, Bieniecka, 2017, pp. 35–49). This stage should engage the company management and key stakeholders. It is important to analyze the company's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats from this scenario. Based on the findings, the vision and mission of the company should be developed. The next step, which is vital from our point of view, is to formulate a strategy which defines how to implement diversity management. When the above elements have been formulated, the company should return to the present situation and determine its status quo. This requires a diversity audit, or – in other words – analyzing existing HR. The audit is conducted through interviews with all stakeholder groups and may

be accompanied by a standardized questionnaire on attitudes to diversity. The results should be used by the DPT to present a broader audience with main suggestions related to the status quo. They should be the starting point for planning actions for change, i.e. adopting company's approach to diversity management (Hernik, Bieniecka, 2017, pp. 35–49).

It is essential that company objectives related to the implementation of diversity management should be determined by board members and the diversity project team. They must refer to the developed strategy and guarantee participation of relevant departments and other structural units. They should all be obliged to accept these goals and to set clear criteria for assessing their achievement. The company is finally ready to implement diversity. At this stage, the DPT plays a key role, as it oversees, controls and accompanies all activities. The team also functions as a 'communication centre'. This is what the below Figure 4 refers to.

Figure 4. Process of implementing diversity

Source: own work based on Kubica, 2014, p. 200.

It should be mentioned here that the DPT team may be responsible e.g. for: group building trainings which include diversity in all company's departments; events; meetings with a large number of employees to provide information on diversity management; leadership development programmes for diversity management amongst lower-level management; and a change of tools for assessing the performance of managers in order to enhance diversity management and to

allow for the evaluation of its performance (Kubica, 2014, p. 200). One should remember that diversity management is a multi-faceted process leading to the creation of a work environment which benefits different aspects of a business.

Advantages and disadvantages of diversity management

The essence of a business model is in defining the manner by which the enterprise delivers value to customers. And, it is essential that all business models refer to resources, which obviously include the human ones. The main reason for implementing diversity in HR is to create a framework for creativity, innovativeness and, as a result, better efficiency. Moreover, apart from the economic results, social effects – such as greater job satisfaction and empathy – may be expected (Hernik, Bieniecka, 2017, pp. 35–49).

There are other benefits of diversity, for example some of the employees can unleash an untapped potential in themselves and others, and thus better meet their own needs and expectations, as well as expectations of the employer. Respect and understanding for others and using diverse talents and skills of the staff help optimize the work of employees (and thus it benefits the company), while on the other hand it allows for full use of the employee's potential. A homogeneous group of people is associated with a risk of using old patterns and methodologies, which may inhibit creativity. Hence, diversity is important, as it initiates and integrates a variety of ideas, perspectives and employee experience, which may lead to groundbreaking discoveries and increase company's chances of success. A more open environment attracts better and more creative people who hope to be able to implement their ideas in that environment (Hernik, Minguez Vera, 2016, pp. 57–63; Zografova, 2013, pp. 93–100).

As mentioned above, diversity may have a positive impact on the competitiveness of an entity. Having a diverse workforce that is able to adapt to changing environments and respond better to emerging challenges, may build a stronger market position with a competitive advantage. A diverse team of employees is better suited to the needs of diverse clients, as they will understand them better. And the fact that we have more and more diverse customers around, and diversity is a symbol of our time, is indisputable (Hernik, Bieniecka, 2017, pp. 35–49; Parsons, 2018; Zapata-Barrero, 2010, pp. 383–402).

Another consequence of implementing diversity in the company may be meeting the requirements of corporate social responsibility. A diversity-based business entity better complies with the anti-discrimination laws and therefore builds its reputation (Zapata-Barrero, 2010, pp. 383–402). It also means building an image of a modern company and understanding the problems of the modern world. What is more, such a reputation creates an image of a good employer which attracts the best employees, while those who are already employed, will not want to leave to work for competition. Naturally, implementation of diversity

may encounter resistance of employees who are not positive about change, so it is important to be aware that diversity management is a long-term process (Lauring, Selmer, 2013, pp. 631–646.) And introducing changes in HRM may be problematic, especially if one of the underestimated groups suddenly becomes a favoured one. In an enterprise, managers think about diversity due to the lack of women in managerial positions, or the lack of disabled people. And suddenly, these groups become the centre of interest, and become favoured. Such situations should be avoided, and this should be consistently included in the diversity implementation strategy, because the essence of diversity management is that everyone benefits, not just privileged groups. If one group of employees has more rights than others, the implementation of diversity will not succeed. However, still current employees may have a weaker sense of security and may feel stressed by the prospect of change. They may not understand the need of change and do not want new elements of their environment (new job positions, new regulations, new colleagues). It is therefore important for the rules of diversity implementation to be widely known in the organization (i.e. used and presented in internal communication). What is more, the implementation of new ideas, such as diversity, depends largely on the leaders of the organization and their positive attitudes (Karaszewski, Lis, 2014, pp. 53–70). Without this introduction of diversity implementation will be impossible. It must be added as well that in the pursuit of being ‘trendy’, the organization may lose sight of the objective it strives to achieve. Rather than utilizing diversity management as a tool for improving HR policy, it may become merely a strategy to improve company’s PR, which, in the long term, will bring negative effects. This should be avoided.

One can also address broader social issues, such as immigrant problems and integration with the society (Zapata-Barrero, 2010, pp. 383–402). Besides, we can also refer to gender equality in general and notice that the Western culture is still the only one, in which the gender egalitarianism has been implemented in full, at least in law regulations. On the other hand, the poorest results concerning the gender inequality and violation of women’s rights are fixed in the low-developed and poor countries of Asia and Africa (Berishvili, 2016, pp. 108–115; Hernik, Bieniecka, 2017, pp. 35–49). So, implementing diversity in business could improve the situation of women in the society, but these are not issues directly related to business management, so it will not be a matter of discussion here.

Conclusions

Very often international migration, which recently has been growing significantly, and has changed demographic structures of societies, is discussed from social and macroeconomic perspective. It has to do with the fact that people have been moving around since the dawn of history, and as a consequence, every community is heterogenic, which means that people are different from each other not

only in terms of gender or age, but also in terms of background or education. But this statement applies not only to countries, but also to smaller communities, such as employees in a company.

A business model can be understood as a company's plan for how it will create revenues and make a profit. The design of business can contain a mixture of ideas, including conception of human resources. In particular, the bottom of a business model can be formation of HR by conception of diversity. The key reason for using diversity in business activity is to build a frame for inspiration and inventiveness, and, as a result, improved effectiveness. Aside from the financial outcomes, social effects – for example better job fulfilment and understanding – may be assumed. And at last, a value of introducing diversity in the organization may be meeting expectations of CSR.

Answering the question of how to achieve diversity in the workplace, it should be concluded that:

- a) the manager should assess the company's functioning and get to know its current status, especially from human resources point of view;
- b) the manager needs to create a group of leaders ready to implement changes (this should not be done by one person, for example the owner);
- c) a scenario of changes is necessary, and, at the same time, educational and informational campaigns should be conducted among all employees;
- d) the manager must ensure that every employee feels satisfied thanks to changes;
- e) the manager needs to gradually hire new workers and also to offer newcomers help at the workplace;
- f) the manager must constantly inform about the positive effects of changes.

As results from the above points, implementation of diversity must go through several stages, which is not easy, and lasts quite long (even dozen of years). But bearing in mind many positive effects, it is worth taking such a process and bringing it to an end. Naturally, introducing changes in human resources management may be challenging, for example present employees may have a weaker sense of security and may feel stressed by the prospect of revolution, but this should be predicted and consistently included in the diversity implementation strategy.

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Jak realizować różnorodność w miejscu pracy? Punkt widzenia modelu biznesowego

Słowa kluczowe: konkurencyjność, różnorodność, równość płci, HRM

Streszczenie. Ludzie przemieszczają się od zarania dziejów, a co za tym idzie, każda społeczność jest heterogeniczna. Oznacza, że społeczności różnią się od siebie nie tylko pod względem płci czy wieku, ale także pod względem historii osobistej, edukacji, stylu życia itp. W dzisiejszych czasach, ze względu na wiele otwartych granic i możliwości podróżowania, wszyscy zgadzają się z tym, że kwestia różnorodności staje się coraz ważniejsza. Z tego też względu przedsiębiorcy nie tylko nie mogą ignorować obecności różnorodnych klientów, a także różnorodnych pracowników; muszą zatem dostosowywać swój model biznesowy do nowych okoliczności. Celem artykułu jest pokazanie procesu wdrażania różnorodności z perspektywy modelu biznesowego. W artykule omówiono modele biznesowe oraz wskazano główne zalety i wady modelu opartego na zarządzaniu różnorodnością. Artykuł ma charakter teoretyczny.

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