

EMEA DIVERSITY NEWS 41 EDITORIAL

by Michael Stuber, Owner Manager



THE POWER OF SYMBOLS AND NORMS

Barriers can be very visible, even blatant, just like this ‘no high heels this way’ sign at a global headquarters I recently visited. Here, women might get the impression that they have to take a detour and who knows if their extra mile will even get them to the top floor? Of course, the sign forms part of a corporate safety policy and serves as an important protection. It is, however, at the same time one of the many symbols that accumulate to manifest mono-cultural norms. Minorities find it easy to spot and identify many of the micro-inequities in the management world while the dominant mainstream group has to be made aware. For them, many aspects are so implicit (= assumptions) and given (= facts/cornerstones) that they won’t even consider anyone’s responsibility for corporate cultural norms – let alone their own ability to change any aspect of it.



Obviously, the level of awareness – not for diversity alone, but also for the dynamics of differences and for the overall complexity of the topic – determines the approach a manager in charge of Diversity will choose. When Diversity was young and so were the stakeholders, a D&I strategy, process or programme always role-modelled its own message. With D&I maturing and rising up through corporate ranks, many of the new stakeholders are part of the mainstream management culture themselves. They, hence, apply a different set of tools when developing, designing and implementing Diversity. When these tools are taken off the mainstream shelf, they will fight the fire with gasoline and – literally – burn the topic. Experience shows that you can’t start a diversity programme with KPIs and accountability frameworks before key stakeholder support has been enlisted. You can’t set targets until you are done with your homework (analysis, audits and surveys). And you can’t start with workshops when you don’t have anything to offer as a follow up implementation framework.

So, here we are, the D&I Community, with a greater diversity of stakeholders than we expected to have. We are now called upon to practice what we preach and embrace those different approaches while relying on our competencies and transfer knowledge and skills. Exiting times.

Enjoy our post-holiday issue

Michael Stuber

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DIVERSITY DIMENSIONS

The Lesser of Two Evils for Diversity in School Education?

Stereotypes and role models typically begin to be forged starting with early childhood. In their fight against gender stereotypes and traditional roles of men and women, the Södermalm district of Stockholm has recently taken quite a radical new step: to foster the equality between the sexes, it funded the Egalia pre-school for children up to six years of age, which completely bans words like 'him' or 'her' as well as gender stereotyping games. Instead of calling the kids boys and girls, the teachers use the term 'friends'. Toys and books are carefully chosen to avoid contact with stereotypes and even the dolls are gender neutral. Instead, nearly all the books also deal with single parenthood, homosexuality or child adoption, like the story about two childless male giraffes who find an abandoned crocodile egg and adopt it. This approach aims at broadening the assumptions about family life in favour of more diverse models. Above all, the children learn to consider different gender identities and lifestyles to be just as usual as traditional ones. Traditional fairy tales like Snow White or Cinderella are banned due to stereotyping content. The LEGO bricks are placed directly next to the kitchen so that the children won't create mental barriers between cooking and constructing. Girls and boys, sorry: all kinds of friends play together with all the toys and when a conflict arises over the question who should play for instance 'the mum', the teachers will simply suggest to have more than one mum. Doubtlessly, the Egalia pre-school uses one of the most particular and drastic ways of teaching children to become open-minded and to prevent them from getting trapped in gender stereotypes. It is at the same time an effective way to improve the awareness for diversity in a very crucial state of life, while it might be a bit too strict in the way it delivers on its mission. And then: Who will help the children bridge the gap of in-school experiences and perceived out-of-school reality?

A step in the exact opposite direction has been taken by the Crown Woods College in Greenwich, London: Here, the children are separated into groups according to their performance. All pupils wear a school uniform with a tie in different colours marking the membership of the three divisions of the school. The very good and promising pupils wear purple, the less successful red and blue respectively. What worsens the stigmatisation are physical divides on the school premises. Buildings and schoolyards are divided by fences, and even the eating times differ for each of the groups! Needless to say that such discrimination leads to self-fulfilling prophecies as a result of internalised stereotype, and a class society in which pupils from one division don't want to be in touch with the 'others'. Diversity experts will recognise this dangerous dynamics from Jane Elliot's famous 'blue-eyed' experiment, first carried out in the late 1960s, when she successfully divided a third grade class according to eye colour and created aggression and eroding performance within hours. Just like her blue-eyed children started to tease their (former) brown-eyed friends, the pupils wearing purple ties in Greenwich today tease their blue and red wearing (former) friends.

Restarting an Old Discussion: LGBT Equality in the Workplace

It is still a widespread assumption in some cultures – and quite a few companies – that a person’s sexual orientation does not matter at work and therefore shouldn’t be actively addressed by diversity programmes. Experts, however, know that this resistance typically refers only to non-straight identities as heterosexuality is being made visible and audible all over the (work)place. Despite the many LGBT Diversity large-scale projects that already took place over the past ten years, like the Deutsche Bank’s public conference ‘Invisible Potential’ in 2003, and the regular coverage of the topic in the Media, a recent move of the global insurance company Allianz created quite some irritation among blue chip executive boards. In a confidential communication, which miraculously leaked onto business paper front pages, the Allianz executive board invited all CHROs of other leading firms to consider steps towards the better integration of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees at the workplace and also in management where there are almost no openly gay or lesbian senior executives. Corporate reactions clearly show that the move took many outside their comfort zones. One of the quite surprising reactions included a spokesperson of Lufthansa saying that the sexual orientation of an employee was not an issue for the company. Also Volkswagen expressed that the sexual orientation did not play a role although its financial subsidiary Volkswagen Bank had hosted the first-ever meeting of corporate LGBT employee groups back in 2005. A few other blue chip companies showed similar reservations about Allianz’s move.

Meanwhile, in Great Britain, companies have become much more pro-active regarding sexual orientation in the workplace. The British Government Equalities Office have recently published a survey about the workplace equality of LGBT employees in UK companies, which seems to be very different from the German reality. The report shows that the main motivators for organisations to make a workplace more LGBT-friendly are anticipated business benefits, legislation and a general concern for more equality and diversity. There seems to be, however, still a surprising lack of evidence on the business case for LGBT-friendliness. But hasn’t that been the killer argument for various kinds of D&I initiatives for many years? Other barriers the survey quotes include a lack of knowledge about the topic, the belief that no action is required due to already existing fairness as well as other priorities in the D&I arena. One conclusion of their findings recommends an increased good practice guidance on transgender and sexual orientation equality, the promotion of employer networks on sexual orientation and gender identity as well as the separation in the treating of LGB and transgender issues.

What both initiatives show is a wide-spread learning from many current moves in the D&I arena: New stakeholders in the field launch activities without considering what has been built over many years. This relatively new attitude can be regarded as a result of the increased momentum around D&I, fueled by public debate. The limited impact of isolated activities, however, shows that partnering with other stakeholders and thus role-modelling inclusion will create better results – also for D&I projects.

ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGIES

World politics, executive orders and women's charters

After a long history of programs promoting diversity in the US, President Obama recently issued an executive order to increase workforce diversity in the Public Sector, thus sending another strong message about his commitment to Diversity. Government agencies are now required to develop plans for reaching specific goals aligned to the executive order. Although not all details are worked out yet, it is certain that the implementation of the initiative will be supported by a council of deputy agency chiefs, the Office of Personnel Management, the Office of Management and Budget as well as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which has been given a period of 90 days to develop an action plan. After that, the individual agencies have to set up own plans reflecting initiatives for diversity in recruitment, training and promotion in a period of 120 days.

In another part of the world, Egypt is still far away from promoting diversity in politics after just dispossessing its former head of state, Husni Mubarak, a few months ago. All the hope of the people, especially women, now lie in the building of a new government. To ensure the integration of women's rights in this new era, more than 500,000 (!) organisations and individuals have signed the Egyptian Women's Charter supporting six basic demands that Egyptian women have expressed to their new government. They want an equal representation in legislative committees, decision making positions and political parties as well as a clearly stated equality between men and women in all parts of life, including employment and education. Other demands are concerning equal opportunities in social and economic rights, legislation, the establishment of a national women structure and a representation in the media that is free of stereotypes.

Visually impaired pupils gain new sensory experiences at Belvedere museums

The Belvedere museum in Vienna enables visually impaired young people, for whom most museums have no targeted programmes, to experience the Belvedere art collection. The project employs multisensuality in theory and in practice to meet the pupils' needs and let them experience the museum in very specific, finely differentiated ways, while at the same time training their tactile, auditory and visual perception. A central aspect of the underlying concept is the interdisciplinary approach, which takes the diversity of individual learning abilities and interests into account. In the preparation phase of the project, the art educators worked with the children at school using an 'art box', which contained such things as ground plans of the baroque palace on tactile sheets, materials aimed at providing a better understanding of the oil paintings, and even pieces of the materials out of which Belvedere Palace was built. The project was conceived so as to address all the senses, and this involved working with different materials. "A particular highlight, in our opinion, was the workshops in which the children could touch, hear, eat and smell materials related to selected

paintings in order to give them a new »seeing experience,» explains Roswitha Bittner, project director at the Belvedere. In the workshops, the children created their own interpretations of the objects: specific object descriptions, wooden frames with mosaics, sculptures out of clay, plaster and plasticine, text collages with music samples and listening sequences, and two-to-five-minute audio profiles. Finally, the children also created audio guides about the Belvedere, its history and the artworks in its collection.

More information about the project can be found in the kulturkontakt magazine summer 2011: <http://www.kulturkontakt.or.at/magazin>

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Women's Rights: CEDAW shadow report for Portugal

The improvement of equality between men and women has become a top priority for many governments around the world. To assess the situation of women in terms of discrimination in Portugal, the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights prepared a shadow report for the 42nd Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The analysts discovered that, despite the slight improvement in confirming the social role and importance of women, there is still a general prevalence of gender stereotypes and an ongoing invisibility of women especially in the media and in advertising. Furthermore women are not sufficiently represented in political and public life, with men holding the key positions in political parties, government, public bodies and economic and social partners. The analysts explain this situation partly by the difficulties in balancing work and private life. In the field of education, the findings indicate that gender equality policies have not been mainstreamed in the educational sector and that there are lots of gender stereotypes in pedagogical programs and materials. Also the access to continuous professional training especially after working hours is found to be limited for women.

Similar to other countries, although they reach higher academic qualifications, women in Portugal are confronted with a glass ceiling hindering them from reaching top positions in a company, the report shows. At the same time, the gender pay gap becomes wider in the higher levels of qualification. Therefore the experts demand the implementation of affirmative actions. They also discovered massive gender stereotyping in employment advertisements with a strong tendency to separate 'typically male' and 'typically female' jobs as well as questions about private life issues like marriage or children in job interviews with women, even though this is prohibited by law. According to the researchers the government consequently needs to strengthen the monitoring of law and better inform the women about their rights. This is also valid for some employers pressuring men not to take paternity leave in exchange for extra payments. With the inclusion of all aspects of social, political and working life, the report represents a powerful tool to assess a country's progress in terms of equality, not only between the genders.

BUSINESS CASE

Fostering Innovation through Diversity

The latest survey by Forbes Insight ‘Global Diversity and Inclusion – Fostering Innovation through a Diverse Workforce’ proved once more, that Diversity is a key driver of innovation and crucial for global success. 85 percent of the about 320 surveyed executives from the Americas, Asia-Pacific and EMEA agreed that a diverse and inclusive workforce is crucial to encourage different perspectives and ideas that drive innovation. Furthermore, they see diversity as essential for attracting and retaining top talents in the global competition for the best employees. The strategic focus of diversity, however, widely differs across the regions. While the Asian-Pacific area has a significantly higher prioritisation on Nationality and Age Diversity, EMEA companies show an above average focus on Disability. Nevertheless, gender diversity remains the most prioritised topic in all of the regions. Furthermore, there are some differences in the inclusion of regional differences in global strategies. About one third of the companies stated that their global strategy only allows minimal regional modification, whereas the strategy in half of the companies can be adjusted in terms of different approaches and programs in various regions to address regional needs as well as cultural differences.

The priorities and goals in the diversity strategies in most of the companies lie clearly in the retention and development of diverse talent, the ensuring inclusiveness in the work culture as well as the development of a robust pipeline or high-potential diverse talent. According to the participating companies, the current prioritisation in the corporate world will hardly change over the next three years. In most cases, the CEO, the CHRO or the Board of Directors are ultimately held accountable for the success of the diversity and inclusion programmes, in addition to an internal board or committee, which oversees the D&I strategies and initiatives at the majority of the companies.

Despite the clear statement that diversity fosters innovation and competitiveness, there are still existing barriers for more diversity progress. Although a lot of companies stated that they are advancing in regards of gender and ethnic diversity, they also see a lack of progress in terms of disability, age and sexual orientation. Concrete barriers are mainly seen in an adequate middle management execution of diversity programs and in budget issues which prevent a more consistent implementation. The report also quotes common excuses including a current focus on the survival in the current economic situation and the challenge to establish a clear connection between diversity and business priorities.

Unfortunately, the survey does not provide empirically robust evidence for the linkage of D&I and innovation capacity. On the other hand, this lever has never been disputed by smart managers while it has been supported by other scientific research presented in the International Business Case Report (IBCR).

Unbalanced Work-Life-Balance in the EU

There is progress in the area of work-life-integration, says a current study of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), but the distribution of an effective balance between work and private life remains unequal across the two genders. The pan-European research reveals that women continue to be the main stakeholders for raising children in most EU members states. They face hence more challenges than men to integrate their roles in the families with their job responsibilities. Overall, European women of working ages spend three times as much time on childcare as men. Also, one third of the women report that they had to interrupt their employment due to a lack of supply in childcare place. “If men assumed half of the total child care responsibility, this factor would equally affect all working parents and hence create equally fair opportunities for working fathers and mothers,” comments Diversity expert Michael Stuber who continues to criticise the women-only focus of most childcare or even work/life balance discussions.

According to the EIGE, this means that women who work fulltime and take care of children have to work significantly more than men and have thus less free time for hobbies. And it leads to more women working part-time, which might be one way to obtain a better balance of work and private life. Working part-time, however, still comes at the cost of fewer career options, compared with full-time employment. “The notion of availability is another indicator for prevailing male-bonding systems”, adds Michael Stuber who is working mainly with male managers to discuss such phenomena in order to be able to then change them. For the time being, the EIGE study shows that most women in the EU will still have to choose between a career and taking care of their families – just as men do when they work more following the birth of a child or when they only take over a small percentage of family responsibilities.

MEDIA & BITS

Male Bashing and Gender Stereotyping in the Media

While The Washington Post informs its readers about ‘What men can learn from women about leadership in the 21st century’, the International Herald Tribune published a special report about ‘German women boxed out of work’. With colourful pictures of traditional family models and detailed information about what goes wrong in Germany so that the share of women in executive committees is only two percent, the report paints a quite unhelpful picture of the working situation for women in Germany. It is, for example, totally ignoring the tremendous efforts a lot of companies have already taken to increase the share of women in the corporate world. Of course, those have not had instant impact in year one or two, especially not on the highest management levels. Instead, quotes from CHROs, feminist activist Alice Schwarzer and Labour Minister Ursula von der Leyen about fundamental resistance to change seem to suggest that quotas are the only means left in a totally hopeless situation. Some of the facts and figures, and many of the statements

to explain the underrepresentation of women in management are doubtlessly true. It does not help to resolve the situation, however, when serious media provide strongly biased coverage in the one or other direction.

The second example of such single-minded approaches can be found in the Washington Post. The paper highlights why women nowadays are 'better leaders'. Presenting empirical evidence about (stereotypical) male and female qualities certainly won't facilitate a constructive discussion, which is now more needed than ever before. Instead, defensive attitudes and behaviour with male managers are encouraged, making the lives of diversity practitioners a little more difficult.

Roots & Routes – Promoting Intercultural Creativity

As international network for the promotion of cultural and social diversity in performing arts and media, Roots & Routes organises workshops, gigs, events as well as exchange and mobility programs for dancers, musicians and media talents from different European countries.

In their latest program 'Jam Karet – Life Times' within the scope of the European Commission's campaign 'Youth on the Move', 50 young artists from nine European countries presented a mix of global urban culture, including poetry slam, rap, singing, live band, breakdance, contemporary dance, acrobatics, theatre and live visuals at the Gamescom Festival in Cologne.

From 2011 to 2013 there will be a new project called 'EUtropa' with 250 European artists performing with visual and audiovisual arts to create a shared language based on each artist's cultural heritage and contemporary influences.

Further information about Roots & Routes including projects, profiles of the artists, videos, pictures and music can be found on their website: <http://www.rootsnroutes.eu/>

NEWS ABOUT US

New Diversity Training Tool-Kit 'Propelling Potential Principle'

Based on more than 13 years of experience in the field of Diversity and training, the team of European Diversity Research & Consulting has developed a new diversity training tool-kit which is currently being tested with lead contacts. The unrivalled, innovative modular design combines practical exercises, empirical information and transfer support to facilitate multi-faceted learning. The content structure provides open slots to include company-specific information.

Clients can choose between a basic diversity module or an extended version, and add specific modules for gender, age or cultural diversity or for corporate culture / work-life integration. The tool-kit can be supplemented with pre roll-out executive workshops or post roll-out follow-up by an interactive, self-tutoring e-book on 'Diversity in Leadership'. Additional services are offered in the

area of events (specific diversity events or diversity at management events) or regarding the inclusion of employees (through networks or mentoring programmes).

Partnering with Your Event, Research or Communication Project

Having been one of the pacesetters in Diversity on the European level for more than 14 years, European Diversity Research & Consulting continues to be involved in partnerships with NGOs, Public Institutions, and universities. Whether you want to organise a diversity specific event, need assistance in research of current diversity issues like women in management or the demographical change or want to communicate your diversity projects – European Diversity Research & Consulting is a potential partner for your projects.

We reach out to potential participants of your event by promoting it in our newsletter, on our websites or sending info packages to selected contacts, assist in the event organisation and accomplishment by holding the key-note, speeches, workshops as well as key-noting at the event or moderating the day.

For more information please contact us to get an individual offer.

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Published by **European Diversity Research & Consulting**, a pan-European service provider centred on adding value in the field of Diversity Management and Marketing. With 13 years of experience helping international companies in EMEA build effective, high-impact diversity and inclusion initiatives, we have quickly become the go-to, full-service source for research, communication and training in D&I.

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