Value of Age Diversity – Declarations and Practice in Polish Organizations

Amžiaus įvairovė kaip vertybė – deklaracijos ir praktika Lenkijos organizacijose

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The present article relates to management of age diverse teams in organisations and enterprises located in Poland. Managing diversity is an active and conscious process leading not only to a lack of discriminatory conduct but above all to making full use of the potential of the team. The potential resulting from the diversity of knowledge, skills and experience. The diversity of the age of the team members is in fact a differentiation of this exact type, which in addition allows for not only using but also transferring unique competences and rich experience.

Past studies promoting age diversity management often emphasized the need to implement such solutions due to 'demographic coercion'. Without denying the consequences of demographic changes, the present study focuses not on necessity (weak age management practices) but on the possibility to use the diversity of the team to achieve the goals of the organization (strong age management practices). The need for such research is often emphasized in the literature (Kunze, Boehm and Bruch, 2011, 2013; Bieling, Stock and Dorozalla, 2015)

The main aim of the study presented in this article was to examine the awareness of the value of age diversity among the human resources management professionals employed by enterprises and organizations located in Poland, as well as to confront it with the actual activities related to management of age diverse teams in these organizations. The test results indicate that, while most respondents declare their awareness of the value of age diverse teams, they are definitely less likely to implement actual activities related to the management of such teams. It can therefore be concluded that the most common form of management in this area is weak age diversity management practice characterized by only fulfilling legal requirements related to non-discrimination.

KEYWORDS: age diversity management, age diverse teams, diversity management practices.

Abstract

Introduction

Introduction: diversity management

Managing diversity has become an idea which is gaining more and more popularity and at the same time is constantly developing. The original reason for its formation were the anti-discrimination activities affecting the creation of legal norms that oblige employers to provide equal treatment of all employees and candidates. The law referred to as Equal Employment Opportunity (Pitts, 2009; Shen, Chanda, D'Netto and Mong, 2009) actually was the first step to increase the diversity of employees. However, this diversity was due to an imposed obligation and the need for compliance with the provisions that focus on the Surface Level Diversity, covering characteristics such as age, sex, origin, disability etc. (Harrison, Price and Bell, 1998).

In parallel with the legal changes promotional activities aimed at raising awareness of the value of diversity for organisations were also carried out. Such approach has become considerably more significant at the time of very strong demographic changes, consisting in the ageing of societies and the open flow of people between countries, having their consequences for the labour market. In such case, the opening up for the diversity of employees results not only from the need to respect the law, but also from the need to maintain an appropriate quantitative and competence level of organization's human resources (Bassett-Jones, 2005). Still, however, the described approach to diversity stems more from a desire to avoid the problem than from the actual willingness to use the full potential of diversity. An appropriate approach to diversity management should not be based on the solutions allowing solely for its acceptance, but also on solutions that allow primarily for actually availing of it (Shen et al., 2009). Therefore, the approach to diversity management presented in this study is based on a positive perception of the differences between people (Shen et al., 2009) and is not treated as preventing deficits but as an integral part of the organization (Lawthom, 2000) aimed at increasing its efficiency and quality (Kellough and Naff, 2004). It should be noted, however, that such understanding includes both the Surface Level Diversity and the related, and even resulting from it, Deep Level Diversity, such as knowledge, skills or experience, as well as attitudes and beliefs (Harrison, Price and Bell, 1998; Harrison and Klein, 2007; Rabl and Triana, 2014).

Diversity is one of the most important factors affecting the functioning of teams – and hence also their effectiveness. The proper use of the potential of the individual members of a diverse team allows for complementing and extending its resources above and beyond the level available for any of the individuals (Chuch, 1998; Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Roberge and Dick, 2010). The results of the research indicate that the diversity of the team is conducive to faster and better quality of work (Unsworth and West, 2000), innovative and creative solutions (Adams and Galanes, 2011; Roberge and Dick, 2010), increased flexibility and ability to adapt to different situations (Kenrick, Neuberg and Cialdini, 2005), cooperation (Shen et al., 2009) and thus to a greater sense of job satisfaction (Pitts, 2009). Diversity is therefore a factor that, if used properly, can become a source of competitive advantage of an organization. This can happen, but it is neither obvious nor easy to achieve.

Apart from the potential benefits resulting from the work of diverse teams, the main challenges in this area are pointed out, associated primarily with poor communication among team members, resulting from the use of different cognitive perspectives (Kenrick, Neuberg and Cialdini, 2005). Other challenges include lesser identification and cohesion, and, as a consequence, reduced exchange of knowledge, arrested cooperation and increased number of conflicts (Unsworth and West, 2000). However, whether a diverse team will use its potential is not a coincidence, but the consequence of a proper and active management on the part of its leadership (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Unsworth and West, 2000; Roberge and Dick, 2010), as well as the adoption of a comprehensive human resources management strategy in the organization. (Bassett-Jones, 2005; Pitts, 2009; Rabl and Triana, 2014). The inclusion of

diversity management in human resource management strategies follows directly from the fact that the both of these areas are focused on the use of human capital to achieve the objectives of the organization. Shen et al. (2009, p.237) point out that diversity management should be at the heart of Human Resource practices and policies. However, despite the possibility of achieving tangible benefits, it is not always the case. Rabl and Triana (2014) distinguish two types of practices of diversity management, related to the previously described stages in the development of this idea:

_ Weak diversity management practices: they concern the compliance with and acceptance of legal requirements related to non-discrimination. Actions in this area can be used to create a positive image of an organization meeting external requirements. The organization is aware of the (real or only declared) benefits of diversity management.

_ Strong diversity management practices: they refer to the organization's activities reaching far beyond legislative requirements by creating an environment which celebrates, enables and encourages the usage of full potential of diverse teams.

It is believed that the key diversity management activities undertaken within the HRM framework should focus on (Chuch, 1998; Kellough and Naff, 2004; Shen et al., 2009; Kunce, Boehm and Bruch, 2013; Rabl and Triana, 2014):

_ properly conducted recruitment, whose aim is not only to satisfy the anti-discrimination requirements but also actually open the organization for diversity-increasing workers, while simultaneously verifying the candidates' attitudes towards work in a diverse team – it is emphasized that appropriate actions at this stage can result in a cascading effect in the implementation of diversity management,

_ creating real principles of operation and programmes aimed at developing the skills of cooperation in diverse teams,

_ emphasizing, by the leadership and managers, the value and importance of diversity management.

Unfortunately, it is estimated that many organizations still stop at relatively the easiest (mandatory) level of diversity management that consists in mere complying with the principles of non-discrimination (Shen et al., 2009).

Age diversity management

The presented study focuses on the issue of age diversity. On the one hand, this topic is important due to the demographic changes forcing organizations to extend working lives of older workers. On the other hand, proper management of age diversity allows for full utilization and transfer of experience and often unique competencies of older workers. It is worth noting that the more and more frequently noticed and discussed argument of 'demographic coercion' can be a source of motivation to taking action only in the area of weak age diversity management. However, only the implementation of strong age diversity management practices can allow for avoiding the most common hazards in the management of age diverse teams and increasing the chance of achieving the full benefits of its potential.

The need to promote and implement activities in the field of age diversity management is emphasized in many studies, both by international (Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers and De Lange, 2010; Kulik, Ryan, Harper and George, 2014; Mahon and Millar 2014) and Polish ones (Liwiński and Sztanderska, 2013; Czarnecka and Woszczyk, 2013; Kołodziejczyk-Olczak, 2014), containing recommendations regarding specific practices and solutions. The effectiveness of these practices is confirmed by reports indicating an increase in the efficiency of the organizations in which they are implemented (Li-Qun and Chung-Ming, 2008; Kunze, Boehm,

and Bruch, 2011, 2013; Boehm, Kunze and Bruch, 2014; Bieling, Stock and Dorozalla, 2015), as well as by an increase in the assessment of the attractiveness of such organizations as employers (Pinto, da Silva Ramos and Nunes, 2014; Rabl and Triana, 2014).

There are also relatively plenty studies examining the declared opinion of employers and managers on the competencies and specific advantages of older workers (Brzezinski, Milewska, Woszczyk, Nowak and Kobus, 2011; Perek-Białas, Turek and Strzałkowska, 2011, Laus and Ziarkowska-Hordyj, 2012; Turek, Perek-Białas, 2013; Richert-Kaźmierska and Stankiewicz, 2014) or the use of specific solutions in the field of HRM addressed to individuals aged 55+ (Kwiatkiewicz, 2010; Richert-Kaźmierska and Stankiewicz, 2014b; Stankiewicz, 2015). These studies, using qualitative research (in-depth interviews, focus group interviews) concentrate primarily on actions taken towards older employees or on the activation of individuals belonging to this age group. Therefore, it seems that they relate more to issues of ageing and the aforementioned 'demographic coercion' than to the activities associated with strong age diversity management. It should be noted, however, that even these studies reveal inconsistencies between the opinions on workers aged 55+ declared by employers and managers and the actions taken towards them.

On the other hand, there are few reports from research verifying deliberate and planned use of specific practices in strong age diversity management. Some of them assess the relationship between workers belonging to different generations, especially in terms of perceiving the possibilities of mutual cooperation and knowledge transfer (Gajda and Seroka-Stolka, 2014;) or using specific motivating factors depending on the age of employees in organizations and enterprises (Woszczyk and Rook, 2014). As a result, the fact that the need to increase the intensity of the research concerning strong age diversity management practices is emphasized in the literature, should not be surprising (Bieling et al., 2015). The author of the present study hopes that it may, at least partly, help to fill this gap. At the same time, it can be used to compare the attitudes and actions of managers in different countries, and in future will enable an assessment of possible changes in the use of age diversity management practices.

Methodology

The main objective of the presented study was to answer the following questions:

1 How do human resource management professionals from businesses and organizations located in Poland assess the value of age diverse teams?

2 Do enterprises and organizations located in Poland take real actions in the area of diversity management?

3 Can the actions taken in enterprises and organizations located in Poland be classified as weak or strong age diversity management practices?

In order to answer such questions, a questionnaire consisting of two parts was constructed. The first part consisted of research statements aimed at determining how human resource management professionals from enterprises operating in Poland assess the value of age diverse teams. The second part of the survey, on the other hand, verified taking real actions in this regard. Respondents gave answers to statements and research questions, in a five-point Likert scale of 1 – 'definitely not' to 5 – 'definitely yes'. Both parts of the questionnaire were based on the theoretical foundation arising from a previously conducted literature research. In the first part the assumptions resulting from the research related to diverse teams (Roberge and Dick, 2010; Kenrick et al., 2005; Adams and Galanes, 2011) were used, with particular reference to the role of age diverse teams for the organization, the effectiveness of work in such teams and a sense of satisfaction among their members. The second part of

the questionnaire was based on the assumptions related to key actions that should be undertaken within strong diversity management practices (Shen et al., 2009; Kunce, Boehm and Bruch, 2013; Rabl and Triana, 2014 Bieling et al., 2015), with particular emphasis on actions such as encouraging, facilitating and actual use of the work of such teams. The construction of response scales used in questionnaires was adapted to the methodological requirements of quantitative research (Creswell, 2008).

The questionnaires were sent to 150 human resource management specialists from different enterprises and organizations located in northern Poland. In total, 69 questionnaires were returned, however due to errors or omissions in the responses only 64 correctly completed copies were qualified for further analysis.

The surveyed group included human resource management specialists representing such industries as information technology and telecommunications, banking, power generation and distribution, construction, trade and services, as well as public sector organizations. 23% of respondents were employed in small enterprises, 18% in medium-sized ones and 56% in large companies. Among all the surveyed, 72% were women and 28% men. The participants of the survey were 25 to 45 years old. By far most, for as much as 70%, of the subjects were aged 25–34 years, 24% were aged 35–44 years and 6% were above 45 years old.

In order to disclose the assessment of age diverse teams, the respondents were asked to comment on the following statements:

Building teams of different ages:

  _ is an important aspect of Human Resource Management in an enterprise,
  _ increases the effectiveness of the team work,
  _ allows for utilizing the potential of employees fully,
  _ increases the creativity of the team,
  _ increases the satisfaction of the employees.

The detailed results of the respondents indications are presented in Table 1.

The analysis of the replies received made it possible to conclude that 69% of the surveyed (aggregated results 'probably yes' 47% and 'definitely yes' 22%) agree with the statement that building age diverse teams is an important aspect of human resources management in the enterprise. Just as many respondents, 69% (aggregated results 'probably yes' 44% and 'definitely yes' 25%), agree with the statement that such action allows for utilizing the potential of employees fully. It is worth highlighting at this point that in the above two cases, the 'Yes' answer was the most frequently indicated one (respectively 22% and 25% of the indications).

Table 1

The respondents' opinions on the value of building age diverse teams

Building age diverse teams	Definitely not.	Rather not.	Hard to say.	Rather yes.	Definitely yes.
An important aspect of HRM in the enterprise	3%	14%	14%	47%	22%
Increases the effectiveness of the team work	1%	14%	25%	43%	17%
Allows for utilizing the potential of employees fully	3%	8%	20%	44%	25%
Increases the creativity of the team	0%	11%	17%	55%	17%
Increases the satisfaction of the employees	1%	16%	50%	22%	11%

Source: own work.

The responses to further research statements are also interesting. As many as 72% of respondents agree with the statement that building age diverse teams raises the creativity of the team (aggregated results 'rather yes' 55% and 'definitely yes' 17%). Slightly fewer, but still most of the study participants (60%) say that thanks to its age diversity their team is gaining greater efficiency. In contrast, only 33% of the respondents (11% 'definitely yes' and 22% 'rather yes') agree that working in such team can increase employee satisfaction.

With regard to the above results, further statistical analyses were conducted, taking into account the respondents' enterprise size, as well as their age and gender. The analysis showed that in the case of two research statements the respondents' opinions differ depending on the size of the enterprise they worked for. The results for the 'Building age diverse teams allows for utilizing the potential of employees fully' statement are presented in Table 2.

The analysis of the received results allows for concluding that the answer 'definitely yes' to the above statement was chosen by as many as 70% of the respondents from medium-sized enterprises. And a vast majority of them, for as many as 92% (aggregated results 'rather yes' and 'definitely yes'), treated this statement positively. It is worth emphasizing that none of the respondents in this group indicated a negative response. The respondents from small businesses ('definitely yes' 7%). were least likely to agree with the above statement. They also relatively frequently (20%) disagreed with such opinion (aggregated results 'definitely not' 7% and 'rather not' 13%). The above-mentioned dependencies are illustrated in Figure 1.

In order to determine whether the above discussed differences in the results are statistically significant, a statistical analysis employing the Kruskal-Walis test, being a non-parametric alternative for one-factor variance analysis in an inter-intergroup setup, used for comparing three or more samples, was performed. The test results H (2, N = 64) = 10.71; p <0.01 indicate that the differences are statistically significant. Respondents from medium-sized enterprises, as compared to respondents from small and large ones, claim by far more frequently that building age diverse teams allows for utilizing the employee potential fully.

Table 2

The size of the enterprise that employs the respondent and the responses to the statement: 'Building age diverse teams allows for utilizing the potential of employees fully'

Enterprises	Definitely not.	Rather not.	Hard to say.	Rather yes.	Definitely yes.
Low	7%	13%	7%	66%	7%
Average	0%	0%	8%	22%	70%
High	3%	8%	21%	43%	25%

Figure 1

The size of the enterprise that employs the respondent and the responses to the statement: 'Building age diverse teams allows for utilizing the potential of employees fully' [DN definitely not, RN rather not, HS hard to say, RY rather yes, DY definitely yes]
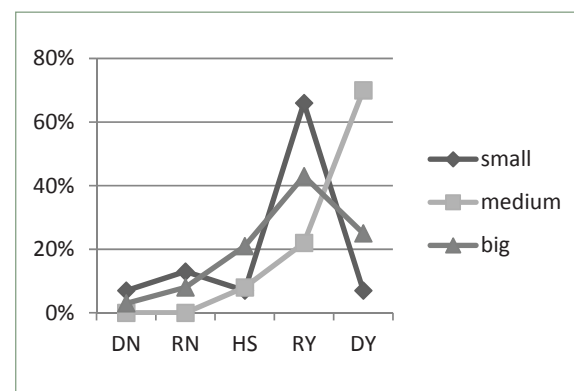

Table 3

The size of the enterprise that employs the respondent and the responses to the statement: 'Building age diverse teams increases the effectiveness of the team's work'

Enterprises	Definitely not.	Rather not.	Hard to say.	Rather yes.	Definitely yes.
Low	7%	20%	13%	53%	7%
Average	0%	8%	8%	42%	42%
High	0%	13%	35%	41%	11%

The second statement in the case of which response differences depending on the size of the enterprise have been identified, was: Building age diverse teams increases the effectiveness of the team's work. The results are shown in Table 3.

As above, the respondents employed in medium-sized enterprises were those who agreed with this statement most frequently (42%). At the same time, only 11% of respondents employed in large enterprises and 7% of respondents employed in small businesses chose this answer. Noteworthy is the fact that 27% of respondents from small businesses did not agree with this opinion (aggregated results 'definitely not' 7% and 'probably not' 20%). The above-mentioned dependencies are illustrated in Figure 2.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test (2, N = 64) = 6.01; p <0.05 indicate that the observed differences are statistically significant. Respondents from medium-sized enterprises, as compared to respondents from small and large ones, claim by far more frequently that building age diverse teams allows for increasing the effectiveness of the team work.

The conducted analyses showed no relationship between age of respondents and their responses. However, a correlation between the gender of the respondents and their responses to some of the statements was shown. The detailed results are shown in Table 4.

The analysis of the obtained results revealed that gender was a factor differentiating the respondents' answers. Men were more likely than women to agree with the statement that building age diverse teams is an important aspect of human resources management (89% of men and 61% of women – aggregated results 'rather yes' and 'definitely yes'). In order to determine whether the discussed differences of results are statistically significant, a statistical analysis was performed using the Mann-Whitney U test, which is a non-parametric alternative to the t-test for comparison of two independent groups. The test results indicate the presence of statistical differences in men's and women's responses [Z = 1.98; p <0.05]. Furthermore, the R Spearman correlation analysis shows a statistical relationship at R 0.3; p <0.05

Men were more likely than women to agree with the statement that building age diverse teams allows for utilizing employee potential fully (89% of men and 61% of women — aggregated results 'rather yes' and 'definitely yes'). In this case, a strong confirmation of this finding was indicated by 33% of the surveyed
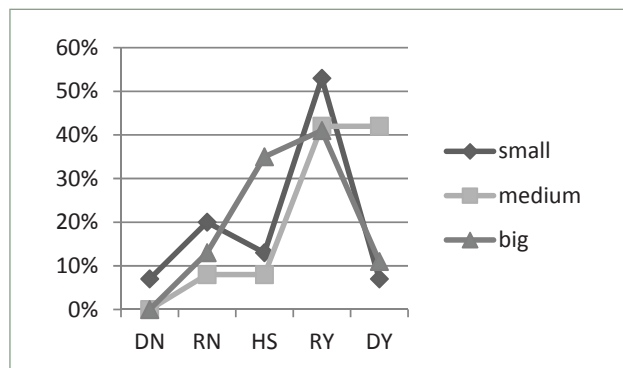

Figure 2

The size of the enterprise that employs the respondent and the responses to the statement: 'Building age diverse teams increases the effectiveness of the team's work' [DN definitely not, RN rather not, HS hard to say, RY rather yes, ZT definitely yes]

Table 4

Gender and the responses to the statement: 'Building age diverse teams increases the effectiveness of the team's work'

Building teams of different ages:		Definitely not.	Rather not.	Hard to say.	Rather yes.	Definitely yes.
An important aspect of HRM in the enterprise	F	4%	20%	15%	41%	20%
	M	0%	0%	11%	61%	28%
Allows for utilizing the potential of employees fully	F	4%	11%	24%	39%	22%
	M	0%	0%	11%	56%	33%
Increases the satisfaction of the employees	F	2%	20%	54%	11%	13%
	M	0%	5%	39%	50%	6%

Source: own work.

men. Results of the Mann-Whitney U test confirm the statistical significance of the difference [Z = -2.00; p <0.05], and the R Spearman correlation analysis shows a statistically significant relationship at R 0.3; p <0.05

In addition, taking into account the gender of respondents in the analysis of responses in this part of the survey allowed for finding an interesting fact. More than half of the surveyed men (56% - aggregate results 'rather yes' and 'definitely yes') and only 23% of surveyed women treated the statement that 'Building age diverse teams increases employee satisfaction' positively. Results of the Mann-Whitney U test confirm the statistical significance of the difference [Z = -2.07; p <0.05], and apart from that the R Spearman correlation analysis shows a clear statistical relationship at R 0.3; p <0.05

While summing up this part of the study, it can be concluded that the opinion of the surveyed human resource management professionals on the value of the age diverse teams is positive. The respondents believe that these teams are an important aspect of human resource management and their creation in an organization increases creativity and efficiency, as well as allows for the use of each employee's potential. However, a small group of the respondents stated that it also leads to an increase in employee satisfaction. It would seem that the factors affecting the greater involvement and use of skills of the team members allowing for improving its efficiency should go hand in hand with a sense of satisfaction of the team members. Perhaps, however, the surveyed respondents are also aware of the challenges and difficulties arising from the work in an age diverse team. It was also found that more positive opinions on the value of age diverse teams were expressed by respondents employed in medium enterprises and men. A more positive opinion received from employees of medium-sized companies can be possibly interpreted as due to easier and faster implementation and faster observation of the real benefits of the creation of such teams, as compared to large organizations. In contrast, an attempt to interpret the more positive opinion of men on the value of such teams would require in-depth research.

It seems that in the context of a positive evaluation of age diverse teams some real actions related to the management of such teams can be expected. In order to verify this claim and respond to the second research question, the answers to the second part of the research questionnaire were examined. The following questions were asked in it: Does the organization you work for:

_ utilize the potential of age diverse teams?

_ carry out actions aimed at facilitating work in age diverse teams?

_ encourage forming age diverse teams?

The detailed results of the respondent indications are presented in Table 5.

The analysis of the responses received allowed for concluding that only 34% of respondents (aggregated results 'rather yes' and 28% 'definitely yes' 6%) use the potential of age diverse teams. As many as 40% of them indicated the answer 'Hard to say'. It seems that in the case of human resource management specialists indicating such response is actually tantamount to camouflaging the answer 'no'. Who, if not them, should know what is happening in this respect in their organizations and implement appropriate measures in this field? Even fewer respondents, 31% (aggregated results 'rather yes' – 27% and 'definitely yes' – 4%), admit that their organizations were taking action to facilitate work in age diverse teams. In the case of this question as much as 47% of respondents admit that such actions are not taken in their organizations (aggregated results 'definitely not' – 15% and 'rather not' – 32%). Relatively most respondents, 41% (aggregate results 'definitely yes' – 14% and 'rather yes' – 27%) say

that their organizations are en-
couraged to create such teams.
However, at the same time 42%
(aggregate results 'definite-
ly – 7% and 'rather not' – 35%)
deny this.

The comparison of these re-
sults to those obtained in the
first part of the study clearly
shows the difference between
the declared assessment of the
value of the age diverse teams
and the actual actions aimed at
utilizing their potential. What is
interesting, in the case of these
results there were no differ-
ences between the responses
received from respondents in
organizations of different sizes
or provided by respondents of
different ages. Only in the case
of a single question concerning
encouraging the creation of age
diverse teams, a difference was
found between the responses
received from women and men.
This difference was significant,
as presented in Table 6.

The question: 'Does your or-
ganization promote creating
age diverse teams' elicited
negative answers from more
than half of women 57 – %
(aggregated results 'definitely
not' – 11% and 'probably not' –
46%). In contrast, the majori-
ty of male respondents, 78%,
responded affirmatively (ag-

Does the organization you work for:	Definitely not.	Rather not.	Hard to say.	Rather yes.	Definitely yes.
use the potential of age diverse teams?	9%	14%	40%	28%	6%
carry out actions aimed at facilitating work in age diverse teams?	15%	32%	18%	27%	4%
encourage forming age diverse teams?	7%	35%	14%	27%	14%

Table 5
Measures related to management of age diverse teams undertaken in the surveyed organizations

Does the organization I work for:		Definitely not.	Rather not.	Hard to say.	Rather yes.	Definitely yes.
encourage forming age diverse teams?	F	11%	46%	15%	22%	6%
	M	0%	11%	11%	45%	33%

Table 6
Gender and the assessment of actions taken in the area of age diverse teams management

During the recruitment process in my organization:	Definitely not.	Rather not.	Hard to say.	Rather yes.	Definitely yes.
the principles of protecting against discrimination are adhered to	4%	12%	13%	38%	29%
attention is drawn to the selection of candidates to enable building age diverse teams	7%	38%	23%	22%	6%

Table 7
Measures related to management of age diverse teams undertaken during recruitment process

gregated results 'rather yes' – 45% and 'definitely yes' – 33%). Results of the
Mann-Whitney U test confirm the statistical significance of the difference
[Z = -3.82; p <001], and the R Spearman correlation analysis shows a statistically significant
relationship at R 0.48; p <0.0001.

Additional two questions asked in the second part of the study were: 'Are the principles of
protecting against discrimination on grounds of age adhered to in the recruitment process in
your organization?' and 'Is attention drawn to the selection of candidates in a way allowing
for construction of age diverse teams during recruitment?' The responses obtained are pre-
sented in Table 7.

The analysis of the responses received allowed for concluding that only 67% of respondents (aggregated results 'rather yes' – 38% and 'definitely yes' – 29%) confirm that their organization follows anti-discrimination rules. However, only 28% (aggregate results of 'definitely yes' – 6% and 'rather yes' – 22%) of respondents admit that attention is paid to the selecting candidates who could build age diverse teams. This may mean that the actions of the respondents in this area result by far more frequently from the need to respect the law, and not from a desire to utilize the potential of age diverse teams. In this context, the fact that 16% of human resource management professionals denied this statement (aggregated answers 'definitely not' – 4% and 'probably not' – 12%) and further 13% indicated the answer 'Hard to say', seems to be an additional source of confusion. In case of these results no significant differences in the responses received from the respondents according to age, or the size of the organization were found.

Discussion

The obtained research results are partly consistent with literature reports. Firstly, the opinions of the researched human resource professionals on the role and effectiveness of work of age diverse teams are consistent with reports from empirical studies (e.g. Boehm, Kunze and Bruch, 2014; Bieling, Stock and Dorozalla, 2015). Secondly, the discrepancy between the declared opinions and actions taken by managers within the scope of HRM, indicated in the literature, has been confirmed (Richert-Kaźmierska and Stankiewicz, 2014b; Stankiewicz, 2015). However, the results also point to some other discrepancies. They are related to the respondents' opinions on the satisfaction from working in age diverse teams. Reports from previous studies presented in the literature show that a sense of job satisfaction among members of age diverse teams is high and shapes the positive atmosphere also in the entire organization (Rabl and Triana, 2014). However, only one third of the surveyed respondents expressed the opinion that the work in age diverse teams can increase such satisfaction. It appears that this divergence can be explained as follows: as the organizations and companies participating in the study rarely take real actions in the field of age diversity management, only a part of the respondents may have experience in this area. Therefore, the large number of positive opinions on the work efficiency can be a result of so-called widespread social belief, or stem from the so-called declarative attitude, which lacks a direct link to the situations experienced in reality — including a sense job satisfaction in such team (or lack thereof). And this would explain the very high percentage (50%) of the 'I don't know' responses.

It is worth mentioning here that the declarative attitude is mentioned as a component of weak diversity management practices (Rabl and Triana, 2014).

Practical and social implications

The obtained results suggest possible ways of practical actions. They should relate to reducing the discrepancies between the declared opinions and the actions undertaken by specialists in the field of age diversity management. Such actions require diagnosing the reasons for such inconsistency. In the absence of knowledge and practical skills related to implementing such solutions in the organization, it seems appropriate to continue the activities aimed at promoting the best practices and supporting the implementation of solutions customized for a given organization. Such actions can cause a specific cascade reaction. Due to the fact that organizations using age diverse management practices are rated as more attractive by both the employees and the external environment (e.g. Rabl and Triana, 2014), they shape public expectations as a result, forcing changes in other organizations. Even if we assume that some of the opinions collected during the survey are merely declarations and meet the current societal expectations and legal requirements in this area, they can provide a good starting point for further action related to the implementation of strong age diversity management.

When interpreting the results, several limitations should be taken into account. Firstly, the responses analysed in the research were collected only from a portion of respondents invited to the study. Of course, there could have been numerous reasons for refusal to participate in the study, but regardless of them, we should be aware that the results cannot be extrapolated to a larger population. Moreover, attention must be paid to the disproportionate distribution of responses received from HR professionals from small, medium and large enterprises and organizations.

Another important point to keep in mind is the specificity of opinion research. It is difficult to determine to what extent a received opinion is real, as opposed to declarative, resulting from the desire to adapt to 'the correct paradigm'. The present study emphasizes this in the section describing the results reflecting a quite visible tendency to select the 'I don't know' answer. It is difficult to accept that the human resource management professionals did not know whether the actions mentioned in the question are carried out in their organizations.

In addition, it should be noted that the results of the study indicate a mismatch between the declared opinions and the actions undertaken by HR professionals, but the factors that may influence on this situation were not analyzed.

Both the results of research and the presented limitations suggest possible directions for future research: it could cover more organizations, while distinguishing enterprises according to their size, which could allow for verifying some of the results obtained in the presented study. The next step could be an attempt to accurately diagnose the factors affecting the differences between the declared opinions and the actions taken in the field of diversity management. In such case, it would be worthwhile to consider not only factors external to the organization but also the internal ones, such as the type of activity (production, services) or the degree of independence left by the executives to HR professionals responsible for decision-making in this regard.

Limitations and future research directions

The conducted study made it possible to answer the research questions posed earlier. Human resource management professionals of the surveyed organizations located in Poland declare their mostly positive assessment of age diverse teams. They believe that such teams increase the efficiency of work, allow for utilizing the full potential of employees, increase creativity, and are an important aspect of human resource management in the enterprise. Unfortunately, the relatively high level of declared awareness of the value of such teams is not connected with actual measures aimed at allowing for utilizing them in practice. In addition, activities at the recruitment stage, indicated in the literature as a key factor in supporting diversity management, definitely consist rather in fulfilling the anti-discrimination requirements than in a real opening for the creation and utilization of age diverse teams. These results indicate that actions taken in the surveyed enterprises and organizations located in Poland can be classified as weak age diversity management practices. Only a few specialists declared utilizing, facilitating or encouraging the creation of such teams — actions characteristic for strong action age diversity management practices.

Drawing on the obtained results, it is difficult to unequivocally determine whether the assessment of the value of management of age diverse teams is only a declaration resulting from political correctness and weak age diversity management. Another option is that it results from a real belief in the values of such teams in the absence of knowledge and skills needed to select and implement concrete actions. In the latter case, it would be appropriate to promote practices indicating the most suitable procedures used by specific organizations and companies (Best Practices), as well as educational activities aimed at supporting and equipping managers with specific skills related to management of age diverse teams.

Conclusions

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Santrauka

Katarzyna Stankiewicz. Amžiaus įvairovės vertė – teoriniai aspektai ir praktika Lenkijos organizacijose

Straipsnyje siekiama atsakyti į klausimus:
1. Kaip žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo profesionalai iš Lenkijos įvairaus tipo organizacijų vertina skirtingas amžiaus aspektu darbuotojų komandas?
2. Ar Lenkijos organizacijose galima aptikti realias veiklas, susijusias su įvairovės valdymu?
3. Ar šias veiklas galima klasifikuoti kaip stiprias ar silpnas įvairovės valdymo praktikas?
Tyrime dalyvavo specialistai iš šiaurės Lenkijos. Tirtų organizacijų žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo

specialistai pozityviai vertino įvairaus amžiaus darbuotojų komandas. Rezultatai atskleidė, kad tokios komandos didina veiklos efektyvumą, leidžia panaudoti visą darbuotojų potencialą, didina kūrybiškumą ir yra svarbus žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo aspektas. Deja, tokių komandų vertės deklaravimas nėra susijęs su realia praktika. Pavyzdžiui, veiklos įdarbinimo etape mokslinėje literatūroje įvardinamos kaip esminės įvairovės valdymo kontekste, praktikoje realizuojami tik antidiskriminaciniai reikalavimai, o ne realiai kuriamos ir įveiklinamos skirtingo amžiaus darbuotojų komandos. Straipsnyje teigiama, kad tirtose Lenkijos įmonėse tik iš dalies realizuojama skirtingo amžiaus darbuotojų komandų valdymo praktika. Tik keli specialistai teigė, jog kuria, skatina tokio tipo komandas.

Gauti rezultatai implikuoja tam tikras praktines galimybes. Veiklų planavimas ir realizavimas pirmiausia turi remtis tokių neatitikimų diagnozavimu, taip pat „geriausių praktikų" perėmimu, jas adaptuojant konkrečiai organizacijai; dar vienas sprendimo kelias – įgalinti vadybininkus, jiems suteikiant reikiamų žinių ir formuojant praktinius įgūdžius, susijusius su skirtingo amžiaus darbuotojų komandų vystymu. Tokie žingsniai gali sąlygoti tam tikras „kaskadines" reakcijas. Organizacijos, taikančios su darbuotojų amžiumi susijusias vadybines praktikas, yra reitinguojamos kaip patrauklesnės ir darbuotojų , ir išorinės aplinkos (Rabl, Triana, 2014), visa tai didina visuomenės lūkesčius, sąlygoja pokyčius kitose organizacijose.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: amžiaus įvairovės valdymas, skirtingo amžiaus darbuotojų komandos, įvairovės valdymo praktikos.

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