

Diversity In Theory and Practice

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Schedule of Conferences:

- **First Conference “Understanding diversity: Mapping and measuring”**, 26-27 January 2006, FEEM, Milano, Italy. Contact person: Valeria Papponetti, valeria.papponetti@feem.it
- **Second Conference “Qualitative diversity research: Looking ahead”**, 19-20 September 2006, K.U.Leuven, Leuven, Belgium. Contact person: Maddy Janssens, maddy.janssens@econ.kuleuven.ac.be, and Patrizia Zanoni, patrizia.zanoni@kuleuven.ac.be
- **Third Conference “Diversity in cities: Visible and invisible walls”**, 11-12 September 2007, UCL, London, UK. Contact person: Valeria Papponetti, valeria.papponetti@feem.it
- **Fourth Conference “Diversity in cities: New models of governance”**, 16-17 September 2008, IPRS, Rome, Italy. Contact person: Raffaele Bracalenti, iprs.it@iprs.it
- **Fifth Conference “Dynamics of diversity in the globalisation era”**, 15-16 September 2009, FEEM, Milan, Italy. Contact person: Valeria Papponetti, valeria.papponetti@feem.it

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This batch of papers has been presented at the Second EURODIV Conference “Qualitative diversity research: Looking ahead”

Diversity In Theory and Practice

Summary

This presentation is about a case study of two organizations working with diversity. One of the studied companies was a large energy company with over three thousand employees and the other was a small dental clinic with thirty employees. The aim of the study was to pay attention to obstacles and possibilities to implement a plan for diversity. The study is mainly based on data collected during observation, interviews and a smaller part of written material such as policy documents. Focus is on the process of implementation and questions like; How did it happen, in which way and why? are of interest. Theoretically, the study belongs to the tradition of grounded theory. One of my conclusions from this study is that diversity in organizations is about individuals since they together compose the diversity. To be able to make work with "diversity" issues more useful for the organization it has to be connected to the leadership and structure in the organization. Another conclusion is that organizations need to be organized in a way that makes it possible to run the idea of diversity. A demand for diversity in the organization and production is necessary to make the plans and ambitions active, otherwise they will linger on beside the organization.

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Managing and promoting diversity has become an important priority for many companies and public authorities during the last several years. It is increasingly common, for example, that they demonstrate their values in so-called diversity policies. Moreover, many also have plans for implementing these values in practice at their workplaces. In this article I analyse two companies' courses of actions with their diversity work. By studying the rhetoric about the diversity work and how their activities are organised I shed light on some of the different possibilities and obstacles encountered when theory is expected to be put into practice.

This study is built on two case studies carried out during a one and one-half year period beginning in 2000. One of the case studies was conducted at a large energy company (Birka Energy), while the other concerned a small dental clinic. Methods used included participant observation, interviews and document analysis. Overall, the analysis follows an inductive logic and is organised in three parts. In the first two parts I present the case studies, from which I draw conclusions in the third and concluding part.

Material and method

The two companies differ from each other in a variety of ways that affect their diversity work. These differences include issues connected with production, organisation, professional and vocational categories, working environment and methods for managing diversity. These differences have also influenced the collection of material – largely as a result of the fundamental varying ways in which the companies have worked with the question of diversity among their staff members.

I observed at a work site within the energy company for a month. It was at the operational production at a district heating plant with about thirty employees. Their task is to produce heating in their geographic district by burning refuse and biofuel. Most of the staff had a college degree with training as a technician or engineer. The work was organised in shift teams with one shift leader and six persons. Given that the work is too technically complex for a typical outsider I was not able to actively participate in the daily work. Instead, I observed the daily routines and the interactions between the employees at the work site. During my stay I talked frequently with the staff and conducted formal interviews with ten of

them. These interviews, which took around one hour each, were tape recorded and transcribed. In addition, I collected documents that describe the company's work with diversity.

I stayed at the dentist clinic for two months. I worked at the reception for slightly more than half of that time, which gave me an insight in the daily work at the clinic. I also interviewed ten members of staff. The interviews lasted for around an hour each and were tape recorded and transcribed. Unlike the energy company, which had policy documents for their work with diversity, no such materials concerning diversity existed at the dental clinic. The clinic's diversity work was illustrated in their ways of organising work and staff – a point to which I will return later in the article.

The empirical material from both companies has been analysed with text analytical methods. The contents were thematised and comparisons between and within the companies were conducted to identify relevant differences and similarities. The analysis has been governed by the overarching question of what kinds of any factors that promote or prevent the implementation of the work with diversity at each company. I look for an answer to this question by analysing the meaning in different concepts that are used in the documents at talks of diversity and compare it with the work in practise.

Background to the work with diversity at the energy company

The energy company had been working with diversity issues for ten years when I examined it. It had profiled itself publicly in its promotional and advertising materials as a company that actively promoted diversity in working life. In addition to the externally-directed part of their drive for diversity also, their internal materials include two kinds of documents: one policy for diversity and one plan they call a plan for integration.

There are two versions of the story describing how the work with diversity started at the company. The first is that there was a shortage of engineers and the personnel manager at the time noticed that applicants with foreign names were being excluded during the recruiting process. He was convinced that it was a waste of resources and on his recommendation the recruiters had to include applicants with foreign names when they selected persons for interviews when they made appointments.

The other explanation is linked to the so-called Laserman episode in the Stockholm area (“Laserman” was a person who during a period in the early nineties shot immigrants with a rifle equipped with a laser sight. Ten persons were injured; one of them was killed and two of the victims were badly wounded). During that period people felt quite unsafe and scared and looked for safety among each other. One consequence of these events was that a new network took form within the company, which among other things, led to increased communications among the staff people with immigrant background. They discovered that they had lower wages, fewer opportunities for career development, and less in-service training than their native Swedish colleagues. Moreover, they shared the feeling of not being granted access to the spirit of the working community. With these experiences in common they decided to form an association and called it “World club” (Världsföreningen). The purpose of the association was to support immigrants within the company by offering them the same opportunities at the workplace as other employees. The idea, somewhat similar to a labour union, offered employees of foreign extraction (from another country of origin than Sweden) an organization to contact when they felt they had experienced discrimination. The management of the company supported the initiative both morally and economically. Today some of the members are an integral part of the company’s work group for integration at the company.

It was not obvious from either the written documents or the interviews whether it was the personnel manager or the World Club that first took up the issue of discrimination within the company. Most interesting, however, was that the very subject of discrimination was placed on the agenda and started to be discussed within the company. Regardless of the actual source of the original initiative, it led to the production of the documents with policies and strategies encompassing the entire company. Two of these documents are of particular significance for the energy company, since they provide basic framework for the company’s work on diversity. First is the policy pertaining to “cultural diversity” which concerns the whole company, and which covers roughly three thousand employees. The second key document is the company’s strategy for implementing their policy, a so-called plan for integration.

Below I analyse both documents: the diversity policy and the plan for integration concerning the whole company. Thereafter, I will examine the implementation of these policies at one workplace from the perspective outlined above.

The meaning of cultural diversity

The energy company's policy for cultural diversity reads as follows:

Birka Energy would like to mirror the society we live in, where many cultures meet and cooperate. Our company culture develops and is enriched in the meeting between different cultures. Cooperation between cultures increases creativity, development and willingness to change. Therefore Birka Energy sees opportunity and value in differences.

Here we see that the policy for diversity envisions *cultural encounters* and *cooperation* at *both* a local and societal level. The company wants to mirror the society of which it is a part, at the same time it wishes to develop its company culture through meetings between different cultures. Furthermore it argues that creativity, ongoing improvement and the willingness to embrace change will increase through cultural cooperation. For these reasons the company perceives cultural differences as valuable and as sources for shaping opportunities.

The conceptual core of the company's policy for "cultural diversity" is the meaning invested in the concept of diversity. Diversity refers to "culture", and culture is conceptualized as being connected with national/ethnic origin. The company notes in its policy document that there is value in differences and that cooperation and meeting between cultures fosters creativity, development and will to change. The company wants to create a space in which people with different cultural origins are able to meet and co-operate, which requires at least two parties with "different" cultures. Implied here, is that they think of culture as something essential, that is to say clearly-defined, lasting and manifest in people.

Certainly there are groups of people who differ from one another culturally in a variety of ways. The main question is how these differences are constituted – in other words, which combination of factors constitute or shape actual differences. This is often unclear and even uncertain because situational factors can have an influence on shaping the profile of a group in a certain context (Hylland-Eriksen 1998). Culture is often used as a designation of national/ethnic belonging. Yet, other belongings in social life have bases comparable to culture, revolve around other specific shared values and perceptions about the world – but without any distinction based on nationality or ethnic origin. For example, an inhabitant of a large city in one country can have more in common with his/her urban counterpart in another country than with a fellow countryman living in the countryside. A key reason for that is there are typically substantial differences in living conditions inside any single country (Hylland-Eriksen 1999). Consequently, what is really meant by "meetings between cultures" is not entirely clear. Who should meet whom and what they should share at the meetings is an open

question. As we have already seen above, the implication of the energy company's diversity policy is that different culture implies different national or ethnic origin than Swedish.

There is also a problematic ambiguity embedded in this way of defining cultural diversity. On one hand, people are imagined as bearer of essential actual "cultures" – they are inherently and enduringly different than their native Swedish counterparts. On the other hand, cultures are expected to be influenced by other cultures in a way that leads to process-oriented and dynamic effects (see for example, Sen, 2006?). Here I refer to the creativity, development and willingness to embrace change which the company expects from mentioned meetings. From the assumption that differences contribute to such processes, the limitation to cultural diversity is peculiar. Does it mean that none of the other differences between people do not contribute to the desired effects?

This leads us to additional problematic aspects of the conceptualizations contained in company's document that concerns trustworthiness as well as support within the organisation. Even though obvious difficulties exist within the company (see i.e, World Club creation) the expectations from what diversity of cultures will bring about for the company is highly idealized. It is not apparent from these idealized image of diversity that there is an understanding that cultural diversity also carries with it certain challenges. Moreover, this touches another important issue, the extent to which the company (or any company) is capable of creating standards and routines that break substantially with the dominant societal norms.

Weak support for the policy in the plan for integration

The company produced an extensive action plan including concrete measures and a quite wide drive concerning different spheres within the company. According to the company's plan for integration and their own summary, they focus on a mix of internal and external work that can be grouped into the following categories; *recruitment*, *equal conditions* and *education*. Below I provide highlights from the plan, along with remarks outlining the extent to which the planned activities have been carried out. Explicit parts of the plans for integration, provided in the company's own words (the presentation is summarized by the author), are included under the heading "objectives"

1 a) Increase the proportion of staff with “international background” (it is the companies word for immigrants within the company) through recruitment, promotions and appointing of managers.

Objective: The proportion of staff with international background shall increase from 5 % to 7 %, the share of managers with international background shall increase from 2 % to 4 %. The timetable for fulfilling these objectives was project several years into the future, extending well beyond the completion of this study. The number of international staff and managers shall be counted by the staff manager at the start of every year (they do not register but estimate international origin).

Result: The timetable for implementation of the objectives was formulated for a time period that extended beyond the time frame of this study. There are not any results to present.

1 b) Increase the proportion of staff with an immigrant background in projects, inquiries etc.

Objective: Measurable objectives are to be specified and performance on these evaluated both at affiliated companies as well as the parent company.

Result: No objectives were specified in the affiliated companies.

2) A study about attitudes on equality and cultural diversity will be carried out within the company.

Objective: The inquiry shall be completed at the latest at the turn of the year 1999/2000.

Result: An attitude study was carried out by Sifo (a well known survey institute), with 800 randomly selected staff members. The study results were not available to me at the time of writing.

3) Management training program shall contain a section on cultural diversity with the purpose of support managers in the realisation of the diversity policy. The managers are responsible for identifying candidates with an immigrant background to be recruited into the program.

Objectives: At a minimum, ten members of staff with an immigrant background should participate in the management training program by 2003.

Result: As of the beginning of 2000, no section about cultural diversity had been developed for the management training program which the company’s 350 managers went through.

4) The internal control of the working environment includes, beginning in 1999, plans for integration and follow-ups at the company level (bolagsnivå).

Objective: Every company in the group of companies shall develop their own plans for integration with measurable objectives. The plans for integration shall be followed up in the internal control of the working environment.

Result: None of the six companies had developed any plan for integration as of the publishing of the year 2000 plan for working environment.

5) Birka Energy shall continue analysing the wage statistic as well as the outcome of wage negotiations aiming to avoid wage discrimination.

Objective: An overall analysis of the group of companies shall be done every year.

Result: The analysis is carried through at every company at the same time as annual regulation of wages is conducted under the supervision of trade-union representatives.

6) Implement an annual summer school for youth with a multicultural and a gender equal composition in the group of participants.

Objective: At least four new summer courses for least fifteen participants with different cultural backgrounds, shall have been carried out as of the turn of the year 2002/2003.

Result: Since 1997, one three week summer course is carried out for fifteen high school students. Participants shall consist of equal numbers of girls and boys and half of them with another background than Swedish. Participants shall receive the same wage as the youth who work in the company during the summer.

7) Birka Energy shall inform about their point of view on cultural diversity when they invite external tenders for supply of service and products.

Objective: A newsletter shall always be attached to make an inquiry to external suppliers as tenders.

Result: It is not clear whether it is done or not. In the affiliated company "Birka Marknad", for instance, all managers have received written information about the procedure and their obligation to realize it. Whether the information actually reached them or has been used is not known (neither by me or responsible persons in the company). At least some staff managers are not aware of the information is not familiar for some staff managers. One explanation is that it may not be relevant for their particular work and business.

8) Members of staff with an immigrant background will be offered the possibility to participate in the mentor program for members of staff with an immigrant background.

Objective: At least two new programs with at least 6 participants in each shall be started by the beginning of 2003.

Result: In April 2000 a mentor program was set up with six attendees.

As an addition to the policy, the company has included a summary of their strategy up to 2003 from the paragraph in the plan for integration:

** We shall increase the knowledge and awareness of cultural differences within our group of companies, for instance, by managerial education and seminars.*

** We shall communicate Birka Energy's point of view on both gender equality and cultural diversity in all external contacts, as in the group of companies' job announcements and other advertisements.*

** We shall actively participate in outward directed work that influences public opinion.*

** We shall reach the objectives in our plan for integration! In the long run, Birka Energy's number of staff should have an ethnic and cultural mix that mirror the ethnic structure within the domain we act within (=our customers).*

The plan for integration describes a quite broad initiative embracing diverse spheres of activity at the company. These can be summed up in terms of the following categories: recruitment, influencing public opinion, equal conditions and education. A significant portion of the objectives were not carried out according to the schedule. In addition, it seems reasonable to consider the plan for integration as a support for the policy. Unfortunately the documents have quite different directions, which implies that they do not support each other. For instance there is a lack of concrete proposals for how collaboration or meetings should bring about integration or diversity. Neither is it pointed out how people's differences should

contribute to the creativity, development and willingness to embrace change that the policy identifies as an output of meetings and collaboration.

The plan for integration basically focuses on issues of representation, i.e. to create opportunities and access through recruitment, promote and educate immigrants with focus on career advancement. Here the distinction rests on immigrant status. From my point of view there is a problem with the type of campaign that focuses on distinguishing one group of people from other employees, both because it may generate destructive backlash and because of a tendency to emphasize and harden the very categories it seeks to minimize. Why are all employees not offered the same opportunities? Another perspective on cultural diversity could, for instance, entail a general effort including all staff, integrated into other personal political issues and thereby become invisible as a campaign to reconcile, integrate and benefit from cultural differences within the company.

Diversity and equality

At the same time diversity is stressed as valuable, equality and one and all's right to same opportunities, rights and duties are emphasized as important guiding principles in the company's staff policy. This is also expressed through the company's external communications and I will here illustrate how it is described for their customers and suppliers. At tendering for external suppliers, the company attaches a newsletter informing potential contractors about their view on cultural diversity. The newsletter provides information about the company's active work with cultural diversity. It also summarizes Birka Energy's policy for equality in following five lines:

- 1) Cultural diversity is a strength for Birka Energy.
- 2) We see a value in diversity.
- 3) Our working climate shall be characterized by respect, understanding and knowledge about other people and cultures.
- 4) All members of staff within Birka Energy shall have same opportunities, rights and duties.
- 5) Birka Energy works actively for equality within its group of companies.

The newsletter for customers expresses a number of values that are presented as both self-evident and uncomplicated. It generally corresponds with the content of the policy for cultural diversity. However it differs in lines 3, 4 and 5. Paragraph 3 indicates that respect, understanding and knowledge of other cultures shall be the norm for the working climate. While nothing is said about how we should read and understand the information about "the

others”, the statement infers that knowledge for being able to understand “them” should be obtained.

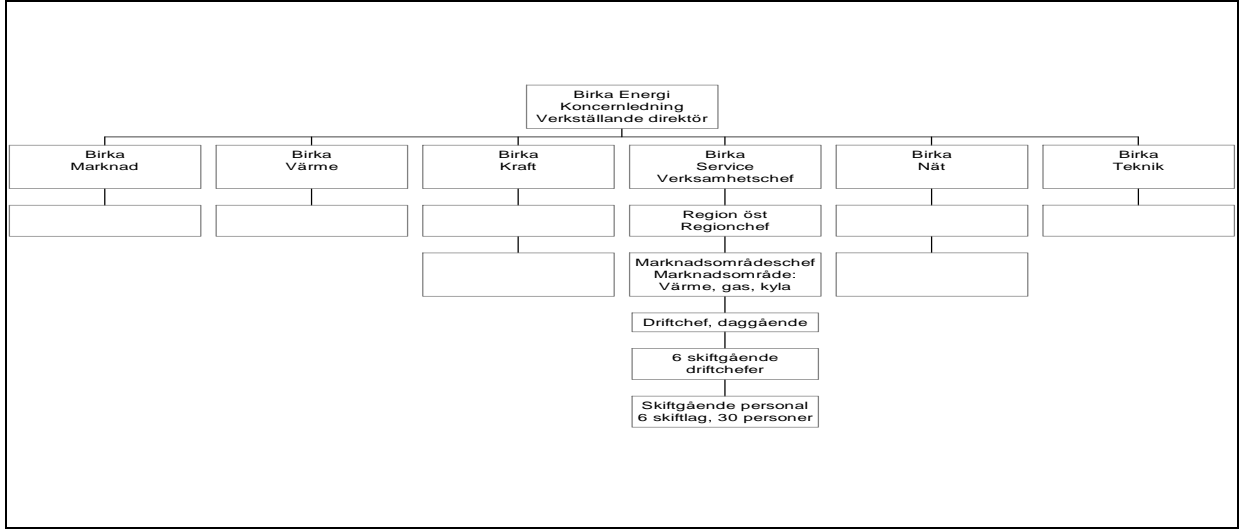
As in the policy document, culture is supposed to be an obvious and durable phenomenon that can be delineated and understood. The open question implied here is: who are the people that should be understood and what elements constitute these cultures that employees are to respect and acquire knowledge about? Are they talking about some of their members of staff? Do they mean that people need knowledge about other people’s culture but not their own?

It is also interesting to inquire how equality principles are realized in the company’s structure and practices. The results from my interviews with staff and observations at the worksite suggest that staff members have little influence over their work and that they do not participate in changes or development at the worksite, or on production procedures. Decisions on changes in the organisation are usually presented to the staff as a given fact. As an example, the company had just finalized the fifth reorganization during the last two years. According to the staff, one of the reorganisations could be quite at odds with the previously implemented one.

The evidence from my case study suggests that the company has a collective and instrumental view of the staff, and that the management does not expect them to do anything other than their daily routines within production. Staff members have a corresponding comprehension of themselves as a group. The staff does not imagine it possible for the organisation to change its policy and adjust itself to the needs of the staff; instead staff members have to adapt themselves to the organisation. The procedure is the same for everybody, Swedes and immigrants alike, and there is no accommodation of differences. At the worksite there is no apparent ambition for integrating the individuals as self-governed parts within the organisation, rather, to assimilate them. “Assimilation” is used here in the meaning that the individuals are incorporated within the organisation as identical, interchangeable, and thereby a non-problematic part of the system.

Another question is how equality is conceptualized in a company that conveys a contradictory message of its organisational structure. The organisation is arguably hierarchical, as evidenced by stratification into many different decision-making levels. Each level is under the control of another level, which indicates a restricted responsibility and influence on the

enterprise at each level. A hierarchical organisation is a way of organising from up to down and a way of organising the work and decision procedure within a company. The structure expresses a view on power. In a hierarchy, power is distributed unequally between levels (and consequently between the people that occupy those levels); those near the top have the most power, which decreases gradually until the one in the bottom with least power. Lack of power translates into limited opportunity to impact policies and daily working routines.



The image illustrates the organisation of the whole enterprise with its six affiliated company, ranging from the production at the bottom up to the highest level in Birka Service.

People within a hierarchical organisation are inevitably unequal, since its structure to place staff in order of precedence and distribute power after rank. Can people be equals in spite of the fact that they have varying grade of influence over each other?

A policy that claims equality for everyone in the organisation stands in contrast to the hierarchical structure that characterizes the organisation. Similarly, the policy for cultural diversity, claiming to value and respect diversity, also stands in contrast with the practices at the worksite I studied.

In the policy, differences within staff are seen as a tool for creating dynamism in the company. It is stated that the company partly sees a value in differences, partly works actively for equality. As we have seen, the staff is regarded as a group with similar needs. The organisation is also the same for all staff and differences are not demanded. At the work site, the approach revealed itself to be quite standardised, with individuals having to conform to prevailing conditions. For that reason, everybody – regardless their country of origin – seems to need submit themselves to the company culture in order to become and remain part of it. It

is the same for all staff, even though it is not adjusted for all. The question is whether this constitutes equality.

According to the *National Encyclopedia*, equality means “all individuals’ equal value” (1993). The concept is problematic since the meaning of the concept is more or less conditioned by ideology. Liberals and socialists, for example, have differing views of equality. Some research also points out that Sweden has long been characterized by an ideology of similarity that is grounded on the idea that some values and objectives are universal and all people are striving to reach them. From this point of view, equality becomes equal rights with same conditions, so people are treated in the same way even if they are different. Different ethnic ideologies diverge from the idea of equality as similarity when their adherents claim the right to strive for objectives and values that need not or should not be considered universal. They want to be recognized as equals even if they differ from other groups in society (Runfors 1996). In the case of the energy company, there seems to be a goal/values conflict between ideas of similarity and diversity within the company. According to the ideology of similarity, people are treated similar even though they are different. This ideology characterizes the company’s relation to its staff. In contrast, the diversity ideology claims the right to strive for goals and values that do not need to embrace everybody. The point is to recognize people even if they differ from the majority (Runfors 1996).

Accordingly, there are certain difficulties associated with equality and the ways of realizing it. Difficulties concern not only how differences and similarities should be valued, but also what concepts should be applied within the company: similar wage for similar work, similar opportunities to promotion, similar access to resources, similar opportunities to influence work, etc. Another question which arises is how equality can be implemented and practised at meetings between people with different conditions and unequal opportunities to claim their distinctive character. How does one shape similar possibility for people with different knowledge and experiences? There are no neutral or nature-given principles available to be employed when levels of competence are to be valued. Judgements about what qualities should be encouraged or disqualified as assets during recruitment, the setting of wage rates or promotions, are driven by norms and values. Many individuals with work experience from third-world countries testify to the difficulties encountered when seeking acknowledgment or valuing of experiences and knowledge obtained before they start to work in Sweden (Andersson, Hult & Osman 2006, Carlsson 2006).

Demand for diversity determines the result

The energy company's documents on diversity contain a number of contradictions and goal conflicts that affect the company's ability to implement its policy for cultural diversity. One of the conflicts concerns the company's conceptualizations of culture and the expected effects on cultural diversity. Culture is conceived as something real, clearly-defined, durable and manifest, while the expected effects of "culture meetings" are dynamic and procedural. The collaboration between different cultures is portrayed as a central method, but cultural diversity is organised as an isolated issue instead of, for instance, integrating it in the general staff policy. Another contradiction in the energy company's document is the stress on equality within the organisation in the same time as it is permeated by a hierarchical structure. A major question is whether it is possible to create an equal work site within an organisation where people have varying degrees of influence.

It seems obvious that a policy that does not correspond reasonably well with the internal culture of the organisation will be very difficult, if not impossible, to implement. In order to succeed they probably need to either modify the structure of the organisation and create possibilities for their objectives or adjust the policy to the organisation. It can lead to a reduction of the degree of ambition to make an implementation possible, or extending the time frame to permit more incremental adjustments. Another problem/obstacle to implementing the policy is that it is not supported by the integration plan.

Diversity as a management strategy

As I mentioned in the beginning of this article, diversity was a management issue at the dental clinic and a way of taking care of the staff's individual resources within the company. Even if the method seemed to be appropriate for utilizing diversity within a group of personnel, the way of organising staff raises several questions about individuals, selection of staff and impact on individuals in the long run.

It has become increasingly common for companies to seek to take advantage of a broader range of their staff's capabilities. At "lean" organisations with a reduced number of staff, the work each individual does often covers a broader range of responsibilities, which at the same

time enlarges the demands and commitment from the staff (RALF 2000). While the organizational form opens up considerable space for the staff's individuality, it is also a form that may be preferable in times of downsizing. The questions of organizational form are therefore of special interest and my analysis of the dental clinic will focus mostly here. I approach this analysis through first examining the main principles in the clinic's diversity work.

Methods of making use of diversity

As noted earlier, the dental clinic has no formal written policies for diversity. Nevertheless, it is a part of the clinic's management philosophy and strategy. Keywords for their management are individuality, participation and integration. There is an individualised approach to the staff and the organisation rests on the principle of participation. The staff members have both individual and joint areas of responsibility, which contributes to integrating individuals and professional groups into the whole. Individual tasks could, for instance, mean that a member of staff is responsible for environmental issues at the clinic. Joint areas could include development groups for children's dental care or new target groups for the clinic. Another common area of responsibility is teamwork where all professional groups (dentists, dental nurses and dental hygienists) at the clinic work together, but with different kinds of contributions towards the clinic's customers.

The management perceives diversity as something procedural and dynamic and they consider it as a creative force for creating dynamic exchange at the worksite when people with different experiences and competences get together. They consider diversity as a group of people with different knowledge, experiences of life, different sex, age, professions and experiences socially, economically and culturally. That is to say personally characteristics as well as social categories. To integrate the staff and get them to strive in similar direction they work partly with in-service training in general subjects that create a joint point of departure, partly with establishing joint attitudes and norms at the work site from perspective of three keywords; acknowledged, respected and participating.

Steering of organisation through norms

The norms formulated to give guidance and direction at a work site can be considered in several different ways. One way is to consider them as common codes for the staff, like a

common starting point that can provide clear ideas of the worksite's expectations of each member of staff. If the reasoning is well-integrated with the norms could as well be conceived as educational rather than coercive. The norms at the clinic remain fairly basic ethical values that the majority of us are probably prepared to accept, even if the content could be interpreted in different ways. It is however an ambiguous attitude. From the leadership's point of view, these particular values reflect a desire to create a free climate for exchange of opinions. The leader of the clinic says, for instance: *It is important to listen to all parts if you'll be able to create a good climate that allows different point of views to be expressed in the forum for discussions. Here at the clinic you are social, straight, open and you talk and can be displeased (?change?).* At the same time the leadership wants to create a good climate for different points of view, guidelines are also given for how it should be done. However, my worksite observations suggest that these guidelines should be considered a general model for desirable behaviour, not as explicit instructions.

The question is how "open minded" it can become. The striving for common norms also raises the question of what happens if someone breaks with the norms. Does it create a restrained atmosphere for those who do not agree with the norms? Divergence from the norms was noticed when some of the staff were speaking languages that were not understood by the whole group of staff members. When it came to the manager's attention that some members of staff felt excluded it was immediately brought up in the coffee room. The management decided that: *From the coming Monday we will only speak Swedish at the working site.* This can be interpreted in several ways, for instance, as restrictions on the right to express oneself freely and in one's own language. The reason given for the position taken at the clinic was it was a matter of respect for those who do not understand the language in question, and for the purpose of maintaining the "participation" norm at the work site.

Individualisation not only means that the employer has an individualised approach; it also means that the staff represent themselves to a larger extent than they may be accustomed to. Consequently, every individual acts on his/her own behalf and is also treated individually. The importance of the group of staff's importance changes, which can contribute to increase the individual's vulnerability. The individuals do have to defend and represent themselves concerning their demands, failings and the like. During good times, those who can skilfully articulate demands and in an effective or persuasive way show their different capacities relevant for the job situation, such a place of work is surely a positive setting. Since it has

become an increasingly common way to organize work in different business settings, it is of significant interest to inquire how it affects people at works sites in the long run.

The employer's broader view of her employee's competences, along with demands for greater participation, also means that staff members were expected to invest more of themselves. To be able to participate more fully, one has to be able to reveal opinions and to position oneself on various relevant issues. When people participate and position themselves on different issues – express opinions, formulate and discuss moral dilemmas – they also need to have the courage to stand up for their opinions. However, not all people are willing to share their positions on different issues or to expose themselves to the inconveniences such exposure can bring. Whether people really participate in this is probably a consequence of more than structural factors that encourage people to engage at the work site in ways that go beyond the formal exercise of a profession. What does it mean for those who only wish to participate in their professional exercise (such as dental nurses) and willingly do the clinical work, but are reluctant to participate in the planning and developing the organization/company? How does this aspect influence the selection during recruitment of staff? Is it only a special category of people who might be suitable, or does diversity also embrace people with a more introvert than open nature?

Diversity and “ethnification” of the staff

The diversity at the dental clinic seems to have contributed to ethnification of the staff – or an increase in the ethnic diversity on staff. A variety of factors appear to have contributed to this development. One is the media attention at the work site. Some media tended to focus on companies' culturally diverse staff rather than the organisation and structure. My presence could also have contributed to generating some specific questions related to diversity. I realized that several persons meant that they always have discussed subjects of world importance and different experiences regardless of whether people from outside have paid attention to them.

Both native Swedes and those with other national/ethnic backgrounds express positive through different responses to the diversity at the work site. Several employees with foreign origins perceive themselves as serving as models, or as ambassadors for “the other”. Some reflected over other's knowledge about them and they are anxious to create a more nuanced picture of immigrants and their home countries. The native Swedes within the staff have a

similar idea, namely that they learn from their non-Swedish colleague. The knowledge is seen as a basis for creating new and wider perspectives of other countries.

Regarding ethnification, it has become a more common way of identifying and distinguishing people from each other through their ethnic background or cultural affiliations both in private and official situations, which also influence people's consciousness of themselves and "other". I was told by an informant in her thirties, for instance, that during her growing up it was not of interest whether or not she was Swedish. As she expressed it: "*I never thought of where I came from.*"

At the dental clinic, this principle for categorisation is strengthened because different belongings somehow have become an asset in the individual's knowledge- and experience base.

The dental clinic has a pluralistic organisation that acts with diverse actors and encourages variety. Different kinds of co-operation are built in the organisational structure. The structure is flat and based on the individual's participation and it is characterized by harmony and consistency between words and action. It appears that the staff in organisations with extensive delegation of responsibility is also very much dependent on the leader they have. Someone always has to have an overall view and overall responsibility. When different actors act at varying levels in an organisation, having a more complete overview becomes even more important than in a small organisation with fewer actors involved. This kind of organisational model raises questions about the long-term effects. How dependent are the members of staff on their leader and how could another type of leader affect the organisation? The dental clinic, like similar organisations, has been downsized, which means that employees do more work in an hour than they used to. How can increasing work demands benefit the staff? How are they compensated for a heavier commitment that seems to be compulsory? The organisation is also flexible and there are expectations that the staff should be able to be adaptable for what the company's engagement requires. One question is whether this perspective emanates from the staff as much as from organizational needs and requirements. However researchers on working life have observed that people are increasingly used as resources and the need for flexibility is more often based on an economic and short-run perspective on business (Sennet 1999, RALF 2000).

Conclusion

In a campaign for diversity where the differences among the staff are pointed to as a resource for creating dynamism within the organisation, it is individuals who "possess" the diversity (even though they create it collectively). The effort therefore concerns the company's relation to the individual. A pluralistic organisation that promotes differences and diversity is probably a necessity for making it possible to take care of individuals' resources and to bring the organization dynamism and creativity. In other words, a company needs an organisational structure that creates and supports the conditions required for a work place to be diverse. One conclusion is therefore that the realization of diversity work is primarily a matter of leadership and organisational structure.

The two cases that have been subjects for this study show that the implementation of diversity work is dependent on strategies and conscious management. In one of the organisations, the dental clinic, ideas and actions are generally consistent with one another and cooperated to a large extent. In the other case, the energy company, there was a lack of a coherent strategy. Different aspects of their plans pointed in conflicting directions and contained goal conflicts, while the management had an additional direction. Based on the results of the study, it can be assumed that no analysis of the organisation was carried out before the plan was developed, since the plan did not have a coherent direction and did not harmonize with the organisation's structure. The energy company nevertheless succeeded in making an impression on its surrounding community and created good will through their externally-directed efforts to influence of public opinion. From the company's point of view, it could have been a goal that was effectively fulfilled. You could also say that they probably needed culture to generate that good will.

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