

# Chapter 81

## Diversity Management: Bringing Equality, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace

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### ABSTRACT

*Despite twenty-five years of debates and researches on how to devise efficient, effective and equitable ways to manage people's diversities in organizations, professionals and academics have produced neither a shared definition of diversity management nor a general accepted assessment on the outcomes that diversity management can deliver for organizations and persons. Very often the concept of diversity management remains unexpressed and unexplained leaving people unsure on its meaning. The aim of this chapter is to expand the understanding of diversity management by systematizing it on the basis of McGregor's new human relations framework. The proposed definition implies to bring equality of opportunities, equity and inclusion in the workplace and allows to revise three causes of criticism ascribed to diversity management, namely, the lack of theoretical foundation, the vagueness of the concept, the reduced anti-discrimination force compared to equal employment opportunities.*

### INTRODUCTION

The increasing diversity of markets, customers and workforces is one of the main characteristics of global society<sup>1</sup>. Factors such as demographic changes, international and national anti-discrimination measures, globalization, service-economy shifts, stakeholder pressures on organizational commitment to corporate social responsibility, and technological advances are heightening the international attention paid to the increase in people's diversities, thereby fostering discussion on their management in organizations. Academics have defined "diversity" in rather different ways (Barak, 2008; Carnevale & Stone, 1994; Cox, 1994; Kandola & Fullerton, 1998; Kossek & Lobel, 1996; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Thomas, 1991; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Here, by "diversity" is meant the multiplicity of differences and similarities that exist among people (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004) and which, combined together,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1933-1.ch081

create each person's multiple and intersecting identities. These identities define a person's uniqueness, which is expressed in how s/he lives with, sees, and relates to other people and to the world in general. Kossek and Lobel (1996) emphasize that *each of these potentially overlapping identity group memberships can affect an employee's attitudes and behaviors in the workplace, as well as influence his or her ability to work well with other organizational members* (p. 2). According to Thomas's idea that *diversity is inherently neither good nor bad, but rather a reality* (2004, p. 10), companies have to gain a sense of how to plan and implement *organizational systems and practices to manage people so that the potential advantages of diversity are maximized while its potential disadvantages are minimized* (Cox, 1993, p. 11). This induces organizations to shift from a management undifferentiated in terms of strategy, policy, solutions and tools to a "conscious" diversity management (Thomas, 1990; Worman, Bland & Chase, 2005). Even though since the beginning of the 1990s professionals and academics have been trying to find efficient, effective and equitable ways to manage people's diversities in organizations they have produced neither a shared definition of diversity management nor a generally accepted evaluation, be it positive or negative, of the outcomes that diversity management can deliver to organizations and persons (Curtis & Dreachslin, 2008; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Kirton & Greene, 2005; Shen, Chanda, D'Netto & Monga, 2009; Theodorakopoulos & Budhwar, 2015; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Therefore, academics are divided into two main groups: those who support diversity management on the basis of the so-called "business case", and those who adopt a more critical approach to the issue.

In order to systematize the concept of diversity management using the new human relations framework revolving around McGregor's thought (2006), this chapter proposes a definition of diversity management and explains it in depth. The proposed definition shows that diversity management brings equality, equity and inclusion in the workplace. Moreover, it allows us to revise three causes of criticism which are often ascribed to diversity management, namely, the lack of theoretical foundation, the vagueness of the concept and the reduced anti-discrimination force compared to equal employment opportunities.

## BACKGROUND

Academics and professionals started to focus their attention on people's diversities in the US in the second half of the 1960s. As well described by Kelly and Dobbin (1998) and Dobbin (2009), the concern in diversity was initially driven by legal factors. Following Kennedy's 1961 executive order 10925, which required federal contractors to commit themselves to ending discrimination by means of affirmative action, in 1964 the Civil Rights Act (Title VII) declared the unlawfulness of discrimination in education, housing, public accommodation and employment on grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality, and thereafter gender and religion. It is worth remembering that the civil rights movement<sup>2</sup> urged J.F. Kennedy's affirmative action order. President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act just a year after Kennedy's assassination, and Title VII became effective the 2 July 1965: a hundred years after the Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (1862), the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery. As Dobbin (2009) underlines, Title VII and its amendments were crafted in *high-minded, but vague, language. They outlawed discrimination without saying what it was* (p. 4). This vagueness brought to an "endogenous" definition of compliance (p. 5): federal administrators and courts *encouraged a race-and gender-conscious system of accounting for progress because they needed a metric by which to judge firms. The federal reporting system focused employer attention on the issue of equal opportunity, but it did not define what employers would do* (pp. 3-4). In order to prevent judicial expansion and trying

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