

Line Managers' Involvement in Diversity Management – An Outlook into the Future

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ABSTRACT:

Purpose:

This paper aims at investigating the degree of diversity management policy devolution to line managers. Apart from that, it explores what measures, support and skills line managers need in order to be able to face the future trend of diversity.

Design/methodology/approach:

A literature review and eight expert interviews with HR managers were conducted in order to compare the current and future prerequisites of successful HR devolution and diversity management.

Findings:

A great discrepancy between the findings from literature and from the interviews were found. The sampled companies are not prepared for the future challenges diversity entails. Diversity is going to increase within workforces, the HR managers, however, seem to be unaware of the implications of this change. They have not yet generated diversity policies nor assigned line managers with the implementation of these.

Research limitations/implications:

The study is limited by the sample size as well as by the restriction of the respondents to be HR managers. Recommendations for further research include investigating the scope of diversity policies, skills and trainings necessary for a successful implementation and the line managements' perspective on diversity devolution and its prerequisites.

Practical implications:

The findings from the paper imply that the devolution of diversity management policies is going to increase in the future. For diversity management to be successful, the line management needs to be formally assigned the implementation of diversity policies. Furthermore, companies should invest in establishing diversity training and policies in order to be able to face this trend and prepare the line managers for their empowerment.

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Keywords:

Devolution, Diversity Management, Line Managers, Training and Development, HRM Implementation, HR Department

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1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the continuing globalization during the last decades workforce demographics changed significantly and the increased diversity to be found within companies turned diversity management into an important part of the organizational agenda (Cox & Blake, 1991). Diversity management is a trend which is expected to even increase in the future. Diversity is defined as “the systematic and planned commitment by organizations to recruit, retain, reward and promote a heterogeneous mix of employees” (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000, p. 75), with the aim of creating a certain mindset among the employees to embrace diversity and, by doing so, increase the organizational performance. Heterogeneous, in this case, refers to differences in ethnicities, religions, gender or sexual orientation. Diversity management is mostly attributed to the human resource (HR) department of a company but it actually involves the whole workforce (Cox & Blake, 1991).

Companies are faced with two different kind of pressures influencing them to engage more in diversity management. Firstly, there is pressure exerted by governments, corporations and individuals supporting the value of diversity (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). Secondly, the demographic change in society, with the people becoming older and not enough children being born, causes shortage in labor. Especially Western governments and organizations start hiring more young skilled workers from abroad in order to fill the vacancies caused by the aging workforce in the last years leading to more diverse workforces (Basset-Jones, 2005). Apart from that, globalization presents a major force behind increased diversity within workforces (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998). This trend towards more diversity can, according to Wentling and Palma-Rivas (1998), only be faced by developing “systematic efforts”, meaning the establishment of a long-term perspective on diversity and the integration of diversity management into the overall organizational strategy.

Therefore, good diversity management is crucial. Research finds positive outcomes of well implemented diversity management. Bassett-Jones (2005) mentions increased problem-solving capabilities and creativity, Gilbert, Stead and Ivancevich (1999) state positive public recognition and Cox and Blake (1991) add human resources of better quality and an improved cost structure. Thus, companies could convert the ‘threat’ of diversity into an opportunity for adding value to the company. The implementation process of diversity management, however, is perceived to be a risky one (Bassett-Jones, 2005). When trying to implement diversity management throughout a company problems arise because of the increased conflict potential, misunderstandings in communication and lower job satisfaction in employees belonging to a minority group (Shen, Chanda, D’Netto & Monga, 2009). These challenges posed by an increasingly diverse workforce can only be overcome by involving the whole workforce and offering adequate training possibilities (Cox & Blake, 1991; Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000).

The development towards more diversity within organizations coincides with the ongoing trend of increasing the line management’s involvement into human resource management in general (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Renwick, 2003; Larsen & Brewster, 2003). *HRM devolution* describes the process of line managers receiving continuously more responsibility to manage their own staff and taking over basic HR tasks (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995). *Line managers* are middle and junior level managers engaged in general management without being specialized in a certain functional area (Legge, 1995). Guest and Bos-Nehles (2013) propose a model for effective implementation of HR policies which stresses the importance of

line managers in the process, ensuring an effective implementation of the HR practices.

Since generating diversity management policies is mostly a task of the HR department, it is seen as the “custodian” of diversity management (Shen et al., 2009, p.236). Consequently, it adopts the role of the overseer, intending to create an atmosphere of valuing diversity throughout the organization. Line managers, however, are in charge of implementing these diversity management policies the HR department generates (Cox & Blake, 1991; Bassett-Jones, 2005). Following this argumentation, one can say that line managers are deeply involved in implementing diversity management practices, especially because workforce diversity is expected to increase in the future which might imply new challenges to them. Mathews (1998) and Shen et al. (2009) emphasize the importance of line managers in diversity management implementation stating that line managers should be included in the strategic, tactical and operational level HR practices to support diversity policies as effective as possible (Shen et al., 2009) and establish an “organizational partnership” (Mathews, 1998; p.176) with the HR managers in order to facilitate the management of the changing workforce. Cunningham and Hyman (1995) studied the line managers’ contribution to implementing change and concluded that, in order to do so successfully, they need thorough training (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003).

Workforce diversity, and the challenges it entails, are expected to even increase with ongoing globalization in the future (Moore, 1999), which is defined as the upcoming five to ten years for this study. A question coming to mind immediately is whether line managers are prepared to take on their new prominent role in diversity management and which competences and organizational support they need to do so. Diversity training can be useful to prepare line managers but its effectiveness is still controversial (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). What skills line managers are required to develop considering the demographic change in the workforce and what other support mechanisms, like organizational diversity policies, are necessary is still subject to examination. In this study, it will be attempted to create an outlook into the future in order to see how well line managers are already involved into the implementation of diversity management, whether more management development is needed and whether line managers are able to cope with its future demands.

Summarizing the aforementioned points one can derive a central research question.

“What do are line managers need in the future in order to be able to successfully deal with workforce diversity within a company?”

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the following, the present state of literature concerning line managers’ and their involvement in diversity management is summarized.

2.1 The Role of Line Managers in Diversity Management

2.1.1 Prerequisites of Diversity Management

If diversity management policies are to be implemented within a company the most important prerequisite is to create a certain organizational culture appreciating diversity and promoting inclusion (Gilbert et al.,1999; Shen et al., 2009). To do so, it is crucial to demonstrate their benefits to the employees. Examples for these benefits are less conflict at the workplace, increased competitiveness and productivity (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000)

or enhanced creativity and problem-solving skills (Bassett-Jones, 2005).

Successful diversity management, according to Mathews (1998), requires the employment of a strategic human resource plan in order to generate commitment towards diversity throughout the workforce. This plan involves a restructuring of existing practices and procedures, for example the compensation or the performance appraisal system, in such a way that the inclusion of minority employees is promoted. The long-term objective is creating a multicultural organization, thus having one organizational culture representing the mixture of diversity within an organization (Gilbert et al., 1999).

2.1.2 The HR Department's Role in Diversity Management

Since diversity management is said to be a doctrine of the HR department, it is in the responsibility of the HR managers to uncover the organizational areas in need of modification, create a strategic plan to do so accordingly and initiate its implementation (Mathews, 1998). In the last decades, however, the implementation of HR policies was continuously more assigned to the line managers (Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Renwick, 2002; Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). Guest & Bos-Nehles (2013) offer a framework for effective HRM implementation, which is comprised of four stages. The first two, the decision to introduce a new HR practice and assuring whether its quality suffices, lies within the responsibility of the HR department, whereas the latter ones, the implementation of these practices and the quality of this implementation process, can be seen as a task of the line managers. Considering HR implementation, the HR professionals' role is mostly restricted to monitoring and observing. Ulrich (1998) claims that the line managers are even in charge of leading "the way in fully integrating HR into the company's real work", helping the HR department to a more strategic position within the company.

According to Renwick (2002), for line managers to be effective implementers they do not only have to possess both, the commitment and the skills to fulfill their new responsibilities, but the support of the HR department is also of crucial importance. Assuming that all HR tasks are either within the responsibility of the line or the HR department is too "simplistic" (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003, p.249). When a company engages in diversity management, all policies and practices need to be modified accordingly, starting with HR, since the HR department can be seen as the overseer of diversity management (Gilbert et al., 1999; Shen et al., 2009), whereas the line is in charge of implementing the diversity policies (Shen et al., 2009). Therefore, the HR department has to provide the line managers with the training necessary for becoming effective implementers and it has to continuously monitor their work (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). This approach implies two things: Firstly, the HR department is liberated from the "burdensome toil of conducting routine techniques" (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999, p.24), and secondly, in order to guarantee an effective implementation, the HR must engage into a partnership with the line (Mathews, 1998). To do so, however, seems to be rather difficult, since the relationship between the line and the HR department is said to be "complex, ambiguous and dynamic" (Larsen & Brewster, 2003, p.241) and the HR managers seem often reluctant to assign some of their responsibilities to the line managers (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013).

In order for line managers to be effective implementers, the relationship between the line and the HR department needs to change as well. Ulrich (1997) conceptualized four possible roles an HRM department can take on, which influence the line-HRM relationship in different ways (Larsen & Brewster, 2003):

Administrative Expert, Employee Champion, Change Agent and Strategic Partner. The strategic partner role might be the most appropriate one to overcome the lack of information and support the line managers perceive (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). It implies that the HR department should align their objectives with the ones from the line (Friedman, 2007), monitor and support the implementation and involve the line managers into policy creation as well (Larsen & Brewster, 2003). This also correlates with the findings of Shen et al. (2009, p.245), stating that the line managers "should participate in decision-making processes in order to fully understand and effectively implement diversity management".

In conclusion, it can be said that the literature emphasizes that line managers should possess a certain set of competences and the support of the HRM department to become effective implementers of diversity management initiatives. Since globalization as well as the demographic change leads to an ongoing increase of diversity within workforces (Cox & Blake, 1991), the challenges entailed by it might increase equally and present new problems for the line managers in the upcoming years. Whether the line managers are sufficiently prepared or whether they may even need to develop new capabilities is examined in the next section.

2.1.3 Line Managers Involvement in Diversity Management

It is crucial to gain the line management's commitment when trying to institute diversity management policies since it is within the line managers responsibility to implement HR policies effectively (Cox & Blake, 1991; Aries, 2004). This implies a change in the role of the line managers. Their input into change processes might be perceived as positive since they are influencing the relationship between employees and the organization significantly by managing the employees' emotions by clarifying the scope of the change process beforehand, facilitating the communication between management and employees and, by doing so, preventing workplace conflict (Mathews, 1998; Huy, 2002; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Teague & Roche, 2012). Apart from that, their unique position between the strategic functions and the operational functions provides them insight into the company's strategic requirements, which is why the line managers present a potential source of knowledge (Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006). These features qualify the line manager to adopt a crucial role in the implementation of diversity management. Shen et al. (2009) developed a framework for HR diversity management (see Figure 1 & Appendix) which divides the HR practices into the levels strategic, tactical and operational.

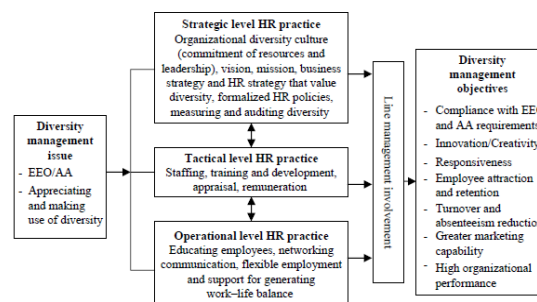


Figure 1: A framework of HR diversity management (Shen et al., 2009)

They state that for diversity management to be effective line managers should be involved in all of them (Shen et al. 2009).

The increase in diversity to be found within workforces, however, also entails an increase in challenges to those in charge of diversity management, hence the line manager and the HR department. In the next section, an overview of these challenges will be presented.

2.2 Challenges to Effective Diversity Management

In this section, adversities to successful diversity management will be discussed. Therefore, the section is subdivided into challenges rooting in a workforce being diverse and challenges caused by the empowerment of line managers via devolution.

2.2.1 Challenges Entailed by a Diverse Workforce

As Mathews (1998; p. 179) states diversity is a “complex” and “multifaceted” issue and many organizations have not been able to manage it successfully in the past (Cox & Blake, 1991). Again, the promotion of the value of diversity and its benefits is crucial and a guiding coalition should be formed in order to ensure the implementation of diversity management policies (Mathews, 1998; Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). Often, diversity initiatives aim at fostering employee integration, thus the appreciation of diversity to become a multicultural organization. Assimilation, thus the compliance with the dominant organizational culture, however, is still the more prominent concept to be found resulting in problems between the majority and minority groups (Gilbert et al., 1999; Mathew, 1998).

The formation of in- and out-groups is, next to reduced cohesiveness and communication, one of the problems (Basset-Jones, 2005). In-groups display the majority, whereas out-groups consist of “individuals who are different from the majority” (Milliken & Martins, 1996, p.420).

For the in-groups, the change caused by diversity initiatives triggers strong emotions, influencing how they perceive the initiatives (Huy, 2002). Often, the emotions are rather unpleasant because of the uncertainty involved in a change, which might generate “anger, anxiety and fear” or “disappointment, shame, or dejection” within the workforce (Huy, 2002; p.32, p.35).

These emotions drive the out-group to cause problems. Typical problems found might be conflict (Scott & Gruman, 2007; Aries, 2004), demotivation (Shen et al., 2009), discord, distrust (Basset-Jones, 2005), uncertainty (Mathews, 1998), lower satisfaction and consequently poorer performance (Mannix & Neale, 2005). This resistance from the majority group to diversity initiatives is manifesting itself in “denial, avoidance, defiance, manipulation” (Dass & Parker, 2001; p.69). These negative reactions can be roughly summarized into two attitudes towards diversity: diversity hostility and diversity blindness (Moore, 1999). The first one is a proactive approach against diversity, whereas the latter one is rather trying to deny its existence; both attitudes, however, present a challenge which has to be overcome. The out-group often encounters “homosocial reproduction” (Gilbert et al., 1999; p.71) or “homophily” (Moore, 1999; p.213), which implies that the majority group prefers to employ people similar to them and would also prefer to advance them. Consequently, the minority perceives their opportunities for growth to be lower, feel isolated (Scott & Gruman, 2007), experience pressure by the in-group (Gilbert et al., 1999) and suffer from stereotyping and information-sharing problems resulting in social categorization (Mannix & Neale, 2005). Huy (2002) claims that line managers could be seen as the “key loci for emotion management during change” (Huy, 2002; p.32/33), being able to reduce negative feelings, and therefore resistance, within the employees, which

represents another argument for line managers empowerment when introducing diversity management policies.

2.2.2 Challenges Entailed by HR Devolution to the Line

The line managers, however, sometimes face problems themselves when having HRM task assigned to them. Guest and Bos-Nehles (2013) state that it is within the line managers’ responsibility to ensure the quality of the implementation of the HR practice, respectively diversity management practices in this case. In literature, five factors influencing line managers’ effectiveness were discovered (Bond & Wise, 2003). The *first* one concerns the commitment of line managers towards their HR responsibilities (Renwick, 2002; Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Bond & Wise, 2003). Line managers might not be willing to take on more responsibility, they might lack motivation and begin to prioritize other tasks, which could negatively influence the effectivity of the implementation (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). The *second* factor concerns line managers’ time management, since they face difficulty fulfilling both their daily tasks and the personnel ones assigned to them (Renwick, 2002; Bond & Wise, 2003). Larsen and Brewster (2003) point out that this development is mostly due to the line managers’ role, which becomes continuously more complex and Herzig and Jimmieson (2006) indicate that line managers today are faced with a role conflict leading to even increased uncertainty about their role, which could further worsen the HR practices’ implementation. The lack of knowledge about these practices and competences in the HR field is the *third* influencing factor (Renwick, 2002; Brewster & Larsen, 2003; Bond & Wise, 2003). A problem here might be the complexity of the tasks, which require extra training for the line managers (Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Teague & Roche, 2012). Line managers might face uncertainty about what manner of doing HR tasks is considered best, especially because the support and advice of the HR department the line managers receive does not suffice (Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006, Teague & Roche, 2012). This lack in support is the *fourth* factor which might worsen the effectivity of HR practices’ implementation (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). The HR department and the line management are supposed to engage into a partnership of some sort, the HR department, however, sometimes seems to be reluctant to support the line and conflicts arise because of the way the HR responsibilities should be fulfilled (Renwick, 2002). In order to solve this issue, the line managers require “clear policies and procedures concerning their HR responsibilities”, being the *last* factor Guest and Bos-Nehles (2013) mention. The HR department seems to lack trust in the line, leading to the line managers having little authority. This, in turn, impedes the distinction between the HR department’s and the line managers’ responsibility in companies favoring HR devolution (Renwick, 2002).

With regard to line management trying to become effective diversity management implementers, the aforementioned five factors should be in their favor (Bond & Wise, 2003). The line managers need to be committed to the new policies, they should have the time to fulfill them and their regular tasks as well, they ought to have the HR competences needed for the implementation in the first place, and they require the support of their HR department and thorough information about their HR responsibilities. Therefore, for line managers to implement diversity management policies successfully these factors play a crucial role, as well as the line managers’ ability to overcome diversity blindness and hostility and create commitment to diversity within the workforce. In the following, training possibilities are discussed which might help the line managers to prepare for this newly assigned role.

2.3 Training Possibilities for Line Managers

This section focuses on what companies can do in order to prepare their line managers to become successful implementers of diversity management policies. Firstly, general requirements for training will be taken into consideration; secondly, the different kinds of diversity trainings are being introduced; and thirdly, an overview of the skills necessary for a line manager involved in diversity management is provided.

2.3.1 Diversity Training and Its Prerequisites

Mathews (1998) finds that it is important to align training to the overall organizational strategy, thus the implementation of diversity management. She states that in order for the workforce to understand diversity, thorough training of the management as well as the employees is necessary. Special attention should be given to the line managers since they can shape the employee perception of diversity actively (Mathews, 1998). Diversity training is said to reduce the employees' impression that minorities received too much attention and to foster their understanding towards them (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000).

Successful diversity training, however, requires certain prerequisites to be in place. Firstly, diversity training should be perceived as "on-going education process", because arranging a one- or two-day seminar once does not suffice to change the mindset of the workforce towards favoring diversity (Cox & Blake, 1991, p.53; Gilbert et al., 1999). Secondly, most companies tend to emphasize the prevalent organizational norms and values, impeding multiculturalism. According to Shen et al. (2009), diversity training instead should really foster a positive attitude towards the differences between people and create mutual understanding. Lastly, employees have to understand the value of diversity training initiatives. Therefore, they should be convinced that these are not just "common-sense anyway" (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995, p.18).

2.3.2 The Different Kinds of Diversity Training

Effective diversity training mostly takes on two forms, diversity awareness training and diversity skill-building training (Cox & Blake, 1991). Diversity awareness training emphasizes the integration of all employees by creating a general understanding of diversity and convincing the employees of the value and necessity of diversity management (Cox & Blake, 1991; Shen et al., 2009). Consequently, it is important that all employees undergo this kind of training in order for diversity management to be effective and to keep resistance within the workforce to it to a minimum. According to Moore (1999, p.214), however, awareness training alone does not suffice if not combined with "skills based interventions". She claims that if diversity initiatives are to be successful, skill-building training is also of importance (Moore, 1999). In contrast to awareness training, skill building training aims at training employees on how to behave when encountering, for example cultural differences in the workplace (Cox & Blake, 1991) and at enhancing their integrating competencies (Moore, 1991). Therefore, this kind of training is especially important for line managers, since they are responsible for implementing diversity policies and need to be able to take on their "Champions" role in this process (Cox & Blake, 1991, p.53; Dass & Parker, 1999). To do so, the line managers should develop a set of competences to be found in literature which are discussed in the next section.

2.3.3 Competences Necessary for Diversity Management

Basset-Jones (2005, p.173) states that the line needs "commitment" towards diversity and "emotional intelligence" in order to implement diversity measures effectively, whereas Cunningham and Hyman (1995, p.5) emphasizes the "people-

centered skills". Moore (1999) elaborates on that and adds integrating competences, which are necessary to avoid conflicts while simultaneously allow for differences. Secondly, "communication skills" could be useful when trying to promote diversity (Moore, 1999, p.214). Being able to manage the organizational networks might also prove advantageous when implementing diversity measures, as well as skills in monitoring and observation, which allow for a direct evaluation of the impact the diversity policies have on the workforce (Moore, 1998). Apart from that, the line managers HR competences need to be developed to fit their empowered role in the diversity management implementation (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003).

The aforementioned competences will, to a certain degree, help overcoming the challenges entailed by diversity (see section 2.2). Awareness training might increase the line's commitment towards diversity, whereas skill-building training as well as HR training enhance their implementation skills and efficiency, which might alleviate the pressure the line managers' experience in their dual role. In order to overcome the managers' need for clear information and support by the HR department, however, the HR department needs to adopt a new role, as can be seen in section 2.1.

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to test if the findings from literature withstand the experience of HR managers with diversity management devolution to the line, expert interviews were conducted. Expert interviews are the tool of choice because of the experts' access to information, in this case about line managers and the process of devolution, and their expertise in this field (Otto-Banaszak, Matczak, Wessler & Wechsung, 2010).

The topics investigated in the interviews are the role of line managers in the HR implementation in general and in the implementation of policies geared towards elderly employees and the diverse workforce. Since this study is part of a bigger one concerning the future of line management, there is another part exploring line managers' involvement into the management of aging workforces (Wigbels, 2015). For this paper, however, only the parts concerning devolution in general and diversity management are of relevance. Special attention is given to the competences line managers need to possess to become effective implementers, especially considering the development of diversity within workforce in the future. Semi-structured interviews, as well as structured interviews were the tools of choice. Semi-structures interviews, conducted in a face-to-face manner are useful because they allow for the construction of meaning through interaction with the interviewee and enable the interviewer to understand the interviewees' perspective more precisely (Kuzmanic, 2009). Whereas structured interviews, in this case e-mail interviews, enable the interviewer to benefit from "asynchronous communication", and thus interview people irrespectively of different time schedules and locations, facilitating the access to potential interviewees (Opdenakker, 2006, p. 9).

3.1 Interview Framework design

The interview framework employed in the interviews consisted of mostly open questions, sub-divided into six parts. The first one concerned the background of the interviewee, the second one asked for the general role and tasks of line managers within the company. The third and fourth part dealt with the aging workforce, and line managers' involvement into the management of it (See Wigbels (2015) and play no role in this paper. The fifth and sixth part, however, envisaged the diverse workforce in general and how line management is engaged into it. Not all

questioned were posed at every face-to-face interview and sometimes new questions emerged during the course of the interview due to misunderstandings or too little or new information needing clarification in the answers given by the interviewee. The e-mail interviews were conducted with the same set of basic questions in order to allow for comparison.

3.2 Experts

The interviewees considered suitable were chosen because of their work experience, expertise and position within the companies they are employed at. The term expert describes persons “responsible for development, implementation or control of solution, strategies or policies” (Otto-Banaszak, Matczak, Wesseler & Wechsung, 2010, p.4) In this case, three years of work experience and HR responsibilities, i.e. generating HR policies and organizing devolution, were the most important factors for choosing the experts. Apart from that, experience with collaborating with line managers and managing a diverse workforce were of crucial importance. HR managers were selected as interview partner, because of their overview of the HR processes and their close relationship to the line managers due to devolution issues (Larsen & Brewster, 2003). Apart from that, line managers could not be asked directly about competences and trainings needed because self-assessment is often flawed, i.e. people tend to overestimate their abilities (Dunning, Heath & Suls, 2004). HR managers seemed more fitting for the study in order to receive a more objective overview of the situation concerning HR and diversity devolution.

The choice of interviewees occurred on the one hand side randomly, thus various HR managers matching the profile were contacted via telephone or e-mail and asked whether they wanted to participate, and secondly, convenient sampling was applied, which means that HR managers from the own extended network were chosen (Babbie, 2013). From the 38 people contacted either by random or by convenience sampling, eight HR managers agreed to be interviewed.

In the beginning of the interview, the interviewees have been asked about their function, experience in the HR area, especially concerning HR devolution to the line, and educational background. All of them were working in the field of HRM, ranging from employees involved in personnel administration to a manager being the HR director of Northern Europe and the Benelux countries. Thus, the expertise of the respondent varied from tactical HRM to strategic. The work experience of the interviewees in the HR area also varied significantly, from 3 to 25 years, as did their age, mostly corresponding to the years of experience. The youngest participant was 23, whereas the oldest just turned 57. Three of the interviewees were males, five were females. The sizes of the companies they are employed at were also rather diverse, stretching from small and medium-sized enterprises to two multinational companies. Four of the companies are engaged in manufacturing, one in the construction business and two are service providers.

3.3 Procedure

The interviews took place between May 22 and June 3, 2015. All were conducted employing the same interview framework, with the same two interviewers present each time posing certain sets of questions (See Wigbels, 2015). The interviews were mostly held in English, with one exception being an interview in German where the interview framework was translated for. For reasons of anonymity, the HR managers were assigned the pseudonyms HRM1 to HRM8, thus Human Resource Manager 1 to Human Resource Manager 8, as can be seen in the transcripts (see Appendix). Four of the interviews were done in a face-to-face manner, whereas four interview framework were answered via

E-mail. Therefore, the face-to-face interviews are semi-structured, because they allow for changes in the set of questions and the way the questions are posed, whereas the e-mail ones are structured, containing only a fixed set of questions (Knox & Burkard, 2009). This has different implications for the answers they entail.

3.3.1 The Face-To-Face Interviews

The face-to-face interviews enabled the interviewees to examine social cues, like gestures as well, and the “synchronous” nature of the interviews lead to the respondents having less time to answer and therefore foster more spontaneous questions and reactions (Opdenakker, 2006, p. 3). All of the face-to-face interviews were recorded and transcribed for the purpose of analysis. The interviews lasted on average forty-five minutes. The location they took place in was most often the interviewee’s office or a conference room at the interviewee’s company. Three interviews were conducted in the Netherlands and one in Germany.

3.3.2 The E-Mail Interviews

Considering the e-mail interviews, HR managers were contacted via e-mail and asked to participate in the study. They were then sent the interview framework via e-mail, which they in turn filled in and sent back. The filled in interview frameworks are attached in the appendix as well. Structured e-mail interviews are said to increase the accessibility of potential respondents as well as the interviewees’ willingness to give also socially not desirable answers (Opdenakker, 2006). However, Opdenakker (2006) also states that they often lead to less interest within the respondents and thus less rich information because of their fixed structure.

3.3.3 Analysis of the Data

In order to analyze the data gathered in the interviews, the transcripts, respectively the filled-in interview frameworks, were coded via Atlas.ti, a software developed for qualitative data, as suggested in literature (Hwang, 2008; Atlas.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2012). Single text passages were highlighted and put under a certain label or code fitting to the questions asked, like “Competences Line Managers”, in order to organize the information gained and to see connections between answers (See the appendix for an example). The software then enables the researcher to create an output displaying the quotes assigned to the various codes, which was the basis for the analysis in the fourth section.

3.4 Validity & Reliability

The interview framework was generated by the consensus of two researchers, Wigbels (2015) and I, increasing its construct validity in order to ensure that the research can uncover what it actually intends to (Babbie, 2013). The first two parts are the collaborative effort of Wigbels (2015) and me, whereas as the other ones were constructed independently and compared later on to receive a cohesive interview framework. The third and fourth part was designed by Wigbels (2015) and the fifth and sixth part by me. Both of us were also always present when an interview was conducted, and the interviews were transcribed together in order to avoid misunderstandings and information getting lost, which might also contribute to the study’s validity and reliability. The coding process as well is based on consensus. Wigbels (2015) and I, after having coded the transcripts independently, decided to reconcile the codes found. When doing so it became clear that although sometimes the names of codes applied varied and sometimes the quotes attached to these codes differed slightly, similar conclusions could be drawn from the data after a comparison. This indicates that although the labels were different, their content and the assigned quotes generally appear to resemble each other.

4. ANALYSIS

In the following, the results of the interviews will be analyzed in order to uncover differences and similarities in the various approaches of the companies towards HR devolution and diversity management.

4.1 The Role of Line Managers

The first section of the analysis deals with the degree of line managers' involvement in HR, respectively diversity management as stated by the HR managers during the interviews. Firstly, the concept of devolution in general is examined, followed by the challenges to be encountered in this process. After that, the HR department's role in it is taken into consideration.

4.1.1 HR Devolution

The role of the line managers is perceived important by most of the respondents within the study. Concerning devolution, nearly all of the companies in question are practicing it, leading to the line managers' role to become increasingly broad. HRM1 even stated that being a line managers is "*kind of the hardest task there is*" (HRM1). Firstly, the line managers' are responsible for their daily tasks, like ensuring a smooth operation, as well as a production without any delays and the safety of their workers. Overall, however, it is seen as their task to coach and support their employees, no matter what industry they are working in. As HRM4 commented on the role of line managers:

"First of all [it is] leading the team and trying to develop the people." (HRM4)

Consequently, the line managers will adapt HR tasks anyways, irrespectively of formal devolution. General HR tasks line managers should execute include initiating disciplinary measures, recruitment and training or coaching. To what extent they were assigned these tasks, however, varied widely. Some HR managers seem to really feel comfortable with the HR devolution and shift as much of their responsibility to the line, whereas others only reluctantly do so.

"But we try to put as much of HR responsibilities into line management as we can." (HRM5)

"So I always try to reduce to the bloody limit, the bloody minimum." (HRM4)

Most of the HR managers, however, seem to prefer a position in between these extremes.

Concerning the reasons for the devolution some HR specialists agreed on it being aligned with the overall organizational strategy, whereas most of them seem to take the devolution of HR tasks for granted, not requiring an explanation. As one respondent puts it:

"It is the very principle: 'HR on the line'. Period." (HRM4)

When it comes to the devolution of diversity related tasks, the companies proved more reluctant. Some of the HR managers embrace diversity by actively assigning the implementation of diversity policies to the line, mostly however, the situation is not as clear. Line managers are mostly only receiving diversity training and are involved in the implementation of these trainings. Apart from the trainings, however, they are not assigned any special responsibilities considering diversity. Line managers are thus formally assigned a lot of HR tasks, but diversity management policy implementation is mostly not one of them.

4.1.2 Challenges to the Line Managers' Role

The general experiences the HR managers had considering devolution, seem rather mixed. Most of them have seen line managers eager to adopt more responsibility, as well as ones refusing to. According to HRM7, this differs for various reasons:

"It is my experience that this differs per person, type of organization and the way that roles and responsibilities are managed; there is not one general conclusion because there are several factors that have an influence on this." (HRM7)

One HR manager finds that the line managers are lacking HR competences, time or experience.

"I think that line managers experience sometimes problems to perform their HR tasks, due to a lack of capacity and lack of competence. They are responsible for a lot of tasks and it is hard to manage their time efficiently. Furthermore, they are not always able to perform their tasks well, because they do not have the right knowledge of skills." (HRM6)

Another one mentions that the line faces a lot of pressure when being assigned extra tasks.

"Yeah, nowadays they are on a huge pressure." (HRM1)

Others claim that line managers are capable to take on more responsibility when provided with enough time and are also show the will to do so.

"They are willing to perform the basic HR tasks." (HRM6)

Line managers are thus naturally adapting the role of HR policy implementers in most companies. Their involvement in diversity management, however, might not be as common. Some problems occur because of the line managers not being prepared for the devolution, mostly in terms of a lack of capabilities, but they generally seem to embrace their shift in their role towards more responsibilities. One prerequisite for successful devolution which should be in place, however, might be the establishment of a close relationship between the line managers and the HR department.

4.1.3 HR and Line Partnership

Some of the managers perceive their role in diversity management as an important one since they are responsible of it and are also required to attend the diversity trainings.

"Yeah, besides the training I mentioned, for the top management because we are convinced that everything starts at the top. For the top management we have workshops on diversity, last year we had one, this year we will have one; so this is one the executive level. HR is organizing it together with the top management." (HRM4)

Considering the devolution of the diversity management tasks they do not appear to feel involved. The HR department usually seem to create the policies, whereas the line is being left alone implementing them. In only three of the companies the relationship between HR and the line managers, supporting each other, was emphasized; HRM5 even compared the HR department's role to the "*business partner role*" Ulrich (1997) identified.

"The HR managers are very close to these line managers, so they know exactly what is happening on the floor, on the departments or wherever. So they are always working in a very close way together so that I am always good aligned on what is happening on these departments and the other way around." (HRM5)

Two respondents especially stressed that line managers are in need of the help of the HR department, in order for any sort of devolution to work.

“Besides that line managers are responsible for HR activities, such as recruitment, training and development, performance management etc. They are supported by decentral HR advisors and a central HR department with specialized HR.” (HRM6)

HRM6 highlighted the line managers’ need of special support stating:

“[T]hey need to be supported with the right tools to manage this diverse workforce.” (HRM6)

More common, however, seems to be a rather distanced approach between the HR departments and the line managers, where the HR department assigns the new responsibilities to the line and more or less leave the implementation to the line.

4.2 Challenges of Diversity Management

In this paragraph, the adversities to be encountered when engaging in diversity management are analyzed. To do so, firstly the amount of different minorities within the workforces of the interview sample companies are examined. Consequently, the HR managers experience concerning the outcomes of diversity are discussed and which role corporate policies are perceived to play for managing diversity successfully.

4.2.1 Diversity within the Workforce

The degree of diversity to be found within the workforces of the HR managers’ companies varies widely per industry and per group of minority. In manufacturing companies, the HR managers stated that the amount of women is rather low, between 10% and 20%, whereas in service companies, their amount accumulates up to nearly equal proportions of women and men. Considering the number of people from different nationalities, the proportion are more evenly spread varying between 10 and 25%. When talking about handicapped people, the companies in question mostly employed zero to five, except for one company employing 25 because of a special company policy.

The only kind of quota for employing either of the aforementioned groups present in the companies also concerned handicapped people. The Social Return On Investment law, which will be enacted this year, requires companies in the Netherlands to fill vacancies with people being handicapped or having been unemployed for a long time, therefore, their presence within companies is likely to increase.

“Yes, there is a legislation coming up by the first of July in which we have to have a quota of people with a handicap or who have a long distance to the labor market, so we see how to help them out.” (HRM5)

One company has an internally set quota for employing women, but the HR manager, HRM4, actually opposes the idea of quotas in general.

“Ja, a quota for hiring women we have. But there is a big danger, which I always say in those say European HR committees: Let’s not focus too much on hiring women, because imagine you are a woman and we are hiring you or you get an internal promotion and you will always ask yourself the question: hey is it because of my quality or is it because I am a lady? It is an instrument to achieve your goal, it is not a goal on its own.” (HRM4)

4.2.2 Outcomes of Diversity

The HR managers’ experiences concerning diversity outcomes are quite divers. Some of the HR specialists reported problems because of diversity, but they were not perceived to be severe ones. Especially, people from different genders or handicapped people seem to cause no issues at all.

“Interestingly, in the daily life when people are dealing with each other it does not play a role at all. This is clearly to see.

Nor the nationality... The main thing is that they understand each other. Well, language is of course the connection. But apart from that, and I hear that from a lot of companies, this plays no role in the daily work life.” (HRM2)

Some, however, mentioned problems when having different nationalities, respectively cultures collide. Examples to be found were:

“Especially when you got a lot of Eastern European employees, sometimes they aren’t sober.” (HRM1)

“We once had an employee who, as a Muslim, refused to take orders from a woman.” (HRM2)

These cases, however, were said to be exceptions. The HR manager of one company, HRM5, reported misunderstandings due to cultural differences within the workforce after an acquisition by an Indian company, for example concerning the formalization in the company.

Nevertheless, one HR managers reported that there are more minor incidents caused by diversity, which are, without the HR department knowing, being solved by the line manager in charge.

“There are certainly other cases, but they do not reach us.” (HRM2)

This might also indicate that the HR department and the line are not working together that closely in this particular company and are not being kept up-to-date about the others one’s work.

4.2.3 Diversity Management Policies

Although diversity management does not seem to be that problematic some companies still stress it in their policies, e.g. by having all-encompassing anti-discrimination policies and trainings in place.

“Not only by ladies, but everything because the more diverse the more innovative, the more the outcome – I believe in that statements.” (HRM4)

“[T]here is a corporate policy for diversity. It is one of our four axes, you know HR policy, diversity, commitment is another one...” (HRM4)

“Yeah, there a countless policies! Before a person enters our company, except for visitors of course, he has to sign a package concerning this, he receives an introduction to the AGG, thus the ‘Allgemeine[s] Gleichbehandlungs Gesetz’ in Germany. They will be taught that discrimination in any form because of sexual orientation, gender in general or nationality will not be tolerated.” (HRM2)

These policies, however, appear to be rather broad and mostly concern anti-discrimination laws. The majority of the HR managers do not report to have any more specialized policies in place. This might also differ with the size of the companies. Diversity seems to be an important point on the organizational agenda in bigger companies, whereas smaller ones tend to tailor solutions to problems when they occur, which explain why the majority of the sampled companies do not have diversity policies in place.

“Nothing special, all is tailor made.” (HRM7)

Thus, even an anticipated increase in diversity does not preoccupy the HR managers significantly since diversity problems seem to be rather rare and of minor severance. This indicates that the diversity management initiatives, if existent, thus far sufficed.

4.3 Training Possibilities for Line Managers

This section concerns the training and development possibilities line managers have according to the HR managers, and what competences they consider worth developing for line managers to become effective implementers.

4.3.1 Training for the Line

Generally speaking, nearly all companies know skill-building trainings of some sort for their line managers, some even require them to undergo diversity trainings. It is stated this is mostly because line managers having been assigned so much extra work, they need to be prepared for.

“There are some special master classes which are offered to develop skills that line managers needed to perform their job well, for example a verbal communication program how to deal with difficult employee interviews.” (HRM6)

Other examples for general training initiatives are trainings on how to cope with severe illness in employees and how to conduct disciplinary measures. Concerning diversity, there are less trainings to be found within the companies. Some of the respondents, however, indicated to have diversity awareness trainings in place, but most of them do not have an institutionalized approach to this.

“There are trainings, but not in this direction.” (HRM2)

“No, not yet. I think we could improve on that as well. We are helping on the spot but not in a good prepared program yet. I think this will be something for the future as we are now opening up much more to this diversity issue.” (HRM5)

One of the reasons for the lack of diversity training possibilities appears to be that the general trainings cover the needs of the empowered line managers already.

The skills line managers are required to develop via these training sessions, for the implementation of general HR tasks and for diversity management initiatives, also seem to resemble each other. Examples mentioned for the general HR devolution include people management skills, straight forwardness, honesty and transparency, conversation skills and decisiveness. These skills, however, were also perceived important when facing diversity management issues:

“They need them for the people in general.” (HRM2)

4.3.2 Competences the Line Manager Need

Although some of the respondents see no need for special diversity management skills, the majority of the respondents agrees that diversity management is so demanding that the usual set of competences necessary for being a line manager does not suffice.

Empathy, flexibility, open mindedness and the ability to adapt quickly and handle change are considered important competences line manager should adopt. As HRM4 puts it:

“You should switch to the people who are in front of you. And some people expect other things than other ones and the line managers should be able to switch between those different people and their different expectation.” (HRM4)

Apart from that, HRM 6 stressed the necessity of being able to monitor and anticipate changes within the workforce.

“Line managers need to be flexible and adaptive. They need to anticipate constantly on the changing internal and external environment of the organization, as well as the changing workforce.” (HRM6)

Furthermore, HRM5 emphasizes integrating competences:

“I think that is something the line managers absolutely need first of all: to contact, to reach out, to understand, to help somebody to find his place in the team.” (HRM5)

Thus, in order to manage diversity effectively, there are certain skills which go beyond the general ones, most HR managers require in their employees, special trainings to foster their development, however, are scarcely to be found.

4.4 The Future of Diversity Management

According to most of the respondents, the presence of minorities within companies is expected to increase in the next five to ten years. Therefore, the sample companies will probably be in need for improved diversity management. Considering women, an increase was expected in companies currently employing only a small amount. One respondent mentioned a potential reason for their advance:

“Women yeah, we expect them because when you look at the Universities of Applied Sciences, the women are rising and that is really a good development and we embrace it.” (HRM1)

The number of foreigners within companies is also expected to increase, mostly because of the labor shortage and globalization of the society. Only HRM1 does not anticipate a change, stating:

“Well, not especially foreigners, I think this is already on a high proportion.” (HRM1)

Since the company already has a workforce comprised of a high amount of minorities, it is not expected that their amount increases in the future.

Due to the new legislation in the Netherlands, the amount of handicapped people is anticipated by the HR managers to rise in all of the seven Dutch companies within the sample.

“Maybe an increase in handicapped people, due to the ‘participation’ law.” (HRM6)

Thus, the presence of all three of the minority groups, women, foreigners and handicapped, appear to increase in the next years, according to the experts. Diversity management is a trend which will increase in the future. The HR managers already reported problems due to different cultural backgrounds resulting in misunderstandings. The occurrence of these incidents will probably accumulate due to for example more foreigners and women in the workforces. In order to deal with them, diversity policies and appropriate diversity management is crucial. Since nearly all of the HR tasks are currently devolved to the line, diversity management will soon be one of their tasks as well and their involvement in it will increase. Whether the line managers are prepared for this empowerment with the skill they possess will be examined in the next section.

5. DISCUSSION

In this section, the results from the interview will be compared to the ones from literature. Apart from that practical as well as theoretical implications from the paper are discussed, its limitations are described and impulses for further research are provided.

5.1 Comparison between Literature and Interview Findings

In the following, the findings from literature and the interviews concerning devolution, line managers' involvement in diversity management, training possibilities for line managers and skills necessary for implementing diversity policies are linked.

5.1.1 Present HR and Diversity Management Devolution

Considering the role of line managers in the implementation of HR practices, in the literature a constant increase towards more devolution has been identified (Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Renwick, 2002). This is supported by the results of the interview, as every company assigned HR tasks to a certain degree to their line managers. The devolution of HR tasks is ranging from line managers conducting only very basic HR task to them being in charge of the implementation of all of the HR practices. Thus, the amount of HR tasks assigned to them tends to be rather big, including for example recruitment and performance appraisal, in contrast to their involvement in diversity management implementation. The findings from literature anticipated the role line managers need to adopt in the process as a very important one, which even extends beyond the tactical level (Shen et al., 2009). In only two companies the line managers are responsible for the diversity management implementation, in the other two they are merely required to attend a special training whereas in the latter three companies diversity management is officially not at all within the reach of the line. This seems to contradict the literature, as can be seen in 5.1.2, in which line managers are mostly perceived as leaders of organizational change (Spreitzer & Quinn, 1997). The findings from literature as well as the interview findings indicate a trend towards more diversity and diversity management in the future, the HR managers, however, appear to not be ready for managing it yet. There seems to be a range of reasons for the low involvement of the line into diversity matters, which are investigated in the next section.

5.1.2 Reasons for a Lack of Line Involvement in Diversity Management

A first reason for line managers apparently not being much involved in diversity management might be that in more than half of the companies the HR managers reported to not yet have institutionalized diversity policies in place. Consequently, most companies have no diversity policies in need of implementation. Line managers, however, are still involved in diversity management, since diversity within workforces is increasing rapidly (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2003), as does devolution to the line (Renwick, 2002). The line managers within the sample companies are not officially assigned to implement diversity management policies, but are nevertheless responsible and are now being left alone with it without having any policies generated by the HR department to guide them. Secondly, the perception of line managers' adding little value in HR devolution is still quite prevalent. Some of the HRM managers preferred to leave the HR implementation to the HR department itself, because of the line being apparently unable to do so. The next reason for the lack of line manager involvement in diversity management implementation might be negative experiences with devolution in the past. Half of the HR managers reported that line managers are facing enormous pressure, and are often lacking the necessary time and HR competences to fulfill their assigned tasks appropriately. This relates to the findings of Bos-Nehles, van Riemsdijk and Looise (2013), who identified pressure, a lack of capacity and HR skills as reasons impeding a successful HRM implementation. The interviews' results on the other factors Bos-Nehles et al. (2013) found, namely a lack of commitment, no advice and support of the HR department, are mixed. Two of the HR experts witnessed unwillingness to take on extra responsibility in their line managers, some state that it varies per person who is in favor of being empowered, others, however, have faced no problems at all concerning commitment.

The relationship between HR and the line does not seem to play that much of a role in some companies, whereas others

emphasized it strongly. Therefore, since neither support nor clear policies of the HR department are given in order to support the line (Bond & Wise, 2003), line managers seem to have not yet reached their full potential as HR implementers, respectively diversity management implementers, which might leave some HR managers hesitant about transferring extra responsibilities to the line. A fourth reason for the lack of line involvement in diversity management might be that diversity in general was perceived as not being problematic. In contrast to that, the findings from literature assign diversity a high complexity (Mathews, 1998), leading to in- and out-group creation and entailing a lot of challenges to e.g. group cohesiveness and communication (Basset-Jones, 2005). In praxis, however, the HR managers reported that occurrences as described in literature are rather single cases based on differences in culture. The other forms of diversity, gender diversity and the increased inclusion of handicapped employees, were reported to not generate any problems at all. Most of the HR managers seem to perceive diversity in a positive way. No cases of diversity hostility or blindness were reported (Moore, 1999), which could demonstrate that diversity is already handled appropriately. This might root in the still rather homogeneous composition of the workforce, which is expected to change in the future, according to literature as well as the interview findings (Cox & Blake, 1991; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998). All interviewees anticipated an increase in the proportion of women and handicapped people, and only two disagreed with the increase in the presence of foreigners within their companies. This, in turn, might cause new challenges in the upcoming five to ten years, which require the line managers to develop new competences. Since HR devolution is ubiquitous in literature (see for example Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Renwick, 2002; Larsen & Brewster, 2003) as well as in the interview findings, it becomes clear that nearly all HR implementation is conducted by the line. With diversity becoming more and more important in the future (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2003), it is safe to anticipate that the involvement of line managers in diversity management is going to increase. In order to prepare for that, line managers might have to undergo special training, as discussed in the next section.

5.1.3 Diversity Training in Practice

Nearly all of the HR managers mentioned different mandatory trainings for line managers to prepare them for the devolution, which fit with the findings from literature (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). Considering the two kinds of diversity trainings, awareness training and skill building training (Cox & Blake, 1991), the results of the interviews differ significantly from literature. Whilst in literature its added value is often promoted, see for example Shen et al. (2009), Moore (1999) or Dass and Parker (1999), only within three of the companies' diversity awareness training is found. Diversity skill building training was not specifically mentioned, which might reflect some of the HR managers' opinion that there are no special skills one needs for managing diversity.

Therefore, the reason why there are no diversity skill building training sessions could be that the normal skill building trainings, as communication trainings, seem to suffice in the managers' point of view. This seems to correspond to the results of Cunningham and Hyman (1995, p.18), that some HR managers see diversity measures as "common-sense". Apart from that, since diversity policy devolution might not be so common yet, HR managers apparently saw no need in the past to invest in more diversity training sessions. The upcoming years, however, will probably increase diversity management devolution, therefore line managers are required to develop extra skills, as can be seen in the next section.

5.1.4 Necessary Skill for Line Managers in the Future

The general skills line managers are required to have, according to the interviewees, mostly correspond to the ones taken from the present state of literature. Empathy (Basset-Jones, 2005) and communication skills (Moore, 1999) are considered generally important for line managers. Concerning skills necessary for successful diversity management implementation, integrating as well as monitoring competences (Moore, 1999) were mentioned. Furthermore, the HR managers added competences not yet listed to the ones from the current literature. Transparency, honesty, flexibility, open-mindedness and adaptability are of importance for managing diversity in the respondents' perception and will be increasingly important skills for the line managers in the future.

Interestingly, most companies do not have institutionalized diversity policies in place and do not seem to suffer from problems caused by that, but the set of competences the HR managers require line managers to possess, however, is more exhaustive than in literature. Therefore, the line managers might still be the ones in charge of handling the challenges entailed by a diverse workforce, without being assigned to do so and lacking organizational support and guidance, i.e. diversity policies.

5.1.5 An Outlook into the Future

In the upcoming, five to ten years, diversity within workforces will increase, as literature (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998) and interview results prove. Line managers' involvement in diversity management will inevitably increase as well, since they are the implementers of all HR policies (Renwick, 2002). The sample companies are mostly not prepared for this change. Line managers are left alone in handling diversity matters, and possess neither the necessary skills nor the authority to deal with diversity's future demands. For diversity management to be effective, the companies have to institutionalize diversity policies, assign the line managers a formal role in diversity policy implementation and provide line managers with the training necessary for developing the set of skills needed for diversity management devolution, as can be seen in the previous section. Unless these prerequisites are not met, the companies cannot be considered ready for the future challenges diversity entails.

5.2 Practical and Theoretical Implications

Considering the practice, this study could provide managers with valuable input considering the role of line managers within their company and in diversity management especially. It provides an orientation for the HR department on which issues need special attention and therefore require line managers to receive a certain kind of training to be prepared for them. The discrepancy between interview and literature findings demonstrate that the sample companies are not ready yet to face an increase in diversity. The study highlights the need for diversity training as well as diversity policies within companies. Line managers should formally be assigned the role of diversity policy implementers. Therefore, it is recommended for companies to invest in diversity training and policies, in order to become prepared for the increased diversity and its future challenges.

Theoretical implications of this paper could be that, although the devolution of HR practices is widely spread in literature as well as practice, the field of diversity management devolution is still mostly open, leaving room for improvement and further research, as can be seen in the next section. The scope of the diversity initiatives, i.e. policies and trainings is still unclear. Diversity management appears not to be as straight forward as presented in literature, especially when line managers are involved and will present a challenge in the upcoming years.

5.3 Limitations & Future Research

In order to improve the results of the study, more interviews have to be conducted, which would increase the interviews' validity and reliability. Apart from that, the opinion of the line managers and the minority group members concerning diversity management and the problems it entails should also be considered, otherwise the results will remain rather one-sided. Different perspectives will enable researchers to understand the dynamics of diversity better and to compare the differing opinions on it. An out-group member might perceive the situation for minorities as more problematic than someone from the majority group. Taking other views into consideration therefore might be a valuable suggestion for further research in the future. Furthermore, other factors influencing diversity should be taken into consideration, like industry and company size and location. During the course of the data analysis, it became already evident that these factors must not be left out, since they seem to have an impact on diversity and its management. Apart from that, important for future research could be a longitudinal study, which will probably facilitate the evaluation of changes in the workforce and might help anticipating future scenarios. Concerning diversity policy devolution, there are still a lot of question left open, for example in how far line managers are already involved in diversity management. Furthermore, it is unclear what policies line managers, who seem to possess more expertise in diversity matters, would like implement in a company. This knowledge might improve the quality of the diversity policies. The scope of skills the line managers need to develop, as well as the scope of the trainings necessary for that, are also still to be investigated.

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude it can be said that most HR managers appeared uncomfortable when talking about the future, since their companies cannot be perceived as prepared for the increase in diversity within workforces. It becomes apparent that the HR managers' awareness about this is quite restricted, which might explain the wide gap between literature and interview findings. When the HR managers recognize this flaw, the need to establish a policy will become evident. Line managers might have recognized this gap earlier, since diversity management is still within their responsibility, without being formally assigned to them. They might feel overstrained due to their lack of diversity management competences as well as organizational diversity policies to support them. These policies are best created in a bottom-up approach with the line managers sharing their experience in diversity management with the HR department. To do so, the companies should adopt the important lesson from literature that the line should work together closely with the HR department, as business partners (Ulrich, 1997). Apart from that, the line managers need to receive the diversity skills training to develop the extra skills which are necessary for diversity management. For line manager to become successful diversity implementers, these factors, diversity policies, HR support and diversity skills training, need to be in place. Thus, if companies invest in these areas, they invest in the future.

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9. APPENDIX

9.1 Figures

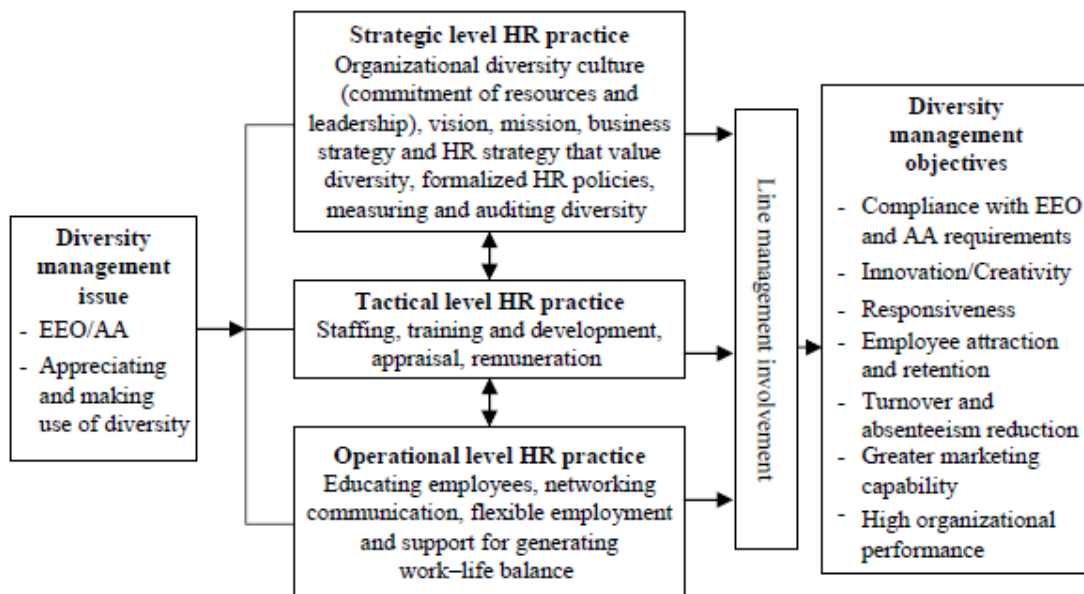


Figure 1: A framework of HR diversity management (Shen et al., 2009)

9.2 The Interview Framework

Interview Template

Interviews with HR professionals from various companies

- Translation of the questions to German in italics

Introduce ourselves

(1) Introduction

What is your job function within the organization?
Was ist Ihre Funktion im Unternehmen?
 Could you briefly describe your work experience?
Könnten Sie kurz Ihre Arbeitserfahrung beschreiben?
 How long have you been working in the HR area?
Wie lange arbeiten Sie bereits im Personalwesen?

(2) General questions about tasks of line managers in the organizations

What are the tasks and role of line managers?
Was sind die Aufgaben und die Rolle von direkten Vorgesetzten in Ihrem Unternehmen?

What were the reasons to assign these tasks and roles to line managers?
Welche Gründe gab es, diese Aufgaben und Rollen zuzuteilen?

Which additional tasks did you assign to line managers?
Welche zusätzlichen Aufgaben haben Sie direkten Vorgesetzten in den letzten Jahren zugeteilt?

Are line managers willing to take over basic HR tasks/ HR responsibilities?
Sind direkte Vorgesetzte generell bereit, Personalverantwortung zu übernehmen?
If not, what types of resistance/problems did you experience?
Wenn nicht, welchen Widerstand/welche Probleme haben Sie erfahren?

What are your experience about line managers handling HR responsibilities?
Welche Erfahrungen haben Sie damit gemacht, dass direkte Vorgesetzte Personalverantwortung übernommen haben?

(3) Questions about Aging Population/Workforce

How many workers older than 45/50(?) have you employed in your organization? (Percentage)
Wie viele Mitarbeiter, die älter als 45/50 sind, sind in Ihrem Unternehmen angestellt?

Will you hire more (due to labour shortages for example) in the future (5-10)?
Werden Sie noch mehr in der Zukunft einstellen (zum Beispiel durch Personalknappheit)?

Could you imagine employing them beyond retirement age set by law?
Können Sie sich vorstellen, diese Mitarbeiter über das gesetzliche Rentenalter hinaus anzustellen?

Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age (set by law)?
Beschäftigen Sie derzeit Mitarbeiter, die das gesetzliche Rentenalter überschreiten?

Could you briefly describe your experience with older employees? (Problems, positive Effects etc.)
Könnten Sie kurz Ihre Erfahrungen mit älteren Arbeitnehmern beschreiben?

Which policies/practices geared to older workers are currently in place in your organization (if any)? (maintenance, development, utilization, accommodative)
Welche Taktiken/Methoden, die auf ältere Mitarbeiter zugeschnitten sind, wenden Sie momentan in Ihrem Unternehmen an?

Are line managers responsible for the implementation of these policies?
Sind direkte Vorgesetzte für die Durchführung dieser Methoden verantwortlich?

Do you somehow redesign the tasks of older workers to be more suitable for them?
Verändern Sie in irgendeiner Art Aufgaben, so dass Sie für ältere Mitarbeiter besser geeignet sind?

What do line managers need to manage older employees?
Was benötigen direkte Vorgesetzte um ältere Mitarbeiter zu managen?

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees?
Welche Unterstützungsmaßnahmen benötigen direkte Vorgesetzte um ältere Mitarbeiter zu managen?

(4) Questions about competences line managers need

Which additional competences do you believe line managers need? (skills, abilities, motivations)
Was glauben Sie, welche zusätzlichen Kompetenzen direkte Vorgesetzte benötigen?

Which programs do you offer to develop older employees? (Example for Program → mentoring)
Welche Programme bieten Sie an um ältere Mitarbeiter zu entwickeln/unterstützen?

How do you think, can line managers develop older employees?
Wie denken Sie, können direkte Vorgesetzte ältere Mitarbeiter unterstützen/ weiterentwickeln?

How do you think the situation will develop in the future?
Wie denken Sie, wird sich diese Situation in der Zukunft entwickeln?

(5) Questions about Diverse Workforce

What is the proportion of women working for your company? (percentage)
Wie hoch ist der Anteil an Frauen in Ihrem Unternehmen?

What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company? (percentage)
Wie hoch ist der Anteil an Menschen verschiedener Nationalitäten in Ihrem Unternehmen?

What is the proportion of handicapped people working for your company? (percentage)
Wie hoch ist der Anteil an (Schwer)Behinderten in Ihrem Unternehmen?

Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the
aforementioned employee groups within the company?
Gibt es eine staatliche oder interne Quota für eine diese Gruppen in Ihrem Unternehmen?

Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?
Erwarten Sie einen Anstieg in der Anzahl einer dieser Gruppen in Ihrer Firma?

Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organization?
(trainings, quotas, anti-discrimination policies, information sessions, having a diversity manager
employed etc.)
*Welche Maßnahmen, zugeschnitten auf eine vielfältige Arbeiterschaft, werden in Ihrem Unternehmen
angewandt?*

For the implementation of which diversity practices/policies are line managers responsible?
Für die Umsetzung welche dieser Maßnahmen sind direkte Führungskräfte verantwortlich?

Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different
nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels (conflicts of opinion,
misunderstandings, diversity blindness, diversity hostility etc.)?

If yes, what kind of? Examples, please
*Haben Sie jemals Probleme durch das Zusammentreffen von Mitarbeitern verschiedener Nationalitäten,
Religionen, verschiedenen Geschlechts etc., erfahren?
Wenn ja, welche? Beispiele, bitte*

How do you expect the situation will develop in the future?
Wie erwarten Sie wird sich die Situation in Zukunft entwickeln?

What do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce?
Was brauchen direkte Führungskräfte um eine vielfältige Arbeiterschaft zu managen?

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage diverse employees?
*Welche unterstützenden Maßnahmen sind nötig, so dass direkte Führungskräfte Vielfältigkeit optimal
managen können?*

(6) Questions about competences line managers need

Which additional competences do line managers need for managing a diverse workforce effectively?
(Conflict management skills, Personnel management skills)
*Welche zusätzlichen Kompetenzen brauchen die direkten Vorgesetzten um eine vielfältige
Arbeiterschaft zu managen?*

Which programs do you offer to develop special skills for line managers? (Diversity-awareness training,
Diversity skills-building training)
Welche Programme bieten Sie an, um die direkten Vorgesetzten zu schulen und/oder entwickeln?

Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a
heterogeneous workforce?
If yes, which?
*Können Sie sich vorstellen, dass die direkten Führungskräfte in Zukunft zusätzliche Fähigkeiten für das
Managen einer heterogenen Arbeiterschaft benötigen?*

9.3 Transcripts

9.3.1 Transcripts from Recordings

9.3.1.1 Interview Transcription 22.05.2015 – Interview with HR Manager 1 (HRM1)

K: okay, we will just shortly introduce ourselves.

We are currently bachelor students, in our third year, writing our Bachelor Thesis in Human Resource

Management under the supervision of Anna Bos-Nehles. Like we said she recommended you to us. So we got a few questions.

C: We are sort of having the same topic, just a little different directions, which makes it possible to do the interview together.

K: We are both writing about Line Management.

C: What is your function within the organisation?

HRM1: Well, it is kind of broad. Starting with internships, trainees and new employees, introducing them, contracting them, all the broad legal stuff. other legal issues basically from people starting here, till their retirement. Next to that I am the training and development coordinator of Hegeman and responsible for SROI (Social Return On Investment), which means that a (growing) percentage of our employees have to “distanced from the labor market”, for example disabled of unemployed for a long time.

C: So your work experience is basically three years.

HRM1: Yes.

K: Are you familiar with the term line management?

HRM1: yes.

K: So I will start with some general questions.

What are the tasks and the role of the line managers?

HRM1: Well that depends.

Do you know the word for ‘uitvoerders` ?

C: We can check the word later.

K: It’s maybe implementers

HRM1: Yes, I think so.

HRM1: Basically you got the project leaders, who are really leading the early preparations done by the calculation and planners on office, here on office and the uitvoerder who is on the construction side and who is kind of managing the construction side based on technical issues, safety issues, time management, hours clocking, subcontractor management, etc.

K: Which additional tasks did you assign to line managers?

HRM1: In the past the uitvoerders were not necessary above the bricklayers for example, sometimes also in between the bricklayers, sometimes above them. So it is so much multi-disciplined, there is so much going on, so they have to be on top.

We are basically dealing with a market, which demands a growing complexity of construction projects, which have to be built with greater efficiency in an extremely competitive market and under high pressure. Compared with an increased focus on energy efficiency, stricter codes and sustainability and built for a dominant part by employees from abroad. Uitvoerders have to manage this process on the construction side. For this reason we hire People having a higher degree, like mostly people from Universities of applied sciences. We don’t take them from a lower level.

We also have to work with a lower budget, all these elements.

Line Managers have to be capable of you know to work with them, have to know the methods, have to be technical on a really high level, communication, on innovation, on ICT. They have to be able to work with these things. So that combined makes that kind of work interesting.

K: So that is like kind a complex role they have to play.

HRM1: You can basically say, that is kind of the hardest task there is.

K: Like concerning HR, what tasks do they fulfill there? Will they do appraisal or rewarding, or recruitment, do they help there or ...

HRM1: We help them a lot. if there is a trainee from a university of applied science, we always put them with one of the older uitvoerders, so that they can combine skills. We get them a lot of support.

Future... that is how the training was named. So that is kind of explaining it.

K: Are line managers willing to take over basic HR responsibilities?

HRM1: it is not that they want, but also that they have to.

K: And have you ever experienced kind of problems with that?

HRM1: yeah, nowadays they are on a huge pressure.

C: Could you like tell me, how many people, or older people you are employing?

HRM1: A lot. we got people working here for more than 40 years. One started as a helper, a bulding helper and he is now one of the uitvoelders. But we got a jubiläum soon.

K: yeah, it is the same in german.

HRM1: But that is more like an exception.

C: Will you hire more older employees, for example due to labour shortages in the future?

HRM1: No, especially in the building industry work is to heavy.

We want to hire younger employees, but nowadays, because they got, of course they got rewarded during the days, their salary was rising. but that, especially in crises doesn’t really keep any space for younger employees.

C: So you would not choose to hire older people? Concerning all the experience, that they could bring to your organisation?

HRM1: Maybe in higher staff we do, like directors or project leaders, or construction leaders. Mostly in the leading staff. But we mostly try to hire younger people.

C: Those older people working for you, could you also imagine, employing them beyond their retirement age, that is currently set by law?

HRM1: No. Doing something with their body is a heavy work. Almost all people, even here in the office, are happy to retire and it is even in law. The Dutch law helps older employees with a 4-day workweek, they are allowed to work 4 days in stead of 5..

C: Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age?

HRM1: Never, they are always going with retirement age.

C: But you have got that one person that is.

HRM1: Yes he worked here for 48 years, but is now 63.

I think we have both. That is were the younger people come along. Their experience, combined with younger effectiveness.

C: Do you have practices in place that are geared to older workers?

HRM1: It is in law, that they can work, when they turned 55, they can work 4 days a week. That is basic law in construction. It is called 55 Plus Law.

Every sector has its own laws as well. I can show it to you and it says that especially for construction after the age of 55 you are allowed to work 4 days a week.

C: That is a really good law.

HRM1: Yes. It is not for the office staff, it is for the people working in construction.

C: OK do you have any practices in place, developed from your company?

HRM1: Hmm, you know when someone is having a problem, we get him a solution and it happens. It happens that one day, you reach the age of fact we help them giving them training and how to spare your back. It's always just what pops up. That's what we are HR for.

C: Okay, then you go up and sort of redesign their tasks?

HRM1: Yes, we somehow try to make work for older employees easier.

C: Okay. And do you think line managers need additional competences for managing an aging workforce?

HRM1: No, not specifically older employees. Making work less heavy, that's already there. Maybe their communication.

I phone training.

HRM1: You see Europe, basically. So it's more like, more like in that than in specifically older employees. No.

C: Okay. Do you have special program in place for older employees?

HRM1: Well, it's, it's more like, it's always in "ergonomie", ergonomics. Like for your backs. Especially when you are in the office, sitting the whole day.

HRM1: You know when you need a training in how to properly use your back. All our employees inside we give them a training on how to sit properly, but that is not only necessary for older employees. The uitvoerders for example, I gave 'em iPhone training.

C: Okay

HRM1: That's also one of the things they have to do. This "uitvoerder" who is 40 years in service, he's got fingers as thick as my thumb. So when he is like, using the iPhone it was kind of tricky. But you know, he has to use the Iphone, to read emails, to take photos and send them. Today it is really necessary.

C: Do you also like use the knowledge of older employees?

HRM1: They are the teach masters

C: So they are sort of mentoring?

HRM1: Yeah, they mentor. We call them "leermeesters", we call it like. We always combine them with younger people and together they make a great effort.

K: So, I define diversity not just like in the backgrounds of the people, but also like different gender, different maybe sexualities, religions whatever. Like, what makes a people a diverse workforce. So my first question is like: What is the proportion of women working here?

HRM1: It's rising. It is uh, it's very low, to begin with.

K: Ja

HRM1: In the labour force we got zero, but right now we got... you see our financial director right there and we got our BIM, that's a new like a three dimensional, four dimensional construction program. She recently graduated also here in research in new computer modelling. And she is hired, so she is now working, of course in administration.

K: What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company? Like a lot of workers like from the Eastern countries; like Hungary?

HRM1: Eastern Europe. So it's basically, like we call it, we got our own curn (?), we got our own main file, of specialized experience. We know our quality, we got qualified for that. It works usually like this: The government wants to build a bridge, they are like: we want this problem and this problem, while we need this bridge; who can build it? So we can build it with this quality and this quality; we got specifications (...)

something missing and everything with brick laying is easy (...) but you can also always get them from Eastern Europe and that's it. And that is also one of the biggest issues for these "uitvoerders"

K: We think you were talking about what people from Eastern Europe can contribute, e.g. that they are cheaper but lack knowledge in construction?

K: Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?

HRM1: Not different, absolutely not different nationalities. Also not women. For longings we have to use that, for social retail investment. And those are people who are unemployed, or who got handicapped or who are...

K: Just like the handicapped?

HRM1: But handicapped and unemployed. And also that unemployed for one year is about worth like ten thousand Euros and employed for law... And that's it for big companies, they have to get like five percent of their staff of it...

K: Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?

HRM1: Well, not especially foreigners, I think that is already on a higher proportion. Women yeah, we expect them because when you look at the Universities of Applied Sciences, the women are rising and that is really a good development and we embrace it.

K: Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organisation? I don't know like anti-discrimination policies or stuff like this?

HRM1: No, it's not like very we ...business. It's like three kilometers that way; that's where they do the easy pre-fab elements which we later combine in the projects; they got build there. That is mostly what we use well when people have been sick for a long time, when they have had a surgery... Just get used to the lower work pressure there, just to get back, get back in the working process and after that, they can work on projects again. So in a save environment, you could say that.

K: Have you ever experienced like problems occurring because of a clash of employees e.g. from different nationalities or, I don't know, religions?

HRM1: Cultures?

K: Mhmm

HRM1: I think so, yeah. Especially when you got a lot of Eastern Europe employees, sometimes they aren't sober. So that's kind of an ...They are really tough, mostly like two years (...) they get kicked off (...) work with us

K: Ok, and I asked this one... And like coming back to line managers, do you think that line managers need some special skills to overcome these problems, to deal with a diverse workforce?

HRM1: No, no. You have to be enabled to work with lots of changes. Sometimes when a project leader or an "uitvoerder", or a line manager in your story, they don't even know who are working. All they have to be able is to manage change. We call it like "Hegeman", we call it "Hegeman" plus; and we come together, like once a month, you have a meeting downstairs in the basement, we got a big room where they share experiences and teach each other how they have overcome experience. Directors are always there, and project leaders who help them overcome these problems, because most problems you start to experience have already been experienced on another business unit. We've got lots of business units in "Hegeman", who all got the same problems.

K: Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a heterogeneous workforce?

HRM1: ...Are getting more and more up. You know changes are not exponentially as well, is not like one in five years always

Unfortunately, the answer was pretty much cut out, could you please answer it again?

Thank you very much again for your help!!!

9.3.1.2 Interview Transcription 27.05.2015 – Interview with HR Manager 2 (HRM2)

C: Also vorstellen muss ich Karina ja nicht. Ich bin ihre Studienkollegin, studiere also quasi das gleich wie sie und ja wir schreiben gerade unsere Bachelorarbeit und benötigen dafür dieses Interview. Also ich würde nun erst einmal mit generellen Fragen zur Person starten.

HRM2: Ja.

C: und dazu Fragen, was genau ihre Funktion im Unternehmen ist?

HRM2: Das war jetzt die Frage?

C: Ja, das war schon die Frage.

HRM2: Also meine Funktion ist, ich bin hier die Personalschnittstelle im Haus. Wir haben hier verschiedene Sorten Personal. Einmal die Zeitarbeiter, die einen großen Teil hier ausmachen. Dann die

festangestellten (...) Mitarbeiter, dafür bin ich die Ansprechpartnerin direkt und die Sogenannten Telelog Mitarbeiter. Das sind Telekom Logistik Mitarbeiter, Mitarbeiter, die wir von der Telekom übernommen haben. Die haben eine eigene Personalstelle, die in Bonn sitzt. Die werden aber durch uns Zeiterfassungsmäßig betreut und rundherum für den Einsatz, die Einsatzplanung, werden sie auch von hier aus betreut. Wenn es um Disziplinarische Maßnahmen geht, dann wenden sich diese Kollegen an Bonn. Das heißt wir haben geteilte Personalstellen. Bei mir ist es hier so, ich bin nur die Ansprechpartnerin vor Ort, weil wir haben eine Zentrale Personalstelle, die bei uns in Hamburg sitzt. Zur Zeit werden wir zwar durch Unna betreut. Dann in Bonn. Das wechselt immer, aber ganze HR Fachbereich sitzt im Moment in Hamburg. Das große Unternehmen (...) hat alles zentralisiert.

(Unterbrechung)

HRM2: Also wir sind ja eine 100% Tochter der deutschen Post und fungieren als GmbH. Und die deutsche Post hat ihre Personalstellen, sowohl als auch die Lohnbuchhaltungstellen, alle zentralisiert. Und vor Ort gibt es dann noch einen Ansprechpartner, der die Dinge die Zentral schwierig, oder gar nicht zu klären sind, zu klären hat. Und das ist hier meine Funktion. Ich bin hier Zeiterfassungsbeauftragte und Ansprechpartnerin für alle Probleme unseres Personals rundherum.

C: Gut. Können sie mir auch kurz ihre Arbeitserfahrung beschreiben?

HRM2: Meine persönliche, oder was heißt Arbeitserfahrung?

C: Genau ihre persönliche Arbeitserfahrung.

HRM2: Mein Werdegang...

Die Personalerfahrung begann eigentlich im Lager von der damals noch Bundespost, wo ich bereits den Personaleinsatz, und alles was mit Personal zu tun hatte, geregelt habe.

Bin dann vor 11 Jahren hier in die Personalstelle gekommen. Da war es noch eine. Mittlerweile ist es ein wenig zentralisiert worden. Das ist so mein Werdegang in Kurzform.

C: Also haben sie gerade gesagt ihre Arbeitserfahrung im Personalbereich beträgt circa 11 Jahre.

K: Also dann mache ich nun weiter. Jetzt geht es um die direkten Vorgesetzten, also bei euch dann um die Gruppenleiter/Teamleiter. Die sind ja der Focus unsere Bachelorarbeit.

Und erstmal, was sind die Aufgaben oder die Rolle, dieser direkten Vorgesetzten hier in diesem Unternehmen?

HRM2: Ja was ist die Rolle. Ja die kümmern sich im Personaleinsatz. um die Personalpläne, disziplinarisch und das heißt Maßnahmen, zum Beispiel für das zu Spät kommen oder irgendwelche anderen disziplinarischen Dinge. Und natürlich müssen sie den Bereich, ihren eigenen Bereich arbeitstechnisch als Vorgesetzten Betreuen.

K: nun hast du mir schon die nächsten beiden Frage eigentlich beantwortet. Welche HR Tasks die quasi übernehmen. Das sind ja zum Beispiel die Disziplinarverfahren.

HRM2: Aber die leiten das nur ein. Also das heißt, wenn eine disziplinarische Maßnahme anliegt, dann hat er das Gespräch mit dem Mitarbeiter zu führen und sagt zum Beispiel, ich stelle fest, zum wiederholten Male bist du zu spät gekommen. Das hat er in der Regel im Beisein eines Betriebsratsmitglieds, der also hier eine ziemlich hohe Funktion hat, zu wiederholen. Und der trägt den ganzen Vorgang dann zu uns, in Form der Mail in der Regle, manchmal schreiben sie es auch auf. Und wir leiten halt, ja dass Papiermäßige ein.

K: Und gab es irgendwelche besonderen Gründe, dass die diese Aufgaben nun übernommen haben, oder hat sich das einfach so ergeben?

HRM2: Die haben das nicht übernommen, sondern es wurde Ihnen zugewiesen. Weil nur der direkte Vorgesetzte solche Vorgänge ja auch mitbekommt. Sonst keiner nur er selbst.

K: Ja okay. Und sind diese direkten Vorgesetzten, generell bereit diese Personalverantwortung zu übernehmen, oder habt ihr da schon einmal irgendwie Probleme erfahren müssen ?

HRM2: Also Arbeitstechnisch sind sie alle sehr gut. Sage ich mal für ihren Bereich. Also der Mitarbeiter, der Teamleiter. Warenein -und Ausgänge, das bekommen sie super hin. Wenn es um Personelle Dinge geht tun sie sich Teilweise sehr sehr schwer. Und solche Maßnahmen, wie disziplinarische Maßnahmen treten so gut wie sehr selten, fast nie hier auf, weil das scheuen sie alle. Und wenn erleben ich dass, das weiß ich aber aus meiner Erfahrung im Lager selbst. Sie regeln viele Dinge vor Ort, klein, klein. Und sie wollen dieses Papiermäßige nach oben und das es in die Akten kommt vermeiden sie tunlichst. Also sehr selten haben wir solche Fälle. Wenn dann sind es auch schwerwiegende Fälle. Haben wir natürlich schon gehabt. Aber dann sind es schwerwiegende Fälle.

K: Und, findest du, dass diese direkten Vorgesetzten, jetzt darunter leiden, das sie durch diese Personalverantwortung jetzt zum Beispiel mehr Druck erfahren?

HRM2: Leiden tun sie darunter definitiv nicht, die werden auch Leidesgerecht bezahlt.

K: Okay, die haben also jetzt kein Zeitmanagement Problem.

HRM2: Nein, das gehört ja zu ihren Tätigkeiten.

K: also das ist schon fest mit eingeplant.

HRM2: Das heißt, sie müssen nicht die eigentlich Tätigkeit als Lagerarbeiter ausführen, sie springen schon mal ein, wenn not am Mann ist. Das gehört zu ihren Aufgaben.

K: Okay. Ja gut, das wäre es mit den generellen Fragen. Dann bist du jetzt wieder dran.

C: Also um das noch einmal kurz zu erklären. Ich habe in meiner Bachelorarbeit, den Fokus auf älter werdende Mitarbeiter gelegt und

HRM2: Da sind sie hier richtig.

C: und werde nun in dem Zusammenhang ein paar Fragen stellen.

Meine erste wäre, wie viele Mitarbeiter, die älter als 45/50 sind, sind in Ihrem Unternehmen tätig?

HRM2: Das könnte ich Ihnen eigentlich aus dem FF überhaupt nicht beantworten. Ich kann es aber, weil wir selbst große Probleme damit haben und wir das vor ein Paar Wochen.. ne ist schon etwas länger her, ausgewertet haben.

Und da kann ich dazu sagen, das Durchschnittsalter unserer Mitarbeiter ist auf TeleLog Seite ... Da erkläre ich mal, wir sind 137 (...) Mitarbeiter und 124 (...). Die 124 (...) sind über die letzten 10 Jahre, seid der Privatisierung eingestellt worden. Die TeleLog Mitarbeiter kommen noch von der Deutschen Bundespost. Die Mitarbeiter der TeleLog haben ein Durchschnittsalter von 55 Jahren. Durchschnittsalter wohl bemerkt. Das ist also schon eine Hausnummer. Die 124 (...) Mitarbeiter, die eigentlich Jünger sein müssten, weil wir sie ja auch erst vor 10 Jahren begonnen haben einzustellen, haben ein Durchschnittsalter von 45 Jahren. Das ist unser Durchschnittsalter hier im Lager, mit dem wir auch sehr stark zu kämpfen haben.

C: Okay gut. Dann mein nächste Frage wäre, ob sie in Zukunft planen, noch mehr ältere Mitarbeiter einzustellen, aufgrund von Personalknappheit, oder sonstigem.

HRM2: Also das können sie sich selbst beantworten. Nein.

C: Okay

HRM2: Ganz sicher nicht.

C: Und die Mitarbeiter, die so momentan beschäftigen, können sie sich vorstellen diese über das Rentenalter hinaus zu beschäftigen?

HRM2: Auf gar keinen Fall. Weil man muss mal sehen, wo wir hier arbeiten. Wir arbeiten hier im Lager, oder auch als Kraftfahrer oder Staplerfahrer. Das heißt unser Personal ist schwerer körperlicher Tätigkeit ausgesetzt. Und das machen sie nicht mit 70. Das schaffen sie auch in dem Tempo nicht mehr. Und deswegen werden wir das ganz sicher nicht tun. So Leute wie ich, wir könnten natürlich bis 80 arbeiten. Stimmt natürlich auch nicht ganz, weil wir dem Tempo auch nicht unbedingt immer weiter standhalten.

C: Noch eine weitere Frage. Beschäftigen sie derzeit Mitarbeiter, die das gesetzliche Rentenalter bereits überschreiten.

HRM2: Nein.

C: Könnten sie mir dann, kurz ihre Erfahrungen, die sie mit älteren Mitarbeitern gemacht haben beschreiben? Probleme oder positive Dinge, die sie nennen können.

HRM2: Ja also positiv ist erst mal rauszustellen, bei älteren Mitarbeitern ist es in der Regel so sie haben natürlich eine gewisse Erfahrung. Sie haben arbeitstechnisch, vom handling her eine Erfahrung, die aber durch Einsatz neuer Techniken ganz schnell wieder wett gemacht wird. Riesenvorteil bei älteren Mitarbeitern ist, das den Umgang und die Erfahrung im Umgang mit Menschen gewohnt sind. Die haben also.. man hat in der Regel mit älteren Mitarbeitern weniger Probleme im Umgang, weil sie über ihre Lebenserfahrung einfach den Umgang mit Menschen kennen, trainierte sind. Sie sind auch, gerade bei jüngeren Menschen, nicht mehr so impulsiv, Vorteil oder nicht Vorteilhaft, weiß man nicht, aber auch nicht so aggressiv. Ja sind ruhiger in der Regel, im Verhalten. Das kann man als positiv herausstellen. Negativ ist natürlich, die Zeit wird immer schneller und sie halte auch im Lager, in der Regel, das Tempo nicht mehr. Sie fallen, wenn sie krank werden, Krankenstand ist bei uns auch ein riesen Thema. Im Moment zwar nicht so, aber immer mal wieder. Wenn sie krank sind, fallen sie länger aus. Lang aus. Sie haben häufig auch schwerwiegendere Krankheiten. Ich kann aber nicht sagen, dass sie häufiger ausfallen, insgesamt, also die jüngeren Mitarbeiter. Die jüngeren Kollegen fallen häufiger aus, dafür aber kurzfristig.

C: Okay.

HRM2: Das ist so.

K: Hat alles sein Vor- und Nachteile.

C: Gibt es hier im Unternehmen, bestimmte Taktiken oder Methoden die direkt auf ältere Mitarbeiter zugeschnitten sind, um sie beispielsweise zu unterstützen?

HRM2: Also danach suchen wir gerade selbst, aber uns fällt einfach nichts ein, was man machen könnte, jemanden im Lager, der Kisten von Rechts nach Links schleppen muss. Also er schleppt sie nun nicht einen Kilometer weiter, dafür haben wir Stapler und Hubwagen, aber er muss schon heben und tragen. So und da fällt uns einfach nichts ein, was man machen kann um ältere Mitarbeiter zu unterstützen. Theoretisch müsste man hingehen, und müsste älteren Mitarbeitern eine gewisse Zeitkulanz geben, weil sie einfach langsamer sind. Aber das gibt das Tempo, der Druck und die Kosteneffizienz nicht her. Und da fällt uns im Moment auch nicht viel ein, muss man ehrlich sagen.

C: Also haben sie momentan noch nicht bestimmte Dinge, wie zum Beispiel kürzere Arbeitszeiten oder

flexiblere Arbeitszeiten.

HRM2: Doch, doch das haben wir, wenn man darauf hin abzielt.

Also die Deutsche Post hat sogar einen Preis erhalten für ihr Altersteilzeit Modell. Das heißt, Kollegen, jüngere Kollegen, die im Unternehmen beschäftigt sind, könne eine Teil ihres Gehalts in ein Altersteilzeitmodell einzahlen. Je nach zur Verfügung stehendem einkommen. Also 2 % des Gehalts, Urlaubsgeld, Weihnachtsgeld, was auch immer sie wollen und der Arbeitgeber, gibt den gleichen oder einen ähnlichen Anteil auch noch einmal dazu. Ehm sie können dann 3 Jahre bevor sie regulär in Rente gehen würden, das ist in der Regel, also bei den Kollegen die jetzt anstehen, 65/66, können drei Jahre vorher in Rente gehen. Oder auch Teilzeit arbeiten. Die Deutsche Post macht es 2 Jahre vorher Rente. 2 Jahre vorher voll, können sie aussteigen und bis zu drei Jahren können sie vorher Teilzeit arbeiten. So ist das Modell. Also insgesamt 5 Jahre. Das kann man aber entscheiden, nachher, kurzfristig vorher, wie man das möchte. Teile davon Teilzeit arbeiten. Ich muss aber dazu sagen, dafür laufen wir Werbung ohne Ende, weil die Kollegen es nicht wollen. Sie wollen es nicht, weil es ihr Gehalt schmälert. Und wenn man ein Gehalt eines Lagerarbeiters hat, dann ist das auch verständlich. Auffallend ist, dass viele Leute mit höherem Einkommen es machen und die mit niedrigem Einkommen nicht. Und dagegen zu steuern ist schon sehr schwierig.

C: Verändern sie Aufgaben für ältere Mitarbeiter um, sie für diese einfacher oder besser geeignet zu machen?

HRM2: Sagen wir mal so, als wir noch aus meiner Erfahrung jetzt, als wir noch Deutsche Post waren, war es einfach. Da hatten wir Lagerarbeiter, und denen hat man die Möglichkeit eröffnet, wenn sie älter wurden, Automatisch zur Buchungskraft oder zum Angestellten zu werden. Und dadurch hatten die eine leichtere Tätigkeit, die stiegen einfach auf. In der Hierarchie stiegen die auf, wurden angestellte und hatten leichtere Tätigkeiten. Das gibt es aber in der heutigen Welt nicht mehr. Du hast die Qualifikation als Lagerarbeiter, du hast die Qualifikation als Kaufmann. So und das, dieser Weg ist nicht mehr, in diesen GmbHs diesen AGs nicht durchlässig. Sondern wir bestehen in unserer Gesellschaft auf eine Qualifikation. Und deswegen ist dieser Weg für uns ausgeschlossen. Das heißt..

C: Eigentlich schade.

HRM2: Sehr schade, das war eigentlich ein gutes Modell, aber das gibt es unter diesen GmbH's, wir sind in Deutschland, mittlerweile so, oder ja in anderen Ländern auch, dass wir auf Qualifikationen Bestehen.

C: Okay, bleibt abzuwarten, ob sich das in der Zukunft, aufgrund von Personalknappheit allgemein noch wieder ändert.

HRM2: Glaube ich nicht. Die Zeiten in den Büros, in denen man Karteikarten ausfüllte und mit stempeln hantierte, die sind heute auch andere. Und Lagerarbeiter jetzt direkt, die können alle mit dem PC umgehen, aber ob man einen Lagerarbeiter, jetzt 1 zu 1 da direkt ins Büro setzten kann wage ich zu bezweifeln.

Wir haben auch noch ein zweites Problem, dass sage ich dazu. Wir ersticken nämlich in Kaufleuten, wir bekommen also pro Kaufmännische Ausschreibung, 30-40 Bewerbungen, Für einen Lagerarbeiter, keine 3. Deswegen ist das auch nicht mehr durchlässig. Das ist der zweite Grund.

Alle wollen ins Büro, keiner will arbeiten, sage ich mal.

K: Warum studieren wir hier?

C: Okay jetzt geht es nochmal ein wenig, in eine andere Richtung. Glauben sie das direkte Führungskräfte, bestimmte Kompetenzen benötigen um gerade ältere Mitarbeiter zu managen.

HRM2: Sie benötigen ganz sicher bestimmte Kompetenzen, aber nicht nur bezogen auf ältere Mitarbeiter. Sie brauchen sie für Menschen insgesamt. Und nicht jede Führungskraft hat das automatisch.

Wir schulen sie, wir lassen sie schulen, sie bekommen Führungslehrgänge, sie bekommen Trainings, sie bekommen "wie führe ich ein Mitarbeitergespräch" Trainings, sie bekommen "wie hat ein Krankengespräch abzulaufen" Trainings, und bei dem Menschen, der die Neigung dazu hat, mit Menschen gut umgehen zu können, fruchtet das immer. Bei dem Menschen, der die Neigung hat, nicht gut mit Menschen umgehen zu können, können sie schulen wie sie wollen, das ist ganz schwierig. Der kann das auch schwierig umsetzen. Das schwierigste ist, eine Führungsposition zu besetzen, mit jemanden der auch ein Händchen für Menschen hat und das auch zu erkennen, das ist das schwierigste. weil wir ins dieser Gesellschaft, wie gerade der Punkt immer Leistung vorgehen. Wir gucken auf die Zeugnisse und sehen 2,1,2,1,2,1 .. ohh super und dann setzen wir den als Führungskraft ein und merken der kann gar nicht mit Menschen umgehen. Zahlen ja super, technik auch, Software prima, aber Menschen die sind ein Problem. Dann haben wir auf einmal eine Person, die hat nur dreien und vieren und leitet als Führungskraft super ein team und den müssen sie rausfiltern und das ist das Problem.

C: Glauben sie, das direkte Führungskräfte Unterstützungsmaßnahmen gebrauchten um ältere Mitarbeiter zu managen?

HRM2: das brauchen sie sicher, sie brauchen die Möglichkeit, entweder ja zu sagen ja sie haben mehr zeit, dann müsste das Unternehmen das aber steuern. Das tut das Unternehmen aber nicht, weil wir einem Kostendruck ausgesetzt sind. Wir steuern die Menschen nach Geld, nach kosten. Wobei sie mittlerweile auch Anfängen die Krankenkosten dagegen zu setzen. Aber unterstützt und würden sie

sicherlich gebrauchen können, das fehlt ein bisschen.

C: Außer der Altersteilzeit, bieten sie da noch andere Programme an, um ältere Mitarbeiter zu fördern oder zu unterstützen.

HRM2: Nein.

C: Nutzen sie in einer Art, die Kenntnisse, der älteren Mitarbeiter, dass diese zum Beispiel Kenntnisse weitergeben an jüngere Mitarbeiter weitergeben? So als Mentoren tätig sind.

HRM2: Ja das machen wir. Das läuft in Form dieser Altersteilzeit. Die Post besteht nämlich darauf, man könnte Altersteilzeit im Blockmodell machen. Zum Beispiel 5 Jahre vorher arbeitest du Teilzeit, bekommst ein Teilzeit Gehalt. Arbeitest für dieses Teilzeitgehalt und die restliche Zeit kannst du zu Hause bleiben. Das macht die Post nicht nur für 2 Jahre.

Für 2 Jahre kann ich im Block vorarbeiten und zu Hause bleiben. Die restlichem 3 Jahre dieser Altersteilzeit muss ich tatsächlich Teilzeit arbeiten. Das heißt jeden Tag in Teilzeit da sein oder auf jedenfall in dem Monat unterhältig arbeiten. Damit in dieser Zeit das wissen des älteren Kollegen an den jüngeren weitergegeben wird. Und wir haben hier 2 Kollegen in Führungsposition, die dieses Modell angenommen haben. Sind alles Mitarbeiter der TeleLog, die ein wenig mehr noch verdienen, weil sie aus der Posthistorie kommen. die haben das Modell angenommen und wir haben Parallel junge neue Führungskräfte, wo wir glauben, das werden die Führungskräfte der Zukunft in ihre Bereiche gesetzt und die werden durch diese älteren Kollegen eingewiesen, unterwiesen und geschult und wenn fragen sind ist der Kollege auch immer wieder sporadisch da. Das machen wir schon.

C: und wir denken sie, wird sich die Situation in der Zukunft entwickeln?

Also noch mehr ältere Mitarbeiter oder eher weniger ältere Mitarbeiter?

HRM2: Die wird sich so entwickeln, das wir mit den Vorhandenen älteren Mitarbeitern erst mal leben. Versuchen die irgendwie in diese Altersteilzeit Modelle zu bekommen. und das wir das durch jüngere Mitarbeiter aufzustocken und da greift das was ich gerade gesagt habe. Wir haben ein Riesenproblem, die Qualität der älteren Mitarbeiter durch gleiche Qualität jüngerer Mitarbeiter zu ersetzen. Und ich spreche jetzt hier vom Lager, weil wir finden die Mitarbeiter mit der Qualität einfach nicht mehr. Der Markt ist hier abgegrast. Alle wollen ins Büro, keiner will ins Lager. Und die die wir im Lager jetzt finden, das sind sehr schlecht ausgebildete, Leute die wir intensiv schulen müssen damit diese die Prüfungen überhaupt schaffen oder wir haben auch als Lager und Facharbeiter, haben wir Abiturienten angestellt, haben wir auch mal gemacht. Das machen die ungefähr 2 Jahre. die Machen die Ausbildung in der Regel auch recht gut und dann sind die weg, weil die studieren anschließend Logistik. Das ist aber nicht das was wir brauchen. Wir brauchen auch wirklich Leute die hier bleiben und auch arbeiten. Das wird noch eine Riesen Hausnummer die erfahrenen älteren Kollegen durch junge, gute Kräfte zu ersetzen. Und deswegen bilden wir hier über Bedarf, weit über bedarf bilden wir aus, um wenigstens ein paar der Leute hier zu halten.

C: Also gerade weil bei der Arbeit, älterer Mitarbeiter nicht in dem Maße arbeiten können, bis sie 70 sind, wie es zum Beispiel eventuell auf dem Büro in Zukunft möglich wäre.

HRM2: Das wäre... war früher wie gesagt durchgängig, da gab's aber auch mehr von diesen Arbeitsplätzen, aber wie gesagt, ja, in Zeiten von Beraterfirmen, von ne... erledigt! Brauchen wir nicht; höher, schneller, können wir einsparen! Weg damit! Insofern fallen immer mehr von solchen Arbeitsplätzen weg.

C: OK, ich glaube das wär's für meinen Teil; Dankeschön!

K: In meiner Bachelorarbeit geht's darum, dass die Arbeiterschaft immer vielfältiger wird; vielfältiger insofern einmal... bezogen auf verschiedene Nationalitäten, aber auch auf verschiedene Geschlechter; d.h. dass immer mehr Frauen arbeiten; und auch, keine Ahnung, Mitarbeiter mit Behinderung; wirklich alles mögliche was einen Mitarbeiter vielfältig macht. Und jetzt erstmal kommen ein paar Fragen dazu, wie viel ungefähr von jeder Gruppe sie beschäftigen. Also zum Beispiel das Verhältnis von Frauen und Männern, an Arbeitskräften, wie ist das hier?

HRM2: Hm, wollen wir mal überlegen... Männer 85%, Frauen 15%; wobei der größte Teil im Büro sitzt. Und Frauen in Führungspositionen: minimal.

K: Und wie sieht das aus mit Mitarbeitern verschiedener Nationalitäten?

HRM2: Querbeet. Wir haben alles. Von Jordaniern bis zur Elfenbeinküste. Amerikaner haben wir nicht, aber von Engländern bis fast alles...

K: Hast du ungefähr einen prozentualen Anteil im Kopf? Wie viele das ungefähr sind?

HRM2: Nein, weil wir nicht unterscheiden bei den Mitarbeitern. Wir machen jetzt kein Häkchen dran, á la der kommt jetzt aus der Elfenbeinküste, völlig egal woher der kommt. Im Lager haben wir alles, von Syrern bis ... ich weiß es nicht; alle Nationen. Aber auch erst in den letzten 10 Jahren.

K: Ja genau; wir hatten ja gerade schon über behinderte Menschen gesprochen, wie sieht es da aus; beschäftigt ihr da viele?

HRM2: Sehr viele! Aber, das hat auch mit unserer Historie zu tun, weil wir mal Deutsche Post waren und die Deutsche Post, als öffentlicher Dienst, hat sich das auf die Fahne geschrieben auch solche Menschen einzustellen. Das ist unter der GmbH natürlich deutlich anders, es zahlen alle lieber, wir gehören nämlich zu einer der wenigen Niederlassungen, die nicht zahlen müssen, weil wir einen sehr hohen Anteil an schwerbehinderten Menschen haben. Wir haben 25 Schwerbehinderte im Einsatz und das bei 300 festangestellten Mitarbeitern. Das ist schon hoher Anteil, ein sehr hoher Anteil. Auch da muss ich sagen, da bekommen wir in den nächsten Jahren immer mehr Schwierigkeiten: Wir haben Schwerbehinderte Menschen eingestellt. Aber dadurch dass die Menschen älter, werden kommen durch Krankheiten, durch irgendwelche Schäden, die die Menschen haben, auch mehr Behinderungen dazu. Und deswegen steigt der Anteil der Behinderten noch an.

K: Ja das wäre auch eine meiner nächsten Fragen: Erwarten sie in Zukunft einen Anstieg der Beschäftigung in einer dieser drei Gruppen?

HRM2: Bei Schwerbehinderten und Frauen sicherlich wird kein Anstieg da sein, weil auch Frauen sich im Lager schwer tun. Sie wollen einfach auch nicht gerne im Lager anfangen, ganz klar. Der Anteil der Frauen, der auffällig ist, ist natürlich immer bei den Teilzeitverträgen. Bei Aushilfen da sind sie dann wieder präsent überproportional, ganz klar, Männer nicht. Der Anteil der Frauen wird nicht steigen, der ist in den letzten Jahren eher gesunken, [...] und der Anteil der Schwerbehinderten wird steigen, weil wir eben auch viele ältere Kollegen haben, die aufgrund ihrer Einschränkungen versuchen an Schwerbehindertenscheine zu kommen, und dadurch ja in Rente gehen können, ein paar Jahre eher, und deswegen [...].

K: Und wie sieht das –aus mit Mitarbeitern verschiedener Nationalitäten? Erwarten sie da auch noch einen Anstieg?

HRM2: Den haben wir schon. Den haben wir in den letzten 10 Jahren gehabt, wie gesagt, weil wir als Lagerarbeiter auf dem Markt hier in Westfalen - wir haben ja eine Vollbeschäftigung in Westfalen, also annähernd Vollbeschäftigung - weil wir einfach keine deutschen - oder sagen wir - schwierig deutsche Mitarbeiter finden, die mit im Lager die Arbeit machen wollen.

K: Gibt es eine Art von Quote, ich weiß nicht, entweder selbst auferlegt oder gesetzlich, für die Beschäftigung eine der eben genannten Gruppen? Du hattest ja jetzt gerade von den Schwerbehinderten gesprochen, aber es ist jetzt nicht so, dass ihr die haben müsst oder so?

HRM2: Es gibt keine Quote, also die Vorgabe ergibt sich eigentlich aus der Arbeit, die wir schaffen müssen. Und deswegen werden wir... wir haben noch zwei Schwerbehinderte hier eingestellt, einmal der Pförtner und noch jemanden im Reklamationsbereich. Haben wir gemacht. Die sind allerdings, muss ich dazu sagen, die haben viele Förderungen in Anspruch genommen, wir haben die Arbeit, in diesem Sinne, des Arbeitsamtes in Anspruch genommen. Da gibt es ja Förderungen und sowas, das haben wir auch gemacht. Nur mit diesem Argument [...] haben wir diese Leute auch angenommen. Dazu sage ich gleich auch, das haben wir nur gemacht, weil es Kinder unserer Mitarbeiter sind. Ob wir das extern gemacht hätten, wage ich zu bezweifeln, aber, wir tun auch was für unsere Mitarbeiter, und wenn wir einen Mitarbeiter haben, und können ihn damit unterstützen, dass wir auch sein Kind unterstützen, tun wir das auch.

K: Welche Praktiken oder Maßnahmen zugeschnitten eben auf eine Arbeiterschaft, die sehr vielfältig ist, gibt es? Also habt ihr irgendwie Trainings oder irgendwelche Anti-Diskriminierungs-Sachen oder informationsbezogene ...

HRM2: Ja, ohne Ende! Bevor hier einer nur einen Schritt hier in unser Unternehmen jetzt, außer Besucher, setzt, hat er ein Paket von sowas zu unterschreiben, kriegt er eine Einweisung bezogen auf das AGG, also das Allgemeine Gleichbehandlung Gesetz in Deutschland. Da werden die unterwiesen, dass wir in keinster Form Diskriminierung aufgrund der geschlechtlichen Orientierung, aufgrund des Geschlechts allgemein, aufgrund der Nationalität dulden. Jede rassistische Äußerung oder sowas führt sofort zu einer Entlassung, was wir auch schon hatten. Das hat es also auch schon gegeben. Wir hatten also wirklich mal einen Mitarbeiter der sich geweigert hat als Muslim sich von einer Frau was sagen zu lassen, und damit ist er in Deutschland und auch hier in diesem Unternehmen nicht tragbar und musste gehen. Ja also sowas hat es schon gegeben. Das unterschreiben die hier, und wir weisen auch immer wieder drauf hin. Einmal im Jahr kriegt jeder Mitarbeiter eine Unterweisung und eine Schulung, zu vielen anderen und auch diesen Themen, das wir in diesem Unternehmen solch Formen auch nicht dulden. Interessanterweise, im täglichen Umgang der Menschen miteinander, spielt all das überhaupt keine Rolle. Das ist also ganz deutlich festzustellen. Weder die Nationalität ... Hauptsache sie verstehen sich. Gut, Sprache ist natürlich die Verbindung. Aber ansonsten höre ich hier, und das hör ich auch von anderen Unternehmen, das ganze in der Arbeitswelt spielt keine Rolle.

K: Ja, das führt auch schon eigentlich direkt zu meiner nächsten Frage: Haben Sie jemals wegen des Zusammentreffens von Mitarbeitern verschiedener Nationalitäten, Kulturen, Geschlechts erlebt?

HRM2: Ja, einmal, den Fall hab ich ja gerade erzählt. Das ist der Fall, der bis zu uns gekommen ist.

K: Da sind aber dann noch welche, die unter der Hand dann eben gelöst wurden, solche Sachen oder?

HRM2: Ganz sicher, aber das kommt dann nicht bis hier her.

K: Sind die direkten Führungskräfte, also die Teamleiter, auch irgendwie dann, weiß ich nicht, wenn es Probleme gibt, direkt involviert in das Lösung finden? Sollen die dann Maßnahmen da ergreifen oder..?

HRM2: Maßnahmen ergreifen wenn es wirklich schwerwiegende Vorfälle gibt, falls sich jemand diskriminiert fühlt, oder das er auf Grund seiner Rasse, seines Glaubens, seines Irgendwas da diskriminiert wird... Ne, dann heißt es die Maßnahme klar melden und "Auf wiedersehen"! Damit droht sofortige Kündigung; also da fackeln wir nicht, da sehen wir auch nicht lange zu. Aber das taucht selten hier oben auf.

K: OK. Die Frage hatte ich ziemlich schon... Genau, jetzt kommen wir zu den Kompetenzen: Also welche Kompetenzen würden jetzt die Teamleiter brauchen um, wie gesagt, die vielfältige Arbeiterschaft effektiv zu führen, zu leiten? Gibt's da was?

HRM2: Nix besonderes, was sie nicht sonst auch eigentlich können müssen. Nein, nein.

K: Alles klar. Und...

HRM2: Also, wir schulen nicht speziell in diese Richtung, das gar nicht.

K: OK. Also dann hast du mir gleich meine nächste Frage beantwortet. Also es gibt irgendwie keine Trainings oder so irgendwie...?

HRM2: Es gibt Trainings, aber nicht in diese Richtung.

K: Auch für die direkten Führungskräfte?

HRM2: Es gibt Trainings, auch speziell für die direkten Führungskräfte, viele und immer mal wieder. Wir haben nächsten Monat nochmal eins zum Thema Krankenstand und Umgang mit Kranken, ne also das wohl. Die werden ständig trainiert, also einmal im Jahr immer wieder. Aber nicht speziell... Das ist auch kein Schwerpunkt, kein Problem, da haben wir andere.

K: Ist ja gut, wenn das kein Problem ist. Genau und, ja dann wäre ich auch schon bei meiner letzter Frage: Können sie sich vorstellen, dass die direkten Führungskräfte weitere Fähigkeiten entwickeln müssten in Zukunft, wenn das halt noch mal zunimmt, ich weiß nicht, zum Beispiel mit der Beschäftigung von Behinderten oder keine Ahnung? Auch nicht?

HRM2: Nein, ich glaube nicht.

K: Das wäre es dann schon. Wunderbar.

9.3.1.3 Interview Transcription 01.06.2015 – Interview with HR Manager 4 (HRM4)

C: Okay should we start?

HRM4: Yes.

C: Okay, we will first ask a few general questions.

For the beginning, we would like to ask you what your function is within the organisation?

HRM4: I am for three years working in the company now. And I was hired as HR director for Northern Europe. And that is the existing countries, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. And that is the whole bunch of HR, there are some departments in every country. Some are too small, where I only have an assistant, but others have a bigger plant. I am covering this area.

C: And could you also briefly describe your work experience?

HRM4: Yes I can. Besides the study, which I did in Amsterdam. Sociology and Economics, I worked in many organisations. I was temporary worker on the HR field, projects and practical support jobs, training and education officer, I was in fact, I did all the things just to gain on experience.

After that I was hired at the company. I have worked there for 11 years in several HR jobs. I developed myself towards, from very green and young, inexperienced, after school towards a more senior HR Manager. Good and nice organisations, good memories. It is like your first love... first employer, first love.

So after 11 years I thought to myself, so this a nice opportunity to do something else, so I started at an organisation which is a Dutch cable company, a Dutch cable manufacturer, but also R&D and Sales was in it. And that so called... responsible on HR activities, so that was the first time that I lead a team. And I was responsible for a social plan and closing factory. Closing the plant and to deal with the unions and etc. and the whole. Well that is a different position, in a team or the only one as an end responsible. I did that for 5 years and as I said in 2012, I started here.

C: Okay that is a long time in the HR area. Our next questions would then be, how long you have been working in the HR area?

HRM4: It is almost, yeah it is 20 years more or less. And that is besides my study. That was in 1993, I started for free as a HR advisor, where I graduated at a certain organisation. You know it right?

C & K: Yes.

HRM4: And they had a big problem, financially said. It was crisis. They did not have any money, so to spend for a new worker. But I said, I don't need money, I see all the work here. If you could give me the experience, I will take care for my energy and the work and then I will be for free. I thought to myself, it is good on your CV and to gain on and build on experience.

K: All right. Then we will continue with some general questions about the line managers in the company. And what are the tasks and the role of the line managers here.

HRM4: Yeah first of all leading the team, and trying to develop the people. And that is a nice HR answer, but reality is sometimes different. Sometimes they forget, because there is a huge product and output demand, which has to be achieved every day. So it is a mixture in the end, about taking care for the quantity and the quality of production, the lead times, internal customer satisfaction, from supplier to delivery and taking care of their people and if they have to take care of the people. You are talking about hiring. Together with HR by the way. And together with a temporary recruitment agency. But also for development of people, sometimes they fire them, if they did not do a good job or due to some other issues.

K: So they have been assigned some additional tasks from the HR field as you already mentioned, like recruitment for example?

HRM4: Oh yes. I can tell you there is a lot of difference between organisation and the position of HR. You should have read some books. I did as well. Metres, kilometres of literature there is to find, but the position of HR here, you may check in your survey is quite strong. And not only because HR is quite strong, or the HR manager here is quite strong. It is also in the minds of people. So that is the best. You do not do all the things by yourself, otherwise you are... It should be spread out, also to the shop floor.

K: Okay, and what were reasons, to assign like extra tasks to HR managers?

Like, are there any reasons for that?

HRM4: Yeah, it is the very principle 'HR on the Line' period. There are two kinds of integration of HR activities. You could say in the tasks of the line managers and into the strategy. And there are two integration perspectives, and one of them is quite a principle thought, a vision. As much as possible in terms of HR. If a leader wants to lead the people, then HR is an important part of it.

K: Okay. And are your line managers willing to take over some of the tasks and responsibilities, like did you experience resistance or problems with it?

HRM4: Sometimes, sometimes we do. And it is not about how important training and education is, it is about how important it is to hire the right people, it is not about, when someone is being fired, who is doing that. That is not the issue. But as you maybe know, our company it a big multinational. Worldwide, global 190.00 people. 56 countries and that has to be controlled. As a consequence, a big multinational has also an internal reference framework and lots of administrative parts. So I always try to reduce to the bloody limit, the bloody minimum, the administrative part for the line management. That will avoid us for the excuse trick. To say hey, I cannot do any more, because I am fully loaded due to all the administrative tasks, so I cannot do the important things. So we skip the administrative part as much as possible and then we can focus on the real thing. But there is some resistance every time, for myself also. There is a squeeze. Because in the end, HR should also think and expect that we facilitate to the max instead of creating resistance, by dull useless administrative parts. And I am very bad at administration. Really and I am proud of it. Because that is, gives me the necessity to organise a team around me. Some people in terms of diversity, who are able to organise that part and I cannot. I do not do that.

K: Okay, then I think time for your part Carina.

C: Okay I will first ask some questions about the increasingly older employees. I don't know if that is a problem here, but we will find out now.

My first question would be how many workers that older than around 45/50 years are you employing? Do you know that number?

HRM4: Yes. Lots. The majority. Ob average the age is 47.1. Last year November we did an employee satisfactory survey. And half year before that a health check and that is why we know. French people, this is a French multinational. They always want to know, want to have facts and figures. They are very keen on big presentations with very, lots of numbers etc. So 47.1 this used to be, in this location, were we are now. This was the former organisation that was a Family-owned company. And people stayed a long time in that company. And they are still there. So lots of older people.

C: Do you plan to hire more older employees, in the future, if necessary?

HRM4: Yes, why not, but there are two things to consider. People are getting older and younger at both. If you know what I mean.

C: Yes, I think so.

HRM4: My father was 70, and he was an old man. Today, I think when I am 70. I have to still work. And if I don't need to work any more. Hopefully I have got the health to travel around the world which is more common for people at the age of 70, than it was before. So people are getting older/younger. Secondly, I do not want to discriminate and that allows me to find the best people. In terms of balance, we need maybe more younger people, but not quite necessarily. Because if we hire people, they should have a good experience. And sometimes I say to the management. Hey, you can invest lots and lots of money in a young, high potential, but be aware, he or she could move out in three years. If you invest in an employee who is a little older, they are more loyal, they are more committed, they will probably stay longer in the company and then it is more, could be a better investment as well. It is always a matter about which team is it. What is the best, how many females/males are there, what background, what

nationality, what age and then we try to hire the best in that case.

C: Okay thank you and could you also imagine, employing current employees beyond retirement age that is set by law? If they are willing to work longer.

HRM4: On i... base, yes. I did already. I organised it already. As ... we had some very specialist jobs and we organised, with the big experience, ex- employees to come back. For a project. I know one was 66 and one was 69 or 70. No problem. In Norway we do the same. We have a customer service employee. 50 Years in service. 50 years, it is really amazing. But he knows a lot. So we will stay in contact and he will be back if there is a problem.

C: That's good. So you basically answered my next question already.

Then I would like to ask, if you could briefly describe your experience with older employees? So if there are any problems or positive things?

HRM4: First of all it is about, it depends on, who you are from yourself. And I was brought up by my parents to have respect, for everybody in the world. For young, for my midst and also for the old people. And I am always, I am convinced that what you give, what you show, that is something you will get back. That not dependent older people, but zooming in on older people. I have some experience with them. Everyone wants to and also they want to be treated fairly. They are maybe a little more hierarchically focused. Maybe more than the young generations, they are not impressed by hierarchical order and other things. I also think they are more loyal, committed. Of course a physical aspect is, that part of their life, but if you transfer that into illness for instance, people are old and if they are ill, they will stay ill more long. They are not ill that often. The young generation so to say, is ill more often, than the older generation. And if the older generation is ill, they are longer ill.

C: Yes we have heard that already. Basically the same words.

HRM4: And of course. Some older people have some resistance against the new things. Before asking, it is already a no. Because it used to be better in the past, and I have done that before and I know how it works. So I don't do it, forget it, but I do not accept that. So because that is not showing respect and if I show respect, I want to receive the same respect and if people do not do that they have a big problem with me. It does not matter who they are. Maybe it is god or the queen or the king, does not matter. If I show respect and people do not. They have a problem with me that is our professional relationship. Same for older people. So straight forward and be honest and transparent and discuss about the things that are in front and if you do that with some natural approach as a person who you are, my experience is that you can achieve everything. With every kind of people.

C: And do think that especially older employees have some special needs?

HRM4: No, on the contrary. They have too much. I am negotiator in a collective labour agreement. We have one ... in the southern part of Limburg which is also part of Europe and for the ... I am a member of how do you say, negotiation and delegation and for some years. And if you look at those collective labour agreements, you know them?

C & K: Yes.

HRM4: That is, it is overloaded with protection, articles, rules for older people. I think that is not, that is pre-historical not from this time anymore, we should change that, it is discrimination. And not needed. So look... Based on the individual, there is, you can define a solution for that person and the younger people we should take for that. If for instance he or she is just married and has a child, they have some special needs. Flexible work hours, part time, or telework or whatever. We should take care for that. And if an older employee, has special needs, special problems, we should take care for that as well. But I am not going, I am not a supporter for that general policy for all the old people or all the young people. I think that is tailor made. That is making HR so interesting. Tailor made solutions.

C: Okay. You do not have any special practices for older employees here?

HRM4: No, we have lots of rules, we facilitate a lot, but that is in the collective labour agreement. Seniority days we have, extra holidays, people with the age of 55+ do not have to work anymore in the night shifts. They can chose not to do that and so on and so on and so on...

C: Yes we already, heard that in the construction industry, they are allowed to work 4 days a week instead of 5.

HRM4: Yes, in this company they can also create that, they have the same possibility. Because we have more than 30 seniority days for people. Above a certain age, which is ridiculous.

C: Next to the normal holidays?

HRM4: Yes that is about 25 days. Plus 30 or more. Than you can create, you can easily go for a four days working week. The only thing is, the seniority days give you only 85% of your income for that day. But yeah what are we talking about. Then they can work 4 days a week. Cost one day, but does not cost 20 %. Cost only of that one day, 15%.

C: Are line managers in your company responsible for the implementation of these policies?

HRM4: No not for the implementation, but for the execution. You can distinguish who is the policy maker, that is the unions and the employer on the negotiation table. That is the collective labour agreement. Then you have to implement the policy on organisational level. And in Luxembourg I have an HR Manager who is taking care for that. She has to do that, that is her responsibility. She has to implement and the line managers they have to take care for a good and a thorough execution. That is the part of HR in their task. That is the three way distinction.

C: My next question would be about competences line managers need.

They are more future type of questions. My first one would be if you think that line managers would need

additional competences in the future to manage older employees, like if the amount of older employees is going to increase maybe.

HRM4: Additional competences...

C: Like additional skills and abilities. Trainings you could offer.

HRM4: This is an interesting question. It is a little bit a suggestive question, because you maybe are thinking that the normal set of competences might not be enough.

C: Yes, might be...

HRM4: No what do I expect from a leader, from a line manager? Leadership and leadership is container, is a big word and blablabla.. But in the end, they need to know about their people, they need to know about themselves, of course they need professional luggage... if it's your affinity, if I'm are working in a technical environment I should know something about technical and environmental issues, but I don't need to know all the details because when I'm a leader I need to organise people who can do that. And it is the same for a line manager: he or she should organise the operators who can do the task, on technical or whatever... A line manager who is a good manager is, I think, also capable of managing older people, old and young. And what I said ten minutes ago, transparency, straightforwardness, honesty, open communication; that is very important for managing different kinds of people. You should switch to the people who are in front of you. And some people expect other things than other ones and the line managers should be able to switch between those different people and their different expectation. Maybe that's an additional one, because in theory from the past, maybe management was more of a straightforward vision how to become a good manager. Maybe the change is that is not only about how to become a good manager, how to become a good human being, how to become a good leader who is aware of the differences in his or her team, form the background specifically.

C: Ok, I will ask the next question then. Do you offer any programs for older employees? An example of a program would maybe be a mentoring program that older employees can teach their experience to younger ones or stuff like that.

HRM4: We do, but not formalized and I think we can improve on that. It's not about discrimination, positive or negative, but it is a matter of employability and to use each other's strengths. We have lots of older employees, they know a lot in their head and we should transfer that knowledge to other people. And that could, for instance, be in an instrumental solution for mentoring or whatever. That's a good one. We do it, but we could formalize it.

C: For example you mentioned in the beginning that you like getting older employees back to do special programs, so these could give their experience to younger ones.

HRM4: Yeah.

C: And one last question to conclude: How do you think the situation will develop in the future? Do you think there are going to be more older employees? Are there going to be problems in finding employees at all?

HRM4: Yeah, I think there will be a shortage on the labour market soon and this time it will be a critical shortage. The baby boomers will leave, they will go for retirement. The sooner or later, the pensionate in the Netherlands has been increased, from 65 to 67, they will leave and that's a big group, a big number of people. In our organisation it is, but also in the whole world, at macro perspective. So that brings a big shortage on the labour market. How to find the people is maybe changing the law, the rules, maybe breaking the rules... And to think more flexible about how to hire the people and under which conditions to hire them, that's from employer point of view. From employee point of view, they should also be flexible on their mind-set; it is a win-win situation.

C: So this will maybe also lead to employing older people again? Because for my experience I know in the past it was harder for older employees to find a new employment, especially in the building industry and now they have to employ older workers because they do not find younger people who want to do the job anymore.

HRM4: Right. Maybe you could do it geographically? In this country, twenty years ago there were not so many Polish people, or Rumanian or Bulgarians. So you can broaden the borders, but it will be not enough. It's also about employability of the people. That said, many employers need a new way of thinking, because many employers are not willing to hire older people due to some think they think there are in; so that image will change and it is changing now. I am from the generation of more than forty, when I was young, like 18,20, being older than 40 was already a drop out looking for a job, 45 was really old and 50 was 7 years before retirement. I fired lots of people who were 57 and a half years old because for social reasons, for restructuring, for the bigger social plan, for big money in the pocket; it was crazy, it's amazing. We cannot afford it anymore, but it was common sense back then. We are talking about the period until 2000 right now.

C: So I think that would be all for my part. Thank you for answering my questions. Now it's Karina's turn.

K: Yeah, I take over now. Like I told you, my focus is the diverse workforce. And diversity is characterised rather broad: by different religions, different cultures, different genders, handicaps;

whatever makes up a diverse workforce. And firstly there will be some question about proportions within your workforce. Like the first one will be concerning the proportion of women working here; is it rather equal or...?

HRM4: No, no, no by far not; industrial company... Every two months I have a meeting with all my European HR colleagues and we share our feelings about diversity. Diversity is a hot shot theme at in our company... and one of the most important aspects of diversity in the organisation is the lady. It makes sense, because we don't have too many ladies... On the shop floor it is 10%, in middle management it is a little bit more and in "cadre", "cadre" is French for management staff and higher, it's 17 or 18 %. So we are measuring the hiring of ladies and we try to hire the ladies if they are equally qualified for hiring... if not I always want to hire the best one and I sometimes have to defend myself to the highest executive committee in Paris. Besides age, we discussed already, background, nationality... In Luxembourg there are 8 nationalities, for instance, but here there are six or seven.

K: This already concerns my next question: How is the proportion of people from different nationalities in your company?

HRM4: That is a good one. It is spread, the majority is Dutch, of course. We are an international multinational company, and that is what we want to be.

K: How about the proportion of handicapped people working for your company?

HRM4: Not too many, we have got 4 working here. But we have also an agreement with an organisation not far from here, for so called social disabled people, they are not handicapped in the terms of arm or legs less, but they are mentally disabled. One of the things why I am proud to be working for this company is we are keen on facts and figure, and big presentations and lots of numbers etc., I told you. The Americans do the same, but the American social heart is quite... straight. It is not in this company, this French company has a big social heart. Of course we need to achieve our results and promises, otherwise we have a problem with the budget, but it is a social company. We are focusing on many aspects of diversity, actually on all.

K: Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?

HRM4: Ja, a quota for hiring women we have. But there is a big danger, which I always say in those say European HR committees: Let's not focus too much on hiring women, because image you are a woman and we are hiring you or you get an internal promotion and you will always ask yourself the question: hey is it because of my quality or is it because I am a lady? It is an instrument to achieve your goal, it is not a goal on its own. Diversity, I am favoured about it. Not only by ladies, but everything because the more diverse the more innovative, the more the outcome – I believe in that statements. If we only hire women that will be a big mess for the company because if you put 10 women together in one room you will become completely crazy. Men have another attitude than women. If you put 10 men together in one room, they will all be machos and therefore it is not diverse, it will not create any innovation.

K: OK: Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?

HRM4: All. We are forced to do it by Dutch law, the so-called participation law. Secondly, there is a corporate policy for diversity. It is one of our four axes, you know HR policy, diversity, commitment is another one... they measure, they are demanding and we have to follow their rule and will achieve something in that.

K: Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organisation? Like trainings or anti-discrimination policies?

HRM4: Especially for those groups?

K: Yeah, but also for the whole workforce.

HRM4: Yeah, we have a gender- awareness obliged for all managers, we have diversity-awareness training obliged for all managers; anti-corruption training obliged for all managers; we have lots of trainings.

K: Are line managers responsible for the execution diversity practices/policies?

HRM4: They are obliged to follow that training also, e.g. the gender-awareness training.

K: Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organisational levels?

HRM4: No, look this is just a company like as all companies. Of course we have problems sometimes, we have problems between people and departments, in corporation, in communication; but I don't think that is because of diversity. So sexual orientation is not an issue, maybe it is not an issue because it is not spoken out loud, but it is not an issue. Discrimination of colour, skin... there are working e.g. Turks, all kinds of nationalities, no problem. In our employee satisfaction survey, we have some question on that theme and when it comes to bullying or sexual harassment, we are very sharp on that. Every single complaint is one too much.

K: OK. Coming to the competences: Do you think line managers need additional competences for managing a diverse workforce effectively?

HRM4: I think the answer is the same that I gave to Carina. I think it is.

K: And are there, I don't know, programs in place in order to develop line managers further in that matter?

HRM4: Yeah, besides the training I mentioned, for the top management because we are convinced that everything starts at the top. For the top management we have workshops on diversity, last year we had one, this year we will have one; so this is one the executive level. HR is organizing it together with the top management.

K: I think that was it from my side. I don't know if you have got any further questions?

9.3.1.4 Interview Transcription 02.06.2015 – Interview with HR Manager 5 (HRM5)

In the beginning we introduced ourselves.

HRM5: Yes okay, as you can see on the whiteboard there, this plant is the plant in Enschede, we are currently building one in Hungary. That is on the right, which we started a few month ago. This will be a complete new big plant, which will focus on OE (Original Equipment), whereas Enschede is focusing at the moment, for the replacement market for the tyres. We also have a CEO here, a German (...). And I am responsible for sales, sales also in Europe and America, tool and tyres, the bicycle division and OE which is a very small part now at the moment, but will be growing because it is a new area we are facing, we are looking at the moment. HR Quality is not my responsibility that is for another HR manager. So I am more supporting everything, but the plant, also supply chain, marketing, product management, accounts, everything but the plant. So that is my sector so to speak, where I am responsible for as an HR manager. I am working here since the first of January in a permanent position, before that as a junior manager, that is how i started here and I thought that is just a temporary option and there where so many things that changed. So that is here in this company, there are so many opportunities, also for me, it is good for me to stay. And before that, I was a head of HR in a cooperation in the agriculture branch and before that HR and sales manager at Randstad staffing services. So that is my background. 25 years of HR and Sales. So 10/12 years of sales and 12/15 years of HR. So that is a little bit of my background. I am living in Hengelo and I think it was you (Carina) that called me for an interview last week I had to go to Italy on short notice, so it is good for us that we have an hour for now.

C: Yes it is really good, that it still worked out.

K: Very nice.

HRM5: Yes and I was very curious what kind of other companies your are interviewing at the moment. Because that is always something also for me to learn from.

....

I thought well, one I found people who helped me, so lets try to do something back for you.

K: Yes that is really nice.

HRM5: Wonderful.

So shoot with all the questions.

C: Actually our first question you already answered quite well in your introduction.

HRM5: Yes I thought that was good, so you can see what my responsibility is and perhaps for you interesting to know and look at the numbers not only the divisions.

We are talking about 150 sales people in the sales nations in Europe and America. And about 250 people in supply chain and all the staffing sides. That is kind of numbers of responsibilities. Perhaps that is interesting for you to know as well.

K: Yes of course. Okay since you introduced yourself pretty well. I think we can already continue with our first set of questions concerning line management.

HRM5: Yes.

K: In this organization what are the tasks and role of the line managers?

HRM5: I am sorry, but what do you mean by that?

The HR responsibilities or?

K: First in general and we will later go to the HR responsibilities.

HRM5: It is quite diverse. Cause you have the plant here. There we have different layers of managers, who are responsible for one group of, for a team of production people, but we also have managers here who are responsible for a complete group of people for supply chain or, so they are responsible for profit and loss, responsible for production numbers, they are responsible also for the people. And depending

on the department where they are responsible for, lets say marketing for example, we have a head of marketing, and below that we have 5 or 6 managers and each have responsibility for 5 or 6 product managers or event managers, or communication people who are working there. So that depends very much on, if you are talking about staff here at the office or staff in the plants. So that is quite diverse, but everybody has its own group of people and performance.

K: Okay, all right. So now coming to the HR tasks. Which additional tasks did you assign to your line managers?

HRM5: Ehm there are responsible for helping out on illness, on developing, we try to give the line managers as much HR responsibility as possible. Of course we are supporting that and we are, we have a function like to signal if we see things, or to advise if they ask for it, and also if they do not ask for it. But we try to put as much of HR responsibilities into line management as we can. I think we can improve that even more if we do right now.

K: okay, what were the reasons to assign these tasks to the line?

HRM5: Because I think that all the line managers, we should, every line manager or coordinator is trained in leadership, and in leadership he should give the right example and he should manage its own team and be responsible for his actions and the decisions he makes. And of course he never stands alone, of course he always will be helped, but it's, we think that to as self-supporting as possible and to put the responsibilities as much as possible towards the people instead of putting it all at the direction, or, general managers level for example.

K: Okay, and are the line managers generally willing to take over these HR tasks?

HRM5: Yes, we are very lucky in this company, that especially when we look at the managerial capacity, and of course we can improve, even today, that.. Well everybody here, who works here knows that it works that way. So everybody is raced that way so to speak. So they know that it is part, of it, that a team manager also is responsible for these HR matters. And you don't organize that in one day. This is the result of our HR director who put that in action for many, many years. So it is very common in this company. But I know companies, who always think, well, if there is a problem, then go to the HR department, that is not my problem, you know? And that is not how it works here. Thank god! But also that means that HR, the HR managers are very close to these line managers, so they know exactly what is happening on the floor, on the departments or wherever. So they are always working in a very close way together so that I am always good aligned on what is happening on these departments and the other way around. But the one who is the responsible, not me, but the line manager.

C&K: Sounds very good.

HRM5: Yes it is really a privilege to work that way as an HR manager. Because I also know that it can be completely different. That if there is a problem than go to HR, so and then you are always active as a trouble-shooter.

But not as a business partner and that is what we exactly are here.

K: All right. I think it is your turn now Carina.

C: Yes, as I already told you, I am focusing on the topic of an aging workforce and would first ask a very general question that is could you tell me how many older workers, like 45/50 you are employing here?

HRM5: I am not exactly sure about the numbers, because then I have to check on the data, but our average age is 47/48. And in the factory, the plant we have around 1200 people working and the average contract period is that people are working here, are working here for 20/25 years. So we are facing for the future another problem, because we are working in a 5 shift, in the factory for example and people do not leave the company because we have arranged many things that are very good. But it is ehm, this 5 shifts working for somebody of 60 years and older is a very hard issue. So we are facing a problem when we are looking 10 years ahead from now.

C: Okay, and are planning to hire more older employees, due to for example labour shortages in the future?

HRM5: No, we are not planning based on age, because as I said, our group is getting older. So it would be, if we would choose, for age, which we do not. Then we would chose for younger people. So that we have a good average in our age, but that is not what we are looking for. We are especially planning on skills. And on being healthy and staying healthy because we do not want them to leave. We have to take care of our, the health of our people so everybody can have a check-up here, at our health service. For how about their condition, their ears, their lungs, everything. So we have our own health service here. So that is good arranged. Yes it is a privilege.

C: And could imagine employing people, currently working here, beyond retirement age that is set by law?

HRM5: Sometimes we do. We do not do that very often. Because I think they deserve to retire when they have this age and this age is rising. Right?

So most of the time people want to take care of their grandchildren or something like that. But sometimes, as we have an example this week. Someone is saying goodbye who retired last year, but stayed half a year longer, only because we wanted him to be a tutor, for to new people, we contracted and there was not really another option. And he was the one with the best experience and knowledge of this. Special market, so we asked him to stay and he wanted to do that, but it is an exception. We stimulate them to retire. They deserve that, and then we have a place for younger ones. To build his or

her career.

C: Okay I think I will get back to that later again. Could you maybe also briefly describe your experience with older employees. Are there problems, or positive things you could mention?

HRM5: Well yes, at the (...) one company for example, there were always very young people, they started there on their first or second job. And then you have a certain challenge where they are starting, buying a house, getting married, having children. So they are in a very turbulent period of time, in which they have to face so many extra things and building on their career and earning money and etc. That is special group I think, when you have only people of that age. Let's say 25-35. That is a very turbulent group. If you are talking about let's say 45 and older, maybe in the plant, sometimes, we have somebody who has extra physical restrictions because of its age. But here we.. I have good experience when you have good mixture, because when the older, they are, they know how to 'relativieren, I am not sure, what this is in English, you know they do not get upset that much. And they are more like a tutor to the younger ones. The other way around, the young ones bring in new ideas about social media and if they are preparing to be open and learn from each other, then it is always wise to have a good mixture. As well as when you have male and females on one floor. It is always good to have mixture, then bring in the best of everybody. That is what we try to stimulate. So for me for example, I am turning 50 this year and ehm this organization does not look at age, they look at what experience do I need for this job. And sometimes it is good to be a little bit more senior in a difficult setting, than to send somebody young to this position. So sometimes it is even an advantage. But on the other hand, physically it can be tough to work in a five shift, to switch all this schedules always. That is getting hard for the ones of 60 years and older.

C: Yes I can imagine. Okay, do you think that older employees have special needs, or other needs than younger employees?

HRM5: Yes, I think that they are, especially when you are talking about 5 shifts, they sometimes need a longer period of time to recover. If they had a night-shift, then you must be sure, that they do not switch immediately from a night shift, to a morning shift. So that they have enough periods of rest in it. And especially take even more care of their health. So this is why we do this health checks and we also have now a, this bicycle, so that we can measure capacity of lungs and heart and we want to improve this health. So this is to be a more, when it is not too late, to see in an early stage if somebody is not that fit, as we want them to be.

C: Okay that is good and do you have any policies or practices, like HR practices in your company, for older workers, or especially for older workers.

HRM5: Not specially for older workers. Because we think that a healthy lifestyle it something we think is very important. So we simulate for example a marathon here in Enschede, we sponsor it, but we also invite everybody to participate. Or other sports activities we sponsor or stimulate that very much. So we put more attention to the positive things than saying well, somebody who is older should be taken care of and we.. No please, we put it in a very positive way and try to challenge the people to participate in these things.

I mean somebody of 60 years can have a better health condition than I have for example.

C: Are line managers responsible, for the implementation of this practices or things that you just mentioned?

HRM5: Yes they always do that together with HR departments, because HR sometimes has a special project or because of law, there are new things to improve or to take care of. So HR can... for help. Or when somebody sees this one, there is something, he is ill for second or third time, then the HR department together with the line manager will talk to this person, to see if there is something going on we should know about, helping, supporting. Or whatever. So line manager is always responsible for his personnel, but HR also looks at it.

C: Okay, do you think that line managers need special skills to manage older employees?

HRM5: Ehm, yes, but I think it is more a matter of experience. And experience comes with age. So I think, when you have a very young, line manager for example 25, and he has to manage a department and most of them are 55 or older. Then it is getting difficult. Because then that would be hard for him. I think then there is no, I think that is also a matter of respect. Especially in countries, not in the Netherlands, but other countries, so like in the south, age is something you, respect you earn, but when you are a little bit older you have respect because you are older. That is especially in the south. Hungary for example. Turning grey is something that gives you extra respect, the Indian culture, we are Indian company, is somebody who is older has more respect and they will listen to him or her not to the younger one. Then it is getting difficult, that is very depending on the culture in the company i think. So I would never advise to be a manager, when you are 25 of a group who is 50 and older because, what does he know, you know. I don't think that is a good mixture.

C: Okay.

HRM5: Not specifically older ones but as I said we were focusing on health and force them "you check everybody". And for health for example I talk to a group of line managers every six months to see who is ill who is healthy, who turned ill for third or fourth time, what is happening over there, what do we have to do, perhaps we should advise him or her to talk to our health service or what do we need to do in that case. So it is... we don't put them aside as a special group, we give everyone as much attention as they need.

...

The younger ones need as much attention as the older ones. They all deserve their own level of communication, perhaps. I mean if you are a little bit older you should address somebody with a little bit more respect, depending on the culture, but everybody needs its attention. And somebody of 25 can as easily be ill as somebody of 50 or 55, and it's not that somebody of 50 or 55 is getting more often ill or whatever. When he gets ill he sometimes takes one or two days longer until he recovers, but that's it. So we are trying to get an advance out of it and trying to be preventive about it.

C: OK. Do you offer any programs for older employees to develop them? Programs like the mentoring you already mentioned in the beginning that the older employees train the younger ones, or are there any other programs like this?

HRM5: Yes, we work with tutors who help the younger ones in developing themselves and that depends on if the senior manager, so to speak, wants to be a tutor – not everybody likes that – but there are some who are a father figure and love to do so, that's where the younger ones always address to; so that's more of a natural role but in general because of leadership we want everybody to be responsible of his own development, own activities, of his own employability and we stimulate everybody in the company to take care of his own employment. We stimulate studying, development, training as much as we can, also for the temporary workers we put in a lot of effort in the end that they can be able to get a permanent position here as well. So we don't have extra programs for the senior as in age, of course when somebody is more experienced automatically he is the first in line to be a coordinator of a department, but it doesn't mean that the oldest one has the most knowledge, depends on the level as well of course and on the ambition. Not everyone wants to be a director.

C: And maybe not everyone wants to lead a group of people because maybe there are not good with people.

HRM5: Right. There are people who love to be a tutor but there are also enough people who say: "please, don't because I don't want all these matters".

C: OK, one last question to conclude: How do you think the situation, like especially on the labour market, will develop in the future? What problems will you maybe face or...?

HRM5: Well, I can imagine that because of the changes that are coming towards us, if it's this company or whatever company, the changes are changing rapidly and even in a higher tempo than it used to be. So on digital marketing, social media, online activities... I can imagine that, let's say 20 years ago sometimes there was a change, now every week there is a change. You have to get used to that and I think that when you are getting older that it's hard to cope with all the changes and the speed with which the changes are following up. And I think that it's something which is a problem, on the other hand the labor market is - thank god - growing since this year, and there are more opportunities. So young guys get the possibilities to start a career, get the possibilities to start a job because they were unemployed in the last two, three years, now they are getting more opportunities. I think it will be wise for a company, not only for very conservative companies, to not only look at the older ones because they have all the knowledge, but especially learn the younger ones, because they have the knowledge in the future, especially around this digital developments. That would be wise to always have positions for younger employees in your company because they bring in new influences otherwise there will be some kind of blindness in your company. You work like this because you always did it that way, and that is not the right answer. I think it's wise on the one hand, but on the other an employee should always take care of employability. For example there is another product instead of the tires that would come to the market and then we won't be able to sell all our tires and we organized to close a part of our company, then what? If somebody can only work here and not ever have learned to work in other situations, then I think we have missed our chances. So you must always be able to cope with different situations and that's where you have to train our people in. And that's even more important now than 20 years ago. 20 years ago the people stayed in their job until their retirement, but that's not anymore.

C: So, I think that was all for my part, thank you for answering my questions.

HRM5: You are welcome. I hope I was of any help.

C: I'm sure of that.

K: Now I am going to take over. So the focus of my bachelor thesis is the diverse workforce. Diversity is characterized in my case in terms of different nationalities, but also different genders, I don't know, different religions, different cultures, whatever makes a diverse workforce diverse. First, I have some question concerning proportions in your workforce. So could you maybe tell me roughly the proportion of women working here?

HRM5: Well in the production there is hardly working anybody because it's a tough job over there. We wanted more ladies but it's physically hardly to achieve. Here in the head office there are more women working, but I think it's 20 % in total. It's good that in the top of the organization we have a head marketing which is a lady, so it's good for us, since last July, so it's the first time that we have a lady in the board, so that good news. And this organization is very fond of diversity, not only because of

international diversity, but also in gender and everything. High performance organizations in general, it's not because they do have women in the board but because they are open for different ideas that makes them having a higher performance than the ones who only look at: "we want them in one color, in one way...". So it's not the fact that there are women, but they are open to other points of view or styles of communication.

K: How about the proportion of people from different nationalities working for this organization?

HRM5: Well that's very difficult to say. Because we have the sales nation in 14 countries where people are working, so 14 nationalities. Here we have about different 8 nationalities working, Indian, Dutch, German, British, Italian. And then we have, which I almost forgot to tell, R&D, the Research and Development part close to the university, there are working all kinds of nationalities as well. So in numbers: 14 in the countries, 8 here, more than 20 so to speak, 20 to 25 nationalities.

K: That's already quite a number.

HRM5: Yes, yes, but that's also because we have got these sales nations, so Scandinavian and everything...

K: Ok, and what's the proportion of handicapped people working here?

HRM5: That's a difficult one. On Monday we have an HR meeting, with our HR colleagues, we talked about it because there is a new legislation coming up where we have to have at least a certain percentage or number of people with a handicap. I don't know, we don't register that. I know we have one in the works counsel who has a wheel chair and I'm sure there are more people with a handicap, but I don't know.

K: The law you mentioned already concerned my next question: Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?

HRM5: Yes, there is a legislation coming up by the first of July in which we have to have a quota of people with a handicap or who have a long distance to the labor market, so we see how to help them out. And that is something which is on the agenda next week, to see about how many people are we talking, how many do we have in the company and then how do we want to act on that. So it's just a week to early.

K: Ah pitty.

HRM5: Yes, we are talking about that because we have to look into our policies on that item.

K: And do you expect an increase in the presence of either of the aforementioned groups?

HRM5: Yes, because of the legislation. We are a company that is well known not just because it is big, but because we have a very social culture. We want to take care of our people. What we always do is we are trying to contract people who are unemployed for many, many years so that give them some training, to see that we can create an opportunity, a little bit of work experience for them, and when they worked here for two years they go back to the labor market and find quit easily a new job, because they have worked here. So we are well known for our social character and we are trying to help because we have a responsibility for that as one of the biggest employers around here. I think we will increase because it's regulated by law, but I think we have already... If we would put that in as a goal itself, I think that if we checked in our administration, then I think that perhaps we already have achieved that goal of numbers, but that's not our way of working, our way of thinking.

K: And how about women in you company? Do you also expect an increase there?

HRM5: Yes, absolutely, especially on marketing, HR. It is not a goal on itself, so we have no policy that when we have two applicants and they are equal that we have to choose for a lady. But we want to be a modern company, so there will be more women joining me.

K: And about the people from different nationalities as well?

HRM5: Yes that's something we absolutely want to stimulate, although it's not a target set or something. Because we are an international company and we want employees from others companies here to understand each other better and to exchange about nationalities and cultures.

K: Do you have policies or practices geared towards a diverse workforce currently in place in your organization? Like awareness trainings or information sessions about it?

HRM5: Let's see if we have special programs on that. Well we did that in Hungary. We started a factory in Hungary, we are building that and besides building this factory we are also creating teams which have to manage the factory next year. There we had a special program implemented by London, where there is our Global Office on cultural differences because there in Hungary, European and Indian people had to work together. Within Europe there are already all kinds of different cultures and differences, but not that big of a difference, but between Europe and India that is a huge difference. There we had a program and a training in order to learn to understand each other a little bit better. So that was one of the first thing we implemented there because the team has to work together to make this factory a success.

K: And are line managers somehow involved in these trainings as well?

HRM5: Yes, this is line managers and HR managers, always together. So we don't make a difference between them, it's not only a line matter or only an HR matter; we always do them together.

K: Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels?

HRM5: Yes. Genders no, nationalities yes. But that's what I said these cultural differences, they can be so different. Especially the Indian versus the European. I mean we are Dutch, Dutch people are very direct and if our boss tells us so it doesn't mean that we do exactly what our boss tells us to because we have an own opinion and fight for our own ideas. And that's something the Indian people are not used to, they are thinking much more in hierarchical layers and ways and protocol. It's not really clash but a big difference and sometimes there is a lot of misunderstanding. It's not because they don't want to but it just happens.

K: Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage diverse employees? You already mentioned the HR support.

HRM5: Yes, especially when for example people coming over here we always help from HR not only to find a place to stay but also how things work. So most of the times we are the first address they can contact if they are things they don't know how it works here in Holland. Line managers for example must be informed about the culture of the one who is coming in. So they must know some things about how it is working in India or in Italy. We try to inform our line managers on that but that is something we should really try to improve. Because I'm from HR and I'm experiencing all of these things for the first time, so I can share my experience regarding these countries, but we can improve on that, there is an opportunity.

K: Do you think that line managers need additional competences for managing a diverse workforce effectively?

HRM5: Hm, that is a good one. I say yes but what kind of competence would that be? They should have a lot of empathy, to be open to understand that it's not a problem to be different – try to learn from it, try to be curious about it and pick the good things out of it instead of just hierarchically saying: "this is how it works here!". I think empathy, openness, transparency, good communicative skills – I think that is something the line managers absolutely need first of all to contact, to reach out, to understand, to help somebody to find his place in the team; absolutely yeah.

K: And do you offer any programs to help the line managers develop in that way?

HRM5: No, not yet. I think we could improve on that as well. We are helping on the spot but not in a good prepared program yet. I think this will be something for the future as we are now opening up much more to this diversity issue.

K: OK, I think that was it from my part already. Thank you! I don't know whether you got any more questions?

C: No, not for the interview.

HRM5: I hope I gave you a good idea about how we act as line and as HR managers, how we help each other and that there is not a big gap between it – as in the real HR business partner role. For example if there is a recruitment issue and if I didn't agree or the line manager does not agree then it doesn't go on, so we should both agree upon on a new candidate. Both our votes count the same. So that's I think a very clear picture of how it works here and I know that it is not that way in all the companies.

9.3.2 Filled in Interview Framework

9.3.2.1 Interview with Human Resource Manager 3 (HRM3)

Interview: Line Managers in connection to an aging and diverse workforce

If possible, it would also be very helpful for us, if you could give a few examples for some questions.

(1) Introduction

What is your job function within the organization?
HR manager Regio Oost (Twente, Achterhoek)

Could you briefly describe your work experience?

- Recruiter StudentenWerk Arnhem
- Human Resource Officer – Payroll
- At the moment: HR manager Regio Oost

How long have you been working in the HR area?

From December 2008 till now.

What exactly are your fields of responsibility within the company?

My area is Twente & Achterhoek -> 7 branches (2x Enschede, 2x Almelo and 2x Doetinchem + Wageningen) These are 1800 employees.

(2) General questions about tasks of line managers in the organizations

What are the tasks and role of line managers?

I'm a staff manager, our line manager (for our region) is responsible for the region. I support the region about HR.

What were the reasons to assign these tasks and roles to line managers?

He keeps control over the region and he needs staff managers to support him in a special area.

Which additional tasks did you assign to line managers?

Are line managers willing to take over basic HR tasks/ HR responsibilities?

If not, what types of problems did you experience?

What are your experience about line managers handling HR responsibilities?

I think its better to have an HR manager with HR skills than a Line Manager with a lot of responsibilities and with less experience with HR.

(3) Questions about Aging Population/Workforce

How many workers older than 50 have you employed in your organization? (Percentage/Number)

CompanyName Regio > 30%.

Will you hire more (due to labour shortages for example) in the future (5-10 or 10-25 years)? We would like to try to get less people older than 50 years because cleaning is a very heavy job....

Could you imagine employing them beyond retirement age set by law? No.

Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age (set by law)? No

Could you briefly describe your experience with older employees?

We are happy that employees are able to work long by Companyname. But a cleaning job is heavy and we see that people older than 50 are more sick.

Which policies/practices geared to older workers are currently in place in your organization (if any)?

Less hours, more time to do the job.

Are line managers responsible for the implementation of these policies?

Yes.

Do you somehow redesign the tasks of older workers to be more suitable for them?

Yes, more time to do the job...

What do line managers need to manage older employees?

Information

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees?

HR support, no judgement, open conversation

(4) Questions about competences line managers need

Which additional competences do you believe line managers need?

Social, conversation skills, rest, able to make a decision.

Which programs do you offer to develop older employees?

POP, extra time to speak with a manager (what do you need etc.)

How do you think, can line managers develop older employees?

To take time and speak with them.

How do you think the situation will develop in the future?

In our business it's hard to work with an age of 65+ so that will be a adventure.

(5) Questions about Diverse Workforce

What is the proportion of women working for your company? (percentage)
60%.

What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company?
(percentage) 30%

What is the proportion of handicapped people working for your company? (percentage) 15% (social return)

Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company? No, there is no quota at this moment.

Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company? Yes, people are working longer at one company. Our employees are working a long time at the company.

I can not answer a lot of questions about this, because at this moment we do not have a policy for these groups. We are going to work on this....

Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organization?

For the implementation of which diversity practices/policies are line managers responsible?

Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels? No, we are very happy with these differences. The company is a very social company.

If yes, what kind of? Examples, please

How do you expect the situation will develop in the future?

What do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce? A open mind!

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees?

(6) Questions about competences line managers need

Which additional competences do line managers need for managing a diverse workforce effectively?
Open mind

Which programs do you offer to develop special skills for line managers?
Network groups

Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a heterogeneous workforce?

If yes, which? At this company we are used to work with these groups!!

Thank you very much for your help.

Carina Wigbels & Karina Küper

9.3.2.2 Interview with human Resource Manager 5 (HRM5)

Interview: Line Managers in connection to an aging and diverse workforce

If possible, it would also be very helpful for us, if you could give a few examples for some questions.

(1) Introduction

What is your function within the organization?

- I'm a HR specialist in a health care organization, responsible for improvement of HR processes. For example, I organize sessions with employees of the HR administration in order to make their work more efficient and to ensure higher quality. Besides that I'm leading HR projects, like the implementation of a performance appraisal system or participating in HR projects like reduction of the workforce.

How long have you been working in the HR area?

- I'm working for 1.5 years in this organization. During my studies, I worked in the HR area as well. So I'm almost 5 years working in the HR area.

Could you briefly describe your work experience?

- My experience in HR is related to HR policy making and performing HR projects. Some of the projects I've done: actualisation of HR policies, like policies about working conditions and absenteeism, development and implementation of E-HRM within the organization, improvement of the performance management cycle.

(2) General questions about tasks of line managers in the organizations

What are the tasks and role of line managers?

Line managers are responsible for a rayon. They are responsible for all the operational activities, managing the operational costs, managing employees, dealing with institutions and customer satisfaction.

Besides that line managers are responsible for HR activities, such as recruitment, training and development, performance management etc. They are supported by decentral HR advisors and a central HR department with specialized HR teams.

Which additional tasks did you assign to line managers?

What were the reasons to assign these tasks and roles to line managers?

Are line managers are willing to take over basic HR tasks/ HR responsibilities?

If not, what types of problems did you experience?

They are willing to perform the basic HR tasks. But they want support from the HR department to perform their tasks. Such as HR policies and HR practices to deal with the HR matters.

What are your experience about line managers handling HR responsibilities?

Line managers need to be responsible for HR tasks. I think that line managers experience sometimes problems to perform their HR tasks, due to a lack of capacity and lack of competence. They are responsible for a lot of tasks and it is hard to manage their time efficiently. Furthermore, they are not always able to perform their tasks well, because they do not have the right knowledge of skills. Therefore, a strong collaboration between line managers and HR is important.

(3) Questions about Aging Population/Workforce

How many workers older than 50 have you employed in your organization? (Percentage/Number)

Will you hire more (due to labour shortages for example) in the future (5-10 or 10-25 years)?

The workforce is aging, this is a big problem for the organization. Working as a health care employee is physically demanding work. Older employees are struggling with their physical health. So it's not desirable to hire more worker older than 50.

Could you imagine employing them beyond retirement age set by law?

The organization is in a big crisis, so the workforce should be reduced. Therefore it is not desirable to employ people beyond retirement.

Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age (set by law)?

A few employees.

Could you briefly describe your experience with older employees?

Older employees have a lot of knowledge. But especially in the house held part of the organization, you can easily gain knowledge to perform the work well. As said before, a lot of older employees deal with physical problems, so the absenteeism rate is high and lead to high costs.

Which special needs do older employees have in your opinion?

They need more tools to deal with the physical work.

Which policies/practices geared to older workers are currently in place in your organization (if any)?

There are no special policies/practices related to older workers.

Are line managers responsible for the implementation of these policies?

Line managers are always responsible for the implementation of policies within the organization.

Do you somehow redesign the tasks of older workers to be more suitable for them?

Within the house held, it is not possible. Within the nursing part of the organization, they work in teams. The team is responsible for dividing the roles and tasks, so it is possible to redesign some of the tasks of the older workers. However, they need to perform routine nursing tasks in order to stay competent.

(4) Questions about competences line managers need

Which additional competences do you believe line managers need?

Line managers need competences to manage a diverse workforce. Competences like flexibility, adaptive power and empathy are necessary to recognize the needs of the different groups of employees and to anticipate on it.

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees?

Managers need to have some tools to manage older employees. Performance management is an instrument to get insight in the issues employees deal with in their work. Furthermore, managers need to be provided with information about their workforce in order to manage the required quantity and qualities of employees now and in the further.

Which programs do you offer to develop older employees?

No specific programs.

How do you think, can line managers develop older employees?

It depends on the specific situation of the employee. Individual interviews with employees can help them to get insight in the needs of the employees. Then different HR practices can be put into practice; for example, internal or external mobility to transfer the employee to another function, job redesign, training etc. Furthermore, older employees are often very experienced employees who can be used as a mentor for new or unexperienced employees. In this way, the knowledge and experience of older employees is used and can be trans missioned to other employees.

How do you think the situation will develop in the future?

In the health care sector, the aging workforce will be a big problem in the future. Employees need to work longer due to a higher retirement age, but often older employees working in health care functions deal with physical problems. It is necessary to anticipate on it, to redesign jobs for older employees and to secure that their knowledge and experience will stay within the organization.

(5) Questions about Diverse Workforce

What is the proportion of women working for your company? (percentage)

What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company? (percentage)

What is the proportion of handicapped people working for your company? (percentage)

Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?

No there are no quota at all.

Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?

Maybe an increase in handicapped people, due to the 'participation' law.

Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organization?

No specific policies/practices.

For the implementation of which diversity practices/policies are line managers responsible?

Line managers are always responsible for the implementation of policies within the organization.

Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels?

If yes, what kind of? Examples, please

No.

How do you expect the situation will develop in the future?

The diversity of our society grows. So I expect the diversity of the workforce will increase as well. So more different nationalities, religions etc.

What do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce?

Same answer as older employees. It is all about managing different types of employees within an organization; different nationalities, ages, gender etc.

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce? They need to get insight in the different needs of the employees. Then they need to be supported with the right tools to manage this diverse workforce.

(6) Questions about competences line managers need

Which additional competences do line managers need for managing a diverse workforce effectively?

Same answer as older employees.

Which programs do you offer to develop special skills for line managers?

There are some special master classes which are offered to develop skills that line managers needed to perform their job well, for example a verbal communication program how to deal with difficult employee interviews.

Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a heterogeneous workforce?

If yes, which?

It becomes more important to be able to customize the implementation of policies/practices into the organization. Line managers need to be flexible and adaptive. They need to anticipate constantly on the changing internal and external environment of the organization, as well as the changing workforce.

Thank you very much for your help.

Carina Wigbels & Karina Küper

9.3.2.3 Interview with Human Resource Manager 7 (HRM7)

Interview: Line Managers in connection to an aging and diverse workforce

If possible, it would also be very helpful for us, if you could give a few examples for some questions.

You do not have to answer all questions, if that is not possible due to confidentiality or other reasons.

(1) Introduction

What is your function within the organization?

HR Manager

Could you briefly describe your work experience?

I have worked at numerous companies, starting as a HR Advisor and now I am HR Manager at this organization. Next to that I also have my own business

How long have you been working in the HR area?

About 15 years after my studies

(2) General questions about tasks of line managers in the organizations

What are the tasks and role of line managers?

- Business development
 - Marketing and sales to find new clients for the industrial unit
 - Contribute to the development and managing of existing clients
- HR
 - Coaching and managing of employees working in group 1 of the industrial unit (currently group Edward)
 - Execute HRM strategy

- Managing project
- Be responsible for own project(s)
- Managing project
 - Be responsible for own project(s)

What were the reasons to assign these tasks and roles to line managers?
Fits organization goals and mission/ direction

Which additional tasks did you assign to line managers?

Are line managers are willing to take over basic HR tasks/ HR responsibilities?

If not, what types of problems did you experience?

In this organisation we have made clear agreements on this

What are your experience about line managers handling HR responsibilities?

It is my experience that this differs per person, type of organization and the way that roles and responsibilities are managed; there is not 1 general conclusion because there are several factors that have an influence on this.

(3) Questions about Aging Population/Workforce

How many workers older than 50 have you employed in your organization? (Percentage/Number)

About 25% of the workforce are older than 45

Will you hire more (due to labour shortages for example) in the future (5-10 or 10-25 years)?

Yes we will grow and we need more staff members

Could you imagine employing them beyond retirement age set by law?

No

Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age (set by law)?

No

Could you briefly describe your experience with older employees?

No bad experiences, motivated and flexible

Which special needs do older employees have in your opinion?

None

Which policies/practices geared to older workers are currently in place in your organization (if any)?

None

Are line managers responsible for the implementation of these policies?

No, they execute them

Do you somehow redesign the tasks of older workers to be more suitable for them? No

What do line managers need to manage older employees?

N.A.

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees? N.A.

(4) Questions about competences line managers need

Which additional competences do you believe line managers need?

There is nothing general to say about this. We feel that every person is different so everyone's target form and goals are different.

Which programs do you offer to develop older employees?

None

How do you think, can line managers develop older employees?

N.A.

How do you think the situation will develop in the future?

(5) Questions about Diverse Workforce

What is the proportion of women working for your company? (percentage)
The workforce comprises two thirds men and one third women.

What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company?
(percentage)
About 55% of our employees are Dutch, 12.5% are French and 12.5% are German, the rest is made up of people from other nationality.

What is the proportion of handicapped people working for your company? (percentage)
Zero

Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the
aforementioned employee groups within the company?
No

Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?
No

Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organization?
None

For the implementation of which diversity practices/policies are line managers responsible?
None

Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different
nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels?
None

If yes, what kind of? Examples, please

How do you expect the situation will develop in the future?
I think it will be the same

What do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce?
Our line manager are managing a different group of people, there is nothing special they need.

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees? None I think this is no
problem

(6) Questions about competences line managers need

Which additional competences do line managers need for managing a diverse workforce effectively?
Our line manager are managing a different group of people, there is nothing special they need.

Which programs do you offer to develop special skills for line managers?
Nothing general, all is tailor made

Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a
heterogeneous workforce?
No

If yes, which?

Thank you very much for your help.

Carina Wigbels & Karina Küper

9.3.2.4 Interview with Human Resource Manager 8 (HRM8)

Interview: Line Managers in connection to an aging and diverse workforce

If possible, it would also be very helpful for us, if you could give a few examples for some questions.

(1) Introduction

What is your function within the organization? HR Business Partner Supply Chain

How long have you been working in the HR area? 4,5 years

Could you briefly describe your work experience? See LinkedIn profile

(2) General questions about tasks of line managers in the organizations

What are the tasks and role of line managers? Mostly we don't have dedicated line managers, which means that we have managers with strategic/tactical responsibility in their area's with direct reports who cover the operational part. An example is a Customer Service Manager who builds, maintains and strengthens relations with a customer. This CS Mgr has several direct reports for solving issues.

Which additional (HR) tasks did you assign to line managers? Managers are responsible for recruiting, developing and rewarding their people and in addition execute adequate performance management.

What were the reasons to assign these additional (HR) tasks and roles to line managers? Ulrich's model

Are line managers willing to take over basic HR tasks/ HR responsibilities? Not in all cases. What you see mostly with basic administrative tasks is that they, due to low frequency, don't have a clue what to do. That's a waste of time. Developing and assessing in performance depends on the line manager. One is better than the other. Also an international context where you might not sit in the same office, or even another timezone is difficult in managing.

If not, what types of problems did you experience?

What are your experience about line managers handling HR responsibilities? They often need help in the basics, but have an high interest and accountability in taking up the rest.

(3) Questions about Aging Population/Workforce

How many workers older than 45/50 are you employing in your organization? (Percentage/Number)
30% or so

Will you hire more (due to labour shortages for example) in the future (5-10 or 10-25 years)? Not specifically a strategy

Could you imagine employing them beyond retirement age set by law? No

Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age (set by law)? No

Could you briefly describe your experience with older employees? Highly experienced, but also limited due to 'been there, done that'-attitude or physical restraints.

Which special needs do older employees have in your opinion? It depends on the person, situation, work expectations, etc.

Which policies/practices geared to older workers are currently in place in your organization (if any)?
Extra holidays when aging, possibility for early retirement, policy to work 80%, 90% paid, 100% pension.

Are line managers responsible for the implementation of these policies? No

Do you somehow redesign the tasks of older workers to be more suitable for them? It depends on the situation. In the end there's still work to be done.

(4) Questions about competences line managers need

Which additional competences do you believe line managers need for managing older employees, if any? None

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees? None

Which programs do you offer to develop older employees? (For example mentoring programs) None

How do you think, can line managers develop older employees? It depends on the need for the employee. We don't treat older employees different than others.

How do you think the situation (concerning older workers) will develop in the future?

(5) Questions about Diverse Workforce

What is the proportion of women working for your company? 40% (percentage)

What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company? Don't know, possibly around 30% (percentage)

What is the proportion of handicapped people working for your company? Very low, estimate 1% (percentage)

Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company? Yes, we will have the legal obligation (participation law) and we are actively employing so called 'Wajongers' in internships.

Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company? Not specifically. As an organisation it would be valuable to be a representation of the consumer market, but it's not a target in itself.

Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organization?

For the implementation of which diversity practices/policies are line managers responsible? None

Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels? We have a Maternity/Paternity portal with tips and tricks, sometimes events.

If yes, what kind of? Examples, please

How do you expect the situation will develop in the future? I don't understand this question.

What do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce? Not different than any other employee; focussing at the need an perform adequate management.

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage diverse workforce? No

(6) Questions about competences line managers need

Which additional competences do line managers need for managing a diverse workforce effectively? Not applicable

Which programs do you offer to develop special skills for line managers? Management Development Programs in several phases, relevant workshop (f.e. mental resilience or coaching), intervision/reflections, etc.

Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a heterogeneous workforce? No, as said diversity or age should not be a discriminator as people of all backgrounds and ages are different.

If yes, which?

Thank you very much for your help.

Carina Wigbels & Karina Küper

9.4 Example from the Coding Process

9.4.1 Examples of Different Codes

	Code Name	Example Quote
1.	<i>HR Tasks Line Managers</i>	"Besides that line managers are responsible for HR activities, such as recruitment, training and development, performance management etc." (HRM6)
2.	<i>Training Line Managers</i>	"Yeah, we have a gender- awareness obliged for all managers, we have diversity-awareness training obliged for all managers; anti-corruption training obliged for all managers; we have lots of trainings." (HRM4)
3.	<i>Diversity Policies</i>	"Secondly, there is a corporate policy for diversity. It is one of our four axes, you know HR policy, diversity, commitment is another one..." (HRM4)
4.	<i>No Diversity Policies</i>	"I cannot answer a lot of questions about this, because at this moment we do not have a policy for these groups. We are going to work on this...." (HRM3)
5.	<i>General Skills Line Managers Need</i>	"Social, conversation skills, rest, able to make a decision." (HRM3)
6.	<i>Increase in Foreigners</i>	"The diversity of our society grows. So I expect the diversity of the workforce will increase as well. So more different nationalities, religions etc." (HRM6)
7.	<i>No Increase in Women</i>	„Bei Schwerbehinderten und Frauen sicherlich wird kein Anstieg da sein, weil auch Frauen sich im Lager schwer tun. Sie wollen einfach auch nicht gerne im Lager anfangen, ganz klar. Der Anteil der Frauen, der auffällig ist, ist natürlich immer bei den Teilzeitverträgen. Bei Aushilfen da sind sie dann wieder präsent überproportional, ganz klar, Männer nicht. Der Anteil der Frauen wird nicht steigen, der ist in den letzten Jahren eher gesunken.“ (HRM2)

9.4.2 Example: Quotes Assigned to the Code "General Skill Line Managers Need"- Atlas.ti Output

Query Report

HU: Bachelor Thesis Transcripts
 File: [C:\Users\Karina\Documents\Scientific Software\ATLAS.ti\TextBank\Bachelor Thesis Transcripts.hpr7]
 Edited by: Super
 Date/Time: 2015-06-07 23:51:05

Document filter:
 No active filter - use 7 Primary Documents in query

5 Quotations found for query:
 "General Skills Line Managers Need"

P 1: HRM3 (69:69) (Super)

Codes: [General Skills Line Managers Need]
 No memos

Social, conversation skills, rest, able to make a decision.

P 2: HRM2 (71:71) (Super)

Codes: [General Skills Line Managers Need]

No memos

Sie benötigen ganz sicher bestimmte Kompetenzen, aber nicht nur bezogen auf ältere Mitarbeiter. Sie brauchen sie für Menschen insgesamt. Und nicht jede Führungskraft hat das automatisch.

P 2: HRM2 (72:72) (Super)

Codes: [General Skills Line Managers Need]

No memos

Bei dem Menschen, der die Neigung hat, nicht gut mit Menschen umgehen zu können, können sie schulen wie sie wollen, das ist ganz schwierig. Der kann das auch schwierig umsetzen. Das schwierigste ist, eine Führungsposition zu besetzen, mit jemanden der auch ein Händchen für Menschen hat und das auch zu erkennen, das ist das schwierigste. weil wir ins dieser Gesellschaft, wie gerade der Punkt immer Leistung vorgehen. Wir gucken auf die Zeugnisse und sehen 2,1,2,1,2,1 .. ohh super und dann setzen wir den als Führungskraft ein und merken der kann gar nicht mit Menschen umgehen. Zahlen ja super, technik auch, Software prima, aber Menschen die sind ein Problem. Dann haben wir auf einmal eine Person, die hat nur dreien und vieren und leitet als Führungskraft super ein team und den müssen sie rausfiltern und das ist das Problem.

P 5: HRM4 (46:46) (Super)

Codes: [General Skills Line Managers Need] [Skills to Manage Diversity]

No memos

So straight forward and be honest and transparent and discuss about the things that are in front and if you do that with some natural approach as a person who you are, my experience is that you can achieve everything. With every kind of people.

P 5: HRM4 (68:68) (Super)

Codes: [General Skills Line Managers Need] [Skills to Manage Diversity]

No memos

A line manager who is a good manager is, I think, also capable of managing older people, old and young. And what I said ten minutes ago, transparency, straightforwardness, honesty, open communication; that is very important for managing different kinds of people. You should switch to the people who are in front of you. And some people expect other things than other ones and the line managers should be able to switch between those different people and their different expectation. Maybe that's an additional one, because in theory from the past, maybe management was more of a straightforward vision how to become a good manager. Maybe the change is that is not only about how to become a good manager, how to become a good human being, how to become a good leader who is aware of the differences in his or her team, from the background specifically.