Bachelor Thesis

''Managing a Diverse Workforce:
The Role of Human Resource Management''

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List of Abbreviations

AA	Affirmative Action
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
D&I	Diversity & Inclusion
DM	Diversity Management
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MNCs	Multinational Corporations

Abstract

This bachelor thesis approaches the topic of diversity management (DM) both theoretically and empirically. The research specifically focuses on the role of human resource management (HRM) in managing cultural differences and diversity in organisations. With a combined literature review and qualitative research, this paper aims to identify how multinational corporations (MNCs) utilise HRM strategies when dealing with a diverse workforce. Current HRM practices observed through interviews are compared to those suggested in relevant literature to identify whether a research-practice gap or connection exists.

The first part of this paper introduces the topic and explains the importance of diversity management as a tool for multinational corporations and a subject of research. Furthermore, it clarifies the purpose of this investigation and outlines what this research aims to find out.

The second part defines the relevant terminology and concepts for understanding diversity management. It also contains a summary of relevant existing empirical and non-empirical literature on the topic of DM conducted in the past, which forms a theoretical basis for the thesis and establishes the current state of the research from which new research progress can begin. The literature is evaluated in its relevance to the study and reviewed critically.

The third part describes in detail the research approach and methods used to gather data for this thesis.

The fourth part presents the qualitative empirical results and analyses the findings. Moreover, this section lays out the strengths and weaknesses of this thesis and suggests directions for future research to promote a deeper understanding of the topic.

The fifth and final section concludes this thesis.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and motivation

The key reason for choosing the topic of workplace DM is that it is a growing concern of MNCs, especially with globalisation and the subsequent increase in workforce mobility, change in employee demographics and pluralisation of markets. Thus, questions about the effectiveness of diversity management initiatives are more relevant than ever. DM as a topic is also versatile, as it varies from one company – and country – to another. Evidence shows that companies in different operating environments, with different institutional arrangements, react differently to similar challenges (Theodorakopoulos & Budhwar, 2015). A particular case is MNCs, as they operate in host countries with different institutional environments, and, as a result, face various pressures to which a range of options are available (Jackson & Deeg, 2008).

Not only is diversity inevitable in some cases, but in many, it is also a conscious decision made by companies. Firms have begun to realise that, to compete more effectively for skilled employees, they must draw from a variety of cultural backgrounds (Ellis & Sonnenfeld, 1994). Being able to manage a diverse workforce accordingly is equally as important, as managers' inability to work with and lead a culturally diverse workforce can result in financial losses for the firm. If prejudice, conflict, miscommunication, or other aspects which may hinder the upward mobility and job satisfaction of minorities are ignored, they can lead to higher turnover of these groups and affect the financial performance of the firm (Thompson & DiTomaso, 1988; Cox & Blake, 1991).

Common reasoning for increasing diversity from the perspective of companies is that diversity has business benefits in terms of competitive advantage. Scholars and practitioners have pointed out that diversity can bring along fresh perspectives and ideas, which can foster creativity and help to mirror and adapt to diverse markets better (Cox & Blake, 1991; Kossek & Lobel, 1996). Although this business advantage reasoning might be solid, the design and implementation of some DM initiatives are not (Ellis & Sonnenfeld, 1994). Studying the outcomes and effectiveness of DM policies is crucial, as the impacts could be adverse if strategies are executed poorly. Unless handled with sensitivity, merely pointing out the differences among groups can increase misunderstanding and hostility (Ellis & Sonnenfeld, 1994).

The agenda on workforce diversity and inclusion (D&I) has become prevalent among human resource (HR) managers and organisational leaders (Scott, Heathcote & Gruman, 2011). Despite their rising popularity, many D&I programs and HR strategies to manage diversity, although positive in tone, lack systemic, firm-wide integration into other policies and do not delve into the core underlying issues (Ellis & Sonnenfeld, 1994; Kossek & Lobel, 1996). Such policies then remain ineffective in reaching their full potential. For instance, regardless of an increasing number of women pursuing professional services careers, many of them still face obstacles in being promoted (Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2008). In this, and many other cases, inequality and bias still prevail.

Information is widely available on the various strategies for cultivating a company culture that values and capitalises on diversity. The effectiveness of these strategies in meeting their goals, however, is less known (Ellis & Sonnenfeld, 1994). Research in the field of D&I and particularly evidence on the positive impact of DM initiatives remain inconclusive (Theodorakopoulos, & Budhwar, 2015). Thus, research enhancing general understanding of the reality of DM practices and of the interaction of variables that contribute to positive outcomes of diversity is being called for (Kossek, Lobel & Brown, 2006; Theodorakopoulos, & Budhwar, 2015).

To investigate the current diversity climate in companies and HR practices' role in it, a specific focus on HRM approaches to workgroup diversity was chosen for this thesis.

1.2 Study and objectives

The subject of this study is to take a closer look at HR practices in MNCs, and, more specifically, those practices that help firms to deal with cultural differences and diversity. The purpose of the thesis is to bring awareness to the importance of thorough understanding and proper implementation of DM policies and programmes.

The study follows a qualitative research method to analyse the approaches taken by two companies to deal with the diversification of their workforce. First, prior literature on DM and HRM will be discussed as well as previous research on the effects of diversity. The theoretical foundation for the empirical parts of this paper is built upon this literature. After presenting the method, measures, and sampling, a summary of the results, limitations, and implications of the approach will be discussed.

The research question was derived from the background and motivation of this thesis. The main question this study tries to answer is what the HRM's role in managing diversity is. This question was developed to investigate what DM tools firms have, and why, and how these are being used. In answering this question, this study also aims to consider what determinants underlie successful implementation of DM strategies in MNCs and what possible challenges MNCs are faced with when dealing with DM strategies.

The objective is to strive for an understanding of what HR managers' attitudes towards diversity are, what their companies approaches to diversity are, and what benefits these are perceived to have on the firm. A part of this thesis is dedicated to revealing concrete cases of strategies undertaken by companies to foster diversity in the workplace. The examples are obtained via interviews with HR managers about their personal experiences. The analysis of the results aims to point out how different HR functions are used to manage a diverse workforce to reveal the positive potential of diversity.

Research Question:
What is the role of HR in managing diversity in MNCs?

2. Theory Development

2.1 Dimensions of diversity

Employee diversity can be broadly defined as ''human characteristics making employees mutually different'' (Treven & Treven, 2007, p.29). Diversity is a complex topic with many dimensions to it, six of which will be briefly mentioned here, with consideration on their impact on work outcomes and performance. These dimensions are ethnicity and race, culture, gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation (Theodorakopoulos, & Budhwar, 2015). Thus, diversity is considered to be derived from more variances than just those of ethnicity and gender, such as from differences in function, nationality, language, ability, or religion (Kossek & Lobel, 1996).

The sources of individual differences mentioned above can be grouped. Both the biologically determined characteristics and specific physical attributes are all ones which persons have little or no control over. Nonetheless, these factors shape individual identity and directly affect a person's relation to other individuals and groups, both at work and in general. When addressing D&I in the workplace, these dimensions are ones which often distinguish those who are less advantaged and marginalised by the majority. With the labour force around the world becoming increasingly diverse, there are both benefits to be tapped into as well as potential problems resulting from heterogeneous workgroups (Treven & Treven, 2007). Issues occurring in the workplace, such as stereotyping, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear, are at the core of discrimination towards the minority groups.

While globalisation has created new economic opportunities for minority groups, it has also deepened social inequalities (Kossek et al., 2006). Data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that, by race, Whites make up the vast majority (78%) of the labour force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Despite advances in bridging the gender equality gap, The International Labour Office's statistics show that more work is to be done. Although women are represented more strongly in middle and senior management positions today, very few get appointed to the highest ranks, particularly in large corporations (International Labour Office, 2018). Women in a majority of developed countries represent less than a third of senior and middle management positions and less than 5% of chief executive officers (CEOs) of public companies (Wirth-Dominicé, L. & International Labour Office, 2015).

Besides the more 'visible' minorities, such as gender or race, which are the most recognised forms of diversity, there are other types that also have important implications for HR systems (Kossek & Lobel, 1996). D&I studies have now expanded to include more minority groups whose voices have been less heard (Priola, Lasio, De Simone & Serri, 2014). Reviewing diversity and discrimination literature on sexual minorities and people with disabilities, it becomes evident that these groups still do not experience equal access to opportunities as their counterparts belonging to the majority do. Other concerns later in the employment cycle include fear of discrimination and lack of integration (Priola et al., 2014; Bonaccio, Connelly, Gellatly, Jetha & Ginis, 2020). The continuing presence of discrimination illustrates the urgent need for a better understanding of the reality of DM strategies and their outcomes.

2.2 Diversity management

2.2.1 HRM perspective

Today, there exists a broad spectrum of organisational responses to managing diversity (Kossek et al., 2006). This paper looks at D&I from the HRM perspective. HR-related decisions include recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and reward and career progression (Theodorakopoulos & Budhwar, 2015). This viewpoint highlights the development and implementation of organisational initiatives that increase the representation of historically excluded groups, empower a diverse workforce once in place to participate in decision-making fully, and ensure the inclusion of a diverse workforce in all aspects of organisational life. As employers have realised the importance of increasing diversity within their workforce, they have begun to question their HR systems' ability to accommodate a heterogeneous workforce (Kossek & Lobel, 1996).

Organisations and their cultures are a function of the people in them, who are a result of an attraction-selection-attrition (A-S-A) cycle (Schneider, 1987). HR policies enable companies to attract, select, and retain different kinds of people, leading various firms to act and feel as if they have different cultures (Kossek & Lobel, 1996). Ultimately, the people make the place (Schneider, 1987) and the design and administration of HR systems make the people (Kossek & Lobel, 1996). People are generally attracted to and selected by firms with members seemingly similar in values to their own. As time goes on, employees who feel they do not fit well in the dominant culture eventually turnover (Schneider, 1987).

However, too much similarity in a firm can be detrimental to its long-term growth, renewal, and readiness to respond to significant environmental changes like the changing demands of the workforce. Diversity supporting HR policies can help the culture in continually adapting to new environmental requirements (Kossek & Lobel, 1996). Such systems are crucial for ''attracting, selecting, motivating, developing, and retaining a highly-skilled, diverse group of employees who possess the key success factors to compete in today's changing marketplace'' (Kossek & Lobel, 1996, p.3).

2.2.2 DM development

Before the emergence of DM, the primary directives were affirmative action (AA) and equal employment opportunity (EEO), brought along by the US civil rights movement (Holvino & Kamp, 2009). DM, as a concept, arose in organisation and management discourse in the late 1980s (Holvino & Kamp, 2009). The idea was introduced as an alternative to AA and EEO, made distinct from the legal and programmatic focus of its predecessors. The DM discourse was more inclusive, business-oriented, and less confrontational than AA, which has been called exclusionary and reactive (Litvin, 2000 in Holvino & Kamp, 2009). Thus, DM had been reconceptualised as a managerial, rather than a legal issue. The managerial conception of diversity shifted the legal focus on discrimination, injustice, and historical disenfranchisement to diversity grounded in organisational success (Edelman, Fuller & Mara-Drita, 2001).

Academics have since encouraged the shift for employers to think beyond the traditional AA legislation and EEO staffing efforts (Kossek et al., 2006). The reason being that AA alone fails to deal with critical causes of injustice and prejudice and does little to help develop the full potential of every individual in the firm. Only hiring candidates from minority groups will not automatically help them perform to their potential. The latter requires managing diversity. Besides, due to its unnatural focus on one group over others, AA can cause a negative backlash if others feel that someone is gaining an unfair advantage (Thomas, 1990).

Broadly defined, DM, in the context of companies, deals with ''the challenge of meeting the needs of a culturally diverse workforce and of sensitizing workers and managers to differences associated with gender, race, age, and nationality in an attempt to maximize the potential productivity of all employees'' (Ellis & Sonnenfeld, 1994, p.82). Based on these goals, companies have developed initiatives, including corporate philosophies and programs (Ellis & Sonnenfeld, 1994).

2.2.3 Effects of HRM on workforce diversity

Generally, research has shown a positive association between formalised HRM practices and workforce diversity (Kossek et al., 2006). A higher representation of women and minorities in management has been linked in particular to identity-conscious HRM structures that explicitly address demographic group presentation (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995). Some researchers theorise that status positions in large organisations are less likely distributed on ascribed characteristics, such as sex stereotypes of managers, when formalised personnel practices are in place (Reskin & McBrier, 2000; Elvira & Graham, 2002).

However, not all research in this field has been conclusive. Some have observed little support for the correlation between diversity training and increases in the workforce or top management diversity (Rynes & Rosen, 1995). Others have found no consistent relationship between formalised HRM structures and representation of minorities at management (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995). Moreover, although companies and academics hope that diversity initiatives will generate positive outcomes, sometimes they can do just the opposite, leading to perpetuating unequal treatment of disadvantaged groups (Kossek et al., 2006). Such unintended consequences can stem from situations where diversity is valued for the wrong reasons.

The business case for diversity is an exemplary argument that has been enacted to the detriment of already less-advantaged groups. The business case, presented by proponents of the ''value-in-diversity'' perspective, implies that by capitalising on potential benefits of cultural diversity in the workforce, firms may gain a competitive advantage in some areas, like creativity, problem-solving, and organisational flexibility (Cox & Blake, 1991, p.46). It is not to say, however, that the business case is all bad. Some research has found that explaining the business case and using it as a justification for implementing a diversity program can positively affect attitudes towards that particular program (Richard & Kirby, 1999). However, the business case does provide a shareholder-satisfying business performance justification, and it has received criticism for setting shareholders above all other organisational stakeholders,

such as family, employees or society (Kossek, 2005). As a result of this mindset, corporations have been effective in hiring women and minorities to mirror diverse markets and win over customers, but less successful in retaining and promoting them. In many cases, less visible barriers still exist that hinder workforce minorities from reaching the top ranks (Blum, Fields & Goodman, 1994; Goodman, Fields & Blum, 2003).

Having observed this trend of unproductive DM practices, researchers have encouraged employers to consider measures that seek further promotion and development of less-advantaged groups than AA (Thomas, 1990). One way to achieve this is to measure the identity profile or demographics of workgroups. By doing so, firms can generate strategies for increasing the representation of minorities and women in management or other functions where they have been historically under-represented (Cox, 2001 in Kossek et al., 2006). Firms should also look at specific barriers to advancement at different career stages (Thomas & Gabarro, 1999 in Kossek et al., 2006).

2.2.4 Effects of workforce diversity on performance outcomes

To measure the effectiveness of DM initiatives, links between the presence of diversity in the workforce and performance outcomes should be examined. These performance outcomes are spread out to multiple levels of an organisation and can be inspected on the individual, group, or organisational level (Kossek et al., 2006).

At the individual level, aspects such as attitudes and performance ratings can be measured (Kossek et al., 2006). Although many individuals deem prejudice against disadvantaged groups as unacceptable, what is referred to as ''modern racism'' still exists (Brief & Barsky, 2000, p.112). Individuals, or ''modern racists'', believe discrimination to be an outdated issue and consider themselves non-prejudiced (Brief & Barsky, 2000, p.112). These individuals might feel that disadvantaged groups use unfair tactics to gain workplace advantages rather than gaining these based on merit (Brief & Barsky, 2000). As traditionally understood, AA often invokes such feelings of unfairness in employees, who believe a particular group is favoured above others (Thomas, 1990). The more subtle and unconscious forms of bias and discrimination that result from modern racism may cause majority members to be less committed to the organisation (Brief & Barsky, 2000).

Some studies show that individuals in demographically more diverse workgroups have more favourable attitudes towards DM initiatives (Kossek & Zonia, 1993). Increasing the number of women in senior management can help reduce problematic and stereotypical sex roles (Ely, 1995). ''Tokenism'' occurs when a member of a minority finds themselves ''working nearly alone among members of another social category'' (Kanter, 1993, p.438). The token member is considered as a representative of their group rather than an independent individual, which encourages social segregation and stereotyping. To avoid this, Kanter suggests thinking in terms of proportional representation and hiring more than one member of a minority into a workgroup. Grouping minority members together can create a critical mass which can help protect them from negative stereotypes (Kanter, 1993). Mostly, increasing diversity in the

workforce appears to lead to more positive attitudes towards diversity, as well as better performance ratings and wages (Kossek et al., 2006).

The effects diversity has on individuals are often linked to those it has on groups (Kossek et al., 2006). Studies have shown mixed findings regarding the effects of diverse group composition on group attitudes and performance (Kossek et al., 2006). Some have found diverse groups, compared to homogenous groups, to generate higher quality solutions on a brainstorming task (McLeod, Lobel & Cox, 1996) and exhibit more cooperative behaviour (Cox, Lobel & McLeod, 1991). Others, however, have not been able to find empirical evidence supporting this (Kossek et al., 2006). Instead, some have found that greater demographic diversity in groups can lead to adverse effects, such as lower social integration and job satisfaction. Furthermore, members who feel different from others may be more inclined to leave the organisation, leading to higher employee turnover (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). The effects of group diversity or type of team on workgroup cohesion and performance remain unclear, as some have found no relationship between these (Webber & Donahue, 2001). Some also argue that diversity can lead to more conflict and better business performance simultaneously (Herring, 2009).

Measuring the effects of diversity on groups is difficult as there are many other factors present besides demographic diversity which may influence the group members ability to work together (Kossek et al., 2006). For instance, as team members get to know each other better over time, the adverse effects of diversity can decrease (Watson, Kumar & Michaelsen, 1993). Deeper-level attributes, such as values, are also relevant to look at in terms of their relevance to workgroup cohesion (Harrison, Price & Bell, 1998). So far, the relationship between diversity and organisational performance remains largely only a finding from controlled experiment and study settings with student samples, with some exceptions (e.g., Richard, 2000). Such studies may lack in their applicability to real-life organisations (Benschop, 2001). Thus, limiting the validity of these findings (Kossek et al., 2006).

On the organisational level, a more diverse workforce can lead to better firm performance (Kossek et al., 2006). Research-based strategic theory anticipates that culturally more diverse companies will be able to mirror increasingly diverse markets better and have more complex inimitable social resources (Richard, 2000). A report by Catalyst shows supporting evidence for the research-based view. According to the report, firms with higher board director gender diversity had higher returns on sales and invested capital compared to firms with lower board director gender diversity (Catalyst, 2011). However, others found less support for direct effects of workforce diversity on organisational performance, suggesting that other factors, such as corporate culture, may play a more significant role (Kochan, Bezrukova, Ely, Jackson, Joshi, Jehn, Leonard, Levine & Thomas, 2003).

There is more research suggesting that the relationship between diversity and organisational performance is not merely a direct negative or positive relationship. Instead, this relationship might be dependent on the strategy, such as growth or innovation, followed by the firm (Kossek et al., 2006). Studies have found that racial

diversity only improved performance significantly if the company pursued an innovation strategy (Richard, McMillan, Chadwick & Dwyer, 2003).

2.2.5 HRM strategies leading to change at different levels

Argued benefits of heterogeneous organisations that value diversity include improved creativity, better-quality group decision making, greater organisational flexibility due to divergent thinking, better ability to attract and retain talent, and more compelling marketing capability (Cox & Blake, 1991). These benefits can be realised through organisational change strategies and interventions, both of which can have a different focus. They can be targeted on either the individual, group, or organisational level (Kossek et al., 2006).

Interventions targeted to one level often affect processes that happen at other levels. Thus, indirect organisational-level outcomes of workplace diversity usually stem from effects that begin at the individual level (Kossek et al., 2006). According to a survey by the Society for Human Resource Management, the three most prevalent corporate diversity policies are improving work and life balance, widening recruitment pools, and employee training (SHRM, 2009). All three interventions are focused on the individual. The most popular measure shows that companies mainly focus on promoting women in the workplace by offering flexible hours and working-from-home opportunities. The second measure illustrates the importance of the business case argument to firms that see diversity as a way to guarantee a talented pool of employees and, thus, a competitive advantage in the future. By choosing the third measure, training programs for employees, firms aim to shape employees' attitudes and behaviours to valuing diversity and reducing discriminatory and exclusive practices that hinder effective working relationships. Training programs vary in their objectives and topics. Despite their popularity, the effectiveness of different training designs is less researched (Kossek et al., 2006), although some have tried (e.g. Rynes & Rosen, 1995).

Individual-level HRM practices have the potential to change attitudes and career outcomes. However, certain aspects should be considered to make these practices more effective in achieving their goals (Kossek et al., 2006). Social psychological research found that behavioural change processes lowering prejudice occurred most likely when a person was able to associate their personal and stereotype belief structures, and actively inhibit the latter (Devine, 1989). Another research shows that persuasion is more likely to produce significant change when it is of personal importance to the recipient (Petty & Cacioppo, 1990). Showing employees how initiatives help them be more efficient on the job or help the company be more competitive than before has proven more impactful than saying that valuing diversity is the morally right thing to do (Kossek et al., 2006). On the same note, research also found that explaining the business case for implementing a particular diversity program, such as employee training, can have a positive impact on attitudes towards that program (Richard & Kirby, 1999).

Considering that diversity in groups can lead to conflict among members (Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999), group-focused interventions are a fundamental aspect of DM. Training can also be focused on groups, for instance, in the form of conflict management with an external facilitator that helps the group to be more productive in

a shorter time (Kossek et al., 2006). Another group-level intervention is to establish identity-based networking groups. These are formal or informal associations for employees with collective group identities (Kossek et al., 2006). Such associations provide the members with opportunities to meet and develop new relationships, both socially and professionally. Belonging to these groups reduces the members' isolation and helps them in growing their social networks (Friedman, 1999). One of the dangers of formally establishing such groups is that they can cause harmful reactions if the groups are perceived as exclusive or threatening (Kossek et al., 2006).

Just like measuring the effects of diversity on groups, it is also difficult to inspect the impacts of group-level interventions. Some evidence suggests that an organisational culture that emphasises collectivist values, rather than individualistic ones, is more likely to benefit from diversity by positively influencing group processes (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade & Neale, 1998). It is essential to note that interventions targeted at one level affect processes happening at other levels, as the individual- and organisational-level strategies will also impact groups (Kossek et al., 2006). These interconnections between different levels of the firm make it challenging to distinguish the exact relationships.

On the organisational level, fostering a collectivist culture is beneficial beyond the fact that it can enhance group processes. A successful DM strategy should address organisational culture change to develop a work environment that emphasises characteristics of a collectivist culture, such as teamwork, participation, and cohesiveness. This type of context then supports the varied abilities and skills of a diverse workforce (Dwyer, Richard & Chadwick, 2003). Overall, diversity should be strategically integrated into the business objectives (Richard, 2000), and the outcome of DM initiatives should be a systemic and organisational transformation (Litvin, 2002 in Kossek et al., 2006). Establishing a top management commitment to diversity initiatives is also of great importance. Without top management support, DM change efforts are less likely to be adopted, and their success in transforming the organisational culture will be limited (Rynes & Rosen, 1995). Moreover, by promoting identity-conscious structures, top management support can indirectly improve the employment status of minorities (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995).

Another aspect deemed as necessary in research is establishing formal measurement systems early on, which track the right indicators and identify key organisational-level measures. These measures include cultural values and norms, the openness of informal social and communication networks, and HR policies and practices related to recruiting, promotion, pay, development, work schedules, and the physical work environment. Amongst others, these measures grant information on any cultural barriers which might hinder full and active participation of all individuals and identity groups (Cox, 2001 in Kossek et al., 2006).

There is some research supporting a contingency perspective on the effectiveness of diversity interventions that target organisational outcomes (Kossek et al., 2006). Some findings suggest that in order to reap the potential benefits of increased gender diversity at the management level, supportive company culture and strategy may be required (Dwyer et al., 2003). Others have found that the extent to which racial diversity

will positively impact company performance is determined by the company's strategy as well as how its leaders and participants manage and respond to diversity (Richard, 2000; Richard et al., 2003). According to the business case for diversity, a diverse workforce combined with a supportive culture can bring about increased creativity. This combination, in turn, becomes a source of competitive advantage for companies that strive for higher levels of innovation (Kossek et al., 2006). Another study found that adopting formal diversity practices reduces employee turnover. The same study found that DM initiatives correlated with improved productivity and market performance for companies that also followed innovative strategies (Richard & Johnson, 1999).

Long-term corporate culture change requires a substantial commitment of resources and leadership (Cox, 2001 in Kossek et al., 2006). The organisational-level effects often take a long time to emerge, with the risk of setbacks. It is no wonder then that most companies keep cultural data internal out of fear for receiving negative publicity or other unwanted consequences (Kossek et al., 2006). Researchers speculate there could be multiple reasons behind the difficulties in measuring organisational outcomes (Kossek et al., 2006). Some attribute the lack of evaluation of diversity initiatives to an unwillingness to accept and address the findings that may emerge (Comer & Soliman, 1996). Besides a fear of results, the resistance could also be due to a lack of interest or resources (Kossek et al., 2006). It is also possible that some firms claim to value diversity only for the sake of a better public image, providing another potential explanation for the lack of evaluation (Comer & Soliman, 1996).

2.2.6 Current state of DM

The review of the literature gives some indication of the current state of DM. There are various dimensions to diversity, more of which are beginning to gain ground in D&I research, and which illustrate the fact that more work needs to be done to understand the impact of DM strategies thoroughly. It is an inevitable fact that the composition of companies' workforces is becoming increasingly diverse (Herring, 2009). As a consequence, the HRM structures in place need to be re-evaluated to help firms adapt to new demands and accommodate for people from different backgrounds.

Generally, DM remains a young managerial concept with inconclusive results from studies examining the effects of HRM on diversity and diversity on performance (Nadiv & Kuna, 2020). Regardless of the inconclusive results on relationships between diversity and the aspects mentioned before, it is clear that if ignored or mismanaged, diversity can have adverse effects and result in financial losses for firms (Köllen, 2019). Besides, if merely seen as a means for meeting market demands and increasing profits, DM is unlikely to improve the position of workforce minorities (Nkomo, Bell, Roberts, Joshi & Thatcher, 2019). Thus, DM also implies an ethical responsibility (Rabl, del Carmen Triana, Byun & Bosch, 2020). Multiple studies have supported a contingency perspective on the effects of diversity, suggesting that diversity needs to be placed in an appropriate context to realise the benefits it can offer.

It appears from the literature and surveys that despite many advancements, stereotyping and discrimination remain as issues to be overcome (Glassdoor, 2019). Thus, more in-depth promotion and advancement of minorities through organisational change strategies and interventions are required. However, investigating the

effectiveness of various HRM strategies to change organisational structures to better nurse diversity also has its challenges.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research method

To accomplish the objective of this study, which is to strive for a thorough understanding of the role of HR in managing diversity, a qualitative research method was chosen. This method focuses on making sense of the world. The contribution of qualitative inquiry is clarifying meanings and exploring how humans engage in meaning-making (Patton, 2015). Qualitative research is, thus, interpretive as the researcher needs to make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed about the phenomena being studied (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

Rather than having to fit observations into a predetermined quantitative range of options, a qualitative research method allows the gathering of information about issues in-depth and in detail. Qualitative methods use words instead of numbers to construe concepts. Qualitative data is used to understand the ''what'' and the ''how''. Emphasis is also on ''why'' (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Qualitative findings can be based on three kinds of data; 1) in-depth, open-ended interviews, 2) direct observations, or 3) written communications (Patton, 2015).

However, it should be noted that qualitative research often produces detailed information about a smaller number of people and cases, which reduces the generalisability of the findings (Patton, 2015). This limitation on generalising the results is not so significant for the chosen research topic, as the goal is more to establish an in-depth understanding of the connection between HR theory on diversity and how this applies to the real world.

This study is a combination of exploratory and descriptive purposes. On the one hand, it follows an exploratory purpose, meaning it aims to ask open questions to discover what is happening and to gain insights about DM in firms. On the other, it is also descriptive in scope, as the interviewing method used allowed the respondents to describe the management methods used in the firms (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

The chosen strategy is a case study. This study is an in-depth investigation of the topic of DM within its real-life context. By covering multiple cases, a single set of ''cross-case'' conclusions can be drawn (Yin, 2018). By comparing multiple cases, it can be seen whether findings can be replicated across these. This case study aims to understand the dynamics of DM within its setting - HRM in multinationals. It also explores the interactions between diversity and its context (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). An in-depth analysis was deemed suitable for probing into the meaning of diversity and revealing how firms deal with it. The goal of the analysis was to provide rich data about reality and study diversity thoroughly in its complexity. Besides, qualitative research methodology also allows finding not only intended but also unintended effects. Through inquiring into participants' experiences, some

unexpected, but essential, aspects may be revealed (Patton, 2015). It is important to note, however, that the conclusions to be drawn from a case study are not generalisable to populations, as the cases do not represent samples (Yin, 2018).

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Method

This research has an exploratory nature. Thus, an in-depth and semi-structured interviewing method was chosen for the data collection of this study. A list of open-ended, key questions was used as a guide for the interview. However, the use of these questions could vary from one interview to another. Depending on the specific organisational context encountered in relation to the research topic or the flow of the conversation, some questions could be left out, or their order could be changed. Besides, some additional questions could also be asked to explore the research question and objectives in more detail, given the specifics of each organisation (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

This method was considered most suitable to approach the topic of workforce diversity for the following reasons. It allowed for more detailed information about diversity in the chosen companies and the reasons behind the actions they take. The semi-structured, in-depth method allowed the probing of answers and helped to reach an understanding of the meanings that respondents ascribe to diversity. Moreover, the participants could freely share their personal experiences with diversity. Furthermore, maintaining flexibility in the questions enabled changing them accordingly during the interview, depending on what the respondent said and asking potential follow-up questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

Some data quality issues related to the chosen interviewing method also need to be considered. The lack of standardisation can lead to concerns about credibility (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). These are related to whether alternative researchers would find similar results and also to issues of bias. Interviewer bias means that the demeanour of the interviewer and things like their tone of voice may affect the way the interviewees answer the questions. Interviewee bias can also occur, meaning the respondent may only reveal a partial and biased picture of the situation. Another one to consider is participation bias, which may result from the nature of the participants who agree to be interviewed, and, thus, biasing the sample. All of the three types of biases can affect the value of the data and raising questions about its external validity and reliability (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

However, having acknowledged these issues, the method was still deemed as most suitable for investigating the chosen research question. Concerning the issue of generalisability of the results, it is not the purpose of this study to necessarily generate transferable, repeatable findings. Rather, this study aims to explore circumstances that are complex and dynamic. The findings also reflect reality at the time of collection and are subject to change over time. Besides, semi-structured and in-depth interviews can reach a high level of validity and credibility by using clarifying and probing questions,

as well as exploring responses from a variety of angles (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

The purpose of the in-depth interview was to have an informal, personal discussion that would encourage respondents to think about their perception of and share their experiences with diversity. The open-ended questions were prepared beforehand, but not sent before the interview. During the Skype interview, the questions were modified slightly depending on the respondent's answers. The aim was to receive personalised answers instead of quantifiable, categorizable answers.

3.2.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to gain relevant and rich information for the research question (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Specific criteria for interviewees were set to obtain homogenous interviewees. First, they had to be from MNCs and in senior HR positions, with a minimum of 5 years' experience working in HR. Second, they had to have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. Additionally, each interviewee was chosen to represent a different industry background.

Based on a personal, academic, and professional network and connections, multiple potential interviewee candidates were contacted via email and LinkedIn. Out of all those who were reached out to, only two interviewees replied and agreed to be interviewed. Although a sample size of two is less than ideal, the circumstances made it difficult to obtain a larger sample size. Despite rigorous efforts to reach out to more potential interviewees, the efforts did not pay off. Either the remaining responses were negative, or there was no response at all. One of the respondents was interviewed through a Skype interview, whereas the other wished to answer the questions via email. As two different data collection techniques were used, face-to-face interviewing and interviewing via email, the study done can be described as a multi-method qualitative study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

Both respondents wished to stay anonymous for this study, so coding (Person A/B) was used for the analysis of their answers. It was also requested that company names remain anonymous.

Table 1. Interviewee profiles

Interviewee	Industry	HR work experience	Current position	Gender	Country
Interviewee 1	Health technology	+ 6 years	Senior HR Manager	M	Netherlands
Interviewee 2	Pharmaceutical	+ 13 years	Learning Designer & R&D HR Business Partner	F	Finland

3.2.3 Formulation of the questions

The questions were constructed based on the motivation and research question. To reduce the risk of response bias, any leading or proposing types of questions were

avoided as much as possible. The types of questions used were mainly open and probing questions. Open questions allowed the participants to describe a situation and encouraged them to give an extensive and developmental answer. Probing questions, then, were used to explore responses further to gain a deeper understanding of particularly those aspects that were of significance to the research topic. The focus of the questions was on real-life experiences of the respondent, rather than abstract concepts they may have a hard time grasping (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Both respondents were asked roughly the same questions, apart from some differences. The respondent interviewed via Skype did not receive the questions beforehand. At the start, before delving into questions regarding diversity, rapport was created by asking the interviewee about his background. The introduction questions were not sent with the second interviewee over email.

The first set of questions was aimed at inquiring into how diversity embodies itself in the firm. These questions established the basis for the interview, as they revealed the extent of diversity within the organisation and how the HR management, represented by the interviewee, perceives it. After laying the groundwork, it was possible to move on to more practical questions regarding the current DM practices and challenges within the firm.

The second group of questions connected the diversity concept more specifically to the firm the interviewee represented. This part of the discussion included questions about the current HRM practices relevant to diversity the firm has in place and the challenges it has faced in implementing them. These questions helped to formulate an idea of the specific contexts in which the firms function. They also allowed distinguishing similarities or differences between these. The interviewees were also asked to elaborate on how important they perceive diversity to be. Their perceptions of importance allowed establishing whether this differs between the two respondents.

The final few questions allowed the interviewees to convey their ideas on how diversity can be beneficial for the firm and how it is connected to workgroup effectiveness. These insights could then be compared to construct an understanding of the motivations behind fostering diversity. The full set of questions are shown at the end of this paper in Appendix 1. Finally, both respondents were eager to discuss the topic of diversity and expressed their availability for further questions.

3.2.4 Data processing

The first interview conducted via Skype lasted around 30 minutes, and it was audiotaped for later transcription and analysis of the data. Besides, recording the interview reduced the risk of losing data with time. For the second interviewee, the questions were sent and received through email. After collecting the results from both interviewees, these were first analysed individually. Afterwards, the answers were compared to scan for similarities and differences. Finally, linkages between the theoretical background and the interview themes were sought. The answers were first organised based on the three themes, which helped to connect them to relevant theories.

4. Results and Discussion

This section elaborates on the findings from the two interviews and analyses them critically.

4.1 Presence of diversity in the firm

Diversity was highly present in both firms. The estimation given by Interviewee 1 of how many nationalities were included in the workforce was 90, whereas Interviewee 2's was 16. Both interviewees defined diversity as a broad concept, reaching beyond the traditional racial and gender diversities. Amongst the ones mentioned were differences in age, personality, background, opinions, and ways of working. The broad definition was adopted within both firms, although some dimensions appeared to be more central to the discussion than others. For both, cultural diversity was a relevant dimension, and for Interviewee 1's firm, gender diversity was another. Interviewee 2 explained that diversity is embedded in one of the core values of the company: "We succeed, face challenges and learn together. We build in all collaboration on mutual trust, appreciation and diversity."

When asked about how the definition of diversity embodies itself in the firm, the answers revealed the following. Interviewee 1 said that the company considers that diverse teams could achieve more because of the different insights the various backgrounds bring. These teams, as stated by him, bring about concrete results and are an added value to the firm. According to interviewee 2, diversity is considered a key growth driver, as it is seen as leading to a higher innovation rate. Some more holistic aspects were also taken into consideration. Interviewee 2 disclosed the company's HR policy as the following: "In (Company 2) each employee has equal possibilities to succeed and develop in his own work. The age, sex, sexual orientation, religion or ethnic background of an individual may never, at any stage of the employment relationship, be considered a discriminating factor. Every (Employee of Company 2) is responsible in his/her own operations for aiming at observing equal treatment of all persons both in daily operations and in decision-making."

4.2 Management approach to diversity

Both interviewees deemed diversity crucial for the companies. For Company 1, this significance is two-fold. From an external perspective, diversity is closely related to the international context in which Company 1 operates. A diverse workforce is thus a crucial success factor for mirroring varied markets better. From an internal viewpoint, employee diversity is a top priority because it leads to better teams, improved results, and more versatile insights. Interviewee 1 names three pillars within the HR, one of which is exclusively dedicated to D&I. As reported by Interviewee 2, diversity is a part of the company's values, and so it guides the way of working. In her opinion, diversity is "extremely valuable and necessary". She also believes that "diverse teams make better decisions and innovations, and this leads to better business results". Besides, Interviewee 2 thinks that "different ways of thinking also enrich the work community".

From recruitment to training, practices were in place on multiple levels of the firms to ensure and stimulate the presence of diversity. For both interviewees, the recruitment

phase was an essential step in this process. Interviewee 1 said that by scanning the demographics of the different sectors within the firm, the ones lacking diversity could be identified. Overall, increasing diversity within the various sectors was a strategic goal, enforced and supported by management. For Company 1, the talent acquisition phase was one with concrete methods set out by management to increase diversity in the workforce. The company has a key performance indicator (KPI) in place to measure the proportion of women hired for senior management positions. Thus, the firm has adopted a top-down approach and considers that the best way to make the company more accommodating to diversity starts at the top, not by adding a few women in work teams. According to Interviewee 1, women in management positions can ''shape the environment and conditions needed to create a diverse workforce in terms of gender''. For Company 2, this stage is about analysing what kind of talent is needed for the team, what competencies are lacking, or which areas need strengthening to meet the strategic goals of the firm. In both companies, diversity was seen as an asset in this context. Interviewee 2 explained how particularly the search for the best talent had led the company to recruit from abroad to find the most competent and suitable person for the role in question.

Apart from recruitment, training courses for teams were mentioned by both interviewees as a way to promote diversity. Company 1 offers training to managers to deal with issues such as managing a multicultural team, learning to recognise ''unconscious bias'' and not only ensuring diversity but also inclusion within teams. The team-building training courses offered at Company 2 are aimed at highlighting the benefits of diversity and the importance of different roles within a team. Besides work team training, diversity is also mentioned in training given to managers. Additionally, language and cultural courses are offered to strengthen cultural awareness. Interviewee 2 notes, however, that in her experience of cooperating with partner firms from abroad, the company culture takes precedence in the ways of working, before the country's culture in which the operations happen.

Another way of promoting diversity mentioned by Interviewee 1 was celebrating International Women's Day together as a company. He also recognised regular campaigns about diversity as significant. Moreover, some platforms serve as networks within the company through which ideas about best D&I practices can be shared. Further down the line, retaining the diverse workforce and talent acquired by the firm is also a critical HR measure, as brought up by Interviewee 1. According to him, here, inclusion plays a vital role, and he emphasised that within the firm, D&I are always referred to as one concept, as they are highly interconnected. A part of the continuous process of fostering D&I is succession planning for strategic roles, through which the company aims to plan and prepare candidates to ensure continuity of diversity in these positions.

Concerning challenges related to diversity, there were differences between the two companies, possibly due to the different structural characteristics of the industries. For Company 1, one challenge is that the technology industry is male dominant. Therefore, for some of the sectors within the firm creating employee diversity has further challenges, namely in terms of lack of candidates. The firm has taken action to tackle this labour market issue by collaborating with educational institutions to attract future

female talent. The firm has also found internal ways to balance diversity between sectors, by creating pipelines through which transfers can be made between the divisions. Another challenge brought up by Interviewee 1 is training managers to have better interpersonal skills for them to be equipped to lead diverse teams. Finally, for Company 1, maintaining the continuous development towards perpetual diversity entails a firm-wide cultural change, which is a difficult task in itself.

For Company 2, cultural diversity appeared to be more prominent. Interviewee 2 described the pharmaceutical industry to be international in many parts. Thus, she thinks it is perceived as natural by the employees to work with colleagues, stakeholders, or partners from different backgrounds. She still believes continuous dialogue about the benefits of diversity is essential, as well as strengthening the capability to discuss diversity, in order to celebrate it truly. Interviewee 2 also mentioned difficulties relating to cultural diversity. These were, for instance, recruiting non-Finnish speakers into some positions where the ability to speak the Finnish language is a requirement to be able to function in the role. Besides, some team conflicts may arise when members see things differently due to their background. However, according to her well-functioning teams can handle such conflicts in a constructive manner.

4.3 Perceived benefits of diversity to the organisation

When asked to define what a productive work team entails, the two interviewees offered slightly different notions. Interviewee 1 named D&I as crucial factors that bring team members together and provide them with a safe space to discuss various perspectives to the issues at hand. To ensure the team structures lead to synergy and not chaos, Company 1 constructs tailor-made project teams, which are then granted creative freedom and managerial support. He considered top management commitment vital in the functioning of such teams, as managers help them in realising their goals. Thus, according to him, managers need to possess ''sincere interest in diversity and people''. Interviewee 2's definition was one which the company uses in its training courses: "Team is a small group of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they are mutually accountable (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).''

Concerning the perception of what a person with a diverse can contribute to a team, Interviewee 1 pointed out new insights, which in turn can enhance decision-making processes, and increased creativity. Interviewee 2's answer was ''She or he can boost innovation, bring different competencies and viewpoints, for example, related to the substance area or market, customers, partners or whole ecosystem in general.'' According to her, by combining these various views, novel and innovative solutions can be found. Interviewee 2 considered different points of view and cultural backgrounds as valuable in all kinds of continuous development within the company.

4.4 Discussion

The results reveal some similarities to the theory. The dimensions mentioned by the interviewees are aligned with those mentioned in the literature, with research on more and more types of diversity emerging. In accordance with the SHRM report, gender diversity was a priority, particularly for Company 1, followed by cultural diversity (SHRM, 2009).

The practices in place in both firms also aligned with those mentioned in the SHRM report (SHRM, 2009). Both respondents indicated training and recruitment as critical steps in promoting diversity. The systems in Company 1 entail that the issue of fewer women in top management positions is being acknowledged and improved. By prioritising the recruitment of women into senior positions, rather than merely adding a few women into workgroups, Company 1 can avoid tokenism (Kanter, 1993).

Another commonality was that the value-in-diversity argument was highly visible in both interviewees' answers. Both respondents considered diversity valuable to the business, as it improves decision-making processes, boosts innovation, and adds value to the firm. The strong emphasis on improved performance and results implies the importance of the business case argument as a rationale for DM efforts. Overall, the potential benefits of diversity recognised by the interviewees were aligned with those mentioned by Cox and Blake (1991).

The difficulty of measuring the effectiveness of DM initiatives was also reflected in Interviewee 1's answers. Although the company has included D&I as one of the main HRM pillars within the firm, measuring the concrete results of this has not proven to be simple. Interviewee 1 mentioned that the company had managed to set a KPI for hiring female leaders, but that, generally, setting KPI's to track diversity within the firm was challenging. Besides, he also emphasised top management support, which correlates with the findings by Konrad and Linnehan (1995) and Rynes and Rosen (1995).

There appeared a slight difference in the general approach to diversity taken by the two companies. Interviewee 1 emphasised the role of management more, consistent with research on the contribution of top management support on the effectiveness of DM initiatives (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995; Rynes & Rosen, 1995). Interviewee 2 brought up also the individual responsibility of all employees in making sure that diversity-accommodating practices are fostered and upheld throughout the firm.

Some weaknesses are inherent to this study. Firstly, the sample size is too small to derive any general conclusions. The results reflect the personal experiences of the respondents and should be taken as such. They do not provide a comprehensive view of how diversity is being managed as a whole within the firms. Thus, the insights gained from this study are tentative at best. Secondly, by choosing HR managers as participants, this study risks being one-sided and biased in its perspective. Managers may generally be more optimistic about diversity within the firm (Rynes & Rosen, 1995). Besides, they may not be aware of issues happening at other levels of the firm and have an entirely different view of the effects of diversity compared to an employee or a team. Thirdly, conducting the second interview via email posed some limitations on the scope of discussion with Interviewee 2, leading to less fruitful insights.

5. Conclusion

As presented in section 1.2, this study intended to investigate the role of HR in managing diversity in MNCs. In order to answer the research question, the data gathered from interviews with HR managers were analysed.

The analysis, in combination with the literature review, revealed that both academics and HR managers widely define the concept of diversity broadly, including more than just the traditional notions of gender and racial diversity. The demographic changes in today's workforce have made it necessary for companies to develop and implement DM practices as part of their HRM systems. The role of HR in large, multinational corporations is central to managing the talent of a diverse workforce. This role entails creating an inclusive and supportive work environment and culture. It also encompasses identifying any potential obstacles in the advancement of workforce minorities within the firm and taking active steps in removing these. Finally, managing the talent of a diverse workforce requires taking into consideration the different motivations, backgrounds, and work experiences of all employees within a company. When this is done efficiently, communication across cultures will be smooth, resulting in productive synergy.

As the interview results show, diversity is promoted at multiple levels of the firm through various HRM functions. At the entry-level, during recruitment and selection processes, any prejudices which may prevent attracting and selecting the best candidates for a specific position should be monitored. What follows next is maintaining the implementation of DM strategy through training and development of employees. Here, skills to help lead a diverse workforce can be taught and possible challenges discussed. In the case of the two companies, the managers' responsibility in making sure that policy and practice are aligned can be seen. However, it is also evident that although fostering a DM strategy begins at the management level, ensuring that it trickles down and is adopted by all employees is just as crucial. Finally, the stages of performance assessment, succession, and retainment should acknowledge the results of each employee based on standardised guidelines to ensure equal treatment. Inclusion is also an integral aspect of DM and should be emphasised to ensure continuity of diversity. Overall, the different HR processes offer possibilities to take action toward increasing and measuring diversity within the company. It takes company-wide action to foster a diversity-supporting climate.

The practical implications of this study remain limited, and its findings did not reveal anything that deviates significantly from the literature, nor can they be generalised to all MNCs. However, this study can help managers to consider what it is that they are doing to promote diversity and how this aligns with empirical findings. The current situation concerning the promotion of workforce minorities looks more promising than in the past. Yet, many more advancements need to be made to create more inclusive and diverse global work environments. Such environments are ones where all employees face fair and respectful treatment, regardless of their attributes, beliefs, or cultural background. Accordingly, all employees must have equal access to resources and opportunities and be able to contribute to the success of the organisation.

Despite the acknowledgement DM has gained, as a field, it continues to lack strong empirical evidence supporting the positive effects of diversity and the effectiveness of DM initiatives, neither of which could be derived from this study either. More research is needed to overcome the difficulties of identifying the variables that contribute to the effectiveness of DM initiatives. Further research should be conducted in various contexts, such as different industries and different levels of the firm besides management. Studying the perspectives of employees on all levels of the firm on the established DM practices could help clarify the complex web of effects and outcomes that workforce diversity creates. Future research should also be focused on various types of diversity, not merely the most obvious ones, such as gender diversity that was also the most prevalent dimension in this study (Nadiv & Kuna, 2020; Yadav & Lenka, 2020). In light of the recent surge of conflicts around racism, the topic of racial discrimination is likely to become a central topic of discussions. So, it should also be for DM research. Finally, more empirical research is required to test the theoretical assumptions in real-life settings (Shore, Cleveland & Sanchez, 2018).

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guide

Personal Background

About the interviewee:
- Could you tell me a bit more about yourself?
- Where are you from?
- What is your educational background?
- How did you land your current job? What made you choose the current company?
- What do you do in your position on an everyday basis?

Company Culture & Personal Experiences

Presence of diversity in the firm:
- How many employees are there in the company (in the country of question)? How many different nationalities are there?
- What does diversity within the company mean? How does this definition show within the firm?

Management approach to diversity – Importance, current practices & challenges:
- On which levels of the firm can diversity be fostered? How/Can you give some examples? Are some more important than others?
- Which practices are currently being used to deal with diversity (during recruitment, training, on a manager-level)? In your personal opinion, are they effective, or are there improvements that can be made in the future?
- How important is diversity for the company? And for you, personally? Why?
- Are diverse teams being actively promoted? How?
- Are there challenges in dealing with diversity in the company? What about at an institutional level? And what about challenges and opportunities for people working in the company? Can you give me some examples?

Perceived benefits of diversity to the organisation - Work effectiveness & optimisation:
- How would you describe a productive and creative work team?
- In your opinion, what do you think a person with a diverse background can contribute to the firm?
- How can diversity be a benefit for organisations in optimising work processes?

Participant Consent Form

[*Bachelor Thesis for the University of Groningen by Annina Junnonen*]

Consent to take part in research

- I……………………………………… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that participation involves an interview of no more than one hour on the topic of management of a culturally diverse workforce.

- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

- I agree with my interview being audio-recorded.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

- I understand that (if I so wish) in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a dissertation.

- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained by the researcher, her supervisors, and co-assessor until the exam board confirms the results of the researcher's dissertation (around July 2020).

- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years after the confirmation of results from the exam board.

- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

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Signature of the research participant

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Signature of participant   Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

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Signature of researcher   Date