Elwira Gross-Gołacka

University of Warsaw, Poland

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4863-9391

egross@wz.uw.edu.pl

Jan Žukovskis

Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8124-9195

jan.zukovskis@vdu.lt

Diversity Management in Management Studies – Theoretical Discussion

ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this article is to attempt to present theoretical considerations towards the concept of diversity management from the perspective of its location in the discipline of management and quality sciences. As the concept of diversity management lacks a strict demarcation between related disciplines, such as economics, psychology, sociology or even biology and cultural anthropology, it should be noted that the specification of paradigms is not closed, and further paradigms, micro-paradigms or mega-paradigms may emerge over time.

Methodology: the research method adopted in the article is literature analysis and inference.

Findings: The approach presented, which points to the permanent development of alternative paradigms and cognitive perspectives in the discipline of management and quality sciences, is a confirmation that these 'sciences' are not 'impregnated' against change and are de facto changing.

Value Added: Consideration of the issue of human capital diversity in organisations and its management has been carried out for many years in the literature, which is characterised by a diversity of definitions and perceptions. It is therefore worth presenting, a cross-cutting historical perspective on the phenomenon of human resource diversity in organisations in the discipline of management and quality sciences.

Recommendations: Diversity management should be defined in the broadest possible way, understanding it as the systematic efforts of an organisation to involve the diversity of its human resources in its activities and to treat it as a strategic advantage. Such a conclusion prejudges the need for further research in relation to the concept of diversity management.

Introduction

Phenomena and processes that are a kind of *signum temporis* – globalisation, technological developments, the information society, networking – are relevant for changing at least some of the established regularities or theories about management. R.W. Griffin wrote that one of the main challenges faced by managers, alongside declining production and employment, is managing diversity (Griffin, 2013, pp. 60–61). There are discussions in the literature, business circles and the media about how to approach and apply diversity management in practice. It is often seen as part of human resource management, knowledge management, and less often as part of strategic and organisational value management. It is therefore worth presenting a cross-cutting historical view of looking at the phenomenon of human resource diversity in organisations – using current nomenclature – in the discipline of management and quality sciences. It can be said that common classical management concepts are still taken into account in the process of learning about and understanding this issue.

From the perspective of classical management concepts

A few words, therefore, about the classical management concepts. The concept of scientific management created and popularised by eminent scientists (F.W. Taylor, H. Fayol, K. Adamiecki, M. Weber, H. Emerson), which is now more than 100 years old and sparked a century-long search for the right balance between "things of production" and "people of production" (Taylor, 1922; Taylor, 1947; Adamiecki, 1938; Bendix, 1975; Emerson, 1926; Fayol, 1930) or between "specialists in numbers" and "humanists" (Kiechel, 2013). An important influence on organisational and management science was the book published by F.W Taylor in 1911, *The Principles of Scientific Management,* which brought an engineering discipline in the form of what was known as 'running a business'. At that time, employers thought that all employees could be

treated the same and that the common motivator was money. The limitation of this classical view was an approach that neglected the role of the individual in the organisation, which is contrary to the concept of diversity management. In general, however, it can be said that the scientific management current was already addressing one dimension of counter-productivity – low labour productivity, which, according to the aforementioned researchers, was due to several causes. On the one hand – from the negative inclinations and habits of the individual (e.g. laziness), and on the other – from the lack of developed working methods, appropriate working conditions, rules of conduct or – emphasised by contemporary researchers – unfair treatment by superiors (Piotrowski, 2000, p. 642). In general, however, a certain weakness of the classical currents was the insufficient attention paid to the working man and the tasks imposed on him by the organisation. This gap became the basis for the development of another trend in organisational and management theory referred to as the behavioural school, within which the human relations direction became the most important, whose founders included: E. Mayo, D. McGregor, H. Münsterberger, F.J. Roethlisberger, A. Maslow, F. Herzberg) (Maslow, 1943; Münsterberger, 1913; Roethlisberger, 1939). For example, research conducted by E. Mayo (Kozminski, 2010) at the Hawthorne facility, Chicago, between 1924 and 1932, began to cast doubt on the theories of the time. This researcher found that working conditions, social factors and group dynamics were also important factors influencing employee behaviour. He then showed the complexity of the motivation process. In essence, the researchers mentioned above emphasised the role of the social context (group and cultural influences) and individual human needs. Above all, in their reflections, they focused attention on low individual productivity, conflicts, excessive absenteeism at work, excessive staff turnover or the increase in employee dissatisfaction. Among the causes of such phenomena, they saw a failure to take into account the diverse psychosocial needs of organisational participants and management's suppression of informal groups (e.g. the disadvantaged). The key to increasing work performance, therefore, was to seek the acceptance of organisational goals by informal groups and to use the influence of informal groups to enhance the efficiency of the management process and increase productivity. In this context, it should be noted that researchers

of the behaviourist direction in management theory have pointed out that the source of people's motivation to work is the need for belonging, security and recognition that each individual has and wants to fulfil in the workplace. High morale and high levels of employee satisfaction, according to humanists, were to be achieved through the display of benevolent interest by superiors. Mainly, a person's participation in an institution is supposed to be the more reliable and productive, the higher his morale is (i.e. the more positive his attitude towards the organisation as a whole, the social group of which he is a member, the organisational function he performs, etc.) – and the more satisfied he or she is with his or her work situation, and this satisfaction stems from the satisfaction of social needs (Piotrowski, 2010, pp. 665–692). This approach popularised the idea that, on the one hand, employees are a rather valuable resource for an organisation and, on the other hand, managers had to take into account the aspect of human satisfaction at work (Gross-Gołacka, 2018).

The impact of modern thinking

The Polish praxeological school with its representatives – T. Kotarbinski (1958, 1970, pp. 120–122) and J. Zieleniewski (1969), who dealt with the principles of conscious human action is also worth noting. These authors focused attention on efficient action by constructing certain guidelines to serve this purpose. In his *Treatise on Good Work,* T. Kotarbinski wrote, among other things, that the concepts used to pronounce praxeological judgements were, for example: economy, efficiency, accuracy of execution, certainty of the methods used (Kotarbinski, 1955, p. 23). The school of the praxeological trend in Poland has evolved to come closer to a systems approach.

Another notable contribution to modern management thinking (including the concept of diversity management) is the aforementioned systems school, which advocated considering the organisation in its environment (L. von Bertalanffy, K. Boulding, S. Beer, J.W. Forester, N. Wiener et al., L. Kantorowicz, G. Nadler et al.) (von Bertalanffy, 1984). In this approach, an organisation is

identified as a system, i.e. a whole consisting of interrelated elements that are in various types of interaction with the environment. In essence, the recognition of the organisation as a system has 'opened' it up to the influences of the environment, while at the same time making the environment sensitive to its actions. This perspective therefore appears to be relevant to the development of the concept of diversity management in organisations. It shows that the management of diverse resources is just as important as, for example, material resources and both interact. In addition, the dynamism of the organisation and its environment makes the organisation different at each moment of its existence from its previous state, which at the same time requires it to be flexible and adaptive to the changing reality.

Continuing the considerations in the proposed scope: it was considered appropriate to mention the achievements of the representatives of the neoclassical school, which was a response to the existing discrepancies between theory and practice. Among the main achievements of the representatives of the neoclassical school, it is worth noting (Borowska-Pietrzak, 2010, pp. 75–86; Lisiecki 2001, p. 78; Kieżun, 1997, pp. 72–74; Chrisidu-Budnik et al., 2005, p. 98): the concept of motivation through participation (P. Drucker), the conceptual model (F.E. Kasta, J.E. Rosenzweig), the model of two types of enterprise organisation – mechanistic and organic (T. Burn, G.M. Stalker), the influence of the external environment on the structure of the enterprise (P.L. Lawrence, J.W. Lorsch), the influence of technology on the organisational structure of the enterprise (J. Woodward, C. Perrow), the links between staff motivation and organisational form (S. Morse), the situational model of leadership (P. Hersey, K.H. Blanchard). Essentially, the neoclassical school emphasised the complexity of the problems occurring in an organisation and the dependence of these problems on internal and external factors. Furthermore, it advocated choosing solutions that are best for the organisation in view of the conditions that exist. From the neoclassical school, a new-wave current in management emerged in the early 1980s (R.T. Pascale, A.G. Athos, T.J. Peters, F.H. Waterman, R.H. Waterman, W. Ouchi), which was the result of a crisis in theory that gave way to a fascination with the experiences of companies that were achieving better results. The research and analysis (mainly of practice) carried out within this strand made it possible to identify certain solutions in the form of

identified regularities (a package of key characteristics of the most effective and excellent companies) and irregularities (a set of 'cardinal sins') committed by managers (Borowska-Pietrzak, 2010, p. 83). Attention has been paid to the factors that generate dysfunctions in effective organisational management.

Postmodernists point to the organizational culture, describing it as unstable, incoherent – the approach differentiating the organizational culture based on dichotomy was opposed. Uncertainty is also perceived in a different way, where, according to postmodernists, uncertainty has been recognized as a certain feeling, a state that should be considered as a stimulus to take action. The issue of power, or rather the prevention of its accumulation at the top of the organisational pyramid, was analysed, which addressed the issues of limited democracy and limited participation of groups hitherto marginalised in the organisation, such as "women, racial and ethnic minorities, mature people and young people", which seems relevant from the perspective of the development of the concept of diversity management.

Also Ł. Sułkowski (2012, pp. 35–55) notes that modern organisations need to focus on other principles of work organisation. He points out that the key to competing is the development of teamwork, and that employees should bear responsibility for the course of the entire organisation's processes, and not only specialised and hard-to-identify fragments. Particularly noteworthy is the aspect raised that concern for quality and commitment to organisational improvement should be a matter for all employees, not just managers. There is also a need for the development of social contacts, interactions and the enrichment of organisational culture, leading to the strengthening of cooperation between employees. In Poland, the postmodern trend has its supporters (M. Kostera, L. Krzyżanowski) and opponents (A.K. Koźmiński).

About diversity management

On the basis of the preceding considerations, it is noted that the issue of diversity management has been present in the literature for many years, it tended

to be seen essentially in terms of optimising individuals and organisations, although it has evolved with the development of management concepts (Nweiser & Dajnoki, 2022). Initially, the assumption was that the employee would perform more effectively and, therefore, individual non-economic motivations were sought to be understood, in particular motivations related to the need to coexist with the group, to the search for recognition and prestige among workers. However, there was no extensive discussion of the nature of behaviour unfavourable to such behaviour (e.g. discrimination, unequal treatment, mobbing) of employees (including managers) and their subjective, organisational and social conditions or the various manifestations of such behaviour. It seems, therefore, that such a multifaceted coverage of this topic is quite rare. This is also noted by Y. Vardi and E. Weitz, who believe that the neglect of this research area in the management sciences is largely due to the nature of these sciences: within which functionalism and positive orientation are the dominant paradigms (Vardi & Weitz, 2004, p. 9).

Functionalism, or the neo-positivist-functionalist-systems (NFS) paradigm prevalent in management science, is characteristic of both the scientific management and human relations currents. This approach views the organisation as a system made up of interrelated parts, each of which has a function in the system (e.g. recruitment, motivation, professional development or remuneration), which at the same time strives in dynamic equilibrium to maintain order and function optimally. In principle, such an approach, may obscure, or even dismiss, the behavioural and interactional level of the organisation. It seems that dismissing any unlawful or unethical behaviour from the analysis will result in treating it as a temporary deviation from the norm rather than a permanent dysfunction of the system/process. With such an approach, interpretations of the processes of: establishing and exercising power and ownership, communication of individuals and teams, formation of cultural elements or making sense of organisational reality (Sułkowski, 2012, p. 116) – important for the concept of diversity management in organisations – may be lost. Furthermore, the NFS paradigm may be a limitation for a complete account of diversity management in organisations due to its 'positive nature'. What this means is that in corporate science, it is a vision of human beings doomed to

hyper-rationality. Organisations, on the other hand, focus on increasing effi-ciency, economic profitability, rather than diagnosing dysfunctions in the man-agement process. The aim is to increase the level of motivation among employ-ees and greater commitment, professional development or increased employee satisfaction for increased efficiency and productivity. It is, however, critical to note that this functionalist-systems orientation in management overlooks many problems related to workplace inequality, discrimination, mobbing or harass-ment – important aspects for the concept of diversity management. It is also worth noting that the level of analysis relates more to the organisational or socio-cultural system and much less to the level of employee behaviour within the organisation (Gross-Gołacka, 2018).

Paradigms and multi-paradigms

Taking the above into account, it is worth adopting the approach proposed by Ł. Sułkowski, who points out that in the management sciences, it is possible to see an increase in the importance of alternative paradigms that move away from the classical understanding of organisation and management associated with economic and technical sciences (Sułkowski, 2012, p. 343).

Table 1. Dominant versus alternative paradigms

Criteria	Dominant paradigm	Alternative paradigm
Relationships between the components of reality	Cause and effect, repeatable	Interdependencies, recurrent and individual
Objectives of the study	Generalisation, versification, analysis, anticipation and programming of change	Understanding, description, synthesis, stimulating change
Relationship of the researcher to the reality under investigation	Objective, external point of view (outsider)	Participant in the phenomena and processes under investigation (insider)
Relationship of the researcher to values	Striving for objective, value-free knowledge	Consciousness entangled in values (axiological attitude)

Criteria	Dominant paradigm	Alternative paradigm
Preferred methodology	Explanatory, providing predictions based on abstract systems of concepts	Descriptive/explanatory or understanding (hermeneutic)
Preferred methodology	Standardised, quantitative, structured methods	Non-standardised, qualitative, unstructured methods

Source: (Sułkowski, 2012, p. 101).

It is worth mentioning that the concepts of corporate social responsibility, sustainable development of the enterprise, human capital, self-realisation and employee subjectivity originated in the field of management sciences and also include the aspect of humanisation of management. Ł. Sułkowski (2012, p. 170) suggests that ideas drawn from alternative paradigms, such as empowerment or diversity management, are only selected examples of approaches that reject instrumental rationalism. Problems of power, group communication and organising group action are of broad interest to many social sciences, humanities and even natural sciences (e.g. evolutionary biology, cognitive science), and admit of multiple points of view. Thus, a strict demarcation between the concerns of different sciences is unnecessary; indeed, greater interdisciplinarity with other sciences and a dose of epistemological pluralism is necessary (Sułkowski, 2012, pp. 170–173).

Diversity management – multiple perspectives

As diversity management can be analysed from many perspectives – both as an organisational or socio-cultural system and from the level of employee behaviour in the organisation – it seems worthwhile to identify the theories of the dominant paradigm (functionalism, neo-positivism, systems theory) *versus* alternative paradigms (interpretivism, critical current). Adopting such a way of thinking would provide an opportunity to generate knowledge to 1) identify the main barriers arising from diverse human resources in an organisation in

the form of: discrimination, culture shock, xeno- or homophobia, attribution errors and the mechanisms that govern them, 2) propose ways and tools to eliminate them, and 3) provide principles and ideas to benefit business from diversity. This approach points to the rapid development of alternative paradigms and cognitive perspectives, which means that management science is not 'impregnated' to change.

Conclusion

The concept of diversity management as a discipline area of management and quality sciences is characterised by a significant influence of other scientific disciplines and a lack of strict demarcation between related disciplines such as economics, psychology, sociology or even biology and cultural anthropology. It should be made clear that the presented specification of paradigms in management is perhaps not complete enough, although the intention was not to include all significant approaches. It is probably not closed, and further paradigms, micro-paradigms or megaparadigms may emerge over time. It is clear that the current paradigms of the discipline of management and quality sciences revolve around the human being in the organisation. The behavioural approach has established the importance of the human factor in organisations, highlighted the importance of group dynamics and the complexity of human motivation. It also focuses on the systems approach, which has identified the organisation as a collection of elements that are interconnected by relationships, which is directed towards the achievement in the optimum possible way of specific goals or activities. Diversity is defined by a mixture of many factors of both differences and similarities, as the largest array of different categories of characteristics. This approach shows that diversity cannot be easily defined in terms of a closed catalogue of characteristics. There is a great deal of variability and diversity. The result of this diversity in an organisation is a valuable differentiated team that contributes, among other things, to diverse experiences, different points of view that foster cooperation, creative

problem-solving, innovation and creativity. And diversity management should be defined in the broadest possible way, understanding it as the systematic efforts of an organisation to involve the diversity of its human resources in its activities and to treat it as a strategic advantage. Such a conclusion prejudges the need for further research into the concept of diversity management.

References

Adamiecki, K. (1938). *O istocie naukowej organizacji. Wybór pism*. Warszawa: PWE.

von Bertalanffy, L. (1984). *Ogólna teoria systemów. Podstawy, rozwój, zastosowania*. Warszawa: PWN.

Bendix, R., & Weber, M. (1975). *Portret uczonego*. Warszawa: PWN.

Berry, J. W., & Laponce, J. A. (1994). *Ethnicity and Culture in Canada: the Research Landscape.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bialystok, E. (1999). Cognitive complexity and attentional control in the bilingual mind. *Child Development, 70*(3), 636–644.

Borowska-Pietrzak, A. (2010). *Szkoła neoklasyczna i jej kierunki*. In A. Czerska, A. A. Szpitter, *Koncepcja zarządzania. Podręcznik akademicki*. Warszawa: C.H. Beck.

Chrisidu-Budnik, A., Korczak, J., Pakuła, A., & Supernat, J. (2005). *Nauka organizacji i zarządzania*. Warszawa: Kolonia Limited.

Emerson, H. (1926). *Dwanaście zasad wydajności*. Warszawa: Instytut Naukowej Organizacji.

Fayol, H. (1930). *General and Industrial management*, translated from the French by J. A. Coubrough (1947). International Management Institute (Polish translation: *Administracja przemysłowa i ogólna*). Poznań: INOiK.

Griffin, R. W. (2013). *Podstawy zarządzania organizacjami*. Warszawa: PWN.

Gross-Gołacka, E. (2018). Szkice o zarządzaniu różnorodnością w naukach o zarządzaniu. *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej. Seria Organizacja i Zarządzanie, 117*, 155–171.

Gross-Gołacka, E. (2018). *Zarządzanie różnorodnością. W kierunku zróżnicowanych zasobów ludzkich w organizacji*. Warszawa: Difin.

Kiechel, W. (2013). Jak zarządzanie zmieniło świat. 100 lat zarządzania. *Harvard Business Review Polska*, March 2013, 61–75.

Kieżun, W. (1997). *Sprawne zarządzanie organizacją. Zarys teorii i praktyki.* Warszawa: SGH.

Kotarbiński, T. (1958). *Traktat o dobrej robocie*. Wrocław: Ossolineum.

Kotarbiński, T. (1970). *Sprawność i błąd*. Warszawa: Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych.

Koźmiński, A. K., & Piotrowski, W. (2010). *Zarządzanie. Teoria i praktyka*. Warszawa: PWN.

Kupczyk, T., Dzieńdziora, J., Jefmanski, B., & Malysiak, J. (2022). Involvement of Companies in the Policy of Work-Life Balance – A Comparison of the Signatories of the Diversity Charter and Non-Signatories. *European Research Studies Journal, XXV*(4), 36–48.

Lisiecki, L. (2001). *Klasyczne i nowe metody organizacji i zarządzania. Teoria i praktyka*. Warszawa: WSZiM.

Maslow, A. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, July 1943, 370–396.

McGregor, D. (1960). *The Human Side of Enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Münsterberger, H. (1913). *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Nweiser, M., Dajnoki, K. (2022). The Importance of Workforce Diversity Management as a Global Imperative – a Systematic Review. *Oradea Journal of Business and Economics*, *7*(2), 63–74.

Piotrowski, W. (2000). Organizacja i zarządzanie – kierunki, koncepcje, punkty widzenia. In A. K. Koźmiński, & W. Piotrowski, *Zarządzanie. Teoria i praktyka.* Warszawa: PWN.

Roethlisberger, F. J., & Dickson, W. J. (1939). *Management and the Worker*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Rzepka, A., Olesińsk, Z., & Jędrych, E. (2002). *Self-Management, Entrepreneurial Culture, and Economy 4.0: A Contemporary Approach to Organizational Theory Development*. New York; London: Routledge.

Sudoł, S. (2016). Zarządzanie jako dyscyplina naukowa. *Przegląd Organizacji, 4*, 4–11.

Sułkowski, Ł. (2011). Natura poznania w naukach o zarządzaniu. *Przegląd Organizacji, 10*, 6–8.

Sułkowski, Ł. (2012). *Epistemologia i metodologia zarządzania*. Warszawa: PWE.

Taylor, F. W. (1911). *Principles of Scientific Management.* New York: Harper and Brother (Polish translation: *Zasady organizacji naukowej zakładów przemysłowych*, 3 ed., Warszawa 1923).

Taylor, F. W. (1947). *Zarządzanie warsztatem wytwórczym (Shop management)*. Poznań: Księgarnia Wł. Wilak.

Vardi, Y., & Weitz, E. (2004). *Misbehaviour in organizations.* New Jersey: Lawrence Elbaum Associates.

Zieleniewski, J. (1969). *Organizacja zespołów ludzkich*. Warszawa: PWN.