

Diversity / Intersectionality - What Makes the Difference ?

The concept of Managing Diversity has emerged within the process of globalization and its special challenges concerning diversity of cultures and attitudes in multicultural societies. Everyday life in former more or less homogeneous social context becomes diverse in several specific parts of life, such as norms and values, distribution of work, working conditions and attitudes to work.

In working life, people with different ethnical and social backgrounds as well as diverse expectations on social lifestyle work together. Under these conditions, concepts of corporate identity have been replaced by concepts of managing diversity.

Managing Diversity is a multidimensional management approach that focuses on the perception, utilization and support of diversity among staff members. Social differences (Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Class, Religion, Sexual Orientation, Lifestyle,...) should receive attention in a positive way and these differences should be integrated in a profitable and capitalized manner within companies. Profit- and Non-Profit Organisations used and developed the concept of Managing Diversity in the fields of Human Resources - and Organisational Development.

The concept of “Managing Diversity” focuses on the support of structural and social conditions that guarantee individual development, on knowledge about mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion and on a process of transformation towards “transculturality”.

Iris Koall (2002, 1 ff.) describes the framework conditions for the concept of Managing Diversity in the field of marked-economy in the following way:

- International relations require intercultural communication between companies and between certain company-fields.
- New marked-potentials should be made available through the orientation on cultural diverse customers needs (Ethnomarketing)
- Workforce diversity increases for demographic reasons, therefore social competence in interaction with different cultures and lifestyles is required

- Traditional gender roles and attitudes in organisations still focus on a male breadwinner/female-coearner (resp. female caregiver)-model and do not meet current developments
- Technical developments foster the process of individualisation and fragmentation of work and life.

The concept of Managing Diversity is based on the fact, that companies are increasingly short-staffed with qualified people. Therefore the management approach has to be changed towards the awareness of differences. The new concept focuses on the individual and its competencies.

There is a strong connection between managing diversity and intercultural and anti-racist-Education programs “which recognize the intrinsic value of cultural diversity” (Dietz 2007: 8). The approaches of cultural diversity in educational field differ from managing diversity because of which and how individuals and groups are addressed. The educational approach is not linked to the market efforts to the individuals like in managing diversity it is.

Cultural diversity emerges as a concept in a particular phase of the multiculturalism debates. Cultural diversity could be understood as an answer to neo-racism that refers on culture as mode of oppression and exclusion.

Cultural diversity discussions reflected that problem: “Essentializing involves categorizing and stereotyping and is a way thinking and acting which treats individuals as if they were essentially defined, that is their subjectivity is determined by membership of particular category in this case their cultural/ethnic group. In multiculturalism, therefore culture plays the part of race and sex in other discourses.” (Grillo 1998, p. 196)

In the context of education appears the problem of identifying the presence of children from certain minorities in schools with a specific pedagogical problem and the corresponding tendency towards an ethnicization of social conflicts (cp. Dittrich/Radtke 1990, p. 28; Dietz, p 17). To counteract this tendency, cultural diversity tries to focus on processes of constructions of identities, majorities and minorities. This leads over to the term Intersectcionalidad.

The term Intersectionality refers to the idea that a person's experiences are influenced by multitude of factors, such as race, gender, sexuality, social class etcetera. These Categories can interact or intersect in ways that can either advantage or disadvantage the person's well-being and development. Using this rationale, intersectionality as an analytic tool can be used to study, understand and respond to the ways in which these factors do intersect and can expose different types of discrimination and disadvantage.

Intersectional research and education have different levels of understanding the different levels of power relations.

Intercategorical approach

The concept of Intersectionality does not necessarily focus on the individual level.

The intercategorical approach in the concept of Intersectionality which analyses the relation of inequalities, such as race/ethnicity, gender and class, has no equivalent in the concept of managing diversity. These categories are described as internal dimensions (Four Layers of Diversity, Gradenswartz & Rowe), that "... have profound effects on our opportunities and experiences..." (Gradenswartz & Rowe, 1998: 24), but- compared to the intercategorical approach – they are described in an isolated, well-defined way, which do not have to touch each another.

"For us, there is no doubt, that the intercategorical approach is the main aim of the concept (of intersectionality)" (Klinger & Knapp, 2005)

Social structural approach

According to the question, how race/ethnicity, class and gender are interrelated within a given economy and society under national and transnational conditions, Knapp (2006) refers to the fact that the answer has to be connected to the structural level. Although the social structural lack of the Intersectionality concept was criticised in the past, since the beginning of the nineties, the structural dimension of the concept has been focussed again in cultural disciplines as well as in social sciences.

The structural level of inequalities was never really touched in the concept of managing diversity (except in the very early “Fairness and Discrimination”-Approach). Managing Diversity is a marked based concept that works with profitable staff potentials. The awareness of minority-needs does not necessarily change organisational structural rules and conditions. At least, structural effects are not intended!

Methodical approach

Up to now, the concept of intersectionality can be described as an analytical method while managing diversity is implemented through applied sensitising training methods. Although both approaches face the same starting point in black feminism, the development of the concepts led to different directions.

Critical comments to the concept of Intersectionality (Knapp, 2006 / Klinger & Knapp, 2005)

The triad of Gender Race & Class strongly refers to the political and social structure of the United States. Therefore Knapp (2006) asks, if there are any potentials of an intersectional concept for the European context. And: Where are the limits of transferability of the analytical perspective?

Knapp (2006) refers to the impossibility, that the term Race can be used in an affirmative and descriptive way in german-speaking countries.

In anglo-american countries, the categories Class Race & Gender were used as identity-categories. The question was, in which way individuals were effected by these categories and which experiences they made as people concerned.

A clear definition of the structural ground was missing for a long time. Therefore Klinger and Knapp (2005) speak about the “vacuousness of the discourses”, which certainly appears when the connections and interdependencies of the categories are discussed about. An solely indication of the intersections will not do. (Klinger & Knapp, 2005)

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