

## **Integrating Diversity Management into the Management of the Organization: Multiple Case Study with the 7S diversity instrument**

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### **Abstract**

Diversity is more and more seen as a competitive advantage in organizations. Organizations want to improve their diversity management. We developed an instrument based on the 7S framework of Peters and Waterman to assist organizations in the integration of their diversity management into the organization management and practice. From a social constructionist viewpoint we state that the development of a common image of the present and the desired for situation is crucial. Working with and discussing our 7S diversity instrument can support organizations to further develop their common image of the present and desired-for-situation concerning their diversity management. The instrument has been used in six organizations in different ways: in a solely research by the diversity manager, in a workshop approach with different department heads and their co-workers and within a diversity project group. We research the effects of use of this instrument to integrate diversity management into the management of the organization, the effects of the different ways in which the instrument is used and give further advices and recommendations.

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## **1. Problem Statement: Need for diversity management in organizations**

On the website of the Managing Diversity Conference of 2003 at Melbourne, Australia diversity and the need for diversity management are described exactly the way we think about it. They say: " Diversity refers to all the ways in which people differ, and may be defined by differences in ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation and ability. Diversity management is the art of capturing the 'diversity dividend' (the organizational benefits to be gained by meeting the needs of diverse groups) to maximize the organization's potential, bringing significant benefits to internal and external stakeholders. The key to successful diversity management lies in the commitment and attention of organizational leaders. Successful managers in the twenty-first century, whether in the public or the corporate sector, stand out as having the experience and tools to deal with the demands of locally diverse communities in a globalized world. The new leaders position themselves at the forefront of organizational management and recognize the shift away from the outdated service delivery model of 'one size fits all' towards a broader and inclusive approach. This approach is based on the fundamentals of niche market penetration, product and service customization, the ability to find complementarities rather than commonality in teams, the management of diverse human resources and diverse customer relationships, and the creation of an inclusive organizational culture.

Building an organizational competency in diversity management also has far reaching benefits in contributing to the community and the organization's capacity to engender cohesiveness. Whilst the dollar bottom line is implicit, attention to diversity can enhance a new, cultural bottom line for organizations based on service excellence, human productivity, competitive advantage and meaningful intercultural community relations."

In this article we discuss a way to improve the diversity management in organizations. We developed an instrument based on the 7S framework of Peters and Waterman, to assist organizations in the integration of their diversity management into the organization management and practice and used it in five other organizations. Some of them just made the choice to start a diversity management, others are doing efforts for several years, but all want to accelerate and optimize their diversity management.

We discuss consecutively our theoretical frameworks, the 7S model as point of departure for the development of the 7S diversity instrument, research questions, methodology and practice, results and findings, and conclusions and recommendations.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. An action-research project, based on a social constructionist view on organizations**

We chose to study an organization from a *social constructionist* angle (Weick, 1995; Gergen, 1994,1996) and to see an organization as the result of ongoing negotiations between all the parties involved in the organization. The creation and sharing of 'meaning' is the basic process of organization. This means that an organization is seen as a co-creation, as something in a constant state of becoming. In social constructionism organization diagnosis and organization intervention are closely linked. Working on a diagnosis and seeking joint visions implies a constant construction and deconstruction of shared 'meaning'. We therefore deliberately avoid scientific research that studies an organization as an 'object' from an exogenous perspective. We consciously choose to do action research. The desired output of *action research* consists of solutions to actual problems on the one hand, and of making a contribution to scientific knowledge and theory on the other (French and Bell, 1995). This is research with the objective of steering present and future action from the inside, and with the typical co-operation between individuals working within the system (referred to as "clients") and individuals outside the system (referred to as "researchers"). We regard this action component, working alongside with employees and the implementation of research results, as a particular mission and challenge. This action-research research strategy implies an iterative process of purposeful data-collection, feedback to the client group, discussion of data, action planning, action and evaluation. The perceptions yielded by this cyclical process are continuously the subject of implementation and testing. This increases the validity of the generated knowledge in the context of the professional university sector. This process of collectively negotiate the new way of organizing is the most decisive within the learning process (Swieringa 1990). In this way we involve people in research and action so that the organization benefits from its inside knowledge and skills, and, what's even more important, that people are motivated to help each other out. By choosing action-research, we opt for a win-win operation between the organizations and research. We opt for co-operation between researcher and clients, and work in close contact with HR-management of the organizations.

This is the framework of our research: an action-research project, based on a social constructionist view on organizations and directed towards appreciating differences.

### **2.2. Optimization of diversity management is a complex organization change process**

Any process designed to 'value', 'manage', or 'increase' diversity is fundamentally a change effort. Change efforts must be pervasive and systemic. Change involves new ways of thinking and acting. From a social constructionist viewpoint we state that the development of a common image of the present and the desired for situation is crucial. Organizational change generally implies that a diversity of actors bring about a variety of change initiatives at various places in the organization (e.g., reformulating the company's vision, creating new tasks and functions, generating new structural arrangements, setting up new training activities, etc.). All these change initiatives have to be aligned in order to bring about successful organizational change. Organizational change is often about a complex process of organizational culture change, a change in the prevailing basic assumptions and norms of the company (Schein, 2004). It always comes down to a far-reaching, long-term and gradual change process in which the whole organization is involved. Each person in the organization is ultimately challenged to change his/her behaviour in relation to other persons. Hence, in every process of organizational change the creation of situations in which people and groups can learn and change is crucial (Schein, 1999) Or, as Beer (2000) puts it: "The need to design a process of implementation that enables organization members to learn is critically important in the

field of organizational change. Indeed, it is what organizational change is about" (p. 434).

*As a consequence of these premises we opt to deliver a diagnosis and set up work points together with the relevant organization members.*

### 3. The 7S model as point of departure for the development of the 7S diversity instrument

#### 3.1. Why the choice of this model?

As mentioned in the previous chapter our method of working is firmly based on joint diagnosis and action planning. It is our intention to further help organizations already pursuing diversity policies on their way towards their integration, and we therefore aim to develop an instrument whereby a group of persons may jointly deliver a diagnosis or take an inventory of the present diversity efforts of their organization. That diagnosis must give out effortlessly into a series of action points.

For this a framework is necessary, a way of working that is sufficiently straightforward and sufficiently complex, and in which an inventory can be taken for each aspect over a continuum ranging from complete integration of the diversity policy in that area to total absence of diversity policy in that area.

The resultant dialogue makes it possible to discuss with each other the underlying assumptions and work methods. This produces a shared picture of the current state of play, a set of work points and, ideally, an objective with quantifiable concrete indicators, enabling the tracking of progress. This process of co-operation and learning should give rise to a change of attitude.

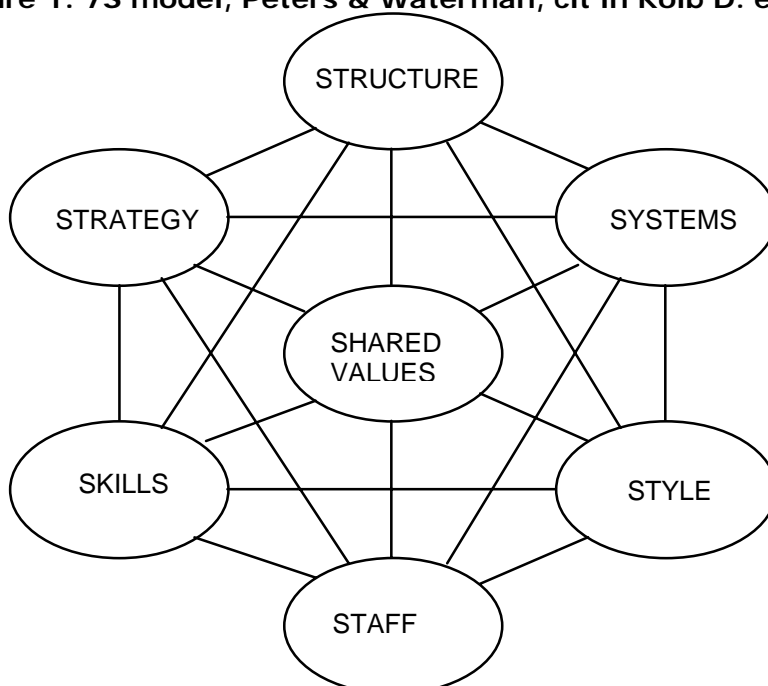
#### 3.2. The 7S model, what it is about ...

The 7S Model is better known as McKinsey 7 S, because the two persons who developed this model, Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, were consultants at McKinsey & Co at that time.

Central to the model is the idea of 'fit' or congruence between the different organization elements or aspects. These organization elements are strategy, structure, systems, style, skills, significant values and staff.

An organization cannot be effective unless all organization components are logical extensions of each other. In organization change you can start in one or several aspects, but the change will not be effective unless the other organization aspects change with it.

**Figure 1: 7S model, Peters & Waterman, cit in Kolb D. et al, 1991**



Those seven elements are distinguished in so-called hard S's and soft S's. The hard elements are feasible and easy to identify. They can be found in strategy statements, corporate plans, organizational charts and other documentations.

The hard S's are Strategy: Actions a company plans in response to or anticipation of changes in its external environment; Structure: basis for specialization and co-ordination influenced primarily by strategy and by organization size and diversity; Systems: formal and informal procedures that support the strategy and structure. (Systems are more powerful than they are given credit for).

The four soft S's however, are hardly feasible. They are difficult to describe since capabilities, values and elements of corporate culture are continuously developing and changing. They are highly determined by the people at work in the organization. Therefore it is much more difficult to plan or to influence the characteristics of the soft elements. Although the soft factors are below the surface, they can have a great impact of the hard Structures, Strategies and Systems of the organization.

If one element changes then this will affect all the others. For example, a change in HR systems such as internal career plans and management training will have an impact on organizational culture (management style) and thus will affect structures, processes, and finally characteristic competences of the organization.

The 7S model is a valuable tool for initiating change processes and giving them direction. A helpful application is to determine the current state of each element and to compare this with the ideal state. Based in this it is possible to develop action plans to achieve the intended state.

### 3.3. The 7S diversity instrument

*In order to benefit most from diversity as an organization room must be made for diversity and the process of co-operation must be managed' (TNO rapport).*

On the basis of the 7S model of Peters and Waterman, together with the NMBS diversity study group, we developed a 7S diversity instrument<sup>3</sup> (Martens, 2007 A+B) and published it in the form of a brochure including its application by the NMBS Group. The purpose is to make a contribution to the creation of a personnel policy that starts out from the appreciation of difference by examining all relevant company variables (company goals and policy, vision, strategy, leadership, systems, culture, personnel, structure, ...) to see whether they promote diversity or in fact inhibit diversity and how that point may be further developed as regards diversity. This is done with reference to a number of questions for each S. Organization members thus discover that there are clear links between diversity and different organization aspects and possibilities to do (even) more. These elements give a total picture of the policy and make clear that diversity calls for an integrated approach in the different areas.

There is no cut and dried way of working to make a success of a diversity policy in the organization. The **content and the process** determine the success of a diversity policy. Each organization itself must therefore get down to the job of giving shape to the *content* (what do we take 'diversity' to mean?, how do we integrate this in our vision – mission? – objectives, which actions do we undertake?) *and* with the design of the *process* (how to we approach it?, who do we involve?, how do we create sufficient support?, ... ).

Using the 7S diversity instrument we obtain an idea of the place and integration of the

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<sup>3</sup> the ESF(European Social Fund) project "Op de rails naar diversiteit" by the University of Hasselt together with the NMBS-Groep, from 01/09/2006 to 01/10/2007.

With sincere thanks to research associates Joke Manshoven from 09/2006 to 08/2007, and to Marie De Keukelaere and Germaine Drieskens from 08/2007 to 12/2007.

ESF: contributions to the development of job opportunities through promotion of employability, spirit of enterprise, adaptability and equal opportunity and through investment in human resources.

diversity policy within the organization.

We formulate a number of core questions regarding diversity in each organization aspect and indicate which concrete steps the organization might take to render the organization aspect more pro-diversity. These steps are drawn from a collection of various check-lists on diversity currently on the market.

The instrument, containing some twenty pages, is explained in outline. For each S we give here a summary of the most important questions and work points used as basis for the preliminary research work and as basis for the subsequent dialogue.

### *3.3.1. Strategy*

- Is diversity included in the strategy of the organization? How does diversity help to realize the organization strategy?
- Is the vision / mission of the organization in the matter of diversity expressed in objectives (in the short – medium and long term)?
- Are these objectives sufficiently concrete? Are the results measurable?
- Is the path that the organization intends to follow to attain these objectives described with sufficient clarity?

We may then consider the following steps:

- Entering into commitments, for example by inclusion in the employment regulations, developing a code of conduct, signing a diversity charter;
- Making the vision around diversity known internally and externally;
- Further development of mission, vision and objectives in connection with diversity;
- Seeking partnership with organizations concerned with diversity.

### *3.3.2. Structure*

Is there space at structural level for diversity via supporting functions, consultation groups or other, ... ?

A first important step is to arrange with the management which structures are advisable to give diversity a clear, visible place within the organization. The project leader plays a major role in this respect, he has the task of involving the right people so as to arrive at the most suitable structure.

A second step is the creation and maintenance of structures supporting diversity.

Concerning communication and the involvement of co-workers, decisions are best made to the measure of the organization.

### *3.3.3. Systems*

Departing from the 7S model of Peters and Waterman we have, to enhance homogeneity of use, also brought HR systems under the general denominator of systems.

For each system work points were named that each time had the intention of offering everyone chances to appreciate diversity and to support the diversity policy.

Two conditions must be taken into account in the development of this kind of system.

First, positive discrimination of specific groups must be avoided. This means that attention is to be paid to the disadvantages that a group may experience through the introduction of a given action. The effort has to be made to take actions that are perceived by everyone as being positive.

Second, any action or instrument should be evaluated by the co-workers (or applicants) so that improvements can be made.

#### 3.3.4. Shared values, superordinate goals

- What are the values that live on the shop floor?
- Do these values promote the further development to an open company where everyone feels happy?
- To what extent are the vision and desired values of the top management (see strategy) supported by the personnel?

#### 3.3.5. Staff

The staff of an organization includes all members of personnel from the various personnel and function categories. Departing from the original version of the 7S model, we have approached 'staff' purely and simply in terms of presence, as "who is present in the organization".

The diversity policy has the objective and consequence of creating a proportional participation on the shop floor. This can be done via quantitative targets and/or qualitative actions, or by creating a diversity-friendly image of the organization so as in time to become an attractive employer for various groups and to work towards a different composition of the personnel.

Conditions for screening the personnel department are the availability of key or reference figures in order to examine the desired progress in diversity policy and to include diversity as a variable in, e.g. satisfaction inquiries, ... .

#### 3.3.6. Skills

- Which combination of knowledge and skill predominates?
- Where do the organization and its members do best?
- To what extent is the personnel skilled in dealing with diversity among colleagues and client groups?
- To what extent managers can develop teams with persons of different backgrounds?
- To what extent are differences appreciated and lead to real synergy (instead of to conflicts)?

#### 3.3.7. Style

Good leaders on the one side create an environment in which co-workers feel at home and on the other side give constant guidance to processes of renewal towards greater diversity. Leaders perform an exemplary function in handling diversity.

- Is there a feeling of diversity in the (top) management and the executives? How can this be seen?
- To what extent do management and the executives take account in their style of management and communication of diversity among the personnel?
- Do the leaders perform an exemplary role in this respect?

The 7S instrument is a dynamic model. The diversity policy is at its best when the interpretation of the 7S's are harmonized with each other. Once the diversity policy is integrated in all organization aspects, effective and lasting results can be scored.

Given that organizations regularly change, it is recommended to go regularly through this guide to common diagnosis and to create each time a 'fit' between the various aspects of the organization.

***'When all seven needles are all pointed the same way, you're looking at an organized company'. (Peters & Waterman, cit in Kolb D. et al, 1991)***



### 3.4. Objectivation of our view on looking to results

In order to be able to analyse the results of the works with the 7S diversity instrument with a certain objectivity, we sought the aid of auditing frameworks. We first tried Ely and Thomson (2001), a model that is mainly directed towards diversity in work groups.

We found another model in Taylor Cox (1993) that gave us a number of useful indicators necessary for a good diversity policy.

A third model was found in Doyen, Lamberts and Janssens (2002) who start their research from the approach used by Ely and Thomas to arrive at 4 angles of incidence for diversity policy, namely span or focus, the level within the organization at which diversity takes shape, whether the organization presents itself to the outside world with its diversity policy, or not as the case may be and, finally, whether actions apply only in respect of groups or for all co-workers.

From 'span' 3 fields of activity can be mapped out, namely:

- the opening of doors: the removal of obstacles for 'other' employees to enter the organization and the making of efforts to attract a varied personnel;
- the opening of practices: taking account in the other HR instruments of the needs of a varied group of co-workers;
- the opening of eyes: training personnel and making them aware of differences and the appreciation of differences in the personnel; turning to best account the experience, knowledge and skills of the 'other' co-worker.

Through the 'level' looking glass we examine how the diversity policy finds expression within the organization: is it top-down or bottom-up? The observed form hardly ever is purely one or the other and will evolve over time.

Manifest or latent policy refers to the way in which the organization communicates its diversity policy. Does it or does it not make its commitment public? Does it, for instance, give training courses under the denominator 'diversity', or is the term completely absent in the communication?

As fourth dimension Doyen, Lamberts and Janssens (2002) distinguish between 'specific or non-specific' measures. 'Specific measures' for example, covers such actions as the making accessible of the workplace to persons with industrial handicaps and the use of specific recruitment channels. 'Non-specific' describes measures arising from ideas about diversity that are in place for everyone. Training in diversity may also be non-specific by exploring mechanisms of stereotyping without focusing any particular group.

This model gave us an additional factor, namely a scaling on a continuum of a number of indicators that lead to a good diversity policy, indicators that may rise to the surface by working with the 7S diversity instrument.

A fourth source, Özbilgin and Tatly in their recent book "Global Diversity Management, an Evidence-Based Approach" (2008), gave us what we were looking for: the criteria that a diagnostic tool must satisfy in order to be effective. Their research reveals that such a tool needs to answer to the following criteria:

The instrument must consist of successive steps that, once completed, show the current status of the organization and facilitate the creation of action plans. The instrument also has to be complemented with 'awareness-raising information', such as examples of good practices or case studies.

The instrument must be multidimensional and approach diversity from all the various possible viewpoints:

- all forms of equality and inequality;
- related to individual, organizational and social matters in order to locate the source of the discrimination from a wider constitution;
- involving all stakeholders in the organization;
- allowing internal and external networking, exchange of information and benchmarking with other progressive organizations;

- showing not only the results in a diagnosis, but also the strengths and weaknesses and how these might be approached;
- (a) evidence-based in terms of past, present and future and (b) showing practices.

The instrument must be sophisticated and accessible at the same time. This means that a 'standard' use is possible, but a working method adapted to the organization may also be applied, thus making the instrument sensitive to the priorities of the individual organization.

Armed with this approach to objectivation of results we may now proceed to Research.

### **3.5. Research questions or propositions**

As part of our assignment for ESF (European Social Fund), the development of instruments or tools making it possible for organizations to develop and continue to pursue a good diversity policy autonomously, we study what it means for organizations to work with the 7S diversity instrument. More specifically we seek an answer to the following questions:

1. Is the 7S instrument for diversity an effective tool for organization members to examine how advanced the organization is as regards its diversity policy and which possible steps may follow? What are the possible improvements?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different ways of working with the 7S model? Which recommendations can be given regarding a working method?

## 4. Methodology and/or research design with limitations

### 4.1. Methodology

In the following chapter we consider how we are to set about this research project and why we chose this working method. We then examine the cases.

The instrument was developed in collaboration with the NMBS Group (Belgian Rail) between August 2006 and August 2007, after which it was applied in different ways in five other organizations of sufficient size and from different sectors. We contacted ten organizations, of which five reacted positively: Sodexho, integrated facilities management, De Lijn, an autonomous government company for municipal and district transport, Center Parcs, holiday villages, Randstad, biggest temporary employment agency in Belgium and, finally, Stad Hasselt, the government body for the City of Hasselt. Four of them have recently obtained the Label Diversiteit, a government initiative with the consequence that organizations commit to effective action around diversity, which may be done by cooperating in research. The other two organizations have also served, via a different route, an apprenticeship towards optimization of their diversity policy.

The University of Hasselt wanted to carry out research on the process of integration of diversity in an organization and looked for companies interested in diversity. The shared objective was the search for the best possible way towards a diversity policy. The chosen initial premises: made-to-measure work and co-ownership, scientific correctness and practical usefulness. co-operation

In the course of the development process in the NMBS group, it soon became clear that the searching and documentation of all these ideas thrown up during the discussions was going to be quite a task, requiring a great deal of preparatory work and progressing only slowly. It was a difficult exercise. We asked questions for each S, identifying in the process which questions were most relevant and, so doing, developing the instrument.

Although the model clearly offers framework and structure, it still appeared very theoretical in practice. It was decided to approach the preparation in a more thorough way and to present the end-product to the steering group afterwards. In a second critical round of questions we then explored where the practices in each of the 7 S's are congruent and reinforce each other. Together with the steering group, and on the basis of study of the literature, we then formulated for each 'S' a series of questions, expressing while talking and working the most relevant questions and thus developed the instrument.

What we here and now watch out for are the results of the works with the 7S diversity instrument and the recommendations of the organizations, the process that these different organizations underwent and the effects of the works with 7S on the thinking around diversity within the organization. To gain an idea of this process we interviewed the persons responsible for diversity within the different companies after completion. The interviews were held in April 2008 by a research associate who was not involved in the project. The following question was posed:

"To what extent does the use of the 7S diversity instrument help an organization to examine how far it is advanced in its diversity policy and to determine the shared next steps?"

Sub questions: How did it go? What was good about it – where did it appear to be a powerful instrument? What went wrong – where is its weakness? What kinds of effects has following the 7S had, positive, negative? Suppose you wish to measure objectively, what is the effect of working with 7S, what would you measure? and how would you measure it?

What, according to you is the best way of working with the 7S diversity instrument?

The processes in the organizations, seeing the particularity of each company, went ahead very differently. As determining indicator we may mention the investment of time and resources that can be described from minimum to quite substantial.

Organisation	NMBS-group	Sodexho	Centerparcs	Randstad	De lijn	Stad Hasselt
Core business	Belgian Railway Company;	Food services in organisations, schools, hospitals, homes for elderly people;	Chain of holiday villages;	Temporary employment agency; offering services related to almost every aspect of HR;	Autonomous government company for municipal and district transport	Government body for the city of Hasselt
Area	All over Belgium	+/- 1.300 sites all over Belgium	2 parcs in the province of Limburg	+/- 245 sites over Belgium	All over Flanders	Stad Hasselt
Turnover	+/- 1,8 thousand million euro	300 million euro	515,8 million euro	923,6 million euro	792,5 million euro	Not relevant

#### 4.2.1. The practice in the NMBS Group

##### 4.2.1.1. Presentation of the organization

The NMBS Group with its 38 000 – mostly male – workforce is the biggest employer in Belgium and has activities in different areas, ranging from the transport of passengers and goods, via telecommunications to building and maintenance of infrastructure. The aggregate turnover for all three sections of this organization, NMBS, Infrabel and NMBS Group is +/- 1.8 thousand million euros.

The top management of the NMBS Group is now more aware of the need for greater diversity in its ranks; 40% of its workforce will leave the organization between now and 2020. For the organization it is a major issue that this important group of newcomers is well received and can be deployed quickly, that they will feel welcome and included in the group within a reasonable period of time. Working on diversity has above all the intention of bringing about a change of attitude among large groups of workers via the raising of awareness.

Since we and the NMBS Group co-developed the instrument, the latter organization was also the pilot in working with the 7S diversity instrument. The time factor is therefore relatively high, several days over a period that ran from September 2006 to November 2007. In that period different focus groups on diversity were also held with the rank and file of the organization (subjects: reception, working together and work-life balance)

The Steering Group Diversity that ran the course, a group of seven, was made up of heads of sections from different areas (marketing, training, selection and recruitment) and other managerial staff.

*The diversity officer: "The interaction with an 'outsider' like Hasselt University was an important chance to come to new and renewing insights in handling diversity and the raising of awareness of our 38 000 workers. We did however do a number of theoretical things and have now set ourselves the goal of triggering a change of attitude for large groups of workers. The 7S instrument, and its development were experienced as a very theoretical exercise "that preached to a number of the converted". Focus groups or talks on the shop floor were also organized. These had a potent awareness-raising effect through which the top management was motivated to release sufficient resources for further action."*

##### 4.2.1.2 NMBS Group – compared with the Doyen-Janssens model

###### Policy span

1. Opening of doors: the different procedures were ex-rayed during the preparation for the obtaining of the Diversity Label. Obstructing factors were found still to be present for the recruitment of non-EU citizens as statutory workers; the possibility was explored of co-operation with the City of Brussels for recruitment of local immigrant workers.

2. Opening of practices: focus groups on the reception of new workers, working with varied colleagues and the work-life balance explored their possible needs. A study of which workers leave the organization within 18 months was planned and the induction brochure and procedures were renewed.

3. Opening of eyes:

*"... by focus groups, by intra web where a strand on diversity is, not only in our company, but diversity in general, by issuing something here and there, a small brochure. We make an annual diversity report, we are now preparing the report for 2007, which is also on the intra web and is freely available. That gives a picture, you can't include everything in it, of course; but it gives a picture of "this is diversity". I give an outline of what we do, but also of the problems."*

The diversity officer explains that 'the opening of eyes' is the most important reason for working on diversity for the NMBS Group.

We can state that the NMBS Group is active on the three levels.

Manifest or latent

The research reveals that the top management has chosen not to make a mission statement or a charter. There is little specific training. However, the recruitment, selection and induction procedures are adapted. NMBS Group does not use diversity very explicitly in its external communication and image.

The working method of the NMBS Group is best described as latent.

Specific or non-specific measures

On the basis of the talks we can state that neither positive nor negative discrimination is allowed. The increasing number of women in the top management is an example here. We can state that mainly non-specific measures are gaining currency.

Top-down or Bottom-up

*"... especially also because it was new, the subject was new, nothing specific had ever been done for diversity. However, efforts had been made for equal opportunities , theoretical attempts, ... and now it was my intention, and the board of directors also rallied to the cause, to really do something for diversity."*

The explicit intention is for the NMBS Group to work on a change of attitude in large groups of workers. The approach is top-down.

#### 4.2.2. *The practice in De Lijn*

##### 4.2.2.1 Presentation of the organization

De Lijn is the commercial name of the Vlaamse Vervoermaatschappij, an autonomous government company that provides municipal and district transport by bus and tram in Flanders. De Lijn was created on 31 July 1990, after the transfer of municipal and district transport from the federal government to the three regions. In the nineteen-nineties De Lijn carried some 220 million passengers, in 2005 the figure had practically doubled with almost 450 million travellers. In total approximately 10 000 people work here; about 7 500 of them work at De Lijn, some 2 500 for private companies that carry under contract with De Lijn. The turnover of De Lijn is 792 million euros.

In pursuance of the internal work on diversity De Lijn agreed to cooperate with the University of Hasselt. A model was run in two consultation moments, one in late October and a second in early December 2007. This happened in co-operation with one person, the diversity manager who, in order to provide information, drew from own research and from data that was already available. As researchers we had little contact with the organization itself.

The diversity manager states that working with the 7S instrument was an inventarization of what was already present and the attending to gaps in the working. For De Lijn communication was the most important work point that came prominently to the fore. Running through the 7S diversity instrument obliges you to consider each aspect.

#### 4.2.2.3. De Lijn compared with the Doyen-Janssens model

##### Policy span

Opening of doors: the recruitment and selection systems are screened for possible obstacles for applicants, a standard form and coaching in completion is available. De Lijn actively uses alternative channels to attract women and immigrant workers. Diversity is not mentioned in the mission or vision.

Opening of practices: the recent recruitment campaign was directed towards women and immigrants. By providing language courses and shift work arrangements – always in the morning or evening shift – the profession can in fact be opened up to these groups and family-friendly timetables can be organized for everyone.

Opening of eyes: training courses on diversity have been developed in the framework of a co-operation with the Karel De Grote Hogeschool. The step has thus been taken towards the raising of awareness. De Lijn is currently active on the first two levels.

##### Manifest or latent approach

Although De Lijn is aware of the need for diversity it is not mentioned explicitly in the mission or vision. De Lijn is there 'for everyone'. In the systems and working, a number of thresholds have been lowered. The top manager often gives external lectures on the diversity policy of the organization. The working is still rather latent, but the transition to manifest is in the offing.

##### Specific or non-specific measures

Recently recruitment campaigns have also been directed towards specific target groups. In the planning account is taken of family-friendly shift arrangements and there are Dutch language courses for non-Dutch-speakers. If necessary functions are adapted to the new needs of a worker no longer able to perform his/her function on account of sickness or handicap.

The organization takes specific or non-specific measures, depending on circumstances.

##### Top-down or bottom-up approach

The top management is keenly aware of the need for work on diversity seeing the large groups of workers who are no longer 'normal' workers. On the basis of these findings we state that the approach is top-down.

#### 4.2.3. *The practice at Sodexho*

##### 4.2.3.1 Presentation of the organization

The core activities of Sodexho include an 'Integrated Facilities Management'. One of these is Food Services (hotels, restaurants and the catering trade for local authorities with three types of customer; companies, schools and hospitals and rest homes), the only department in which research was conducted, Hard Facilities Management (provision of services to buildings, such as technical maintenance) and Soft Facilities Management (services to persons, such as mail distribution, reception, garden maintenance, ...). The activities taken together account for 4 000 jobs and a turnover of € 300 million. The workers are spread over some 1 300 sites. All information is thus related to Sodexho Food Services.

Sodexho recruits workers fairly intensively from minority groups and is aware of the need for coaching and awareness-raising to reach optimum co-operation. The co-operation

with the Hasselt University came about subsequent to the organization's request for information on the "coaching of older workers towards longer working".

The course at Sodexho ran from late August to mid-December 2007. There were 2 consultation moments for working on the 7S diversity instrument. The team consisted of the HR director, the diversity manager and the head of social relations. The running of the 7S diversity instrument was based on data from recent studies within the framework of the Diversity Label and, working alongside the Hasselt University, it was then further developed and presented to the larger group.

The diversity manager says that running through the 7S diversity instrument has the objective of gathering the information widely spread in the organization, enter into dialogue with the team and investigate whether this information is congruent. By repeatedly running through the 7S diversity instrument and making interpretations each time, it became more and more clear where the connections lay between the S's and how specific actions, and especially the support thereof by central HR workers, has a lever effect on several S's. It is a matter of finding actions that can trigger the effect.

*"...we said from the outset, as far as we are concerned such an action plan isn't carved in stone, it's something that lives and will consequently also change. The fact that actions will be added to it, other accents laid, other priorities set is, for me, the first measure to be given, there you are, we're already doing something, we let external persons give their vision and join us in watching and say to us "try to question that, or maybe you could also work on this too, ...". And that, for me, is a sign, "this lives", we try to translate it into concrete actions that yield results."*

#### 4.2.3.2. Sodexho compared with the Doyen-Janssens model

##### Policy span

Opening of doors: the recruitment and selection procedures are screened for factors that inhibit diversity. Standard forms and possible coaching on completion are available.

Opening of practices: newcomers are assigned a coach within the team. In the induction period the emphasis is placed on two-way learning. Promotion and career opportunities are based on skills, qualifications and experience. The function classification system is neutral. The creation of space and flexibility for the 'other' co-worker is still in the initial phase.

Opening of eyes: the organization is aware of the distance between the desired values and the real values on the floor.

*"... yes indeed, the research really showed that we must be aware of a difference between what we are working towards as a company and what lives, ...possibly lives among the workers. The fact that there might be a difference from site to site because we're so scattered, ..."*

In the course of 2008 all workers should be able to follow a course in which diversity will be a component. We may describe Sodexho as active on the three levels.

##### Manifest or latent approach

Diversity is an effective element of the strategy, but is not mentioned explicitly.

*"...We sometimes had problems with the use of words; in fact, a lot is happening on this theme that we do not catalogue under the denominator 'diversity'. And, for us, that isn't very important. What is important is that it is happening, that people show respect, that they behave in compliance with what the company is working towards, ..."*

In the systems, attention is paid to the removal of obstacles for the 'other' worker. The planned training courses may be a bridge towards a more manifest approach to diversity. At present it is still latent.

#### Specific or non-specific measures

Sodexo does not use any specific channels for the recruitment process. In the sites the job contents are where necessary weighted, for instance, to be able to keep on older workers longer. The planned training courses with a diversity strand fall under the general training for all leaders. The organization chooses specific or non-specific measures depending on the situation.

#### Top-down or bottom-up approach

The top management is aware of the need for greater diversity and has taken initiatives so that thinking around diversity gains currency and a greater involvement can be generated in all layers of the organization. The approach is top-down.

#### *4.2.4. The practice at Center Parcs*

##### 4.2.4.1 Presentation of the organization

Center Parcs is a subsidiary of Pierre et Vacances, specialist in holiday villages in different countries, and has two parks in Belgium. Center Parcs employs 2 000 workers and has a turnover of 516 million euros. The organization has already won various awards and prizes for its HR policy, which is characterized as particularly favourable towards women.

Center Parcs has worked on diversity since the late 1990s and is aware of the importance of a positive image among clients and possible job applicants. They have for some years now implemented an integral policy around the 'delighted' programme. The management supports its staff in the development of 'delighted' co-workers in order to obtain 'delighted customers'. One important argument for the intensified work on diversity is to make good the impending shortage on the labour market. The course, consisting of three consultation moments, was run from late October 2007 to mid-December 2007. The team was made up of five persons, the Country HR Manager, members of staff from the two parks and a student from the University of Hasselt who took the minutes.

Diversity is a matter for the local management, supported and guided by the top management. The researchers have no information on the situation regarding diversity in the Belgian head office.

The 7S diversity instrument was experienced as a rather theoretical but well structured model, with many references to concrete examples that could be completed in successive steps. In closing the whole was discussed with the broader working group Diversity, consisting of representatives from all services. The run-through time was experienced as an important factor. Too long a time between consultation sessions, causes breaks in the continuity of the process and is not conducive to dialogue. Importance was also attached to the presentation and manner of communication around the project and diversity within the organization in general, via presentations, via brochures and the like, experienced as an extra dimension.

One of the participants asked if it was possible to make a priority in the action points and whether it is advisable to add a quantification, a sort of scale of points, to reach a score on the different aspects by reference to minimum requirements.

##### 4.2.4.2. Compared with the Doyen-Janssens model

###### Policy span

Opening of doors: during the research the recruitment, selection and induction systems were screened for obstacles; these have sufficient space for the conditions of diversity-driven working. The organization also enlists the aid of other organizations, for example, the Startcentrale Limburg, to reach the particular target groups. Direct discrimination is not tolerated in 'delighted' thinking and the basic attitude of respect. Indirect



discrimination is less readily identified. The HR staff charged with the task of recruitment and selection are very careful in this respect.

Opening of practices: Center Parcs assigns each newcomer a mentor for 8 weeks. After three to six months there is a possibility for an evaluation talk. Given the sector, hotels, restaurants and the catering trade, evening and weekend work is part of the work conditions. Account is taken of the workers' wishes as far as possible. A strict policy of appearance and conduct is pursued in the 'public' part of the organization. Behind the screens there is more tolerance towards the appearance of co-workers. However, respect is the bottom line everywhere.

Opening of eyes: having obtained the Diversity Label Center Parcs intends to make its workers and guests more aware of diversity. In the future, the organization also aims to involve its workers in actions promoting diversity and to process information on such actions in the work consultations so as to reach all layers of the group of workers, including the low-skilled.

In view of the foregoing we can state that Center Parcs is active in the three areas.

#### Manifest or latent approach

No mention is made of diversity in the mission and vision of the organization. However, there is an initial assumption of equality of opportunity and respect. Attention is implicitly paid to diversity in the reception brochure and during the induction of the newcomer.

Obtaining the Label has brought change. The statement by the Country HR Manager "... because, if we obtain the Label, we want people to notice, ..." is an indication of a change of status, from latent to manifest.

#### Specific or non-specific measures

In its recruitment campaigns Center Parcs seeks contact with organizations such as jobkanaal, Kif-Kif and the Startcentrale Limburg. But low-threshold job application procedures and channels of communication that take account of the low-skilled are already in place. Day care facilities are provided for workers' children during the school holidays. This service is mainly used by the exchange cleaners. Flexible adapted solutions are sought as far as possible for workers with an industrial handicap. The measures here are specific measures.

#### Top-down or bottom-up approach

Since the late 1990s Center Parcs has been active in the implicit coaching of diversity. Although some initiatives come from the workers' group, for example, a Turkish cooking evening, the work around diversity is very much directed from the top.

### *4.2.5 The practice at Randstad*

#### 4.2.5.1 Presentation of the organization

Randstad Belgium is the biggest private employer in Belgium and market leader in the field of temporary employment. Besides matching labour demand with supply, the company offers a package of services that includes practically all aspects of provision of HR services. In Belgium the company puts 30 000 people to work every day, it has 17 000 customers, 1 400 employees permanent staff, and there are 245 offices spread across the country. The turnover is around 923 million euros.

Randstad Belgium belongs to the Randstad Group, the third-largest employment agency in the world. Randstad promotes diversity to its customers and has spent the past 45 years working on the integration of minority groups on the labour market. Randstad states having a workforce of 30 000 that they employ and post, who must be a reflection of the composition of the society at large.

The Randstad case was taken up in November 2007 by a research associate and a master student who developed the thesis plan in co-operation with the HR advisor: the

running-through of the 7S reflection model, rounded off with a workshop. Under the guidance of the HR advisor the master student went through the questions and sought answers in the information that could be found in the organization, drafted a report and made recommendations. This was reviewed by the HR advisor, after which the next S was dealt with. A summary of this report was the basis for the workshop where a dialogue was held with a group of 8 participants from different departments. Among them were the HR manager, an employee from PR, HR advisors and a number of consultants active in the commercial circuit on diversity developed by Randstad. Besides the desk research there were 2 interventions by Hasselt University. A first introductory talk and a second closing workshop of about half a day (5 hours). The second intervention was experienced as especially productive due to the external view, the guidance and the information from the University of Hasselt.

The group experienced the works with the 7S instrument on diversity in the home organization as clarifying. Thanks to the background of the participants it was possible to run through all the S's in a short period of time and to arrive at renewing insights. The instrument was experienced as structured, effective and efficient; the effect of the interventions on one S with repercussion on the other S's was enlightening. The course has helped Randstad on the way to a more structured diversity policy.

#### 4.2.5.2. Compared with the Doyen-Janssens model

##### Policy span

Opening of doors: seeing Randstad's core activity the organization seeks for its internal working mainly highly skilled co-workers, and selection procedures are high-thresholds. There are contacts with Kif-Kif for the recruitment of immigrants. However, the talks have revealed that, in reality for Randstad itself, recruitment is not varied.

Opening of practices: 80% of the co-workers are women. The consequence is that a number of measures towards flexibility and work-life balance are in place. Flexibility towards 'other' co-workers within the Randstad team exists in offices where a greater number of immigrants are recruited since the external co-workers in the area are also to a large extent of immigrant origin. Flexibility towards persons with industrial handicaps is not yet present.

Opening of eyes: the training package that new co-workers pass through certainly pays attention to diversity. Diversity also features in the internal and external communication. However, the reality is that, at the present moment and regarding internal working, there is a large gap between knowing and doing. The researchers state that Randstad is rather inactive as regards the internal working in the three areas.

##### Manifest or latent approach

In the working with the external co-workers explicit reference is made to diversity in all its aspects. This enhances the image of the organization. This line does not run unbroken to the internal working; the internal approach is directed towards equality. Selection however, is made on the basis of required skills. The approach is latent.

##### Specific or non-specific measures

Each co-worker receives training in diversity in contact with clients and external co-workers. For the recruitment of immigrants, there is contact with Kif-Kif. Randstad helps other organizations in the recruitment of persons from minority groups, but little diversity is present in its own ranks. The researchers find that the policy towards external co-workers includes specific measures. However, no specific measures are in place for internal co-workers.

##### Top-down or bottom-up approach

On the basis of the talks we can state that co-workers certainly do understand and work with the line of thoughts on diversity towards clients and towards external co-workers.

The guidelines on working around diversity are given by the management at worldwide level. The approach is top-down.

#### 4.2.6. The practice at Stad Hasselt

##### 4.2.6.1 Presentation of the organization

The College of the Mayor and Aldermen is responsible for the day-to-day management of the city (70 500 inhabitants). The local government of the City of Hasselt consists of 41 town councillors, including 8 aldermen and the mayor. Stad Hasselt has 45 public service departments.

The policy statement sets out the broad lines of the policy that the new town council intends to pursue. "We want a city where all the 'classical' policy areas are attended to in a professional manner. But we do not want to be the classical city of a century ago. We want to work on a city that is open to the New. A city that sets the tone and raises the bar, but also a city with a sense of reality. Hasselt must remain a city on a human scale, keeping its typical character, because that is precisely what makes Hasselt so unique", says Mayor Herman Reynders.

Stad Hasselt is not a 'company' but a local government body that often co-operates with various players. Voluntary organizations, advisory boards and cultural associations take part in local government in various ways. The associates of the City of Hasselt who take part in these activities through their professional context find themselves in a separate situation. There is a 'culture transfer' of government to the inhabitants and *vice versa*.

The course on the 7S diversity instrument ran in four consultation moments in the period from mid-October 2007 to mid-December 2007. Internally information was collected by a project team of 10 co-workers from different departments and different layers of the organization that each, two by two, sought information and were guided by the responsible for organizational development. This gave rise to an integrated process and drove the work on the 7S diversity instrument deep into the organization in a very early stage.

##### 4.2.6.3 Compared with the Doyen-Janssens model

###### Policy span

Opening of doors: the recruitment and selection procedures were examined for obstacles in an earlier project on diversity and adaptations were made. The selection committees are of varied composition with men and women and, where possible, co-workers from the minority groups. To reach the minority groups Stad Hasselt works with, amongst others, VDAB (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling, gives training, activates and guides job seekers to the labour market), OCMW (openbaar centrum voor maatschappelijk welzijn), WEP+ (Werkervaringsplan, an employment project in co-operation with VDAB) and BUSO (, secondary school for children with special needs ), thereby keeping the job application threshold as low as possible. The organization development officer formulates the situation as follows:

*"... we have already begun with the selection process, someone who applies as an immigrant for a job in Stad Hasselt... 'one: do we reach these people?' and a number of adaptations have been made in that respect; and, two, "are the questions that we have culturally neutral and, if such is not the case, do we feel good or bad about it, ..." because that is also a question we must ask '..."*

Opening of practices: Stad Hasselt has a very good reputation as employer, with an eye to the work-life balance. Induction courses are available for BUSO students.

Opening of eyes: Stad Hasselt has two agencies directed towards diversity and respect. STEPS, dealing with all forms of undesirable behaviour and the work group 'Attention for

Personnel', which can propose initiatives for the improvement of welfare on the shop floor. Stad Hasselt does not run courses that address the subject of diversity.

We can state that Stad Hasselt is active on levels one and two. It is also active on level three towards existing co-workers, but not as regards diversity in general or in its extension or intensification.

#### Manifest or latent approach

Stad Hasselt screens the recruitment and selection procedures for accessibility. It has no Diversity Charter, but it does have STEPS, to low-threshold contact persons who support respectful behaviour among all co-workers. Diversity is often said to cause neither positive nor negative discrimination. The approach is latent.

#### Specific or non-specific measures

Stad Hasselt uses specific channels for the recruitment and selection of minority groups. Co-workers who have not yet learnt the language are given courses in Dutch during the induction course. Functions are adapted if an incumbent co-worker so requires. At the present moment workers are recruited for broad careers, which may be a threshold for persons with industrial handicaps. We can state that specific and non-specific measures may be taken according to the situation.

#### Top-down or bottom-up approach

The policy of Stad Hasselt is a continuation of the national policy on diversity. The policy statement 2007 – 2012 includes diversity, and Stad Hasselt expressly states that it will take account of diversity, creativity and tolerance. The extent to which this policy should be guided democratically from below remains to be seen, the organization development officer says

*"... first reaction was positive, that they still wanted to join in. If choices really had to be made it will become apparent how far this has in fact been properly thought through and felt through. Generally speaking I would expect it to be a positive process."*

## 5. Result and findings

In this chapter we examine the following question. "How is working with the instrument experienced by the different organizations."

Organisation	NMBS-group	Sodexho	Centerparcs	Randstad	De lijn	Stad Hasselt
Cause & motivation	Working on the Diversity Label	Working on the Diversity Label	Working on the Diversity Label	Working on the Diversity Label	Part of the policy	policy for 2007-2012
Total time span	From 04/09/06 till 31/10/07 +/- 15 maanden	From 24/08/07 till 29/11/07 +/- 3 maanden	From 31/10/07 till 08/04/08 +/- 5 maanden	From 08/11/07 till 11/04/08 +/- 5 maanden	From 31/10/07 till 06/12/07 +/- 1 maand	From 07/10/07 till 17/12/07 +/- 2,5 maanden
Time spent	meetings of +/- 2 hours	5 days by the diversity manager and 2 x 5 days by the researchers	5 meetings of 3 hours	2 x ½ days with U.H. and the Diversity team + 4 days of deskresearch by the master student	+/- 2 days	3 x ½ days with UH + X hours to prepare the meetings
Number of co-workers on the project	7 on 38.000	3 on 4.000	5 on 2000	8 on 1.400	1 on 10.000	10 on 913
Function of the team members	Diversity manager + head of staff of training, marketing, recruitment and selection + managers of linked departements	The HR director, diversity manager, responsible social relations	The Country HR manager + staff members from the two parcs	The HR manager, HR advisors, consultants Randstad Diversity	Diversity manager	10 co-workers from several departements and several layers of the organization. Co-ordinated by the organization development officer
number of meetings	15	6	6	2	2	4

Using the look back interviews on working with the 7S diversity instrument in the different organizations we arrive at the following summary. All the organizations had recently – less than 2 years ago – conducted research on diversity in a preliminary course in which most of the concrete information was made available. A deeper knowledge of the own organization was confirmed on the basis of the questions asked, and there was an awareness of the importance that the top management attaches to the subject. This ranges from the top manager making diversity very explicit, with the intention of thus winning the co-workers around, to working towards effective results on the shop floor.

The 7S diversity instrument was experienced by the six test organizations as a useful means of running through all aspects of the organization in a structured manner.

*NMBS Group: "yes, as far as structure is concerned I was obliged to undertake research work to see where provision was made in our structure and where there were gaps; points we have to work on and think about the next time we write regulations; in that respect it does oblige you to look at things in a structured manner."*

*Sodexho: "... it is a structured way to examine in fact all aspects that live within an organization, absolutely. I think it also gives you a complete picture of what is going on. The fact that you have a direction via a number of core questions, of 'that's what we intend, on the basis of the questions, to challenge what exists in that area in your organization', 'what you yourself still see as points for possible improvement, ...' I thought that was really good. Really a complete instrument."*

All the organizations mention the importance of going through the results of the research with an external organization, in this case the University of Hasselt, and the importance of good dialogue on the subject in the team so that ideas may be disseminated.

*NMBS Group: "... it was naturally interesting to join outsiders in thinking about diversity in our company, that was very important."*

*Sodexo: "... because in that area the mentors play a clear role. If you would have limited it in the preparation, they are there at that moment to break it open and expand it."*

Each interviewee realized that the process in the home organization is unique and does not bear comparison with other organizations. The composition of the teams that worked with the 7S diversity instrument was very divergent, ranging from one person drawing up and delivering documents, via one person acting as go-between, to HR teams and multi-disciplinary management teams to a multi-disciplinary organization wide team.

The organizations experienced the 'intangible, non-quantifiable, non-categorizable' nature of the soft S's as a 'limitation'.

*De Lijn: "I know that I struggled mainly with the bit about values, that I found it very hard to interpret. So perhaps the questions there are rather too general, ... or too vague; or maybe it also has to do with the fact that we perhaps didn't do so much work on it, ... but I didn't find it that easy to answer; it remained vague, while the other parts were more concrete."*

*Sodexo: "It's also much less readily objectively measurable. Compared with the other points such as number of workers, division of workers, what the strategy is and so forth, it really is much harder to grasp."*

As strengths, explicit mention was made of the fact that the instrument brings structure and allows completeness in a clearly mapped-out project, passed through step by step. It gives the opportunity of taking stock of what already exists and reveals whether anything is indeed present in the first places, the invisible become visible and, consequently, controllable and measurable.

*Stad Hasselt: "In the first place to link an inventory of what we are already doing about diversity, and where you first think "are we doing something on diversity at all?", , it is 'generating many examples, in that sense it was certainly a plus, an enrichment of a process in which we are all engaged, but we are not always aware of the things that we in fact do."*

*Center Parcs: "The main apparent advantage of the 7S diversity instrument is that it is a finite model. After interpretation of a first aspect, you know that there are six more to go."*

It leads to joint thinking and dialogue and addresses the existing sensitive points of the diversity policy. The many examples from the cases broaden understanding and trigger thinking about the home organization. We now see that focus groups on the shop floor are a necessity.

*Stad Hasselt: "... because we were dealing with people from all points of the compass of the organization, high/low, and from the different departments, we had to vary. That also means that you sit down at the table with people who are not really well informed on the subject (discussion about diversity). The value-added is that they deliver input from their own point of view."*

#### Weaknesses of the instrument

In different organizations thinking around the soft S's was experienced as 'different', confronting them with the fact that there is still a long way to go, and also the difficulty to put information on culture and behaviour in a theoretical compartment. Another organization mentions the lack of a quantifying component to arrive at a bottom line and to measure gradations of evolution.

## The effect of working with the 7S diversity instrument

As important effects of working with the 7S diversity instrument mention was made of the realization of what is going on around diversity, ... or of what still remains to be done, ... in which S the gaps are situated. The many examples from other cases help to spread thinking about the home organization. The acquisition of the seven aspects, and the need to be active simultaneously in different areas so that the undertaken actions lead to results, was also an important realization.

The contents of the examined S's hold good and make organizations aware, among other things, of the distance between the values that they espouse as organizations, and the values lived on the shop floor, that remain mostly implicit and are now made explicit.

Working with the 7S diversity instrument also has the consequence that actions arise, that evaluation happens at fixed points, that pro-diversity work is institutionalized and embedded in the structures and systems.

What is to be measured?

Organizations give qualitative indications on the question "which way did the organization take and how can it be shown in measurable terms"; "I have a better idea of what my HR colleague thinks about diversity", "we see more clearly the need for a management position", "we find that diversity must be included in the Key Performance Indicators".

One organization also referred to a counter indication for 'measuring', namely the risk of disillusion when the results do not tally with intention/expectations and this leading to the withdrawal of resources. Measuring is a 'superficial approach', diversity a sensitive area that relies to a large extent on 'perception and fingertip feeling'. Measuring too early may nip the growth process in the bud because account is not taken of underlying mental models such as the will and perseverance of the measured group.

What measuring method?

How do we measure progress with regard to the integration of the diversity policy as a consequence of working with the 7S diversity instrument?

The suggestions here are measurement via focus talks with groups of co-workers, the collection and research/processing of reactions to information on the intra web, brochures, annual reports and other publications and progress reports, statements by the top management.

Best possible working method

A number of points emerged from the talks with the organizations that seem to be crucial for them. The 7S diversity instrument can be used in almost all organizations, big or small, starter or already well on the way to integration of diversity.

One important condition is thorough preparation of the file, information on concrete facts and data about the mission, vision, systems, structures and so forth and the making available of sufficient examples from various other cases so that each organization can do its own mental exercise. This is best done working together with the lower layers of the organization. The dialogue with an external talking partner has been experienced as very productive.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

### 6.1. Conclusions

Through processing the results of the look back interviews and application of the different models we reached the following conclusions.

The Ely and Thomson model was developed for use in small groups. The increase of scale to the organizations in which we conducted research rendered it unusable. The Taylor Cox model gave us a number of indicators that, once optimized, lead to a more integrated diversity management. The model by Doyen-Janssens et al. gave us a comparable set of indicators, arranged on a scale from of little to optimum, that enabled us to evaluate the results of working with the 7S diversity instrument. Not until the final stages of the research did we discover the work of Özbilgin and Tatli, published in 2008, of which Chapter 6, Diagnostic Equality and Diversity Checks, explores in detail the demands made of a successful and appreciated diagnosis instrument if there are:

- successive steps with the current status of the organization as result, complemented with 'awareness-raising information',
- a multidimensional approach to diversity,
- sophisticated yet accessible, with the possibility of working towards an application that is standard or made-to-measure for the organization.

Based on the reactions of the six organizations that worked with the 7S diversity instrument and were able to confirm whether they could effectively show a result, we received the answer that working with the instrument was experienced as positive; they were further assisted in their process of integration, it sets awareness in motion and brings out work points.

In the organization development model from which we set out, the organization is a social construction in which change is brought about through learning processes whereby people behave differently, which is decisive for the creation of the instrument. To obtain change it is necessary to bring people together to think about questions of assignment of meaning: who we are, what we do, what we want to be, what the highest priority steps are that have to be taken.

In the light of the foregoing we developed for the ESF the 7S diversity instrument that helps individuals and organizations. From the vision of Özbilgin and Tatli, our own vision and the vision of the six test organizations we may conclude that the 7S diversity instrument is a good instrument.

As possible improvements we are considering the reworking of the questions that belong to the components that were experienced as the most difficult, such as 'Style' or 'Significant Values'. Possibly the search or design of diagnosis instruments for the perception of the values and style that live on the shop floor. However, we note that in the work with Stad Hasselt, these 'soft' S's did not throw up any additional comments or difficulties. The fact is that the project group was relatively large, but the organization culture also allowed people to 'talk' about diversity. The more client-oriented organizations, such as Center Parcs and its 'delighted programme', likewise experienced fewer problems. We feel that the more monolithic and bureaucratic the organization becomes, the more the 'soft' S's become a stumbling block.

In this stage it is still not obvious for organizations to discern the 'indicators' that show the trends and developments, where measuring points might be attached. The moment that 'objectives' arise criteria can be set and measurements can be taken: the condition for this – we would say - is a manifest policy.

#### 6.1.1. Four work forms

After analysis of the data we were able to distinguish 4 work forms.



The first of these is the quick scan; one person does all the research work, completes the document and presents it to the researchers. The advantage of this method is that an inventory can be taken quickly, it requires only little investment of people and of resources. The impact on the working of the organization depends on the position of the person within the organization (top manager or not) and the scale of the organization (big or small).

In the second form, the research is carried out by one co-worker who, accompanied by the external organization, asks the organization questions and, in a final workshop, communicates the findings to a group of co-workers who are concerned with diversity because of their function. The external guides place more stringent audit demands, the facts and figures are collected and explained efficiently. They are also present in the workshop for the formation of additional insights. This working method requires a large dose of commitment and motivation of the 'forwards' of the project and may, if the workshop was of high quality - that is, if sufficient time was spent on testing the mental models and underlying assumptions of the participants, have a considerable impact on the working of the organization. Involvement and ownership may arise in a small group.

In the third form, the team running the project consists of different HR staff members who carry out the research work themselves and communicate their findings in a closing workshop to a larger group of co-workers who, whether or not because of their function, are involved in the subject of diversity. The facts and figures and their impact on the organization are explicit and known by the project leaders. The external organization takes note of the data and is present to give input in the workshop. This means that investment in time and resources for research work is limited. In exactly the same way as in the second form, the quality of the workshop is decisive for the impact on the working of the organization. Involvement and ownership may arise among a large group of co-workers.

In the fourth form, the team consists of a group of co-workers from all layers and sections of the organization. They conduct the research themselves, in teams of 2 persons, and present their findings in dialogue sessions with the whole group and in the presence of the external associate. Via the preliminary work of persons not familiar with diversity or with the area in which the organization conducts its research work, attention is called as fully as possible to the approach to diversity in this strand of the organization. This requires a substantial investment of time, with the consequence of a broader dissemination in the organization through the duo antennas and high degree of involvement and ownership of a larger group of co-workers, and this benefits the tracking of the proposed actions.

## *6.2. Recommendations*

After the learning process that we as researchers experienced with the organizations we may now make the following recommendations. Which work method is recommended for which organization?

Different factors are critical here. We direct our attention to the objective, the importance of diversity for the team members and for the organization, to the culture of the organization and to the impact that a specific work method may have on its working.

### *6.2.1. The objective*

If the organization wishes a simple evaluation of the situation it may be sufficient to charge one person with the completion of the questionnaire. As the organization wishes to collect more and deeper-seated information, including on jointly desired actions, the work method will evolve towards a greater deployment of persons and resources. The work method evolves from quick scan to integrating research.

The importance and significance of diversity for the team members.

Depending on whether more information on diversity is available explicitly, more people become more familiar with diversity through their functions, their background knowledge of the subject increases, more or less preparation of the file will be necessary.

### 6.2.2. Culture of the organization

One important indication is the way the organization 'lives'. If the organization culture has grown into a 'monk's cell' culture or into an 'integrative' culture. Organizations that live in the cell model are usually not familiar with over-all work groups and dialogue. To the extent that organizations succeed in breaking out of these inhibiting structures, building bridges across the frontiers between departments, setting about the job together and engaging in dialogue, the learning process will be more or less permanent, people will be more or less owners of the solutions that emerge.

Very thorough file preparation is recommended in the case of a cell culture (departments working side by side with little in the way of interaction). This facilitates the dialogue. The group may become bogged down in the minutiae of data, facts and figures such that people not longer come to talk about the underlying assumptions and little if any radical change is set in motion. The required extra role behaviour may provoke resistance. External guidance is a quasi necessary condition in this form of organization for arriving at a result. Co-workers from the integrative culture, on the other hand, are familiar with co-operation, looking for and acquiring information about subjects that are not necessarily function-specific; they know from experience where and how to find such information and they perceive this work method more as an enrichment than as an imposition. Not only the involvement of the group members is important in the issue of 'diversity', but also the skills, whether or not acquired in a training course, of working together in teams and projects is an important indicator of the choice of a work method.

### 6.2.3. Impact

The impact of working with the 7S diversity instrument for the team leaders is linked, one, to the intensity but, most of all, (b) also to the duration of the process. In work methods one and two, co-workers have to engage with the subject intensively over a shorter period of time, and then more or less let go again. In work methods three and four, in which the instrument runs more slowly, the effect may be assumed to be greater because of the constant refixing of attention on a number of themes, a work method that is known in educational theory as being an effective method. This work method has a better chance of inspiring greater commitment to and ownership of the solutions that emerge.

The impact on the organization is very variable. Work method one created practically no support base, so it is safe to assume that there will be little effect at organizational level. The more human and other resources are involved in working with the instrument, the better the chance of greater impact, and the work can penetrate deeper into the organization. This is especially useful in the implementation and tracking of work points of which the contents and importance are much better known and broadcasted. The impact on the organization is inextricably bound with the impact on the person, and is to a large extent proportionate to the invested time and resources.

### *6.3. General conclusion*

In view of the foregoing we can state that the 7S instrument is flexible, it may be used with considerable or little input and in organizations at any stage of integration of the diversity policy in their management.

To document working with the 7S diversity instrument we have formulated the following general recommendations:

- on user-friendliness

To arrive at best-possible use of time and resources it is important that the preparatory work is done on the basis of the questions and examples from the above cases and that a well-padded file is built up. This way the participants in the talks are informed quickly and completely regarding a number of concrete facts of life in the organization; this benefits the dialogue and avoids useless discussions.

- on outcomes (contents)

If the preparatory task has been conducted sufficiently thoroughly we can now consider the internal organization and, via the dialogue with an external guide, make a critical assessment of the situation as regards the different S's. The resultant discussion of the contents may be enlightening for all parties. The dialogue concerns not only the taking of an inventory but, rather, the starting of a thinking process, setting off in search of existing or perhaps other approaches to diversity.

- on possibilities

Unlike a check-list, working with the 7S diversity instrument also makes non-naming phenomena visible and brings to light the creativity of organizations. For many, thinking about diversity in all its facets is quite new. Examples from own practice and background are readily formulated. If these find their way to a forum, the talking partners 'recognize' diversity in other environments, they question each other about underlying assumptions, see not only their own shortcomings but also new possibilities for synergy. Talking also makes possible the prioritization of actions.

- on integration

Communication is of crucial importance. Dialogue in smaller or larger groups across the various layers of the organization for the acquisition of information is a step up towards an effective change of attitude.

- optimum work method

The process can be started by different triggers in the organization. This may be the HR Department or, equally well, a motivated co-worker in Production. However, the top management must be involved and informed as quickly as possible regarding the costs and expected benefits, and their consent must be obtained regarding the work method and what is to be done with the results of the research. A commitment to a positive co-operation must be made here if the process and the resultant actions are to have any chance of success.

After this official 'go ahead' the initiative-taker can set about the task, start up a work group, prepare the file, set up various actions to detect background information and underlying sensitivities. The dialogue can then be started with the work group – by preference together with an external talking partner so as to broaden and give greater depth to the existing lines of thought – and this culminates in a report on the situation for each S. Armed with the result of this working and a comprehensive action plan drawn up for all the S's together and setting a number of priorities, the initiative-takers go back to the top management where they obtain approval for the actions to which the organization intends to commit itself, where a planning emerges and follow-up begins.

If also possible, a quantitative measurement is then made, hopefully showing positive results, and motivation for constant effort will increase.

Our conclusion on working with the 7S diversity instrument is very simple and basic, "you get out of it what you put in, or you get what you give, ..." A principle that connects seamlessly with thinking on diversity, the interest in - and involvement with the 'other' co-worker may lead to enrichment, on condition that we take the step and also learn how to deal effectively with that 'other' co-worker.

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## Website

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