GEL: M10

DIVERSITY AS A STRATEGY IN ANALYSIS AND CHANGE ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

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Abstract. An effective management of the behavior of human resources in the organization is conditioned both by the highlighting of behavioral differences, and by respecting the diversity of behaviors. The statement is based on the fact that differences between individuals are sources for the development of creativity or sources of conflicts and frustrations. In this way, on the one hand, the attributions of management include: the recognition and appreciation of individuals with behaviors desirable to the organization, obtained from the valorization of the talents, abilities, motivations, commitments of each individual. Such behaviors lead to workplace performance and indicate the potential that the individual demonstrates to stay and develop in the organization. On the other hand, managers dealing with the recognition and appreciation of individual behaviors must realize the quality level of their own behavior and understand its impact on subordinates.

Keywords: diversity, strategy, analysis, change, behavior, organization, group, individual, attitude, knowledge.

Factors for analyzing and changing employee behavior within organizations act based on two objectives:

1. *Changing the behavior of management staff.*
2. *Changing the behavior of employees.*

The identification and implementation of change solutions is carried out according to two types of change: *organizational* and *individual*.

The *organizational* change of behavior is achieved through the *value system*, such as the company's philosophy and mission; by implementing policies and strategies, aligned with the company's vision and objectives; by building an organizational structure; *by the way of directing the system and the organizational subsystems*; through *the technologization of the organization*.

The key elements in this type of behavior change are:

• *the structure of the behavior change management team,* which presents an interdisciplinary process, models of change and takes into account the fact that the impact will be felt at all levels of behavior change;

• *the roles and responsibilities of the behavior change management team,* which presents a series of aspects of organizational behavior change, which will be taken over by all team members, in determining the training requirements and implementation of behavioral change tools and techniques.

The *individual change behavior* is achieved by *assigning roles and responsabilities to individuals*, by *capitalizing people's beliefs and attitudes*, by *highlighting abilities of staff members*, which, being manipulated and applied
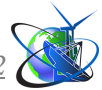
correctly, become competitive advantages and lead to performance.

The key elements in this type of behavior change are:

• *the process of changing behavior at the individual level,* which presents itself as a slow and difficult process, which is based, in particular, on the motivation and on the learning/training of the staff;

•*the perceptions generated by the management's actions/behavior*, which require appropriate management, because any change in behavior generates mistrust and rezistance on the part of employees;

•*techiques for adapting to behavioral changes*, because the individual must learn to recognize the necessity and usefulness of changes in his behavior and the group he belongs to.

In this way, change management presents a series of behavior modification models, which are deduced from the synthesis of scholarly research and based on practice in the field. These models, as stated above, constitute a basis for understanding the processes and mechanisms of change both at the organizational level and at the individual level.

According to the Hersey-Blanchard model, behavior changes take place in a system of axes on which the duration of *the change* is estimated – from the short axis to the long axis (horizontally) and the *difficulty of the change* – from low difficulty (vertically), on four levels:

1. the level of knowledge;
2. the level of attitudes;
3. the level of individual behavior;
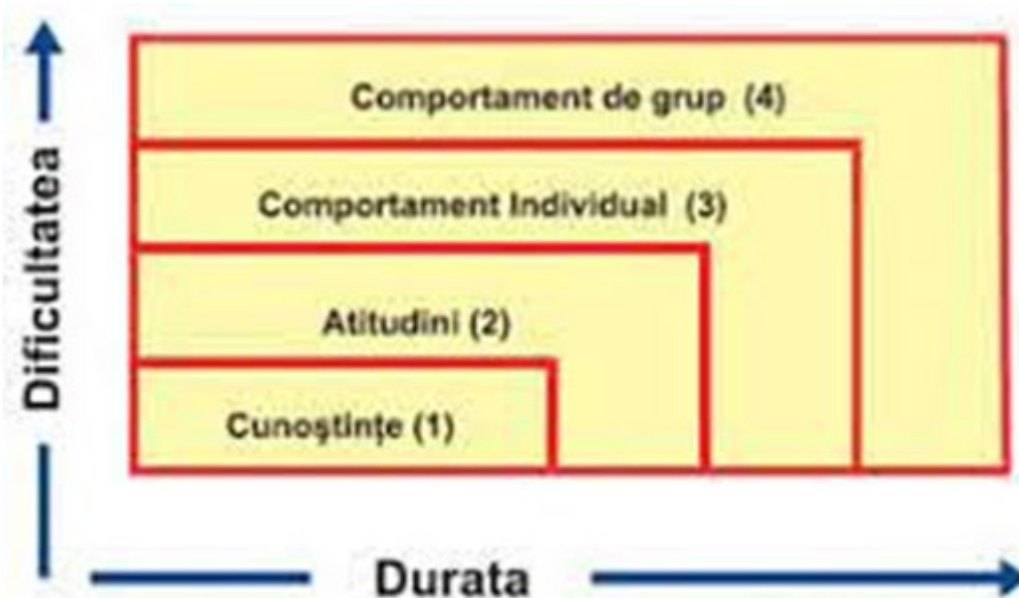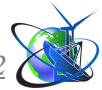4. the level of group behavior.

Figure 1. The levels of behavior change according to the Hersey-Blanchard model

Source: [7]

For each of the four levels, the duration and difficulty of the change increase progressively: from the accumulation of knowledge about change, which is achieved

relatively quickly and easily, to the change of individual and group behavior, which is achieved, relatively, in a longer period of time and with a greater degree of difficulty.

In this way, the Hersey-Blanchard model indicates the order in which the different levels of behavioral change should be approached and suggests different strategies for approaching this change.

One of the strategies for influencing behavior is based on **diversity management**. It is made useful by the fact that the basis of organizational behavior is individual behavior, which appears as a result of the interaction between the person and various environmental factors that the individual encounters. Hence, the behaviors encountered in organizations are very diverse, and the diversity of personalities interacting with different organizational environments results in a variety of behaviors.

Therefore, ***diversity*** *represents the multitude of individual differences and similarities that exist between people.* Differences and similarities are based on dimensions of diversity, which are divided into *primary and secondary dimensions* [4]:

• *The primary dimensions of diversity* are: gender, ethnic heritage, race, mental/physical abilities and characteristics, sexual orientation and age;

• *The secondary dimensions of diversity* are: communication style, experience and work style, family status etc., personal characteristics that change during human existence, depending on different exterexterna landrnal factors, depending on the choices the individual makes in different moments of life.

The *primary* and *secondary* dimensions interact dynamically, generating various combinations of behavior. This interaction influences the self-image, value system, needs, goals and expectations of the individual. As a whole, the primary and secondary dimensions define an individual's behavior and influence the way this behavior is perceived and treated by his peers.

An effective management of the behavior of human resources in the organization is conditioned both by highlighting behavioral differences and by respecting the diversity of behaviors. The statement is based on the fact that differences between individuals are sources for the development of creativity or sources of conflicts and frustrations. In this way, on the one hand, the attributions of management include: the recognition and appreciation of individuals with behaviors desirable to the organization, obtained from the valorization of the talents, abilities, motivations, commitments of each individual. Such behaviors lead to workplace performance and indicate the potential that the individual demonstrates to stay and develop in the organization. On the other hand, managers dealing with the recognition and appreciation of individual behaviors must realize the quality level of their own behavior and understand its impact on subordinates.

Another challenge for *diversity management* is the recognition of barriers and the possibility of either overcoming them or turning them into advantages. The most well-known barriers to modeling behavior are:

• *Discrimination,* which means treating a person's behavior in an inappropriate way because that behavior is different from other people's.

• *Stereotypy,* which appears when behavioral characteristics of a group are
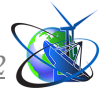
extended to a person, starting only from that person's membership in the group.

- *Resistance to change,* which is the consequence of introducing an already established behavior change solution. However, the resistance behavior on the part of the employees arises from the fear of failure in the face of change and from the universal desire to leave everything as it is.

The managerial implications of increasing behavioral diversity within organizations require the adoption by these organizations of a philosophy that must value the behavioral differences between employees. In turn, this philosophy must be transformed into practical methods of action that guide the behavior of each employee towards the achievement of the organization's objectives and that draw attention to the fact that an effective management of diversity represents a competitive advantage for an organization. However, the way diversity is managed affects organizational behavior and organizational efficiency.

Therefore, *influencing behavior* through diversity management takes place *by improving employees attitudes and behaviors at work*. It was found that employees who differ in their behavior (behavior due to race and ethnic heritage) from the majority of members of the group in which they work, are less satisfied with their career, less devoted to the company. This happens because of the stress caused by the discriminatory attitude of group members towards members with different behavior. As a result, job dissatisfaction appears, workers' interest in the organization's goals decreases. Consequently, these employees perform worse than the rest of the group members.

An organizational policy aimed at non-discriminatory treatment of employees at work would obviously lead to stress reduction, increased job satisfaction, improved employee attitude towards specific objectives and the general objectives of the organization, therefore - to increased performance in work.

Another way to influence behavior through diversity management is *to increase the quality of the staff recruitment process*. Attracting and keeping employees willing to change their behavior according to the organization's demands represents a competitive advantage for an organization. Companies that practice effective diversity management in this sense have greater chances to create this advantage, because women, people of color, people with different sexual orientations, etc. - good specialists, they will prefer to work in such companies. Moreover, recruiting employees as diverse as possible helps organizations to provide better services to customers. The following example explains this: a vice president of a company came to the following conclusion regarding the recruitment of a diverse workforce: "Our customer base is very diverse. By recruiting the workforce from this diverse area, our employees become representatives of the communities in which we do business, which has a positive effect on the image of the company, on our business in general." [1].

Amplifying creativity and the innovative spirit is also a way of influencing behavior through diversity management. The diversity of the workforce also means different ideas and perspectives, so an increased potential for creativity and innovation. Rosabeth Moss Kanter was one of the first specialists to study the relationship between workforce diversity, on the one hand, and creativity and
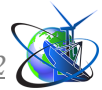
innovation in the organization, on the other. The results of the studies carried out by the researchers demonstrated that organizations characterized by a high level of innovation deliberately used work teams with heterogeneous attitudes and behavior towards the organization's objectives [3].

Another way to influence behavior through diversity management is to increase the ability to solve problems and performance within the group. Due to the fact that groups characterized by a great diversity of member behaviors have diverse perspectives, points of view and experiences, we can assume that they also have the ability to find more solutions, to better solve their internal problems and increase employee's performance. The research conducted in this regard, however, does not firmly support the premise that the diverse behaviors of the members lead to an increase in the group's capacity to solve its internal problems and reach a high level of productivity. It seems that the highest degree of performance is recorded in groups with medium diversity behaviors. R. Kreitner and A. Kinicki opine that, in order for diversity to contribute positively, significantly, to group performance, it is necessary to satisfy two additional conditions [2]:

1. The members of the group must *adopt behaviors resulting from common values and norms,* which promote achievement of the objectives of the organizations they belong to.

2. The members of the group must *be aware of and show tolerance towards the behavioral differences* between them.

To ensure an effective management of behavioral diversity, it is not enough to be aware of the existence of diversity in the organization and its importance in the management of behaviors, but also to know which organizational practices would help managers in the effective management of behavioral diversity of employees in organizations.

In this regard, *the eight generic options for action* developed by diversity expert R. Roosevelt Thomas Jr. are proposed.[6]:

•*Option 1, „Include/Exclude",* aims to either increase (include) or decrease (exclude) the number and variability of behaviors, which make up the components characterized by diversity, at all levels of organizational behavior.

•*Option 2, „Denial of differences",* shows that the recourse to this option takes place by denying the existence of behavioral differences in the group, which is manifested by statements, according to which the decisions made in the group do not take into account the sources of diversity in the behavior of individuals, the success of the group depending on income and performance.

•*Option 3, „Assimilation",* shows the premise that people with behavior different from the behavior of the dominant subgroup will end up, sooner or later, behaving similar to the majority of the subgroup.

•*Option 4, „Suppression of Differences",* demonstrates two-way cancellation/reduction of behavioral differences:

- asking majority group members (or forcing them) to stop complaining about the behavior of minority members;

- causing the group to accept behavioral differences as a necessary evil, as a duty that must be fulfilled.
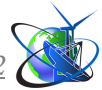
• *Option 5, „Isolation",* employees with different behavior from those who make up the majority, by creating groups that will be entrusted with tasks, special projects, which can only be carried out by these people.

• *Option 6, „Toleration"* of individuals with different behaviors, which means awareness of the existence of these behaviors according to the idea: „there is room for everyone in the organization", but under the conditions of limiting interdependencies. What is meant is the tolerance of different behaviors, without valuing them.

• *Option 7, „Building relationships"* starts from the premise that, by establishing quality relationships, employees manage to overcome behavioral differences between them. Unlike option 6, this option does not require simple tolerance, but also understanding and acceptance of behavioral differences. Group goals are achieved by focusing on behavioral similarities between members, not differences.

• *Option 8, „Mutual adaptation"* assumes that group members recognize and accept behavioral differences and, most importantly, agree that anyone can be open to change; the readiness for change of each behavioral component of the group is manifested in order to achieve common objectives.

In conclusion, regarding the options analyzed above, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. None of the above options can be considered good or bad, effective or ineffective in an absolute way. The efficiency of one or another of the options can only be seen emerging from the context.

2. The options can be put into practice both in isolation and in various combinations, but also depending on the context.

3. The options can be implemented regardless of the nature of the behavioral diversity that manifests itself in an organization. For example, if the condition of adaptation to the context is respected, they can be used both in the process of merging two companies, when, in fact, they are merging two behavioral cultures, and when an organization is faced with behavioral problems demonstrated by individuals different by race , sex, sexual orientation, etc.

However, the effective management of diversity, in order to change organizational behavior, is conditioned by the following factors:

• the existence of a mentality that allows the awareness, understanding and acceptance of both the general *differences between individuals and the differences in behavior*.

• approving an appropriate legislative framework and an education policy for democratic citizenship.

And regarding **diversity**, **we conclude** that if laws create an adequate framework, if individuals learn from childhood that human diversity is a gift and that the quality of interpersonal relationships in organizations depends on its understanding and acceptance, then individuals, becoming employees, will knows how to value this diversity by cultivating a culture of tolerance of the different behaviors existing in the organization and turning it into a competitive advantage.

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