Chapter 8
Diversity and Inclusion Practices among Different Cultures

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Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to analyse diversity and inclusion (D&I) practices from the perspective of different cultures and verify if approaches towards those concepts are common or contain disparities. According to a literature analysis, approaches towards D&I vary significantly depending on the culture, mostly due to a country's location (Western vs. Eastern), and history and values by which a nation is driven. Research conducted in an international IT company, on the contrary, shows no differences in D&I practices among cultures. Lack of diversification may be a result of the necessity to adapt to a constantly changing business world and requirements imposed on all units of an organisation to follow one coherent strategy in terms of D&I. Research limitations as well as the need for a further analysis in order to fully investigate the subject are also discussed.

Keywords: diversity, inclusion, diversity management, culture, cultural differences

Introduction

Quoting Hu Jintao, "Diversity in the world is a basic characteristic of human society, and also the key condition for a lively and dynamic world as we see today".[1] This approach may also be applied in modern organizations. As the pace of changes taking place inside and outside of companies is continuing to increase exponentially, diversity issues are gaining importance (Martin 2014). New challenges which companies are currently facing in that area are related to increased employee mobility, demographic changes (ageing population and declining birth rate), as well as economic growth

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1   https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/hu_jintao_178666 (accessed 27.02.2020).

and higher number of women entering into the workforce (Brimm, Arora 2001). According to forecasts, 21st century's workforce will be characterized by an even growing minorities (Langdon, McMenamin, Krolik 2002; Klarsfeld et al. 2014). Minority refers to a group of people who may be treated in a disadvantageous way compared to members of the dominant social group (Healey, O'Brien 2014). Groups are divided into majority and minority most frequently based on visible characteristics: ethnicity, gender, age, race and disability (Leśniowska, Andrejczuk 2016; Kandola, Fullerton 1998), as well those less obvious, such as sexual orientation, religion or beliefs. Members of minorities are often prone to unequal treatment and discrimination, which in a professional environment may concern inappropriate, private comments, denying individual's high qualifications, objectively unjustified refusal to promote (Mor Barak 2015) or offering lower salaries to employees for the same job. Taking above reports into consideration, more and more organizations are treating actions aiming at respecting and improving human rights (with special emphasis on actions which are designated for individuals who belong to the above-mentioned minorities) as a business imperative (Roberson 2006).

Researchers have pointed out several diversity impact factors, which have been broadly analysed in the literature: organization culture, HRM practices, institutional environments, organizational outcomes related to managing employee diversity (Patrick, Kumar 2012). One variable which requires more attention is culture. According to Cooke and Saini (2012: 28) "an awareness of the host country's institutional context and cultural traditions is essential to understanding diversity management issues and likely solutions". As Hofstede (2001: 9) states "most nations display a common mental programming of a majority of their inhabitants' containing shared values, rituals and symbols" that provide a national identity. It seems almost impossible that such an impactful factor as culture does not have any influence on D&I practices in organizations.

As a result of the above reflections, the main objective of this chapter is to verify whether cultural differences in the practices of implementation in the D&I area exist. Cultural differences are understood here as differences arising from being a citizen of a certain country, being raised with respect for a certain cultural heritage and in the business context, operating as a company in a certain country, obeying its laws and being influenced by the nearest environment. This is supplemented by a literature review and an analysis of a practical approach towards challenges related to diversity of one of multinational IT companies.

Diversity, Inclusion and Diversity Management – Definitions, Advantages and Disadvantages

Diversity has been interpreted in many different ways. It may be understood as "acknowledging, understanding, accepting, and valuing differences among people with respect to age, class, race, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, etc." (Esty et al. 1995).

In a business context it is a term used to describe "the changing mix of the workforce which is becoming more heterogeneous" (Brimm, Arora 2001: 108). Since also practice provides a confusing compilation of idiosyncratic and unorganized diversity practices in organizations, it is crucial to ensure a higher level of coherency and complementarity (Vassilopoulou et al. 2013). This may be achieved by recognizing initiatives under the umbrella of diversity management, which is defined as "a set of organizational policies and practices aimed at recruiting, retaining, and managing employees of diverse backgrounds and identities and creating a culture in which everybody is equally enabled to perform and achieve organizational objectives and personal development" (Syed, Tariq 2017: 1). Diversity management can also be understood as "a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued" (Patrick, Kumar 2012: 1). The main aim of diversity management is to raise employees' awareness of the subject and using differences to the company's advantage (Wziątek-Staśko 2012). The concept of diversity management was originally developed as a potential solution to the problem of social exclusion and discrimination of individuals due to stereotypes and prejudice, but over time it has started to be perceived as an important factor for an organization's functioning (ibidem). The second crucial concept related to diversity is inclusion (Roberson 2006). Inclusive actions ensure a full participation of all people working for an organization in its daily functioning (Wziątek-Staśko 2012). "The concept of inclusion-exclusion in the workplace refers to the individual's sense of being a part of the organizational system in both the formal processes, such as access to information and decision-making channels, and the informal processes" (Mor Barak 2014; as cited in: Mor Barak 2015: 85). As confirmed by researchers, an inclusive diversity culture is crucial for organizations to benefit from diversity (Nakagawa 2015).

According to companies' representatives there are several motivations behind promoting diversity in the workplace. One is the belief that they are crucial for furthering successful functioning of an organization (Wziątek-Staśko 2012). Changes occurring in a company environment bring re-evaluation of hitherto declared values among employees and society, which has a great impact on responsible business strategies. For example, British Telecom uses the United Nations United Declaration of Human Rights as a determinant for all their business activities with the focus on building relationships with employees, clients, suppliers and local communities.[2] The second reason is related to advantages of ensuring diversity among employees (ibidem). Studies show that it boosts productivity and retention of highly talented staff (Basset-Jones 2005, Hanappi-Egger et al. 2007), resulting in more committed, satisfied, better performing employees (Patrick, Kumar 2012), as well as improved creativity and customer focus (Raatikainen 2002), including reduced absenteeism (Aigner 2014), better organizational adaptability and more innovative approaches

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2   https://rownosc.info/media/uploads/roznorodnosc_w_firmach.pdf (accessed 01.03.2020).

(Wziątek-Staśko 2012). Finally, there is the question of law and obligations set on organizations by national governments, which will be discussed further in the chapter.

Most research and literature reviews focus on benefits of diversity in the workplace, nevertheless, in order to meet the aim of full objectivity and provide a deep analysis of the discussed topic, it is important to include disadvantages of diversity in the workplace. According to Aigner (2014: 111) "diversity management has often been criticized as a *double-edged sword*". Researchers indicate the fostering of negative phenomena such as inequality and discrimination (Lorbiecki, Jack 2000; Wrench 2007), a higher number of misunderstanding (Schmid 2010; as cited in Aigner 2014), conflicts in work groups (Martin 2014), hindered communication, absenteeism and loss of competitiveness, especially within ethnicity minorities (Brock, Sanchez 1996; Pitts et al. 2010; Ingram 2011). Nonetheless, those issues should not be treated as obstacles, but as challenges necessary to be taken into consideration while striving for an effective diversity management.

Cultural and D&I Implementation Practices – Literature Review

The issue of cultural differences towards D&I implementation practices may be analysed from various angles. First, there is the business context – the approach towards and initiatives undertaken in the D&I area by every organization operating in a particular country and its culture. The second area is related to national law and government policy in general, i.e. the broadly understood social context. According to Mor Barak (2014, as cited in Mor Barak 2015: 84) "in recent decades, many countries around the world, (…) have made significant progress through legislation and public policies toward creating a more equitable work environment". Those changes have been reflected in Constitution Acts, Codes e.g. Labour Code, other national law acts, as well as acts issued by unions and all organizations of which particular country is a member of e.g. the European Union.

In order to meet those objectives the author:

1. focuses on seven typically discussed characteristics: age, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief in the literature review,
2. presents D&I initiatives undertaken by governments and companies operating in the analysed country,
3. presents cultures of five countries (China, Japan, Malaysia, Poland, the United Kingdom), which were the subject of own research and one additional country (the US) as "concept of diversity management initially evolved and developed" (Vassilopoulou et al. 2013: 1) (Table 1),
4. adds a brief historical/social context to country's description whenever necessary for understanding phenomena taking place in the D&I area in a particular nation.

The cultures of the analysed countries are described based on 6 Hofstede cultural dimensions. According to Hofstede's concept every country can be located between extremes of each presented dimension (Hofstede 2001). Dimensions represent "independent preferences for one state of affairs over another that distinguish countries from each other": [3]

- individualistic/collectivistic – "the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members",[4]
- masculine/feminine – masculine societies are driven by success, while for feminine societies dominant values are caring for other and quality of life,
- uncertainty avoidance – "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations" (Hofstede 2001: 15),
- power distance – "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (ibidem: 13),
- time perspective – "it describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future",[5]
- indulgence restraint – "the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulse".[6]

Table 1. Presentation of reviewed countries in terms of Hofstede cultural dimensions

Country	Cultural dimension according to Hofstede					
	Individualistic / collectivistic	Masculine / Feminine	Uncertainty avoidance	Power distance	Time perspective	Indulgence restraint
China	Collectivistic	Masculine	Low	High	Long-term	Restraint
Japan	Collectivistic	Masculine	High	High	Long-term	Restraint
Malaysia	Collectivistic	Masculine / Feminine	Low	High	Short-term	Indulgent
Poland	Individualistic	Masculine	High	High	Short-term	Restraint
UK	Individualistic	Masculine	Low	Low	Long-term	Indulgent
US	Individualistic	Masculine	Low	Low	Short-term	Indulgent

Source: Own elaboration based on Hofstede (2001); https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/ (accessed 01.03.2020).

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3   https://hi.hofstede-insights.com/national-culture (accessed 05.03.2020).
4   https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/the-usa/ (accessed 05.03.2020).
5   Ibidem.
6   Ibidem.

China

Diversity and inclusion are not popular words in Chinese, thus society's interpretation of those expressions differs from the one presented by Western countries. The Chinese rather use terms such as "social integration" or "social adaptation", which aim at integrating minorities into society and assimilating differences, instead of recognizing and valuing them as it happens within inclusive actions.[7] Even though understanding what diversity exactly means varies, the Chinese seem to be aware that it is one of the most important concepts in today's world. As President Xi Jinping states: "We should reject arrogance and prejudice, be respectful of and inclusive toward others, and embrace the diversity of our world". [8] Unfortunately, Hays's[9] research shows that support for diversity exists only in the declarative sphere: 44% of the respondents believed they did not receive a job due to age, and 25% said that they were not successful in the recruitment process due to gender. The same opinion is shared by Cooke and Saini (2012), who underline that Chinese firms do not perceive diversity management as valuable, but rather as a way to avoid conflicts. Another problematic area within D&I is related to "low level of countervailing power possessed by the disadvantageous groups" (Cooke 2011b; as cited in ibidem: 17).

According to a report developed by Constellations International[10] the following initiatives for diversity management undertaken by companies operating in China are worth mentioning: diversity workshops for managers and management trainees in L'Oreal, a mentoring programme in Sodexo, a welfare plan for same-sex couples in IBM, as well as employment and job-seeking training for disabled individuals by Xiaolongbao (a design agency).

Japan

According to literature, the Japanese culture is highly homogenous, with a tendency to set strong barriers in terms of behavior, ways of thinking, and consequences of not obeying the unwritten law (Wziątek-Staśko 2012). This is coherent with observations made by two other researchers: Japan's citizens tend to be less tolerant towards ambiguity[11] hence they prefer their environment to be structured and "maintain harmony in society and the universe" (De Mente 1993: 1). Similarly to Chinese, in Japanese

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7   http://www.constellations-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Diversity-and-Inclusion-in-Chinese-Workplace.pdf (accessed 07.03.2020).

8   http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-11/17/c_137613904.htm (accessed 10.03.2020)

9   https://www.hays.com.my/DIreport/index.htm (accessed 10.03.2020).

10 http://www.constellations-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Diversity-and-Inclusion-in-Chinese-Workplace.pdf (accessed 11.03.2020).

11 http://www.lib.tezuka-gu.ac.jp/kiyo/nTEZUKAYAMAGAKUIN-UNI/n6PDF/n6Berglund.pdf (accessed 07.03.2020).

there is no single word for "diversity"; in fact, there are at least three different words: 多様性 – tayōsei ("diversity", but with a "variety" connotation), 異質性 – ishitsusei ("diversity", but with associations with "differences"), and ダイバーシティ – daibāshi-ti, which as a non-Japanese origin word is the least popular (McDonald 2008: 3).

Japan is a No 1 country struggling with labour shortage (Ganelli, Miake 2015). Therefore it is surprising that most decision-makers in Japanese companies still believe that women should quit work in order to raise their children and due to that rarely promote them as well as sap their career motivations (Nakagawa 2015). Hence, only 0.9% of board members in the country are women, which is the second lowest ratio among the studied countries.[12] The government has actively addressed the issue of labour shortage by encouraging older employees to stay in the work-force (for example by introducing General Principles Concerning Measures for the Aged Society,[13] and increased the pension eligibility age from 62 to 65) (Kashiwase, Nozaki, Tokuoka 2012), yet there are still few initiatives aimed at combating ageism (Grünschloss 2011). An analysis of the Japanese culture and actions undertaken in the D&I area bring a perplexing conclusion. It seems that the country perceives diversity as a solution to the demographic problems, rather than a concept which leads to a broad range of social, cultural, and business benefits. Nevertheless, even if the process of replacing outdated but deeply rooted traditional habits is a great challenge (Vaszkun 2013), companies have to undergo an organizational transfor-mation – mostly due to the pressure from foreign competition (Nakagawa 2015).

Malaysia

While analyzing the concept of D&I in the Malaysian society it is worth mentioning those focused on counteracting discrimination towards Bumiputera, who are the indigenous inhabitants of the country. In the 1970s, the government introduced policies which aimed at favouring Bumiputera in order to create opportunities and defuse interethnic tensions (Khoo 1997). Unfortunately, although at first it seemed like an action supporting members of the disadvantaged group,[14] it proved to be the beginning of discrimination towards non-Malay citizens. Consequently, in 2018 the country did not ratify the United Nations convention, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.[15] Another important fact is related to potential actions supporting the LGBT community, which are strictly prohibited since homosexuality is illegal in Malaysia. This leads to the conclusion

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12 https://images.forbes.com/forbesinsights/StudyPDFs/global_diversity_rankings_2012.pdf (accessed 09.03.2020).

13 https://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/japan/socsec/aging.html (accessed 09.03.2020).

14 https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/affirmative-action/ (accessed 06.03.2020).

15 https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2018/11/434078/why-malaysia-backpedalled-icerd-ratification (accessed 06.03.2020).

that the country is not open towards diversity, which is confirmed by Hays's report,[16] according to which 48% of respondents believed that challenging cultural norms would have a disadvantageous impact on their career development.

With all the social and legal struggles notwithstanding, corporations operating in the country are making strong efforts to promote the D&I area in their internal environment. PwC declares to put emphasis on employees' competencies in every day work, instead of any personal characteristics such as religion, gender, race, age or disability.[17] The company tries to achieve this by, for example, organizing awareness sessions, Living Library meetings (experience sharing) and "Blind Lunches" to let individuals understand the challenges of visually impaired. Shell has introduced three programmes for women aimed at career development and organizes assignments in different countries and roles for minorities.[18]

Poland

In Poland the first efforts in the D&I area were made in 1980 along with ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women issued by the United Nations. The document obliged the Polish government to ensure human rights equality regardless of gender by taking necessary steps (including legal) in areas such as education, employment, and healthcare (Wziątek-Staśko 2012). In order to support religious freedom, the country laid down provisions under the new bill in 1989. It states that no one may be discriminated or privileged due to their religion (article 6, paragraph 1).[19] One good example of another legal regulation is a country-specific recommendation related to women's participation in the labour market which was given by the EU to eight member states, including Poland, related to increasing participation of women in the labour market, lowering the high gender pay gap, ensuring the availability of formal childcare, as well as "reducing tax-benefit disincentives for second earners".[20] Hence, it can be said that in terms of legislation Poland secures the rights of minorities and social groups, which may be discriminated.

In Poland most activities aimed at promoting the D&I area are related to gender, age and disability, with rather few initiatives within ethnicity, religion and sexual

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16 https://www.hays.com.my/DIreport/HAYS_1995946 (accessed 10.03.2020).

17 https://www.pwc.com/my/en/aboutus/diversity-index.html (accessed 10.03.2020).

18 https://www.shell.com.my/careers/shell-commitment-to-diversity-inclusion/shell-malaysia-a-diverse-and-inclusive-culture.html (accessed 10.03.2020).

19 http://odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/R%C3%B3wne-traktowanie-ze-wzgl%C4%99du-na-wyznanie-w-zatrudnieniu.pdf (accessed 07.03.2020).

20 http://odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/annual_report_ge_2019_en.pdf (accessed 28.02.2020).

orientation.[21] Probably the lack of actions promoting the mentioned minorities is a result of a strong belief in stereotypes among Poles, and (using a term developed by Hofstede) their specific mental programming. Many business people state that Poland is not yet ready for introducing initiatives in those areas – it should be definitely perceived as one of the main challenges to be faced by organizations operating in Poland. Literature review results are reflected in practice. Companies provide employees with opportunities for developing their competencies regardless of their personal characteristic (Leśniowska, Andrejczuk 2016), organize training sessions on how to cooperate with the disabled (Morawska-Wilkowska, Krajnik, Remisko 2009), implement mentoring programmes thanks to which young individuals are able to easily gain knowledge from more experienced colleagues, and assign new tasks to older employees in order to let them acquire new skills (Lisowska, Sznajder 2013). What is more, companies verify the gender balance ratio, paying attention to providing equal professional opportunities to men and women[22] and striving to minimize gender pay gap (Klonowska 2014).

United Kingdom

The British society is characterized by a vibrant diversity mostly due to the country's colonial past and current demographic changes, such as ageing population or feminization of the labour market (Roper, Tatli 2014: 266). Being aware of the importance of D&I, the government ensured the presence of regulations protecting minorities on the ground of age, sexual orientation disability, gender, race, ethnicity, religion and belief (Equality Act 2010[23]). Legislation is a crucial issue in the UK; studies show that initiatives undertaken by organizations (operating in both public and private sector) are driven by legal compliance (Tatli 2010).

One of the first companies promoting the D&I area in the UK was Hewlett-Packard, which formed employee networks promoting gender diversity (e.g. women's lunch-time speaker series) in early 1980s, and introduced a diversity management training in 1992. With time, such initiatives started to become more creative; for example, a Bristol company hired a team of professional actors to produce a film about diversity management in a "light-hearted vein" (Brimm, Arora 2001: 116). Nowadays, British companies make even stronger efforts to promote D&I area, both in their local and global entities. In 2017 Tesco launched a broad campaign called "Everyone's welcome", which supported diversity among their clients and

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21 https://ngoteka.pl/bitstream/handle/item/54/Zarzadzanie_roznorodnoscia_w_Polsce_FOB. pdf?sequence=1 (accessed 09.03.2020).

22 https://ngoteka.pl/bitstream/handle/item/54/Zarzadzanie_roznorodnoscia_w_Polsce_FOB. pdf?sequence=1 (accessed 28.02.2020).

23 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents (accessed 10.03.2020).

raising awareness of their employees.[24] Internally, the company organized a set of training sessions during which individuals discussed ways of enhancing diversity, shared information on minorities, and created diversity action plans for each shop. Additionally, employees with different religion/belief can use flexible work time in order to celebrate religious events (Wziątek-Staśko 2012). More and more companies are deciding to implement internal diversity management policies, which not only shows the values important for those organizations, but serves as a guideline for employees. For example, in BP's Code of Conduct[25] one may find statements underlining the importance of drawing strength from diversity, respecting all people regardless of their personal characteristics, ensuring fair treatment and providing equal opportunities.

United States

The first discussions on diversity management in US, which occurred in the 1950s, were related to concerns regarding how to effectively manage multinational teams with the use of contemporary communication technologies (McKeena, Beech 2002). Since then, the country has gone a ling way, becoming one of the most advanced in successful counteracting against discrimination and deriving benefits from diversity. The role of legislation and policies in those efforts should be stressed, such as Equal Pay Act of 1963, Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and federal Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action standards, according to which each organization's non-compliancy should result in severe financial sanctions (Vassilopoulou et al. 2013).

Despite strong legal support for diversity by the government, US companies quite often introduce their own codes of conduct aiming at showing values by which they are driven in the D&I area (Johnson & Johnson *Our Credo*[26]). Those values are as well presented by organizations with a higher coherency with modern, digitalized world e.g. by creating diversity promoting videos (Apple).[27] When it comes to internal initiatives aiming at reinforcing D&I, US companies regularly verify their percentage ratios of minorities, undertake activities to minimize pay gap around the globe, partner with e.g. minority-serving institutions, offer student camps to ethnic minorities (Bohlander, Snell 2004), and advocate on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community. The most popular US trend in enhancing diversity is to leverage diversity

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24 https://www.thedrum.com/news/2018/11/06/tesco-reprises-everyone-s-welcome-campaign-it-worked-us-last-year (accessed 04.03.2020).

25 https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/business-sites/en/global/corporate/pdfs/who-we-are/our-values-and-code-of-conduct/bp-code-of-conduct-english.pdf (accessed 04.03.2020).

26 https://www.jnj.com/credo/ (accessed 04.03.2020).

27 https://www.apple.com/diversity/ (accessed 04.03.2020).

management to acquire a competitive advantage inter alia by reducing risks of discrimination lawsuits and improving general corporate image (Kossek et al. 2006).

Research

The aim to the study was to analyse a major IT company – 7th largest IT service provider in the world, employing over 140,000 people (391 different nationalities) in over 77 locations – in terms of diversity and inclusion practices. The company was set up in Japan, which means that its roots are placed in a culture which is characterized by little openness. One of the organization's main strategic goals is to promote respect and equal opportunities to all employees regardless of their personal characteristics. It states that diversity is a source and driver of innovation. Initiatives undertaken in the D&I area have been analysed in 9 of the company's locations: China, Costa Rica, India, Japan, Malaysia, Poland, Portugal, Russia, the United Kingdom. Although the mentioned practices were mostly embedded in the professional environment, occasionally they concerned the organization's close environment, such as local communities. The list of specific actions undertaken by the company in different countries and different D&I areas is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Initiatives for promoting the D&I area in different countries

China	
• Posters raising employees' awareness of disability	Disability
• Mixed gender outdoor sports	Gender
• Campaign informing about human rights especially from the perspective of minorities	Sexual orientation
Costa Rica	
• Gender equality workshops • Workshops for female employees on how to develop their careers • March against violence against women and girls	Gender
• Employees participation in a pride parade in order to show support for the LGBT community • Celebrating the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia by sharing a newsletter raising awareness	Sexual orientation
India	
• Awareness quiz about disability to help employees understand basic terminology in this area • Disability sensitization workshops in order to break stigmas and teach managers how to manage employees with disabilities • Sign language workshops in order to help employees understand how the deaf communicate	Disability

Japan	
• Pamphlet on the company's stance on the employment of people with impairments: presentation of jobs available, explanation how the company provides an affirming and individually-oriented workplace for all, details about special training programs, workplace-oriented consultations.	Disability
• Meetings for employees to engage in a discussions with LGBT individuals	Sexual orientation
• Training on human rights, distributing leaflets, hosting lectures aimed towards managers, and sending messages through the intranet	All areas
Malaysia	
• Visit to house of kids with disabilities in order to increase employees' awareness	Disability
• Gender equality survey to verify the level of women empowerment • Coding workshops for women to increase their interest in tech subjects	Gender
Poland	
• Special policies for disabled employees in terms of business trips and health and safety • Neurodiversity sessions • Human library: disabled employees sharing their stories with other employees	Disability
• Regular participation in Women in Tech summit • Workshops for girls at schools in order to increase their interest in tech subjects	Gender
• Cooperation with an NGO supporting the LGBT community in organizing lectures, marches, etc.	Sexual orientation
• Survey among employees with actions should be additionally undertaken by the company in order to promote diversity in the workplace	All areas
Portugal	
• Meeting with the representatives of NGO working with disabilities to raise employees' awareness	Disability
• Employees participation in pride parade in order to show support for the LGBT community	Sexual orientation
Russia	
• Workshop for employees to raise their awareness about disability	Disability
• Participation in Women in Tech Programme in order to bring women into technical roles • Sharing stories of female employees with regards to their daily professional challenges	Gender

United Kingdom	
• Sessions to discuss issues which the staff face with regards to disability, and how they would like to see them tackled	Disability
• Girls' Day: Inviting employees' daughters and granddaughters to take part in tech workshops in order to increase their interest in tech subjects • Actions aiming at reducing gender pay gap • Verification of female empowerment level via annual employee satisfaction and comparing year to year results • Organization of conference Women in Technology • Organization of webcasts on topics such as AI delivered by internal female experts in order to celebrate International Women's in Engineering Day	Gender
• Mentoring programme in which senior leaders are mentors for employees who are different from them in terms of personal characteristics, such as age	All areas
All above countries	
• Celebrating international day for people with disabilities by: • inviting employees to wear purple to show solidarity • broadcasting a global webcast on building a disability-friendly workplace • sharing positive stories about employees with disabilities	Disability
• Training sessions on unconscious bias and creation of inclusive job adverts in order to ensure gender balance in external and internal recruitment • Female leadership development programme, which aims at cultivating female employees personnel for future leadership and managerial positions • Informing employees on the advantages of gender diversity in the workplace: e.g. 1.4 times more revenue generation	Gender
• Celebrating World Kindness Day by encouraging all employees to champion acts of kindness to other, especially those from minorities • Video interviews with top management representatives in order to share their support for D&I practices in the company • FAQs available for employees in order to raise their awareness on disability and LGBT issues	All areas

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of data collected from company's representatives.

Most of those initiatives focus on gender and disability. Despite the fact that the company's top management declares strong support for sexual orientation diversity, it is not reflected in the number and differentiation of actions undertaken in all locations. This aspect does not concern Malaysia, in which homosexuality is illegal; only internal processes against discrimination based on sexual orientation applies in this location. There is a lack of initiatives aiming at the inclusion of minorities due to age, race and religion, and those undertaken in the area of ethnicity are not structured and subject to a proactive approach of each location's management team. In most cases each entity supports foreign employees through providing explanations

as to the country's specific rules/regulations, HR procedures, visa acquisition procedures (if necessary), information about the country's culture. The initiatives do not vary significantly across different cultures, which may result from the fact that the organization adjusted its strategy and undertaken initiatives to requirements of the fast-changing global world (promoting diversity), rather than to the culture of their country of origin. Most certainly only this kind of approach provides the possibility to draw clients' attention, to cooperate with stakeholders from all over the world, and to successfully build competitive advantage as a result.

Conclusions

According to the literature review, approaches (including practices) towards D&I vary significantly across cultures. The first area in which differences may be observed is language. Western countries show a certain level of coherency in their understanding of "diversity", whereas in Eastern countries either different expressions are used (e.g. China), or words which seem to have the same meaning in fact inspire different connotations (e.g. Japan). Disparities across cultures also occur in legal regulations, mostly in terms of minorities, which is related to a particular country's history and values. As presented above e.g. the Malaysian LGBT community is not supported by the government, while in the US, 21 states, the District of Columbia and two territories (Guam and Puerto Rico) have laws which prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.[28] What is more, the differences arise from the cultural "profile" of a nation. While analysing countries' cultures through Hofstede's dimensions it is clear that collectivistic cultures and those with high power distance (China, Malaysia, Japan) create a less enhancing environment for minorities than those which are perceived as individualistic and has low power distance (the UK, the US). Finally, there is the question of demographics: the more homogenous, the less open to diversity. Such societies tend to perceive differences among people as a threat rather than source of potential advantages. Chinese "social integration" is a good example of a response to diversity, which unfortunately does not aim at deriving benefits, whereas the heterogeneous and multicultural US nation is oriented towards taking advantage of this state (e.g. by elevating company's performance and consequently revenue). All countries' representatives as well as companies' representatives declare the importance of diversity and inclusive actions in today's world, although this is not always reflected in the practice.

On the contrary, the present research shows that approaches towards and practices undertaken in the D&I area within the analyzed company's entities do not vary significantly. This is in line with the literature review only to some extent.

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28 https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/10/08/lgbt-employment-discrimina-tion-half-of-states-offer-no-protections/3837244002/ (accessed 08.03.2020).

Organizations presented in this chapter may be classified as international corporations. The strategies of the "big players", such as BT, Apple, BP, mirror the necessity of promoting the D&I area and each company's entity is obliged to keep a certain level of coherency and reflect the provisions of strategies in daily actions. Most often top management makes the decision to appoint a Diversity Manager, Diversity Lead or even the steering committee, who are supposed to harmonize practices implemented in the D&I area in all locations. Even if differences are not visible in the business context, they definitely exist in the social one.

Those reflections lead us to research limitations. In order to provide a deeper exploration of the subject, additional research in companies operating locally should be made. Apparently, the lack of global regulations applied in particular organization may be a sine qua non for noticing cultural differences in a practical approach towards the D&I area in the business context. The question arises: what will impact those companies more – business requirements of the modern world or firmly rooted culture? Research into a comparison of D&I practices in different local companies may bring interesting conclusions.

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Key Terms and Definitions

Culture – set of core values applicable in a given community which shape the way that a group behaves and communicates.

Cultural differences – differences between one set of values and others which may have inter alia a geographical, religious, national and historical background. They can lead to an unintentional conflict through misunderstanding and misinterpretation of intentions.

Diversity – presence of different human features among people who belong to one community.

Diversity management – shaping within a community a respectful culture towards others in which members can cooperate successfully beyond differences at every level (political, national, religious, geographical, etc.).

Inclusion – set of activities which aim at ensuring that all people, especially minorities, have equal rights and opportunities.

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