Reflecting Diversity in a Participatory Way
Presentation of a Workshop-Concept for Supporting Organizational Changes

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**Topics:** Organisational development and change, police organisations, homeland security, diversity and demographic change
1. Background Information

2. Workshop-Concept – A Participatory Way to Reflect Diversity

3. Organizational Reactions & Participants‘ Feedback

4. Conclusion
Background Information

Context:

- German governmental organisations are increasingly faced with issues and conceptual approaches such as “Intercultural Competence”, “Intercultural Communication” or “Intercultural Opening”

- Social developments and stakeholders demand from the organisations to deal with these topics (public visibility)

- Public administrations are required to implement diverse activities and concepts in regard to those

Problem:

- Intercultural openings are “forced” upon the organisations externally without actively involving the employees, their experiences and knowledge

- The implemented concepts and activities are particularly used for the creation of a public image, employer branding or impression management
Background Information


**Topic:**
Intercultural opening of organisations and public administrations

**Approach:**
Through supporting dialogue and bonding between organisations and individuals a common understanding of cultural/ethnic diversity and intercultural competencies will be established.

**Case:** Municipality in West Germany
What did the municipal administration do? (examples)

- Signing of the Diversity Charter in 2008
- 2009: Start of an internal project „Diversity as an Opportunity“ for intercultural opening

Diversity events
- e.g. “Diversity Day”, “Diversity Talk”

Diversity activities concerning gender, ethnicities/race, health, sexual identity ecc.

Diversity posters in the city hall, tab for diversity management on the website

E.g. project with other seven municipal administrations: “KOMM-IN“ for inter-municipal integration (2008)
Background Information

What was missing?

- Internal dialogue about diversity
- Active involvement of the employees in the process of the intercultural opening
- External communication about diversity [lack of information; “We have diversity management? Oh, interesting!” (quote from one of the workshop participants)]
- Translation of diversity activities into “action” at the workplace: e.g. framework of the Diversity Charter

Remaining questions (also challenges):

1. What does it mean for the employees of the municipal administration to deal with the topic of diversity in their everyday workplace life?

2. How can the employees be involved in the process of the intercultural opening of the municipality?
Our Approach/Idea:

- **Systemic concept** of an organisation:
  1. Complex problems can only be solved when considering the whole system.
  2. Socio-technical systems need (external) support regarding the problem solving; but the solution has to be formed internally.
  3. Employees who have or see the problems are the „experts of the problem“.
  4. Academic mentors only offer the framework.

- Reflection on issues/problems in a **participatory way**

- **Involvement** of relevant stakeholders from different hierarchical levels, professional departments

- **Collaborative** teaching and learning methods
Workshop-Concept

1. Initiation Phase
2. Scanning Phase
3. Discovery Phase
4. Workshop Phase
5. Action Phase

Workshop 1 → Workshop 2 → Workshop 3 → ...

First organisational implementation

Project Group-Workshop
Executives-Workshop
Conclusion-Workshop

(Own Chart, Dossier, p. 7)
1. Initiation Phase
- Clarification of intention and objectives
- Screening of organisational framework conditions
- Involvement of key stakeholders/gate keeper
- Forming of project teams
- Clarification of roles
2. Scanning Phase

- Survey and evaluation/analysis of primary and secondary data
- Getting an inside view into the organisation
- Multi-method research design

- Participatory observation
- Group discussions
- Organisational
- Documents
- Customer survey (n= 179)
- 30 Interviews
3. Discovery Phase

- Reflection and discussion of research results
- Participatory survey (of the participants)
- Selection of relevant issues for the workshop phase

1. Relevant dimensions of diversity for the workplace?
2. Current challenges?
3. Other relevant issues with regard to diversity?
4. Workshop Phase
- Forming of small groups (as heterogeneous as possible)
- Collaborative processing of the chosen topics
- Creation of individual action strategies
- Development of ideas/approaches for organisational changes

Workshop 1 “Diversity, Health and Stress“
How do diversity, health and stress interact?

Workshop 2 “Handling Diversity and Prejudices at the Workplace“
How can diversity and prejudices be handled at the workplace?

Workshop 3 “Successful Communication and Diversity“
What is the role of successful communication regarding the diversity?
5. Action Phase

- Summary of results
- Planning of organisational actions
- Consolidation and sustainability
- Participants’ feedback

Reflection Workshop
Which new strategies and improvements need to be implemented in order to have the employees’ diversity play its optimal part in everyday worklife?

Feedback Workshop
What did the employees learn during the workshops and how can this be transferred to their own workplace?

Leadership Workshop
How should leadership be designed in order to achieve optimal results in heterogeneous teams?
Organisational Reactions and Participants’ Feedback

Reactions

• Letter to the mayor – suggestion to establish a “Culture of Welcome” within the immigration office
• further training opportunities (e.g. “intercultural communication”) for all employees (not only for clerks but also e.g. for cleaners and technical staff)
• Creation of spaces for intercultural encounters, e.g. “Diversity Day”
• appointment of contact persons for cases of discrimination (e.g. the staff council)
• long-term improvements of the infrastructure (e.g. intranet access for all employees)
Organisational Reactions and Participants’ Feedback

Participants’ Feedback

- diversity as a multifaceted issue – opportunity to select relevant aspects in a participatory way catches the topics that are of urgent importance for different employees (not only from the leaders’ view)
- encounters with “strangers” from different hierarchical levels help to develop a mutual understanding and solidarity among the different employees
- signal for engagement concerning diversity issues (also after the workshop)
- increasing visibility of groups on lower hierarchical levels
- hidden discrimination becomes visible
Conclusion

• “Affected become involved” – all persons can participate in the process of raising diversity issues and development of approaches

• letters of intent (e.g. signing the Diversity Charter; “The Charter is a fake!”) without internal links or feedback loops lead to rejection and resistance

• unequal treatments concerning information channels lead to ignorance and misinformation

• opportunities to reflect on one’s own behaviour and to discuss organisational conditions concerning diversity at the workplace (e.g. leadership, structures) are important

• external and internal communication about diversity issues need to go hand in hand!
I look forward to discussing the results with you

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