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MANAGEMENT OF AGE-DIVERSE TEAMS AND THE TYPE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

A b s t r a c t: The modern world brings demographic changes that are of great importance to employers. There are currently four generations on the labour market – baby boomers, X, Y and Z, who differ in their approach to work, needs and expectations. However, good cooperation in the workplace is necessary. A appropriate solution in this case is proper management of generational diversity in the organization. However, its level depends on many factors, including the type of organizational culture. It was decided to examine this relationship. Therefore, research were conducted, the results of which showed whether and how the type of organizational culture determines the management of an age-diverse team. The purpose of the research is a recognition of relationship between the type of organizational culture and the level of age management in the organization. The research outcomes showed that the type of organizational culture is one of the factors determining the level of management of generational diversity in an enterprise. Interestingly, organizations with a clan-type culture that assumes values and practices in line with the idea of multigenerational management are not the best at managing an age-diverse team.

K e y w o r d s: organizational culture, multigenerational management, age management

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is a time of permanent transformations in every area of life that determine the increase in differences between people born and growing up at different times [Berkup, 2014, p. 218]. The increasing dynamics of changes in the modern world means that successive generations differ from the previous ones. They have different experiences. They grew up in a different social, economic and political reality. Therefore, they are characterized by a different system of values, a different approach to life, different needs and expectations

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as well as a different style of communication and work [Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, 2016, p. 381]. The success of an organization depends on the appropriate use of the potential of all employees, regardless of their age, gender, nationality or other individual characteristics. It is therefore necessary to recognize the potential of each generation, its values, needs, motivations, style of work and communication. Generations characteristics are obviously simplified. They only show basic trends. Therefore, an attitude open to diversity and understanding of specific needs, experiences and adopted strategies of activity is crucial issue. Managers should be aware of the historical context in which their employees were brought up, which determines the specificity of the functioning of individual generations. The manager of multi-generational teams should beware of stereotypes and be aware of the differences between individual generations and accept it. It becomes necessary to revise current solutions and to introduce appropriate age management methods and tools, and to revise existing solutions. Therefore, it is worth identifying the differences between generations and explaining their causes [Amayah, Gedro, 2014, p. 43; Costanza, Finkelstein, 2017, p. 3].

The purpose of the research is a recognition of relationship between the type of organizational culture and the level of age management in the organization. One hundred and fifty two employees took part in the research. The method of diagnostic survey was used. The survey was conducted online. It was completely anonymous, therefore it is impossible to tell which companies' employees filled it in. The research was conducted from July 2019 to May 2020.

1. AGE MANAGEENT IN AN COMPANYY

The dynamic, continuous changes currently occurring on the labour market necessitate adequate personnel management [Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2013, p. 90]. Increasingly, HR managers are wondering how to differentiate their approach to individual generational groups. Differences between employees of diverse ages have never been so significant, which is caused by dynamic social changes, determined, among others through rapid technological development, an increase in living standards and demographic change. Individuals differing only by a few years can live in a completely other social reality. Therefore, activities in the field of human resource management should be modified, treating the human capital of the organization not as a set of employees, but as representatives of several generations. Each generation has different priorities, needs and expectations [Stachowska, 2012, p. 39]. Identification and understanding of generational differences are becoming necessary [Costanza, Finkelstein, 2017, p. 338]. It is worth adding that age is positively correlated with work commitment and

satisfaction [Lyons, Kuron, 2014, p. 146]. Appropriate selection of a team, including the age of employees, is all the more important.

Human resource management practices should respond to the individual needs of employees. One of the solutions is a properly constructed age management system [Wziątek-Staśko, 2015, p. 48]. Means practices targeted at employees of different ages. It covers activities that make it possible to rationally and effectively use the potential of different generations of employees in an organization [Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, 2016, p. 382]. Uses consciously selected instruments and tools in the field of human resource management, addressed to all employees, regardless of their age and seniority.

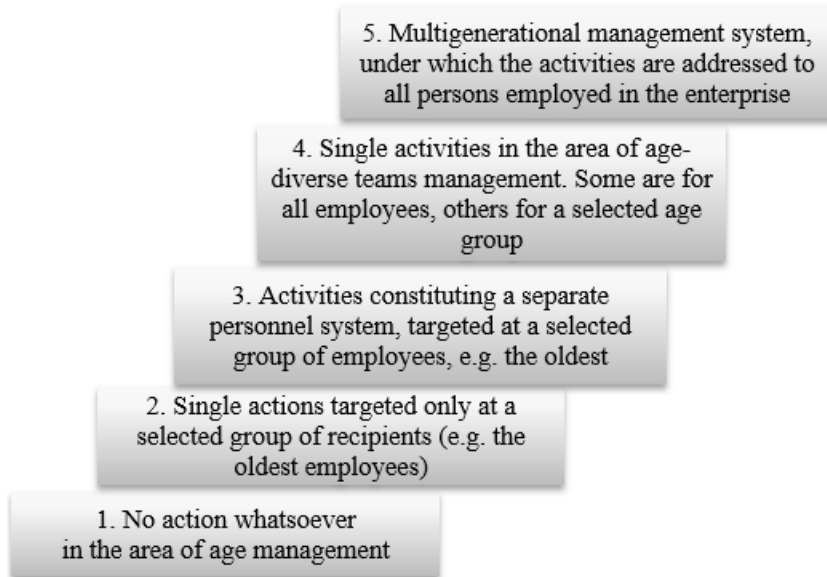
The term ‘age management’ is usually used to describe activities targeted at the oldest employees in an organization, covering most (or all) of human resources management areas. This term appeared both in the literature on the subject and in management practice relatively recently, over a dozen years ago, mainly in the USA, Sweden, Finland, and Great Britain [Kołodziejczyk-Olczak, 2014, p. 37]. The terms age diversity management, intergenerational or multigenerational management, and the age support climate are also used interchangeably (or next to it) [Dumay, Ronney, 2011]. From the point of view of linguistic correctness, however, it is worth talking about managing age or generation diversity or managing employees of different ages. The term ‘age management’ is a mental abbreviation which, while not offensive in English, can raise unnecessary doubts in Polish. It has been assumed in the literature to associate them with activities addressed to the oldest employees in the organization. Recently, however, more and more often it is indicated that age diversity management should be covered by employees of all ages. It seems that the correct definition is provided by Iwona Mendryk [2019, p. 150], who calls age diversity management “a set of planned, methodically ordered and systematically undertaken activities aimed at all members of the organization, aimed at maximizing the potential benefits resulting from the age diversity of employees.” Lack of focus on the oldest employees does not in this case become a reason for age discrimination.

It should be remembered that age is only one of the components of the overall concept of human resource management [Sołtys, 2013, p. 61]. The broad approach to age management assumes adapting human resource management and work environment activities to the expectations of employees of all ages, not only the oldest, as well as taking over responsibility for the changing system environment [Wziątek-Staśko, 2015, p. 49]. Age diversity is beneficial for the company. It can be made an unquestionable advantage [Rogozińska-Pawelczyk, 2014, p. 19]. It assumes the conduct of employment policies resistant to demographic changes, taking advantage of the benefits of all employees from each generation, promotion of physical and mental health, reduction of arduous work and promotion of life-long learning, which can be called multigenerational management.

The management of age diversity should also be based on the prevention of negative phenomena, most often resulting from inappropriate age stereotypes. In a broader perspective, it should cover all employees, adequate to their needs and development tasks [Pawlak, 2016, p. 409]. This way of managing age-diverse staff is called multigenerational management. It certainly fits in with the idea of diversity management much more than age management. It is a solution that takes into account the needs of all employees, not just the oldest ones. Thanks to it, it becomes more effective to use different experiences, knowledge and competences of staff, which allows maintaining the appropriate level of organizational knowledge (explicit but also hidden), mutual assistance, professional development throughout the entire life cycle, as well as separating private life and professional at various stages of professional development [Woszczyk, Warwas, 2016, p. 42].

It seems that the management of generational diversity in an organization can take various forms. Its levels are presented in figure 1. The functioning of a separate age management system for employees with different age shows the advanced human capital management in a given enterprise.

Figure 1. Levels of age diversity management in an organization



Source: Own elaboration based on literature analysis and conducted research

Managing age diversity is still not a popular practice. The results obtained in Denmark in 2009 showed that only 40% of HR directors and managers who participated in the research implemented age diversity management in their com-

panies, although at the same time as many as 70% of them were aware that it was needed [Jensen, Møberg, 2012]. Also, Iwona Mendryk [2015, p. 106], as a result of her research, concluded that most enterprises do not have solutions for managing employees of different ages. If they do appear, they appear in the form of ad hoc actions. This only takes place in organizations that have experienced the negative effects of demographic changes. Moreover, most of these activities only affect workers in their 50s. Therefore, it can be concluded that, according to the above list, it is at most the second level of age management.

It is worth emphasizing that the level of age management in an organization depends on several factors, among which the type of organizational culture is one of the most important.

On the basis of the above definitions and the elements recurring in them, it was established that organizational culture includes values, belief norms and patterns of behavior developed over the years and shared by all members of a given organization, which the individual is not aware of as long as they are not violated or are no longer useful in everyday life. This is how the organizational culture will be understood in this work. There is no single correct definition of organizational culture. However, it has several features that allow it to be defined. There is [Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2011, p. 352]:

- holistic – covers all phenomena in a given organization, they are not only a simple sum of its components,
- historically determined – reflects the company's history
- associated with the subjects of anthropological research – rituals and symbols
- a social creation – it is created and maintained by a group of people belonging to the organization
- difficult to change – although it should be emphasized that different authors have a different opinions on how difficult it is.

Edgar Schein distinguishes three basic elements of organizational culture: artifacts, norms and values, and basic assumptions. The most visible level are artifacts, that is, visible, tangible, audible phenomena, structures or processes rooted in norms, values and assumptions. It is the outermost layer of culture. They express the identity of the members of the organization. They distinguish her from others. This is what the new member of the group sees first. On the second level there are values and numbers of behavior. Norms are joint control by a group of what is good and what is bad, how it should be, what works and what doesn't. They can be formally written (as regulations, prohibitions, orders) or informal. Then they are socially controlled by the group. Standards are not always people aware of. They say how it should behave. They set goals and methods of measuring their achievement, desirable characteristics of employees and patterns of behavior in a given situation. Values determine the definition of good

and bad. They are therefore related to the ideals shared in a given group. They say how people want to behave, what they strive for. It is a criterion for choosing among various possibilities. Standards should reflect values. Then the culture is relatively stable. Otherwise, there will be instability and tensions. Essential, fundamental, basic cultural assumptions constitute the core of culture, that is, its deepest level. These assumptions are very abstract. They are, moreover, at the most permanent level of human consciousness, which makes them unconscious, inaccessible or difficult to access for direct perception. Therefore, they exist beyond consciousness [Schein, 2010, pp. 24–32].

Organizational culture is often described as an iceberg. Only a small tip is visible. Most of its elements remain secret, hidden. It manifests itself in “professed values, dominant leadership styles, language and symbols, methods of conduct and routine procedures, and the definition of success”. These features distinguish the organization from others [Cameron, Quinn, 2015, p. 30].

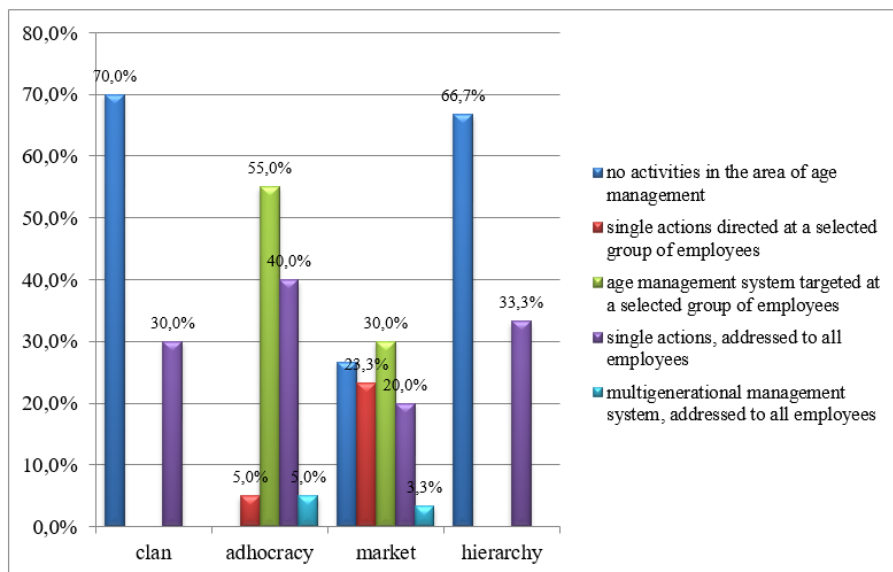
2. TYPE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND THE LEVEL OF MANAGEMENT OF AGE DIVERSITY IN THE ENTERPRISE

In order to examine the relationship between the type of organizational culture and the level of age management in the organization, a research was conducted in which one hundred and fifty two employees of human resources departments participated. The method of diagnostic survey was used. The survey was conducted online. It was completely anonymous, therefore it is impossible to tell which companies’ employees filled it in. Figure 2 presents their results. The survey was addressed to employees of various departments and levels, but mainly to employees of HR departments.

In the vast majority of surveyed enterprises, activities in the area of age management do not take place. In two organizations, an multigenerational management system was created. They include such practices as: different assessment criteria for employees of different ages, intermentoring programs, the possibility of using flexible working time by younger generations of employees, different employee evaluation criteria and different benefits for people of different ages.

Interestingly, the most common activities in the field of management of generational diversity occur mainly in organizational cultures such as market and hierarchy (according to the typology of organizational cultures according to Cameron and Quinn). This is quite surprising. It would seem that multigenerational management activities as the highest level of age diversity management in an organization will more often take place in a clan culture that assumes team work, cooperation, a friendly working atmosphere and partnership. This is part of the assumptions of multigenerational management.

Figure 2. Management of generational diversity and the type of organizational culture



Source: Own study based on the results of conducted research

The most common age management single practices in other enterprises include activities in the area of employee recruitment (appropriate construction of job advertisements, adjusted to the age of desired candidates, differentiation of sources of employee recruitment), mentoring, health protection activities, promotion of lifelong learning and programs targeted at employees in retirement age.

The type of organizational culture is one of the factors determining the level of management of generational diversity in an enterprise. Interestingly, organizations with a clan-type culture that assumes values and practices in line with the idea of multigenerational management are not the best at managing an age-diverse team. Noteworthy is the fact that the vast majority of organizations participating in the research do not use any age management practices, which seems to be unfavourable in the current demographic situation, where the phenomenon of aging of the population is becoming increasingly apparent, which is a constant increase in length life. This is mainly due to technological changes in work, economic growth, better living conditions and the development of medicine. At the same time, it is worth paying attention to the low fertility rate and the negative migration balance indicator [Schimanek, Kotzian, Arczewska, 2015, p. 10]. It is forecasted that a systematic decrease in the number of people up to 32.1 million, of which 30.2% will be citizens over 65 [Waligórska, Kostrzewa, Potyra, Rutkowska, 2014, pp. 155 and 166]. The result will therefore be an increase in the demographic dependency ratio.

A steady decline in the workforce is visible, as well as the phenomenon of early occupational deactivation [Fura, Fura, 2012, p. 306].

SUMMARY

Constructive cooperation of generations present on the labour market – baby boomers, X, Y and Z – is also necessary, but difficult. At the same time, it is worth creating teams of employees of different age. Thanks to this, the company can enrich itself with different experiences, competences and predispositions of its employees, which allows it to better adapt to the requirements of a changing market and clients' requirements [Liwiński, Sztanderska, 2010]. Age groups of employees also allow for intergenerational transfer of knowledge and experience, thus contributing to the continuity of knowledge and skills in the organization [Pawlak, 2016, p. 413].

For this reason, the most appropriate solution is to introduce in the organization practices that create an multigenerational management system that will allow better use of their potential of all employees, which is necessary in the current demographic situation. On this basis, it is possible to distinguish certain recommendations for enterprises with different types of organizational culture. First of all, it should be emphasized that in every enterprise, regardless of the organizational culture, a good solution is to introduce team management practices of different ages, which will be addressed to employees of all ages. These should cover areas such as employee recruitment, motivation, employee evaluation, training, as well as the process of leaving the employee.

Liwiński and Sztanderska (2010, pp. 7–8) divide the benefits of managing age diversity into three groups:

- 1) Diversity benefits - any differentiation of employees is beneficial as it allows the organization to respond to changes in the market and better adapt to the needs of diverse customers. Recruitment of employees, which allows you to create a multigenerational team, is therefore particularly important. Any differentiation of personnel, also in terms of age, is beneficial for the organization, regardless of its type of organizational culture.
- 2) The benefits of maintaining competencies at an appropriate level - they constitute a valuable resource of human capital that an organization may lose when the group of the oldest employees retires. Therefore, it is important to exchange experiences between generations, which will maintain the continuity of knowledge and skills in work teams.
- 3) Reduction of employment costs of employees through promotion and health protection, improvement of ergonomics of the workplace, appropriate motivation, prevention of layoffs, and better work efficiency.

Appropriate management of employees of different ages also allows for the creation of conditions for cooperation between strong, stable, and loyal multigenerational teams, which leads to minimizing the risks resulting from multi-generationality and benefiting from the exchange of experiences. It also ensures open communication, feedback and understanding, and consequently greater work productivity. It encourages mutual respect and fosters changes in attitudes towards different age groups of employees. Thus, it guarantees safe and stable employment. As a result, employees do not have to fear discrimination and other negative aspects of their age and therefore can focus on the performance of tasks. It fits perfectly into the assumptions of the clan type organizational culture. Age or intergenerational management works not only inside the organization. It leads to the promotion of appropriate attitudes in society (Gellert, Kuipers, 2008, p. 134; Lubrańska, 2015, pp. 178–179). All this is conducive to creating a positive image of the organization in the local environment. A good reputation as a company that fosters diversity results in a good reputation among potential job applicants, which attracts the best, most talented. The organization appears to be an attractive employer worth working for (Beazley, Ball, Vernon, 2017, pp. 227–233; Mendryk, 2013, pp. 109–110), which is especially attended by the youngest generations of job candidates. It will also attract top-class specialists in narrow fields in which the enterprise may specialize, especially in the culture of the adhocracy type. Thanks to the proper management of age diversity, the morale of the crew is increased. This, in turn, translates into employment optimization through better use of the competences of people employed in the organization and maximization of the recruitment potential (Schimanek, Kotzian, 2015, pp. 11–12). It allows for rational planning of tasks and obligations among already employed employees. Intergenerational management activities are also conducive to increasing motivation. People, regardless of their age, are less afraid of changes, feel respected and appreciated, and this translates into greater commitment and increased efficiency and productivity of their work, which should be especially appreciated in organizations such as the market. Besides, a clear system of employee departures means that employees do not have to worry about them, so they are more focused on the performance of their duties (Świeszczak, 2013, pp. 61–63). Properly conducted intergenerational management also helps to set goals in the organization together. Thanks to this, they are consistent with the objectives, which also seems to be particularly important in the organizational culture of the market type. Regardless of the type of organizational culture, managing generational diversity is also a good response to the current demographic problems. It also allows for the extension of professional activity (Lubrańska, 2015, pp. 178–179; Ziółkowska, 2016, p. 368). Therefore, the main recommendation for the management practice will be, regardless of the type of organizational culture of the company, to run a coherent age diversity management system.

It should be emphasized that after introducing the practices of managing employees of various ages, it would be worth examining their effectiveness in enterprises with different types of organizational culture, which may constitute a desirable direction for further research. At present, however, it is hardly possible due to the lack of an appropriate number of companies that use such practices.

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ZARZĄDZANIE ZESPOŁEM ZRÓŻNICOWANYM WIEKOWO A TYPIEM KULTURY ORGANIZACYJNEJ

Zarys treści: Współczesny świat niesie za sobą zmiany demograficzne, które mają olbrzymie znaczenie dla pracodawców. Na rynku pracy obecnie są cztery pokolenia – baby boomers, X, Y i Z, które różnią się podejściem do pracy, potrzebami i oczekiwaniami. Konieczna jest jednak ich dobra współpraca w miejscu pracy. Dobrym rozwiązaniem jest w tym przypadku odpowiednie zarządzanie różnorodnością pokoleniową w organizacji. Jego poziom zależy jednak od wielu czynników, między innymi od typu kultury organizacyjnej. Postanowiono zbadać tę zależność. Przeprowadzono zatem badania ankietowe, których wyniki pokazały, czy i jak typ kultury organizacyjnej determinuje zarządzanie zróżnicowanym wiekowo zespołem.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura organizacyjna, zarządzanie międzypokoleniowe, zarządzanie wiekiem

