

DIVERSITY WITHIN CORPORATE EDUCATION AT THE SLOVAK LABOUR AND WELFARE ADMINISTRATION: A CROSS-SECTIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

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Abstract: Diversity of the workforce encourages innovation. In order to maintain the workforce, it is necessary to adapt the company's training with regard to the needs of individual employees. Organisations that understand the relationships between diversity, inclusion and education have the potential to set up a culture of lifelong learning and thus improve quality of life for their employees. Diversity can strengthen work involvement, improve the organisational climate, promote inclusion, and contribute to increased productivity and the quality of life of employees. We researched the question of diversity by questionnaire; an online survey was conducted at the Slovak Labour and Welfare Administration, investigating the dimensions of diversity, inclusion, quality of life, and education. We identified the subjective perception of the dimensions of education, diversity and inclusion by employees in relation to the criteria of quality of life, job positions or time spent working in the institution. Our results showed that education has an impact on the self-esteem of the respondent's personal and professional life, and that the quality of personal and professional life is influenced by the position and length of time spent in the organisation.

Keywords: lifelong learning; diversity; inclusion; corporate education; quality of life.

1 Introduction

In Lifelong education, or lifelong learning, is a purposeful learning activity that aims to improve knowledge and competencies for all individuals who wish to participate in learning activities. This learning focuses on their contributions to sustaining or advancing the viability of their workplaces, and collectively to securing national social and economic goals [1, 2]. A highly skilled and knowledgeable worker is an asset for any organisation, and skill sets are always associated with promotion and salary hikes, as well as career success [3].

The term diversity in the context of our study is used to mean a variety in styles or approaches within education and the workplace. Diversity is fuel for recombination, and recombination has far more potential to drive innovation than incremental improvement or luck [4]. Diversity management is a tool for the integration of different groups of the workforce; it is implemented through a process of creating and supporting working conditions that respect the similarities and diversities between people and recognises their specific needs to enable them to use their potential and be beneficial to the organisation. Inclusion is the practical implementation of diversity, equal treatment and respect into reality [5, 6]. During the last few years, the research topic 'diversity in corporate education' has become increasingly relevant to ensure and sustain successful employee engagement and satisfaction, both for corporate universities and family business models [7 -10]. Individuals construct their corporate identity through corporate education. This makes it important for various institutions or business organisations to focus on developing the capabilities of employees through corporate education training programmes [11, 12]. A recipe for change is entrepreneurship education [13, 14]. This means that the perceived value of corporate education will be based on the involvement of individuals in learning programs [15]. For sustainability, businesses are increasingly utilising corporate education [16]. More businesses are utilising education as a way to respond to the pressing needs imposed by changing workplace trends [17].

There is a lack of studies examining the influence of lifelong learning on the employees' quality of life, especially on employees of the state administration in the Slovak Republic. Even though some studies [18-21] described the impact of learning on the quality of life of employees in different contexts or proposed a possible linkage between lifelong learning and

quality of life, no empirical studies have been conducted to test and explore the relationship between these constructs. No prior studies have looked into the exploration of diversity within corporate education at the Slovak Labour and Welfare Administration. However, the Slovak Government-initiated paper Lifelong Learning Strategy and Consulting for the Period 2021-2030 [22], states its main goal is to ensure every citizen has lifelong access to opportunities for education, to enable them to develop their skills and competences at every stage of their life and with regard to individual needs and circumstances, thereby empowering individuals to realise their potential in personal, work and civic life. It is the starting point for opening up lifelong learning at all levels of organisations and companies for the next period. Diversity in the field of corporate education in Slovakia is currently a challenge due to a lack of experience and research in this area; thus, we will explore diversity within corporate education at the Slovak Labour and Welfare Administration (SLWA) and describe the impact on the employees' quality of life. In this article, which is intended to be descriptive and exploratory in nature, we present the empirical results that show the answers to the research questions:

RQ1: What is the subjective perception of the dimensions of education, diversity and inclusion in relation to the quality of life of the respondents in this organisation (SLWA)?

RQ2: What is the subjective perception of individual dimensions in relation to their position and length of employment in this organisation (SLWA)?

2 Materials and Methods

2.1 Context of Study

This study was carried out in the Slovak Labour and Welfare Administration. The Slovak Labour and Welfare Administration (SLWA) is established and coordinated within the competence of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic. The SLWA manages, controls, coordinates and methodically directs the performance of state administration in the field of the social and legal protections of children, coordination of family policy, social affairs and employment services. These institutions were the target group of the research. The number of employees as of 31.12.2021 was 664. There were considerable fluctuations in the number of employees, as well as organisational changes, during the year. The online questionnaire survey was approved by the SLWA Headquarters. 500 questionnaires were sent out during October - November 2021, and 262 were returned (n=52%).

2.2 Research design and instrument

This study utilised a cross-sectional, quantitative, descriptive design. A cross-sectional questionnaire survey is a tool that can be used in any type of research and is the main means of collecting quantitative primary data. A questionnaire enables quantitative data to be collected in a standardised way so that the data is internally consistent and coherent for analysis [23].

The research instrument used for this survey was a questionnaire consisting of several sections. Section A provided demographic details such as age, gender, education, job position, region (five questions); the following four sections covered respectively: quality of working and personal life (B – fifteen questions); education (C –fifteen questions); diversity, anti-discrimination approaches and the working environment (D – thirteen questions); and, inclusion (E – ten questions).

Each of these constructs was made up of five to fifteen open or closed questions. Face validity of the questionnaire was achieved by a review of its format and content by university researchers and also through initial pilot testing with 20 respondents who were not included in the main study. The questionnaires yielded

quantitative data: in section A it was demographic details and in sections B to E a descriptive method was used. For quantitative analysis the statistical package STATISTICA was used [24].

The 58-item questionnaire consisted of five parts, with the first 12 questions related to demographics. The questions in each section of B-E were simple statements rated on the Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The tool was assessed in terms of reliability, internal consistency and validity of convergence. We used Cronbach's alpha (which allots a value from 0 to 1) to calculate the reliability of the data. We calculated Cronbach's alpha (= 0.91) in the STATISTICA program; as the value of Cronbach's alpha approaches one, it indicates a very high reliability and validity of the data obtained by the questionnaire method. In addition, we examined the correlations between the individual dimensions. Since the assumption of a normal distribution of observed traits (four dimensions) is not substantiated, we used a nonparametric Wilcoxon signed rank test, which is a nonparametric analogy of a paired parametric t-test, to verify the statistical significance of differences in the level of observed traits. In this study we presented partial data in connection with the research questions.

2.3 Participants and Procedure

An online questionnaire was sent by email to 500 employees between October and November 2021. A total of 262 employees (81,9% women and 18,1% men) voluntarily and anonymously completed the questionnaire. After eight weeks, at the point analysis, the total response rate was more than 52 % return (number sent / number included in the study).

2.4 Ethical issues

University ethical clearance and research permission from the Labour and Welfare Administration was obtained for the study. Enclosed with the online questionnaire was a cover letter informing the employees about this research study and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of both the employees and their data. Contact details were given in the contact letter in case employees required further information before deciding to participate or if they wanted to be kept informed of the results of the study. Employees were free to return the questionnaire or not and could withdraw their data from the study at any time without affecting their relationship with the employer - Labour and Welfare Administration. Return of the questionnaire, however, implied consent to participate in the study.

3 Results

3.1 Characteristics of respondents

In total, 262 people (52% of the survey recipients) responded to our study. Table 2 shows the distribution of gender, age, education and time spent in employment. Of the respondents, (n=6) were 24 years or younger (2,3%) and were female (83%). The majority (57%) were in the 25-45 years age group and 79% female. In the 46-65 years age group, (n=105) were female (86,6%), (Figure 1).

In this study, we will focus on three identified indicators affecting individual dimensions: education, position, and time spent in the organisation, related to both research issues.

Respondents perceive the quality of personal and professional life and diversion, the quality of personal and professional life and inclusion, education and diversity, as well as diversity and inclusion, statistically significantly differently according to their age, gender, education, the spent time in organisation and their position. The calculated value of the probability 'p' was less than the selected level of significance: alpha = 0,05 in four cases. The probability value is only greater than 0.05 (p = 0.200) in one case - when comparing the dimensions of education and inclusion. This means that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of these dimensions by respondents - all dimensions are perceived by respondents in the same way, (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Participants' socio-demographic characteristics (n=262).

Gender	n%
Women	81,9
Men	18,10
Age	n%
18-24	2,3
25-45	57
46-55	21,20
55-65	19,20
Education	n%
High school	5,80
1st degree university	6,50
2nd degree university	85,40
3rd degree university	2,30
Time spent in organisation	n%
less than 1 year	15,80
1-3 years	13,50
4-6 years	19,20
7-9 years	10
more than 10 years	41,50
Position	n%
Clerk, Counsellor	50,8
Social Worker, Methodologist	12,1
Director, Head	12,7
Assistant	8,9
Manager	7,4
Coordinator	8,1

Figure 2. Wilcoxon single-sample test.

Dimensions	Z	p
quality-diversity	13,094	0,000
quality-inclusion	10,649	0,000
education-inclusion	1,281	0,200
education-diversity	6,935	0,000
diversity-inclusion	9,683	0,000

3.2 Education

We used the nonparametric method of Kruskal-Wallis test, a nonparametric analogy of one-factor analysis of variance, by testing the statistical significance of differences between four groups of respondents (secondary education, 1st to 3rd degree universities) in the context of quality of personal and professional life. It is a direct generalisation of Wilcoxon's two-sample test for the case of independent samples. We performed the calculations using the STATISTICA program. After entering the input data for each dimension in the output report, we obtain the following results for the selected Kruskal - Wallis test: the value of test criterion 'H' and the value of probability 'p', the latter being the probability of error we make when we reject the tested hypothesis. If the calculated value of p is too small (p <0.05 and p <0.01, respectively), we reject the tested hypothesis about the equality of the mean levels of the observed signs (at the significance level of 0.05 or 0.01, respectively); otherwise, we do not reject the hypothesis, and the observed differences are not statistically significant.

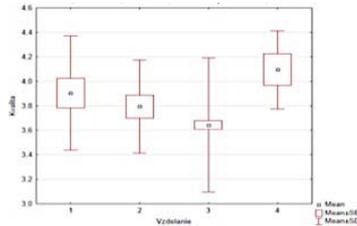
The statistical significance of differences between groups of respondents (created on the basis of their education), in the dimension of quality of personal and professional life, achieved the test criterion value H = 7.821920 and p value = 0.021. Since the calculated value of the probability p is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis at the level of significance, which means the difference between the four groups of respondents with respect to the observed trait (quality of personal and professional life) is statistically significant. This proved that the self-assessment of the dimension of quality of personal and working life is influenced by the respondent's education. From Table 2 we can see that there is a statistically significant difference in the group of respondents with the 3rd level of university education, who perceive the quality of personal and private life differently to the respondents with the 2nd level of university education.

Figure 3. Results of Kruskal-Wallis multiple comparison test (p-values).

Education	1st degree of university	2nd degree of university	3rd degree of university
High school	1,000	0,404	1,000
1st degree of university		1,000	0,950
2nd degree of university			0,021 ¹

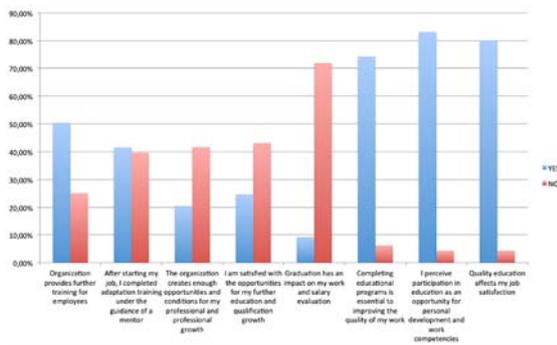
¹ The results are statistically significantly different.

Figure 4. The values of education.



Statistically significant indicators showed that the education of respondents has an impact on the self-assessment of the dimension of quality of personal and working life. In the conditions of the researched subject, for example, the following was found for comparison within the training:

Figure 5. Respondents' views on education in the surveyed organisation.



3.3 Time spent in the organization

Assuming that respondents with different time spent in the organisation perceive individual dimensions differently, we tested the statistical significance of differences between five groups of respondents (less than 1 year of employment in the organisation, 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-9 years, more than 10 years) in the dimension of quality of personal and working life.

The results of these different groups of respondents showed statistically significant differences in the dimension of quality of personal and professional life, specifically: the value of test criterion $H = 10.32895$ and $p = 0.0352$. This shows that self-assessment of the quality of personal and professional life is influenced by the time spent in the organisation. The results of multiple comparisons show that diversity $H = 11.16553$, $p = 0.0248$, inclusion $H = 11.99794$ and $p = 0.0174$ is a statistically significant difference between the group of respondents who have been working in the organisation for less than one year and those who have been working for more than ten years, with the graph showing the quality of personal and professional life.

Figure 5. Results of Kruskal-Wallis multiple comparison test (p-values).

Time in organization	1-3 years	4-6 years	7-9 years	More 10
less than 1 year	1,00	1,000	0,607	0,024 ¹
1-3 year		1,000	1,000	0,979
4-6 years			1,000	1,000
7-9 years				1,000

¹ The results are statistically significantly different.

Figure 6. Values of time spent in the organisation in the dimension of quality of personal and working life.

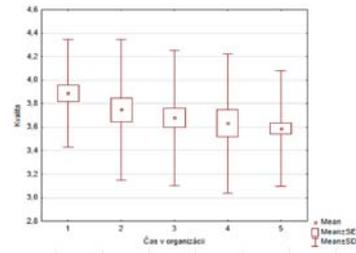
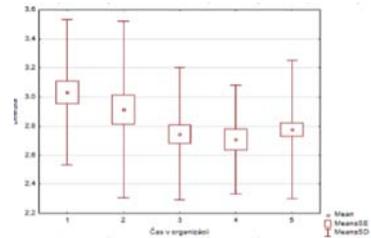


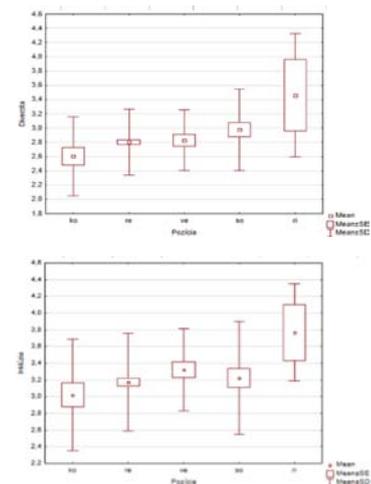
Figure 7. Values of time spent in an organization in the dimension of diversity and inclusion.



3.4 A company position

A company position refers to the role that an employee plays within an organisation. Each position comes with a particular set of duties that ultimately helps the overall operations of the company. By testing the statistical significance of the differences between the six groups of respondents (Director, Manager, Clerk, Consultant, Methodologist (Social Worker), Coordinator) in the diversity and inclusion dimension, we noted the statistical significance of the director position compared to all other positions with the following results: diversity $H = 9.194623$, $p = 0.0464$ and inclusion $H = 5.201913$, $p = 0.04672$, thus demonstrating that the self-assessment of the diversity and inclusion dimension is influenced by position, namely the position of the director compared to other positions in the organisation.

Figure 8. Values of position in the organisation in the dimension of diversity and inclusion.



4 Discussion

In terms of effective diversity and inclusion, less importance is placed on the amount of diversity an organisation has rather than the quality of the organisational culture that is created through the diversity implementation process, which determines whether the benefits are fully realized [25]. Diversity in society must be maintained in order for the system to be strong and to withstand

all changes. The principle of inclusion can be solved with a personalised approach; each employee represents a unique case, especially in corporate education. Additionally, the lifelong learning phenomenon is directly related to innovations and technologies [26]. Effective diversity and inclusion management should support a heterogeneous mix of employees, including through training, which our research has shown affects quality of life. The acceptance of diversity, whether on the part of employees or organisations, has a direct impact on the way employees are selected, developed, trained and are given opportunities to participate in public life as stated in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). The Mor Barak inclusion model was generally supported, with evidence linking inclusion with increased perception of diversity, job satisfaction, quality of life, as well as reduced stress and reduced employee turnover [27].

One of the principles of the Lifelong Learning Strategy and Consulting for the period 2021-2030 is to build a flexible and open system of educational paths and an effective system of adult education [22]. The report by the Public Services and Administration Sector Council [28] states that adult participation in education decreases with age and increases with education, which was corroborated by our research in an organisation with a highly qualified workforce (more than 80% of staff have a tertiary degree). The results of our research have proved that the identified interest of employees and possibility of lifelong learning is not sufficiently used, which results in a gradual, research-confirmed reduction in job satisfaction and thus a subjectively assessed quality of life.

According to the annual reports [29], education in the researched organisation focuses on personal development, vocational education, management education and education in the field of information technologies. According to statistics, the most important motivating factors in the case of administrative positions are, in addition to finances, the demand for personal development, gaining experience, a good team and the possibility of time flexibility [30]. The current Lifelong Learning Strategy and Consulting for the Period 2021-2030 focuses on key objectives such as increasing efficiency and flexibility, strengthening inclusiveness, increasing adult participation in education, focusing on the individual's individual career, and strengthening their motivation to learn. In order to enrich their employees' working life, and to improve their own productivity, it is necessary for organisations in Slovakia to focus and implement the objectives described in the Lifelong Learning Strategy. Currently a commitment to these aims is lacking.

The comparative study 'A Conceptual Content Analysis of 75 Years of Diversity Research in Public Administration' [31] examined how the focus of diversity has changed over time and how diversity research in public administration has progressed. The authors concluded that if diversity studies are to reflect 21st century society, scientists must more than ever understand and empirically study the intersection of diversity dimensions in a comparative context. These studies should include those that can examine the effects of inclusion on turnover, job satisfaction, performance, organisational commitment to assess management impact, employee involvement, organisational climate, and other variables. In our research, we focused on comparing the dimensions of diversity, inclusion, education, and subjective assessment of the quality of life.

The government paper Lifelong Learning Strategy and Consulting for the Period 2021-2030 aims to strengthen the role of public employment services as an active mediator in overcoming economic and social change [22]. This requires people to have access to quality professional counselling services that actively contribute to the development of career management skills, skills development and a meaningful link between people's individual needs and specific job opportunities. The pandemic has also shown the need to create a flexible business knowledge system with the support of technology, the implementation of innovation, the development of a lifelong learning culture, new forms of work and the use of LMS

(learning management system). An important contribution to understanding the theoretical link between adult learning and well-being in adult learning can be found in Field's [32] report; this emphasises that, while we tend to focus on the economic benefits of adult learning, the evidence that learning promotes well-being is overwhelming.

The self-assessment of the quality of personal and professional life is influenced by the time spent in the organisation. The results of the multiple comparison showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the group of respondents who have worked in the organisation for less than one year and those who have worked for more than ten years, while the perception of the dimension of diversity and inclusion is declining. A company position refers to the role an employee has within an organisation. By testing the statistical significance of differences between groups of respondents (Director, Manager, Officer, Consultant, Methodologist, Social Worker, Coordinator) in the diversity and inclusion dimension, we noted the statistical significance of the director's position compared to other positions, demonstrating that self-assessment of the diversity and inclusion dimension is affected by position.

Harnessing the potential benefits of a diverse workforce requires new types of leaders - leaders who are inclusive, flexible, self-aware, attentive and able to build lasting and trusting relationships with others so that employees feel part of the organisation. Based on the findings of the study, inclusion is strongly associated with overall employee satisfaction, so organisations should take active and deliberate actions that are synonymous with authentic, respectful, and inclusive leadership. Doing so is likely to result in better performance, organisational commitment, and achievement of organisational goals by increasing overall employee satisfaction [33].

More than 80% of employees who work in the Slovak Labour and Welfare Administration, based on the theory of Strauss-Howe [34], are described as Generation Y and Generation X. Generation X is the most educated, characterised by hard work, communicativeness, self-sufficiency, and the need to grow. Generation Y currently makes up about one third of people of working age. They are identified as valuing loyalty, they do not recognise the directive way of management, they do not enjoy assignments without the possibility of discussion, they perceive work as fun and the concept of work-life balance is not as important for them as for Generation X, they need to see the meaning of the task, and they are valuable team members [29]. More than 50% of respondents from our research were representants of Generation Y. Generation Y (millennials) have a strong focus on education, and when organisations are unable to meet their expectations, they prefer to leave. It is therefore necessary to strengthen activities to sustain them. One of the hallmarks of Generation Y employees is the need for learning and development; they appreciate the continuing education opportunities offered by organisations to facilitate their professional growth. They desire to acquire work-related knowledge and skills. One way to support their development needs is to develop competencies. Mentoring is a development initiative that appeals to Generation Y because they constantly crave personal and professional development, development support and feedback. The emphasis on lifelong learning and career development opportunities, mentoring, strategic leadership, knowledge sharing, and social media reflects a long-term commitment to invest in talent development and is essential to retain Generation Y staff [35]. Factors affecting the retention of Generation X employees include job content, skills utilisation, career advancement, work-life balance, remuneration, safety needs, leadership, career advancement, and motivation (including financial). They prefer learning in the workplace.

New technologies and the digitisation of public administration can help maintain the principles of diversity in education through an individual, personalised approach and at the same time can be more cost-effective in promoting a culture of lifelong learning. It is not possible to create a universal system of lifelong learning for all; everyone needs to create a learning

space to enable opportunities in their life and professional journey.

4 Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between the quality of life and education of staff and the need to promote a culture of flexible lifelong learning, the relationship between the position in the institution and the length of working life in the institution affecting the quality of life. Therefore, there is a need to work to increase the awareness of diversity in corporate education, especially for Human Resources at the Slovak Labour and Welfare Administration. Additionally, these findings have implications for lifelong education and the enhancement of employees' quality of life. Further investigation with larger heterogeneous samples or smaller in-depth interviews with employees is recommended.

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