

Diversity Management

Diversity is only a problem where simplicity reigns.

The diversity management approach has developed as a reaction and result to the American civil rights movement. First it was the people with African heritage, then the feminist movement that campaigned for equality in society.

Against the background of the resulting anti-discrimination laws, but also in the course of demographic change, globalization and the standards of the knowledge society, 'Managing Diversity' was developed as an approach to manage diversity in businesses and institutions.

Around 90 % of the 500 leading companies (Fortune 500) work with Diversity-Management approaches. Studies prove that Diversity-Management not only has a positive influence on the collaboration in a diverse work force, but also generates more efficiency by taking economic advantage. This success of diversity management now spreads to an increasing number of institutions outside the business world.

School is made up of a 'diverse, compound work-force'. The socialization backgrounds of children and youngsters increasingly differentiates from each other. Learning arrangements, which focus on individual competence development in social contexts, have to encourage a constructive collaboration between all persons concerned within and outside of school.

Meaning: learning arrangements serve as the organization of complexity. It is about designing adequate settings for heterogeneous groups of students, in which goal oriented and self-efficient learning¹ can develop. The success focus has an effect on the self-perception and ultimately on the self-concept.

This comes from how the individual learner and arranging the contextual conditions in a manner that the success of self-efficacy experiences is more likely.

The idea that two dozen people of the same age sit in the same room at the same time and read the same page in the same book and 'learn', and then later give the same answers to the same questions at the same time just can't be a very good idea. Not likely today and less likely tomorrow.

This is because people are born as individuals and they should stay that way. That is in their own interest and in the interest of society. Human mass copies have seldom contributed to constructive developments. 'Where everybody thinks the same, nobody thinks very much.' (Lippmann)

Learning arrangements in school are based on the individual. They are the base 'for a process in which the concerned persons take matters into their own hands, realize their own abilities, develop their own strength and use social resources. The guiding perspective is self directed coping and designing of their life.' (Theunissen/Plaute 1995).

The students stand in the centre and as self efficient participants they construct their life to be goal oriented. They play a constructive part in the social contexts of school and the motto is to learn with and from each other. Learning doesn't mean copying off the white board while ruminating facts is not a brain activity, as is often falsely assumed.

Learning means to design our own. It is a self encouraging, active and constructive process based on the principle of self organization and self direction. These self initiatives and activities don't only help the individual needs they also have an effect on the environment. The learning environment produces impulses and inspirations. This generates the forces of the learning dynamic demonstrating the ever changing ecosystem of the involved systems.

¹The experiences of "I can do it" strengthen the confidence in our own abilities. 'Self efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the sources of action required to manage prospective situations,' defines Albert Bandura. The belief in oneself and ones abilities, which motivates us and lets us approach challenges confidently. Self-efficacy describes the subjective certainty of being able to solve difficult or new tasks based on our own abilities. It generally influences our way of thinking, feeling and acting, as well as, from a motivational point of view, goals, effort and endurance of a human. An increase of the self-efficacy corresponds with more joy in achievement and better health. (Bandura 1997 / Fuchs 2005)

The system includes the active participation of the learn coaches. They take on directing part of the responsibility. This Means: Successful school learning develops in a climate of responsibility. What does this mean? For example, when expectations are not delivered?

	RESPONSIBILITY PARADIGMA	FINGER POINTING PARADIGMA	JUSTIFICATION PARADIGMA
Student	Why did I not show more interest and make an effort?	The teacher should have explained it better.	One doesn't have enough time, and when it's not clear you can't even ask about it.
Teacher	Why did I not support them effectively and in time?	The student should have paid more attention.	In such large classrooms one can't pay attention to every student.
Parents	Why didn't we realize it and why didn't we do something?	The teachers should make sure that the students do their work.	These youngsters don't let anyone tell them what to do. What can you do?

An example: In the context of IGLOU (International primary school reading evaluation), the teachers were interviewed about the responsibility of school performance.

The teachers attributed the students' **success** of the students to themselves and the performance of the school.

The students' **failure**, however, was attributed over 90% attributed to "the others" (primarily the students themselves).

The responsibility paradigm comes from a principle of collective responsibility. Everybody should feel like a part of the solution, and not part of the problem. A solution and development oriented way of thinking proved very helpful. For the Learn Coaches this means: help to self help.

'I help him to be successful. That's what I'm here for' Darran Cahill (Andre Agassi's coach) said, and that applies to school and life... Because there is no alternative to success. Failure nor futility is an alternative.

School must be a place students experience as successful and meaningful. The linchpin is the individual and goal-oriented commitments and contracts in a social context. That leads to the demand for a constructive exposure to diversity and differences. Therefore: Diversity Management.

Sources, resources, links:

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