SERENA GIANFALDONI,
CATERINA GRECO
(edited by)

# DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN COMPANIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Reflections on the topic
starting from a statistical survey

FrancoAngeli

# Informazioni per il lettore

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## Sociologia professionale

Negli ultimi anni la professione di sociologo è andata progressivamente diffondendosi sia in termini quantitativi sia rispetto alle aree di intervento. Ciò è avvenuto sicuramente per un consistente aumento nella domanda di competenze sociologiche, ma anche perché quella frammentazione disciplinare che per molto tempo è stata indicata come un limite della sociologia si sta progressivamente rivelando come la sua vera ricchezza. Il differenziarsi delle specializzazioni professionali si ricollega alla pluralità degli approcci e delle teorie, mentre la sistematizzazione del sapere professionale, che non può certo dirsi conclusa, fonda il suo stato di avanzamento soprattutto sulla presenza di riflessioni ed esperienze che rappresentano l'humus sul quale far evolvere questo processo.

Esaminando i problemi, i metodi e le tecniche, così come i risultati nell'applicazione della sociologia, ovvero stimolando il dibattito su questi temi e dando conto dei progressi realizzati, *Sociologia professionale* si propone di essere il punto d'incontro delle diverse riflessioni ed esperienze e uno dei fattori moltiplicatori di questo processo.

Per meglio conseguire questi obiettivi, la collana è articolata in modo da raccogliere per un verso i contributi che più si soffermano sui fondamenti e sui problemi metodologici, o su quelli tecnici che nascono nelle applicazioni della sociologia, e, per l'altro verso, i volumi che, a partire dalla descrizione di interventi effettuati (ricerche, analisi, ecc.), propongono modalità innovative e/o nuove ipotesi di applicazione della sociologia.

Sulla base della loro rilevanza all'interno del dibattito scientifico e accademico, tutte le proposte di pubblicazione vengono sottoposte alla procedura del referaggio

(*peer review*), fondata su una valutazione che viene espressa sempre e per ogni lavoro da parte di due *referees* anonimi, selezionati fra docenti universitari e/o esperti dell'argomento.

La *Società Italiana di Sociologia (SoIS)* è un'associazione scientifico-professionale di sociologi impegnata nella promozione e nel riconoscimento sociale del ruolo del sociologo/a. Le attività dell'associazione sono rivolte allo sviluppo della professionalità e alla crescita della professionalizzazione del sociologo, all'aumento delle possibilità occupazionali dei laureati e al contributo alla diffusione della sociologia.

Fabrizio Battistelli, Maria Grazia Galantino

# Sociologia e politica del coronavirus
Tra opinioni e paure

**Sociologia**

# Summary

## Section III – Strategies

# Introduction

*by* Ursa Pondelek *and* Niccolò Rinaldi

At the helm of some companies, or even holding the reins of modern empires and states, one can as likely as not still find managements, both newly minted and senior, afraid of any notion of diversity and hesitant to assume a proactive role in managing diversity, holding on to rigid concepts that shall be put out to pasture. Nevertheless, those seem tranquil in their golden stables and have not revealed themselves in the present study. While still some years ago Diversity Management was not listed in curricula and managers learned it later in their career, admirable young students mentored and coordinated by Serena Gianfaldoni and Caterina Greco have carried out a brilliant research project and written a book about this cardinal skill and technique, essential to every organization. Embracing Diversity Management, the panacea to success, even before the actual inception of their professional trajectory, as they did, is not putting the cart before the horse; it amounts to jumping on the winning horse.

The concept of Diversity Management in the workplace, nowadays intrinsically linked to equal opportunity employment, social justice model and, somehow even more important, best efficiency of human intellectual capital, is relatively new, yet stories of old empires evince how different diversity management practices affect organizations. The ancient Greeks and Romans, albeit not being commercially orientated, laid important foundation stones in the development of management, by accomplishing a myriad of industrial projects, such as roads and aqueducts. Plato's recognition of human diversity served to develop the idea of division of labour. Socrates preached the development of managerial skills such as creating an atmosphere of information sharing and analyses. The Romans' contribution to management were standardization of measures, weights, and coins, needed to administer a vast

empire, and the notion of corporations, with Roman enterprises selling stocks to the public. The Romans' embrace of diversity, inclusion of diverse cultural groups based on merit, and immigrants, was the essential factor in its incredible rise to world superpower. Despite slavery remaining a norm, workers were gaining some degree of freedom; they still had masters who assigned them jobs and educated them how to perform their tasks. The Persian Empire, on the other hand, was exclusionary. Precisely when the Roman Empire sought to maintain the purity of Roman blood, culture, and religion, it spiraled downward into disintegration and oblivion. Between the classical world of Greeks and Romans and the world of the Renaissance, the Dark or Middle Ages saw little trade or economic development in Europe, while trade flourished in the Muslim and Chinese worlds. The Italian merchant and explorer Marco Polo provided readers with tales and goods from those booming and culturally diverse societies.

The Venice Republic, too independent to subdue itself completely to the Christian West and too impregnated with commerce to avert itself of the possibility to trade with the world, incarnated cultural diversity that resulted in dialogue and progress. La Serenissima, if we imagine it as a cosmopolite and inclusive enterprise, has construed its greatness and strength precisely due to its ethnic and religious diversity and cultural cohabitation. Harmony between different religious and ethnic communities composing the social tissue in Venice also influenced its art, and painting by Paolo Veneziano The Madonna (dark woman modelled on Middle Eastern or North African lady) and Child with Two Votaries (Turkish clothes) is an example. In Engineering Management theory, an important metaphor has been coined: the Medici effect. The Medici are sometimes portrayed as manipulative money lenders, corrupters, instigators of murderers and ruthless men of power, but they also left their mark as wise humanists, patrons and skilful rulers that were able to maintain peace and prosperity in Tuscany for three hundred years. Their greatest accomplishments were in recruiting, managing and sponsoring artists, architects, poets, scientists, astronomers, theologians and philosophers, by inviting them to Florence. Diverse skills in diverse domains. The Medici family financed the invention of the piano and opera and it is possible that they were even behind the first discovery of America. The Medici effect occurs when the management deliberately brings different disciplines, experiences, backgrounds, beliefs and cultures together to boost productivity through the intersection of different ideas and break-through solutions. The management needs to make sure that intercultural differences are understood and ensure intercultural communication. Diversity Management performed by Medici stimulated a burst of creativity that allowed the society to emerge from the Dark Ages and enter into the Renaissance era. Inclusionary

practices of Medici were applied to great talents, but not to ordinary citizens, which, in the period of podestà, ended up utterly excluded from political decision-making in Florence and Tuscany.

However, it was outside Europe where we can find better examples on managing differences: diversity was a driving factor for the wealth of the Ottoman Empire and was due to many factors, like ethnicity, language and religion, latter being by far the major criteria. Muslims formed about 80% of the population. Non-Muslims enjoyed the same liberties and rights, such as privacy of residence, liberty of religion and thought, liberty of education, access to public utilities and employment rights as Muslims. Inclusion of diversity and by merit has shown to lead to increased organizational effectiveness and resilience, a lesson not always practiced in Europe: when, at the turn of the sixteenth century, Giordano Bruno was burnt alive in Campo dei Fiori by the Pope, in India the Great Mughal Akbar (who was born a Muslim and died a Muslim) had accomplished his large project of legally codifying minority rights, including religious freedom for all: the power of India was to be based in its rich variety, similar to the beauty of its colourful style.

We do not need to look for far away examples to understand the added value of "diversity management". It would be enough to turn to literature reminiscent of our childhood, such as Collodi's iconic character Pinocchio, carved as a puppet who longed to become a real human being. Other children were laughing at him at school but he defended himself and gained their respect. He teaches us that diversity does not genuinely exist; it is a product of prejudice. He is always alone on the run and fighting adversaries who are jealous of his diversity, characters he encounters on his way such as the Fox and the Cat, wish to see him dead because he is too alive, trick him because he is too smart, the Terrible Shark wants to imprison him because he is too free. In his diversity, he wins every episode, which empowers him further so that he makes his way inside the whale and reunites with his father Geppetto. After building a huge fire causing the whale to sneeze, they are blasted ashore. His diversity has helped Pinocchio to overcome all challenges and he is a winning character. The story epitomizes diversity that always wins and is capable of great deeds. Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking is equality diverse, red-haired, freckled, unconventional and superhumanly strong, always accompanied by her monkey seated on her shoulder, and able to lift her horse with one hand. She is playful and unpredictable, open and unbiased, likes to talk to children, adults and animals alike. Human resources specialists shall look for employees with Pippi's and Pinocchio's qualities to form teams capable to generate and exponentially expand innovative ideas. People who are honest, who speak with their hearth, and are different, literal thinkers who are courageous and appreciative; who motivate, electrify, inspire and smile.

Diversity is looking at opportunities and solutions from a different angle, generates high levels of understanding and acceptance of differences. This is how innovation and cultural change are created. Also, in Grimms' Fairy Tales, characters who are in a disadvantageous position, poor or diverse, are often rewarded as heroes, and those that employ exclusionary techniques vanquish. In Hansel and Gretel, we learn that a person's age or other personal circumstance that make him or her weaker does not determine their abilities. It is not wise to underestimate a person based on his or her age or other weaker link; one can learn something from everyone around. The moral of Cinderella is that by trusting employees and respecting their diversity, the workers will more likely perform better. Overly demanding bosses can drive talent away. In Shoemaker and the Elves, creating a positive work environment is important not only for employee morale, but also for business, happy employees will work harder to make your business a success. Most of Shakespeare's plays have a penchant to deal with the debacle of leadership and provide useful insights to the modern managers, including on managing diversity.

Even though he reflected the conditions of his time, Shakespeare was one of the first playwrights to create a leading role for a black or a Jew character.

The bard of Avon was able to break down cultural barriers and help people better understand their own cultural heritage. Shakespeare, with his own direct experience of the work of actors, knew how to manage different personalities and how to lead a working team to success, while as a writer he mistrusted appearances and challenged exterior stereotypes – so strong even nowadays. Such a process is so true in Shakespeare that two of his famous characters, Othello and Viola, warn both other characters of their plays and the audience by saying the identical revealing words: "I am not what I am".

This is likely to be lesson number one for a good manager of diversity: to go beyond misleading appearances and to build a fortune's business by searching the gold mine, which is in everybody's brain, well aware that pluralism equals to power. Again, Shakespeare can also remind that the "shape of diversity" in a team is not only a challenge, but also a joyful opportunity to enjoy mutual learning through curiosity, humility, respect and self-respect, and, in a professional and constructive way, to "have fun".

A gold digger, a stage manager, a philosopher, an explorer, a global merchant, a children's storyteller: after all, all this is the vocation of an engineer of Diversity Management, because to discover professional capacity, he or she has to help each member of the team to rediscover himself.

*Section I*
*The Research*

# 1. Companies, Organizations and Diversity Management. An Empirical Study

*by* Serena Gianfaldoni *and* Caterina Greco

This chapter will present the results of a research on Diversity Management, as a result of a collaboration between CAFRE Interdepartmental Center for Updating, Training and Educational Research of the University of Pisa[1]; Master in Empowerment of Different Skills and Inclusive Education of the University of Pisa[2]; LINK Laboratory for Universities and Companies[3]; Degree Course in Management Engineering at the University of Pisa[4].

Coordinators and implementers of the research project are Serena Gianfaldoni, Professor of Human Resources Management at the Engineering School of the University of Pisa and Caterina Greco as part student of the Master in Empowerment of Different Skills and Inclusive Education.

The aim of the Research Project is to investigate the issue of Diversity Management in the organizational and marketing sphere, starting with a sample of 81 corporate managers and executives of organizations or institutions who showed an enthusiastic collaboration.

The scientific committee of the Project[5] has decided to carry out a

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[1] https://www.cafre.unipi.it/

[2] https://master.cafre.unipi.it/

[3] https://laboratoriolink.blogspot.com/

[4] The collaboration between the University and Business Link Laboratory, CAFRE and the Management Engineering Degree Course has allowed over the last 5 years to involve over 500 young people who have attended the Human Resources Management Course in a transfer project. The young people involved were able to listen to the valuable testimonials of experienced managers, allowing them to enrich their academic training.

[5] The scientific committee of the Project is made up of Serena Gianfaldoni (University of Pisa); Caterina Greco (Master Empowerment of Different Skills and Inclusive Education, University of Pisa); Michele Lanzetta (University of Pisa); Patrizia Magnante (University of Rome "Tor Vergata"); Ahmed Habouss (Naples L'Orientale University).

statistical survey to observe the phenomenon from a quantitative perspective, drawing on the experience of several managers and head managers already involved by CAFRE in previous research projects[6]. The reference sample belongs to a network of managers and students promoted at the University of Pisa. It all started since the 2014 Academic Year with the aim of activating the cross-transfer of experiences and the updating of managers[7]. This network made it possible to carry out the project on schedule.

As regards the planning of the activities, the following scheme agreed by the research group was followed.

First, the research hypotheses have been focused. The questionnaire was subsequently completed, with the aim of outlining a brief and understandable form, suitable for stimulating the participation of managers and executives who are usually very busy. The questionnaire was then submitted, in the pre-test phase, to ten managers who simulated the compilation, offering the opportunity to highlight the critical issues, the gaps, the redundancies, the timing of the compilation. Subsequently, the definition of the sample was made, drawing from the dense network of managers who, as said above, collaborate permanently with the CAFRE and the LINK Laboratory. Once the definitive version of the questionnaire was defined, the tasks and deadlines for filling in were scheduled. At the beginning of March 2020, the statistical survey started and the questionnaire was submitted to the managers who had offered their time availability.

The options offered to managers were two: in the first case, they could autonomously fill the format, at times considered suitable; in the second case, the possibility of being interviewed by telephone (due to coronavirus) by the project coordinators or by the students of the group involved in the project was made available to the managers. Most of the managers interviewed chose to respond to the young students who thus had the opportunity to exchange views on a current topic by listening to the experience of qualified managers and executives.

During the filing of the questionnaire, the coordinators left autonomy to the managers and the applicant students involved, systematically monitoring the progress of the compilation. Most of the questionnaires were sent over the course of two months. At the end of the compilation, the students who joined the project also had the opportunity to draft written reports on the diversity in the specific realities approached.

Given the potential sensitivity of the topic and considering company policies, often restrictive in terms of involvement in research activities,

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[6] In particular, the University Business Project and the Italians Project Abroad.
[7] https://laboratoriolink.blogspot.com/

managers were guaranteed respect for privacy. The data collected, therefore, has been used exclusively for research purposes, in compliance with the privacy rules and made anonymous. To stimulate participation and to encourage greater frankness/sincerity in the answers provided, it was made clear, on the first page of the questionnaire, that the compilers of the questionnaire would not be traceable. All managers have given their consent to the use of the data provided. Only a small number of managers/executives preferred to hide behind an abbreviation or a generic description of the company. Again, to encourage the involvement and peace of mind of the professionals involved, they were offered the opportunity to indicate whether they wanted to receive a copy of the completed questionnaire in the end.

## 1. Finding managers

For the definition of the sample, as previously indicated, we chose to rely on the dense network of managers of the LINK University Company Laboratory, to which over 500 managers have participated in its activities in the last five years. All managers of the network received a formal invitation to participate in the project, with the indication of the deadlines and the commitment that could have entailed. The sample consists of 81 mangers representing 81 companies present on the national territory. The 81 Managers contacted to participate in the statistical survey responded to the call immediately. It is interesting to note that, although managers of the two sexes were invited to participate in the project, male managers predominantly took part in the statistical survey, reaching a percentage of 75.3% compared to 24.7% of managers of female sex.

What is the identikit of the managers and executives involved who formed the sample? First of all, we can underline that the professionals involved are operative both on the Italian national territory but also on the international scene. Numerous units of the sample, in fact, are managers and executives defined as intercultural, engaged in global professions, used to relating to the diversity of markets, cultures, religions and behavioural patterns.

As far as the working sector is concerned, we can confirm that these are managers and executives figures active in many different companies.

Numerous managers work for companies in the energy sector[8]. A large

[8] Among them: Companies that deal with Energy trade & Energy Services; service companies for the national energy system; companies that deal with the construction of energy plants; oil industry service companies; digital services and solutions company for the oil and gas value chain.

group of managers work for IT and communication companies[9]. Then we interviewed managers who have roles of responsibility in the automation *sector*[10] and in the nautical sector[11]. Managers who work in companies in the paper sector also participated in the statistical survey[12], but there were also managers who work in companies that design high tech technology[13]. Managers working in companies in the chemical sector also attended[14]; managers active in consultancy firms for companies[15]; managers of companies engaged in the construction sector; executives active in the transport and logistics sector[16]. Not even managers of the banking sector, the financial sector and the insurance branch[17] are left out. Then managers of large retailers are included as; managers who lead companies in the fashion and luxury fashion sector; managers of healthcare companies; public administration officials; officials of the Community Institutions; managers dealing with International Cooperation; managers active in Import-Export companies; managers who deal with certification of compliance, safety and product performance; tourism sector managers; managers of companies operating in the horticultural production sector.

[9] Among them: Companies engaged in the design, development and integration of software systems; companies that deal with Network Management Control; IoT, wireless connection and sensor networks; Telecommunications companies.

[10] Among them: Aircraft manufacturers; companies that design, build and market helicopters; companies that produce and sell motor thermal and air conditioning products for motor vehicles; companies that manufacture and resell auto parts.

[11] Managers of companies involved in the production and sale of boats; leading companies in the design and construction of yachts; companies that manufacture equipment for naval systems; companies that deal with the supply of products and technological services; companies that deal with refit and repair in the nautical sector; actions that offer after-sales assistance services in the nautical field; companies that produce gyroscopic stabilizers for boats.

[12] Among them: companies that offer products and technological solutions in the field of paper and non-woven fabric; companies manufacturing paper converting machines; companies that manufacture packaging machinery.

[13] In particular, companies for the production of artificial vision systems; companies that design elevators and lift components.

[14] These include companies that produce basic chemistry and companies engaged in chemical analysis and environmental consultancy for the health and safety of workers.

[15] Business consultancy and services agencies; companies that deal with professional consultancy and business training; companies that project coaching courses.

[16] With reference to managers who deal with the management, organization and promotion of port activities.

[17] Specifically companies that offer insurance and banking services; banks and asset and financial consulting firms: credit brokerage firm; companies that deal with administrative and accounting organization.

| SECTORS OF COMPETENCE OF MANAGERS/EXECUTIVES |
|---|
| Energy |
| IT sector |
| Automative |
| Transport |
| Logistics |
| Nautical |
| Paper |
| High tech |
| Chemical |
| Construction |
| Health Care |
| Marketing |
| Large Distribution |
| Fashion-luxury |
| Banking |
| Insurance |
| Communication |
| Consultancy |
| Education |
| Public Administration |
| Community Administration |
| International Cooperation |

With regard to the roles covered by the managers involved, in the respective organizations and business realities, we can note how it is, in any case, management roles, coordination and responsibilities declined and indicated in various ways[18]. Reference is made to technical management roles in the production and design branch[19]; managers engaged in the quality sector[20]; managers who hold positions of responsibility in the sales sector[21]; managers

[18] Founder; CEO; Sole Administrator; Administrator and partner; Holder; Shareholder; President; Manager; Director; General Manager; Plant Manager; President; Division President; Management Framework; General Manager, Coordinator; Management Control Manager.

[19] Production Manager; Program Manager; Project Manager; Operation Manager; Construction Safety Planning Manager; Senior Designer; Chief Engineer; Head Department.

[20] Development Quality Engineer & DFMEA Moderator.

[21] Marketing Director; Sales Director; Sales Manager; Wholesale Manager; Commercial Director; Client Manager; Customer Service Director; Sale Representative for Italy.

| ROLES COVERED BY MANAGERS/EXECUTIVES |
|---|
| **Management roles** |
| CEO; Sole Administrator; Shareholder; Division President; General Manager; Head of Unit. |
| |
| **Production and Engineering:** |
| Production Manager; Program Manager; Project Manager; Operation Manager; Construction Safety Planning Manager; Senior Designer; Chief Engineer; Head Department. |
| |
| **Sales** |
| Marketing Director; Sales Director; Sales Manager; Wholesale Manager; Client Manager; Customer Service Director; Italy Sale Rapresentative. |
| **IT services** |
| Techinical Service Director; Business Intelligence Manager; Director for ICT systems |
| |
| **Human Resources** |
| HR Development Manager; Selection Manager |
| |
| **Quality** |
| Development Quality Engineer & DFMEA Moderator |
| |
| **Legal fields** |
| Director of claims of legal area |
| |
| **Banking and Finance** |
| Private Banker; Credit Manager. |
| |
| **Insurance sector** |
| General agent  Attorney at law |
| |
| **Healthcare sector** |
| Nursing coordinator |
| |
| **Research and Development** |
| Research and Development Manager |
| |
| **Business communication** |
| Responsible of External Communication |
| |
| **Public and private Administrations** |
| Member of the European Parlament; Political advisor Eu Institution; Mayor. Responsible for the administrative area; Funzionario administrative and accounting Responsible. |

who coordinate the IT area of the companies involved[22]; managers with responsibility in the human resources sector[23]; managers holding administrative roles[24]; legal area[25] managers; managers with responsibilities in the field of banking and finance[26]; insurance coordinator managers[27]; managers with responsibility roles in the healthcare sector[28]; managers who hold a managerial role in the research and development area[29]; managers responsible for corporate communication[30]; public officials and administrators[31].

## 2. Research hypothesis

In the phase of defining the objectives and investigative strategies, numerous research hypotheses were outlined, subjected to verification in the subsequent analysis phase of the data collected.

First of all, the research group started from the hypothesis that diversity, at least formally, is considered a value to be protected in organizational and business situations, as the culture of respect since all forms of diversity are now more widespread.

Among the expectations we also had the conviction that an overall uniform view would emerge from the data, despite the different areas of action of the managers. This expectation stemmed from the consideration that the managerial function involves, by its nature, the responsibility of coordinating a working group made up of distinct elements, all committed to the achievement of a common target.

With regard to the perception of the phenomenon, we had defined as the research hypothesis that the approach towards the issue of *Diversity Management* was, to some extent, influenced by gender and the age group of the managers surveyed, elements considered capable to affect the perception of the phenomenon.

Among the research hypotheses, there is also a strong bond between a

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[22] IT Services Director; Business Intelligence Manager; Director of General Services and ICT Systems.
[23] HR Development Manager; Selection Manager.
[24] Administrative area Manager; Accounting administrative Officer.
[25] Legal area claims Manager.
[26] Private Banker; Credit Manager.
[27] General Agent legal representative.
[28] Nursing Coordinator.
[29] Research and Development Manager
[30] External Communication Manager.
[31] Euro MP; Political Counselor European Institution; Mayor.