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Diversity in organisations and cross-cultural management

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Course aims and intended learning outcomes

The course delves into key topics in the area of diversity management; that is, a recent approach to human resource management aimed at developing inclusive organisations that can favour the expression of employees' specificities and different identities (e.g. linked to gender, age, ethnicity, physical abilities, national origin, professional and educational background) and valorise them to the advantage of both organisational performance and individual well-being. Within this framework, particular focus is placed on cross-cultural management, which involves managing employees and work teams in ways that recognise the role of intercultural differences in the current business context.

The course pays specific attention to the practical implications of the issues addressed in terms of organisational diagnosis and management action.

EXPECTED LERNING OUTCOMES

Knowledge and understanding

Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

- understand the main elements and issues related to the practice of diversity management in contemporary organisations;
- understand the key role of human resource management processes in designing and implementing effective inclusion and diversity management policies;
- appreciate the cross-cultural skills that are needed by organisational employees engaged in international activities and communication (e.g. expatriates);
- demonstrate an awareness of the practical tools through which organisations mostly conduct actions in the field of diversity management and cross-cultural management (e.g. programmes for handling international assignments).

Applying knowledge and understanding

Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

- carry out a basic diagnosis of the situation of specific organisations with regard to inclusion issues and implemented diversity management initiatives (strengths, weaknesses, needs, etc.);
- suggest, at the elementary level, appropriate interventions to address particular challenges relating to diversity and cross-cultural management in organisational settings;
- utilise some basic attitudinal and behavioural skills acquired through the course to better deal with diverse and international work environments in their current or future professional careers.

Course content

- What is diversity management, why does it matter? The challenge of diversity in the current organisational landscape.
- The organisational advantages of managing diversity in the workplace: the business case for diversity.
- Diversity management and Corporate Social Responsibility: generating benefits for employees and communities.
- Diversity management vs. equal employment opportunity? Differences and interdependencies.
- The key tools of diversity management: human resource management practices and beyond.
- Barriers and risks in managing diversity.



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- The case of cross-cultural management: engaging people in a global business context.
- Cultural differences and communication in organisational settings and processes.
- Sending people on international assignments: the experience and challenges of expatriation.

Reading list

Readings for exam preparation will be indicated at the beginning of the course. Presentations discussed in class and other course materials will be available on Blackboard.

Teaching method

The course is mainly based on interactive lectures, in which students are expected and encouraged to participate actively. Activities will include guided practical exercises and (possibly) opportunities for discussion with experts from the professional world.

Assessment method and criteria

The final exam consists in an oral test.

The exam is primarily aimed at assessing students' knowledge of the course's key topics and concepts and their capacity to express arguments clearly and consistently. Additional criteria contributing to the final exam grade regard active participation in class activities, as well as the capacity to engage in personal and critical reflection and connect theory to practical application of concepts.

Notes and prerequisites

No prerequisites are required for course attendance and admission to the final exam.

Place and time of consultation hours

Office hours for students are held in the Department of Sociology (4th floor), according to the timetable available at the secretary's office of the department.

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